

Translation Peculiarities of the XIXth Century Folk Texts Culturally Marked Vocabulary

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The problem of the relations and connections of the language, culture and ethnicity is an interdisciplinary one and the only possible way to resolve it lies in the attempt to join efforts of several sciences, including linguistics and translation. It is not new. Cultural studies are now regarded not just as an allied sector of linguistics, but as a phenomenon without the analysis of which one can not comprehend the mystery of man as well as the mystery of the language and text. And that is why the problem of translating the folk texts (folklore texts) culturally marked lexicon arises as an indispensable phenomena for understanding the source culture.

Term folklore as a notion was coined by Briton William John Thoms who, in 1846, proposed that the Anglo-Saxon compound folklore be used instead of the Latinate popular antiquities to describe “the manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs” and other materials “of the olden time.” (McCormick – White 2010) Thus Folk texts are mainly described as the texts of “the unwritten literature as expressed in folk tales, proverbs, riddles, songs, etc”. (“Folklore” n.d., n.p.). The folk text carries the inscriptions of cultural coding in the form of myths, legends, symbols, fantasy and dreams of the source culture. The problem of understanding the folk text or (folklore text) lies in the sphere of understanding cultural identity of a certain nation. Thus the folk text carries the inscriptions of cultural coding in the form of myths, legends, symbols, fantasy and dreams of the source culture. The main problems the translator of the folklore text overcomes are generally connected with the translation of the lacunae or culturally marked lexical units.

Lacunae (culturally marked lexical units) are considered as the main difficulty for rendering from one language into another. Under lacunae vocabulary we understand lexical units that have no verbal equivalent in one of the languages being compared, due to the absence or concepts in a certain lingvoculture or lexical unit expressing this concept. The definition implies that the main lacunae vocabulary complexity is its untranslatability, which results in a process of the semantic presentation of these lexical units. Thus, in order to demonstrate the meaning of gaps, translators need to think carefully on the semantization techniques.

The specific ways of such culturally marked lexical units translation can be reviewed through figurative categories used in folk vocabulary (metaphor, simile, connotation).

In case of translation with the absence of translation equivalents, i.e. when in the target lingvoculture the corresponding concept or linguistic sign with a similar tradition of use doesn't exist, it is practically impossible to establish the relationship between the folklore nomination and its translation equivalents. In this regard, we should speak of asymmetry and homology (a structural semantic 'resonance'

between the different elements or similarity with the fundamental differences), or of a conflict "quasi-equivalence" (the term Yuri Sorokin) (Сорокин 2003).

As to the translation techniques we may consider the follows:

1) the replacement of the source word (phrase) by the corresponding equivalent of the target language;

2) the interpretation, in which in addition to the equivalent in the target language translators give the information about the coincidence (or divergence) in the cultural component of meaning.

The translation of the great amount of the lacuna lexicon is frequently based on the methods of transcription/transliteration as well as by means of the semantic translation or modeling words and constructions after foreign patterns (e.g. personal, geographical names, mythological concepts so on).

This very often results in appearance of the target language words having just similar sound-graphic form, but not correlating neither to the source language notion, nor to the concept.

In case of semantic translation the lexical units of the target language are used. The problem is that such equivalents have just the close translational correspondence of meaning with the absence of conceptual content.

In this regard the main interlanguage and intercultural complications caused by the translation on micro- and macro- levels have been noted. Translation transformations aiming to overcome different kinds of complications, may either lead to the meaning loss or to semantic increments in the target text.

Linguocultural determination of the folk units initially sets the the folk unit asymmetry in different folk traditions, reflecting the cultural identity of the mental categorization and conceptualization processes.

Language complications on the lexical level arise due to mismatch between the meanings of words, lack of semantic differentiation, different pragmatic potential of words in source and target languages, the similar notion lack or absence of interlanguage correspondences.

For example, the pragmatic potential of folklore and mythological contexts is different and the words having the equivalents in source and target languages have different associative realities: *піч* – *сидіти на печі* (stove – he would sit on the stove), *пампушка* – *cake*, *стодола*, *клубня* – *shed, barn*, *бичок* – *ox*, *піп* – *Рope*, *шинок* – *tavern*.

