Problems Perceived in Translating Culture

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PROBLEMS PERCEIVED IN TRANSLATING CULTURE

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1. Introduction

Translation as a means of communication is nowadays not only regarded as a way of reproducing information, but also as a connection between people, languages and cultures. As language is predominantly influenced by the people speaking it and their thoughts, beliefs and values, the purpose of communication, and therefore, translation becomes rendering these from one language into another. Even though in the past translation was not concerned with the cultural aspect of texts, today it is the central issue for translators all over the world, as culture is everything that surrounds people of a certain society and makes them who they are. It also manifests differently in every society, making it difficult at times to transfer messages from one language into another, i.e. from one culture into another. Many of the problems that arise in translation stem predominantly from cultural differences existing between cultures, thus making the translator's task even more challenging as, in order to render a message from one culture into another, s/he has to have the knowledge of both cultures.

2. Aims of the thesis

The aim of the thesis is to find out what problems undergraduate students (final year of B. A. program) of English language and literature at a Croatian university face when translating a text that contains various references to cultural entities, i.e. culture-specific expressions. Another objective of the study is to uncover the reasons why these problems occur in the first place and give recommendations based on the relevant information from literature that will help overcome these obstacles when translating.

The aims of the thesis mentioned above can be summarized as the following questions the answers to which will be the core elements of this thesis:

1) What are the problems which Croatian students of English face when translating texts that contain references to cultural elements?

2) Why do these problems occur?

3) What translation techniques and strategies do students use when translating culturally specific expressions from one language into another?

3. Theoretical background

Traditional views of translation define it as a process which "involves the translator changing an original written text (source text) in the original verbal language (source language) into a written text (target text) in a different verbal language (target language)" (Munday, 2006:4-5). Catford (1965, according to Mares, 2012:70) similarly defines translation as "a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another", but bases his definition on the concept of equivalence, describing translation as the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language. Going along the lines of translational equivalence, Newmark (1988) sees translation as rendering the intended meaning of the author presented in the source text into the target text and language. He does not stop at emphasizing the transfer of meaning in translation, but states that translation is used to transmit both knowledge and culture. Akbari (2013:14) is the one who provides a definition of translation putting at its core the cultural aspect of translation. For him, "translation, involving the transposition of thoughts expressed in one language by one social group into the appropriate expression of another group, entails a process of cultural decoding, recoding and encoding" (Akbari, 2013:14).

According to many scholars, culture plays an extremely important role in translating and its qualities condition the way a text will be translated. Newmark (1988:94) defines culture as "the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression", Duranti as "something learned, transmitted, passed down from one generation to the next, through human actions, often in the form of face-to-face interaction and, of course, through linguistic communication" (1994, according to Durdureanu, 2011:51), whereas Akbari (2013) believes the very core of culture are traditional ideas and their attached values.

The relationship between language and culture becomes interesting when taking into account the process

of encoding a message for one audience and translating it for another. Some views of this relationship regard language as an expression of culture, exerting influence on the speakers' perception of the world they live in (Akbari, 2013; Mares, 2012). Therefore, differences between languages are not just manifested on the level of different vocabulary and syntax, but rather on a much deeper level of speakers' interpretation and understanding of the world that surrounds them (Mares, 2012). Interestingly, Witte (2000, according to Stojić and Brala-Vukanović, 2014) asserts translation is firstly an intercultural act and secondly a linguistic one.

House (2016:7) puts forward the notion of language being primarily a social phenomenon, "naturally and inextricably intertwined with culture". Basing her opinion of language on socio-linguistically and contextually oriented approaches, she regards language as being embedded in culture which suggests that the meaning of any linguistic unit can only be understood in its cultural context. Furthermore, she concludes that "since in translation 'meaning' is of particular importance, it follows that translation cannot be fully understood outside a cultural frame of reference" (House, 2016:7). Mares (2012) adds that culture plays an important role in determining whether a certain linguistic unit is appropriate to use.

The role of the translator today seems to have moved from being only a mediator between languages to being a mediator between cultures (Durdureanu, 2011), as communication between cultures can be achieved through translation (Mares, 2012:69). This way, the aim of translation is in one respect viewed as providing the means for intercultural communication, a communication "between members of different cultures who presumably follow differing sociocultural rules for behavior, including speaking and who can range from groups at the national level […] as well as groups that have potentially differing rules for speaking such as social glass, age, gender" (House, 2016:6). She also states that the most essential concept in the rendering of a text from one culture into another is functional equivalence, as a prerequisite for achieving a "comparable function of a text in another context" (House, 2016:6).

