



TRANSLATION STRATEGIES FOR KOREAN AND UZBEK CULTURE SPECIFIC ITEMS(CSIS)

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Abstract. This article explores the translation strategy of Korean Culturally specific items (CSIs) and aims to provide a useful reference for future Korean text translations based on the analysis theory and actual examples. This article focuses on the translation of Culturally Specific Items (CSIs) that are notoriously difficult to translate that are not widely studied so far in the field of Translation Studies and even less studied in Korean –Uzbek language pair. The need for this particular research is that CSIs certainly do exist in a text that needs to be translated and those CSIs constantly hamper translators' minds in the real world of translation, however so little is known about how they are translated in the target language.

Key words: Cultureme, translation, culturally specific items, Korean culture, Uzbek culture.

Introduction. Culture has ethnic, regional and historical characteristics. Therefore, different cultures require communication, and such communication requires translation. In other words, because translation is a product of cultural communication, translation cannot be discussed not being aware of culture. While concepts such as 'globalization' and 'internationalization' appear in large numbers, politics, economy, and culture between countries are complexly intertwined. On the one hand, converting cultural elements in language translation, which is a part of culture, is a difficult process and translators are facing difficulties. Therefore, the problem that arises along with this is the translator's selection variable for translating cultural elements.

For example, when a translator converts a cultural element, whether or not to convey the information contained therein, if so, to what extent and how to convey it, whether to add an explanation or generalize it after translating it as is, or to the reader's understanding. In order to increase the translation quality, a series of choices are required, such as whether to replace it with cultural elements from the target language culture; if replaced, to what extent can readers from the target language culture accept it? This study started from the question that translators' search for answers to these difficult problems will differ depending on each translator, and that professional literary translators in particular will have their own consistent or particular conversion strategies.

Many scholars have conducted research on cultural centers so far, such as Nida.E. (1964), Vermer (1983), Newmark (1988), Stolze (1992), and Aixelá (1996) that can be said to be the most representative researchers. Nida (1964) proposed the term 'cultural specialties' in his book 『Towards a Science of Translating』. This concept is similar to the definition of cultural center. And Nida (1964) also presented the concepts of formal equivalence and dynamic

equivalence. After Nida's research, Vermeer (1990) proposed the term 'culturemes' and defined it as 'a cultural product that is not conceptualized in the discourse network but is ready to accept the target culture. Reiss and Vermeer proposed the scope theory, which states that the translator must know why the source text (ST) is being translated and what function the target text (TT) performs, and that the 'purpose' of translation is already determined before translation. . In 1988, Newmark used the term 'cultural word' in his book 'A Text Book of Translation' to present the composition and classification of cultural elements. And cultural elements were classified into ecology (system), material culture, social culture, organization, custom, procedure, concept, and gesture and attitude culture. Stolze (1992) argued that elements are universally present and well-known in the source language culture, but are unfamiliar to the target language culture, or textual elements that may evoke certain associations in the source language culture but are used meaninglessly in the target language culture.

Research combining culture and translation is still actively conducted, and correspondingly, a lot of research results on the translation of cultural elements have been accumulated. In the case of Korea, research on cultural translation began very early, but research on defining cultural elements and introducing terms began in the 21st century. First of all, looking at the definition of a cultural center, it was confirmed that different scholars refer to a cultural center using various terms. Lee Geun-hee (2003), a leading scholar in translation research on cultural elements, refers to cultural elements with the concept of 'language closely related to culture', and refers to specific vocabulary or words that originate from the unique society and culture of a social community that uses one language. It is defined as a custom of language use. Furthermore, in 『Translation Mountain Book』 published in 2005, she gave a more specific definition of cultural elements, using the expression 'culture-bound vocabulary'. Meanwhile, Kim Hyo Jung (2004), another representative scholar who pioneered this field, said, 'It refers to all the cultural, social and economic endowments of a language area that induce a specific understanding and corresponding behavior in a specific situation. Linguistic He introduced the concept of 'cultural element' for the first time, defining that 'this includes not only factors, but also non-linguistic phenomena and institutions that appear in the original language culture but are unknown or differently defined in the translated culture.' On the other hand, Shim Jae Gi (2004) viewed expressions that refer to specific objects in time and space within one culture as an obstacle to communication between different cultures, and replaced cultural elements with the term 'vernacular expressions'. And Kim Hye Rim et al. (2016) used the concept of 'cultural terminology' to define it as a conceptual term related to Korean life or lifestyle, and that in addition to the culture that developed autonomously in Korea, it originated from a foreign culture, but then settled back into Korea's unique culture and culturally-related terms that have taken root were also included in the category of cultural terms.

