

6 Intercultural semantics in research on the reception of literary translations

Studies concerning translation theory, originated after the cultural turn that occurred in translation studies in the 1990s, focus on the role of non-linguistic elements in the translation process.⁷⁰¹ In the article regarded as a breakthrough,⁷⁰² Bassnett and Lefevere (1990:4) factually questioned the validity of linguistic tools in research on literary translation, at the same time undermining the significance of comparative analyses of the source text and the target text. Focusing translation research on the widely understood cultural conditions of the process of translation and its reception does not necessarily mean that we give up referring to the achievements of linguistics. Contemporary linguistics strongly emphasises the relationships between language and culture, especially the necessity of knowing the context of culture in order to properly understand a given text.⁷⁰³

1 Donal Carbaugh's concept of cultural communication

In chapter one, I have discussed problems related to the precise definitions of the terms “intercultural communication” and “cultural communication” as well as the misunderstandings that can result from using a big number of related terms. I share Zarzycka's opinion (2000:35) that the multiplication of terms does not lead to the transparency of an argument. Nevertheless, at this point, I would like to refer to the concept of *cultural communication*, worked out by the American ethnographer Donal Carbaugh (1990) since in my opinion, it can appropriately be applied to interpret a situation in which people who use various mother tongues need to communicate.

A starting point of Carbaugh's reflections is the distinction between these two terms. He regards **communication**, embracing all linguistic behaviours, as a fundamental process thanks to which social life is created, maintained and

701 See chapter one, section 10.

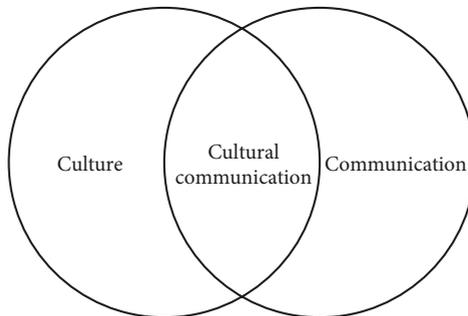
702 See Gentzler's foreword to Bassnett and Lefevere, *Constructing Cultures. Essays on Literary Translation* (1998).

703 I understand text in a very broad sense: an oral and written message being a series of sentences that can be recognised as a complete message (Dobrzyńska 1993:11).

transformed. A message contains structures and processes of creating meanings; it includes man's efforts to understand the world. Moreover, communication is performed in a concrete space through specific forms and actions, fulfilling variable functions.

On the other hand, **culture** is a system of symbols, symbolic forms and their meanings. Cultural systems possess integrative potentials. This means that culture allows combining the scattered parts of the system of symbols and senses into a meaningful whole. A cultural system is not static and as such it can be transformed. It is understood by participants of a given culture, thanks to which they see the world as being coherent. A set of suitable codes gives access to this system. Thanks to the codes, the cultural system is profoundly experienced, i.e. these codes also suggest the participants of a given culture what feelings are proper at a given moment. The last characteristic of culture that Carbaugh distinguished is its being rooted in history: the characteristic constitutes a system of inherited conceptions, expressed in symbolic forms thanks to which people can communicate, deepen and develop their knowledge and shape their attitudes towards the world.

Finally, precise definitions of communication and culture allow us to see clearly that these terms, although having many common features, are not identical⁷⁰⁴; not all communication is culture and not all culture is communication. Carbaugh presents their mutual relationships in a model: two overlapping circles.



704 Carbaugh calls Hall's statement that "culture is communication and communication is culture" an irritating tautology.

The common part of these circles marks the scope of the concept which Carbaugh called “cultural communication.” It embraces all situations in which, through certain discourse behaviours, including linguistic activities, elements characterising a given culture, specific only for this culture, become visible.

A frequent reason for communication failures between representatives of various cultures is that they interpret the recalled symbols by referring to different cultural systems. Since the same symbol placed in different systems can refer to completely new meanings. So it can happen that one of the participants of a communication act recalls a concrete sign which the partner of the interaction refers to his or her native cultural system, and thus the sign is misinterpreted. In other words, the participants of a communication exchange do not always have “codes of access” to the meaning of the native culture of their interlocutors.⁷⁰⁵

In my opinion, this perspective can contribute to explaining the mechanism of the phenomenon that Berman (1985) called “the experience of the foreign” in translation. The reader of a translation subconsciously, almost automatically, refers signs to his or her native cultural system, which leads to interpreting them in a way that is contrary to the author’s intentions. This can to a smaller or greater extent modify the meaning and message meant by the author. Consequently, the work acquires a new reading, departing from the context of its origin.

2 Semantic indicators of reading proposed by Janusz Lalewicz (1977)

Two basic stages can be distinguished in the process of understanding a written text – all texts, not only the literary ones. The first stage is to properly decode the expressions and their combinations used in a text, i.e. to capture the meanings suggested by the system of a given language. The other stage is connected with the skill to ascribe a concrete fragment of reality to the text. This means that even

705 Carbaugh (1990:15) gives an example of such a situation by recalling university courses during which students were asked to present the cultural heritage of their communities. The representatives of the Osage Indian tribe, who usually participated in discussions, limited their presentations to half-words and general statements (*Yeh, I guess that sounds okay to me*). It turned that out in the culture of Osage, in the presence of the elderly and non-members of this community one should be reserved, and the Indians were faithful to the cultural norms of their own group, showing them in practice – it was a manifestation of their cultural heritage, which other participants of the courses wrongly interpreted as an expression of disregard and lack of interest in this issue.

excellent knowledge of the lexical and grammatical subsystems of language does not guarantee that the reader can understand the text. Understanding requires knowledge of at least some realities, i.e. knowledge of the world that would be sufficient to appropriately associate the linguistic means used with the fragments of the non-linguistic reality.

This can best be seen in scientific texts. In order to understand them correctly, we need the knowledge of a given field, i.e. its terminology, characteristic expressions and rules of constructing scientific texts. Moreover, we need the knowledge of the model of this discipline, i.e. the universe of the objects it speaks about as well as their characteristics and properties. Reading a scientific text is not connected with the reader's interpretative effort since "its interpretation is determined by a fixed [...] language and a model, so is given *a priori*" (Lalewicz 1977:11).

In the case of texts written in colloquial language, not having any artistic character, such as letters, reportages or diaries, the language does not impose any interpretative key "since there is no model of this language" (Lalewicz 1977:11). The meanings of such texts are actualised in utterances. In order to understand them, we need to know the circumstances of the act of communication and possess certain knowledge of the world which the reader must share with the author of the text. When these conditions are not provided, it is impossible to interpret the text properly.⁷⁰⁶

A literary text originates in a colloquial language and speaks about colloquial reality, but refers the reader to the depicted world and not the real one. It does not speak of objects known directly from experience but of objects that do not exist in reality. Nevertheless, the phenomena and matters depicted in such a text reveal characteristics that are analogous to the characteristics of the objects known from everyday experience. "We read a literary story as a story about analogous figures and events, and at least comparable with the figures that we read about in real stories – although not placed in our world" (Lalewicz 1977:13).⁷⁰⁷ Thus, the reader interprets, for example, a novel referring it to the world that he knows and to the experiences that have become part of his life within this world. Interpretation is performed thanks to discovering analogies between the events

706 For instance, we will not probably be able to discover the meanings of a letter which was found by accident unless we have the information of the sender, addressee and circumstances of its origin.

707 A similar opinion was presented by Grzegorzcykova (1995:18), "In novels [...] we deal with a *quasi*-real world accepted on the basis of some convention."

of the depicted world and the real world. It is not possible to find a situation depicted in prose in the real world, but based on experience one can recall such situations to the description of which this text proves adequate. In other words, a literary work speaks of certain events, people and objects created in one's imagination, but a story about them is not the author's basic aim. Since through them the writer wants to say something important about real events and people. The interpretation of a literary work is not *a priori* imposed since there is no model that would determine it, "it is in the literary sense created and given to the text by its reading" (Lalewicz 1977:15). Therefore, there is no single "right" interpretation; there can be many interpretations. It would be difficult to determine their hierarchy, i.e. recognise which are most accurate or best. The reading and interpretation of a text depend on a number of non-textual factors, such as the circumstances of its origin and reception as well as the author's intentions, the reader's world, including his world view and ideologies, etc.

What can influence the modification of interpretation of a literary work? Lalewicz's factors of reinterpretation include the change of the world in which we read a given work, the change of literary public and the change of the reality to which the text is referred. The first factor occurs when readers encounter a text written in a different epoch. The second factor concerns the sociological conditions of transformations taking place among different readers' groups. The last factor emerges when readers refer a text to a sphere that is different from the usual one, like in the 18th century novels by Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift, which by their contemporary readers were understood as novels conveying a philosophical meaning, while our youth public reads them as adventure novels. Readers' visions of the world or their views can influence their interpretations of literary texts, too.

Examining a literary translation, we can ask to which extent the change of language can influence its reinterpretation. From the reader's perspective, Shakespeare's translated drama is still his drama, only written in the language the reader knows... However, Lalewicz omits this aspect. He thoroughly analyses how *La Princesse de Clèves* by Marie de la Fayette could have been interpreted by the literary public during the authoress' times and by contemporary readers. Lalewicz lays a strong emphasis that the distance of time between the origin of a work and its contemporary receivers modifies the interpretation of the work to a considerable extent. However, he does not say whether he means the French or the Polish public, whether he has used the original version of the work or its translation. Thus, concentrating only on non-linguistic phenomena in his analysis, he has not included the change of language and has not counted it as a factor of the reinterpretation of text.

