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## **Literary translation as an interpretation of the worldview: cognitive and cultural aspects**

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**Abstract:** The article examines the peculiarities of translating fiction from a foreign language into Ukrainian from a cognitive and cultural perspective. Literary translation is understood as a complex, multi-level process that involves not only reproducing the linguistic form but also the conceptual and cultural worldview embedded in the original text. The main focus is on the concept as a key unit of cognitive linguistics, its structural components (conceptual, figurative, and value-based), and their significance for the translation interpretation of literary texts. The problem of lacunae as a manifestation of the national and cultural specificity of languages, which causes translation difficulties and requires the use of special compensation and transformation strategies, is analyzed separately. The typology of lacunae (interlingual and intralingual, systemic and functional) and their role in shaping translation decisions are considered. The article emphasizes that the adequacy of literary translation depends on the translator's ability to combine linguistic competence with a deep understanding of the cognitive and cultural factors that determine the artistic integrity of the text.

**Keywords:** literary translation, translation studies, cognitive linguistics, concept, linguistic worldview, literary text, lacunarity, non-equivalent vocabulary, intercultural communication, translator's interpretation, national and cultural specificity.

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## **1. Introduction**

A literary text is a complex, multi-level structure in which the ideological-aesthetic, genre-compositional, and linguistic levels interact within the aesthetic speech system. In the process of

translation, such a text appears not as a collection of separate linguistic units, but as a holistic artistic organism, the reproduction of which requires the preservation of not only semantic, but also cultural and aesthetic integrity. Ideally, the translation of a literary work should be integrated into the national culture of the target language without losing touch with the cultural background of the original text. Unlike the translation of texts of other genres, literary translation involves not only interlingual but also intercultural transfer, within which there is an interaction of different systems of values, associations, images, and ways of perceiving the world. In this context, the translator's work takes on a dual nature: on the one hand, they must interpret the literary text as a recipient, comprehending its conceptual and figurative content, and on the other hand, they must reproduce this content using the means of the target language, ensuring that the artistic integrity and aesthetic function of the work are preserved.

The relevance of the problem of literary translation is determined by the need to understand translation activity in a cognitive and cultural dimension, in particular taking into account concepts, linguistic worldview, and the phenomenon of lacunarity. It is these factors that determine the limits of literary translation and dictate the choice of translation strategies aimed at adequately reproducing culturally marked meaning in the target language.

Literary translation is a dual-aspect process influenced by numerous variables. Among them, the key issue remains the orientation of the translation towards the source language or the target language, as well as the expediency of adapting the original to certain pragmatic guidelines. Ukrainian and German literary works not only function in different languages but also represent different cultural systems, varying significantly in terms of linguistic, literary, cultural, and social conventions [1].

In this context, translators need to pay special attention not only to the specific means by which aesthetic effects are created in the target language culture, but also to the methods and strategies for achieving expressive equivalence. It is equally important to understand the cultural and social values embedded in the original and to reproduce them adequately in the literary translation.

## **2. Object and subject of research**

The problem of perception and understanding of literary texts has repeatedly been the subject of philological research. Within the framework of various scientific approaches, it has been interpreted both in linguistics and literary studies. At the same time, this problem remains relevant in the field of translation studies, since a literary work reflects the author's worldview, their poetic vision of reality, as well as individual features of language and style.

From the perspective of creativity theory and psychology, the generated text as “language in action” [2] appears as a form of the author's stream of consciousness, objective in linguistic structure. In this regard, one of the key problems of translation studies is the problem of the interconnection between language and the spiritual world of a person, which covers the issues of the relationship between language and cognition, language and consciousness, language and mentality, language and culture. Contemporary translation studies actively interact with anthropocentric linguistics, whose methodological basis is “language – personality – culture.” [3].

