

Session Plan: Realia in travel brochures

Learning outcomes

Textual: 3 (recognition of culture-specific items of one's own culture and knowledge of strategies to deal with them in translation)

Stage: I

Preparation needed

Travel brochure(s) in students' mother tongue of their hometown or other area in their own country. Tourism-oriented web pages can be used as well; in that case, sufficient amount of PCs is necessary.

Groups

Pairs or groups of three.

Time (total suggested time)

1.5 hours

Background for lecturer (bibliography, anticipated difficulties)

Central concept: realia

The term realia is Latin for 'real things' and in translation studies, is used to refer to concepts which are found in a given source culture but not in a given target culture (Leppihalme 2011:126). This is due to the fact that cultures construct reality in different ways. According to Leppihalme (2001: 139), "lexical elements (words or phrases) that refer to the real world 'outside language' ". Leppihalme, however, also points out that the distinction between extra- and intralinguistic is somewhat artificial, for when we deal with words, we necessarily also deal with language, even if the words themselves refer to the world outside" (Leppihalme 2001: 139).

According to Florin (1993: 123), realia are words and combinations of words denoting objects and concepts characteristic of the way of life, the culture, the social and historical development of one nation and alien to another. Since they express local and/or historical color they have no exact equivalents in other languages.

Parallel terms: culture-bound problems, culture-specific items, extralinguistic cultural references or culture-specific references.

Classification of realia provided by Nedergaard-Larsen (1993)

Extralinguistic culture-bound problem types

Geography etc

geography

meteorology

biology

mountains, rivers

weather, climate

flora, fauna

cultural geography

regions, towns

roads, streets etc

History

buildings: monuments, castles etc

events: wars, revolutions, flag days

people: well-known historical persons

Society

industrial level: trade and industry, energy supply etc

social organization: defence, judicial system, police, prisons, local and central authorities

politics: state management, ministries, electoral system, political parties, politicians, political organisations

social conditions: groups, subcultures, living conditions, problems, ways of life,

customs, housing, transport, food, meals, clothing, articles for everyday use, family relations

Culture

religion: churches, rituals, morals, ministers, bishops, religious holidays, saints

education: schools, colleges, universities, lines of education, exams

media: TV, radio, newspapers, magazines

culture: leisure activities, museums, works of art, literature, authors, theatres,

cinemas, actors, musicians, idols, restaurants, hotels, nightclubs, cafés, sports, athletes

Potential translation strategies for realia (Leppihalme 2001); examples from English into Finnish.

- Direct transfer: pub - *pubi*
- Calque: ginger beer - *inkivääriolut* (ginger 'inkivääri', beer 'olut')
- Cultural adaptation: Hyde Park Corner - *Esplanadinkulma* (Esplanadi is a park in Helsinki, corner, 'kulma')
- Superordinate term: Spotted dick - *jälkiruoka*, 'a dessert'
- Explicitation: the Blitz - *Lontoon pommitukset*, 'the bombing of London'
- Addition: translator's note, glossary, preface, etc.
- Omission: realia left out completely

These seven strategies for realia do not cover all the possible ways of dealing with realia in translation, but "offer quite comprehensive coverage". Leppihalme remarks that a combination of strategies is also possible. For example, direct transfer or a calque may be complemented by addition (2001: 145).

For more detailed accounts, see e.g.:

Florin, Sider 1993. Realia in translation. In: Zlateva, Palma (ed.) *Translation as Social Action*. Russian and Bulgarian Perspectives. London: Routledge, , 122–128.

Leppihalme, Ritva 2001: Translation strategies for realia. In Kukkonen, P. & Hartama-Heinonen, R. (eds.) *Mission, Vision, Strategies, and Values: A Celebration of Translator Training and Translation Studies in Kouvola*.. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, p. 139–148.

Leppihalme, Ritva 2011: Realia. In: Yves Gambier & Luc van Doorslaer (eds): *Handbook of Translation Studies*. John Benjamins: Amsterdam. ss. 126–130.

Nedergaard-Larsen, Birgit 1993. Cultural factors in subtitling. *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology* 2, 207–241.

Activities

1. Lead-in: 15 minutes

Students form 'marketing teams' and are asked to brainstorm and write down ten things that make their country/hometown sound special (see the student worksheet, task 1). Alternatively, students can be asked to list the items they would miss most if they were to leave their hometown/country for a long period of time. Once the lists are compiled, they are written on the blackboard or smartboard for everyone to see.

2. Discussion on the concepts of realia and culture-specific item, teacher-led, 15 minutes

The teacher introduces the concept as a possible instance of non-equivalence in translation and provides a few definitions for them. Examples of realia are sought out among the items listed on the blackboard. At this point, students are encouraged to consider these items from a certain target culture's point of view (see the student worksheet, task 2).

3. Analysing the brochure, time 30 minutes

Students are given a brochure for analysis. In small groups, students are asked to read it and pinpoint all instances of realia in them. This is done for the purpose of translating the text into a foreign language; thus, to be able to see whether an item is "culture-specific" or not, it must be reflected on the target culture in question. Students are also asked to ponder on the possible ways to translate those items into the target language(s, if there are several first foreign languages in the group). (The student worksheet, task 3.)

4. Discussion plus introduction of strategies, time 30 minutes

Group discussion on items found in the text and proposed ways of translating them. In the end, introduction of e.g. Leppihalme's translation strategies for realia. (The strategies can be introduced at an earlier point as well; however, this task is designed to encourage students' creative thinking and therefore, no ready-made categories are given beforehand.)

Adaptations for an integrated approach

This exercise can be easily be integrated in a practical course of translation; after exercises 1-4, students are asked to translate the brochure (the same or another one) as homework.

STUDENT WORKSHEET: Realia in travel brochures

- 1. You are a member of a marketing team of your home region (town/country), planning to participate in an international tourism fair. You are at the initial stage of designing promotional material for the fair; to get you started, you are asked to brainstorm in a group and come up with TEN things that might allure tourists to your home region. Write the down in the box below.

- 2. Take a look at the items in your list and consider them from the translation point of view. Does any of the items pose of problem for translation into your first foreign language(s, if there's variation in the group)? You may make notes in the box below.

3. Now analyse the brochure you are given. What kind of instances of realia can you find in it? How would you translate them into your first foreign language(s)?