

Linguistic analysis of onomastic realia in the French language

Análisis lingüístico de la realia onomástica en lengua francesa

Análise linguística da realia onomástica na língua francesa

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Abstract

The study of realia not only enriches linguistic competence, but also strengthens cultural understanding and the ability to communicate in a language. Due to its importance, the objective of this work is to carry out a linguistic analysis of the onomastic realia in the French language. The article analyzes the opinions of linguists on the formation of realia in the French language and the problems associated with its translation. Special attention is paid to semantic meaning and divergent opinions in this area are contrasted. It was found that the process of creation of realia and its genesis coincides with the variety of encoding of cultural and historical information. On the one hand, considering the formation of realia from a historical point of view confirms that their origin dates back to very ancient times, and the analysis of the etymology of each realia remains complicated.

Keywords: realia; translation; non-equivalent vocabulary; linguo-culturology

Resumo

O estudo da realia não só enriquece a competência linguística, mas também fortalece a compreensão cultural e a capacidade de comunicar numa língua. Pela sua importância, o objetivo deste trabalho é realizar uma análise linguística da realia onomástica na língua francesa. O artigo analisa as opiniões dos linguistas sobre a formação da realia na língua francesa e os problemas associados à sua tradução. É dada especial atenção ao significado semântico e são contrastadas opiniões divergentes nesta área. Verificou-se que o processo de criação da realia e sua gênese coincide com a variedade de codificação da informação cultural e histórica. Por um lado, considerar a formação das realia do ponto de vista histórico confirma que a sua origem remonta a tempos muito antigos, e a análise da etimologia de cada realia permanece complicada.

Palavras-chave: realia; tradução; vocabulário não equivalente; língua culturologia

Introduction

The term realia is derived from the Medieval Latin word "*reale*" (in plural) and the neuter adjective "realis", and it originally means real (true) things. S. Vlahov and S. Florin were the first authors who conducted serious and rigorous research in the sphere of realia and determined the true meaning of the phenomenon. Scientists note that realia have always been a serious problem for translators since

Resumen

El estudio de los realia no sólo enriquece la competencia lingüística, sino que también fortalece la comprensión cultural y la capacidad de comunicarse en un idioma. Debido a su importancia, el objetivo de este trabajo es realizar un análisis lingüístico de los realia onomásticos en lengua francesa. El artículo analiza las opiniones de los lingüistas sobre la formación de realia en lengua francesa y los problemas asociados con su traducción. Se presta especial atención al significado semántico y se contrastan opiniones divergentes en este ámbito. Se encontró que el proceso de creación de realia y su génesis coincide con la variedad de codificación de información cultural e histórica. Por un lado, considerar la formación de los realia desde un punto de vista histórico confirma que su origen se remonta a tiempos muy antiguos, y el análisis de la etimología de cada realia sigue siendo complicado.

Palabras clave: realia, traducción, vocabulario no equivalente, linguoculturología

they have a purely national meaning and significance, therefore sometimes they don't have equivalents in the translation language (Mavlonova & Achilova, 2020).

In the early 1950s, scientists began to talk about realia as bearers of the "color" of national-specific elements. Then, it was pointed out that this peculiarity created serious problems in translation. In the works of Retsker (1974) apart from the term realia, the terms non-equivalent vocabulary and exotic vocabulary were also used as synonyms referring to this concept. In realia the words that reflect the distinctive features of the state system and folklore, culture, social system, and historical era, notions, related to the mode of life and the names of household items, i.e., words denoting features that distinguish one people from another (Djachy & Pareshishvili, 2014). That's why, realia are defined as linguistic units used in a "strange", foreign language text and belonging to a "strange" culture and are not present in the "native" culture. (i.e., in the culture of the original text).

In his book "Translation Theory and Translation Practice", Retsker (2007) establishes three categories of equivalents: constant and synonymous "equivalents" (equivalent correspondences), variant and contextual analogues, as well as contextual substitutions (or translation transformations). The author analyzes the differentiation of meanings, specification of meanings, generalization, single translation and compensation, antonymous translation, and semantic (sense) development. The first type of equivalents refers to the language sphere, and the last two ones - to the speech sphere, so, it is quite natural, that the boundary between them is very mobile. Realia are partly attributed to the second, partly to the third type, because they are units that do not have exact equivalents in the translation language. So, peculiarities of the "transition" of realia from one language to another were described for the first time in the works of Retsker.

