

WUT 2020**10th International Conference “Word, Utterance, Text: Cognitive, Pragmatic and Cultural Aspects”****DOMINANT CONSTRUAL AND REPERSPECTIVATION
PATTERNS IN ENGLISH-RUSSIAN LITERARY TRANSLATIONS**

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Abstract

The article grounds the procedural function of cognitive dominants structuring the translator's cognition and discourse as the trigger of shifts in the sociocultural perspective constitutive of the artistic-aesthetic structure of the literary text under translation. The paper sums up the findings of a comparative study of 33 parallel texts (11 literary texts in English and 2 translations of each text into Russian), supplemented by relevant data from the parallel national corpora RNC and ReversoContext (2013-2019). Discourse analysis of these data resulted in identification of a number of socioculturally specified models of world construal, likely to dominate the discourse of a literary translator from English into Russian as a bearer of specifically structured linguistic cognition and an emergent system of sociocultural knowledge. These patterns are semantically intertwined, socioculturally modulated and consistently interact in the translation process, triggering various shifts in the artistic-aesthetic structure of all the translations analysed regardless of the general sociocultural vector of the reflective translation strategy implemented therein. Such consistency suggests that these construal patterns constrain and even predefine the translator's perspective on the diegetic world, driving the processes of conceptualization, categorization and representation of the latter in the translator's discourse and text. The data analysed manifest frequent semiotic traces of concurrent semantic effects of those dominants that entail contrasting perspectives, which results in significant sociocultural reperspectivation of the diegetic world in translations. The article presents a cognitive-semiotic typology of reperspectivation patterns, most frequently encountered in the data analysed.

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1. Introduction

The sociocultural facet of literary translation, a leading discourse technology of cross-cultural value transfer, has remained in the translation scholarship's focus for over three decades. Such unceasing research interest in the sociocultural was initially instigated by the cultural turn of the translation studies framework in the early 1990s, which dramatically transformed scientific construal of the nature of literary translation, with the culture-conscious metaphors of rewriting (Lefevere, 2016), intervention (Venuti, 2017) and manipulation (Hermans, 2014) gradually displacing the conventional concept of translation equivalence and the research focus eventually shifting from purely linguistic onto aesthetical, political, ideological and other sociocultural forces driving the translator's discourse (Gentzler, 2017; Harding & Cortes, 2018; Hermans, 2019; Lefevere, 2016; Maitland, 2017; Pym, 2017; Venuti, 2017). A decade later the sociology of translation came of age, bringing into the limelight the issues of social constructivism and activism in translation (e.g. Angelelli, 2014; Buzelin & Baraldi, 2016; Chesterman, 2016; Evans & Fernandez, 2018; Munday, 2013; Tymoczko, 2014; Wolf, 2015; Wolf & Fukari, 2007). In the Russian framework the sociocultural facet of translation has been explored from a variety of research perspectives as well (e.g. Chajkovskij, Voronevskaja, & Lysenkova, 2016; Galeeva, 2011; Maslennikova & Milovidov, 2018; Ogneva, 2019). In other words, a lot has been achieved worldwide in unveiling a multitude of sociocultural forces behind the translator's discourse choices.

2. Problem Statement

However, at least one significant issue remains unresolved – that of the cognitive mechanisms by means of which the sociocultural can ever get manifested in the translator's individual discourse and which are to be held accountable for the “irreducible difference” beyond the grasp of even the most experienced translator (Venuti, 2013, p. 54). Doubtless, since most of these mechanisms belong with the subconscious, their functional nature can be described at best in the form of a hypothesis, which partly explains the above-mentioned theoretical gap. However, for the literary translation studies it is of great significance to devise such a hypothesis as it is the cognitive subconscious that is the primary realm of emotion, association and insight at the core of imagery and creativity constitutive of aesthetic cognition, literary translation being one of its discourse forms.

