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Linguacultural Dimensions in the Translation of Khaled Hosseini's Narratives

A. Islam¹ 

¹Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages, Almaty, Kazakhstan

(E-mail: aisha_ling@mail.ru)

Abstract. This article examines the linguacultural challenges involved in translating Khaled Hosseini's literary works, specifically “The Kite Runner”, “A Thousand Splendid Suns”, and “The Mountains Echoed”. These novels, deeply embedded in Afghan and American cultural contexts, are characterized by rich linguistic and cultural elements such as realia, idiomatic expressions, code-switching, and culturally specific references. Translating these features into Russian and Kazakh presents significant challenges, requiring a balanced approach to preserve the authenticity and thematic depth of the narratives. The translation analysis is based on linguacultural approach, drawing on the linguistic theory of translation and the cultural turn in translation studies. This dual framework allows for a detailed analysis of foreignization and domestication strategies employed in the target texts. The findings highlight the crucial role of culturally sensitive translation in maintaining the integrity of the source text and identify the effective translation practices for multicultural literature advancing the development of literary translation. Its practical implications extend to enhancing cross-cultural dialogue, fostering global empathy, and refining translation strategies within multicultural literary contexts.

Keywords: Linguacultural approach to translation, multicultural literature, literary translation, linguacultural references, foreignization, domestication, translation strategies.

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Introduction

In a globalized world, translation plays a crucial role in fostering cross-cultural communication and understanding. It enables multicultural literature to transcend linguistic barriers, allowing broader audiences to engage with diverse cultural perspectives. Translation in multicultural contexts requires more than linguistic equivalence; it involves accurately conveying linguacultural dimensions, including different forms of language interference such as cultural code mixing, misspeaking and cultural references like directly translated idiomatic expressions, realia, and intertextuality, which are intrinsic to the multicultural source text. Preserving the linguistic and cultural aspects of a multicultural narrative is vital to maintaining its authenticity and ensuring that the author's intentions, themes, and stylistic features are faithfully represented. This is particularly significant in Hosseini's works, where cultural and linguistic aspects are integral to the narrative's impact and emotional depth.

Khaled Hosseini, born in Kabul, Afghanistan, and later emigrating to the United States, is a distinguished author who has significantly influenced contemporary literature. His acclaimed novels *The Kite Runner* [1], *A Thousand Splendid Suns* [2], and *the Mountains Echoed* [3] explore themes of identity, displacement, and the human condition through the lens of his dual cultural experiences. As a prominent figure in immigrant literature, Hosseini transcends cultural boundaries by providing insightful depictions of Afghan society, history, and the complexities faced by individuals navigating multiple cultures. His narratives enrich American literature by integrating universal themes with specific cultural contexts. Through his works, he invites readers to engage with unfamiliar perspectives, fostering a deeper appreciation for diversity and the multifaceted nature of global communities.

Beyond its literary function, translation serves as a means of promoting multicultural awareness and global empathy. By addressing the challenges inherent in cross-cultural translation, translators contribute to cultural exchange and social enrichment. Analyzing the linguacultural dimensions of translating Hosseini's works provides valuable insights into the complexities of this process and underscores the necessity of culturally informed translation approaches.

The primary objective of this article is to investigate the linguacultural factors involved in the translation of Khaled Hosseini's literary works. The study seeks to analyze the specific challenges that arise in preserving the cultural and linguistic distinctiveness of the source texts and by analyzing translation strategies employed, to illuminate how the multicultural features can be faithfully conveyed.

This article addresses the following primary questions:

- How are the cultural and linguistic features intrinsic to Khaled Hosseini's works represented in their translations?
- What impact do translation strategies, specifically foreignization and domestication, have on the narratives of these works?

An in-depth consideration of these questions elucidates the complexities involved in translating texts rich in cultural and linguistic content and assesses the effectiveness of various translation approaches in preserving the integrity of the original narratives.

Materials and Methods

This article analyzes a selection of Khaled Hosseini's novels, chosen for their profound exploration of cultural and linguistic themes pertinent to Afghan society and their widespread international acclaim, especially in the American context. The analysis incorporates the original English texts and their translations into Russian (*Бегущий за ветром* [4], *Тысяча сияющих солнц* [5], *И эхо летит по горам* [6]) and Kazakh (*Батпырауық қуған бала* [7], *Жарқыраған мың күн* [8], *Таудағы жаңғырық* [9]) examining the linguacultural aspects of translation across different linguistic and cultural contexts. These translations were selected to represent languages with distinct linguistic structures and cultural backgrounds. The source English narrative, influenced by Afghan linguacultural alongside Russian, with its Slavic roots and the Kazakh, a Turkic language, provides a rich and diverse linguistic landscape for translation analysis. The materials and the comparative approach provide a basis for exploring the strategies employed to preserve the cultural and linguistic integrity of the original works while making them accessible to new audiences with different linguacultural backgrounds.

