

Assimilation of Foreign Culture Concepts: Acculturation Experience Using Material of Secondary Texts

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Abstract— This paper analyses texts with ‘borrowed plots’, i.e. plots that were used in other cultures before and have been written in a foreign language and in a foreign culture, and are very popular in other cultures. Their interpretations have minor divergences from the original story that reveal a linguistic and cultural basis. There have been three noticed models of assimilation of cultural concepts, such as complete adoption of a concept; incomplete adoption of a concept or assimilation; rejection or disregard of a concept. They are very interesting for linguistics and cultural studies because they show differences in similar cultural concepts. The material of the research includes secondary texts of fairy tales which appeared in different cultures. Divergences from the original story bear culturally specific features and can be used for comparison analysis and cultural studies.

Keywords— *intercultural communication, acculturation, text adaptation, translation transformations, axiological world map, secondary texts.*

I. INTRODUCTION

A lot of researches have been devoted to the process of cultural interaction [1, 2, 3, 4, 5], and scientists have made a considerable advance in this field. It has been pointed out that exchange of information between cultures may happen via different products of culture, such as texts, films, cartoons and comics, art etc. and concepts in them. The process of interaction when cultures produce a certain impact on each other is called acculturation. It can affect various spheres of culture, but the concept sphere gives a chance to a detailed analysis. Concept assimilation can be viewed as a type of acculturation. During concept assimilation, a concept from a foreign culture is borrowed with some changes, so it starts to look more familiar for the culture recipient.

In some cases, communication of cultures can occur due to exchange of texts, and sometimes they may be creolized texts [6]. A creolized text is an inhomogeneous text comprising verbal and nonverbal parts which function as one unity. Creolized texts are often used for text adaptation and simplification to illustrate verbal information, to produce aesthetic and emotional impact on the reader, or to persuade the reader [7].

A culture that accepts (or adopts) the text can be called ‘the culture recipient’, and the one that has produced the text to be accepted can be called ‘the culture-agent’. The exchanged texts bear certain concepts and values that are fragments of conceptosphere or axiological world map.

II. SETTING A PROBLEM

Difference and uniqueness of cultures are an axiom, therefore researchers are looking for new methods to discover and analyze the asymmetry of cultures. Among many of these methods, there may be comparison of ‘borrowed plots’ when some plots are borrowed from one culture into another one. When taking a text from the culture-agent, the culture-recipient adapts it according to its own laws, customs, and traditions. In some cases ‘borrowed plots’ are fairy tales with no evident writer. One can also see some changes in the plot if one compares the versions of this tale in diachronic aspect, but more often the divergence is evident when the plots are borrowed from one culture into another. Some plots are so popular that they can be found in a number of cultures, but every tale has its own peculiar details.

It is important to note the fact that ‘borrowed plots’ tend to be precedent texts. According to V.V. Krasnykh and G.G. Slyshkin, a precedent text is known to the majority of people in the society and fits with the following conditions. First, the people either have read it or heard about it; second, they are familiar with the plot; third, they appeal to this text (or its parts, characters, etc.) rather often [8, 9]. Precedent texts, as well as other precedent phenomena, are a part of mentality of the society (it can be a certain group of people or a culture as a whole). Presumably, studying of the ‘borrowed plots’ might be a key to researching mentality of a culture. They can also be used to study differences from the other cultures where they have been transmitted into.

The adopted texts circulating within the cultures contain concepts that are of different value for the ‘culture-recipient’ and the ‘culture-agent’. In the ‘culture-agent’ this concept may be of crucial importance (e.g. concept QUEEN / KING for the British culture), but in the ‘culture-recipient’, it may occupy much more modest position (e.g. concept QUEEN / KING in

the Soviet culture), it may also have a different structure and image component. This question still needs to be highlighted.

Nonverbal component of creolized texts performs an aesthetic function, so it may comprise an imaginary part of the concept [10]. It can also be transformed when it is transmitted into another culture. It has not been discovered yet how nonverbal part of a creolized text can be transformed to fit better into a foreign conceptosphere.

All the questions stated above give more profound understanding of how foreign cultural concepts can assimilate into another culture.