One of the mechanisms structuring the translator's discourse might be that of *perspectivation*, i.e. the process of taking, setting, articulating, coordinating and aligning subjective perspectives in an inter-subjective discourse encounter (Graumann & Kallmeyer, 2002). This cognitive mechanism is complex and multifaceted. In its perceptual dimension it thrives on attention allocation processes, coordinating how the translator perceives and construes the imaginary narrative world and its semiotic affordances. Another perspectivation dimension accounts for spatial and temporal structural relations of the affordances salient to a particular translator. The basic dimension of perspectivation, though, is generally agreed to be the one that involves subjectively relevant social relations and cultural practices (e.g. Geeraerts, 2016; Graumann & Kallmeyer, 2002), which in literary translation should be of even greater significance, considering the fact that sociocultural patterns frame the overall aesthetic structure of the literary text in the process of its creation and reception (Lotman, 2016). It might be argued then that it is

the subjective specificity of the translator's sociocultural perspective that provokes myriad interrelated shifts in translations at various discourse levels, most of which are likely to be unintended (random) and tend to go unnoticed by the translator regardless of their professional expertise.

3. Research Questions

If that is so, what particular knowledge structures drive the translator's sociocultural perspective? What kind of conceptual and categorial shifts do they trigger? At what discourse levels do such shifts occur? How are they manifested in the translator's text? Are they consistent? How significant are they in aesthetic terms? Are they purely subjective or do they overlap, at least partly, in different translations of the same text? Do they overlap in various translations within the same pair of languages, for instance, in literary translations from English into Russian?

4. Purpose of the Study

The present study aimed to answer these research questions in order to account for the perceptivity of the translator's cognition and discourse as a possible cause of shifts in translation. The *hypothesis* to test was that the subjective specificity of the sociocultural perspective enacted by the translator in the translation process is driven and constrained by a variable set of '*cognitive dominants*' (Boldyrev, 2019), i.e. neurally prominent and cognitively entrenched, experience-grounded yet culture-modulated semantic patterns of world construal (cognitive models) which due to their enhanced ontological and cognitive salience frame the translator's perspective and discourse structure – primarily in the automatic mode of consciousness, regardless of the translator's reflective intention. Thus dominants (through the perspective they enact) from the outset of translating constrain which textual affordances can ever be perceived by a particular translator and what will be represented, shifted and lost in their translation (Leontyeva, 2018).

5. Research Methods

In order to test this hypothesis, a comparative discourse analysis of 33 parallel texts (i.e. 11 literary texts of different genres in English, 2 translations of each text into Russian) was carried out. When necessary, this empiric data was supplemented by the data from the English-Russian parallel sub-corpus of Russian National Corpus (2003-2020) (<http://www.ruscorpora.ru>) and the specialised parallel corpus ReversoContext (2013-2019) (<https://context.reverso.net>). The form of discourse analysis applied was anthropocentric by its focus on the structure of individual (i.e. the translator's) yet culture-modulated linguistic cognition and comprised traditional analytical techniques and tools of cognitive linguistics, poetics and narratology.

6. Findings

6.1. Cognitive dominants in English-Russian literary translation

At the first stage of discourse analysis a set of semantically interrelated world-construal patterns consistently instantiated in various discourse dimensions and at various textual levels of the translations

