Article

The Formation and the Functions of Cultural Codes in the Works of Charles Dickens

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Abstract: Cultural codes embedded in literature reflect the social, historical, and religious realities of their time, serving as symbolic markers that enrich meaning and provide insight into collective consciousness. Charles Dickens, particularly in his novel Hard Times, masterfully integrates cultural codes that mirror the complexities of 19th-century English society, including class divisions, industrialization, family relations, and religious beliefs. While Dickens's works have been extensively studied globally, there has been insufficient focus in Uzbek linguistics on the linguocultural dimensions of his writings, especially regarding their translation and the preservation of cultural nuances. This study analyzes the formation and functions of cultural codes in Hard Times, exploring how they shape the stylistic and emotional coloring of the text and how they are transmitted or lost in Uzbek translation. The analysis demonstrates that Dickens's use of names, idioms, biblical references, and social practices carries deep cultural significance, often obscured in translation when literal methods are applied. Examples include symbolic character names, metaphors of luxury such as turtle soup, and satirical expressions like "Hands," which lose their stylistic coloring in Uzbek versions. The research introduces a linguocultural approach to Dickens's work within the Uzbek scholarly context, combining literary analysis with translation studies to reveal how cultural codes function across languages. These findings underscore the necessity for translators to consider socio-historical context and cultural symbolism to preserve stylistic depth, thereby contributing to more accurate cross-cultural communication and a fuller appreciation of Dickens's literary legacy.

Keywords: Cultural Codes, Hard Times, Social Background, Linguocultural Analysis, Character, Tradition, Religious

1. Introduction

Cultural semiotics is one of the increasingly developing directions in modern linguistics, focusing on how cultural features are expressed and transmitted through language. A growing number of linguists are conducting research in this field, recognizing that cultural codes embedded in literary works provide deep insights into national identity, traditions, and historical consciousness. Although the works of Charles Dickens have been studied and analyzed from various perspectives by many researchers worldwide, they have not yet been sufficiently examined by Uzbek linguists from a linguocultural standpoint[1]. Dickens's works, with their vivid depictions of social life in 19th-century England, present a wealth of cultural codes that reflect the customs, traditions, religious beliefs, and socio-economic realities of the time. However, these codes are not always immediately visible to the reader and require close analysis of characters,

events, and narrative details to be identified[2]. His novel Hard Times is especially significant because it captures the struggles of industrial society, the clash of utilitarian philosophy with human values, and the conditions of the working class. Within this context, cultural codes function as symbolic markers that enrich the stylistic and emotional coloring of the text. The challenge arises when translating such works into other languages, as the depth of meaning may be lost if cultural codes are rendered literally rather than interpreted within their socio-historical context. Therefore, examining Dickens's works from a linguocultural perspective not only contributes to translation studies but also enhances cross-cultural understanding by revealing how language and culture are inseparably intertwined in literary discourse[3].

2. Materials and Methods

This research is based on a qualitative literary analysis method, supported by linguocultural and historical approaches, with particular attention to Charles Dickens's novel Hard Times and its Uzbek translation by Khonimqul Tojiyev[4]. The methodology involves identifying, classifying, and interpreting cultural codes embedded in the text, with the aim of understanding how Dickens uses language, character names, idioms, and symbolic references to reflect the cultural, social, and religious context of 19th-century England. A central part of the analysis is the comparison of how these cultural elements are conveyed or altered in the Uzbek translation, thereby assessing the challenges of cultural transfer between languages. For this purpose, the study applies established theories and concepts from English, Russian, and Uzbek linguists, enabling a comparative perspective[5].

The analytical process includes a close reading of the source text to extract cultural items such as names, metaphors, idioms, religious allusions, and social practices, followed by an examination of their linguistic, cultural, and stylistic significance. Translation strategies are then evaluated to determine whether they preserve or alter the cultural coloring of the original[6]. Historical methods are employed to contextualize Dickens's use of cultural references, linking them to contemporary customs, class relations, and religious beliefs of Victorian England. By combining linguocultural analysis with comparative translation studies, this methodology ensures a comprehensive exploration of how cultural codes function in Dickens's prose and the extent to which these codes are retained or transformed in Uzbek translation[7].

3. Results

First of all, Charles Dickens paid special attention to the choice of names for the characters in the work. In particular, not a single name in "Hard Times" was chosen in vain, but has its special meaning. If we analyze them, each name in it was chosen by skillfully using the pecularities of the English language, literature and culture and reveals certain features of the characters, but in the translation they were not given any attention and were transcribed as a simple name[8]. For example, Sissy, whose real name is Cecilia Jupe, is called Sissy by everyone. In English, the name "Sissy" has the following meanings: 1) a girlish boy; 2) a cowardly, shy, timid child. The writer chose this name for his character, considering the second meaning of this word. Sissy actually attended Mr. Gradgrind's school, which was based solely on facts, but she hated it and was very quiet in class. Interestingly, no child was called by their first name at this school, but was given a number. Sissy was also referred to by her teacher as "girl number twenty"[9].

