

# Translating cultural capital from Croatian into English - Case study of 'Naš čovjek na terenu' by Robert Perišić and its translation into English

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**Translating cultural capital from Croatian into English – Case study of  
'Naš čovjek na terenu' by Robert Perišić and its translation into English**

Diplomski rad

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## **Table of contents**

### 1. Abstract

### 2. Sažetak

### 3. Introduction

#### 3.1. Research questions

### 4. Theoretical framework

#### 4.1. Translation theory

#### 4.2. What makes a good translation?

#### 4.3. The issue of untranslatability

### 5. Culture

#### 5.1. Different definitions of culture

#### 5.2. Culture and language

#### 5.3. Cultural knowledge in the process of translation

#### 5.4. Translating cultural capital

### 6. Analysis

#### 6.1. Methodology

#### 6.2. 'Naš čovjek na terenu' by Robert Perišić

#### 6.3. Strategies of translating cultural capital in 'Naš čovjek na terenu'

#### 6.4. Strategies of translating slang and dialect in 'Naš čovjek na terenu'

#### 6.5. Corpus findings

### 7. Conclusion

### 8. Reference

## 1. Abstract

Language and culture have always been interwoven and could not exist without each other. Language reflects the beliefs and values of a culture and is shaped by it at the same time. The most important bond in communicating between cultures is the translator. His/her task is to introduce the target audience to a different culture enriching his own.

This paper gives a brief overview of the most influential translation studies theories, analyses the qualities of a good translation and the issue of untranslatability. It stresses the importance of the cultural knowledge of a translator in addition to his/her linguistic and stylistic competence. It lists different definitions of culture and analyses the relationship between culture and language. Furthermore, it emphasises the role of a translator as a cultural mediator and mentions various strategies and principles of translating cultural capital.

Its main focus is on the analysis of culture-bound terms from the book 'Naš čovjek na terenu' by the Croatian author Robert Perišić and the strategies used for their translation into English by Will Firth. Furthermore, it discusses the translation strategies used, validates the choices made by the translator and offers alternative solutions for particular translation challenges.

**Key words:** literary translation, culture, cultural capital, strategies of translating cultural capital

## 2. Sažetak

Jezik i kultura oduvijek su bili isprepleteni te jedno bez drugoga ne bi mogli postojati. U jeziku se ogledaju vjerovanja i vrijednosti kulture, dok istovremeno ta kultura oblikuje jezik. Najvažnija spona u komunikaciji između kultura jesu prevoditelji. Njihov je zadatak upoznati ciljnu publiku s drugom kulturom i na taj način obogatiti vlastitu.

Ovaj rad donosi kratak pregled najutjecajnijih teorija prevođenja, analizira karakteristike dobrog prijevoda i problem neprevodivosti te ističe važnost prevoditeljevog znanja o kulturi, uz jezične i stilske kompetencije. Rad daje i različite definicije kulture te istražuje vezu između kulture i jezika. Naglašava ulogu prevoditelja kao posrednika između kultura te navodi različite strategije i principe prevođenja kulturnog kapitala.

U fokusu je rada analiza kulturoloških pojmova iz romana 'Naš čovjek na terenu' hrvatskoga autora Roberta Perišića i strategije kojima se pri njihovom prevođenju na engleski jezik koristio prevoditelj Will Firth. U radu se komentiraju i validiraju prevoditeljske strategije i u određenim slučajevima nude alternativna rješenja.

**Ključne riječi:** književno prevođenje, kultura, kulturni kapital, strategije prevođenja kulturnog kapitala

### 3. Introduction

Language, as an important and inseparable part of human culture, reflects the customs, beliefs and behaviours of particular social groups and it certainly is much more than just a means of communication. Every language has its own unique ways of expressing various aspects of human life and the world around us. That is where both the challenge and the beauty of translation lies.

The translation of culture-bound items is one of the greatest challenges in literary translation. A good translator possesses of course excellent linguistic skills and is familiar with the source and target culture, but this is often not enough. He needs to recognize subtle semantic differences and read between the lines, make the translation flow and seem as natural as possible. Clearly, the process of translation requires much research, attention and effort.

The aim of the paper is to stress the importance of cultural knowledge in the process of translation and to show how different strategies deriving from translation theory can be applied in translating cultural capital. The theoretical part of the paper lists significant translation theories as well as various definitions of culture. It examines different strategies for translating cultural capital and shows their practical application through examples from the translation of the novel 'Naš čovjek na terenu' by Robert Perišić. This paper is also an exercise in targeted translation quality assessment and criticism.

Since much research has been done on translating cultural capital from English into Croatian, I decided to analyse the vice versa situation: translating from Croatian into English. It was very difficult to find contemporary Croatian novels translated into English or into any other foreign language for that matter. Luckily, I came across the book 'Naš čovjek na terenu' by Robert Perišić, which proved to be a valuable corpus for my research and also an entertaining piece of Croatian literature I highly recommend.

### **3.1. *Research questions***

The particular issues that will be looked at in this paper are the following:

- 1) Which strategies for translating cultural capital prevail in the case study?
- 2) What are the most efficient strategies for translating cultural capital applied in the corpus?
- 3) Which translation solutions and strategies need to be reconsidered and why?
- 4) Which aspects of Croatian culture have proven to be the most challenging to translate in the corpus under observation?
- 5) What alternative solutions can be offered for particular translation challenges?

## 4. Theoretical framework

### 4.1. *Translation theory*

Translation has always played a significant role in human culture and intercultural communication, but translation studies are a relatively new discipline. In the past sixty years many linguists, theorists and professional translators have attempted to define various principles of translation theory and to provide solutions to common translation problems.

Newmark (1988a:19) believes that translation theory's main concern is to determine appropriate translation methods for the widest possible range of texts and text-categories. He also claims that it provides a framework of principles, restricted rules or hints for translating texts and criticizing translations. Fedorov (1958, 1968 cited in Newmark, 1988b:9) sees translation theory as an independent linguistic discipline, which derives from observations and provides the basis for practice.

Furthermore, James S. Holmes (1988 cited in Munday, 2008:10) distinguishes between 'pure' and 'applied' translation studies. In his map of translation studies, Holmes divides translation theory into a theoretical and a descriptive branch. The theoretical branch is again divided into general and partial theories. According to Munday (2008:10), general theories refer to those who describe every type of translation and make generalisations for translation as a whole while partial theories are restricted according to the medium, area, rank, text type, time and problem. The descriptive branch, on the other hand, is concerned with the description of the phenomena of translation (Munday, 2008:10) and can be product, process and function oriented. Applied translation studies include three co-dependent fields: translation training, translation aids and translation criticism.

In addition, Bassnett (2002:17) claims that Translation Studies is "exploring new ground, bridging as it does the gap between the vast area of stylistics, literary history, linguistics, semiotics and aesthetics". She divides Translation Studies into four general categories of interest (Bassnett, 2002:17): 'History of Translation' as a part of literary history; 'Translation in the TL Culture', which extends the work on single texts or authors and includes work on the influence of a text, author or genre; 'Translation and Linguistics'



concerned with the studies of linguistic equivalence, language-bond meaning, untranslatability, etc. and finally 'Translation and Poetics', which includes literary translation in both theory and practice.

Roman Jakobson, defines three types of translation (Jakobson, 1959 cited in Munday, 2008:5): intralingual translation ('rewording'), where a text is rewritten in the same language, interlingual translation ('translation proper'), which includes interpreting verbal signs by means of another language and intersemiotic translation ('transmutation'), where a written text is translated into music, a film or a painting. One of the central concerns of translation theory is the concept of equivalence. In addition to defining the previously mentioned types of translation, Jakobson (1959 cited in Bassnett, 2002:24) discusses the issue of equivalence. He states that complete equivalence in the sense of synonymy or sameness cannot take place in any of his types of translation. In fact, he believes that all poetic art is untranslatable and that only the so called 'creative transposition' can be achieved. Mounin (1963 cited in Bassnett, 2002:24) has a similar theory stating that translation is a series of operations of which the starting point and the final product are just 'significations' and function within a culture.