3 The semantics of the artistic text

Today no one questions the contribution of various linguistic theories to research on literary works.⁷⁰⁸ Continuing my reflections on the reception of literary translation, I would like to discuss to which extent the methods worked out by contemporary semantics could be applied in research on the reception of literary translation.

In order to interpret the semantic layer of a work shaped by the syntactical-semantic and lexical-semantic conventions, it is the theories of semantics that undoubtedly have the value of being a basic analytical tool

– writes Ewa Sławkowa (2001:10), stressing the importance of theoretical and methodological problems suggested by the relationships between the semantic analysis of language and the semantic analysis of text. An artistic text results from the author's creative approach to all norms: linguistic, stylistic and literary. It contains a specific way of seeing the world, different from the common one. The author passes his own vision using the language system in a non-typical way as he “goes beyond the standard meanings and connectivity that reflect this common view of the world” (Grzegorzczkowska 1999:45).

Polish scholars dealing with the semantics of the artistic text as a rule focus on poetry. They discuss the metaphor as an artistic mean built on the unconventional collation of words. Another aspect of their analysis is the non-standard use of various grammatical categories in poetry.⁷⁰⁹ The number of papers dedicated to the semantic content of prose is decisively smaller.

The semantics of the artistic text can be understood in a narrow way, limiting research to “the static layer of meanings” (Sławkowa 2001:11), i.e. the so-called semantic fact. One can also assume a broader perspective considering potential senses whose discovery depends to a large extent on the receiver conditioned by various factors of a cultural character. Each approach influences the semantic analysis of text in a different way. This analysis fundamentally aims at reconstructing the author's intentions and his vision of the world depicted

708 See Sławkowa “Instrumentarium badawcze współczesnego językoznawstwa w opisie semantyki tekstu artystycznego (wybór zagadnień)” [Research Tools of Contemporary Linguistics Used to Describe the Semantics of the Artistic Text (Selected issues) in: *Semantyka tekstu artystycznego* [The Semantics of the Artistic Text], eds. Pajdzińska and Tokarski, Lublin 2001, pp. 9–23.

709 See for instance the articles in the volumes of *Kreowanie świata w tekstach* [Creating the World in Texts], ed. Lewicki and Tokarski (Lublin 1995) and *Semantyka tekstu artystycznego*, eds. Pajdzińska and Tokarski (Lublin 2001).

in his work or showing a variety of possible readings, conditioned by the context of time and culture of the receiver. Hence Sławkowa suggests the semantic analysis of the sender, the semantic analysis of text and the semantic analysis of the receiver (Sławkowa 2001:11). Consequently, the research on the semantics of the artistic text should consider many aspects. These issues are more complicated when we deal with translations of literary works since we should investigate not only the meanings as consequences of going beyond the norms and conventions found in the original text, but we should also verify how these non-standard linguistic activities have been translated and to which extent translators' activities have influenced the modification of the meanings in translations.

However, I would like to reflect on situations that look apparently simpler in which the translator, looking for equivalents of the words and structures of the source text, is not forced to take dramatic decisions and treat the linguistic material in a creative way. Since there are words that have obvious equivalents in the target language, and the translator should simply use them. There still remains the question to what degree these words are rooted in the native culture, and consequently, to which extent the meanings of these words and their equivalents overlap in the source culture and the target culture. Transferring this problem to intercultural communication, we can ask how receivers would understand these signs after they have been moved to another cultural system.

4 Intercultural semantics

In various languages, the same segments of non-linguistic reality are understood and described diversely. In other words, linguistic conceptualisation can vary to a considerable extent; it concerns first of all cultures that are distinct from one another, but in some cases, it also refers to similar cultures.

Although concepts are not connected with a certain language system, the system can influence them because language expresses the way of the organisation of knowledge referring to objects – and thus it includes concepts – in a culture using a given language. Objects creating the given state of affairs can be conceptualised in the same or different way in the source culture and the target culture

– indicates Zofia Berdychowska (2005:125). These differences appear at all the levels of the linguistic structure: phonology, morphology, syntax and the lexicon (Goddard, Wierzbicka 1998:175). The question which scholars have posed for years is: are there more things that connect people in this area or are there more things that divide them? The followers of the universalist conceptions claim that people see and think in a similar way, and so their languages, reflecting their thoughts, must have numerous things in common.

The extreme version of linguistic relativism claims that linguistic structures, above all the grammatical ones, determine our thinking. A consequence of this attitude is the thesis of the untranslatability of languages and essential problems with communication between representatives of cultures using different languages.

The stand of Cliff Goddard and Anna Wierzbicka (Goddard, Wierzbicka 1998:138) is a compromise solution. In their opinion, “though incompatible in their extreme versions [...] it is possible to see some truth in both linguistic relativity and universalism.” On the one hand, most concepts of language are strongly linked to the culture of the society that uses them. Yet, there is a group of concepts of a universal character, i.e. occurring in all languages.

According to Wierzbicka (1995:103), there are three types of concepts:

- universal (semantic primes). They are most likely innate, so found in the languages of all kinds of human groups. They constitute minimal units of meaning that can neither be divided into smaller elements nor defined. People understand them intuitively. Wierzbicka (1989:42) writes that all complex meanings in all languages constitute different configurations of these fundamental conceptual blocks. According to the 2002 research, the number of primitives was 59,⁷¹⁰ and they embraced, for example I, you, one, many, say, good;
- culture-specific. They belong to one concrete language community, reflecting its unique experiences and lifestyle. Words referring to the culture-specific concepts as a rule have no equivalents in other languages, but in their original sound they many a time widen the range of their vocabularies, i.e. function as borrowings. The examples can be the commonly known and understood terms, like *kamikaze*, *kolkhoz*, *kibbutz*, which we explicitly associate with the right cultures and do not try to seek equivalents in the Polish lexicon since in our culture, as well as in other cultures, there are no phenomena and institutions similar to these terms. As regards Polish examples, we can refer to the word “*inteligencja*” [intelligentsia]” as a term defining a social group; it is not translated since it is untranslatable: it refers to the term that has not even a close counterpart in other cultures;
- intermediate. They have equivalents in many languages. On the one hand, they can go beyond the borders of cultures and reflect certain elements of

710 See Goddard, Wierzbicka, (eds.) *Meaning and Universal Grammar. Theory and Empirical Findings*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia 2002.

human experience. On the other hand, they are closely related to the culture of the society that uses them. Thus, they partly embrace universal elements and partly reflect what is characteristic of a given culture. The experiences to which given concepts refer in one culture are not identical with the experiences that stand behind these concepts in other cultures. That is why, words naming these concepts in various languages have a different semantic scope; one can hardly speak of their equivalence, and in consequence – full translatability.

The fundamental universal semantic concepts create a metalanguage thanks to which we can precisely define concepts occurring in various languages, and then we can juxtapose these definitions. This allows us to capture the differences between intermediate concepts that under the illusion of apparent similarity make effective communication between representatives of various language communities difficult.

The attention of scholars investigating meaning, whether in philosophy or semantics, has most frequently been drawn by abstract concepts, like *truth*, *good*, *freedom*, fundamental to define the ideological and philosophical attitudes of concrete societies.⁷¹¹ Yet, it is much more difficult in practice to define concepts referring to material objects that surround people in their lives. Some linguists undermine the sense of defining lexical units naming “ordinary” objects arguing that the native users of a language do not need such definitions. Indeed, they understand such words as *coffee*, *apple* or *chair*, and their intuitive knowledge in this respect exceeds even the most perfect definition. However, such definitions are indispensable when we want to explain the meanings of a given culture to representatives of another culture.

5 Intercultural semantics vs. research on literary translation

The analysis of the meanings of some words used in the original text and comparing them with the meanings of the equivalents used in translations should, in my opinion, at least to a certain extent provide answers to the question how readers have understood translations. The reception of a literary text is done in the act of reading; understanding the meanings of words and grammatical forms of a literary work is directly related to its interpretation. That is why it

711 Analyses of such concepts can be found, for example, in Anna Wierzbicka's works, in the volume *Understanding Cultures through Their Key Words* (1997), and in Jadwiga Puzynina's *Slowo – wartość – kultura* [*Word – Value – Culture*], where one chapter is dedicated to “words important to Polish culture.”

seems important to attempt to reconstruct how receivers could decode words in translations and what semantic scope he could ascribe to them. It is neither possible nor necessary to analyse all words used in a translation in case of a novel. However, I think that interesting results can be obtained by concentrating on words that are important from the perspective of the structure of the whole work, which Kazimierz Wyka (1969) defined as “key words.” This should allow us to pose hypotheses which contents and senses included in the text of the original are available to readers of translations, and which can occur to be difficult to decode or even unavailable. It is also worth attempting to answer the question to which fragment of the reality readers know they can refer the elements of the world depicted in a given literary work. Since at this stage, according to Lalewicz, the most crucial part of the process of understanding is realised: receivers will understand texts if they are able to match them to some concrete *universum* of objects, conditions or events. Another important thing is whether this process of associating a word with its designate will follow the author’s intentions since the sender’s knowledge of the world does not always correspond to the receiver’s knowledge of the world.⁷¹²

In order to carry out these analyses it seems appropriate to apply Wierzbicka’s methodology, which she used in numerous studies concerning the semantic scopes of words in various languages and cultures. Defining meanings in a complete way, she first refers to their definitions in dictionaries and/or encyclopaedias. Subsequently she investigates their usages of words in various types of text: artistic, scientific, and sometimes also popular. Thanks to that, she can reconstruct the specific experiences, being part of users of a given language, that are hidden behind the concepts to which these words refer. Her ultimate aim was to create definitions of the analysed words through a metalanguage worked out on the basis of universal units.

