CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN SPANISH SPEAKERS’ BACKGROUND AS A TEACHING RESOURCE

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the issue of cultural differences in Spanish speakers’ background and their use as a teaching tool at the university. The questions of cultural identification and national identity are widely spread in modern linguistic investigations, especially nowadays in the period of globalization. The Spanish language is one of the most widespread languages in the world and it is a native language for different nationalities. This reason makes the Spanish language very diverse and ambiguous. Each nationality has its own variant of Spanish apart from the standard language and terminology and realia that are formed in different variants of the language under the influence of cultural features. The study of cultural identity as a nation’s background is very important in the language learning process, because it contains the basis of the cultural identity and the world cultural heritage.

The study used general scientific and private (linguistic) methods. For the analysis there were selected the most popular realia referring to culture and traditions of different Spanish speaking nationalities. Based on the survey conducted among the students of the Kazan Federal University, Russia, the most challenging realia for translation are the ones from the Catalan and Basque languages related to politics. Therefore, special emphasis should be made on the investigation of cultural differences, which is essential in the modern world of international cooperation.

Keywords: realia, linguistics, translation, language education, world cultural heritage.

1 INTRODUCTION

Development of international cooperation, widening of communication boards brought to the borrowing of foreign words, lifestyle and customs. No borders in communication with people from other countries and another cultural background, the availability of foreign intellectual and cultural resources’ exchange brought to the changes of cultural ideas. One of the most striking processes taking place at the moment, due to the expansion of cultural exchange and dialogue is the process of globalization [1]. The investigation of cultural differences and their role in language learning process is one of the most challenging and important aspects of linguistics, because cultural differences are not just transmission of customs, traditional values of different nationalities from one language into another, but it is transmission of exact language units, words, phonetics taking into account the specifics of the cultural differences [2]. Cultural differences within the community of the Spanish language speakers may cause specific translation, designing a full replacement of some original words to make them identical for other speakers of the same language. In the modern world, where the process of globalization is actively spreading and influencing many cultures and languages, there are no doubts that successful communication requires not only language skills, but also knowledge of cultural features of people of a country, their communicative behavior, traditions and customs [3]. Language is the verbal treasury of a nation, a medium of thought transmission which it “packs” into language structure [4]. At the same time, language is in constant interaction with culture, society and various fields of human activity and it is constantly developing, losing and acquiring new language elements, depending on cultural characteristics.

2 METHODOLOGY

The study used general scientific and private (linguistic) methods. For the study there were selected and analyzed the most popular realia referring to culture and traditions of different Spanish speaking nationalities. Realia is the most interesting unit of translation from the culture’s point of view as a unit that contains native national content [5]. In this paper we tried to find out how the cultural differences are important in the language transmission and the aim of our research is to investigate in which cases these differences cause problems in language learning or translation and how they can be solved. In our
research we referred to the translation of realia from one dialect to another within one language to understand it clearly and point out the most interesting differences [6]. A lot of scientific works are devoted to the problem of realia translation. Many scientists, such as Golubeva S., Tameryan T., Gurmenskaya D. and others work in the field of cultural differences investigation; however, many questions still require a special study.

3 RESULTS

Among the realia, that have caused most difficulties in understanding and translation, based on the personal experience of the professors teaching Spanish at Kazan Federal University, Russia, and the survey conducted among 100 students of the Higher School of Foreign Languages and Translation, are as follows (the terms are accompanied by examples to facilitate understanding or provide specific examples):

3.1 Terms in Catalan and Basque languages related to politics and widely used in Spanish

Lendakari or Lehendakari: it is a Basque name used to refer to the President of the Basque Country Autonomous Community in Spain. Lehendakari means “the one who is governing” in the Basque language.

Example: Íñigo Urkullu Renteria is a Basque politician from Alonsotegi, the Lehendakari of the Basque Government since 2012.

Ikurriña: it is the name of the official flag of the Basque Country Autonomous Community. The name comes from ikur (mark or sign).

Example: The Ikurriña, the Basque flag, has become a symbol for struggling national aspirations.