As Hall (1976) notes, he claims that the most important component of culture is completely hidden and what we see as culture is 'just the tip of the iceberg'. As the figure above illustrates, the more powerful elements of culture are submerged thus they are not easily recognised. The tip of culture may include what appears to be obviously 'cultural' such as customs, rituals, food which forms obvious Culturally Specific Items in translation whereas the submerged cultural elements such as social interaction rate, roles in relation to age, sex, class, occupation, kinship and many more elements which are equally important, if not more,

that feed into more problematic Culturally Specific Items in translation, although we do not fully understand the extent of their existence. For example, Uzbek people would easily recognise ‘김치’ (kimchi) as a Korean Culturally Specific Item and Korean people would definitely consider ‘fish and chips’ as a Uzbek Culturally Specific Item because food is one of the cultural elements that stays at the tip of the iceberg of culture – it’s new and foreign to them. On the other hand, Uzbek people would not easily recognise ‘학연’ as a Korean Culturally Specific Item although such the norm of 학연 can be explained, Uzbek people would not comprehend what 학연 brings to Korean people’s life and how such the relationship is perceived in Korean culture. Korean people would not easily recognise ‘wake’ (a gathering that takes place after funeral) as a Uzbek Culturally Specific Item although such the notion can be described to Korean people, since Korean funeral culture is so vastly different to Uzbek culture, Korean people would not comprehend what ‘wake’ brings to the deceased family and how such the social gathering, often happening immediately after the funeral, is perceived by Uzbek people. What is interesting from the above examples of Korean and Uzbek culture within the Iceberg analogy of culture is that, to a certain extent, the cultural elements above the water level are something rather ‘new’ to your own culture and it can be perceived as something foreign, whereas the cultural elements below the water level seems more ‘different’ or ‘contrary to’ your own culture thus appears to be ‘unnatural’. This then leads us to a possible supposition that the explicit cultural elements above the water level are likely to be less complicated to translate in comparison to the implicit cultural elements below the water level. At least, with the former, an attempt to translate is likely to be focused on explaining what a new cultural element is, rather than the latter case, which involves a clarification concerning why a cultural element is so different or unnatural. However, it is important to acknowledge that the water level of the iceberg theory is not tranquil in accordance with the ‘Triad of Culture’ which Hall expanded from the iceberg theory. In the ‘Triad of Culture’, Hall introduces three levels of culture viz. ‘technical culture’, ‘formal culture’, and ‘informal culture’ or ‘out-of-awareness culture’. Amongst these three, firstly, the ‘technical culture’ is at the level of science. For example, in Korean, each month of a year is named after its sequence (i.e., March is 3 월 and December is 12 월). It is on the denotative level. That makes the English translation of each months of Korean culture-free. And the cultural items embedded in the Korean ST in this level of culture are unlikely to cause difficulties to translate into Uzbek. If so, ‘weight and measures’ - what Lee (2008) claims as CSIs, may require a second evaluation, since weight and measures are universal and they do not cause cultural difficulties in translation but only require an appropriate conversion to the TT culture such as currency. Having said that, some items of ‘weight and measures’ may cause translation difficulties, such as a Korean item ‘리’ (a unit of distance which is equivalent to 0.393km) depending on how such the measure is embedded in a ST. Regarding the second level of culture, ‘formal culture’, this is not necessarily objective but this level of culture (i.e., traditions or rules) can be acquired and understood. For example, in Korean, you take your shoes off as you pass the main entrance of one’s house; and when you serve a meal, your soup should be on your right and the bowl of rice on your left - unless the table is prepared for ancestral rites – as it is regarded normal in Korean culture. Once a Uzbek person is introduced

to these traditional Korean practices the customs can be easily assimilated, respected for what they mean and begin the process of relationship building. For example, ‘입추’ is ‘formal culture’. It the 13th of the 24 seasons in the traditional Korean calendar, referring to the transition to Autumn.

These types of more subdivided seasons do not exist in Uzbek culture. However, this can be understood by Uzbek people, once explained. Cultural elements at this level in the Korean ST may require clarification but translation is achievable. The third level of culture, ‘informal culture or out-of-awareness culture’, is related to Freud’s statement that ‘master of the house’ which is governed by the unconscious which is formed from crucial memories in childhood and guides our adult life (Katan 2012:46). As the ‘informal culture or out-of-awareness culture’ is no longer technical or objective, Katan claims “it is the “not-what-he-said but how-he-said-it” level” (Katan 2012:46). In terms of Speech Act Theory, it is the “illocutionary force of proportion that we respond to, rather than the locution” (Katan 2012:46). Now, since the CSI we discuss in this thesis is only in the written form, not the oral form, the application of ‘informal culture or out-of-awareness culture’ within the scope of “notwhat-he-said but how-he-said-it” level is limited. Nevertheless, CSI candidates at this level of culture are detectable in a Korean ST by eliminating CSIs that contains denotative meanings or meanings that are not necessarily denotative but can be learnt and comprehended. This level of CSIs are maybe the most problematic ones to translate because Nida’s (1964) ‘equivalent effect’ appears to be almost impossible. The following is one of the renowned Korean pop-songs which contains at least two possible CSIs - ‘먼지’ (dust), ‘주먹밥 먼지’ (rice ball dust).

