



## Challenges of Teaching Translation of Culture-Bound Terms

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### ABSTRACT

Intercultural competence is really important in language teaching nowadays since it is closely related to the learners' need for successful intercultural communication. Translation is closely related with TL and SL cultures and translation teaching provides students the solutions to the translation of cultural terms, thus minimizing translation loss, preserving the cultural element in translation, mediating between cultures and facilitating intercultural communication. The paper tackles the issue of intercultural competence and also the techniques of translating culture-bound terms: transference, componential analysis, domestication, foreignization, rationalization, expansion, clarification. It also provides some examples from the translation of literature from English into Albanian. While making the decision which methods to choose, the best criterion is considering the readership's source-culture knowledge. Considering the nature of the text and the similarities between the ideal ST and TT reader, another important aspect is to determine how much missing background information should be provided by the translator using these methods.

**Keywords:** Intercultural competence, transference, componential analysis, domestication, foreignization

### 1. INTRODUCTION

For two decades intercultural competence has been a fashionable, much-quoted and influential concept in language education. Thus, the competence learners need for successful intercultural communication is one which enables them to bring the two cultures and cultural identities present in the interaction into a relationship of communication. "The foreign-speaker must be able to perceive and understand the culture(s) of the native-speaker, to reflect on his/her own culture(s) as seen from the foreign perspective, and to relate one to the other, explain each in terms of the other, accepting that conflicting perceptions are not always reconcilable." (Byram and Risager, 1999). This competence should enable the learner to become "a mediator between cultures", which is essential from a communicative point of view since "it is the mediation which allows for effective communication". The ability to mediate between two cultures is an essential component of intercultural competence.

Considering this aspect of intercultural competence, one task is communicative translation. If translation is regarded as an act of communication in which a text produced for readers in one particular context is rendered for readers in another, students need to take on the role of intercultural mediators. First, they need to relate source and target culture in order to identify culture-specificity in the source text. Subsequently, they have to try and explain one culture in terms of the other when seeking a communicatively satisfactory mediating position for cultural divergences. "Translation is a kind of activity which inevitably involves at least two languages and two cultural traditions." (Toury, 1973). Translators are permanently faced with the problem of how to treat the cultural aspects implicit

in a source text (ST) and of finding the most appropriate technique of successfully conveying these aspects in the target language (TL). These problems may vary in scope depending on the cultural and linguistic gap between the two (or more) languages concerned.

The cultural implications for translation include: lexical content and syntax, ideologies, ways of life in a given culture. The translator also has to decide on the importance given to certain cultural aspects and to what extent it is necessary or desirable to translate them into the TL. The aims of the ST will also have implications for translation as well as the intended readership for both the ST and the target text (TT).

Considering the textual cultural implications means: recognizing all of these problems, taking into account several possibilities, deciding on the most appropriate solution.

Newmark, a famous scholar in translation studies, proposes two opposing methods: transference and componential analysis.

**Transference** gives "local colour," keeping cultural names and concepts. Although placing the emphasis on culture, meaningful to initiated readers, he claims this method may cause problems for the general readership and limit the comprehension of certain aspects.

**Componential analysis** excludes the culture and highlights the message, highlights the communicative aspect of translation.

Let's provide one example from the translation of "Memoirs of a Geisha" from English into Albanian where the two translation methods are used and see what are the advantages and disadvantages of the use of each method.

**Table 1:** Use of methods in translating culture-bound terms

<b>Memoirs of a Geisha</b>	<b>Transference</b>	<b>Componential analysis</b>
Kuinko's clothing was much more refined than mine and she wore <b>zori</b> .	Rrobat e Kunikosishinshumë me tëbukura se tëmiatdheajovishte <b>zori</b> .	Rrobat e Kunikosishinshumë me tëbukura se tëmiatdheajovishte <b>pantofla</b> .

The first method "transference" implies that the term "zori" that is kept the same as it appears in the source-language text because no equivalence can be found with the Albanian terms for clothing.

The second method "componential analysis" gives an easily-understood term by the Albanian readership, but deprives the term of its cultural aspect and local setting. The reader has the impression that this girl has nothing special in her attire if you compare her with an Albanian girl. The best method is using transference coupled with the method of explaining or footnotes. According to the explanation given in the Wikipedia the meaning of zori is as follows: **Zōri** are flat and thonged Japanese sandals made of rice straw or other plant fibers, cloth, lacquered wood, leather, rubber, or synthetic materials. The abbreviated form of the definition can be: flat and thonged Japanese sandals made of straw, cloth, wood, leather, rubber. In Albanian, the footnote can be as follows: (pantoflajaponezetësheshta me gisht)

In translating culture-bound terms, it is worth-discussing the strategies proposed by Venutti: domestication and foreignization.