This analysis is grounded in several theoretical perspectives to analyze the linguacultural aspects of translating Khaled Hosseini's novels. Firstly, the Linguistic Theory of Translation provides a framework for examining the transfer of linguistic components, such as syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, from the source language (English) to the target languages (Russian and Kazakh). It offers a basis for understanding how linguistic structures are preserved or modified in translation. Secondly, the Culture Turn Theory focuses on the translation of cultural content, emphasizing the significance of cultural contexts, references, social norms, and values in the translated texts. Together, these theories form a solid foundation for the modern Linguacultural approach, which is increasingly relevant in today's culturally diverse world and underscores the importance of preserving cultural identity.

The research employs a qualitative comparative analysis to investigate the translations. This approach provides a detailed comparison of the original English texts with their Russian and Kazakh translations to examine how linguistic and cultural elements are rendered in the target languages. The identification of cultural and linguacultural elements helps uncover central themes, motifs, and linguacultural components within the novels, as well as how these elements are maintained or adapted in the translations.

Data are collected through an analytical examination of the selected texts including the extraction of cultural and linguistic samples both the source texts and their translations. The documentation of translation strategies records methods such as *foreignization* (preserving source linguacultural elements) and *domestication* (adapting to target culture norms and eliminating linguacultural determination) to assess their impact on the narratives and cultural representation.

This methodological approach enables a thorough exploration of the challenges and strategies involved in translating the linguacultural aspects of Hosseini's works. It contributes to a deeper understanding of effective translation practices within a multicultural context, highlighting the importance of preserving cultural and linguistic integrity in literary translations.

Literature Review

Immigrant literature comprises works that depict the experiences of individuals migrating from one culture or nation to another, examining the complexities of adapting to new environments while striving to preserve one's heritage. In contemporary American literature, multicultural narratives play a crucial role in “including ethnic voices and showing their ambivalent place within and against US literary and national histories” [10], thereby contributing to a more inclusive literary canon and foster understanding across diverse cultural backgrounds.

According to T. Ansary, Afghan-Americans “are among the newest and smallest American ethnic communities” and Khaled Hosseini is one of the first figures in the literature, who was ‘born out of the catastrophe and has the weight of darkness leaning into the light’ [11]. His novels exemplify general immigrant literature through their intricate exploration of themes such as displacement, familial relationships, and the quest for redemption, incorporating motifs like sacrifice, loyalty, and the enduring impact of past actions on present circumstances. The cultural and linguistic features in his English-written narratives provide an authentic portrayal of Afghan society, including its traditions, social norms, and language enhancing the emotional resonance and realism of the stories.

The translation of Hosseini's linguaculturally rich texts necessitates a thorough understanding of translation studies frameworks. Building on the works of S. Bassnett and A. Lefevere such as *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation* [12] and *The Translation turn in Cultural Studies* [13], the *Culture Turn* in translation studies represents a shift from focusing on linguistic equivalence to emphasizing cultural context and meaning. This approach recognizes that effective translation requires a deep understanding of the source culture to accurately convey its connotations. The linguistic theory of translation emphasizes the systematic study of language structure and meaning, providing principles for maintaining semantic integrity in translated works. Meanwhile, cultural translation theories propose strategies for handling cultural elements, advocating methods that balance fidelity to the source text with accessibility for the target audience.

Furthermore, the metamodern paradigm in literature, characterized by oscillation between modernist and postmodernist approaches, is evident in Hosseini's storytelling. His works blend traditional narrative techniques with contemporary themes and complex character development, reflecting metamodern features through the exploration of profound human experiences while acknowledging ambiguities and contradictions. This literary approach adds another layer of complexity to the translation process, requiring translators to capture the stylistic peculiarities inherent in metamodernism [14].

