An analysis of culturemes in literary translation:
Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

Student: Javier Díaz Ortiz

Tutor: Susan Isobel Cranfield McKay

ABSTRACT

The aim of this dissertation is to analyse and attempt to accurately define the notion of *cultureme*, with a particular emphasis on how it is used in literature. I will attempt to answer some key questions, such as: what is a cultureme? What differentiates culturemes from other linguistic notions? How do translators bridge the gap that culturemes create in literature? What are some recurrent strategies? Moreover, this dissertation will analyse how translators solve the possible issues they face when translating culturemes in literature. In order to achieve that, a prospective, comparative analysis of the novel *The White Tiger*, by Indian author Aravind Adiga, and its translation in Spanish (*El Tigre Blanco*) by Santiago del Rey, will be carried out, examining how cultural references, culturemes and other structures have been translated.

KEYWORDS: culturemes, Aravind Adiga, literary translation, cultural references

RESUMEN

Este artículo tiene el objetivo de analizar y describir con claridad y precisión la noción de culturema, con un particular énfasis en su uso en la literatura. Responderemos a algunas preguntas, como: ¿qué constituye un culturema?, ¿qué diferencia los culturemas de otras nociones lingüísticas?, ¿de qué estrategias disponen los traductores para disminuir la brecha que crean los culturemas en la traducción literaria? Asimismo, este análisis examinará cómo los traductores resuelven los problemas que pueden derivarse de la traducción de culturemas. Para alcanzar este fin, este trabajo estudiará dicho concepto a través de un análisis contrastivo de la obra *The White Tiger,* del autor Aravind Adiga, y su traducción al español (con el título *El Tigre Blanco*, por Santiago del Rey), basado en cómo del Rey solventó posibles complicaciones como referencias culturales, culturemas y otras estructuras.

PALABRAS CLAVE: culturemas, Aravind Adiga, traducción literaria, referencias culturales

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

This work will focus on analysing the notion of *cultureme*, emphasizing its use in literature. In order to do so, we will attempt to define as precisely as possible this concept, establishing what distinguishes it from other linguistic and sociolinguistic notions such as phrasemes, idioms, or expressions. Following that, the culturemes present in the book *The White Tiger* (2008), by Indian author Aravind Adiga and its translation in Spanish, *El Tigre Blanco*, will be analysed in search of cultural elements, which will be studied and compared. Our aim is to investigate actively the different techniques to translate culturemes or, accordingly, to move the concepts towards the reader through different approaches and gain an understanding of how much of the original meaning is still present in the translation.

As Nord describes it (1997: 34), a cultureme is a social phenomenon of a culture X that is regarded as relevant by members of this culture and, when compared with a corresponding social phenomenon in a culture Y, it is found to be specific to culture X.

As translators, we are all familiar with the difficulties of translating literary texts, even more so when coming upon cultural references or notions such as culturemes, both of which may not have an exact equivalent in the target language. However, translators might not always be fully certain about what is and what is *not* a cultureme. The concept is often perceived as a loose term encompassing others, such as phraseme or idiom, to name a few. Therefore, this work will compile and comprise theories put forward by linguists, in an attempt to elucidate the concept.

Literature is undeniably much more accessible now thanks to the Internet than it has ever been before. With the rise of literary blogs and websites such as Amazon, authors and their novels can have a bigger audience (Black, 2009). Reading is still one of the main hobbies among teenagers and adults. Some recent data confirm this. In a recent report, Conecta Research & Consulting found that during the first months of lockdown due to the 2020

global pandemic of COVID-19, Spain experienced an increase of 4% in the number of occasional readers. 54% of them were adults, whose preferred hobbies went in order of preference as follows: watching TV, being on the phone, and reading.

Literature evolves in parallel to history, time, people and historic events. Things that were admissible or at least overlooked decades ago, such as racism, sexism, or the idea of empire and colonization, are no longer acceptable (Black, 2009). On this same level, in 19th century Europe it was common for European writers to travel to foreign countries in order to write about them in their books. Nowadays, this could be seen as an act of violence against a culture, an imperialist act (Black, 2009).

Now, if we take a closer look at translated literature by country, we observe a curious circumstance. Anglophone countries have a very low rate of translated books, roughly 2-3% (BBC, 2014), compared to countries such as France (27%), Spain (28%), or Slovenia (70%) (Kantar, 2021).

All this data highlights the need many Indian authors feel to write in English in order to get noticed and get major distribution, in sum, to make a living, according to Black. This has enabled the emergence of a number of Indian writers who have made their mark in world literature, including Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Vikram Seth or Amitav Gosh. In the same way that the 1990s saw a boom in authors from Asian countries who achieved global recognition by publishing in English (Black, 2009). This tendency raises the question of how to translate culture. Is there more than one strategy, and which is the best or most suitable? Perhaps the question should be different: which strategies suit different situations better?

A quick search on the Internet about the notion of cultureme will give us subpar, often dull results that can easily be mistaken or confused with other linguistic concepts such as idioms, phrasemes or even cultural references. This situation has prompted the incentive to commence this research.

Additionally, an analysis of the mentioned novel translated by del Rey will provide answers as to what translation strategies are most employed, allowing us to compare this with the proposals of linguists and scholars, as well as to investigate whether the translated elements convey the same message.

This dissertation has two main objectives. Firstly, it will study what culturemes are and what are the most common and effective techniques for translating them. Secondly, to carry out a contrastive analysis of culturemes in the book *The White Tiger* (2008) and its Spanish translation *El Tigre Blanco* (2009), in order to identify and assess the techniques used to move the text towards Spanish readers. Furthermore, secondary objectives will focus on:

- Analysing the phenomenon of culturemes, their use and translation.
- Observing and analysing the different translation techniques pertinent to culturemes, such as: translator's footnotes, paraphrasing, reformulating, explaining, etc.
- Detecting the main strategy employed by the translator.
- Examining whether the translation conveys the same message with the same effect as the original.

This dissertation will utilise as a substructure for analysis the aforementioned work, *The White Tiger* (2008) by Aravind Adiga, as well as its Spanish translation by Santiago del Rey, *El Tigre Blanco* (2009).

Firstly, research will provide the theoretical background this work will be based on. This research will assist in understanding what composes the cultural elements that characterise literature, which consequently are an essential and often problematic cornerstones of translation.

In order to extract and analyse the culturemes of the book under study, this research will be based on the works of authors like Vermeer (1984), Pamies (2017), Nida (1945, 2000), and Newmark (1988), among others. This work will utilise the theories proposed by Newmark (1988) and Harvey (2000) in order to analyse and categorise the extracted data from the book and its translation into Spanish; as well as Molina Martínez's (2001) classification of culturemes.

Finally, the purpose of this study is to find the strategies employed in the translation of cultural elements in the book and to examine their frequency and their communicative potential, that is, which ones convey the intended meaning better.

The dissertation will be distributed in three sections. The first part will pay particular attention to compiling information in order to structure the theoretical framework, and will mainly focus on defining the concept of cultureme. Secondly, it will study translation techniques and methods proposed by linguists and translation theorists, followed by an analysis of culturemes in *The White Tiger* and their translation into Spanish. Finally, the third part comprising the conclusions of the comparative analysis and reflections will be presented.

The theoretical framework will pay particular attention to defining the notion of cultureme as well as meticulously enumerating what does not constitute culturemes, thus tailoring an unequivocal conception of culturemes. Following that, this dissertation will study some relevant theories and translation strategies proposed by linguists such as Newmark (1988) or Harvey (2000), whose notions will help lay the foundations for the subsequent comparative analysis. Cultural elements will be classified according to categories proposed by Molina Martínez (2001).

Secondly, a contrastive analysis of the culturemes in Aravind Adiga's novel *The White Tiger* (2008) and its Spanish translation by Santiago del Rey (2009) will be carried out.

The culturemes present in the novel will be compiled and classified, then commented on. Del Rey's translation strategies will also be analysed in order to conclude which one has the highest potential to convey a complete, meaningful message to the general reader in the target culture (TC). Finally, the conclusion will contain a synthesis of the study, as well as a final reflection in accordance with the objectives initially set out.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Definition of culturemes

A concise definition of the notion of cultureme is not particularly easy to come across. Very few dictionaries actually have a definition of this concept. According to Pamies (2017), the use of this term is relatively recent among phraseologists. This might explain why its definition in lexicons is open to question. However, the origins of the term can be traced back to 1983, as this work will discuss later. Wikipedia defines culturemes as "any portion of cultural behaviour apprehended in signs of symbolic value that can be broken down into smaller units or amalgamated into larger ones. A cultureme is a cultural information-bearing unit, the contents of which are recognizable by a group of people".

