

TRANSLATION OF INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS

The article elucidates translation techniques in reproducing English Indirect Speech Acts into Ukrainian within the framework of pragmatics. A special attention is given to indirect directives. In conclusions, an attempt is made to analyze these techniques and their relevance for teaching English.

Key words: direct speech act, indirect speech act, implicitness, politeness, contrastive pragmatics.

Our words do not always reveal our genuine intentions. What we really mean is often implied rather than explicitly stated. Let us look at an example:

“Come on”, he said, “I’ll give you a lift.” In his fragile state, Rebus felt this to be the nicest kindest thing anyone had said to him in weeks. “Are you sure you have room?” he said. (Rankin)

The underlined utterance is a direct commissive offering a lift to the inspector. At the same time, it could be treated as an indirect directive, carrying the meaning of an imperative: *“Get in the car.”*

Speaking on the difference between direct and indirect speech acts, **J. Searle** (1991) suggests that a speaker using a direct speech act wants to communicate the meaning that the words conventionally express. There is a direct relationship between the form and the function. On the other hand, the use of an indirect speech act shows that the meaning the speaker wants to communicate is different from what lies on the surface. The form and the function are not directly related. There is an underlying pragmatic meaning; and one speech act is performed through another speech act. For example, the commissive *“I’ll give you a lift”* has the function of a directive. However, the same utterance can be a statement, a request, a command or a joke. It is very important for the translator to decipher the message correctly. Very often the speaker’s intention differs from what the utterance seems to say. The sentence *“I don’t know”* may be not only a statement, but also an expression of hesitation. In the first case, it will be translated as *“Я не знаю.”* In the second case, the translation *“Та як вам сказати?”* will be more appropriate. The utterance *“Is Mr. Smith there, please?”* is not a question but a disguised request meaning *“Запросіть до телефону пана Сміта?”*

Indirect speech acts are part of everyday life. It is not always easy to give a consistent classification of utterances into indirect and direct speech acts because many of them operate on both levels. It is not uncommon for an utterance to have more than one function: representative, commissive, directive, expressive and so on.

J. Searle's classical example of an indirect speech act is the utterance *“Can you pass the salt?”* We can interpret it as a general question and give a yes/no answer

without breaking any linguistic norms. However, more often than not hearers perceive it as a request. Likewise, the utterance *"There's a fly in your soup"* may be both a simple assertion and a warning not to eat the soup. It is all about the context. The question *"What's the time?"* may be understood as the suggestion for an unwelcome guest to leave, if the host is looking for an excuse to get rid of him. Analogously, the statement *"I wouldn't do this if I were you"* has the implicit force of an imperative: *"Don't do it!"*

Indirect speech acts constitute one of the numerous forms of politeness. Indirectness is associated with politeness to such a degree that it has become common to use interrogative rather than imperative sentences to express orders or requests. This is especially true with people who are not on familiar terms with you. Here is an interesting example. Many British restaurants, bookshops and petrol stations display the sign *"Thank you for not smoking."* An expressive thanking speech act is used instead of the imperative directive *"No smoking"* because the former sounds more polite and friendly than the latter.

Any social dimension can influence the use of indirect speech acts. Of special importance are the formality of the context, the reasonableness of the task and social distance (differences of status, roles, age, gender, education, class, etc.). Social distance can give the interlocutors power and authority. Those who have a less dominant role tend to resort to indirectness. For example, in the following extract from a short story by M. Spark, a directive (advice) is expressed indirectly, with the help of a descriptive representative: *"No need to trek all that way to the Furnace."* And Jimmy pointed out in support. *"The mist descends."* "All right", said surprisingly, for he hardly ever accepted any of our advice. (Spark)

The notion of the speech act is of paramount importance to linguistic studies. It adds a different dimension to the semantics of the utterance by treating it as action that the speaker intends to perform. Speech Act Theory can also be beneficial for Translation Studies, specifically for determining whether the translated passage is equivalent to the source text. The propositional content of the utterances is not the only thing the translator needs to focus on; the illocutionary force of the speech units must also be interpreted correctly. A translation may prove to be communicatively inadequate if the translator failed to give a proper interpretation of the speech acts.

The number and range of illocutionary functions remain almost the same in different languages. The difference can be observed in the use of certain speech acts and the choice of forms for their realization in different situations. These restrictions are caused by socio-cultural factors. The cultural relativity of illocutionary functions determines the necessity of a contrastive study. In India, for example, the expressive speech act of 'praising' and 'congratulating' a person on their appearance can be expressed by the utterance *'How fat you are!'* because weight is an indicator of prosperity and health in that country. In Britain, the same words are used in the speech acts of 'criticizing', since health, education and fashion have conditioned public into thinking that being slim is beautiful.