"Hard Times" contains several other cultural codes that reflect British customs, without which a reader who is not aware of them will not be able to fully understand the content of the work. For example:

There is not a Hand in this town, sir, man, woman, or child, but has one ultimate object in life. That object is to be fed on turtle soup and venison, with a gold spoon. Now,

they're not a going – none of 'em – ever to be fed on turtle soup and venison, with a gold spoon. And now you know the place[10].

It is known that drinking turtle soup from a golden spoon was quite expensive, and this dish was considered a symbol of the English upper class. This dish was prepared only at banquets or official meetings. I. Beaton's "Household management" reports that turtle soup was a sign of luxury, and in the last century it became a tradition among the rich, and was served at the luxurious luncheon table organized annually by the Lord Mayor at the Guildhall. Workers could only dream of this. Leaders like Mr. Bounderby, without even considering the workers as people, addressed them as "Hands". The lexical meaning of this word means "body part", that is, the author effectively uses satire with the help of metonymy. However, in translation, this word is simply translated as "worker", and the stylistic coloring is lost[11].

4. Discussion

The relationship between Stephen, a simple worker, and his wife can provide insight into family relationships in the author's time. His wife is described in the work as "She took to drinking, left off working, sold the furniture, pawned the clothes, and played old Gooseberry" [12]. Although Stephen does not live with his wife, he cannot divorce her. This is because there were two types of divorce in that era: the first, "divorce a vinculo matrimonii", by marriage; in which separation and remarriage are permitted; the second, "divorce a mensa et thoro", by court order, which required legal measures, in which even if they separated, they remained married, but did not live together, that is, they were considered married and could not remarry. This type of divorce was carried out by the church courts, while the first type, which was only available through parliament, was only affordable for the upper classes. Stephen, being a simple worker, can only get a divorce through the church, but even though he loves Rachel, he cannot marry her[13]. This is also based on the idea of utilitarianism, which is based on the idea of considering that the population is growing faster than the means of subsistence, and the aim is to reduce the birth rate among the poor. However, soon, after the publication of the works of Charles Dickens, reforms in family divorce relations in England begin to be implemented. In 1850, a royal commission is established to regulate divorce issues. Starting from 1853, divorce matters are transferred from church courts to civil courts, and these courts begin to implement both types of divorces mentioned above. The above sentence uses the expression "played old Gooseberry". This expression is used in the sense of "being the third, the extra between two lovers". In the work, the author uses the phrase for a different purpose, namely to mean "to live a chaotic life", but in the translation, this phrase is not translated as intended[14].

According to his religious beliefs, Charles Dickens was a Christian and used religious legends and heroes in his works many times. For example, when Stephen's wife became addicted to alcohol and had a chaotic life, one night Stephen had an opportunity to get rid of her, but he didn't do that. At that time he was consoled by the words "Thou knowest who said, "Let him who is without sin among you cast the first stone at her!" Thou art not the man to cast the last stone, Stephen". Here a reference is made to a legend in the Bible. According to it, a woman with bad morals is brought to Jesus to examine him and people asked to verdict on her. If Jesus sentenced the woman to be stoned, he would accuse the prophet of cruelty and inability to be the Savior, and if he released the woman from punishment, he would accuse her of not following the precepts of the Christian religion. Then Jesus turns to the people and says, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." As a result, no one throws a stone at the woman and she is forgiven and released. In the work, Stephen does not do this even when he has the opportunity to punish his wife, which is why the author refers to the above legend[15].

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that Charles Dickens was a deeply thoughtful and reasonable person, who possessed both religious and secular knowledge, and was not only a skilled writer but also an influential social critic of his era. His ability to intertwine cultural, social, and religious elements into his works, particularly in Hard Times, demonstrates his profound understanding of human nature and society. The cultural codes reflected in his writings reveal the complexities of nineteenth-century English life, highlighting class divisions, family relations, and moral dilemmas, all of which remain relevant for contemporary readers. The analysis shows that Dickens's narrative power lay not only in storytelling but also in embedding symbolic meanings that require careful cultural and linguistic interpretation. For translators, this underscores the importance of going beyond linguistic equivalence to convey the full depth of cultural and stylistic nuances. Successful translation of Dickens's works demands familiarity not only with the English language but also with the socio-economic background, literary traditions, and religious contexts that shaped his writing. Without this multidimensional approach, the stylistic coloring and deeper implications of his texts risk being lost. Furthermore, Dickens's use of satire, allegory, and biblical references illustrates his dual reliance on both faith and reason, which gave his works enduring resonance. Therefore, his novels should be regarded as complex cultural artifacts that bridge literature, history, and philosophy. A holistic approach to their study and translation contributes to preserving Dickens's legacy and ensures his relevance across cultures and generations.

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