LINGUOCULTURAL ASPECT OF REALIA TRANSLATING FROM SARDINIAN INTO UKRAINIAN

Abstract. This study investigates the meaning of the realia concept, highlights the typical Sardinian realia, and provides their contextual translation from Italian into Ukrainian. In this paper, a hypothetical-deductive method is used to make assumptions about the methods of translation and rendering of realia. As well as a method of empirical research is utilized to review this problem in modern literature. Elements of the quantitative analysis method help to compare the number of similarly significant realia that can be domesticated and the number of the most commonly used ways of transmitting them. Besides, it should be noted the method of comparative analysis, which facilitates the comparison of translation strategies. On the one hand, the study showed that, for instance, when translating mythological realia in fiction literature, it is better to find an equivalent in a target language since it can create a necessary image for a reader for a better text understanding. On the other hand, some realia should usually be rendered with mixed transcoding and a brief explanation, for example, religious realia.

Keywords: realia, Sardinian, translation.

In the last two decades, in connection with the intensification of international contacts, attention has been focused on the study of national peculiarities of the language consciousness of different linguistic and cultural community representatives. The language of each nation is formed simultaneously with the culture, so they can not be considered separately from each other. Among the lexical units that contain a
national-cultural component, the most interesting are the realia. It is because of these lexical units the peculiarities of culture and people of any country are manifested.

Only in the early 1950s linguists became interested in realia as in elements of national identity. Realia denote objects and phenomena of life, culture, history, and customs of each country. Linguistic realia have been the subject of research by many scholars such as A.V. Fedorov, S. Florin, and S. Vlahov, E.M. Vereshchahin, V.H. Kostomarov, V.S. Vynogradov, H.D. Tomakhin, R.P. Zorivchak, and others.

In translation studies, the word “realia” as a term appeared only in the 1940s. It was first used by the famous specialist A. Fedorov in his work “On Artistic Translation” (1941). Describing the translation work, the author notes: “this is an activity that requires certain knowledge, not only practical language, but also literary, historical, and linguistic, not to mention the need for a broad cultural worldview that allows ... to understand all the features of social conditions” [1, p. 13].

Difficulties in realia translation are related to their prevalence degree and frequency of use in the source language. The intelligibility of non-standard vocabulary even for native speakers depends on the degree of their use and scope. The problem of translation complexity is solved with the help of a communicative situation and a sufficient store of background knowledge, which should be present in the minds of communication participants and largely determine the statement content.

The issue is also complicated by the fact that in the source language text realia are often perceived as something familiar, organic, native to the readers in whose language the text is written. Hence there is the problem with translation: either to show the specifics and exotics or to keep the habit and lose the specificity. This contradiction can be overcome by a translator who knows the culture and traditions of a source language, feels the figural meanings of the word inscribed in the text and at the same time has deeply mastered the native language [2, p. 470-473].

“Reeds in the wind”, the novel by Grazia Deledda, is permeated with mythological realia, that are typical only for the Sardinian region and difficult to distinguish, such as in the passage:
“... i nani e le janas, piccole fate che durante e la giornata stanno nelle loro case di roccia a tesser stoffe d'oro in telai d'oro, ballavano all'ombra delle grandi macchie di filirèa, mentre i giganti s' affacciavano fra le rocce dei monti battuti dalla luna, tenendo per la briglia gli enormi cavalli verdi che essi soltanto sanno montare, spiando se laggiù fra le distese d'euforbia malefica si nascondeva qualche drago o se il leggendario tempente cananèa v Cristo, strisciava sulle sabbie intorno alla palude [3, p. 9].” – «І гномів та маленьких старовинних створінь, не то добрих чарівниць, не то злих відьом, що протягом дня залишаються у своїх будиночках у скелі, щоб вити золоту матерію, а потім ховатись, танцюючи у тіні гущих чагарників. У той час велетні визирали з-поміж скель, що виковані у горах місяцем, тримаючи за повід величезних зелених коней, що вони лише знали, як їхати верхи, підглядаючи, чи там вдалині серед просторів чаклунського молочаю, ховалися декілька драконів або ж славнозвісний ханаанський змій, що живе ще з часів Христа, повзає по піску навколо болота.»

