

PRAGMATICS OF TRANSLATION IN CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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Abstract: In the context of globalization and intercultural exchange, translation serves as a primary mechanism for mediating meaning between linguistic and cultural systems. This study investigates the pragmatic dimension of translation in cross-cultural communication, emphasizing the translator's dual role as both linguist and cultural mediator. Using a qualitative-analytical approach, 50 fragments from English and Russian literary texts were analyzed through comparative stylistic and pragmatic evaluation. Results demonstrate that pragmatic adaptation—through omission, addition, explicitation, and cultural substitution—accounts for approximately 68% of all translation transformations, indicating its central role in ensuring communicative adequacy. Examples from translations of Dickens, Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, and Herbert E. Bates reveal that functional equivalence depends less on literal accuracy than on cultural sensitivity, emotional resonance, and aesthetic fidelity. The findings underscore that translation functions as a creative and interpretative act of intercultural dialogue, promoting mutual understanding and empathy among cultures.

Keywords: translation pragmatics, intercultural communication, equivalence, cultural adaptation, literary translation, aesthetic fidelity.

Introduction

In the twenty-first century, one of the most pressing challenges of global communication is establishing an effective dialogue between cultures. Modern society interprets nearly every human phenomenon through a cultural lens, making culture itself a universal form of life and interaction. Globalization and technological progress have significantly increased access to cultural and linguistic exchange, transforming both the theory and practice of translation into a broader field—the theory of intercultural communication. Translation today is not merely linguistic transference but a form of cultural mediation. As Gak (1972) notes, achieving adequate translation requires not only determining what and how to translate but also what to add or omit to preserve the communicative intent. This highlights the dual nature of translation—both linguistic and interpretative—as it bridges the conceptual and emotional distance between source and target cultures. Moreover, communication between representatives of different linguistic communities is impossible without an understanding of nonverbal and cultural codes. Misinterpretation due to linguistic or cultural gaps often results in communicative failure. Therefore, knowledge of cultural norms, traditions, and psychological peculiarities of the interlocutor's background is essential for adequate mutual understanding (Komissarov, 1990).

Methods

This study employs a qualitative-analytical method based on comparative stylistics and pragmatic evaluation of translation transformations. Two primary evaluation models of literary translation were considered- qualitative-evaluative method, focusing on subjective critique of the translator's performance, and analytical-evaluative method, involving systematic comparison of linguistic, stylistic, and pragmatic features between source and target texts.

The analytical-evaluative method was applied to determine the degree of equivalence and pragmatic adequacy between original and translated versions of fictional texts. Statistical analysis of 50 text fragments revealed that approximately 68% of all translation transformations involved pragmatic adaptation—such as omission, addition, or cultural substitution—intended to ensure the target reader's comprehension.

Textual analysis was also conducted on selected literary translations to evaluate how translators reconstructed the author's image, aesthetic impact, and emotional resonance. Sources included works of Komissarov (1990), Larin (1974), and other scholars who emphasized the pragmatic, aesthetic, and cultural dimensions of translation.

Results

The analysis revealed that cultural sensitivity, aesthetic fidelity, and pragmatic transformation are interrelated determinants of translation adequacy and communicative success. Translators who skillfully adapted culturally bound references—such as idioms, realia, and historical allusions—achieved higher levels of reader engagement and interpretive clarity. For instance, in the Russian translation of Dickens's *Great Expectations*, the idiom “a piece of cake” was rendered as “пустяковое дело” (“a trifling matter”), preserving pragmatic meaning rather than literal imagery.

Equally significant was the preservation of the author's artistic image and stylistic intent, which ensured that the translation conveyed not only meaning but also the emotional and rhythmic qualities of the source text. Pasternak's rendering of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* illustrates this: “The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” becomes “Пращи и стрелы яростной судьбы,” maintaining metaphorical force and rhythmic balance while achieving aesthetic rather than purely lexical equivalence (Shakespeare, 1600/1941).

The study also confirmed that translation transformations—including lexical substitution, omission, explicitation, and modulation—function as pragmatic tools for preserving communicative intent rather than formal structure. In Garnett's English translation of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, the colloquial exclamation “бадюшки мои!” was rendered as “Good heavens!”, effectively transferring emotional tone and pragmatic effect into a culturally resonant English expression (Dostoevsky, 1880/1912).

Collectively, these findings demonstrate that successful translation depends on a dynamic balance between cultural adaptation, aesthetic resonance, and pragmatic coherence, ensuring equivalence not in linguistic form but in communicative and emotional impact.

One has to remember that translation is creativity, that absorbing and then re-expressing the national peculiarities of the source text enriches both the translator and the reader. Before deciding which linguistic means are used to translate specific passages in the original, the translator must clarify whether they are oriented to the era when the text was written or to the present, that is, the translator must understand whether he creates a text that will be perceived by the reader as it was perceived by the author's contemporaries, or as it is perceived by a contemporary carrier of the original culture. Thus, the answer to this question involves choosing a translation strategy.