Eugene Nida, one of the most influential translation theorists and founders of modern translation studies, introduces the concepts of formal and dynamic (functional) equivalence. Nida claims that formal equivalence is oriented towards the source language structure (cited in Munday, 2008:42) and that it focuses on the message itself. The message in the target language should match the message in the ST as closely as possible.

Dynamic equivalence, on the other hand, aims at complete naturalness of expression (Munday, 2008:42). The aim of dynamic equivalence is to find "the closest natural equivalent to the source-language message" (Nida, 1964 cited in Munday, 2008:42). In other words, it is important to construct a natural sounding and fluent translation that will have the same effect as the original. Nida therefore stresses that this "easy natural style in translating, despite the extreme difficulty of producing it [...] is nevertheless essential to producing in the ultimate receptors a response similar to that of the original receptors" (Nida, 1964 cited in Venuti, 1995:16).

According to Venuti (1995:16), with his theory of dynamic equivalence Nida advocates the so called domestication of translation. Domestication and foreignization are terms popularised by Friedrich Schleiermacher denoting "ethical attitudes towards a foreign text and culture, ethical effects produced by the choice of a text for translation and by the

strategy devised to use it” (Venuti 1955:19). Moreover, Schleiermacher’s theory was further developed into the theory of two basic translation types, overt and covert translation. Overt translation, according to House (2003:98), is not a second original and has an independent status in the source culture while a covert translation enjoys the status of an original text in the target culture.

Neubert (1967 cited in Bassnett, 2002:34), on the other hand, distinguishes between the study of translation as a process and as a product. He stresses that translation equivalence should be considered a semiotic category, comprising a syntactic, semantic and pragmatic component arranged in a hierarchical relationship (Neubert, 1967 cited in Bassnett, 2002:35).

To summarise, translation studies offer a vast theoretical framework and a variety of principles and strategies which can be useful in the process of translation. There is of course much more research to be done, especially because it is still a young discipline.

#### ***4.2. What makes a good translation?***

In its broadest sense translation is the process of rendering from one language into another. Newmark (1988a:7) sees translation as a craft consisting in the attempt to replace a written message and/or statement in another language. However, every translator knows that translation is far more than just replacing one linguistic unit with another and that his main priority is to translate ideas, not words. This can be seen in literary translation where the so called “stylistic competence” (Tabakowska, 1993:72) comes into play. Tabakowska claims that this type of competence “lies within fuzzy borders that separate ‘the craft’ from ‘the art’ of translation”.

Translation indeed is an art and it might therefore be purposeless to talk about an ideal or even correct or good translation. This is particularly true in the case of a creative and imaginative process like literary translation where some translation solutions are merely a matter of taste and point of view. Bassnett (2002:35) claims that “if a dozen translators tackle the same poem, they will produce a dozen different versions”.

Newmark (1988b:6) writes that “a satisfactory translation is always possible, but a good translator is never satisfied with it” and he believes that a translation can usually be improved. However, there are some general rules and parameters for establishing the quality of a translated text.

First of all, there is ‘invisibility’, a frequent term used when distinguishing between good and bad translations. A good translation is clear, coherent and emphasizes the essential meaning of the original. In fact, it should appear as an original text and not a translation meaning that the translator should be as invisible as possible. According to Venuti (1995:3), invisibility refers to the illusionistic effect of discourse, of the translator’s own manipulation of the translating language.

Second, a quality translation has to be fluent and transparent, which is again connected to translator’s invisibility and the fact that the text should read as an original:

A translated text, whether prose or poetry, fiction or nonfiction, is judged acceptable by most publishers, reviewers and readers when it reads fluently, when the absence of

any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities makes it seem transparent, giving the appearance [...] that the translation is not in fact a translation, but the original. (Venuti 1995:3)

Considering the faithfulness to the ST, Belloc (1931 cited in Bassnett, 2002:140) accepts the moral responsibility to the original, but also claims that the translator “has the right to significantly alter the text in the translation process in order to provide the TL reader with a text that conforms to TL stylistic and idiomatic norms”. In brief, the TT should match the ST but at the same time it has to be adapted to the rules of the TL.

Furthermore, Katan (1999:14) considers translators to be ‘privileged readers’ of the source language text. They have the opportunity to read the text carefully before translating and therefore are in a position to help the target reader by producing as clear a text as the context would warrant. To illustrate, Shapiro (cited in Venuti, 1995:3) compared a good translation to a pane of glass:

I see a translation as the attempt to produce a text so transparent that it does not seem to be translated. A good translation is like a pane of glass. You only notice that it's there when there are little imperfections – scratches, bubbles. Ideally, there shouldn't be any. It should never call attention to itself.

However, it is not always easy to remain under a shadow and repress your personal opinions and writing style. As the American translator Norman Shapiro (1986 cited in Venuti, 1995:7) puts it: “Certainly my ego and personality are involved in translating, and yet I have to try to stay faithful to the basic text in such a way that my own personality does not show.” Despite the fact that a translation is not an entirely unique and new piece of writing, “every translation, up to a certain point, is an invention and as such it constitutes a unique text” (Paz, 1992 cited in Bassnett, 2002:46).

Nowadays, there is a wide range of translation fields, including legal, business, technical, medical, literary translation and many more. Since many translators do not have the luxury to specialise only in one area, they translate all sorts of texts from various fields. So perhaps an asset of a good translator is to have good general knowledge or to know something

about everything. As Blaise Pascal puts it: “As we cannot be universal by knowing everything there is to know about everything, we must know a little about everything.”<sup>1</sup>

In addition, the quality of the work one needs to translate can also vary. As stated before, the translator’s task is to maintain the essence and meaning of the original text, but what if the source text is of low quality? In Newmark’s words:

A translator must respect good writing scrupulously by accounting for its language, structures and content, whether the piece is scientific or poetic, philosophical or fictional. If the writing is poor, it is normally his duty to improve it, whether it is technical or a routine, commercialized best-seller. (1988a:6)

Finally, translators need to learn how to make use of new technologies and translation tools as well as of the Internet as a valuable source of information. As Čačija (2008:113) puts it, “translators are assumed to have perfected adequate techniques for finding relevant information offered by various sources, especially those offered online”.

Altogether, translation clearly is a demanding and challenging task requiring much research, effort and constant learning. The translator’s task is to find a suitable translation method and use all other sources of information available in order to produce a clear, coherent and transparent text which is faithful to the original and yet a distinctive piece of writing.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/385623-little-of-everything---as-we-cannot-be-universal-by>

### **4.3. The issue of untranslatability**

A frequent question in translation theory is the issue of ‘untranslatability’ or the limits of translatability. Bassnett (2002:39) examines Catford’s theory of linguistic and cultural untranslatability. The former occurs when there is no lexical or syntactical substitute in the TL for a SL item and the latter when there is no relevant situational feature for the SL text in the TL culture.

The problem of linguistic untranslatability can easily be solved by applying rules of the TL structure. For instance, the linguistically untranslatable German sentence *Um wieviel Uhr darf man Sie morgen wecken?* can easily be rendered into English as *What time would you like to be woken tomorrow?* (Bassnett, 2002:39).

