

REPRESENTATION OF COGNITIVE CONTEXT IN LITERARY TRANSLATION

Yana Yurevna Arustamyan

PhD, associate professor at the Department of Comparative Linguistics, National University of Uzbekistan

Abstract. *The present research deals with the problems related to the interpretation of conceptual information in the process of literary translation. Cognitive context involves a vast layer of implicit information, which forms the representation of author's intention and reflects the main ideas incorporated in the text. Different approaches to the analysis of the cognitive context in modern linguistics are discussed in the article as well. The analyzed examples illustrate the role of cognitive context and the necessity for the adequate interpretation of conceptual information in pre-translational analysis and further equivalent choice of means of translation.*

Key words: *cognitive context, conceptual information, situational context, pragmatic effect, literary translation.*

1. Introduction

Modern approaches to translation of a literary texts are closely connected to the achievements in cognitive linguistics studies. It is natural because cognitive research cannot stand aside from translation theory and practice, since one of their tasks is to study the ways of structuring the information flow when transferring the content of the original message into the target language. The study of ways to ensure optimal translation, in our opinion, should be based on a detailed analysis of the utterance (original text) in order to determine its cognitive parameters of the conceptual organization, which should be respectively represented in the target language, taking into account the specifics of its linguistic, pragmatic and cultural characteristics. Coordination of the cognitive parameters of the original and the translation provides their conceptual and semantic identity. Obviously, such cognitive correspondence also contributes to the achievement of the same pragmatic effect by the translation. The cognitive organization of the original text provides for the transfer of information due to the activation of the mental structures of verbal information existing in the human brain. This approach to verbal information predetermines the need for conceptual comprehension of the original and provides not only knowledge of the source language, its grammatical and lexical system (that is, the linguistic competence of the translator), but also knowledge of the cognitive models of information organization that are used by representatives of the linguocultural community in whose language the original text exists. In other words, the translator must not only know the original language and the target language, but also “think” in these languages, and adequately coordinate their cognitive models (Savitskaya, 2013, p.116).

Taking into consideration the fact that for belles-lettres two types of context (which are linguistic and extralinguistic) are equally meaningful, in this work we will emphasize the role of cognitive context (as an essential part involving extralinguistic factors), which is being actively studied for the recent years. The definition of the cognitive context, or cognitive information, in a literary text although discussed in various researches, is still disputable. For N.N. Boldyrev (2006), the cognitive context is a connected structure of knowledge, in which our experience of cognizing the world programmed the presence of certain elements or events

and their corresponding interpretation or evaluation involved in a cognitive area (mental space, conceptual structure), containing knowledge of a certain kind, one way or another associated with a given linguistic unit. (Boldyrev, 2009) In other words, following Boldyrev's (2008) definition, the meanings of words in the language system are correlated not only to the paradigmatic and syntagmatic contexts, "but to certain cognitive contexts - cognitive structures, or blocks of knowledge that stand behind these meanings and ensure their understanding." (pp.17-18)

In the theory of discourse, the cognitive understanding of the context is laid down in the works of T.van Dijk (2009), who defined the context not as a physical objective reality, but a subjective category, a mental model formed by the thinking minds of speakers of a particular language: "Contexts are not some (part of a) social situation, but a subjective mental model of such a situation." (p.7) T. van Dijk (2009) speaks of the existence of schemes as collective, socially shared knowledge and personal, individual, forming complex relationships in the communication process: "Contexts are subjective, they represent personal experiences, namely the experience of the current communicative episode, and they also feature instantiations of sociocultural knowledge we share about social and communicative situations and their participants". (p.7) It is noteworthy to emphasize that in cognitive anthropology there is the concept of "cultural models" defined by Holland and Quinn (2000) as socially shared knowledge (cultural model as a form of general, socially shared knowledge), and cognitive linguists have shown the dependence of cognitive models on cultural models (knowledge of rules of behavior typical for a particular linguistic culture): "Cognitive models for particular domains ultimately depend on so-called cultural models. Cultural models can be seen as cognitive models that are shared by people belonging to a social group or subgroup." (Ungerer and Schmid, 2006, p. 51) This point of view is also shared by M.Halliday (2003), who defined a "context of situation" and a "context of culture", which can be inferred as constituents of a cognitive context on the whole. Meanwhile, the context of situation is widely observed by American and European linguists (see, for example, Hatim and Mason, 1994; Hall, 1990; Scollon and Scollon, 2001) and mostly substitutes the term "cognitive context". Therefore, we can conclude that cognitive context is an umbrella term for all pragmatic and cultural information which was perceived by individuals and is interpreted according to their own knowledge, experience, and attitude through certain hints referring to existing objects or situations.

