

# FUNCTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ELLIPTICAL STRUCTURES IN THE ASPECT OF LITERARY TRANSLATION

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**Abstract:** This article deals with the means of rendering functional potential of elliptical constructions in the translation of literary texts from Russian into English. This study of translation techniques is based on the semiotic theory of the text interpretation, as well as on the assumption that equivalence of the translation can be achieved on the condition of preserving all kinds of semiotic functions in the literary text.

**Keywords:** elliptical constructions, semiotic functions, a non-systematic item, strong/weak (or poetic) implications, equivalency of translation, literary text, stylized oral speech

## 1. Introduction

The topicality of this study is caused by the growing attention in modern linguistics to the translated texts being a part of the literature in the target language, that is those which have a certain aesthetic value as a work of art. This attention is caused by the recent trends in the theory of translation to treat translation in the aspect of cross-cultural communication. At present, one of the features of cross-cultural communication study lies in the close attention to the peculiarities of the "foreign" culture, as well as in tolerance towards those elements of it that do not coincide with our idea of the "right" state of things. In this regard, in translation studies there is a widely spread idea that nowadays readers of literature demand such literary translation, that reflects the national colouring of the original, that is a text which is not a variant of an original text, but its functional substitute in the literature of the target language (B. Hatim, L. Venuti, D. Damrosh, S. Ne-

valainen, V. N. Komissarov, Y.A. Sorokin, V.A. Kuharenko, N. D. Arutyunova, etc.).

At the same time, the understanding of the literary text as a sign (A. Prieto, M. Bahtin, M. Lotman, R. Jakobson, etc.), the meaning of which is formed as a result of the complex interaction of its components, makes the problem of the possibility of such a translation of the literary text especially difficult.

## **2. Objectives/Purpose of the study**

The aim of the study is to identify the functional and structural potentials of elliptic constructions in the original English and Russian literary text and to find out how these potentials are realized in the translated English literary text and by what means the translation equivalence is achieved.

## **3. Methodology and sub headings**

### *Functions of Ellipsis in Literary texts*

The understanding of elliptical constructions (ECs) as constructions with one or more nulled syntactic positions of structurally necessary sentence members allows us to clarify the boundaries of this phenomenon and to analyze the factors causing differences in the formation of ECs in speech in the Russian and English languages. These differences lead to the asymmetry of the EC functions in Russian and English literary texts. For example, large contextual dependence of ECs in English leads to the limited use of some types of ECs in English literary texts in comparison with Russian literary texts.

Nevertheless, in a literary text, both in English and in Russian, ECs are capable of performing approximately the same set of semiotic functions, which makes possible the appearance of such translated literary texts in English, which, in terms of the functioning of the ECs in them, are equivalent representatives of their originals.

The functioning of ECs as semiotically significant elements is based on the fact that, being a non-systemic item for a literary

text (EC is initially an element of colloquial speech), they are able to signal the introduction of other systems' elements into the body of the text, for example, the introduction of stylized oral or written speech patterns.

So, the primary function of ECs consists of signaling the introduction of an off-system element into the text.

The secondary function is subordinated to the primary one and consists of signaling the peculiarities of the communicative act, such as informality of the communication situation, close connection of the communication act with the consituation, the similarity of the apperception base of the conversation participants, as well as a certain degree of parallelism in the relations of the communicants.

The tertiary semiotic function of ECs in stylized oral speech lies in its ability to create strong or weak (poetic) implications as a result of the ellipsis' interaction with the context .

Strong implications appear as a result of special conditions of the use of ECs, when, for example, an EC is accompanied by stylistic devices of repetition, gradation, etc.

For example:

“Oh, hello, darling. I was just ringing to see what you wanted for Christmas”.

“Christmas?” (FH: 324)

A weak implication is created as a result of contradictions arising between the meaning stimulated by the EC, which performs its secondary semiotic function, on the one hand, and the knowledge of the situation obtained from the context, on the other hand. For example (the narrator being one of the “girls” mentioned):

“Seriously, old girl,” he said, **ignoring** me. “Office is full of them, single girls over 30. Fine physical specimens. Can't get a chap”. (FH: 41)

The degree of ECs' stability in speech, that is – their being set phrases or not, plays an important role in the creation of implication of a certain type.

Thus, ECs appear in a literary text as a functionally and textually significant element.

*Means of Achieving Equivalence with regard to the Functions of ECs*

Achieving the equivalence of translation, that is, obtaining such a translated literary text, which could take a worthy place in the literature in the language of translation, is based on the achievement of both functional equivalence (related to the content of the text) and textual (related to the form of the text).

