

CULTURALLY SPECIFIC SENSE OF SIMILE IN TRANSLATION (A CASE STUDY OF THE FLORA NAMES *LEAF*, *TREE* IN UKRAINIAN AND ENGLISH)

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Culturally specific images and symbols are ethnic semantics carriers. They show historical, national and cultural experience of the nation. The translation studies analysis of similes with a flora name, verbalised in the Ukrainian-English language pair, enables tracing the peculiarities of culturally specific images and concepts.

The article investigates, analyses and gives detailed characteristic of the notion of the culturally specific sense as an element of the actual sense of simile, peculiarities of universal and nationally specific attributes being the result of the national conceptualisation of a corresponding flora object (leaf, tree) in the consciousness of Ukrainian and English speakers. Translation studies analysis is applied aiming at revealing the ways of rendering the culturally specific sense in similes with a flora name (leaf, tree). Ways of translating simile with the utmost load of cultural information rendering are discussed.

Key words: simile, flora name, translation, culturally specific sense, ways of translation.

Introduction. Speech as a form of the spiritual conception of the outer world aims at a subjective or objective reflection of reality in specific linguistic signs which represent a certain notion or an associative concept of the world. A lingual concept of the reality only constitutes a part of our knowledge of the general complex picture of the world which is reflected in man's consciousness. Hence, imagery and symbolism are both a certain linguocultural generalization and a form to express an individual understanding of the world.

The investigated similes corpus reflects the conceptualisation of the outer world, both universal and ethnocultural. Since concept as the "epitome of culture" cannot be divided, the notion of the ethnic component, or the cultural other, on the level of language, and the culturally specific sense (henceforth CSS) on the level of speech are utilised in the research. By revealing the cultural other in the image / symbol, the CSS actualises it in speech. Thus, the analysis conducted further mainly focuses on the object of comparison within simile and **aims** at actualising the figurative meaning of the name and features of the idiomatic stock and symbolism revealing the ethnic peculiarities of the language as a system.

Methodology. The complex methodology of the research is based on the principle of anthropocentrism and interdisciplinarity, a differentiated and multidimensional space where Translation Studies intertwine with a number of other disciplines: cultural studies, cognitive linguistics, stylistics, philosophy and literary studies. The aims of the research and

the specificity of its polyaspectual object, namely simile constructions with flora and fauna symbolism, determine the following research methods: comparative translation, contextual and conceptual analyses. The latter is viewed according to Yu. Stiepanov [16, p. 41] as the macroanalysis comprising two microlayers: 1) the analysis of the notional component (field theory, componential analysis) and 2) the analysis of the cultural component (topical and historical association, inner form).

The research is conducted on the basis of the excerpts from Ukrainian literary texts and their English translations.

Results and discussion. Considering simile as a unit of translation (J.-P. Vinay and J. Darbelnet, A. Neubert, L. Barkhudarov, V. Komissarov, V. Koptilov, etc.) which should ultimately have correspondence in the target language, it is necessary to clarify the notion of the CSS, which is of utmost importance in researching simile as an object in the translation studies analysis. CSS is perceived as a “constituent of the communicative (actual) sense of a linguistic unit (expression), non-lingual and paralingual means, whose development is influenced by a certain culture; it reflects the perception of «cultural objects by members of a certain national lingual community»; it is a set of cultural semes of linguistic units (expressions) in communication” [2, p. 62–63]. F. Batsevych believes this unit ‘to reflect the dynamic interpersonal nature of the interaction of different culture bearers; to a certain extent, it is relevant to the units and categories of idioethnic languages and, hence, is subject to linguistic research’ [2, p. 62–63], a translation studies one in particular.

As a unit of translation, simile is represented in speech by means of a certain CSS whose reproduction is paramount in the process of interlingual communication. The latter is characterized by “its communication parties making use of interlingual communication means with CSSs as well as of communicative strategies and tactics which are different from the ones they use within their culture” [2, p. 62–63].

