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**TRANSLATION OF CULTURE-BOUND WORDS, EXPRESSIONS, AND
PROVERBS FROM KAZAKH INTO ENGLISH
(BASED ON THE MATERIAL OF THE TRILOGY "THE NOMADS"
BY I. YESSENBERLIN)**

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Abstract

This study examines the translation of culturally specific vocabulary, particularly culture-bound words and expressions, in Ilyas Yessenberlin's trilogy *The Nomads* from Kazakh to English. A qualitative research approach was employed, utilizing a descriptive methodology to analyze military terminology, kinship terms unique to the Kazakh culture, culture-bound expressions, and Kazakh proverbs.

The paper is structured into several sections, including an introduction, methodology, findings, discussion, and conclusion. The primary objective of this research is to investigate the challenges associated with conveying the meaning of culture-bound words and expressions in translation, and to examine the strategies employed to render them accurately in English. The study aims to address the following research questions: "How were culture-bound words and expressions translated into English?" and "To what extent did the translator preserve the meaning of these culture-bound expressions?"

Findings indicate that military and kinship terms were primarily transliterated, with some instances of descriptive translation. Certain proverbs and metaphors were omitted, while others were translated literally. Given the novel's extensive use of metaphorical language, the study provides valuable insights for translators, interpreters, and educators, offering additional knowledge on effective strategies for rendering culturally embedded terms in translation.

Keywords: literary translation, Yessenberlin, "The Nomads," culture-bound expressions, proverbs, Kazakh idiomatic expressions, metaphors.

**ҚАЗАҚ ХАЛҚЫНЫҢ МӘДЕНИЕТІ МЕН САЛТ-ДӘСТҮРІН БІЛДІРЕТІН
СӨЗДЕР МЕН ТҰРАҚТЫ СӨЗ ТІРКЕСТЕРІНІҢ, СОНДАЙ-АҚ МАҚАЛ-
МӘТЕЛДЕРДІҢ ҚАЗАҚ ТІЛІНЕН АҒЫЛШЫН ТІЛІНЕ АУДАРЫЛУЫ
(І. ЕСЕНБЕРЛИННІҢ "КӨШПЕНДІЛЕР" ТРИЛОГИЯСЫ НЕГІЗІНДЕ)**

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Аңдатпа

Бұл зерттеу Ілияс Есенберлиннің *Көшпенділер* трилогиясын қазақ тілінен ағылшын тіліне аудару үдерісіндегі мәдени бояуы қанық лексиканы, әсіресе ұлттық ерекшеліктерді білдіретін сөздер мен тұрақты тіркестерді талдауға арналған. Зерттеу шеңберінде сипаттамалық талдауға негізделген сапалық әдіс қолданылды. Негізгі назар әскери терминологияға, қазақ халқына ғана тән туыстық атауларға, мәдени мағына жүктелген сөздер мен тіркестерге, сондай-ақ қазақ мақал-мәтелдеріне аударылды.

Мақала кіріспе, әдіснама, зерттеу нәтижелері, талқылау және қорытынды бөлімдерінен тұрады. Бұл зерттеу тілтану саласындағы студенттер мен оқытушылар үшін, сондай-ақ отандық және шетелдік авторлардың тарихи және әдеби шығармаларын оқуға қызығушылық танытатын оқырмандар үшін де өзекті.

Зерттеудің мақсаты – мәдени-тілдік ерекшеліктері бар сөздер мен тіркестердің аудармада мағыналық берілу сипатын анықтау және оларды аудару барысында қолданылған стратегияларды талдау. Зерттеудің негізгі сұрақтары: "Мәдени-тілдік ерекшеліктері бар сөздер мен тіркестер ағылшын тіліне

қалай аударылды”? және “Аудармашы олардың бастапқы мағынасын қаншалықты дәрежеде сақтай алды”?

Зерттеу нәтижелері көрсеткендей, әскери және туыстық терминдер негізінен транслитерация арқылы берілген, кейбір жағдайларда сипаттамалық аударма қолданылған. Кейбір мақал-мәтелдер мен метафоралар аудармада қолданылмаған, ал кейбірі сөзбе-сөз аударылған. Шығармадағы метафоралық қолданыстардың молдығын ескере отырып, бұл зерттеу аудармашылар, тіл мамандары мен оқытушылар үшін пайдалы материал бола алады, сондай-ақ мұндай тілдік бірліктерді аударудағы әдістер туралы қосымша ақпарат ұсынады.

