**Interpretation in Translation: Between Scylla and Charybdis (A Glimpse into Teaching Practice)**

**ABSTRACT**

This paper aims to analyze the language patterns used to facilitate interpreting sense bringing equivalence focused on a source language (SL) in line with pragmatic adequacy more required for a target language (TL) in Retour translation. The authors put a premium on the need to interpret the invariant sense of the SL via inferencing through the lens of the asymmetries between the source (English) and target (Russian) languages. The retour translation is no longer called into question by international researchers, though it needs methodological support. Broader pragmatic context facilitates inferencing and the derivation of invariant sense in this direction of translation, as the translator is better acquainted with the pragmatic context of his/her mother tongue. The absence of direct equivalents is not an obstacle, as invariant sense is rendered through translation transformations and shifts. The authors use the interpretational approach to translation in their teaching practice in the MGIMO-University Master Degree programmes and curricula, which the article illustrates through vivid examples of translation difficulties and their resolution with the help of grammar and semantic shifts made possible by both linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge or broad pragmatic context. The authors use a comparative linguistic method and that of translation modelling.

**Keywords:** source language, target language, interpretation, equivalence, direct equivalent, translation transformations/shifts

1. **Introduction**

   In this paper, we intend to present an analysis of a topic that still raises controversies, notwithstanding the great wealth of research literature written on the subject. The topic is how to render or interpret sense in translation bringing equivalence in line with pragmatic adequacy in retour translation. There are two schools of thought on the issue:

   - Semantic or linguistic translation that focuses on the equivalence that in some cases disregards the stylistic norms of the target language (TL) while rendering with utmost accuracy the specific features of the text in the source language (SL) in terms of sense/meaning and its linguistic form and structure.

   - Communicative pragmatic approach takes into account both the sense of the SL text and the stylistic norms of the TL, in the absence of direct equivalents disregarding the semantic and grammatical structures of the SL.

2. **Literary Review**

   There is a dichotomy of equivalence and adequacy, with the equivalence focused on SL and pragmatic adequacy on the TL (Evee, 2017). The dynamic equivalence by Nida (Nida 1974) and its highest levels from the equivalence model by Komissarov (Komissarov, 2002) take into account the pragmatic features of the SL text.
The pragmatics foregrounds adequacy, as the translator has to derive sense from the broad pragmatic context (Givon, 1989), which would consist of the extralinguistic situation or background knowledge that includes general (encyclopedic) knowledge, the knowledge of the specific domain to which the text belongs and of its specific topic. Knowledge of the broad pragmatic context facilitates a lot the derivation of invariant sense in both directions of translation (Korovkina, 2018), especially in the retour. The translator is more well-versed in the word view, hence, the pragmatic context of the mother tongue.

Adequate rendering of the invariant sense of the SL text, when linguistic and semantic structures of the SL and TL do not coincide, stands for interpretation as it is understood by the interpretation theory of translation and hermeneutics in translation represented in Russia by Krukov (Krukov, 1988), Garbovsky (Garbovsky, 2004), Ivanov (Ivanov, 2018), Mishkurov (Mishkurov, 2013) and in Europe primarily by Seleskovich and Lederer (Seleskovich & Lederer 1984, 1989), though the latter deal mainly with simultaneous interpreting, though not only.

According to Lederer (Lederer 2003), sense interpretation both in translation and interpreting stands for understanding and sense deverbalization and its reverbalization in TL. Hence, the translation consists of three stages: deverbalization, reverbalization and verification (Lederer, 2003). It should be pointed out that many researchers share this perception of translation as a three-stage process. For example, the Soviet psycholinguist Zimnaya singled out three stages in translation: grasping of the sense of the message in the SL, switching over to a TL, and the production of a message in the TL (Zimnaya 1978, 43 – 48). This coincides with the simultaneous interpreting model designed by the Soviet linguists and simultaneous interpreters Shiryaev and Chernov, who described the process of interpreting as comprehension of the message in the SL, translation decision and production of the message in the TL (Shiryaev 1979, 101; Chernov 1987, 224). Some researchers believe that there are only two phases in translation: comprehension and production (Gile 2009, 101-102).

