

REPRESENTATION OF SYMBOLIC IMAGES THROUGH TRANSLATION

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Abstract: *This article explores the complex process of translating symbolic images across languages and cultures. Translation is framed not only as a linguistic operation but as a creative and scientific act that involves deep cultural, historical, and cognitive understanding. The paper discusses how translation serves as a bridge between civilizations, highlighting the challenges translators face when conveying culturally embedded symbols that lack direct equivalents in the target language. Drawing on theories by Eugene Nida, Susan Bassnett, and G. Gachev, the study examines the role of dynamic equivalence, cultural adaptation, and semantic nuance in symbol translation. It also addresses the historical evolution of translation practices, the sociolinguistic nature of dialect variation, and the strategies translators use, such as metaphrase, paraphrase, and imitation. The article concludes that effective symbol translation requires not just lexical substitution but also the preservation of cultural resonance and emotional impact for the target audience.*

Keywords: *translation, symbolic image, cultural adaptation, dynamic equivalence, semantic nuance, intercultural communication, symbol interpretation, linguistic relativity.*

INTRODUCTION

Translation is a complex and multifaceted process. While scholars and researchers have expressed various perspectives on the concept of translating “from one language to another”, in reality, translation extends beyond simply finding linguistic equivalents it is both a scientific and creative endeavor. The act of translation brings together different cultures, individuals, ways of thinking, literary traditions, historical periods, levels of development, customs, and worldviews. This is why translation is not only of interest to translators but also to cultural scholars, ethnographers, psychologists, historians, and literary critics. The primary reason for this interdisciplinary interest is that translation intersects with various aspects of human activity, making it a subject of study across multiple academic disciplines. Moreover, translation serves two fundamental functions: it facilitates communication between people and enables the transmission of information across time and space.

This activity represents both a form of literary creativity, where a text is recreated in another language, and one of the most essential means of intercultural communication.

Considering its distinctive features and the relationship between the original and the translated text, translation can be classified into several types, including literary translation and scientific translation. Depending on how the original text is conveyed, translation may also be referred to using terms such as interpretation, adaptation, commentary, and annotation, which are widely used in translation studies. Historically, translation emerged as a response to the need for communication and interaction between people from different tribes and linguistic backgrounds. One of its earliest forms - oral interpretation, known in the past as *tilmochlik* - has been preserved and continues to be practiced to this day.

MAIN PART

One of the central topics in translation studies is the sociolinguistic aspect of translation, particularly the challenge of rendering the variability of social group dialects in different languages. The social stratification of highly developed languages encompasses numerous subsystems, all of which must be adequately reflected in a high-quality translation. This issue highlights key aspects of translation adequacy, as translators inevitably face linguistic and cultural difficulties in the process. The criterion of adapting the original text to a cultural and linguistic environment that may differ significantly from that of the source language complicates interlingual translation. In fact, this complexity is often cited as an argument in favor of the untranslatability of certain literary texts.³

According to historical sources, the earliest known instance of translation dates back to Mesopotamian times, when *The Epic of Gilgamesh* - originally a Sumerian text - was translated into an Asian language. Another significant example of early translation efforts includes the work of Buddhist monks who translated Indian texts into Chinese.⁴

Another crucial historical reference is the *Rosetta stone* (196 BC), a trilingual inscription carved on a stone slab featuring the same text in Greek, Demotic, and Egyptian hieroglyphs. This artifact played a pivotal role in deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphs and highlights some of the earliest documented translation practices.⁵

Translation studies have also played a vital role in religious texts. One of the earliest and most significant large-scale translation projects was the *Septuagint* (3rd century BC), which involved translating the Hebrew Bible into Greek. This translation was carried out by Jewish scholars in Alexandria and became a fundamental religious text for Greek-speaking Jews and early Christians.⁶

Over the centuries, the demand for translation has steadily increased. However, its fundamental nature as a form of creative expression and the art of recreation has remained unchanged. Scholars suggest that the earliest works on translation studies emerged in Ancient Rome, where theoretical approaches to translation first began to take shape. The contributions of ancient Roman scholars to the development of translation studies were immense. Notably, Cicero and Horace (1st century BC) were among the first theorists to

³ Масленникова Е.М. *Художественный перевод : Новое о старом.* – Тверь, 2014. – 240 с.