For the members of the original linguocultural community such conceptual and semantic features are typical indicators of the certain situation, but in the foreign-language and under the foreign cultural conditions they do not have these pragmatic functions: the representatives of different linguocultural community do not have the necessary presuppositions for the exact identification of these signs functions because of their non-representation in the objective world and, respectively, in folklore and mythological context. As a result, these features can be regarded as

"foreign", "alien", "unclear" and, being implied in the other linguocultural space, tend to take the peripheral place.

While dealing with the culturally marked vernacular vocabulary in different languages I came across the translations of some Ukrainian folklore texts into English: "Cossack fairy tales and folk tales by Bain R. Nisbet" (Bain 1902), "Sixty folk – tales from exclusively Slavonic sources. Translated with brief introductory notes by A. H. Wratislaw" (Wratislaw 1889), "Myths and folk-tales of the Russians, Western Slavs, and Magyars by Jeremiah Curtin" (Curtin 1903), "Russian folk-tales by W. R. S. Ralston" (Ralston 1873), "The songs of the Russian people, as illustrative of Slavonic mythology and Russian social life" (Ralston 1872), "Songs of Ukraina with Ruthenian poems translated by Florence Randal Livesay" (Livesay 1916). Those texts were chosen as the material of the following research because of the high linguocultural potential of the folk vocabulary they contain. Our main aim was to try to show the background knowledge essence in translating the cultural fragments from one language into another.

In the preface to "Cossack Fairy tales and folk-tales selected edited and translated by R. Nissbet Bain" Ukrainian is identified as the language of Cossaks: "The favorable reception given to my volume of Russian Fairy Tales has encouraged me to follow it up with a sister volume of stories selected from another Slavonic dialect extraordinarily rich in folk-tales – **I mean Ruthenian, the language of the Cossacks...**" (1902, 10). Further the translator specifies "**Ruthenian is a language intermediate between Russian and Polish**, but quite independent of both" (1902, 10). Such argumentation is the example of the complete misidentification of the Ukraine in general as the cultural surrounding as well as of its folklore, traditional to the European folklorists, as the translations from the Ukrainian were made through Russian. As we can see, the translators as the representatives of a certain national linguocultural communities, not always have a cognitive framework that is structured in a certain way of other national-cultural community indispensable knowledge, and this linguocultural background, specific national cultural mentality is not recognized.

Now we are going to stop on some folk text cultural codes. Being the constituents of the folklore world picture they realize the cultural asymmetry. While studying the above translations we can assume that lacuna and culturally marked vocabulary mainly deals with everyday life, like food and beverage, meal hours, etiquette; with living conditions, such as: living conditions in the city and in the countryside; living standards (regional, social and ethnic group variants), chores; etiquette and ritual behavior; abstract concepts inherited by a certain culture; traditions, customs, superstitions realized in the mythology.

1 Everyday Life, Like Food and Beverage, Meal Hours, Etiquette; Chores

The folk food and beverage names are not translated but transcribed into English. Though sometimes occur the cases of mistranslation due to the attempt of the translator to substitute the specific cultural fragments with the familiar to the target language users images. We've noticed rather funny fragments with the use of

traditional Ukrainian foods and beverages. For example Traditional Ukrainian spirit *горілка* is rendered into English by means of the lexeme *brandy*.

Горілка (sometimes popularly used the word *горівка*) (from the burning taste) or *оковита* (lat. *Aqua vita* – the water of life, living water) – a strong alcoholic drink from cleaned alcohol. *Горілка* is made from a solution of ethanol in water, usually – 40% (by volume). Industrially produced from high-quality cereals under alcohol purification. Beyond Ukraine the word *Горілка* is used to name the Ukrainian bitter pepper drink. *Горілка*, made at home, is called *самогон* or *самогонка*. The main raw material for the manufacture of *самогон* is sugar beet or beet sugar.

Brandy, is an “alcoholic beverage distilled from wine or a fermented fruit mash. The term used alone generally refers to the grape product; brandies made from the wines or fermented mashes of other fruits are commonly identified by the specific fruit name. [...] The name comes from the Dutch *brandewijn* (“burnt wine”), referring to the application of heat in distillation. Commercial distillation of brandy from wine originated in the 16th century. According to one story, a Dutch shipmaster began the practice by concentrating wine for shipment, intending to add water upon reaching home port, but the concentrated beverage immediately found acceptance.” (“Brandy” 2014, n.p.). Ukrainian folklore heroes, more often ordinary peasants, never head of brandy, as a drink.