Кілт сөздер: көркем әдебиетті аудару, Есенберлин, Көшпенділер, мәдени ерекшеліктері бар тіркестер, мақал-мәтелдер, қазақ тіліндегі тұрақты сөз тіркестері, метафоралар

ПЕРЕВОД КУЛЬТУРНО-ОБУСЛОВЛЕННЫХ СЛОВ И ВЫРАЖЕНИЙ, А ТАКЖЕ ПОСЛОВИЦ С КАЗАХСКОГО НА АНГЛИЙСКИЙ ЯЗЫК (НА МАТЕРИАЛЕ ТРИЛОГИИ «КОЧЕВНИКИ» И. ЕСЕНБЕРЛИНА)

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Аннотация

Данное исследование посвящено анализу культурно маркированной лексики, в частности, слов и выражений, отражающих национальную специфику, в процессе перевода трилогии Ильяс Есенберлина “Кочевники” с казахского на английский язык. В рамках работы применен качественный исследовательский метод, основанный на описательном анализе. Основное внимание уделено военной терминологии, уникальным для казахского народа терминам родства, культурно обусловленным словам и выражениям, а также казахским пословицам.

Структура статьи включает введение, методологию, результаты, обсуждение и заключение. Целью исследования является выявление особенностей передачи значений культурно маркированных слов и выражений в процессе перевода, а также анализ применяемых переводческих стратегий. Основные исследовательские вопросы включают: “Каким образом культурно обусловленные слова и выражения были переданы на английский язык?” и “В какой степени переводчик смог сохранить их исходное значение?”

Результаты исследования показали, что военная и родственная терминология преимущественно передавалась с использованием транслитерации, в ряде случаев применялся описательный перевод. Некоторые пословицы и метафоры были опущены, в то время как другие переведены дословно. Учитывая насыщенность произведения метафорическими выражениями, данное исследование представляет ценность для переводчиков, лингвистов и преподавателей, предоставляя дополнительную информацию о методах адаптации таких элементов в процессе перевода. А также данное исследование представляет интерес для читателей, увлекающихся историей и литературой отечественных и зарубежных авторов.

Ключевые слова: перевод художественной литературы, Есенберлин “Кочевники”, культурно-обусловленные выражения, пословицы, казахские устойчивые выражения, метафоры.

Introduction

Traditions, customs, and norms vary from country to country. Still, the modern world is constructed in a way that requires those countries to exchange religious and cultural ideas constantly. One of the main instruments of culture for every country is its language. With the help of this, countries can not only express their rules and norms but also help others understand their specificity. The process of interacting between various nations or countries is called intercultural communication. Intercultural communication is the foundation of relations between different countries and their respective nations. Hence, it is very essential to retain the unique characteristics of a country when translating language that conveys its culture. This is one of the primary objectives of every translator, as the perception of another country's nature highly depends on how those translators convey its essence.

A translator is an expert in intercultural communication who helps others eliminate cultural boundaries. They not only transmit the words but also the ideas and views. Equally important is to note that these experts are required to be familiar with the history of both the target and source countries, as speakers often tend to refer to previous historical events, especially in the political sphere [1].

It is necessary to briefly explain some differences between translators and interpreters, as they both work with two languages and cultures, but some distinctive features should be highlighted. Interpreters are oral translators who perform during conferences, meetings, and other face-to-face gatherings. In contrast, translators primarily work with written forms of the material, such as documents or literary works. One distinctive feature of these two professions is that interpreters must reproduce a given part of speech immediately in the target language; consequently, they attempt to capture the basic idea and represent it [1]. However, the situation is different for translators, especially those who translate literature, because literary translation requires not only conveying the main idea but also transforming its style and the way it is used, incorporating diverse pacing and tone. Literary translation primarily differs from other types of translation in that it aims to convey the essence and emotions of the author and their work. The point here is that the reader of the target work should catch the same feeling as the reader of the source work [2]. Additionally, translators face other challenges during their work. Here are some of them.

