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Semantic features of language units as a translation problem

**Семантичні особливості мовних одиниць
як перекладацька проблема**

Summary. *The article is devoted to the problem of a source text translation analysis, namely the importance of understanding semantic meanings of source text units while corresponding to a target text. The article considers the most common views in domestic and foreign linguistics on the nature of language meaning, what meaning is and what relation it has to the language form, because without this it is impossible to solve the problem of lexical correspondences in translation. Meaning is a mental entity formed by the reflection of individual elements of reality. It can be defined as an objective reflection of reality. As a socially determined category, the meaning is characterized by a stable status in synchrony, however, it changes in diachrony. The meaning of a word or word combination is determined by the content of necessary and arbitrary features of the notion, that is, the semantic structure that the word or word combination corresponds to, regardless of whether these features are reflected. In our research, we consider a meaning as the relation of a sign to a set of graphemes or phonemes, denotatum and signifier – elements that are not in themselves as meanings of a sign, but due to their presence, the sign gets meanings, that is, it becomes what it is – a sign, and not just an object of reality. So, the system of relations that a sign includes is multi-sided – any sign is part of a whole grid of complex and diverse relations. In modern semiotics, it is customary to talk about three types of relations, which include a sign – and, accordingly, about three types of meanings, in connection with each of which translation problems arise on the level of semantics. Based on the fact that in the text (speech macro-expression), an autonomous language unit becomes an integral speech component of the whole, losing its vocabulary autonomy and entering into indissoluble connections both with neighboring units and with the entire utterance, the translator should use a macro-translation approach to the original.*

Key words: *source text, target text, language sign, semantic meaning, translation analysis, translation unit.*

Анотація. Стаття присвячена проблемі аналізу перекладу вихідного тексту, а саме важливості розуміння семантичних значень одиниць вихідного тексту при їх відповідності цільовому тексту. У статті розглянуто найпоширеніші у вітчизняній та зарубіжній лінгвістиці погляди на природу мовного значення, на те, чим є значення та яке відношення воно має до мовної форми, адже без цього не можна вирішувати проблему лексичних відповідників при перекладі.

Значення є психічним утворенням, яке формують відображення окремих елементів дійсності. Значення можна визначити як об'єктивне відображення дійсності. Як соціально обумовленій категорії значенню властивий стабільний статус у синхронії, втім, воно змінюється у діахронії. Значення слова чи словосполука зумовлюється змістом необхідних та довільних ознак поняття, тобто тієї семантичної структури, якій відповідає слово чи словосполука, не залежно від того, чи відображені зазначені ознаки. У нашій роботі ми розглядаємо значення як відношення знака до сукупності графем чи фонем, денотата та сигніфіката – елементів, які самі по собі не є значенням знака, але завдяки їх наявності знак отримує значення, тобто стає тим, чим він є – знаком, а не просто предметом. Отже, система відношень, до якої входить знак, є багатобічною – будь-який знак є частиною цілої сітки складних і різноманітних відношень. У сучасній семіотиці прийнято говорити про три типи відношень, до яких входить знак – і, відповідно, про три типи значень, у зв'язку з кожним із яких виникають перекладацькі проблеми на рівні семантики. Спираючись на факт, що в тексті (мовленнєвому макроявищі) автономна мовна одиниця стає невід'ємним мовленнєвим компонентом цілого, втрачаючи свою словникову автономію і вступаючи в нерозривні зв'язки як із сусідніми одиницями, так і з усім висловлюванням, перекладач має використати макроперекладацький підхід до оригіналу.

Ключові слова: вихідний текст, цільовий текст, мовний знак, семантичне значення, перекладацький аналіз, одиниця перекладу.

Introduction. Language is an intermediary between a person and extra-linguistic reality. It itself bears the imprint of human ways of mastering reality, and is also at the same time a means of conceptualizing it, embodying a naive (linguistic) picture of the world. Thus, language leaves its mark on the perception of reality by a person – perception through the prism of language.