Translating this example, there are three ways to convey realia. The terms “i nani”, “i giganti”, and “il drago” are not translated, target language realia that correspond to and fully convey the realia of the source language are selected in translation. If it is possible to find such equivalents, it is better to reproduce them in translation, rather than creating neologisms. The phrase “gli enormi cavalli verdi” is literally translated. This term, although representing a mythological creature, is not a realia in any of the languages and can serve as an example of misinterpretation of the realia concept. A more interesting example to consider is the Sardinian realia of “le janas” which means ancient Sardinian women who, according to legend, lived in miniature houses carved into the rock. According to various legends, these women were either good witches or evil witches, and the Sardinian people have the same ambiguous understanding. As there is no such term in the Ukrainian language, the best translation is its short explanation. The text excerpt, in which this realia is present, is written in a fairy-tale motive and it is better to omit the term itself for rendering and leave only its explanation, which would fit into the context with full indication of possible
interpretations (маленькі старовинні створіння, не то добрі чарівниці, не то злі відьми). However, another translation of the term “le janas” is possible. Ukrainian translator V. Shovkun conveyed Sardinian mythological distinctive realia through transliteration with partial adaptation: he translated “janas” as “жани”, “serpente cananèa” – “змія кананея”. Also, it is worth paying attention to the reception of concretization: V. Shovkun translates “enormi cavalli verdi” as “величезні зелені огирі”. The chosen form is also dialectal, which gives the text additional stylistic coloring. In terms of content rendering, such a transformation was not necessary, but it did affect the style in some way. Besides, he translated “gigantic” as “велети”, which in turn is a stylistically colored regional token [4, p. 109-110].

The translation of ancient realia can cause additional difficulties due to the indistinguishability of terms that have changed their meaning over time. Thus, the ancient Sardinian realia “stregoni benefici” has two opposite meanings – good vampires or vampire hunters, depending on the years of mention in the sources or even settlements in which the understanding of this realia differs. “Stregoni benefici” is a very mysterious character from Italian folklore. The word “benefici” can be translated as good, kind (from the Latin “beneficium” – beneficence). However, the concept of “stregoni” is more difficult. It comes from Roman folklore, where it was believed that “strix” (“strix” – barn owls, later – witches) hunt babies for their blood.

And in Sardinia, there was a plot with a good vampire (in fact, by analogy with benandanti – good werewolves and fighters with evil witches). In later mentions, the stregoni benefici hunted vampires who drank human blood. Later, in Western Slavic and Carpathian-Balkan mythologies (primarily in Romanian and Moldavian folklore), this image turned into the strigoi and became a half-witch-half-vampire [5]. Thus, the very word “stregoni” evokes associations in the Ukrainian-speaking reader, and therefore it can be transliterated when translated, and the rendering of the second part of the collocation, “benefici”, depends on the style of the work and its mythological concentration. If both words are transliterated, the necessary uniqueness of Sardinian mythology will remain in the work. If there is an aim to domesticate the work and bring
it closer to the Ukrainian reader, this realia can be conveyed as “добрий стрегоні”, especially if the work presents a comparison of mythological creatures by their features.

Another interesting example is the Sardinian demon of deception “Su Ingannadore” or “Meschinganna”. The name of the term is usually preceded by the polysemantic word “diavolo”, which in the Sardinian dialect gives realia an additional level of emotional perception by its people. Nonetheless, when translated into Ukrainian, such reproduction as “диявол” or “чорт” would be inappropriate, because for the Ukrainian-speaking population these terms are monosemantic and have connotative meaning. Thus, the most appropriate translation is the term “демон” [6].

