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APPLYING CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS FOR ELUCIDATING CERTAIN FEATURES OF CULTURAL FOREIGN WORDS

Understanding verbal art is a complicated and multifarious phenomenon. The present paper is devoted to the study of some problems related to certain cases of using cultural foreign words, which are revealed due to the application of the contrastive method of analysis. By the application of the method of linguopoetic confrontation of the original and the translated versions of a work of verbal art an attempt is made to identify transliterations of cultural foreign words not having their equivalents in English or French cultures. The usage of cultural foreign words in a work of fiction ensures a global aesthetic impact on the reader.

Key words: *philological reading, culture-specific items, cultural foreign words, contrastive analysis, transliteration, expressive impact, Egyptian culture, "The Alexandria Quartet"*

The question of perceiving, understanding and interpreting a work of fiction has long been in the center of philological research. The understanding of a literary work first and foremost depends on the understanding of words or, to be more exact, literary words. The expressive-emotional overtones which words acquire in a literary context avail the reader of the opportunity to grasp more than the eye instantly catches, to get more additional information of aesthetic character. The so-called "philological reading", in which both reading and research are conjoined, is reading between the lines, continuously questioning the aesthetic relevance of this or that stretch of the text in pursuit of the author's intention and the general purport of the work. Philological reading is a permanent quest for meaning /Назарова, 1994/.

In verbal art words are chosen and stringed together to suit the imagination of the writer and express the subtle and evocative content which is in the basis of all verbal artistic creativity. The expressive strength of the literary word is a very important element in the process of a literary communication. Thus, the word in a literary work is a unit of expressive impact and the reader should grasp the intention of the writer.

Our research focuses on the use of cultural foreign words in a piece of literature and aims at enhancing the aesthetic relevance of the literary work and the essence of artistic creativity of the author.

Different terms have been used to refer to cultural elements in Translation Studies. The term “cultural foreign words” was first used by E. Nida in *Linguistics and Ethnology in Translation Problems*, where the author speaks about some problems connected with the translation of such words /Nida, 1945/. Scholars keep on extending the diversity of terms introducing “cultural bumps” /Leppihalme, 1997/, “culturally marked segments” /Mayoral and Muñoz, 1997/, “culture-bound references”, “culture-specific items” /Aixelà, 1996/, /Nedergaard-Larsen, 1993: 207-241/, etc. C. Nord uses the term “cultureme” to refer to culture-specific items, which are defined as “a cultural phenomenon that is present in culture X but not present (in the same way) in culture Y” /Nord, 1997: 34/. In Franco Aixelà’s terminology “culture-specific items” are defined as follows: “*Those textually actualized items whose function and connotations in a source text involve a translation problem in their transference to a target text, whenever this problem is a product of the non-existence of the referred item or of its different intertextual status in the cultural system of the readers of the target text*” /Aixelà, 1996: 58/.

Translating fiction in the real sense of the word is an extremely difficult task, translating culture is a more complicated process. Translation, which is known as a means of communication between different nations with different languages, plays a crucial role in relaying one culture into another. The characteristics of a culture have important consequences for the act of translation. In fact, a translator’s task is far beyond a mere interlingual transfer and a collision between source and target cultures.

As Lance Hewson and Jacky Martin state it, culture is not a static entity, on the contrary, it is a dynamic and hybrid system: “*‘culture’ is not some homogenous and eternal truth, but a specific collection of features which have to be minutely examined in each translation situation*” /Hewson, 1991: 123/. The main challenge in translation is to manage to convey the cultural connotations pertaining to the language in the target text to the source text being translated. It is unlikely that two concepts or two representations would coincide when translated from one language to the other. These items belong to a particular culture; they refer to cultural identities which do not have direct equivalents in another culture. Translating is not a simple linguistic transposing operation, and it is thus vital to take into account the extra-linguistic cultural factor. The translation of culture demands that translators make a choice between conservation and replacement of the item.

This indisputable fact becomes more critical in case of culture-specific items which are considered as a source of difficulty in translation. Halloran, for example, believes that culture-specific items pertain to a particular culture and refer to cultural identities which do not have direct equivalents in another culture /Halloran, 2006/.

As Mizani asserts: “There is a long debate over when to transcribe, when to paraphrase, when to use cultural substitution, and last but not least, when to coin a new word by translating literally” /Mizani, 2009/. However, the choice of

translation strategies is not simply a personal or random act. According to Alvarez and Vidal, “translators are constrained in many ways: by the prevailing poetical rules and norms of the time, by what the dominant institution and ideology expect of them, by the public for whom the translation is intended, etc. On the whole, they are constrained within what is called sociocultural constraints” /Alvarez, Vidal, 1996: 6/.