⁴ <https://www.languagenetworkusa.com/resources/blog/brief-history-of-translation-everything-you-need-to-know>

⁵ Carol A., *The Rosetta Stone.* British Museum Press. 1985. -p 24-29. ISBN 978-0-87226-034-4.

⁶ Barnes W. E., *On the Influence of Septuagint on the Peshitta.* 1901, pp. 186–197.

draw a distinction between literal (word-for-word) and semantic (sense-for-sense) translation. Their insights into translation practice influenced the evolution of translation theory well into the 20th century.

The primary challenge in translation lies in rendering culturally specific concepts that lack direct equivalents in the target language. Achieving full comprehension in such cases requires careful adaptation to ensure clarity and precision⁷. In general, the more frequent the interaction and exchange between two or more languages, the greater the balance between **metaphrase** and **paraphrase** in the translation process. However, due to shifts in lexical gaps and ecological differences in vocabulary, relying solely on etymological similarities may sometimes lead to misinterpretations of a word’s present meaning in a given language. Translation has always played a crucial role in facilitating cross-linguistic communication and shaping national languages and literatures. Given the historical and social significance of translation as a practical activity and its intrinsic connection to translation theory, analyzing the formation and evolution of this theoretical discipline remains an engaging and valuable area of study.

One of the key theoretical challenges for translators is the translation of *symbols*. This process involves accurately and deeply conveying the symbolic signs encountered in a text and their multiple layers of meaning in another language. Symbols are often rooted in specific cultural, religious, mythological, or historical contexts, making their translation particularly complex. The difficulty arises from the fact that their meaning is not always directly transferable across languages. A translator must go beyond simply rendering words; they must also grasp the symbolic meanings embedded within the text and convey them in a way that is both accurate and culturally appropriate for the target audience.

Scholars hold differing views on this matter. According to G. Gachev, every national worldview is shaped within a specific geographical and cultural context, reflecting the local nature of a people’s character and their unique way of perceiving and conceptualizing reality within a particular ethnic consciousness. These parameters influence the deep semantic structure of a text, which is embedded in the linear sequence of linguistic units used by the author. As a result, a text mirrors not only the cultural identity of the individual who created it but also the nature and level of development of the broader cultural tradition to which they belong.⁸

In the process of conveying figurative symbols of foreign cultures in a translated text, the translator often incorporates additional explanatory or interpretative linguocultural commentary. Each ethnic group’s imaginative thinking is reflected through artistic imagery, the aesthetic features of form, and tropes. These elements, however, may pose challenges for foreign readers if left untranslated or unadapted. Therefore, in translation, they should be replaced with equivalent images that do not create cognitive dissonance for target language readers. In other words, the translator must maintain a “balance” between two cultures,

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Translation#cite_note-Kasperek_p._84-11

⁸ Гачев Г. Национальные образы мира. Евразия. – М., 1999, стр.49

ensuring that the artistic and cultural essence of the original is preserved while remaining accessible to the target audience.

In this regard, **Eugene Nida** proposed “the **concept of dynamic equivalence** in translation, emphasizing the importance of preserving both the **meaning and impact** of the original text. He advocated for considering the **cultural context** when translating symbols, ensuring that they are rendered in a way that maintains their communicative effect and resonates with the target audience.”⁹

CONCLUSION

Analyzing the scholar’s views above, we can conclude that a translator must convey not only words but also meaning and impact, as the ultimate goal of translation is to ensure that the reader of the translated text experiences the same effect as the reader of the original text. Furthermore, the scholar emphasizes the importance of accounting for cultural differences in translation. Symbols or expressions that are clear and meaningful in one culture may be entirely incomprehensible in another. Therefore, a translator must adapt the text in a way that aligns with the cultural background of the target audience, ensuring both clarity and cultural relevance. The translation of symbols and symbolic characters presents a unique challenge, as symbols do not merely carry lexical meaning but also encompass deep metaphorical and cultural significance. As an integral part of human cognition, symbols can convey different meanings across various cultures, making their interpretation in translation particularly complex. Therefore, when translating symbols, it is essential to consider not only their direct lexical meaning but also their symbolic, metaphorical, and semantic connotations.

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⁹ Nida, E. A. *Toward a Science of Translating*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.. 1984

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