



SEMANTIC AND PRAGMATIC
TRANSFORMATION OF METAPHORICAL UNITS IN
THE TRANSLATION OF RUSSIAN LITERARY PROSE
INTO UZBEK

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the specific features of the semantic and pragmatic transformation of metaphorical units in the translation of Russian literary prose into Uzbek. Metaphor is analysed as a multilevel linguistic unit comprising denotative-semantic, figurative, emotional-evaluative, and pragmatic components. Particular attention is paid to the changes that occur when metaphorical images are transferred in the context of interlingual and intercultural interaction. Drawing on translations of works by Russian writers, the study identifies the principal types of transformation: specification, generalisation, image substitution, explicitation, and functional compensation. The findings indicate that translation transformations may affect not only the content of a metaphor but also its expressiveness, evaluative force, and communicative effect. The article concludes that a comprehensive approach is required to assess the adequacy of metaphorical translation.

Introduction

Metaphor is one of the most productive means of organising a literary text. It enables authors to express complex semantic relationships through figurative naming, establish an emotional and evaluative attitude towards the phenomena being depicted, and influence the reader.

In contemporary linguistics, metaphor is regarded as a means of conceptualising reality. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson demonstrate that metaphorical models form part of the human



conceptual system and shape the ways in which abstract phenomena are understood [Lakoff and Johnson, pp. 25–27].

In literary discourse, metaphor possesses additional pragmatic potential. It can characterise a literary figure, create an ironic effect, intensify emotional tension, convey the author's evaluative stance, or structure the symbolic space of a literary work.

When a text is translated into another language, the translator must convey not only the meaning of a metaphorical unit but also its communicative and pragmatic function. V. N. Komissarov emphasises that translation equivalence involves preserving the communicative orientation of the original while allowing for transformations of its linguistic form [Komissarov, pp. 51–68].

The aim of this study is to identify the principal types of semantic and pragmatic transformation affecting metaphorical units in the translation of Russian literary prose into Uzbek.

Research Methods

The study employs contrastive, semantic, contextual, and linguocultural methods.

Contrastive analysis makes it possible to identify differences between metaphorical units in the Russian original and their Uzbek translations.

Semantic analysis aims to determine which components of the original meaning are preserved, modified, or lost.

Pragmatic analysis is used to identify changes in emotional impact, authorial evaluation, expressiveness, and stylistic effect.

The contextual method is employed to determine the function of a metaphor within a specific literary passage.

In this study, semantic and pragmatic transformation is understood as a change affecting a metaphorical unit during translation, whereby its semantic or figurative structure is modified and its pragmatic effect on the recipient may also change.

Research Findings

1. The Semantic Structure of Metaphor in Translation

A metaphorical unit is a complex formation in which several components interact. Its foundation is its denotative and logical content, which, in a literary text, is supplemented by imagery, emotional evaluation, and pragmatic orientation.

Different relationships between these components may arise in translation. For example, a translator may preserve both meaning and imagery, modify the image while retaining the meaning, or convey only the essential information at the expense of some of the original expressiveness.

Accordingly, the following types of transformation can be distinguished:
semantically equivalent rendering;



specification;
generalisation;
image substitution;
explicitation;
pragmatic compensation.

2. Specification of Metaphorical Meaning

Specification is employed when the meaning conveyed by the source metaphor requires a more precise expression in the target language.

For example, the Russian expression душа замерла (literally, “the soul froze” or “the soul stood still”) conveys a state of intense emotional shock, fear, or suspense. When translated into Uzbek, it may be rendered using the expression юраги орқасига тортиб кетди (yuragi orqasiga tortib ketdi, approximately “one's heart sank”) or another expression appropriate to the context.

This transformation involves a change in the figurative structure: the Russian metaphor is based on the idea of the soul coming to a standstill, whereas the Uzbek expression may evoke a physical change in the state of the heart.

Nevertheless, the principal pragmatic component—the intensity of the emotional experience—is preserved.

Thus, specification may involve a transformation of imagery without any substantial loss of pragmatic effect.

3. Image Substitution

One of the most common translation strategies is the replacement of the original metaphorical image with a functionally similar image in the target language.

For example, the Russian expression лить крокодиловы слёзы (“to shed crocodile tears”) denotes hypocritical or insincere sorrow. A literal rendering into Uzbek may prove stylistically ineffective if the corresponding figurative model is not established to the same degree as a fixed expression in the target language.

In such cases, the translator may use an Uzbek expression denoting insincere regret or pretence.

The semantic content is preserved, while the figurative structure changes. The process can therefore be represented as follows:

Original image → alternative image → preservation of communicative function.

This type of transformation is particularly important in literary translation because literal accuracy may result in pragmatic inadequacy.

4. Generalisation and the Reduction of Expressiveness

Generalisation is the reverse process, whereby specific metaphorical content is conveyed through a more general linguistic unit.



