# THE PRAGMATICS OF TRANSLATING PROVERBS AND SAYINGS FROM KAZAKH INTO ENGLISH (ON THE MATERIAL OF BOOK OF WORDS BY ABAI KUNANBAEV)

\*Zhabayeva S.S.<sup>1</sup>

\*<sup>1</sup>Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor of A.Baitursynov Kostanay Regional University, Kostanay, Kazakhstan, e-mail: <u>zhabayeva\_ss@mail.ru</u>

**Abstract.** The article explores the issues of the cultural adaptation in the translating process. The pragmatic problems of translation and the levels of equivalence are in the focus of the given research. The aim of the article is to explore the semantics of proverbs and sayings in «Book of Words» by Abai Kunanbaev and the way they are transferred in the English translation. The article gives the survey and analysis of the studies and approaches to translating culture-bound words and expressions. The descriptive and comparative methods of analysis were exploited for the analysis of the original proverbs and sayings and the translation version. The comparative study was also aimed at analyzing the methods of translation for better representation of cultural, functional, communicative factors for achieving the equivalence. A special attention is paid to the analysis of the efficiency of the exploited methods of translation. This approach determines the scientific significance of the article.

The pragmatics of translation is understood as the complex aspect connected with the representation at cultural and communicative levels. Research findings have proved the idea that a successful translation depends on the translator's ability to interpret cultural implications and specific culture-bound concepts. The article also resulted in conclusions about the factors influencing the choice of the translation strategy for preserving semantic, pragmatic and functional equivalence. The practical findings of the article enhance the knowledge of translation problems from Kazakh into English. The significance of the article lies in the possibility of using the results of the research in the field of literary translation including the topical issues of Kazakh-English translation.

Keywords: translation, proverb, culture, method, explicitation, implication, equivalence, pragmatics

### **Basic provisions**

Proverbs and sayings reflect the national mentality, the peculiarities of the history, culture, traditions. The main function of proverbs and sayings is to give the ethnic evaluation of the objective reality, thus, reflecting the world view. Proverbs and sayings are characterized by deep meaning which, in most cases, needs interpretation by linguists and the task of translators is to convey the meaning using various techniques making it explicit. There are arguments about approaches to translating culture-bound words and the methods of translation, which may vary according to the contextual and functional aspects. The given research is aimed at investigating these methods and analyzing their effectiveness on the material of culturally specific proverbs and sayings in «Book of Words» by Abai Kunanbaev.

### Introduction

The issues of culture and translation have always been in the center of studies by linguists and specialists in translation studies. Cultural issues cover a wide range of problematic questions: cultural semantics, «cultural» words and concepts, pragmatic adaptation etc. Translation is a kind of activity, which inevitably involves at least two languages and two cultures. This statement means that translators should decide how to transfer the cultural implicit information in the target text. One of the main important aspects is the cultural and linguistic difference between the source and target language. For translators certain difficulties arise in the transference of idioms, proverbs, sayings, cultural realia and non-equivalent words. Proverbs and sayings reflect the national mentality, the peculiarities of the history, culture, traditions. The main function of proverbs and sayings is to give the ethnic evaluation of the objective reality, thus, reflecting the world view. The interest to this theme is caused by the fact that Kazakh and English cultures, and languages consequently, are distant in various aspects. It was necessary to see how the peculiarities of the unusual artistic style of Abai Kunanbaev were transferred in the English translation. It is necessary to mention the phenomenon of great Abai and his «Book of Words», which is the object if research in this article. In this book Abai showed social, aesthetic, humanistic and religious views. In this work Abai illustrated his wisdom and philosophical outlook. «Book of Words» cover a wide range of topics. Each chapter is devoted to reflections about a separate topic. Abai Kunanbaev attaches importance not only to the beauty of words, but also to the depth of meaning and logical content. This great work shows that Abai is a master of the genre of edification. He formed a new format for the presentation of ethical and philosophical thoughts. «Book of Words», the great heritage of Abai Kunanbaev, present a social and ethical code of the Kazakhs, a moral code of life. Proverbs and sayings are used by Abai for better representation of concepts and ideas. Structurally, they are short sayings which give a useful advice, embody simple true ideas, based on life experience and wisdom.

