

An Integrated Analysis of Translations of Tatar Prose into Russian: The Methodology and General Principles

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Abstract: This article describes an integrated methodology for the study of translations of Tatar prose into Russian, both inclusive of a wide array of corpus data and with an orientation towards bringing to light linguo-cognitive mechanisms and linguo-culturological and value (ethical and esthetic) factors. The developed translation methodology is aimed at not just the study of episodes of a particular work but involves taking account of the characteristics of a linguo-cultural and cognitive environment that emerges around significant text units and underlies the nature of translation transformations.

Key words: Translation • Tatar prose • Concept • Integrated analysis • Translation transformations

INTRODUCTION

In the 20th century, the theory of translation became an interdisciplinary strand, its major aspects studied by representatives of various sciences. Researchers note that translation, being one of the forms of existence of a work of literature, brings to light new meanings in the original text, thus to a considerable extent determining the fate of a work of literature in a cultural tradition receiving it.

One's perception of a translation in a new language and cultural environment is associated with a complex intertwinement of various objective and subjective factors, including the extent of affinity (chronological and typological) between the languages and cultures of the source and translation, the particular nature of the genre and style of the work under translation, the competence and mastership of the translator, translation strategies chosen by one, the peculiar mold of the epoch the translation is being effected in and much more. In the modern theory of translation, there seems to be a realization of the close linkage between a word as a language unit and the cultural tradition and psychology of a people as a whole [1, 2]. Hatim and Munday (2004: 6) define translation as "the process and the product of transferring a written text from source language (SL) to target language (TL) conducted by a translator in

a specific socio-cultural context together with the cognitive, linguistic, cultural and ideological phenomena that are integral to the process and the product" [1].

The overwhelming majority of studies in the theory of translation conducted in Russia are dedicated to the study of translations of works of Western European literature into Russian. Having said that, issues of translation of texts of Russia's national literatures into Russian remain understudied. Scarce and mostly negligible in volume, studies into translations of works of Tatar literature into Russian are put together on quite limited material; they look into just some of the aspects of the correlation between the language characteristics of original texts and their translations and are of an evaluative nature on the whole.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Contrasted with an abundance of existing literature on the theory of translation, there is a compelling need for developing a new integrated methodology for the study of translations inclusive of linguo-cognitive mechanisms, culture-specific knowledge and methods for organizing information within various types of cultures. The reception of the phenomena of Tatar culture through translated works of literature has enormous heuristic

potential, since it makes it possible to identify what is translated, what is omitted, or what is deformed in translation, as a text on the whole and its units can be assimilated by the reader of the translated text who does not command the language. Our study helps identify the major vectors for the perception of the phenomena of Tatar culture and mentality, as well as the dominant features of Russian linguo-culture, which set the direction and character of translation transformations.

It is impossible to describe methods for preserving and transferring multifarious additional information implicitly contained in the text of the original (cultural background, the connotative-expressive characteristics of language units, the discursive-communicative and genre-stylistic characteristics of the source text, etc.) without analyzing what is the new, the *different* (compared with the original), that the target text carries, which is born and starts functioning in a new language and cultural environment. This is particularly important when it comes to works of literature that are deemed crucial repositories of linguo-cultural information, a sort of compression of the language and cultural picture of the world.

A study of this kind is impossible without defining the role of the concepts of national culture in the structure of works by Tatar writers, their axiological potential, without describing major methods for translating language units representing cultural concepts. To identify and describe the cultural component of the meaning of a word, one needs situational (pragmatic and content-rich) contexts; vocabulary definitions do not normally reflect the ins and outs of cultural background or do negligibly.

Many modern works accentuate the significance of corpus data to the theory of translation [3-6]. "Corpus-based research in translation is concerned with revealing both the universal and the specific features of translation, through the interplay of theoretical constructs and hypotheses, variety of data, novel descriptive categories and a rigorous, flexible methodology, which can be applied to inductive and deductive research, as well as product- and process-oriented studies" [3].