In this definition, "any portion of cultural behaviour" refers to any activity apprehended sensorially –that is, by means of visual or audible perception, e.g. songs, jokes, advertisements, etc.-, or intellectually –for instance, tales and literature, religion, etc.-. This dissertation will provide more examples below, including some specific ones. The "symbolic value" that can be "broken down into smaller units or amalgamated into larger ones" denotes the nature of culturemes to be grouped, for example into "History of Spain" (e.g. *llora como una mujer lo que no has sabido defender como un hombre*, in reference to a well known event concerning Boabdil, the last ruler of the Emirate of Granada) (Luque Nadal, 2009: 99) or into "Universal History" (King Arthur and the knights of the round table, or *religion is the opiate of the masses*) (ibid: 99-100). Lastly, in order for a cultureme to be shared, it has to be recognized by a group of people.

Wikipedia goes on to suggest the following about culturemes:

> [...] Their usage can be seen in cultural expressions, phraseologisms, jokes, slogans, literature, religion [...], etc. All of which are subcultures in a culture system. Culturemes of this nature have historical relevance that when translated or explained result in a miscommunication and misunderstanding.

This view of culturemes as "subcultures" of a "culture system" is based on the idea that a country, for example, has an indeterminate number of subcultures made up of culturemes, the classification of which will be studied below. For instance, in Spain, the Tooth Fairy is represented by a mouse called *Ratoncito Pérez*, which satisfies the same Western tradition, that is, it collects the lost tooth and replaces it with a small payment. With this in mind, Luque Nadal demonstrates how this is a Spanish cultureme by illustrating it with the joke: *¿Cuál es el animal con más dientes? –El Ratoncito Pérez* (Luque Nadal, 2019, 99). This comes to represent one of those "subcultures". In addition, this example elucidates the cited problem referred to as "miscommunication", as non-natives or those not familiar with this cultural particularity would fail to understand the joke.

We will now explore the work of some scholars on the issue, in an attempt to better define the concept.

Luque Nadal (2009, 95) highlights that "culturemes are, by definition, culture-bound notions specific of a country or a cultural sphere and many of them have a complex semantic and pragmatic structure"[1]. However, this definition is imprecise, and possibly misleading; as it could also refer to other linguistic concepts, such as idioms.

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[1] *Los culturemas son, por definición, nociones específico-culturales de un país o de un ámbito cultural y muchos de ellos poseen una estructura semántica y pragmática compleja* (Luque Nadal, 2009, 95).

Luque Durán (2009) stresses that culturemes encompass cultural ideas, which function in texts as ornamental elements. However, Luque Durán's greatest contribution to the definition of cultureme could possibly be his approach to how culturemes become invalid and outdated. Culturemes are not a restricted group, but rather new ones are constantly being created for various reasons: to refer to political figures, actors, authors, fictional characters, songs, clothing, games, sports, trends, socio-political events, literary and artistic creations, economic developments, historical and religious references, etc. ("cf. Teliya et al., 1998; Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen, 2005: 214-215; Luque Durán, 2007, 2009; Piirainen, 2015" in Pamies, 2017). One example of this could be former Spanish president Mariano Rajoy's polemic, illogical words, which rapidly turned into punchlines, thus becoming Spanish culturemes (e.g. *Cuanto peor mejor para todos y cuanto peor para todos mejor, mejor para mí el suyo. Beneficio político* or *¿Y la europea?*, both of which are immediately recognisable by Spaniards as pronounced by the former president). Although in the spotlight for some time, these culturemes, susceptible to becoming widespread jokes, eventually do become outdated and their use plummets. Therefore, the number of culturemes in every culture is steadily fluctuating, thus making them difficult to quantify.

As Pamies (2017: 102) proposes, culturemes can be described as extralinguistic cultural symbols, which perform as metaphoric models, thus prompting figurative expressions in language. Pamies also states that culturemes comprise idiomatic meanings, namely, those whose literal reference previously had a symbolic extralinguistic function. By way of illustration, he puts forward the following case:

> All culturemes are symbols but not all symbols are culturemes. If we have a look at a Dictionary of Symbols, we can see that many of the listed symbols did not become culturemes. For example, in Spain, justice is commonly represented in paintings, sculptures, cartoons, etc., as a woman with a balance in her hands and a bandage on her eyes (following the ancient symbolic images of the Greek Goddess Themis). However, in the Spanish language, the "bandage on the eyes" represents self-deception (llevar una venda en los ojos 'to have a blindfold on one's eyes' "to be unable to understand an obvious truth because of prejudices or self-deception"; quitarse la venda de los ojos 'to take out the blindfold from one's eyes' "not to fool oneself anymore"). (Pamies, 2017: 102)

He also uses this example to stress that "an accurate description of culturemes needs not only to define what they are, but also what they are not". The following sections will discuss Pamies' classification discussing what culturemes are not.

Culturemes are not mere words

In his article, Pamies (2017) points out that "cultural symbols maintain an independent value when integrated into the linguistic paradigm of idioms". For example, the cultureme core in the Spanish idiom "cortarse la coleta" (to cut off your ponytail), meaning to retire from a profession or give up a hobby, is not actually a ponytail, but the implicit source for this metaphor, which is bullfighting, while the traditional outfit of bullfighters includes a small ponytail, which they cut when they retire (Pamies, 2017: 102). Furthermore, Pamies observes that, in some cases, one or more components or even the referent can be replaced by another word with a different meaning, with no modification to the idiom's global sense: e.g. *don't give a damn > don't give a shit > don't give a fuck* (Pamies, 2017).

Culturemes are not lexical gaps

Culturemes differ from realia[2] in the fact that the cultural referent of the former may exist in many places, whereas the latter are lexical gaps in other languages because their original referent existed only in one country. Pamies (2017) also highlights that realia can become culturemes,e.g. elements of gastronomy, bullfighting.

Culturemes are not cultural key-words

Some words are untranslatable despite having a referent in another language because they are culturally loaded (Pamies, 2017). This is explained as their conveying ethno-specific connotations is hidden; the same applies to cultural keywords (e.g.: EN. *reasonably, hooligan*; FR. *charme, raison*; ES. *castizo, chulería*). The meaning of this kind of words is

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[2] Realia (pl. noun): are words and expressions for culture-specific material items. As realia carry a local overtone, they often represent a challenge for translators. They are born in popular culture and are increasingly found in diverse kinds of texts. One of their main purposes is to convey an exotic touch in fiction, i.e. spaghetti, kimono, carabinieri, peseta, etc. (Source: Wikipedia)

deeply rooted in a local culture, e.g. the Portuguese *saudade*, which has an abstract meaning, often defined as "a deep emotional state of nostalgic or profound melancholic longing for something or someone that one cares for; it carries a repressed knowledge that the object of longing might never be had again". Pamies observes that these kinds of cultural words "are false friends because connotations are anchored in the meaning of the word itself, not in a pre-existing extra-linguistic symbolism".

Culturemes are not necessarily ethno-specific

Despite their dependence on local culture, culturemes may be shared by several languages, as Pamies (2017) suggests, since the boundaries of linguistic communities do not necessarily match cultural ones. By way of illustration, Pamies (2017) points out as an example the case of mythological and biblical symbols, catalysing the same idioms in many languages; e.g. the concept *scapegoat* (a person who is blamed for the wrongdoings, mistakes or faults of others) exists in many other languages: Spanish: *chivo expiatorio*, German: *Sundenbock*, French: *bouc émissaire*.

However, a cultureme shared by several languages does not predict that all its underlying metaphors will correspond to each other. For instance, the idioms *the kiss of Judas,* or *to carry one's cross* can be considered widespread idioms since they are present in several languages, but *to cry like a Madeleine* is not shared by German and Russian. Hence, metaphors derived from the same cultureme may coincide only partially in other languages (Pamies, 2017).

Lastly, Molina Martínez (2001) puts forward the following definition of cultureme:

> *A verbal or nonverbal element that is culturally specific in one culture, which when in contact with another culture through translation, may cause a cultural problem between the source and target texts* (2001: 78-79)[3].

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[3] *Un elemento verbal o paraverbal que posee una carga cultural específica en una cultura y que al entrar en contacto con otra cultura a través de la traducción puede provocar un problema de índole cultural entre los textos origen y meta* (Molina Martínez, 2001: 78-79).

This definition shares similarities with Nord's denotation (1997):

A cultureme is a social phenomenon of a culture X that is regarded as relevant by members of this culture and, when compared with a corresponding social phenomenon in a culture Y, it is found to be specific to culture X (1997: 34).

These two definitions are possibly the most enlightening and precise ones. Firstly, both Molina Martínez and Nord identify culturemes as a dynamic cultural element, which suggests that culturemes do not only exist within a single culture, but also as a consequence of a culture coming into contact with another ("al entrar en contacto con otra cultura", "when compared with a corresponding social phenomenon in a culture Y"). Another interesting concept introduced by Molina Martínez' definition, is that of culturemes having a verbal or non-verbal nature. Italians are particularly known for their extensive usage of non-verbal communication, that is, using hand gestures as they speak as a way to communicate. For example, they might scrape their chin with their fingers to express that they "do not care" about something, this gesture can be seen as offensive by non-natives, thus creating a "cultural problem", as Molina Martínez observes. This is also present in the definition proposed by Nord (*[...] it is found to be specific to culture X*). What is also interesting to notice is that both academics avoid conceiving culturemes only as a translation problem, an idea that we will attempt to reinforce during the analysis of some of the culturemes in the novel. In sum, these two definitions make it possible to understand culturemes in a logical, clear way.

