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EXPANDING THE SPACE OF UNDERSTANDING: THE TRANSLATION PROJECTS OF F. SCHLEIERMACHER AND U. HAJIBEYLI

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Translation is essentially a hermeneutic process, inseparable from interpretation, understanding, and rethinking of a text within the framework of another language, worldview, and culture. Its role in expanding cognitive and cultural horizons can hardly be overestimated. This article analyzes two conceptually distinct yet philosophically complementary translation projects — those of Friedrich Schleiermacher and Uzeyir Hajibeyli. Special attention is given to the conception of translation as an intellectual mediation between cultures, as well as a means of dialogue and preservation of otherness. The study highlights the continued relevance of the hermeneutic approach to translation in the context of intercultural communication and the philosophy of understanding.

Keywords: translation, hermeneutics, F. Schleiermacher, U.Hajibeyli, cultural dialogue

Introduction

The issue of translatability/non-translatability of texts, or, in other words, the adequacy/inadequacy of translation, containing a philosophical contradiction, has long occupied the minds of humanity. There is a widespread belief in the fundamental non-translatability of texts. Hence, the comparison of translation with the reverse side of a carpet, which does not reflect the brightness of the colors, the beauty of the carpet's patterns, i.e., it does not provide even a close representation of the original. We also hear the voice of disappointment in the melodious Italian saying: "Traduttore — traditore", meaning "The translator is a traitor." It is widely known that translating poetry is much more difficult, and even often impossible, compared to prose. In the 12th century, Nizami Ganjavi wrote in one of his qasidas: "If the linguistic *framework* of all sciences is replaced by another linguistic *framework*, / Nothing will change, for the essence of the content will only be clothed in the attire of a different *design*. / But if the linguistic *structure* of a poem is replaced by another, / It will not be suitable for recording or conveying the author's thoughts" [6, p. 37]. The truth of these words is somewhat confirmed by V.A. Zhukovsky's statement that "A translator in prose is a servant, but a transla-

tor in poetry is a *competitor*", meaning that the translator is always in a situation between accuracy and freedom. Some thinkers – Herder, Hegel, Heidegger, and others – at times saw translations as a threat to the uniqueness of national literature, a cause of cognitive distortions

The contradiction between the constant necessity of translation and the immense difficulty of its realization is explored in José Ortega y Gasset's essay on translation, titled "The misery and the splendor of translation". On the one hand, for the Spanish philosopher, translation is a utopian activity and an unattainable intention, much like all human endeavors striving for realization. On the other hand, recognizing its enormous role, he urges writers not to disregard the work of translators, alongside original creativity, and to engage in translating works from antiquity, the Middle Ages, and modern times. Declaring translation to be an "intellectual work of the first order", he expresses his desire "to restore the prestige of this labor" [7, p. 352]. Nevertheless, the acute need for translators – these "mail horses of enlightenment" (Pushkin) or "proletarians of literature" (Emily Apter) – and the weight of their intellectual labor has always been recognized. It is worth noting that the intense combination of skepticism

with hope and pessimism with glimmers of optimism appears in many treatments of the translation issue, and in theories of translation developed within the hermeneutical tradition.

Translation is fundamentally a hermeneutical process, insofar as it is intimately bound up with understanding, interpretation, and the re-conceptualization of a text across language, worldview, and culture. Richard E. Palmer emphatically highlighted the paradigmatic nature of translation within hermeneutics [8]. Furthermore, the term “hermeneutics”, deriving from the, carries multiple senses — not only “to translate from one language to another”, but also “to interpret”, “to explain”, “to understand”. Typically, translation is regarded as the primary level of understanding; and in contexts where comprehension must occur within a single language among speakers of the same linguistic community, translation can function as a substitute for other hermeneutic operations.