I have not undertaken the final stage of the analysis since in my research on literary translation constructing precise definitions does not seem to be most important. Instead, it could be valuable to verify what potential differences between the functions of selected words in the source text and their equivalents in the target text can appear. Therefore, I will limit my research to several examples of what meanings a given word contributes to the original text and what meanings of the equivalent of this word readers can discover in translations.

Words in the original literary work convey information of a non-themed character about the depicted world. Formulations and grammatical forms

712 I have written about this in chapter one, section 3.

adopted in the work carry implied knowledge about the sender – at all the levels of literary communication, i.e. about figures uttering concrete statements and the narrator as well as the author.

The scope of information implied and coded in the structure of utterances [...] reveals the code of utterances and its realisation, indirectly characterising the sender and receiver as users of this code – the sender as the real user and the receiver as a potential user (Okopień-Sławińska 1971:113).

In translation, the character of this information must be modified. First of all, the translator is not always able to find equivalents in the target language which could convey implied information of the character that is comparable with the original. Moreover, the reader of the target text does not always have knowledge that will be necessary to capture non-themed information in order to understand the work in accordance with the author's intentions. In my opinion, in research on translation from the reader's perspective it is worth verifying which information has penetrated the target text, whether the information has been modified to a certain extent through the very fact of being immersed in another language and culture or whether it has not totally been distorted.

6 *Mate* as a culture-specific word

Many words concerning food and beverages refer to concepts that can be counted as culture-specific.

It is clearly no accident that Polish has special words for cabbage stew (*bigos*), beetroot soup (*barszcz*) and plum jam (*powidla*), which English does not; or that Japanese has a word *sake* for a strong alcoholic drink made from rice, whereas English does not.

– note Goddard and Wierzbicka (1998:145) These words do not only name concrete dishes and drinks but also reflect “the distinctive historical and cultural experiences of the speech community” (p. 145). Such Polish words as *pierogi* or *barszcz* can be found in French or English dictionaries in almost unchanged forms, sometimes written according to the spelling rules of these languages.⁷¹³

713 For example, *Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary* (<http://mw1.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>) explains the entry *pierogi*:

Main Entry: **pie-ro-gi**

Variant(s): also **pi-ro-gi** \pə-¹rō-gē, pi-\

Function: *noun*

Inflected Form(s): plural **pie-ro-gi** also **pie-ro-gies**

As examples, I have selected a few names of beverages used by the protagonists of *Hopscotch* by Cortázar. My focus is on the word *mate*. It is the name of the traditional infused drink from leaves of a plant grown in some areas of South America. This word also conveys other important contents and can be counted as an important key word of Argentinian culture.⁷¹⁴ It is especially interesting as it combines different contents: on the one hand, it names an object belonging to the world of daily experiences and on the other, it conveys cultural information and is a characteristic of the Argentinian nature. This word has no equivalents in other languages; it can be found in other (non-Spanish) dictionaries in its original form: *yerba mate* in Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary⁷¹⁵ and *le maté* in the Spanish-French dictionary *elmundo*.⁷¹⁶ Therefore, it refers to a term that fulfils the criteria of being a culture-specific concept.

6.1 The cultural references of *mate*

Spanish dictionaries give several contemporary meanings of this word originating from the Quechuan language. *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española (DRAE)* (Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy)⁷¹⁷ and the on-line dictionary *elmundo.es*⁷¹⁸ explain that *mate* is a beverage made of the leaves of *yerba mate* and also a special gourd for its drinking. *elmundo.es* adds that the word refers to the plant and its leaves. Moreover, the first dictionary enumerates the phraseological phrases containing *mate*. These are: *cebar el mate* (to brew mate),

Etymology: Polish, plural of *pieróg* dumpling, pierogi

Date: 1811

: a case of dough filled with a savory filling (as of meat, cheese, or vegetables) and cooked by boiling and then panfrying.

In turn, *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/define.asp?key=8975&dict=CALD>) has the entry: *barszcz* defined as:

borscht, borsch

noun [U]

a type of soup made from beetroot (= a small dark red vegetable); access: 15.09.2010

714 About key words of cultures see Wierzbicka 1997.

715 <http://mw1.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>; access: 15.09.2010.

716 http://diccionarios.elmundo.es/diccionarios/cgi/lee_diccionario.html?busca=mate&submit=+Buscar+&diccionario=6; access: 15.09.2010.

717 <http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltGUIBusUsual>; access: 15.09.2010.

718 http://diccionarios.elmundo.es/diccionarios/cgi/lee_diccionario.html?busca=mate&submit=+Buscar+&diccionario=1; access: 15.09.2010.

mate amargo (or *cimarrón*) – bitter, *cocido* (boiled), *de leche* (with milk instead of water), *dulce* (sweet), *lavado* (insipid, “washed” resulting from unsuccessful brewing), *verde* (lit. green, meaning bitter). All these terms refer to the process of brewing or they name its variants. Their number indicates that it is a popular drink that can be made in many ways. This dictionary gives yet another important piece of information: the scope of the use of these terms is limited to Argentina and Uruguay.

The quotes with *mate*, placed in the online Corpus of the Spanish Language, come first of all from Argentinian and Paraguayan literature, and sporadically, from Chilean. By analysing them we can conclude that brewing and drinking *mate* has been an element of daily routine:

- *El agudo chillido del despertador suena y despierta a Julián. Julián se sienta como un autómata en la cama. (...) pone el agua a calentar y, luego de dejar el **mate** listo para que respire el agua a punto de hervir, hace flexiones en el suelo. Uno, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco... (Santiago Giralt, Rutinas, <http://www.ficticia.com/indicePorTitulo.html>)*
- *A sharp squeak of the alarm can be heard, and Julian is waking up. Julian is getting up like an automaton. [...] he prepares **mate**, pours water, which has almost reached its boiling point, over it; doing sit-ups on the floor. One, two, three, four, five...*

Brewing *mate* can be a special ritual:

- *Empezó a preparar la merienda. Cuando llovía, el brasero iba derecho al cuarto de la abuela y su presencia lo transformaba en aromática cocina: a salvo de la lluvia, Lidia se puso a quemar la yerba y el azúcar para el **mate** cocido de todas las tardes. (Riquelme de Molinas, *De barro somos*, <http://www.corpusdelespanol.org/>)*
- *She started preparing snacks. When it rained, the brazier went straight to the grandmother's room and its presence transformed it into a kitchen full of aroma. Safe from the rain, Lidia began preparing the yerba with sugar for the afternoon boiled **mate**.*

Mate is also a drink that is usually served to guests:

- *Cuando José Pedro vio al gobernador consultar su reloj, le dijo adivinando su prisa: - Ya pronto nos iremos, señor. Van a servirnos otros asadito, el vino y el **mate** del estribo. Luego... ¡a casa! (Barrios Eduardo, *Gran señor y rajadiablos*, <http://www.corpusdelespanol.org/>)*

- *When José Pedro saw the governor look at his watch, he said, guessing that he was in a hurry: - We'll be gone soon, sir. They are going to serve us asadito, wine and mate before we leave. Then ... we'll go home!*

Mate turns out to be an effective cure in various situations, even for a hangover:

- *Ignacio se levantó embotado. No había dormido ni dos horas corridas. Rumbé hacia el pozo. Deseaba reavivarse con el agua escarchada de la palangana. Metió la cara de golpe y se puso a tiritar. La resaca se irá con el **mate**, se ilusionó. Y el mate bien caliente, lo despabiló en unas cuantas chupadas.* (Riquelme de Molinas, *Bazar de cuentos*, <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/FichaObra.html?Ref=4379>)
- *Ignacio got up dull. He had not slept even for two hours. He moved towards the well. He wanted to revive himself with the frosted water from the basin. He shoved his face in and began to shiver. He deluded himself that the hangover would disappear after drinking **mate**. And the hot mate has woken him up after having a few sips.*

Brewing *mate* can be a kind of a ritual that contributes to building a family community and helps build an intimate relationship between partners:

- *Elvira lo admitía - su marido era muy condescendiente; la dejaba salir, siempre y cuando estuviera de regreso temprano. A él le gustaba encontrarla en la casa cuando volvía del cuartel. Satisfacía su ego que ella personalmente le sacara las botas, pese a que tenía un ordenanza. Lo hacía sentirse el amo que ella le cebara el **mate** y le relatara las mil trivialidades del día, aunque él no le prestara mayor atención.* (Pardo Carugati, *La víspera y el día*, <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/FichaObra.html?Ref=4506>)
- *Elvira admitted - her husband was very condescending, he let her go out as long as she was back early. He liked to find her at home when he came back from the barracks. His ego was satisfied when she took off his boots, even though he had an ordinance. He felt that he was the master when she was brewing **mate** and telling him thousands of trivial stories that had happened that day, even though he did not pay any attention to them.*

Mate is treated as one of the essential elements that stress the Argentinian identity:

- *Siempre supe que mi incapacidad de comer chinchulines y de jugar al truco y la falta de pasión y militancia futbolera me segregaban de la argentinidad, circunstancia dolorosa a la que trato de paliar con fervor tanguero, el culto a Gardel, el **mate** amargo y los recurrentes, frustrantes y frustrados intentos de*

sumarme a posiciones políticas populistas (...). (Luis de Montalto, *Fiesta en la montaña*, <http://home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~fernand4/atrasados.html>)

- *I always knew that my aversion to eating chinchulines and playing the billiard as well as my lack of passion for football separate me from Argentineness, which is painful and I am trying to sooth it by my eagerness to dance tango, love of the cult of Gardel, bitter **mate** and the recurrent, frustrating unsuccessful attempts to join the populist political parties [...]*.

