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CULTURAL REALITIES AND THE ISSUE OF EQUIVALENCE IN ARTISTIC TRANSLATION (IN THE EXAMPLE OF YU HUA'S NOVEL "LIVING")

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Abstract: This article analyzes the problems of equivalence and interpretation that arise in the process of translating cultural realities found in the novel "To Live" by Yu Hua, a major representative of modern Chinese literature . The study identifies the semantic, historical and communicative functions of cultural realities in a literary text and examines the translation strategies used in their translation into another language. Since culturally loaded units embody the lifestyle, social relations, historical experience and worldview of a particular people, simple lexical conformity is not always sufficient in their translation. Based on various translations of cultural units in the novel "To Live", the possibilities of such methods as literal translation, descriptive translation, interpretation, adaptation and transliteration are analyzed. The results of the study show that in the translation of cultural realities, along with linguistic equivalence, cultural and communicative equivalence must also be taken into account.
Keywords: cultural realities, culturally loaded units, equivalence, interpretation, literary translation, translation strategy, intercultural communication.
Abstract : This article examines the problems of equivalence and interpretation in translating culture-loaded words in Yu Hua's novel To Live (huózhe). Particular attention is paid to the semantic, cultural, historical and communicative functions of culture-specific units. The study analyzes translation strategies such as literal translation, adaptation, explanation, amplification and transliteration. The analysis demonstrates that lexical correspondence alone is insufficient for conveying culturally specific meanings. Cultural and communicative equivalence should also be considered when translating Yu Hua's novel into another language. The study concludes that the translator acts not only as a linguistic mediator but also as an interpreter of cultural meanings.
Keywords: culture-loaded words, cultural realia, equivalence, interpretation, literary translation, translation strategies, intercultural communication.

Introduction: Literary translation is not a simple linguistic exchange between two languages, but a complex communicative process between two cultures. In a work of art, words can express not only their lexical meaning, but also the historical experience, lifestyle, social relations, values, and worldview of a particular people. Therefore, translating units with cultural content is one of the most difficult issues in literary translation [1-2].

Yu Hua's novel " Living " is an important source for studying this issue. The work depicts the life of Xu Fugui and his family against the backdrop of complex historical periods in 20th-century China. Along with the personal fate of the characters in the novel, it also reflects social and cultural changes in Chinese society [1-3]. Therefore, the work contains many units that represent the people's daily life, family relationships, historical events, and cultural views.

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In the study conducted by Zhang and Lou, culturally loaded units in the novel «活着» were studied as a special object of research, and the abundance of such units in the novel was noted [1-2,4-]. The authors show the need to analyze cultural units from linguistic, cultural and communicative aspects [1-7].

A study by Wang, Amini, and Tan Ai Lin in 2025 also called "Living" The study focuses on the issues of loss, additional meaning, and equivalence associated with culturally loaded units in the English translation of the novel. Researchers emphasize that achieving complete equivalence is not always possible in cross-cultural translation [2-17,19].

The purpose of this article is to analyze the issues of equivalence and interpretation in translating cultural realities in Yu Hua's novel "Living".

Research methodology. The research used comparative-analytical, contextual and descriptive methods. The source material was Yu Hua's novel "活着生" and its existing translation options, as well as scientific studies that studied culturally loaded units in the translation of the novel.

In the analysis of cultural units, attention was paid to their function in the context, historical and cultural content, and the translation strategies used in translation, along with their lexical meaning. This approach allows us to determine not only the “word-for-word” correspondence in the translation process, but also the general function of the unit in the text [1-8]. For example, in Yu Hua's novel 《活着》 , the sentence “我瞙了耙话鼻子一酸，差点掉出眼泪来” appears. Although the phrase “鼻子一酸” literally means “a nosebleed”, in the context it expresses the emotional state of the hero close to strong excitement and crying. Therefore, it is appropriate to express it in Uzbek through contextual equivalents such as “铝gli ezildi”, “gō'ziga yash keldi”.

As we know, in the theory of translation studies, realities have been studied by scholars on a certain basis. Therefore, it is permissible to touch upon them in the analysis of the work. These are:

1. The concept of cultural reality and culturally loaded unity. Cultural reality refers to an object, phenomenon, concept, tradition, social relationship, or linguistic unity that is characteristic of a particular people or culture. Such units existing in one language may not have a full equivalent in another language, or it may be difficult to express their full cultural content through the existing equivalent.

Zhang and Lou consider culturally loaded words as units that reflect the beliefs, values, and lifestyle of a particular society. The researchers point out that the translation of such units poses a problem of equivalence [1-5].

In the novel "To Live", cultural units appear in various forms. They can be conditionally divided into the following groups:

1. Material-cultural realities;
2. Socio-cultural realities;
3. Historical and political realities;
4. Realities that represent religious and traditional concepts;
5. Realities representing popular expressions and figurative units;
6. Realities representing units of address and kinship.

