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Compensation As A Strategy For Achieving Translation Adequacy In Rendering Substandard Lexis

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Abstract: This article examines compensation as a key translation strategy for achieving adequacy in rendering of substandard lexis. Substandard lexical units — such as dialectisms, slang, jargon, argot, and vulgarisms — are socially and culturally marked elements that pose significant challenges in translation due to their stylistic, pragmatic, and expressive functions. Drawing on classical and contemporary theories of translation by Ya. I. Retsker, A. V. Fedorov, V. N. Komissarov, A. D. Shveitser, and others, the study analyzes the relationship between the notions of equivalence and adequacy and argues for the particular relevance of adequacy when translating stylistically downgraded language. Special attention is given to compensation technique as a means of reproducing semantic, pragmatic, and stylistic effects that are inevitably lost in direct translation. The article proposes an expanded classification of compensation, distinguishing between contact and distant compensation, as well as introducing the concepts of horizontal and vertical compensation. It is argued that compensation plays a crucial role in preserving the overall stylistic colouring and communicative impact of texts saturated with substandard lexis, thereby contributing to translation adequacy at the level of the text as a whole.

Keywords: Substandard lexis; translation adequacy; equivalence; compensation; stylistic colouring; translation strategies.

Introduction: Language is a social phenomenon whose primary function is to serve as a medium of communication among people. Consequently, it is impossible to study a particular language in isolation from the various social strata, professional groups, and regional dialects in which that language functions. Language exists and develops within society, reflecting social diversity, cultural norms, and communicative practices.

The term "substandard" was introduced into linguistic scholarship in the 1930s by the American linguist Leonard Bloomfield, as noted in numerous studies (see, for example, Vorobyova V. V.). Bloomfield contrasted non-standard language with standard language, emphasizing the functional and social differentiation of linguistic forms [Bloomfield, 1933]. In Uzbek linguistic research, the term substandard is commonly used to refer to lexical units that fall outside normative standards, are restricted in usage, and belong to socially marked or non-codified vocabulary.

Substandard lexis typically includes dialectal forms, jargon, slang, and vulgarisms—elements that do not conform to the norms of the literary language. These linguistic units pose particular challenges for translation, as they are deeply embedded in social context, cultural connotations, and pragmatic meaning. Rendering substandard lexis adequately in translation therefore requires not only linguistic competence but also a thorough understanding of the social, cultural, and communicative functions these elements perform in the source language.

Before addressing substandard lexis, it is essential to clarify the notion of the standard, or linguistic norm. The standard language represents a socially approved, codified form of language that functions as a model in education, official communication, and written discourse. In contrast, substandard lexis operates primarily in informal, spoken, and context-dependent communication, reflecting spontaneity, emotional expressiveness, and social identity.

The existence of substandard lexis highlights the social nature of language and its close connection with real communicative practices. Particularly in fiction, oral speech, cinema, and popular culture, substandard lexical units play a crucial role in ensuring imagery, emotional expressiveness, and the naturalness of dialogue. For this reason, substandard lexis should not be regarded as linguistically marginal or deficient; rather, it constitutes an important and functional layer of the language system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

From a translation perspective, substandard lexis presents a serious challenge. Translators must convey not only the denotative meaning of such units but also their stylistic, emotional, and cultural implications. The increasing presence of substandard language in contemporary literature, media, and digital communication underscores the need for its systematic study, particularly with regard to issues of gender representation, censorship, internet discourse, and offensive language. As a socially and culturally marked lexical layer, substandard lexis remains insufficiently explored and continues to pose complex problems for both linguistic analysis and translation practice.

According to the classification proposed by the compilers of the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary—which may be regarded as sufficiently comprehensive—substandard lexis includes coarse colloquial vocabulary (low colloquialisms), general slang, jargon, argot (cant), and vulgarisms. This classification is also cited by A. M. Vinokurov [Vinokurov, 1988].

From the standpoint of translation studies, complete equivalence between the source text and the target text is unattainable. As scholars have noted, the original remains a unique and unrepeatable product of the author's individual creative work and a part of national literary culture. A translation can only be adequate, that is, relatively equivalent to the original: it may infinitely approach the source text but can never fully coincide with it, since a translation has its own creator, its own linguistic material, and its own existence within a different linguistic, literary, and social environment. The translator perceives the semantic and emotional-expressive information of the source text and recreates it using the resources of the target language, striving to preserve its functional completeness. Thus, the translator does not seek one-to-one correspondences for each unit of the source text but rather re-expresses its meaning [Vinogradov, 1978].

The concept of adequacy is closely connected with that of equivalence. In translation theory, these terms are sometimes distinguished and sometimes treated as synonymous. Scholars such as Ya. I. Retsker and A. V. Fedorov do not consider equivalence an independent concept, viewing adequacy as synonymous with integrity and full value. According to Retsker, the integrity of a translation implies the unity of form and content on a new linguistic basis; a translation can be recognized as integral (full-value or adequate) only if it conveys the same information by equivalent means [Retsker, 2004].

A. V. Fedorov defines full value in translation as an exhaustive rendering of the semantic content of the original and a complete functional and stylistic correspondence to it. Of particular importance for the present study is his assertion that translation adequacy presupposes the use of linguistic means that may not formally coincide with the elements of the original but nevertheless perform an analogous semantic and artistic function within the structure of the whole.

