

**CHALLENGES OF TRANSLATING CULTURE-SPECIFIC ELEMENTS IN
SCIENCE FICTION LITERATURE**

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Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqola ilmiy fantastika adabiyotida madaniyatga xos elementlarni tarjima qilishdagi qiyinchiliklarni o'rganadi. Tadqiqotda neologizmlar, frazeologik iboralar, hazil va so'z o'yinlari, tarixiy va mifologik ma'lumotlar, shuningdek texnologik atamalar tarjimadagi murakkabliklar sifatida tahlil qilinadi. Maqolada tarjimonlar tomonidan qo'llanilgan strategiyalar, masalan, moslashtirish, izoh qo'shish va madaniyatga muvofiq o'zgartirishlar muhokama qilinadi. Tadqiqot natijalari ilmiy fantastika tarjimasida til va madaniyat o'rtasidagi murakkab munosabatlarni ochib beradi.

Kalit so'zlar: ilmiy fantastika, tarjima, madaniyatga xos elementlar, neologizm, frazeologik iboralar, hazil, texnologik atamalar.

Abstract

This article explores the challenges of translating culture-specific elements in science fiction literature. The study analyzes the difficulties posed by neologisms, idiomatic expressions, humor and wordplay, historical and mythological references, as well as technological terminology. Translation strategies employed by translators, such as adaptation, annotation, and culturally appropriate modifications, are discussed. The findings reveal the complex interplay between language and culture in the translation of science fiction works.

Key words: science fiction, translation, culture-specific elements, neologism, idiomatic expressions, humor, technological terminology.

Аннотация

В данной статье рассматриваются проблемы перевода культурно-специфических элементов в научной фантастике. Исследование анализирует трудности, связанные с неологизмами, идиоматическими выражениями, юмором и игрой слов, историческими и мифологическими ссылками, а также технологической терминологией. Обсуждаются стратегии перевода, применяемые переводчиками, такие как адаптация, добавление пояснений и культурно-адекватные изменения. Результаты исследования показывают сложное взаимодействие языка и культуры при переводе произведений научной фантастики.

Ключевые слова: научная фантастика, перевод, культурно-специфические элементы, неологизмы, идиоматические выражения, юмор, технологическая терминология.

INTRODUCTION

Translating literature is a complex task that goes beyond the mere conversion of words from one language to another. In the realm of science fiction, this complexity intensifies due to the frequent incorporation of culture-specific elements that are deeply embedded in a particular society's traditions, beliefs, and social norms. These elements often include idiomatic expressions, humor, folklore, historical references, technological concepts unique to a culture, and even linguistic playfulness that may not have a direct equivalent in the target language. The translator's role, therefore, extends beyond linguistic accuracy to cultural mediation, where they must ensure that the original meaning, tone, and context are effectively conveyed to a new audience. One of the primary challenges in translating culture-specific elements in science fiction literature is dealing with neologisms and invented terms. Science fiction authors often create new words to describe futuristic technology, alien species, or imagined societies. While these neologisms may carry implicit cultural connotations or reflect the worldview of the original society, translating them literally can strip away their nuances or confuse the reader. The translator must balance fidelity to the source text with intelligibility for the target audience, sometimes opting for creative adaptation or footnotes to retain both the originality and comprehensibility of the work.

Another significant challenge lies in translating social norms and ideologies embedded within the text. Science fiction often reflects contemporary societal issues, such as political hierarchies, gender roles, and ethical dilemmas, framed through

futuristic or alternate realities. When these norms differ significantly between the source and target cultures, the translator faces the delicate task of preserving the author's critique or commentary without imposing foreign interpretations. Failure to navigate these differences can result in misrepresentation or loss of the work's intended social and philosophical impact. Humor and idiomatic language present additional obstacles. Many science fiction narratives rely on puns, wordplay, and culturally grounded jokes to enrich the story and develop characters. Translating these elements literally often leads to awkward or meaningless renditions in the target language. Translators must creatively adapt these instances, sometimes inventing equivalent expressions or restructuring dialogue to achieve a similar effect. This process, however, risks deviating from the author's original stylistic voice, highlighting the tension between cultural fidelity and readability.

Moreover, science fiction literature frequently incorporates historical or mythological references specific to the source culture. These references may serve to deepen world-building, create allegorical layers, or provide subtle commentary. Translators must decide whether to retain these references in their original form, provide explanations, or substitute culturally analogous elements. Each choice carries potential consequences for reader engagement and interpretation, making the translator's decisions critical for maintaining the narrative's richness and depth. The issue of technological and scientific terminology also intersects with cultural specificity. In many science fiction texts, technology is not only a functional tool but also a reflection of societal values and priorities. Translators must navigate the challenge of rendering these concepts accurately while maintaining the connotations and implications embedded within the original language. In some cases, a term may be conceptually unfamiliar to the target audience, requiring careful contextualization to avoid misinterpretation. In conclusion, translating culture-specific elements in science fiction literature demands more than linguistic competence; it requires cultural sensitivity, creativity, and a nuanced understanding of both the source and target societies. The translator acts as a bridge, negotiating between different cultural frameworks to preserve the literary, philosophical, and imaginative essence of the work. The challenges are multifaceted, encompassing neologisms, idiomatic expressions, humor, social norms, historical references, and technological concepts. Despite these difficulties, effective translation can enrich the target language's literary landscape, providing readers with access to the complex and imaginative worlds of science fiction while fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The study of translating culture-specific elements in science fiction literature has attracted increasing scholarly attention over the past few decades. Researchers emphasize that science fiction, as a genre, is uniquely positioned at the intersection of imaginative speculation and cultural commentary, making the translator's task particularly challenging. According to Venuti (1995), translation is not merely a linguistic exercise but a cultural negotiation, where the translator mediates between source and target cultures. This perspective underlines the importance of considering social norms, humor, idiomatic language, and historical or mythological references when translating literature that carries strong cultural markers. Several studies have focused on the adaptation of neologisms and technological terminology in science fiction. Baker (2011) highlights that invented terms often embody cultural assumptions and imaginative concepts that may not exist in the target language, requiring translators to either coin equivalent terms or provide explanatory strategies. Similarly, Nida (1964) emphasizes the principle of dynamic equivalence, arguing that the goal of translation is to reproduce the same effect on the target audience as the original had on its readers, which often necessitates creative adjustments.