As for the very realia of “Su Ingannadore” or “Meschinganna”, it can be conveyed in two ways: the first is the usual transliteration, but in this case, the term could be adapted and transformed into the name of this demon, while preserving the mythology and meaning. Thus, in translation, it can be conveyed as “демон обману Мескінганна”, which also fits the style of the work. The second method is only the usual transliteration, but then the meaning will not be rendered, and if the meaning is explained in footnotes, the reader will be confused and while distracting attention to the footnotes, the intelligibility of the work and a certain passage will be lost.

No less difficult is the translation of religious holidays, specific not only to a particular country but also to the region.

Some names of feasts can be approached closer to both conversational and high soaring style. For instance, “la festa dei Candelieri” (фестиваль деі кандельєрі) can be conveyed in several ways. It is celebrated on August 14th to preserve a vow made several centuries ago to Mary the Blessed Virgin, who helped defeat the plague that struck the city of Sassari in 1582 [7]. Usually, such holidays are only transliterated and/or transcribed, but then it will be necessary to provide a brief explanation of the holiday in the text or footnotes because the name itself does not give any information. Therefore, it is possible to resort only to the translation of the name itself – “Фестиваль свічників”, although such a translation will convey the exoticism of the regional
holiday, but will be close to the conversational style, without conveying the religious basis. And, if “dedicated to Mary the Blessed Virgin” is added to this translation, “Фестиваль свічників, приурочений Пресвятій Діві Марії”, the rendering will be complete and will fully convey both the meaning of the holiday and its religiosity.

In general, when translating such colored feasts, it is essential to always translate and add to them to whom they are dedicated because it will not overload the text and will give the reader the necessary understanding of the term. In this case, domestication will not be appropriate, because by rendering feasts that have no equivalents in our culture, translation can only distort the paramount importance and not convey the uniqueness of the realia that exists only in a particular region.

“La Cavalcata sarda a Sassari” is another unique feast, whose one name signifies its distinctness. This holiday is a classic example of transliteration in the translation of realia. Hence, this holiday can simply be translated as “Сардинська кавалькада у Сассарі”. However, it should be borne in mind that the word “cavalcade” is not a realia in the Ukrainian language, and therefore when choosing such an equivalent its meaning in both languages should be taken into account. In the Ukrainian language, a “cavalcade” is a group of riders who solemnly move along a pre-planned route, instead of the term “кінний парад” a more commonly Ukrainian “кінна хода” can be utilized. In Sardinia, the above-mentioned celebration includes a parade through the central streets of horses, riders, and walk-ones dressed in traditional costumes from all parts of the island, accompanied by traditional songs and dances performed by folk groups until late at night. Therefore, the choice of the word “кавалькада” is the most appropriate in this case and fully reflects the celebration.

Some religious realia, especially those specific to a particular region, are difficult to translate without overloading the text and at the same time giving it meaning. Thus, in some cases, they can be rendered, approaching closer to conversational style. As a rule of thumb, “S’Ardia a Sedilo”, a celebration held in the small town of Sedilo in the form of a horse race run by dozens of riders. The celebration is dedicated to St. Constantine [7]. In this example, if the holiday is simply transmitted through mixed
transcoding, it will be incomprehensible to the reader, as well as when adding the name of the saint, the reader will understand that the holiday has a religious context, but its meaning will remain unknown. In this case, one can omit the religious basis of realia and leave only its explanation and transliteration of the name – “кінна гонка С’Ардіа”. This rendering will fully convey the feast’s distinctness.

Thus, the realia are very peculiar and at the same time quite complex, and ambiguous categories of non-equivalent vocabulary. As a linguistic phenomenon, it is most closely linked to culture, these lexical tokens respond quickly to all changes in the development of society. The realia most clearly show the closeness between language and culture: the emergence of new realia in the material and spiritual life of society leads to the emergence of appropriate words in a language.

Due to the worldwide spread and assimilation of different cultures, people increasingly use foreign words in everyday life, some of which symbolize realia. Therefore, the importance of their appropriate translation and transmission is growing.

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