According to Molina Martínez (2001: 91-92), culturemes have the two following common features, which observe the dynamism present in two words or expressions in a particular context:

1) Culturemes exist only in-context, meaning that they exist in the context of a cultural transfer between two specific cultures. This means that:

   a) culturemes are the consequence of a cultural transfer, not only cultural elements specific to one culture.

b) culturemes can be found in the context of two different cultures. The word *chador* (a piece of cloth that leave only the face exposed, worn generally by Muslim women), which Newmark describes as a *cultural word*, would not work if the languages coming into contact were Farsi and Urdu, as the *realia* is shared by both languages, therefore it does not constitute a cultureme for speakers of either of the two languages. This example illustrates that a word X (*chador*) can be a shared cultureme between languages A (Farsi) and B (Urdu), but not necessarily between languages A and C (any other language that does not share the *realia*, e.g. English).

2) Any given cultureme will have a different meaning depending on the context.

Linguists and scholars seem to agree that the origin of the term is not completely clear. Pamies (2017: 102) implies that "the term was taken from translatology, which in turn had borrowed it from non-verbal communication". Nonetheless, most academics point at Oksaar, Nord and Vermeer (1983), the latter being widely regarded as the author of the following quote popularised by Nord (1997): "a cultureme is a social phenomenon of a culture X that is regarded as relevant by members of this culture and, when compared with a corresponding social phenomenon in a culture Y, it is found to be specific to culture X".

2.1 Cataloguing of culturemes

Academics also have a number of designations to catalogue culturemes. This section will focus on comparing some of them in an attempt to scale them down to only one proposal, which this work will utilise to classify the culturemes in the novel that is the subject of our study.

Although this dissertation will take on board Nord (1997) and Molina Martínez's (2001) definitions of cultureme, which as stated above avoid conceiving culturemes only as a translation problem, for the sake of comparison, refinement and accentuation of the different categorisations, this section will study the classifications proposed by academics who do focus on culturemes as merely an issue to be considered by translators. Molina

Martínez deems the use of categories to organise culturemes to be a "useful tool to identify and classify them" and this dissertation will utilise her classification to catalogue the culturemes in the book *The White Tiger* (Adiga, 2008).

Nida (1945) stresses that "translation-problems, which are essentially problems of equivalence" can be suitably treated under the following categories: ecology (weather conditions, geographical features, flora and fauna), material culture (architecture feats, styles), social culture (leisure, work), religious culture (symbols, icons), and linguistic culture (the use of *tú* vs *usted*, or *du* vs *Sie*). He further states how "an examination of selected problems in various aspects of culture" can decisively clarify the relationship of cultural information with semantic problems.

Adapting the classification put forward by Nida, Newmark (1988: 95) proposed a new category years later. The impact of his addition is based on nonverbal elements, namely "gestures and habits", which may include gestures such as "cocking a snook", and habits like spitting. In regard to Molina Martínez' definition, this addition by Newmark gains relevance, since non-verbal communication comprises a broad share of cultural elements. In consequence, Newmark's categories include: ecology (flora, fauna, winds, and geographical features), material culture (food, clothes, houses and towns, transport), social culture (work and leisure, instruments, etc.), organisations, customs, activities (political and administrative, religion) and gestures and habits.

Similarly to Nida, but in a slightly more restrictive way, Nord (1994) puts together four categories, based on the sociocultural setting: natural environment, way of life, history and cultural heritage.

Finally, Molina Martínez (2001: 91-94) took into consideration all these categorisations and proposed a new set: natural environment, cultural heritage, social culture and linguistic culture. Under "natural environment", Molina Martínez integrates flora, fauna, weather conditions, etc. adding also man-made landscapes and toponymy. For the category "cultural heritage", she groups a wide assortment of cultural elements, from characters

(whether real or fictitious), historical facts, folklore, mythology and religion, to cinema, music, monuments, means of transport, housing, tools, etc. The category "social culture" largely coincides with that of the same name proposed by Nida (1945), and includes traditions, treatment and courtesy, gestures, the physical distance between two people when they speak, but also political, legal and educational systems, organisations, coins, eras, etc. Finally, "linguistic culture" concerns lexicography and phonology, phrasemes, idioms, proverbs, insults, etc.

What is remarkable here is that Molina Martínez took into account the dynamism of culturemes and, building on that, she decided that these categories "should be more flexible than the traditional ones in order to group them". Therefore, her categorisation dismisses the concept of using a large number of categories with a succinct definition, as opposed to those used for *realia*, proposed by Vlakhov and Florin, 1970, as seen in Almela, 2013. Her classification also includes culturemes not only as words, but also as concepts.

2.3 The importance of culture in translation

Translation and culture are intimately connected. Language is embedded in culture, thus resulting in meanings in both source and target languages being affected by their cultural context. There is colour and subtlety to every text that can make it challenging to translate. That is why it is possible to say that translators have to be more than only bilingual, beyond their linguistic expertise they need to have a thorough understanding of the culture of the source language as well as that of the target language, as translation without deep cultural knowledge can be risky. Witte (1992: 409) makes a further remark on the subject stating that "the translator's bicultural competence cannot be limited to a thorough knowledge of their working languages, but must be complemented by a comparative

bicultural competence between these languages"[4]. For that reason, the present work will study the need for cultural competence in translating texts.

Culture can be described as the ways of life and customs, knowledge and degree of artistic, scientific, industrial development in an era, social group, etc. (RAE). However, philosophy professor Jesse Prinz argues that many authors have stressed that traditional definitions of this term "pack in too much", as they lump together psychological items (e.g., belief) with external items (e.g., art) (Prinz, 2011). He goes on to explain that "this would be especially problematic for those who hope that culture could be characterized as a natural kind, and thus as a proper subject for scientific inquiry".

Other definitions have attempted to clarify this duality, but for the focus of this dissertation, an approach more concerned with language and translation will be sought. In line with this, Newmark 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" (1988: 94). Furthermore, Newmark declares that he does not regard language as a component or feature of culture. If it were so, he adds, "translation would be impossible", in opposition to Vermeer, who states that "language is part of a culture" (Reiß and Vermeer, 1989: 24).

Despite the discord on whether language is part of culture or not, the two notions appear to be inseparable, bound together. Nida confers equal relevance to both linguistic and cultural differences between the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) and concludes that "differences between cultures may cause more severe complications for the translator than make differences in language structure" (Nida, 1964 in James, 2002). This hints at the fact that the purpose of translation is communication.

It would appear that the balance tilts towards agreeing that language is an integral part of culture. This is implied by Lotman: "no language can exist unless it is steeped in the

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[4] *La competencia bicultural del traductor no puede limitarse al conocimiento profundo de las culturas de trabajo, sino que debe ser complementada por una competencia bicultural comparativa entre ellas (cfr. Witte 1987)*. From Witte, 1992.

context of culture; and no culture can exist which does not have at its centre, the structure of natural language" (Lotman, 1978 in James, 2002). The disparity among languages and cultures is one of the difficulties of translation. The bigger the gap between the SL and the TL, the more challenging and laborious the transfer of the message.

For Bassnett (1980 in James, 2002), language is "the heart within the body of culture", adding that "a whole set of extra-linguistic criteria must also be considered", illustrating that linguistic notions of transferring meaning are seen as being only part of the translation process.

What can be concluded from this is that translators need to have a bi-cultural competence, a solid understanding of the source culture (SC) and the target culture (TC), ideally complemented with a comparative bicultural capability. The existing duality between language and culture, and whether one is inherent to the other, highlights the purpose of translation, which is communication. Finally, the disparity between languages and cultures illustrates the rigour of translation as being more than a mere replacement of words.

2.3.1 The role of the translator

In today's world, there is no question that the role of translators is truly significant. Thus, it has come to be known that translators do more than merely translate words; they find the best way to render and transpose the intended message. This task is anything but simple; in fact it demands both linguistic and cultural accuracy.

Nida (1964 in Dweik et al.) draws attention to the role of the translator stressing that it "is to facilitate the transfer of the message, meaning, and cultural elements from one language into another and create an equivalent response to the receivers". From the professional point of view, translators play a role as intercultural communication experts, mediators, and form the bridge between people, cultures, and opinions (Köksal and Yürük, 2020: 327).

Intercultural communication with a focus on specific cultural background knowledge plays a major role in shaping broad-minded translators, well-aware of ethnic, cultural and other peculiarities of a given language (Köksal and Yürük, 2020: 336). Köksal et al add that the notion of intercultural communication is defined by the Council of Europe (2001) as "the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts" (Köksal and Yürük, 2020: 336).

2.4 Translation procedures

In Chapter 8 of *A Textbook of Translation* by Peter Newmark (1988: 81-93), he states that "while translation methods relate to whole texts, translation procedures are used for sentences and the smaller units of language". This statement marks the outset of Newmark's translation techniques.

