

# INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION MADE POSSIBLE DUE TO ALTERNATION OF FREEDOM AND FIDELITY IN TRANSLATION

*Holta Heba, PhD candidate*

The European University of Tirana, Albania

---

## Abstract

Translation is widely seen as a connecting bridge between the identities of two different languages and cultures, while in itself it is an essential means in the process of communication. The exchange of messages between French language and Albanian language is the central focus of this paper, bearing in mind the importance and the indispensable role of this process. La Fontaine comes meaningfully into Albanian language and culture through the art of translation of Vedat Kokona and Andon Zako Çajupi. In this exchange of messages, the preservation of meaning is completely in translator's hands. Thus, the translator becomes an indispensable filter for making communication possible.

The theories of meaning, cultural transference, the antinomy faithfulness / freedom, as well as some other communication theories are the theoretical foundation of this paper.

The translator, who is faced with the absence of linguistic and cultural identity material, manages to convey the meaningful message through linguistic and cultural transformations as well as the duality faithfulness / freedom, which in its turn, becomes indispensable and avoids the untranslatability of the message. This constitutes the very argument of this paper.

The meaning is not merely a sum of words, but an organic meaningful unity that is expressed in non-identical ways in different identities. The words and sentences may undergo transformations in form and structure but they need to preserve an unaltered message.

When the translator undresses the message of the linguistic and cultural parameters of French language and dresses it with the linguistic and cultural material code of the Albanian language, then the French culture comes meaningfully to the Albanian culture.

---

**Keywords:** Fidelity in translation, freedom in translation, intercultural communication, transformation, identity

## Introduction

The examination of the efforts made for conveying a meaningful message from one language to another and from one culture to another is the purpose of this paper. The research questions are: Can the meaning be preserved while translating from French into Albanian? In what way and at what extend can untranslatability be avoided in the process of intercultural communication? What are the instruments that make meaningful translation possible?

In the process of translating from one language to another, the translator is obliged to make linguistic transformations with the purpose of adapting a certain concept of the source language to the linguistic parameters of the target language. The language of a nation is closely related to its culture, history and traditions.

“Some anthropologists have seen the language, in other words the linguistics, as an essential ingredient for the human science, since it constitutes a connection between the biological level and the socio-cultural one” (11).

Each national identity has its respective norms, thus the language and the culture of a nation differ from the language and the culture of another nation. The norms of a certain language and culture should not be misunderstood by the readers and speakers of another language and culture. In order to elaborate on these issues, this paper is based on three books: “Selected Fairy Tales” by the outstanding poet La Fontaine, which was brought into Albanian by the outstanding poet Andon Zako Çajupi and “Selected Fables”<sup>1</sup> by La Fontaine, brought into Albanian by the translator Vedat Kokona. Andon Zako Çajupi was based on the original fables of his time, while Vedat Kokona was based on the original publication “Fables Choisies”. The term “*brought into Albanian*” makes you think that francophone fables come to Albanian both linguistically as well as culturally.

Since the Albanian reader is unaware of the work in the original language, translation is indispensable and worth analysing in the process of communication between two different cultures. The reader gets to know the art of La Fontaine only through the work done by the translator.

The comparison of translated texts, in contemporary Albanian, with the text in the source language, which was created in the seventeenth century, should be made in such a way that it reveals the linguistic and cultural transformations with time.

“Communication between human beings living in different times would be impossible away from certain systems of understanding that remain

---

<sup>1</sup>This book was published in 2005. Kokona Publications. On the left page is the fable in French and on the right page is the fable in Albanian.

almost unchangeable in time, while they make possible the conveyance of older cultures to the cultural environments of later times, translation as well, no matter how close the old is with the new” (2).

Reproduction of time is another phenomenon related to this paper since the translation should respect historical factors that are materialised from the words of the source language and are made meaningful to the target language reader in a distant period of time from the time in which the text was written.

### **Methodology**

The Methodology used in this paper is the comparison of texts of fables being translated from French into Albanian. An analysis of the translation of La Fontaine’s fables by Andon Zako Çajupi and Vedat Kokona is made by comparing the texts under the perspective of transformations made at linguistic planes (morphological, syntactical, lexical, sentence types) and cultural planes (orientalisms, enrichment of target language text, dialectic forms, phraseological expressions, labelling and proverbs. The paper is divided in two planes since language and culture are two inseparable instruments national identity.

