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Translating culture: problems, strategies and practical realities

0. Introduction

Literary texts display many linguistic peculiarities, as well as social and cultural aspects of our lives and, thus, we can assert that literary translation is one of the main ways of communication across cultures. Translating literary texts, however, is not an easy task, since it certainly poses many problems for the translator. One of the problems a translator can face arises from the fact that some words or phrases denoting objects, facts, phenomena, etc… are so deeply rooted in their source culture (SC) and so specific (and perhaps exclusive or unique) to the culture that produced them that they have no equivalent in the target culture (TC), be it because they are unknown, or because they are not yet codified in the target language (TL). When discussing the problems of correspondence in translation, "differences between cultures may cause more severe complications for the translator than do differences in language structure" (Nida 130). Moreover, several theorists, such as Santoyo, García Yebra and Yifeng, amongst others, support untranslatability when we face texts with terms which are so culture-bound and culture-specific as to defy translation (cf. Fernández Guerra, "The issue" 41).

In all cases, when cultural differences exist between the two languages, it is extremely difficult to achieve a successful transfer, if not impossible (whatever the competence of the translator in the two languages involved). And even the slightest variation from the source language (SL) cultural term can be taken as an act of subversion against the culture it represents. Literary translation itself can even be regarded as an act of subversion, or a means of providing an alternative or subversion of reality. As Levine affirms, "the literary translator can be considered a subversive scribe" (7). In the same line of thought, when talking about the task of translating literature, Silver states: "I understand subversion as at the core of the translation project itself" (Silver 5).

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The aim of the present paper is twofold: (1) to revise the literature dealing with the main typologies and classifications proposed as regards cultural terms, and (2) to show the main translation procedures and strategies that can be employed in order to solve the problems involved in translating differences between cultures.

This paper will also present the results obtained in a study based on the translation of 4 passages of texts that relied on cultural aspects. The study involved 96 students attending a course on English-Spanish translation, and a total of 40 cultural terms were selected so as to analyse the different translation strategies used by students when translating them.

1. Cultural terms

Many scholars agree with the fact that language is an expression of culture and individuality of its speakers and have, hence, deeply examined cultural terms, as well as the problems involved in their translation when there is a lack of equivalence between two languages and cultures (Kade, Kutz, Nord, Rabadán, and Venuti, for example).

Vlakhov and Florin seem to have been the first ones to coin the term realia to refer to cultural elements, and the term has now been generalized and is frequently used to refer to objects, customs, habits, and other cultural and material aspects that have an impact in shaping a certain language (Cerdá Massó 248).

Since then, many classifications and taxonomies for such cultural aspects have been offered (Baker, Katan, Mayoral, Molina, Newmark, Vlakhov y Florin, etc.). Following Nida and applying the concept of culture to the task of translation, Newmark (21) puts forth his classification of foreign cultural words, establishing five categories:

a.Ecology (flora, fauna, winds, climate, etc.): Hoy hace ‘poniente’ en ‘Levante’ could be an example in Spanish.

b.Material culture (food, clothes, houses, towns, transport): Aquel de la ‘boina’ acaba de comprar ‘bunuelos’.

c.Social culture (work and leisure): No puedo quedarme para ver ‘quemar las Fallas’ porque manana empiezan las ‘oposiciones’.

d.Organizations, customs, activities, procedures or concepts (which include artistic, religious, political and administrative subcategories): Me voy al ‘PROP’ a ver qué ayudas recibo en la compra.

e.Gestures and habits: ?Quedamos a tomar un ‘chisme’ después de ‘misa’?

Katan (17) also provides a comprehensive view of how culture reveals itself at each of the following logical levels:

a.Environment (including climate, housing, food, etc.): exemplifying terms in the Spanish culture are poniente, barraca, faralaes, paella, etc.

b.Behaviour (actions and ways of behaving in certain cultures): greeting someone with two kisses instead of shaking hands, for example, is quite common in Spain.

c.Capabilities, strategies and skills used to communicate (including non-verbal communication, rituals, etc.): !ponme una cerveza! is a typical formula in Spanish to order a drink, but using the imperative would not be appropriate in English and a possible translation could be Could I please have a beer?

d.Values of the society and its hierarchy: Ellos creen que son mejores por ser ‘payos’.

e.Beliefs: Hoy es ‘domingo de Ramos’.

f.Identity: Acaban de derribar otro ‘edificio franquista’.

Ku (91-98), reduces his taxonomy to the four generic types proposed by Molina:

a.Environment, including ecology, place names, etc.: La zona del ‘Bierzo’, for example.

b.Cultural heritage (religious beliefs, historical events, characters, festivities, folklore, housing, objects, etc.): Un alto porcentaje de espanoles tiene una ‘segunda residencia’.

c.Social culture (conventions, beliefs, habits, social organizations, etc.): Vamos de ‘tapeo’.

d.Linguistic culture (fixed expressions, idioms, insults, etc.): ‘!Anda ya!’, eres un ‘capullo’.

