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WORDS IN FICTION: COMMUNICATIVE DISTANCE, CODES AND ASSOCIATIONS

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Abstract

In fiction, images, motives, and complicated complexes of motives, etc. are fixed via WORDS that get a special semantic load and associations. Behind the author's usage of WORDS there may be hidden special and particular ways of representing significant meanings that are implied in the text. Any literary text is constructed according to a certain linguistic and cultural code that involves a cultural approach to its reading, understanding and re-interpretation. The article discusses limits of WORDS' communicative distance revealed in a literary text due to synchronous and diachronic changes in meanings. Having got associative power, WORDS direct the process of reading and interpretations. The article is based on translations of Russian writers' works into English and translations of English writers' works into Russian. Translations' analysis showed that the nationally specific cultural components fixed in texts can change over time partly due to new social factors when the information ceases to be actually up-to-date from the point of diachronic perspective. Being interpreted in a different cultural space, the source text triggers the mechanisms of secondary categorization and codification and to some extent it begins to show specific features of the secondary target culture where it happens to live under the name of translation.

Keywords: Text, codes, meaning, associations, understanding, interpretation.

1.   Introduction

A literary text is a means of cultural transfer, a dynamic representation of traditions (social, ethical, aesthetic, etc.) and culturally generated meanings. As a cultural phenomenon, any text exists at the definite moment when readers start to read it and deal with textual codes, meanings, motives. They can manage to internalize the message(s) affirmed in the text by its author, doubling textual meanings on the "what-is-text-for-me" principle. The boundaries of text perception are limited by readers' diving and indulging into textual worlds and surfing there. In the process of reading readers select textual elements according to their diachronic significance, but cultural "gaps" arise and as lacunae they keep readers off the author's intentions.

Literary texts' complexity results in the following: the author's meanings encrypted in it easily become lacunae for future succeeding generations of readers. Cultural contexts require a special mode of reading, which sometimes implies diachronic cultural compensation. In literary texts WORDS are involved in interrelated and interdependent systems when words' associative connections and poetic codes go through the World of the text, the World of the author, and the World of a definite national literature. Authors create their personal poetic systems focusing and targeting the semiosis of culture. On the whole, there are explicit and implicit sets of values behind the WORD in literary texts. The common background and knowledge of literary codes allow readers to navigate within texts. Being indulged in the active dialogue with the author via the written text, reader becomes bearers of semantic contexts, choosing a communicative space for the text as the World of the text and accumulating the pluralism of textual meanings (Goodheart, 1999; Macovski, 1997).

2.   Problem Statement

In case of translation a target text begins to set up new ties and links with other sociocultural factors formed in this society. The target text, meanwhile, reflects national linguistic and cultural specificity of both societies – the primary source society and the secondary target society, as well. However, at the same time, there is a high chance of losing its national cultural content when the source text turns out a distorted target text in the fun-house mirror of translation. Situational word dependence due to the realization of a definite sociocultural context requires taking into account the semantic and associative connections of words and code parameters of the whole text. Words represent not only their communicative ties, but also hypertext links within a text, they show the collective common knowledge, experience and different artefacts of culture. When translators fail to select, classify and value words and their contexts, secondary readers are to get a curved text World, false ideas about the different culture that embodies the concept 'Otherness'.

3.   Research Questions

Reader act within the interpretative framework, developing new forms of synthesis of original elements of the text content. As a result, new readers can get new meanings that sometimes different from meanings implied by the author. Textual ambiguity leads to plurality and variability of readers' interpretations. Obstacles to text understanding and comprehension are cultural contexts and linguistic

contexts, words' connotations and specific cultural meanings, cultural frameworks, other sociocultural indicators and ethnic constants adopted it the society and associated with the culturally specific aspects of social relations (Guizzo, Alldred, & Foradada-Villar, 2018; Vedenina, 2017). Experiences that different people and groups have may be considered to be an obstacle preventing people from finding any common ground (Lloyd, 2010). Even gender of the author and readers manifest themselves in text-projections (Gritsenko, 2016; Mamaev, 2015). In this regard, WORDS carry a special emotional component, which in a certain way indicates a specific referent, i.e. an object of extralinguistic reality. Plurality of secondary texts may be caused by differences in translators' creative individuality when they do their best trying to meet adequacy and / or equivalence.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to discuss communicative distance, word associations and codes as reasons for plurality of translations seen as cases of (re) interpretation of a literary text. Time limits of the author's code underlie literary texts and turn them requiring commenting for following generations of readers into closed texts or half-closed texts. Potentially any literary text has an unlimited range of re-readings and reinterpretations. Boundaries of reinterpretations can be limited only by the text construction, traditions of reading and strategies for text understanding. The reader's individual text projection is mainly subjective. It depends on the text characteristics and the interpretive abilities of the reader. As WORDS form special unique codes and possess their associative power, they serve as semantic milestones directing the process of reading and interpretations.

5. Research Methods

In this study, methods of semantic and pragmatic interpretation are applied. Textual meanings are interpreted with respect to communicative and pragmatic context of functioning WORDS. The methods used in the research are the following: contextual analysis, discourse analysis, intertextual analysis, component analysis of vocabulary definitions, conceptual analysis to highlight the structure of a concept, and a method of observation, comparison, and synthesis. To analyse national and cultural semantics of language units, we also use methods worked out in cognitive studies (Álvaro, 2019; Dehyaa & Al-Emara, 2019; Halverson, 2015; Schwieter & Ferreira, 2017) and linguocultural studies (Krasnykh, 2017; Krasnykh, 2019).

