

LITERARY TRANSLATION AS A FORM OF CONVEYING CULTURAL ASPECTS (AN APPROACH TO TRANSLATABILITY FROM FROM GERMAN INTO TURKISH)

TRADUÇÃO LITERÁRIA COMO UMA FORMA DE TRANSMITIR ASPECTOS CULTURAIS (UMA ABORDAGEM DE TRANSLATABILIDADE DO ALEMÃO PARA O TURCO)*

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Abstract: Translation is a unique communication form shaped primarily by cultural characteristics. The translation decision is strongly influenced by the cultural references which are presented in the text. Against this background, the present study aims to clarify which strategies are available for the translation process. All linguistic elements can be subsumed under cultural references, which entail certain behaviours, i.e. the way of acting, grasping reality, or even classifying the way of thinking in their respective system. For this purpose, some translation-theoretical views are first outlined, within the framework of which the cultural references are considered starting from fundamental perspectives. In the context of all these positionings, the analysis examines methods and strategies used within the translation. This part concludes with interpreting the findings. The study used the book written by Hans Joachim Schädlich *Der Sprachabschneider* and its Turkish translation *Sözcükkirpan* by Tuvana Gülcan.

Keywords: Translation and Culture. Culture -Specific References. Literary Translation.

Resumo: A tradução é uma forma de comunicação única, moldada principalmente pelas características culturais. A decisão de tradução é fortemente influenciada pelas referências culturais que são apresentadas no texto. Neste contexto, o presente estudo tem por objetivo esclarecer quais estratégias estão disponíveis para o processo de tradução. Todos os elementos linguísticos podem ser subsumidos sob referências culturais, que implicam certos comportamentos, ou seja, a forma de agir, de captar a realidade, ou mesmo de classificar a forma de pensar em seu respectivo sistema. Para este fim, algumas visões teóricas da tradução são primeiramente delineadas, dentro da qual as referências culturais são consideradas a partir de perspectivas fundamentais. No contexto de todos estes posicionamentos, a análise examina métodos e estratégias utilizados dentro da tradução. Esta parte conclui com a interpretação das conclusões. O estudo utilizou o livro escrito por Hans Joachim Schädlich *Der Sprachabschneider* e sua tradução em turco *Sözcükkirpan* por Tuvana Gülcan.

Palavras-chave: Tradução e Cultura. Cultura - Referências específicas. Tradução literária.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language is an essential means of expression and is always involved in communication situations, and it reflects learned behaviours influenced by whatever culture one was socialised in. Against this background, the question arises as to what decisive role the translator now has when he reproduces the source texts in a target language with special consideration of the cultural references. Translators make the source text accessible to their target recipients, and this is where their skills particularly stand out since the text itself only acquires its meaning through its addressees. Competence thus becomes a situationally determined or determinable concept (Euler, 2001).

In his role as a mediator between languages and cultures, the translator should be able to decode the culturally encoded content of the foreign culture well in order to do justice to linguistic transmission. In this context, the recipients should ideally associate the text with similar intellectual content as the readers of the source text. In doing so, the translator has to overcome all challenges, and these problems are to be dealt with in more detail in the present work.

The overarching goal is to explain which procedures and strategies were used to transfer the cultural references in the book *Der Sprachabscheider* from the source to the target language. For this purpose, the categorisation of "cultural markings" according to Nord (1993) is based on which the realia are classified into "background situation", "current situation", "non-communicative action", and "communicative action". The interdependence of these influencing variables and the effects on the translation are listed and evaluated in this work using examples taken from the text.

2. THEORETICAL BASIS

In their role as mediators between the source and target cultures, the translator should be able to break down the text into its semantic units and analyse them, which also includes the cultural meaning of the respective terms or situations. This approach allows access to the linguistic structure of the subject matter (Gardt, 2018) that the texts are about, and only then does it become clear that the meaning of the text is individually assigned and that it depends on the cultural environment in question and the personal experiences are affected. In this sense, Eleanor Rosch (1973) notes that the textual interpretations depend

on the situation and can also be very individual. In other words, these perceived meanings are linked to the individuals' personal experiences and cultural environment. As a result, so-called prototypes can be constructed in which the individual and culture-specific knowledge are in the foreground.