The achievement of functional equivalence is based on adequate transference of all the components' functions of the source text (ST) into the target text (TT), as well as on transference of the relations, existing between these components. The textual equivalence lies in the structural-semantic similarity between ST and TT.

The transference of ECs' functions, as well as that of features connected with their relationship with the context, is carried out either by the use of an EC in the target text, or, in the case of turning an EC into a structurally full sentence, by using compensation methods, or by replacing an EC with a functional equivalent. As for the peculiarities of a literary text form, here we are talking about marking text as a work of art, created by a particular author.

The motivation of translation decisions in the case of translation of ECs is determined by the degree of asymmetry in their functions and nomenclature in the texts in the English and Russian languages.

*Methodology*

In this paper, while deciding on the degree of translation equivalence of a passage containing EC, we used the data obtained from the analysis of the survey, where the readers bot of the source text and of the target text were asked a number of questions about their perception of that passage. The conduction of such a survey and the development of this questionnaire were

determined by the necessity to make the assessment of translation decisions more objective.

The material for the analysis is taken from the following books and their translations: Fielding, H. 1996. *Bridget John's Diary*. Picador. London, (FH); Rybakov, A. 1989. *Children of the Arbat*. Tr. by H.Shukman. Arrow Books, 733 p. (RA); Topol, E., Neznansky, F. 1983. *Red Square*. Quartet Books. N.Y., 276 p. (TE); Dovlatov, S.D. 1985. *The Zone. A Prison Camp Guard's Story*. Tr. By A.Frydmann. N.Y., 178 p. (DSZ); Platonov, A. 1978. *Chevengur*. Tr. by A. Olcott. – Ardis Pbl. Michigan, 333 p. (PAC).

#### 4. Result/Findings

As a result of the study we have identified three main tactics of translation of Russian ECs into English:

1) preservation of the EC, provided that in the TT it performs a function similar to the function of the EC in the ST (almost 70% of our material).

2) changing the EC for a functional analogue

– while translating ECs which perform functions of imitation of mental processes, such as approval or refutation, in a stylized oral speech in Russian. In this case, the functional analogues in the most cases are the one-word-sentences expressing agreement or disagreement: yes/ no, OK, etc., e.g.:

– Ты **был** у Солца? – вдруг переходя на «ТЫ», спросила она.

– **Был**. (РА: 68)

“You have been to Solts?” Suddenly she was using the familiar form with him.

“**Yes**”. (РА: 105)

– while translating a set EC. Such set ECs, used in the stereotypical urban situations, are almost always translated with the help of English set phrases (not necessarily ECs) that are used in similar situations, e.g.:

-- Только что в сторону Востряково проскочила белая «Волга» 52-12 с двумя пассажирами...

– Понял.(ТЭ: 382)

“(...) – a white Volga has just passed through, registration МКІ-52-12, carrying two passengers, heading for Vostryakovo.”

– “Roger!” (ТЕ: 119)

– set ECs used in pseudo-official situations (prison jargon) are usually replaced by expressions that characterize the speaker in terms of his low social status or characterize his territorial and social dialect, for example Cockney dialect, e.g.:

– Ты все осмотрел?- спросил бывший «Пахан», а ныне мастер по сборке автомобилей автозавода имени Лихачева.

– Обижаеть! (ДСЗ: 466))

“Did you go over the lot?” asked Bossman, who after a career in crime now worked as a car assembly technician at the Likhachov Motor Works.

– “Do me a favour!” (DSZ: 194)

– set ECs, which are precedent statements (e.g., quotations), are usually replaced by figurative expressions, which may not be precedent statements in English:

– Выпьем за школу! – предложил Максим.

– Привет сентиментальному бегемотику! – вставил Юра.

Макс исподлобья посмотрел на него.

– Отречемся и отряхнем? (РА: 57)

“Let’s drink to our school!” this was Max’s idea.

“Here’s to sentimentality!” Jury sneered.

Max looked at him, astonished.

– “Should we just forget it, cast off like an old boot?”  
(РА: 89)

3) restoration of the EC to a full sentence along with the introduction of additional elements into the text that perform in this context the same functions as the restored EC, thus using compensation. A variety of means relating to different language levels can be used for this purpose:



– syntactic means, for example, inversion, capable of performing the function of indicating the excited emotional state of the subject of consciousness or speech, e.g.:

– Механик, сукин сын! – сердился Копенкин на Никиту. – Мед в бутылку ворует! (ПА: 275)

“You’re a mechanic, you son of a bitch!” Kopenkin became angry with Nikita. “Honey he steals in the bottle...” (РАС: 77)

This method of compensation is used in a limited number of cases.