However, cultural untranslatability proposes a greater problem since it is often not enough to just look up the meaning of a word in a dictionary. The cultural context and references associated with the word are equally important. Bassnett (2002:39) illustrates this fact with the term ‘bathroom’ in English, Finnish and Japanese. In those languages both the object and the use of the object have completely different concepts and one has to examine all the cultural aspects when translating it. For the translation of many cultural concepts detailed research is therefore the key to a correct and appropriate translation.

In 2004 the international translation agency Today Translations conducted a survey to find the world’s most difficult words to translate.<sup>2</sup> A team of 1,000 linguists identified the word ‘ilunga’ from the Tshiluba language spoken in DR-Congo to be the hardest to translate. The term denotes ‘a person who is ready to forgive any abuse for the first time, to tolerate it a second time, but never a third time’. Even though the definition is very detailed and precise, the language experts carrying out the survey emphasise the cultural implications of the term

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<sup>2</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3830521.stm>

which make it difficult to translate the word properly, bearing in mind its cultural context. Nevertheless, the lengthy definition of the word is in fact its translation and therefore everything that can be interpreted can also be translated.

Furthermore, Tabakowska (1993:74) mentions some popular examples of untranslatability like puns, plays on words, ambiguities and verbal jokes. She considers untranslatability to be text-specific and relative. Translation becomes complicated “when different languages prove to have conventionalized their imagery differently” (Tabakowska, 1993:77), but she advises the translator to always consult translation theory in order to find appropriate solutions.

In addition, Baker (2010:18) names some common types of non-equivalence like culture-specific concepts, differences in expressive meaning or form, non-equivalence occurring when the SL concept is not lexicalized in the TL, when the SL word is semantically complex or when the SL and TL make different distinctions in meaning. However, there is also always an appropriate strategy for dealing with each type of non-equivalence. For example, the problem of differences in expressive meaning can be solved by adding a modifier or an adverb (Baker, 2010:21). The English verb ‘batter’ can be translated into Japanese with a more neutral verb like ‘tataku’ (meaning ‘to beat’) plus a modifier such as ‘savagely or ruthlessly’.

However, Mounin’s opinion (Mounin, 1963 cited in Bassnett, 2002:44) concerning translation equivalence is rather sceptic. He asserts that communication through translation can never be completely finished and that “linguistics demonstrates that translation is a dialectic process that can be accomplished with relative success”. As an illustration he adds that personal experience is in its uniqueness untranslatable and that the base units of any two languages are not always comparable (Mounin, 1963 cited in Bassnett, 2002:43).

At the same time, Newmark (1988b:79) considers writing off a word as ‘untranslatable’ to be absurd and also proposes a set of different strategies for dealing with non-equivalence, which will be discussed later on. The Czech translation theorist Jiří Levý goes even further by claiming that any contracting or omitting of difficult words in translation is immoral (Levý, 1969 cited in Bassnett, 2002:31).

To conclude, the translator’s task and responsibility is to face every challenge that comes along during translation and to find appropriate answers. There is a translation for

every seemingly untranslatable word or concept and in fact, the search for an appropriate solution is what makes translation exciting. In Newmark's (1988b:8) words: "The personal pleasure derived from translation is the excitement of trying to solve a thousand small problems in the context of a large one."

## 5. Culture

### 5.1. *Different definitions of culture*

According to House (2003:93), the concept of culture has been the concern of many different disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, anthropology, literature and cultural studies. She believes that the definitions offered in these fields vary according to the particular frame of reference evoked. For instance, The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines culture as the beliefs, way of life, art and customs that are shared and accepted by people in a particular society. Similarly, The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as the distinctive ideas, customs, social behaviour, products, or way of life of a particular nation, society, people, or period. These very basic definitions suggest that culture is closely linked to society, social groups and their norms and behaviour.

Sir Edward B. Taylor, an English evolutionary anthropologist suggests that culture is a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.<sup>3</sup> The humanistic view of culture also focuses on the products of a culture and cultural heritage as a "model of refinement, an exclusive collection of a community's masterpieces in literature, fine arts, music, etc" (House 2003:93). Similarly, American anthropologists Alfred Louis Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn defined culture as follows:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values. Culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/culture.aspx>



the other, as conditional elements of future action. (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1961 cited in Katan, 1999:16)

Culturology goes even further by claiming that our culture, tradition and the ideologies we are born into dictate the patterns of our behaviour. More precisely, our behaviour is “determined not by its physical type or genetic constitution, nor by its ideas and desires and hopes and fears, nor by processes of social interaction, but by external, extra somatic cultural tradition”.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, when discussing various models of culture Katan (1999:29) mentions the Iceberg Theory popularized in the 1950s. It suggests that the most important and powerful parts of a culture such as action, communication and environment are completely hidden. We only see the tip of the cultural iceberg, namely customs, rituals, music, art, food, drink, ways of dressing and greeting. Katan (1999:18) adds that people also instinctively know what culture means to them and to which culture they belong.

However, some post-modernist theorists claim that “there are no ‘pure cultures’ and no such things as ‘social groups’ because these groups are constantly destabilised by external influences” (House 2003:94). And despite a century of efforts to define culture adequately, there was in the early 1990s no agreement regarding its nature (Asher, 1994 cited in Katan, 1999:17).

Finally, Katan (1999:16) stresses the importance of teaching culture to translators, interpreters and language students in general. He believes that culture is collective and that it is acquired rather than learned. Katan also (1999:17) points out that culture is just a part of a shared mental model of the world which consists of interrelated beliefs, values and strategies and cognitive environments which guide the shared basis of behaviour.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/culture.aspx>

## ***5.2. Culture and language***

As stated before, culture has a significant impact on human life and behaviour. It influences our values, beliefs, traditions and many aspects of everyday life. Language certainly is an inseparable part of every culture. House (2003:95) believes that it has an overridingly important position in any culture and describes it as a “collective knowledge reservoir” to be passed on from generation to generation.

Bassnett (2002:23) asserts that language is the heart within the body of culture. She adds that it is the interaction between the two that results in the continuation of life-energy. Newmark (1988b:94) also stresses the role of language in a culture and defines culture as “the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression”. Every society therefore has a different perception of social reality, which is represented through language.

One of the most influential and best known theories concerning the relationship between our language and our behaviour is the ‘Sapir-Whorf hypothesis’ or ‘linguistic relativity’. Kövecses (2006:34) mentions two versions of the theory: the strong one where the language we speak determines the way we think and the weak version stating that our language just influences our way of thinking. He claims that language has an impact on our mindset and behaviour, but to an extent. He sides with the weak version of the hypothesis. Kövecses explains:

If the strong version were true, it would be impossible, or next to impossible, to learn a foreign language. We would be prisoners in the ‘prison house of our own language.’ But many people learn foreign languages, often several languages, and they often acquire native or near native competence in them. (2006:34)

In addition, Sapir (1956 cited in Bassnett, 2002:22) sees language as a guide to social reality and claims that human beings are at the mercy of the language that has become the

medium of expression for their society. He believes that experience is largely determined by language habits of the community and that “the worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached”.

Moreover, House (2003:96) develops the idea of the so called ‘linguistic-cultural relativity’ connecting linguistic diversity with “external differences of historical, cultural and social background”. Naturally, the language we speak can also be seen as a reflection of the culture we live in and the social group we belong to: “Members of a particular culture are constantly being influenced by their society’s (and/or some of the society’s subgroups’) public and cultural representations (with regard to values, norms, traditions etc.)” and “this influence is exerted most prominently through language used by members of the society” (House 2003:95). As Palmer (1976 cited in Baker, 2010:16) puts it: “The words of a language often reflect not so much the reality of the world, but the interest of the people who speak it.”

In short, language and culture are indivisible. Lotman (1978 cited in Bassnett, 2002:23) illustrates the co-dependency of language and culture as follows: “No language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture; and no culture can exist which does not have at its centre, the structure of natural language.”