In Zhang and Lou's study, culturally charged units identified from the novel "Living" were divided into groups such as ecological, material, social, religious, and linguistic cultural units. The researchers noted that they identified a total of 164 culturally charged units [1-9].

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In a study conducted by Deng Qianyu and Wang Qi in 2024 on the Japanese translation of "Living", culturally loaded units were also analyzed based on groups such as material culture, social life, historical information, religious culture, language culture, and famous names [3-149,151]. Based on the scientific and theoretical opinions of scholars, the realities presented in the novel "Living" were expressed can also be analyzed according to its characteristics.

2. Characteristics of cultural realities in the novel "Living". Although Yu Hua's artistic style is simple and concise, there are many linguistic units with high cultural content in the novel. Zhang and Lou show that Yu Hua's language has a simple and concise structure, and at the same time, the specific syntactic and stylistic characteristics of some Chinese units create difficulties in translation [1-13]. For example, the use of repeated units in the novel enhances the character's mental state and the emotional impact of the event. Researchers show that repeated units such as "走走哭哭" and "哭哭走走" are difficult to fully preserve in translation [1-14]. This situation shows that it is necessary to take into account not only semantic meaning, but also rhythm and style in translation.

Therefore, the problem of cultural unity in translation is - firstly, to convey its direct meaning; secondly, to recreate and preserve the cultural and artistic impact created by this unity. The translator must pay attention to these two factors. Then the translation process will be clear, understandable and can affect the reader.

3. The problem of equivalence in translation. Equivalence is one of the main concepts in translation studies, expressing the substantive and functional relationship between the source text and the translation text. However, achieving equivalence in general in the translation of cultural realities is a somewhat difficult situation. Therefore, the translator must pay attention to this in the translation process.

Wang, Amini, and Tan Ai Lin's study analyzes the relationship between loss, additional meaning, and equivalence in the translation of culturally loaded units in the novel "Living". The researchers note that it is not always possible to achieve complete equivalence due to cultural and linguistic differences [2-20]. For example, the article cites the example of the Chinese expression "断子绝孙" being translated into English as "be finished". The researchers show that in such a translation, part of the cultural and historical meaning of the expression, related to the non-continuation of the generation, is lost [2-21]. This example shows that even if the general meaning of a word or expression is preserved in translation, its cultural connotation may be lost. Therefore, it is not correct to assess equivalence for cultural realities based solely on lexical compatibility.

4. Strategies for translating cultural realities. An analysis of the translation options in the novel "To Live" shows that several translation strategies are used to convey cultural realities.

A. Literal translation. In literal or word-for-word translation, the formal and semantic features of the source unit are preserved as much as possible. This method can be effective in cases where the cultural unit is understandable to the target reader. However, in units with strong historical or cultural content, literal translation may not be sufficient. Zhang and Lou illustrate this with the example of the unit "包产到户". This concept is related to the agricultural and economic policies of China in the late 20th century, and a literal translation alone does not fully convey the meaning [1-17].

B. Descriptive translation and amplification. If a cultural unit is unfamiliar to the target reader, the translator can clarify its meaning through additional description. Zhang and Lou show that

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in the translation of the units “包产到户” it is possible to make the historical-economic context understandable by providing additional information [1, p. 17]. The advantage of this method is that the translator provides the reader with the necessary context without losing the understanding specific to the source culture.

C. Free or functional translation. It is not possible to reproduce the meaning of some cultural units exactly in the target language. In such a situation, the translator can choose an expression that preserves the contextual function of the unit. For example, Zhang and Lou analyzed the unit "良心" (liángxīn) and showed that it is close to the meaning of "honesty" or "conscience" in a certain context. According to researchers, it is more appropriate to give the contextual meaning of this unit than to translate it literally [1-16].

D. Transliteration and Explanation. Some cultural realities can be transliterated in order to preserve their originality. However, transliteration itself does not explain the meaning to the reader. Therefore, a short explanation can be added to it. The forms of address between the characters in the novel are an example of this. Zhang and Lou analyze the address units such as "老爷" and "少奶奶" and show that they express age, social status and family relationships in Chinese society [1-19]. Therefore, in such units, the translator should take into account not only the lexical meaning, but also the social function of the address form and apply it in the translation process.

5. The issue of domestication and foreignization. The choice between domestication and foreignization is one of the important issues in the translation of cultural realities. In the domestication strategy, the text is brought closer to a familiar and natural form for the target reader. In foreignization, the uniqueness of the source culture is preserved as much as possible. For example, translating the unit “生活队” (shēngchǎn duì) found in the novel as “production brigade” serves to preserve the socio-political concept in the source culture. In this case, the translator does not completely adapt the original cultural unit to another culture, but preserves its content as much as possible. This is an approach typical of the foreignization strategy. On the contrary, expressing this concept in an expression familiar to the Uzbek reader, such as “collective farm brigade,” approaches domestication.