III. PROBLEM SOLUTION

A. Cultural background

Studies of fairy tales are tremendously resourceful for linguists for a number of reasons. Firstly, this material provides a system of linguistic and cultural values, many of which are universal ones. Secondly, fairy tales help people transmit these values; they very often pass them on from one generation to the other [11, 12]. Sometimes this transmission happens not within one culture but between different cultures. There has been noticed that some plots in fairy tales are eagerly adopted by cultures, so one plot with minor changes can be found in a range of cultures. Such stories are called 'borrowed plots'. They are not perceived by native speakers as a foreign rudiment because they suit the culture recipient comfortably. The reason why they fit a new culture so agreeably is accurate and thorough adaptation of these stories, which takes into consideration all peculiar features and concepts of the 'culture-recipient'. So, with these 'borrowed plots' we can observe not only translation into another language, but interpretation into another culture. It is called a 'cultural turn' in translation [1]. Specific historical, cultural, and ideological contexts make a 'sieve' for translation, transforming or neglecting of specific concepts.

Gideon Toury makes the following suggestion that "translation activities should rather be regarded as having cultural significance. Consequently, 'translatorship' amounts first and foremost to being able to play a social role, i.e. to fulfill a function allotted to the activity, its practitioners and/or their products - in a way which is deemed appropriate in its own terms of reference" [13: 53-69]. Cultural significance of translation is revealed in two particular ways, such as, firstly, choosing specific plots for translation. The stories that are translated into a lot of languages become world classical literature; they contain a treasury of valuable messages and concepts that can be seen as universal values. Secondly, as a result of translation of a specific text, there may happen acculturation of the text or message into own culture, i.e. 'culture-recipient'. It occurs due to transforming culturally significant concepts and assimilating of a new concept or notion into own system of concepts.

A vivid example of this story is Cinderella. It is a classical 'borrowed plot' that can be found in a lot of cultures. The same story in Russian and English variants has some evident differences. An English Cinderella is an orphan, though a Russian Cinderella has a father. Slight difference, as it may seem, is repeated in a range of other stories, where orphans in English-told stories have their mirrored Russian characters who

have one or both parents. It happens due to different attitudes towards bringing up children in these two cultures. English culture sees a child as a self-confident independent personality from a rather early age. This idea is developed in a lot of stories and fairy tales (David Copperfield, Harry Potter, Paddington the Bear, etc.). In Russian stories the connection between generations is absolutely evident (we always see either parents or grandparents in fairy tales).

So, the translator's work is connected not only with transmission of the text into another language, but they are to transmit it into another culture with morals suitable to this culture. This tendency can be seen in a number of stories.

B. 'Borrowed plots' as secondary texts

The theory of secondary texts is formed on the thesis that one text can be built on the basis of another text (a prototype text) but with different pragmatic goals and in different situation of communication. A secondary text can often have another genre (parody, burlesque, etc.) [14], it can take only a part of a prototype text (i.e. intext). A secondary text has some deviations from a prototype. An example of a secondary text is a simplified (or graded) text or an adopted text. A simplified text is a secondary text that is written for readers with lower linguistic knowledge and has changes in syntax, grammar, or vocabulary. There can be grades of simplification according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Sometimes the problem of comprehension is not in the language of the text, but in the background knowledge of the reader. Professionals sometimes need to simplify texts in order to make them more understandable for people without special knowledge [7]. Thus, the form and the content of the text can be deviated to achieve specific communicative goals.

In case of interaction of cultures, we can see a great difference in their concept spheres which is caused by unsimilar historic experience, customs, and traditions of these cultures. So, when a text is transmitted into another culture (to the 'culture-recipient'), naturally, certain changes should be expected with regard to the concepts and structure of these concepts.

IV. METHOD

We have analyzed a range of texts functioning in Russian, English and French cultures (you can see it the list of references). The criteria of selection were functioning of this text in all these cultures and its popularity. We can also claim the selected texts to be precedent according to the reasons mentioned above.

