ON THE ISSUE OF 'TRANSDAPTATION'

Bianca Oana HAN[1]

Abstract

Due to the difficulty implied by the attempt to render words from one language into another, especially if those are culture specific items, there are instances when translation needs to go further, to that so-called 'transdaptation', (i.e. if we may, combination of the terms translation + adaptation). For the present paper, we are briefly viewing Mona Baker's opinion on the matter regarding the issue of culture specific elements and their equivallation.

Keywords: culture specific elements, 'transdaptation', individuality

The present article is part of a postdoctoral scientific research, entitled *Communication of the national spirit by translating culture specific elements,* and focuses upon aspects related to the translation of literature from Romanian into English, aiming mainly at issues concerned with the inter-linguistic and inter-cultural transfer of those terms that attempt to maintain and preserve the local atmosphere and air specific to every nation. We are interested in that special category of untranslatable terms, real "mill stones" for the translators, as they bear geographical, historical, socio-cultural experience: the so called 'culture specific elements', i.e. 'CSEs'.

They say that our identity is what makes us who we are. They say that national identity cannot be rendered by means of translation in another language without betraying it up to a certain extent. We say we ought to try and to succeed. We consider that by translation we gain more than we lose, from many points of view. This might stand as a simple explanation to the necessity to 'declare war' to the linguistic difficulties of a certain language; since the individual is not meant to live separated from a community, the community needs to build bridges of communication between members of different nations.

We ought to be clear that, by the efforts in translating (here, we understand also the process of equation, adaptation, re-invention, rendering etc.) the CSEs in a different language, there is, on the one hand, always a certain amount of loss implied as well as, on the other hand, a certain amount of gain. All that due to the fact that 'any translator brings along a certain amount of new items, imposed by the continuous, never-ending renewal of concepts, of civilization, of international language.' (Bulgăr: 3) Once again, we have to embrace the idea according to which the translation has the capacity to access and decode linguistic conventions otherwise unique, specific to a certain people, proper to a certain culture.

[1] Assitent. PhD., *Petru Maior* University, Târgu-Mureş

BDD-A3095 © 2012 Universitatea Petru Maior
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-23 07:11:55 UTC)

This debate cannot escape the idea that there will always be the ardent issue of *non-equivalence* in question; according to Mona Baker (21), there are certain common issues to be regarded when touching the matter:

Culture-specific concepts –item referring to the fact that one word from the source language text expresses a concept that is unknown in the target language. The word can relate to culture-related items, like traditions, religion, food or drink;

The source-language concept has no lexical equivalent in the target language – this would mean that the source language expresses something that is easy to understand in the target language and an equivalent can be found, although not an equivalent that is able to recreate the impact of the word in the source-language text.

The source-language word has a complex meaning – this might imply certain problems since there are words that are very complex when it comes to the meanings that they encompass. This would mean that a single word can have more meanings, or denominate a set of actions, characteristics, etc. Bolinger and Sears suggest that: "If we should ever need to talk regularly and frequently about independently operated sawmills from which striking workers are locked out on Thursday when the temperature is between 500° and 600°F, we would find a concise way to do it" (ibid.:114). These statements would refer to the fact that the words that pose problems by expressing complex meanings, usually appear from the need of expressing a concept that is intensely used.

There are differences between distinctions in meaning in the source language and target language – this implies that the target language may have more or less distinctions in meaning that the source language. These distinctions in meaning are related to the cultural differences that may occur, hence, a word that relats to a cultural concept has many meanings in the source language, while the target language does not hold other meanings than the basic one.

The target language lacks a superordinate – the target language might contain the specific words that make up a certain semantic field, but lacks the main word that superordinates that semantic field.

The target language lacks a specific term – this would imply the opposite situation of the item above (5), which means that the target language lacks a term from the semantic field of the word in question. For example, the word "beer" can be translated in Romanian only as "bere", while in English, there are many distinctions:

- *"ale"*
- *"lager"* – light beer (Romanian: bere blondă)
- *"brew"* – colloquial for "beer"
- *"stout"* – beer type (Romanian: bere neagră tare)
- *"bock"* – German beer
- *"shandy*" (UK) – beer and lemonade

(http://www.wordreference.com/roen/bere).

BDD-A3095 © 2012 Universitatea Petru Maior
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-23 07:11:55 UTC)

Differences in perspective –Baker explains this item by the differences in physical and interpersonal perspective that may be given different values and meanings from one language to another. She relates this topic to the physical relations with the expressions that concern people and their interaction, the circumstances that involve people. These expressions may come in pairs, as: come-go, give-take, etc. for instance "Japanese has six equivalents for "give", depending on who gives to whom: yaru, ageru, morau, kureru, itadaku and kudasaru" (McCreary, 1986) (Baker, 23).

Differences in expressive meaning – this would concern the differences between words in the source language and target language, in terms of expressive meaning. The translator may encouter a word that can have a strong expressive meaning in the source language, while the word that has the same propositional meaning in the target language is rather neutral. The common technique in such case is to add expressiveness by means of an adverb, or another element, or to emphasize later on in the text.

