АУДАРМАТАНУ/ TRANSLATION STUDIES/
ПЕРЕВОДОВЕДЕНИЕ

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THE PROBLEM OF OVERCOMING KAZAKH NON-EQUIVALENCE IN LITERARY TRANSLATION: A REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND APPROACHES

Abstract. This article analyses the work of local researchers studying the issue of Kazakh non-equivalence. It examines the ways of overcoming non-equivalence in the literary translation of works of Kazakh authors into Russian and English. A review of the key works published in international and local scientific journals over the past five years, from 2020 to 2024 inclusive, is provided. The relevance of the study is determined by the need to preserve the cultural and aesthetic features of the original text when adapting it for a reader in another linguocultural environment. The article focuses on the need for a careful approach to the transfer of non-equivalent vocabulary in the process of literary translation. Based on the full-text analysis and synthesis of the results, it can be concluded that various methods, such as transcription, transliteration, calque, descriptive translation, explanatory footnotes, approximate translation, replacement, and omission, can be used to convey Kazakh non-equivalent vocabulary in literary translation into Russian and English. In the future, we suggest conducting research on how the target audience perceives the translation.

Keywords: non-equivalent vocabulary, realia, translation, Kazakh non-equivalence, literary translation.

Introduction

In recent times, the number of literary translations from Kazakh into English has increased and consequently, these translations of Kazakh authors have become the subject of special attention among Kazakhstani researchers. The problems of transmitting culture through literary translation and preserving national character without loss are of particular interest to these researchers inasmuch as when translating literary works that are rich in national features, a number of factors arise that are essential for accurately conveying the information. And one of the main challenges is the presence of non-equivalent vocabulary. Because "such words provide a glimpse – however partial or obscured – into ways of being, doing and thinking in that culture" (Lomas, 2018).

This review article presents a concise theoretical overview of the issue of non-equivalence and the perspective of researchers on the problem of overcoming it in literary translation.

Translation is not only transferring words from the source text (ST) into the target text (TT), but it is a complex intellectual activity that faces serious difficulties in conveying semantic and cultural nuances. And namely problem of non-equivalence is doubtless one of the main problematic areas in Translation studies. According to M. Baker, "It is virtually impossible to offer absolute guidelines for dealing with the various types of non-equivalence which exist among languages" (Baker, 2018).

The purpose of this review article is to analyze existing knowledge about non-equivalence, identify and systematize approaches to the transfer of non-equivalent vocabulary from Kazakh into Russian and English languages.

The objective set entails solving the following tasks:

- to discuss modern approaches to the definition of «non-equivalence»;
- to analyze various approaches to transferring non-equivalent vocabulary;
- to identify translation features of non-equivalent vocabulary from Kazakh into Russian and English.

The term "non-equivalent vocabulary" is widely used in Translation studies, but its interpretation is not always clear due to the lack of an unambiguous definition of the term "equivalent". In 1973, E. Vereshchagin and V. Kostomarov were the first to introduce the term "non-equivalent vocabulary". According to these scientists, "non-equivalent vocabulary" means words, the content plan of which cannot be compared with any foreign language lexical concepts and, properly speaking, untranslatable (Vereshchagin & Kostomarov, 2005).

Catford differentiates between two kinds of untranslatability, which he calls linguistic and cultural. According to Catford, linguistic untranslatability occurs when the target language (TL) lacks a lexical or syntactical equivalent for an item from the source language (SL), while cultural untranslatability arises when the TL culture does not have a corresponding situational feature present in the SL (Catford, 1965).

Despite such a characteristic feature as untranslatability into other languages by means of constant correspondence and their lack of correlation with some word of another language, it does not mean that they are completely untranslatable. L.S. Barkhudarov considers that they present a certain difficulty, but it is one that can be overcome (Barkhudarov, 1975).

S. Vlakhov and S. Florin, in their work, emphasize the possibility and necessity to translate non-equivalent vocabulary, i.e., to overcome, to re-express, and to convey it to the reader (Vlakhov & Florin, 1980). Thus, the work of S. Vlakhov and S. Florin touches not only lexical aspects of translation, but also the broader cultural and communication issues.

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J. House shares the same opinion, considering that even when the cultural differences between languages are vast, these gaps can be closed through ethnographic knowledge and understanding. In other words, untranslatability arises only when such knowledge and reflection are lacking (House, 2023).

