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## **Translation Strategies in the Yakut Heroic Epic Olonkho: Lexical Problems (on the Nurgun Botur the Swift epic)**

**Vilena G. Dyachkovskaya  
and Alina A. Nakhodkina\***

*M. K. Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University  
58 Belinsky Str., Yakutsk, 677000, Russia*

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*The paper views translation strategies regarding to lexical issues encountered in Yakut heroic epic “Nurgun Botur the Swift” by P. A. Oyunsky. The authors give brief information on the olonkho. Different definitions to the term ‘translation strategy’ are examined. The authors apply componential analysis in the translation of figurative words and word pairs. The paper also views the definitions of these terms. Culture specific vocabulary is considered to be one of the main lexical issues translator faces as well.*

*Keywords: translation, epic, olonkho, translation strategies, nonequivalent words, figurative words, word pairs, culture specific vocabulary.*

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### **Introduction. What is Olonkho?**

Olonkho is an invaluable cultural heritage of the Yakut (Sakha) people. According to the well-known researcher of the Yakut folklore Georgy U. Germogenov – Ergis, “Olonkho is a magnificent monument to the unique Yakut poetic art, having intrinsic artistic, ideological and cognitive value” (Ergis, 2008: 214).

The term *olonkho* denotes both the concept for the Yakut heroic epic genre, and for single legends that compile this genre. Olonkho is called by the name of the main character (“Er

Sogotokh”, “Dyyray Bergen”, “Nurgun Botur”, “Kyys Nurgustai”, etc.). They are written in the poetic form, reaching six or ten and, in some cases, thirty or forty thousand lines (Emelyanov, 1980: 4).

Olonkho takes a leading place in the Yakut folklore. The first researcher and collector of the Yakut oral poetry, Russian scientist and revolutionary Ivan A. Khudyakov called olonkho “the central sort of poetry, the key instrument of education”. Olonkho embodied the whole spiritual culture of the Yakut people, expressed

their dreams for the future, and synthesized all the best that a Yakut oral poetry has reached (Emelyanov, 1980: 4).

Due to the research work of Russian researchers, particularly political exiles, olonkho has been known to scientific world since the mid 19 century. A great contribution was made by the remarkable study of Academician O. Boetlingk "On the Yakut language" and Khudyakov's "Verkhoyansky Collection". The author of "Dictionary of Yakut" E. K. Pekarsky carried out an extensive research in collecting and scientific editing of the Yakut folklore samples. He published "Samples of Yakut Folk Literature" in three parts and eight editions.

The Yakut researchers P. A. Oyunsky, G. U. Ergis, G. V. Ksenofontov, A. A. Popov, G. M. Vasilyev, I. V. Pukhov, national writer D. K. Sivtsev-Suorun Omolloon, folklorists S. I. Bolo, A. A. Savvin, P. N. Popov and many others made a considerable contribution to collecting and studying olonkho.

Emelyanov noted that olonkho has strongly marked specific genre features and sharply contrasts with other genres in its ideological and thematic content, traditional range of images, stability of composition structure, originality of existence, olonkho performers' skills, traditional style and figures of speech (Emelyanov, 1980: 6).

Platon A. Oyunsky is a founder of the Yakut Soviet literature, outstanding Yakut poet and revolutionary. He recreated the Yakut heroic epic in a perfect and harmonious form. "Nurgun Botur the Swift" is one of the best and most popular Yakut epics.

## Theoretical Framework

### *Translation Strategies*

Nowadays the term *strategy* is practiced in many areas: psychology, politics, economics, etc. The term *translation strategy* can be found in the theory and practice of translation as well, which

has been widely used in relation to the translation process.

One of the first to give the definition to *translation strategy* was H. Krings. With regard to translation strategies, Krings suggests that translation strategies can be classified as strategies of comprehension (inferencing and use of reference works), equivalent retrieval (especially interlingual and intralingual associations), equivalent monitoring (such as comparing Source Text (ST) and Target Text (TT), decision-making (choosing between two equivalent solutions) and reduction (for instance of marked or metaphorical text portions). Krings defines *translation strategy* as perceived interpreter plans aimed at solving specific translation problems (Krings, 1986).

According to Lörcher, *translation strategy* is "a potentially conscious procedure for the solution of a problem which an individual is faced with when translating a text segment from one language to another" (Lörcher, 1991: 76).

Peter Newmark classified *translation strategies* as follows: 1. word-for-word translation; 2. literal translation; 3. faithful translation; 4. semantic translation; 5. adaptation; 6. free translation; 7. idiomatic translation; 8. communicative translation (Newmark, 1988: 45-47).