In Ukrainian and English languages, cultural traditions and precedent texts, there exist a number of legends, folk-beliefs and superstitions about plants. They are observed both in the idiomatic stock of the two languages as well as in literary texts where authors apply them to figuratively depict the world around us. In the folk imagination, plants are associated with and are symbols of life, strength, tenderness, beauty, etc. Furthermore, similes with a plant name actualize Biblical associations in literary texts.

Both in Ukrainian and English lingual cultures, the concept of a *leaf torn away from the tree* is deeply symbolic, primarily of separation and death [6, p. 335]. These Biblical and apocryphal aspects of the concept are reflected in the Ukrainian literature. In the samples “*Пішли літа марне з світа, як лист по Дунаю...*” [9, vol. 3, p. 52] / “*The years passed by uselessly like leaves floating down the Danube*” [24, p. 20], “*Адже був би я самісінький на світі, як лист, відірваний від дерева*” [19, vol. 18, p. 108] / “*I would have been left all alone in the world, like a leaf torn from the tree*” [p. 218], the effect of the verbalized concepts *separation* and *death* is intensified through the modified idiom *leaves floating down the Danube* in the first example and the amplified image *a leaf torn from the tree*, in the second.

The symbolism of the lexeme is even stronger in the context “... і показав їй через вікно могилу. – Не хотіла-с ти на цю Канаду, то підемо світами на старість, як лист

no polю” [15, vol. 1, p. 67] / “*And through the window he showed her a grave. “You didn’t want to go to this Canada, then we’ll go into the world and be blown about in our oldage, like a leaf over the fields”* [31, p. 15].

Since the English are well acquainted with this biblical image, these similes are reproduced in translation by means of full equivalence and calquing the author’s modifications. The conceptual load is fully preserved: “*The years passed by uselessly like leaves floating down the Danube*” [24, p. 20], “*I would have been left all alone in the world, like a leaf torn from the tree*” [20, p. 218], “*And through the window he showed her a grave. “You didn’t want to go to this Canada, then we’ll go into the world and be blown about in our oldage, like a leaf over the fields”* [31, p. 15]. However, in the last example the toponym *Canada*, an average geographical name for Englishmen, is marked by a negative evaluative sense for Ukrainians of the end of the 19th – the beginning of the 20th centuries in terms of the cultural and historical aspect: it was the period of the first emigration wave in Western Ukraine stipulated by extreme hardships urging the Ukrainian peasantry to look for a better life and leave their homeland. Considering the above-mentioned, *Canada* poses a symbolic lacuna in the cultural and historical sense for the Anglophone audience. Undue attention to the symbolic connotation of this toponym, which in fact becomes the nuclear one in the context, leads to the loss of the ethnic and cultural information it is loaded with and does not verbalize the cultural other in the text.

The image of an *aspen leaf* symbolizes *sadness* and *grief*. This apocryphal symbol is shared within both Ukrainian and English cultures: an aspen leaf trembles because Judah hanged himself on this tree. This is why the aspen tree is considered impure and cursed. It throbs in the wind and trembles (a colloquial Ukrainian lexeme to name this tree is *mpenema*, which derives from *mpenetamu* / *tremble*). Another reason for the aspen tree to tremble is shame and horror: the cross Jesus was crucified on was made of an aspen tree [6, p. 422]. In the English idiomatic system, the name of the aspen leaf is marked with a connotation dissimilar to the Ukrainian one: it denotes a *talkative* person, especially a woman [33, p. 67].

Further contexts exemplify the apocryphal symbolic sense of the name: “... *я тремтів, мов тпенетів лист*” [10; 15, p. 79], with the colloquial variation of an aspen leaf, *mpenemie* *лист*. The effect of the colloquial name used here is multiplied by the phonostylistic means of the [tp] consonance in Ukrainian. However, due to objective reasons, it is not reproduced in translation: “... *I was shivering like an aspen leaf*” [26, p. 180].

