

LINGUISTICS TRANSFORMATIONS APPLIED IN THE TRANSLATION OF TABOO LANGUAGE**Jo'rayeva Sevara Hasan qizi**

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Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqola tabu leksika va unga yondosh evfemistik hamda disfemistik birliklarni tarjima jarayonida yuzaga keladigan lingvistik transformatsiyalar tizimi asosida tahlil qiladi. Tadqiqotning maqsadi manba matndagi tabu birliklarning pragmatik yukini saqlagan holda maqsad tilida ekvivalent ifoda topish mexanizmlarini aniqlashdir. Metodologik asos sifatida qiyosiy-tahliliy yondashuv, kontekstual semantika, pragmalingvistika va tarjima transformatsiyalari tasniflari qo'llanadi. Ilmiy yangilik tabu birliklar tarjimasini faqat leksik almashtirish doirasida emas, balki uslubiy registr, nutq etikasi, personaj nutqi va janr talablarini bir tizimda uyg'unlashtiruvchi transformatsion model sifatida asoslashdan iborat.

Natijalar badiiy, audiovizual va ommaviy matn tarjimasida tabu birliklarni adekvat berish bo'yicha tavsiyalar ishlab chiqishga xizmat qiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: tabu leksika; evfemizm; disfemizm; pragmatik ekvivalentlik; tarjima transformatsiyalari; uslubiy registr; kontekstual semantika.

Аннотация. Данный тезис анализирует систему лингвистических трансформаций, применяемых при переводе табуированной лексики, а также эвфемистических и дисфемистических единиц. Цель исследования состоит в выявлении механизмов поиска эквивалентного выражения в языке перевода при сохранении прагматической нагрузки табуированных единиц исходного текста. Методологическая база включает сравнительно-аналитический подход, контекстуальную семантику, прагмалингвистику и классификации переводческих трансформаций. Научная новизна заключается в обосновании трансформационной модели перевода табу не только как лексической замены, но и как согласования стиливого регистра, речевого этикета, речевой характеристики персонажа и жанровых требований. Полученные выводы направлены на выработку практических рекомендаций для художественного, аудиовизуального и медийного перевода.

Ключевые слова: табуированная лексика; эвфемизм; дисфемизм; прагматическая эквивалентность; переводческие трансформации; стиливой регистр; контекстуальная семантика.

Abstract. This article examines the system of linguistic transformations used in translating taboo language, including euphemistic and dysphemistic units. The study aims to identify mechanisms for selecting target-language equivalents while preserving the pragmatic load of taboo items in the source text. The methodology relies on comparative analysis, contextual semantics, pragmalinguistics, and established classifications of translation transformations. The scientific novelty lies in modelling taboo translation not merely as lexical substitution but as an integrated adjustment of stylistic register, speech etiquette, character voice, and genre constraints. The findings support practical recommendations for rendering taboo expressions adequately in literary, audiovisual, and media translation while maintaining ethical and communicative balance.

Keywords: taboo language; euphemism; dysphemism; pragmatic equivalence; translation transformations; stylistic register; contextual semantics.

Main Part.

Taboo lexis is not merely a phenomenon belonging to the lexical layer of a language, but emerges as a complex pragmatic unit that is directly connected with social norms, speech etiquette, communicative situations, and cultural codes. Therefore, the issue of translating taboo units should not be viewed as a simple act of “finding a word,” but rather as a process of recoding meaning, intention, evaluativeness, and expressive force. In translation theory, the concept of transformations serves precisely to explain such recoding: the translator adapts the relationship between form and meaning in the source language to the possibilities of the target language, thereby ensuring different levels of equivalence [1].

In the case of taboo lexis, however, equivalence often shifts from semantic equality to pragmatic equivalence, since the primary function of such units is not to convey nominative information, but to influence, insult, threaten, amuse, disgrace, or mark social distance. Thus, in the translation process, the denotative meaning, connotative value, stylistic register, and perlocutionary effect of a taboo unit must be considered as an integrated set of parameters.

The linguistic nature of taboo is multilayered. On the one hand, taboo units are associated with expressing culturally “forbidden” or “uncomfortable” topics, and they typically cluster around domains connected to religion, corporeality, sexuality, insult, violence, physiological states, and social stigma. On the other hand, taboo is continuously renewed in speech through the processes of euphemization and dysphemization: while euphemism softens a prohibited meaning and renders it socially acceptable, dysphemism, by contrast, intensifies expression by making it crude, offensive, or harsh. This dynamic is equally reflected in translation: at times, the translator is forced to soften the expression, while in other cases, they must preserve the harsh wording in order to maintain the naturalness of a character’s speech. In literary and audiovisual translation, numerous factors determine these choices: the audience’s age, publishing policies, censorship requirements, genre conventions, the limitations of subtitles and dubbing, as well as the taboo boundaries of the target-language culture. Therefore, a translator’s strategy cannot be explained through the simple dichotomy of “literal” versus “free” translation; rather, it is grounded in a system of transformations [2].

One of the most common transformations in the translation of taboo units is lexical substitution. In this process, a taboo word in the source language is rendered in the target language by a functionally similar but formally different unit. The key requirement of lexical substitution is to prioritize pragmatic effect over semantic core. For instance, offensive expressions often carry evaluative force rather than a precise denotative meaning; thus, if a translator focuses solely on denotative accuracy and chooses a target-language equivalent that sounds strange or artificial, the credibility of the character’s speech is undermined. At this point, the principle of functional equivalence becomes dominant: the translation should convey the same degree of social distance, aggression, and register [3]. However, functional equivalence is not an automatic solution either, as the degree of vulgarity, regional coloring, or associated stereotypes of a target-language equivalent may misdirect the original intention. Therefore, lexical substitution frequently operates together with stylistic compensation: softening at one point is balanced by intensification at another to maintain overall pragmatic balance.