Examples of different cultural elements in texts are not a rare occurrence. Terms used for denoting these cultural elements in literature are many - realia, culturally-bound and culture-specific expressions, and they represent concepts closely related to a specific culture (Terestyenyi, 2011:13). Vallo and Vermes

(2000; 2004, according to Terestyenyi, 2011), point out that culture-specific items are context dependent and believe that any element can become a culture-specific item if it carries a connotative meaning in the source culture. A more elaborated definition of culturally-bound expressions is provided by Aixela (1996, according to Akbari, 2013:17), referring to them as "those textually actualized items whose function and source text involve a translation problem in their transference to a connotation in the target text, whenever this problem is a product of the non-existence of the referred item or of its different intertextual status in the cultural system of the target text."

The translatability of these expressions was a topic of interest for many scholars, divided between those believing they could certainly be rendered into another language and culture and those advocating their untranslatability. Those deeming it impossible emphasize the "gaps" that inevitably exist between different cultures and languages, thus making it very difficult to achieve a perfect transfer. On the other hand, there are scholars who think "everything conceivable by the human mind must be capable of being expressed in any language" (Fernandez Guerra, 2012:22), making it clear that everything can be translated. As a contradiction to the concept of universal translatability, House (2016) notes the presence of connotative meanings in culture-specific texts that can certainly pose problems when translating, as they are often elusive and difficult to communicate.

If one believes in the possibility of translation of culture-specific expressions, the main interest of his endeavors is the concept of equivalence in translation. The success of the translation depends on the translator's ability to create equivalence between the source and target text, in which there is coherence between text, language and culture (Stojić, Brala-Vukanović, 2014:409). Heltai (2007, according to Terestyenyi, 2011), in his study of culture-specific items, approaches them from the viewpoint of equivalence. Noting that the meaning of words consists of various components, depends on the referential meaning (to which part of the reality it refers to) and can have a range of emotional or associative meanings, he concludes absolute equivalence could never be attained as lexical items in two languages differ from each other in some components. However, as lexical items from two different languages can refer to the same reality, absolute and working equivalences between them can exist. He

extends his opinion on equivalence by also adding a concept of partial equivalence, when "because of the different segmentation in the two languages the meaning of a word is not the same, as they are to be found in different places in the system" (Terestyenyi, 2011:14). Contrary to this, Newmark (1988) remarks that achieving the equivalent effect is not possible when source culture and target culture are remote from each other, as cultural expressions have to be explained in a generic way or be clarified.

Among some of the common problems of non-equivalence in translation, Baker (2011) includes culture-specific concepts, the source language concept not being lexicalized in the target language, semantically complex source language words and the source and target languages making different distinctions in meaning. The so-called cultural gaps, which lead to linguistic gaps, fall under the category of culture-specific concepts. Finding equivalents for culturally-bound terms asks for both the bridging of the cultural and linguistic gaps and meeting the reader's expectations (Mares, 2012:17). Kussmaul (1995, according to Mares, 2012:71) states that "translators have to be aware of the fact that readers' expectations, their norms and values, are influenced by culture and that their comprehension of utterances is to a large extent determined by these expectations, norms and values." House (2016) claims that linguistic units denoting particular cultural phenomena cannot be understood in isolation from the phenomena themselves and that only knowledge of these phenomena can make translation (as a reconstruction of meaning) possible. In her words, "knowledge concerning when, why, by whom and to what effect language-specific units are employed can, in theory, be accessed" and "cultural gaps can always be bridged via ethnographic knowledge and insights or, stated negatively, untranslatability only occurs whenever such knowledge, such insights, such reflection is absent" (House, 2016:39). The role of the translator in this process is to fully comprehend the implications and connotations of the source text in order to determine suitable equivalents in the target language context. It is the translator's decision whether to keep the original term to preserve the meaning of a culture-specific word or to use different strategies as to render them into the target language (Mares, 2012:72).

There have been many propositions by translation scholars about translation strategies, techniques and procedures a translator should utilize when rendering the culture-specific items from one language into

another. Newmark (1988:81-93), one of the most prominent translation scholars lists the following procedures for translating culture-specific expressions:

1) Transference

Transference *(*loan word, transcription) refers to the process of transferring a SL word to a TL text. Newmark (1988) states that only cultural concepts (belonging to the source language culture) should be transferred into the target language text, usually combining it with another translation strategy.

2) Naturalization

In this strategy the source language word is adapted to the normal pronunciation, then to the normal morphology (word-forms) of the TL.

3) Cultural equivalent

The strategy of cultural equivalence stands for translating the source language cultural word by a target language cultural word and both words are approximate cultural equivalents.

4) Functional equivalent

This translation strategy, which is often applied to cultural words, is based on the use of a culture-free word, at the same time neutralizing or generalizing the source language word. Newmark (1988) regards it as the most accurate way of translating culture-specific words.

5) Descriptive equivalent

Descriptive equivalence encompasses the description of culture-specific words.