To the French linguist Georges Mounin (Boulanger, 1994), the principles of this transition, follow from the sign nature of the language: "Each language consisting of signs must be translated into another language according to these rules because here their common basis is situated". The theory of realia, represented in the work of S. Vlachov and S. Florin is of a complex integrative nature, it reveals a turn from a purely linguistic approach to a broader, philological approach that combines elements of literary and cultural approaches (Kharina, 2018). The authors solve the problems of realia based on a comparative analysis of the original text and the translation text, connecting them with the category of national color. Moreover, emphasize this specific feature of realia when translating them from one language to another (Vlachov & Florin 1980). For them, realia are words and expressions that are characteristic for the life (everyday life, culture, social-historical development) of the people and name objects that are strange to other peoples; being carriers of national or historical flavor, they do not have exact equivalents in other languages as a rule. Therefore, they cannot be

translated on the basis of general rules, i.e., require a more careful approach (Afrouz, 2022; Triberio, 2021).

In spite of these challenges realia is extensively use in language education (Bhatti et al. 2021; Lee et al. 2021; Ryanskaya et al.2020). According to Berwald (1987) the main advantage of incorporating authentic audiovisual and mass media resources within the foreign language classroom lies in their capacity to offer contemporary language content spanning a wide array of subjects, thus facilitating continual reinforcement of grammatical structures introduced in the classroom setting. Furthermore, beyond encompassing the conventional lexicon typically acquired during the initial phases of language learning, these resources may encompass idiomatic expressions and an expansive vocabulary associated with various domains such as sports, politics, gastronomy, music, and other specialized topics.

Considering the relevance of the topic, the objective of this work is to carry out a linguistic analysis of onomastic realia in the French language. In this regard, it is necessary to point out that although works on the matter can be found in academic literature (Renshaw, 1927; Teachers & Cru, 1929; Wasley, 1952), we believe that there are still many aspects that have not been treated in depth.

Materials and methods

To conduct the study, literature analysis was mainly used as a research method. The literature review is very useful for studying realia, since by reviewing books, articles and other published materials that address the topic, you can learn how realia have been used and perceived over time and in different contexts. The review made it possible to identify the main trends regarding the most common types of realia in the French language, their functions, and evolution. Furthermore, these were contrasted with other languages such as English and Azerbaijani. Through this method it was also possible to learn about the different theories and approaches that have been developed to understand the role of realia and its function in language. In this way, it was possible to obtain a vision of the current state of knowledge in relation to this topic, which served as a solid basis for proposing new lines of research.

On the other hand, the study of realia was focused on the context of translation studies, which implies understanding the cultural meaning of realia, considering various translation strategies and analyzing the general strategy and attitude of the translator towards domestication and foreignization. For this, a classification of realia was carried out according to their type and importance in the culture of origin. This, according to different authors (Ischenko, 2012; Leppihalme, 2001; Triberio, 2021), can help translators understand the cultural meaning of realia and develop effective translation strategies to translate them accurately. Furthermore, different translation strategies are analyzed, which is of great

importance because translators and professors must consider the importance and familiarity of the actual elements in the source culture when deciding a translation strategy (Herrell and Jordan, 2016).

Results and discussion

In translation, first it is distinguished the denotative meaning (referent's nationality), as well as connotative meaning associated with the expressing of local (regional, national) and temporal (historical) coloring of reality. This principle allows to systematize realia on the basis of linguistic (connotative) criteria Vlachov & Florin (1980) introduce additional parameters (speed of perception, distribution, forms of realias and methods of translation), offering a detailed multispectral classification of realia, taking into account their division also by subject, division by place and division by time. It is important to notice that realia are lexical items, originating from the history of the national culture of a definite country or region, from history of its inhabitants. Then, when translating realities, numerous, quite different means and methods are used. These methods can be diversified from phonetic transcription of words and expressions to their general semantic translation. Israeli researcher, professor at Tel Aviv University Gideon Toury (1980, 2000) offers two methods for realia translation: "adequateness" (closeness to meaning) and "acceptability" (compatibility with the culture of the source language). A brief highlight of the methods is shown below:

- Verbal (word-based) transcription of the word. This method is called "transliteration" because the word is written in another script;
- Transcription of the word in accordance with the rules of pronunciation of the original language. E.g., the word "Kashmir" (Hindi language) is written in French as "Kachemire";
- Creation of a new word by the means of calquing. An example is the French expression "marché aux puces" (dirt mall) is derived from the English expression "flea market";
- The creation of a new word similar to the original one, but with a more specific, "national" sounding: e.g., the word "muezzin" is derived from the Arabic word "muazzin";
- The use of a source language word that is adapted and presented as the original word. For example, the Italian word "cappuccino" (milk) is used as "latte" (lait-milk) in many languages, including French;
- Explanation of the term. E.g., the use of the word "Jewish temple" instead of the Hebrew word "une synagogue" - synagogue;

- Substitution of a word in the source language with a similar term in the translation language. For example, the use in French of the expression "*art nouveau*" (new / contemporary art) instead of "*Jugendstil*";
- Substitution of the original word by a common and international term such as the use of the word "*vin rouge*" - "red wine" instead of the French *beaujolais*;
- Use of an additional adjective to help the reader determine the genesis of the realia. For example, "*pampa argentine*" - Argentinean pampas (plains);
- Translation of the general meaning of the word. Thus, the English sentence "Does the National Health Service cover this drug?" in a Belgian context means "*Ce médicament est-il remboursé par la mutuelle?*".