This category of words has not only many names but also has variety of definitions. Moreover, in Translation studies, the volume of non-equivalent vocabulary has not yet been precisely determined; that is, it has not been established what exactly is included in this category of words. Scholars hold varying opinions on which lexical units should be considered non-equivalent vocabulary. Thus, L.S. Barkhudarov, S. Vlakhov and S. Florin, A.O. Ivanov and other scholars give different thematic classifications. L.S. Barkhudarov makes a distinction between three groups of such lexical units: proper names, realia and random lacunae (Vlakhov & Florin, 1980). S. Vlakhov and S. Florin differentiate them between geographical realia, ethnographic realia and socio-political realia (Vlakhov & Florin, 1980). A.O. Ivanov treats as referentially non-equivalent, pragmatically non-equivalent and alternatively non-equivalent (Ivanov, 2006).

Irrespective of different classifications, non-equivalent vocabulary allows us to understand more deeply the national, historical and cultural characteristics of various nations. These words reflect cultural identity and help expand the linguocultural knowledge of the country among foreign readers. Therefore, it is very important to determine quite justified ways of overcoming the problem of non-equivalence.

There are given several ways of conveying non-equivalent vocabulary are given based on translation practice:

1) transliteration and transcription;
2) calque:
3) descriptive translation;
4) approximate translation;
5) transformational translation (Vlakhov & Florin, 1980).

M. Baker highlights such strategies as:

(a) translation by a more general word (superordinate);
(b) translation by a more neutral/less expressive word;
(c) translation by cultural substitution;
(d) translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation;
(e) translation by paraphrase using a related word;
(f) translation by paraphrase using unrelated words;
(g) translation by omission;
(h) translation by illustration (Baker, 2018).

L. Venuti, in his work *The translator's invisibility: a history of translation,* proposed two strategies that provide both linguistic and cultural guidance: domestication and foreignization. Domestication aims to adapt the TT to achieve maximum understanding by the target audience. Foreignization consists of preserving the features of the original text, despite the fact that the TT looks exotic and incomprehensible (Venuti, 2013).

According to Jojić, the most difficult challenges translators encounter are translating words that are closely connected to culture. Given that every language is closely linked with the culture and customs of its speakers, conveying these elements in another language is much more complex than it may initially appear (Jojic, 2008).

Vilceanu believes that the comprehension of culturally specific elements relies on the translator's cognitive, linguistic and encyclopedic knowledge, i.e., on his pragmatic competence,

and their transfer is shaped by the expectations of the audience. However, neither the translator nor the readers possess flawless ability to consistently identify and accurately interpret words or phrases carrying cultural significance (Vilceanu, 2016).

M. Baker considers that the choice of a suitable translation depends not only on the languages involved but also on how the ST writer and the translator handle these languages. It is influenced by the expectations, background knowledge, and biases of the readers in a particular context, the translator's understanding of their role, and factors like censorship or outside interventions that may affect the translation process (Baker, 2018).

J. House, in her work *Translation: The Basics*, emphasizes that the choice of translation strategy used by translators is influenced by the role of the translated literature in the target culture (TC). When the translated literature occupies a primary position, translators strive to create a TT that closely reflects the original, thereby introducing new conventions into the TC. In contrast, if the translated literature occupies a secondary position, translators adapt their work to match the existing norms of the TC (House, 2023).

From the above, it becomes clear that overcoming non-equivalent vocabulary is especially important for literary translation, since literary works reflect cultural flavor and make special demands on the translator and «provide a «window» into the experience and understanding of the life of other cultures» (Lomas, 2018). Literary translation, being both a science and an art, involves a variety of methods and approaches, determined by the uniqueness of the translator, their knowledge, experience and creative approach to recreating the original (Razumovskaia, 2023).

The relevance of our research lies in the fact that literary translation always makes an important contribution to the development of world literature and requires adequate translation, taking into account cultural characteristics.

Materials and methods

The study collected and reviewed a range of the most relevant scientific publications on this topic. An analysis of scientific publications revealed that the term "Kazakh non-equivalence" is often used in parallel with such concepts as "realia", "culture-related realia", "national vocabulary", "nationally specific vocabulary", "ethnocultural vocabulary", "ethno-cultural markers", "ethnographism", "culturally marked vocabulary", "culturally specific vocabulary".

Scientific publications were identified using the Scopus and Web of Science databases, Google Scholar and ResearchGate electronic libraries in English and publications recommended by the Committee for Quality Assurance in Education and Science of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Kazakh and English. The search focused on articles published over the past five years, from 2020 to 2024 inclusive.

At the start, sampling was carried out using a search query "ways to overcome the problem of non-equivalence in translation", «translation of nationally specific vocabulary», «translation of realia», «translation of fiction», «literary translation from Kazakh into Russian/English», «linguocultural aspects of translation», «translation strategies in transferring non-equivalent vocabulary», «features of translating ethnocultural vocabulary», etc.