To describe the formation of a prototype, Kleiber (1993) uses the bird as an example to show how strongly the meaning can differ depending on the ubiquitous imprint. If the idea of a bird comes into view as a prototypical representative, then in European culture, it would be associated more with a sparrow or a blackbird than the idea with a penguin or an ostrich. In our cultural environment, the latter is less likely to be recognised as prototypical representatives of this animal species. Exactly the other way round, in the steppe in Africa, this meaning would be extended to include the ostrich because of its high frequency there, with the sparrow or the dove again being among the prototypical peripheral representatives. This shows that a representative of a category can have different degrees of representativeness and that a designation can sometimes have a different meaning.

Linguistic forms are thus embedded and closely interwoven in personal situations because they mutually depend on the will to understand. As early as 1977, Fillmore developed a linguistic theory of meaning in which he called the idea in a person's mind a scene, and he called the various coding possibilities of a particular scene a frame. Against this background, Fillmore argues that each person can interpret the exact text differently since they have different life experiences (Fillmore, 1977). This allows the creative role of the translator to come into its own. Here, for example, specific frames are selected by the author of the source text with the expectation that his readership will be confronted with the scenes he intended. The scenes evoked by the text are, in turn, supplemented by other scenes by the target readers, which are based on their own knowledge of the world. The translator plays a key role here, as they have to assess the scenes called up from the frames of the original text as objectively as possible and then transfer them back into suitable frames in the target language.

2.1 The translation of the culture references

In the previous explanations, it became clear that the language is part of the culture and that one must therefore know one's and the target culture well enough in the act of translation to be able to translate professionally. All linguistic elements can then be

subsumed under cultural references, which entail certain behaviours, i.e. the way of acting, grasping reality, or even classifying the way of thinking in their respective system. These aspects, dependent on one's culture, affect one's perception of what is happening around oneself. What is concretely tangible is also decisive in this sense since it can be decisive for a culture. This fact is always related to the existing knowledge of the world or the recipient's experience. From this, it can be deduced that food, clothing or even certain habits, which are inherent in a cultural society, such as the sense of humour or the tradition of a country, should be listed under the cultural references. A particularly salient challenge for the translator is that a specific culture can be perceived differently due to different personal experiences or origins. However, all patterns and motifs show a certain similarity between cultures; in other words, they may have more specific components on the common denominator than others.

Thus, in the further course of this work, cultural references are to be understood as the linguistic elements and material things or behaviours that have been specifically shaped for a specific culture and recorded and compiled by it.

Now the question arises as to what options the translator has for dealing with such cultural specifics to edit in fictional texts.

Here it is necessary to outline the analysis framework using a proven method that provides scientifically based criteria. Christiane Nord proposes an approach to this desideratum. She states that the facts and allusions described by the author are reasonably, easily identifiable by readers from the same cultural milieu, and the elements present in the text are thus familiar to the recipient. For the reader of the target text, however, the situation is different in this respect. According to Nord, the possibility of identifying text can be lost due to the position of the text in a foreign environment. (Nord, 1993).

For understanding, the reference to the reality of the target text should be established concerning the target recipient. In this way, when translating fictional texts, certain culture-related elements can be perceived in the best possible way for the recipient of the target text and identified with one's own reference to reality. When creating the text world, the author of the source text explicitly refers to reality. Nord mentions certain elements, such as behaviour and actions or names typical of a culture, which can appear in a fictional text and with which the target recipient can assign his living environment. In the further course of this work, the integration of the cultural references created by Nord will be discussed in more detail.

3. *DER SPRACHABSCHNEIDER* BY HANS JOACHIM SCHÄDLICH- A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE CONTENT

The following section provides background information on the German original text relevant to the following translation analyses. The cultural references contained therein are then analysed.