The main difficulties that a translator faces are related to the variety of languages, opportunities and ways to use them to name objects and describe situations. Language factors not only create difficulties in translation, but also create conditions for overcoming them. Although each language is unique, the construction and use of all languages are based on the same principles: all languages are made up of two-way units that have sound and meaning. Languages have a vocabulary and grammatical structure, serve as a means of forming thoughts and transmitting them in the process of communicating with other people; all languages are used

to create extra-linguistic reality. Each of them is able to express notional categories of time, place, number, modalities, and many others in different ways, to denote classes of objects and individual objects and their features, processes, and states.

Languages have a large number of other universal properties – both the most general and more specific ones. This universality reflects the unity of human thinking and the world around us. It ultimately determines the possibility of translation.

Methodology. There are different definitions of "translation". One of the followers of the theory of translation Kyiak T.R. gives the following definition: Translation is the process of converting a speech work in one language into a speech work in another language while maintaining the same meaning, or rather the system of meanings expressed in the source text [4, p. 11]. According to Kudriavtseva N.S., translation is the transfer of information contained in a certain work of speech by means of another language [5, p. 34]. Popko I. emphasizes that translation can be regarded as one of the most important types of communicative activity. It focuses primarily on the complete and adequate transmission of the original language, which contains the whole set of implications of the linguistic, social and cultural plan [7, p. 341]. Worthy of attention is the definition of Chernovatyi L. M.: To translate means to express correctly and fully by means of one language what is already expressed earlier by means of another language [10, p. 89]. In all of the above definitions, translation is defined as the process by which text appears in another language. In the theory of translation, the distinction between translation-process and translation-result has acquired the traditional status. Thus, Shuttleworth M. writes that translation as a result of translation activity is "analogous to the original", and translation as a process is "a specific oral or written activity aimed at transforming an oral or written text that exists in one language by an another language, while preserving the invariance of the content and qualities of the original, as well as author's authenticity" [12, p. 60]. Munday J. considers translation as a foreign-language form of the message contained in the original [11, p. 195]. In other words, the texts of the translation and the original are recognized as communicatively equivalent, that is, that is, they are able to perform the same function in different communication conditions. It is worth noting that, despite sometimes opposing positions, many of the scientists of translation theory focus on the content plan, that is, on the meaning. For example, Saiko M.A defines the act of translation as transferring the value of a unit of language of an entire text or part of it from one language to another [8].

The purpose of the article is to analyze the problem of a source text translation analysis, namely the importance of understanding semantic meanings of source text units while creating a target text.

Results and Discussion. Language is a part of a person, and new meanings are constantly appearing in it, and some of them disappear before they even get into dictionaries. So, the metaphor of a mechanism that, so to speak, "generates" (a mechanism of semantic derivation) can be applied to language. The mechanism is "triggered" by necessity and provides the needs of speakers in new meanings. However, it should be clarified: this is a natural mechanism. The principles of its construction and functioning are consistent with human nature and are subject to the same laws and restrictions as other internal mechanisms and information systems of a person [6, p. 58].

Human language has all the means to overcome any situation of untranslatability. The possibilities of translation are also expanded by the fact when comparing culture and a particular language, a certain word becomes a symbol, that is, fundamentally polysemantic one [1, p. 309]. This fact is confirmed by the fact that the unit of translation is determined not by a single word or sentence, but by a text [2, p. 15]. However, on the other hand, for a translator and linguist, operational distinction is important not only on the level of texts, but also on the level of elements of culture and language, because the language is integrated into the culture, where it functions.

So, the building material for the formation of texts is language signs. The content of the text is similar to a mosaic consisting of various meanings of language signs. Therefore, it is possible to understand the meaning of the text only when there is a clear idea of the essence and purpose of the language sign. In modern linguistics, a language sign is usually understood as a sound or graphic complex that corresponds to a word (stable phrase) [9, p. 102].

Language units are not just labels used to refer to their respective objects. Each language sign has a constant, unique meaning, and these meanings for units of different languages, as a rule, do not coincide. That is why translation can never be reduced to a simple replacement of one form with another, because the translator has to decide constantly which units of the translated language are most suitable for the content of the original [10, p. 219].