6) Synonymy

In the strategy of synonymy, a near target language equivalent is sought for a source language word in a specific context, where a precise equivalent may or may not exist. This strategy is utilized when there

is no clear one-to-one equivalent for a source language word, and the word is not essential for the meaning of the text.

7) Through-translation

This is a literal translation of common collocations, names of organizations, the components of compounds and perhaps phrases, known as calque or loan translation.

8) Shifts or transpositions

A shift or transposition is a translation procedure which involves a change in the grammar when translating from source to target language.

9) Modulation

Modulation includes a change of viewpoint, perspective and often of category of thought.

10) Recognized translation

This translation strategy refers to the use of the official or generally accepted translation of any institutional term.

11) Translation label

Translation label is a provisional translation, usually of a new institutional term, which should be made in inverted commas and can be done through literal translation.

12) Componential analysis

It comprises the splitting up of a lexical unit into its sense components, one word often translated in two, three or four sense components.

13) Reduction and expansion

These are viewed as imprecise translation procedures, including translation shifts via a more general word or a more specific adjective.

14) Paraphrase

It refers to an amplification or explanation of the meaning of an expression from the source text.

15) Equivalence

This is a strategy which implies approximate equivalence, accounting for the same situation in different terms.

16) Adaptation

Adaptation involves the use of a recognized equivalent between source and target text situations.

17) Couplets

In couplets, triplets or quadruplets two, three or four of the above-mentioned strategies are combined when dealing with a single problem. This translation strategy is particularly common for cultural words, if transference is combined with a functional or a cultural equivalent.

18) Notes, additions, glosses

In these, the additional information a translator may have to add the target text is normally cultural (accounting for difference between source language and target language culture), technical (relating to the topic) or linguistic (explaining wayward use of words), and it depends on the expectations of the target text audience.

Baker (2011:34-52) combines her thoughts on the different ways of translating culture-specific expressions into the following list of translation strategies:

1) Translation by a more general word (superordinate)

It involves the use of a general (superordinate) word to overcome a lack of specificity in the target language compared to the source language.

   2) Translation by a more neutral/less expressive word

   3) Translation by cultural substitution

This translation strategy includes the replacement of a culture-specific item with a target language item which does not have the same meaning but is likely to have a similar impact on the target reader.

   4) Translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation

   5) Translation by paraphrase using a related word

This strategy is used when the concept expressed by the source language expression is lexicalized in the target language but in a different form.

   6) Translation by paraphrase using unrelated words

If the concept expressed by the source language expression is not lexicalized at all in the target language, the paraphrase strategy is used so as to unravel the meaning of the culture-specific term.

   7) Translation by omission

   8) Translation by illustration

This strategy can be used if the source language word lacks an equivalent in the target language, but refers to a physical entity which can be illustrated.

Stojić and Brala-Vukanović (2014:423-425) list the following ones:

1)   Borrowing

2)   Calque

3)   Explanation and paraphrase

4)   Translation by analogy

5)   Change of superordinate and subordinate word relations

6)   Adaptation

7)   Omission

3.1.   Previous studies

In their research into the problems university students majoring in English face when translating texts that contain culture-specific elements, Dweik and Suleiman (2013) found that the majority of students found it difficult to achieve an equivalent effect in the target texts with regards to the culture-specific items from the source texts. Another problem they faced was deciding which was the appropriate translation strategy for dealing with these terms. Many students used either literal translation or the glossing technique without providing additional information. The results also show that in many cases the students depended on the guessing technique, meaning they depended on the context to figure out the meaning (Dweik and Suleiman, 2013:56). They concluded that cultural differences and cultural gaps are some of the crucial elements which make translation difficult for students and that one of the major reasons behind it is lack of cultural awareness, but there is also the unfamiliarity with various translation strategies.

In another study of translation strategies used when translating a text with culture-specific items from Hungarian into English, Terestyenyi (2011) found that the strategy of transference was applied more often than any other. Following it were the strategies of addition and circumlocution, providing an analogous term or translation via a more generalized term.

Fernandez Guerra (2012) also carried out a study concerned with the strategies students employed when translating cultural items from English into Spanish and vice versa. The results of this study show that translating culture-specific expressions is a challenging task for students and the choice of strategies they used reveals either the "subversiveness" of the translator (which leads to a domestication of the source language text in the target culture, translating in a fluent and invisible style so as to minimize the

foreignness of the text) or the resistance and maintenance of the source culture (leading to foreignization, maintaining the dominant cultural values of the source language and culture) (Fernandez Guerra, 2012:22-23). The results also show that students prefer using translation strategies such as borrowing, descriptions and adaptations, which leads to a conclusion that the use of these strategies typifies students' both subversion and preservation of source culture elements. The two main problems for the students were, as the author mentions, (1) that they focused primarily on the cultural elements and not on the language and style of the text, just trying to 'adapt' the source language culture to the target language culture, or (2) they focused mainly on language and style, preserving elements of the original culture and not rendering the message accurately (Fernandez Guerra, 2012:23).

