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THE ROLE OF TRANSLATION IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Intercultural communication is the foundation of international stability in a globalized world. States are increasingly cooperating with each other, the information space is developing, and economic integration is increasing. This creates a need for effective information exchange between people who speak different languages and belong to different cultures. Translation is a key factor in this context. It facilitates communication and understanding between people.

Translation can be seen as a way of understanding another culture. The lack of agreement between the semantic and cultural content of concepts in different languages causes translation to have the character of a subjective interpretation. The translator's understanding of the cognitive system of the native and target languages determines the outcome largely.

According to Hans-Georg Gadamer, translation should not be viewed as a mechanical transfer of content, but rather as an interpretative process. In this context, transmission involves "fusion of horizons", within which meanings are reconciled between different linguistic and cultural perspectives. Consequently, the translator acts as a mediator in the process of understanding, ensuring communication between representatives of different cultures [2].

This can be illustrated with the example of the concept of a dragon. In the Western cognitive system (English), a dragon is often seen as a symbol of evil or danger. A dragon is an aggressive creature that must be defeated, as shown in fairy tales or "The Hobbit". In contrast, in eastern cognitive system (Chinese), the dragon symbolizes luck, wisdom, and imperial authority. This demonstrates that the translator must consider cultural differences in meaning to convey the author's intended message accurately.

An important aspect of intercultural communication is the consideration of the cultural context that Edward T. Hall has explored. He divided cultures into "high-context" (Japanese, Arabic, Chinese) and "low-context" (German, American). In high-context cultures, much of the meaning is conveyed not in words, but through the situation, the status of the interlocutor, and nonverbal cues. In low-context cultures, on the contrary, the main content is contained directly in words [1].

The abovementioned explains why the translation of humor or national traditions is difficult. The translator should not just translate words, but reproduce the context that is obvious to native speakers, but incomprehensible to another culture. Without this, communication can turn into "dialogue of the deaf" when the words are clear, but their true meaning is not. In such a situation, the translator chooses between the two strategies described by Lawrence Venuti: "domestication" and "foreignization".

Domestication makes the text clearer to the reader, adapting it to a familiar culture. Foreignization, on the contrary, preserves the features of the original and shows the difference of another culture. According to Venuti, the translator is not neutral: it depends on their choice how the reader will perceive another culture in a simplified way or in its true complexity [5].

A good example is the idiom “break the ice”. If you translate it literally, a reader may think about physical action and not understand the hint. But if you use the strategy of “domestication” and replace it with the phrase “defuse the situation”, the meaning immediately becomes clear. This supports Hall’s idea: a translator does not just translate words, but completes the context so that a foreigner feels the same emotional connotation as a native speaker [1].

The biggest challenge for a translator is handling idioms and culture-specific details. Umberto Eco described translation as a “process of negotiation” with a text. A translator must constantly make compromises, deciding what to modify or omit in order to preserve the original intention [3].

This aligns closely with Eugene Nida’s theory of “dynamic equivalence”. According to Nida, the goal is not to translate word-for-word, but to ensure that the reader of the translation experiences the text in the same way as the original audience [4]. This is particularly important for humour: if a joke is translated literally, it often loses its effect. Therefore, the translator must adapt it to elicit the same emotional response or laughter.

Studying idioms, particularly the expression “It’s raining cats and dogs”, clearly illustrates these theoretical approaches. A literal translation “cats and dogs fall” would create only a strange or funny picture for a Ukrainian reader, completely losing the meaning of the heavy downpour. To achieve Eugene Nida’s “dynamic equivalence”, a translator must enter into what Umberto Eco called the “negotiation process” with the text. This means a conscious compromise: abandoning literal “cats and dogs” in order to preserve the true “spirit” of the original. By choosing the Ukrainian equivalent “it pours like from a bucket” the translator adapts the phrase in such a way as to evoke in the audience the same emotional response and understanding that the original reader had. This proves that the main task of translating is not to copy words, but to reproduce their effect.

The study emphasizes that translation is an indispensable tool for intercultural communication and international dialogue. It requires not only knowledge of the language but also a deep understanding of the cultural context, cognitive systems, and emotional responses of the audience. A successful translation conveys the meaning, cultural specificity, and emotional impact of the original, ensuring accurate understanding between representatives of different cultures.

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