Differences in form – this refers to the fact that there are certain words from the source language that do not have equivalents in the target language. And Mona Baker refers here to the fact that "Certain suffixes and prefixes which convey propositional and other types of meaning in English often have no direct equivalents in other languages (…). It is most important for the translators to understand the contribution that affixes make to the meaning of words and expressions, especially since such affixes are often used creatively in English to coin new words for various reasons, such as filling temporary semantic gaps in the language and creating humour. Their contribution is also important in the area of terminology and standardization."(Baker, 24-25). By this mechanism, English allows the creation of terms that often do not have direct equivalents, the case of

- "conceivable", which in Romanian will be translated as: "care poate fi conceput", even if there is the possibility of using "imaginabil"
- "lovable", Romanian: "care poate fi iubit", even with the existing "atrăgător" and "simpatic".

Differences in using of certain terms–"Even when a particular form does have a ready equivalent in the target language, there may be a difference in the frequency with which it is used or the purpose for which it is used. English, for instance, uses the continuous *-ing* form for binding clauses much more frequently than other languages which have equivalents for it, for example German and the Scandinavian languages. Consequently, rendering every *-ing* form in an English source text with an equivalent-*ing* form in a German, Danish, or Swedish target text would result in stilted, unnatural style." (Baker, 25). – this is representative for the fact that the translator has to know certain particularities that occur at a general level.

*Using the loan words when translating – False friends; T*his final item that Baker classifies here deals with the loan words being used in source language and the issues of transferring it to the target language. This raises issues because it is not always

BDD-A3095 © 2012 Universitatea Petru Maior
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-23 07:11:55 UTC)

possible to find a loan word in the source language that can have the same meaning. "Quite apart from their respective propositional meaning, loan words in English are often used for their prestige value, because they add air of sophistication to the text or its subject matter" (Baker, 25).

- Examples from Italian to English: Adagio, Broccoli, Espresso, Pizza, Spaghetti, Umbrella, Violin, Sonata, Arsenal Balcony, Cappuccino, Casino, Opera, Zucchini (http://www.english-for-students.com/Italian-Loan-Words.html)
- Examples from French to English: bon vivant, camouflage, cabaret, coup d'etat, coupon, crayon, entrepreneur, espionage, faux pas, hors d'oeuvre, laissez faire, lieutenant, mayonnaise, memoir, menu, par excellence, rendezvous, reservoir, roulette, séance, savoir faire, souvenir. (http://www.krysstal.com/display_borrowlang.php?lang=French)

False friends–are the words or expressions that may have the same form but mean different things. This could be an issue because of the fact that an un-experienced translator may attempt to render the word in the source language, without realising that it is placed in a wrong context

We are to understand that translation is a means to enrich the vocabulary of a language, considering the strategies it uses in order to achieve this prerogative; thus, during the translation process, the translator activates various linguistic and semantic areas by appealing to: borrowings, neologisms, collocations, idioms, euphemisms, stereotypes, CESs, etc. Among the other strategies of translation, one could also mention certain linguistic-hiding techniques, using footnotes, endnotes or explanatory notes, attempt to reconstruct vague equivalences. (Croitoru 2004: 8) R.T.Bell states, and he is not the first one to do it, that "the ideal of obtaining a complete equivalence is a chimera". All these imply the participation of extra-textual factors (socio-cultural, historical frame, data regarding the author, authorial intent, spatial-temporal coordinates of the source test and the receiver etc.) and also intra-textual factors (regarding the subject, plot, content, composition, vocabulary, surface and deep structures of the phrase, style etc.)

Bibliography:

Baker, M. (2002) *In other words*, London and NY: Routledge Publishing House
Bell, T. Roger, *Translation and translating. Theory and practice*, general editor C.N.Candlin, Longman Group UK Ltd.,1991, translated by Cătălina Gazi, *Teoria şi practica traducerii*, Editura Polirom, Iaşi, 2002, p. 24.
Bulgăr, G., *Interferenţe culturale în arta traducerii*, in România literară XVIII, nr. 21/1984

BDD-A3095 © 2012 Universitatea Petru Maior
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-23 07:11:55 UTC)

Jeanrenaud, M., *Universaliile traducerii*, *Studii de traductologie*, Editura Polirom, Bucureşti, 2006
Lungu Badea G., *Teoria culturemelor, teoria traducerii*, Editura Universităţii de Vest, Timişoara, 2004
Ricoeur, P., *Sur la Traduction*, Bayard, 2004, traducere şi studiu introductiv de Jeanrenaud, M., *Despre traducere*, Editura Polirom, Iaşi, 2005

Acknowledgements: This paper is a result of the project `Transnational Network for Integrated Management of Postdoctoral Research in Communicating Sciences. Institutional building (postdoctoral school) and fellowships program (CommScie)" - POSDRU/89/1.5/S/63663, financed under the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013.

BDD-A3095 © 2012 Universitatea Petru Maior
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-23 07:11:55 UTC)