

ALYSTAĞY BAÝYRYMA IN TRANSLATION (TURKISH, ENGLISH): LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL ASPECTS

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT: The article first discusses translation peculiarities of culture-specific items in the famous poem *Alystağy baýyryma* (To my brother in distance) of great Kazakh poet Magzhan Zhumabaev in parallel to the Turkish and English languages. Turkish is a related language, and this poem is well-known in Turkey, even has been translated several times by poets (poetic translation) and scholars (prose translation). But it was recently translated into English, that is, in 2018 for the 125th anniversary of the poet's birth by a professor at the University of Michigan, Timur Kocaoglu.

This poem message to the fraternal Turkish people contains several culture-bounded words. And we considered their reflection in translation to the related and non-related languages through comparative analyses, and focused how translators coped with the task of rendering of cultural words. Since this has been and still remains as one of the most discussable and relevant aspects of literary translation. Fortunately, we were given a rare opportunity to speak with the translators, and some moments have been accompanied by comments from the translators themselves.

Key words: poetry, artistic translation, culture, linguistics, realities.

"Uzaktaki Kardeşime" Çeviride (Türkçe, İngilizce): Dilbilimsel Ve Kültürel Yönler

ÖZ: Makalede öncelikle büyük Kazak şairi Magzhan Zhumabaev'in ünlü şiiri *Alystağy baýyryma*'daki (uzaktaki kardeşime) kültüre özgü öğelerin Türkçe ve İngilizceye çevirileri ele alınıyor. Türkçe akraba bir dildir ve bu şiir Türkiye'de çok iyi bilinmektedir, hatta şairler (şiir çevirisi) ve akademisyenler (düzyazı çevirisi) tarafından birkaç kez Türkçeye çevrilmiştir. Ancak yakın zamanda İngilizceye, yani 2018 yılında şairin 125. doğum yıldönümü nedeniyle Michigan Üniversitesi profesörü Timur Kocaoglu tarafından çevrilmiştir. Kardeş Türk halkına yönelik bu şiir kültürel kavramlar içermektedir. Ve karşılaştırmalı analizler yoluyla akraba olan ve olmayan dillere çevirilerindeki yansımalarını değerlendirdik ve çevirmenlerin kültürel kavramları nasıl çevirebildiklerini irdelemeye odaklandık. Bu, edebi çevirinin hala en tartışmalı ve en çok ilgi duyan yönünü oluşturmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: şiir, sanatsal çeviri, kültür, dilbilim, gerçekler.

Introduction

In the life of individual peoples and nations there are people who play an important role, their work reflects the era, the peculiarities of the life of their nation. And if Abdulhamid Cholpan (1897-1938), Abdulla Kadyriy (1894-1940), Zhomart Bokonbaev (1910-1944), Ishangali Arabaev (1882-1933), Abdulla Tokay (1886-1913) and Galymzhan Ibragimov (1887-1938) were great poets and writers of the Uzbek, Kyrgyz and Tatar peoples during the revival of the national life of many Turkic peoples at the beginning of the last century, then such was considered one of the Kazakhs Magzhan Zhumabayev. He is a brilliant Kazakh poet recognized as the son of all Turkic peoples. In 1921, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, uniting scattered groups of rebels, led the struggle for Turkish independence. During this most difficult period for the country, M. Zhumabayev, who sincerely suffered from the disunity of the Turkic peoples, wrote his famous poem "*Alystağy baýyryma*" ("To my brother in distance"). At a conference dedicated to the 100th anniversary of this event, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Turkey to Kazakhstan Nevzat Uyanik said:

On May 19, 1919, the future leader of the Turkish people went to Samsun, where he raised the army for an armed struggle against the Entente. This was the time when the Ottoman Empire was defeated in World War I and had to be divided and disarmed. Mustafa Kemal, defending the independence of Turkey, entered the war and won. The fight for freedom was hard and difficult. In these difficult years a poem-message to the fraternal Turkish people from the great Kazakh poet Magzhan Zhumabaev "*Alystağy baýyryma*" appeared. It was a great message for our

people. Magzhan, through common roots and history, showed the involvement of the Kazakhs in the hard struggle of the Turks for independence» (Turkish Ambassador to Kazakhstan: We do not forget Magzhan's message to the "distant brother", 2019).¹