### ***5.3. Cultural knowledge in the process of translation***

Cultural knowledge, including knowledge of various subcultures, has long been recognized as indispensable for translation, as it is knowledge of the application that linguistic units have in particular situational and socio-cultural contexts which makes translation possible in the first place. (House 2003:96)

As stated before, translation is much more than just replacing units from a source language with the units of a target language. It is also the most important form of intercultural communication. As Newmark (1988b:10) puts it: "Translation is now used as much to transmit knowledge and to create understanding between groups and nations, as to transmit culture." The cultural factor plays an important role in the process of translation and must not be neglected. In Bassnett's (2002:23) words: "In the same way that the surgeon, operating on the heart, cannot neglect the body that surrounds it, so the translator treats the text in isolation from the culture at his peril."

A translator needs to be both bilingual and bicultural, which means that among the linguistic skills of a language and large general knowledge, he needs to possess the knowledge of history and culture of both languages. He is the mediator between the source and the target culture. According to Čačija (2008:106):

[...] cultural implications are as equally important for the translator as lexical aspects and both areas should be approached with equal consideration. Challenges that translators face do not exclusively lie within the scope of linguistics, but also of cultural competence.

Taft (1981 cited in Katan, 1999:12) sees a cultural mediator as a person who facilitates communication, understanding and action between persons and groups who differ with respect to language and culture. He lists a number of competencies a cultural mediator must possess: knowledge about society (history, traditions, customs, values, important people in the

society, etc.), communication skills (written, spoken and non-verbal), technical skills (e.g. computer literacy) and social skills (such as rules that govern social relations). In addition, Katan (1999:15) warns that for instance the Western community at large still sees a translator as a walking dictionary and not as a cultural mediator.

Every language is culture-specific and sometimes there is an abstract or concrete concept in one language completely unknown to the speakers of another language. Baker (2010:18) illustrates this fact with the word ‘Speaker’ (of the House of Commons) which has no equivalent in Russian, Chinese and Arabic and is often translated into Russian as ‘Chairman’. This word does not reflect the actual meaning of this concept and the role of the Speaker of the House of Commons, a politically impartial person who chairs debates in the Commons chamber.<sup>5</sup>

Another interesting example is the word ‘exotic’, which has no equivalent in oriental languages such as Chinese since it refers to something unusual and exciting coming from such distant oriental countries. In such cases Baker (2010:27) suggests translation by a more neutral or less expressive word.

In addition, there is also the question of translating into one’s second language. Despite all the linguistic and cultural competence and research, can a translator working into his second language possess equal knowledge of idioms, fixed expressions and culture-bound terms and their implications as a native speaker? Baker (2010:68) claims that “a person’s competence in actively using the idioms and fixed expressions of a foreign language hardly ever matches that of a native speaker”. She also quotes The Code of Professional Ethics of the Translators’ Guild of Great Britain which states:

A translator shall work only into the language (in exceptional cases this may include a second language) of which he has native knowledge. ‘Native knowledge’ is defined as the ability to speak and write a language so fluently that the expression of thought is structurally, grammatically and idiomatically correct. (Baker 2010:68)

However, more often than not, translators work into their second language and they do it successfully. Again, it is important to consult translation theory as well as various online sources, especially when it comes to translating culture-bound expressions. Čačija (2008:113) advises translators to keep up with the latest developments in translation strategies and to

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.parliament.uk/business/commons/the-speaker/the-role-of-the-speaker/role-of-the-speaker/>

“embrace technological advancement facilitating the translation process, primarily that related to various Internet tools and sources such as encyclopaedias, dictionaries, journals, newspapers, study materials, various transcripts, etc.”

Similarly, Katan (1999:8) stresses that translators should develop an efficient strategy of finding relevant information from concordances, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, glossaries; on paper, computer and in human form. He also suggests that similar texts written in the target language by native-language speakers could be of great help.

In conclusion, as the most important bond in interlingual and intercultural communication, a translator needs to be aware of his/her own cultural identity, possess both linguistic and cultural competencies, as well as communication and social skills. Every expression identified as culture-bound has to be analysed in term of its socio-cultural connotations consulting various online sources, dictionaries and translation theory.

#### **5.4. Translating cultural capital**

Translation studies have become more and more concerned with the cultural dimension of a translation, so there is a wide range of strategies and principles for translating culture-bound terms (or non-equivalence in general). The translator's task is to choose an appropriate strategy which fits the ST best, respecting both the target and the source culture and to produce a transparent and coherent translation which reads as an original.

In discussing the translation of culture-bound items Newmark (1988b:95) adapts Nida's cultural categories: ecology, material culture (artefacts), social culture, organisations, customs, activities, procedures, concepts and gestures and habits. He suggests componential analysis as the most accurate translation procedure for these categories. Componential analysis is based on a component common to the SL and the TL and it highlights the message (Newmark, 1988b:96).

However, Čačija (2008:112) finds that componential analysis leaves the cultural content in the background and the language item sometimes becomes unrecognizable as a cultural term. She illustrates this fact with a number of examples from an American TV series where English culture-bound expressions like 'the bird lady from Mary Poppins' are translated into Croatian as 'prosjakinja' (beggar) or 'Annette and Frankie' as 'savršen spoj' (a perfect match).

In addition, there is also the question of whether or not translations can account for culture or to what extent culture is relevant as proposed by Katan (1999:7). He believes that culture and translation are increasingly linked and examines the two extreme views regarding that matter. On one hand, there is the belief that everything can be translated without loss and on the other that nothing can be translated without loss (as the Italian expression *traduttore/traditore* ('translator/ traitor') asserts). He regards both viewpoints as correct and discusses them by dividing the argument into three levels: technical, formal and informal.

He goes on by saying that the technical level of a culture is nowadays global and that communication at a technical level is explicit. Conceptual terms will therefore be easier to

translate as different cultures come together under the so called global communication umbrella and they do not propose a translation problem. However, there are certain cross-cultural differences at the formal level. Katan (1999:9) illustrates this with an example of food labelling which one would expect to be a simple case of word-for-word translation while it is in fact the opposite. He concludes that translators and interpreters should therefore be well versed in all aspects of the two cultures they are mediating between. Finally, the informal or out-of-awareness level of culture is the one where the translator plays the role of a cultural mediator. According to Katan (1999:12) he/she needs a high degree of intercultural sensitivity or in Taft's words (1981 cited in Katan, 1999:12) "two skills in one skull".

There is a wide range of strategies and principles for dealing with various types of non-equivalence. I narrowed my choice down to the strategies proposed by Baker, Newmark and Fawcett which I later applied in the corpus analysis. Baker (2010:23) proposes the following strategies for translating various types of non-equivalence:

*a) Translation by a more general word (superordinate):* the translator goes up a level in a semantic field trying to find a more general word "that covers the core propositional meaning of the missing hyponym in the target language" (Baker 2010:25).

*b) Translation by a more neutral/less expressive word:* Baker exemplifies this strategy using an English text translated into Chinese, where the word *exotic* is translated into *strange unique* since "*exotic* has no equivalent in Chinese and other oriental languages" (Baker 2010:27).

*c) Translation by cultural substitution:* replacing a cultural bound term from a SL with a cultural item from a TL which is likely to have similar impact on the target audience "gives the reader a concept with which he or she can identify, something familiar and appealing" (Baker 2010:29).

*d) Translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation:* Baker (2010:33) considers this strategy particularly useful for translating culture-specific terms, modern concepts and buzz words.

*e) Translation by paraphrase using a related word:* this strategy can be applied when "the concept expressed by the source item is lexicalized in the target language but in a different form" (Baker 2010:36).