Finally, Fernández Guerra ("Tradicionalismo" 139) describes four major types of realia, which can turn translation into a very difficult process.

a.Geographic and ethnographic terms: Albufera, gorrilla… (in Spanish), or The Square Mile, cockney…(in English).

b.Words or expressions referring to folklore, traditions and mythology: Toro embolado, romería, pena, tracas, entierro de la sardina, rociero… Ceilidh, Christmas stocking, touchdown, tag…

c.Names of everyday objects, actions and events (such as food and drinks, clothes, housing, tools, public transport, dances and games, units of measurement, money, etc.): Agua de Valencia, bunuelos, paella, migas, mantilla, barraca… Christmas pudding, cottage pie, happy hour, miles, earmuffs…

d.Social and historical terms denoting territorial administrative units or divisions; departments, professions, titles, ranks, greetings and treatments; institutions, patriotic and religious organisations; etc.: oposiciones, Diputación provincial, guardia civil, pata negra, caudillo… sophomore, A-level(s), Salvation Army, Christie's, YMCA…

Authors such as Baker (21), Mayoral (76), Nord (523-527), Santoyo ("Traducción" 143), and Marco Borillo (El fil 295-208) offer similar classifications, emphasizing local colour, mannerisms, cultural and temporal distance between two linguistic communities, etc. and recognising, more or less explicitly, the focus on dominant cultures, the inevitability of loss, or even the impossibility of translating these terms:

it is known that a perfect translation of culturally-bound texts is impossible. The translation focusing on the purpose of the SL text writing is, however, always possible. This can be proven with the translation of so many literary works into other languages (Hariyanto).

It is true that translating realia or cultural terms, such as the types mentioned above, causes many translation difficulties, but this does not mean that they cannot be translated. In fact, along the lines of some translation scholars, particularly those of the Leipzig school (Kade, Jäger, Neubert), all languages can say (or are capable of saying) the same things; but, as a rule, all of them say it in a different way. Indeed, should two languages say it in the same way, then we would not be speaking of two languages, but of one and the same language. The translator can have recourse

to several devices for solving the problem of bridging the gap across cultures, providing that s/he is culturally aware of those differences. S/he can rely on various procedures, techniques or strategies to deal with such translation problems. The following translations into Spanish of Taste this Christmas pudding, for example, could illustrate it:

Borrowing: Prueba este Christmas pudding.

Adaptation: Prueba este turrón.

Explanation: Prueba este dulce navideno hecho de frutas confitadas y conac.

Generalisation: Prueba este dulce.

Literal translation: Prueba este pudín de Navidad.

Reduction: Prueba esto.

Etc.

The translator can coin or borrow the term from the SL into the TL, or adapt it to suit the TC ('turrón' or 'roscón de Reyes'). It is also possible to explain the conceptual differences in a footnote or in the text itself ('dulce navideno hecho de frutas confitadas y conac or pastel típico de Inglaterra'), and so on. It is up to the translator to choose the most suitable way to render it in the TL, and for the TC, depending on the aim, the time available, the potential readers, etc. of the translation.

2. Translation procedures and strategies

According to Krings (263-275) or Lörscher (76-81), among others, translation strategies are usually defined as the procedures leading to the optimal solution of a translation problem. The procedures or strategies based on comparative stylistics (Vinay y Darbelnet, Malblanc, Intravaia and Scavée), also used by other scholars (Vázquez Ayora, Newmark, …), or the techniques suggested by Bible translators (Nida, Nida and Taber, Margot), intended to propose a metalanguage and to catalogue possible solutions in the task of translation. Such procedures have been sometimes criticized, among other reasons because there is even a lack of consensus as to what name should be given to these categories (procedures, techniques, strategies or methods are often interrelated and used

as synonyms). Naming problems occur because the procedures sometimes overlap, they only catalogue differences in terms of language and not usage, and they focus on translation results rather than on the translation process. There have been, however, several attempts to differentiate procedures from strategies, which are more related to the translation process (Hurtado 36). In any case, the procedures or strategies that are usually mentioned in academic publications serve both to analyse and catalogue translation equivalence and to improve the acquisition of translation competence, since knowing and comparing them is definitively necessary to obtain an adequate translation.

One of the leading taxonomies, and certainly the best known, is that of Vinay and Dalbernet. The seven basic translation procedures are, according to them, adaptation, calque, equivalence, modulation, borrowing, literal translation and transposition; although they also refer to compensation, expansion and contraction. Other authors have reformulated and added new procedures, or broken down the aforementioned ones into distinct subcategories. Among the well known reformulations we should mention the one proposed by Vázquez Ayora (251-383), for example, who distinguishes between (i) oblique translation procedures (adaptation, amplification, compensation, equivalence, explicitation, modulation, omission and transposition) and (ii) direct methods (calque, loan and literal translation). Hurtado (36-37) expands the list with strategies that account for solutions of textual nature: extension, amplification, compression, discursive creation, description, generalisation, particularisation, reduction, paralinguistic or linguistic substitution, and variation.

