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CULTURAL LACUNAE: LACUNAS OF ACTIVITY AS INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN TRANSLATION

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КУЛЬТУРНЫЕ ЛАКУНЫ: ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТНО-КОММУНИКАТИВНЫЕ ЛАКУНЫ КАК МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНАЯ КОММУНИКАЦИЯ В ПЕРЕВОДЕ

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Abstract. The article deals with the translation issues of lacunas of activity as cultural lacunae which are an integral part of the Kyrgyz culture and adequate interpretation of which plays a great role in intercultural communication. Through translated works of art cultures undoubtedly communicate in many ways. Traditions, rituals and other behavioral peculiarities characteristic to one culture might be quite unknown or even seem strange to foreign readers. The author tried to give examples for lacunas of activity described in the novels by Ch. Aitmatov and to show the difficulties of lacunas of activity translation as none of the methods proposed by scholars can be used in transforming them into English. Comparing lacunas of activity in the ST and TT, it has been found out that gestures, movements, actions that follow talking reflected in the works of art can't be eliminated, compensated or commented in literary translation therefore it will be challenging for foreign recipients. Indifferent readers will find them strange while concerned ones will get more information about another culture. This way cultures communicate with each-other through translation.

Аннотация. Рассматриваются вопросы перевода лакун деятельности как культурные лакуны, которые являются неотъемлемой частью кыргызской культуры и адекватная интерпретация которых играет большую роль в межкультурной коммуникации. Через переведенные произведения культуры, несомненно, общаются разными способами. Традиции, ритуалы и другие особенности поведения, характерные для одной культуры, могут быть совершенно неизвестны или даже показаться иностранному читателю странными. Автор попытался привести примеры лакун деятельности, описанных в романах Ч. Айтматова и показать трудности лакун перевода деятельности, поскольку ни один из предложенных учеными методов не может быть использован для перевода их на английский язык. Сравнивая лакуны деятельности в оригинале и переводном тексте, установлено, что жесты, движения, действия, сопровождающие разговор, отраженные в художественных произведениях, не могут быть устранены, компенсированы или прокомментированы в художественном переводе, поэтому будут проблематичны для иностранных реципиентов. Равнодушным читателям они покажутся странными, а заинтересованные получают больше информации о другой культуре. Таким образом, культуры общаются друг с другом посредством перевода.

Keywords: cultural lacuna, lacunas of activity, intercultural communication, literary translation.

Ключевые слова: культурная лакуна, деятельностно-коммуникативные лакуны, межкультурная коммуникация, художественный перевод.

It is widely known that through translation, cultures communicate with each other. Kyrgyz people learned about other cultures with the help of the works of art created by Shakespeare, Rudyard Kipling, O. Henry, J. London, G de Maupassant, R. Tagore etc. They were available for Kyrgyz audience in translation and by reading the translated works of art, Kyrgyz writers and poets got inspiration and wrote their novels and poems. Thus, Kyrgyz literature developed as well. The world got to know the Kyrgyz culture through translated novels by Ch. Aitmatov as his novels were translated into more than a hundred languages. Kyrgyz national traditions, customs, cultural values and realities reflected in his works of art are unarguably known to other recipients through translation.

In the study descriptive method (to describe distinctive features of lacunas of activity) and comparative method (to analyse the source text and target text to identify the translation equivalence) were used.

Due to the process of globalization and the advancement of science and technology in the context of international communication, the cultural aspect of it – the communication between the various cultures – has recently received increasing attention, as “the language can be seen as an extension of the culture” [1]. Thus, it’s important for every culture to follow the way how those particular cultural realities are being interpreted into another language that foreign recipients could get the clear picture of what’s been described or narrated.

Actually, the translation of certain objects, notions, phenomena characteristic to certain culture that do not have equivalent in other languages or cultures has been studied and different ways of problem solutions have been proposed by different scholars. Discrepancies, inconsistencies in languages and cultures are recorded at various levels and are described by various authors. For example, in relation to the lexical level of the language, such terms as “non-equivalent vocabulary” (Barkhudarov, Vereshchagin, Kostomarov), “anti-words” (Stepanov), “realities” (Vlakhov, Florin) and in relation to national-specific elements in cultural texts that obstruct communication, “ethno-aidema” (Sheiman, Varich), “dark places” (Budakova), “burr” (Gachev) have been proposed. Discussing linguistic and cultural differences the term “lacuna” is claimed to be used by the majority of scholars. I. Yu. Markovina claims that all cases of non-equivalent vocabulary can be considered as examples of the aforementioned “lacunae”. The concept of “lacuna”, underlying the issue of lacunarity in intercultural communication, and the concept of non-equivalent vocabulary in translation are quite similar.

The terms are frequently used in a correlative manner. A lexical lacuna is traditionally understood as absence of a word in one language and its availability in the other one. On the contrary, a non-equivalent word is a word that exists in one language and is absent in the other. It is worth reminding that non-equivalent words and lacunae are found in pairs – if there is a lacuna in one language, the language which is being compared has a non-equivalent word and vice versa [2].