Based on the preliminary results, it was decided to focus on scientific publications using the following key phrases: "translation of nationally specific vocabulary", "translation of realia", "literary translation from Kazakh into Russian/English", features of translating ethnocultural vocabulary", "domestication and foreignization".

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For the full-text analysis, 20 works were selected. The synthesis aimed to offer a comprehensive overview of the current state of research on this issue in Kazakhstan. Common patterns related to overcoming the problem of non-equivalence in literary translation were identified and summarized.

Results and Discussion

Among Kazakhstani scientists, the number of researchers dealing with issues of non-equivalent vocabulary is relatively small (see Fig. 1). The analysis of the publications by above mentioned keywords showed that the problem of transferring Kazakh non-equivalent vocabulary was studied by S. Tazhibayeva, S. Ashimkhanova, A. Aldash, K. Yergaliyev, B. Mizamkhan, S. Seidenova, Zh. Manapbayeva, A. Akkaliyeva, N. Zhumay, A. Alpysbayeva, G. Kozhakhmetova, I. Yerbulatova, A. Zhussupova, Zh. Aukhadiyeva, and others.

These authors in their articles observed the names of clothing items, jewelry and accessories, gastronomic words, names of kinship, proper names and words of address with the names of baby animals, etc.

The selected articles analyzed ways of conveying Kazakh non-equivalent vocabulary into Russian and English in such literary works as "Abay zholy" by Mukhtar Auezov, "Koshpendiler" by Ilyas Yessenberlin, "Ak boz uy" by Smagul Yelubay, "Kan men ter" by Abdizhamil Nurpeisov, "Gaukhartas" and "Suyekshi" by Dulat Isabekov, "Oyangan olke" by Gabit Musrepov and the poem "Turkistan" by Magzhan Zhumabayev.
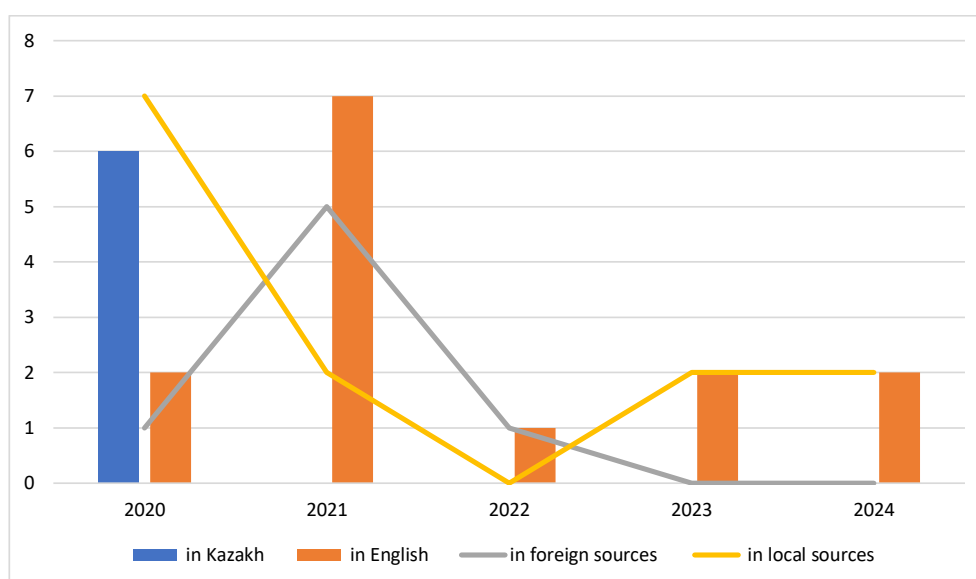

Figure 1. **Selected works for full-text analysis by year and sources**

These researchers examined the types and frequency of techniques for translating non-equivalent vocabulary, evaluating their uses and misuses from the perspectives of domestication and foreignization, based on a corpus compiled from Russian and English translations. They revealed that Kazakh non-equivalent vocabulary is transferred in literary translation into Russian and English mainly using methods such as transcription, transliteration, calque, descriptive translation, explanatory footnotes, approximate translation, replacement and omission.