It is also worth mentioning that some studies focus only on specific translation procedures that should be used when dealing with cultural elements. This is the case with Graedler (3), who cites four: (i) making up a new word, (ii) explaining the meaning of the SL expression in lieu of translating it, (iii) preserving the SL term intact, and (iv) replacing it using any term in the TL that has the same “relevance” as the SL term. Harvey (2-6) also proposes four ways: (i) functional equivalence, using a term with the same “function”, (ii) formal or linguistic equivalence, or word by word translation, (iii) transcription or borrowing, which may include notes, and (iv) descriptive or self-explanatory translation. Mur Duenas (74-79) labelled her translation procedures as (1) TL cultural cognate; (2) SL cultural and linguistic borrowing; (3) SL cultural borrowing plus explanation;

(4) replacement of SL cultural referent by explanation; (5) TL cultural referent suppression; and (6) literal translation of TL cultural referent. Finally, Marco Borillo ("Les tecniques" 138), considering the intervention of the translator and his approach to the TC as a continuum, proposes the following six procedures: (i) pure or naturalised loan, (ii) literal translation, (iii) neutralisation (description, generalisation or particularisation), (iv) amplification or compression, (v) intracultural adaptation, and (vi) intercultural adaptation.

The aforementioned procedures will now be briefly described and illustrated, in alphabetical order.

2.1. Adaptation

Adaptation is used in those cases in which the type of situation being referred to by the SL message is unknown in the TC and translators create a new situation that can be described as situational equivalence (Vinay and Darbelnet 52-53). Thus, it can be understood as what other authors have called cultural, dynamic or functional equivalence (cf. 2.7.). It actually refers to a SL cultural element that is replaced by another term in the TC. This would apply, for example, to Christmas pudding, and its possible translation into 'turrón' mentioned above.

There are situations in which adaptation seems, to some extent, necessary: in advertising slogans, or children's stories, for example. In other cases there are certain conventions, more or less generalized, as regards adapted translations of foreign cultural elements in the TL. This applies, for instance, to weights and measures, musical notation, generally accepted titles of literary works or geographical names, etc. The basic goal of the translator when trying to 'adapt' the translation is to have a similar effect on the TL readers, 'domesticating', in a way, the cultural terms.

2.2. Borrowing

Borrowing a term is taking a word or expression straight from another language, without translation. The procedure is normally used when a term does not exist in the TC, or when the translator tries to get some stylistic or exotic effect. It can be "pure", if there is no change of any kind in the foreign term (broker, chip, clown, feeling, stop, etc.), or "naturalized", if the word has

some change in the spelling, and perhaps some morphological or phonetic adaptation (as in diskette ‘disquete’, format ‘formatear’, indent ‘indentar’, reset ‘resetear’, etc.).

Some authors prefer the terms foreign word, foreignism, Anglicism, Germanism, ... when referring to pure borrowings (that have not been fully assimilated into the TL system), and use borrowings or loans when the words are naturalised in the TL, the difference being when the term has been incorporated and how it has been adapted to the TL (Torre 94). In any case, borrowings are one of the main ways of enriching a language, as the Spanish writer Unamuno indicated as regards literary translation: “meter palabras nuevas, haya o no haya otras que las reemplacen, es meter nuevos matices de ideas” (cf. Lorenzo). And, as far as English is concerned, Wagner states that it is “the only language whose elements are seventy-five percent of foreign origin” (cf. Fernandez 514). When translating texts with a great amount of cultural terms, however, we should be cautious (García Yebra 340), unless we want to maintain a certain local colour or exoticism.

2.3. Calque

Calque could be described as a literal translation (either lexical or structural) of a foreign word or phrase. It could actually be considered a special type of loan or borrowing, since the translator borrows the SL expression or structure and then transfers it in a literal translation (Vinay and Darbelnet 47), as in the case of shocked ‘chocado’, stressed ‘estresado’, etc.

The difference between loan/borrowing and calque is that the former imitates the morphology, signification and phonetics of the foreign word or phrase, while the latter only imitates the morphological scheme and the signification of that term, but not its pronunciation. In the case of football, for example, using the same term in Spanish would be a pure borrowing; the word fútbol would be a naturalised borrowing, and balompié a calque.

According to Santoyo (Teoría 93), calque is not only an acceptable form of translation, it is strict and correct translation, since it is built with significants of the SL. García Yebra (335) also considers that it leads to a good translation and that it can certainly contribute to enrich the TL (whereas borrowings are not really translation procedures, but giving up in the translation task).

2.4. Compensation

The aim of compensation is to balance the semantic losses that translation involves (either in the content of the message or its stylistic effects). Compensation introduces a SL element of information or stylistic effect in another place in the TL text because it cannot be reflected in the same place as in the SL: the translation of dialects, irony, politeness values, etc. In the case of Spanish-English translation, we could mention, for example, the familiarity or formality of “tú” and “usted”. Both words are translated into English as “you”, so the translator will have to express degrees of formality in different ways, maybe compensating by using other English words of the formal and informal registers, in order to preserve the same level of formality.