There can be three models how cultures exchange texts in the process of interaction:

translation into a foreign language and growing popularity of the story in the 'recipient-culture' or becoming a part of classical literature ('David Copperfield' by Ch. Dickens);

assimilation of the story according to the sphere of concepts and values of the recipient culture after it has been translated and retold by a different writer and was translated in its turn into a number of languages ('Volshebnik Izumrudnogo Goroda' (Sorcerer of Emerald City) by A. Volkov which was written after 'The Wonderful Wizard of Oz' by L.F. Baum);

perceiving the text as a part of own culture (e.g. Cinderella, Red Riding Hood, Le petit Chaperon Rouge, etc.) which has been assimilated into culture recipient with highly recognizable plot with minor changes.

For our research we used texts from the second and third models, and picked out concepts that have been transformed in some way. Analysis of this process shows three possible patterns of concept adoption, these are 1) complete adoption of a concept; 2) incomplete adoption of a concept or assimilation; 3) rejection or disregarding of a concept. We have not studied thoroughly the texts from the first model because such cases are very closely viewed by the theory of translation. The choice of a story to be translated is made by the publisher, and after that further translations and secondary texts on its basis are stimulated by the popularity among the readers.

Assimilation of the story according to the sphere of concepts and values of the recipient culture

Let us illustrate the mentioned above statements with examples of parallel scenes from 'Sorcerer of Emerald City' by A. Volkov (SEC) [15] and 'The Wonderful Wizard of Oz' by L.F. Baum (WWO) [16]. The creation of the SEC story was meant to make it fit into the Soviet culture as much as possible, so the writer added some details and rejected what he thought to be unsuitable. Though both stories are fairy tales about friendship and kindness, they bear features of the cultures where they have been created.

Concept "FAMILY" (members of the family)

WWO: "That's all right," said the Stork, who was flying along beside them. "I always like to help anyone in trouble. But I must go now, for my babies are waiting in the nest for me. I hope you will find the Emerald City and that Oz will help you."

SEC: The Stork answers, "... My wife and children are waiting for me".

The Russian culture underlines the model of the family with both parents and their children, it is an element that has been added to the story by the translator; though an American fairy tale renders nothing about the father in the family of the Stork, it presupposes only woman with her children.

In WWO we can read the scene when the hurricane started, and all the family rushed: "Aunt Em dropped her work and came to the door. One glance told her of the danger close at hand.

"Quick, Dorothy!" she screamed. "Run for the cellar!"

Toto jumped out of Dorothy's arms and hid under the bed, and the girl started to get him. Aunt Em, badly frightened, threw open the trap door in the floor and climbed down the ladder into the small, dark hole."

In this part we can see Aunt Em checked that the child is near and rushed to save herself, though the girl did not leave her dog behind and did not follow the woman.

SEC renders a little bit different idea: "Anna rushed to the cellar and opened the door. – 'Ellie, Elli! Quick! Here!', she cried.

But Toto, frightened by the roar of the hurricane and thunder, run to the door and hid under the bed in the farthest corner. Ellie did not want to leave her pet alone, so she rushed after him. And at this moment a surprising thing happened...".

In the American tale the woman checked the child and started to save herself, neglecting the consequences. The Russian translator decided that a situation when an adult does not try all means to save her child is inadmissible. So, in the Russian story the situation is "surprising", i.e. something that the mother could neither predict nor change.

Concept "FRIENDSHIP"

Both texts contain this concept; moreover, it is one of the text dominants that structures the text. Yet, the Russian version activates this concept more often for it is very important in the Russian culture (you can see a profound study of concept FRIEND and its semantic and cognitive analysis in a manual of A. Wierzbicka [17].

WWO: "They were all tired out when they reached the shore at last and stepped off upon the pretty green grass, and they also knew that the stream had carried them a long way past the road of yellow brick that led to the Emerald City. "What shall we do now?" asked the Tin Woodman, as the Lion lay down on the grass to let the sun dry him. "We must get back to the road, in some way," said Dorothy. "The best plan will be to walk along the riverbank until we come to the road again," remarked the Lion".

In the American story, when the friends lost the Scarecrow, they did not purposefully try to find him; only when they saw him, did they make a rescue plan. The Russian translator decided to underline the team spirit and care for the friend, so the Russian version is a little bit different here:

SEC: "Where shall we go?", asked him [the Lion], narrowing his eyes. 'Backwards, where our friend remained', Ellie said. 'We can not leave without saving our Scarecrow'.