2 Living Conditions, Such As: Living Conditions in the City and in the the Countryside; Living Standards (Regional, Social and Ethnic Group Variants)

Ukrainian lexeme *ШИНОК* is for some reason translated as a *tavern*. Though the nature of the words as well as their etymology is quite different. According to the Etymological Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language the word *ШИНОК* is an old word to denote the institution for selling and drinking alcohol. The word is borrowed from German through Polish: g. *Schenke* «*шинок*», svl. *schenk(e)* «the sale of the strong drinks» connected with the word *schenken* «give; present wine in the *korchma* (another Ukrainian name for a drinking place)», the word is close to the English *skink* «to pore (wine, beer)»; germ.**skankian* «to hold awry» produced from the adjective **skanka* – «awry».¹

The English nomination *tavern*, is used to name the establishment where alcoholic beverages are sold for consumption on the premises. “Tavern keeping has paralleled the growth of trade, travel, and industry throughout history and virtually worldwide” (“Tavern” 2014, n.p.). As to the etymology, the word *tavern* appeared in the late 13c., with the meaning of the “‘wine shop,’ later ‘public house’ (mid-15c.), from Old French *tavern* (mid-13c.) ‘shed made of boards, booth, stall,’ also ‘tavern, inn,’ from Latin *taberna* ‘shop, inn, tavern,’ originally ‘hut, shed, rude dwelling,’ possibly by dissimilation from **traberna*, from *trabs* (genitive *trabis*) ‘beam, timber,’ from PIE **treb-* ‘dwelling’ (cognates: Lithuanian *troba* ‘a building,’ Old Welsh *treb* ‘house, dwelling,’ Welsh *tref* ‘a dwelling,’ Irish *treb* ‘residence,’ Old English *ðorp*

¹ Compare Етимологічний словник української мови.

'village, hamlet, farm, estate'). If so, the original meaning probably was 'wooden shed.'" ("Tavern," 2001 – 2015, n.p.)

3 Traditions, Customs, Superstitions, Mythology

For example the Ukrainian Ox is transcribed as *Oh*, *Oh* is an ancient Slavonic mythical creature, the ruler of the Forest Kingdom. Appears in the tale called "Oh" and is described as the short old man all green with a long beard. Appears out of nowhere on a stump after someone sitting on a tree stump exclaims the word "oh". In the English version of the tale *Ox* is described "as a little little old man, all so wrinkled and puckered, and his beard was quite green and reached right down to his knee". In Ukrainian *Ox* is an exclamation used for the expression of physical pain, suffering, fear, a feeling of relief and so on. In English *oh* is an exclamation used to express a range of emotions including surprise, anger, disappointment, or joy, or when reacting to a remark. The target language notion is corresponding the source language word not only in the form but is very close to the base concept. But the Ukrainian word *мавки* is translated as *water-nixies*: "А за наймичок у Оха мавки – такі зелені, як рута!". "And Oh had water-nixies for serving-maids, and they were all as green as rue." *Мавка* is Fairy forest creature in the image of a beautiful naked girl with long flowing hair, the closest British image is the wood nymph. The *Neck*, *Nicor*, or *Nixie* or *Nokken* (German: *Nixe*; Norwegian: *nøkk*; Swedish: *näck*; Finnish: *näkki*) are shapeshifting water spirits in Germanic mythology and folklore, who usually appeared in forms of other creatures. *Nixe* from Old High German *nihhus* is a crocodile; related to Sanskrit *nijanas* "washing oneself". The male *Nix* (*Nicker*) was originally a water-monster of an animal nature, regarded as malicious and dangerous. In Sweden, it is known as *Nack*. The female *Nixe* is a water-sprite with a human torso and the tail of a fish. There are similar beings in the folklore of many nations: cf. the →*Rusalka* of the Slavs and the →*Ningyo* of the Japanese. So it is obvious that those spirits are of different nature.²

The word *чорт* is generally rendered by "demon" or "devil", *чорт* is considered to be a demon of total evil, with horns, hoofs, skinny tail, and a pig-face in Slavic mythology (demonology). He is the son of the Slavic god Chernobog and the goddess Mara. In Ukraine, he is also known as *гаспид*, *дідько*, *ірод і куций* (*haspyd*, *didko*, *irod*, and *kutsyi*). In folk Christianity, he is considered a minion of Satan (Войтович 2005, 591).

