

Cultural Differences and Translation Strategies: On the Example of Anne Brontë's Works

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ABSTRACT

In the process of literary translation, two cultures should be viewed as communicative bridges. This is because translation is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but also a process of cultural interpretation and mediation. The article provides insights into this concept and presents the views of several scholars on the topic. The main function of cultural linguistics is explained, emphasizing the importance for translators to take it into account during the translation process. Through Anne Brontë's novel Agnes Grey, the ethical, religious, and social environment of the Victorian era is reflected. The article highlights that toponyms, anthroponyms, historical and cultural connotations, as well as traditional and religious-cultural elements, are among the essential techniques in artistic translation.

Keywords: Localization, interpretation, Victorian era, governness, cultural contrasts, cultural concepts, toponyms, anthroponyms

INTRODUCTION

Translation activity has been practiced since ancient times and has become an inseparable means of intercultural communication and knowledge exchange. The development of translation theory has been shaped by various factors and, at the present stage, is regarded as an independent academic discipline. According to I. S. Alekseeva, contemporary translation theory "encompasses all directions that study translation both as an action and as a result" [6: 352].

Language serves as a tool through which members of society perceive the world; it is the main verbal medium that expresses values and reflects patterns of thinking. Language is always formed within a specific cultural framework. Therefore, translation should be viewed not merely as a linguistic phenomenon but as a process of cultural interpretation and mediation. The close interrelation between language and culture has given rise to a branch of linguistics known as “cultural linguistics.” This field is closely connected with translation studies, as it reinterprets translation as a communicative bridge between two cultures.

In his monograph *The Cognitive Foundations of Translation Studies* (2019), Sh. S. Safarov analyzes the translation process within the framework of the cognitive paradigm. The author defines translation not as a simple technical process of code substitution but as a complex cognitive activity that involves human thinking, logical reasoning, and cultural conceptual understanding. The translation of a literary work, therefore, represents a cognitive process of reinterpreting information, constructing meaning, and facilitating intercultural communication [5: 36].

METHODOLOGY

The methodological foundation of this study is based on the principles of comparative–analytical and cultural linguistic approaches. These principles make it possible to explore a literary text in translation from multiple perspectives, taking into account its specific cultural and linguistic features. The research is also grounded in the idea of the interrelation between language and culture, and in understanding translation as a form of intercultural communication.

There is a direct connection between cultural linguistics and translation studies, since every act of translation serves as a link between two cultures. A translator must convey not only the words but also the cultural meanings embedded behind them. In literary translation, particular importance is given to recognizing and transferring national stereotypes, values, traditions, and

mental frameworks in a way that resonates with another culture. The translator, as an intercultural mediator, must be sensitive to cultural differences, consider semantic and cognitive distinctions, and reflect them through appropriate cultural linguistic strategies.

The main task of cultural linguistics is to identify intercultural differences and analyze national and cultural concepts, stereotypes, and ethnic characteristics through language. This aspect is especially crucial in the translation process, as it requires the translator to possess sufficient cultural linguistic knowledge in order to convey cultural information accurately.

The connection between cultural linguistics and literary translation is undeniable: artistic translation represents one of the most essential manifestations of cultural linguistic thinking. It not only conveys reality through language but also reflects the author's worldview, mentality, and national spirit. Therefore, beyond linguistic equivalence, such factors as cultural fidelity, stylistic harmony, and ethnoconnotative value become the key criteria for translation quality.

At the present stage, the translator is no longer seen merely as a technical code converter but as an interpreter and mediator between cultures. B. Bilir (2024) refers to this process as "localization", emphasizing that the translator must render meaning not only in linguistic terms but also in accordance with the mentality of the target culture [1: 502-505]. In this sense, cultural mentality encompasses a society's customs, historical experience, aesthetic perceptions, and collective ways of thinking – all of which are reflected in its language and function as essential sociolinguistic and semantic criteria in translation. The translator's task is to understand this mentality and adapt it to the cultural framework of the target language. Thus, the translator becomes an active and selective creator, evaluating each unit anew within its context.

The way cultural concepts are represented in translation also requires particular attention. Cultural concepts are notions deeply rooted in the historical and national experience of a people and are often reflected in lexical units, idiomatic expressions, symbols, and metaphors. For instance, in English, the concept of

“home” may convey meanings of personal freedom, independence, and comfort, while in Karakalpak culture, it is more closely associated with the notions of *shañaraq* (family), *ata-ana* (parents), and *bereket* (prosperity). The translator should recognize such differences and choose equivalent expressions that convey similar emotional and associative meanings in both cultures. In this way, cultural concepts become one of the fundamental factors ensuring the connotative adequacy of translation and the effectiveness of intercultural understanding.