A boy named Paul and the mysterious Mr Vielolog is the two main characters of the work. Paul likes to fantasise, think up remarkable stories on the way to school and experience an adventurous expedition in his imaginary world. He is a mediocre student who does not excel in school; instead, he is interested in all kinds of sports and leisure activities and sees homework as an obstacle to structuring his free time the way he would like it after school. So it suits him very well when he gets the strange offer from a mysterious Mr Vielolog to do his homework in exchange for certain parts of speech and letters. So they make a deal, and Vielolog gets prepositions and definite articles in Paul's speech repertoire and does his homework for a week.

Through this harmless trade, Paul's ability to speak and express himself is severely impaired. This way, sentences without prepositions and definite articles can be created unconsciously, after which his social environment registers this change in Paul's language. Over time, his incomplete sentences cause him some trouble.

Even if his lack of words is a hurdle in his language, Paul gradually gets used to the afternoons when he does not have to do homework, so he goes into business with Mr Vielolog a second time for the necessary homework cause. This time Paul gives his verb forms and the first consonant from his word list of double consonants. Now Paul's sentences are hardly understandable and even complete. This condition naturally causes many minor annoyances at school and home. Paul is usually an outgoing and talkative boy who loves to talk about his dreams and experiences.

Nevertheless, everything is difficult for him now because he cannot talk about it. In the end, he does not have any friends around him because he cannot have a proper conversation and gets increasingly lonely. Bruno, a sincere friend, stands by Paul's side when he learns about the incident. This whole exchange deal with Vielolog was a big mistake, and the idea of having free afternoons was, of course, a misjudgment. In order to undo all this and return to his 'normal' language, his faithful friend Bruno helps him relearn

everything he has long since given the Vielolog in return for his 'services'. After painstaking work, Paul has relearned all the parts of speech, and when he can prove this, the Vielolog is so upset that he gives everything back to Paul.

The book implicitly gives an insight into concepts such as language attention, sensitisation and awareness. This insight awakens interest in language and an understanding of grammatical structures and, in particular, promotes language analysis skills, which can motivate further learning, especially for foreign language learners. The possibility of approaching this complex topic from different perspectives results in a large number of scopes for action through comparative language analysis of the language system and language use, which served as food for thought for the planning of the present work.

Tuvana Gülcan willingly takes on the task of familiarising her readership with the topic of language reflection. The book she translated from German into Turkish was published in 2013 under the title *Sözcükkekırpan* by Habitus Minor Publishing.

4. ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL REFERENCES

This section is devoted to the analysis of cultural references according to Nord's (1993) classification. The original version by Hans Joachim Schädlich *Der Sprachabschneider* and the Turkish translation *Sözcükkekırpan* by Tuvana Gülcan were used as analysis material. The results are presented according to Nord's grouping of cultural markers into background situation, current situation, and communicative and non-communicative action (1993). The following, these components will be presented based on the analyses. The examples are numbered and marked by source text (ST) *Der Sprachabschneider* and target text (TT) *Sözcükkekırpan*[†].

4.1. The current situation

Nord counts the place and time of action as well as the protagonists' personal names, professions and titles for the current situation.

4.1.1 Location of Plot

[†] For an overview and better understanding, the relevant text passages for the analysis will also be translated into English by the author of the present study. These can be found in the appendix.

Cultural references may be included in the plot location, confusing readers of a different cultural society (Nord, 1993).

The exact location is not explicitly mentioned in the OT or the ZT. The reader is catapulted directly into the action through the abrupt entry without being able to imagine a setting at first.