Alosque (2009, according to Dweik and Suleiman, 2013:49) focused her study on cultural words which require background knowledge to be understood and, therefore, pose problems in translating them. The problems, she states, are a result of either a different semantic range of cultural words in the source and target languages, the absence of the cultural concept in the target language, the loss of meaning or the metaphorical meaning conveyed by many cultural words. The study has revealed constraints of the translation strategies used to translate cultural terms (loan, functional equivalence, descriptive equivalence, approximate equivalence) and differences in the conceptualization of reality in both languages, which point to cultural gaps that make translating cultural expressions difficult.

Olk (2003, according to Dweik and Suleiman, 2013) conducted a study which explored the influence of cultural knowledge on translation performance of German students of English who were asked to translate a text containing a number of British references into German. The results have shown that the students often lacked sufficient knowledge of British culture to deal with cultural concepts that occurred in the text which led them to use inappropriate solutions (Dweik and Suleiman, 2013:48).

4. Methodology

4.1. Sample

A sample of 15 students of the final year of undergraduate program of English language and literature at one Croatian university was selected to participate in the study. The sample was selected on the basis of convenience, availability and willingness to participate in the study.

4.2. Instrument

The instrument was comprised of two parts. The first part of the instrument was a short text in Croatian which the students were asked to translate into English. The text was deliberately chosen because it included several expressions that can be defined as culturally-bound specifically to Croatian culture.

The second part of the instrument consisted of a questionnaire that comprised six questions concerning the particulars of the students' translations, the potential problems they faced when translating the given text from Croatian into English, the translation techniques and strategies they used and usually use when translating culturally specific terms and also their opinions on the equivalence of the source and target texts. The demographic information about the students was not seen as an important factor of the study as we would not expect to see much deviation within the sample.

5. Results

The results relating to the first part of the instrument, i.e. the translation of the given text from Croatian into English will be presented first. This will be done in terms of singling out the expressions and phrases which are seen as culturally specific and providing the different translations that the respondents used to account for their meaning in the target text.

(1) The first culturally-bound element was a publication under the name *Zbornik za narodni život i običaje južnih Slavena.* It can be best described as an anthology which deals with the topic of folk life and customs of South Slavic people.

The results show that 40% of the respondents kept the name of the publication the same as in the source text, without translating it or providing an explanation for it. Also 40% of the respondents kept the original form of the name in Croatian but explained it in brackets or translated it into English and put the original name in brackets. The last 20% of the respondents translated the name of the publication into English in several different ways:

1) Repertory for folk life and customs of Southern Slavs

2) Anthology of national life and folk traditions of South Slavic people

3) Anthology of the folk life and customs of the Southern Slavs

(2) The second culturally-bound element was the term *vile* (*vilama* in the source text), which in Croatian mythology denotes young and beautiful women who have supernatural powers. When translating this expression 100% of respondents translated it into English as *fairies*.

(3) The next term was *Nedobrice* referring to some of the creatures that fall under the category of *vile* and who, according to the mythology, resided in the Croatian region of Slavonija and were characterized as being evil toward humans.

The majority of the respondents, 66,66% of them, kept the original term *Nedobrice* in their target texts but added an English expression in brackets. 13,33% of respondents only kept the translated expression in English. The English translations vary greatly, cumulating 12 different ways of denoting the source text term: *Non-goods*, *Meanies*, *Nogoods, No-gooddoers, Misbehaved, Not-good, Unkind, Ill-doers, Ungoodies, non-goodies, the Ungood* and *Wicked fairies*. Some of the respondents (20%) left the original term *Nedobrice* in the target text without an explanation.

(4) Another culturally specific term that appeared in the source text is *vilenice*, which stands for females that were in one way or another in contact with *vile*, but they were human and occupied themselves with healing people based on the instructions from *vile*.

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The results show that 20% of the respondents translated *vilenice* just as *fairies*, 40% kept only the source text word *vilenice* and there were other varied translations: *Pixies, witches, female god, female fairies, elves* and *female elves*.

(5) The term *vilenjaci* in the context of the given text denotes males that were in contact with *vile* but did not occupy themselves with healing people.

The results show less variation among the sample concerning the translation of this term. 40% of respondents kept the original term *vilenjaci* in their translation, 40% translated it as *elves* and other translations were *warlocks, male gods* and *male fairies*.