#### **Materials and Methods**

The given research is aimed at exploring cultural aspects of the source text and it's realization in the target text. The framework of the practical material includes sayings and proverbs from *Book of Words* by Abai kunanbaev. The translation into English was done by Richard McKane. In the *Book of Words* Abai used a great number of proverbs and sayings in order to make certain emphasis on some ideas and produce more colorful effect. Comparative analysis of the semantics was exploited for revealing the extent of the pragmatic and functional equivalence of ST ad TT. The theoretical survey of the translation techniques was done with the focus of investigating different approaches to translation analysis is based on the comparative contrasting of the original and translation and categorizing according to the technique used by the translator. The componential analysis was used for determining the level of semantic equivalence. In the course of the translation analysis special attention was paid to the analysis of the appropriateness of using

different translation techniques for achieving the communicative adequacy. The cultural issues are in the main focus of the research.

## Results

The concept of «culture» is defined differently by anthropology, philosophy, linguistics, cultural studies and other sciences. These definitions vary according to the approach and sphere of application. J.House says about two basic views of culture: the humanistic approach, which treats culture as the "cultural heritage". The scientist states: "The anthropological concept of culture refers to the overall way of life of a community or society, i.e., all those traditional, explicit and implicit designs for living which act as potential guides for the behaviour of members of the culture" [1, p. 8]. The anthropological approach is relevant for lingua cultural and translation studies, as for these sciences it is necessary to take into account the issues of the reflection of ethnic mentality and worldview in the language.

G. Hofstede et.al. [2], D. Katan [3], J. Vinay and J. Darbelnet [4] studied the problems connected with interrelation of culture and translation. Different approaches were proposed and implemented by linguists for preserving the functional, semantic, pragmatic equivalence. There are arguments about the translatability of "cultural" words from ideas of the impossibility to transfer culture of the source text to the concepts, which postulate the translation techniques, which make nearer cultures of the ST and TT. There are different approaches to translating culture. M. Tymoczko [5] said that translators should pay special attention to "specific locations in texts".

Mona Baker [6] states that certain difficulties appear when culture-specific concepts are used. She proposes using the following translation strategies for the transference of fixed expressions and idioms: using an idiom of the similar meaning and form; using an idiom of the same meaning but dissimilar form; using paraphrasing; translation by omission [6].

E. Nida stated that "cultural context of the source language" should be taken into account when deciding the translation procedures and it is important for the interpretation of the larger cultural context [7, p. 244]. For producing equivalents in cases with no regular term in the receptor language, the method of searching for descriptive equivalents is proposed by the linguist. P. Newmark studied "noequivalent words" stressing that there are no "untranslatable" words and proposes the ideas of componential analysis or using footnotes [8, p.78]. P. Newmark also says that much depends on the translator, on his awareness and consciousness [8]. It is the task of the translator to decide which cultural aspects should be transmitted.

The problems of cultural implications were studied in various aspects: Klaudy [9], Becher [10], Tymocsko [5] and others. Victor Becher investigated the issues of explicitation and implicitation in translation and referred to the classification of explicitation given by Klaudy and points out "the pragmatic type which is motivated by differences in cultural and/or world knowledge shared by members of the source and target language communities" [10, p. 22]. Discussing the translation of culture M.Tymocsko states that a translator must "unpack the embodied" [5, p. 227]

situation, interpret the cultural situation of the source text and the culture of the target language.

Written in the last years of Abai, the "Book of words" consists of 45 Words, different in volume and spelling. In the original title "Qara sozder" (lit. *black words*) metaphorically means *wise words, edifications* since in these works there is clear criticism of the Kazakh people. For all his years, Abai realized the shortcomings and disadvantages of the Kazakhs, and frightened that he could not solve this in any way, he decided to write about it in his usual style. The behavioral vices of the Kazakhs of that time (after which the author implies human vices in general) Abai uses only as a plot background to find answers to more essential, other philosophical questions. Proverbs and sayings serve as an expressive means, accurately convey the meaning and help to understand the views of the author. In "Book of Words" Abai exposes vices of people and uses a number of proverbs and sayings about these vices.