As T. Peredriyenko observes "The feature of the nominations of the kind is that the Slavic linguocultural name for the concept is the lexical unit *чорт* which is opposed to English, where the name standing for the concept is the nomination *devil* (Ukrainian *диявол*)" (Передриенко 2006, 174). The devil is represented in church literature just as it was introduced in Slavic lingvocultures that is devoid of national characteristics. The concept *чорт* has come about a very significant change: it has obtained new features, as well as managed to keep the old, absorbing the signs of

² Compare *Online Etymology Dictionary*.

the Satan and hell, pagan and Christian devil and Satan. In the modern lingvoculture the notion of *чорт* is used as genitive – to describe the ancient pre-Christian faith evil spirit and in the Christian sense, the image of the devil.

The direct naming of the Devil, as with the deity, has been subject to severe taboos originating in notions of word magic. There has always been respect for diabolical power and a belief that an oath invoking the Devil could be binding if heartfelt. Historically, however, the situation was more complex: the name of the Devil was very current in medieval oaths, then became euphemized, distorted, or “minced” between the Puritan and Victorian periods, and reinstated in the twentieth century. By this time, with the secularization of society, the name had little impact (Hughes 2006, 118).

The English modern term *devil* derives from Anglo-Saxon *deofol*, which in turn is rooted in Greek *διαβολος*, “the slanderer, liar or false accuser,” the foundation of the notion of the Father of Lies. Although England was technically converted to Christianity in 597, Anglo-Saxon has many compounds, such as *deofol craft* for “witchcraft” or “devil worship,” *deofol seocnesse* for “devil sickness” or “possession by the devil,” and *deofillisc*, “devilish,” all of which seem to be literal (Hughes 2006, 118).

Ukrainian *Див* is rendered into English by means of descriptive translation. The expression *Evil Powers* is used: *In the olden times all manner of Evil Powers walked abroad*. The translator also gives a note: *Div*. This ancient, untranslatable word (comp. Latin *Deus*) is probably of Lithuanian origin, and means any malefic power. In the Ukrainian mythology *Див*, *Діў*, *Діє* is first of all considered to be the God of the Sky. The ancestors usually gave the Sky the masculine image and the Land was associated with the feminine Goddesses. *Див* stands close to the main Slavic Gods, such as *Perun*, and mainly is not associated with the *Evil Powers*. (Войтович 2005, 146).

4 Etiquette and Ritual Behavior

The tradition of drinking as stereotyped behavior is one of the most common Ukrainian traditions described in the folk texts. Ukrainian expression *випити на коня* (to drink for the horse) is usually rendered into English as *to have one for the road*. In the Ukrainian correlate of this phraselogical unit we can see the updated and reinvented Cossack trip script. It refers to certain cultural stereotypes, etiquette-labeled behavior standards and, as a result, to rethinking of the original meal, drinking alcohol prototype. The origin of the English phrase *to have one for the road* is associated with the practice of passing death sentences. The sentenced to death was offered a last drink in the pub on the way to Tyburn Tree, the place public executions in London (“Origin of Phrases” n.d, n.p.).

5 Abstract Concepts Inherited by a Certain Culture

Abstract concepts and ideas met in the Ukrainian folklore text prevail by the notions of soul (душа), happiness (щастя), fortune (доля) and so on. Ideas of the kind mainly inherit the mythologically specified images that cannot be translated in the word-to-word translation but demand the essential knowledge of the Ukrainian specific mythology, culture as well as the folk psychology.

The peculiar feature of such concepts in Ukrainian and English is the partial difference of their semantic structure. English *fortune* is more abstract than Ukrainian *щастя* or *доля*. In the English texts the word *happiness* mainly gives its name to the whole concept as a category: *fortune* acquired its meaning first in 1300, "chance, luck as a force in human affairs," from Old French *fortune* "lot, good fortune, misfortune" (12c.), from Latin *fortuna* "chance, fate, good luck," from *fors* (genitive *fortis*) "chance, luck," possibly ultimately from PIE root **bher* "to carry". If so, the sense might be "that which is brought". Sense of "owned wealth" is first found in Spenser; probably it evolved from senses of "one's condition or standing in life," hence "position as determined by wealth," then "wealth, large estate" itself. Often personified as a goddess; her wheel betokens vicissitude (Etymonline).