The citations clearly show that *mate* is an important element of Argentinian everyday life. Everyone drinks it regardless of age and circumstances. It accompanies formal and informal conversations. Drinking *mate* brings comfort in the midst of psychological and physical sufferings. Moreover, it fulfils important cultural functions: in the private dimension, it can be an element that strengthens family, and in a broader dimension, it is regarded as an indicator of Argentinian identity.

6.2 The functions of *mate* in *Hopscotch*

In the first part of *Hopscotch* taking place in Paris, *mate* is drunk by the main protagonists: La Maga coming from Uruguay and Oliveira from Argentina. The ritual of drinking *mate* is very important to them. They do not give up drinking *mate* despite the fact that in Paris *mate* is expensive and difficult to buy, and its taste is far from prefect:

- *Oliveira cebó otro **mate**. Había que cuidar la yerba, en París costaba quinientos francos el kilo y era una yerba perfectamente asquerosa* (p. 95).⁷¹⁹
- *Oliveira made himself another **mate**. He had to watch out for his mate, in Paris it cost five hundred francs and it was a terrible stuff.*⁷²⁰

The inability to give up *mate* is such a strong impulse that Oliveira accepts it as a present from his brother whom he hates and who sometimes sends him cash and things that cannot be obtained in Paris.

Brewing and drinking *mate* are elements of the couple's routine leading to some kind of bond between them and creating intimacy:

719 All the citations come from Cortázar, *Rayuela*, Bruguera Mexicana de Ediciones, México D.F 1984.

720 All of the citations are from *Hopscotch: A Novel*, tr. Gregory Rabassa, Random House, Inc., 1966, New York, e-book.

- *Cuando volvió con las manos rojas y brillantes, Oliveira le alcanzó un mate. Se sentó en un sillón bajo chupando aplicadamente. Siempre estropeaba un mate, tirando de un lado y otro la bombilla, revolviéndola como si estuviera haciendo polenta (p. 101).*
- *When she came back her hands were red and shining; Oliveira handed her the gourd. She sat down on the low easy chair and sucked the mate in a deliberate sort of way.*

A gourd of *mate* given by the partner brings comfort both in emotional and physical fatigue. “[...] this *mate* is like a pardon, something incredibly reconciliatory” says Oliveira, coming home tired, completely soaked and mentally exhausted after a night, full of absurd adventures, of walking around Paris.

- *Le pasó el mate vacío a la Maga, que se había acurrucado a sus pies con la pava entre las rodillas. Empezaba a sentirse bien. Sintió los dedos de la Maga en un tobillo, en los cordones del zapato (...) El mate estaba muy caliente y muy amargo (p. 174).*
- *He passed his empty gourd to la Maga, who had squatted by his feet. He began to feel good. He felt La Maga’s fingers on his ankle, on his shoelaces. He let her take off his shoe with a sigh. (...) The mate was hot and very bitter.*

This private dimension of celebrating *mate* is not the only element that makes the relationship between La Maga and Oliveira a special one in the group of cosmopolitan friends. This group called the Serpent Club includes people who have come to Paris from all over the world: a Chinese, some Englishmen, a Yugoslavian and a Frenchman. Despite their close relationships, La Maga and Oliveira never propose to drink a gourd of *mate* with them. Since for La Maga and Oliveira brewing and drinking *mate* is an expression of cultural fellowship, a signal of a relationship that characterises those who celebrate the same rituals although they live abroad, far from their home. This is a ceremony that the non-initiated profane people are not allowed to participate in. The borders of this community are not set by the Spanish language – La Maga and Oliveira do not serve *mate* even to the Spaniard Perico Romero.

For the main protagonist of *Hopscotch*, his attitude towards *mate* defines his Argentinian identity. The questions about one’s roots becomes especially important to immigrants, even those who were not forced to migrate. Thus, Oliveira is obsessively seeking that mysterious, elusive centre that he describes as “the unity, the sum of all the actions which define a life.” At some moment, he concludes, “This *mate* might show me where the center is.”

His attitude towards *mate* helps him divide the world into those whom he treats as his locals, i.e. who drink and participate in his ritual of brewing *mate*,

and the others, i.e. those who are not allowed to take part in the ceremony and do not understand it. This creates a gap between Argentinian culture characterised by *mate* and French culture that does not know this drink:

- *la droguería de la estación Saint Lazare la vendía con una vistosa calificación de maté sauvage cueilli par les Indiens, diurética, antibiótica y emoliente* (p. 96).
- *[it was] sold in the pharmacy of the Saint-Lazare station next to a gaudy sign that said “maté sauvage cueilli par les Indiens”, diuretic, antibiotic, and emollient.*

Oliveira's return to Argentina means a return to the country where *mate* is brewed in a perfect way.

As regards personal contacts, distance towards a strange culture is articulated as aversion towards *mate*, being one of the expressions of Argentinian culture, “I'll never know these delights of the pampas,” says Gregorovius, one of the members of the Serpent Club and Oliveira's rival for Lucia's affections.

My analysis leads to a conclusion that the use of *mate* expresses a number of meanings and nuances referring to a concrete cultural context. Their proper understanding and interpretation require knowledge of this context. Otherwise, readers can encounter problems in interpreting some fragments of the novel. In my opinion, Spanish-speaking readers are able to decode most of these senses. In the case of readers coming from the most southern parts of Latin America, the contents conveyed by *mate* also contribute to creating a feeling of close cultural bonds with the author.

6.3 Polish readers versus *mate*

Let us reconstruct what the Polish readers of the late 1960s and the early 1970s could have known about the Argentinian *mate*. This word appeared in the dictionaries and encyclopaedias of that period. *Słownik wyrazów obcych i zwrotów obcojęzycznych* [Dictionary of Foreign Words and Phrases] by Władysław Kopaliński in the 1968, 1989, 1994 editions defines this word in an identical way:

Paraguay holly; Paraguay tea, aromatic beverage similar to coffee and tea, from the dry leaves and shoots of mate.

Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN [PWN Universal Encyclopaedia] published in 1975 has a longer explanation:

Paraguay tea; Paraguay holly, *ilex paraguariensis*; a bush or tree from the species of the holly genus, ovate leaves, length up to 10 cm, evergreen; as a wild plant, it grows in South America (extinct species); it has been cultivated since the 17th century (currently mainly in Brazil, Paraguay and northern Argentina); the infusion from dry leaves is a beverage.

Generally speaking, the information that the Polish readers of the first editions of *Hopscotch* could gain about *mate* was rather sparse. Knowing the laconic definitions of *mate*, they could not imagine how the exotic beverage should be prepared and what its taste was. The available sources did not give any knowledge of the cultural references of this term. This is confirmed by Majcherek's recollection about the novel (1984:116), "It became a part of my life; one could not part with it; people spoke about the novel, and it completely captured our imagination (our tea tasted like *mate* although nobody knew what it was exactly)." A characteristic thing was also that in the numerous reviews and essays concerning the most famous novel by Cortázar, which were published in the Polish press in the 1970s, the tread of the Argentinian identity of the main protagonist was hardly discussed.

Therefore, for the average Polish receiver who did not know the cultures of Latin America but who reached for the first editions of this novel, the load of cultural senses conveyed by *mate* was impossible to be captured. That is why *mate* meant first of all a breeze of exoticism, which was difficult to define. *Mate* introduced a certain aura of mystery. It signalled a world that was unknown and attractive because of its otherness and unavailability. It was these meanings that were brought to the foreground. And it did not matter that this exotic mystery happened in Paris in the 1960s. For an average Pole, Paris was as exotic as distant Argentina.

Let us note that the change of the language and cultural context of reception caused that from the perspective of the real receiver, the function of *mate*, one of the key terms in *Hopscotch* was fundamentally changed. For Spanish-speaking receivers, this word conveys profound meanings being a sign of the Argentinian identity, whereas in the world of the novel, it is a symbol of fellowship between the main couple, voluntary immigrants. From the Polish receiver's perspective, the situation looked slightly different. Although careful readers could see that drinking *mate* was a specific ritual distinguishing the main protagonists of the novel, they did not know its cultural references. Thus, for them *mate* was first of all a mark of exoticism.