First, translators should follow the same stylistic nature as the source text. For instance, if the text is written using a lot of humor, translators should convey it in a way to achieve the same feelings, such as laughing, happiness, or surprise, and if the text is all about sadness, the readers of the target text should also feel despondency, despair, or frustration.

Second, there are terms like domestication and foreignization in translation. Domestication refers to the translator's use of the so-called "invisible" approach, which lends naturalness to the target text. This strategy helps translators convey the same ideas and perceptions in a way they used to have, but at the same time, preserve the essence of the source text. However, there can be many words or collocations that do not exist in the target culture. In this case, the strategy of foreignization enables translators to convey the basic idea. They use those "unfamiliar" words but give an extra explanation so that the readers can understand what was meant and experience some other culture's peculiarity as well [3].

The third problem concerns culture-bound expressions such as idioms, proverbs, or metaphors. They are difficult to translate as they first reflect a certain culture's uniqueness and secondly, they have roots in ancient times and are tightly connected to its history. For example, a famous Kazakh interpreter Ye. Iskakov claims that Kazakh proverbs and sayings are closely tied to their nomadic heritage, whereas English proverbs are mainly derived from the Bible [4].

As can be seen above, translators go through lots of steps before presenting an almost "equivalent" version of the source text in another language.

Regarding culture-bound expressions, the primary reason to explore them is the growing international interest in the Kazakh language and the President of Kazakhstan's address, K. K. Tokayev, highlighting the increasing importance of the Kazakh language due to the rising interest of modern youth. The research may be helpful to translation studies students, teachers, and researchers who wish to explore literary translation in depth.

Methodology

The research is dedicated to finding culture-bound words and expressions and exploring their translation from Kazakh into English using a descriptive approach. Qualitative descriptive research enables researchers and readers to gain a clear understanding of an event or phenomenon. It also allows us to examine given problems from various perspectives thoroughly. Furthermore, the descriptive approach is transparent and consequently free from any bias that can affect research [5].

The data collection for the research was drawn from the first part of the trilogy, titled "The Charmed Sword," by Kazakh writer I. Yessenberlin. Culture-bound words were selected in accordance with Z.G. Proshina's book, "Theory of Translation." Since proverbs reflect specific features of the Kazakh nation, they were also included in the list of research data. Culture-bound expressions comprised military terms, kinship terms, Kazakh tradition and custom terms, and proverbs.

The data analysis part comprised three major steps. Firstly, every found word was classified by its meaning into the groups mentioned above. The next step was to see their translation in “The Nomads” and classify them using translation techniques and transformations. There are several types of translation methods, including *transcription, transliteration, calque, half-calque, descriptive translation, expansion, reduction, and substitution*. Additionally, there are three types of transformations: grammatical transformations, lexical or semantic transformations, and complex transformations, which encompass both grammatical and lexical transformations [6].

Generally, the translation of culture-bound words and expressions is achieved through transliteration, transcription, calque, explanatory translation, lexical substitution, or other methods.

Kinship terms generally have their equivalents in the target language. Since some terms in the Kazakh language are inherently unique to their nation, their translation may be challenging. For this reason, translators use explanatory translation as a solution. For instance, words like *нағашы, бөле, жуен* are mostly explained and translated as *a relative from the mother's side, a child of the mother's sister, and a grandchild of the mother's parents*, respectively [7].

Tradition and custom terms are also translated using the above-mentioned techniques, along with more techniques. Since proverbs are metaphorical expressions, their translation can be a bit challenging for translators and interpreters. As Z.G. Proshina states, those expressions are commonly translated using *metaphorization, demetaphorization, or remetaphorization*.

Metaphorization involves translating a word or phrase that is not metaphorical into the target language by using metaphorical expressions in the target language. For example, *A young girl suddenly came around the house* can be translated into Kazakh as *Қаршадай қыз аяқ астынан үйдің қасынан жалт етіп шыға келді*. Demetaphorization, on the other hand, involves translating metaphorical expressions into straightforward sentences or phrases. For instance, the phrase *“the skeleton in our family closet was my brother John”* can be translated as *Біздің отбасымыздың құпиясы ағамыз Джон болатын* [6, p. 136]. This method is recommended only in case of a phraseological lacuna. The last remetaphorization method involves translating metaphoric expressions with their full equivalents or partial equivalents, which means finding an equivalent metaphor in the target language. For instance, expressions like *to play with fire* and *when pigs fly* are translated into the Kazakh language as *отпен ойнау* and *тезек гүлдегенде* respectively.

