

## LINGUOCULTURAL FEATURES OF TRANSLATION IN MARK REESE'S TRANSLATION OF "O'TGAN KUNLAR" BY A.QODIRIY

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**ABSTRACT.** *The article highlights the notion of language and culture, their tight connections in foreign language acquisition. Presented the brief overview of target language interpretation considering the national traditions, history, literature, life style, economic and cultural studies of the nation. It also states the vital contribution of Linguoculture in exploring the interrelationship and influence of language with culture. Moreover, a deep view is presented on linguoculturemes to be one of the most important concepts in linguocultural studies as well as their classification is listed.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Language, culture, linguoculture, linguocultureme, socio-culture, image, interpretation, concept.*

### **I. Introduction**

Culture is defined as "the customs and beliefs, art, way of life and social organisation of a particular country or group" (Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary of Current English, 6th ed.). Moreover, Newmark explains culture as "the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression" (1988: 94). Since culture is so deeply connected with language, each language reflects its own culturally specific features. Wardhaugh suggests that the structure of a given language determines the way in which the speakers of that language view the world. In other words, different languages reflect different cultures and values, and if the culture of the source language (SL) differs from that of the target language (TL), word selections or ways of making statements will be different in the target text (TT) from those of the source text (ST).

Some words and expressions are unique and specific to a culture and cannot be simply translated word for word from one language to another. Jakobson acknowledges that interlingual translation involves two different codes, therefore

there is no full equivalence between them (2000: 114). According to Toury, translation is nearly always conducted within a certain cultural environment, and

consequently, “translators may be said to operate first and foremost in the interest of the culture into which they are translating” (1995: 12). Indeed, translators need to modify or compensate the messages of the ST that are greatly influenced by the source culture and language to communicative and familiar messages with a natural form of expression for the target audience to comprehend and accept. Translating the ST into an acceptable and suitable linguistic and cultural form for the target audience is part of the translator’s responsibility in transcultural communication.

Translators should also carefully render culture-specific words and expressions without distorting the original message of the ST to achieve the goal of representing “the original message in the appropriate dominant cultural form in order to give it the greatest chance of success” (Coulthard, 1992: 13). While Nida places equal importance on both linguistic and cultural differences between the SL and the TL, he concludes that “differences between cultures may cause more severe complications for the translator than do differences in language structure”.

## II. Main body

Many theorists, like Toury and Lefevere, advocate that literary texts are cultural artefacts and are part of “a system operating in the larger social, literary and historical systems of the target culture” (Munday, 2001: 108). Similarly, it can be postulated that translated texts are products of the target culture and have to meet the socio-cultural demands of the receiving system as this is initial yet critical

role of translators in today’s worldwide quest for nurturing trust and understanding. Unless the messages of the ST are transported in a comprehensible and acceptable way for the receiving audience, the translators’ mission of building trust and understanding cannot be accomplished. Translators may therefore be said to face various constraints in making the TT acceptable and comprehensible for the target audience and in allowing the TT to fulfil a certain function assigned by the target system.

This paper will attempt to investigate what involves the act of translating from English into Japanese and the possible constraints on the translator’s part.

Through a close examination of shifts between a ST and its TT, attempts will be made to illustrate the constraints involved in English-Japanese translation.

Translational strategies of which the translator applies in the act of translating will also be analysed for the same purpose.

Studies at the United States Naval Academy, wrote an article for Voices of Central Asia. In it, he was asked how modern states preserve, alter, or censor Central Asian culture. Reese explained:

People will find a way to effect change. My grandfathers loved Nathan Bedford Forest and Robert E. Lee; I personally think it is time to take down monuments that venerate leaders who broke their oath to defend the Constitution of the United States of America, a document I fervently believe in [...] Confederate generals no longer represent who we are. We want new faces and voices that truly reflect the nature and soul of our community. Thus, while the question asks about Central Asian elites, I would say that the US is currently going through the same process.

Three years on, who we should put atop pedestals and celebrate in literature has become a fiercely debated topic from Bristol to San Francisco.

Reese's points have become even more relevant. The interview's context was a discussion of the Uzbek novel, *O'tkan Kunlar* (Bygone Days). Written by the Jadist writer Abdulla Qodiriy in the 1920s, it was the first full length novel by an Uzbek author, and one of the first examples of realism in Uzbek literature. Qodiriy was purged by Stalin in 1937, decried as an enemy of the people, and was executed in Tashkent the following year. In spite of decades of censorship, Qodiriy and his work have experienced an unexpected revival: Uzbekistan's modern intelligentsia consider *O'tkan Kunlar* as a canonical work. Qodiriy is held up as a national hero, and he even appears as a character in Hamid Ismailov's defiant *Devils' Dance*, winner of the 2019 EBRD Literature Prize.

