INTEGRATING PHONOLOGY AND PHONETICS IN TRANSLATION STUDIES: SOUND, RHYTHM, AND MEANING ACROSS LANGUAGES

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Abstract. Phonology and phonetics play an integral role in translation, influencing not only the perception of language but also the transfer of emotion, sound pattern, and aesthetic quality. Translators frequently encounter challenges when the sound features of one language do not have direct equivalents in another. This study explores three interrelated areas: (1) how sound symbolism can be translated across languages; (2) the impact of phonological constraints in transliteration and translation; and (3) the function of prosody in interpreting oral discourse. Through these perspectives, the paper argues that phonetic awareness enables translators to maintain both linguistic and emotional fidelity, contributing to a more authentic and engaging target text.

Keywords: Phonology, Phonetics, Sound Symbolism, Transliteration, Prosody, Translation Studies

Аннотация. Фонетика и фонетика играют неотъемлемую роль в переводе, влияя не только на восприятие языка, но и на передачу эмоций, звуковой картины и эстетических качеств. Переводчики часто сталкиваются с трудностями, когда звуковые особенности одного языка не имеют прямых эквивалентов в другом. В данном исследовании рассматриваются три взаимосвязанные области: (1) как звуковой символизм может быть передан между языками; (2) влияние фонологических ограничений на транслитерацию и перевод; и (3) функция просодии при переводе устной речи. С этих позиций в статье утверждается, что фонетическая осведомлённость позволяет переводчикам сохранять как языковую, так и эмоциональную точность, способствуя созданию более аутентичного и увлекательного перевода.

Ключевые слова: Фонология, Фонетика, Звуковой символизм, Транслитерация, Просодия, Переводоведение

Annotatsiya. Fonologiya va fonetika tarjima jarayonida muhim o‘rin egallaydi. Ular nafaqat tilni idrok etish, balki hissiyot, tovush naqshi va estetik ohangni yetkazishda ham katta ahamiyatga ega. Tarjimonlar ko‘pincha tovush xususiyatlari boshqa tilda to‘liq muqobilga ega bo‘lmaganda qiyinchiliklarga duch keladilar. Ushbu maqola uch jihatni ko‘rib chiqadi: (1) tillararo tovush timsollarini tarjima qilish; (2) transliteratsiya va tarjimada fonologik cheklovlarning ta’siri; va (3) og‘zaki nutqni tarjima qilishda prozodiyaning roli. Tadqiqot shuni ko‘rsatadiki, fonetik sezgirlik tarjimonlarga nafaqat lingvistik, balki hissiy sadoqatni ham saqlash imkonini beradi.

Kalit so‘zlar: Fonologiya, fonetika, tovush timsoli, transliteratsiya, prozodiya, tarjima tadqiqotlari

Translation is not solely a transfer of meaning; it is also a transfer of sound, rhythm, and emotion. Phonology and phonetics- the study of sound systems and their articulatory and auditory properties-are vital components of linguistic structure that deeply influence how messages are understood. In many translation practices, however, these aspects are often neglected, especially in technical or literal renderings. Yet in literary, poetic, and oral contexts, the phonetic layer carries cultural and emotional weight. For example, rhyme, alliteration, and onomatopoeia can create vivid imagery that transcends simple denotation. Translators, therefore, need to develop a dual sensitivity: one toward meaning and another toward sound. According to Catford, true translation must account for both “linguistic and phonological equivalence,” since ignoring sound patterns can distort tone and communicative effect. This article aims to explore how translators manage these sound-related features through sound symbolism, phonological constraints, and prosody.

Sound symbolism suggests that certain phonemes evoke particular emotions or sensory experiences. For instance, the English cluster /sl/ (as in slime, slip, slow) tends to evoke smoothness or unpleasantness, while /gl/ (as in glow, glitter, gleam) is linked to light and brightness. Translators must find ways to preserve such associations even when phonetic equivalents do not exist.

In Japanese, mimetic words such as kirakira (sparkling) or dokidoki (heartbeat) vividly express sensory perception. Rendering these into English or Uzbek often requires creative adaptation rather than direct substitution. Jakobson (1960) argued that poetic language relies on “the projection of the equivalence principle from the axis of selection to the axis of combination.” In practice, this means translators should look for functionally similar sound effects in the target language rather than mechanically copying the form. For example, an Uzbek translator rendering “The silver sea shimmered” might choose “Kumush dengiz yaltirab tovlandi,” maintaining the rhythmic and sound harmony. Such awareness ensures that phonological form continues to support meaning, not contradict it.

Phonological constraints define how sounds are structured and permitted within a language. When words or names move across languages, transliteration must adapt them according to the target language’s sound system. Transliteration is not just a mechanical process of letter substitution-it involves complex phonological decisions. Take, for instance, the English name “Thomas,” which becomes “Фомас” in Russian, or the Japanese adaptation of “McDonald’s” as Makudonarudo. These examples show how each language reshapes foreign phonemes into locally acceptable patterns. Catford (1965) emphasizes that transliteration must respect the phonotactic limits of the target system to avoid unintelligibility In translation of cultural texts, such adaptation may extend beyond phonemes to entire syllabic structures. For example, the Arabic /q/ sound, absent in English, is commonly replaced with /k/, as in Quran → Koran. These transformations illustrate the phonological compromises translators make to balance clarity, familiarity, and authenticity for the audience.

Prosody-the combination of stress, rhythm, and intonation-adds the emotional and pragmatic layer to spoken language. In interpreting, prosody can completely change meaning. A simple English phrase like “You’re coming?” may sound inquisitive, impatient, or friendly depending on its intonation pattern. Interpreters and translators must convey these nuances across languages, adjusting pitch, stress, and rhythm to preserve pragmatic intent. As Gile (1995) notes, prosodic control is essential to “maintain communication equivalence” in real-time interpretation. The translator’s ear thus becomes as important as their vocabulary. Additionally, prosody shapes audience perception. In film dubbing, for instance, prosodic mismatches between original and dubbed versions can lead to emotional disconnection. Awareness of the target language’s natural rhythm and intonation patterns ensures that speech sounds authentic and emotionally resonant.

In conclusion, phonology and phonetics are not minor aspects of language but central to achieving full communicative equivalence in translation. Translating sound symbolism, adapting phonological structures, and reproducing prosody all demand sensitivity to how sound conveys meaning and emotion. If translators ignore these sound-based elements, the text may lose its expressive and aesthetic power, even when the words are accurate. Effective translation therefore requires the ability to both understand and hear language. A translator must not only reproduce what is said but also how it sounds. From my perspective, developing phonetic awareness should be an essential part of translator education, particularly for literary and oral forms of translation. By paying attention to sound, rhythm, and tone, translators can preserve the musicality of the original and bring its emotional depth to new audiences.

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