The adequate understanding and interpretation of cognitive context in the process of a literary translation plays an essential role as it may either expose the real author's intention or conceal the important idea from the reader. Therefore, cognitive analysis of translation problems is primarily due to the presence of a certain socio-cultural and historical experience among representatives of linguistic communities. The variety and differences of such experience give rise to the formation of different intellectual, emotional, social images and stereotypes, sociocultural and ethnocultural norms, as well as discursive communication strategies. However, translation problems of a cultural nature can be easily solved provided the translator has a high level of background knowledge and his sufficient pragmatic competence. A more important requirement is the awareness and consideration of the specifics of the linguistic picture and the linguistic mentality of representatives of different cultures, which are due to a peculiar vision of the physical picture of the world. The consequence of this is the difference in the choice of differential features of objects and concepts that form the basis of their names. There is no doubt that the culture of native speakers, which actually forms their life experience, influences the process of perception and assimilation of information about the environment. On the other hand, a unique perception of the world is the basis for the implementation of internal representations in specific forms. The cognitive activity of an individual is mental processes that ensure the processing of

information and as a result of which special structures of consciousness are formed. In this regard, language as a type of cognitive and communicative activity is considered by cognitologists in the form of a system of signs that take part in coding and transmitting information about the environment, that is, language is a means of representing the structure of knowledge that is formed in human consciousness. In other words, information about the world is first constructed (or conceptualized) and only then verbalized. Such an interpretation of the language predetermines the need to take into account the interaction of linguistic structures with other cognitive components of information, in particular, with conceptual structures. The cognitive activity of an individual as an integral part of his consciousness occurs in a certain socio-cultural context. In particular, ethical norms, political and religious orientations, and various components of culture significantly affect the process of cognitive activity. Recent studies indicate that the conceptual structure (system) of consciousness is closely interconnected with the linguistic structure, since it is formed both in the process of processing the results of different types of perception (visual, auditory, tactile, motor), and as a result of linguistic assimilation of experience. (Savitskaya, 2013) In other words, regarding the fact that cognitive context mostly refers to the *individual* experience, the translator becomes a co-author of the text depriving the readers of a translated text of their own understanding through personal associations in case the cognitive information was revealed in a wrong way.

To illustrate the role of cognitive context for the translation, let's appeal to the example selected from the story by K.Vonnegut "2BRO2B". The title of this novel is an allusion to the Shakespearian play "Hamlet", modernized by a graphic means of foregrounding: "To be or not to be". This is a kind of a short-story narrating one situation when a person is faced this very choice, therefore, the title itself is very symbolical and involves a deep philosophic proposition. This story was translated into Russian twice, however, both translators left this title originally in English as they could not find out appropriate means to render this language game in correct manner from cognitive point of view. Taking into consideration that these were rather modern translations, when many people can decode this combination of numerals and letters, this choice can be justified. Moreover, in the text there is the explanation of this symbols:

The number was: "2BR02B." ... "To be or not to be" was the telephone number of the municipal gas chambers of the Federal Bureau of Termination. (Vonnegut, 1962, pp3-4)

However, this explanation was differently rendered in two translations:

Translated by Y.Yeltsova	Translated by A.Arakelov
<i>Номер был 2BR02B... "Быть или не быть" был телефонным номером муниципальных газовых камер Федерального Бюро Прекращения Жизни.</i>	<i>Вот этот номер: 2BRO2B... Этот номер принадлежал муниципальному управлению газовых камер при Федеральном бюро завершения цикла</i>

As we can notice here, both translators preferred to leave this abbreviation without Russian equivalent (as it was emphasized earlier), however, in A.Arakelov's translation we can find a footnote commenting these set of symbols: "Если произнести номер вслух, он будет звучать «To be or not to be»: «Быть или не быть?»". This explanation seems appropriate and helps the readers to understand the symbolism of the title, because this combination of numerals and letters was a phone number of a special place, where people could make an appointment for euthanasia, thus opening the door for the birth of a new human. In this context we should emphasize the role of this allusion, which symbolizes the choice between the life and death and, therefore, involves the main idea of this story.

Our next example refers to the problems, conditioned by the reality in which translation was created. One of the novels by K.Vonnegut, “Cat’s Cradle”, was translated into Russian in 1970 and for many years it was the only translation of this novel into Russian. Taking into consideration that it was the epoch of strict censorship in the Soviet Union, some extracts of this novels were transformed by the translator as “direct rendering of style and content of translated foreign literature could result in a long-term publication ban and affect the reputation of the translator and his/her publishers. Therefore, the domesticating approach of Rait-Kovaleva can be justified by her desire to introduce modern American prose to the Soviet reader, in which she by all means succeeded.” (Kamovnikova, 2019, p.185) For example:

Original text	Translated text (R.Rait-Kovaleva)
<p><i>From what Frank had said before he slammed the door, I gathered that the Republic of San Lorenzo and the three Hoenickers weren't the only ones who had ice-nine. Apparently the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had it, too. The United States had obtained it through Angela's husband, whose plant in Indianapolis was understandably surrounded by electrified fences and homicidal German shepherds. And Soviet Russia had come by it through Newt's little Zinka, that winsome troll of Ukrainian ballet. I was without comment. I bowed my head and closed my eyes; and I awaited Frank's return with the humble tools it would take to clean up one bedroom—one bedroom out of all the bedrooms in the world, a bedroom infested with ice-nine.</i></p>	<p><i>Из слов Фрэнка, брошенных перед тем как он хлопнул дверью, я понял, что республика Сан-Лоренцо и трое Хонникеров были не единственными владельцами льда-девять... Муж Анджелы передал секрет США, а Зинка – своему посольству.</i></p> <p><i>Слов у меня не нашлось...</i></p> <p><i>Я склонил голову, закрыл глаза и стал ждать, пока вернется Фрэнк с немудрящим инструментом, потребным для очистки одной спальни, той единственной спальни из всех земных спален, которая была отравлена льдом-девять</i></p>

From this example we can observe that a considerable number of original text (strikeout in the example) was omitted under the pressure of the objective reality of the country in which this translation was being created.

However, in 2015 a new version of this novel was published in Russian. This modern translation avoids of all these political influence and in this variant we can see the reflection of a complete picture of the original text:

Original text	Translation (Y.Biryukov)
<p><i>From what Frank had said before he slammed the door, I gathered that the Republic of San Lorenzo and the three Hoenickers weren't the only ones who had ice-nine. Apparently the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had it, too. The United States had obtained it through Angela's husband, whose plant in Indianapolis was understandably</i></p>	<p><i>Из того, что Фрэнк сказал перед тем, как хлопнуть дверью, я заключил, что Республика Сан Лоренцо и трое Хёникеров не были единственными обладателями льда-девять. По-видимому, Соединённые Штаты Америки и Союз Советских Социалистических Республик тоже обладали им. Соединённые Штаты получили его через мужа Энджелы, чей</i></p>