Translating multicultural literature, such as Hosseini's novels, presents significant challenges. One primary issue involves choosing between foreignization and domestication strategies. Foreignization retains elements of the source culture within the translation, preserving its distinctiveness, whereas domestication adapts cultural references to be familiar to the target audience. Striking a balance between cultural adaptation and preservation is essential to maintaining the authenticity of the original work without compromising its accessibility. Additionally, linguistic and cultural differences require careful consideration, as translators

must navigate idiomatic expressions, colloquialisms, and culturally specific concepts that lack direct equivalents in the target language.

Results and Discussions

As we mentioned Hosseini's works showcase American multicultural literature and thus represent all the linguacultural features of this genre. The most prominent culturally-determined aspects include *cultural insertions*, *intertextuality* and *borrowed expressive means*. Linguistically-determined features include various types of code-mixing such as *bilingualism*, and *translanguaging*. Together, these elements add authenticity to the narratives and immerses readers in the Afghan cultural milieu.

The most vivid examples are cultural insertions, such as Afghan and Muslim realia, translated using various methods generally aimed at preserving cultural reference in the source texts:

Eng: Hassan and I sat under the *kursi* and played *panjpar* as wind – rattled tree branches tapped on the window [1, p. 46].

Russ: Мы с Хасаном сидим на подушках на полу за *курси*, низким столиком, накрытым толстым стеганым одеялом, и играем в *панджпар*. [4, p. 46]

Kaz: Хасан екеуміз қалың көрпемен жабылған жер үстелде жастықтарға отырып, панжпар ойнаймыз. [7, p.50]

In Russian translation *курси* is followed by in-text explication of its meaning while the second realia, *панджпар*, is left as contextually explicit, assumed to be understood as some type of a table game. The Kazakh translation opts for cultural equivalents, using *жер үстел*, while retaining the original Afghan term *панжпар*. As the analysis shows, many terms are familiar due to regional and religious similarities and do not require additional explanation as the meaning can be inferred from the context.

It should be noted that names of Afghan cuisine constitute the broadest layer of cultural realities and translation analysis show that the most commonly used translation method is transliteration.

Eng: We'd gone to Dadkhoda's Kabob House afterward, across from Cinema Park, had lamb *kabob* with freshly baked naan from the *tandoor*. (1, p. 71)

Russ: После зоопарка мы наведались в кебабную Дадходы напротив «Кино-парк» и ели *кебабы* из ягнятины и горячий, из *тандыра*, хлеб. (4, p. 66)

Kaz: Хайуанаттар бағынан кейін біз Кино саябағына қарама-қарсы орналасқан Дадходы кәуапханасына барып, қой етінен жасалған *кәуап* пен *тандырдан ыстық нан* жедік. [7, p.76]

The challenges faced in translation are often related to conveying the sensory experiences associated with Afghan foods. Even the general terms like "*naan*" or "*kebab*" that could be easily adapted to "*хлеб*" and "*шашлык*" without any significant loss of meaning, are often transliterated and supplemented with descriptive phrases to evoke the aromas and flavors. The Kazakh audience could find cultural equivalents even when the Afghan original terms are retained as these dishes are familiar due to regional cuisine similarities. Overall, some cultural, historical and religious proximity of Turkic culture, including Kazakh, to Eastern Iranian

Afghan linguaculture ensures that a number of basic cultural realities and referents are easily understood by Kazakh readers without extensive explanation. In contrast, Russian translations often employ a variety of methods to make the text more accessible to readers. The following examples fully illustrate the above points:

Eng: People went to mosques for their ten raka'ts of noontime prayer and then retreated to whatever shade they could find to nap in, waiting for the cool of early evening. [1, p.91]

Russ: Люди, отчитав в мечети положенные десять *ракатов*^[20] полуденной молитвы и выйдя на улицу, радуются любой тени и ждут не дождутся вечера, который принесет прохладу. [4, p.82]

[20] *Ракат* – цикл словесных формул и движений при совершении намаза. В ракат входят: заявление о количестве всех ракатов, которые верующий собирается произнести; 1-я и, как правило, 112-я суры Корана; отдельные строки из других сур; периодическое повторение «Аллах Акбар» – «Аллах велик». Если молитва происходит в мечети, то все действия производятся синхронно всеми присутствующими по примеру муллы’.

Kaz: Мешітте бес рәкәт намазын оқып, көшеге шыққан жұрт кез келген көлеңкеде қуанып, салқындық әкелетін кешті асыға күтеді. [7, p.101]

In comparison to the Kazakh translation, the Russian translation provides an extended footnote to a religious term while borrowed from Arab language *raka'ts* is the part of the modern Kazakh vocabulary and needs no comments.

