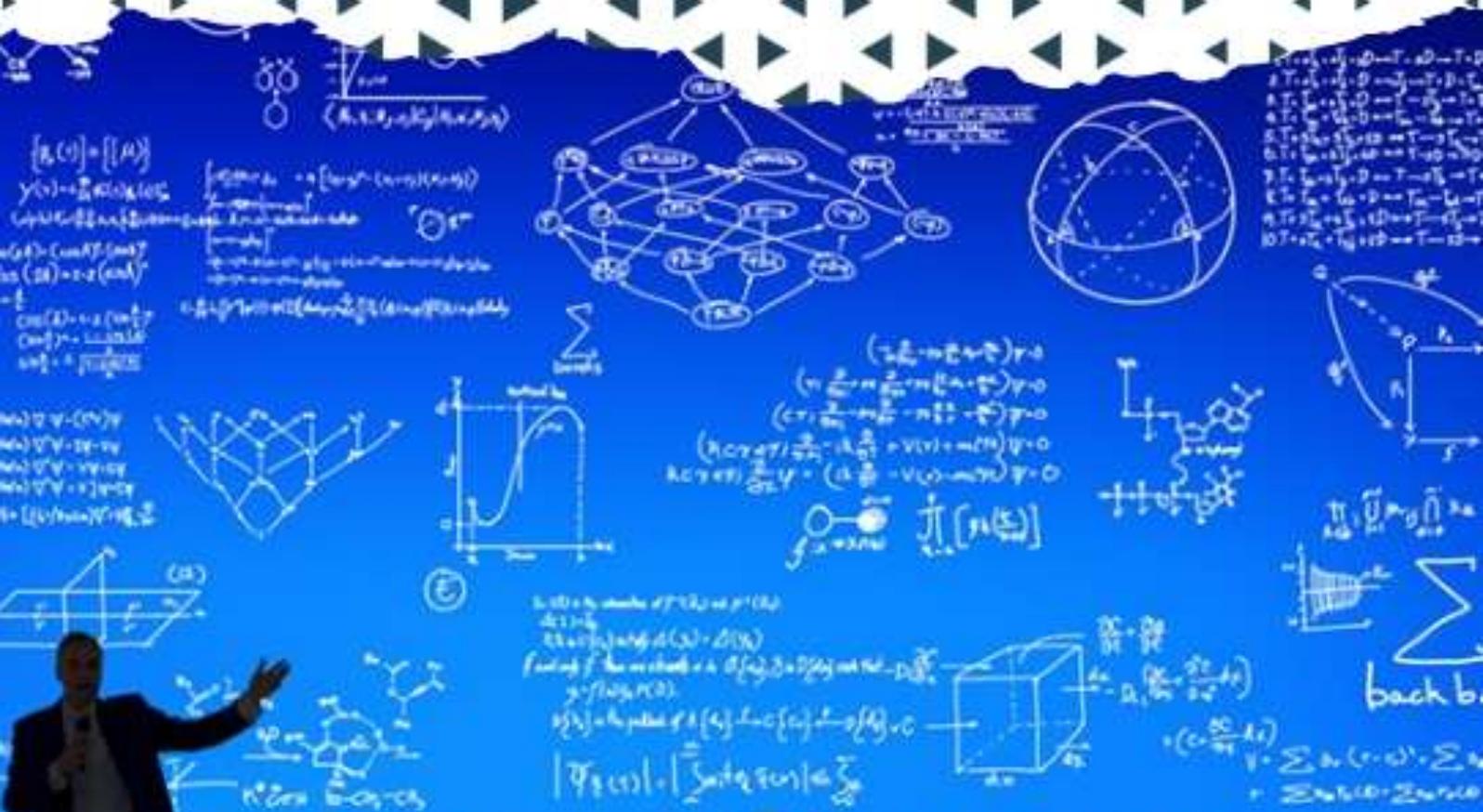




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Cultural Challenges in Translation

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Abstract. This article examines cultural challenges in translation as one of the most complex issues in translation studies. Translation is not only a linguistic process but also a cultural act that requires deep understanding of both source and target cultures. The study aims to identify major types of culture-specific elements and analyze strategies used to overcome cultural barriers in translation. The research is based on qualitative analysis of theoretical sources and practical examples from literary and non-literary texts. The findings demonstrate that cultural competence and appropriate translation strategies significantly contribute to achieving equivalence and effective cross-cultural communication.

