PECULIARITIES OF TRANSLATING LEXICAL ITEMS RELATED TO US CULTURE AND HISTORY IN MICHELLE OBAMA'S AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL "BECOMING" FROM ENGLISH INTO ROMANIAN

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The given article illustrates the process of translating Culture Specific Items (CSIs) and the difficulties encountered during the process of translation. The article also presents the results of the analysis of the existing definitions and classifications given by linguists and translators. At the same time, the applicability of the research is reflected in the examples of Culture Specific Items selected from the novel under analysis and their translation into Romanian.

There is a large group of scientists who provide their definitions of Culture Specific Items (CSIs) relating to their own vision of the given concept. Yet, some of the most popular definitions is the one given by Javier Aixélâ, who considers that CSIs are "*elements of the text that are connected to certain concepts in the foreign culture (history, art, literature) which might be unknown to the readers of the TT*" **[1]**. Also, Mona Baker claims that CSIs represent "*source-language words [that] express concepts totally unknown in the target culture*". **[2]** Vlahov and Florin, Aixélâ, Gudavičius, Espindola and Vasconcellos provide their classifications of CSIs paying attention to the most obvious features of a culture.

In this research, the taxonomy of CSIs provided by Peter Newmark is applied to the examples selected from *Becoming*, Michelle Obama's autobiographical novel. He groups CSIs into 6 subcategories:

1. ***Ecology*** refers to Geological and Geographical environment descriptions of the homeland representing a certain culture or nation. In the sentence "*Sometimes we'd end up in a neighborhood to the south, an area known as* ***Pill Hill*** *due to an apparently large number of African American doctors living there*", ***Pill Hill*** represents a neighbourhood which is located in the South Side of Chicago, Illinois and is translated as ***Pill Hill („Colina Pastilelor”)***. In this case, the translator keeps the original name of the neighbourhood and appeals to the use of literal translation of the proper name in order to help the reader understand the meaning and the etymology of the name of the neighbourhood.
2. ***Public life*** involves expressions related to politics, law or governmental patterns such as political parties, names of politicians and others. For Americans, ***Pledge of Allegiance*** is a patriotic recited verse that promises allegiance to the flag of

the United States "*Crazy rumors swirled about Barack: […] That he refused to recite the* ***Pledge of Allegiance***." In this situation, the translator uses preservation technique and gives the reader its literal translation ***"Jurământul de credinţă"***.

3. ***Social life*** includes aspects of economy, people's occupations, social welfare, health and education. After the *American Civil War*, a new occupation for men called ***Pullman porter*** appeared in the US, and men were hired to work on the railroads as porters on sleeping cars. They were overworked, underpaid and demeaned, but generations of porters on the Pullman Palace Car Company helped promote the rights and future of African Americans. So, this information is absolutely necessary to know about US history and culture. "*Terry, meanwhile, had once been a* ***Pullman porter*** *on one of the overnight passenger rail lines running in and out of Chicago.*" Normally, only Americans could easily recognize the significance of this expression and its cultural attribution, which is why the translator refers to some additional information and informs the reader of "însoţitor de vagon la compania Pullman" stressing that Pullman is a company where porters work.
4. ***Personal life*** refers to aspects related to food, clothing, transport and housing patterns of the culture. To illustrate, one of the most popular grocery retailers *Walmart* is mentioned in the sentence "***Walmart****, which was then the nation's largest grocery retailer…*". As it is a proper name, the translator refers to the preservation technique. In the sentence *"Everything that mattered was within a five-block radius - […] and* ***the liquor store****, which also sold* ***Wonder bread****,* ***penny candy****, and* ***gallons of milk****. (p.23)",* the translator also refers to globalization to render specific food and drink items so that the reader understands what was available to the main character: „*Tot ceea ce conta pentru mine se afla pe o rază de cinci cvartale – [...] şi* ***magazinul de băuturi****, unde se vindea şi* ***pâine feliată, bomboane ieftine*** *şi lapte." (p.21).* as for the measurement unit typical of the US culture 'gallon', the translator omits it sticking to a simple variant of 'lapte' in Romanian.
5. ***Customs and pursuits*** category includes expressions and words which represent aspects of Body language, hobbies, sports and national idioms. In the sentence "*Every year for the* ***Air and Water Show****, we packed a picnic and drove north along Lake Michigan…*" we encounter a popular American custom named ***Air and Water Show***, which takes place annually on the shore of Lake Michigan in Chicago, Illinois. For Americans this is an important cultural holiday, but for those who are not close to American culture, this is an unknown event, so this is why the translator helps the reader become familiar with it by translating it as "***sărbătoarea Foţelor Aeriene şi Navale"***.
6. ***Private passions*** category refers to religion, music, poetry, social organisations and churches. Using this expression "***Hot Cross Buns***", which is a staple for Easter mornings, the author relates to a song for children *"From my room, I'd listen to them attempting, note by uncertain note, to win her approval, graduat-*

*ing from “**Hot Cross Buns**” to “Brahms’s Lullaby,” but only after many tries.”* To translate this song name, the translator applies the technique of globalisation, “***melodioară pentru copii”*** in order to convey the essence of this song and the age group it refers to.

A group of translators, such as: Fedorov, Harvey, Newmark, have come up with their classifications of the translation techniques used for CSIs. However, the taxonomy presented by Davies is the most suitable for this research.

After having analysed 206 examples extracted from Michelle Obama’s autobiographical novel *Becoming*, there has been carried out a quantitative analysis of the results received, which shows the distribution of each CSIs category and translation techniques used. Thus, the most popular category of CSIs is Personal Life, which represents 35% with 72 examples out of the total number of examples. Public Life represents 19% with 40 examples, Private Passions and Social Life contain 13% with 26 and 28 examples respectively. The least numerous categories are Ecology and Customs and Pursuits which give 10% with 20 examples each.

In terms of the use of translation techniques, the most commonly used technique is Preservation, which represents 65% with 139 translated examples out of 206. Additionally, it is the second most popular technique that makes up 13% with 28 examples. The following one is Localisation, represented by 23 examples that make up 11%, which is followed by the group of Transformation with 15 examples, that is 7% of the total number of examples. Globalisation is represented by 9 examples, that is 4%. The cases that are rendered with the help of Creation translation technique has not been identified.

In conclusion, it is important to bear in mind that the translation of culture specific items depends not only on the linguistic knowledge of the translators, but also on the general culture knowledge, as well as the knowledge of the target culture.

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