An American linguist Ch. Hockett, when comparing the grammatical systems of two languages, finds “random holes in patterns” — random spaces in speech patterns [3]. Canadian linguists J.P. Vinay and J. Darbelnet define the term lacuna as “a phenomenon that occurs whenever a word of one language does not have a correspondence in another language” [4]. Yu. S. Stepanov

gave a detailed explanation of the term “lacuna” in the context of linguistic direction. He described lacunae as “white spots on the semantic map of the language, invisible from the inside, to a person who speaks only one language” [5].

Lacunae can be lingual (lexical, grammatical, stylistic) and cultural (ethnographic, psychological, behavioral, kinesics etc.) Besides, lacunae can be not only intercultural or interlingual (emerging while intercultural communication process), but also intracultural (intralingual) [6].

Cultural lacunae can be understood as deeply embedded ways of communicating within a given culture, which seem to be odd or strange for non-members of the culture. A culture builds its identity by identifying outsiders, creating subjective viewpoints and opinions of others. Members of a certain culture think in a certain way [7]. The goal of lacuna analysis is to observe subtleties, overlapping, inconsistencies, individual traits, and advancements in contrast to many “guides” on cross-cultural communication, which are frequently in danger of spreading magic formulas [8].

Cultural lacunae are classified into four principal groups [8]: Mental lacunae; Lacunae of activity; Lacunae of objects; Axiological lacunae, which were marked as a special class.

Mental lacunae follow two principles: 1) the naming of the respective perspective or the respective intercultural constellation is crucial and 2) frequently different lacunae coincide and they denote differences in all cognitive or affective states or models, differences in the state of knowledge in its broadest sense, such as • conscious and subconscious • so-called common sense and reflected knowledge • rules derived from experience or ethics • expectations and fears. Mental lacunae can be further separated into emotional lacunae relating to culture, lacunae of fond or knowledge and linguistic lacunae. Lacunae of fond or knowledge is subdivided into conceptual, role-related, spatial, and time-related lacunae while linguistic lacunae are subdivided into partial and complete lexical and grammatical lacunae as well as [8].

The distinction between mental lacunae and lacunae of activity is made to distinguish between observable behavior on one side and mental conceptions on the other. Few times do the two sides agree. Different scientific research methodologies are also required. Different processes of thinking, talking, moving, and other actions are indicated by lacunae of activity. They may originate from odd mental or objective preconditions, and as a result, they may be thought a bit strange. The following subgroups are an open list based on the current state of research: lacunae of use of language, lacunae of paralinguistic and body language, lacunae of etiquette, behavior, routine and taboo, lacunae of thinking, perception and orientation in space and time which are subdivided into syllogistic lacunae and perceptive lacunae, lacunae of communicative means, lacunae of oral texts and moving pictures and lacunae of virtual texts and pictures [8].

Lacunae of objects denote differences in objects and in human environment. Among other subgroups are lacunae of written or otherwise recorded texts and images, lacunae of public environment, lacunae of geographic infrastructure, lacunae of private environment, lacunae of the human body, attributive lacunae and lacunae of food [8].

Axiological lacunae in some manner offer a special dimension to the lacuna model because they signify culture specific connotations and evaluations of differing phenomena so that they are often at the root of misunderstandings and conflicts. These culture specific connotations and evaluations can be seen as different interpretation schemes of reality. In other words, any object/situation etc. of a foreign culture during an intercultural encounter can account for a specific meaning in this concrete encounter that is an axiological lacuna. They have a key function in the lacuna model and only come to existence through the emergence of other lacunae in the way that the interplay of a multitude of gaps/ differences/misunderstandings lead to a specific meaning for

the concrete intercultural encounter. Axiological lacunas are a second dimension in the lacuna model [8].

Discussion

Further examples for lacunas of activity picked up from the novels by Ch. Aitmatov will be analyzed.

1. Биздин Садык дагы жылкычы болуп жүрүп, жайлоодогу малчылардын тоюнда кыз куумайга түшүп, Жамийлага жетпей калган имиш, ошондон кийин намыстанып аны ала качып келгенин уккам [10].

Our Sadyk was also a horse-breeder. It was said that at the spring races he could not overtake Jamila. Perhaps that was so, but they said that after that the insulted Sadyk had kidnapped her [11].

Foreign recipients won't understand the reason of Sadyk's action. There is a national game called kyz kuumai (lit. Chasing after a girl) where unmarried young men and adult girls participate in horse races. If a young man wins in a horse race, he marries a young lady. It was widely practised in everyday life of Kyrgyz people. These days this game is played but the tradition of marriage is rarely practised. From Sadyk's activity in this extract foreign recipients learn about one of the traditional marriages of Kyrgyz people. Strange activity that made Sadyk kidnap his wife. It was one of the forms of forced marriage.