Abertzale: “Patriot” in English. It is a word usually referring to people or political groups that are related to Basque nationalism.

Example: The demonstration was also held in a climate of growing distance between Elkarri and the abertzale left.

Senyera: “Pennon” or “Ensign” in English. The Senyera is a Catalan word that refers to a vexillologic symbol based on the coat of arms of the Crown of Aragon. It consists of four red stripes on a golden background. This coat of arms historically represented the King of the Crown of Aragon. Nowadays, the Senyera pattern is the flag of Catalonia, Balearic Islands, Aragon and Valencia, as well as other historical Catalan-speaking territories.

Example: The Senyera is one of the oldest flags in Europe to be used in present day, but not in continuous use since its creation. There are several theories advocating either a purely Catalan or a purely Aragonese origin for the symbol.

Estelada: “Starred flag” in English. It is an unofficial flag used mainly in demonstrations to claim the independence of Catalonia. It is normally a Senyera with a white star superimposed on a blue triangle at the top, although a red star on a yellow background is also common.

Example: There are many Estelada flags hanging from balconies and official buildings in Catalonia.

3.2 Holy week or Semana Santa terms

Saeta: it is an unaccompanied partly improvised piercing Andalusian song of lamentation or penitence sung “a capella” during a religious public procession.

Example: A saeta is an outburst of flamenco song, traditionally sung from one of the balconies in one of the streets of the city.

Costaleros: group of people carrying processional sculptures during the Holy Week in Spain. These processions are mostly common in the South of Spain.

Example: The week consists of processions in which enormous ‘pasos’ (floats) are carried around the streets by teams of ‘costaleros’ (bearers) followed by hundreds of ‘nazarenos’ (penitents).
**Paso**: “Float” in English. It is a float that represents the episode of the Passion of Christ. They are carried by the costaleros.

Example: The procession during Semana Santa in city of Seville is famous for “pasos”. Pasos are big painted wooden sculptures. Each one of them represents scenes in the last days of Jesus Christ and immense grief of Virgin Mary for the torture and killing of her son.

**Nazareno or Penitente**: Usually these terms are translated as “penitent” in English. Some of the people participating in a procession wear a penitential robe. It has several parts: a tunic, and a conical shaped hood used to hide their face. Sometimes they wear a cloak too. The robe is of medieval origin.

Example: During procession the nazarenos carry candles or wooden crosses. In some moments, they walk barefoot with shackles and chains on their feet as a sort of penance.

**La Madrugá**: Derived from the Spanish word “Madrugada” (dawn). It is the day of the Holy Week where there is the highest number of processions in Seville during the early hours of Good Friday. This is considered to be the most important day of the Holy Week in Spain.

Example: La Madrugá begins on late Thursday night/Friday morning, and includes a series of processions which run all through the night until the next morning.

3.3 Bullfighting terms

**Traje de luces**: “Suit of lights” in English. It is the traditional clothing that Spanish bullfighters wear in the bullring.

Example: A bullfighter or matador is usually distinguished from his assistants by his satin traje de luces (suit of lights) which is generally decorated in gold.

**Corrida**: Usually translated as “bullfighting” in English. It is a traditional spectacle in Spain and some other Spanish speaking countries where a bullfighter fights one or more bulls in a bullring. Although the word bullfighting is often used, sometimes the Spanish word corrida can be found in many texts and documents.

Example: Spain is split overall on the issue. Six years ago, the largely autonomous regional Catalan government banned “corridas”, as the pastime is known in the region.

**Torero or Matador**: “Bullfighter” in English. It is the person who fights one bull or more in the bullring.

Example: Manolete was one of the most famous male matadors in Spain.

**Muleta**: It is a stick with a red cloth hanging from it. It is used to attract the bulls in a series of passes. In this way, the matador shows control over the animal. Sometimes this word is translated as “cape” or “red cape” into English.

Example: Finally, the matador used his muleta, a red cape, in controlled and increasingly slow motion to force the bull to charge.