(6) The next culturally specific item that appeared in the source text is the term *vidanje* (*vidanja* in the text) and it refers to the art of healing people with medicinal herbs practiced by *vilenice* and *vilenjaci*, which is based on the knowledge passed on to them by *vile*.

As the term *vidanje* is shortly explained in the source text, 60% of respondents translated the surrounding text but also kept the original term (either in brackets or separated with dashes). 13,33% of respondents did not translate the word *vidanje* in any manner but only translated the surrounding text. Other translations include: *healing with herbs, healing*, *amelioration* and *arch*.

(7) The last expression that could be described as culturally-bound is *biljarice*. This term is used in mythology for *vile* who have the knowledge of which herbs are medicinal and could help heal people.

The term *biljarice* is actually also explained in the source text as *čuvarice bilja* (herb keepers). All 100% of respondents translated this expression in a similar fashion (*guardians/keepers of herbs/plants*). However, the results vary in terms of translating the expression *biljarice*: 53,33% of respondents kept the original term along with the mentioned short definition, 6,66% respondents did not translate the word *biljarice*, while 20% of them coined new words such as: *herbswomen* and *herbers*. Out of the 53,33% of respondents who kept the term *biljarice* along

with translating the expression *čuvarice bilja*, 13,33% of them also added the translation of *biljarice* as *plantees* and *herbswomen*.

The second part of the results, those relating to the questionnaire, will be displayed in terms of referencing all of the answers that the respondents provided.

(1) The first question was concerned with expressions that posed a problem to the respondents when translating the given text from Croatian into English.

Problematic expressions and the percentage of respondents to whom these expressions posed a problem when translating are shown below.

Expression	Percentage of respondents (%)
Nedobrice	100
biljarice	80
vidanje	73,33
vilenice	73,33
Zbornik za narodni život i običaje južnih Slavena	40
vilenjaci	33,33
pučki imaginarij	20
vile	6,66
etnološko-antropološka	6,66
čuvarice bilja	6,66

(2) Another concern of this thesis is which translation strategies and techniques the respondents usually use when translating expressions and phrases relating to culture.

Strategies and techniques are listed below along with the percentage of respondents who use them when translating cultural terminology.

Translation strategy	Percentage of respondents (%)
cultural equivalence	6,66
calque	6,66
borrowing	26,66
literal translation	26,66
equivalence	46,66
borrowing and explanation	33,33
through-translation	6,66
adapting	6,66
functional equivalence	6,66

(3) Another concern of this thesis is the reason why the respondents used a certain strategy for translating expressions closely relating to culture.

The results show that for the expression vile 26,66% of respondents used the strategy of literal translation as they believe the English term *fairies* is a literal translation of *vile*. On the other hand, 33,33% of respondents used equivalence and the reason for this is they think *fairies* is the equivalent word in English for the Croatian word *vile*. 26,66% of the respondents used adaptation as a translation strategy because, to them, words *vile* and *fairies* are almost equivalents or have a very similar meaning. There was some more variation within the sample as 6,66% of respondents translated *vile* on the basis of cultural equivalence and also 6,66% of them translated it as *fairies* because that is the usual word for denoting the meaning of *vile*.

As for the expression *Nedobrice*, 20% of respondents used borrowing to keep the original word in the target text and the reasons they gave for this were not to lose the meaning of the word, it denotes a specific kind of creature and there is no equivalent expression in English. 66,66% of respondents used borrowing accompanied by providing either a short explanation in English in

brackets (6,66%), used calque in order to translate the expression (40%) or coined a new term to account for the meaning of the source text expression (20%). 13,33% of respondents used only calque (6,66%) or coinage (6,66%) in order to translate *Nedobrice*, without providing the Croatian expression. The predominant reason why they used these strategies was not to lose the effect in the target text and to provide an equivalent with respect to semantics.

In order to translate *vilenice*, 40% of respondents used borrowing as a translation strategy because they did not think there was an equivalent in English or they simply did not know how to translate the word. 26,66% of respondents used cultural equivalence but translated the term in a different way (*pixies*, *fairies*). The reason for this is they believe these terms to be equivalent on the cultural level or do not know the difference between the two terms. In addition to this, 33,33% of respondents used different terms so as to adapt the Croatian expression to the English language without mentioning it in the target text.

Vidanje was also one of the culture-specific terms which 60% of respondents translated in terms of borrowing because either the text already provided a short explanation or there is no equivalent in English, whereas 13,33% only translated the surrounding explanation. 20% of respondents used equivalence and 6,66% literal translation from the dictionary.

As for translating the term *biljarice*, 33,33% of respondents borrowed the original word from the original text and translated the surrounding text which serves as a short explanation of the term. The reasons they mentioned for doing this is that there is no equivalent in English or they do not know how to translate it. Some of the respondents (26,66%) both translated *biljarice* into English through calque and put the original term into brackets. 40% of respondents avoided using the original word in their target texts and translated *biljarice* through calque (20%), used a short explanation in order to describe the term (13,33%) or used a literal translation they found in a dictionary (6,66%).