By its very nature, the translation process is possible only due to a phenomenon known as the "bilateral nature of language units" [11, p. 199]. The presence of two inextricably linked sides – the plan of expression (form) and the plan of content (meaning) – is the essence of any language sign. The meaning contains the ability to identify the derived situation and make sense of new situations. On the other hand, a meaning is a limitation: it is not designed for anything. The range of derived objects and situations that "serve" a certain meaning, as well as the possibility of its modification and extension to new objects and situations, is also limited [3, p. 83].

First of all, there is a relationship between the sign and the object it denotes. These relations are constant for a given unit on a specific synchronous section of the language. The relation of the designation, that is, between the sign and the denotatum, comes to the fore when analyzing the semantics of the word in implementation.

It is worth saying that objects, processes, qualities, phenomena of reality denoted by signs are called referents of signs, and the relationship between a sign and its referent is preferential meaning of the sign. It should be noted that the referent of a sign is usually not a single object, process, etc., but a whole class of homogeneous objects and phenomena. In speech, in a specific text, signs of language can denote and most often denote not the whole class ("referent") as a whole, but only some specific single object (or process, phenomenon, etc.) – denotatum. Any language sign has a denotative meaning, because there is no sign without denotatum.

We emphasize that translation does not deal with language, but with speech, or to be exact with specific speech texts. So, in the translation process, the correspondence between the signs of two languages – the source and target – is often established not on the level of referents, but on the level of denotates.

Having considered above the structure of a language sign meaning let's move on to the question of defining a language sign, which should be considered as a unit of translation.

The most typical language sign is a word. It is generally accepted that a word is the main structural and semantic unit of a language that serves to name objects and their properties, phenomena, etc., which is characterized by a set of semantic, phonetic and grammatical features specific to each language [4, p. 79].

The word as a structural element of a language is multifaceted. Words (this is common to the vocabulary of English and Ukrainian) have a certain content volume, certain structural features. Words of the languages we compare form verbal associative series, can be elements of semantic fields. They are characterized by a certain motivation, can be part of phraseological units, used in various functional styles, and also distributed among lexical groups depending on their etymology, area of functioning, etc.

The word has a certain semantic potential, that is, the opportunities that are provided to speakers by the derived meaning and the situation associated with it for understanding and conceptualizing other situations. On the other hand, a word has its own range of situations of different types and different nature, to which it can be extended, which it can "cover".

The semantic potential of a word is almost never fully realized. Only a part of it is implemented as separate meanings [7, p. 348]. This process

is uneven – one possibility (type of meaning) can be implemented repeatedly, the other one – never. This also applies to words of the same semantic class, which should have approximately the same potential. However, different words of the same class have a different number of meanings [9, c. 100].

However, a word itself has no meaning and cannot be understood if it is completely isolated. We will not find its meaning directly in a sign. The word acquires its meaning and develops it only in a set of sentences and texts in specific situations that are experienced.

The highest level of speech flow organization is text. Language signs manifest themselves only when they are closely related in sentences, texts, and situations. They take on meaning only as connected units. Being textual-related ones, they may make sense only as those that convey text content [1, p. 219]. We speak normally not in disparate words, but in sentences and texts, and our speech is based on the situation. If we want to understand what a given word is and how it relates to its meaning, we should definitely take this into account. Otherwise, we will go from some difficulties in the course of reasoning to others. The semantics of words in the text are radically different from the semantics of isolated words, and the semantics of words should be supplemented with the semantics of the text.

Text is more than a set of lexemes. It is a verbally formed thought about the human environment. Summing up various approaches to determining the composition of a text, Dorofeieva M.S. notes that on each level of text organization, we can select its simplest elements-units. Thus, the simplest unit of fiction speech is the expression [1, p. 294]. When we talk about a text content, it does not mean that it is contained directly in the text – in a combination of letters and sounds. The text content is thoughts, feelings, and associative images that are triggered by text in our brain. The text content is located outside the text itself – in the minds of the sender (the one who creates and transmits the text) and the addressee (the one to whom the text is addressed and the one who perceives it).

The text is predetermined by two points: the idea (intention) and the implementation of this idea. Speech intent or a speaker's speech will is a universal component which presents in every utterance – from a one-word everyday remark to large, complex works of science and literature. Speech intent is defined as the subjective moment of expression, which determines the whole expression, its volume and boundaries and is realized when choosing a certain speech genre [5, p. 174].