On the other hand, some realia in French language are represented by metonymy or abbreviation:

- a) *l'Hexagone* - Hexagon, i.e., France because the country has a hexagonal form in the map;
- b) Ways of expressing state structures and officials, for example: *l'Élysée* - Elysees palace, the chancellery of President; *le palais Bourbon*-Bourbons Palace, Parliament; *le Luxembourg-Senate*- Luxembourg Palace, Senate; *l'Hôtel Matignon* - the Matignon Palace, the chancellery of the Prime Minister; *le Quai d'Orsay* - *Ke d'Orsay* - Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA); *le Quai des Orfèvres* - *Ke dez Orfevr* - *Le de Orfèvre*, criminal police; *Bercy* - Ministry of Industry, Economy and Finance (located on Rue Bercy); *Palais Brogniart* - *Rialto* (exchange) (located in a building designed by the architect Brogniart);
- c) In the French press, the metonymic expressions of the realia connected with other countries, in particular with Great Britain, can be found often: (*le Palais de*) Westminster - Westminster, the Houses of Parliament; Buckingham Palace, Queen's Palace. The same can be seen with USA: *la Maison Blanche* - The White House; *Le Capitole* - Capitol, Congress building. In addition, while translating the names of ministries, the word "ministry" is often missed out: *l'Intérieur* - Ministry of the Interior. Organizations and members of the party are usually designated by abbreviations: UN RPR (*Rassemblement pour la République*) (Association for the Support of the Republic or Union for the Support of the Republic). In the names of departments, the word "*département*" is usually missed out. We have noticed that in the Azerbaijani language, realia of such kind also exist: *Odlar yurdu* (Azerb) or Land of Fire (i.e., Azerbaijan) - *Le pays des feux* (Azerbaïdjan); Residence of the President (Eng) – *President sarayı* (Az)- *Résidence présidentielle* (Fr); Government House – *Hökumət Evi*- *La Maison d'État*; *Milli Majlis* (Azerb)/*Parliament* - *Le Conseil National Parlement* (Fr); NPA (*Nouveau*

Parti d'Azerbaïdjan) - YAP-Party «New Azerbaijan» (Azerb); CEE (Centre d'examen d'État)- State Examining Center (SEC); XIN (Xarici İşlər Nazirliyi, Azerb)-MFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) -MAE (Ministère des Affaires étrangères), etc.

To all these realia, the names of national cuisine dishes, and other concepts and characteristics for each country can be also added. Thus, many names of dishes of national Azerbaijani cuisine and pastries cannot be translated into other languages and retain their national names in translation: *dolma, khashil, khingal, bozbash, piti, dovga, nishasta; sweets (les sucreries): shakerbura, pakhlava, fasalli, keta, and badambura*

The words connected with life, culture of other peoples, fauna, flora of different countries are also called "cultural" terms and exoticisms according to Bayramov (2008). However, in recent years the term realia has been widespread in linguistics, including various concepts. One of them is "interlinguoculturology", which studies the processes and phenomena that take place at the intersection of languages and cultures. The notions, in which the theory of translation is included, such as "ethnic conflictology" (Sopokin, 1999), "ethnic bibliopsychology", "ethnography of communication" (Bazylev & Copokin, 2000), "ethnohermeneutics", "ethniorhetoric", "ethnotranslatology" and "cognitive ethnopsycholinguistics" are new directions in this sphere. In the words of Tomakhin (1988) realia are in the focus of attention of these spheres of science because they unite these spheres within the framework of the problems of ethnic mutual understanding and the interaction of language markers.