2.5. Compression / reduction / condensation / omission

These four terms are opposed to the ones mentioned in section 2.8. In all of them the translator synthesizes or suppresses a SL information item in the TL text, mainly when that information is considered unnecessary (Vázquez Ayora 359) because the cultural term does not perform a relevant function or may even mislead the reader.

Compression/reduction/condensation/omission of information is not common when translating cultural terms and, when it occurs, it is usually to avoid repetitions, misleading information, or lack of naturalness.

2.6. Description

As the term itself indicates, a term or expression is replaced by a description of its form or function. It could, thus, be regarded as a sort of paraphrase, or even as an amplification or explanation (cf. 2.8.) of a SL term, as in the Spanish translation of He’s a Cockney ‘Es de la parte este de Londres, de la parte más pobre’.

2.7. Equivalence

According to Vinay and Dalbernet, equivalence refers to a strategy that describes the same situation by using completely different stylistic or structural methods for producing equivalent texts (Vinay and Dalbernet 52). This basically means that the translator uses a term or expression recognised as an established equivalent in the TL. It is similar to adaptation (cf. 2.1.) and to modulation (cf. 2.11.) in that it expresses the same situation in a different way (Vázquez Ayora 322), mainly in cases of idioms and formulaic language, as in God bless you '!Salud!', Holy cow! '!Madre mía!', You must be joking! '!Ni hablar!', Only the good die young 'Mala hierba nunca muere'.

2.8. Explicitation / expansion / amplification / diffusion

These terms are in opposition to the ones mentioned in section 2.5. Explicitation means that we express in the TL something that is implicit in the context of the SL (Vázquez Ayora 349), or that we introduce details that are not expressed in the SL, such as more information, translator's notes, or explicative paraphrasing, as in IRA 'La organización terrorista IRA'.

In the other three cases, those of expansion (Vinay and Darbelnet 184), amplification (Vazquez Ayora 137) and diffusion (Malone 45), the translator uses, in the TL, more words than in the SL to express the same idea.

Examples of these procedures could be the following ones: Coffee break 'descanso para tomar café', The man next door 'el hombre que vive (en la puerta de) al lado', Successful fishermen went back home 'los pescadores que habían tenido éxito volvieron a casa'.

2.9. Generalization

With this procedure, in opposition to particularisation, the translator uses hypernyms or more general or neutral terms, normally for stylistic reasons, or to avoid unnecessary repetitions or ambiguity, as in the case of John has a beautiful dog 'Juan tiene un hermoso animal'.

2.10. Literal translation

Literal translation, or word by word, occurs when a SL word or phrase is translated into a TL word or phrase, without worrying about style, but adapting the text to the TL syntactic rules, with minimal adjustments, so that it sounds both correct and idiomatic (word order, functional words, etc.). In Vinay and Dalbernet's words (48), it is the direct transfer of a SL text into a grammatically and idiomatically appropriate TL text in which the translators' task is limited to observing the adherence to the linguistic servitudes of the TL.

An example of literal translation could be John loves Mary 'Juan ama a María', in which the preposition 'a' has been added because it is a requirement for direct objects denoting a person.

2.11. Modulation

Modulation consists of using a phrase that is different in the SL and TL to convey the same idea (Vinay and Dalbernet 51). In other words, there is a change in the point of view, focus, perspective or category of thought in relation to the SL, as in Neither head nor tail 'ni pies ni cabeza', Don't get so excited 'tranquilízate', …

It is similar to transposition and, sometimes, necessary in order to avoid lack of fluency or exoticism in the translation.

2.12. Particularisation

Particularisation is in opposition to generalisation (cf. 2.9.). It refers to the procedure in which the translator uses in the TL hyponyms or more precise or concrete terms, as in She's a great person 'Es una mujer maravillosa', in which particularisation disambiguates whether 'person' is male or female, since there is no translation of 'she' in this case.

2.13. Substitution (linguistic-paralinguistic)

According to Hurtado (36), linguistic-paralinguistic substitution is the translation procedure in which linguistic elements are replaced by paralinguistic elements (intonation, gestures, etc.) or vice

versa, as in Oh, what a shame!, which could perhaps be translated as '!Qué pena! dijo sorprendida', or to translate the Arab gesture of putting your hand on your heart as 'Thank you'.

2.14. Transposition

This procedure involves changing a grammatical category or replacing one part of the speech for another, without changing the meaning of the message (Vinay and Dalbernet 50). The following translations are types of transposition: This computer is out of order 'Este ordenador no funciona', I knocked him down 'Le derribé de un golpe', I touched a footbrake 'Frené'… (this last example also includes a reduction).

Grammatical transpositions, with appropriate morphological and syntactic adjustments, are quite frequent in order to obtain a translation that sounds as if it had been originally written in the TL.