*f) Translation by paraphrase using unrelated words:* “the paraphrase may be based on modifying a superordinate or simply on unpacking the meaning of the source item” (Baker 2010:38).

*g) Translation by omission:* Baker (2010:42) points out that this procedure may seem drastic, but in some contexts if a word or expression can be omitted particularly when it “is not vital enough to the development of the text”.

*h) Translation by illustration:* this procedure can be applied when “the word which lacks an equivalent in the TL refers to a physical entity which can be illustrated” (Baker 2010:43).

Furthermore, Newmark (1988b:43) lists the following strategies:

*a) Word for word translation:* this method is used to “understand the mechanics of the source language or to construe a difficult text as a pre-translation process” and “cultural words are translated literally” (Newmark 1988b:45).

*b) Literal translation:* “the SL grammatical constructions are converted to their nearest TL equivalents but the lexical words are again translated singly, out of context” (Newmark 1988b: 46).

*c) Faithful translation:* this uncompromising and dogmatic strategy tries to “reproduce the precise contextual meaning of the original within the constraints of the TL grammatical structures” (Newmark 1988b:46).

*d) Semantic translation:* Newmark (1988b:46) describes this method as being similar to ‘faithful translation’, but more flexible and taking more account of the aesthetic value of the ST.

*e) Adaptation:* Newmark (1988b:46) believes it to be the ‘freest’ form of translation where the SL culture is converted to the TL culture and the text is rewritten.

*f) Free translation:* this is a “paraphrase much longer than the original” (Newmark 1988b:47) and Newmark calls it pretentious and not a translation at all.

*g) Idiomatic translation:* it “reproduces the ‘message’ of the original but tends to distort nuances of meaning by preferring colloquialisms and idioms where these do not exist in the original” (Newmark 1988b:47).

*h) Communicative translation:* this procedure “attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original in such a way that both content and language are readily acceptable and comprehensible to the readership” (Newmark 1988b:48).

Commenting on those strategies Newmark (1988b:48) points out that only semantic and communicative translation fulfil the two main aims of translation, namely accuracy and economy.

Finally, Fawcett (1997:34) proposes the following eight translation strategies:

*a) Borrowing:* Fawcett defines this process as taking words straight into another language, especially in translating technology and culture.

*b) Calque:* a type of literal translation, common in specialised and internationalised fields.

*c) Literal translation:* a word for word translation which, according to Fawcett, sometimes works and sometimes it does not.

*d) Transposition:* happens because grammatical structures are often not identical in different languages.

*e) Modulation:* Fawcett defines it as a translation strategy which consists of using a phrase that is different in SL and TL to convey the same idea.

*f) Reformulation (equivalence):* a creative process of expressing something in a completely different way. Fawcett mentions idioms and advertising slogans as an example of this strategy.

*g) Adaptation:* a strategy that is sometimes very problematic, where a term specific to the SL culture is expressed in a totally different way that is familiar or appropriate to the TL culture.

*h) Compensation:* used when a term cannot be translated from SL into TL. The meaning lost in the immediate translation is expressed somewhere else in the TT.

It is important to point out that these strategies serve only as a basis for dealing with different kinds of non-equivalence. Also, not all of them can be applied in translating culture-bound items. The choice of an appropriate translation strategy is determined by the text genre,

register, function, the target audience and many other factors which need to be taken into consideration before translating.

## **6. Analysis**

### **6.1. Methodology**

For my case study I choose the novel 'Naš čovjek na terenu' since it is a rich source of Croatian cultural capital, from landmarks and place names to phrases, idioms, song lyrics and dialects. I was interested in their translation solutions and how some concepts of Croatian culture have been introduced to the American audience.

The identification of culture-bound concepts is based on the definition of realia proposed by the Bulgarian scholars Vlahov and Florin who describe them as words and composed expressions representing denominations of objects, concepts, typical phenomena of a given geographic place, of material life or of social-historical peculiarities of some people, nation, country or tribe. They state that for this reason realia carry a national, local or historical colour and do not have exact matches in other languages.<sup>6</sup>

Another helpful guidance was Baker's (2010:18) view on culture-specific concepts. She suggests that a source language may express a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture and that this abstract or concrete concept may relate to a religious belief, a social custom or even a type of food.

After collecting relevant examples from the corpus, I classified them according to the following 8 strategies for translating cultural capital suggested by Baker, Newmark and Fawcett:

- 1) Translation by a more general word (superordinate)
- 2) Translation by cultural substitution
- 3) Translation by omission
- 4) Literal translation
- 5) Translation by using a loan word plus explanation/modifier

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<sup>6</sup> <http://translationjournal.net/journal/32idioms.htm>

- 6) Translation by using a loan word plus explanation and a cultural substitution
- 7) Borrowing (transcription)
- 8) Translation by a paraphrase (free translation)

The examples of slang and dialect are listed in a separate section and their analysis is based on the following methods:

- 1) Translation by a paraphrase (free translation)
- 2) Literal translation (using dialect)
- 3) Translating dialect using standard language

I offered brief explanations of all culture-bound elements used in the ST and the TT and discussed strategies applied for their translation. I also validated the choices made by the translator and offered alternative solutions for particular translation challenges.

## 6.2. 'Naš čovjek na terenu' by Robert Perišić

Robert Perišić is a bestselling Croatian writer, journalist and screenwriter, born in 1969 in Split, Croatia. He graduated in Croatian Language and Literature from the University of Zagreb. His writings include essays, short stories, novels, plays, poetry, travelogues, columns and literary reviews. Perišić is also a cultural activist campaigning for better contracts and greater subsidies for Croatian authors<sup>7</sup> and has his own literary column in the distinguished Croatian literary magazine 'Globus'.

His collection of short stories 'Možeš pljunuti na onoga tko bude pitao za nas' (*You Can Spit on the One Who'll Ask for Us*) published in 1999 was very well received. In these tragicomic tales Perišić portrays the post-war Croatia of the late 1990s using humour, irony, street slang and local dialects.

In 'Užas i veliki troškovi' (*Horror and Huge Expenses*), another collection of short stories published in 2002, Perišić points out the existential problems of a transitional society. His protagonists include writers, poor students, ageing rockers, celebrities and party people all trying to cope with their everyday problems and looking for love and affection. The book is considered to be one of the most important Croatian books of the decade.

Furthermore, Perišić is also known as the screenwriter of the award-winning Croatian movie 'Sto minuta Slave' (*100 Minutes of Glory*) about the tragic life of Slava Raškaj, the greatest Croatian watercolour artist of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

'Naš čovjek na terenu' (*Our Man in Iraq*) from 2007 is a social novel and a comic picture of Croatian media full of humour, wit and intelligence. Perišić introduces us to a wide range of colourful characters such as aspiring actors, journalists, entrepreneurs, models, local politicians and wannabe celebrities. Tin, the main protagonist and correspondent of a Croatian newspaper, sends his Arab speaking cousin Boris to Iraq to report on the war. However, Boris proves to be an unsuitable amateur who has lost touch with reality. After sending him a number of useless and chaotic ramblings, Boris goes missing. Tin has to fake his reports, which causes numerous problems in his professional and personal life.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://timeoutcroatia.com/culture/literature/robert-perisic/>

The novel has been published in nine countries and became the bestselling book of 2008 in Croatia. It was also very well received by the international audience and critics who compared it to satirical anti-war novels like *The Good Soldier* by Jaroslav Hašek and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five* describing it as an ambitious, thought-provoking and incredibly funny book that powerfully illustrates the hangover of war.<sup>8</sup> It received the Croatian literary award 'Jutarnji list' and the German 'Literaturpreis der Steiermärkischen Sparkasse 2011' in Austria. The English version of the novel was published in 2012.