In the Russian translation studies one of the first to use this term was D. Schweitzer. He indicates that translation is generally composed of a series of choices. At the first stage translator faces the choice of *translation strategies*, primarily including the decision to give preference to textually precise (literal) translation or to translation, boldly diverging from the original formal structure, closer to free translation. Further, translator decides which aspects of the source text should be reflected foremost in the target text. Thus, translator establishes a hierarchy of values, organizes priorities (Schwejtser, 1988: 65).

### **Componential Analysis**

Linguistics has developed various methods of lexical semantics research. This research work employs the method of componential analysis. Use of componential analysis to separate in the linguistic unit meanings elementary meanings (semes) allows us to compare some compound of source and translation units and to identify the extent of compliance with each other. Method of componential analysis was developed by N. Trubetskoy applying to phonemes, and due to its efficiency and versatility penetrated the study of grammatical and hereafter lexical meanings (Mednikova, 1969).

In his textbook “Translation and Linguistics” Schweitzer gives the following definition of componential analysis, “componential analysis in modern linguistic literature refers to that method of text analysis, which is aimed at selecting of word components or semantic components (in other words ‘semes’ or ‘semantic multipliers’), as well as at studying out the principles of the compounds and their structural organization. Componential analysis provides an opportunity for higher and in-depth analysis of the word semantic structure, identification the correspondence and correlation between its individual meanings, and specification those characteristics on the basis of which the words are combined into groups of synonyms or semantic fields”. Schweitzer distinguishes three types of components – general, differential and additional (Schwejtser, 1973: 44). The term semantic component is used in this paper.

### **Discussion**

#### **Figurative (Picturesque) Words**

Kharitonov defines figurative words in the Yakut language as “unchangeable words that express the sensual presentation of the motion, the signs and the internal state of the object” (Kharitonov, 1954).

One of the Yakut researchers to pay attention to the originality and uniqueness of the figurative words was Alexey E. Kulakovsky. He applied to them his own term ‘picturesque words’. It is worth noting that Kulakovsky emphasized untranslatability of ‘picturesque words’. Kulakovsky wrote that ‘picturesqueness’ of them lies in the fact that “each such word draws several signs of the subject, expressing coincidentally the action of the conversation object” (Kulakovsky, 1979: 385). The researcher was impressed most notably by the fact that, in spite of the spontaneity and improvisation in the use of such words, listeners could immediately understand their meaning. He supposes that the bases for the creation of such words still are some linguistic laws, but the nature of these laws is not yet clear. ‘Picturesque words’ cover a wide range of meanings: in addition to description of the form, motion, and shapes, they can give the concept of sound and color (Kulakovsky, 1979: 386).

Although figurative word-roots are of no large amount, each of them forms a large number of derivative figurative words. For instance, *лэс курдук* (*les kurduk*) – ‘small in stature, with a broad, solid figure, chunky’; *лэскэү* (*leskei*) – ‘to bulge, to protrude in rounded shape (e.g. about a short stature person’s belly)’; to have a bulging belly; *лэспэү* (*lespei*) – ‘to have a fairly dense, broad shape with small stature’; *лэспэт* (*lespet*) – ‘to have a broad form’; to make something broad’; *лэхэриү* (*leherii*) – ‘to walk briskly, run, striking the eye by big belly with small stature’; *лэхэй* (*leseii*) – ‘to be big, bulging, protruding (about short human’s stomach, usually a child)’; *лэхэзэр* (*leseger*) – ‘with a big protruding belly (about a man of small stature, a child)’ (Sleptsov, 2009: 170-172).

When translating such figurative words, the translator is expected to be very careful, since they play a significant role in the Yakut epic as in

translation its general content-meaning hand, so in its artistic expressiveness and poetic style.

Let us to consider the example of a componential analysis of the Yakut figurative word *доодос гын* (*dodos gyn*):

Тоң маһы  
Тоһута тэппитэ  
Тойон киһи буолан,  
Доодос гына туран  
Дойохтуу хаалла  
[Oyuunuskay: 106].

The Russian translation:

Большие обломки стволов,  
Как *дородные* тойоны-князя,  
Стоя, беседовали меж собой.  
[Oyunsky, 2007: 78]

The English translation:

When it kicked  
A frozen tree,  
Standing *stately*  
As a toyon man,  
It kept chattering.  
[Oyunsky, 2014: 90].

Figurative words are introduced into speech by means of verb ‘gyn’ (*to do*) or by postposition ‘*kurduk*’ (*like, similar*). Sleptsov Yakut-Russian Dictionary defines a figurative verb ‘dodoi’ “to move, to walk slowly (about a short, full-figured person)”; ‘doodonoo’ – “to walk steadily, slowly, with small steps (about a short, very full-figured person, an animal with short

legs)”; ‘doodonochu’ – an adverb “with dignity, sedately” (Sleptsov, 2006: 164).