S. P. Denisova rightly notes: “Ethnicity at any stage of evolution is characterized by language and culture.” [4]. Research into the interaction between language and culture opens up new perspectives for solving current problems in translation studies, particularly in terms of reproducing culturally marked elements in translation. In this regard, further theoretical clarification is needed on the influence on the translation process, the identification of cultural elements that are preserved or transformed in translation, as well as the definition of translation techniques and strategies aimed at their adequate transmission.

Cognitive linguistics is a branch of linguistics that views language as a means of acquiring, storing, processing, and using knowledge. Its research focus is on studying the ways in which reality and internal reflective experience are conceptualized and categorized in language. Within the cognitive approach,

language appears not only as a system of signs but also as an instrument of cognition closely linked to human thought and consciousness. The main task of cognitive linguistics is to analyze the nature of human linguistic competence and its ontogenesis, to clarify the specifics of linguistic categorization and conceptualization, and to explain cognitive activity in the processes of speech production, perception, and comprehension. An important aspect of the research is the study of cognitive processes and the role of natural languages in their implementation, as well as establishing the relationship between linguistic structures and conceptual models [5].

Translating a literary text involves recreating a picture of the world that is as close as possible to the original, representing the ethno-cultural specificity of society. When working with a text created within another cultural community and based on a different picture of the world, the translator must analyze the features that distinguish the author's vision of reality from their own, as well as identify the ways in which these features are expressed linguistically and figuratively in the literary work. The translator's task is to select the optimal means of translation that ensures the adequate reproduction of these features in the target text.

### **3. Target of research**

In modern science, the term “worldview” refers to a holistic image of reality—a set of a person's value-based ideas about the world that reflect the characteristics of their worldview. A worldview encompasses value-oriented knowledge about reality, formed as a result of a person's spiritual activity [6]. At the same time, a translator is unable to cover all fragments of a worldview, since their semantic richness and diversity are fundamentally inexhaustible. The translator must analyze features that distinguish the author's vision of reality from their own and identify the ways these features are expressed linguistically and figuratively. The task is to select the optimal means of translation that ensures adequate reproduction of these features in the target text. The goal is to provide a translation that maintains both the semantic and cultural integrity of the literary work.

### **4. Literature analysis**

The linguistic picture of the world has repeatedly been the subject of scientific analysis, particularly in the works of L. A. Lysychenko [7], M. O. Shygarieva [8], I. V. Kononenko [9], H. P. Lukash [10], Laura M. Ahearn [11], Everett Caleb [12] and others.

The worldview of each society is holistic and unique, which is naturally reflected in the monuments of its spiritual culture, in particular in works of fiction. The cultural and historical characteristics of a society in a literary text take on a symbolic character and are realized through a system of cultural and temporal markers. It is the reproduction of these signs of the original text that poses one of the greatest difficulties in literary translation and requires the use of special translation techniques. At the same time, translation practice shows that, despite significant differences between languages and cultures, it is possible to adequately reproduce the information encoded by the author in the source text.

### **5. Research methods**

Before starting work on the translation of a literary text, the translator must study the cultural concepts of the society in which the original was created, determine how they are represented in the text, and reproduce them in the translation. A concept as a unit of consciousness contains a verbally fixed judgment of a moral, ethical, ideological, psychological, or other nature. The analysis of concepts thus makes it possible to identify the linguistic picture of the world within which a person's perception of real

phenomena is formed. It is this linguistic picture of the world that actually forms the basis of the general spiritual picture of the world of society.

Contemporary studies of cognitive aspects of linguistics (O. Kubryakova, O. Selivanova, and others) consider the concept as one of the key terms in the conceptual apparatus of cognitive linguistics, which is of direct relevance to the theory of literary translation. The concept appears as a two-sided mental entity that combines psychological and linguistic dimensions. In the mind of a speaker, it functions as an ideal object that represents culturally conditioned ideas about the world and serves as a prototype for the formation of derivative concepts, while in speech, it acquires verbal form, since the reflection of reality is mediated through language. In translation, a concept is an object of interpretation rather than mechanical reproduction, which necessitates taking into account its cognitive and cultural content. O. Selivanova defines a concept as an informational structure of consciousness, an organized unit of memory that accumulates a set of verbal and nonverbal knowledge about the object of cognition, formed as a result of the interaction of the mental functions of the conscious and unconscious [13].