Naturally, today the situation of Polish receivers is totally different than 40 years ago. Yet, the definitions of *mate* in dictionaries and encyclopaedias remain almost the same.⁷²¹ The exception is *Praktyczny słownik współczesnej polszczyzny* [Practical Dictionary of Contemporary Polish] that gives the widest explanation of the word:

721 The contemporary edition of *Uniwersalny słownik języka polskiego* PWN says that *mate* or *herba mate* or *yerba mate* is a holly with leathery leaves and small flowers, cultivated for its leaves containing caffeine or a beverage form dry leaves of this plant; <http://usjp.pwn.pl/lista.php?co=mate>, access: 20.09.2010.

mate from Quechua, an American Indian language, *mati* through Spanish *mate*; noun, neuter; flectionless.

1. botanical “species of tree of the holly genus (Aquifoliaceae), up to 13 m high, with whitish smooth bark and evergreen, leathery ovate leaves up to 13 cm long; characterised by small red and red-brown fruits: it grows wild in South America, cultivated in Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina because of its leaves from which after proper processing we can have an aromatic beverage: *Ilex paraguariensis*”: *Mate* grows in large areas in Paraguay and Brazil and it is the main source of tea there. The infusion from dry leaves of *mate* is a beverage containing ca. 1 % of caffeine.
2. “a beverage from dry leaves of this plant”: *Mate* is drunk with sugar or with milk, yet lovers of *mate* say that it is best without sugar. [...] ⁷²²

This dictionary does not only provide strictly scientific information, but also, to a small extent, certain contents of a cultural character. As the only Polish dictionary it shows its grammatical gender – *mate*: neuter. This decision of the editors’ of *Praktyczny słownik współczesnej polszczyzny* might have been taken in accordance with the rule that Polish nouns ending with a vowel other than *a* are usually neuter.

Chądzyńska, who translated *Hopscotch*, chose a different way. She regarded the word *mate* as a feminine noun. The reason could have been the similarity of this beverage to tea, which Poles knew (tea – Polish: *herbata* is a feminine noun). Ascribing the feminine gender to *mate*, the translator gave readers a valuable indication – with what they could compare the unknown beverage.

Contemporary receivers are in a different situation than the readers 30 years ago. Paris stopped being an inaccessible capital of Europe; even Argentina became less alien and exotic. Today readers are not doomed to gain knowledge only from dictionaries and encyclopaedias since almost everyone can use the powerful source of information – the Internet. One does not need to know Spanish. It will be sufficient to open a proper page of Wikipedia⁷²³ to acquire basic information about *mate*. Its rather short article provides information about the etymology of the word, on which territories it grows, that its leaves are used to brew a beverage, and a detailed description how to brew *mate*, a process being a kind of a ritual. In the photos, you can see the Paraguay holly, the special utensil to brew it and the gourd to drink it. If someone wants to taste *mate*, he can find online shops (but not only), where the herbs and all necessary accessories for brewing can be bought (usually “healthy food” shops). However, this does not

722 *Praktyczny słownik współczesnej polszczyzny*, ed. H. Zgólkowa, Wydawnictwo Kurpisz, Poznań 1999, vol. 20, pp. 345–346.

723 <http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mate>, access: 15.09.2010.

change the fact that at present, an average Polish reader can find it difficult to capture the most important functions of *mate* in *Hopscotch*. Polish readers perceive *mate* as a key word in the novel, but will probably ascribe to it a function that would be different from the one in the original.

Roman Jakobson (1959:232) defines the meanings of words as linguistic or semantic facts. Therefore, in his opinion, it is not necessary to taste dishes or beverages to understand words that name them. Such words as “nectar” or “ambrosia” are commonly understood although nobody could try to taste these beverages. “Any representative of a cheese-less culinary culture will understand the English word *cheese* if he is aware that in his language it means «food made of pressed curd»” claims Jakobson. We can agree with him if we assume that the receiver knows what curd is ... (the bacterial fermentation is not achieved at all of the latitudes).

Wierzbicka stresses the importance of comparison in constructing and understanding meanings. Thanks to the translator’s effort, Polish readers of the translation of Cortázar’s novel could understand *mate* as a beverage similar to tea. They could have assumed that *mate* had its own properties and understood that it was an important term in the world of the novel, but if they did not make big efforts they could not decode all of the senses of this word. Since *mate* brings to mind the whole system of behaviours and rituals and is an element of cultural communication in the sense which Carbaugh ascribed to this term. *Mate* is a culture-specific term transferring contents that are important to Argentinian culture and that characterise only this culture. As such, it is recognised outside Argentina, but this does not change the fact that a person who does not know its culture has limited access to this knowledge.

7 Beer in Latin American culture and in Polish culture

The drinking of *mate* distinguishes the main couple in Cortázar’s novel among the other figures. Hence it may be surprising that this beverage does not accompany La Maga and Oliveira in their love scenes. *Mate* fulfils many cultural functions but it is obviously not a beverage of lovers, which is confirmed by the analyses of citations included in the Corpus of Spanish.

For many readers, *Hopscotch* is first of all a love story. Chądzyńska recollects a couple who performed a peculiar dialogue through pages torn off from the novel.⁷²⁴ Yet, La Maga and Oliveira brew and drink *mate* during long and serious

724 “Okno w murze,” an interview given to Warszawski, *Czas* 1980, no. 21, p. 26.

conversations when the fate of their relationship hangs in the air, while in the background of their intimate situations the beverage is ... beer:

- *(La Maga) pensaba en Rocamadour, cantaba algo de Hugo Wolf (mal), me besaba, me preguntaba por el peinado, se ponía a dibujar en un papelito amarillo, y todo eso era ella indisolublemente mientras yo ahí, en una cama deliberadamente sucia, bebiendo una cerveza deliberadamente tibia, era siempre yo y mi vida, yo con mi vida frente a la vida de los otros* (p. 24).
- *(La Maga) was thinking about Rocamadour. She sang something from Hugo Wolf (badly), she kissed me, she asked me about her hairdo, she began to sketch on a scrap of yellow paper. That was all she, no doubt about it, and that was I on a deliberately dirty bed, drinking a glass of deliberately flat beer, always being myself and my life; there was I with my life face to face with other people's life.*
- *No había un desorden que abriera puertas al rescate, había solamente suciedad y miseria, vasos con restos de cerveza, medias en un rincón, una cama que olía a sexo y a pelo, una mujer que me pasaba su mano fría y transparente por los muslos (...)* (p. 25).
- *There was no disorder to open escape-hatches, there was only filth and misery, glasses with stale beer, stockings in a corner, a bed which smelled of sex and hair, a woman who ran her small, thin hand along my thighs [...]*

Perhaps it is worth reflecting why Polish readers did not associate beer with this couple that was certainly one of the well-known lovers in literature in Poland in the 1970s. Let us look at the cultural references related to beer for the users of Polish and the users of Spanish.

Dictionaries of both languages provide similar explanations. In Spanish, we read that beer is “alcoholic drink of bitter taste, yellow, pale or dark, made through the fermentation of barley, brewed with hops.”⁷²⁵ The Polish definition of beer is “a foamy drink with a small percentage of alcohol, brewed from malted barley, hops, yeast and water.”⁷²⁶ *Inny słownik języka polskiego*⁷²⁷ states precisely: a beverage of a golden or dark brown colour. The fundamental difference between the Polish and Spanish dictionaries is that the former gives a long list of collocations and phrasemes with the element *beer*. According to *SJP*, beer can be *strong, light, pale, dark, mulled, lager*. Other collocations inform about the utensils in which beer is served or stored: *glass, mug, bottle, barrel*. *Słownik*

725 www.diccionarios.com/consultas.php. A similar definition is given by the dictionary of the Spanish Royal Academy.

726 *SJP*, PWN, Warszawa 1978, vol. II.

727 Ed. M. Bańko, PWN, Warszawa 2000.

frazeologiczny języka polskiego by Stanisław Skorupka⁷²⁸ gives adjectives related to the places of beer production: *English, Bavarian, Okocim, Pilzen*. In Polish, we also have idioms with beer production: *nawarzyć sobie lub komuś piwa* (to make troubles for oneself or others) and *pić piwo, którego się nawarzyło* (to face the music), *dać na piwo* (give some money for beer) or *dostać od kogoś na piwo* (get some money for beer). *Wielki słownik frazeologiczny z przysłowiami* [The Great Dictionary of Idioms and Proverbs] gives the idiom *małe piwo* (a piece of cake).