The aim of the research is to study the peculiarities of using cultural foreign words in a piece of verbal creativity and consider some ways of dealing with the translation of culture-specific items by applying the method of contrastive analysis of the original and the translated version of a work of verbal art.

The method of contrastive analysis emerged in the 20th century, when the comparative study of languages gained an important role in linguistics. With the application of the method of the contrastive study of the original text and its corresponding translation many elements are revealed, which otherwise would be remained unnoticed if the analysis were carried out within the scope of one language. However trivial the elements may seem, it must be kept in mind that the style of the author is created by such subtle and minute linguistic devices. Thus, the method of contrastive analysis contributes to uncovering the peculiarities of the author's individual style.

The research is carried on L. Darrell's "The Alexandria Quartet"¹ and its French translation. The main characters of the novel belong to different social layers and different ethnic groups (Arabs, Jews, Greeks, Englishmen, French, etc.) and have different professions (a diplomat, a writer, a teacher, a secret agent, a real estate agent, etc.). Their language is rich in French, Arabic, Greek slang words and expressions which emphasize which social layer they belong to. Thus, for instance:

Briefly we met here in the padded chairs, in the mirrors, before separating to go about our various tasks – Da Capo to see his brokers, Pombal to totter to the French consulate, I to teach, Scobie to the Police Bureau, and so on... (p. 218)

Farther to the east sits god old big-bellied Pombal, under each eye a veritable diplomatic bag. ... His only preoccupation is with losing his job or being impuissant: the national worry of every Frenchman since Jean-Jacques. ... ‘Dis donc, tu vas bien?’ ... ‘Ecoute- tu veux une aspirine?’ or else ‘Ou bien – j’ai une jaune amie dans ma chambre si tu veux...’ (p. 220)

Here everywhere the cries of the open street greeted him and he responded radiantly. ‘Y’alla, effendi, Scob’... ‘Naharak said, ya Scob’... ‘Allah salimak.’ (p. 224)

And then all the primeval courtesies of the road exchanged between passers-by to which Narouz responded in his plangent voice, sounding as if it belonged to the language as much as to the place. ‘Naharak Said!’ he

cried cheerfully, or 'Said Embarak!' as the wayfarers smiled and greeted them. (p. 254-256)

Toto! He is an original, a numero. His withered witch's features and small boy's brown eyes, widow's peak, queer art nouveau smile. He was the darling of old society women too proud to pay for gigolos.

"Toto, comment vas-tu?" – "Si heureux de vous voir, Madam Martinengo!"
(p. 219)

The literary work under study is rich in cultural foreign words. The examples provided below are taken from "Balthazar" – the second volume of "The Alexandria Quartet":

In such a mood every promise of distraction offered relief, and he was pleased when Narouz suggested that the village singer should be called to play for them, a custom which they had so often enjoyed as youths. There is nothing more appropriate to the heavy silence of the Egyptian night than the childish poignancy of the kemengeh's² note. (p. 263)

Il n'y a rien qui convienne mieux au lourd silence des nuits d'Égypte que la voix poignante et enfantine du kemengeh. (p. 300)

In the example above we come across the word *kemengeh*, which is a Persian word denoting a musical instrument. *Kemengeh* is a vivid example of a culture-specific item. The instrument does not exist in the English and French cultures. Thus, it is not recorded in English and French dictionaries as well. The use of the cultural foreign word is not by chance. Durrell wants to create the beautiful picture of the Egyptian night by using a culture-specific item, to make the reader perceive the soul of the Egyptian culture. The use of the method of contrastive analysis reveals the following picture. In both languages (English and French) the word is transliterated *kemengeh's* and *du kemengeh*. The grammatical category of case in both examples is expressed in accordance with the grammatical norms of each language. All this adds to the aesthetic globality of the work.

Assumingly, the picture would be somehow different if the word were translated into Armenian. As in the Armenian culture there exists the musical instrument called "*քամանչա*", the word would be translated instead of being transliterated.

We come across other uses of cultural foreign words by Durrell when he is describing one of the main heroes of the novel – Scobie, and it is not by chance. From the horizontal context it becomes clear that Scobie is a white man, who has lived most part of his life in Egypt. The author clearly makes the reader feel that Scobie belongs to Egypt. He has assimilated with Egyptian Arabs to the extent of becoming a part of them.