Nevertheless, the generally accepted translation model includes three stages: comprehension of invariant sense of the message in an SL, switching over to a TL and a search for translation solutions and reverbalization, reformulation or production of the message in the TL. This model coincides with the perception of the interpreting process shared by Seleskovich (Seleskovich 1998, 8). Though the researcher dealt with simultaneous interpreting, the universal principles and tools of simultaneous interpreting to a larger extent coincide with written or at sight translation (we shall leave aside the cognitive mechanisms of simultaneous interpreting such as probabilistic forecasting and deal only with universal cognitive translation and interpreting features).

The universal cognitive translation mechanism translation is inferencing. It enables a translator to elicit the SL invariant sense, to deverbalize it and to reverbalize again in the linguistic structures of the TL. Inferencing has been studied by modal logic and cognitive linguistics and later was adopted by the translation theory. One of the first researchers to introduce this term in cognitive linguistics was W. Sellars in 1953 as a model of generating knowledge that is based on the conceptual world view rather than language rules. For example, suppose an individual knowledge of concepts includes the notion of a specific colour, for example, red. In that case, the individual will be able to prompt an adequate response to a word expressing this colour. Pragmalinguistics also deals with entailments or implicatures generating from the context in the process of inferencing. P. Grice has designed an inferential model of communication focusing on communicative implicatures resulting from the context (Grice 1975, 1989). They arise in speech, their unambiguous understanding depends on the speech context and the observance by the communicants the principle of cooperation and one of its postulates, the information relevance. The theory of relevance (Wilson & Sperber, 2004) is of paramount importance for inferencing and for communication in general: ‘an input (a sight, a sound, an utterance, a memory) is relevant to an individual when it connects with background information he has available to yield conclusions that matter to him’ (Wilson & Sperber 2004, 251).

Though two terms, inferences and implicatures are sometimes used interchangeably, the term inferencing stands for the generation of entailments – implicatures on the basis of presuppositions: common or shared knowledge of communicants.

The first classification of implicatures in the Soviet translation studies was presented by Chernov in his probabilistic model of simultaneous interpreting. While noting that presuppositions are the basis for inferencing, as they provide for a complete understanding of the message in the SL, he focuses on implicatures singling out their four types: language, referential, cognitive or thesaurus-based and deictic (Chernov 1987, 95 – 105). These types of implicatures are used in all modes and directions of translation and interpreting, not only in simultaneous interpreting. As the implicatures are closely connected with presuppositions, they can be regarded as similar in their linguistic and extralinguistic nature. Thus, they can be divided into two big groups that condense the four types of implicatures in Chernov’s model:
Referential and language-based presuppositions and implicatures stand for the language mean describing the communicative situation, which is used in the text. They are closely interconnected, also representing discursive elements and providing for the text coherence and cohesion. They are manifest at the level of co-referents, semantic and lexical repetitions and the sentence functional perspective (which is called theme-and-rheme in the Russian research). The first group of presuppositions is also related to interlanguage asymmetries caused by the differences in the world view between the SL and the TL that will be discussed below.

Cognitive-thesaurus-based presuppositions are realized in the communicative situation of translation. They amount to extralinguistic information and encyclopedic knowledge: knowledge of the world, culture, and translation domain. The term thesaurus-based is used in Russian linguistics and linguo-didactics and a means of a translator's mental lexicon that includes all the knowledge as mentioned above.

Both groups of presuppositions interact in the course of message/text perception and understanding by the translator, as they also serve as the basis for inferencing and the interpretation of invariant sense in the SL text in the course of translation, which results in deriving contextual implicatures and their rendering in the TL message. The text in the SL is viewed as an integral part of discourse in the SL, which includes both the text as language signs or lexical units expressing specific meanings and an extralinguistic situation behind the text. To render it into the TL in an adequate way requires information processing based on the knowledge of presuppositions.