- **Transference.** It is the process of transferring a SL word to a TL text as a translation procedure, resulting in 'loan words'. According to Newmark, cultural words are often transferred to give local colour, to attract the reader (as this work will review later on in the analysis of culturemes in the novel under study). In consequence, the following are normally transferred: names of people, geographical and topographical names, names of periodicals and newspapers, plays, films, titles of yet untranslated literary works, and names of private companies and institutions. He concludes that "the argument in favour of transference is that it shows respect for the SL country's culture. The argument against it is that it is the translator's job to translate, to explain" (Newmark, 1988: 83).
- **Naturalisation.** It adapts the SL word first to the normal pronunciation, then to the normal morphology of the TL, e.g. *Edimbourgh* (ibid: 83).
- **Cultural equivalent.** It is an approximate translation where a SL cultural word is translated by a TL cultural word, e.g. *la conoció en el bar* for *he met her in the pub*.

Rendering of this kind can be used in general texts or publicity as a brief explanation to readers who are ignorant of the relevant SL culture.

- **Functional equivalent.** It requires the use of a culture-free, or neutral word, sometimes with a new specific term, thus neutralising or generalising the SL word, e.g. *Polish parliament* for *Sejm*. Newmark claims that this procedure 'which is a cultural componential analysis', is the most accurate way of translating (ibid: 83).

- **Descriptive equivalent.** By ways of illustration, Newmark utilises the following example: "for *machete*, the description is 'Latin American broad, heavy instrument', the function is 'cutting or aggression'; description and function are combined in 'knife'" (ibid: 83). Therefore, the meaning of the cultural element is explained in several words.

- **Synonymy.** This procedure is used for a SL word with no clear equivalent, in particular for words that are "not important" in the text, for instance adjectives or adverbs. It is consequently used as a near TL equivalent to an SL, where economy precedes accuracy.

- **Through-translation.** This is the literal translation of common collocations, the most obvious examples being the names of organisations, e.g. *European Commission = Europäische Kommission*, or *European Central Bank = Banco Central Europeo.* Newmark remarks that through-translation should only be used "when they are already recognised terms" (ibid: 85).

- **Shifts or transpositions.** It involves a change in the grammar from SL to TL. Newmark differentiates three types of shifts: 1) the change from singular to plural, e.g. *furniture - muebles.* 2) the required change when a grammatical structure does not exist in the TL. 3) the change of word category when literal translation is possible but not natural in the TL, e.g. *Notre commerce avec l'étranger n'a cessé de s'améliorer - our foreign trade has shown continuous improvement* (ibid: 86).

- **Modulation.** It is the change of category or perspective. Newmark stresses that sometimes the use of this procedure is mandatory, but others, "it should only be used when the translation is not natural unless you use it" (ibid: 88).

- **Recognised translation.** It occurs when translators use the official or generally accepted translation of any institutional term. According to Newmark, this is sometimes the only acceptable option.

- **Translation label.** Similarly to the previous one, this is a "provisional translation", usually for a new, institutional term. Newmark adds that it "should be made in inverted commas, which can later be discreetly withdrawn".

- **Compensation.** Newmark observes this when loss of meaning occurs, thus triggering a compensation in another part, e.g. when sound-effect, metaphor or pragmatic effect are lost in translation.

- **Reduction and expansion.** Although imprecise, Newmark remarks the use of this procedure particularly in poorly written texts. Examples of these two techniques are: *science linguistique < linguistics* (reduction); *dead end < callejón sin salida* (expansion).

- **Paraphrase.** Again when a text is poorly written, Newmark recommends using this procedure to amplify or explain the meaning of a segment of the text. Here the explanation is much more detailed than that of the descriptive equivalent.

- **Couplets.** It is the combination of two, three (triplets), four (quadruplets) or more of the above-mentioned procedures. Newmark explains that they are particularly common for cultural words.

- **Notes, additions, glosses.** Described as additional information in a translation, this may be cultural (accounting for the differences between the SL and the TL), technical (relating to the topic) or linguistic (explaining wayward use of words), and it is dependent on the requirements of the reader in the TL.

Translators' footnotes are an addition that provides clarification to the TL reader, and they usually present difficulties that the translator had themselves during the course of the translation. Nevertheless, the use of these footnotes is considered by some academics a poor quality choice. Nida (1964 in Ordudari, 2007) advocates the use of footnotes to satisfy at least two of the following functions: to provide supplementary information and to call attention to discrepancies with the original text.

Malcolm Harvey (2000) refers to culturemes as culture-bound elements and puts forward the following four procedures for translating them, which he places on a continuum ranging from SL-oriented strategies to TL-oriented strategies:

- **Functional equivalence.** Is the use of a referent in the TL culture whose function is similar to that of the SL referent, e.g. *mortgage = hipoteca* (ibid: 2). There will be inevitably connotational differences between the SL and the TL term.
- **Formal equivalence or linguistic equivalence.** It means plainly a 'word-for-word' translation (ibid: 4).
- **Transcription or 'borrowing'.** According to Harvey (ibid: 5), this technique stands at the far end of SL-oriented strategies, and entails reproducing or, when necessary, transliterating the original term. Harvey further states that "the main advantage of this device is that it is referentially unambiguous. However, the need for a gloss or footnote makes it somewhat stilted and long-winded, and makes the translator's presence intrusive" (ibid: 5).
- **Descriptive or self-explanatory translation.** It uses generic instead of culture-bound terms (or culturemes) to convey the meaning. Harvey (ibid: 6) claims that "although technically a gloss", this translation strategy is sufficiently concise to function almost autonomously without the need for transcription.

These strategies shine a light on a troublesome area of translation, which is translating culture-bound elements, and they will assist in the ensuing analysis that will attempt to identify and assess the strategies used by the translator of the novel under study.

3. PRACTICAL APPROACH AND ANALYSIS

3.1 Preface

In this section we will present an explanation of the methodology that will be used for the analysis of all the culturemes in *The White Tiger*. After this analysis, we will attempt to offer some conclusions based on the results and the research presented above.

The White Tiger by Indian author Aravind Adiga, tells the story of Balram Halwai, a man who creates his own fortune, rising from an impoverished village washed by the river Ganges to being a successful entrepreneur. He is the son of a rickshaw puller, and he himself is forced to stop attending school in order to be put to work in a tea shop. After being hired as chauffeur by a rich landlord of the village for his son and his daughter-in-law, Balram starts pushing himself to escape the invisible bars that imprison him in the heart of a nation divided by the darkness and the light. His dazzling, alluring and often provocative journey to the top of the heap is skillfully constructed and thrilling. The hardships Balram encounters and the way he comes out of them –often with humour, but sometimes with bad results– only make the overall story more compelling. Readers will undoubtedly find some passages to be raw and slightly unsettling, as this novel is not intended to depict an idealised image of India, but a clear, brutal and truthful one. In fact, this dark reality mingles perfectly with a touch of humour to slightly soften the tone. This novel was published in 2008 and won the Man Booker Prize the same year. The story has been adapted as a film for the online streaming platform Netflix; it was released in early 2021.

Our research will address the following questions that prompted the topic of this dissertation, as well as the choice of the novel. We will explore the use of culturemes in the novel, and their translation, with a particular focus on the categorisation of these cultural elements, and the strategies used to translate them. Our research questions are therefore:

1. How do translators bridge the gap that culturemes create in literature? What are some recurrent strategies?
2. How does the translation of culturemes affect the understanding of a novel, whether fictional or not, and further, the understanding of a culture?
3. How do translators' footnotes help readers understand what they are reading?
4. How can the study of culturemes inform our knowledge of their function and the strategies used to translate them?

3.2 Methodology

As mentioned above, the methodology will use the categories for grouping cultural elements proposed by Molina Martínez (2001). It should be noted that in "cultural heritage" we will also include what Newmark named "material culture", as his proposal also comprises some important elements that Molina Martínez seems to have left out: food, clothes, houses and towns. The culturemes will therefore be grouped in the following categories:

- **Natural environment:** including features of ecology, such as flora, fauna; weather conditions, man-made landscapes, and toponymy.
- **Cultural heritage:** covering characters (whether fictional or not), historical events, religious knowledge, popular beliefs, folklore, landmarks, proper names of people, tools, objects, musical instruments, land and fishing exploitation techniques, urbanism, military strategies, transports, food, clothes, houses and towns.
- **Social culture:** concerning social conventions and habits: terms such as treatment and courtesy, the way of eating, dressing, and speaking; customs, moral values, greetings, gestures, physical distance when talking, etc. Regarding social organisation, political, legal, and educational systems; organisations, calendars, eras, measurements, etc.
- **Linguistic culture:** transliterations, sayings, idioms, generalised metaphors, symbolic associations, interjections, profanities, insults.

To gather the required data, the novel *The White Tiger* (Adiga, 2008) and its Spanish translation *El Tigre Blanco* (del Rey, 2009) were read. The culturemes present in the source text were detected and subsequently recorded in a corpus and then compared with their translation in the translated novel.