2.15. Variation

Finally, variation is a procedure in which the translator changes elements that affect several aspects of linguistic variation: changes in tone, style, social dialect, geographical dialect ... (Hurtado 37), as in the case of I ain't no fool 'No soy ningún tonto', or in Yep, and it's dirt cheap 'Sí, y se lo dejo muy barato', in which the register used in the TL is completely different.

3. Practical realities: strategies used to translate cultural terms

The fifteen procedures mentioned in the previous section are, according to many experts, the main translation strategies that could be used when dealing with problems that students can face in translating texts. Malone (2), for example, indicates that such strategies or procedures "will serve either as tools for the study of completed translation (the analytic mode), or as helpmates in the act of translation (the operative mode)". And Jääskeläinen? considers that the strategies used by a translator are skills and procedures that promote the acquisition and use of information, and may be associated both with the product (the translated text), as well as with the process of translation itself, whose strategies "are a set of (loosely formulated) rules or principles which a translator uses to reach the goals determined by the translating situation" and can be global or local strategies:

"global strategies refer to general principles and modes of action and local strategies refer to specific activities in relation to the translator's problem-solving and decision-making" (Jääskeläinen?16).

3.1. Empirical study

The following pages show the results of a study carried out to analyse the strategies that 96 students employed when translating cultural terms from English into Spanish and vice versa. Students were in their third year of a Programme in English Studies at the Universitat Jaume I of Castellón (Spain), and the course they were taking was English-Spanish translation II (which focused on the translation of literary texts). All of them were Spanish and their level of English was certainly advanced. Most of them (83.3%) had also stayed in the UK at least one academic term (as Erasmus students), so one can indeed assume that they were sufficiently familiar with the cultural terms used for this study. The analysis focused on the translation of fragments of four literary texts (two in Spanish and two in English), all of them including a large number of cultural terms. In each of the four fragments, a total of 40 cultural terms were selected, which are outlined below:

T1. The food of fiction (written by A. Lang). In this poem 11 cultural terms were identified:

(1)Of Scott's or Ainsworth's "venison pasty"

(2)Beefsteak pudding

(3)Made by Ruth To cheer Tom Pinch

(4)Gabriel Varden

(5)In Bracebridge Hall

(6)The Christmas roast

(7)Fruits from the Goblin Market Garden

(8)Cups of tea were ever brewed

(9)Like Sairey Gamp's—the dear old sinner?

(10)Like that for Short's and Codlin's dinner?

(11)To use the Fotheringay's own diction —Pendennis ate, the love-sick boy?

T2. The Longest Journey (novel by E.M. Forster). Students had to translate nine cultural phrases selected from the fragment:

(1)Sawston School

(2)It was then a tiny grammar-school

(3)The City Company who governed it

(4)Innumerable residences, detached and semi-detached

(5)The bishops, like the stars from a Roman candle

(6)It dropped the prefix "Grammar"

(7)The "Commercial School"

(8)It had not the gracious antiquity of Eton or Winchester, nor, on the other hand, had it a conscious policy like Lancing, Wellington

(9)The average Englishman

T3. De !viva San Fermín! a !Pobre de mí! (narrative story by F. Erbiti Zabalza), in which 10 allusions to folklore were chosen:

(1)El chupinazo del 6 de julio

(2)El inicio de los sanfermines

(3)Entonando el 'Pobre de mí'

(4)De ahí que muchos pamploneses, al ritmo de 'Uno de enero, dos de febrero…'

(5)Casa Consistorial

(6)Al paso de la procesión de San Fermín, mientras algún txistulari o jotero dedica alguna pieza al santo

(7)Sin música no habría sanfermines y sin Manuel Turrillas alguien tendría que inventarla de nuevo

(8)En sanfermines también suenan el txistu, la gaita, las fanfarres y multitud de grupos,

(9)Acudir diariamente a la corrida sin ser aficionado

(10)Algunos traspasan la barrera del desmadre para instalarse en la imbecilidad cuando agarran a los toros en el encierro

T4. La romería (short story written by C.J. Cela, who was awarded the 1989 Nobel Prize in Literature). The fragments students had to translate included these 10 cultural terms:

(1)La romería era muy tradicional

(2)Ir todos juntos a merendar

(3)Los prepararon de domingo

(4)Una revista taurina

(5)Una perra gorda

(6)Tomaron de primer plato fabada asturiana

(7) Un tenderete de rosquillas

(8)!Pues estaría bueno!

(9)?Con esos bárbaros? !Ni hablar! Son todos una partida de cafres

(10)A lo hecho, pecho: aquello ya no tenía remedio y, además, a burro muerto, cebada al rabo

The different procedures (described in section 2) used by the students to translate these cultural terms were analysed. Of course, translation procedures and strategies were explained in detail and exemplified in advance in several lectures of a theoretical and practical nature.

3.2. Results

Table 1 shows the results obtained in the translation of cultural terms from English into Spanish.

As can be noticed, students used the procedures of adaptation (24.