The same translation methods are used for words with cultural connotations, such as those reflecting social customs. For example, the concept of *namys* 'honor' and its impact on individuals, are critical to understanding character motivations shaped by these cultural norms.

Eng: No matter. The point is, I am your husband now, and it falls on me to guard not only your honor but ours, yes, our nang and namoos. That is the husband's burden. [2, p.221]

Russ: Это все теперь неважно. Главное, я твой муж и обязан блюсти не только твое доброе имя, но и наше, то есть честь и гордость нашей семьи. Это мой долг. [5, p.83]

Kaz: Мұның бәрі қазір маңызды емес. Ең бастысы, мен сенің күйеуіңмін, тек сенің жақсы атыңды ғана емес, біздің, яғни отбасымыздың намысын да сақтауға міндеттімін. Бұл әр күйеудің міндеті. [8, p. 94]

In translation, the word *namoos* should be rendered in a way that conveys its profound social implications, which may require additional context or adaptation. Translating this concept requires careful consideration to preserve its weight and implications. In Kazakh, the word “намыс” fully corresponds to the originally Arab word “*namus*”, directly meaning ‘honor’ but having extended connotations related to ‘virtue’, ‘custom’, ‘pride’, etc. This linguistic similarity allows a more straightforward translation that retains the original meaning. In Russian, the translator uses “*честь и гордость*” to expand on the social expectations tied to it. Descriptive translation provides explanations within the text to clarify cultural practices related to the significance of concepts like “*namus*” without overburdening the reader.

Hosseini's narratives are enriched with Afghan idioms and proverbs, which serve as direct cultural references. According to M. Kossybayev and others, proverbs “көне дәуірден бүгінге дейін халықтың өмір тәжірибесін жеткізіп келеді” [15] thus these expressions often present challenges in translation due to their cultural specificity. For example, *A Thousand Splendid*

Suns, a character reflects: “Of all the hardships a person had to face, none was more punishing than the simple act of waiting” [2, p. 129]. While not an idiom per se, this expression resonates with the cultural emphasis on patience and endurance, highlighted by E. Entezar as common themes in Afghan national worldview [16]. Afghan idiomatic inclusions in analyzed American narrative help to reveal the author’s background culture and give a glimpse to the national mentality and motifs of Afghan characters. Engaging with such proverbs and idioms “enables a person to understand the thoughts, emotions and views of the speakers of target language” [17]. Thus, preserving the exact form and in some cases with in-text meaning explication are the most adequate translation methods that do not erase and neutralize the multicultural layers of American narratives.

As for linguistic features that present specific challenges when translated into other languages, linguacultural analysis shows that *bilingualism* and *translanguaging* are not used as the primary narrative language in works, but serve as a specific characteristic of the speech of particular characters who switch between languages during dialogues or inner monologues. Hosseini incorporates elements of Dari and Pashto languages within the English text. Code-switching can occur for a variety of reasons, including changing the addressee, expressing emotions, creating intimacy, or emphasizing belonging to a particular cultural or social group and helps to create more complex and realistic characters, highlighting themes of migration, assimilation, cultural and linguistic synthesis. Expressions of love as well as other expressions of positive and negative emotions involuntarily occur in the mother tongue or first language:

Eng: Not muttered: Достет дарум. I love you back. – I love you back, she said [2, p. 285].

Russ: Достет дарум. Я люблю тебя. – И я тебя [4, p. 233].

Kaz: Достет дарум. Мен сені жақсы көремін. – Ал мен сені [7, p. 240]

In this case, the preservation of the native language is an important aspect of conveying the character's imagery, as the native language, according to J. Dewaele, remains a primary means of expressing deep feelings due to its deeper emotional foundation and connection to personal identity, particularly the expression of love as in the example above [18].

An adequate method for preserving the functionality of bilingualism, if a non-English phrase is followed by a repetition in English, is to highlight the phrase with a transliteration in Russian and Kazakh and provide an equivalent translation of the repetition in English. This method allows preserving the personification of the speaker, his linguacultural identity, the figurative content of the text and the author's style.

As for *translanguaging*, one of the most common instances in the works of Hosseini involves the naming of relatives. According to K. Smith-Christmas, the concept of family language policy highlights the strategic use of native terms for family members as a way to strengthen linguistic and cultural ties within immigrant communities. Family terms often carry connotations of affection, closeness, and care, as they are imbued with emotional weight that equivalent English terms may not fully convey. Studies have shown that for many bilinguals, native words – for example, *mother* or *uncle* – elicit a stronger emotional reaction than their English counterparts [19].