Thus, we can say that the pursuit of happiness often met in folklore texts include, in its essence, not only search for some abstract moral satisfaction, but also wealth. People views, specifications and superstitions concerning *fortune* have ethno-cultural specifications and original approach that is different from one civilization to another. This sense to some extent is implemented in the folklore texts. One can agree with S. G. Vorkachov who said that "the conceptual component of this concept is formed, above all, by the core definition that includes distinctive, genus-specific features that fix the boundaries of the domain to which it belongs: *fortune* is a positive and emotional evaluation of one's own fate. Another conceptual component formant of the *fortune* concept is presented by the essentialist semantics, which is associated with the interpretation of the last within a particular ideological concept. We can assume that the specific concept is precisely determined by the number of culturally marked everyday representations – everyday concepts that are shared by the ethnic society members" (Воркачев 2002, 112). So based on the following determination one can make a parallel between the English lexeme *fortune*, and the Ukrainian concept *доля*. The word *доля* is partially izosemic to *fortune* in the meaning of material wealth. According to the etymological dictionary of the Ukrainian language *доля* has the meaning "part; fate", and the lexemes *бездолець*, *бездолля*, *бездольний*, *бездольник*, *здольний*, *здольщина*, *знедолений*, *знедолити*, *недоля* are its derivatives. The word comes from р. бл. *доля*, др. *доль*, р. *dola*, ч. *dola* (from rus.), ст. *dole*, слов. *dol'a*, дол(а) – псл. *dolja* "part", connected with *děliti* "divide"; – related to lit. *dalis* "part", [*dalià*] "fortune, happiness", *dalyti* "divide"; the semantics ("part" > "доля") is close to the Russian *удел* "part" – apanage; independent principality in mediaeval Russia, *участь*(*lot*, *destiny*) (Етимологічний словник української мови т. 2, 107).

It seems possible to conclude that the translation of the folk text concerning its style high frequency of outdated vocabulary and a large number of realities peculiar to a source folklore language also shows a difficulty of transferring the historical and

cultural coloring. When translating it often occurs that some background cultural information, of a native speaker (source language speaker) does not correspond to the information contained in the target language. This information can turn into unfamiliar and incomprehensible, even if it deals with an ordinal, seemingly similar situation. Lacunae vocabulary, the words that can not be rendered with a simple translation, being the integral part of each of the lexical systems, depict the uniqueness of ethno-cultural group individual perception. Such vocabulary is mainly traced while dealing with everyday life, like food and beverage, meal hours, etiquette; with living conditions, such as: living conditions in the city and in the countryside; living standards (regional, social and ethnic group variants), chores; etiquette and ritual behavior; abstract concepts inherited by a certain culture; traditions, customs, superstitions realized in the mythology. Thus the problem of rendering culturally marked lexicon in the folk text depends on the level of the translator's background knowledge. The gaps in which bring the partial or complete misunderstanding of the source text can as well lead to the full misidentification of the source language culture.

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Summary

Translation Peculiarities of the XIXth Century Folk Texts Culturally Marked Vocabulary

The paper deals with the translation of units that belong to the folk vocabulary in Ukrainian, English taking into account specific linguocultural features inherent in each language. The patterns of structural and semantic organization of the main translational models of such vocabulary are settled. The means of verbalization and cultural coding within "folk" world picture are traced. The conceptual basis of the linguo-cultural semantics objectification of folk vocabulary in Ukrainian, English texts of the XIX century are studied. Lacunae (culturally marked lexical units) are considered as the main difficulty for rendering from one language into another. The specific ways of such culturally marked lexical units translation are reviewed through figurative categories used in folk vocabulary (metaphor, simile, connotation). The special attention is paid to rendering the mythological lexical and phraseological units that are singled out as a separate layer of folk vocabulary, as well as the precedent phenomena impact on the appearance of precedent names. The main task of this research is to select, describe and study the folk lacunae vocabulary of the three languages in accordance to each other (based on the texts of the XIX century), to determine the means of lacunae compensation in the dictionaries as well the folk texts of the XIX centuries translated. The cause of lacunae one language units appearance in relation to the other languages and vice a versa is determined, the selection of ethnographic lacunae units are compared with other languages, as well as the development of equivalence and adequacy conditions of translation at the level of lacunae units of compared languages is studied.

About the Author

Olexandra Palchevska is an assistant professor of foreign languages and technical translation department of Lviv State University of Life Safety. In March 2006 defend a PhD. dissertation in general linguistics "Concept of Road in the English, French and Ukrainian Languages: Lingvocognitive and Ethnolinguistic Aspects". She has 35 publications (including professional and foreign editions) and has participated in 40 conferences.