6. Findings

As texts are the part of the world cultural semiosis, each of them to some extent summarize results of a special period in the conceptualization and categorization of a world fragment that the author has chosen to represent and describe (Kubryakova, 2009). At first, the woman in the fairy tale in verse "The Tale of the Fisherman and the Fish" (1833) by A. Pushkin (1799–1837) asks the golden fish for a new trough, then she is eager to get a new countryside log house, or izba, in Russian (Pushkin, 2017). Since in England they used to build mainly brick or stone houses, in translations the greedy old woman demands and receives a cottage. A. Pyman (Pushkin, 1985) explains in a footnote that izba is a peasant's log cabin

and also mentions a carved attic window. R. Chandler pays attention to the used material: a handsome house built of wood (Pushkin, 2012). O. Elton believes this cottage had an attic (as cited in Pushkin, 1935). I. Zheleznova (as cited in Pushkin, 1997) expects to find the gabled roof (a new gabled cottage) but it is typical of an English house, located in a rural or suburban area. Similar descriptions of a gabled house are common for many English novels, e.g., "Jude the Obscure" by Th. Hardy (1840–1928) or "The Hound of the Baskervilles" by Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930).

Nevertheless, the process of conceptualization encoded by linguistic means goes within every cultural and linguistic society differently because of specificity of cultures and languages (Kasevich, 2013). A. Pushkin's novel "Eugene Onegin" (1823–31) reflects a historical model of dandyism, which had begun to develop in Russia by that time (Pushkin, 2011). In the first chapter lines of stanza XXVII tell us about people who are enjoying themselves at the ball (Mel'kayut profili golov / I dam i modnykh chudakov) where there are fashion freaks or fashionable eccentrics. Under the name of fashion freaks or eccentrics, the poet means dandies from Saint-Petersburg. Naturally, fashion freaks or eccentrics cannot be counted as full equivalents for Russian word group модные чудаки 'modnyye chudaki'. The first translator of A. Pushkin's novel into English, Henry Joseph Spalding (1840–1907) learned Russian while serving at the British Embassy in Saint-Petersburg. Unlike modern translators, H. Spalding (Pushkin, 1881) chose the noun beau (fashionable beaux) to derive the stanza's context to the British culture of the 19th century and its cultural emotive meanings: the most famous trendsetter of that epoch was legendary English dandy George Brummell (1778–1840), also known as Beau Brummell.

The degree of familiarity with a wide context predetermines the communicative distance established between the author and readers. So, the translation as a secondary text projection of the original brings out the context that is present in the minds of the communicants and independent of its verbal expression. The fable "Canary and Nightingale" by A. Izmaylov (1779–1831) shows a rich manor house in the countryside surrounded with birch trees and lilacs, currant and raspberry bushes (Izmaylov, 1890). Having moved to the USA after his youth in Russia, Leo Wiener (1862–1939) changes, nevertheless, the landscape. For example, he prefers bramble bushes that are so typical for the USA (Izmaylov, 1903). The main character falls in love with the Nightingale and starts asking for biscuits (бисквиты 'biskvity') and sweets (конфеты 'konfety'). The translator refers to crackers and candies from American English. On one hand, translation is a bilingual textual communication when translators as primary readers of the original try to find and set up subject (referent) links and semantic links with respect to their own real World. On the other hand, they have to take into account the characteristics of their secondary readers who belong to the host language and culture.

William Shakespeare (1564–1616) was fond of puns, plays on words and euphemisms to made his contemporaries laugh and giggle (Shakespeare, 1994). Many of such expressions used earlier as euphemisms are marked in modern dictionaries as obsolete. They are out of use due to the change in the cultural pattern and model. Isabella from his "Measure for Measure" uses the noun shame (Is't not a kind of incest, to take life / From thine own sister's shame?) in the meaning 'an extramarital affair'. When his character from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" mentions French crowns (Some of your French crowns have no hair at all; and then you will play barefac'd) he laughs at complications from a venereal disease which resulted in the person's baldness. It is hard to render Shakespeare's "culinary" euphemisms into

other languages. Translators are often unable to set the communicative distance properly. In act II of the second part of the play "King Henry IV" W. Shakespeare denotes Mrs. Quickley's profession as a victualler. But the hidden and less familiar meaning of the word victualler 'innkeeper' strongly corresponds to the place because long ago a victualing-house 'a tavern' used to name a brothel. That's why it is clear why the characters were talking about multiple cases of violation of the law in her house (there is another indictment upon thee, for suffering flesh to be eaten in thy house, contrary to the law). The modern reader is to understand what suffering flesh is eaten in the tavern: since that time words flesh and meat have been used to point to the human body as an object of lust (His grace says that which his flesh rebels against). Changing conditions under which text communication takes place can lead to changes in each parameter of the subtext that over time may become "lost" for new readers who are separated from the author by time barriers.

It is readers whose interests translators try to promote when looking for adaptive and assimilation changes in the source text (Demyankov, 2019). In general, the structural and functional adaptation of the text depends on expectations-anticipations of the text-receiving audience. As active interpreters translators choose strategies of neutralization, domestication, foreignization, adaptation, etc.

7. Conclusion

Parameters of words in literary texts include subjective evaluation, contextual motivation, determinism of the present situation and its context, a wide range of associations, and reflexivity. On the whole, words trigger mechanisms of association, recognition, and categorization. The semantic proximity of the source text and target texts as its individual projections are ensured by translators' knowledge or ignorance of the cultural and historical models. It is necessary to take into account cultural codes and values encrypted in words, the peculiarity of word usage which can imply special means of setting textual meanings.

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