German philosopher, theologian, and translator Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), in his lecture “On the Different Methods of Translating” (1813), observed that the need for the translator’s mediation arises for several distinct reasons: differences in dialects among tribes of the same nation; class distinctions among contemporaries, engendering disparities in education and culture; and when individuals embody divergent perspectives and dispositions. Schleiermacher remarks that “Occasionally we must translate even our own words, when we want to make them our very own again” [11, p.1-2]. By “translating,” he means employing “quite different words and phrases” within the same language.

For Schleiermacher, a true translation is a written, interlingual one—not an oral, everyday variant—whose goal is to allow the reader, while remaining in his native tongue, to fully appreciate the work. Schleiermacher asserts that there are only two possible strategies: either the translator preserves the author, compelling the reader to approach him; or the translator preserves the reader, compelling the author to move toward him. In the first, the translator must, as much as possible, retain the original’s

linguistic, historical, and cultural distinctiveness—its foreignness. In the second, the translator strives to smooth over those differences to ensure the text is more accessible. Schleiermacher warns that mixing these strategies risks failure: author and reader may never meet [11, p. 6]. This binary framework remains a universal criterion in translation theory. In the 20th century, Lawrence Venuti reformulated Schleiermacher’s distinction into the strategies of foreignization and domestication. Venuti aligns with foreignization, though he criticizes Schleiermacher—arguably unfairly—for what he perceives as chauvinistic condescension toward foreign cultures [15, p. 99].

“I hate all theories that do not grow out of practice” — these words of Schleiermacher could, with full justification, be applied to his entire oeuvre. His philosophical doctrine of universal, “general” hermeneutics — one of the important milestones in the historical development of hermeneutics — with its aims, principles, and formulas (such as the hermeneutic circle, the idea that “every part can only be understood in light of the whole of which it is part, and vice versa,” the congenial understanding — “to understand the author and his work better than he himself” — etc.), as well as his translation theory discussed above, grew out of many years of Schleiermacher’s practical work translating the dialogues of Plato. As scholars rightly observe, his path to philosophy, to hermeneutics, begins with translation practice [3; 5, p. 99, 153].

Schleiermacher learns from practical translation the universality of foreign experience and thus the universality of understanding. He writes: “I understand by interpretation any understanding of another’s speech” [12, c. 242]. For him, word, speech, or text—written or oral, in scientific or everyday contexts—are all legitimate objects of interpretation [14, c. 242] and hermeneutics. His strict method assumes that misunderstanding arises spontaneously, and that understanding must be willed at every point [13, c. 62]. Hence Schleiermacher defines hermeneutics as “the art of avoiding misunderstanding.” The central task of hermeneutics be-

comes the requirement to seek understanding at every point [2, p. 185]. This universalization of understanding marks a pivotal turning point in the history of hermeneutics.

Foreignness in interlingual translation, as is well known, manifests in a heightened form. Gadamer viewed translation as a limiting case that doubles the hermeneutical process itself. Schleiermacher, identifying further problems that intensify the challenge of translation, maintained that in poetry it is necessary to reproduce not only the semantic but also the musical features of the original—such as meter and rhyme [11, p. 14-15]. However, this was not a discussion of “musical translation” in the proper sense.

Uzeyir Hajibeyli (1885–1948), by integrating music into the subject matter of hermeneutics, expanded its conceptual framework. Hermes, the deity associated with hermeneutics as a doctrine, was also an exceptional musician. He is credited with inventing musical instruments such as the lyre and flute, and played them brilliantly. The founder of modern Azerbaijani musicology, “the patriarch of professional Eastern music” (T. Khrennikov), who embodied the synthesis of Eastern and Western musical traditions, as well as the genius composer who created the first opera in the East and a prominent publicist, Uzeyir Hajibeyli was also a significant musical hermeneut, an interpreter rooted in the traditions of professional mugham (a multi-sectional vocal-instrumental form, also referring to the modal system of Azerbaijani music). Here, we will explore just one aspect of his musical hermeneutics, namely, translation

Translation in music is one of his most fascinating and original concepts. The idea proposed by U. Hajibeyli regarding the translation from Western music to Eastern music and the first experiments in this field are truly remarkable. His logic was clear: if it is possible to translate the works of Western writers, such as Shakespeare, Schiller, Hugo, and others, and make them accessible to the people, then it is also possible to make the music of Mozart and Wagner understandable to the people through translation. This is necessary, as each nation, each people has not only a spoken language but also a musical language.