Among the scholars who treat adequacy and equivalence as synonymous are L. S. Barkhudarov, V. S. Vinogradov, L. K. Latyshev, and A. L. Semenov. Barkhudarov emphasizes that translation adequacy presupposes equivalence while requiring equal consideration of semantic and pragmatic factors [Barkhudarov, 1975]. V. S. Vinogradov defines adequacy and equivalence as the most complete preservation of genre-specific features and the entire diversity of information contained in the source text [Vinogradov, 2004]. Many Western scholars focus primarily on the concept of equivalence, without explicitly using the term adequacy (e.g. Catford, Popovič, Bassnett, Halliday).

According to V. N. Komissarov, adequacy and equivalence are evaluative notions: only an adequate translation can be regarded as successful. An adequate translation necessarily includes a certain degree of equivalence, whereas an equivalent translation is not always adequate [Komissarov, 2002]. A similar position is held by A. D. Shveitser, who distinguishes adequacy and equivalence on the basis that equivalence concerns the result of translation, while adequacy relates to the conditions and communicative situation in which translation takes place. Thus, equivalence answers the question of correspondence between texts, whereas adequacy concerns the correspondence of the translation process to communicative conditions [Shveitser, 1988].

To achieve translation adequacy, translators employ various strategies, including the creation of occasional translation variants, calquing, descriptive translation, the use of footnotes, and the compensation technique. The present study focuses on the analysis of

compensation.

The concept of translation compensation was introduced by Ya. I. Retsker, who classified it among lexical transformations. He defined compensation as the replacement of an untranslatable element of the source text by an element of a different order, in accordance with the ideological and artistic character of the original, and in a position convenient for the target language [Retsker, 2004]. However, as V. N. Komissarov observes, such a broad definition sometimes makes it difficult to distinguish compensation from other contextual substitutions [Komissarov, 2002].

Retsker distinguishes between semantic and stylistic compensation. Semantic compensation supplements a component that cannot be directly rendered in translation in order to ensure the completeness of meaning. This technique is often applied in the translation of non-equivalent vocabulary, particularly realia. Semantic compensation may be local (partial) or total (global), depending on whether it compensates for specific cultural gaps or for the inadequacy of a dictionary equivalent.

R. K. Minyar-Beloruchev defines compensation as a lexico-semantic transformation that makes up for inevitable semantic or stylistic losses by means of the target language, not necessarily in the same place in the text [Minyar-Beloruchev, 1999]. In general terms, compensation can be understood as a translation technique whereby elements of meaning, pragmatic value, and stylistic nuance that cannot be directly transferred are reproduced by other means elsewhere in the target text.

Compensation may be contact, when losses are compensated in the same position as in the source text, or distant, when compensation occurs in a different position. This study proposes an expanded classification by introducing the notions of horizontal and vertical compensation. Horizontal compensation involves the reproduction of lost elements by means of the same linguistic level (e.g. lexical by lexical, phonetic by phonetic), whereas vertical compensation involves the use of a different linguistic level (e.g. lexical by syntactic or phonetic means). Both types may be contact or distant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Since the present article focuses on substandard lexis, special attention must be given to its transmission in translation. The selection of appropriate equivalents for stylistically downgraded units is highly subjective, as the perception of stylistic colouring varies among speakers. As V. P. Berkov notes, different speakers may classify the same word as colloquial, vernacular, or neutral [Berkov, 1977]. Consequently, translators rely heavily on linguistic intuition and normative knowledge.

Reproducing the function of substandard lexis in isolated cases does not guarantee translation adequacy at the level of the whole text. As A. V. Fedorov emphasizes, adequacy can be assessed only through the correlation of the functional load of stylistically lowered units throughout the entire text [Fedorov, 1983]. Similarly, V. V. Sdobnikov argues that the loss of stylistic colouring does not automatically entail inadequacy, but translators must decide which functions can be sacrificed without compromising the overall effect [Sdobnikov, 1992].

To avoid stylistic losses, translators frequently resort to compensation. This is related to what V. D. Devkin terms the "increased radiation" of stylistically marked words, which can colour an entire passage of discourse. Even a single substandard unit may impart a colloquial tone to an extended fragment [Devkin, 1979]. This property applies not only to individual words but also to utterances and syntactic structures, as noted by Yu. M. Skrebnev.

CONCLUSION

Utterances that deviate from the norms of the standard language and incorporate elements of linguistic substandard are classified as stylistically lowered. Such utterances represent a complex phenomenon affecting all levels of the language system.

In literary fiction, substandard vocabulary appears in a processed and typified form, shaped by the author's intent and by the functions it performs in the text. The compensation technique plays a crucial role in rendering such vocabulary in translation. Its essence lies in reproducing elements of meaning, pragmatic value, and stylistic nuance that cannot be transferred identically, by means of different linguistic resources, not necessarily in the same position of the text.

Compensation may be contact or distant, horizontal or vertical. Through its flexible application, translators are able to preserve the overall stylistic colouring and communicative effect of texts rich in substandard lexis, thereby contributing to the achievement of translation adequacy.

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