ST (Korean)	TT (Uzbek)
당신 곁으로 다시 또 먼지되어	Sizning yoningizga yana chang bo’lib
당신 곁으로 가리라	Sizning yoningizga yana boraman
눈물조차 버무려 주먹밥 먼지되어	Hattoki ko’z yoshim qurib ‘chumok pab’ga aylanib
이제는 두근두근 기쁨의 먼지되어	Endi duk-duk urgan quvonchim chang bo’lib

Unlike months of the year or the 24 seasons in the traditional Korean calendar, the word ‘먼지’ (a possible equivalence of Uzbek word ‘chang’) used here carries rather complicated meanings, including ‘something extremely light and transient’. The formal equivalent of ‘먼지’ exists in Uzbek (‘chang’) but the unique value ‘먼지’ carries in this particular ST does not synchronise with how the Uzbek perceive ‘chang’ in general. Firstly, if a British person wanted to explain ‘something extremely light’, ‘dust’ is perhaps not one of the popular options among other alternatives (i.e., feather, air) nor would people associate ‘dust’ with something beautifully light. Therefore, this usage of the Korean word ‘먼지’ in this context not only differs from how ‘chang’ is used in Uzbek but the aesthetic value (a sense of futility) and the emotive value it gives to a Korean readership are different to what Uzbek word ‘chang’ gives to Uzbek people. The interesting truth is that when ‘먼지’ is used in another sentence, in a more general context, to simply indicate the meaning of ‘chang’, it obviously fails to carry any aesthetic/emotive value presented within the aforementioned example. In other words, this

proves lexical items acquire different meanings and values, as well as having their propositional meaning, depending on the context in which they are used. Each language contains out-of-awareness culture and when a writer becomes creative and uses a certain type of linguistic expression, people who belong to the same cultural group as the writer are likely to see such a linguistic expression as 'what seems natural and right' and would grasp the actualised meaning potential of the expression, whereas people from other cultures are likely to struggle to understand or fully understand the actualised meaning potential of the expression. That is why it is crucial for the translator to detect the gap of meaning in highly context-specific expressions, under cultural perspective, in order to produce an accurate translation. Louis Dumont points out the translatability of a text that possesses culturally generated meaning potentials and values by stating that:

The oneness of the human species ... does not demand the arbitrary reduction of diversity to unity; it only demands that it should be possible to pass from one particular to another and that no effort should be spared in order to elaborate a common language in which each particularity can be adequately described (Dumont 1970:289, Halliday 1978:86). The translator who translates from his/her mother tongue to another language would be in a better position than one who translates from the foreign language to his/her mother tongue, to detect the precise meaning the source text which the writer tried to establish if a particular ST contains a particular meaning/value beyond its general meaning. As a translator, who shares the same culture as the writer, would be able to think about possible reasons why the writer picked a particular lexical item or grammatical structure amongst other alternative options. Such a thinking process would help the translator to work out what effort is required in order to construct a common language in which each particularity can be adequately described. For example, '먼지' has synonyms such as '티끌', '때', '분진', and '티', each with their own patterns of how they collocate with other lexical items. Although the propositional meaning of the aforementioned 5 Korean words contains 'something dirty', they each carry individual expressive meaning and some of them have presupposed meaning as well. Translators who come across with '먼지' in the aforementioned particular context would think any other synonyms had not been used, but the ST author chose '먼지'. This thinking process helps the translator to narrow down the meaning potential of the ST. The following are the precise meanings and the pragmatic usages of each synonym which distinguish them from '먼지' and help us understand why the singer song writer of the renowned Korean pop-song chose '먼지' for his song.