(1a) *Montags, dienstags, mittwochs, donnerstags, freitags und sonnabends klingelt genau neben Pauls Ohr pünktlich um sechs Uhr dreißig der große Wecker so laut, dass Paul glaubt, er träume von einem großen lauten Wecker, der genau neben seinem Ohr klingelt.* (ST, S. 7)

(1b) *Pazartesi, Salı, Çarşamba, Perşembe, Cuma ve cumartesi saat altı buçukta kocaman saat kulağının dibinde o kadar yüksek sesle çalıyor ki, Paul rüyasında tam kulağının dibinde çalan kocaman bir saat gördüğünü sanıyor.* (TT, S. 5) (see Appendix)

However, this can be any large Western-oriented city, because infrastructural networking with public transport such as the tram is explicitly mentioned in the story. In the further course, however, the scene in the ST can be clearly marked as German, when Paul toyed with the idea of being able to 'take a portion of sauerkraut from the blue sky' (ST, p. 15)

4.1.2 Names

Within the context of an action, the names are integrated into a context and thus fulfill a function in the text. If in the story, even one of these names appears together with a play on words or a rhyme, which is decisive for the action, then the name is retained.

(cf. *ibid.*: 129ff.).

(2) *Faulpaul, paulfaul* (AT, p. 49) - *Tembel Paul* (ZT, p.47) (See Appendix)

The names were retained in the original form in the Turkish translation (Paul, Bruno). In addition, the personal names provide a 'fairly reliable indication' of the culture in which the action takes place (Nord, 1993). Here a direct retention strategy was capitalised on. Substitution is another strategy in which a name is replaced with another similar name from the source culture. Alternatively, the name is replaced by another description.

Epstein (2009) presents various ways of dealing with names. On the one hand, the source text names can be used unchanged or replaced with the names in the source language connotations. The name *Vielolog* can be deduced from the term philologist. A philologist is a scholar who studies and interprets literary or cultural-historical content in a specific language. However, the banality and platitude of his appearance give the reader the

impression of the absurdly comical, which is further reinforced by the nuanced formulation of his onomatopoeia. This is about a name with connotations, which is why the decision to translate it was made and linguistic creativity was shown with *Çokbilir*.

(3) Vielolog (ST)- Çokbilir (TT) (See Appendix)

4.2 The Background Situation

According to Nord, culture-specific habits such as clothing, food, drink, units of measurement or currency are sub-components of the cultural markings relating to the background situation. Since the book's main character is a student named Paul, we initially focus on the details of everyday school life.

4.2.1 The school system

(4a) In the source text, there is a passage where Paul's school performance is going downhill. He can no longer form understandable sentences, and in a class test in which Paul has to answer in complete sentences, it is all the worse for him, and not a single lesson goes by without a reprimand. The teachers believe he is doing everything wrong on purpose and scolds him, *and it rains on fours and fives* (ST, p.40-41).

A school grade is used to assess the student's performance and is documented in Germany as a graded number from one to six or a corresponding word rating from 'very good' to 'unsatisfactory'.

In the target text, the passage mentioned is translated as follows:

(4b) Öğretmenler Paul'ün her şeyi mahsus yanlış yaptığına inanıyor. Ders saati geçmiyor ki Paul azar işitmesin. Sözlülerde sağanak sıfır yağıyor ve bütün öğretmenler Paul'e kızıyor. (TT p. 39) (See Appendix)

The "school grading system" is also present in Turkey. However, class work is evaluated with points from 0-100. In the certificate, the performance assessment is made according to these points. Here, Paul's grades have been transferred to the target language grading system, and it *is raining on zeros*.

(5a) Elsewhere in the book, the setting is Paul's classroom, and they have geography class. When Paul is asked to help answer the question of where the river Main is going. However, since he has exchanged his prepositions and definite articles for the solution to his homework and does not have a standard-compliant use of language, he replies, "*Main fließt Rhein*". (ST, p. 29)

(5b) This passage was also retained in the target text with the names: *Coğrafya dersinde Paul tahtaya kalkıp Main nehrinin nereye aktığını söylemesi gerektiğinde "Main Nehir Ren Nehir akar," diyor.* (TT S, 27) (See Appendix)

From this point of view, Paul's likely age should first be determined by referring to the school systems in the source and target language countries. Geography is taught in schools in Germany from the fifth grade, and according to the fifth-grade curriculum, students in selected areas of Germany should know and understand simple connections between natural and cultural factors and describe characteristics of their rural and urban areas. It is precisely this fact that leads to the assumption that this could be a fifth grader. The Turkish school system introduces geography as a separate subject in the ninth grade, and before that, this subject is involved in social studies lessons.