In 2004, that is exactly 83 years later, the Turk poet Feyzullah Budak, who worked as the vice-rector of the Kazakh-Turkish University, wrote, as it were, a response poem called "*Maǵjanǵa jaýap*" (Reply to Magzhan) (Tursynbayuly, 2018). Having read the texts of these lines, one can feel and understand the living connection between our two fraternal peoples, which Magzhan so subtly felt. In his address to his distant brother, the poet spoke of how he sincerely empathizes with everything that happens to the Turkish people, and that his soul is with them. And while in the Soviet period, when his work was prohibited in his homeland, in Turkey his poems were popular. After Kazakhstan gained independence, the first monument to the Kazakh poet outside the homeland was erected in the Kechiorn district in Ankara.

On March 11, 2020, the Embassy of Kazakhstan in Turkey and the EcoEurasia Association held an event entitled "From Turkestan to Anatolia - Magzhan Zhumabaev" in Ankara (From Turkestan to Anatolia - Magzhan Zhumabaev, 2020).

The Chairman of the EcoEurasia Association Hikmet Eren noted the importance and relevance of thought in the works of M. Zhumabaev. In his speech, he said that the works and thoughts of the great Kazakh poet and one of the leaders of the "Alash" movement will forever leave an indelible mark in the memory of our peoples. Emphasizing Magzhan's thoughts about the unity of the Turkic peoples, he continued his speech with the words of Ziya Gokalp: "The motherland of the Turks is not Turkey or Turkestan, but the great Turan" (From Turkestan to Anatolia - Magzhan Zhumabaev, 2020). The Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Turkey Abzal Saparbekuly stated that Magzhan sincerely empathized with everything that happened to the Turkic people, and spoke about several poems that are especially popular in the modern Turkic world. For example, such works as "To my brother in distance", "Turkestan", "The Earth", "Prophet". Finally, revealing the socio-economic, spiritual and philosophical-psychological characteristics of the work, he noted that with his poems he gathered the Turkic peoples under a single sky (From Turkestan to Anatolia - Magzhan Zhumabaev, 2020).²

The works of the classics of Kazakh literature have been translated into dozens of languages, including Turkish, Uzbek, Russian and Tatar. The translator, Turkish poet Ali Akbas, admitted that in order to translate poetry for this collection, he needed to deeply understand the poet's soul, having studied his work and biography. He also stated that "Magzhan is a poet of freedom and liberty. Magzhan is a man who died for the unity of the Turkic peoples" (Zhumaliyeva, 2018).³

And in 2018, to the 125th anniversary of the birth of the great poet, another significant event happened. A book by Timur Kozhaoglu with translations of the poet's poems in English has been published. It was to be expected. His literary heritage for all mankind in the end had to be translated into one of the global languages, which will open the doors to Magzhan's work almost to the whole world. His thoughts, creativity, struggle for freedom and anti-humanism are universal values. The sensitive soul of the poet was worried for all of humanity, and in those days when he felt helpless in the fight against non-humanity, he turned to his poetry. The poet was thinking about renewing the universe and expanding the intention of humanity with anew. In his poem "Let the Flood Cover the Earth" the poet shows concern for both the West and the East. He asks the question "What would I do if the Flood was enveloped in the Earth, splashing with poisonous foam, and I would be left alone as it does not become alive and not alive" and he himself answers: "I would create a new person, From my sparkling flame". Timur Kocaoglu said that "There is a dramatic voice in Magjan's poetry. He is a brave man who is fully confident in the correctness of the fight against injustice, humiliation, obscurantism and tyranny. In his poetry he listened only to the voice of his heart, and not to the imposed Soviet ideological doctrines. The world community should continue to study the poetry of Maghjan, since his works are not fully considered. I hope that the future generation will conduct an in-depth study of his work" (Dyusekeev, 2018).⁴

He is absolutely right since the literary heritage of the poet has not been studied thoroughly yet. And in this article we would like to consider translation of this very poem "*Alystaǵy baýyryma*" ("To my brother