Will Firth, the translator of the book was born in 1965 in Newcastle, Australia. He studied German and Slavic languages in Canberra, Zagreb and Moscow. He translates from Russian, Macedonian and Serbo-Croatian into English and German. Since 1991 he has been living in Berlin, Germany, where he works as a freelance translator of literature and the humanities. Firth says that his mission is "to funnel socially and politically relevant writings and quality literature from Eastern Europe, so vastly underrated, to the egotistical 'West'".<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> <http://ourmaniniraq.com/press-and-praise-for-our-man-in-iraq/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.willfirth.de/english.html>

### **6.3. Strategies of translating cultural capital in ‘Naš čovjek na terenu’**

As stated before, the writings of Robert Perišić are full of humour, irony and sarcasm. In ‘Naš čovjek na terenu’ he uses a lot of culture-bound expressions, especially when mentioning places, landmarks and street names, newspapers, television shows and song lyrics.

The analysis is based on the previously mentioned translation strategies proposed by Baker, Newmark and Fawcett or in some cases a combination of two strategies. Every culture-bound expression is briefly explained and a few possible alternative translation solutions or strategies are suggested. The translation of slang and dialect is analysed in a separate section.

#### 1) Translation by a more general word (superordinate)

- ‘Plavi oglasnik’ (Perišić, 2007:14) - ‘the classifieds’ (Perišić, 2012:14)

‘Plavi oglasnik’ is a well-known Croatian newspaper with classified advertisements, translated with a superordinate term since ‘Plavi oglasnik’ is not known to the target audience.

- ‘Sa svojom tvrdom dinarskom facom’ (Perišić, 2007:26) - ‘with his rugged Balkan face’ (Perišić, 2012:25)

The adjective ‘dinarska’ is derived from the proper noun Dinara, the name of the highest Croatian mountain and a part of the Balkans, which are better known in the target culture than the mountain itself, so a superordinate is the most suitable solution.

- ‘Stara konobarica u borosanama’ (Perišić, 2007:169) – ‘an old waitress in orthopaedic work shoes’ (Perišić, 2012:157)

‘Borosana’ are orthopaedic shoes with open toe and heel segments, produced by the company Borovo. Since they are considered a typical Croatian product and their popularity goes beyond the borders of Croatia, translation by a loan word plus a brief explanation (either in the text or in a footnote) might have been a better solution.

- ‘Zvuk automobila s Ilice’ (Perišić, 2007:184) – ‘the sound of the cars from the main road’ (Perišić, 2012:172)

The translator used a superordinate term for translating the name of the longest street in Zagreb, while he could have simply added a modifier (‘Ilica street’) as he did with some other place names in the book.

- ‘Mozak mi je odjednom proradio ko singerica’ (Perišić, 2007:208) – ‘my brain suddenly started to function like a sewing machine’ (Perišić, 2012:193)

‘Singerica’ is a colloquial Croatian term for a Singer sewing machine, very popular in former Yugoslavia. Nowadays it is a metonymic term for any kind of sewing machine, which is not the case in English, so translation by a superordinate is here a valid strategy.

- ‘Ja ti malo prodajen na Dolcu’ (Perišić, 2007: 256) – ‘I sell a bit at the market ‘ere’ (Perišić, 2012:240)

‘Dolac’ is the biggest and most popular farmers’ market in Zagreb. Even though a superordinate is a legitimate solution, the translator could have kept the proper name (‘Dolac market’). Many place names from the book are translated with a superordinate or even omitted whereas by adding a short description or explanation the translator could have brought these parts of Croatian culture closer to the target audience.

- ‘Književni urednici koji polako zaboravljaju na Krležu’ (Perišić, 2007:274) – ‘literature editors who were starting to forget our great writers’ (Perišić, 2012:256)

Since the role of a translator is to educate and familiarise the readers with elements of the source culture and Krleža indeed is a significant part of Croatian culture and literature, it would be a better solution to say for instance ‘literature editors who were starting to forget our great writers, like Miroslav Krleža’. It can be said that this translation fails to meet its educational potential on the target audience because the translator keeps ignoring elements of the source culture instead of familiarising his audience with them.

## 2) Translation by cultural substitution

- ‘Ispijao pelinkovce’ (Perišić, 2007:46) – ‘I drank vermouth’ (Perišić, 2012:44)

‘Pelinkovac’ is bitter liquor based on wormwood which is very popular in Croatia and its neighbouring countries. It does not have a lot in common with vermouth. On one hand, it does not play a significant role in the text, so vermouth could be an acceptable substitution. On the other hand, there is a number of similar drinks, like for instance Jaegermeister which might have been a better solution.

- ‘Gdje smo igrali picigin’ (Perišić, 2007:72) – ‘where we played ‘keepy-uppy’’ (Perišić, 2012:67)

‘Keepy-uppy’ is a game where the aim is “to keep a ball in the air for as long as possible by bouncing it [...] using the feet and head”.<sup>10</sup> ‘Picigin’, on the other hand, is a game

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/keepy-uppy.html>



played on the beach where the aim is to keep the ball out of the water using the palm of your hand. The type of the game does not have an important role for the overall context, so a cultural substitution could be a good strategy. But on the other hand, the unique game and tradition of ‘picigin’ is a part of Croatian cultural heritage and it would be better to keep the loan word and offer a brief explanation of the term either in a footnote or incorporate it into the text. Again, the translator assumes that his audience does not know much about Croatian culture and at the same time neglects his position as a cultural mediator who should bring the source culture closer to his readers.

- ‘Davati izjave za Red Carpet’ (Perišić, 2007:91) – ‘give statements for Hello’ (Perišić, 2012:85)

‘Red Carpet’ was a popular Croatian showbiz programme with content similar to the British Hello magazine. But it is highly unlikely that celebrities from the local glamour scene of Zagreb, where the book is set would give statements for a British magazine. A more appropriate strategy would be translation by a superordinate: ‘give statements for showbiz programmes’.

- ‘Bio ja u Đuri’ (Perišić, 2007:194) – ‘I was at The Blitz’ (Perišić, 2012:182)

‘Đuro’ was a popular night club in Zagreb which could be seen as an equivalent to The Blitz in London. But again, since the reader knows that the book is set in Zagreb, the translator could have used another strategy, for example keeping the proper name plus adding a modifier: ‘I was at the club Đuro’.

- ‘Ti bi isto htio i ovce i novce’ (Perišić, 2007:190) – ‘You’d like to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds’ (Perišić, 2012:178)

The Croatian idiom ‘imati i ovce i novce’, means to have two desirable but mutually exclusive things at the same time while ‘to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds’ means to remain on good terms with both sides in a conflict or dispute.<sup>11</sup> The translator opted for a good strategy but did not find good equivalents. A better solution would be to use for example the idiomatic proverb ‘you can’t have your cake and eat it too’, which is more similar in meaning to the idiom from the ST.

- ‘Proleće na moje rame sleće’ (Perišić, 2007:246) – ‘Here comes the sun, little darling’ (Perišić, 2012:230)

A line from a popular song of the Yugoslav rock band Bijelo Dugme is translated with a line from ‘Here Comes the Sun’ by The Beatles. In this case the translator found a good

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/run-with-the-hare-and-hunt-with-the-hounds>

cultural substitution, but other song lyrics are either translated literally or paraphrased which are both valid strategies.

