

ETHNOLINGUOCULTURAL ASYMMETRY IN LITERARY TRANSLATION

Zhuldyz K. ALSHINBAYEVA¹, Zhanara S. SARMANOVA¹,
Amangeldi S. ZHANBATYR², Saule B. ZAGATOVA³,
Gulnara I. KULDEYEVA¹, Manshuk Zh. YESKINDIROVA¹

¹Department of Translation Theory and Practice, L.N. Gumilyov
Eurasian National University, Nur-Sultan, Republic of Kazakhstan
²Department of Philosophy and Cultural Studies, Korkyt Ata Kyzylorda
State University, Kyzylorda, Republic of Kazakhstan
³Department of Foreign Languages, The Eurasian Humanities Institute,
Nur-Sultan, Republic of Kazakhstan

Abstract: *The relevance of this article is determined by the urgent need for a deeper study of the mechanism of comprehending and conveying the meaning of a foreign language and culture text during translation. The purpose of the article is in comparative study of asymmetry as a translation phenomenon on the material of imaginative literature in the Kazakh, English and Russian languages. The authors used a comparative method to analyze the difference in translation form Kazakh to English and Russian languages. The scientific novelty of the research is determined by the disclosure of the role of asymmetry as a text-forming factor, the introduction of the concept of ethnolinguocultural asymmetry into the conceptual apparatus of comparative linguistic research, and the identification of ways to influence ethnolinguocultural asymmetry on the result of translation. This article will be interesting for scientists in the sphere of translation and philology and also for translators.*

Keywords: imaginative literature, national language, interlingual and intercultural asymmetry, idiom, norms of translation.

Literary text is the result of the creative process and the realization of creative ideas. The literary work is characterized by a clear, emotional, aesthetic, conceptual, informational and cognitive character. Thus, most of the studies in modern linguistics are based on anthropocentric paradigm, leading to the "human-linguistic-cultural" triad and new research in the humanitarian field. Innovative ontologically-oriented research focuses on phraseology and its ethno-cultural semantics. Language is the national heritage of the people from generation to generation. It is a valuable tool that represents a special character of public relations. The richness of the national language can be seen in the literature of the nation¹.

Thus, it is obvious that the scientific and methodological basis for the study and propagation of the national language requires a modern approach. It's the only way to discover the originality, richness, ethno-cultural identity of the national language. That is to say, not only as a means of communication, but also in a deeper connection with the history, traditions, way of thinking,

¹ M.U. Suleibanova, "The growth of agglutinativity in the word-formation system of the Russian language", in *ASTRA Salvensis*, 2019, vol. VII, no. 13, p. 457-466.

and outlook of the people speaking the language. As we have already said, the phraseological fund of the language is a mirror of the peoples' living. Fiction is a complex genre, art of speech. It depicts cognitive abilities, knowledge, and time of the writer. That is why translating artistic texts is a challenge.

Universal and specific characteristics of each culture as a system are shown as a result of interaction of two linguocultural communities during translation. It is known that objective property of the translation is only incomplete rendering of the initial message which is caused by inevitable asymmetry of any couple of language systems which is considered to be asymmetry of language pictures of the world in contact in translation.

Reflecting objective reality, both the author of the original and the translator operate with signs of languages, which include information about the culture of the entire linguistic society in the language system. At the same time, the translation constantly involves a clash of cultures: not only the culture of one people with the culture of another, but also the culture subjectively perceived and described by the original source, with the subjective view of the translator about the foreign culture and the features of its rendering by the author's original source.

It is necessary to realize in a new light technical and cultural achievements of civilizations as a whole which becomes very relevant nowadays in the process of integration of the countries around the world including Kazakhstan, into the form of universal culture. Today it is already not enough to know features of historical, political, economic and cultural development of any country. Opportunity and necessity of analytical and critical comparison of foreign culture to the culture of the country is an important condition of translator's professional training and activity. In this process the main attention has to be paid to two aspects: national and international. The critical attitude towards any cultural traditions, both positive, and negative, is possible only on the basis of free possession of the universal and standard cultural norms and values.

Topicality of this research is caused by insufficient study of influence of culturological factors on the literary translation. Success of interlingual and cross-cultural communication in all spheres of communication depends on deep approach to language as to a national picture of the world at which correlations between the form of expression and the reasons determining it are established. We plan to identify symmetric and asymmetric phenomena between two languages – Kazakh and English – in a certain area of their functioning, particularly in the field of literary translation, taking into account the problems and tasks of comparative phraseology, theory and practice of translation in the following study.