(4) When asked if they left any expression from the source text the same as it was in the original, 93,33% of respondents answered affirmatively, while 6,66% of respondents answered negatively. As for the reasons why they left the original expression, 50% stated that they did not think there is an adequate translation into English and 50% kept the original term but added an explanation in English. No respondents stated they did not know the meaning of the expression.

(5) The opinion on the difference between the Croatian term *vila* and the English term *fairy* was also one of the issues the study explored. When asked if there is a difference between the two terms in the languages mentioned, 40% of respondents answered affirmatively and 60% negatively. The respondents who answered affirmatively to this question specified what the difference actually encompasses and these are the answers:

1) Both terms denote female creatures with supernatural powers, but *vila* can also be a term for a beautiful young woman in Croatian

2) The English term has a broader meaning

3) Croatian term *vila* can have multiple different meanings, while the English term has only one

4) In Croatian, *vila* denotes more than one magical creature from stories and legends

5) There is not an equivalent term that could be deemed perfect

6) In English, *fairy* denotes different imaginary creatures, while *vila* is a clear term in Croatian.

(6) When asked about whether their translation is equivalent to the source text, 53,33% of the respondents answered affirmatively, while the other 46,66% answered negatively.

6. Discussion

The translators' role being to provide a fertile ground for the communication between cultures, what they must do in order to successfully mediate in this communication is to reconcile the differences that

inevitably exist between them. Culture-specific elements represent one of the major issues for translators and from the results of this study it is visible that cultural expressions were problematic to translate for the majority of the respondents. The results reveal that the expressions closely related to Croatian mythology were the ones they found most challenging to translate, with expressions like *Nedobrice* which posed a problem for all of the respondents, *biljarice*, which posed a problem for 80% of them, *vidanje* for 73,33%, as did *vilenice, Zbornik za narodni život i običaje južnih Slavena* for 60% and *vilenjaci* for 33,33% of them. As these items all refer to mythology (as an integral part of almost every culture) and are, therefore, distinct, they have connotations that are called up only in the minds of the members of Croatian culture. Rendering these items into another language is inevitably complex, as they do not exist in the extralinguistic reality of other cultures (Aixela, 1996, according to Akbari, 2013). The 'perfect transfer' could seem to be impossible to achieve taking into account the cultural gaps that exist between the two cultures and, consequently, languages. In order to translate these terms, it is necessary for the translator to understand the concepts they stand for and at the same time try to achieve an equivalent effect in the target text.

As previously mentioned, there is a plethora of possible translation strategies, procedures and techniques the respondents were in position to utilize in their translations. The results have shown that the preferred strategies for translating culture-specific concepts in this study were literal translation, translation using a loan word plus explanation, borrowing (transference, translation using a loan word), functional equivalence, calque and couplets.

The following table shows translation strategies used for translating culture-specific items.

Translation strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Literal translation	25	20,8
Loan word plus explanation	24	20,33
Borrowing (transference, loan word)	21	17,5
Functional equivalence	18	15

Calque	11	9,16
Couplet	10	8,33
Descriptive equivalence	6	5
Omission	3	2,5
Translation by a more general word	2	1,6

In this study the strategy of literal translation and translation using a loan word plus explanation were used most often by the respondents (20,8% and 20,33% respectively). The percentage of respondents who translated the culture-specific terms by borrowing (transference, using a loan word) was also relatively high (17,5%). These findings partially support Terestyenyi's (2011) results of transference being applied more than any other translation strategy when translating culture-specific items. However, literal translation was found to be the most prominent of the translation strategies applied to these terms, with Dweik and Suleiman (2013) including it among the procedures most used by students translating a text containing cultural elements. Literal translation being used most frequently can lead to the conclusion that the respondents' translations did not transfer the connotative meanings that culture-specific texts have. House (2016) believes these connotations that cultural words have to be very difficult to communicate, therefore making literal translation an unfitting procedure for this purpose.

Using translation by a loan word plus explanation can be regarded as an optimal strategy through which the intended meaning can be rendered, as the cultures involved in the translation are remote and the culture-specific terms have to be clarified so as to be understood. Newmark (1988) maintains that the explanation of cultural expressions is crucial in rendering their meaning. Additional information, i.e. the explanation of cultural terms added by the respondents suggests they share this opinion and that they focused more on transferring the content of the source text rather than on the style of the target text. These three most frequently applied translation strategies show a tendency for the preservation of culture-specific elements from the source culture, leading to a foreignization of the target text (especially

in the case of borrowing), which Fernandez Guerra (2012) lists as one of the possible issues concerning the translation of texts containing culture-specific elements.

