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## THE USAGE OF PRAGMATIC APPROACH IN LITERARY TRANSLATION

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### ABSTRACT

*Last two decades have seen an increasing interest in approaching literary translation from pragmatic perspective as both pragmatics and translation are concerned with communicative situations. Pragmatic relations in literary translation are superimposed on semantic relations and play an equally important role in analyzing the original text and in producing an equivalent text in the target language. The pragmatic adaption of translation must make it possible for the target receptor to understand the implications of the message and to be aware of its figurative and situational meaning. Pragmatic problems in this article are analyzed applying pragmatic principles such as speech acts, presuppositions, implications, deictic expressions and politeness formulas.*

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**Keywords:** *literary translation, pragmatic problems, speech acts, presuppositions, implications, deictic expressions and politeness formulas.*

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### АННОТАЦИЯ

*В последние два десятилетия наблюдается растущий интерес к подходу к художественному переводу с прагматической точки зрения, поскольку и прагматика, и перевод связаны с коммуникативными ситуациями. Прагматические отношения в художественном переводе накладываются на смысловые отношения и играют не менее важную роль как при анализе исходного текста, так и при создании эквивалентного текста на языке перевода. Прагматическая адаптация перевода должна позволить целевому адресату понять последствия сообщения и осознать его переносное и ситуативное значение. В статье анализируются прагматические проблемы с применением таких прагматических принципов, как речевые акты, пресуппозиции, импликации, дейктические выражения и формулы вежливости.*

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**Ключевые слова:** *художественный перевод, прагматические проблемы, речевые акты, пресуппозиции, импликации, дейктические выражения и формулы вежливости.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The main function of literary translation is to enhance understanding among cultures and nations. According to the American Professor Rainer Schulte, "Literary translation bridges the delicate emotional connections between cultures and

languages and furthers the understanding of human beings across national borders. In the act of literary translation the soul of another culture becomes transparent, and the translator recreates the refined sensibilities of foreign countries and their people through the linguistic, musical, rhythmic and visual possibilities of the new language” (Schulte 37).

A literary translator deals with a text which involves linguistic, pragmatic and cultural elements. Ganesh Devy summarizes the characteristics of literary translation: expressive, connotative, symbolic, focusing on both form and content, subjective, allowing multiple interpretations, timeless and universal, using special devices to heighten the communicative effect and tendency to deviate from the language norms (Devy 112). Lindsey Gutt stresses that while translating a literary work one should preserve the style of the original text. In accordance with him, “this wider stylistic dimension of communication is, of course, of special interest to literary studies, and so it is not surprising that theorists concerned with literary translation have paid considerable attention to the preservation of the stylistic properties of texts” (Hatim 23). Pragmatic relations in literary translation are superimposed on semantic relations and play an equally important role in analyzing the original text and in producing an equivalent text in the target language. According to Komissarov and Koralova, words as semiotic signs are not indifferent label of objects, they may acquire definite implications, become associated with certain theories, beliefs, likes and dislikes, and people develop certain attitudes to them (Комиссаров 43).

The pragmatic implications of the word are an important part of the meaning that produces a certain effect upon the receptor. Every act of speech communication is meant for a certain receptor as it is aimed to produce a certain effect on him or her. In this respect “any communication is an exercise in pragmatics” (Riazi). Semantically equivalent messages do not necessarily mean the same thing to the source-and-target language receptors that is why pragmatics of the original literary text requires important changes in the transmitted message. The translator should be aware of whether the message is a statement of fact, a request, a command, an entreaty or a joke. Very often the sender’s communicative intent differs from what the message seems to say.

**For example**, a phrase as I don't know may be rendered as Я не знаю (the statement of fact) or Да как вам сказать? (expression of hesitation).

The pragmatic adaptation of the translation must make it possible for the target receptor to understand the implications of the message and to be aware of its figurative and situational meaning. English scholar Basil Hatim describes pragmatics in terms of situationality, intentionality and acceptability. Thus, the pragmatic

approach can be said to apply these three important features in literary translation (Hassan 11).

## METHODS

Situationality refers to the appropriate use of a statement in a particular situation. Without a contextual situation an utterance could not be interpreted. Understanding is got by associating and connecting the new information verbalized in the text with knowledge of the world or of a particular situation. This process of “concrete occurrence” in a context is called actualization by Stephen Levinson. In the novel *The Moon and Sixpence* by William Somerset Maugham, while describing Strickland’s wife, a woman interested in literature and inviting writers to her place, one of the characters says: She finds them amusing. She wants to be in the movement. Here the word movement has a contextual or situational meaning “to keep up with fashion” (Maugham 27). It would be appropriate to translate it as Она не хочет отставать от моды. If we consult English- Russian dictionary; we can see that the word movement can be translated as движение, перемещение, передвижение. We can't use either of these meanings, because our word-for-word translation will sound ambiguous. Intentionality refers to the intention of the producer. In a successful literary translation the receiver's interpretation should coincide with the sender's intention. Even if the form of an utterance does not correspond to the intended function, the receiver recognizes the sender's intention. This is true because the sender and the receiver know each other. They share common background knowledge. In translation the writer and TL reader rarely share background knowledge. Therefore, the role of translator is to mediate between the writer and the reader. According to the pragmatic approach, intention should be preserved in translation (Riazi).