In the example “*І затрусилась, мов осиковий листочок*” [10, p. 76] – “... *quivered like a poplar leaf...*” [26, p. 114] the girl’s anxiety is intensified morphologically by the diminutive form of the Ukrainian lexeme leaf, *листочок*, a *small leaf*. The translation suggests a different lexeme, a *poplar leaf*, which lacks the apocryphal connotation of the original.

A prototypical apocryphal attribute of the aspen tree, *fear*, is revealed in the context “*Василь – блідний-блідний, як тая настоящая смерть, волосся йому розкуйовджене, очі, мов у мертвого, дивляться і не бачать нічого, руки неначе судороги покорчили, а сам, як лист труситься...*” [10, p. 11]. A number of idiomatic similes are amplified by morphological means of national and poetic character (a prolonged form of the adjective, *настоящая*, corresponding suffixation of the adjective *блідний*). In the translation “*Vasyl,*

pale as death, with disheveled hair, his eyes like those of a corpse, staring and seeing nothing, his hands stiffened at his sides, his body shaking like a leaf" [26, p. 207], the national lingual elements are not preserved due to objective reasons, while the emotional load of the text is reproduced by means of the equivalent, loan and descriptive translation.

In the Bible, a *fruitful tree* symbolizes a person who abides by the Law of God, while a *fruitless* one is associated with sinners [14, p. 236]. For example, Apostle Judah compares sinners to autumn trees, fruitless, twice dead, extirpated [3, Judah 1:12]. In popular beliefs, the universal symbolic image of the tree is that of a living being. In Ukrainian precedent texts, in particular, Christmas carols about the beginning of the universe, the image of *water* is accompanied by the image of a *sycamore tree* (*явір, клен*) as a center of the universe or a universe axis symbol [6, p. 175]. In Scandinavian mythology, there is a legend about Yggdrasills/Yggdrasil, axis mundi, which connects the nine worlds in Norse cosmology; its branches extend far into the heavens and are supported by tree roots that extend far away into other locations – three wells [32, p. 1155]. Both in Ukrainian and English cultural traditions, the life and attributes of the tree are associated with the life of man. In similes these features tend to be frequently made use of: "*Рустем вкинув у душу її нове зерно, що зросло там, як дерево, зацвіло тугю, вродило думи й нові бажання*" [9, vol. 2, p. 215]. While introducing the image of the tree and stages of its growth into the text, , the author describes the protagonist's life. Actualized in the context, the tree verbalizes the concept of *life*.

As a rule, prototypical attributes of the *tree* are fully rendered in translation, as in the example where the girl is compared to a young tree: "*Коло неї Гафійка. Наче молода щена в панському саду*" [9, vol. 3, p. 46] – "*Гафійка was next to her. She is like a flower from the lord's garden*" [24, p. 15]. Furthermore, the rheme within the sentence is psychologically loaded. Intensified by the intonation, the rheme makes the reader stop and visualize the process of a young tree growing. Although the simile is restructured in translation, as is the image, it does not distort the general perception of the idea: the translator succeeded in rendering the concept and its positive axiological connotation.

A *blossoming tree* or a *branch with fruit* or *flowers* are also considered symbols of life, which is supported in the Bible. In the example "*... що таке наше життя? Як блиск на небі, як черешневий цвіт ...*" [9, vol. 3, p. 226] – "*What is life? A flash in the sky, a cherry blossom*" [24, p. 42] the image of a tender cherry blossom becomes symbolically emphasized in the author's individual perception. Conceptually, it verbalizes *transiency* of life. However, the translator transforms simile into metaphor. Although the general idea is preserved, the metaphor sounds more explicit than the simile: instead of a vivid associative attribute a reader might draw in their mind, a full identification takes place. The identification may appear excessively depressing and perceived as a fact, not a h.int.

Adequacy in translating idioms rooted in national attributes can be achieved by means of partial equivalence with a different image, like in the example "*... і відразу поснули, як дерево*" [19, vol. 16, p. 174] – "*... and immediately fell asleep like a log*" [20, p. 141]. Although the tertium comparationis is latent in the simile structure, the full idiom *п'яний як дерево* [5, vol. 2, p. 754] (drunk as a tree) is still well understandable for Ukrainian and Anglophone audiences.