Target text-oriented translation strategies were used on many occasions but significantly less than source text-oriented ones. The most used strategy out of the target text-oriented ones was functional equivalence (15%), followed by calque (9,16%), couplets (8,33%), descriptive equivalence (5%), omission (2,5%) and translation by a more general word (1,6%). It can be concluded that the source text-oriented translation strategies take precedence over the target text-oriented ones, providing an insight into either the respondents' inability to render the intended meaning of the source text or their dependency on the source text and lack of knowledge of the source culture. Focusing only on adapting the source language culture to the target language culture (Fernandez Guerra, 2012), language, style and coherence of the target text are undermined.

In addition to this, Fernandez Guerra (2012), Terestyenyi (2011) and Alosque (2009, according to Dweik and Suleiman, 2013) maintain that borrowing (transference, loan words) is the preferred translation strategy for dealing with culture-specific items and the results of this study also corroborate their finds. The respondents applied this strategy in 17,5% of cases. The items that were borrowed most often are culture-specific concepts (*Zbornik za narodni život i običaje južnih Slavena*, *Nedobrice*, *vilenice*, *vilenjaci*) which again represent gaps between the languages involved in the study both in cultural and lexical respect. The fact that these items were transferred in their original form from Croatian into English without providing an explanation or adding a note represents another issue for target text audience, who, without the knowledge of the source language are not able to access the concepts behind these expressions, thus making them unable to understand the target text. Regarding the frequent application of borrowing, the main goal of creating equivalence in translation between the two texts and coherence between the two cultures (Stojić, Brala-Vukanović, 2014) cannot be deemed accomplished as the translations filled with borrowings can seem unnatural in the target language. Also, as House (2016) claims, cultural concepts cannot be understood in isolation and, as in this case, source culture-specific items still existing in translation make the translation more of a barrier between the source and target language and culture, rather than a bridge between the cultural gaps that already exist between

them. It can be supposed that the respondents wanted to convey the message staying true to the source culture and preserving its elements rather than produce an equivalent effect on the target text audience, focusing more on the style of the text, which is one of the problems Fernandez Guerra (2012) asserts students face when translating culture-specific expressions.

The main reasons borrowing was used as a translation strategy are either that there are no equivalents in the English language for the culture-specific items concerned or the respondents did not know how to translate these expressions, which is indicative of their lack of knowledge of different possible translation strategies they could use as well as of their lack of cultural knowledge. It seems as though borrowing (transference, loan words) is a strategy applied when no other options are available to them. The issue that arises from the excessive use of borrowing as a translation strategy is not only the problem of foreignization of the target texts but also the problem of misunderstanding and sending to the target audience a message impossible for them to decode, perceive and comprehend.

Another problem that occurs in the respondents' translations is the translation of the word *vile*, which all of the respondents translated as *fairies*. This expression is a true definition of what Baker (2011) refers to as a cultural gap - a word from the source language which is not only not lexicalized in the target language, but the concept that *vila* stands for does not exist in the target language culture, making it seem impossible to achieve equivalence between the source and target texts. As the Croatian word *vile* and its translations raises the question of equivalence and whether absolute equivalence can, in the case of culture-specific elements, be attained, it is interesting to note that when asked about the problematic expressions to translate from the source text only 6,66% of the respondents admitted they had trouble with rendering the meaning of this word into English. The distinction between *vile* in Croatian, denoting young and beautiful women who have supernatural powers, and *fairies* in English, standing for imaginary small creatures with magic powers (Collins Dictionary and Thesaurus) is clear, thus making *vile* and *fairies* only partial equivalents, matching semantically only in terms of having supernatural powers. Furthermore, *fairies* carries a connotation of being small and imaginary, which brings the two terms further apart and calls into question the correct understanding of the source language item as both the cultural and lexical gaps that exist between the source and target culture are not filled. In addition to

this, the results have shown the reasons why the respondents used the word *fairies* to translate the concept of *vile* were that *fairies* is its equivalent or its near equivalent in English (66,66%), that it is its literal translation (26,66%) with 6,66% translating it as *fairies* because this is the 'usual word' that is used. When asked about the difference between the two terms and what this difference is, 60% of the respondents believe a distinction does not exist, while out of the 40% who answered affirmatively, only one respondent (6,66%) had the knowledge that *vile* in Croatian can also denote beautiful young women (rather than only small, magical creatures), with one other answer vaguely falling under this category, claiming the Croatian word *vila* can have multiple different meanings. Evidently, the reason for these (mis)translations is the lack of cultural knowledge on the respondents' part, Olk (2003, according to Dweik and Suleiman, 2013) also asserting that students in many cases of translation lack the knowledge required for dealing with concepts from a given culture.