In 1926, the composer published an article titled “Translation in Music” in the journal *Maarif ve Medeniyyet* (“Enlightenment and Culture”) (Issues No. 5-6), where he introduced “an unprecedented endeavor”—a new and original project for translating musical literature. The article explains the absence of such a translational experience by pointing out that the music of European nations is built upon a common systemic foundation. Thus, German music, while differing from Italian music in terms of national color, shares the same foundational principles. This foundation is based on “major and minor scales.” Although European music has methods that replace translation, such as arrangement, transcription, and transposition, these are not considered true translation. That is, by using the theme of a composer’s musical composition, one can create another piece based on that theme, modify it with additions, or even rearrange it, and one can transpose a piece from one key to another, even shifting from major to minor to change the mood. However, all of this is akin to paraphrasing and retelling a verbal text, which, for Schleiermacher, did not qualify as true translation. Similarly, U. Hajibeyli did not regard these as true translation, as the main condition for translation is the presence of a difference in foundations. Referring specifically to the difference in the foundation of Western versus Eastern music, he gives the following definition of “true musical translation”: “...if a musical composition, written on the basis of Western music, is translated into an Eastern foundation while preserving its form and idea, the goal of true translation, in my opinion, will become clear” [4, p. 230].

One of the principal aims of musical translation is to render Western musical fragments intelligible to Eastern audiences. When an individual hears speech in an unfamiliar and unintelligible language, it evokes a sense of melancholy; similarly, music that is not understood tends to provoke irritation [4, p. 230]. In order to grasp Western music, Eastern listeners—even those well-versed in scholarship—must spend years listening to it, growing accustomed to its idioms, and furthermore, engaging

in its theoretical study. Musical translation, however, may serve as an effective means of facilitating a more rapid and accessible understanding of foreign musical traditions.

Uzeyir Hajibeyli illustrates this point by recalling the 1924 staging of Léo Delibes' opera *Lakmé* in Baku. Although the opera's subject matter drew from Eastern life and the libretto was translated into Azerbaijani, the production was ultimately unsuccessful. Notably, Hajibeyli attributes the failure of the performance to the audience's inability to comprehend its musical language. He writes: "Since the words—which are secondary in nature and not of central importance in the opera—were translated, while the composition, that is, the musical dimension, remained untranslated" [4, p. 231].

Hajibeyli sees the foremost significance and value of translating Western musical works in their potential to open new horizons for the development of Eastern music, laying the foundation for its accelerated advancement. Musical translation, he argues, has the capacity to transmit the Western musical tradition—cultivated over millennia and evolved to its present state—along with its underlying ideas encoded within musical forms, into the realm of Eastern music. This, in turn, could provoke a broad and progressive transformation within Eastern musical culture, which for centuries had remained largely static, and may enable Eastern music to assume a major role within the global landscape of musical art. Moreover, through such translation, Eastern listeners would acquire the ability to perceive and comprehend the diverse emotional and intellectual ideas embedded within the corpus of Western musical literature [4, p. 231].

In this regard, Hajibeyli's thought resonates strikingly with Friedrich Schleiermacher's conception of translation as an act of "respect for things foreign, and because of its disposition toward mediation, to carry all the treasures of foreign art and scholarship, together with its own, in its language, to unite them into a great historical whole" [11, p. 16].

However, musical translation is by no means an easy task; it demands a high level of professionalism. It requires the development of

specific techniques and methods of translation, which must be studied and mastered, alongside a deep and comprehensive knowledge of the principles of both Western and Eastern music. For this reason, Uzeyir Hajibeyli advocates for the teaching of musical translation as an academic discipline within music schools.