To collect and classify all the culturemes in the novel, several tables were used. The first subdivision (Figure 1) corresponds to culturemes which were present in any form other than translators' footnotes in the novel and reflect the following elements: context in the source text (ST), context in the target text (TT), and the number of the page where they can be found (Page). In accordance with Molina Martínez's cataloguing, the tables were split in four different categories: natural environment, cultural heritage, social culture and linguistic culture (see Appendix II for the full collection of culturemes).

Culturemes referring to natural environment

ST	TT	Page

Figure 1. Model for collecting culturemes

The second subdivision was used to collect the totality of the translators' footnotes in the novel, as they were the main striking feature encountered when reading the Spanish translation. They were grouped by chapter; therefore, *Figure 2* was replicated for each chapter. The table includes the page on which the footnotes can be found; the footnote in Spanish (ES) and its referent in English (EN). This process was used to compile all the footnotes. However, as we can see in table 6 in Appendix II, these footnotes were grouped together with the rest of culturemes in order to get a full perspective of all the cultural elements, regardless of the way they appear in the novel.

Chapter:	**ES**	**EN**
Page:		

Figure 2. Model for collecting the translators' footnotes

Once classified according to the way they are presented, the culturemes in the novel will be analysed independently using the table as seen in *Figure 3*, which we will use to comment on them in greater depth. The following tables show an example of each of the types of strategy that we have identified in the translation of the novel. We have analysed all the culturemes in this way, but have chosen to give here just one example of each for reasons of economy of space. The table includes elements that will allow us to clearly identify the category into which each cultureme falls, and to recognise the translation strategy employed. This model for analysis will facilitate a comment and will also allow for a better understanding of the results. The 'Context' field will reflect the situation as it appears in the novel and in the translation; 'Category' will be used to catalogue each of the culturemes, according to Molina Martínez's approach; and 'Translation strategy' will reflect which of the procedures proposed by Newmark has been employed.

Page:	**Context:**
Page:	**Context:**
Category:	
Translation strategy:	

Figure 3. Model for analysing culturemes

3.3 Analysis

In total, 36 cultural elements were found in the novel. The complete compilation of culturemes and their translations, including the translators' footnotes, can be reviewed in Table 6, Appendix II. Some of them will be analysed and discussed below. The criteria used for choosing which examples to analyse and comment on responds to the translation strategies used by the translator; therefore, we will attempt to analyse at least one of each type in an effort to offer a detailed insight into the translation strategies employed in the Spanish text and their impact on the TC reader.

Page: 101	He declared himself free of the Darkness: **he had made his Benaras** that day.
Page: 99	Se declaró libre de la Oscuridad, públicamente; había tenido **una iluminación**
Category: natural environment	
Translation strategy: naturalisation	

Figure 4. Example 1

In this example, we can observe that the translator opted for a naturalisation of the term. Varanasi, also known as Benaras or Banaras (Benarés in Spanish) is one of the holiest cities in India for Hindus and Jains. This explains what the author conveys with this metaphor; Benaras being a holy city, the holiest of the seven sacred cities in India, symbolises enlightenment. The character mentioned in this extract in particular transitions from the Darkness into the Light by getting a job that allows him to move to a big city. It is in the holy cities where one can achieve *moksha*, meaning emancipation, spiritual liberation and enlightenment. All this background information might be unknown for the general reader, so the naturalisation for the term 'iluminación' (enlightenment) reflects a function-oriented meaning translation, an attempt for domestication or naturalisation.

Page: 253	'Please, Muslim **uncle**', I begged. 'I'm just a rickshaw puller's son from the Darkness. Tell me all about poetry. Who wrote that poem?'
Page: 232	– Por favor, **hermano** musulmán –supliqué–. No soy más que el hijo de un conductor de *rickshaw* de la Oscuridad. Háblame de la poesía. ¿Quién escribió ese poema?
Category: social culture	
Translation strategy: transposition, naturalisation (couplet)	

Figure 5. Example 2

In India and other Asian countries, it is common to address older people, such as parent's friends, shopkeepers or newly met people as 'uncles' or 'aunties' to show respect.

However, in Western countries including Spain, this would not work in the same way. The terms 'brothers' and 'sisters', on the other hand, are frequently used by Christians to refer to other members of the group, and its use is considerably wide-spread in the West, thus making it a fitting choice as a TL-oriented translation.

Page: 83	**I bent down and touched his feet**, and held on to them for seconds longer than needed...
Page: 85	**Me arrojé a sus pies** y me mantuve allí un poco más de lo necesario...
Category: social culture	
Translation strategy: functional equivalent	

Figure 6. Example 3

Although in the Spanish translation it might seem that the character was touching the other character's feet as if he were begging for mercy, this could not be further from reality. In India, touching another person's feet is a sign of respect, and that is exactly what is happening in this and other examples throughout the novel. The use of a functional equivalent with no further remarks to the gesture in question and an alteration in the intensity of words, leads to an ambiguous and misleading reading in the Spanish translation. This is not the case in the novel in English, as the verb employed does not have the connotation it has in Spanish. The translator made an overstatement. 'Me arrojé a sus pies' would translate inversely as 'I threw myself at his feet', as if begging for mercy. This shift in focus affects the text and the understanding of the SC by altering the meaning of the gesture to the unaware reader.

Page: 56	"**Pinch your neck and swear** – you'll send every rupee you make every month back to Granny!"
Page: 56	"**Pellízcate el cuello y jura que** le enviarás cada mes hasta la última rupia que ganes"
Category: social culture	
Translation strategy: functional equivalent	

Figure 7. Example 4

Similarly to the previous example, this one displays another case of neutralisation that can potentially undermine the reader's understanding of the SC. In India, pinching your neck – or your throat– is a symbolic representation that one is telling the truth, a gesture to convey the truth not just with words. Similarly, in some Western societies this is equivalent to placing your hand on your chest to swear an oath. The translator decided against using a footnote here to further explain this cultural reference or give details, but resorted instead to using a functional calque through a functional equivalent. The problem with using this technique, as we have seen with this and the previous example, is that the neutralisation of culturally loaded words or expressions can hamper the perception of the SC in its full form.

Page: 110	I ran back to the mosque. *Namaz* must have ended by now.
Page: 107	Corrí de vuelta a la mezquita. **La oración** ya debía de haber terminado.
Category: cultural heritage	
Translation strategy: naturalisation, descriptive equivalent (couplet)	

Figure 8. Example 5

As we can observe in this example, the *namaz*, also called *salah*, are prayers performed by Muslims. The word *salat* is used in Spanish for this same concept. However, the translator opted for a descriptive equivalent of the term, replacing the word by explaining its meaning. Some argue that the term *salat* is not precise enough, and that it should not be

translated as *oración* (prayer), as this new term could also refer to a different type of prayer. Nonetheless, the neutralisation of the word *namaz* for *la oración* is another clear example of domestication.

Page: 129	[...] and I kept my eyes to the carpet the whole time I was in the room - which had the additional benefit of giving me the look of a ***pucca*** servant.
Page: 122	[...] y mantenía los ojos fijos en la alfombra mientras permanecía en aquella habitación, lo cual tenía el beneficio adicional de darme el aspecto de un **criado de primera**.
Category: social culture	
Translation strategy: descriptive equivalent	

Figure 9. Example 6

In this example we observe a word referring to a particular aspect of Indian society. *Pucca* describes houses made of permanent materials, such as bricks, concrete, or cement, in contrast to older houses generally made of mud and organic materials. Therefore, working as a *'pucca* servant' carries the meaning of being a really good servant. The translator adapted this meaning through the use of a descriptive equivalent, thus bringing the concept closer to the reader in a clear and distinct way using a Spanish collocation.

Page: 100	The priest celebrated a special *pooja* to pray for the Great Socialist's victory; **mutton *biryani*** was distributed on paper plates in front of the temple;
Page: 98	El sacerdote celebró un gran oficio especial para rezar por la victoria del Gran Socialista; distribuyeron **cordero *biryani*** en platos de papel frente al templo [...]
Category: cultural heritage	
Translation strategy: transference, note	

Figure 10. Example 7

Biryani is a popular rice dish throughout India and other Asian countries. Ingredients vary according to the region, but it usually contains rice, spices, vegetables and meat. The translator decided to render the term through transference, accompanied by a footnote briefly explaining the content of the dish. However, his translation contains a syntactic error, as 'cordero *biryani*' is not idiomatic and does not follow Spanish grammar rules. In Spanish, the noun complement or modifier, in this case, functions as a collocation; therefore, it should have been translated as '*biryani* **de** cordero', like the structure 'paella **de** marisco'. It could be argued that the option 'cordero *biryani*' adds local colour; giving the text a foreign touch, despite not meeting the grammar rules of the Spanish language.

Page: 100	The priest celebrated **a special *pooja* to pray** for the Great Socialist's victory.
Page: 98	El sacerdote celebró **un gran oficio especial para rezar** por la victoria del Gran Socialista.
Category: cultural heritage	
Translation strategy: naturalisation, expansion (couplet)	

Figure 11. Example 8

As can be inferred from the text, a *pooja* is a religious practice performed by Hindus. More precisely, it is a worship ritual to offer homage and prayer to deities, to honour the presence of a guest or to spiritually celebrate an event. *Pooja* is an offering of light, flowers and water or food to the divine. In Hindu practice, *pooja* displays a variety of performances. The Spanish translation contemplates a descriptive expansion with the intention of domesticating the term. The couplet used here works excellently as a naturalisation technique, making the text easy to read and understand for the reader.