Procedure	T1	T2	*Total*	(%)
Adaptation	262	205	**467**	24.32%
Borrowing	233	117	**350**	18.23%
Calque	15	23	**38**	1.98%
Compensation	2	21	**23**	1.20%
Compression	9	41	**50**	2.60%
Description	271	152	**423**	22.03%
Equivalence	120	114	**234**	12.18%
Explicitation	67	79	**146**	7.60%
Generalization	4	1	**5**	0.26%
Literal translation	54	64	**118**	6.14%
Modulation	0	14	**14**	0.73%
Particularization	3	8	**11**	0.57%
Substitution	0	0	**0**	0%
Transposition	16	25	**41**	2.13%
Variation	0	0	**0**	0%
Total	1056	864	**1920**	100%

1 - English-Spanish translation of cultural terms

32%), description (22.03%) and borrowing (18.23%) much more often than the rest. Each of these three procedures is illustrated in the following translations:

(a) ...cups of tea were ever brewed ... ‘preparaban café’.

(b) the Christmas roast ‘la cena de Navidad típica en Gran Bretana’.

(c) It dropped the prefix “Grammar”… ‘Perdió el prefijo Grammar’.

In the case of adaptations, students have opted for terms in the TL whose function is similar to that of the SL term, and have adapted them to the TC, as in (a) above. In the case of descriptions, students sometimes paraphrased the meaning of the cultural linguistic expression, probably having in mind to produce a TL text that reads more fluently. More than half of the descriptions used by the students, however, were in footnotes or translator’s notes, as can be appreciated below. Footnotes can indeed help readers to understand the SC but, when the translation is sprinkled with many footnotes, the end product may not appeal to the common reader:

Note: Tom y Ruth Pinch son personajes de la novela Martin Chuzzlewit, escrita por Charles Dickens.

Note on Commercial School: with the aim of training boys for the civil service, the army, the world of commerce and university.

As regards borrowings, it is worth mentioning that in most cases students' translations were certainly 'foreignizing' (Venuti 240) and the end product did not seem natural and coherent at all, as in the following translation:

El "venison pasty," de Scott o Ainsworth [...] El beefsteak pudding hecho por Ruth.

Their choice could, however, be justified in some translations, as stated by Mayoral, who argues that, depending on the aim and the potential readers of the translation, SL cultural features can be primarily preserved due to stylistic reasons, whereas transforming and adapting them to the TC aims at obtaining a fluent discourse and ensuring easy readability (88).

Students also made recourse, quite often, to other three procedures: equivalence (12.18%), explanation (7.60%) and literal translation (6.14%). Significant examples could be:

(a) Beefsteak pudding 'el lechazo'.

(b) It had not the gracious antiquity of Eton or Winchester, nor, on the other hand, had it a conscious policy like Lancing, Wellington… 'Sawston no tenía la noble antigüedad de famosas instituciones como Eton o Winchester, ni, por otra parte, la orientación progresiva de Lancing, Wellington y otras instituciones modernas'.

(c) Sawston School had been founded by… 'Swaston School había sido fundada por'…

Instances of compression (2.60%) were used, normally, to omit elements that were problematic, i.e. not translating the term:

It was then a tiny grammar-school… - 'Era entonces un pequeno colegio'…

The use of compensations (1.20%) and generalizations (0.26%) was surprisingly low. Here is one of the cases of generalisation:

To use the Fotheringay's own diction Para utilizar la propia dicción del lugar.

Comparing both texts, it is worth noting the greater amount of borrowings and descriptions used when translating text 1, probably with the intention of maintaining the typical and perhaps exotic names (in the case of borrowings), or to explain British dishes and all the references to Dickensian characters as well as the literary works that appear in the poem.

Table 2 shows the procedures used to translate the 20 cultural terms from Spanish into English

The procedures with a higher rate of use were borrowings (37.

Procedure	**T3**	**T4**	***Total***	(%)
Adaptation	98	79	**177**	9.21%
Borrowing	403	318	**721**	37.55%
Calque	0	0	**0**	0%
Compensation	0	14	**14**	0.72%
Compression	87	46	**133**	6.92%
Description	226	320	**546**	28.43%
Equivalence	82	110	**192**	10%
Explicitation	46	26	**72**	3.75%
Generalization	15	8	**23**	1.19%
Literal translation	3	24	**27**	1.4%
Modulation	0	1	**1**	0.05%
Particularization	0	0	**0**	0%
Substitution	0	0	**0**	0%
Transposition	0	14	**14**	0.72%
Variation	0	0	**0**	0%
Total	960	960	**1920**	100%

Slika 2 - Spanish-English translation of cultural terms

55%) and descriptions (28.43%), as illustrated in the next examples:

(a) El inicio de los sanfermines… ‘the start of the sanfermines...’.

(b) La romería era muy tradicional ‘The romería was very tradicional’.

(c) El chupinazo del 6 de julio ‘The chupinazo (burst of fireworks) of the 6th July’.

(d) …los prepararon de domingo ‘…dressed them very smart, as in their Sunday best’.