Anne Brontë (1820-1849) was an English novelist who, though the least known among the Brontë sisters, occupies an important place in Victorian literature for her deep attention to psychological and social issues in her novel *Agnes Grey*. First published in 1847, the work reflects the ethical, religious, and social environment of Victorian England through the life of a governess. Rich in autobiographical elements, the novel was inspired by Anne Brontë’s own personal experiences.

Agnes Grey can be regarded as a distinctive product of the cultural, ethical, and social thinking of the Victorian era – the second half of the nineteenth century, when the British Empire reached the height of its power. This period followed the Industrial Revolution and was characterized by the formation of social classes and ethical norms that defined the structure of society. Victorian culture was marked by conservative values, a patriarchal social order, devotion to diverse forms of religious belief, adherence to moral principles, and an aspiration toward social respectability.

The Brontë family grew up in an environment closely connected with literature, and each of the sisters developed a distinct and individual voice as a writer. Charlotte Brontë once remarked: “We did not love our school, but we loved the freedom of thought it gave us afterwards” [3]. This statement reveals the spirit of upbringing in the Brontë household, where independent thinking and intellectual freedom were highly valued.

Anne Brontë expressed these ideas in *Agnes Grey* through her portrayal of the governess class – a social group occupying an ambiguous position, belonging fully neither to the wealthy nor

to the poor. As a result, governesses were often marginalized by both social groups. This situation vividly reflects the cultural realities of Victorian society, which was deeply structured around class divisions. Through her work, Anne Brontë does not simply offer social critique based on personal experience but rather reveals the social issues of Victorian England from a cultural linguistic perspective, using cultural symbols and linguistic expression to illuminate the moral and social dimensions of her time.

In addition, the Victorian era was characterized by a growing critical attitude toward society itself. For example, Liza Jardine writes: “Victorian morality was less about actual virtue and more about the performance of propriety for social approval” [4]. This statement shows that Victorian ethical values were largely based on appearance and external conformity. During this period, many moral principles – such as religious devotion, loyalty to family, and female modesty – became tools of social control.

In this regard, I. A. Yeliseevanotes: “The governess in the Victorian novel represents not only a social type but also a metaphor for the dual position of women between freedom and subordination” [8]. This view helps to understand more deeply the cultural and social connotations attached to the image of the “gouvernant”, governess in *Agnes Grey*.

In his scholarly work *Anne Brontë* (1996), M. H. Frawley characterizes Anne Brontë as “an underrated yet powerful female author who challenged the cultural, ethical, and social relations of her time” [2: 82]. According to him, *Agnes Grey*, despite its simple language, reveals the moral flaws of Victorian society and serves as a social and cultural document of the era through its complex layers of meaning.

N. P. Mikhailovskaya regards Anne Brontë as a writer who continued the traditions of classical realism in English literature. She emphasizes that *Agnes Grey* is distinguished by its straightforward language and balanced composition, while its depiction of ethical conflicts and social inequalities appears natural and convincing [11: 34]. In her view, Anne Brontë’s prose was remarkably open and self-assured for its time, playing

a special role in portraying the inner struggles of Victorian women.

In *Agnes Grey*, the governess figures are shown as a group subject to formal moral norms but, in practice, socially marginalized. From this perspective, Anne Brontë exposes the moral hypocrisy of the Victorian era and the inconsistency between its social structures and real life. Thus, the Victorian period was not merely a space of idealized values but also a complex cultural arena that generated critical positions and alternative perspectives on those very ideals.

In the image of *Agnes Grey*, the author carefully depicts her own social experiences, highlighting deception, discrimination, violence, the pride of the wealthy, and the complexities of the poor in society. Although Victorian ethics valued moral order, religious devotion, and family virtues, the inconsistency between these ideals and their real-life practice is sharply criticized in the novel.

RESULTS

The language used in Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey* serves as a means of expressing the author's ethical and aesthetic worldview, as well as reflecting the psycho-social and cultural values of the Victorian period. The author's linguistic choices demonstrate her attention to simplicity, clarity, and ethical precision. Through language, Brontë portrays the cultural and social realities of contemporary English society and the complex social position of governesses.

Her style avoids excessive ornamentation, romantic emotionalism, or lofty rhetorical pathos. Instead, she portrays real life and the thoughts and emotions of ordinary people within the framework of everyday realism. The use of culturally marked expressions, realia, and religious-ethical terms typical of the Victorian context enriches the novel linguoculturally. For instance, expressions such as "tea-time," "Sunday-school," and "chapel" reflect key symbols of English culture and possess essential spiritual and social significance.