2. Кудалаган күйөөсүнүн жөн-жайын сурабадым. Оңтою келбеди, анын үстүнө, коомайландым. Бирок кыздын сөзүнүн кыябына карасам, алыскы таякелеринен окшойт. Тоодо токойчу көрүнөт. Жек-жаат эки тарап илгертен бери маал-маалы менен сөөк жаңырттып келатышкан сыяктуу. Ошол үчүн кыздын ата-энеси Аселди бөтөн бирөөгө кетет деп үч уктаса түшүнө кирбейт экен. Андай болгон соң менин атымды атап кажаты жок тура. Мен ким элем? Каңгып жүргөн бир шоопур. Өзгөнү коюп, өзүм ооз ача алмакмынбы? [10].

I never asked her about the man she was to marry. It was none of my business and, besides, I didn't want to know. From what she said I gathered that she hardly knew him. He was a sort of relative of her mother's and lived in the mountains, in a remote lumber camp. The families had a long-standing tradition of exchanging brides, and they had thus maintained their kinship for generations. Asel's parents would never allow her to marry an outsider. And marrying me was quite out of the question. What was I? A common lorry driver from nowhere, without kith or kin. I'd never dare to propose, even [12].

The reason why this man doesn't want to learn about her future husband is because he fell in love with the engaged girl. It is an example for arranged marriage, where parents who are distant relatives decide to marry their children to maintain their kinship for generations. An ordinary lorry driver who grew up in an orphan house doesn't dare to make a marriage proposal. It's important in Kyrgyz culture that both bride and groom were from worthy families and kinship.

3. Ошентип жөнөп калдык. Эң оболу жолдогу бир дүкөндөн Аселге кийим-кечек сатып алдык. Ал жалаң көйнөкчөн келбеди беле. Баарынан да гүлдүү чоң шалы жоолук сатып алдык [10].

We were off. The first thing we did was buy Asel some clothes at a shop we passed. All she had was the dress she wore. Among other things, we bought her a large, bright, flowered shawl [12].

This is an example for marriage of mutual agreement. Despite the fact that Asel was to marry a distant relative, she agreed to marry Iliyas who she fell in love with too. On the way they bought clothes and a shawl for Asel. In Kyrgyz tradition marriage is impossible without white shawl and new clothes for bride. Here not because she had the only dress, she was wearing but according to the tradition they bought new items like a shawl and dress.

4. Ошентип, жол мизинде сүйлөшүп турабыз. Урмат аке машинеге жакындаган да жок, Асел тарапты караган да жок. Асел эстей койгону жакшы болуптур, шалы жоолугун көзүнө түшүрө салына койду эле, мына ошондо Урмат аке ыраазы боло күлүмсүрөдү.

— Жөн билги келин экен! — деди. — Тилегиңе жет, балам. Сен эми автобазадагы улуулар баарыбыздын келинибиз болосуң. Мына эмесе, Илияс, келиндин көрүндүгүн өзүнө эле берейин, — деп мага акча сунду. Алдым, албасам аксакал киши кейип калбайбы. Кош айтышып жөнөп кеттик. Асел башынан жоолугун түшүрбөйт [10].

We stood talking in the road, but Urmat-ake did not so much as glance towards the lorry and Asel sitting in the cab. Fortunately, she was quick to do the right thing: she put the shawl on her head and covered her face with it. Urmat-ake smiled benignly.

“Everything is proper now”, he said. “Thank you, daughter, for respecting tradition. From now on you will be our daughter-in-law, the daughter-in-law of all the aksakals in the motor depot. Here, Ilyas, this is for seeing your bride”, he handed me some money. I could not offend him by refusing. We went our different ways. Asel kept the shawl on [12].

Urmat ake didn't come up to the bride even didn't turn his head towards her. This is because of the tradition that the bride shouldn't meet elder brothers-in-law. The bride should be officially introduced to groom's brothers and they in return should give some money for seeing their daughter-in-law for the first time. The bride should constantly bow to relatives and guests. Before that special introduction the daughter-in-law escapes brothers-in-law not to show her face. Therefore, Asel covers her face.

Conclusion

From the examples given above foreign readers will learn about Kyrgyz marriage the following:

Forced marriage; a girl who participated and won in the horse race was kidnapped;

Arranged marriage; parents of young people agree to marry children to maintain relationship with distant relatives;

Companionate marriage; a girl agrees to marry the man even if she was engaged.

Important objects of marriage are a white scarf, new clothes for the bride, curtain screen, and some amount of money for seeing the bride.

The bride shouldn't show her face to senior brothers-in-law unless she is officially introduced to them. All these activities should be done in every decent home as it's given in the example above.

From the examples provided above it's clear that lacunas of activity contain some information. Talking, movement and other activities are mostly based on cultural traditions and ethics and foreign readers might find them a bit strange. But such unusual actions motivate them seek more information and get reasons for such activities described in the novels. Such lacunas of activity can't be eliminated or compensated; they are just described as in the source text. The rest should be interpreted by readers themselves.

We want to finish the article with the citation that ‘the large number of the lacunae does not lead to the impossibility of the interlanguage communication. The absence of the verbal designation does not mean the inability to understand the phenomenon. The translation as an object of study in linguoculturology is believed to be the absence of a verbal sign in a particular language does not mean that it is fundamentally impossible for the speakers, the understanding of the certain meanings and concepts are clearly verbalized in another culture’ [9].

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