In some occasions, however, none of the two procedures seemed appropriate:

(a) …ir todos juntos a merendar… 'to go all together to merendar'…

(b) compró el periódico de la tarde anterior y una revista taurina… 'he bought the previous evening's newspaper and a bull-fighting magazine, which is very typical for those who like bullfighting'…

In the first example, the borrowing could perhaps be avoided, using some similar term in English, as 'a picnic', 'a mid-afternoon snack' or even 'something to eat'. The same can be said for the description or explicitation in the second example, which seems totally unnecessary.

As in the case of English-Spanish translation, students were also prone to resort to equivalence (10%), adaptation (7.21%), compression (6.92%) and explicitation (3.75%), as can be observed below:

(a) a lo hecho, pecho: aquello ya no tenía remedio y, además, a burro muerto, cebada al rabo 'it's no use crying over spilt milk: there was nothing they could do about it and, besides, it's no good being wise after the event'.

(b) …asciende por encima de la Casa Consistorial anunciando el inicio de la fiesta… '…rises up over the town hall announcing the start of the feast…'

(c) En sanfermines también suenan el txistu, la gaita, las fanfarres y multitud de grupos 'During sanfermines you will also hear other types of music and a multitude of groups of all types and qualities'.

(d) …se pasó el resto de la manana apretándole una perra gorda contra la picadura 'she was the rest of the morning pressing a "perra gorda", a coin that existed in Spain in those days, on the sting'.

None of the students used the procedure of calque, particularisation, substitution or variation, and only one of the students used modulation:

También nos cansamos los demás y nos aguantamos. !Pues estaría bueno! 'We're getting tired too and we're putting up with it. That's not good!'

A summary and comparison of the procedures followed by the 96 students is presented in Figure 1. The black columns indicate the procedures used when translating from English into Spanish and the values specified in the shadowed columns correspond to the terms translated into English.

The frequent use of adaptations (in English-Spanish translation) and borrowings (in Spanish-English translation) is evident.

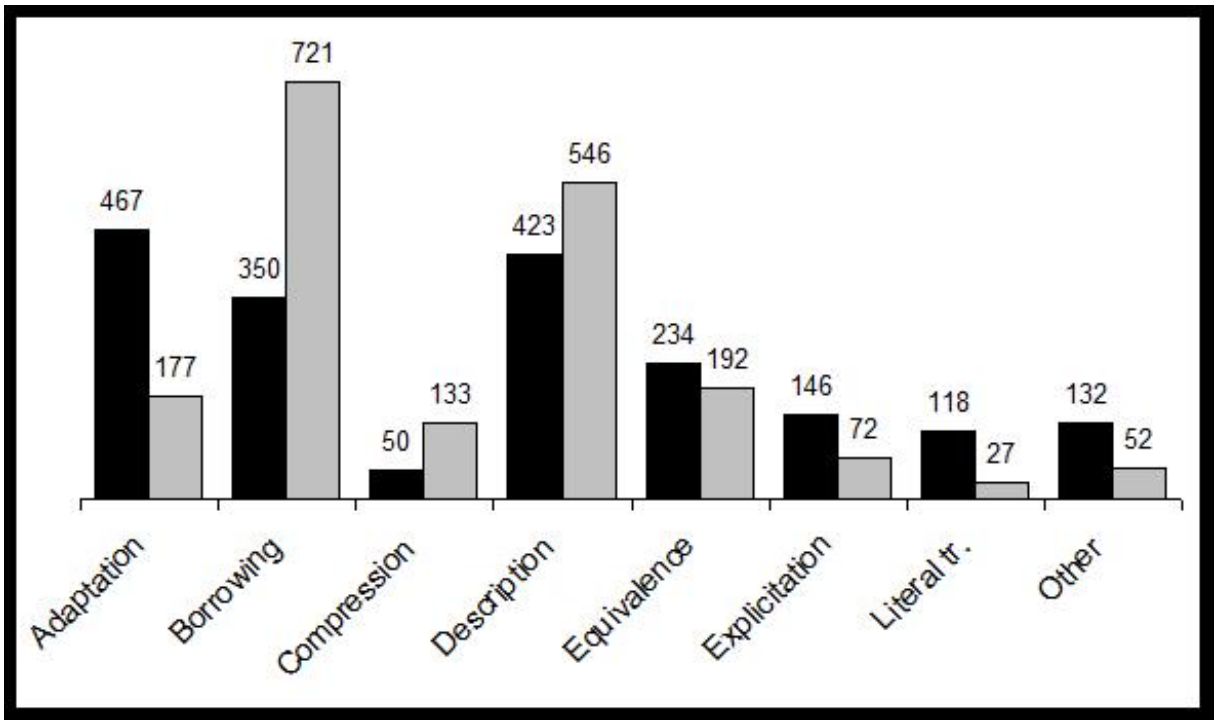

Figure 1 - Overall results of the procedures used.

In the case of adaptation, which is probably the strategy that subverts the original more than the others, this high use may be due to learners' greater awareness of the SL culture, which makes it easier for them to find cultural equivalents. In the case of borrowings, the reasons for preserving the SC terms in their translations could be the difficulties involved in back translation (or translation into a foreign language); but we can also perceive an attempt to highlight the conventions of the SC as different from those of the TC, or even as some sort of maintenance of the SC and resistance against the dominant TC.