The final step was to explore how their meaning was conveyed and whether it preserved the cultural peculiarities of the Kazakh nation.

The descriptive approach employed in this study allows for an in-depth analysis of the data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the specific methods and techniques used, as well as their effectiveness in conveying the core meaning of culture-bound expressions. The following section presents the key research findings in tabular format.

Findings

The section comprises the main results revealed during the research, followed by four tables related to military terms, kinship terms, Kazakh tradition, and custom terms and proverbs.

During the research, twenty-nine military terms, thirteen kinship terms, twenty-six Kazakh tradition and custom terms, and thirty proverbs were identified in the novel's first part. The research revealed that the translation of those terms and proverbs was omitted mainly in the English version of the novel. The following table contains the terms, in which translation was conveyed using mostly transliteration, explanatory, word-for-word translation, and demetaphorization strategies. Some terms do not have their translations at the beginning of the chapter, but they are provided in the second part of it. The translation of those words is given by using a slash. Some culture-bound expressions were explained in the discussion section, and their translation was proposed.

Table 1. The translation of military terms in the trilogy

Military terms	
Онбасы	Onbasy
Жүзбасы	Zhunbasy

Мыңбасы	Mynbasy
Қолбасшы	Commander-in-chief
Ноян	Noyon
Сұлтан	The most credulous/Sultan
Сұлтан Бегім	<i>Missed</i> /Sultan-Begim
Дәйекші	Hangman
Баһадүр	Bahatur

Kinship terms	
Шөбере аға	Relative
Бәйбіше	Wife
Нағашы жұрт	<i>Missed</i> /uncle on his maternal side
Жиен	<i>Missed</i>

Kazakh tradition and custom terms	
Ұлы құрылтай	Great kurultay
Ақ киізге көтеру	Lifted up on a white felt mat
Ру	Clan/Kin
"Ой, бауырымдау"	It was an ancient Kazakh tradition to burst into an aul in mourning, galloping at full speed, lamenting and moaning "Oh our dearest!"
Атеке атау	Altalyk/sworn brother

Proverbs/metaphorical expressions	
Екі қошқардың басы бір қазанға сыймас	Two sheep's heads cannot be cooked in one and the same pot.
Ақ түйенің қарны жарылды	A white camel was sacrificed for the occasion
Бас кеспек болса да, тіл кеспек жоқ	You have the right to cut off a convict's head, but first, you must listen to what his tongue has to say!
Жел тұрмаса шөптің басы қимылдамайды	<i>Missed</i> /"Why did he not verify the rumors when he first heard them?"
Көздің қарашығындай сақтау/күзету	"Make sure nothing happens to him. Otherwise, it will cost your head."
Аталы сөзге арсыз тоқтамас	There was an unwritten law saying: "You can cut off a man's head, but you cannot cut off his tongue"
Досыңнан қасыңның еті тәтті	There is nothing more delicious than the flesh of your enemy.
Қардың басын қар алар, ханның басын хан алар	Snow falls on snow, and a Khan takes the place of another Khan.
Алтын көрсе періште жолдан таяр	Even God's angel goes wrong when the glitter of gold blinds his eyes.
Аға өлсе – ініге мұра	"Now do tell us what it is, so that we could start preparing for merry celebrations!"

As can be seen above, many words and expressions possess cultural features, and they play a crucial role in conveying the essence of the source work, particularly in literature. However, if some of them are missed or misinterpreted, it may lead to numerous misunderstandings.

Discussion

In the given part of the trilogy, translating military terms was not so difficult as they were simply transliterated. Despite this fact, some terms would sound a bit strange and extraordinary to English-speaking readers. However, they were not explained in the book, and people had to guess what they meant accordingly. For instance, the word “noyan” is a culture-bound term in the Kazakh nation, referring to a person who leads his clan. The word “bahatur” refers to a representative of a military class in medieval times. This word also has one more spelling, “bahadur”. As U.K. Zhangaliev et al. state, “bahadur” along with “batyr” and “bagadur” originally referred to a brave man who was able to call the enemy to battle before the war [8]. Additionally, T.S. Nurgazina (2024) notes that “bahadur” is a Turkic-Mongolian term meaning a brave, strong, and courageous person [9]. Since these words are specific to the Turkic-Mongolian and Persian nations, it would be appropriate to provide some clarifications on them in the translated trilogy.