The use of family terms like “*Agha*”, “*Kaka*”, “*Baba*” and honorifics like “*jan*”, “*bachem*”, “*hachem*” reflect Afghan social specifics. In “*The Kite Runner*”, the term *Agha* is used consistently to refer to the protagonist's father’s friend:

Eng: 'I rode with Baba, Rahim Agha and Kaka Homayoun' [2, p. 69]

Russ: 'Со мной ехали: Баба, Рахим Ага и Кэка Хамаюн' [4, p. 64]

Kaz: 'Менімен бірге Баба, Рахим аға, Хамаюн Көке болды' [7, p. 72]

The use of kinship terms like "Baba", "Agha", "Kaka" instead of "father" or "dad" illustrates the cultural context and conveys a specific familial relationship characteristic of Afghan society. In the Russian translations, these terms, for example *Agha* is often retained as *Ara*, preserving the cultural context and honorific significance. This retention, strengthened by capitalization, allows Russian readers to sense the hierarchical relationships inherent in Afghan society. Similarly, in the Kazakh translation, the term is retained as 'аға', which in Kazakh also means 'elder brother/elder male person', capturing both the linguistic and cultural features.

The translation of cultural and linguistic elements in Hosseini's works demands a special approach that respects the depth and richness of the source material. By carefully selecting appropriate translation strategies, translators can convey the intricate customs, traditions, and societal norms that define the characters and their experiences. This not only enhances readers' understanding and appreciation of Afghan culture but also reinforces the universal themes that make Hosseini's novels resonate with a global audience.

Conclusion

Translated works like Hosseini's novels contribute to cross-cultural dialogue and empathy. They provide insights into Afghan society and the universal human condition, promoting understanding and compassion. By making these stories accessible to a wider audience, translations play a pivotal role in building bridges between cultures and fostering a global community.

The majority of analyzed examples from original and translated works of H. Hosseini illustrate the use of translation techniques aimed at highlighting foreignness in English-written narratives. In the Russian translations, many cultural and linguistic elements of Afghan linguacultural are retained through transliteration without alteration, but often accompanied by footnotes or glossaries explaining their meanings. This approach maintains the exotic flavor of the source text. Conversely, the Kazakh translation may find cognates or culturally equivalent terms within the Turkic linguistic tradition, facilitating a more seamless integration into the target language while preserving the original meaning.

However, certain linguistic and cultural specifics may be eliminated, primarily to preserve the style, general tone or emotional load of the original text in the translation. Certain foreign words and combinations, especially those that do not carry a large identifying load, may be stylistically or culturally adapted or completely omitted to ensure smoother and clearer reading. Domestication occurs when idiomatic expressions are replaced with Russian or Kazakh equivalents to aid reader comprehension, for example, an Afghan proverb about wisdom and ignorance might be substituted with a proverb from a target linguaculture conveying a similar message. Effective cultural adaptation enhances readability while preserving essential cultural elements. Over-domestication may lead to a loss of cultural richness, whereas excessive foreignization can impede understanding. Successful translations strike a balance, allowing readers to appreciate the cultural context without feeling alienated.

Linguacultural approach to translation implies a balanced use of foreignization and domestication as translation strategies without compromising the integrity of source works – preservation of cultural authenticity and the readability and accessibility of the text for the target audience. The brief analysis underscores the complexities involved in translating Khaled Hosseini's linguistically and culturally rich narratives. Navigating linguistic diversity, cultural references, and thematic elements in translation is based on thorough linguacultural analysis of the original works. It helps to highlight those fundamental elements that insert Afghan linguaculture into the American narrative and then focus to preserve the same aspects in source languages. The strategies employed, whether foreignization or domestication, significantly impact the preservation of the works' integrity and the audience engagement. Ultimately, the effective translation of such works enhances global understanding and highlights the vital role of translation in promoting contemporary literature.

Conflict of interests

The article contains no conflict of interests.