It is important to note that the use of couplets as a translation strategy has a fairly high percentage among the strategies used generally in all translations (8,33%). Newmark (1988) believes it to be one of the most common strategies for translating cultural words, as a few strategies are combined to render the meaning in a more elaborate way. Using couplets may seem as one of the most reasonable translation strategies to both transfer the meaning and preserve some of the culture-specific elements that occur in the source text, but sometimes they take away from the overall effect of the text, as more information than necessary is included in the translation.

Another interesting find of this study is that calque is used relatively often (9,16%), which suggests that many of the respondents seem to have focused more on the overall equivalent effect of the target text, but at the same time retaining the intended meaning of the source text. It also speaks for the respondents' creative ability at reconstructing the meaning in favor of the target text audience.

Even though it is a challenging task to achieve equivalence in translation, especially trying at the same time to render the meaning of culture-specific terms, the respondents still aspire to achieve it, which is obvious from almost half of them (46,66%) claiming equivalence is the translation strategy they use when translating cultural elements and the majority of them (53,33%) believing they achieved

equivalence in their translations. The fact that the respondents aim at creating an equivalent target text to the source language one only confirms House's (2016) assertion that the most essential concept in the rendering of a text from one culture into another is functional equivalence. So as to achieve a comparable function of both the source and target text in translation, in 15% of the cases the respondents used functional equivalence and in 5% descriptive equivalence, which speaks for their awareness of the problematic terms being closely related to one culture and not the other and that the target audience would not be able to decode the message accurately if the translation was too dependent on the source text.

All of the previously mentioned finds lead to the conclusion that an equivalent effect is extremely difficult to achieve in a cross-cultural translation, having in mind that the two cultures concerned are remote, all the more in the mythological respect, with Newmark (1988) maintaining that this is inevitable when it comes to a translation involving cultures that hardly overlap in some sense.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to find out whether the students of English language and literature at one Croatian university faced problems when translating a text that contains cultural elements into English. From the data obtained in the study, it can be concluded that the respondents found culture-specific expressions problematic and difficult to render into the target language. In many cases the primary goal of achieving equivalence in translation was not attained and the target texts often seemed unnatural, incoherent and displaced in the target language culture. Some of the reasons for this are that the respondents relied more on source text-oriented strategies, such as literal translation, borrowing and translation by using a loan word plus explanation. It is evident that the translation strategies the respondents used are quite constricted, which also brings forward the issue of the foreignization of the translations, present in the majority of cases. The reasons for applying such a limited range of translation strategies can also be accounted for by the respondents' lack of cultural awareness and knowledge which made the translation of culture-specific terms even more challenging than it already is with the many cultural and, consequently, lexical gaps that are often a hindrance in the process of transferring the meaning of a text.

To conclude, as the role of translators today shifts toward them being mediators between cultures, their decision when translating a text containing cultural elements should be based on their knowledge about both the source and target culture, as well as the knowledge of the target text audience and their expectations. Accordingly, it is in their hands to decide if they would prefer to render the meaning (content) of the source text, putting the style and naturalness of the target text into the background or they would want to produce an equivalent effect on the readers, creating a translation which would achieve coherence between the target language and culture.

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9. Appendix

1. The Croatian text used in the instrument, which the respondents had to translate into English:

Na samom početku valja istaknuti da su mnogi autori u hrvatskoj etnološko-antropološkoj znanosti pisali o vilama. Velik prinos svakako predstavlja *Zbornik za narodni život i običaje južnih Slavena* u kojem su detaljno izložene mnoge karakteristike vilinskih bića prisutne u pučkom imaginariju. Tako je u Zborniku, u kontekstu vilinskoga ambivalentnog karaktera, navedeno kako su, primjerice, u Slavoniji vile nazivane Nedobrice jer su sve, prema čovjeku, zle, no opet, njihov odnos s čovjekom uvjetovan je njihovim trenutačnim raspoloženjem i prihvaćanjem čovjekova karaktera. (...) S takvim vilama ostvarivani su brojni susreti, na razmeđu između ovoga i onoga svijeta, a zabilježeni su u starim predajama pučkog imaginarija. Odabrani su pojedinci (vilenice i vilenjaci) i komunicirali s vilama koje su ih učile raznim znanjima o ljekovitosti bilja te praksama liječenja – *vidanja* – znanjima koja oni potom koriste za izlječenje svojih sumještana. Nije ni čudno da su vile odabirale pojedince kojima će prenositi svoja znanja, s obzirom na to da su slovile kao "čuvarice bilja – biljarice".

(Source: Tkalčić, M. (2015).Vile i vilinska pedagogija u novopoganskim duhovnostima u Hrvatskoj. *Stud. ethnol. Croat.*, 27, 189–246)