



Culturemes and Non-Equivalent Lexis in Massmedia

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ABSTRACT

The article raises the question of the need to improve the structural diversity and operational capabilities of the modern mass media (bi-or multilingual) to avoid lacunes in the transmission of culturemes and non-equivalent words into another language.

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Linguistics of the recent years is a good illustration of general trends in the modern humanistic: we witness an increasingly obvious inclination to interdisciplinarity and paradigm in approaches to such complex objects as a language, deep understanding of it as an anthropological phenomenon in the immanent relationships with psychological and behavioural matrices, with ethno-cultural origins of the linguistic picture of the world. Therefore, linguoculturology is one of the most dynamically developing fields of linguistics and linguocultural studies which develops both traditional (the relationship of culture and language, speech and language, comprehension of meaning-making rules) and new (conceptology and culture, linguistic and mental pictures of the world, non-equivalence and lexical gaps, semantics and pragmatics of language signs) issues¹.

The term “cultureme” itself was created outside the boundaries of linguistics, in the cultural theory of S. Lem, in which it describes, first of all, the minimal, indivisible units of culture: rituals, values, and stereotypes.

In modern linguocultural research the term “cultureme” is a hotly debated topic and demonstrates various approaches to its content. V. Gak considers cultureme “as a sign of culture that also has a linguistic expression” (Gak, 1998). A. Vezhbitskaia regards cultureme as “an integrated interlevel unit, the form of which is the unity of a sign and language meaning, while the content — the unity of language meaning and cultural value” (Vezhbitskaia, 1999). V. Vorob’ev singles out a linguistic cultureme along with a cultureme, given that “a cultureme” is considered to be an element of reality (an object or a situation), attributed to a particular culture, while “a linguistic cultureme” is the projection of the culture element into a language sign” (Vorob’ev, 1997). However, this approach is linguistically restricted and ignores the immanent asymmetry of the meaning and the implementation, as semantic load of cultureme is much higher than that of realia, since it appeals to culturally significant information, it is extrapolated to other levels of the ethno-cultural picture of the world.

¹ Hall, J. (2012). Teaching and researching language and culture. New York: Longman.

A. Bukhonkina suggests the classification of culturemes (Bukhonkina, 2002), based on the specific characteristics of their inner form and specificity of interlinguistic asymmetry; however, this approach is more applicable to the realia, since the cultural significance and immanent signification is often ignored².

The problem of equivalence lies in the area, in which an interdisciplinary consensus has been achieved: lexico-semantic structures of lexis of a particular language are peculiar, specific to this language and, therefore, they are partially unique. It means that the lexical-semantic structures of two (or more) languages are non-isomorphic. Non-isomorphy of lexis forms the theoretical and observed empirical circumstances, examination of which leads to concrete manifestations of the problem of equivalence in different disciplines. In this case, we are only interested in the metalexigraphic aspect of this issue. We believe that the notion of equivalence in the lexicographical research should not be constructed anti-intuitively, away from its use in the common language sense, but must be more precise, and also must be different from the concept of equivalence in related disciplines, especially if we refer to contrastive linguistics and translation theory.

It is necessary to remember about various approaches to the definition of the equivalent and equivalence in translation studies. Equivalence of translation is defined as the common content of the original text and the translation.

A. Ivanov regards an equivalent as “functional compliance in a target language, transmitting expression on the similar level (words, collocations) to all relevant components within the given context, or one of the variants of meaning of the original unit in the source language” (Ivanov, 2006)

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² Hanks, P. (2012). The corpus revolution in lexicography. *International Journal of Lexicography*, 25 (4), 398–436. <http://doi.org/10.1093/ijl/ecs026>