The textbooks he compiled for music education, such as *Technical Exercises in the Style of the Canon*, as well as ten exercises adapted from the repertoire of the Russian violinist G. N. Dulov and reworked for the tar—a plucked string instrument widely used in Azerbaijani folk music—represent his early explorations in the field of musical translation. These materials not only stand as pioneering examples of his work in this area, but also serve as practical proof of the possibility of applying the European system of musical notation to traditional Azerbaijani instruments.

The Azerbaijani composer, conductor, and musicologist Afrasiyab Badalbeyli, during a 1965 seminar for young creative professionals, spoke about a musical translation performed by Uzeyir Hajibeyli of Mozart's *Piano Sonata in G major, No. 15*. He recalled that after listening to the piece, the translation was found to be more appealing than the original itself. However, the professor was told that this was not a composition by Mozart. Uzeyir Bey responded, "This composition is not mine either. If the author of this composition is not Mozart, then who is he?" [9, p. 65].

The appeal of the musical translation was primarily due to the fact that the piece was comprehensible to Azerbaijani listeners. The composer used his original translation of Mozart's work in the first movement of his fantasy *Chahargah*. It is worth noting that he composed *Chahargah* and later *Shur* for the first notation orchestra of Azerbaijani folk instruments, which he organized in 1931. In doing so, he enriched the genre of fantasy-cantata with the spirit of *Mugham*, a distinctive element of Azerbaijani national music.

The notion of "musical language" and translation as a means of fostering spiritual closeness between peoples also emerges in Uzeyir Hajibeyli's reflections on Eastern and Western musical instruments, particularly in his identifi-

cation of timbral similarities between them [4, pp. 227–228]. He was firmly convinced that Eastern music could be effectively performed on Western instruments. Referring to the violin—the leading instrument in Western orchestras—as a “companion to our kamancha,” Hajibeyli noted that the dastgah Segah could be performed with great success on it. Similarly, he associated the viola, with its “dim and melancholic timbre”, with the dastgah Chahargah, and the cello, with its “wondrous voice”, with Shushtar, Bayati-Shiraz, and Humayun.

He further specified which dastgahs were suitable for performance on the flute and bassoon, as well as on brass instruments such as the trumpet, trombone, and cornet. However, he observed that the construction of the piano makes it impossible to modify its tonal structure; as a result, certain sections of mugham—especially in Segah and Chahargah—when played on the piano, tend to sound somewhat out of tune. Nonetheless, he argued that such tonal discrepancies on instruments like the piano should not be a cause for concern; the key, in his view, lies in remaining faithful to the authentic Eastern style.

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Hajibeyli’s detailed analysis of instrumental timbres reflects not only his deep musical sensitivity, but also a broader philosophy of intercultural adaptability. Rather than treating Eastern and Western instruments as incompatible, he sought to find resonances between them, demonstrating how national music could be expressed through foreign means without losing its essence. His insights laid the groundwork for a hybrid performance culture that both preserved tradition and embraced innovation.

Uzeyir Hajibeyli took pride in the fact that, whereas European music relies primarily on two scales—major and minor—Azerbaijani music possesses, in addition to these, a wide range of other modal systems. This rich heritage, he believed, offered vast potential for the development of national musical creativity. At the same time, he criticized the fascination some musicians—particularly those playing the tar and kamancha—had with the “sweet” sound of the European minor mode.

While he had no objection to the performance of European melodies on national instruments, Hajibeyli considered it unacceptable to equate mugham modes such as Bayati-Shiraz, Shushtar, Mukhalif, and Shur with the Western minor scale. He wrote: “While major and minor have long since worn out their welcome even among Europeans themselves—and they are now turning to Eastern music in search of novelty—our musicians’ fascination with major and minor stems from a lack of formal training and is, in fact, quite regrettable.”

These words reflect his awareness of broader processes at play in the global musical landscape, including modernist tendencies in European music. For instance, he was aware of the emergence in the early 1920s of the twelve-tone compositional method—dodecaphony, or serial music—which sought to break free from the limitations of traditional tonality.