### 3) Translation by omission

- ‘ispred buffeta zvanog Lonac (Dolac? Concordia? Kvazar?)’ (Perišić, 2007:11) – ‘Lonac Cafe (or whatever it was called)’ (Perišić, 2012:12)

The author mentions some popular places in Zagreb: the farmers’ market Dolac, the sports and recreation centre Concordia and the restaurant Kvazar. The terms are omitted in the translation probably because the translator considered them unimportant for the context. Also, if the translator decided to keep these proper names, he would have to offer some additional information and these lengthy sentences would not have the same effect as the original ones. Another solution would be to keep the proper names and then offer brief descriptions in footnotes.

- ‘ko đuveglija’ (Perišić, 2007:21) – no translation

‘Đuveglija’ is a Turkish loan word and a colloquial term denoting a man who is ready to get married, a fiancé or a groom.<sup>12</sup> There is probably no English word with such a variety of meanings, but the translator could have chosen just one.

### 4) Literal translation

- ‘Na Hajdukovim utakmicama’ (Perišić, 2007:26) – ‘at Hajduk football matches’ (Perišić, 2012:26) – a Croatian football club
- ‘Bekrija’ (Perišić, 2007:47) – ‘drunkard’ (Perišić, 2012:45) – ‘bekrija’ denotes a man who likes alcohol and night life
- ‘Danas’ (Perišić, 2007:54) – ‘Today’ (Perišić, 2012:49) – name of a newspaper
- ‘Hrvatska seljačka stranka’ (Perišić, 2007:57) – ‘Croatian Peasant Party’ (Perišić, 2012:53) – political party
- ‘Ne mirišu mi zumbuli’ (Perišić, 2007:130) – ‘The bluebells don’t smell no more’ (Perišić, 2012:119) – song lyrics
- ‘Tripice’ (Perišić, 2007:169) – ‘tripe soup’ (Perišić, 2012:157) – type of food
- ‘Što sam ja, što si ti, moj živoote’ (Perišić, 2007:187) – ‘What am I, what are you, oh liiife’ (Perišić, 2012:175) – song lyrics

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<sup>12</sup> <http://hjp.novi-liber.hr/>

- ‘Čuješ li me kako / Dozivam te, rode’ (Perišić, 2007:254) – ‘Can you hear me calling, kinsman’ (Perišić, 2012:238) – song lyrics
- ‘Kao Hum u Istri, mikropolis’ (Perišić, 2007:355) – ‘like the micropolis of Hum in Istria’ (Perišić, 2012:315) – a town in Croatia (Hum) and a Croatian region and the largest peninsula (Istria)

The translator chooses the strategy of literal translation mostly for rendering unrhymed lines from song lyrics and culture-bound items which are used in a clear context so no additional explanation is needed (football club, newspaper, political party).

#### 5) Translation by using a loan word plus explanation/modifier

- ‘Gastarbajteri su definirali taj žanr’ (Perišić, 2007:71) – ‘a milieu dominated by rough-and-ready ‘Gastarbeiter’ types (Perišić, 2012:66)

The German term ‘Gastarbeiter’ (literally ‘guest worker’) refers to a foreign worker or a migrant who is temporarily working in another country. The word also has a rather pejorative undertone, which the translator achieved through the expression ‘rough-and-ready’.

#### 6) Translation by using a loan word plus explanation and a cultural substitution

- ‘Iz doba kada sam zajedno s Johnnyjem pjevao’ (Perišić, 2007:92) – ‘I used to sing along with Johnny Štulić – fellow rebel and Yugoslavia’s answer to Nick Cave’ (Perišić, 2012:85)

Branimir Johnny Štulić was the lead singer and composer of the popular former Yugoslav rock group Azra. The translator introduces the target audience to Štulić by comparing him to the Australian musician Nick Cave, who is probably more familiar to the readers. While other examples of using only cultural substitutions are rather confusing, combining this strategy with another one (keeping the term from the source culture plus comparing it to a similar one from the target culture) proves to be more efficient.

#### 7) Borrowing (transcription)

- ‘Ičo Kamera’ (Perišić, 2007:25) – ‘Icho Kamera’ (Perišić, 2012:25)

The translator chose to transfer the nickname directly into English following English grammar rules in the first part (‘Ičo’ became ‘Icho’) but not doing so in the second part

(‘Kamera did not become ‘Camera’). He could have opted either for ‘Icho Camera’ or transferred it directly keeping the diacritic marks in the first part as he did throughout the whole book with surnames such as Markatović, Štulić, etc.

- ‘Ronhill’ (Perišić, 2007:71) – ‘Ronhill’ (Perišić, 2012:66)

The name of the Croatian cigarette brand Ronhill is transferred directly into English without further explanations. In fact, no additional information is needed because the context makes it clear that the character is talking about cigarettes.

#### 8) Translation by a paraphrase (free translation)

- ‘zeleni val’ (Perišić, 2007:22) – ‘quiet street’ (Perišić, 2012:22)

The Croatian term ‘zeleni val’ (literally ‘green wave’) refers to a type of street where the traffic flow is regulated by specially coordinated traffic which does not mean that the street is quiet. In fact, adjectives such as ‘busy’ or even ‘jammed’ would be more appropriate.

- ‘Nećemo mi tu nikad na zelenu granu!’ (Perišić, 2007:44) – ‘We’ll never make it good here!’ (Perišić, 2012:43)

‘Doći na zelenu granu’ is a common Croatian phrase meaning to come to terms with somebody or something and get better. It has a slightly different connotation from ‘make good’, which means to succeed and become famous,<sup>13</sup> but it fits the context because the characters are talking about dropping out of college and becoming artists.

- ‘međusobno su se isposvađali na ‘pas mater’ (Perišić, 2007:91) – ‘everyone quarrelled with everyone else, the expletives were as foul as foul could be’ (Perišić, 2012:86)

‘Pas mater’ is part of a Croatian swear word. Translation by a paraphrase is the most appropriate solution here because other strategies like for example literal translation would not create the same effect as the original sentence.

- ‘Mene neki đavo tera... Skuvaj kafu bez šećera’ (Perišić, 2007:130) – ‘Life is mad but I’m no quitter / Make me coffee, black and bitter’ (Perišić, 2012:119)

The lines are taken from a song by the former Yugoslav rock band Riblja Čorba. In this case the lyrics are paraphrased keeping the overall meaning and the rhyme.

- ‘A na ulici sa svake strane / Filijale, uredi / Iz njih plaze birokrate / Jao, ljudi / Pa ja se bojim’ (Perišić, 2007:92) – ‘The street is lined on either side / With office

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/make-good?q=make+good>

buildings tall / Bureaucrats creep and teem / Help, oh help / It makes my flesh  
crawl (Perišić, 2012:86)

The translator used the same strategy for translating the lines from a song by the former Yugoslav band Azra. Again, he managed to keep the rhyme, form and idea.

#### 6. 4. *Strategies of translating slang and dialect in 'Naš čovjek na terenu'*

##### 1) Translation by a paraphrase (free translation)

- 'Brate, brđanine, kume, kumašine' (Perišić, 2007:12) – 'Wotcher Ned, how's them parsnips comin' along? How's the harvest goin', cuz? Hey bro, where ya been?' (Perišić, 2012:13)
- 'Čoviće, Ičo Kamera se probio u publiku kod Ane!' (Perišić, 2007:26) – 'Stone the squids, who'da thought Icho Kamera would make it thru Ana's programme!' (Perišić, 2012:26)

##### 2) Literal translation (using dialect)

- 'Rodo' (Perišić, 2007:21) – 'cuz' (Perišić, 2012:21)
- 'Pa ne mogu virovat!' (Perišić, 2007:26) - 'I canny believe it!' (Perišić, 2012:26)
- 'Biži ća jer ću te uđrit nogon!' (Perišić, 2007:28) – 'Hop it or my boot's gonna fin' an arse to kick!' (Perišić, 2012:28)
- 'Ja ti malo prodajen na Dolcu' (Perišić, 2007:256) – 'I sell a bit at the market 'ere' (Perišić, 2012:240)

##### 3) Translating dialect using standard language

- 'Ali oni su gledali samo *nevistu*' (Perišić, 2009:82) – 'But my parents only had eyes for their *daughter-in-law*' (Perišić, 2012:77)

The characters in the ST mainly use informal, colloquial language and some of them speak with a Dalmatian accent. In order to keep the comic effect created by the use of accent, the translator renders the Dalmatian dialect into Scottish, mostly literally or by using a paraphrase.