Descriptive paraphrase as a translation tactics leads to rendering the denotative meaning of the unit: “... губи злиплись, язик мов дерев’яний...” [10, p. 47] – “... her lips seemed glued together, her tongue was like a wooden thing...” [26, p. 36]. Nevertheless, the associations typical of the tree are more than often so evident that the target reader appears to have no difficulty in grasping both the denotation and connotations.

Another attribute of the tree, its upcoming *death*, and, hence, aimlessness and, figuratively, vacuousness, is implemented in the context “Всякої бесіди було багато, але вона розліталась в найрізніші сторони, як надгнилі дерева в старім лісі” [15, vol. 1, p. 70] – “There was all sorts of talk, but it flew into various directions like rotten wood in an old forest” [31, p. 153]. The image is partially transformed by means of metonymy (tree – wood); however, the prototypical attribute is preserved.

The **oak** is one of the most frequent flora names in folklore and the Scriptures. It is the epitome of greatness and might; however, it means nothing in the face of God [14, p. 258]. The oak symbolizes a man, father, as well as strength, health and mightiness [6, p. 203]. Unlike in Ukrainian, there does not exist an idiom in English to denote *strength* with this flora name (strong as an *ox/horse/lion*); however, it may still be assumed that contextually the calqued version of the Ukrainian idiom can be correctly perceived in the target language. The reason for this assumption is that an oak tree was believed to be a sacred tree in the old days; it was the tree of the god of thunder, and druids respected and worshipped it [32, p. 792]. In the contexts “... бо Тугар Вовк був мужчина, як дуб” [19, vol. 16, p. 11] – “... for Tuhar Vovk was a man like an oak” [20, p. 74], “Зостався Мирін сам собі, як палець. Як дуб серед осичок в лісі, так він серед піщанської громади” [12, vol. 2, p. 101] – “Now he was left all alone. Among the local peasantry he stood apart like a lonely oak in an aspen grove” [30, p. 73] the verbalized concept of *strength* is opposed to *weakness*.

The **fir tree** is considered to be a symbol of *young beauty*, especially in Western Ukrainian territories. It is characteristic of the Carpathian Mountains region. Its slimness, gracefulness and robustness due to its plasticity are the attributes a number of Ukrainian similes are based upon: “Тепер Іван був уже легінь, стрункий і міцний, як смерічка ...” [9, vol. 3, p. 185]. In English, the fir tree is devoid of these attributes. The only allomorphic one in the English – Ukrainian language pair is it being a symbol of Christmas decorations and festivities. This is why the calqued Ukrainian idiom tends to be misunderstood by the Anglophone readership: “Ivan was now a young man, as tall and robust as a fir tree” [25, p. 14].

The abundance and spread of this tree species in Ukraine lead to its perception as something natural and taken for granted. This attribute, *being wide-spread and natural*, is the idea behind the simile in the following context, where the girl’s songs are as natural for her soul as flowers or fir trees which grow around her: “... вони (співанки – О. М.) ... родились у її грудях, як сходять квіти самосійні по сіножатях, як смереки ростуть по горах” [9, vol. 3, p. 187]. In translation, the prototypical features and positive evaluation of this folk image are lost: “They (songs – O.M.) were born in her breast the way wild flowers spring up in a hay field or fir grow on mountain slopes” [25, p. 14].

The flora name **ash tree** symbolizes a handsome young man, a kossak, in the Ukrainian folk tradition [6, p. 665]. In the Anglophone world, the ash tree is perceived as an immense

mythical tree (contrary to the oak tree in the Slavonic mythology) [32, p. 1155]. This discrepancy is the reason for the concepts behind idiomatic similes with the name of this tree as an object of comparison to be perceived differently. In the example “*Стина так і гнеться, неначе молодий ясенок, а з виду як намальований: очі йому як зірочки ...*” [10, p. 52] the prototypic attribute of young manhood is the one the simile is based upon. With a set of linguistic means in Ukrainian (derivation, diminutive suffix) the author amplifies his warm feelings towards the protagonist. In translation, the simile is calqued: “*He sways like a young ash tree; his red cheeks, like an apple, might have been painted; his eyes are like two stars ...*” [26, p. 48]. Inasmuch as the imagery as well as prototypical cultural views differ, the translated image and hence the concept has a fair chance to be misunderstood.