During the translation process, all dimensions of the concept—figurative, conceptual, and value-based—must be reproduced as fully as possible, since the picture of the world is formed as a set of corresponding dominants. The most accessible for reproduction in translation is the conceptual component of the concept, since conveying its core meaning usually does not constitute a significant difficulty. On the other hand, the figurative and value levels require special attention from the translator, as they ensure the preservation of the cultural specificity and axiological content of the source text.

The concept of culture is of fundamental importance for translation studies, since translation as a type of interlingual activity is directly based on the interaction of different cultural systems. In a literary text, cultural specificity manifests itself in two dimensions: as “culture in language,” i.e., a particular linguistic picture of the world determined by the historical and mental experience of the linguistic community, and as “culture represented by language,” which encompasses the description of cultural realities, artifacts, traditions, and social practices [14]. These levels form different types of translation tasks and require differentiated translation strategies. While the reproduction of cultural realities is mainly associated with the choice of appropriate lexical, semantic, or commentary tools, the transmission of the linguistic picture of the world involves the interpretation of the concepts underlying the text. Thus, the transition from one text to another is not only a transition from one language to another, which requires the translator to have a deep understanding of the conceptual and cultural structure of the source text.

In terms of the expressiveness or inexpressiveness of concepts by lexical units, two types can be distinguished: verbalized and nonverbalized. Among concepts that do not have an established customary linguistic expression, there are, first, those that appear in groups and classes of words (conceptual, categorical, and classificatory lacunae), and, secondly, concepts that are not represented at all in the lexical and phraseological system of the language, i.e., intralinguistic lexical lacunae [15].

## 6. Research results

In translation, concept and worldview are priority categories, but it is the lacunae that have the greatest practical significance. A **lacuna** is a basic element of the national specificity of a linguistic and cultural community, which complicates the translation of texts and their perception by recipients from other cultures due to the absence in one language of equivalents of linguistic units of different levels, designations of concepts and categories, associative reactions, as well as paraverbal means of speech [16]. According to their nature, lacunae are divided into **systemic** and **functional (linguistic and speech, linguistic and cultural)**. Systemic or linguistic lacunae are revealed when comparing units of different levels of the language system, while functional lacunae manifest themselves directly in speech. **Systemic lacunae**, in turn, are differentiated by levels of linguistic structure into *phonetic* (absence of certain

phonemes in the language, discrepancies in intonation patterns, stress, pauses), *lexical* (absence of a corresponding word), *nominative* (mismatch in the status of names, for example, when a simple word in one language corresponds to a compound or phrase in another), *morphological* (absence of certain morphological categories), *syntactic* (discrepancies in syntactic organization), and *stylistic* (inconsistency in the stylistic coloring of units denoting the same referent).

**Functional lacunae** include *activity-communicative* and *cultural* lacunae, as well as *lacunae in cultural space*. Activity-communicative lacunae are caused by the inconsistency of communicatively relevant kinemes (phonation characteristics, gestures, facial expressions, body movements, head position, gaze, distance between communicants, time parameters of communication, touch, physique, etc.). *Cultural* lacunae are related to the peculiarities of national mentality, culture, and speech etiquette, while *lacunae in cultural space* reflect the specifics of reality, in particular national dishes, units of measurement, holidays, rituals, and other elements of material and spiritual culture. The characteristic features of lacunae are their incomprehensibility, unusualness, and exoticism for speakers of other languages and cultures.

The term *lacuna* is often equated with non-equivalent vocabulary, but there is a relationship of inclusion between these concepts, since not every lacuna is non-equivalent. Contemporary research suggests distinguishing between cognitive lacunae as non-equivalent words, while the absence of words or sememes in the target language should be interpreted as lacunae proper. R. Brislin also uses the term *realia* to refer to lacunar phenomena, but *realia* belong to conceptual lacunae [17].