analysed (regardless of the translation strategies these texts manifest) was identified. Due to the consistent textual visibility of their semantic effects in the empiric data these construal patterns were regarded as potentially dominant for an average English-Russian literary translator. The conceptual core of this set of dominants is constituted by two causality construal modes, which seem to focalize the translator's perspective and frame the overall structural arrangement. These are the mode ANTHROPOCENTRISM with the conceptual feature HUMAN AGENCY profiled in the event frame and the mode MYSTICISM centered around the concepts GOD, FATE and RANDOM. Both causality modes entail different forms of specification on the conceptual continuum (UN)CERTAIN and (UN)PREDICTABLE and get instantiated in the translator's discourse through a number of more specific construal patterns, competitive in terms of the sociocultural perspective they entail: STABILITY – CHANGE, RISK, CHALLENGE; STATE – PROCESS; FORCE – FREEDOM, OPPORTUNITY, CHOICE; ENDURANCE, SUBMISSIVENESS – AGENCY, WILL, RESPONSIBILITY; SOUL, SPIRITUAL – BODY, CORPOREAL, MATERIAL; INTERNAL (ETHIC) – EXTERNAL (AESTHETIC); ETHICS – PRAGMATICS; EMOTION, EVALUATION – RATIONAL; SOCIAL – INDIVIDUAL; COMMON, JOINT – PRIVATE, COMPETITIVE; CONFORMITY – TOLERANCE; NORM, STEREOTYPE – SINGULARITY, PECULIARITY; DISTANCE, POWER, STATUS – EQUALITY. Although significance of the outlined dominants appeared to vary even across the same text (i.e. for the translator over time), all the translations considered revealed certain overlaps in categorial distinctions triggered thereby, which suggests that the dominant cognitive models in question might indeed be culture-modulated. Their semantic effects being most visible in grammar-related textual shifts, grammar might be regarded as the dominant discourse form of implementing sociocultural deixis in translation, apparently primarily non-reflective.

6.2. Common patterns of sociocultural (re)perspectivation

The next aim of the analysis was to identify some patterns of sociocultural (re)perspectivation commonly instantiated in the translations under consideration and to explore their causal dependence on the outlined cognitive dominants. As the ultimate outcome of the study, a cognitive-semiotic typology of these patterns was devised, which accounts for common linguistic means of their textual instantiation, sociocultural origin of the dominants they have been driven by, foreignization and domestication as two prototypical discourse modes of sociocultural perspectivation in translation and for the basic narrative codes fundamental to aesthetic forms of human cognition.

Regarding sociocultural specificity of perspective-driving dominants, the mode of consciousness (i.e. reflective-transitive vs. automatic-intransitive awareness) and the general vector of the translator's strategy (i.e. priority of either the target sociocognitive system and sociocultural space or the source one), three major perspective-framing modes were outlined.

1. *Resistant perspective framing* entails reflective inhibition (by means of the mechanism of cognitive control in access consciousness) of dominant and hence automatic activation of those construal patterns that mark the translator as the agent of the Russian (i.e. target) sociocognitive space, particularly in case of their conflict with the construal patterns cued by the narrative codes of the source text (as the aesthetic dominant of the translator's strategy; the reflective mechanism of sociocultural orientation of the

target reader). Although in its pure form this mode is rare, in moderate form it is quite widely implemented in contemporary translations, which tend to textual foreignization.

2. *Assimilative perspective reframing* entails unconscious (intransitive awareness, phenomenal consciousness; the subconscious mechanism of sociocultural self-positioning) domination of construal patterns that mark the translator as the subject of the Russian sociocultural space. This perspective-reframing mode is the most common one – due to the translator’s inability to completely inhibit automatic activation of cognitive dominants, naturalness of certain cognitive dissonance in translation as well as domestication tendencies characteristic of the Russian practice of literary translation.

3. *Aggressive perspective reframing* entails reflective enforcement of natural assimilative tendencies for aesthetic and/or ideological purposes (access consciousness; the mechanism of sociocultural orientation; the translation strategy dominant) regardless of the perspective cued by the source text codes. This perspective-reframing mode is characteristic of ideologically loaded Soviet translation practices (the chronotope factor) and contemporary translation practices of “woman/-manhandling” (the gender factor; Leontyeva, 2015).

Considering shifts in the narrative codes, crucial to establishing a sociocultural perspective in the literary discourse as an aesthetic form of human cognition, the following patterns of reperspectivation were frequently observed in the empiric data.

1. Inversion of the aesthetic modes “EVERYDAYNESS” and “TRANSCENDENCE” (cf. Milovidov, 2019), resultant primarily from lexical recategorization, euphemization and dispemization.