**Domestication** involves making the TT read as fluently as possible, and this involves careful text selection.

**Foreignization** involves choosing a text that is obviously not of the target culture and rendering the linguistic and cultural differences in the translation. It highlights the foreign culture and prevents it from being absorbed by the target culture.

**Table 2:** Examples of the strategies of domestication and foreignization

Source language text	Domestication	Foreignization
I have a train schedule hidden under the <b>tatami mats</b> upstairs. (Memoirs of a Geisha)	Lartkamnjeorartrenash, qe e kamfsheturposhteshilteve.	Lartkamnjeorartrenashqe e kamfsheturposhteshtrojcave prej <b>tatami</b> .
Is the law of our side if I say ‘Ay’? (Romeo and Juliet)	E kemi me vetek <u>anunint</u> ’i them po? (AlqiKristo)	Sikurt’ithemi ‘po’, jemibrendaligjit? (HaxhiMerko)

In the examples given to illustrate the method of domestication, it can be easily seen that the text uses a neutral, typical term for Albanian. Whereas in the second method of foreignization, the explanation for “tatami mat” is given by translating the word “mat” and preserving **tatami**, but no explanation is given about this term. (tatami- a type of mat used as a flooring material in traditional Japanese-style rooms)

In the second example from “Romeo and Juliet”, the word “law” is translated as “kanun” that is kind of oral law that existed in Albanian since the XV-th century, and “Romeo and Juliet” was written by Shakespeare in the XVI-the century. The translation wanted to place the reader back in time, when there was no written law and “kanun” was the only form of law used.

Other techniques that can be employed while translating culture-bound terms are: rationalization, clarification and expansion.

Rationalization where syntax, punctuation and sentence structure are altered. In the example below the syntax and structure has been changed in order to translate the word” wareshinobu.”

**Table 3:** Example of the use of the rationalization technique

Source language text	Rationalization
They all wore the same hairstyle-the wareshinobu of a young apprentice geisha.... (Memoirs of a Geisha)	Flokëtikishintëkrehuranë të njëjtën mënyrë, <u>uareshinobu</u> , që është kërehja e geishave

Clarification, where things are rendered clear in the TT that are not meant to be clear in the ST. This can be done through paraphrase or explanation. In the example below the word “sake” is translated by using the couplet technique of transference plus explanation.

**Table 4:** Example of the use of the clarification technique

Source language text	Domestication	Foreignization
One day many years ago I was pouring a cup of <u>sake</u> for a man who happened to had been in Yoroido only the previous week .  (Memoirs of a Geisha)	Njeditëshumëvjetmëparëposervirjanjëfilxhans <i>sake</i> njëburri, icilinëbisedë e sipërpermeni se njëjavëmëparëkishteqënëJoroido.	pijetradicionalejaponeze, qënxitretngafermentimiiorizit  (is an alcoholic beverage of Japanese origin that is made from fermented rice)

Expansion, where the TT is longer than ST through overtranslation. In this example the translation for the culture-bound term “tamakura”, expansion is used alongside transference by giving the explanation of the term.

as well as the **takamakura**-‘...---sidhenje **takamakura**-‘jastëkilartë”

There is a smorgasbord of translation techniques that can be used while translating the culture-bound terms. The best criterion to decide about the best and appropriate technique to use is to **consider the readership’s source-culture knowledge**. Translators always have a reader in mind. They decide upon strategies and techniques based on what their perceptions about the source culture are. The following example does not consider the reader and reader’s understanding of the source-language culture, because the Albanian reader doesn’t have a hint

what kind disease “tashweesh“ or what kind of pray “nazr“ is. If the technique of transference is used alone, then it can cause misunderstanding for the reader.

**Table 5:** Use of Translation Technique of Transference

Source language text	Target language text
Why didn’t you call earlier? I’ve been sick with <u>tashweesh!</u> My mother’s praying and doing <u>nazr</u> every day. (Kite runner)	Pses’mëtelefonovëmëparë? Jam sëmurë me <u>tashweesh!</u> Mamajalutetdhebënnazrçdoditë

## 2. CONCLUSIONS

Translation is not a matter of words only: it is a matter of making intelligible a whole culture;

When translating, it is important to consider not only the lexical impact on the TL reader, but also the manner in which cultural aspects may be perceived and make translating decisions accordingly;

In translating culture-bound terms, there should be a compromise between ST requirements and TT expectations;

Considering the nature of the text and the similarities between the ideal ST and TT reader, an important aspect is to determine how much missing background information should be provided by the translator using these methods;

Depending on the situational context, the best preferred methods are: transference and componential analysis and the techniques of explanations, paraphrasing and footnotes.

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