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А. Ислам

*Абылай хан атындағы Қазақ халықаралық қатынастар және әлем тілдері университеті,
Алматы, Қазақстан*

Халед Хоссейнидің нарратив аудармасының лингвомәдени аспектілері

Аңдатпа. Мақалада Халед Хоссейнидің «Батпырауық қуған бала», «Жарқыраған мың күн», «Таудағы жаңғырық» сияқты шығармалары аудармаларындағы лингвомәдени мәселелер қарастырылады. Ауғандықжәнеамерикандықмәдени контекстертоғысында туындаған аталмыш көркем туындылар лингвистикалық және мәдени ерекшеліктерімен, атап айтқанда, реалийлер, идиоматикалық бірліктермен қатар, мәдени кодтардың бір-бірімен алмасуымен сипатталады. Оларды орыс және қазақ тілдеріне аудару барысында түпнұсқалық нарративтің шынайылығы мен тақырыптың тереңдігін, лингвомәдени ерекшеліктерін сақтай отырып, адекватты аударма жасау үшін тиімді аударма бағытын қолдану талап етіледі. Мақалада баяндалған сараптама аударматанудағы лингвистикалық теория мен мәдени бетбұрыс тұжырымдамасын біріктіретін аударматанудың лингвомәдени бағытына негізделген. Аудармаға талдау жасау барысында аталмыш ұстаным аударма мәтіндерінде қолданылатын форенизация және доместикация аударма стратегияларын егжей-тегжейлі қарастыруға мүмкіндік берді. Сараптама барысында қол жеткізілген нәтижелер түпнұсқа мәтіндердің тұтастығы мен лингвомәдени ерекшеліктерін сақтайтын аударма тәжірибесінің маңыздылығын көрсете отырып, көпмәдениетті әдебиет туындыларын аударудағы өнімді тәсілдерді айқындап, жалпы көркем аударманың дамуына ықпал етеді. Жүргізілген аударма талдаудың практикалық маңыздылығы мәдениетаралық диалогты кеңейтуге, жаһандық эмпатияны нығайтуға және көпмәдениетті әдебиет контексіндегі аударма стратегияларын жетілдіруге өзіндік үлес қосады.

Түйін сөздер: аударматанудағы лингвомәдени бағыт, көпмәдениетті әдебиет, көркем аударма, лингвомәдени ерекшеліктер, форенизация, доместикация, аударма стратегиялары.

А. Ислам

*Казахский университет международных отношений и мировых языков имени Абылай хана,
Алматы, Казахстан*

Лингвокультурологические аспекты перевода нарративов Халеда Хоссейни

Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются лингвокультурные проблемы перевода произведений Халеда Хоссейни, таких как «Бегущий за ветром», «Тысяча сияющих солнц» и «И эхо летит по горам». Эти романы, характеризующиеся богатым переплетением афганского и американского культурных контекстов, содержат сложные языковые и культурные элементы, включая реалии, идиоматические выражения, кодовые переключения и культурно-специфические отсылки. Особенности их перевода на русский и казахский языки требуют применения взвешенного подхода, направленного на сохранение аутентичности повествования и его тематической глубины. Переводческий анализ основывается на лингвокультурологический подход, интегрирующий лингвистическую теорию перевода и концепцию культурного поворота в переводоведении. Используемый подход позволяет детально рассмотреть переводческие стратегии такие как, форенизация и доместикация, применяемые в целевых текстах. Результаты подчёркивают значимость культурно-чувствительных переводческих практик, которые способствуют сохранению целостности оригинальных текстов, определяют продуктивные приемы перевода мультикультурной литературы и оказывают определенное влияние на развитие художественного перевода. Практическое значение проведенного переводческого анализа заключается в расширении межкультурного диалога, укреплении глобальной эмпатии и совершенствовании переводческих стратегий в контексте мультикультурной литературы.

Ключевые слова: лингвокультурологический подход к переводу, мультикультурная литература, художественный перевод, лингвокультурологические особенности, форенизация, доместикация, стратегии перевода.

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Information about the author:

Aybarsha Islam – Doctor of Philology, Professor, Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages, Almaty, Kazakhstan. E-mail: aisha_ling@mail.ru, ORCID: 0000-0002-8920-9294.

Айбарша Ислам – доктор филологических наук, профессор, Казахский университет международных отношений и мировых языков имени Абылай хана, Алматы, Казахстан. E-mail: aisha_ling@mail.ru, ORCID: 0000-0002-8920-9294.

Айбарша Ислам – филология ғылымдарының докторы, профессор, Абылай хан атындағы Қазақ халықаралық қатынастар және әлем тілдері университеті, Алматы, Қазақстан. E-mail: aisha_ling@mail.ru, ORCID: 0000-0002-8920-9294.



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