

Linguocultural Features in The Process of Translating Literary Works

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Abstract: This article explores the essential role of linguocultural features in the translation of literary texts. Translation is not only a linguistic act but also a cultural one, as literature reflects the values, beliefs, and traditions of its original culture. The paper examines how culture-specific elements—such as idioms, humor, metaphors, and historical references—pose challenges in the translation process. It also discusses the major strategies used by translators, including domestication, foreignization, cultural substitution, and calque. By analyzing selected literary works and providing real-world examples, the article highlights the translator's responsibility to preserve both the meaning and artistic integrity of the original text. The study concludes that literary translation is a creative and intercultural process that requires deep cultural awareness, linguistic skill, and ethical sensitivity.

Keywords: Literary translation, linguocultural features, cross-cultural communication, cultural substitution, translator's ethics, literary adaptation.

Introduction: Translation is not merely the act of converting words from one language into another; rather, it is a complex and delicate process that involves the transmission of culture, emotion, and meaning. In literary translation, this challenge becomes even more intricate due to the embedded cultural elements, stylistic devices, and authorial voice. Linguocultural features—those aspects of language that are deeply rooted in cultural context—play a significant role in shaping how literary texts are interpreted and re-expressed in another language. Consequently, translators must act not only as linguistic mediators but also as cultural interpreters. This article aims to explore the main linguocultural features involved in the translation of literary works, the strategies used to handle them, and the potential challenges faced in maintaining both fidelity and artistic integrity.

First and foremost, it is essential to understand that language and culture are inextricably linked. Language serves as a vehicle for cultural expression, while culture shapes linguistic structures and meanings. In literature, cultural references are often subtly interwoven through idioms, metaphors, customs, societal norms,

and historical references. For instance, a phrase like "Achilles' heel" carries specific mythological meaning that may be familiar to a Western audience but could be obscure to readers in other cultural contexts. Moreover, the literary canon of a particular culture reflects its worldview, values, and traditions. When translating such works, especially novels, poems, or plays, the translator must take into account these embedded cultural elements to avoid misrepresenting the author's intent. Therefore, literary translation is a form of cross-cultural communication that goes beyond the lexical level [5, 155-158].

As a matter of fact, one of the key obstacles in literary translation is the presence of untranslatable or culture-bound elements. These may include names of festivals, cuisine, units of measurement, historical allusions, or proverbs that do not have direct equivalents in the target culture. For example, the Japanese term "wabi-sabi" conveys a nuanced aesthetic principle of finding beauty in imperfection and impermanence—an idea not easily encapsulated in a single English word. Furthermore, humor, irony, and wordplay present major challenges. Puns or cultural jokes often rely on

shared knowledge or phonetic similarities that may not exist in the target language. As a result, translators must find creative ways to convey similar effects, sometimes opting for a different joke or a footnote to preserve the humor while explaining the cultural context.

In order to address these challenges, translators employ a range of strategies. One common method is domestication, where culturally specific elements are adapted to align with the norms and expectations of the target audience. For instance, a translator might replace a reference to “Thanksgiving” with a more culturally relevant holiday in the target language. Conversely, the strategy of foreignization retains the original cultural references to preserve the authenticity of the text, often with the aid of footnotes or glossaries. This approach respects the source culture and encourages readers to engage with unfamiliar concepts, promoting intercultural understanding. In addition, the technique of cultural substitution may be applied. This involves replacing a culturally specific term with another term from the target culture that conveys a similar connotation. Meanwhile, calque or loan translation is used when a phrase or expression is directly translated word-for-word, which can work if the structure and meaning remain intact in the target language [2, 106-110].

To illustrate the application of these strategies, let us consider the translation of Gabriel García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The original Spanish text contains numerous references to Latin American political and cultural realities. In the English translation, while some terms are adapted for clarity, many cultural elements are preserved to retain the novel’s rich Latin American identity. Another pertinent example is the Russian novel *The Master and Margarita* by Mikhail Bulgakov. The text is laden with Soviet-era political satire and Christian symbolism. Translators have faced significant difficulties in maintaining the dual-layered meanings and subtexts without losing the narrative’s mystical tone. In such cases, a balance between domestication and foreignization is essential. Likewise, in translating poetry, where form and rhythm are critical, translators often prioritize conveying the thematic and emotional essence over a literal translation. For example, translating a haiku may involve reimagining imagery to fit the cultural sensibilities of the target audience while retaining the poem’s brevity and mood.

In light of these challenges, the translator holds both an ethical and creative responsibility. Ethically, the translator must strive to remain faithful to the source text while considering the cultural background of the readers. Creatively, they must reconstruct the literary

experience, not just the content. This dual role requires cultural competence, literary sensitivity, and a profound understanding of both source and target languages. Moreover, literary translators often make subjective choices based on their interpretation of the text. While this introduces an element of individual influence, it is a necessary part of the process due to the inherent ambiguity and multiplicity of meanings in literature [1].

Another crucial aspect that must be emphasized in the process of translating literary works is the role of context. Context is not limited to the immediate textual environment but extends to historical, social, and cultural settings in which the work was produced. Without a full understanding of context, even the most linguistically accurate translation may fail to convey the intended meaning or emotional resonance. For instance, literary works written during periods of war, political upheaval, or cultural transformation often carry coded messages, satire, or symbolic imagery that only make sense within that context. A translator who is unfamiliar with such background information may misinterpret these signals or miss them entirely. In this sense, contextual knowledge functions as a lens through which both the translator and the target reader can better understand the nuances of the original work. Additionally, character names, locations, and dialogue often carry contextual significance. In certain cultures, names may reflect social status, ethnic background, or even religious identity. For example, in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, the names and rituals are deeply rooted in Igbo tradition. A translator must decide whether to preserve these elements in their original form or explain them within the text, depending on how familiar the target audience is with the cultural context. Furthermore, intertextual references—where a text refers to other literary or historical works—demand a high level of contextual awareness. A biblical reference or allusion to classical mythology may be easily understood by one audience but may require explanation or adaptation for another. In such cases, footnotes, endnotes, or brief in-text clarifications can enhance understanding without interrupting the literary flow. Thus, context serves as both a guide and a framework. It helps the translator make informed choices not just about vocabulary and syntax, but also about tone, voice, and cultural appropriateness. The more thoroughly a translator immerses themselves in the context of the source text, the more faithfully and meaningfully they can reconstruct its essence in the target language.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, translating literary works is a

multidimensional endeavor that encompasses both linguistic and cultural translation. Linguocultural features such as idioms, cultural references, humor, and historical context require careful handling to ensure the translated text resonates with the target audience while honoring the source material. Translators must navigate between domestication and foreignization, creativity and fidelity, making thoughtful decisions that reflect both the spirit and the substance of the original work. Ultimately, literary translation is not only about bridging languages but also about building cultural bridges, enabling readers to access, appreciate, and empathize with world literature across cultural boundaries.

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