2. Inversion of the narrative mode EVENTFULNESS and the descriptive mode ITERATIVITY, triggered primarily by:

- *stativizing the diegetic world* as a result of 1) profiling a terminative phase in the event frame with the conceptual feature RESULT-STATE foregrounded; 2) lexical-grammatical temporal reconceptualization of the narrated events in the gestalt mode (their construal as an integral experience with an unspecified phase structure); 3) syntactical and other textual forms (e.g. omission) of compressing the narrated (diegetic) and/or narration time; 4) depersonification and hence reification of certain conceptual features of the characters’ actions; 5) construal (often by means of nominal recategorization) of adjectival or adverbial features of the characters’ actions as their constant personality traits;
- *passivizing the diegetic world model and/or the characters’ world image* as a result of 1) backgrounding or defocusing the characters’ agency in the narrated events, particularly the plot-driving ones; 2) other forms of reconstruing causal interrelations between the events in the diegetic world; 3) converting the “probabilistic” narrative world model (based on the set of the aesthetic dominants THE HUMAN AGENT, CHOICE, ACTION and RESPONSIBILITY), which might be regarded as a contemporary literary prototype, into the “accidental” (THE HUMAN AGENT and RANDOM), “imperative” (SOCIETY, NORM, ROLE and EVALUATION) or, less frequently, “precedential” one (FATE, ROLE, SUBMISSIVENESS) (Tyupa, 2016 on these narrative world models).

3. Expansion and transformation of the narrative world space triggered by 1) profiling initially backgrounded or defocused conceptual features (affordances) in the structure of the scenes and events constitutive thereof; 2) shifts across modalities in construal of certain conceptual features; 3) categorial shifts across the conceptual scales SPECIFIC – GENERIC and CONCRETE – ABSTRACT; 4) inverting the modal and digital narration modes; 5) shifts to evaluative social categorization, frequently accompanied by enforced iterativity and the inverted narration mode; 6) primary categorization of secondary reference (omission of lexical and topical repetition).

4. Inversion of the subjective-affective and chronicler modes of narration resultant from 1) subjectification / objectification / stereotypization of evaluative categorization; 2) shifts in evidentiality and the translator's involvement mode (the embodied / disembodied observer, agent or patient), in turn caused by a) adopting another mental vantage point in space and time, b) inverting the partitive and gestalt modes of perspectivation, c) splitting the attention focus, d) reframing the structure of the salience continuum and the overall attentional frame constitutive of the translator's perspective, e) shifts across the scales SPECIFIC – GENERIC and CONCRETE – ABSTRACT, f) metaphoric or metonymic reconceptualization of certain events, scenes and their particular features, g) inverting the modal and digital modes of narration representation, h) the translator's self-identifying with a certain character rather than the narrator, whose textual function the translator is supposed to perform.

5. Genre-related categorial shifts accompanied by reframing of the reader's expectation, with the basic cognitive reference point anchored in a different 'aesthetic paradigm' (Tyupa, 2019).

It is hardly possible to identify any clear-cut trends in textual instantiation of the outlined patterns, their combinations fluctuating across the same translation. However, on the whole, Russian translators seem to be prone to stereotype-driven evaluative social recategorization while construing the characters' personality and actions, to more abstract categorial distinctions with frequent shifts from the modal to digital construal and to stativizing, passivizing and objectifying the narrated events, although the subjective-affective mode seems to override a distinctly more objective chronicler's mode. All these perspective-driven shifts can be regarded as semantic effects of those cognitive dominants that mark the bilingual translator's immersion primarily in the Russian (i.e. target) sociocognitive and sociocultural space. Curiously, similar dominants seem to structure the imperative world model characteristic of the so-called "swarm" and "role-based" forms of social cognition and the aesthetic paradigm of traditionalism they relate to (Tyupa, 2016).