– lexical-syntactic means, such as excessive repetition. This group includes a method consisting of restoring the ES to a full sentence by repeating the part of the statement already contained in the previous replica, thus, making it a redundant one and, as a consequence, stylistically marked. It means that this statement, by creating tautology, is capable of performing in certain contexts functions similar to the functions of the ECs (simulation of mental processes accompanying communication), e.g.:

– (...) Думаю, что он не должен уйти от ответственности.

– Не уйдёт, – пообещал Богулин. (РА: 34)

“(...) I don’t think he should walk away from his responsibility””.

– “He won’t walk away”, Bagulin promised. (РА: 54)

– lexical means, that consist of the additional introduction into the target text some colloquial words or phrases (“that was that”), words that are usually used to fill in the pause of hesitation (“well, yes”), words that directly indicate the fact of citation, e.g.:

– Привез попутных ссыльных, приказали, вот и привез. (РА: 296)

– “His job had been to bring the two exiles to this place. He’d done it and **that was that.**”(РА: 467)

– graphic means, e.g., high-lightening a certain part of the statement in italics. With the help of this means, which in this case compensates for the similar function of the EC, which has been restored to the full sentence, the translator simulates the pro-

sodic high-lightening of a certain part of the statement in the oral speech, which becomes the rheme fragment in the phrase, e.g.:

– (...) У меня полно русских друзей, и никто из них не бьет меня за то, что я наполовину еврей.

– Будут бить, – сказал он. (ТЭ: 495)

“I have Russian friends all over the place, and none of them beat me for being half-Jewish”.

“They will beat you.” (ТЕ: 219)

4) while translating set ECs, translators sometimes use the method of loan translation, but in most cases it is ineffective and leads to the appearance of non-equivalent translation, due to the fact that the resulting phrase is unable to perform the functions of ECs, which consist of creating certain associations in the consciousness of the text recipient, e.g.:

– Возьмите три рубля, ефрейтор. Каждому по способностям...

– Запрещено, – сказал конвоир. (ДСЗ: 17)

“ Take three rubles , Corporal. To each according to his abilities.”

“ Forbidden”. (DSZ: 19)

The study of tactics used by translators to achieve an optimal balance between the functional and textual aspects of equivalence in the translation of ECs, the conditions of which in some cases contradict each other and even exclude each other, allowed us to reveal a certain dependence of the translator's strategy on the peculiar hierarchy of ECs' functions in the literary text.

The functions obligatory subject to transference in the translation are:

– secondary semiotic functions of ECs in stylized oral speech, expressed in the characteristic of the depicted communication situation

– tertiary semiotic functions in all types of stylized texts, expressed in the ability of elliptic structures to participate in the creation of strong implications.



The function which is subject to the partial transference in the translation is the tertiary function of ECs, which is their ability to create weak, "poetic" implications.

Typically, this ECs' function is supported by other elements in the text. As a result of it, the restoration of ECs to complete sentences in the TT can lead to simplification of the original structure, but will not violate its semantic integrity. Such translation is recognized as functionally equivalent (equivalent with small losses associated with the loss of the textual component of equivalence).

The function subject to facultative transference in the translation is the primary function of ECs, expressed in its ability to signal the introduction of a non-systemic fact into the text. In this case, ECs play only a supporting role in the performance of this function, and their restoration to full sentences does not lead to losses in translation.

## **5. Discussion**

The methods of analysis of translation tactics developed in this study, as well as the method of survey proposed by us, can be transferred to the analysis of the equivalence of translation of other linguistic phenomena in addition to the ellipsis.

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## PECULIARITIES OF TRANSLATING ENGLISH MILITARY LEXICAL UNITS

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**Abstract:** Translation of military texts is a very challenging task for the novice translators who work in the military sphere. In most cases translators find it hard to work with them texts due to their complexity. This paper is focused on the basic problems military translators can face when work with military lexical units.

The data of the study is taken from the UK, US and Russian Army glossary. The results of the survey show that military texts are very specific therefore special preparation is needed to translate them properly. Military translator should be linguistically and culturally competent in languages, experienced enough in the military sphere and, of course, have good knowledge of military lexical units in both languages. Such strategies as compensation, cultural equivalence and paraphrasing should be used by translators.

**Keywords:** military lexical units, military language, professional competence, cultural competence, military slang terms

### **1. Introduction**

Translation from one language into another is primarily a means of cross-cultural communication. The practical work of