Page: 13	The teacher turned aside and spat - a jet of **red _paan_** splashed on the ground of the classroom. He licked his lips.
Page: 19	El maestro se volvió y escupió. Un chorro de **_paan_ rojo** fue a salpicar el suelo de la clase. Se relamió los labios.
Category: cultural heritage	
Translation strategy: transference, note	

Figure 12. Example 9

This instance shows one of the most common cultural elements throughout the book. _Paan_ is a mix of spices and nuts wrapped in betel leaves that are consumed in India and other Asian countries, such as Pakistan or Indonesia. _Paan_ is chewed for its stimulant effects and to aid digestion, with the inconvenience that the profuse salivation it creates stains the mouth. It is usually spat, thus causing hygiene issues in public spaces. In the Spanish translation, the term was rendered through a transference, retaining the word in italics, in addition to a brief description in the form of a footnote.

3.4. Results

Our results will focus on enumerating the cultural elements in the novel and identifying the translation strategy used in each case in order to answer the research questions presented above. We will analyse firstly, the translation strategies employed and their frequency (Figure 13); and secondly, the procedure used by the translator, that is, whether he opted for a naturalisation or foreignisation approach. See Appendix II for the models and tables used for this analysis.

Once all the culturemes in the novel were collected, they were classified and analysed. The resulting information is presented in the table below.

Category	Total
Natural environment	3
Social culture	7
Cultural heritage	25
Linguistic culture	1
	36

Figure 13: Tally of cultural elements in the novel

Noticeably, the most common type of cultural element used in the novel corresponds to the category 'cultural heritage' (25), followed by 'social culture' (7) at a fair distance. In the cultural heritage category, culturemes referring to food were reasonably common (11). The rest can be classified as religious knowledge (5), and folklore (5), among others with a lower frequency. We decided not to include proper names of people in this category since no name was translated or naturalised in Spanish. The same was true for the names of cities, regions, districts, or states, since proper names of places either have an official translation or do not need changes.

Regarding social culture, culturemes refer either to social conventions, customs or gestures (4) or social organisation (3). Culturemes related to the natural environment refer to toponymy (2) and man-made landscapes (1). Lastly, the only cultural element in the novel concerning linguistic culture corresponds to a famous saying in India: *Hindi Chini Bhai-Bhai* (India and China are brothers).

The analysis of the translation strategies used by the translator show a clear tendency to foreignisation. The predominant strategy is transference, which Newmark defines as 'loan words'. The use of 'loan words' often give local colour, thus attracting the reader and showing respect to the source language and culture. The following table shows the frequency of all the different strategies used by the translator.

Translation strategy	
Transference	21
Through-translation	1
Cultural equivalent	4
Naturalisation	7
Functional equivalent	6
Descriptive equivalent	2
Couplets	5
Notes	15

Figure 14. Analysis of translation strategies applied to culturemes

Footnotes were a recurrent technique employed by the translator (15). This strategy was used in conjunction with transference 14 times, and once with a through-translation (see Table 6 in Appendix II for the complete analysis). In only 6 out of the 21 instances where transference was used, the translator did not resort to the utilisation of footnotes. From this dissection, it is possible to say that the translator adopted predominantly a foreignisation strategy, resorting to footnotes particularly when the term referred to food, which was the case in 10 out of 15 translator's notes.

On the other hand, we can observe an attempt to naturalise some of the cultural elements. These translation strategies aim either at naturalisation or foreignisation. As a result, we identified that 15 of these procedures were aimed at naturalisation, and 20 were oriented toward foreignisation (it should be noted that we differentiate between the quantification of 'naturalisation' as a translation technique (7) and as a global translation procedure oriented to the whole text, thus resulting in 20). In three of the six instances where a functional equivalent was used to translate actions concerning gestures or customs, we observed the materialisation of a disadvantage; this often had the power to neutralise what the author

intended to convey. This was the case with: *me arrojé a sus pies* (I bent down and touched his feet); *pellízcate el cuello y jura* (pinch your neck and swear); and *conductor de rickshaw* (rickshaw puller); it also masked some of the characteristics bound to Indian culture by not being more explicit in the translation. The cultural equivalent strategy was used as a way of bringing the text closer to the reader by employing a term that was easily accessible to the reader: *berenjenas* (brinjals); *escupidera* (spittoon). Lastly, the use of couplets often resulted in an unaffected, sophisticated naturalisation, for instance: *por favor, hermano musulmán* (please, Muslim uncle); or *la oración ya debía de haber terminado* (*Namaz* must have ended by now).

It is worth mentioning that the author has a tendency to explain cultural aspects in a natural, flowing way from the perspective of the main character. For instance:

> "'Halwai…' He turned to the small dark man. 'What caste is that, top or bottom?' [...] I should explain a thing or two about caste. Even Indians get confused about this word, especially educated Indians in the cities. [...] See: Halwai, my name, means 'sweet-maker'. That's my caste - my destiny. Everyone in the Darkness who hears that name knows all about me at once."

This makes it easier to render some of the culturemes in the novel, since the author already makes an excellent elucidation of the terms that may be complex for the reader. Here, although we do not get a definition of 'caste', we get a glimpse of how society works in India, and a critical comment towards higher classes in the cities ('especially educated Indians in the cities'). This ironic explanation, along with the general background of the character and the novel itself, allow us to identify the main character as a 'lower caste' individual (he belongs to the *Vaishyas* caste, one of low prestige; in fact, one of the bottom two). This example also enlightens us on how the caste system works, with the lower castes being treated as inferior people living in 'the Darkness', and the higher castes being wealthy and in 'the Light'. The author uses this metaphor with light and darkness to reinforce this concept.

3.4. Analysis of the translator's footnotes

Based on the evidence the examples above provide, it is reasonable to state that the translator of this novel adopted predominantly a foreignisation strategy, in global terms. This idea is also supported by the number of footnotes the translator used throughout the text. As mentioned above, 10 out of 15 footnotes refer to food. The rest cover various elements (see table 1 in Appendix II for a full list of the translator's notes). We will now look into some examples to understand how the translator conferred them the 'local colour' that Newmark mentions.

Only one of the terms –Mother Ganga– was rendered using a through-translation, the rest of the terms appearing in the Spanish version of the novel as a transference, in italics. What is curious, is that some words, which were equally culturally-loaded, did not have a footnote explaining their meaning. Words such as *sadhu* or *curry* were rendered using transference as a translation procedure. This could be explained by the fact that these words are fairly well-known and widely used in Western culture, or simply as an attempt of the translator to avoid overloading the text with too many footnotes. What we can state is that these words give 'local colour' in the translation.

Also, the name of some Indian sweets was not translated or described, as they were part of an enumeration in the text. This would explain why they were transferred and retained in italics, rather than having an accompanying footnote as well, as their nature can be deduced from context.

As a reader it is possible to say that, in general terms, these ST characteristics are not detrimental to the final result, but have the completely opposite effect; the tone, the location, the traditions described in the story, the characters and their behaviour, and the overall atmosphere of the novel is undeniably foreign, undeniably Indian. It would have been a mistake to attempt to mask the many cultural elements that 'add colour' to the story.

3.5 A comment on the humour of the novel

From a translation theory perspective, the humour present in the novel is relatively uncomplicated and direct. This is possible thanks to humorously use of irony in the author's style; the humour does not rely on jokes including parody or nonsense. Humour is mostly used in this novel as a way to slightly reduce the dark tone in some parts of the story, e.g.:

> "And then another thing. Every road in Delhi has a name, like Aurangzeb Road, or Humayun Road, or Archbishop Makarios Road. And no one, masters or servants, knows the name of the road. You ask someone, 'Where's Nikolai Copernicus Marg?' And he could be a man who lived on Nikolai Copernicus Marg his whole life, and he'll open his mouth and say, '*Hahn*?'. Or he'll say, 'Straight ahead, then turn left', even though he has no idea" (Adiga, 2008: 119).

The fact that someone does not know the name of the street they live on is an example of humour based on irony. In India, the names of streets are often changed, sometimes for collective memory reasons (meaning, names that refer to people with a reprehensible past or that draw from India's colonial past), or for the economical interest of those in power who accept money. However, in some instances the humour can be grim as well:

> "The police know exactly where to find me. They will find me dutifully voting on election day at the voting booth in the school compound in Laxmangarh in Gaya District, as I have done in every general, state, and local election since I turned eighteen. I am India's most faithful voter, and I still have not seen the inside of a voting booth" (Adiga, 2008: 102)

This example alludes to the fact that in some rural, impoverished areas of India, elections are rigged, and poor people are not permitted to vote because those who hold power, as depicted in the novel, are in charge of fixing the elections. The main character decides to look at this unfortunate situation with humour and, once more, ironise about it.