The most frequent stylistic devices in the novel are as follows:

1. **Irony:** Anne Brontë conveys her critical perspective on the social position of governesses and the moral duplicity of wealthy families through subtle irony. Example: “They talk of the dignity of honest toil, and then treat the honest toiler with contempt” (A. Brontë, *Agnes Grey*, London: Smith, Elder & Co. 1847).
2. **Metaphor:** The author often expresses ethical and psychological states through natural imagery.
Example: “The storm without answered to the storm within.” Here, the external storm parallels the inner psychological unrest of the heroine (A. Brontë, 1847).
3. **Contrast and antithesis:** Differences between the rich and the poor, men and women, and governesses and landowners are conveyed through semantic contrasts.
Example: “Their children were taught kindness, while the servants were treated with cruelty.” This technique reinforces the author’s critical stance (A. Brontë, 1847).
4. **Characterization through dialogue:** Each character’s speech reveals their social background and ethical position.
Example: The governess Agnes uses simple, direct phrases: “I tried to do my duty” (A. Brontë, 1847).
5. **Cultural realia:** – Frequent references to “tea-time,” “Sunday-school,” “hymns,” and “chapel” reflect the socio-cultural life of Victorian England (A. Brontë, 1847).

These stylistic devices define the aesthetic and philosophical foundations of the novel and allow it to be regarded as an important artistic document within the cultural context of the Victorian period.

The author frequently employs ethical terms such as “virtue,” “modesty,” and “humility,” which represent the moral norms of the era and provide insight into the characters’ actions, thoughts, and social roles. Thus, the language of the novel embodies not only aesthetic significance but also deep cultural and ethical meaning.

Furthermore, through language, Anne Brontë constructs cultural contrasts between the rich and the poor, the governess and the landowner, men and women – contrasts that acquire semantic depth throughout the text. The stylistic and cultural features of the author's language therefore serve as a methodological foundation for the linguocultural analysis of the work.

DISCUSSION

Various electronic databases contain historical records of the translations of the Brontë sisters' works produced in Russia from the 19th to the 21st centuries. The analyses show that the degree to which cultural linguistic units are preserved in translations largely depends on how deeply the translator understands the cultural context. For instance, in the earliest Russian translations of *Agnes Grey*, the meaning of the word “*gouvernant/governess*” was not fully conveyed; later, this unit found a more appropriate equivalent in the form of “*úy oqitwshu/home teacher*” [8]. Differences in translation are particularly noticeable in rendering religious expressions, social roles, and stylistic nuances.

As stated by scholars,

Топонимы, использованные в тексте, зачастую выступают не только как географические ориентиры, но и как носители культурной информации, раскрывающие особенности социального пространства Англии XIX века/Toponyms used in the text often serve not only as geographical references but also as carriers of cultural information, revealing the characteristics of England's social space in the 19th century. [8: 93]

This view emphasizes that toponyms perform a dual linguistic and cultural function. On the one hand, they provide geographical precision; on the other, they reflect the division of 19th-century English society into class, religious, and economic layers. For example, place names such as “Ashby Park” or “Horton Lodge” allow the reader to visualize the lifestyle of the upper class and its ideological space. Through such toponyms,

the novel outlines a sociocultural map of the Victorian era that merges real and conceptual dimensions.

In translation, it is crucial to preserve the semantic and cultural load of these toponyms, as they serve as indicators of the characters' positions within the social hierarchy.

N. P. Mikhalskaya and G. V. Anikin, in their studies, evaluated the Brontës' creative legacy within the cultural and ethical framework of the Victorian era. Through their novels, they addressed themes such as social justice, religious ethics, and the formation of female identity [12]. According to them, Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey* is largely autobiographical, portraying through the "gouvernant/governess's" life the social structure of Victorian society, particularly the contradictions between the middle and upper classes.

The researchers also note that simplicity, realism, and ethical principles occupy a central place in Brontë's artistic style. These aspects are vividly reflected in the linguistic expression of *Agnes Grey*. Through the use of simple syntax, clear vocabulary, and harmonious, sincere tones, Brontë brings the image of the governess to life with authenticity and moral depth.

Yu. V. Dyachenko conducts a comparative analysis of the Brontë sisters' literary heritage within both Russian and English literary studies [7]. In particular, when focusing on Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey*, Dyachenko examines the critical reception of the novel in the 19th-20th centuries, highlighting the interpretations within their social and cultural contexts. The author analyzes the thematic issues raised in Brontë's work: such as social inequality, religious ethics, and the position of governesses-and emphasizes how these themes are represented through linguocultural units. Yu. V. Dyachenko further shows the differing receptions of *Agnes Grey* by English and Russian scholars: in English literary circles, the novel is valued primarily as a realistic depiction of a governess's life, whereas in Russian academic studies, the emphasis is placed more on its ethical and didactic dimensions. These differing interpretations underscore the crucial role of cultural linguistic units in both translation and critical analysis.