A study conducted by Bi Manman in 2024 analyzes the culturally charged units in Michael Berry's translation of the novel "Living" precisely from the perspective of domestication and foreignization. The study emphasizes that the novel is rich in cultural units and that it is important for the translator to recreate them while preserving their original cultural content [4-19,21]. In this regard, it is not advisable to consistently follow a single translation strategy in the translation of the novel "Living". The type, context, and impact of each unit on the reader should be assessed separately.

6. The role of the translator's interpretation. In the translation of cultural realities, the translator is not only a linguistic mediator, but also a cultural interpreter. Because the translator determines which meaning of the unit in the source text is important and determines how to transfer it to the target language.

Zhang and Lou view translation as an interrelated process of language, culture, and communication, emphasizing the need for the translator to convey the cultural connotations of the source text to the target reader [1-8]. Their approach considers the linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions of translation together [1-10,12].

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From this point of view, the translator's interpretation is manifested in three stages. First, he determines the lexical meaning of the cultural unit. Second, he determines the historical and cultural connotation of the unit. Third, he conveys this meaning to the target reader in an understandable and artistically natural form. The research of Wang et al. also shows that in translation some parts of the cultural meaning can be lost or enriched with new meanings [2-22]. Therefore, the translation process is not a mechanical replacement, but an interpretative activity.

7. The importance of the translation of cultural realities for the Uzbek language. The issue of translating Yu Hua's novel "Living" into Uzbek is also relevant for Uzbek translation studies. The historical, social and linguistic differences between Chinese and Uzbek cultures may require additional explanation or functional adaptation when translating certain cultural units. For example, although Chinese kinship and address units have important socio-semantic properties in Uzbek, the kinship systems and address forms in the two languages are not always fully compatible. Therefore, when translating such units, the social distance and level of respect between the characters should be taken into account, in addition to their lexical meaning.

In addition, contextual interpretation plays an important role in conveying political and social concepts related to 20th-century Chinese history to the Uzbek reader. Zhang and Lou, when analyzing historical-economic units such as “包产到户”, also show the need to convey historical context in translation [1-17]. Therefore, in the Uzbek translation of the novel “Yashamoq”, two main tasks of the translator emerge: on the one hand, to preserve the uniqueness of Chinese culture; on the other hand, to convey the content of the text to the Uzbek reader in a natural and understandable way.

Results and Discussion. The analysis of the novel's language revealed that three main factors were identified as important in the translation of cultural realities in the work "To Live".

The first factor is linguistic compatibility. The translation unit must be grammatically and semantically adapted to the target language. Zhang and Lou's research has shown that short and repetitive syntactic structures in Chinese are reproduced differently in translation [1-12,14].

The second factor is cultural compatibility. The translator must understand the meaning of the cultural unit in the source language and not misinterpret it. Units such as "良心", "包产到户", "老爷" and "少奶奶" clearly demonstrate this [1-15,19].

The third factor is communicative compatibility. The translation should convey the author's main communicative intention to the intended reader. Zhang and Lou show that the translation process must preserve the communicative intention along with the linguistic and cultural content [1-19,21].

Wang et al.'s research shows that loss and addition of meaning can occur naturally in the translation of cultural units [2-20,24]. Therefore, it is not enough to assess the quality of translation solely by "word-for-word correspondence".

Deng and Wang's 2024 study showed that the Japanese translation of "Living" used different strategies for material, social, historical, religious, and linguistic cultural units [3-149,153]. This result suggests that the strategy used in translating cultural realities varies depending on the type of unit.

Conclusion . Yu Hua's novel "Living" is one of the important literary sources for studying the issue of translating cultural realities. The culturally loaded units found in the novel reflect the daily life, historical experience, social relations, values, and worldview of the Chinese people.

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The analysis revealed that it is not always possible to achieve absolute equivalence in the translation of cultural realities. In translating such units, methods such as literal translation, descriptive translation, amplification, functional adaptation, transliteration, and interpretation can be used [2-20,25].

The success of the translation of cultural realities is not determined only by preserving the lexical meaning of the word. The translator must also take into account the contextual, historical, cultural and communicative features of the unit. In particular, units such as "良心", "包产到户", "老爷", "少奶奶" show that cultural content is of particular importance in translation [1-19]. Also, translations of "Yashamoq" into different languages show that the same source unit can be interpreted differently by different translators. This confirms the active role of the translator in recreating the literary text [4-19,21].

In general, the harmony of linguistic, cultural and communicative equivalence can be considered as the main principle in translating the cultural realities of the novel "Yashamoq" into Uzbek . The translator should strive to create a literary text that is understandable and natural for the Uzbek reader, while preserving the uniqueness of the source culture.

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