Acceptability refers to the effect of SL text on TL receptor. When a reader receives a literary text, she/he associates it with his/her background knowledge. The impression the reader gets when she/he reads is defined as the effect. The effect of the target text on the target language reader should be equivalent to that of the source language reader. Pragmatic problems appear when the SL and TL have different pragmatic principles. Different languages employ different pragmatic principles in the same communication behaviour: what is polite in one community may be impolite in another. A cooperative principle in one community may be uncooperative in another. Fawcett considers this pragmatic difference as a part of the translator's competence. The translator has to identify the area of pragmatic interference between the two languages. Pragmatic competence is defined as “the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and understand the language in the

context”. He argues that pragmatic failure occurs when utterance fails to achieve the sender's goal. It results in misunderstanding and even crosscultural communication breakdown (Hassan 18).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Pragmatic problems will be evident in case of applying pragmatic principles such as speech acts, presupposition, implicatures, deictic expressions and politeness formulae in translation.

First, preserving the force of speech acts may be problematic. Mistranslating speech acts is due to the difference between the sense of the force of utterance, in other words locutionary and illocutionary acts. Politeness as a sociocultural phenomenon can be seen as one of the basic guidelines of human interaction. The goal of politeness can be described as reflecting or realizing the social or interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in human interchange. Studies examine various speech acts in different languages have provided valuable insights into culture- specific features of politeness and difficulties foreign language learners have in recognizing and adhering to the politeness norms of the target language. Polite requests are central to Levinson’s theory and the most frequently studies speech act in cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics (Levinson 66).

It can be appropriate in both English and Russian to use the imperative Tell me as an opening request for information as in the following extract from The Dead, one of the short stories in Dubliners by James Joyce. Gabriel, a middle-aged friend of the family is about to start a conversation with the teenage Lily.

E.g. -Tell me, Lily, he said in a friendly tone, do you still go to school -O no, sir, she answered. I'm done with schooling this year and more (Joyce 194).

Professional translator Olga Holmskaya suggests the following translation:

Скажи-ка, Лили, - спросил он дружеским тоном, - ты все еще ходишь в школу? – Что вы, сэр, - ответила она, - я уже год как окончила школу, даже больше (Джойс 81).

This imperative sentence “Tell me” should not be understood as a coercive one, or as a threatening act. The same speech act in another context can be translated differently.

Second, translating implicit meaning may be problematic for translators. Implicit meaning includes presuppositions and implicatures. Presuppositions depend on shared knowledge between the reader and the writer. In translation it may happen that the writer and the TL reader do not share this kind of knowledge. Hassan

suggests that translating presuppositions as assertions will distort meaning (Hassan 32). Presuppositions should be preserved in the target text.

Translating implicatures may also cause problems. Some implied meaning is inferred beyond what is said. For example, the title of the novel *Crooked House* by Agatha Christie was translated into Russian as *Кривой домишко* where the additional lexical emotive implication of crookedness (wretchedness) was matched by emotive suffix *-ишко*, one of the numerous emotive suffixes so characteristic of the Russian lexical system. As for a deictic expression, in linguistics it refers to the phenomenon when understanding the meaning of certain words and phrases in an utterance requires contextual information. English has a wide variety of expressions that are commonly analyzed as deictics: personal pronouns such as *I* and *you*, spatial adverbs such as *here* and *there*, demonstratives such as *now*, *then*, *today*, *ago*, and recently motion verbs such as *come* and *go*, and tense morphemes such as the future auxiliary *will* and the past tense suffix *-ed*. In addition, grammatical constructions such as the imperative and vocative are often characterized as deictics. Other linguistic elements can be used deictically if they are combined with a genuine deictic or some other referential means. For example, a noun such as *tree* may refer to a concrete entity in the situational context if it is accompanied by a demonstrative that relates the concept of *tree* to a concrete entity in the surrounding situation (that tree).

Alternatively, content words can be grounded in the speech situation by nonlinguistic means such as gesture, eye-gaze, or the presentation of an object. In general, as Levinson has pointed out, just about any nominative expression can be used deictically if it is accompanied by communicative device that indicates a direct referential link between language and context (Levinson 54).

*The old man was dead. I removed the bed and examined the corpse. Yes, he was stone, stone dead. I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many minutes. There was no pulsation. He was stone dead. His eye would trouble me no more (Edgar Allen Poe: The tell tale heart).*

In the story the deictic expressions such as *I* and *there* do not refer to the author and entities in the surrounding situation, but to the *I*- narrator and elements in the universe of discourse. It is well-rendered by the Russian translator Hinkins:

*Старик был мертв. Я оттащил кровать и осмотрел труп. Да, он был навеки, навеки мертв. Я приложил руку к его груди, против сердца, и держал так долгие минуты. Сердце не билось. Он был навеки мертв. Его глаз большие не потревожат меня (По 141).*

## CONCLUSION

Summing up, I would say that the attention given to pragmatic facts and principles in the course of literary translation can enhance the understanding of translation. A good literary translation is not simply concerned with transferring the prepositional content of the source language text but also with its pragmatic features. Pragmatic task of literary translation aims at ensuring maximal equivalence with the original. It is also important to emphasize the translator's background knowledge of history, culture and language.

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