This paper is part of my doctoral thesis on which I am still working. The main objective of this paper is a detailed analysis of the examples drawn through comparison, and the remarks whether these transformations do or do not influence the conveyed message.

This book contains 42 fables written by the outstanding French poet as well as Vedat Kokona’s translations.

### **Communication made possible through translation and interpretation**

“Communication is always a collective act; it always presupposes at least two ends: a speaker A and a listener or an intended recipient B (12).

Communication does not simply help to express yourself in a clear way, but it also helps you to correctly understand the ideas expressed by the others. For this reason, there is a need for a translator in the conversations between people in different languages and cultures. Translators’ role is the one of a bridge between two cultures. It makes possible the communication between people who do not speak the same language and come from different cultural backgrounds and traditions. It is impossible for all international identities to communicate if they are not based on the science of translation. It is impossible to learn all the languages in the world and this is the reason why the science of translation is so important. Intercultural translation is strongly based on translation and interpretation which are two indispensable means for building the bridge that allows the passage of a meaningful message from one language to another and from one culture to another.

Translation plays a special role in the communication between the speakers of two different languages who consequently belong to different cultures. This role has to do with the exchange of meaningful words and the accurate transmission of a message between these communicators. The importance of this paper in the science of communication is related to the fact that translation is indispensable for getting to know the cultures of two or more countries that do not share the same language, traditions, and culture.

Translator's invisibility in the intercultural communication is transformed into a necessity since it is the translator who makes possible the conveyance of the message in a meaningful way. If we focus on equivalence and accuracy for conveying the message in a meaningful way, the translation of fables is relatively difficult. While interpreting the fable, the translator has to retain not only the meaning but also the number of words used. Nevertheless, from the linguistic perspective, it is important for the meaning in the target language to be identical with the meaning in the original language.

“For the ones interested in the process of intercultural communication, the stress does not fall mostly on equivalence, but on the bridges that the people build for crossing from one language to the other” (10).

In cases when the translator is a poet as well, he allows himself to select the words but still he has to remain faithful to the meaning. Translator's job cannot be done by someone who simply speaks two languages. The translator has to master the language and culture of both the source and target language. In intercultural communication, translator's job cannot simply be that of linguistic equalisation, since this way the conveyance of a meaningful message can be greatly put at risk.

Exact sciences have produced the mathematical theory of communication which deals with measuring the amount of information without paying attention to the meaning of the message, while the social sciences are interested in a communication theory that places meaning in the centre of attention

“The main operators of this theory do not have anything to do with coding or decoding, neither with fighting the excessive noises, but rather with the molecular actions of association and disassociation which make possible the permanent metamorphosis of the meaning” (8).

It is quite clear that no single language can be spoken in the world since there are lots of nations of different historical and cultural backgrounds. In order to show the importance of translation in communication, first we need to give the definition of this science. In fact, there are many definitions, but the one closer to the approach of this paper is:

“Translation is conceptualised as conveyance of words of meaning, thought, climate, world, and feeling from the source language to the target language” (6).

The aim of translation is the communication between groups of people or individuals who do not speak the same language. This aim is found deeper and deeper in the very heart of communication. It is present in all walks of life, the professional as well as the everyday ones. You can get to know a foreign culture or world only by means of translation. In case the translation is for practical purposes, it is conceptualised as a functional instrument of communication.

While indispensable for communication, translation is a technique, art, profession, and science (14).

Translation is an art since the translator has to reproduce in the target language what the person in the source language wants to say. This reproduction is art in itself. It is a technique since it is directly connected with the art of writing and speaking. An accurate conveyance of the message requires linguistic and cultural techniques to be used by the translator. These techniques are extremely individual, but they also have to respond to all parameters of linguistic material code required by communication.

Translation requires good knowledge of the foreign language, very good knowledge of the mother tongue, rich cultural background, deep concentration and great curiosity. As Kokona argues:

“The foreign language does not give its treasures easily. It does not open with the magic words “Open sesame!” It does open, but it requires hard work” (6).

Being a science, on the other hand, translation is closely related to linguistics, psychology, lexicology and lexicography.