a) 티끌

'티끌' carries a propositioning meaning that combines '티' and '먼지'. However, when '티끌' is used in a sentence, it carries a meaning of 'mayda, arzimas narsa' (something extremely little, worthless, insignificant). Therefore, when Korean people hear the word '티끌', it does not necessarily make them think of 'something dirty' as 'dust' does. '그는 티끌 만한 양심도 없다' can be translated as 'Uning ozgina bo'lsada vijdoni yo'q' (He hasn't even got the tiniest mote of

conscience), ‘티끌 하나 없이 깨끗이 청소를 했다’ can be translated as ‘Gard goldirmay tozalab qo’ydim (cleaned well without leaving a single trace of dust).

b) 때

‘때’ carries the propositioning meaning of ‘kir’(dirt). It often means dirt on clothes or the dead skin of human body which Korean people scrub off when they go to a public bath house. ‘때 미는 데 얼마예요?’ can be translated as ‘Kir ishqalagich qancha turadi?’ (How much is it for scrubbing off dead skin?).

c) 분진

‘분진’ is generally regarded as a synonym for ‘티끌’, but the usage of this word is, unlike ‘티끌’, more strictly limited by its presupposed meaning. ‘공기 필터로 분진제거’ can be translated as ‘Havo filtrlagich orqali changni tozalash’ (remove the dust in the air using an air filter).

d) 티 ‘티’ is a tiny speck of dust and normally associated with a fault or defect. ‘티 없이 맑은 목소리’ can be translated as ‘Kamchiliksiz tiniq ovoz’ (a clear voice without a fault) and ‘눈에 티가 들어갔다’ can be translated as ‘Ko’zimga chang kirdi’ (I have a tiny speck of dust in my eye).

Another ST expression ‘주먹밥 먼지’ (rice ball dust), a compound word, is another example where it is even trickier to convey its authentic Korean meanings and values to Uzbek readers. When I asked three professional Korean translators, each of whom have considerable experience in dealing with various STs, how they would translate this particular Korean word, all of them found it extremely challenging to suggest any possible TT. Certain types of CSIs certainly go way beyond the end of the scale between ‘dynamic equivalence’ and ‘formal equivalence’ of Nida’s two basic orientations (1964:159), as they don’t just present the translator with a dilemma between ‘correspondence in meaning’ and ‘correspondence in style’ but a far more fundamental issue – a doubt on feasibility: Can the expression be translated at all?

Bearing in mind these three levels of culture, one may argue that terms involving ‘technical culture’ and ‘formal culture’ appear to be less problematic to translate. The following Korean proverbs have been selected in an attempt to classify Korean CSIs into Hall’s three levels of culture: ‘technical culture’, ‘formal culture’, and ‘informal culture or out-of-awareness culture’. The possible Uzbek translations, and the allocation of each to one of the three different levels of culture, have been provided. I am aware that the attempt to follow allocations is incomplete and requires further investigation. However, I am also aware that unanimous agreement on this classification may not be achievable as the core notions involved here, culture and language, are both abstract. Achieving an absolutely clear-cut division of Korean CSIs into three levels of culture is not our focal aim, but this is an attempt to demonstrate different levels of Korean CSIs and to present the challenges they bring to Korean translators.

ST (Korean)	Literal Translation	Technical Culture	CSI
피는 물보다 진하다	Qon suvdan ochroq	The importance of	No

사공이 많으면 배가 산으로 간다	bo'ladi Bosh ko'p bo'ls akema toqqa boradi	family bond is universal thus it is objective and culture free. Too many boatmen lead the boat to the mountain	No
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The outcome of the analysis of the above Korean proverbs shows one important phenomenon when we try to translate Korean proverbs for Uzbek people. It is not the linguistic conversion which causes a translation problem, but the discordance of connotative sense. In other words, since the connotative sense resides in some of the Korean proverbs which are extremely cultural, without explaining what the connotative sense is, translation simply fails to preserve the genuine meaning. On the other hand, it is also acknowledged that some Korean proverbs in the level of 'technical culture' do not require cultural mediation since they have universal meanings rather than them being cultural-specific. Therefore, faithful translation not only works for TT readers, but it allows the possibility of maintaining a unique taste of the Korean expression. If so, it may be argued that it is needless, if not undesirable, for Korean translators to go beyond 'formal equivalence' when they translate CSIs at the level of 'technical culture'. Why translate '사공이 많으면 배가 산으로 간다' ('Too many boatmen lead the boat to the mountain') to 'Too many cooks spoil the broth'?

Conclusion. I believe they would translate CSIs all very differently, as Culturally Specific Items cannot be translated literally. I assume that Korean professional translators may translate Korean CSIs similarly as they would comprehend meaning of Korean CSIs much better than they would with Uzbek CSIs. With Uzbek CSIs, I assume the professional Korean translators would present their various renderings of the original meaning and some translators who have never lived in the U.K. may struggle to produce an agreeable translation..

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