The Spanish equivalent *cerveza* does not appear in many phrases: the dictionary of the Academy gives only one collocation: *cerveza doble* explained as “strong beer.”⁷²⁹ The online *elmundo* gives two collocations: *cerveza de barril* (draught beer) and *una jarra de cerveza* (a pitcher of beer).⁷³⁰

The quantitative predominance of Polish phrases with *beer* over the Spanish phrases is striking. The number of idioms and collocations in Polish testifies to the fact that beer has been profoundly rooted in Polish culture. It was a beverage that accompanied meals of the rich from the 11th century, drunk in big quantities (up to 3 litres a day). Only in the second half of the 18th century, beer was replaced by mead and vodka. Beer was regarded as a beverage of the common people (Kuchowicz 1992:31). But it did not disappear from Polish tables. Nevertheless, its prestige and popularity decreased in the post-war period. The low quality of beer served in the period of the Polish People’s Republic resulted from the process of production that did not meet the norms, and also the ingredients were of poor quality, neither was it not properly stored. As one of the protagonists from Włodzimierz Kowalewski’s work recollected:

- *None of us drunk beer, by the way, one could seldom buy it, and when one could, it had the taste of cabbage and rotten potatoes.*⁷³¹

This negative connotation of beer must have originated in those times. Since beer was preferred by a specific group: only men, mostly physical workers having

728 S. Skorupka, *Słownik frazeologiczny języka polskiego*, Wiedza Powszechna, Warszawa 1977.

729 http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO_BUS=3&LEMA=detenidamente, access: 25.09.2010.

730 http://diccionarios.elmundo.es/diccionarios/cgi/lee_diccionario.html?busca=cerveza&submit=+Buscar+&diccionario=1; access: 25.09.2010.

731 The Corpus of Polish by Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN http://korpus.pwn.pl/results.php?k_set=1&k_find=piwo&k_free=free&k_limit=300&k_ile=100&k_left=10&k_right=10&k_order=Center; access: 25.09.2010.

the opinion of overusing alcohol. Beer was bought and drunk in booths. Thus, we have images of

- *booths selling beer, crowded with people resembling trees torn by wind.*⁷³²

*Inny słownik języka polskiego*⁷³³ gives the phrase *osoba spod budki z piwem* (a person standing at a beer selling booth) meaning someone rude.

Beer selling booths were so much rooted in the Polish scenery that they were even glorified in literature: in Miron Białoszewski's poem, such a booth became "a manger in Wołomin" for "three shepherds wearing donkey jackets, stitched kings."⁷³⁴ The sight of a woman, especially a young one, drinking beer could have been shocking:

- *girls representing "zero"; they have no respect for themselves very pretty girls standing with such boozers; I say that: they stand, drink beer, no respect.*⁷³⁵

Therefore, in post-war Poland, beer was seen as a beverage for men, drunk only in male company. Today this stereotype is kept in advertisements directed to male customers. It is no wonder that the Polish readers of *Hopscotch* preferred not to remember that in the breaks in love scenes the main protagonist drank beer. Since from our perspective, beer was not romantic at all. But the Spanish word *cerveza* has no such associations. It is a beverage that everyone can drink, men and women, regardless of their education, and it is not shocking:

- *Estoy un poco nerviosa. - ¿Quieres tomar algo? - Sí, una cerveza, por favor. Leah era una de esas mujeres en las que era difícil adivinar su edad y su estado civil, si era soltera, divorciada, viuda o si seguía casada. (Gertopan Susana, El nombre prestado; <http://www.corpusdelespanol.org/>)*
- *I am a little nervous. Do you want to drink something? - Yes, beer, please. Leah was one of those women whose age was hard to guess, and so was her marital status; it was not known whether she was single, divorced, a widow or married.*

Hence, the image of La Maga drinking beer is nothing special for Spanish readers.

732 *ibid.*

733 *Inny słownik języka polskiego*, ed. M. Bańko, PWN, Warszawa 2000.

734 "Filozofia Wołomina" [The Philosophy of Wołomin] /in:/ M. Białoszewski, *Trzydzieści lat wierszy* [Thirty Years of Poems], PIW, Warszawa 1982, p. 23.

735 The Corpus of Polish by Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN http://korpus.pwn.pl/results.php?k_set=1&k_find=piwo&k_free=free&k_limit=300&k_ile=100&k_left=10&k_right=10&k_order=Center

8 The Spanish drink *el vodka* and the Polish *wódka*

Another alcohol drunk by the protagonists of Cortázar's novel is *el vodka*; obviously translated into Polish as "wódka." In this case, the translator of the novel had no choice. However, it is worth stressing that in Spanish there are two words for the Polish word *wódka*: beside the cited *vodka* we have *aguardiente*. Both terms have similar explanations in Spanish dictionaries: alcoholic drinks as products of distillation.⁷³⁶ Yet, *vodka* has foreign connotations: according to the dictionaries, it is a strong alcoholic drink drunk mainly in Russia (Spanish Academy Dictionary⁷³⁷) or associated with Central European countries (*elmundo*⁷³⁸). Spanish receivers have no other associations with this word; both in Spanish and Hispanic culture it is less common than *aguardiente*. This is confirmed by the data collected in the Corpus of the Spanish Language: 425 citations

736 DRAE:

aguardiente. (De *agua* y *ardiente*).

1. m. Bebida espirituosa que, por destilación, se saca del vino y de otras sustancias; es alcohol diluido en agua. *Aguardiente de caña, de guindas, de Cazalla.*

(http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO_BUS=3&LEMA=detenidamente)

vodka.

1. amb. Especie de aguardiente que se consume mucho en Rusia.

(http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO_BUS=3&LEMA=detenidamente, access: 28.09.2010)

elmundo.com: aguardiente

m. Bebida alcohólica que, por destilación, se saca del vino y otras sustancias. Puede ir seguido de la prep. de, indicando la sustancia de la que se obtiene o el lugar del que procede: *aguardiente de caña, de Cazalla.*

(http://diccionarios.elmundo.es/diccionarios/cgi/lee_diccionario.html?busca=aguardiente&submit=+Buscar+&diccionario=1); access: 28.09.2010

vodka

amb. Aguardiente de cereales (centeno, maíz, cebada), incoloro y de fuerte graduación alcohólica que se consume mucho en los países de Europa Oriental. Más c. m.: se tomó un vodka con naranja.

(http://diccionarios.elmundo.es/diccionarios/cgi/lee_diccionario.html?busca=vodka&submit=+Buscar+&diccionario=1); access: 28.09.2010

737 http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO_BUS=3&LEMA=detenidamente; access: 28.09.2010.

738 http://diccionarios.elmundo.es/diccionarios/cgi/lee_diccionario.html?busca=vodka&submit=+Buscar+&diccionario=1; access: 28.09.2010.

with *aguardiente* and only 75 with *vodka*. *Aguardiente* is a more popular drink, almost plebeian; everyone can taste it and get drunk with it:

- *Ya de mayor, como dependíamos del jornal que nos cayera cada día, íbamos a la plaza cada mañana a la espera de que alguien nos cogiera para trabajar. Allí, a la puerta del único bar que por entonces había, estábamos todos los jornaleros esperando. Muchos entraban a tomar la copa de **aguardiente** y una cosa caliente y oscura a la que llamaban café.* (Patricio Chamizo, *Paredes, un campesino extremeño*, <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/FichaObra.html?Ref=4797>)
- *When I grew older, as we worked on the daily wage, we went to the plaza every morning waiting for someone to hire us. There, at the door of the only bar that was then there, we, labourers of one day, waited. Many came in to drink a glass of **aguardiente** and a dark and hot liquid that was called coffee.*
- *Cuando está como ahora, es un alma de Dios: cuando está borracho, una tromba: recupera toda agilidad que el bote le ha quitado; ningún policía se atreve a acercarse a él en los días que bebe, y bebe semanas enteras. Trabaja borracho: se cae al mar, resopla como una foca y sube la bote; le cambian ropa y le dan un trago de **aguardiente**; sigue trabajando y ni siquiera estornuda.* (Manuel Rojas, *Hijo de ladrón*, <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/FichaObra.html?Ref=4018>)
- *When he is like today, he is a soul of God; when he is drunk, he becomes a typhoon: he regains all agility lost in prison; no policemen dare to approach him on the days he drinks all the time, and this can last for weeks. He works drunk: he falls into the sea, snorts like a seal and the boat goes up; they gave him new clothes and a glass of **aguardiente**. He keeps working and does not sneeze even once.*

On the other hand, *vodka* is more exotic, drunk for example by figures in foreign films:

- *Bueno hay otra película - no recuerdo - cuál de la serie, una de las de cero, cero, siete, que a él lo mandan a hacer un chequeo antes de una misión lo - y lo - y sac/ - abre un maletín con **vodka**, huevos de codorniz y caviar, ¿ eh?. Sí, recuerdo aquello. Bueno, supongo que lo recordáis también, no recuerdo quién, no sé si es Contra el doctor No o contra - Gol/ - No, contra - Goldfinger, no. Yo creo que es una de las más recientes.* (oral utterance, *España Oral: CCON031B, pus.html* http://elvira.llf.uam.es/docs_es/corpus/cor)
- *Well, there is another movie, I do not remember which one of the series, one about OO7, in which he is made to do a check before his mission - and what? He opens a briefcase where he has **vodka**, quail eggs and caviar, huh? Yes,*

I remember that. Well, I guess you remember it too, I do not remember whether the film was about Dr. No or Goldfinger. No, this was not Goldfinger but one of the most recent films.

