

## THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY OF ALLUSIONS: TRANSLATION CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

Although the process of translation may seem *terre-a-terre* and sometimes trivial for people with an inapt eye, even the most experienced translators often go through ups and downs that are caused by thousands of unexpected challenges. Arising from the fact that any source text (ST) has a specific function and an audience of its own, and it is crucial to preserve its peculiarities as much as possible in the target text (TT) [5], these translation dilemmas include, but are not limited to the use of correct terminology, proper style and adaptation of culture-specific items.

Among them, allusions are likely to become a challengeable translation task when they cross a cultural divide, due to the fact that these units have specific meanings in the culture and language from which they arise, but can be absolutely unfamiliar to the audience in a different cultural and lingual environment. Furthermore, the use of intertextual references in general shows an expectation that the reader is able to recognize the references made, otherwise their effect is meaningless. This combination of implicitness and assumed familiarity often makes allusions a translation issue.

Therefore, this paper is set up to investigate how intercultural communication is impacted by the way allusions are translated, as well as to give useful insights into translation strategies, which allow translators and / or interpreters to maintain the functions and connotations of allusions in translation to the maximum extent possible.

First and foremost, it is essential to define the notion of allusion and isolate its principal features, which have to be taken into account in order to explore what kinds of interpretive possibilities are available to translators and recipients of translated texts alike. Needless to say, there exist several approaches to the concept of allusion in literary studies, linguistics and translation. For instance, M. H. Abrams defines allusion as a brief reference, explicit or implicit, to a person, place and event or to another literary work or passage [1]. Another definition of allusion states that it is a figure of speech that compares aspects or qualities of counterparts in history, mythology, scripture, literature, popular or contemporary culture [2].

To cut it short, standard definitions in literary studies share the idea of “explicit or implicit reference to something”, consequently indicating two important properties of the term: allusiveness (i.e. explicit or implicit form, which requires a certain degree of resemblance to the referent) and presence of assumed shared knowledge, which is presumably familiar to the author and at least some of his / her readers, making an allusion recognizable and perceived in a proper way [4]. Taking into account the fact that allusions can be subdivided into several thematic precursor groups, including religion, mythology, literature, memes, cinema, history and what not, it can be extremely difficult for the translator to

adequately and efficiently adapt this or that reference, preserving both the form and author's intention embedded in it. It is worth adding that same goes for the audience, which is expected to identify these culture-bound elements and understand them. On one hand, it is vital to have sufficient cultural competence and translation expertise, as well as a vast knowledge of various subjects, to render an allusion in the target language. On the other hand, recipients have to have an appropriate background knowledge to avoid "culture bumps" [2] (situations in which the reader may not understand a source-cultured allusion clearly until he / she refers to its reference or some explanations are given). Thus, it is vital to recognize allusions in the text, as well as find an appropriate strategy to translate them, which would ensure delivery of a certain reference to the recipient.

Generally speaking, there are several potential translation strategies, which are somewhat different due to the fact that allusions can be represented in two forms: proper name (PN) and key-phrase (KP) ones [3]. The former may include real-life and fictional figures, famous writers, painters, poets and so on, the latter – nursery rhymes and children's tales, songs, movies and TV shows, political slogans, different catch-phrases, clichés and proverbs, etc. Although there are some slight differences between the strategies for translating these two groups, the commonalities include keeping the allusion, changing it somehow and omitting the allusion.

To be more precise, potential strategies for translation of PN allusions are as follows:

- retention of the name with several subcategories: use of the name as such, use of the name with guidance and use of the name with detailed explanation (e.g., a footnote or other explanatory means);
- replacement of the name by another source language name or replacement of the referent with a target language name;
- omission of the name, which is instead explained via other means, or complete omission of the allusion.

For KP allusions the list of potential strategies is somewhat longer and includes:

- use of a standard translation;
- extra-allusive guidance, which is added to the text;
- use of footnotes, endnotes, translator's prefaces and other explicit explanations not slipped into TT;
- rephrase and / or recreation of the allusion by means of the target language along with preservation of its connotation;
- omission of the allusion whatsoever.

Naturally, some of these strategies can be used in fusion, though it depends on the context and peculiarities of each text. Regardless, translation of allusions is complicated by two factors. First, it is highly probable that the recipients cannot make much of allusions, because the connotations of these allusions are lost in translation thanks to translator's inability to re-create them. Second, the recipients of translations are not a homogenous group, which has equal background

knowledge, and thus some of them can be unable to understand certain references without proper guidance.

Consequently, translation of allusions remains a challenging task, which requires a complex and thorough approach, both in terms of translation and cultural adaptation. Therefore, indicated translation strategies, which can be further implemented in specific translation methods and techniques, can help solve potential, allusion-based translatorial problems, leaving great prospects for future analysis and research.

## REFERENCES

1. Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. – Fort Worth: Holt, Reinhart & Winston, Inc., 1971.
2. Leppihalme, R. *Culture Bumps: An Empirical Approach to the Translation of Allusions*. – Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd, 1997
3. Niknasab, L. Translation and Culture: Allusions as Culture Bumps. *SKASE Journal of Translation and Interpretation*. – Volume 5 (1). – 2011.
4. Ruokonen, M. Cultural and Textual Properties in the Translation and Interpretation of Allusions. An Analysis of Allusions in Dorothy L. Sayers' Detective Novels Translated into Finnish in the 1940s and the 1980s. *Annales Universitatis Turkuensis B 330*. – Turku: University of Turku, 2010.
5. Snell-Hornby M. Linguistic Transcoding or Cultural Transfer? A critique of Translation Theory in Germany / M. Snell-Hornby / ed. by C. Colerup, A. Loddegaard. *Teaching Translating and Interpreting. Training, Talent and Expertise*. – Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1992. – P. 79–86