

PRAGMATIC AND STYLISTIC EQUIVALENCE IN RENDERING HISTORICAL CHARACTER VOICE

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Abstract. *This thesis explores pragmatic and stylistic equivalence in the English rendering of historical character voice. Examples from Navoiy and Starry Nights show how literal, grammatical or denotatively accurate translation may still alter irony, authority, fear, moral judgement and popular resistance. The study argues that translators should evaluate an utterance as a speech act embedded in a social relationship and compensate for losses of implicature, register and figurative force.*

Keywords: *pragmatic equivalence, stylistic equivalence, character voice, speech act, historical fiction, irony, metaphor, compensation.*

Character voice in a historical novel is created through the interaction of vocabulary, syntax, figurative language, forms of address, social position and implied attitude. A ruler's hesitation, a poet-statesman's counsel and a commoner's ironic question cannot be translated adequately by transferring propositional content alone. Each utterance performs an action: it may warn, justify, accuse, console, resist or ridicule. Pragmatic equivalence concerns the preservation of these communicative functions, while stylistic equivalence concerns the linguistic manner through which they are performed.

Nida's dynamic equivalence shifts attention from formal correspondence to the response of the receptor [1]. Newmark distinguishes semantic translation,

which follows the source text's contextual meaning closely, from communicative translation, which seeks a comparable effect on the target reader [2]. Koller's model additionally separates denotative, connotative, text-normative, pragmatic and formal-aesthetic equivalence [3]. These frameworks suggest that a translation may be accurate at one level and deficient at another. Historical dialogue therefore requires a layered evaluation rather than a binary judgement of correct or incorrect.

In Navoiy, Husayn Boyqaro says, "Qon to'kmoq fikri menda ham yo'q," translated as "I do not think of shedding blood" [4, p. 459; 5, p. 325]. The English sentence communicates rejection of bloodshed, yet the phrase "menda ham" signals alignment with another position and contributes to the ruler's emotional hesitation. "I, too, have no desire to shed blood" better preserves the interpersonal relation and the connotative tone. The example illustrates a frequent problem: the loss of a small discourse element can subtly reshape the psychological profile of a historical figure.

The following statement, "bo'yniga tayoq urmoq otaning vazifasidir," is translated as "the duty of father hit him with a stick on his neck." The source expression uses a culturally grounded disciplinary metaphor. The literal rendering is grammatically defective and changes moral counsel into an image of crude physical violence. A version such as "it is a father's duty to discipline a wayward son firmly" sacrifices the concrete stick but preserves the directive speech act and the ethical position attributed to Navoiy. This is pragmatic compensation: a formal feature is reduced in order to prevent a more serious functional distortion.

Political metaphor also shapes character relations. The phrase "har qadamda sizga tosh otadi" presents Majiddin's hostility as repeated stone-throwing. The translation "is trying to denigrate you" gives a plausible interpretation, but its

abstract verb narrows the threat to reputation. The Uzbek metaphor evokes continuous attack and potential political harm. “He casts stones at you at every turn” retains the image, whereas “he attacks you at every turn” preserves the frequency and hostility but neutralises the material metaphor. The choice depends on whether the surrounding English can support the figurative expression without ambiguity.

The socio-political voice of ordinary people is especially vulnerable to stylistic levelling. In Navoiy, the complaint that Majiddin “o‘z xayolxonasidan haftada yangi zakot to‘qib chiqarmoqda” combines invention, ridicule and anger at arbitrary taxation [4, p. 188]. “Majiddin every week invents new taxes” communicates the event but weakens the speaker’s ironic evaluation and generalises zakot into taxes. “Every week Majiddin spins yet another zakat levy out of his own fancy” retains both the image of fabrication and the historical term. The expression is slightly marked in English, but that markedness reflects the speaker’s deliberate sarcasm.

The proverb “och qornim, tinch qulog‘im” is rendered literally as “Emptiness in the stomach, but silence in the ears.” Its components are recognisable, but the English lacks proverbial rhythm and the implied preference for poverty over official harassment. “An empty stomach is better than troubled ears” more clearly restores the evaluative comparison. If the administrative context is already established, there is no need to over-explain the agents of oppression. Pragmatic equivalence here is achieved through restructuring rather than word-level correspondence.

Irony depends strongly on sentence type. Arslonqul’s question “Ko‘rgan tomoshalarigiz badaliga haq to‘lamaysizlarmi?” is a rhetorical accusation directed

at those who suffer the ruler's lavish festivities and subsequent taxation. A declarative English version beginning "We must also pay..." reports an obligation but removes the dialogic sting of the question. "And are you not expected to pay for the spectacle you have seen?" maintains the interrogative form and the sarcastic implication. Preserving speech-act type is therefore an important dimension of pragmatic equivalence.

In *Starry Nights*, Tohir's father responds to military danger through a chain of questions: "Bu ne ko'rgulik?", "podsholar sal murosa qilsalar bo'lmaydimi?" and "hammasi bir-biriga qarindosh emish-ku" [6, p. 9]. These are not requests for information. They voice the common people's moral judgement of dynastic conflict. The direct translation contains grammatical interference that makes the speaker sound confused, while Ermakova's "How come the shahs and sultans can't agree among themselves so we can all live in peace?" creates a natural oral register and explicitly restores the collective interest [7, p. 25]. The latter is pragmatically stronger because it preserves both complaint and social perspective.

A systematic translation of character voice should begin with a speech-profile map. For each principal figure, the translator can record social status, habitual register, preferred forms of address, recurrent metaphors and dominant speech acts. During revision, each passage should be checked for propositional accuracy, implied evaluation, interpersonal relation, genre-appropriate naturalness and consistency with the character's established voice. Where one feature cannot be retained directly, compensation may operate through syntax, lexical intensity, rhythm or a nearby contextual cue.

Pragmatic adaptation must nevertheless avoid rewriting the character according to modern expectations. Making a historical ruler excessively

conversational, replacing a culturally specific moral judgement with contemporary psychological vocabulary, or intensifying popular protest beyond the source text would create a different ideological profile. The translator's creative freedom is therefore bounded by evidence in the immediate passage and the wider novel. Functional equivalence is not unrestricted naturalisation; it is disciplined reconstruction.

In conclusion, historical character voice emerges from what is said, how it is said and what social action the utterance performs. The examined translations confirm that denotative accuracy can coexist with losses of irony, hesitation, authority, fear and resistance. Pragmatic and stylistic equivalence requires attention to discourse particles, metaphor, rhetorical form, register and cultural implicature. By treating dialogue as socially situated action and using carefully controlled compensation, translators can reproduce not only historical information but also the moral and emotional voices through which the novel interprets history.

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