In order to exemplify how the cultural other may lead to insurmountable difficulties in translation, it is worth considering the image of the Ukrainian national symbol, the *cranberry*, the one of the sun, fire, beauty, love, healthy woman, her spiritual life, stages of a woman’s life [6, p. 269–271]. The reproduction of the denotative meaning of this flora name without paying due attention to its deep ethnic symbolism leads to unrepairable losses. Although the seme of red colour is rendered in the sample “*Почервоніла, як калина ...*” [10, p. 50] – “*She flushed the colour of a cranberry ...*” [26, p. 144], still the English flora name *cranberry* is a far cry from the Ukrainian one with its rich national symbolism, in this case that of a girl’s beauty. Thus, the cultural other disappears from the context altogether. The same misfortune happens to the Ukrainian symbol in the example “*Як ішла заміж – як калина була та гладка, як піч, а тепер – як з хреста знята*” [12, vol. 2, p. 300] – “*When the girl was getting married, she looked fit and fine and was as big as a barrel. Now she is thin and looks awful*” [30, p. 264]: translated descriptively, with no explanation to the deep cultural symbolism of the image of *калина*, which is intensified by another idiomatic simile with a deep cultural symbolism, *гладка, як піч*, a Ukrainian beauty turns into an average plump girl.

Conclusions. The analysis of the corpus (120 samples) and, accordingly, the quantitative data enables us to offer a glimpse into the state of arts within nationally marked similes with a flora name and their rendering into the target language. Loan translation tends to be the most frequent way (54 %), while partial equivalence (18 %), full equivalence (14 %), descriptive paraphrase (6 %), transposition on the connotative level (4 %) and zero rendering (4 %) take up further positions. Overlapping in the perception and distribution of the outer world is believed to be the reason for allomorphy in Ukrainian and English. The Bible and precedent texts demonstrate it clearly. On the contrary, isomorphic peculiarities are stipulated by the specificities of a certain lingual community / nation world perception.

Culturally specific images and symbols are ethnic semantics carriers. Since they reflect historical, national and cultural experience of the nation, it is loan translation and /or descriptive paraphrase which tend to most successfully demonstrate it. The linguocultural analysis enabled us to trace the peculiarities of the culturally specific images and concepts and, on the other hand, to carry out the translation studies analysis of similes with a flora name which verbalise them in the Ukrainian-English language pair.

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**ВІДТВОРЕННЯ
КУЛЬТУРНО-СПЕЦИФІЧНОГО СМISЛУ ПОРІВНЯННЯ
У ПЕРЕКЛАДІ (НА МАТЕРІАЛІ ФЛОРОНАЗВ ЛИСТ, ДЕРЕВО
В УКРАЇНСЬКІЙ ТА АНГЛІЙСЬКІЙ МОВАХ)**

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Культурно-специфічні образи та символи – носії етноспецифічної семантики. Вони виявляють історичні, національні та культурні особливості народу. Перекладознавчий аналіз порівнянь із флороназвами в межах українсько-англійської мовної пари дає можливість простежити особливості таких культурно-специфічних образів. У статті розглянуто поняття культурно-специфічного смислу як образотворчого у межах порівняльної конструкції, особливості універсальних та національно-специфічних ознак як результату концептуалізації відповідних об'єктів флори (лист, дерево) у свідомості українців та англomовлян з метою визначення способів передачі культурно-специфічного смислу у порівняннях із флороназвою (лист, дерево) та відтворення культурно-специфічної інформації.

Ключові слова: порівняння, флороназва, переклад, культурно-специфічний смисл, спосіб перекладу.