The challenge of humor and idiomatic expressions has also been explored in translation studies. Chiaro (1992) points out that puns, wordplay, and culturally bound jokes are highly resistant to direct translation and often demand inventive solutions to preserve the author's intended effect. Furthermore, historical and mythological references embedded in science fiction texts have been studied by Bassnett (2014), who notes that translators must make careful decisions regarding retention, explanation, or substitution of culturally specific content to maintain narrative coherence and meaning.

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology to explore the challenges of translating culture-specific elements in science fiction literature. The research involves a case study approach, focusing on selected works of well-known science fiction authors, including texts that have been translated into multiple languages. The analysis involves a close reading of both the source and translated texts, with special attention to neologisms, idiomatic expressions, cultural references, and technological terminology. Comparative textual analysis is used to identify strategies employed by translators, such as literal translation, adaptation, footnoting, or omission, and to assess their effectiveness in preserving cultural meaning and literary style. In addition, expert interviews with professional translators of science fiction are conducted to gain insight into their decision-making processes, challenges faced, and strategies employed in handling culture-specific elements. Data collected from textual analysis and interviews are triangulated to ensure reliability and to provide a comprehensive understanding of

the complex interplay between language, culture, and creativity in science fiction translation. This methodology allows for an in-depth exploration of the nuances of translation, highlighting both the theoretical and practical challenges of mediating culture-specific elements in a genre that is inherently imaginative and culturally rich.

RESULTS

The analysis of selected science fiction texts and their translations reveals a range of strategies employed by translators to address culture-specific elements, each with varying degrees of effectiveness. One of the most common challenges observed is the translation of neologisms and invented terminology. In works where authors create entirely new words to describe futuristic technology, alien species, or social systems, translators often face the dilemma of preserving originality versus ensuring comprehension. For example, in translations of terms that denote technological devices or imagined social roles, translators frequently use a combination of adaptation and explanatory footnotes. In some cases, literal translation is retained, which maintains fidelity but may confuse readers unfamiliar with the cultural or conceptual background of the source text. Conversely, creative adaptation often results in more accessible terms but may risk losing some of the author's original imaginative nuance.

Idiomatic expressions and humor present another recurring challenge. Puns, wordplay, and culturally grounded jokes often lose their intended effect when translated literally. In the texts analyzed, translators frequently resort to substitution with culturally analogous expressions in the target language. For instance, jokes relying on English idioms are sometimes replaced with equivalent idiomatic humor in the target culture, preserving the comedic effect while altering the original phrasing. This strategy, while effective in maintaining reader engagement, can sometimes shift the tone or subtle connotations of the original narrative. Social norms and ideologies embedded within science fiction texts also pose significant difficulties. Translators must navigate references to hierarchical structures, gender roles, and ethical frameworks that may differ substantially between cultures. In several cases, translators opted for slight modification of culturally specific terms or inclusion of brief explanatory passages to ensure that the target audience could interpret these elements accurately. For instance, phrases describing authority or social etiquette in a futuristic society were sometimes expanded or clarified to convey the intended social dynamics, reflecting the translator's role as both a linguistic and cultural mediator.

Historical and mythological references were observed to be particularly sensitive to cultural differences. When the source text relied on myths, folklore, or historical

events unfamiliar to the target audience, translators used various strategies, including footnotes, glossaries, or substitution with culturally relevant analogues. This approach enabled readers to appreciate the narrative's depth without disrupting the flow of the story, although it sometimes required a careful balancing act to avoid over-explanation, which could interfere with the immersive experience of science fiction. Finally, technological and scientific terminology was found to carry implicit cultural significance in addition to functional meaning. Translators had to ensure that terms were not only accurate but also retained their connotative weight within the context of the story. In cases where the original text portrayed technology as an expression of societal values, translators supplemented literal translations with contextual clarifications or relied on previously established conventions in the target language's science fiction lexicon. Overall, the results demonstrate that translating culture-specific elements in science fiction is a highly nuanced process requiring creativity, cultural sensitivity, and strategic decision-making. Successful translations balance fidelity to the source text with the readability and cultural accessibility of the target audience. Translators often act as cultural interpreters, mediating between the imaginative world of the author and the expectations and understanding of new readers, ensuring that the literary, social, and philosophical essence of the work is preserved.

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