This model of presuppositions has a direct correspondence with discourse-based mental world modelling by Kohn and Kalina, which is based on the referential activation of cognitive world knowledge, the propositional construction of a mental world via inferencing. "Linguistic knowledge is knowledge about the linguistic means of expression that can be used for the referential, propositional, illocutionary and perlocutionary processing of world knowledge" (Kohn & Kalina 1996, 121). But linguistic knowledge alone is not enough for discourse processing, as it "relies on the diversified knowledge... including knowledge... of the general world and/or specialized-subject knowledge, knowledge about the communicative situation" (Ibid:121). The authors suggest calling this integration of linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge bottom-up and top-down processing (Ibid:122). In our view, this type of processing is closely related to the cognitive translation mechanism of inferencing that can lead to proper interpretation of the invariant sense in the SL and the TL.

Another point that relates to our topic and has raised many controversies is the quality of retour or inverse translation. Many researchers were against it, for example, Lederer (Lederer, 2003), who believes that the quality of translated texts can never reach the original in terms of style, which may be quite true in some cases. The gist of the dispute has been presented by the study made by Donovan (Donovan, 2003), and the conclusion made is that retour translation is possible if it is needed. Though this study has been applied to simultaneous interpreting, its conclusions can be used for other translation and interpreting modes. Currently, for pragmatic reasons, the retour translation is in high demand, and the translators' training has to meet the demand for developing curricula and teaching guidance in this area. Unlike the European translation theory and translators' training, the Soviet/Russian translation school has always opted for teaching inverse translation. There are various options aimed to improve the quality of a text translated from a mother tongue. For example, editing by a native speaker or working in translators' tandems with the working pairs of languages being the same, while mother tongues are different. In this case, a translator can also act as a consultant for his/her partner in the tandem.
Moreover, as the English language has become a lingua franca servicing at a global level in many specific domains of knowledge, the demand for LSP communication and LSP translation has risen manifold. The fact that non-natives speakers from different countries are more intensely involved in LSP translation enables better understanding among nations (Hatim 2001, 164). All these factors lead to a greater need to develop and design translators’ programmes and curricula to teach inverse translation, as there are still some gaps in this area.

3. Research Hypothesis

Sense interpretation in translation means that the translator is always navigating between the Scylla of liberal translation and the Charybdis of the literal one. The literal translation results from the SL structural and semantic specifics, with the translator aspiring to reach the utmost accuracy and equivalence. The liberal translation may be the translator’s personal choice and the fruit of his/her efforts to render the invariant sense omitting the clumsy grammar and semantic structures that are not consistent with the SL stylistic norms while potentially departing too much from the sense. To stay within the limits of the invariant sense, the interpreter is guided by the information relevant in the given context of the SL text or message.

Relevance is treated from a practical angle in teaching and training of translation. It can be measured in terms of its correlation with the communicative situation and the pragmatic and linguistic contexts. In terms of these correlations, the translation bottlenecks are translation difficulties that arise from the language asymmetries caused by the differences in the world view of the SL and TL. These difficulties are explained and discussed during the text analysis in the course of translation training. The students are taught to infer the sense of the message in the SL on the basis of the knowledge of presuppositions deriving the contextual implicatures.

Moreover, the difficulties or asymmetries have been classified according to their linguistic and semantic nature, and language level, which facilitates the discussion and analysis in the textbooks on translation training put together by Davletshina (Davletshina, 2020) and Korovkina (Korovkina, 2020), which are used in the Master’s Degree programme in translation. In addition to the classification of the asymmetries, the textbooks and curricula contain the exercises that drill on the translation difficulties and texts for translation from Russian into English related to the domains studied at the MGIMO-University, which helps to develop the knowledge of broad pragmatic context.

