INTEGRATING SEMANTIC PERSPECTIVES IN TRANSLATION STUDIES: POLYSEMY, METAPHOR, AND CROSS-LINGUISTIC MEANING TRANSFER

Amirbek Badriddinov
Gulistan State Pedagogical Institute
e-mail: amirbekbadriddinov9@gmail.com

Abstract. This section explores the semantic dimension of translation, focusing on how meaning is preserved, altered, or lost across languages. It analyzes key linguistic challenges such as polysemy, homonymy, and the translation of figurative language, which often lead to semantic ambiguity. The study also examines cultural and contextual influences that cause semantic shifts and lexical gaps, revealing the limits of linguistic equivalence. By investigating how translators deal with meaning at both lexical and conceptual levels, this research highlights the importance of semantic awareness in achieving accurate and natural translations across different languages and cultures.

Keywords: semantics, meaning, translation, polysemy, metaphor, untranslatability, linguistic equivalence

Аннотация. В этом разделе рассматривается семантическое измерение перевода с акцентом на том, как значение сохраняется, изменяется или теряется в разных языках. Анализируются ключевые лингвистические проблемы, такие как полисемия, омонимия и перевод образного языка, которые часто приводят к семантической неоднозначности. В исследовании также рассматриваются культурные и контекстуальные влияния, вызывающие семантические сдвиги и лексические пробелы, выявляя пределы лингвистической эквивалентности. Рассматривая то, как переводчики работают со значением как на лексическом, так и на концептуальном уровне, данное исследование подчёркивает важность семантической осведомлённости для достижения точного и естественного перевода между разными языками и культурами.

Ключевые слова: семантика, значение, перевод, полисемия, метафора, непереводимость, лингвистическая эквивалентность

Annotatsiya. Ushbu bo‘lim tarjimada semantik jihatlarni o‘rganadi, ya’ni ma’no tillar o‘rtasida qanday saqlanib qolishi, o‘zgarishi yoki yo‘qolishini tahlil qiladi. Unda polisemiya, gomonimiya va obrazli ifodalarni tarjima qilish kabi semantik noaniqliklarga olib keladigan asosiy tilshunoslik muammolari ko‘rib chiqiladi. Shuningdek, madaniy va kontekstual omillar sabab yuzaga keladigan semantik siljishlar hamda leksik bo‘shliqlar tahlil qilinadi. Maqola tarjimonlarning so‘z va tushuncha darajasida ma’noni qanday uzatishini o‘rganib, tarjimada semantik xabardorlikning to‘g‘ri va tabiiy tarjima uchun naqadar muhimligini ta’kidlaydi.

Kalit so‘zlar: semantika, ma’no, tarjima, polisemiya, metafora, tarjima qilinmaslik, lingvistik ekvivalentlik

Semantics, the study of meaning, lies at the heart of translation. While grammar and syntax structure sentences, semantics determines the sense conveyed by words and expressions. Translators must therefore navigate the complexities of meaning across languages, where even similar words can differ in nuance, connotation, or cultural implication. Translation becomes especially challenging when words have multiple meanings (polysemy), identical forms with different meanings (homonymy), or when figurative language resists literal interpretation. Furthermore, lexical gaps- cases where one language lacks an equivalent term can make perfect translation impossible. This section explores how semantic phenomena such as polysemy, metaphor, and lexical gaps affect translation and how translators can approach these challenges to achieve both accuracy and cultural resonance.

Polysemy refers to a single word having multiple related meanings, while homonymy occurs when two words share the same form but have unrelated meanings. For instance, the English word “bank” can mean a financial institution or the side of a river. Translating such words requires understanding context to choose the correct meaning. Polysemous and homonymous words create ambiguity because the same form may suggest different interpretations in another language. A translator must analyze semantic context and pragmatic

cues to identify intended meaning. As Nida and Taber (2003, p. 56) note, understanding meaning depends on "the total linguistic and situational context," not isolated words. Failure to interpret this context can result in misleading or absurd translations (Nida & Taber, 2003, p. 58).

Semantic shifts occur when meanings change during translation due to cultural, historical, or contextual differences. Words that seem equivalent may carry distinct emotional or social connotations. For example, the English word "home" implies warmth and belonging, while its literal translation may not evoke the same emotional depth in another culture. Translators must be aware of these shifts to preserve intended tone and implication. As Hatim and Mason (1990, p. 112) explain, translation involves not only linguistic transfer but also "the negotiation of meaning between cultural contexts." Semantic shifts often demand rephrasing or compensation techniques to maintain communicative equivalence and cultural relevance.

Metaphor, idioms, and figurative expressions enrich a language but complicate translation. Literal rendering often destroys intended imagery or stylistic effect. For instance, translating the English idiom "spill the beans" literally would confuse readers unfamiliar with the expression. Effective translation of figurative language requires identifying the underlying meaning and finding an equivalent expression in the target language. According to Newmark (1988, p. 104), translators should "reproduce the same image in the target language if possible," but when this is impossible, they must replace it with a culturally appropriate alternative. This balance ensures that the translation remains expressive while preserving cultural meaning (Newmark, 1988, p. 107).

Lexical gaps occur when a word in one language lacks a direct equivalent in another. For example, the German word "Schadenfreude" (pleasure derived from another's misfortune) has no single-word equivalent in English. Similarly, cultural concepts like the Japanese "wabi-sabi" or Uzbek "or-nomus" often resist direct translation. Such cases illustrate the concept of untranslatability, where meaning is so deeply tied to culture that any translation risks loss of nuance. As Venuti (2017, p. 145) argues, translators must sometimes "foreignize" the text- preserve original cultural elements- to maintain authenticity. Others, however, prefer "domestication," adapting unfamiliar terms for readability. The translator's choice depends on the purpose and audience of the translation (Venuti, 2017, pp. 147–148).

The study of semantics in translation reveals the deep complexity of conveying meaning across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Translators are constantly challenged by issues such as polysemy, homonymy, metaphor, and untranslatability - all of which require not only linguistic competence but also cultural sensitivity and contextual understanding. Accurate translation depends on the translator's ability to interpret meaning beyond words, considering both cognitive and pragmatic dimensions of language use. By applying semantic awareness and analytical precision, translators can bridge gaps between languages and preserve the communicative intent of the original text. Ultimately, the success of translation lies not in literal equivalence but in achieving functional and conceptual correspondence that resonates within the target culture.

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