The analysis of the following examples in the source text and the target text revealed the strategies and techniques, exploited by the translator. One of the methods is calquing: «Бұрынғы қазақ жайын жақсы білген адамдар айтыпты: 'Би екеу болса, дау төртеу болады' деп» [11] // "People who know Kazakh ways well say: 'When two biys get together, there is sure to be four disputes' [12, p. 84]. The proverb contains a realia  $\delta u$ , which is transliterated as *biys* and this method is efficient for the transmission of the cultural specifics. Calquing is good enough for preserving the structural equivalence, but the semantical and functional equivalence may be lost. The deep semantics of this saying is implied here and means that it is difficult for two leaders to coexist side by side. The use of realia biys may not be understood by the TT audience and, as a result, the communicative function will not be realized. The next example also illustrates the case when SL word becomes part of the TL. Realia *6u* was transliterated in the translation, but it leads to the loss of the pragmatic and functional equivalence without necessary comments: «Байдан үмітсіз – құдайдан үмітсіз» [11] //"If you can"t rely on the bey, don't count on God either" [12, p.87]. P. Newmark called this method as transference which is good in terms of bringing "colour and atmosphere" [8, p.96], but on the other hand, it might "exclude the message" [8, p.9].

The next example is another example of calquing, which is combined with the descriptive method for the explanation of the proverb meaning: *«Ырыс баққан дау бақпас»* [11]. // "If you want to prosper, avoid discord!" [12, p.119].

The method of explicitation is widely used when translating culture-bound words. Different approaches were exploited by linguists in order to investigate the process of explicitation in the translation. On the one hand, it may be caused by the necessity to make shifts due to differences in linguistic and textual systems. Another approach to explicitation takes into account cross-cultural aspects. According to Blum-Kulka, explicitation presents certain shifts, which are caused by target language system and communicative conventions [13]. Vinay and Darbelnet [4] state that explicitation is directed to the addition of the information, which is implicit in the source text. P.Newmark introduced the term "componential analysis", which to his mind "has not the pragmatic impact of the original" and "is based on a component common to the SL and TL" [8, p. 96]. The following examples illustrate

the use of the descriptive method by the translator with the purpose of explication of the implied meaning: *«Ердің малы елде, еріккенде қолда* [11] //*"The herds of exalted men are left to the care of others, except when such men have nothing better to do*" [12, p. 87]; *«Түстік өмірің болса, күндік мал жи»* [11]. //*"If you will live no longer than noon, make provision for the whole day"* [12, p. 87].

The next example illustrates the use of the metaphoric translation and the case of figurative comparison in the original where the translator substituted the image: «Қайраны жоқ көлден без, қайыры жоқ елден без» [11]. // "Beware of a lake with no shallows and of a people that knows no mercy" [12, p.87]. Translating metaphors presents certain difficulties as the translator faces a choice: preserving sense or image or using combination of both. The above given example shows the strategy of preserving the contextual meaning of the metaphoric comparison.

Expressive comparisons might also be a means for better representation of the implied meaning. In the next example, the translator uses a comparison for the description of the object, in this case of a poor man: «Малдының беті – жарық, малсыздың беті – шарық» [11]. // "A rich man has a countenance full of light, a poor man — as hard as stone" [12, p.87].

The method of paraphrasing presupposes the substitution of words by synonyms or words with the similar connotation: «Мал – адамның бауыр еті» [11]. // "Cattle for the Kazakh is flesh of his flesh" [12, p.87]; «Алаған қолым – береген» [11]//"The hand that takes also gives" [12, p. 87]. The stress on the phrase flesh of his flesh underlines the connotation of the Kazakh бауыр еті. Paraphrasing is suitable in situations when we observe important implications or omissions.