The objective of these textbooks, as well as this paper, is to highlight the need to interpret the invariant sense of the SL, which is a mother tongue, through the lens of the asymmetries between the source and target languages, creating an idiomatic text in a TL, with the help of inferencing. Methods used in the research are comparative analysis and translation modelling simulation.

4. Findings

The MGIMO experience of teaching translation is reflected in the Master’s degree programmes and curricula, which have incorporated the theoretical postulates and developed exercises highlighting specific difficulties of interpretation in translation related to the interlanguage asymmetries.

As we have already stressed, the knowledge of presuppositions enables a translator to find a translator decision based on invariant sense interpretation resorting to translation shifts and transformations in the TL that change the prominent features describing the extralinguistic situation in the SL. These features are linguo-specific and lead to the language asymmetries that manifest themselves in metonymic shifts, differences in the metaphoric imagery, and explicit vs implicit language models when an SL or a TL tends to use more frequent implications explication (Korovkina, 2018).

Let us show some relevant examples. There are grammar patterns, which are called so for the purpose of the classifications in translation training. One of the most common grammar transformations or shifts used in Russian-English translation is a syntactical one, i.e. making the Russian adverbial modifier of place, time and cause the subject in the sentence in English, which makes the English structures more condensed. This can be clearly illustrated in the following example:

В результате глобализации ограничивается способность индустриальных стран смгать негативные последствия открытия внутренних рынков. – Globalization constrains the ability of industrial countries to cushion the adverse effects of domestic markets opening.

The translation shifts at the semantic level that result from the interpretational approach can be most vividly illustrated by the translation (or rendering the invariant sense) of metaphors and metonymies.

There are a lot of Russian metaphors which have a direct equivalent in English. They mainly belong to the Greek and Roman linguistic heritage, but not only:

почивать на лаврах - to rest on your laurels, быльна перепутье - to be at the crossroads, улица с двустороннем движением - a two-way street, раскачивать лодку – to rock the boat etc.

The problem arises when we need to translate a metaphor that does not have a direct equivalence, resulting from differences in the world view of both languages and the ensuing interlanguage asymmetries. The translation difficulty is taken care of through interpretation. The sense of the metaphor may be derived through a metonymic shift:
a change in the view on the extralinguistic situation through close association and the search of imagery typically used in the SL:

Победители войн всегда вводили правила, которые защищали их национальные интересы, не загоняя в угол побежденных. The winners of wars always set the rules to protect their own national interests without stymying the defeated.

The change of the metaphorical imagery plus metonymy is one of the most frequent types of translation shifts, which is possible through inferencing of the invariant sense on the basis of SL and TL presuppositions. In this case, the comparative linguistic method is of great help. Some other examples illustrating metonymic shifts go together with metaphors for the illustration of this translation difficulty (the second and third example feature a dead metaphor plus metonymic shift):

1. Россия дистанцируется от чрезмерных дружеских объятий с этими государствами – Russia eschews excessive fraternity with these states.

2. Эта встреча министров обороны России и Японии перешла границы обычного протокольного мероприятия, – This Russo-Japanese meeting of defense ministers went beyond a routine protocol meeting.

3. Вопросы безопасности не занимали в последнее время большого места в повестке дня двусторонних встреч на высшем уровне – Security issues have not recently featured high on the bilateral summits’ agenda. Ближний Восток занимает всё более значимое место в системе международных отношений – The Middle East is increasingly prominent in international relations.

In general, metonymy is one of the universal language nomination tools, and every language has its own linguo-specific ways of describing the extralinguistic situation. Hence, metonymic shifts are widely used in translation, and our classification presents numerous examples of metonyms of different types in the relation between SL and TL. As it has been stated, it is a universal language tool, on a par with a metaphor. It is also a source of language asymmetries and translation difficulties. For example, a metonymic shift may be based on different types of sense modulation or logical reasoning: the process vs result, the first stage of the process and the last one, cause to effect. For example:

Как и тогда, в то феодальное десятилетие, более сильные делат собственность более слабых с помощью коррумпированной государственной машины. – As was the case in the wild 1990s, those with more muscle are seizing the property of the weaker through corrupt state machinery.