Keywords: cultural challenges, translation studies, culture-specific elements, equivalence, cultural competence, cross-cultural communication

Introduction. In today's globalized world, translation plays a vital role in facilitating communication between different cultures. Through translation, people access foreign literature, academic research, legal documents, and media texts. However, translation is far more than a mechanical transfer of words from one language to another. Since language is deeply embedded in culture, translators often face difficulties when cultural elements of the source text do not exist or function differently in the target culture.

Cultural challenges in translation arise from differences in traditions, beliefs, values, social norms, and historical experiences. These challenges become especially evident when translating idioms, proverbs, realia, religious references, and culturally bound expressions. Literal translation in such cases may result in misunderstanding, loss of meaning, or distortion of the original message.

The main objective of this article is to analyze cultural challenges in translation within the IMRAD framework. The study seeks to answer the following research questions: what types of cultural challenges commonly occur in translation, what strategies are used to address these challenges, and why cultural competence is essential for translators.

Methods. This study adopts a qualitative and descriptive research methodology. The research is based on an extensive review of classical and modern theoretical works in translation studies. The main theoretical framework is drawn from the works of prominent scholars such as Eugene Nida, Peter Newmark, and Susan Bassnett, who have extensively discussed the relationship between language, culture, and translation.

The study also employs textual analysis of selected examples from both literary and non-literary texts. These examples were chosen because they

contain clear cultural elements that pose translation difficulties. The analyzed materials include idioms, proverbs, culture-specific terms, forms of address, and references to religious or historical events.

The research process involved careful comparison of source texts and their translations in order to identify cultural challenges and the strategies used to resolve them. The analysis focused on how meaning was transferred from the source language into the target language and whether cultural meaning was preserved or adapted. Special attention was paid to cases where literal translation failed and where translators applied alternative strategies to convey meaning. This methodological approach allowed for a deeper understanding of cultural challenges and their solutions in real translation practice.

Results. The analysis shows that cultural challenges in translation can be categorized into four main groups.

Culture-Specific Words and Realia

Culture-specific items, often called realia, refer to objects and concepts unique to a particular culture, such as national dishes, traditional clothing, holidays, and social institutions. Examples include sumalak, Thanksgiving, and kimono. These items carry strong cultural associations and usually lack direct equivalents in the target language.

The findings indicate that translators frequently apply borrowing, transcription, or descriptive explanation to deal with realia. Borrowing helps preserve cultural identity, while explanation ensures clarity for the target audience.

Idioms and Proverbs. Idioms and proverbs reflect the cultural wisdom and historical experience of a community. Their meanings are figurative and cannot be understood literally. For example, the English idiom "to spill the beans" means to reveal a secret.

The results show that functional equivalence is the most effective strategy when a similar idiom exists in the target language. In the absence of an equivalent, paraphrasing is used to convey the intended meaning.

Social and Cultural Norms. Social norms such as politeness strategies, forms of address, and levels of formality vary across cultures and are often encoded in language. The analysis reveals that failure to adapt these norms may lead to translations that sound unnatural or culturally inappropriate.

Religious and Historical References. Religious and historical references pose significant challenges because they require shared background knowledge. The results demonstrate that translators often rely on footnotes or brief explanations to preserve meaning without altering the original cultural context.

Discussion. The results confirm that cultural challenges are central to the translation process. The absence of direct equivalents does not make



translation impossible; rather, it demands informed decision-making and cultural sensitivity. The choice of strategy depends on factors such as text type, target audience, and communicative purpose.

This study highlights the role of the translator as a cultural mediator. Translators must strike a balance between faithfulness to the source text and acceptability in the target culture. Excessive domestication may result in cultural loss, while excessive foreignization may reduce readability and comprehension.

The findings also emphasize the importance of cultural competence in translator training. Knowledge of cultural traditions, values, and social norms is essential for producing accurate and meaningful translations. Cultural awareness enables translators to avoid misinterpretation and cultural bias.

Conclusion. This article has analyzed cultural challenges in translation using the IMRAD model. The study demonstrates that translation is a culturally sensitive activity requiring more than linguistic proficiency. Culture-specific elements such as realia, idioms, social norms, and historical references present major challenges for translators.

Effective translation depends on the translator's cultural competence and ability to apply appropriate strategies. In the context of globalization, addressing cultural challenges in translation is crucial for successful cross-cultural communication and mutual understanding.

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