Due to the accumulation of knowledge in the past, the understanding a text acquires a specific double layer. That is, there is a process when other hidden information contained in memory is added to information that

is perceived directly and contained in the surface structure of an object. People who perceive real or speech events are able to construct a mental meaningful representation only if they have a more general knowledge of such events [11].

It is necessary to distinguish between two concepts "content/sence" and "meaning". Meaning is a language category, a system category, the possibility of certain designations is limited by the scope of a specific language. The meanings of a single unit in different languages may not match. The notion of meaning applies only to individual language signs (words and stable phrases). The content appears only in the text, and the meaning is inherent in language units even before they are used in speech (pronounced/written) [9, p. 98]. We use the notion of sence in relation to the text as a whole and its complete parts (utterances, groups of utterances), this is a communicative category, the meaning of a language unit updated in speech. The sence does not depend on the difference between languages and can be expressed by different language means in different languages.

Speaking about the complete and accurate transmission of the content plan of the original text, the term content is used in the widest possible sense of the word – not only "intellectual" or "subject-logical" content. This is all the information of the source text – both intellectual and emotional, which is carried by the units of the translation text, as well as the pragmatic potential of the text [3, p. 83]. The sence of a fiction work – (its semantics) is a work in the narrow sense of the word. The text itself is simply a technical means, a "channel" of communication. For example, the novel "Vanity Fair" by W.M. Thackeray in English and Ukrainian – these are two different versions of the novel, and what they have in common, what should be preserved in translation, is a fiction work in the narrow sense of the word. The translator must convey the ideological and aesthetic content. The text is only a carrier of this content. The text itself is determined by the language in which the work was created, and therefore when translating a lot of things have to be expressed by other means inherent in another language.

Translation deals exclusively with textual sence, since only texts are translated and can be translated. It follows that meanings are in principle untranslatable, except when it comes to meanings and when they are part of text content. It is not the meanings specific to definite languages that are translated, but the sences set by the situation [10, p. 168]. Any translation that begins with the transmission of separate words and phrases is doomed to failure. The first technical step in translation is to reproduce the thought of each completed part of the text, that the thought is determined by the whole context, the entire text work [4, p. 176].

The contextual meaning of a word may not coincide with the dictionary meaning and may fundamentally differ from the meanings of this

language unit previously fixed in dictionaries. Taking into account this basis, we express the opinion that functioning in a coherent text, language units, including vocabulary units, not only realize their systemic meaning fixed in the language, but also acquire new meanings and their shades under the pressure of context and the extra-linguistic situation. This allows participants in the communication process to describe not pre-defined and rigidly fixed situations, but the entire infinite set of possible and imagined situations.

In this regard, we consider it necessary to take into account the fact that Linguistics finds a dictionary counterpart in the translation language for each unit of the original language (i.e., its relatively autonomous micro-phenomenon). However, this micro-translation approach to the original cannot be taken as the basis of translation activity (bilingual dictionaries are built on this micro-translation principle). After all, within the framework of this approach, completely different factors already operate, which turn adequacy into a phenomenon that is almost elusive for traditional translation.

Conclusions. Thus, the task of translation is to provide a type of cross-language communication in which the text created in the language of the recipients of translation could act as a full-fledged communicative replacement for the original and be identified by the recipients of translation with the original in functional, structural and semantic terms. Consequently, the linguistic principles of translation transformations come not from the formal, but from the semantic side of the compared language phenomena. In other words, the linguistic aspect of translation allows to go not from form to content, but from content to form. For translation analysis of the original text, it is important to know about the constituent meanings of language units, the mechanism of their action, and the interweaving of different shades of meaning in a word. Then, on the basis of the interrelationships of denotative and connotative shades of word meanings, which are manifested not in an isolated word, but in the composition of phrases, in the context of a sentence, a whole statement, text and situation, the author of the target text will discover the true meaning of the source text. Such knowledge is important for moving away from literalism and creating an adequate target text filled with mood and ideas as close as possible to the source text.

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