For example, a culturally or historically marked metaphor may be replaced with a neutral word combination. As a result, the essential content is retained, but the figurative quality of the original is diminished.

Such a transformation may be necessitated by the absence of a direct equivalent in Uzbek or by the translator's intention to make the text more accessible to the target audience.

However, generalisation may have a negative effect: it can weaken the author's evaluative stance and the emotional expressiveness of the text.

Therefore, translation analysis must distinguish between semantic adequacy and pragmatic adequacy. Conveying the factual meaning of an expression does not necessarily ensure that its literary impact has been fully preserved.

5. Explication of the Cultural Component

Explication is used when the meaning of a metaphor is associated with specific cultural knowledge.

In classical Russian prose, such expressions may reflect historical realities, social relationships, and everyday perceptions characteristic of the nineteenth century. The figurative motivation underlying these expressions is not always immediately apparent to contemporary Uzbek readers.

In such cases, the translator may make the meaning of the metaphor explicit within the text.

Explication increases semantic transparency but may also reduce the conciseness and figurative richness of the original.

The translator must therefore negotiate between two competing objectives:

preserving cultural specificity;

ensuring that the content is accessible to the target reader.

The optimal solution is one in which the cultural component is not eliminated but rendered in a form that readers of the target language can understand.

6. Pragmatic Transformation

The pragmatic dimension is particularly important when translating metaphors that convey evaluation.

The same metaphor may characterise a literary figure positively or negatively, or convey irony or satire. If the translation preserves the referential content but loses the evaluative component, a pragmatic transformation has occurred.

This phenomenon is particularly evident in the works of Nikolai V. Gogol. In *The Overcoat*, the descriptions of Akaky Akakievich combine physical characterisation with ironic authorial evaluation. For example, the sequence describing the protagonist as “somewhat pockmarked, somewhat reddish-haired, and even somewhat short-sighted” creates an effect of deliberate understatement in the presentation of his individual characteristics.



In Chulpan's Uzbek translation, some of these meanings are conveyed through the construction *бир оз* (*bir oz*, “somewhat”) and word-formation devices available in Uzbek [Noraliev, pp. 67–68]. As a result, the principal function—the presentation of a characteristic as present to a limited degree—is preserved, although the linguistic form changes.

Thus, this transformation demonstrates that a pragmatic function can be maintained even when the semantic and grammatical structure is modified.

7. Functional Compensation

When preserving the original metaphor is impossible, compensation may be employed. A lost figurative or expressive component can be reproduced through a different linguistic device.

Compensation is particularly important in literary translation because an individual metaphor is often integrated into a broader system of imagery.

If a particular image cannot be retained, the translator may intensify the emotional force of a neighbouring expression, preserve irony through another stylistic device, or introduce a different metaphorical image.

Compensation therefore makes it possible to approach translation not as a sequential replacement of individual words but as the recreation of the literary function of a text at the level of an entire utterance or passage.

Discussion

Semantic and pragmatic analysis demonstrates that the transformation of a metaphorical unit in translation may affect several levels simultaneously.

Type of transformation	Semantic change	Pragmatic change
Equivalent rendering	Minimal	Minimal
Specification	Refinement of meaning	Usually preserved
Generalisation	Broadening of meaning	Possible reduction in effect
Image substitution	Change in imagery	Function preserved
Explicitation	Making implicit meaning explicit	Possible reduction in figurativeness
Compensation	Replacement of a linguistic element	Function restored

Consequently, translation transformations should not be assessed solely in terms of correspondence between dictionary meanings. It is also necessary to consider what the metaphor accomplishes within the literary text.



If a metaphor characterises a protagonist, its characterising effect should be preserved; if it conveys irony, its ironic orientation should be maintained; and if it creates emotional tension, a comparable degree of emotional impact should be achieved.

In this respect, the concept of pragmatic equivalence complements the traditional understanding of semantic correspondence. Literary translation should aim to preserve the communicative effect of the original to the greatest extent possible.

Conclusion

Metaphorical units in Russian literary prose constitute complex semantic and pragmatic formations in which imagery, evaluation, emotion, and cultural information interact.

When translated into Uzbek, these units undergo various transformations, including specification, generalisation, image substitution, explicitation, and functional compensation.

The analysis demonstrates that a change in figurative structure does not necessarily result in a loss of adequacy. If the replacement preserves the essential meaning, emotional and evaluative characteristics, and communicative function, the translation may be regarded as functionally equivalent.

Particular importance should be attached to preserving the pragmatic potential of metaphor. In literary translation, it is essential to convey not only what a metaphor means but also how it affects the reader.

Thus, semantic and pragmatic transformation constitutes an inherent component of Russian–Uzbek interlingual transfer. The effectiveness of a translation strategy depends on the translator's ability to take into account the semantic structure of the metaphor, its cultural markedness, the author's intention, and the characteristics of the target audience's reception of the text.

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