Oxford Dictionary of English defines the word ‘stately’ as “impressive or grand in size, appearance or manner; formal, slow, and dignified” (Oxford Dictionary of English, 2006: 1727).

Componential analysis of the figurative word ‘dodos gyn’ and its translation into English by Adverb ‘stately’ in Table 1 shows that the common component is archeseme manner of action and walking’, as well as a differential component ‘dignified’. Differential component ‘slowly’ coincides with the additional component of the English word ‘stately’. It should be noted that the person to whom the figurative word ‘dodos gyn’ relates should be thick, but at the same time, he must be aware of his dignity, be slow in his movements. Labial phoneme / o /, according to Afanasyev’s classification of ideophones, represents a rounded shape of the object (Afanasyev, 1993: 10). Shoulders and all of his body parts must be short, thick, and rounded.

Thus, the translation of the figurative word ‘dodos gyn’ is believed to be appropriate, since it reflects the differential components of dignity and slowness. To achieve a greater effect it can be strengthened by the addition of the similar structure epithet, which has an additional component of ‘being abdominous, overweight’ ‘*stout*’: *standing stout and stately*. But in this case we lose the rhythmic element of the epic.

In the Russian translation this figurative word is omitted, but this fact is compensated

Table 1

Word	Archiseme	Differential Component	Additional Component
Доодос гына ( <i>туран</i> )	Manner of action, walking	Slowly, gently; dignified	About a person or animal of small stature
Stately ( <i>standing</i> )	Manner of action, walking	Impressive, grand, formal, dignified	Slow

by the introducing of the adjective to the word ‘toyon’ – ‘дородный’(‘stout’), which is close by meaning and sound to the original word.

### Word Pairs

Word pairs are considered to be specific vocabulary of expressive fund of the Yakut language. The grammar of the Yakut language of word pairs states that “the words of this type are underinvestigated”. There are only preliminary observations. So you have to be limited only by individual remarks about these words. Word pairs are widely presented in the language of poetry, fiction, as well as in speech. The Yakut linguistics drew up the following traditional definition of the word pairs: “Word pairs are coordinative, i.e. grammatically equal or parallel combination of two words belonging to the same part of speech, and representing one lexical unit” (Kharitonov, 1982).

Let us consider the example of a word pair in the Yakut heroic epic “Nurgun Botur the Swift”, Song 2 – in the Yakut version:

...Сир гиэнэ киинэ буолан  
*Сириэдийбит-сиппитэбит...*  
 [Oyuunuskay: 60]

The Russian translation:

...Необозрим простор  
 Великой долины той...  
 [Oyunsky, 2007: 46]

The English translation:

...It became the full and ripe  
 Centre of the world...  
 [Oyunsky, 2014: 45]

In this example, the verb pair ‘сиппит–сириэдийбит’ (‘sippit-siriediybit’) consists of synonymous verbs in the past tense. According to Ubryatova’s classification it refers to a combination consisting of two notional words (Ubryatova, 1960).

The semantic components analysis by Sleptsov’s Yakut-Russian Dictionary showed the following:

1. Сит (‘sit’) 1) to overtake, to catch someone or something l. ‘кини уолаттары ситтэ’ he caught up with the boys; 2) fig. to reach, achieve smth.; ‘Итинэнэн тугу ситтигиний?’ What you have achieved by this? 3) fig. to keep up, to mature; 4) fig.to grow up; reach adulthood, maturity (Sleptsov, 1972: 327).

2. Сириэдий (‘siridii’) – to settle, to spread (usually on a solid household) (Sleptsov, 1972: 326).

A componential analysis of the word pair ‘сиппит-сириэдийбит’ in Table 2 revealed – a differential component in the word pair ‘сиппит’ and ‘сириэдийбит’ is a figurative meaning: ‘сиппит’ – development, ‘сириэдийбит’ – feasibility. A common component in these word pairs is a sign of the completed form. The components of the word pairs together have a common meaning of ‘mature’, in the context of this epic they are translated into English as a coordinative combination comprising two homogeneous Adjectives – «fullandripe», and are connected by the coordinating conjunction ‘and’.

A componential analysis of the English pair word ‘ripe’ and ‘full’ in Table 3 showed that a differential component of the word ‘full’ is an

Table 2

Word	Archiseme	Differential Component	Additional Component
сиппит (to overtake)	Take the complete form	Development	Full age
Сириэдийби (to settle)	Take the complete form	Feasibility	Well grounded

Table 3

Word	Archiseme	Differential Component	Additional Component
full	Complete form (in full)	rich, full	Slang : rude , dirty , drunk
ripe	Complete form (ready)	Mature, sustained	Detailed; satiated ; coast

adjective “rich, full, word ripe – ripe, mature. Additional components of the word “ful” are slang words – rude, dirty, drunk, the words “ripe” – “detailed”, “ful”, “satiated”, “coast”. A common component of this pair of word is a “completed form”.