Results also show some preference for descriptions. It seems that, when facing culture-specific terms, students do really know what they imply or denote, but cannot always find an equivalent term in the TL, so they tend to describe it. As regards equivalence, compression, explicitation and

literal translation, there are no quantitatively significant differences in the strategies used for the translation of texts into the native language and for the translation into their foreign language. The small percentage of use of the other procedures (calque, compensation, generalization, modulation, particularization, substitution, transposition and variation) could perhaps be explained by the fact that not all strategies can be equally applied to culture terms.

Still, it is important to point out that the use of these translation procedures or strategies should not be viewed in isolation, and that they need to be put into context. Also, one cannot consider some procedures as better or more appropriate than others, since their use depends on the aim of the translation, the translator's attempt to subvert or maintain the SC, the potential readers, the cultural distance between the SL and the TL, etc.

Finally, though it does not follow directly from the quantitative results presented in the previous paragraphs, reference should be made to the fact that in many instances there was not much coherence in the translation method used by the students. They translated several cultural terms having recourse, in the same text, to adaptations or cultural equivalents, as well as borrowings, thus combining indiscriminately a foreignizing and a domesticating approach. In some other occasions, one could also discern that students seemed to focus only on translation problems (the cultural terms that had no equivalent in the TL), and not on the text as a whole and the coherence it should have.

4. Conclusion

The present paper has first made a quick reference to some theoretical aspects concerning cultural terms, mainly to the most important typologies and classifications proposed, as well as the translation procedures or strategies that can be used to translate these terms.

Despite the fact that translators have been carrying out their task for more than two thousand years, some scholars (Santoyo, García Yebra, Yifeng, etc.) consider that, in some cases, translation is impossible, basically when one has to translate poetic texts or those of a cultural nature. Of course, when "gaps" between two languages and cultures exist, to achieve a perfect transfer will be very difficult, and cultural gaps certainly seem to prove the problematic nature of

translation. Yet, according to Kade (93), from the linguistic and communicative perspectives, everything conceivable by the human mind must be capable of being expressed in any language. And, since anything that can be said in one language can be expressed in another (Nida and Taber 4), we can infer that everything can be translated from any given language into any other language. Therefore, the translation of any text is objectively possible, even if there are different codifications, historically conditioned, resulting from the fact that not all speech communities are at the same stage of evolution (Kade 93).

To overcome the difficulties and problems that cultural elements pose, the translator can use a wide range of strategies, such as the ones synthesized in section 2. Many translation scholars consider them pivotal in the translation process, but these strategies are not the universal panacea and studies on translation strategies and procedures have been sometimes criticised. Some authors (Chuquet and Pallard 10, Kelly 133, Larose 18, etc.) criticise the nature of these procedures, indicating that borrowings and calques, for instance, are not really translation procedures, while others (especially adaptation) are beyond the limits of translation, or that there is no clear boundary between them. Procedures have also been criticised arguing that knowing them is not useful for the translator and that studies on the several types of strategies or procedures are mere labels used to designate what translators do intuitively and what they have done for centuries, before linguists gave those procedures a name (Kelly 155). Understanding and knowing when to apply such procedures, however, can be very helpful and methodologically useful for students (Hurtado 43-44).

This paper has also shown the results of an empirical study, in which 96 students translated culture-bound literary texts, in order to find out the problems they faced in translating 40 cultural terms and the strategies used to solve them. Translating culture-specific concepts seems indeed a very challenging task and the choice of certain strategies can reveal either the “subversiveness” of the translator (leading to a domestication of the SL text in the TC, translating in a fluent and invisible style so as to minimize the foreignness of the text), or the resistance and maintenance of the SC (leading to foreignization, maintaining the dominant cultural values of the SL and the ideological dominance of the SC). In this study, results show a clear preference for borrowings,

descriptions and adaptations (both in direct and back translation), so one can say that this typifies, to a greater or lesser extent, students' both subversion and preservation of SC elements.

In some occasions students should also try, perhaps, to have some "freedom" when translating these cultural elements, since their main problems were basically that they either (1) focused primarily on the cultural elements and not on the language and the style of the text, just trying to 'adapt' the SL culture to the TL culture, or (2) they focused mainly on language and style, preserving elements of the original culture and not rendering the message accurately (Venuti 240). A balance between domesticating and foreignizing the TL text would be the most appropriate, though, in line with Levine, we can say that, to a certain extent, "a translation must subvert the original" considering "what is lost and can be gained in crossing the language barrier" (Levine 83).

Of course, the results obtained here cannot be extrapolated, since they would probably have been different if we had analysed a larger number of literary translations, a larger number of students, a greater variety of texts, or even if more languages and cultures had been involved. It would have been equally interesting to compare students' translations with the ones carried out by renowned translators, but that certainly exceeds the scope of this paper.

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