Relying on existing corpus resources helps make the study more in-depth and to a large degree avoid inferential bias. In this work, we first carried out the selection of significant concepts of Tatar culture, which are of interest in terms of the theory of translation and performed a semantic analysis of lexemes that denominate them based on data from definition and bilingual dictionaries. Then, using the Tatar national corpus [7], which is an aggregate of different-level conceptual-

functional models in Tatar (currently, the volume of the corpus's textual collection is about 26 million usages), we conducted the selection and further semantic and contextual analysis of relevant lexemes. The large volume of corpus data makes it possible to identify and objectively describe significant semantic components and associative lexeme links not reflected in definition dictionaries but needed for the proper understanding of the text of the original. Only after that, we performed the analysis of the language of translations, with lexeme translation methods investigated based on the material of a considerable number of translations performed by different translators (we concurrently examined both translations of different works on a related subject and different translated versions of a same work). The study material consisted of prose works by Tatar writers of the 20th century and their translations into Russian.

Thus, the study of language material is based on a complex methodology that incorporates analysis of corpus data and matching analysis of the source and translation, with elements of componential analysis, conceptual analysis, definitional analysis, description of methods for getting across culturally determined content in translation, as well as analysis of strategies employed by translators in translating works of Tatar literature into Russian.

The developed methodology for the analysis of translations is aimed not just at the analysis of episodes of a particular language system but involves taking account of a linguo-cultural and cognitive environment that emerges around significant units of text (both in the original and translation) and underlies the nature of translation transformations.

Main Part: Analysis of concepts of a complex configuration in the original and translation.

Using copious material from translations of Tatar prose and poetry, performed at different times, we conducted work on the description and semantic modeling of concepts crucial to the structure of a whole work of literature (namely, the concepts *täüfiq, mo?, räncü, bähillek*), in verbalizing which there most often occur in the target language various transformations (lexical-semantic, expressive-emotional, stylistic, evaluative, etc.).

We identified the most common variants of representing national-specific concepts in translated texts. As a rule, Tatar writers, in dealing with the apprehension of concepts, include an entire spectrum of meanings and

associations related to those concepts; however, the actualization of particular concepts depends on the writer's creative personality. In representing national-specific concepts, translators employ the descriptive method or draw upon dictionary matches, which get the meaning of a lexeme under translation only roughly. Analysis shows that lexemes that denominate a matchless concept are subject in translation to considerable transformation (all the way to the replacement of the concept).

The shattering of a symbol's initial space in translations occurs as a result of selecting a figurative token that is unable to carry the associative load that was characteristic of the original. In selecting equivalents, translators most often build on the dictionary meanings of words – however, this often leads to numerous conceptual losses in translation.

In particular, in representing the concept *täüfiq* (according to a Tatar-Russian dictionary, “piety”, “morality” [8, p. 345]) in translated texts, translators accentuate the universal ethical aspects of the initial term, with lexemes in Russian getting these ethical settings across in quite an abstract form (“nice”, “kind”), which expresses panhuman values, while the syncretically complex nature of the initial concept, which includes not just magnanimity and kindness, but humility, chastity, loyalty to traditional ethical values, etc. is not reproduced in translation. Texts in Russian lose meanings expressing that a person who possesses the quality *täüfiq* conforms one's thoughts and actions to the teachings of Islam. None of the above translations uses the word *piety*, which implies religious connotations, while the content richness of the Tatar concept *täüfiq* is crucial to the proper understanding of the images of the characters and particular episodes of literary works [9].

One of the key concepts of Tatar culture is *mong* (according to a Tatar-Russian dictionary, (1) “sadness”, “sorrow”, “affliction”, “grief”; (2) “melody”, “tune”, “chant”; (3) “harmony”, “groove”, “lyricism” [8, p. 213]) is also interpreted differently in translated works. Translators either build on the dictionary meaning of the word or try to bring in new conceptual hues into the text. Most often, this concept is represented through the Russian words “sadness”, “sorrow”, “affliction” and “melody”, while the text undergoes considerable translation transformations and additions in translation.