A word pair ‘сиппит-сириэдийбит’ is translated by archeseme equivalent ‘full and ripe’.

A word group ‘full and ripe’ is similar to English pair synonyms: word of the same part of speech (Adjective), identical in the objective-logical meaning (the completed form is ‘ready’), with intensification and increase of the meaning. In comparison with the English binary idiom: “alive and kicking” (Kunin, 2005: 139) – there is a coordinative word combination, reference to the same concept, and in the Yakut word pair ‘сиппит-сириэдийбит’ introduces the reference to generic notion of higher level – first is the component of action development ‘сиппит’, then the component of feasibility and completeness ‘сириэдийбит’. Nevertheless, in the English variant there are no characteristic features of a pair synonyms as alliteration, also one of the synonyms is not an archaism.

#### ***Culture Specific Vocabulary***

Heroic epics keep important information about the unique culture of the ethnic; therefore, a particular challenge is translating culture specific vocabulary. The translator must perfectly know all the details of the culture specific vocabulary translation, precise structure of the target language, its style, and be aware of the ethnic culture. To meet these challenges, researchers have developed

certain strategies, techniques of translation: transliteration, transcription, calque, descriptive translation, lexical-semantic replacement (concretization, generalization, and modulation), the translation comment, functional replacement, omission. This paper views most commonly used strategies.

Transcription is mainly used to translate mythological characters’ proper names (Үрүн Уолан – Urung Uolan; Тимир Дьигистэй – Timir Jigistei; Баай Байанай – Baai Baianai; Саха Саарын Тойон – Sakha Saaryn Toyon, etc.), the names of the landscape objects (Кудулу Байҕал – Kudulu Baigal, Өлүү Чөркөчөөх – Eluu Cherkechekh, etc.); vocabulary, naming domestic realities (салама – salamah, сэргэ – sergeh, чорон – choron, etc.).

Calque, strategy of literal, word-for-word, or root-for-root translation, is mainly used in translating epithets (Ehekh Kharbir, Three Shadows; three-layered sky; the eight-rimmed, eight-brimmed – traditional regular epithet, part of the so called ‘epic formula’).

The examples of descriptive translations are ‘Уот Кудулу Байҕал – Kudulu Baigal the blazing ocean; Дьылҕа Тойон – Jilga Toyon, the Lord of Fate; алаас – alaas-valley; эмэгэт – emeget-idol; Ketteny the blacksmith’.

Translation comment is one of the most frequently used methods of translation in this translation of “Nurgun Botur the Swift”. Translation comments are given in the text as a footnote on the same page, with detailed explication of a word, and also before the translated text in a special section “Select Glossary and Commentaries”.

### Conclusion

Translation strategy is a term that different researchers understand differently. On the one hand, it is a cognitive process that involves translation procedures that occur in the mind of the translator, on the other hand, a strategy implicates various translation techniques, methods. The common factor is that strategy is used by translators to find solutions to translation problems and implementation of adequate translation in general.

Thus, we come to conclusion that in order to represent a 'picture' of Yakut figurative words and to strive to preserve a structure and a sense of word pairs when translating them into English,

we suggest considering the same composition of a word by the componential analysis and only then, having chosen the essential component, do the translation. The paper also viewed several examples on translation strategies of culture specific vocabulary.

Olonkho as the most ancient epic art of the Sakha people has marked vocabulary, which includes Yakut figurative words, word pairs, as well as the culture specific vocabulary. It is considered to be a specific field of culture, which reflects the identity, the culture and mentality of the Sakha people. Professional responsibility of the translator is to overcome the cultural barrier applying different strategies.

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## **Переводческие стратегии в якутском героическом эпосе Олонхо: лексические проблемы (на материале эпоса «Нюргун Боотур Стремительный»)**

**В.Г. Дьячковская, А.А. Находкина**  
*Северо-Восточный федеральный университет  
им. М.К. Аммосова  
Россия, 677000, Якутск, ул. Белинского, 58*

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*В статье рассматриваются стратегии перевода лексических единиц якутского героического эпоса «Дьулуруйар Ньургун Боотур» П. А. Ойунского на английский язык. Авторы дают краткую информацию об истории олонхо. Приводятся различные определения термина «стратегия перевода». Исследуются примеры применения метода компонентного анализа при переводе образных и парных слов. В статье также даются определения этих терминов. Безэквивалентная лексика рассматривается как одна из основных лексических проблем, с которыми сталкивается переводчик при переводе эпических текстов.*

*Ключевые слова: перевод, эпос, олонхо, стратегии перевода, безэквивалентная лексика, образные слова, парные слова.*

*Научная специальность: 10.00.00 – филологические науки.*

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