Even though invisible, translators play an important role in conveying the message from one language to the other. Their mediatory role is quite at hand when we need to set up the bridge of communication between two different identities. It is not always easy to transmit to the target language what has been said in the source language. An accurate and concise transmitted idea requires from the translator to have a large cognitive background.

Relations between people of different identities do not simply comprise linguistic translation; they also comprise cultural, dialectal, phraseological translations as well as the translation of labelling expressions and proverbs.

### **Translation made possible through the antinomy: Fidelity and Freedom.**

A century long concern to translators has been: Should a translator be faithful or free while translating? (7)

Fidelity and Freedom are always present in translation through the alternation of equivalence and correspondence. Correspondences are used when the translator translates word for word. In such a case it is easy for the translator to find the equivalent phrase without the need for subjectivity. Equivalences are used when the translator plays with the words. The translator adds or removes the word in the target language without altering the meaning of the message in the source language.

The lexico-semantic transformation during translation is done for a very essential reason. It is clear that in different cultures, one signifier does not have the same signified, or it may have a multitude of signified.

1. An example of the abovementioned is the translation of the syntagma “réliefs<sup>2</sup>” d’ortolans<sup>3</sup> (verse 4, page 22) of the fable: “The Town Rat and the Country Rat”. In French, the meaning of the syntagma is: leftovers of a kind of bird called ortolan, which is highly praised in France.

In Albania this kind of bird is not praised at all and almost totally unknown. This way, the translator transforms this kind of food into the syntagma “kukurec dhe fërgesë (tripe and fried cheese)”. Both these kinds of food are praised and known in Albanian culture. While preserving the rhyme, Kokona brings it closer to the Albanian language and culture through the food quoted in the fable. The complete meaning of the syntagma in French passes into Albanian language by means of its Albanian equivalent. If the translation was done word for word, the value of this kind of food would not fit into the Albanian culture. Consequently, the use of ethnocentrism, otherwise naturalisation, in the target language text was considered necessary. Naturalisation is the phenomenon of changing facts in order for making them understandable in the target language and culture.

Çajupi translates this syntagma with the most preferred south Albania’s food of his time “mish të pjekur në hell (roasted meat on skewers)” (verse 9, page 17), which is still highly praised today. Right at this very moment, both translators try to adapt the French word to a favourite kind of food to the Albanian readers. What for? It is clear that in case the translation was done in conformity with the French words and food concept, the importance of this kind of food for both rats would not be clear to the Albanian reader.

It is important for a translation to consist of these two indispensable instruments.

The translator is obliged to write a text that has to be identical to the original but in a different way. (9)

---

<sup>2</sup>Food leftovers, according to Micro Robert dictionary, page 920. ce qui reste d’un repas, reste.

<sup>3</sup>In the French-Albanian dictionary 1989 “ortolan” is translated as “beng”, a kind of bird, page 733

Conveyance of a meaningful message requires translator's fidelity, while considering word structure, or sentence structure, the translator is free to formulate them according to his own reasoning without breaching the rules of the target language.

In case it is thought that the translator can be free to play with the words and their order, it is clear that this freedom should not exist in text or message contents. (13)

Fidelity in translation is determined by three objects: author's message, target language and the public" (4).

2. An example where the translator is obliged to perform morphological transformations can be seen in the fable "The Lark and her Young Ones with the Owner of a Field", in which La Fontaine uses the plural word "les bles" a number of times. When translated into Albanian it is always in its singular form "gruri" (wheat).

The translator cannot say: The wheats have to be harvested. In Albanian, the concept of wheat is always in the singular.

These three objects are inseparable in the process of translation. In case we strictly keep loyal to one of these objects, while underestimating the other two, we face the danger of having the message lost.

Freedom in translation is very frequent while translating fables since poetic language requires a lot of strain for finding the right word to keep up with the rhyme.

"Translation can be very free. What needs to be stressed out is the fact that the translator has to adapt the translation to the target language." (3).

The translator needs to try to imitate the primary language. Nevertheless, freedom in translating fables is unavoidable because word reformulation requires the use of correspondences. The translator faces a double job. While conveying the message from the source language to the target one, the translator has to play with the words in order to build the rhyme.