A key challenge in transferring non-equivalent vocabulary arises from cultural specificity. G Kozhakhmetova and S. Tazhibayeva revealed the complexities involved in translating

national jewelry. While examining the translations of jewelry and accessories, namely "sholpy", the authors concluded that when translating national vocabulary, the translator must consider not only names but also their specificities, purpose and the context of their usage in the SL. Also, they realized that dictionaries have a limited ability to reveal the essence of non-equivalent vocabulary in literary translation, and proposed to create a comprehensive electronic thesaurus to more effectively solve the problem. According to G. Kozhakhmetova and S. Tazhibayeva, it is crucial to carry out a collaborative interdisciplinary study to systematize jewelry terminology, clarifying its role, and understanding its functional and semantic meanings within people's worldview in resolving certain issues related to high-quality translation. The researchers also concluded that, when transferring untranslatable vocabulary, it is essential to use illustrations to accurately represent such terms in TL and ensure a high-quality translation (Kozhakhmetova & Tazhibayeva, 2021). This strategy was mentioned in M. Baker's work, where she indicates that this approach is helpful when a word with no equivalent in the TL refers to a physical object that can be illustrated, especially when there are space limitations and the text needs to stay brief, concise, and clear (Baker, 2018).

Z.Zh. Aukhadieva et al. argued that an accurate and culturally relevant translation of national vocabulary requires understanding its meaning within the cultural context; therefore, it is crucial to translate not just the name but also its functional and cultural meaning. The authors are convinced that translating the names of national costumes into foreign languages through description and interpretation is one of the most effective methods, as it is often challenging (Aukhadiyeva et al., 2023).

G. Mehmet and A.E. Alpysbayeva examined anthroponyms and toponyms and determined that the national uniqueness of them is most accurately conveyed through transcription and transliteration, methods that are frequently used due to the complexity of Kazakh names (Mehmet & Alpysbayeva, 2021). The issue of translating anthroponyms and toponyms, particularly within literary works, is both relevant and highly sought after.

Zh. Manapbayeva et al. revealed that the Russian translation adhered to the foreignization strategy, whereas the English translation incorporated both foreignization and domestication strategies (Zhussupova & Ashimkhanova, 2020).

A.Zhussupova and S. Ashimkhanova came to the conclusion that the object of research should be mentality, since without understanding it, it is impossible to accurately convey the characteristics of the ethnocultural identity of a people. Also, it was recommended to consider the cultural characteristics of the target audience, provide explanations and aim to retain the original atmosphere of the work (Zhussupova & Ashimkhanova, 2020).

Akkaliyeva et al. explored how Kazakh literature is represented through a mediating language, considering the transfer of non-equivalent vocabulary from the point of view of indirect translation, highlighting how culture-specific lexemes reflect a nomadic way of life and the complexities of intercultural communication (Akkaliyeva et al., 2021a). This view of the problem is relevant since most translations of Kazakh literary works into English were translated indirectly, through their translation into Russian.

Each of these articles contributes to the study of translating national vocabulary, yet broadening the approaches to encompass a wider range of texts and audiences could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities and nuances involved in translating from Kazakh into Russian and English.

The problem of overcoming non-equivalent vocabulary in literary translation is highly complex and multifaceted. It requires from a translator not only a thorough understanding of

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SL and TL, but also a keen awareness of the cultures, traditions and history of both SL and TL. This review article examined various approaches to overcome the issue of absent direct lexical analogues and highlighted the strategies translators use to preserve the cultural nuances and artistic intent of the ST.

The review revealed that the majority of the studies confirm the importance of preserving the cultural uniqueness of texts with a strong ethnocultural identity, avoiding cultural assimilation during literary translation. It should be especially emphasized that all the studies we analyzed supported L. Venuti's strategy «foreignization» (Venuti, 2013), which strives to preserve the cultural uniqueness of texts and emphasize the origins of the TT. This strategy resists the assimilation of the ST and encourages cultural diversity. Comprehending the mentality (Akkaliyeva et al., 2021b) and recognizing the purpose and context of using (Kozhakhmetova & Tazhibayeva, 2021) culturally specific vocabulary helps in achieving this.

Despite the interest of local researchers in this topic, there is still a lack of research dedicated to ways of overcoming the problem in literary translation from Kazakh into Russian and English and indirect translation into English via Russian. Even fewer studies have been devoted to analyzing the rich corpus of non-equivalent vocabulary.

We also noticed that the psycholinguistic aspect of the problem, the issue of how the application of specific methods influences the perception of the text by various audiences (such as Kazakh and international readers), and how this alters the overall impression of the work, has not been studied yet, when the way an audience perceives a translation is key to its overall success. M. Baker (2018) and J. House (2023) focus attention on the influence of audience expectation on the translation. Also, how translation may vary depending on the cultural context of the target audience has not been sufficiently explored. These aspects can help to deepen research in the field of translation of non-equivalent vocabulary, as well as make it more comprehensive and relevant.