The method of borrowing is aimed at making the source culture nearer to the target audience. In the next example, the translator used the method of specification by using the Kazakh realia *dzigit*, the substitution of the animal for *wolf* obviously was done with the purpose to use the image of the animal, which is known in all cultures as the one with a fierce nature: *«Ep азыгы мен бөрі азыгы жолда»* [11]. // *"The dzighit and the wolf will find their food along the way"* [12, p. 87]. The use of Kazakh realia "dzigit" might present difficulty for understanding by the TT audience unless followed by additional comments.

The next example of translation illustrates the use of the functional equivalent: «Өнер алды» –«success»: «*Өнер алды – бірлік, ырыс алды – тірлік»* [11]. // "*The source of success is unity, and of well-being life*" [12, p. 89]. Generally, this method may be used for deculturalising or "domesticating" [13] a cultural word and depends on the context.

In the next example, the translator uses the variant with generalizing meaning "a treasure chest", which is not equal for transferring the concept "*man*". For Kazakh nomads the cattle was a real treasure: a source of food and life. The concept *жан* in the Kazakh language is very important because it implies different connotations with deep semantic structure. In the translation it is generalized by using the variant "*own life*" that is semantically equal but a deep conceptual implication is lost: *«Ama-aнadaн мал тәтті, алтын үйден жан тәтті» дейді»* [11]. // "A treasure chest is dearer than father and mother, but your own life is dearer than a palace of gold" [12, p. 135]. In the next saying, it was necessary to emphasize the key idea, which

underlines that livestock breeding was vital for nomads. The translator used the method of generalization: «*Man manқaн ердің жазығы жоқ*» [11]. // "*He who has managed to get rich is always in the right*" [12, p.87]. The method of generalization is widely used in cases when there are no equivalent counterparts or because of stylistic reasons.

The next example of the proverb is followed by the interpretation of the author. The descriptive method for the interpretation of the proverb is combined with the specification of the word «айлалылық» cleverness: «Осы күнде қазақ ішінде 'ici білмес, кісі білер' деген мақал шықты. Оның мәнісі: 'ісіңнің түзүлігінен жетпессің, кісіңнің амалшы, айлалылығынан жетерсің' деген сөз» [11]. // "It's the person not the matter, that counts. In other words, success depends not on the Tightness of the matter in question, but on the cleverness of the person involved" [12, p.83]. The next example shows the use of the specification of the metaphoric қаралы, which implies the mourning house. The translator explicitly expressed it as "the place of a funeral feast" thus explaining the Kazakh tradition of a hearty funeral dinner: «Қарның ашса, қаралы үйге шап» [11]. // "If you are famished, gallop to the place of a funeral feast" [12, p. 87]. Such modifications are possible when the translator intends to preserve the source language collocation. As Mona Baker states: "Translation often involves a tension – a difficult choice between what is typical and what is accurate" [6, p. 56]. Thus, achieving a communicative effect is more important than accurate translation and it is realised by using the patterns familiar to the TT audience.

### Discussion

Translating culture-specific words is widely discussed by linguists since there are arguments about the problem of translatability and the possibility to transfer cultural implications. The translation of proverbs and sayings becomes problematic when they contain cultural concepts, deep imaginative representations, cultural realia. The illustrated examples show that the method of explicitation, which was used by the translator, does not fully transfer the implied meaning. In general, the use of explicitation is discussed by the linguists and translators, especially in cases of big differences between languages, and hence, cultures. Different taxonomies were proposed by linguists for better representation of culture, or, at least making it nearer to the target culture and language. On the one hand, explicitation provided the understanding or «domesticating» things, which were implicit in the source language. The examples showed various methods of description. But, on the other hand, the level of expansion may lead to misunderstanding in cases of realia or cultural implications transference. The method of calquing, which preserves the morphological and syntactic structure, enriches the target language and may be regarded as an accessible method of translation. Borrowing, as a translation technique, may lead to «foreignization» and will not seem natural for target text readers. The methods of generalization and specification are aimed at achieving the communicative tasks, also, in cases of the absence of equivalent semantic counterparts. Modulation or logical development is often used for better representation of culture-specific concepts depending on the context and for deculturalising the ST.