4.2.2 Meals and Food

Meals and food are also to be understood as distinctive culture carriers. This is reflected in the following sections of analysis and evaluation.

(6a) When the cloud formation stimulates Paul to dream and fantasise, he wishes that he could now and then get a portion of *Sauerkraut* through the thin wispy cloud (ST, p.15), from which it can be concluded that he particularly likes this dish.

(6b) *Yatak şeklindeki bulutun hemen yanında süzülen bulutçuklar tıpkı labana turşusu gibi görünüyordu. Arada sırada Paul kendine (..) bir porsiyon labana turşusu alıyordu.* (ZT, p. 12-13) (see Appendix)

(7a) Elsewhere, at breakfast, Mother tells him to go shopping after school. Paul should buy ten Schrippen, four bratwursts, and a bag of barley. Also, mom needs icing sugar because she wants to bake cookies. (ST, p.43)

(7b) *Annesi kahvaltı sırasında okuldan sonra alışveriş etmesini rica ediyor. Paul'ün on tane sandviç ekmeği, dört tane tombul sosıs, bir paket yulaf ezmesi ve bir paket çorbalık buğday alması gerekiyor. Ayrıca annesi kurabiye yapmak için bir paket de pudra şekeri istiyor.* (TT, S. 41) (See Appendix)

The many listed foods are typically German names. The *Schrippe*, for example, is a roll that can mainly be found in and around Berlin. *Sandviç ekmeği* has been adequately translated with Nord's view, as she holds that source language culinary terms should be culturally adapted into the target language (1993). What matters here is not whether

Sauerkraut from German is translated as *labana turşusu* (en.: pickled cabbage) into Turkish, but instead that the target readers can pick up on Paul's upbeat assessment of the taste.

4.3 Communicative Action and Non-Communicative Action

According to Nord, communicative action and non-communicative action refer to cultural markings such as forms of address, value systems, rituals and customs (1993). In literary works, the protagonists are presented authentically and in detail, thus becoming the centre of attention. Here the focus is on their world of thoughts and behaviour, which is why their characteristic properties act as triggers for the events in the story.

Paul has difficulty getting up early in the morning for school and wants to keep dreaming. He does this on the way to school in the realm of the clouds with an unlimited imagination. The following passages from the source and target text should make this clearer:

(8a) *Ein weißer Riesenbaum. Ein riesiger Weissbaum. Ein riesiger Himmels-Weissbaum. Ein weißer Himmels-Riesenbaum.* (ST, p.14)

(8b) Beyaz bir dev ağaç. Dev bir beyaz ağaç. Dev bir gök beyaz ağaç. Beyaz bir gök dev ağaç (T1, p.12) (See Appendix)

The description of how Paul lets his fantasies run free on his way to school evokes a very characterful, exciting, and humorous scene, which is realised on the metatextual level through a very well-chosen language in the target text but still needs to be made easier to understand. Plenty of compound words are used here.

Paul does not like homework and would also like to do something with friends, play football or go swimming. Against this background, the scene of the first encounter with Vielolog, standing on a wooden box in front of the school and singing, is presented in a very striking way. For clarity, this passage is compared between the source and target text:

(9 a) *"Übernahme gegen Lohn- Aufsicht über Präposition. Suche dringend Prädikat,-Biete frischen Wortsalat. Kaufe einzeln und komplett- Konsonanten (außer Z). Wer tauscht alte Stammsyllaben -Gegen fertige Hausaufgaben?"* (ST, p.23)

(9 b) *"Ücret karşılığı ismin hallerine- Göz kulak olurum. Acilen fiil arar, Taze laf salatası sunarım. Tek tek ya da toptan Sessiz harf satın alırım. Yok mu fiil köklerini Hazır ev ödevlerine değiştirecek yığıt?"* (T1, p.20) (See Appendix)

Here, Vielolog is promoting his 'service' to persuade his customers - in this case, students - to buy by offering homework in exchange for language as a barter. This part also

comes across as very prominent in the target text. The onomatopoeia that accompanies the song of the polylogist is also reproduced exactly in the target text.