In a literary text, different meanings of the polysemant *mong* find themselves bound up with complex links and associations, while the translation shatters, breaks into isolated conceptual fragments the initial unity of the text

and its figurative system. The concept *mong* lets the writer bring to light, denominate and describe a person's inner world, which can be moved not only by thoughts but feelings as well; *mong* reflects a broad gamut of emotions, meditateness, nostalgia and harmony. In the unity of the human spirit, there is no abrupt separation between the elements of feeling, cognition and will: they intertwine in manifold ways and are interdependent. In works by Tatar prose writers, the concept *mong* as a synthetic construct of a complex nature makes it possible to express the harmony between a person's inner world and cosmic, natural reality, the concurrence of the rational and emotional, verbal and musical, the correlation between individual memory and people's memory and the link between the esthetic, ethical and emotional. And this concurrence is not a state of pure positivity, the givenness of physical reality, but implies a longing for the past, the Unrealizable, the Inexpressible. We should disclaim that what is referred to here is not an existential schism or fissure in one's consciousness, not something destructive in one, but that in one's perception of life there is also room for both nostalgic emotions and a keen hankering for the unrealizable. The concept *mong*, combining in itself meditateness and the emotional and esthetic principles, reflects the special spiritual experience of Tatar culture, which is reflected in the language and cultural picture of the world. Translations get across just a general idea of the ins and outs of the concept *mong* in Tatar culture using the means of the Russian language. Translation material attests to the fact that the content-functional and esthetic fullness of the concept *mong* is completely different in different translations. If in original texts this concept of a complex configuration carries the same conceptual load, which is associated with the syncretism of meanings, translations externalize its completely different aspects [10].

The associative-conceptual field of another concept in Tatar culture, *bähillek* (according to a Tatar-Russian dictionary: (1) “forgiveness”; (2) “blessing”; (3) “consent” [8, p. 69]), is also largely deformed in translation. Translations most often actualize the meaning associated with “forgiving”, which is mainly inclusive of situational-pragmatic factors and leads to the narrowing of the conceptual field of the initial concept. In some cases, the translation of lexemes denominating a concept of a complex configuration (e.g. *räncü*) lets us infer that translators often reproduce lexemes that are absent in the context under translation but are present in common Tatar contexts of using lexemes representing concepts of a complex configuration (based on corpus data).

Based on material from polyvariate translations, we have described manifestations of ambiguity in interpreting concepts in the structure of a work of literature. We have illustrated that interlingual divergence mechanisms lead to the conceptual fragmentation of the translated text. In translating a lexicon with a cultural component, the translator has to explicitly express, provide in unfolded form what to the Tatar reader is provided implicitly, in folded form, as background knowledge, with the cultural component of the word's meaning gotten across inclusive of pragmatic, connotative, contextual and other factors.

The study has revealed a correlation between the extent of complexity of selecting initial conceptual, functional and esthetic dominants in the original text and translation polyvariety (in different translation versions). The broad spectrum of meanings present in the concept's textual field is interpreted by translators differently, based on their individual notions of the author's worldview. In this regard, what comes to be significant is the translator's creative potential and, as the findings of the study indicate, the ability to render with minimal losses the inner content of concepts is inherent in those translators who are professional writers – authors of original works (e.g. R. Kutui).

CONCLUSION

The developed methodology involves analysis of content units of the source text as a part of the linguo-cultural space of the original's language with the engagement of a large number of corpus data. This makes it possible to verifiably establish the semantic nest, the typical combinability and associative field of lexemes denominating lexemes of a complex configuration, going beyond data from definition dictionaries, but is clearly insufficient for the analysis of literary texts. Results obtained are employed in the analysis of translation transformations and strategies, which not only makes the study in-depth but to a considerable degree helps avoid inferential bias, which is crucial to a humanitarian study.

Thus, the more complex the selection of initial conceptual, functional and esthetic dominants the original text contains, the more variants of translation and translation transformations there can be in different translation versions. Changes in the concept's information structure are due to mismatch between the language pictures of the world, the value priorities and cultural traditions of language communities. The associative-conceptual field of concepts does not

normally expand in translation but, on the contrary, narrows, which leads to the conceptual fragmentation of the translated text and shattering of its content, image and stylistic integrity.

Inferences. We can now draw the following inferences:

- Corpus data makes it possible to objectively describe significant semantic components and associative lexeme links needed for the proper understanding of the text of the original;
- Lexemes that denominate a matchless concept are subject in translation to considerable transformation;
- In representing national-specific concepts, translators employ the descriptive method or draw upon dictionary matches, which get the meaning of a lexeme under translation only roughly;
- The associative-conceptual field of concepts does not normally expand in translation but, on the contrary, narrows; interlingual divergence mechanisms lead to the conceptual fragmentation of the translated text.

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