Hajibeyli's critique reveals not only a defense of the uniqueness of Azerbaijani modal systems, but also a deep understanding of contemporary Western musical developments. By contrasting the creative stagnation he perceived in European tonality with the untapped richness of Eastern modes, he advocated for a more confident, self-aware approach to national musical identity—one grounded in theoretical knowledge rather than imitation.

Although the idea of musical translation was not further developed in subsequent years, it nonetheless remains—and will continue to remain—in the history of Azerbaijani music as a visionary project conceived by a genius composer and musician. However, it would be inaccurate to say that the problem of musical translation has been relegated to the archives of forgotten ideas. A number of scholarly articles published in European academic circles suggest otherwise.

Among these is an article published in May 2017 in the *Northwestern Undergraduate Research Journal* entitled “**The Theory of Musical Translation**”, which is based on a comparative analytical framework [10]. However, this study is concerned solely with translation **within** the realm of Western music—specifically, how twentieth-century composers incorporated fragments of earlier musical works into their own compositions.

Thus, Uzeyir Hajibeyli's hermeneutic project—centered on musical translation as a dialogue between Eastern and Western musical cultures—retains a remarkable degree of relevance even today. His vision not only anticipated many of the concerns later raised by comparative musicology, but also offered a culturally grounded framework for bridging traditions through artistic means. In this light, both Hajibeyli's and Schleiermacher's theories of translation—each emphasizing the potential for mutual understanding through engagement with the intellectual and spiritual worlds of others—reflect some of the most pressing and enduring values of our time: the ideals of humanism, in-

tercultural dialogue, and tolerance.

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**ANLAMA MƏKANININ GENİŞLƏNDİRİLMƏSİ:
F.ŞLEYERMAXER VƏ Ü.HACIBƏYLİNİN TƏRCÜMƏ LAYİHƏLƏRİ**

A.A.Hacıyeva

Tərcümə mətnin başqa dil, dünyagörüşü və mədəniyyət kontekstində təfsiri, anlama və yenidən mənalandırması ilə sıx bağlı olan hermenevtik prosesdir. Onun koqnitiv və mədəni üfüqləri genişləndirməsindəki əhəmiyyəti danılmazdır. Məqalədə Fridrix Şleyermaxer və Üzeyir Hacıbəylinin konseptual baxımdan fərqli, lakin fəlsəfi cəhətdən bir-birini tamamlayan tərcümə layihələri təhlil olunur. Tərcüməyə mədəniyyətlər arasında intellektual körpü, həmçinin dialoq və fərqliliyin qorunması vasitəsi kimi şərhinə xüsusi diqqət verilir. Tədqiqatda tərcüməyə mədəniyyətlərarası kommunikasiya və anlama fəlsəfəsi kontekstində hermenevtik yanaşmanın bu gün də aktual olduğu vurğulanır.

Açar sözlər: tərcümə, hermenevtika, F. Şleyermaxer, Ü. Hacıbəyli, mədəni dialoq

**РАСШИРЕНИЕ ПРОСТРАНСТВА ПОНИМАНИЯ:
ПЕРЕВОДЧЕСКИЕ ПРОЕКТЫ Ф. ШЛЕЙЕРМАХЕРА И У. ГАДЖИБЕЙЛИ**

A.A.Гаджиева

Перевод представляет собой герменевтический процесс, неотделимый от интерпретации, понимания и переосмысления текста в контексте иного языка, мировоззрения и культуры. Его значение в расширении когнитивных и культурных горизонтов сложно переоценить. В настоящей статье анализируются два концептуально различных, но философски взаимодополняющих переводческих проекта — Фридриха Шлейермахера и Узеира Гаджибейли. Особое внимание уделяется трактовке перевода как интеллектуального посредничества между культурами, а также как средству диалога и сохранения инаковости. Исследование подчеркивает актуальность герменевтического подхода к переводу в контексте межкультурной коммуникации и философии понимания.

Ключевые слова: перевод, герменевтика, Ф.Шлейермахер, У. Гаджибейли, культурный диалог