Kazakh kinship terms also exhibit some differences from those in the English language. There are notions such as *нағашы* and *жәуір* which specifically refer to the relatives from the mother’s side. A woman’s children will be called “zhien” by that woman’s parents. For English-speaking audiences, this may be confusing as they refer to those kids as grandchildren and do not distinguish between the mother’s and father’s sides. This case clearly demonstrates the need to add additional information to the translated artwork, as the target audience may be confused or unable to understand these kinship terms [10].

The metaphor *ақ түінің қарны жарылды* is an ancient Kazakh expression meaning that happy days came to their land. It is not only about sacrifice but also about happy moments. As shown in the table, this expression was translated directly. Yet, this did not lose its meaning; it would be applicable to provide some explanations and reasons for such a custom. A.G. Gali-Askar claims that during the time of enemy raids, people would celebrate the safe return of their batyrs from war by sacrificing a white camel. The color white represents purity, good news, and positive intentions in the Kazakh nation. Consequently, the expression has two different roots. The first concerns the nomadic lifestyle of the nation, and the second is about the color white, which is considered a symbol of good fortune for the Kazakh people [11].

The expression *"ақ күйге көтеру,"* which was translated directly, refers to the inauguration ceremony of modern times [12]. Unfortunately, this was not explained in the text either. Additionally, the metaphorical expression “Аға өлсе – ініге мұра” refers to a Kazakh tradition from ancient times known as “*әмеңгерлік*” (*amengerlik*). It is about a woman who is expected to marry one of her deceased husband’s brothers, i.e., one of her brothers-in-law. It was an ancient tradition to protect that woman and her children from others and care for them [13]. Additionally, according to the book “Life and Culture of the Kazakh People,” this tradition has three reasons for its occurrence. First, the woman will continue to live in her house and with her family. Second, her children will live and get along with their other relatives, as tradition dictates, which will ultimately benefit them. The third reason is that Kazakh tradition requires women to stay within their clan. There is a specific Kazakh proverb related to this case, such as *Әйел ерден кетсе де, елден кетпейді*, which means that a woman cannot leave her clan (country, motherland) even if *she leaves her husband* [14]. However, this notion was not mentioned at all in the text, and hence might lead readers to be confused about why that woman has to marry her brother-in-law.

“*Ой, бауырымдау*” is also a traditional Kazakh phrase used during mourning ceremonies. Unlike the previous expression, this notion was clarified to the audience. Turning to proverbs, it can be seen from the above that most proverbs were translated word for word, conveying their meaning. Yet, they have lost their cultural color, and consequently, people do not realize that they have read a metaphor or proverb. For instance, the proverb “*Жел тұрмаса шөптің басы қимылдамайды*” means that every rumor has its basis and every occasion has its reason for happening. However, it was not mentioned and was fully missed in the text. It would be appropriate if the translator employed the remetaphorization method by using an equivalent, such as “There is no smoke without fire.” Furthermore, many proverbs that should have been translated were just missed, despite having crucial points in the novel. For example, the proverb “*Алтын көрсе періште жолдан таяр*” was translated directly using the

demetaphorization method. However, in the English language, there is a more similar equivalent, such as *Money makes the mare go* which has the same meaning [15]. Even though a directly translated version of this proverb conveys the meaning, the target readers might misunderstand the roots of using this religion-related expression. According to K.K. Satayev, this proverb was not originally related to the Kazakh nation. There is a legend about the angel Jabrail, who saw a piece of gold on the road and left it there because he respected Allah's will to send this gold for the people's needs. That is why people then started to use this metaphor [16]. It would be more applicable if the translator clarified that there is no commonality between the religion and the Kazakh tradition.