¹ Translated by authors

² Translated by authors

³ Translated by authors

⁴ Translated by authors

in distance"). Of course, it is impossible to cover all aspects of translation in one article. Therefore, we decided to focus on one of the problematic and relevant aspects of translating poetry. This is a translation of linguocultural vocabulary, or rather realities. There are two reasons for choosing these elements of language. Firstly, the poetry of the poet is rich in culturally bounded vocabulary. Secondly, translation of words of national color is one of the 'tricky' issues of literary translation, which causes multiple discussions and still has no unambiguous solution. As Goethe noted, "When translating, one has to get to the untranslatable. Only then can one really know a foreign people, a foreign language" (Goethe quoted in Vlahov, Florin, 1980, p. 4). So realities are 'untranslatable' and significant at the same time. How to deal with them? The greater the distance in history, culture, and the geographic distance of peoples and the language they use, the larger the barrier becomes. This can be said about Kazakh and English, that have nothing in common, and relate to different language families. But Kazakh and Turkish both relate to Turkic languages family, and have common historical roots which continues to this day. And we conducted a comparative analysis in parallel of these languages (Turkish, English), how the translators coped with this task (translation of realities from Kazakh into Turkish and English) in the case of the poem *Alystaǵy baǵyryma* (*To my brother in distance*). If there were any changes or translation decisions, then what was their impact.

Methodology.

The article uses materials from the book "The poet of flame, liberty and love" (2018) by Timur Kocaoglu, which includes a short biography, translations of the poem in English, and links to the most significant works on poet. T. Kocaoglu is a professor at the University of Michigan, director of the center for "European, Russian and Eurasian Studies". The material for the translation in Turkish was the translation of Ferhat Tamir, who studied the work and fate of the poet a lot, and whose book with translations of the poet's poems was published in 1993 in Ankara. It is worth noting that F. Tamir translated in prose. In communicating with him, he explained that in order to translate Magzhan with poetics, you need to be the same poet, the same level (Personal communication). Therefore, he limited himself to translation in prose. Since the object of our study is not the poetics of translation, this fact did not play a significant role. Unfortunately, we couldn't find poetic translations of Ali Akbas. But we strongly believe that a number of continuing studies will be devoted to this topic. And we could consider both prose and poetic translations. Theoretical issues of the translation of the words of realities are based on the book by S.I. Vlahov and S.P. Florin "Untranslatable in Translation".

Results and discussion.

The childhood picture of brothers by the poet is very warmly and cordially described in this poem. A picture of brothers who went to sleep in the same bed, who sucked milk from the breast of one mother, and played *asyk* (knucklebone) together:

Table 1.

Original (in Latin script)	Interlinear translation (by authors)
Alalı altın <i>saka</i> atıspap pek? Tebisip bir tösekte jatispap pek? Altayday anamızdıñ ak sütinen Birge emip, birge dâmin tatispap pek? (Zhumabayev, 1989, p. 24)	Haven't we played with golden <i>saka</i> ? Haven't we scuffled in the same bed? The white milk of our mother Altay haven't we sucked and tasted together?

From the very first lines, the translator's attention is drawn to the word *saka*, not only *saka*, but gold. Since this is an uncommon vocabulary, and an element of the national game. Translation into another language requires a special approach. To understand the meaning of the word *saka*, you need to know the game of *asyk* (knucklebone), in which *saka* is used. *Asyk* is one of the most widespread folk games in Central Asia. It is included in the ethnic sports of the World Nomad Games and in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. In order to play *asyk*, you do not need expensive or complicated equipment and special conditions. The main thing is to arm yourself with the bones of the knee joint of animals, that is called *asyk* in Kazakh (more often - small ruminants: a lamb or a goat), and have a free area where you can place them. The bones were previously boiled in salt water or taken from livestock eaten. After that, simple *asyks* (plural form of *asyk*) were painted in different colors, and, depending on the size and color, they had their own names and different prices, for example, the cheapest - the little "simpleton" never painted, there was also "asyk-saka". The rules

of the game of Asyk are simple. The bones are placed in a row (at stake), the players' task is to knock out one or several of them at once with their *saka* from a certain distance. Those bones that can be knocked out become the prey of the player.

