



## NATIONAL MENTALITY IN LITERARY TRANSLATION

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### ABSTRACT

The translation of literary works is not merely a linguistic activity but also a cultural one, reflecting the national mentality embedded in the original text. This article explores how national mentality, defined as the collective consciousness and values of a society, plays a significant role in literary translation. It examines the challenges that arise when translating the cultural and historical nuances of a text, the strategies that translators employ to convey these nuances, and the impact of cultural differences on the reader's understanding. The study draws from various examples of translated works, comparing the original text with its translation to highlight the preservation, alteration, or loss of national mentality.

**KEYWORDS:** National mentality, literary translation, culture, language, cross-cultural communication.

### INTRODUCTION

Literary translation is an essential bridge between cultures, facilitating the exchange of ideas, stories, and values. It is through translation that readers gain access to the literature of other nations, enriching their understanding of different societies. However, literary works are not just narratives told through words; they are also reflections of the cultural and historical context in which they are written. This cultural essence, often referred to as national mentality, poses a challenge for translators. National mentality encompasses the shared values, beliefs, and behavioral norms of a people, often deeply rooted in the social fabric of a nation. Translators, therefore, must not only convey the literal meaning of a text but also its cultural nuances and the worldview embedded in the original language.

National mentality refers to the collective psychological traits, attitudes, and beliefs of a particular nation. It is shaped by historical experiences, social norms, traditions, religion, and language. In literary texts, national mentality manifests through various elements such as idiomatic expressions, cultural references, character behavior, and moral values. For example, Russian literature often reflects themes of fatalism and collectivism, while American literature may emphasize individualism and freedom. When translating literary works, the challenge lies in how to convey these deeply ingrained mentalities to a reader who may not share the same cultural background.

Table 1

### Challenges in Translating National Mentality



Challenge	Description
<b>Cultural References and Allusions</b>	Literary works often include specific historical events, figures, and cultural practices that may be unfamiliar to foreign readers, potentially leading to a loss of cultural richness when translated.
<b>Idiomatic Expressions and Proverbs</b>	Idioms and proverbs reflect national values and worldviews. Direct translations often result in nonsensical phrases, requiring the translator to find culturally appropriate equivalents.
<b>Characterization and Dialogue</b>	Characters' behavior and speech patterns are influenced by their cultural environment. Translating dialogue requires cultural sensitivity to accurately reflect social dynamics in the target language.
<b>Humor and Satire</b>	Humor, including jokes, puns, and satire, is often culture-specific and difficult to translate. Translators must decide whether to retain the original humor, adapt it, or find equivalents that resonate with the target culture.

**Table 2**

**Strategies for Conveying National Mentality in Translation**

Strategy	Description
<b>Cultural Adaptation</b>	Adapting cultural elements to make them more accessible to the target audience by replacing unfamiliar references with culturally relevant ones. However, this risks altering the original text's authenticity.
<b>Explanatory Footnotes or Endnotes</b>	Retaining the original cultural references while providing explanations in footnotes or endnotes, preserving the original work's integrity but potentially interrupting the reader's experience.
<b>Literal vs. Free Translation</b>	Choosing between staying close to the original text (literal) or prioritizing meaning and intent (free). Literal translations can be unnatural, while free translations may better convey the national mentality.
<b>Transcreation</b>	Reimagining the text in the target language while maintaining the essence of the original. This is especially useful in poetry or advertising, where capturing emotional and cultural impact is key.

The translation of literary works can significantly influence how a nation's culture and mentality are perceived by the global audience. A well-executed translation can offer readers an authentic glimpse into the national character of the source culture, fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. However, poor translations can distort the original meaning, leading to misinterpretations of the national mentality.

Furthermore, the act of translating a work into another language can itself transform the national mentality of the original text. The choices made by the translator, whether conscious

or unconscious, reflect their own cultural background and worldview, potentially altering the way the text is received by the target audience.

The translation of literary works is a complex and nuanced process that goes beyond mere linguistic conversion. It involves the careful navigation of cultural differences and the preservation of national mentality, which is deeply embedded in the language and context of the original text. Translators play a crucial role in bridging the gap between cultures, allowing readers to access and appreciate the richness of foreign literatures. However, the challenges posed by national mentality in translation require careful consideration and skillful decision-making to ensure that the cultural essence of the original work is preserved and conveyed to the new audience.

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