Here he belonged by adoption, here he was truly at home. He would defiantly take a drink from the laden spout sticking out of a wall near the

Goharri mosque (a public drinking fountain) though the White Man in him must have been aware that the water was far from safe to drink... (p. 224)

When he was in the upper town his walk and general bearing had an artificial swagger – it suggested a White Man at large, brooding upon problems peculiar to White Men – their burden as they call it... By the time we had reached the outskirts of the Arab quarter, however, he had all but shed these mannerisms. He relaxed, tipped his tarbush ³ up to mop his brow, and gazed around him with the affection of long familiarity. (pp. 223-224)

...Il se détendait, repoussait son tarbouche en arrière de son crane, et jetait autour de lui ces regards affectueux que seule peut conférer une longue familiarité. (p. 253)

And Scobie? Well, he at least has the comprehensibility of a diagram – plain as a national anthem. ...After years as a Bimbashi ⁴ in the Egyptian Police, ... he has just been appointed to ... the Secret Service. (p. 221)

Après avoir rempli pendant des années les fonctions de Bimbashi dans la police égyptienne, ... il vient d'être nommé dans... le service secret. (p. 250)

In the examples above, we come across two cultural foreign words, namely *tarbush* and *Bimbashi*. The application of the method of contrastive analysis reveals the following picture. Both words are transliterated in the English and French languages. The author clearly wants to highlight that the events of the novel are taking place in an eastern country – in Egypt. The use of cultural foreign words creates an atmosphere of a foreign culture, which is felt throughout the whole novel. This, of course, adds to the aesthetic globality of the work of verbal creativity. The parallel study of the French translation accounts for the fact that culture-specific items should be transliterated in the target languages. It is interesting to note that the word *Bimbashi* is spelt exactly the same way in both languages. Whereas the word *tarbush* has different spellings in the two languages – Eng. *tarbush* and Fr. *tarbouche* in accordance with the accepted spelling norms of each language.

It is worth mentioning that in all the above mentioned examples the meaning of the cultural foreign words can be easily retrieved from the context. For instance, play the *kemengeh*, tip the *tarbush* up to mop one's brow, and serve as a *Bimbashi* in the Egyptian police.

To sum up, cultural foreign words, acting as culture-specific items, are usually transliterated in the target cultures. The use of such elements in a piece of verbal art turns them into units of expressiveness, ensuring a global aesthetic impact on the reader.

NOTES

1. Lawrence Durrell (1912-1990) is one of the renowned figures of the 20 century literature. "The Alexandria Quartet" is a series of novels consisting of four volumes. All four volumes – *Justine*, *Balthazar*, *Mountolive*, *Clea* are complete works which are interconnected and intertwined with one another.
2. See: Wikipedia – *Kemenche* or *kemençe* is a name used for various types of stringed bowed musical instruments having their origin in the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly in Greece, Iran, Turkey, and regions adjacent to the Black Sea. These instruments are folk instruments, generally having three strings and played held upright with their tail on the knee of the musician. The name *Kemençe* derives from the Persian Kamancheh, and means merely "small bow".
3. See: Wikipedia – Modern colloquial Arabic *ṭarbūš*, perhaps from Spanish *trapos*, *ragged*, or *trapucho*, *old rag*, *worthless item of clothing* (*perhaps used as a slang term for the tarboosh, the typical male headwear of the Maghreb, by Moriscos who settled in the Maghreb after their expulsion from Spain in the 1600s*)
4. See: Collins online dictionary – a Turkish military official

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Ա. ԱՅՈՒՆՑ – Չուգադրական վերլուծության կիրառումը «մշակութային» օտար բառերի առանձնահատկությունները լուսաբանելիս. – Հոդվածում քննության են առնվում «մշակութային» օտար բառերի լուսաբանմանն առնչվող որոշ խնդիրներ, որոնք առավելապես ի հայտ են գալիս Չուգադրական վերլուծության մեթոդի կիրառման շնորհիվ: Բնագրի և թարգմանության զուգահեռ քննությամբ փորձ է արվում վեր հանել «մշակութային» օտար բառերի տառադարձման այնպիսի միավորներ, որոնք չունեն իրենց համարժեքը անգլիական կամ ֆրանսիական մշակույթում: Նմանատիպ լեզվական միավորները մեծացնում են տվյալ ստեղծագործության գեղագիտական ազդեցությունը:

Բանալի բառեր. բանասիրական ընթերցում, մշակութային տարրեր, «մշակութային» օտար բառեր, Չուգադրական վերլուծություն, տառադարձում, գեղագիտական ազդեցություն, եզիպտական մշակույթ, «Ալեքսանդրյան քառյակ»

А. АЮНЦ – Применение сопоставительного анализа с точки зрения выявления характеристик культурных иноязычных слов. – В статье рассматриваются некоторые вопросы, связанные с переводом культурных иноязычных слов, которые в основном выявляются при применении метода сопоставительного анализа. В процессе исследования были выявлены транслитерации культурных иноязычных слов, которые не имеют своего эквивалента в английской или французской культуре. Такие единицы играют активную роль в процессе обеспечения эстетического воздействия художественного произведения.

Ключевые слова: филологическое чтение, культурные реалии, культурные иноязычные слова, сопоставительный анализ, транслитерация, эстетическое воздействие, египетская культура, «Александрийский квартет»