**Banderilla**: The literal translation into English is “little flag”. It is a colourfully decorated sharped stick used to weaken the bull.

Example: The use of banderillas on bulls is considered to be a torture.

3.4 Other terms

**Guardia Civil**: “Civil Guard” in English. The Guardia Civil are Spain's conventional police force who are organised along paramilitary lines and controlled by the Ministry of the Interior. It is the oldest law enforcement in Spain. The Guardia Civil wear green uniforms. They have wide ranging responsibilities for national law enforcement and have the resources, powers and facilities of a normal police force.

Example: Felipe was a member of the Guardia Civil for twenty seven years, during which he had various postings in the provinces of Almeria and Alicante.

**Flamenco**: It is one of the national artistic forms of Southern Spain, especially in Andalusia. It is mainly associated with Romani people. The way of singing and dancing flamenco has become very popular worldwide and it has been declared by UNESCO as one of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.
Example: Flamenco is booming in Spain, and it’s booming among the Japanese. Many Japanese fall in love with the art at first sight, and spend the best years of their lives trying to master it.

**Guerrilla:** “Little war” in English. It consists of a small group of combatants, including armed civilians, who use military tactics to fight a larger army. This term became popular during the early-19th century Peninsular War, when the Spanish people rose against the Napoleonic troops and fought against a highly superior army using the guerrilla strategy.

Example: The fear they said was that these subversive groups, who admitted their former affiliation with the political arm of the guerrillas, may try to re-establish the “mass organizations” that were destroyed by the violent repression of strikes and demonstrations in the early 1980s.

**Tapas:** Tapas are a wide variety of appetizers, or snacks, in Spanish cuisine. They can be cold or hot and they are usually served when ordering a drink. In the south-east of Spain tapas are served for free. Sometimes tapas are translated as “snacks”, although this is not always the right term in English, as tapas can occasionally be as big as a usual dish.

Example: Most bars in Granada will serve up a free tapa with every drink.

**Telenovela:** It is a type of limited-run serial drama originally produced in Latin American countries that has become popular in other European or Asian countries. The word “telenovela” comes from “tele” (short name for television) and “novella” (novel). They are very often translated as “soap operas”, since some English-speaking countries have produced their own versions of telenovela.

Example: It was Abita, my great-grandma who spent all day in a rocking chair watching telenovelas and baseball games.

4 CONCLUSION

Culture has many different functions as creating stereotypes for fixing the models of national behavior and traditions and it is a thing that unites people of the same ethnic group providing distinctive features, customs, languages that are inherited by many generations. In the modern century of globalization many new terms and models of lifestyle are borrowed from different foreign languages and cultures, they are firmly fixing in the language and erasing the borders of cultural identities. Sometimes new words enter the language and sometimes became its essential part or they have a translation that preserves the literal meaning of the origin language. However there are many terms, so-called realia that haven’t got any equivalents in the language of translation and it causes problems with the meaning transmission. The translation of realia is a very ambiguous process, because, on the one hand, they are unique units of the language that keep cultural information and they are “mirrors” of cultural diversity. On the other hand, they are units that can’t be translated literally and they need to be substituted by other words that could be more suitable for understanding an exact meaning. However, the translation of realia is not only the transfer of the words’ meaning, but it is a transfer of real life units, cultural heritage and national identity. It is necessary to point out that background knowledge as a set of ideas may be very different depending not only on the nationality the person refers to, but also depending on the individual’s membership in a particular social group or generation. It is one of the main reasons why cultural differences investigation is so important. It shows not only the cultural difference of the nation itself, but also the generations’ differences in cultural background within the same nationality. Cultural differences are not only the result of the languages evolution, but it is an active process reflecting connections between cultures and nationalities during different periods of time. It is an active change forming under the influence of different processes. The enrichment of the languages may be explained as necessity of cultural and spiritual development of generations. But language can’t exist apart from the nationalities and their culture, because the language is a providing link between people of different nationalities and their instrument of both language and culture protection and development. The investigation of cultural differences is a key to preservation of national identity in the modern century of globalization.

REFERENCES