Drinking *wódka* is profoundly associated with Russian culture from the Spanish-speaking receivers' perspective; it penetrates every aspect of the Russian people's lives:

- *Los cultores del alcohol, en realidad, se preocupan menos por las últimas letras de la marca que por el contenido de las botellas. El vodka no es para los rusos sólo una bebida, sino un condicionante genético que se manifiesta en los más diversos aspectos culturales. Cualquier aniversario o evento - por insignificante que sea - es digno de regar con **vodka**. Una gripe, resfrío o traumatismo no resiste una cura de **vodka**; las infecciones retroceden ante su presencia; limpia manchas, purifica espíritus y, claro está, levanta el ánimo. En una conferencia, un académico puede saltar de una ecuación de ingeniería molecular a las virtudes del vodka en la desactivación de isótopos radiactivos. (Arg:Cronista:628_LOZA, <http://www.lllf.uam.es/~fmarcos/informes/corpus/coarginl.html>)*
- *The lovers of alcohol really worry less about the make than the content of the bottle. **Vodka** is not just a drink for Russians, but a genetic condition that manifests itself in the most diverse areas of culture. Any anniversary or event, even insignificant, is worth watering with **vodka**. An influenza, cold or trauma must yield to the cure by **vodka**; it cures infections; it takes off stains, purifies the spirit and, of course, makes one feel better. During a lecture, a professor can jump from a molecular engineering equation to the virtues of applying vodka in the deactivation of radioactive isotopes.*

Sometimes going for *el vodka* to a bar is nothing extraordinary, it is part of social life:

- *Puse en alquiler mi departamento y me mudé a vivir con Laura. Cada tanto iba al bar a tomar un vaso de **vodka** con José, o a jugar al dominó con don Samuel, hasta que la muerte fue llevándolos uno a uno, cumpliendo con la justa ley. (Susana Fuente Gertopan, *El nombre prestado*, <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/FichaObra.html?Ref=5483>)*
- *I rented my apartment and moved in to Laura's. From time to time I went to the bar to have a glass of **vodka** with José, or to play dominoes with Don Samuel, until death took them one by one, complying with the just law.*

Yet, in Spanish-speaking cultures, *vodka* is more often associated with drunkenness, dead-drunk and alcoholism:

- *Después llegó el momento en que me dije, Pedro, estás exagerando, no te pases, y allí empezó la cuestión del vodka, y ya no fueron solamente dos traguitos, sino dos botellas diarias, un poco más de relajo...* (Perú: Caretas: 1414, <http://www.caretas.com.pe/1414/1414.htm>)
- *Then came the moment when I said to myself: Pedro, you're exaggerating, give it a rest and the topic of vodka began, and it was not two sips, but two bottles a day, a little more of relaxation...*

Cortázar, ordering his protagonists to drink strong alcohol, could choose between *vodka* and *aguardiente*. It seems that he omitted the second term on purpose since in Spanish *aguardiente* is more commonly used and refers to the native culture. Moreover, drinking *aguardiente* in Paris could have been little realistic: in France one could hardly buy a strong alcoholic drink produced from corn. The protagonists of *Hopscotch*, pretending to be elaborated intellectuals, would not have wanted to drink a common, plebeian drink. That is why, Cortázar orders them to drink *vodka*. In Paris, *vodka* could be easily bought, and from the perspective of Hispanic culture, it brings some breeze of exoticism.

The members of the Serpent Club drink *vodka* during a meeting in a flat in Quartier Latin, listening to music, mainly jazz, and talking all the time ... about everything. They see *vodka* as a strong alcohol and drink it to get drunk:

- *[...] un poco bebidos todos* (p. 62).
- *[...] all of us a little tight (...)*.
- *La sbornia en su momento más alto. Vodka dudoso, horriblemente fuerte* (p. 89).
- *A binge at its highest moment. Doubtful vodka, terribly strong.*

Thanks to *vodka*, the world appears to be a little unreal:

- *(...) a Oliveira le costaba creer que todo eso estuviera sucediendo* (p. 63).
- *[...] it was hard for Oliveira to believe that all of this was taking place.*

However, *vodka* predominantly allows them to get rid of their daily concerns:

- *- Los intercesores – pensó otra vez, hamaacándose con Babs que estaba completamente borracha y lloraba en silencio escuchando a Bessie, estremeciéndose a compás o a contratiempo, sollozando para adentro para no alejarse por nada de los blues de la cama vacía, la mañana siguiente, los zapatos en los charcos, el alquiler sin pagar, el miedo a la vejez, imagen cenicienta del amanecer en el espejo a los pies de la cama, los blues, el cafard infinito de la vida* (p. 63).

- “The intercessors,” he thought once more, snuggling up to Babs who was completely drunk and was crying quietly as she listened to Bessie, trembling in time to the rhythm or counterpoint, weeping inside so not to get far away from the blues about an empty bed, tomorrow morning, shoes in puddles, unpaid rent, fear of old age, the ashen image of dawn in the mirror at the foot of the bed, the blues, life’s infinite cafard.

Drinking *vodka*, the protagonists do not make any ritual gestures, like encouraging others to drink with them, making toasts or drinking at the same time. Everyone drinks in his own tempo and pours his glass himself or asks someone to do that. Their drinking *vodka* is not of a communal character; on the contrary, they seem to be very lonely and their talks become monologues – aloud or in silence.

The Polish definitions of *wódka* are similar to the Spanish. *SJP* defines it as “a strong alcoholic drink made from spirit and water.”⁷³⁹ Similarly, *MSJP* (1989:906) reads, “an aqueous solution of spirit.” But the Polish dictionaries also give lists of collocations and idioms, proverbs and sayings with the word *wódka*: *pure, flavoured, Gdańsk vodka, something to eat with vodka, to distil vodka, to neck vodka back, to neck vodka, drunk with vodka* (*Inny słownik języka polskiego*). *Uniwersalny SJP* (PWN) lists: *alcohol (wine, vodka, etc.) idzie, poszedł, uderza, uderzył komuś do głowy, idzie, poszedł komuś w nogi* [become drunk]; *iść, pójść, skoczyć na kieliszek, na kielicha, na wódkę* [go for a drink]; *lać w kogoś (w siebie) wódkę* [pour vodka in oneself]; *podlać coś wódką; strzelić kielicha, wódkę* [drink vodka]; *szukać zapomnienia, pociechy w kieliszku, topić, utopić coś, np. kłopoty, smutki, troski, zmartwienia, w alkoholu (w wódce, w winie), w kieliszku* [seek comfort in vodka]. The number of these phrases and idioms testifies to the fact that vodka has been deeply rooted in Polish culture.

For Poles, vodka, defined by Tadeusz Konwicki as a “tribal drink of Central and Eastern Slavs,” is associated with a system of behaviours. This beverage seems to be democratic: everyone can drink it regardless of age and social status. However, it should be stressed that vodka is regarded as a man’s drink. Women most frequently accompany men drinking vodka, but they themselves do not drink it a lot:

- *Był już trochę podcięty, ale przyniósł pół litra. Hanka przygotowała zagrychę i popijali. Co to jest jednak pół litra na trzech? Nawet na dwóch, bo Hanka prawie nie piła.*⁷⁴⁰

739 <http://sjp.pwn.pl/lista.php?co=w%F3dka>; access: 08.09.2010.

740 Bielecki, *Siostra komandosa*, quoted after the Corpus of Polish by Wydawnictwo Naukowego PWN, <http://korpus.pwn.pl/opis.php?id=1527&sel=3051,1>; access: 08.09.2010.

Although he was a bit drunk, he brought a half litre. Hanka prepared a variety of snacks and began drinking. But what did half a litre mean for three people? Even for two since Hanka drank very little.

Vodka turns out to be a necessary element in doing business:

- *Na kuchni grzał się bigos i skwierczały kurze udka. Paweł nalał do kieliszków **wódki**. Mężczyźni usiedli naprzeciwko siebie i rozmawiali o cenach skór w Taszowie i w Kielcach. Potem Ukleja rzucił sprośny kawał. **Wódka** znikiała w gardłach, a kieliszki wydawały się zbyt małe, żeby nasycić to potworne pragnienie ciała.*⁷⁴¹

*There was bigos stew heating up and chicken thighs sizzling in the kitchen. Paweł filled the shot glasses with **vodka**. The men sat opposite each other and talked about the prices of animal hides in Taszów and Kielce. Then Ukleja told a dirty joke. Vodka kept disappearing in their throats, and the glasses seemed too small to slake their bodies' monstrous thirsty.*⁷⁴²

It is also a universal cure for feeling unwell because of sad events:

- *Znów nie możesz dogadać się ze swoją kobietą, a twój najlepszy kumpel właśnie leczy kaca i nie chce pójść z tobą na **wódkę**.*⁷⁴³

*Again, you are not able to come to an agreement with your woman, and your best companion has just been treating his hangover and does not want to go out for **vodka** with you.*

This universality of drinking vodka, because of the status of the one who drinks and the reason for some trauma, has been recently described by Janusz Głowacki:

- *Narzeczona zdradza - seta, nie ma na buty - sto pięćdziesiąt, cenzura zdejmuje książkę - pół litra, przyjaciel zakapuje - półtora, nasi przegrywają z Ruskimi w nogę - trzydniówka.*⁷⁴⁴

741 Tokarczuk, *Primeval and Other Times*, [Primeval and Other Times] quoted after the Corpus of Polish by Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, http://korpus.pwn.pl/results.php?k_set=1&k_find=w%F3dka&k_free=free&k_limit=300&k_ile=100&k_left=10&k_right=10&k_order=Center; access: 10.09.2010.