## 6.5. *Corpus findings*

The first section of the corpus under observation consists of 33 examples of culture-bound elements. The main strategy used for their translation is literal translation, followed by translation by a superordinate and translation by cultural substitution:

- 1) Translation by a more general word (superordinate): 7
- 2) Translation by cultural substitution: 6
- 3) Translation by omission: 2
- 4) Literal translation: 9
- 5) Translation by using a loan word plus explanation/modifier: 1
- 6) Translation by using a loan word plus explanation and a cultural substitution: 1
- 7) Borrowing (transcription): 2
- 8) Translation by a paraphrase (free translation): 5

Literal translation is used for translating shorter song lyrics which do not rhyme and terms used in a clear context which does not need additional explanations. The translator opts for translation by a superordinate in cases where he presumes that the subordinate term is not that common in the target culture or when it is not of greater importance for the understanding of the text. However, the author mentions some important elements of Croatian culture and heritage (Miroslav Krleža, *borosane*) which could have been translated by using a modifier or a brief explanation incorporated in the text or even a lengthier one in a footnote. He also chooses superordinate and more general words for landmarks and place names (Ilica, Dolac) or even omits them completely (Concordia, Kvazar).

Furthermore, translation by a cultural substitution is completely justified in cases where the substitute from the target culture does not alter the meaning of the text or when the term is not that significant for the overall context. But on the other hand, these terms are also important and unique elements of the source culture (e.g. *picigin*) which could have been explained in the text or in a footnote. Moreover, there are also cases where the application of this strategy is rather confusing, for instance when substituting things and places which obviously do not

belong to the source culture (Hello magazine, The Blitz nightclub) for things and places from the target culture. Cultural substitutions are a good translation technique for idioms but the translator did not succeed in finding their equivalents.

Finally, the strategy of free translation or translation by a paraphrase proves to be the most efficient when it comes to translating song lyrics. The translator successfully rendered the lyrics into English and kept their tone, form and the rhyme.

To conclude, the author pictures Croatian everyday life in his own unique, insightful and witty way and by using a lot of culture-bound items and expressions, but the translator ignores or neutralises the majority of them. He chooses subordinates, more general expressions, cultural substitutions and even omission over explanations which would familiarise the audience with Croatian culture. Translation as a form of both interlingual and intercultural communication should spread culture across borders and languages and educate the target audience about aspects of the source culture which this translation mostly does not.

In the second section of the corpus I analysed the techniques for translating slang and dialect and found 7 examples. Following strategies were applied:

- 1) Translation by a paraphrase (free translation): 2
- 2) Literal translation (using dialect): 4
- 3) Translating dialect using standard language: 1

In 6 out of 7 examples the translator kept the dialect either by translating it literally (using Scottish dialect) or with a paraphrase. He managed to render the humorous effect created by the use of colloquial language and accent.

## 7. Conclusion

After analysing the translation of culture-bound elements from 'Naš čovjek na terenu' and strategies used for their translation I have found answers to all of my research questions:

### 1) Which strategies for translating cultural capital prevail in the case study?

The translator of 'Naš čovjek na terenu' most frequently uses literal translation when rendering cultural capital (9 out of 33 examples), followed by translation by a more general word or superordinate (7 out of 33 examples) and translation by cultural substitution (6 out of 33 examples). Literal translation is also the most frequently used technique for translating slang and dialect (4 out of 7 examples).

### 2) What are the most efficient strategies for translating cultural capital applied in the corpus?

According to the case study, the most efficient technique for translating cultural capital applied in the corpus is translation by a paraphrase (free translation), but only in translating song lyrics. There are a few excellent examples of rendering song lyrics where the translator managed to keep the overall tone, rhythm and rhyme in every line.

However, in my opinion the most suitable strategy for translating cultural capital would be translation by using a loan word plus explanation/modifier, which the translator used only once. In the analysis and the corpus findings I mentioned other culture-specific concepts which could have been translated by applying this technique. Furthermore, translation has great educational potential on the target audience and has the power to spread culture across borders. As a cultural mediator the translator should not ignore or neutralise the elements of cultural capital but familiarise the target audience with the source culture as much as he/she can.

### 3) Which translation solutions and strategies need to be reconsidered and why?

In general, I find the translation of 'Naš čovjek na terenu' to be quite good. The translator managed to render the author's subtle irony and wit which he uses to capture the lives of his colourful characters. But since the focus of my analysis is on the translation of cultural capital, I would say that the translator did a rather mediocre job. The quality of the translation



is reduced to some degree because of the frequent use of superordinate and more general words and cultural substitutions.

The translator seems to assume that the target audience knows little or close to nothing about Croatian culture. Even if it were true, this does not justify his disregard for all the important elements of the source culture. A translator should not leave his/her audience in the dark but educate them, assuming of course that the translator himself/herself possesses the relevant cultural knowledge.

4) Which aspects of Croatian culture have proven to be the most challenging to translate in the corpus under observation?

According to the case study, Croatian idioms and phrases as well as place names and a few other authentic aspects of Croatian culture (e.g. *picigin*, *borosane*) have proven to be a translation challenge.

5) What alternative solutions can be offered for particular translation challenges?

The above mentioned translation challenges can be solved by applying another strategy. For instance, place names such as Dolac, Ilica, Kvazar, Đuro, Concordia do not need to be omitted, replaced by superordinates or cultural substitutions even if they do not play a significant role in the text. They can be translated into English by simply adding a modifier, a brief explanation incorporated into the text or even a lengthier one in a footnote. The same goes for other parts of Croatian culture mentioned in the analysis which have been ignored or neutralised by the translator.

However, even though the translator chose the most efficient strategy for rendering idioms and phrases (translation by cultural substitution), the substitutions he found do not have the exact same meaning as the ones from the source culture (e.g. 'to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds' is not the same as 'ti bi htio i ovce i novce'). The only solution to this problem is a more thorough research.

On the other hand, cultural substitutions are not the best translation strategy for place names or TV shows: the audience presumably knows that the legendary night club The Blitz is based in London and that Hello is a British magazine. These terms can be translated by adding modifiers or short explanations or even with a superordinate word, as it is shown in the analysis.

To summarise, the translation of cultural capital is a great challenge for every translator. In order to find appropriate strategies for dealing with any kind of translation problems, one should consult translation theory, which serves as a good basis. The strategies presented in this paper can serve as guidance in tackling non-equivalence in cultural capital. Translators also need to make use of all available research sources, especially the Internet.

A translator is a cultural mediator, the most important bond in intercultural communication, and in addition to his/her linguistic and stylistic competencies, he/she needs extensive cultural knowledge. He/she should not disregard the original elements of a source culture by neutralising or omitting them, no matter how 'untranslatable' they seem. The translator's task is to bring the source culture closer to his/her audience, to educate them and arouse their interest in that culture.

The majority of culture-bound items from 'Naš čovjek na terenu' are translated literally, by a superordinate, a more general word or by cultural substitution. Unfortunately, these strategies have not proven to be efficient when it comes to translating culture-specific concepts. In fact, they reduced the quality of the translation failing to meet the educational potential a translation has on the target audience.

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