One of the few exceptions to the previous statement can be found in the following instance: "It was a scene to put you in mind of that passage in the Bhagavad Gita, when our Lord Krishna -another of history's famous chauffeurs- stops the chariot he is driving

34

and gives his passenger some excellent advice on life and death" (Adiga, 2008: 187). Two cultural elements, which are bound to Hindu religion, are present in this example. The Bhagavad Gita is one of the main holy scriptures of Hinduism; and Lord Krishna, one of the major deities. These two factors could possibly undermine the task of the translator in his attempt to bring the text closer to the reader and to transfer humour without relying on footnotes or another translation technique, for instance, a descriptive equivalent or an expansion. Therefore, the reader who is unaware of these two cultural elements might not find this ironic comment funny, where the main character seems to compare himself to this Hindu god, as they both appear to be drivers.

In other cases, the humour appeals to universally-known characters, as we can see in the following extract, where the main character is in a book market and the shop-keeper makes this statement about one of the books he sells: "One time the publishers changed the Hitler cover so it looked like Harry Potter, and life was hell for a week after that" (Adiga, 2008: 206). In this instance, the humorous effect is achieved by the absurdity of the situation and the use of two opposing famous characters; one is innocent (Harry Potter), and the other an evil individual (Hitler).

4. CONCLUSIONS

We have attempted to shed light on the definition of cultureme and have arrived at a description that seemingly satisfies making a distinction between what is, and what is not a cultureme; one that examines the notion in detail and with accuracy. Taking this into account, a cultureme can be described as a verbal or non-verbal element which is specific to one culture. When these cultural elements come into contact with other cultures through translation, they may cause problems, because members of the target culture are not familiar with the cultural elements of the source culture. This has prompted the consequent examination of the different ways to categorise culturemes. We therefore offered an overview of translation strategies specially used for the rendering of cultural elements. All these aspects were essential for the analysis of the culturemes in the novel.

Our results show that the most common strategies in the novel are transference (21 instances), which Newmark describes as 'transferring a SL word to a TL text, resulting in 'loan words'' (Newmark, 1988: 83). This is followed by notes (15 instances), which comprehends any additional information in a translation; and naturalisation (7 instances), which is the adaptation of a term or sentence to TL conventions. This analysis facilitated the identification of translation techniques and helped to get a glimpse of translation procedures when facing cultural elements.

We have observed that following a foreignisation strategy in the translation of this novel represented a global success, since the number and weight of culturally-loaded elements required the translation to be faithful to the original. The benefit of using this strategy, in accordance with Newmark, is that it gives the text 'local colour', meaning that loan words are common and even used in preference to naturalisation in the translation. This approach favours the source language and culture, which also has the benefit of interesting the reader in the TC, according to Newmark. We could observe this in the analysis and examples provided above.

We have attempted to shed some light on the idea and perception of culturemes and the different possible approaches to translating them. It is worth bringing our attention back to the fact that an accurate definition of the notion of cultureme is not particularly easy to find. Therefore, in our research it was necessary to put the focus on exploring the concept and achieving an accurate, wide definition that encompassed all the details that make up a cultureme. Our study has also made it possible to answer one of the preliminary research questions: 'How does the translation of culturemes affect the understanding of a novel, whether fictional or not, and further, the understanding of a culture?' As we have seen in the above analysis of this novel and its translation, culturemes play a role in adding a local, exotic touch; a local hue, which is tangible when coming in contact into another culture. On account of that, a correct translation of cultural elements is essential. The understanding of the text by the reader in the TC relies heavily on this task, as an

unsuccessfully translated text will only derive in odd and convoluted results. Choosing the right translation strategies will ultimately determine the outcome of the translator's work.

We will now learn if this dissertation has succeeded in finding answers to the preliminary questions. We support that the question: 'How do translators bridge the gap that culturemes create in literature? What are some recurrent strategies?', has been answered in this work. In the investigation of *The White Tiger*, we have found that the translator used two means of global action in order to render the culturemes and the overall tone of the novel, which are naturalisation and foreignisation.

However, the array of strategies that can be used to translate culturemes, constitute the front line of a translator's tools. These strategies are quite diverse, as we have discussed above, and their use will result in different outcomes. In the analysis of this novel, we have observed that the most used strategies employed by the translator were transference (21), footnotes (15) and naturalisation (7). Some other recurrent strategies include: descriptive equivalent, shift or transposition, cultural equivalent, or expansion.

With regard to our third question 'How do translators' footnotes help readers understand what they are reading?', we also found good examples that illustrate the answer to this question in the analysis of the novel. The use of footnotes, although polemical to an extent, according to some academics, can be a practical and effective resort to adequately inform the reader of those elements that cannot, or should not, be translated, because this would mean losing meaning or withdrawing the exotic detail from the novel.

Our final question, 'How can the study of culturemes inform our knowledge of their function and the strategies used to translate them?' has allowed us to learn about the nature of culturemes, the categories in which they can be classified, and the main translation strategies –both global and specific. This knowledge –along with the analysis conducted in this dissertation– will allow us to better identify culturemes, and which translation strategies will work better in particular situations. It will also enhance the likelihood of

choosing the right approach to bring the text closer to the reader while retaining the original function in the ST.

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6. APPENDICES

6.1 Appendix I. Index of tables

6.2 Appendix II

1. **Table 1. Translator's footnotes**

The 1st night	ES	EN
#1. Pg. 19	Mezcla de hojas de betel y especias, que se masca con fines digestivos	*paan*
#2. Pg. 20	En la mayoría de las lenguas indias se llama Ganga y es una divinidad femenina	Ganga
#3. Pg. 22	Escaleras de piedra junto al Ganges	*Ghat*
#4. Pg. 38	Tortas de pan. El *daal* es una mezcla de legumbres	*Rotis & daal*
The 2nd night		
#5. Pg. 57	Somier de mimbre	*Charpoy*
#6. Pg. 65	Dulce hecho de masa de harina frita y azúcar	*Gulab jamuns*
#7. Pg. 74	Aguardiente de palma	*arac*
The 4th morning		
#8. Pg. 98	Arroz con carne y especias	Mutton *biryani*
The 4th night		
#9. Pg. 133	Una especie de crepe típica de la cocina india	*dosa*
The 5th night		
#10. Pg. 176	Vegetal semejante al pimiento verde, pero con la consistencia de la berenjena (también conocido como <<quingombó>>, <<gombo>> o <<bamia>>). El *chapatti* es el pan plano oriental	*Daal, chapattis & ocra*

The 6th morning		
#11. Pg. 189	Rosquilla frita de puré de patatas o de lentejas	*Vada*
The 6th night		
#12. Pg. 218	Bebida a base de yogur y especias	*lassi*
#13. Pg. 243	Cigarrillos asiáticos	*bidi*
The 7th night		
#14. Pg. 277	Empanadillas orientales	*samosas*
#15. Pg. 290	<<La India y China son hermanas>>. Viejo eslogan de la época de Nehru.	*Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai*

Table 1. Translator's footnotes

2. Table 2. Culturemes referring to natural environment

ST	TT	Page
He declared himself free of the Darkness: **he had made his Benaras** that day	Se declaró libre de la Oscuridad, públicamente; había tenido **una iluminación**	EN: 101 ES: 99

Table 2. Culturemes referring to cultural environment

3. Table 3. Culturemes referring to cultural heritage

ST	TT	Page
So, I'm closing my eyes, folding my hands in a reverent ***namaste***, and praying to the gods to shine a	Conclusión: cierro lo eyes, junto mis manos en un reverente ***namaste*** y rezo a los dioses para que iluminen	EN: 9 ES: 14

light on my dark story	mi oscura historia con su luz.	
The teacher turned aside and spat - a jet of red ***paan*** splashed on the ground of the classroom. He licked his lips.	El maestro se volvió y escupió. Un chorro de ***paan*** rojo fue a salpicar el suelo de la clase. Se relamió los labios.	EN: 13 ES: 19
My mother's body had been wrapped from head to toe in a **saffron silk cloth**, which was covered in **rose petals** and **jasmine garlands**.	El cuerpo de mi madre estaba envuelto de la cabeza a los pies con un **paño de seda de color azafrán**, cubierto de **pétalos de rosa** y **guirnaldas de jazmín**.	EN 16 ES 22
I remember swinging my hands and singing, **'Shiva's name is the truth'**	Yo agitaba las manos y cantaba: <<¡**Shiva** es el nombre de la verdad!>>.	EN 16 ES 22
He was a **Sikh**, a man with a big blue turban.	[...] cara a cara con el conductor del camión, que era un **sij**, un hombre con un gran turbante azul.	EN 55 ES 58
Ram Persad explained. This **spittoon** was for the Stork, who liked to chew *paan*. If the spat the *paan* out of the window the *paan* might streak the sides of the car, so he spat near his feet, into the spittoon, which the driver washed and cleaned at the end of every ride.	Ram Persan se lo explicó. La **escupidera** era para el Cigüeña, a quien le gustaba mascar *paan*. Si escupía por la ventanilla, podría dejar un reguero de *paan* en el lateral del coche, así que prefería escupir en aquella escupidera situada entre sus pies, que el conductor se encargaba de	EN: 69 ES: 71