Currently Kazakhstani literary translation industry is developing dynamically. In his article titled "Orientation to the future: spiritual revival" President Nursultan Nazarbayev said: "In the next few years we will be able to

translate the best 100 textbooks in the world into different languages from the various languages in the world, and to give young people the opportunity to learn from the best of the world”². In addition, the issue of translating from the Kazakh language into the world languages is actively implemented.

The problem of translation the works of Kazakh classical literature into world languages

The problem of translation of the best works of Kazakh classics into world languages attracts the attention of linguists and translators of our country. It has been proven that literary translation is the unique to “open” our history, traditions and spiritual treasures of the independent country. National language is the heritage of the people from generation to generation, it is a valuable tool that represents a special character of public relations. The richness of the national language can be seen in the fiction of the people. Phraseological fund of any language is the spiritual treasure of the nation that is reflected in language.

In the study of idioms, ethnocultural features reflecting the national identity of a particular population are evident. Ethnocultural semantics of idioms is in its inner form. Therefore, to understand the ultimate meaning of phraseology, ethno-cultural semantics, it is necessary to look into its inner form. Analyzing several scientific works devoted to the issue of inner form of idiom, it is cleared up that all idioms have inner form, but not all of them have the ethno-cultural semantics. Consequently, we can divide idioms into two major groups taking into account their semantic aspect: universal and narrow³ (Figure 1).

² N.A. Nazarbayev, “Course towards the future: modernization of Kazakhstan’s identity”, 2017, Available at http://www.akorda.kz/kz/events/akorda_news/press_conferences/memleket-basshysynyn-bolashakka-bagdar-ruhani-zhangyru-atty-makalasy

³ N.F. Alefirenko, *Controversial semantic issues*, Gnozis, Moscow, 2005; T.P. Kiyak, “On “the internal form” of lexical units”, in *Questions of Linguistics*, 1987, vol. 3, p. 58-68; A.P. Luriya, *Language and consciousness*, Moscow University Publishing, Moscow, 1998; V.N. Teliya, *Russian phraseology: semantic, pragmatic and cultural linguistic aspects*, School “Languages of Russian Culture”, Moscow, 1996.

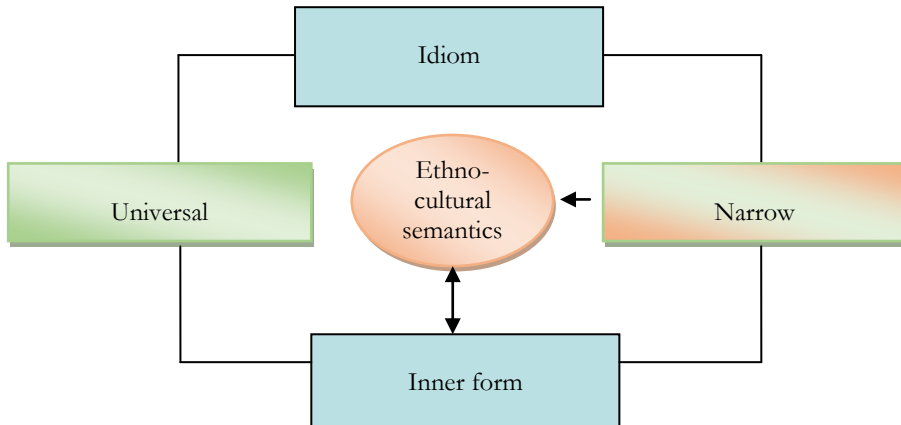


Figure 1: The two major groups of idioms, divided by taking into account their semantic aspect

Most idioms appear and develop on the basis of the image which forms them. In other words, the image of idiom is its inner form, and in the onomasiological aspect, the inner form is regarded as the most important component of the idioms' semantics. The inner form acts as a pillar of the idiom. Without the inner form there is no semantics, and there is no idiom either. For this reason, if the idiom loses its inner form, it is deprived of its meaning, which, in turn, cannot serve as a communicative unit. Thus there is no doubt that inner form, semantics and function of idiom have close connection.

In the first half of the XVIII century the notion of inner form was presented for the first time by V. von Humboldt⁴. He believed that the inner form is a multifaceted phenomenon based on the national spirit or national spiritual power. Then the idea of inner form notion was supported in the works of Potebnya, Vinokur and other scientists. The issue of inner form is one of the least studied branches of phraseology. Today to the notion of inner form the following explanations are given:

- 1) full and comprehensive etymological concept;
- 2) a nomination marking the basis of a certain value;
- 3) synchronous motivation of the lexical unit;
- 4) an image-based semantics, sensual component of the semantic structure⁵.

⁴ V. Humboldt, "On the difference in the structure of human languages and its influence on the spiritual development of the human race", in: *Selected Works on Linguistics*, Progress, Moscow, 1984, p. 37-297.

⁵ Z.I. Hovanskaya, *Stylistics of French language*, Vysshaya Shkola, Moscow, 1984.

The inner form causes the appearance of image in the consciousness of person and represents the system of components communication. In addition, the inner form is the result of a common understanding, developed and formed in the consciousness of the ancestors in the historical development of a particular society. Therefore, on the basis of internal form, we can determine ethno-cultural semantics of idiom.

Difficulties in using conditional norms in translating idioms

During literary translation, we obligatory face the problem of interlingua transfer of ethnocultural semantics of idiom. That is why it is very important to identify the inner form of idiom and then understand its ethnocultural semantics. The translation is a century-old art. At different stages of human development as a linguistic community, the concept of translation and its goals has undergone significant changes. Once it was argued that the original text should be translated literally, and then the translation should be at a higher level than the original. In other words, at different historical stages of human development, the requirement for translation was changed and the concept of "conventional norm" emerged. In conformity with modern development requirements, the conventional translation norm requires that the translation be closer to the original, the original or complete replacement of the original.

These translation norms are based on a well-known hierarchy. First of all, the translation must be pragmatic, so we understand the leading norm is a pragmatic rule. The nature of the translator's actions is largely dependent on the genre-stylistic nature of the original text. Consequently, the genre-stylistic norm is in the second place. The genre-stylistic norm determines equivalent translation, i.e. the equivalent translation is in the third place. It is a conventional norm that determines how a translator interprets his work, how much it feels. The ultimate requirement of the translation hierarchy is the standard of equivalence.

We consider it is reasonable to add the norm of idioms translation. The reason is that the translation of the pragmatic value, internal form, ethnocultural semantics of phraseology in the translational language is the only way to achieve adequate translation. We believe that adequate translation of idioms should be placed on the third place, i.e. after the genre-stylistic translation (Figure 2). Since the idiom is a linguistic unit that can provide unique information about ethnos, it is an invaluable way to access the qualitative textual translation, rather than their equivalent translation. With regard to translation norms, we have come to realize that there is a need for special rules for translating idioms. When translating idioms with ethnocultural semantics into English, the translator faces serious difficulties in translating the Kazakh literary text into a special national tone. In short, there

are a lot of difficulties in translation from Indo-European languages to Turkic languages, or vice versa.

In the analysis of the Kazakh literary text and its translation into English, usually by means of Russian, we have seen that translators interpret the original text through the linguistic picture of the world, and as a result, there is a great deal of discrepancy in the translation text. Thus, it is possible to conclude that as a result of the asymmetry of the linguistic images of the Kazakh, Russian and English people in translation of the literary texts, there is a great deal of discrepancy in the text of the translation.

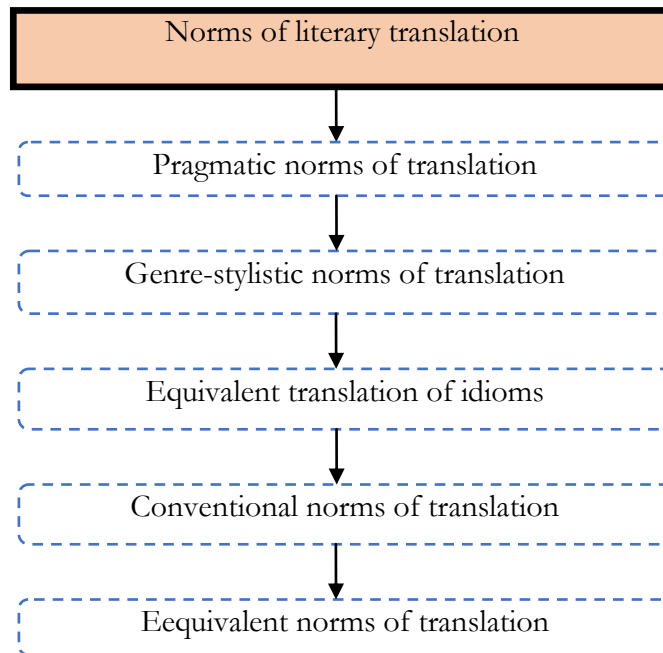


Figure 2: Types of norms of translation, located in order of the level of importance

Having studied and analyzed the translations of the novel "Abai" by prominent Kazakh writer Mukhtar Auezov in Russian (two versions) and English (two versions), we cannot deny that these translations give readers a great opportunity to learn a lot of things about the culture and life of the Kazakh people. However, in our study, we consider that idioms with ethno-cultural semantics, which are particularly difficult for the translator to preserve the national color, by comparing the original text and its translations⁶. As we

⁶ O.V. Chetverikova, D.A. Kovalchuk, A.A. Bezrukov, N.L. Fedchenko, L.V. Alexandrovich, "The poetic text as a form of language objectification of the semantic sphere of the word-painter", in *ASTRA Salvensis*, 2019, no. 1, 91-99.

have already seen, it is impossible to find complete lexical and semantic equivalents in the language of translation. As an example, let's consider the translation of Kazakh idioms with ethnocultural semantics into Russian and English (Table 1).

Table 1: Comparison the translation of Kazakh idioms with ethnocultural semantics into Russian and English

«Abai zholy», (original)	«Путь Абая», (approved by author)	«Путь Абая», А. Кім's translation	«Abai», Progress Publishers translation	«Abai», L. Navrozov's translation
Smagul Ospanmen <i>tuidei kurdas</i> ⁷Смагул, брат Абая по младшей матери – Айгыз, ровесник Оспана ⁸ Смагул, брат Абая по младшей матери Айгыз, ровесник Оспана ⁹ .	Smagul was weeping bitter, angry tears for all that he was <i>as old as</i> Ospan ¹⁰ Smagul, the son of Abai's younger mother, Aigiz, a boy of Ospan's age ¹¹ .

As we can see, the phrase "тҮЙДЕЙ ҚҰДАС" is translated into Russian by one word "ровесник" (literally: peer), and into English as "as old as". If we look at the origin of phrase "тҮЙДЕЙ ҚҰДАС", the original form of the word тҮЙ(дей) is "straight", meaning "equal", "straight", "smooth"¹². Here we see an asymmetry phenomenon in translation. Since the word "тҮЗ" (i.e., "flat" or "flat field") for our nomad people life is very close, it is reflected in the idiom above. If we translate it literally it will sound as the following: "flat peers". Ethno-cultural semantics of idiom has not been preserved in the Russian and English translations, but we believe that the phraseology of the «тҮЙДЕЙ ҚҰДАС» is successfully translated here. However, we suggest the following translation «Smagul and Ospan were of the same age». That is to say, using the descriptive method, we translated the idiom with etho-cultural semantics.

⁷ M. Auezov, *Abai zholy*, Zhazhyshy, Almaty, 2013.

⁸ M. Auezov, *Abay way*, Khudozhestvennaya Literatura, Moscow, 1978.

⁹ M. Auezov, *Abay way*, Zhibek Zholy, Almaty, 2012.

¹⁰ M. Auezov, *Abay way*, Khudozhestvennaya Literatura, Moscow, 1978.

¹¹ L. Navrozov, *Foreign languages*, Nauka, Moscow, 1980.

¹² V. Humboldt, "On the difference in the structure of human languages and its influence on the spiritual development of the human race", in: *Selected Works on Linguistics*, Progress, Moscow, 1984, p. 37-297; V.A. Zvegintcev, *Readings on the history of linguistics of XIX-XX centuries*, State educational Pedagogical Publishing House, Moscow, 1956.

Conclusions

As we have seen, intercultural asymmetry can be avoided by addressing the issue of interlingua asymmetry. The reason is that in the three cultures, the notion of "peers, people of the same age" is asymmetric in grammar and lexical aspects. If the author uses idiom in the original text, the Russian translation uses only one noun ("ровесник"), and English "as old as". But we came to the conclusion that the sentence was harmonious. We all know that there are no two languages in the world and no two cultures. As Humboldt put it, "Building a human language is a form of personality, the form of the language is represented by an individual individual, and a mediocrity is translated into the language and sentiment"¹³. As these two phenomena take place at the same time we suggest the new term – ethnolinguocultural asymmetry. The study of ethnolinguocultural asymmetry in the translation space in the aspect of interlingual and intercultural interaction yielded the following results:

- definitions of ethno-linguistic, interlingual and intercultural asymmetry are given;
- interpretation of the translation error is given;
- a classification of translation errors in the translation space has been created;
- interpretation of the translation discrepancy is given;
- as a result of a comparative analysis of literary texts in Kazakh and their translations into English and Russian, the dichotomous nature of ethno-linguocultural asymmetry was revealed and substantiated;
- the definition of ethno-linguistic cultural asymmetry as a text-forming factor of negative and positive orientation is substantiated.
- the influence of ethno-linguistic cultural asymmetry on translation errors was established;
- the influence of ethno-linguistic cultural asymmetry on the harmonization of the meanings of the texts of the original and translation was established.

¹³ V. Humboldt, "On the difference in the structure of human languages and its influence on the spiritual development of the human race", in: *Selected Works on Linguistics*, Progress, Moscow, 1984, p. 37-297.