Anthroponyms-personal names-play a distinctive role in literary translation, reflecting social, cultural, and semantic functions. From a cultural linguistic perspective, anthroponyms are not merely identifiers but also serve as cultural markers. Through the names of characters, the novel conveys aspects of contemporary culture, religious beliefs, and class hierarchy.

For example, the name “Agnes” originates from Greek, meaning “*páklik*/purity” which symbolically reflects the character’s ethical qualities. The surname “Grey” is associated with the color grey, suggesting her neutral, modest social position and unobtrusive presence in society. Through the selection of both first name and surname, the author conveys Agnes’s social standing, personal virtues, and moral positioning.

According to N. A. Kondratyeva, anthroponyms are

milliy-mádeniy markerdi ańlatıwshı tiykargı birliklerden biri bolıp, olar awdarma qılınıp atırǵanda alternativ mádeniyatqa uyqas túrde kodtan-kodqa ótkeriliwi kerek/one of the crucial units that signify national-cultural markers, and when translated, they must be transferred from code to code in a way that is compatible with the target culture. [10: 77]

Moreover, names frequently appearing in the novel, such as “Rosalie”, “Murray”, and “Bloomfield”, also indicate the characters’ social origin, aesthetic position, and relationship with the author. The name “Rosalie,” for instance, has French origins, evoking beauty, charm, and aristocratic refinement. Through this name, the author contrasts the character’s external beauty with her internal qualities, emphasizing the interplay between outward appearance and inner disposition.

In the translation process, the preservation of the semantic and connotative content of anthroponyms is of great importance. For this reason, translators must understand the cultural context of these names and apply equivalence and interpretive strategies accordingly. Names are not merely phonetic identifiers; they also convey cultural connotations.

Historical and cultural connotations are the semiotic layers of language units that, while not explicitly stated in the text, evoke

in the reader ideas about a specific historical period, social circumstances, or cultural milieu. They are often associated with historical figures, events, customs, social institutions, religious practices, or cultural phenomena and are expressed through characters either in a realistic or symbolic manner.

In Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey*, such connotations are frequently encoded in the depiction of the governess. Governesses occupied a unique intermediate position within Victorian England's social hierarchy, and this status is conveyed in the novel through cultural stereotypes and historical perceptions. In addition, linguistic units such as "tea-time" (*shay waqti*), "chapel" (*siyimwxana*), "sabbath" (*dem alw kúni*) carry historical-cultural connotations, providing the reader with rich information about 19th-century English social and religious life.

For instance, "tea-time" functions as a fundamental ritual of English social life, illustrating the interaction between social groups, the observance of etiquette and moral norms, and the symbolic role of domestic space. The term "chapel" refers to the religious practices of lower-class Protestants, highlighting their social cohesion and distinct cultural identity. If such connotations are not fully conveyed in translation, the cultural and historical context of the text may be lost.

From a translation studies perspective, the adequate rendering of historical-cultural connotations requires not only linguistic competence but also a deep understanding of the source language's culture. These units are not simply translated lexically; their cultural significance, semantic scope, and functional role must also be considered. Therefore, in literary translation, supplementing such connotations with cultural commentary or explanatory notes is often an essential strategy to preserve meaning.

Traditional and religious-cultural units are linguistic elements associated with culturally specific customs, religious beliefs, and spiritual values. Such units carry not only lexical meaning but also cultural-semiotic significance, playing a vital role in representing a particular social stratum, historical period, or cultural context within a literary text. Through these units, the

ethical norms, religious values, social institutions, and historical traditions of a society are conveyed.

Terms such as “Sunday-school”, “hymns” and “parson” belong to the category of traditional units that reflect the religious and spiritual life of Victorian England. For example, “hymns” – religious songs of praise-serve as tools for creating a spiritual environment, and in the novel, the author presents them as essential instruments for moral education and the practical duties of the governess. Through these songs, religious influence within English culture is artistically incorporated into the context of the novel.

CONCLUSION

From a cultural linguistic perspective, modern translation theory cannot be limited to grammatical and semantic analysis alone; it also allows for cultural interpretation. The translator acts as a mediator between cultures, conveying not only linguistic units but also the spiritual worldview, mentality, and aesthetic perspectives of the source culture. In particular, cultural mentality encompasses a nation’s historical experience, social values, spiritual and aesthetic ideals, and systems of stereotypes. The translator must understand this mentality, fully grasp the connotative layers of the text being translated, and convey them in a way that aligns with the linguistic and cultural norms of the target audience.

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