	limpiar después de cada trayecto.	
I ran back to the mosque. *Namaz* must have ended by now.	Corrí de vuelta a la mezquita. **La oración** ya debía de haber terminado.	EN: 110 ES: 107
I looked at the big poster of **Sonia Gandhi**. She was holding a hand up in the poster, as if waving to me - I waved back.	Miré al gran poster de **Sonia Gandhi**. Tenía una mano alzada en la fotografía, como si me estuviese saludando. Yo le devolví el saludo.	EN: 135 ES: 127
On her birthday, for instance, he had me dress up as a **maharaja**, with a red turban and dark cooling glasses, and serve them their food in this costume.	Para el cumpleaños de la señora Pinky, por ejemplo, me hizo disfrazar de **maharajá**, con un turbante rojo y gafas oscuras, y servirles así vestido su comida.	EN 154 ES 146
It was a scene to put you in mind of that passage in the **Bhagavad Gita**, when our Lord Krishna -another of history's famous chauffeurs- stops the chariot he is driving and gives his passenger some excellent advice on life and death	era una escena que recordaba a ese pasaje **del Bhagavad Gita** en el cual nuestro señor Krishna -otro de los chóferes famosos de la historia- detiene el carro que conduce y le da a su pasajero algunos consejos excelentes sobre la vida y la muerte	EN: 187 ES: 174
A girl began crossing the road in a tight T-shirt, her chest	Una chica con una camiseta ajustada empezó a cruzar la	EN: 198 ES: 184

bobbing up and down like three kilogrammes of *brinjals* in a bag	calle; los pechos le bamboleaban arriba y abajo como tres kilos de **berenjenas** en una bolsa	
We're not allowed to do that; there's usually a fat guard at the glass door up at the front, a man with a waxed mustache and beard, who wears a ridiculous **red circus turban** and thinks he's someone important because the American tourists want to have their photo taken with him.	No nos está permitido; suele haber un orondo vigilante frente a la puerta de cristal: un tipo con bigote y barba encerados que lleva **un ridículo turbante rojo** y se cree muy importante porque los turistas americanos quieren sacarse fotos con él.	EN 200 ES 185

Table 3. Culturemes referring to cultural heritage

4. **Table 4. Culturemes referring to social culture**

ST	TT	Page
General Public is hereby informed that the man in the picture namely Balram Halwai alias MUNNA son of Vikram Halwai **rickshaw-puller** [...]	Por la presente se informa al público de que el hombre del retrato, llamado Balram Halwai, alias MUNNA, hijo de Vikram Halwai, **conductor de *rickshaw*** [...]	EN: 12 ES: 18
Pinch your neck and swear - you'll send every rupee you make every month back to	**Pellízcate el cuello y jura que** le enviarás cada mes hasta la última rupia que	EN: 56 ES: 59

Granny!	ganes"	
Swoosh! -As soon as the gate was open, **I dived straight at the Stork's feet**!	¡Entré zumbando! En cuanto se abrió la verja, **me lancé directo a los pies** del Cigüeña	EN: 61 ES: 63
'You're a landlord. It's the **Brahmins** who are vegetarian, not us'	- Tú eres un señor. Los **brahmanes** son los vegetarianos, no nosotros.	EN: 83 ES: 84
I bent down and touched his feet, and held on to them for seconds longer than needed...	**Me arrojé a sus pies** y me mantuve allí un poco más de lo necesario...	EN: 83 ES: 85
The priest celebrated **a special *pooja* pray** for the Great Socialist's victory	El sacerdote celebró **un gran oficio especial para rezar** por la victoria del Gran Socialista	EN: 100 ES: 98
[...] and I kept my eyes to the carpet the whole time I was in the room - which had the additional benefit of giving me the look of a *pucca* servant.	[...] y mantenía los ojos fijos en la alfombra mientras permanecía en aquella habitación, lo cual tenía el beneficio adicional de darme el aspecto de un **criado de primera**.	EN: 129 ES: 122
He put a hand on me and whispered, 'Have you thought about what I said, sweetie pie? Does your master need anything? **Ganja**? Girls?	- ¿Has pensado en lo que te dije, querido? ¿Tu amo no necesita nada? ¿**Hierba**? ¿Chicas? ¿Chicos? …	EN: 147 ES: 140

Boys? ...		
'Please, Muslim **uncle'**, I begged. 'I'm just a rickshaw puller's son from the Darkness. Tell me all about poetry. Who wrote that poem?'	- Por favor, **hermano** musulmán -supliqué-. No soy más que el hijo de un conductor de rickshaw de la Oscuridad. Háblame de la poesía. ¿Quién escribió ese poema?	EN: 253 ES: 232

Table 4. Culturemes referring to social culture

5. Table 5. Culturemes referring to linguistic culture

ST	TT	Page
Now, your Excellency, a great leap forward in Sino-Indian relations has been taken in the past seven nights. ***Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai***, as they say.	En las últimas siete noches, Excelencia, se ha producido un gran salto hacia delante en las relaciones chino-indias. Tal como dice: ***Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai***.	EN 317 ES 290

Table 5. Culturemes referring to linguistic culture

6. Table 6. Complete list and analysis of culturemes

ST	TT	Category	T. Strategy	Procedure
A jet of red *paan* splashed on the ground	Un chorro de *paan* rojo fue a salpicar el suelo	Cultural heritage	Transference, (note)	Foreignisation
Arac	*Arac*	Cultural heritage	Transference ,	Foreignisation

			note	
Bhagavad Gita	Bhagavad Gita	Cultural heritage	Transference	Naturalisation
Bidi	*Bidi*	Cultural heritage	Transference, note	Foreignisation
Brahmins	Brahmanes	Social culture	Naturalisation	Naturalisation
Brinjals	Berenjenas	Cultural heritage	Cultural equivalent	Naturalisation
Charpoy	*Charpoy*	Cultural heritage	Transference, note	Foreignisation
Daal, chapattis & ocra	*Daal, chapattis & ocra*	Cultural heritage	Transference, note	Foreignisation
Dosa	*Dosa*	Cultural heritage	Transference, note	Foreignisation
Folding my hands in a reverent namaste	Junto mis manos en un reverente *namaste*	Cultural heritage	Transference	Foreignisation
Ganja	Hierba	Social culture	Cultural equivalent	Naturalisation
Ghat	*Ghat*	Natural environment	Transference, note	Foreignisation
Gulab jamuns	*Gulab jamuns*	Cultural heritage	Transference, note	Foreignisation
He had made his Benaras	Había tenido una iluminación	Natural environment	Naturalisation	Naturalisation

Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai	*Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai*	Linguistic culture	Transference, note	Foreignisation
I bent down and touched his feet	Me arrojé a sus pies	Social culture	Functional equivalent	Naturalisation
I dived straight at his feet	Me lancé directo a sus pies	Social culture	Functional equivalent	Naturalisation
Lassi	*Lassi*	Cultural heritage	Transference, note	Foreignisation
Maharaja	Maharajá	Cultural heritage	Naturalisation	Naturalisation
Mother Ganga	Madre Ganges	Natural environment	Through-translation, note	Naturalisation
Mutton *biryani*	Cordero *biryani*	Cultural heritage	Transference, note	Foreignisation
Namaz	La oración	Cultural heritage	Naturalisation, descriptive equivalent (Couplet)	Naturalisation
Paan	*Paan*	Cultural heritage	Transference, note	Foreignisation
Pinch your neck and swear	Pellízcate el cuello y jura que	Social culture	Functional equivalent	Naturalisation
Pooja pray	Un gran oficio especial para rezar	Cultural heritage	Naturalisation, expansion (Couplet)	Naturalisation

Pucca servant	Criado de primera	Social culture	Descriptive equivalent	Naturalisation
Red circus turban	Ridículo turbante rojo	Cultural heritage	Functional equivalent	Naturalisation
Rickshaw puller	Conductor de rickshaw	Social culture	Transference, functional equivalent (Couplet)	Foreignisation
Rotis & daal	*Rotis & daal*	Cultural heritage	Transference, note	Foreignisation
Saffron silk cloth, covered in rose petals and jasmine garlands	Un paño de seda de color azafrán, cubierto de pétalos de rosa y guirnaldas de jazmín	Cultural heritage	Functional equivalent	Naturalisation
Samosas	*Samosas*	Cultural heritage	Transference, note	Foreignisation
Shiva's name is the truth	Shiva es el nombre de la verdad	Cultural heritage	Transference	Foreignisation
Sikh	Sij	Cultural heritage	Transference	Foreignisation
Sonia Gandhi	Sonia Gandhi	Cultural heritage	Transference	Foreignisation
Spittoon	Escupidera	Cultural heritage	Naturalisation, cultural	Naturalisation

			equivalent (Couplet)	
Uncle	Hermano	Social culture	Transposition, naturalisation (Couplet)	Naturalisation
Vada	*Vada*	Cultural heritage	Transference, note	Foreignisation

Table 6. Complete list and analysis of culturemes