(10 a) *Der Bär brummt, das Brett knarrt, der Rabe krächzt* (ST, p.22)

(10 b) *Ayı homurdanıyor, döşeme tahtası gıcırıyor, karga garklıyor* (TT, p. 20) (See Appendix)

4.3.1 The Emotionality of the Descriptions

Conversely, the one-sided emphasis on amusing pastimes is also criticised here; for the sake of free time, Paul has degraded himself to a mere puppet and is now severely restricted in his ability to act. Now he has enough time but no fun; he can neither banish his boredom nor worries.

(11 a) *Es macht Paul gar keinen Spaß mehr anzusehen, was es zu sehen gibt, weil er es nicht mehr richtig erzählen kann. Und es macht auch gar keinen richtigen Spaß mehr, etwas zu sagen.* (ST, p. 30)

(11 b) *Seyredilecek şeyleri seyretmek Paul'e eskisi kadar keyif vermiyor çünkü gördüklerini anlatamıyor. Artık hiç ağzım açasız yok.* (TT, p.28-30) (See Appendix)

Doing homework and enjoying leisure time instead form two mutually related poles of Paul's existence, and the one-sided emphasis on amusing pastime is implicitly criticised here.

5. CONCLUSION

The present work is based on a descriptive-analytical approach, which devotes its attention to the target text, but still needs to lose sight of the elements of the original completely. The aim here was not to judge whether the translation was 'correct' or 'appropriate' but rather to examine how the transfer of cultural references from the source text to the target text was dealt with. Consequently, it emerges from the analysis findings that almost all the cultural specifications, such as the very clearly presented reactions and emotions of the main characters, which are partly reflected in their way of speaking, were included in the Turkish version. The subtleties of the meaning of the character descriptions and the interaction of the main characters can also be updated in the Turkish translation, whereby the function of the text for the overall story is preserved. It was also possible to conclude the considerations that went into the translation decisions regarding the target

language transfer of cultural references. The language cutter deals with the complex topic of linguistic peculiarities, which are taken up repeatedly during the plot. This confrontation with the language itself not only serves to ensure understanding of the formal and functional grammar but can also be linked to the reader's world knowledge in a situation-oriented manner. The translation brought up the complexity that the translator had to deal with while working on the target text. This fact, in turn, contributes to the target readership's understanding and comprehension of this relevant topic.

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APPENDIX

Statements taken by preserving the original language have been translated into English by the article's author.

1a / 1b

On Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, right next to Paul's ear, at 6:30 sharp, the big alarm clock rings so loud that Paul thinks he is dreaming of a big loud alarm clock ringing right next to his ear.

2

Lazy Paul

3

Polylog

4b

The teachers believe that Paul did everything peculiarly wrong. Lesson time does not pass so that Paul does not get scolded. There are zero downpours on the orals examinations, and all the teachers are pissed at Paul.

5b

"Main River Rhine River flows," Paul says in geography class when he has to get on the board and tell him where the Main flows.

6b

The cloudlets floating right next to the bed-shaped cloud looked just like sauerkraut. Paul would buy himself (..) a serving of sauerkraut every now and then.

7b

Her mother asks him to shop after school during breakfast. Paul needs to buy ten loaves of bread, four chubby sausages, a packet of oatmeal, and a packet of soup wheat. Also, his mother wants a pack of powdered sugar to make cookies.

8a / 8b

A giant white tree. A huge white tree. A giant sky-white tree. A white sky giant tree

9

"Take over supervision of preposition for wages. Urgently looking for the predicate, -offer fresh word salad. Buy individually and completely- consonants (except Z). Who trades old stem syllabaries -for finished homework?"

10

The bear growls, the board creaks, the raven croaks.

11

Paul no longer enjoys looking at what there is to see because he can no longer tell it properly. And it's no longer really fun to say anything.