Lacunarity can be established not only between two languages, i.e., at the interlingual level, but also within different forms of existence of one language, which allows us to speak of internal lacunae [18]. *Realia*, as an element of material and spiritual culture, reflect the way of life and thinking of a particular society and have no analogues in another culture, which leads to the absence of corresponding lexical units in the target language. At the same time, semantic lacunae, unlike *realia*, denote concepts that are absent in the target language, not because of the specific nature of the culture, but because of the peculiarities of national linguistic thinking [19].

The problem of lacunarity is not limited to interlingual equivalence. In the linguistic system of each language, there are a significant number of intralinguistic lacunae, i.e., unfilled gaps in the lexical and phraseological composition, even in the presence of linguistic units that are close in meaning. This refers to the absence of established names for certain concepts or situations that are relevant to communication but have not received separate lexical representation. For example, the Ukrainian language has the word *ковзанка* (skating rink), but there is no special name for the strip of ice on the asphalt where children skate in winter; there is the lexeme *старшокласник* (high school student), but there is no corresponding unit to denote elementary school students; the word *молодьята* (newlyweds) is used, but there is no name for spouses with significant experience of family life. Concepts such as “to speak slowly,” “to say something appropriate,” “to convey truthful information,” “to say intelligent things,” and “to convey information directly, without hints or innuendo” also do not have established lexical expressions.

The existence of such intralinguistic lacunae indicates that lacunarity is a systemic characteristic of the linguistic picture of the world. This is of fundamental importance for translation studies, since translators encounter not only interlingual differences, but also different ways of conceptualizing reality within a single linguistic system.

Literary translation differs from other types of translation in that its dominant features are artistic, aesthetic, and poetic functions. Given the task of recreating the aesthetic effect of the original in the target text, the translation of literary works often involves departing from maximum literalness in order to preserve artistic quality and expressiveness.

Each work of art, literary movement, and historical period poses specific translation challenges. These challenges can only be overcome if the translator has mastered the achievements of related

scientific disciplines with which translation studies is closely intertwined. These include neurolinguistics, linguistic semantics, text linguistics, discourse studies, communicative and cognitive linguistics, linguoculturology, ethnopsycholinguistics, and other fields that allow for a comprehensive understanding of the process of literary translation.

## 7. Prospects for further research development

Future research may explore improved methods for representing cultural concepts, figurative meaning, and lacunae in translations, as well as expanding comparative analyses between languages to enhance literary translation accuracy and intercultural understanding.

## 8. Conclusions

The study gives grounds to assert that literary translation is a complex, multi-level process in which linguistic, cognitive, and cultural dimensions are closely interrelated. The translation of a literary text is not limited to the mechanical transfer of meanings from one language to another, but involves the interpretation and reproduction of the holistic picture of the world embedded in the original. Concepts play a special role in this process as units of collective and individual consciousness in which the cultural experience of the language community is accumulated. In translation, it is important to take into account all components of a concept—conceptual, figurative, and value-based—since it is their combination that forms the artistic meaning of the text. The greatest difficulties for the translator are not related to conveying the core meaning, but to reproducing figurative, evaluative, and culturally marked elements.

In this context, the problem of lacunae becomes crucial. Lacunae, as a manifestation of the national and cultural specificity of languages and cultures, reveal the limits of direct translatability and necessitate the use of interpretative, compensatory, and transformative translation strategies. They can be both interlingual and intralingual in nature, covering various levels of the language system and speech activity, which complicates the translation process but at the same time makes it creative.

Thus, literary translation emerges as an act of intercultural communication in which the translator acts as a mediator between different linguistic worldviews. The effectiveness of this mediation depends on the translator's ability to combine linguistic competence with a deep understanding of the cultural concepts and cognitive structures underlying the literary text. It is this approach that allows the aesthetic and semantic potential of the original to be reproduced as fully as possible in the translation.

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