Finally, the novel includes some specific Kazakh expressions related to time. For instance, Yessenberlin uses collocations such as *"Күз қыстауға қайтқанда"* or *"Биесауымдай жер шабу."* They are directly related to time. The first is approximately November. This timeframe may vary depending on the changes in weather over the next 90 to 100 days. The second expression is about one hour. There is one more expression, *Сүт пісірім уақыт*, which is about 15 minutes. In the translated novel, the expression *Күз қыстауға қайтқанда* was explained as *"We will settle the matter in autumn, when the auls return to their winter residences."* As can be seen, the translator used the explanatory method, which is preferable in the context. However, target readers might have no idea what it was like back in the winter residence. In this case, it might be clearer if the translator could clarify the nomadic style of the Kazakh people at that time. One more example of a specific measure in the Kazakh nation is the phrase *"Бір жарым қарыс."* It is the distance between a person's thumb and index finger. Accordingly, one measure can be distinguished from another depending on the shape and size of a person's palm and fingers. Unfortunately, these purely Kazakh expressions were also missing from the text.

The study found that culture-bound expressions were predominantly translated directly into English. However, their intended meanings were largely retained. The following section will provide concluding remarks and discussions.

Conclusion

The modern world is constructed in a way that requires everyone to connect. Communication can occur between two people, their relatives, friends, and even between strangers. It can also be within one country and internationally. The communication between two or more countries is referred to as intercultural communication because it involves people from different geographical locations, with diverse languages, lifestyles, and cultures. It is essential to acquire some communication skills and knowledge to engage in even a simple dialogue with a foreigner [17]. Moreover, there are several reasons to do so.

First of all, it is a fact that every person represents their culture and country, and the perception of their country is highly dependent on how those people behave, speak, and communicate. History can reveal a multitude of instances where communication between two people has led to varied outcomes, ranging from long-term friendships to wars. It is easier when there is no barrier between two different people, such as not knowing the language or specific ethical or cultural norms inherent to every nation, because people know how to initiate and conduct a dialogue and what to expect from a partner. However, it becomes somewhat complicated when two people or even countries are unaware of each other's language and culture. In such cases, interpreters and translators play a crucial role for the two different nations, as they are considered the bridge between them, primarily because they serve as an important tool for connection, namely language. However, knowing a foreign language itself cannot guarantee a smooth and fruitful dialogue. It also requires understanding the cultural, ethnic, and other backgrounds of those countries. Furthermore, during every intercultural communication, people view the world through the lens of different nations as seen through the eyes of translators and interpreters. That is why their profession is regarded as one of the most difficult. Primarily, it becomes problematic when translating literary works, as the translated literature should accurately reflect every feeling that the target author intended to convey. Every nation is prosperous in great literature.

People can gain insight into an author's entire body of work by reading their works. Kazakh language, like many others, is rich in different kinds of proverbs, metaphors, and culture-bound words. It is seen from the beginning of the famous trilogy "The Nomads." This trilogy is considered a treasure

of the Kazakh nation because it tells a story spanning five centuries. Every reader of the original book in the Kazakh language will immerse themselves in the extraordinary history, full of happiness, stress, despondency, excitement, and more.

The trilogy “The Nomads” is considered one of the most famous and beloved historical novels of all time, as it is based on factual events. From the very beginning, this literary work entices its readers with beautiful language. Every detail in every scene in the book is described with great care, allowing readers to absorb it in one breath. It is thanks to the masterful use of metaphors, proverbs, and combinations. For instance, there is a scene in the novel devoted to the feelings experienced by Abulhair Khan when he realizes that the woman he has loved for many years could betray him, and then his feelings of regret about those thoughts when he discovers that all his doubts about her were unfounded. Yessenberlin could play with language in a way that made readers quickly transition from feelings of happiness to anxiety and vice versa. That is why it is crucial to convey these emotions to the target audience in their native language. Only by doing so, the target reader will be able to feel the experience that the Nomads went through to become an independent khanate. The English version of this trilogy is also full of beautiful metaphors, collocations, and expressions. The translator managed to convey most parts of it subtly. However, in the first part of the trilogy, proverbs were sometimes omitted or mistranslated, resulting in the loss of their cultural significance.

Since the given research served only a descriptive nature, careful analysis is needed to find more equivalents to the Kazakh proverbs and metaphors in English.

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