This is an example of a cause to effect type of metonymic shift. The invariant sense of the expression to carve up properties a translation by metonymy to seize because of some stylistic and frequency restrictions:

Metonymic shifts can also include generalization vs specification and antonymic translation. As a rule, a language has its own classes of desemanticized words whose meaning can be derived only in the context. That is why there is no single translation correspondence, and a translator has to resort to specification/substantiation as a type of metonymic shift. For instance, the translation of the word субъект from Russian into English is one of such examples:

Субъектами военно-политических процессов теперь выступают не только государства, но и негосударственные акторы, а масштабы и интенсивность вовлечения этих субъектов в механизм информационного противоборства в перспективе будут скорее всего усиливаться.

It is not only states but also non-state actors that have become players in the military-political arena, with the scale and intensity of their involvement in the information confrontation likely to increase in the long run.

Other variations of the word субъект:

Субъекты, обладающие материальными и интеллектуальными возможностями – stakeholders with sufficient material and intellectual resources;

негосударственные субъекты – non-government/non-state actors;

заинтересованные субъекты – parties concerned

Another important language feature is its implication or explicative nomination trends. Russian tends to be more explicit, while in English, the sense is often more implied. To balance the texts in SL and TL in terms of styletics and render the invariant sense, a translator must be well-versed in implicit vs explicit language models.

More often than not, the translation from Russian into English requires compression and implication or sense condensing. Sometimes it is the other way around. The translator has to resort to explicitation in order to render the invariant sense in a more adequate way:

Тем более что телевизионная реклама стала короче, часто она сокращается до 15 секунд, за которые человек с трудом успевает понять адресованное ему послание. И тут же возникает новая реклама, которая накладывается на предыдущую. – TV commercials are becoming shorter, lasting only 15 seconds, and this is too brief a period to get a good grasp of a message that is quickly superseded by another.

Sometimes only a word in the SL message needs to be explained (its sense interpreted):
Свою роль сыграло своевременное и активное смягчение денежной политики. – They resorted to a softer monetary policy, which they managed to introduce almost overnight.

Or:
12 января Ж.-К. Т. впервые сообщил зарявшийся «евробьюм», что считает чрезмерные скачки единой валюты неуместными. – January 12 was the first time when Mr. T. told the eurobulls who had gone too far that euro's exorbitant fluctuations were out of place/detrimental.

The examples of the opposite trend: sense condensing in English.
- The sense is condensed in the whole utterance:
  1. В цепом законопроект направлен на то, чтобы вывести тысячи предприятий из-под контроля частного бизнеса под власть государства. – On the whole, the draft is aimed at placing control of thousands of private companies in the hands of the state.

2. Глобальные рецессии – явление цикличное, они наступают примерно раз в 8–10 лет. – Global recessions come in cycles of every 8–10 years.
- The sense is condensed through a string of pre-positional adjectives, which presents a special difficulty for a Russian speaker of English:
   Недавно Procter & Gamble выпустила на рынок новую линию высококачественных средств для ухода за волосами. – Shamu, in the recent segment of the market, is expected to introduce more new brands in two to three months.

The sense is condensed at the level of the situation described in English by a single word that requires an explanation in Russian. Again, these linguistic structures are not easily recognized by a Russian speaker:
   1. Его аналитики заранее подсчитали, к каким негативным последствиям может привести дальнейшее развитие сложившейся ситуации, в том числе для крупных игроков, если вовремя не предпринять срочные неотложные меры. – The bank's analysts had made estimates of the damage that could be inflicted by a worst-case scenario if regulators did not take urgent measures.

2. Паника и кризис доверили к очередям вкладчиков, желающих забрать свои деньги из банка XX. – The panic and confidence crisis/credibility gap led to runs on the XX bank.