3. A typical example of syntactic transformation is found in the fable The Cicada and the Ant, "La cigale, ayant chanté tout l'été" (verse 1, page 12) where a sentence in the indicative mood in French is used. In Kokona's Albanian translation this verse is brought to Albanian through a relative clause. The verb in the present perfect tense is transformed into simple past tense and the sentence begins with the conjunction "si (as)", which in front of the verb "kendoj (sang)" makes possible the relative clause: "Si këndoi gjinkallë e marrë, gjithë beharë" (As the crazy cicada sang, all summer long). In the source language this form of a sentence does not exist. This is an obvious linguistic transformation.

4. The shift from the plural form of the personal pronoun "you" into the singular "you" is an example of cultural and linguistic transformation. The

use of the second person plural was very frequent in written and spoken 17 century French. The use of plural is found almost all over La Fontaine's fables. A formal language style is used in the source language text since the author addresses a person in the singular using the second person plural.<sup>4</sup>

This phenomenon belongs to the French language and culture and cannot play the same role in the present-day Albanian language and culture. All verbs in the second person plural in the French version are transformed into the second person singular in the Albanian version. In the source language text, the author addresses the character with the plural "you". In the target language text, the author addresses the character through the use of the singular "you".

The debate fidelity/freedom is expressed through the duality correspondence/equivalence. Freedom in translation and fidelity to meaning constitute a duality that helps to convey the message.

Translator's job remains an uninterrupted challenge to the curse "Translator, traitor" (9).

In fact, this kind of antinomy devalues the one-way translation. In case the translator is simply loyal, or simply free, automatically the translator is a traitor. Translator's duty is to be able to control both fidelity and freedom in order for being able to accurately convey the concept of the source language to the target language in a meaningful way. It seems that the translator is forced to deviate, but these deviations have to be controlled.<sup>5</sup> The purpose of this entire paper is to find and analyse the linguistic and cultural transformations.

### **Conclusion**

Since there are elements of linguistic and cultural non-identity between the two nations, the preservation of a meaningful message from one language to another and from one culture to another brings about linguistic and cultural transformations. In the process of communication between two different countries the message from the source language to the target language is required to come complete and meaningful.

It is the translation which serves as a filter for the author's message and idea to be understood by the target language reader as if the latter was a source language reader.

As a conclusion we can say that transformations while shifting from one language to another are indispensable, but the message has to remain unaltered and the meaning totally retained.

---

<sup>4</sup>In the 16th century in France, formality was widely used in spoken language, consequently there is a very frequent use of second person plural.

<sup>5</sup>Control of deviations serves to bring message meaning closer.

Finally in this paper, which focuses on the preservation of meaning while shifting from the source language to the target language, needs to be stressed out the saying of the great translator Andre Kaminker: *I did not say what you said, but what you wanted to say.*

### References:

- Cajupi, A. *Perralla të zgjedhura nga te vjereshtarit math, La fontaine*. Heliopolis. 1920.
- Fuga, A. *Shtigje drejt guvës së gjarprit*. Tirana: Ora. 2004.
- Henry J. *La traduction des jeux de mots*. Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle. 2003
- Hurtado, A. *La notion de fidelite en traduction*. Paris: Didier Erudition. 1990.
- Kokona, V. *La Fonten, Fabula te zgjedhura*. Tirana: Botimet Kokona. 2005.
- Kokona, V. *Mbi perkthimin me perkthyesin*. Tirana: Botimet Kokona. 2003.
- Lederer, M. *La traduction d'aujourd'hui*. Paris: Hachette. 1994.
- Levy, P. *Les técnologies de l'intelligence, l'avenir de la pensée a l'ere informatique*. Paris: Editions, La Decouverte. 1990.
- Marashi, A. *Përkthimi para gjyqit*. Shkodër: Shtepia botuese “At Gjergj Fishta”. 1996.
- Martin, J; Nakayama. *Hyrje ne komunikimin nderkulturor*. Tirane: Uet/Press. 2010.
- Shkurtaç, Gj. *Etnografi e te folurit të shqipes*. Tiranë: Shtepia botuese e librit Universitar. 2004.
- Shkurtaç, Gj. *Sociolinguistikë e Shqipes*. Tirana: Shtepia botuese Morava. 2009.
- Tournier, M. *Le vent Paraclet, Gallimard*. Paris: Didier Erudition. 1990.
- Tupja, E. *Keshilla një përkthyesi te ri*. Tirana: Onufri. 2000.