742 Tokarczuk, *Primeval and Other Times*, tr. A. Lloyd-Jones, Twisted Spoon Press, Prague 2010, p. 168.

743 CKM 1999 / 5, quoted after the Corpus of Polish by Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, http://korpus.pwn.pl/results.php?k_set=1&k_find=w%F3dka&k_free=free&k_limit=300&k_ile=100&k_left=10&k_right=10&k_order=Center; access: 08.09.2010.

744 <http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,6634769.html>; access: 12.06.2009.

Your fiancée has betrayed you – a hundred grams, she does not have money to buy shoes – a hundred and fifty, the censorship has cancelled your book – half a litre, your friend will inform on you – a litre and a half, our football players lost against the Russians – three days of drinking.

Vodka has become a permanent element of Polish culture, something you must have in many situations:

- *Kiedys gościł tu Iredyński z dziewczyną i tak się spił, że nazajutrz nie miał ani na **wódkę**.*⁷⁴⁵
Iredyński was our guest here, with his girl, and he drank so heavily that had no money even for vodka the next day.
- *Już raz w życiu były odczytane w kościele moje zapowiedzi, nawet kupiono **wódkę**.*⁷⁴⁶
Once in my life there was my publication of banns, even vodka was bought.
- *Czego się napijecie? Jest jeszcze **wódka**, no i wódka, i może być jeszcze ewentualnie wódka z sokiem.*⁷⁴⁷
*What are you going to drink? We still have **vodka**, and more vodka, and perhaps vodka with juice.*

Vodka has also become an important theme of Polish contemporary literature: suffice it to mention *Pod mocnym aniołem* (The Mightly Angel) by Jerzy Pilch or Marcin Świetlicki's volume of poems entitled *36 wierszy o wódce i papierosach* [36 Poems about Vodka and Cigarettes].

Świetlicki's volume is especially interesting. In his poems, the word "wódka" does not occur even once, it is only in the title. Yet, it is a very important signal that he speaks of difficult matters, perhaps painful, straightforward, without any ambiguity and hiding behind masks that one can assume every day. A drunk is devoid of any restrictions and speaks frankly.

[...] everyone that even once led to have a horrible hangover knows very well in what cosmic perspective his life seemed to be, how beneficially a hangover influences the

745 *Przekrój* 2001/2918, quoted after the Corpus of Polish by Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, http://korpus.pwn.pl/results.php?k_set=1&k_find=w%F3dka&k_free=free&k_limit=300&k_ile=100&k_left=10&k_right=10&k_order=Center; access: 08.09.2010.

746 *CKM* 1999/8, quoted after the Corpus of Polish by Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, http://korpus.pwn.pl/results.php?k_set=1&k_find=w%F3dka&k_free=free&k_limit=300&k_ile=100&k_left=10&k_right=10&k_order=Center; access: 08.09.2010.

747 Dunin, *Tabu*; quoted after the Corpus of Polish by Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, http://korpus.pwn.pl/results.php?k_set=1&k_find=w%F3dka&k_free=free&k_limit=300&k_ile=100&k_left=10&k_right=10&k_order=Center; access: 08.09.2010.

understanding and proper placing of your own being in the order of existence (social orders lose their meanings), how a hangover ridicules the trinkets and trivialities which we are suddenly chasing with inexplicable zeal

– Śliwiński showed, discussing Świetlicki's poetry (Czapliński, Śliwiński 1999:120). For readers living in the Polish People's Republic, drinking vodka had another aspect: the pervasive habit of drinking received an ideology that it was to widen the space of freedom in the oppressive system:

[...] dealing with drunkenness is like dealing with sexual life. This was a sphere that the state could not completely control. A person got drunk and felt free, or at least felt free for a while.⁷⁴⁸

– recollected Janusz Głowacki. Moreover, the fact that you were drunk caused your being forgiven of behaviours that would be unacceptable in other circumstances:

(A person) could topple all trashcans, pick up some young woman, tell the boss: Go to hell! The next day, you had a hangover but also an excuse: I was drunk! Well, in this case, it's all right. A drunken man is forgiven, it is not proper to harm him. A human being is sensible – that is why he gets drunk.⁷⁴⁹

The appearance of vodka in the Polish translation of *Hopscotch* brings images and behaviours that are typical of the Poles' culture of drinking this alcohol. It inevitably recalls specific associations that are obvious for every Pole, and which consequently creates a completely different mood than the one in the source text; it creates a mood of commonness and ordinariness. Through the fact of drinking vodka, in the eyes of Polish readers, the cosmopolitan protagonists of *Hopscotch* torn in Paris are transformed into a group of neighbours, drowning their grudges against the world in a sea of alcohol.

The members of the Serpent Club from Cortázar's novel are related to our native drunkards by the fact that they treat vodka as a mean to get drunk and thus forget the daily reality, and at the same time, vodka makes them relax and they can discuss the most difficult subjects straightforwardly (like Oliveira analysing complex existential issues) or can recall traumatic events (like La Maga saying that she was raped in her youth). However, for them drinking vodka is not an element of everyday life; it has no rituals having a social meaning nor any rituals which they created to meet the needs of their group.⁷⁵⁰ Its character is accidental.

748 <http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,6634769.html>; access:12.06.2009.

749 *ibid.*

750 The rituals related to drinking vodka in Polish culture, as an example of a translational problem, are discussed by Skibińska in *Kuchnia tłumacza* (2008). She stresses

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Vodka is a beverage that is culturally alien, slightly exotic and so in a sense more elegant than the alcohols that can be accessible every day.

9 Summary

Translators of fiction must meet numerous challenges. The process of translation consists in choosing right grammatical forms and finding right equivalents in the name of variously understood faithfulness to the original text. Words have not only lexical meanings but also bring to mind different associations rooted in a concrete culture.

Out of the three analysed words, only *mate* refers to a culture-specific concept. It is strongly connected with Argentinian culture, brings to mind contents that only characterise this culture. In the Polish rendering, the word *mate* has remained it is original spelling, and so it is a borrowing. However, we should note that from the Polish readers' perspective, its meaning seems considerably poorer. An average Pole cannot decode the numerous meanings of *mate*, which the Argentinian users of Spanish can perceive.

Vodka and *cerveza* are intermediate concepts. Although in Polish and Hispanic culture, there are words indicating this concept, their meanings are not identical. Each word is followed by a different load of experiences and each evokes different connotations. Their definitions in dictionaries and encyclopaedias sound similarly in both languages since they reflect the scientific image of the world, referring to objective experiences. Yet, they do not reflect their multiple senses that they communicate in each culture.

At this point, we are dealing with slightly different situations. From the perspective of the readers of the original, *mate* occurs to be semantically broader than for Polish readers. For the latter, the semantic scope of this word is narrower than for Spanish users. In turn, vodka and beer as the equivalents of respectively *vodka* and *cerveza* introduce into a translated text cultural references that are missing in the source text. Therefore, readers of the translation cannot help not actualising the senses that are absent in the original. Consequently, they understand and interpret the text in a slightly different way than the readers of the original text.

that "the scenarios of drinking alcohol are different, the Polish and French images concerning this sphere are different, and so are the images of the second community that experiences the rituals in the act of translation" (p. 133).

One of the consequences of the shift of meanings that occurs in the process of translation can be the modification of the functions performed by a given element in a literary work. *Mate*, which in the original version is a symbol of the fellowship of the voluntary immigrants, a sign of familiarity, is chiefly an indicator of exoticism for the Polish reader. As regards vodka, the situation is reverse: in the Spanish version, vodka gives the meetings of the Serpent Club a certain value of elegance – drinking a special alcohol coming from an alien culture, whereas the Polish reader has completely different connotations, signalling the familiarity of the situation.

It is also worth remembering that concepts are not given once for always; they can be modified slightly with the growth of the knowledge of the members of a given community and their new experiences. I think that for Polish contemporary readers, *mate* is a less exotic beverage (but to a certain extent rather strange and seldom used) than for the readers who lived 30 years ago.

The Argentinian word *mate* and the Polish *wódka* can certainly be described as elements of cultural communication in the sense suggested by Carbaugh. Both communicate a series of meanings and behaviours that are typical of each of these cultures. For participants of other cultures, these meanings can be partially available, and their full understanding requires openness to another culture and sensibility to communicative signals that characterises it. Their understanding entails using a certain amount of cognitive energy.

The conducted analysis has allowed me to note that the change of the language of a literary work can essentially influence its understanding. The aforementioned words do not pose any serious difficulties for the translator: *mate* remains in its original form, and the choice of the Polish equivalent for *vodka* seems obvious. Yet, their meanings have been modified in another linguistic environment. Hence the change of the language in which we read some text can and should be counted as a factor of its reinterpretation. Adequately, the factors of reinterpretation would be not only external phenomena as Lalewicz seemed to suggest but also, in the case of translated texts, linguistic phenomena. It would therefore appear that analysing a literary translation stressing the problems of its reception, it is worth using the tools worked out by linguistic semantics. Thanks to these tools, we can describe the modifications of the meanings of particular words in the process of translation and the way that they can influence the understanding of the whole work.