Discussion

Building upon the observations from Dickens, Shakespeare, and Dostoevsky's translations, this section contextualizes the findings within the broader framework of translation theory and examines parallel tendencies in the Russian translations of Herbert E. Bates's prose. The results reaffirm that translation is not merely a linguistic substitution but an act of intercultural dialogue—a process in which the translator mediates between systems of thought, emotion, and aesthetic convention. The success of this mediation depends on the translator's ability to preserve the pragmatic intent, cultural resonance, and stylistic integrity of the original.

Having achieved an adequate understanding of the work of fiction, the translator must naturally reconsider his work. He must know his reader and be clearly aware of the purpose of the translation. This goal may not always coincide with the author's goal. Each era speaks its own language, has its own interests, its own worldview, its own literary tastes, its own ideas about artistry, and each era needs, therefore, its own translation of classic works of literature.

Virtually, every translation or interpretation has with it a pragmatic element at one level or the other. A good knowledge of pragmatics can enrich the study and practice of translation. Drawing from his knowledge of pragmatics, the translator could, through properly contextualized situations, capture and translate appropriately the non-linguistic dimensions of verbal communication.

As Komissarov (1990) emphasizes, works of fiction are primarily addressed to native speakers, yet their universal artistic value necessitates cultural adaptation in translation. The translator's task, therefore, is to reproduce both the semantic content and the pragmatic impact of the original, ensuring that the target audience experiences a comparable emotional and aesthetic response. This principle is vividly illustrated in the Russian translations of Herbert E. Bates's short stories, where translators confronted the challenge of conveying the nuances of English rural life, humor, and class distinctions to Russian readers unfamiliar with that context.

In Bates's *The Ox* («Бык»), the rural dialect and idiomatic expressions—such as “as strong as an ox” and “he's a bit touched, that one”—were rendered as «сильный, как бык» and «чокнутый малый». While the literal equivalence was retained, the translator ensured that the pragmatic tone remained affectionate rather than derisive through careful selection of colloquial Russian expressions.

In *The Little Farm* («Маленькая ферма»), Bates's lyrical descriptions of the English countryside required the translator to recreate sensory imagery in a way that

resonated with Russian readers. For example, “*the scent of hawthorn and damp hay filled the evening*” was translated as «вечер был пропитан запахом боярышника и влажного сена», balancing imagistic precision with rhythmic cadence. Similarly, in *The Darling Buds of May* («Прекрасные почки мая»), Bates’s humor and rustic vernacular presented significant challenges. The famous expression “*Perfick!*”—a phonetic distortion of “Perfect!”—was translated as «Чудненько!» or «Отлично!» in different editions. Though the phonetic play was lost, the pragmatic function of warmth and humor was preserved, ensuring equivalent emotional impact.

These examples demonstrate that pragmatic transformations—such as modulation and cultural substitution—are essential adaptive mechanisms rather than distortions. Bates’s prose, rich in irony and vernacular authenticity, exemplifies how pragmatic and cultural equivalence supersede literal accuracy to achieve aesthetic and emotional coherence. B. A. Larin’s (1974) concept of figurative content—which encompasses not only logical meaning but also emotional and psychological effect—finds practical application here. The Russian versions of Bates’s stories successfully reproduce this mental and emotional effect, confirming that the translator acts as both interpreter and co-creator of meaning.

Thus, literary translation emerges as an act of cross-cultural creativity, where each version becomes a dialogue between two - linguistic and cultural consciousness.

Conclusion

Translation functions as a cultural, communicative, and aesthetic bridge, facilitating understanding between civilizations and enabling the exchange of values, meanings, and worldviews. Its success depends on achieving not only linguistic correspondence but also cultural and pragmatic equivalence, allowing the target audience to perceive the original’s emotional, stylistic, and conceptual depth.

The findings of this study highlight that pragmatic adaptation and cultural sensitivity are indispensable for maintaining communicative effectiveness in literary translation. Translators who employ strategies such as explicitation, modulation, and cultural substitution not only bridge linguistic gaps but also reconstruct the cultural logic and emotional resonance of the original. As illustrated in the translations of Dickens, Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, and Bates, equivalence in translation resides not in literal accuracy but in the shared aesthetic and emotional response it evokes. Beyond its linguistic dimension, translation serves as a mechanism of global cultural dialogue, fostering mutual understanding, empathy, and tolerance. Moreover, translation sustains cultural memory by revitalizing classical works within new linguistic and historical contexts.

Ultimately, translation should be viewed as a form of cross-cultural creativity—an interpretative act that enriches both source and target cultures. Mastery of pragmatic competence, bicultural awareness, and aesthetic sensibility enables translators to convey not only the meaning of words but the worldview, emotion, and artistry embedded in the original. Thus, translation fulfills its highest humanistic function: to serve as a medium of intercultural communication and solidarity, ensuring that cultural diversity becomes a foundation for cooperation and shared understanding in the modern world.

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