Quite often, we need to seek for a metaphoric expression in English to condense sense:
   Во многих странах мира идут с ним в глаза на голову нефть.

We have presented the linguistic patterns that can be understood only in the context. This understanding is based on language presupposition related to interlanguage semantic and structural asymmetries. Language presuppositions also include those that are closely knit both with linguistic expression and extralinguistic situation: the discursive features of the text in the SL and the TL. Their adequate translation also requires some structural and semantic changes. For example:

Учитывая неопределенность и комплексный характер (omission) угроз будущего, Вашингтон и его союзники взяли курс на (neutral) создание соответствующего их видению нового миропорядка и под предлогом апелляции (paraphrasing) к неправомерной деятельности Москвы и Пекина заговоряют их информационные возможности. Виду наличия (omission) у США передовой технологической базы Вашингтон пытается навязывать остальным собственные правила поведения.

Given the uncertainty and complexity of future threats, Washington and its allies have decided to create an international order which is in line with their worldview and have been building up their cyber capabilities in advance, citing the alleged illegal activities of Moscow and Beijing. Given the advanced technological base, the U.S. is trying to impose its own rules of conduct on other countries.

These are examples of translation difficulties that are resolved through the knowledge of the language and referential presuppositions. To render the invariant sense properly from the SL to a TL, a translator must choose between the Scilla of equivalence and accuracy and Charybdis of stylistic adequacy. A translator has to use both linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge to reach this objective, which is blended in a mentioned above bottom-up/top-down approach (Kohn, Kurt & Sylvia Kalina 1996). Sometimes presuppositional mistakes are caused by the misunderstanding of the extralinguistic situation, though the sense of the SL message in terms of words is absolutely clear. For example:

В настоящее время в Китае пустует около 50 миллионов квартир, и примерно столько же строится. – We have financed the construction of flats worth 50 million dollars, and approximately the same amount is allocated for the construction in progress. Though the sense of the utterance was – We have some fifty million empty flats, and another fifty million are now under construction.
5. Discussion

We have presented a number of translation difficulties that can be resolved only through invariant sense interpretation, as there are no direct equivalents in translation. These grammar and semantic patterns are a blend of information belonging to the broad pragmatic context, which can be processed only through a bottom-up/top-down approach mentioned above. This blend can be reached through the knowledge of the specific translation domain, which is a focus of translators' training at the level of Master Degree programmes. The curricula offer texts mainly from the broader political domain and the economic one, as has been illustrated by the examples.

We are well aware of the bottlenecks in translation related to an inadequate idiomatic level displayed by students in case of retour translation. Retour translation as an issue of research has not been addressed in this paper in great detail. It needs to be done in the future in order to analyze the shortcomings of inverse translation and the linguistic and translation tools used to boost the idiomatic level of the translated text. All this can be related to the acquisition of professional translation competences by a translator. Even at a present level of research, we can assume that an interpretational approach is of great help in case of retour translation. It helps to avoid clumsy literal grammar and semantic structures.

Conclusions

1. The interpretational approach in translation is focused on the translation difficulties arising from the language asymmetries that, in their turn, are caused by the differences in the world views of the SL and the TL.

2. The incorporation of the theoretical postulates into the practice of translation and its training makes the process of learning/teaching much more efficient. This has translated in practice in drawing up the classifications of translation difficulties and the clear-cut guidance showing how to avoid the shortcomings of literal and liberal translation and finding the pragmatic equivalents that render the sense invariant from the TL into the SL.

3. We apply the interpretational approach to the translation in both directions, with the focus on the translation from Russian into English, as there is a lack of methodological guidance in this area.

4. Knowledge of the domain facilitates translators’ training as it is based on the knowledge of general pragmatic context and makes it possible to apply interpretation techniques with greater understanding, which is extensively used by the MGIMO Master’s Degree programmes in translators’ training.

References


Textbooks: