



МОНГОЛ РОМАНЫ СОЁЛЫН ОНЦЛОГ ҮГИЙН ОРЧУУЛГЫН СУДАЛГАА

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***Abstract:** This study analyzes how the culture-specific items (words and phrases) of the Mongolian language have been translated into English based on literary examples. The translation of the culture-specific word is unique and difficult for foreigners to understand because it is inextricably linked with the language, culture, and customs and reflects the national characteristics. As a result of this research, the author has analyzed the literary translation of culture-specific words (realia), especially how culture-specific words in literature were translated from Mongolian into English. The study was done based on the selected Mongolian novel. During the research work, some culture-specific words were left untranslated, and in some cases, one word was translated in many different ways. In addition, there are cases where the original text's eloquent, historical, and cultural examples were omitted during the translation process. Therefore, this work will contribute to the promotion of our national heritage and researchers researching this topic.*

***Keywords:** Culture-specific item, translation, culture, language, literature*

I. Introduction

The language and culture of any nation cannot be understood separately from its people. Language is closely related to the culture of every nation in the world. Thus, the issue of the translation of culture-specific items has been one of the main themes for linguists. In this paper, the author reviewed the scholars' concepts about classifying and translating culture-specific words through research work. When learning a native language and a foreign language, a person not only establishes separate vocabulary and grammar rules, but also learns the history and customs of the people, gets used to the established way of life, and even finds the way of thinking. In modern linguistics, language is considered a means of communication and cognition and a form of culture that preserves, carries, and expresses its way of life.

The purpose of this research work is to analyze the translation of culture-specific words in literary discourse, consider how they were translated, and make theoretical conclusions about

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how to solve the culture-specific item without losing its meaning. Realia is described as follows (plural noun) are words and expressions for culture-specific material elements. The word realia itself originated from medieval Latin, in which it originally meant “the real things”, i.e. material things, as opposed to abstract ones. The realia shows many specific aspects of the lifestyle, customs, traditions, and social development relations of the people who speak the language and contains different cultural patterns. As the living style of the country develops and changes, it is natural that the language, which is metaphorically the lifeblood of the people, and in the process of its evolution, the vocabulary, including the culture-specific words, also develops itself through the use of language.

Mongolian scholars and writers Ts. Damdinsuren, academician B. Renchin, translators G. Akim, D. Dashdavaa, R. Gurbazar, G. Tomtogto, E. Ravdan, and Ts. Olziyhutag have studied the realia words of the Mongolian language and contributed to the research on linguistics. In addition, Linguist J. Tomurtseren, (2001) in his study of the dictionary of the Mongolian language, points out that "Words reflect the national identity of the people who speak that language to some extent." Moreover, he stated that words with cultural meaning constitute a certain part of the vocabulary of any language. Also, according to "phenomena, characteristics of the real world, their relationships, reflected in the human consciousness through words." Mongolian linguist E. Bayarsaikhan (1988: 168) has conducted some research materials translated into Russian on the realia of the novel “Gologdson khuukhen” by famous writer Ts. Damdinsuren. Moreover, he points out that two or more phenomena of two languages were compared, and there were some universal things and some culture-specific items that exist in the cultures. It is related to social and cultural differences, geographical differences, people's lifestyle, and customs" indicating that the meaning of the culture-specific realia does not correspond exactly when it is expressed in the language of other people. Regarding realia words, R. Gurbazar (1996: 110) said, "The names and contents of objects and phenomena that reflect the features of the nation, people's lifestyle, customs, and tradition, civilization, and social organization are expressed in the language of that specific country, and words and combinations that cannot be translated into other languages are called realis. For example, there is no way to directly assign such words of the Mongolian language such as *ovoodoo*, *ölzii /khe/*, *tashmag*, *Bumba*, *aimag*, *ger*, *bielgee*, *boshgo /office/*, *yuj*, *khoemii*, and *maliin zus* in any foreign language. All these words are culture-specific words that can't be translated with equivalent words in other languages. D. Badamdorj points out that “Cultural values, everyday life items, relics of the unique nomadic civilization, unique ethnic artifacts and creations within the framework of Mongolian national culture will be unique things created by Mongolian people, not common among the people of the world. He thinks that the word marked with such a concept is a realia word, such as *ger*, *deel*, *etc*, *yogurt*, and *auspicious thread* [5, p. 206] and specifically noted the method of translation of these words. G. Tomtogtokh, (1996) a linguist points out that it would be a great contribution to the development of the comparative and

cultural studies fields if culture-specific words are studied in detail within broad perspectives so that semantic categories of the language can be defined well enough. R.Gurbazar (1996), a scholar on translation studies defines the characteristics of the culture-specific realia by stating that “within the source language text the realia show their original meaning whereas, in the target texts, they can be translated by calqued”. Moreover, he points out that realia words are unambiguous and contain phonetics and word formation of their native language and express their own meanings, and are used in scientific, literature, and informal discourse. Culture-specific words are used in their cultures with their full original meanings. However, these words are translated into other languages. R. Gurbazar (1996) classified culture-specific words into several different categories including ethnography, mode of life, oral stories, legends, and social and history-related words. [4, p. 110].

Newmark (1988: 45) clearly defines the methods of translation as follows: word-for-word translation, literal translation, faithful translation, semantic translation, adaptation, free translation, idiomatic translation, and communicative translation. Each method differs from other translation techniques. Moreover, Newmark (1988: 45) defines culture as the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression.

II. Methods

The purpose of the study is to analyze the translations of the culture-specific items (realia) in Mongolian novel and how the source texts are translated into English. Specifically, the resources of the research material were G. Mend-Oyo’s (2017) “Gegeenten” translated by Simon Wiksmith (2021) It is an interesting fact that “Gegeenten” was translated by a foreign translator and we hypothesize that some culture-specific items would be lost in the target text. With these expectations, the author chooses the novel “Gegeenten” as the resource of the study. There were several steps were taken for the study. First, the novel in Mongolian were thoroughly analyzed and the culture-specific items (realia) were marked and selected as the data of the realia. Second, the chosen culture-specific items’ English translations in the target language were examined thoroughly in comparison with the source language texts. The translations of the realia in the target language were analyzed by Newmark’s (1988) methods. Moreover, the source language examples of realia were written in Roman, and English translations were provided just after the examples. In this study, the semantic meanings of the culture-specific items were thoroughly checked based on the Explanatory Dictionary of the Mongolian Language (2016). In addition, the study also focuses on the target texts and whether the chosen equivalent words of the culture-specific words’ meanings were correct or not so they were used as the source for the study as well. Moreover, in this study, the Romanization System is used to transcribe the Mongolian examples. The main focus is on the English and Mongolian examples comparing to each other. In this study, we use abbreviations for the Explanatory Dictionary of the Mongolian Language (EDML: 2016) and the Cambridge Dictionary (CD: 2022) for the readers to be clear enough.

III. A Contrastive Analysis of the Translations of Culture-specific Realia in “Gegeenten” by Mend-Oyo (2021) novel

“Gegeenten” (2021) by G.Mend-Oyo and its English translation were selected as the main research material for the study. Realia (culture-specific items) were selected within the theoretical framework of the realia and marked as the data for the study. The study analyzes the culture-specific items in detail and reveals that realia words were translated in different ways and which means those words were not constant but with frequent changes in the words and phrases resulting in a misunderstanding in the target texts for readers. Thus, the culture-specific realia’s translation process must be a focus of the study for researchers.

Also, as a result of observations during the research, it is believed that several things should be taken into account when translating culture-specific words. In the case of literary translation, it is not enough for the translator to know the language at the level of use, and it is believed that having knowledge of the culture of the people in the language of the original text is the most important requirement. In this regard, the researcher Ts. Magsar (2018: 41) classified common mistakes made during the translation as follows. It includes; mistakes due to a lack of cultural knowledge, cognitive meaning-dependent errors, word-by-word translation errors, errors caused by not knowing a previously established translation, errors caused by not noticing the conditions, errors caused by source ambiguity, meaning errors, and mistakes caused by source text error. In addition, scientist D. Dashdavaa (1977: 44) points out that “A translator cannot provide the readers with that important thing without knowing the history and culture of the people and the people who speak the language they are translating” Knowledge of history, culture, customs, and philosophy is also important for translation. Consider the examples of culture-specific realia words and their translation below:

Mongolian: source text: (1a) Solbio buhtei khugshin shar **at** unasan gandmal ulaan **deetlei** uvgun khun Dalai goviig zahlan baruun zugiig zamnaje. (Gegeenten, 2021).

English: target text: (1b) An old man in tattered red (2b) **deel**, riding an old yellow **camel** with crossed humps, was crossing this oceanic desert, heading westwards. (The Holy One, 2021).

Looking at this example, (1a) “*at*” is translated into English as (1b) “*camel*”. According to the explanatory dictionary the word “*at*” refers to “a mature male camel over five years old” (EDML 2016). But the word “*camel*” is defined as “a large animal with a long neck, that lives in the desert and has one or two humps”, a big animal. (CD 2022) Since this translation is not satisfactory in terms of semantic understanding, it is considered appropriate to translate or quote as “ camel over five years old, ” meaningfully giving readers the source text.

(2a) *deel* is transliterated as (2b) *deel* because there is no equivalent word in English. Example (2a) The word “*deel*” is explained as “an outer garment with a lapel collar to wear outside” (EDML 2016). The negative side of words translated by transliteration is that ordinary readers who read the literature will not get the real meaning and will not get a full understanding.

Mongolian: source text: Tudev bi khorin tavtaidaa (3a) “Tsagaan sumiin” (4a) **takhilchiin** tangarag urgusun khun. Khamag yum ar nuruun deerh alga daram tal saran (5a) **mengetei** mini kholbootoi. (6a) **Noyon gegeenii** ilgeesen dohio! Minii aav **Ongoi** (7a) iim(8a) **temdegtei**. (Gegeenten, 2021).

English: target text: When I, was twenty-five, I was honored to receive the vow as (4b) **guardian** of the (3b) **White Temple**. Everything came together in a moon-shaped (5b)

blue spot, as wide as a hand, on my back. It was a sign, sent by (66) *the Holy One*! My father (76) *Ongio* had exactly the same (86) *mark*. (The Holy One, 2021).

(3a) The word "Tsagaan Sum" is defined in the Explanatory Dictionary of Mongolian as "a place for religious rituals such as worshipping God, preaching, and holding meetings." (EDML 2016) In example (3b), the word "White Temple" is defined as "a building used for the worship of a god or gods in some religions" or "a building used for the worship of a god or gods in some religions"(CD 2022) and is equivalent in terms of semantic understanding.

In example (4a) the word "tihilch" is explained as "who performs sacrifices, a priest who offers sacrifices"(EDML 2016). But when translating this example into English (4b), the word "guardian" was chosen and its meaning is explained as "someone who protects something"(CD 2022). The translation of this word has been translated equivalently, and although its structure is clear, it is considered to translate it as "monk in charge of the objects used in sacrifices" or "monk in charge of the objects used in sacrifices".

In example (5a) the word "menge" expresses the meaning of which is a "symbolic color given to an individual by nature"(EDML 2016), but this word (5b) is translated as "blue spot" which is only for Mongolians. In fact, the word "menge" and "blue spot" is different in meanings in the source texts. Mongolians believe that someone can reborn after death so they mark the body. However, blue spots are found in the area of the newborn child's back of the ass. In the target text, it was translated as a blue spot which provides readers with different ideas. Thus, to translate culture-specific words, we need to study more about that culture, tradition, and language as well.

The next example (6a) is "Noyon" which is defined as a "local high-ranking official or ruler" (EDML 2016), the word "saint" in English is defined as "a person who specializes in religious teachings: the holy owner [obsolete] (a person who has the knowledge to penetrate many things like the sun and the moon)" and it is translated by the translator (6b) as the Holy One, and this example is explained as "related to a religion or a god: very religious one" In the Holy Bible, (Isaiah 43:15) says, "I am the Lord, your Holy One, Israel's Creator, your King." (6a) The word Mr. Gegeen means not only a religiously enlightened person, but also the lord of the province or locality, so it is considered appropriate to transliterate it as "Gegeenten".

The word "temdeg" mentioned in example (8a) is not a culture-specific word in the sense of the characteristic or feature of anything described in the dictionary of the Mongolian language. (EDML 2016). But the Mongolians put some special sign before burying the dead, and it is a cultural feature that they recognize when they come to the next generation. In the example sentence (8a), the word "meaning" has the meaning of this custom, so it was marked as the culture-specific realia in this context. This example (8b) explains that the word "mark" has 18 different meanings in the dictionary. From these, it is believed that the meaning of "something that shows or proves a particular quality, feeling" or "something that shows or proves a particular quality, feeling" has been selected and translated, taking into account the culture-specific meaning of the example "mark" in English. (CD 2022)

In the example sentence (7a) **Ongoi** and (9a) **Naryaa** are proper names, which the translator transliterated as (7b) **Ongio** and (9b) **Nariya**. In general, it is observed that the method of translating the given name from a foreign language, transliterating it according to the phonetic features of the language being translated, and replacing it with a meaningful word is widely spread in the practice of translation. Scholars have generally agreed that transliteration is correct when translating proper names.

Mongolian: source text: (10a) **Khadag** (11a) **embuu seltesiig negen myangan** (12a) **lan mungu ed baraa** dagalduulan (13a) **Bogd gegeen** tanii ulmii bat orshihiiin danshigt urguj buig bolgoono uu? (ГЭГЭЭНТЭН РОМАН, 2021).

English: target text: With these thousand silver (126) *pieces*, and these (116) *other gifts*, and this offering (106) *scarf*, may we hold a ceremony for the (136) *Bogd Gegeen*'s long and stable life? (The Holy One, 2017).

In example (10a), the word "Khadag" is explained as "a thousand woven fabric that is presented to Mongolian elders and guests to show their respect" (EDML 2016). However, in example (3b), it is translated as scarf, this word is defined as "a strip, square, or triangle of cloth, worn around the neck, head, or shoulders to keep you warm or to make you look attractive", square or triangular fabric. In example (3b), the English noun and verb of the word scarf has 5 different noun meanings or is translated as a ribbon-shaped scarf. However, in English, the word (3b) scarf means a person's clothing and neck scarf, so the reader does not understand the word literally and it is not understood that Mongolian people express respect, so it is necessary to transliterate it as "khadag" in this context. The purpose of the "khadag" and "scarf" is very different in reality.

In example (11a), the word "embuu" can be replaced by similar words "silver ingot" or "a piece of metal, usually in the shape of a narrow brick", "silver ingot weighing about 50 lan" (EDML 2016) or "silver ingots weighing about 50 lan" can be interpreted, while in (11b), "other gifts" is translated together with other words or even omitted without translation. (11a) the word "embuu" means "a solid coin made by casting gold and silver in a special mold; an old-time monetary unit; usually the upper part is thin, the lower part is flat, or the shape of a fist or ring-shaped lobe, usually the size of fifty lan. (EDML 2016)

The word (12a) "lan" is translated as (12b) pieces, while the word (12a) lan is defined as "a measure of weight; one lan is equal to 7.3 grams; (12b) the word "pieces" is explained as "a part of something" (CD: 2022). Culture-specific words such as "lan" can be translated by transliterating with explanations.

In example (13a), the word "Bogd Gegeen"/-a.Gegeen ezen, (13b) is transliterated as Bogd Gegeen, which means Bogd Khan, the leader of Buddhism in Mongolia. In example (13a), the meaning of "Bogd Gegeen" is written in different ways in the novel "Gegeenten" and translated differently in the target text, i.e. transliteration, and equivalent methods. This is likely to be confusing for readers. For example, *Bogd Javzandamba- Bogd Jetsudamba, Saint of Darnad, Jetsun Taranatha, Saint of Darnad - Taranatha Incarnation, Bogd- Bogd, The Bogd Gegeen- The Bogd Gegeen*

Mongolian: source text: (14a) **Gobid** chin delger zun hovor tohiolddog bolhoor ch teruu, (15a) mori uraldaj, найр (16a) **naadam** uusgehed hugshin huvuugui noyod yadusgui l chuulchih yum daa. (Gegeenten, 2021).

English: target text: Such a beautiful summer was rare in the (146) *Gobi*, but for (166) *the games* and (156) *horse racing*, rich and poor mixed together without the old divisions. (The Holy One, 2021).

In example (14a), "Gobi" is transliterated as (14a) Gobi. In example (14a), the word Gobi is explained as "sparse vegetation, forests, and running water are rare, sandy and gravelly soil, marmots are not introduced, and in some cases, it is translated as "desert". The definition of the word "Desert" is "an area, often covered with sand or rocks, where there is very little rain and not many plants" or "covered with sand, stones. (EDML 2016)

Mongolian: source text: Mori malaa (17a) *nemnej*, (18a) emeel yugaa avaad(19a) **ger** baraa ruugaa shahtsaldan ortsgooloo. (Gegeenten, 2021)

English: target text: They (17b) **blanketed** the animals, removed the (18b) tack, and we all squashed into (19b) ger with all our possessions. (The Holy One, 2021).

In example (17a), the word “nemneh” is interpreted as "to cover the animal's back"(EDML 2016), while (17b) the word blanketed is defined as "to cover" or “to protect in English. (CD 2022) This word is interpreted with its equivalent word in the target language.

In example (19a), the word "ger" is interpreted as "a traditional, national felt dwelling of Mongolian ethnicity" in the dictionary of the Mongolian language. (EDML 2016). In the target text the word “ger” is transliterated as “ger” which is unique with its traditional style of housing.

Mongolian: source text: Nairin (20a) *ikh geriin* (21a) **khoimort noyod ihes suugaad l idee budaa tsagaa olj**, yaria huuruu delgej baital (22a) **geriin deever** (23a) **tsavag nevtlen end tendgui** dusaal goojin baij suukh gazargui bodlog baina. (Gegeenten, 2021).

English: target text: The nobles all sat eating at (216) the *back of* the (206) *large* festival *ger*, the talk flowed, there were drops falling here and there through the (226), (236) *felt roof*, there was not a place to sit down. (The Holy One, 2021).

In example (20a), the word "ikh ger" is defined as "large ger is divided by the number of walls, the gers of local high-ranking officials or rulers usually have gers with 6-8 walls, the gers of the provincial head offices have gers with 10-12 walls"(EDML 2016). When translating it (20b) as large ger, a combination of transliteration and simile was used.

In example (21a), the word "hoimor" is defined as "the space behind the pillar of the house, a respectable seat" in the dictionary of the Mongolian language. (EDML 2016) In example (21b), "the back of" is explained as follows: "the inside or outside part of an object, vehicle, building, etc. that is furthest from the front" or "the inner and outer part furthest from the front, such as objects, vehicles, buildings,(CD:2022) etc. So, although this translation is semantically correct, it is believed that the meaning of "respectable seat" is not fully understood.

The word "geriin deever" is translated as "felt roof" in (23b). The term "geriin deever" is defined as "insulation outside the house, over the roof" in the dictionary of Mongolian language. (EDML 2016) "felt roof" would be: felt: noun, "a thick cloth" made from a pressed mass of wool, hair, or fur" or "thick cloth made from a pressed mass of wool, hair, or fur", but roof: noun, "the covering that forms the top of a building, vehicle, or another object" or “the cover that forms the upper part of buildings, vehicles, and other objects”. In example (23a) "tsavag" which refers to ger’s roof related object /"layer for the roof of a Mongolian ger" (EDML 2016) is left untranslated.

We have classified the realia in the novel "Gegeenten" by Mend-Oyo (2021) as follows: **related to customs:** *temdeg, khadag, hoimor, ald khadag, khuurug*, **related to religion and social development:** *Bogd Javzandamba, Saint of Darnad, Bogd, Saint of Bogd, Tsagaan Sum, Noyon Gegeen, Tushee Ghun, God with gongerva*, **related to domestic life:**, *khaya, tono, tsavag* **related to geography:** Gobi, Khurenbelchiri area, Inner Khamar, **related to folklore:** hangards, semberem of Bure Bishgur, **related to folk measurement:** it can be classified as *lan* and so on.

IV. Conclusion

In the course of the research work, it has been noted that the large-scale analysis and study of the culture-specific realia words have been studied thoroughly in detail. When translating realia, the translator must understand the meaning and content of the original work

and source text, try not to confuse words with culture-specific words, and have a good knowledge of the national characteristics culture, history, and social system. It is necessary to think about history, culture, and customs in comparison with today's life. In this way, readers can be fully introduced to another world, another culture, other customs, morals, and life. It is necessary to accurately identify the words in the original text and their corresponding words, and make tireless efforts for this.

When translating realia, the translator must understand the meaning and content of the original work, in other words, source text information tries not to confuse words with realia, and have a good knowledge of the culture, history, and social system. It is necessary to think about history, culture, and customs in comparison with today's life. In this way, readers can be fully introduced to another world, another culture, other customs, morals, and life. It is necessary to accurately identify the words in the original text and their corresponding words, and make tireless efforts for this. We emphasize the importance of the translation of the realia because it will contribute to the development of linguistics, specifically, to the culture study field. In conclusion, it is advisable for the translator to use transliteration and interpretation methods, or a combination of them, without leaving the words of the national culture untranslated.

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