<p><i>surrounded by electrified fences and homicidal German shepherds. And Soviet Russia had come by it through Newt's little Zinka, that winsome troll of Ukrainian ballet. I was without comment. I bowed my head and closed my eyes; and I awaited Frank's return with the humble tools it would take to clean up one bedroom—one bedroom out of all the bedrooms in the world, a bedroom infested with ice-nine.</i></p>	<p><i>завод в Индианаполисе по понятной причине был окружён электрифицированной оградой и кровожадными немецкими овчарками. А Советская Россия достала его через ньютову маленькую Зинку – обаятельную блесёнку украинского балета. Мне нечего было сказать. Я опустил голову и закрыл глаза, и я ждал возвращения Фрэнка со скромными инструментами, нужными, чтобы прибрать одну-единственную спальню — одну спальню из всех спален мира, спальню, заражённую льдом-девять.</i></p>
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As we can see, the second variant is closer to the original text and includes important cognitive information related to the confrontation between the USA and the USSR, which was inappropriate for the first version of translation according to political situation and “cold war” relationship between the countries.

The following example will illustrate the role of stylistics in revealing the cognitive context. Here, we should specify that the cognitive approach in linguistics in general and in cognitive stylistics, in particular, is based on taking the recipient's knowledge as the initial base, the starting point for processing and interpreting the information received. In this regard, the central thesis of cognitive stylistics becomes the thesis that the strategies for using knowledge depend on the goals of the language user, the amount of knowledge in the text and context, the level of processing or the degree of coherence necessary for understanding and which are criteria for the strategic use of knowledge, this also includes personal opinions, beliefs, installation. (Lunkova, 2011, p.19) Following this idea we can state that stylistic devices and markers can also be indicators of cognitive information necessary to be adequately transferred in translation. Let's address to the example, selected from the same novel:

<p><i>I smashed up my seventy-five-dollar violin on a big brass knob at the foot of my bed, and I went down to a florist shop and got the kind of box they put a dozen roses in, and I put the busted fiddle in the box, and I sent it to her by Western Union messenger boy</i></p>	
<p>Translation by R.Rait-Kovaleva <i>Тут я расколошматил свою скрипку – а она была дорогая, семьдесят пять долларов, - прямо об медную шишку на кровати, пошел в цветочный магазин, купил там шикарную коробку – в такой посылают розы дюжинами, - положил туда разбитую скрипку и отослал ее с посыльным</i></p>	<p>Translation by Y.Biryukov <i>Свою скрипку за семьдесят пять долларов я вдребезги разбил о большой бронзовый выступ на ножке кровати; и я пошёл в цветочную лавку, и взял коробку, в какие кладут по дюжине роз, и положил в эту коробку разбитую скрипку, и отправил ей с посыльным из «Вестерн Юнион».</i></p>

In the original text we can see that the author introduced two variants of one and the same musical instrument: *violin* and *fiddle*. The problem is that these two words are synonyms, however, they refer to different stylistic layers: *violin* belongs to a neutral or literary styles, while *fiddle* is a colloquial style. In our opinion, the choice of these two words is not occasional: the author intended to emphasize the rising rage of the character by

depicting his speech in the manner of changing from literary speech to informal. This is important cognitive information in this passage, which, in our opinion, was better rendered by R.Rait-Kovaleva: she managed to “lower” the style of the whole paragraph compensating the absence of stylistic synonym by introducing some other words in informal manner (*расколоиматил, отослал*). Therefore, the adequate choice of synonyms, although translating not the same word in original, can help the translator to represent the almost the same picture, which was displayed in the original text.

Summarizing the abovementioned, we can conclude that the cognitive context, by its nature, refers to the associated structure of knowledge, in which individual’s world vision and perception plays a crucial role for interpreting the text. The understanding of cognitive context is associated with personal opinions and evaluations, as well as with the creation of specific models for representing understanding in translation, which becomes a rather difficult task, and further study of the problems of cognitive processing of text should take into account the role of numerous extralinguistic (social, cultural, psychological, historical, etc.) factors. Therefore, pre-translational cognitive text analysis involves not only (and not so much) self-sufficient speech and language analysis, but much analysis through speech and language processes of perception (understanding) and production of text, which requires attracting knowledge about such mental processes as memory, imagination, sensory perception, associations, etc.

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