In addition, future research could focus on analyzing the translation of other Kazakh literary works to identify universal or specific approaches to translating literature with national characteristics. Moreover, an analysis could be conducted to examine how the results align with or differ from previous studies in the field of literary text translation.

Conclusion

A review of studies devoted to the issue of overcoming Kazakh non-equivalence in literary translation showed that Kazakh non-equivalence is associated with certain problems that can lead to losses in meaning. An analysis of the publications of local researchers confirmed that Kazakh non-equivalence requires additional background knowledge from the translator, and the lack of knowledge and its value leads to losses in translation.

Based on the analysis carried out, it can be concluded that the culture of a nation with a different language, lifestyle, religion, and perspective can only be conveyed to another country through high-quality translation. A well-executed translation acts as the key channel of communication, linking two countries. It not only fosters connection among cultures but also promotes national values and helps expand the worldview.

Language possesses a distinctive ability to capture and maintain significant historical and cultural events linked to the lives of its speakers (Zharkynbekova, 2010). And such features should be reflected in translation. After all, "literary translation is the unique to "open" our history, traditions and spiritual treasures of the independent country" (Alshinbayeva, 2021).

All these factors indicate the importance and necessity of further research in this area. In the future, we propose conducting such research on the perception of translation by a target audience. Also, future research could examine the translations of other Kazakh literary works to identify specific approaches and compare the results with previous studies in literary translation.

It is hoped that this review will be valuable for translators and researchers seeking an overview of the problem of transferring non-equivalent vocabulary and ways of overcoming it in literary translation.

Conflict of interests
The article contains no conflict of interests.

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Көркем аудармада қазақша баламасыздықты еңсеру проблемасы: зерттеулер мен тәсілдерге шолу

Аңдатпа. Бұл мақала қазақша баламасыздық проблемасы бойынша жергілікті зерттеушілердің зерттеулерін талдауға арналған. Мақалада қазақ авторлары шығармаларының орыс және ағылшын тілдеріндегі көркем аудармаларында баламасыздықты еңсеру жолдары талданады. Соңғы бес жыл ішінде, 2020-2024 жылдар аралығында, халықаралық және отандық ғылыми журналдарда жарияланған негізгі жұмыстарға шолу жасалады. Зерттеудің өзектілігі түпнұсқа мәтінді басқа тілдік және мәдени ортадағы оқырманға бейімдеу кезінде оның мәдени-эстетикалық ерекшеліктерін сақтау қажеттілігі болып табылады. Мақалада көркем аударма процесінде баламасыз лексиканы жеткізу аса ұқыптылықты қажет ететіндігіне баса назар аударылады. Мәтіндерді талдау және нәтижелерді синтездеу негізінде қазақша баламасыз лексиканы орыс және ағылшын тілдеріне көркем аудармада транскрипция, транслитерация, калькалау, сипаттама аударма, сілтемеде түсіндірме беру, жуықтап аудару, алмастыру және түсіріп тастау сияқты әдістер қолданылады деген қорытынды жасауға болады. Келешекте аударманы мақсатты аудитория қалай қабылдайтынына қатысты зерттеу жүргізуді ұсынамыз.

Түйін сөздер: баламасыз сөздер, реалия, аударма, қазақша баламасыздық, көркем аударма

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Проблема преодоления казахской безэквивалентности в художественном переводе: обзор исследований и подходов

Аннотация. Данная статья посвящена анализу изучения проблемы казахской безэквивалентности отечественными исследователями. В статье анализируются пути преодоления безэквивалентности при художественном переводе произведений казахских авторов на русский и английский языки. Представлен обзор ключевых работ, опубликованных

в международных и отечественных научных журналах за последние пять лет, с 2020 по 2024 год включительно. Актуальность исследования определяется необходимостью сохранения культурно-эстетических особенностей исходного текста при его адаптации для читателя в иной лингвокультурной среде. В статье акцентируется внимание на необходимости бережного подхода к передаче безэквивалентной лексики в процессе художественного перевода. На основе полнотекстового анализа и синтеза полученных результатов можно сделать вывод, что для передачи казахской безэквивалентной лексики в художественном переводе на русский и английский языки можно использовать такие методы, как транскрипция, транслитерация, калькирование, описательный перевод, пояснительные сноски, приблизительный перевод, замена и опущение. В дальнейшем мы предлагаем провести исследование того, как целевая аудитория воспринимает перевод.

Ключевые слова: безэквивалентные слова, реалия, перевод, казахская безэквивалентность, художественный перевод.

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