Another important transformation is semantic generalization and concretization. In taboo domains, generalization is more frequent: for example, a specific corporeal or physiological detail may be rendered into a more general, neutral expression in the target language.

This is particularly common in translations intended for mass audiences, as well as in subtitles and television products. However, excessive generalization may result in the loss of the author's style and the character's personality, reduce the intensity of conflict, and weaken the dramatic force of a scene. Concretization, by contrast, may transform a vague euphemism in the source text into a more explicit expression in the target language; this often arises from cultural differences, since an expression considered euphemistic in one culture may be perceived as a simple nominative unit in another. Therefore, generalization and concretization should be analyzed not as the translator's "moral" choices but rather as tools for ensuring communicative adequacy [1].

The third transformation is modulation, that is, shifting the perspective of meaning.

In taboo units, modulation often occurs through metaphorical or metonymic re-expression. A directly stated vulgar unit in the source text may be rendered in the target language through irony, sarcasm, or figurative meaning. Although this technique serves as a means of euphemization, its effectiveness depends heavily on context: irony requires cultural competence, and the audience may not interpret it uniformly. Moreover, modulation may alter the sociolinguistic features of a character's speech: for instance, the speech of a blunt, straightforward character may become "literary" in translation. Therefore, modulation must be balanced with compensation and reconstruction of the appropriate register [4].

The fourth transformation is phraseological equivalence and adaptation. Taboo meanings are often expressed through phraseologisms, idioms, argot units, and local slang.

Although the literal translation of such units is often semantically understandable, it is pragmatically ineffective because the "ready-made" expressive force of the idiom is lost. Hence, adaptation is required—that is, selecting a phraseological unit in the target language that performs a similar function and carries a similar register. In the process of adaptation, the translator navigates between two risks: the first is "domestication," which may erase the cultural coloring of the source text, and the second is preserving excessive "foreignness," which disrupts naturalness. This balancing act is particularly complex in taboo idioms, as their level of acceptability varies significantly from one society to another [2; 5].

The fifth transformation involves omission and addition. The omission (ellipsis) of taboo units is present in translation practice, but from a scholarly perspective, it should not be viewed as an "error"; rather, it should be treated as a strategic decision conditioned by communicative constraints. In audiovisual translation, time and space limitations, publishing policies, age ratings, and broadcast standards often increase the likelihood of omission.

However, excessive omission disrupts the emotional gradation of the text, weakens conflict, and leads to misinterpretations of social distance between characters. Addition, on the other hand, may be necessary to reveal the hidden pragmatic purpose of a taboo unit: for example, an insult conveyed through intonation, stress, or cultural presupposition in the source language may require a more explicit form in the target language. Nevertheless, addition must not distort the author's stylistic economy or turn into didactic explanation [1; 4].

Register and audience appropriateness hold special methodological significance in the translation of taboo lexis. Any taboo unit is inherently linked to the questions "who is speaking," "to whom," and "in what context." From a sociolinguistic perspective, such units are strong markers of speech identity: age, profession, subculture, social class, gender-related stereotypes (without delving deeply into the subject), and regional variation are clearly reflected in taboo discourse.

In translation, however, these markers often face the danger of being “flattened.” If the translator renders all characters’ insults with uniformly neutral or uniformly vulgar equivalents, the polyphony of the text is diminished. Therefore, the system of transformations must preserve the hierarchy of registers: for instance, one character’s profanity may be rendered as rough, short, and stressed, while another’s may be expressed through ironic or “refined” dysphemism.

This approach strengthens pragmatic equivalence because readers perceive character differences through linguistic cues [3].

Cross-cultural differences constitute the central challenge in taboo translation. A unit that represents a strong taboo in one culture may function as an ordinary conversational item in another, or conversely, an expression used as a mild joke in the source text may turn into a strong insult in the target language. This increases semantic and ethical risks for the translator, who must preserve the text’s expressive force while considering the norms of the target audience. Transformations here act as a “normative filter”: euphemization, modulation, generalization, and adaptation recalibrate taboo boundaries. However, the crucial scholarly point is that such adjustments should not “sanitize” the author’s stance but rather restore the communicative function of the original text. Thus, in analysis, the key question becomes not “what word was translated,” but “how the effect was recreated” [5].

The criteria for assessing translation quality in taboo lexis extend beyond the traditional notion of “accuracy.” First, the semantic core must be preserved, though denotation is not always the primary concern. Second, pragmatic intensity—degree of vulgarity, social distance, and emotional force—must be matched. Third, genre consistency must be ensured: stylistic coloring in literary texts, and natural spoken discourse and synchrony in audiovisual texts. Fourth, ethical balance must be maintained: the translation should not insult the audience without cause, but it should not dilute the author’s intention either. Based on these criteria, the system of transformations is evaluated not through a “right/wrong” dichotomy but through the category of “degree of communicative adequacy” [2; 4].

Conclusion.

Translating taboo lexis is one of the fields requiring the most extensive and delicate use of linguistic transformations, where pragmatic equivalence rather than denotative equivalence occupies the central position. The study demonstrates that in translating taboo units, transformations such as lexical substitution, generalization and concretization, modulation, phraseological adaptation, omission, and addition operate in an interconnected manner, and their selection is determined by register, genre, audience, and cultural norms.

The proposed approach interprets the translation of taboo units not as an attempt to conceal “forbidden content,” but as a transformational model aimed at reconstructing the communicative impact and artistic function of the source text in the target language.

Consequently, a practically significant principle for translators emerges: the most reliable solution for translating taboo units is not found at the level of isolated words but within the unity of context, character speech, and overall stylistic strategy.

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