Among the entire set of asyk, a large one called "*saka*" must have been present. Everyone who plays *asyk* has a *saka*. It is a trump card. In the game, "*saka*" plays the role of "*khan*" - the most important trophy, if the participant is able to win it with the help of his dexterity. Usually, the largest and, accordingly, the heaviest asyk from the collection is chosen for it. Sometimes, for greater stability and penetration force, lead was poured into such a bone and wrapped with copper or aluminum wire. And the *khan's* and *sultan's* children were even poured with gold. In the Kazakh folk tale "*Altyn saka*" ("*golden saka*") the value of this asyk is well conveyed. For her sake, the boy almost dies at the hands of an evil witch (Ulimbai, 2011, p. 623). That is why the poet used the notion of "*golden saka*". Childhood memories are always dear and unforgettable for any person. For a young boy who played in the vast land, ran, the golden saka was priceless. Asyk game is as a symbol of childhood.

T. Kocaoglu reflected this realia in English in the following way:

Haven't we have played *golden knucklebone*
 Haven't we scuffled together in the same bed
 Haven't we drank from our mother Altay
 the same white milk and tasted together? (Kocaoglu, 2018, p. 69)

We see that translator uses the concept of generalization rendering *altın saka* as *golden knucklebone*. It means that instead of one element of the game (*saka*), there is a name of the game itself (*asyk* - *knucklebone*). But from the above definition of the game of *asyk* and its elements, one can understand that this is not the same thing. There is also a risk of losing the poet's intentions, to whom he wants to convey one of the valuable attributes of his childhood. Since each young boy treasured his gilded *saka*, which is the largest, most weighty. But there is another side to the coin. When we interviewed the translator, he explained the reason for his decision in translation. As for the multilingual audience, the game of *asyk* (*knucklebone*) is more familiar than its elements. And for them the game itself will be more understandable rather its detailed elements (Personal Communication).

When translating into Turkish, the translator also used the same method of generalization despite the fact that many Turkic peoples played *asyk*:

Alaca **altın aşık** atışmamış mıydık?
 Aynı döşekte tepisip, yatmamış mıydık?
 Altay gibi anamızın ak sütünden birlikte emip,
 onun yaptığı yemeği birlikte yememiş miydik? (Tamer, 1993: 265)

Probably, F. Tamir also intended to make the translation more approachable for the readers, since despite the former popularity of this folk game of the peoples of Central Asia, the detailed elements may have been forgotten. The defining word *altın* (gold) sounds and spelled similarly in Kazakh and Turkish: *алтын* – *altın*. In the following lines, one can highlight the name of the religiously mythical animal *piraq*:

Table 2.

Original (in Latin script)	Interlinear translation (by authors)
Turmap ped bizdin üçin möldir bulak Sıldırıp, sılık sılık tavdan kulap? Dayar bop uçkan kustay, sokkan kuyın, Tilesek, bir-bir <i>tulpar</i> beyne <i>pirak</i> ! (Zhumabayev, 1989: 24).	Was there a clear spring Gurgling falling from the mountains for us? If we wished, as a flying bird and storming wind, There was ready <i>tulpar</i> like Buraq!

Tulpar is a notion that bears cultural feature. The fastest and the most beautiful horses have been called *tulpar*. According to Kazakh folk, *tulpars* were mainly ridden by heroes. It also carries mythical meaning. There is a saying in Kazakh language as *kanatty tulpar* (winged tulpar) and it is depicted in a state emblem of independent Republic of Kazakhstan. Two mythical horses with wings seem to protect the *shanyrak* (figurative meaning is *the main, respected house*) from both sides. They also vividly express the idea of serving the common home - the Motherland. To cherish the Motherland as the apple of an eye and faithfully serve it is one of the important leitmotifs embedded in the images of mythical horses.