6.3. Example

Due to the limited space of the article, this section will illustrate semantic effects only of a few dominants and reperspectivation patterns outlined above on the example of two Russian versions of the title of the famous short story "*The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*" by Fitzgerald (1922). These versions of the title, loaded with sociocultural deixis, manifest curious shifts and discrepancies in the perspectives adopted by each translator, these shifts being aesthetically significant considering the fact that a title as an element in a strong textual position, foregrounded in attention allocation processes, frames the reader's expectation and hence the perspective on the diegetic world the reader will adopt, at least in the beginning. In this respect the original title cues a distinctly positive appraisal (*curious*) of the

protagonist's life as something UNUSUAL, SINGULAR (*case*) and exciting genuine INTEREST and as such is definitive of the whole diegetic world, driven by the dominant TOLERANCE anchored in the domain INDIVIDUAL. Considering the fact that such perspective is apparently culture-modulated and quite uncharacteristic of the Russian discourse practices, marked by distinct collectivistic “we-ness” (Larina, Ozyumenko, & Kurteš, 2017), what happens to this sociocultural deixis in translations?

(1) *Забавный случай с Бенджаминном Баттоном* [A funny/amusing accident/incident to Benjamin Button] (the translation by Tatyana Lukovnikova (Fitzgerald, 2017), first published in 1968).

Although this translation preserves the original positive appraisal of the UNUSUAL (*забавный*) and the focus on SINGULARITY (*случай*) and in this respect can be regarded as instantiating the resistant mode of perspective-framing, the affect-loaded adjective *забавный*, which denotes something able to trigger the emotions of fun and pleasure, suggests the translator's emotional involvement and quasi-perceptual presence in the diegetic world, at least as its embodied observer. Such subjectification of the narration, which is consistent throughout Lukovnikova's text (Fitzgerald, 2017), considerably alters the narrative codes – due to the fact that Fitzgerald's (1922) narrator explicitly proclaims the detached chronicler's perspective, characteristic of the aesthetics of realism. Given that EMOTIONALISM is quite characteristic of the Russian discourse, this culture-modulated perspectival shift illustrates the assimilative mode of perspective-framing, as does the translator's choice of the noun *случай* [accident, incident] – the most conventional Russian equivalent for *case* (according to the data of Russian National Corpus (2003-2020) and ReversoContext, (2013-2019)). The noun *случай* profiles a set of unforeseeable circumstances beyond the individual's will and control – in full accord with indirect causality that reifies and backgrounds the actual human agent in the event frame as a mere Experiencer (Patient) or Instrument of certain supreme IRRATIONAL power (TIME, LUCK, GOD, FATE, etc.). The preposition *с* [to] adds to such causal MYSTICISM, foregrounding the idea of Button's inactive SUBMISSIVENESS – in stark contrast to Fitzgerald's narrative (1922), which consistently profiles Button's anthropocentric agency. Such passivization is partly justifiable by the fundamental role of the concept TIME (a truly unpredictable irreversible power beyond human control) in the aesthetic structure of the text. However, considering the meta-functionality of the title, the shift in question actually reperspectivizes the diegetic world from probabilistic into accidental. Along with this significant shift in the narrative codes, the adjective *забавный*, definitive of Benjamin's life, sways the narrative to the pole of EVERYDAYNESS, thereby provoking the reader to expect an anecdote and to construe the narration and the world narrated in a comical mode, which is hardly the aesthetic dominant of Fitzgerald's text (1922).

(2) *Странная история Бенджамина Баттона* [A strange story/history of Benjamin Button] (the translation by Andrey Rudnev (Fitzgerald, 2016), first published in 2015).