Based on the information discussed so far, we can classify the realia as shown below by themes they approach:

1. Ethnographic realia: the food products, drinkables, place of living, furniture, dishes, property, utensils, and mode of transport;
2. Work activities: human resources, labor organization and others;
3. The art and culture: National holidays and folk games, musical instruments, national dances and songs, fairy-tale personages, historical places, habits and traditions, places of worship, rituals;
4. Units of measure and money;
5. Vegetative and animalistic symbols: "arce"- birch-tree (national symbol of Canada); caburé – wild bird, the feather of which have magic power; color symbols- vert- green color, symbol of hope and future (Panama, Chile); names of animals- coq-rooster (symbol of France); bear (symbol of Russia);
6. Geographical realia: the local names, legendary places, landscapes, etc;

7. Social-political realia: administrative-political system, government authorities and government entities, institutions like state buildings, etc;
8. Social-political life: politics and statesmen; social movement and events, degrees, titles and posts, types of activity, appeals, social-political structures and institutions, immovable, lexicons expressing ethnographic and mythological realia.

On the other hand, realia can be further classified by location and time as will be analyzed next. It can be argued that the division by “location” is based on a linguistic principle that allows us to consider, first of all, the realia: 1) at the level of one language, i.e., native or foreign one; 2) at the level of pairs of languages, i.e., both source and translational (internal and external). Depending on the length of the territory of some country, i.e., "range" of use, "native" realia can be national, local or micro-realial, but foreign realia can be international and regional ones. Native realia exist as national or local, depending on their distribution and width of scope, while foreign realia exist as international or regional realia, i.e., focused on interdisciplinary interaction based on semiotic principles (Aputyunova, 1999).

Most cases native realia are the original words of the given language (Az: “*shekerbura*”, “*pakhlava*”, cheese “*motal*” etc.); (Fr.) *Camembert* – camembert (English) while in most cases foreign realia are represented by borrowed words, that is, words or calques of foreign origin that are included in the vocabulary of the language. They are also either morphemic or literal translations of object names, strange to a certain people, or transcribed realia of another language (very often certain occasionalisms or neologisms). Vlachov & Florin (1986) classify regional realia widely used by several people and usually connected with certain referents (primarily with physical geography or some branches of physics) as lexical units, close to terms. These realia are contrasted from one hand, with international realia, that exist in the vocabulary of many languages, but at the same time retain their original national color, and on the other hand, there are micro-realial, the social basis of which is narrow locally: it can be a word referring to only one city or village.

Regarding the division by time, Vlachov & Florin (1986) proposes to divide the realias based on a temporal criterion into 1) modern and 2) historical realia. Tomakhin (1988) defines modern and historical realia as follows: “Historicisms are words which express “dead” realia, and neologisms are words, expressing realia that come into existence in a certain historical period”. This author includes in historical realia the names of historical events, names of the most important stages in the history of the country, historical documents, political and religious groups, and participants of those events. For example, in Azerbaijani, the words – “*dekabrist*” – (Decembrist),” “*milis*” - police, pasha, -*konsul* -council, etc., are included in realia; in French: féodal - feudal, *roi* - shah, guillotine - guillotine - (beheading machine, etc.) are also considered as realia.

The mentioned typology of realia is closely connected with two problems of the theory of translation: the problem of assimilation or "abruption" (U. Eco's term) and with archaization, modernization, or synchronization of the translated text. These problems are directly connected with the translation of realia, since namely in such translations the exact place and time of the source (original) text are determined. The choice of translation strategies is defined by extralinguistic and linguistic factors, including cultural, social-political, economic, and social factors. By means of assimilation, the translator tries to adapt the text to the national culture. The positive side of this approach is that the translated text becomes more understandable for the reader. But the negative point is that the unique style of the original, source text sometimes is lost (Samoxina, 2012).

In our consideration, Samoxina's opinion is contradictory because every professional translator, when translating a text, first of all, controls the principle of commitment, i.e., maximum closeness to the original text. In texts containing realia, the realia themselves can be got across to the reader clearly, without loss to the style of the text only by means of explanations. French researchers, who specialize in the theory and practice of translation, while speaking of the translation of realia, call it the "cultural core" of the text - "traduire le culturel", or "the translation of culture" - "*traduire la culture*" and in some cases even interpret it as a kind of "cultural ignorance" (or cultural unawareness)- "*traduire l'ignorance culturelle*".

The overwhelming majority of specialists in the sphere of translation stand for the so-called "discharge", because they think, that such realia create in the readership the impression that the world presented in the translation is strange to the cultural world of the original text. This strategy also allows to enrich the translational language by new lexical units. In translation, discharge is carried out by mechanical methods: by direct translation (Bezanson - Besancon), transcription (Montagne Blanc - Montand Blanc); transliteration (Dorset - Dorset), Paris - Paris (the name of Paris, the beautiful son of Priamus, and the name of the modern city of Paris in recent years in the Azerbaijani language is interpreted as a trace of fire, - "warmth", "ray", as well as by the method of calquing (gratte-ciel - skyscraper).