Reese discovered *O'tkan Kunlar* in graduate school in 2002 and, in his own words, "Once I began, I became completely obsessed with finding out how the novel ended." This was no mean feat given that the full novel was only available in Uzbek. A Russian translation had been produced in the 1930s, but with significant portions removed. For almost 20 years, the translation of *O'tkan Kunlar* has been Reese's passion project, and at last the book is accessible to an English speaking audience.

*Asian Affairs* does not, as a general rule, review fiction, so this isn't a review of Qodiriy's novel, but rather of the importance of Reese's translation. It's a short discussion of the challenges of transposing a work of literature from its native language into another tongue with completely different frames of cultural reference; and it's a thought piece on the role of translation in widening access to works literature which would otherwise remain largely out of reach.

There are several schools of thought in translatology (the theory, description, and application of translation). A translator might seek equivalence, the direct correspondence between linguistic forms; apply scientific methodology to build empiric descriptions; prioritise the purpose to be fulfilled by the translation, rather than the equivalence of words (Skopos theory); or focus on cultural translation, respecting the source culture whilst acknowledging cultural difference. Reese takes the latter path

with O'tkan Kunlar, summarising his reasoning as, "If you don't know the author's culture or mindset, you are lost." A literal translation from Uzbek to English would fail to reflect the richness of the original text, or to effectively communicate its themes.

### III. Conclusion

Qodiriy's language in O'tkan Kunlar is opaque and experimental. In the introduction, he writes of his desire to innovate with forms of expression, to somehow capture creative impulse, and to challenge himself so that he might develop as a writer and an individual. Reese had to wrestle with Qodiriy's linguistic contradictions, juxtaposing the archaic language of the court with the contemporary street talk used by many of the characters.

As a translator, he ably captures the multifaceted cultural world Qodiriy depicts, drawing upon his own decades of experience in Central Asia to get the balance right, maintaining the essence of the text whilst making it accessible to international readers.

At its simplest, O'tkan Kunlar is the story of Otabek, a Muslim reformer in the late 19th century Kokand Khanate, his wrongful accusation of conspiracy,

and a nail-biting scene in which it is proved he was unjustly framed. The cultural backdrop to the novel is far more complex, however, and Qodiriy explores themes of poor governance, ethnic conflict, corruption, human rights, and the roles of religion and women in society. There is no easy moral or practical resolution to any of these thorny issues, and Otabek's struggles and frustrations are clear.

Qodiriy might have set the novel in the late 1800s, but there's no doubt that he saw parallels with contemporary life in the Turkestan SSR. The warnings and lessons he attempted to deliver to his own generation brought him into conflict with the authorities, but they are also what piqued Reese's interest. "When an author who was purged in 1938 can speak to a guy from Arizona on an emotional level that I can empathise with," explains Reese, "that author has achieved a hallmark of all great literature—universality."

There is always a tension between tradition and reform, those who want to benefit from the status quo and those who push for change. In this respect, O'tkan Kunlar is tied to neither time nor place, but has something familiar and valuable to any audience. Without access to the cultural and social insight afforded by literature, an outsider's view of any country – but in particular one such as Uzbekistan which spent decades in relative isolation – is blinkered. With incomplete knowledge, we struggle to comprehend the other, and thus are unable to engage at the level necessary to identify shared interests and areas for collaboration. There is little appetite or ability to learn from each others' experiences and work together to address the topics which Qodiriy writes about, and of which we are still all afflicted.

There's an Italian saying, "Traduttore, traditore" (To translate is to betray). It assumes that translation is a hopeless task, that the full transmission of ideas from one language to another is impossible. What Reese's translation of O'tkan Kunlar shows is that complete transmission is unimportant. The value of a translated work, and this one in particular, is that it opens the door into a literary and cultural world which would otherwise remain totally out of reach for the vast majority of readers.

His translation is a bridge between Uzbek and English which enables us to improve our intercultural understanding, and thus strengthens our ability to work together to address the shared challenges which are as critical in 2020 as they were when O'tkan Kunlar was written 100 years ago.

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