Even though in both stories the Scarecrow was saved, the Russian version explicits the idea of saving a friend and underlines its importance.

Concept QUEEN / KING

Both texts have a character Mouse Queen that symbolises attitudes towards the state authorities. The 'culture-recipient' and the 'culture-agent' have absolutely different systems of government. WWO shows monarchical point of view, and SEC reflects socialist attitudes. So, this concept when being transmitted into another culture underwent serious assimilation.

WWO: "Then the Queen hurriedly gave her people the order to start, for she feared if the mice stayed among the poppies too long, they also would fall asleep." Here we can see care of a monarch towards her subjects, this concept is especially strong in the British culture. In the Soviet Union "QUEEN / KING" concept had absolutely different estimation and value, so the idea of a monarch troubling about her people was queer, and was neglected in the translation.

The concept QUEEN / KING is correlated with the concept STATE in Soviet culture. If in the British culture (or other

cultures with monarchies) to serve the Queen / King is the same as to serve the country, in the Soviet culture it was important to serve the country. This idea influenced the interpretation here:

WWO: "Therefore you have done a great deed, as well as a brave one, in saving my life," added the Queen."

SEC: "By saving my life you discharged your duty".

So, WWO underlines that to save life to the Queen is seen as something outstanding and great, the words bear positive connotation; SEC gives a neutral word combination, just stating what the person is supposed to do.

B. Acculturation of the story (the text as a part of own culture with highly recognizable plot having minor changes)

We have compared same concepts in French, English and Russian versions of fairy tales to see possible divergencies in the plots. Let us give some examples from a fairy tale 'Red Riding Hood'.

The Russian fairy tale: "Once upon a time there lived a small girl. Her mother loved her with all her heart, and her granny loved her even more. The Granny presented her with a red hat for her birthday. Since that time she would go in it everywhere. Her neighbours spoke about her like that, 'Here is a Red Riding Hood'."

In this version the feelings of people are stressed.

The French version is different: "Il était une fois une petite fille. Sa mère a fait pour elle un beau chaperon rouge. Elle le portait toujours et on a commencé à l'appeler Le Petit Chaperon rouge" [18]. (Once upon a time there lived a small girl. Her mother made a beautiful red hat for her. She always wore it, and we started to call her a Red Riding Hood).

The French version does not speak about feelings explicitly, but shows acts of care and love of the mother.

The version in English states the following: "There was once a sweet little maid who lived with her father and mother in a pretty little cottage at the edge of the village. At the further end of the wood was another pretty cottage and in it lived her grandmother.

Everybody loved this little girl, her grandmother perhaps loved her most of all and gave her a great many pretty things. Once she gave her a red cloak with a hood which she always wore, so people called her Little Red Riding Hood." [19].

This version shows a family with both parents (it is the only version of the kind, so it can show the personal view of the writer), and it notes feelings as well as deeds.

Nevertheless, the versions above depict cultural specific features reflected in traditional clothes and food. Hoods were a usual garment for Europe, but they were not as common as hats in Russia.

In all the versions, the Red Riding Hood carries some dainties to her Granny, but different stories suggest different foods (the Russian fairy tale suggests pies, the French one speaks about pastries, and the American version mentions eggs, butter and cake, and other dainties).

V. DISCUSSION

Thorough research of 'borrowed plots' can shed light on a range of problems in the sphere of cultural and social studies. There are some questions that should be considered further. Above we have discussed situations when a culture accepts foreign texts or other cultural phenomena. Yet, there is a process of bringing up children using these texts, and the impact of 'borrowed plots' is to be analyzed further.

Second, not only similar concepts can help adopt and assimilate the text into a foreign culture. There might be some valuable message for the culture there, something that needs to be maintained. This message can be a criterion of the 'cultural sieve' that marks information beyond the culture as similar / acceptable or strange / unacceptable.

Some cultures can stand closer to each other, having similar concept sphere, and they are likely to interact. The 'borrowed plots' in this case are expected to have fewer divergences.

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