In the pragmatics of translation, functional, semantic and cultural aspects should be distinguished. The functional aspect is aimed at achieving the goal of communication and the ST should have the same communicative effect on the recipient. The semantic aspect is directed to the ability of the utterance to transfer the meaning with the help of the context. The semantic aspect of the pragmatics of the utterance can be achieved by different linguistic means. The cultural aspect of translation pragmatics needs pragmatic adaptation, i.e. in the transformation of the source text the background knowledge of the receptor should be taken into account to provide the necessary regulatory impact.

Thus, the functional, semantic and cultural contents of the utterance are differentiated in the process of translation. The functional content of the utterance constitutes its purpose of communication. The preservation of the functional contents of proverbs and sayings is very important because they may contain certain implications, which might present difficulties in the process of translation. The «cultural» content of the utterance contains information about culture, information about the «cultural component» of the meaning of the language sign, expressions in various communication situations. The correct understanding of the cultural content presupposes the same extralinguistic knowledge among the communicants.

Since the experience of cognition of the surrounding reality is unique for each linguistic community, there are lexical units that do not have lexical correspondences in the language, since the object designated by this unit is absent in the practical experience of the ethnic community of TL.

The issues of translatability are closely connected with the conceptual picture of the world, which presents a system of interconnected information reflecting the cumulative cognitive experience acquired by representatives of a certain society. The uniqueness of the conceptual picture is reflected in the linguistic picture of the world and determines its uniqueness. The inclusion of conceptual and linguistic pictures of the world in the linguistic consciousness allows us to talk about intercultural communication as an exchange of images of consciousness associated with specific words. We may conclude that when the same objects and phenomena are present in two cultures, the translation problems associated with them arise mainly due to differences in their interpretation and designation.

# Conclusion

Thus, the given research explored the issues, connected with the possibility to preserve semantic and pragmatic specifics of proverbs and sayings in the translation. The empirical material from the "Book of Words" by Abai Kunanbaev is a good example of the text, which abounds in culture-bound words, expressions and concepts. The research was focused on proverbs and sayings in the original and English translation. The semantic and translation analysis revealed the discrepancies in the realization of cultural concepts, cultural implications and pragmatic tasks. For translating proverbs and sayings the translator exploited the methods of calquing, borrowing, paraphrasing, explicitation, specification, generalization. The methods

for translating proverbs should fulfil the main aim – achieving levels of equivalence: pragmatic, functional and communicative. Cultural equivalence might be achieved by pragmatic adaptation. Kazakh proverbs illustrate situations in which the extralinguistic reality described in the statement is unknown to the foreign-speaking recipient. "Book of Words" contains a great number of culturally specific proverbs and sayings, which reflect the system of cultural values and traditions, national mentality, the moral principles, attitude to the society. Abai is a great master of the unusual style of edifications written as a philosophical treatise. Abai raised the problems of history, pedagogics, morality and human rights and proverbs and sayings were used as the lexical means of colorful description. It is the task of the translator to «domesticate» the TT, but the examples, which were analyzed above, showed that a certain loss of cultural connotations and conceptual meanings took The conducted research also suggests that translation, being a type of place. intercultural communication, requires extensive extralinguistic knowledge of the SL culture.