As for the issue of a chronological character, it relates to the translation of a literary text in its archaization, modernization or synchronization in time. This problem is studied on a par with the problem of assimilation and discharge. Some researchers prefer the modernization method. In research in the sphere of archaization and modernization, the archaization of modern realia and the modernization of historical realia are analyzed specifically. Besides, it is necessary to use the term synchronization, which is understood as the temporal compatibility of the original and the translation of a literary text. Thus, starting work on translation, the translator must first of all choose a clear strategy for his work: assimilation or discharge, archaization, modernization or synchronization.

As Vlachov and Florin (1986) noted, the method of "choice" in the translation of realia should answer the question: to transcribe or translate? To researchers' mind, a high level of perception of the text and of its content, the full revelation of the meaning and content of realia, the achievement of a communicative effect, the minimization of "losses" and the maximum degree of their compensation directly depend on the choice of the translator. So, in the studies of these authors, for the first time, a complete concept of the features of realia with national coloring, which manifests itself in translation, is presented.

The systemic approach to realia is also very important: "the national identity of the referent", "place" and "color of the epoch", "connotative" (associative) meaning, as well as the "participation" of this lexical unit in the contradiction between "strange" and "native". The analysis of the mentioned contradiction paved the way for further prospects for studying the evaluative markers of intercultural dialogue as a peculiarity of the realia, studied within the framework of intercultural communication. Associative realia are connected with various national historical and cultural manifestations and enter the language in a very peculiar way. Such realia are not reflected in special words (in non-equivalent vocabulary,) but are "fixed" as ordinary words (e.g., May 9 - Victory Day, *14 Juillet - la Prizé de la Bastille* - July 14 – the Bastille Day).

In most cases, non-equivalent vocabulary can be found among neologisms, national realia, words, expressing specific concepts, among little-known names that need to create occasional equivalents in translation. The presence of non-equivalent vocabulary in the text does not mean that their full or relatively exact meaning cannot be expressed (in differ from their direct equivalents). But there are also cases when the equivalence partially coincides with the meaning of the translated unit. Then, it should be taken into account, that the phenomenon of non-equivalence arises for certain reasons.

Besides, despite the presence of regular correspondences in the language, in translation, contextual substitutions are often used. Traditionally, the following reasons for the occurrence of cases of non-equivalence are given: the absence of some notion or object in the life of the population, speaking the translation language (material non-equivalence); the absence of a similar notion in the translated language (lexical-semantic non-equivalence); the presence of various lexical-semantic features (stylistic non-equivalence). Lexical non-equivalence arises when a lexical unit expresses a notion that is well known to native speakers of the source language and is fixed in the lexical system of this language, but unknown or little known to native speakers of the target language and, as a result, is not reflected in the lexical system of this language. Thus, realia are notions that are characteristic of the material and spiritual life of a people and do not exist among other people.

Finally, at a certain historical stage scientific and technical terms can be also considered to be non-equivalent vocabulary. In such cases, scientific and technical innovations expressed by a non-

equivalent term can be represented in other languages by an equivalent or calque, depending on the degree of distribution: e.g., smartphone, communicateur-communicator, nanotechnology-nanotechnology.

Conclusions

At the present stage of language development, the translation of a lexical unit from one language to another one is of particular interest, because native speakers have a large stock of linguistic means for expressing and conveying the semantic content when translating from one language to another. In this context, the study of realia plays a crucial role in understanding and mastering a language since these words enrich the linguistic competence of speakers by incorporating social and contextual elements that cannot be learned just through standard grammar and vocabulary. The conducted analysis shows that the presence of realia and non-equivalent vocabulary in onomastics is conditioned by the unique national, cultural, and linguistic characteristics of people. Therefore, the use of onomastic realia allows to develop fluency of speech and strengthen the expressiveness of the narration.

It can be said that in general, realia help to characterize the semantic and cultural universe of the language. Thus, by delving into realia, one can better understand the idiomatic expressions and particularities of usage that make a language living and authentic. Furthermore, it is important to notice that the study of realia promotes a deeper appreciation of the culture and society associated with the language because by exploring customs, places, and situations, a more complete view of the everyday lives of native speakers is gained. This fosters cultural empathy and the ability to communicate more effectively in real situations.

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Conflicto de intereses

Los autores declaran que no existen conflictos de intereses

Declaración de contribución de autoría

Vafa Seyid: conceptualización, curación de datos, adquisición de fondos, investigación, metodología, validación, visualización, redacción – borrador original – revisión.

Sadaqet Salimova: análisis formal, adquisición de fondos, administración del proyecto, recurso, redacción – revisión y edición