Semantic effects of dominants and shifts in the sociocultural perspective they bring about are even more visible in Rudnev's title with an apparently stereotyped and explicitly negative appraisal of THE UNUSUL (the adjective *странная* [strange, weird]). The data from Russian National Corpus (2003-2020) and ReversoContext (2013-2019) suggest that the most frequent English equivalents for the Russian adjective *странный* are negative evaluative adjectives *strange* and *weird* (frequently collocating with *case*) while *curious* generally entails positive appraisal based on a subjective emotional response rather than a socioculturally specified concept of some normal behavior (as is the case with the evaluative

adjectives *strange* and *weird*). In this respect the title seems to instantiate the culture-modulated dominants NORM, CONFORMISM and STABILITY with zero TOLERANCE to OTHERNESS, UNPREDICTABLE and CHANGE and the cognitive reference point (the evaluation benchmark) anchored in the conceptual domain SOCIAL, far more prominent throughout Rudnev's translation than the domain INDIVIDUAL. In the title this domain is additionally foregrounded by the polysemantic word *история*, which provokes the reader to assess the life of a particular individual against the cognitive background of the entire mankind experience, with the attention focus split between the domains INDIVIDUAL and SOCIAL. All that ultimately transforms the narrative world model from probabilistic into imperative. What is particularly interesting about this perspectival shift is not only the fact that this translation appeared in 2015 and as such was expected to reveal the current democratic values EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, TOLERANCE, FREEDOM, CHOICE, etc., but also the fact that Rudnev, who has translated the whole short story heritage of Fitzgerald (cf. Fitzgerald, 2016), appears to be a consistent adept of the foreignizing approach aimed at careful recreation of stylistic and aesthetic features and peculiarities of the source text and its author. That suggests that the perspectival shift in question is assimilative by nature and can be regarded as a purely random, unintended semantic effect of deeply entrenched cognitive dominants inaccessible to the translator's control. It should also be noted that in contrast to the emotionally-loaded adjectives *curious* and *забавный, странный* lacks perceptual concreteness and as such shifts narration to the detached non-embodied observer's perspective and the distal mode of narration and its representation. Such perspective, though, resonates with the one adopted by Fitzgerald's (1922) narrator, which reflects perspective-framing in the resistant mode.

Another curious point to mention is an apparent intertextual allusion to the novel "*Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*" (1886) by Robert Lewis Stevenson, known as "*Странная история доктора Джекила и мистера Хайда*" in Russian translations. Doubtless, there are some distinct similarities in the aesthetic structure of these two texts. For instance, Stevenson reconsiders the doppelganger theme, traditional to the romantic and gothic literature while Fitzgerald (1922) reconsiders an even more conventional motive of the irresistible power of time. Both texts revolve around the issues of maturing, personality crisis, fate and irreversibility of changes. Both enact a phantasmagoric world of grotesque – accidental, singular and hence unprecedented. However, the titles of these texts contain two totally different *evaluative* adjectives, representative of totally different world models belonging with contrasting aesthetic paradigms. Stevenson's world is frightening (the aesthetic dominant of the gothic novel), immoral and indeed *странный (strange)* in a negative way while Fitzgerald's (1922) world is anecdotal, eccentric, sparking curiosity and occasionally laughter (*curious*) and hence unusual in an appealing way.

7. Conclusion

Overall, the notions of cognitive dominants and the translator's perspective can come in quite useful (as analytical tools) in uncovering and explaining cognitive roots of various sociocultural shifts in literary translations. Within the present study they have enabled identification of a number of construal patterns and modes, potentially dominant for an average English-Russian literary translator and framing their discourse. These dominants appear to be semantically interrelated, interact throughout the translation process and drive the translator's sociocultural perspective (often inconsistent), which in turn frames the

processes of conceptualization, categorization and textual representation of the diegetic world by the translator. The study has shown that in the translator's discourse and text this world undergoes myriad forms of reperspectivation, which affects all levels of the aesthetic structure, often to the detriment of the aesthetic and cultural merits of the literary text under translation. Considering these potential negative implications, raising the translators' awareness of the cognitive dominants and (re)perspectivation patterns outlined above can enable them to enhance the *literary* quality of their translations, which is the ultimate goal of any translation-related endeavor.

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