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# ҚАЗАҚ ТІЛІНЕН МАҚАЛ-МӘТЕЛДЕРДІ АҒЫЛШЫН ТІЛІНЕ АУДАРУ ПРАГМАТИКАСЫ (АБАЙ ҚҰНАНБАЕВТЫҢ «ҚАРА СӨЗДЕР» ШЫҒАРМА НЕГІЗІНДЕ)

#### \*Жабаева С.С.1

# \*<sup>1</sup>Филология ғылымдарының кандидаты, А Байтүрсынов атындағы Қостанай өнірлік университетінің доценті, Қостанай қаласы, Қазақстан, e-mail: zhabayeva ss@mail.ru

Андатпа. Мақалада аударма процесінде мәдени бейімделу мәселелері қарастырылады. Прагматика мәдени-коммуникативтік деңгейде бейнелеуге қатысты күрделі аспект ретінде түсініледі. Мақаланың мақсаты – Абай Құнанбаевтың «Қара сөз» кітабындағы мақал-мәтелдердің семантикасын және олардың ағылшын тіліндегі аудармасында берілуін зерттеу.

Мақалада осы мәселе бойынша зерттеулерге шолу мен талдау берілген. Мақалмәтелдердің түпнұсқасын және аударылған нұсқасын талдау барысында сипаттау және салыстырмалы зерттеу әдістері қолданылды. Салыстырмалы зерттеу сонымен қатар аудармашының мәдени, функционалдық және коммуникативті баламалылыққа қол жеткізу үшін қолданатын аударма әдістерін талдауға бағытталған. Қолданылатын аударма әдістерінің тиімділігін талдауға ерекше назар аударылады. Бұл тәсіл мақаланың ғылыми маңыздылығын анықтайды.

Зерттеу нәтижелері аудармашының сәтті болуы мәдени ерекшеліктерді қамтитын мәтіндерді түсіндіру қабілетіне байланысты деген ойды растады. Зерттеудің практикалық нәтижелері қазақ тілінен ағылшын тіліне аударма мәселелері саласындағы білімдерін толықтырады. Мақаланын маңыздылығы көркем аударма саласындағы зерттеу нәтижелерін, оның ішінде нақты қазақша ағылшын тіліндегі аудармасын пайдалану мүмкіндігінде.

**Тірек сөздер:** аударма, мақал-мәтел, мәдениет, әдіс, экспликация, импликация, эквиваленттілік, прагматика

# ПРАГМАТИКА ПЕРЕВОДА ПОСЛОВИЦ И ПОГОВОРОК С КАЗАХСКОГО НА АНГЛИЙСКИЙ ЯЗЫК (НА МАТЕРИАЛЕ ПРОИЗВЕДЕНИЯ «СЛОВА НАЗИДАНИЯ» АБАЯ КУНАНБАЕВА)

\*Жабаева С.С.1

\*<sup>1</sup>Кандидат филологических наук, доцент Костанайского регионального университета им. А.Байтурсынова, Костанай, Казахстан, e-mail: <u>zhabayeva\_ss@mail.ru</u>

Аннотация. В статье исследуются вопросы культурной адаптации в процессе перевода. Статья посвящена прагматическим проблемам перевода и вопросам сохранения эквивалентности. Цель статьи – исследовать семантику пословиц и поговорок в «Словах назидания» Абая Кунанбаева и их перевод на английский язык. В статье дается обзор и анализ исследований по этой проблеме. При анализе оригинальных пословиц и поговорок и переводного варианта использовались описательный и сравнительный методы исследования. Сравнительное исследование было направлено на анализ приемов перевода, учитывающих культурные, функциональные и коммуникативные факторы. Особое внимание уделено анализу эффективности использованных способов перевода. Такой подход обусловливает научную значимость статьи. Под прагматикой понимается сложный процесс, связанный с репрезентацией на культурно-коммуникативном уровне. Результаты исследований подтвердили идею о том, что успешный перевод зависит от способности переводчика интерпретировать тексты, содержащие культурологические особенности. В работе также сделаны выводы о том, какие факторы влияют на выбор переводческой стратегии для достижения семантической, прагматической и функциональной эквивалентности. Практические результаты исследования пополняют знания в области переводческих проблем с казахского на английский язык. Значимость статьи также заключается в возможности использования результатов исследования в области литературного перевода, в том числе актуального казахско-английского перевода.

Ключевые слова: перевод, пословица, культура, метод, экспликация, импликация, эквивалентность, прагматика

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