Buraq (arabic البراق, shining, lightning-fast) - in Islam, an extraterrestrial intelligent creature, on which Muhammad made the night migration from Mecca to Jerusalem. There are many legends associated with Buraq, the most famous are: that the Buraqs will take the righteous to heaven; before Miraj, Muhammad was transported by Buraq from Mecca to Jerusalem, and so quickly that water did not have time to pour out of the overturned vessel; before Muhammad, Burak also served other prophets, each of whom tied Buraq to the ring at the Jerusalem rock. This tradition gave the Muslim name for the Western Wall of the Temple Mount - "Buraq Wall" (Borges, Guerrero, 2004, p. 187).⁵

In English, the translator conveys the functional and stylistic feature of this reality, and through transliteration gives the Arabic name for the *pirak* as *Buraq*, but the notion of mythical *tulpar* has been substituted by *stallion*:

Isn't staying for us the pure spring
From mountain with a gurgling sound
It was ready as a flying bird and a wind
If we wish it will appear as a stallion Buraq (Kojaoglu, 2018, p. 69).

According to Cambridge dictionary, "stallion is an adult male horse that is used for breeding" (Cambridge dictionary online, n.d.). Some features of stallion as speed, physique may have some in common with *tulpar*, but it is not enough to compensate cultural and mythical context. The following notion of *Buraq* has been explained by the translator in the form of an endnote: «Buraq: is a steed in Islamic mythology, a creature from the heavens that transported the prophets. Most notably Buraq carried the Islamic prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Jerusalem and back during the Mi'raj (Night Journey to Heaven)» (Kocaoglu, 2018, p. 69).

In Turkish, the translator also makes a footnote, but not for the proper name Buraq. Translator explains the word *tulpar*, which is an expressive noun in Kazakh language used to name the fastest and special horses:

Tertemiz pınar, bizim için dağlan aşığıya dökülüp şırlı şırıldayıp dıymamış mıydı?
İstesek... Tıpkı *Burak*'a benzeyen, uçan kuş ve esen fırtına gibi sür'atli birer *tulpar*⁶ hazır olup...

Buraq is a well-known notion and proper name in Turkish, rather than Kazakh *tulpar*. Probably, that served as the reason for such kind of decision.

Conclusion

From the above analysis, we can conclude that even if the languages relate to the same language families and have much in common from history, there exist some peculiarities (in the case of *tulpar* in Turkish translation). And translator used method of additional explanation outside the text. In English translator also employed the same technique. But nevertheless, there is a still controversial issue that needs to be considered additionally (in the case of *tulpar* translated as a *stallion*). In the term of rendering of reality *saka*, both translators resorted to generalization for the sake of more relevant target text perception by readers. So, there is an undeniable truth that, in order to translate cultural vocabulary, the translator needs background knowledge. Or, as the famous French linguist and translation theorist J. Mounin stated that "To translate from a foreign language, two prerequisites are tender, of which each is necessary, and one is not enough: to learn this foreign language and study (systematically) the ethnography of the collective using this language. There can be no complete translation if both conditions are not met" (Mounin quoted in Vlahov, Florin, 1980: 382). At the same time, we have been once again convinced that the untranslatable reality remains less and less, due to the fact that the process of active international integration, globalization, and intensive exchange of cultural and educational information, people and cultures are becoming closer. People learn more about literature, culture, history of other nations (in the case of translation of cultural notion *saka*). The assertion that the culture of one people is specific and impenetrable for another people, that each of them has its own customs, associations, its own psychology, its own attitude to reality, and it is irrepressibly more and more contested. And these examples prove that it is possible to reflect culture in translation by using relevant techniques. Linguistic

⁵ Translated by authors

⁶ tulpar: Çok hızlı koşan efsanevi at (The legendary horse that runs very fast) (Tamir, 1993, p. 265).

research reveals the presence in languages of numerous universals, reflecting the common environment, perception of the surrounding world and mental organization among all the inhabitants of our planet. In the modern world, there is a further rapprochement of cultures, reflected in a certain convergence of languages. All this undoubtedly makes it easier to overcome the differences in common pictures of the world in the process of translation. Differences between the cultures of linguistic communities do not seem to be an insurmountable obstacle to translation. Of course, knowledge of the reality behind the original text is necessary for its understanding and translation. But the facts of a foreign culture are not something incomprehensible, inaccessible for description and study. Using ethnographic data, a translator can successfully cope with the task of reproducing or explaining in translation the features of the culture reflected in the meanings of the words in the original.

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