When official documents are translated, illocutionary forces of certain utterances often have to be changed due to differences in cultural norms. For

example, a word-for-word translation of a business letter from a language where directness is customary may result in unintentional offence. The Ukrainian utterances „*Будь ласка, повідомте нам про...*”; „*Будемо вдячні, якщо Ви повідомите нам про...*” need to be translated as ‘*we should be grateful if you would let us know...*’ or ‘*we should like to suggest...*’ rather than ‘*kindly inform us immediately of your intentions ...*’ or ‘*we are sending you instructions....*’ The former are conventional ways of requesting a favour in English.

The English question “*Have you got a match?*” is a request, while the Ukrainian utterance “*Чи маєте Ви сірники?*” carries two meanings. The speaker either asks you for matches or offers them to you. Only the utterance “*У Вас немає сірників?*” pronounced with interrogative intonation and a stress falling on “*немає*” is unambiguously a request.

When advice is offered in Ukrainian, speakers prefer not to use modal verbs (*могти, хотіти*) that would make the speech act indirect. Preference is given to direct speech acts of advice.

To see off a guest, a Ukrainian would use causative verbs, for example, “*Заходіть. Телефонуйте. Пишіть.*” This form of communication often provokes an inadequate response from a foreigner. Instead of “*Дякую!*” prescribed by the Ukrainian speech etiquette, the bewildered guest will say: “*With great pleasure!*” or ask, “*When exactly should I come? What for?*”

If a passenger wants to get off a crowded bus, he/she is not supposed to ask the passengers blocking the way if they are getting off or not the way people do in Ukraine. In USA public transport a direct speech act would be taken as meddling in other people’s personal matters. Instead a request to make way must be disguised as a statement: “*Excuse me, I am getting off*” or as a question in the first person: “*Could I get off please?*”

Indirect speech acts must always be taken into account when teaching a foreign language. In many cases they make the communicative center of a conversation and sound much more natural than direct speech acts.

To ask for information, native speakers do not often use direct speech acts because they are not suitable from the point of view of speech etiquette. That is why to master the art of conversation, students must be able to use indirect declarative questions, e.g. “*I’d like to know if you are interested in football*” or “*I wonder if we could be pen-pals*”, etc.

English lessons for the Ukrainians must include tips for making English less direct, i.e. a list of specific rules on how to “soften” the directness of speech with the help of indirect speech acts. A typical exercise would suggest: “When you present your point of view, use questions rather than statements. For example, say: “*Wouldn't that be too late?*” instead of “*That will be too late.*”

For a translation to be equivalent to the source text, the interpreter needs to keep in mind the illocutionary force of each utterance. “The translator will seek to relay the illocutionary force of each speech act in turn” (**Hatim, Munday** 2004:61). In other words, in order to translate *I have compiled a bibliography, which I should be happy to send...* - the translator should know that the first speech act is a representative; the second one is a commissive. In reality, however, a fairly literal

translation will in many cases produce the desired effect. When a translator deals with ritualistic performatives of the type “*I pronounce you man and wife*”, “*I bet*”, a literal translation will not be acceptable. The cultural norm of the target language may call for a specific speech formula. This is the reason many linguists find it surprising not to find these formulas in bilingual dictionaries. Compare the translation of a performative: “*Anthony said with a grin: “The legal life’s narrowing! I’m all for crime. Here’s to it” (Christy) Ентоні усміхнувся: „У вас, юристів, надто обмежені інтересю А мене злочини не лишають байдужим. Я виголошую тост за злочини!”*”

The ability to convey illocutionary functions properly is an essential aspect of translation skills. The study of different cultural ways of speaking is sometimes called **Contrastive Pragmatics**. These studies increasingly reveal that we all speak with what might be called a pragmatic accent. It means that certain communicative aspects of our conversation are understood without being said.

If we have any hope at all of developing a capacity for cross-cultural communication, we will have to devote much more attention to understanding the nature of pragmatic accent in different languages.

LITERATURE

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У статті проаналізовані засоби відтворення англійських непрямих мовленнєвих актів, зокрема директивів українською мовою. Оскільки англійська вербальна поведінка характеризується високою ступінню імпліцитності і опосередкованості, некатегоричності і компромісності щодо інтересів комунікантів, у перекладі директивних висловлювань часто спостерігається транспонування мовленнєвих актів – непрямий мовленнєвий акт може перетворюватися в прямий у перекладі українською мовою. У висновках зроблено спробу узагальнити основні засоби експлікації імпліцитних змістів висловлювання у перекладі.

Ключові слова: прямий мовленнєвий акт, непрямий мовленнєвий акт, імпліцитність, ввічливість, контрастивна прагматика.

В статье анализируются способы перевода английских косвенных речевых актов, в частности директивов на украинский язык. Поскольку речевое поведение англичан характеризуется высокой степенью импліцитности, опосредованности, некатегоричности и компромиссности, в передаче директивных высказываний часто происходит транспонирование речевых актов – косвенный речевой акт становится прямым в переводе на украинский язык. В выводах сделана попытка обобщить основные способы экспликации импліцитных смыслов высказывания в переводе.

Ключевые слова: прямой речевой акт, косвенный речевой акт, имплицитность, вежливость, контрастивная прагматика.