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Translation from Russian into Spanish of the Modal Indetermination in Dostoevsky's Novel *The Brothers Karamazov*

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This article is based on the "Sapir-Whorf Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis," which argues that every language gives its speakers a particular kind of world-view. In this sense, it could be said that, typologically, Russian and Spanish work in different directions. In Russian, the most important typological categories are space and object; in Spanish, they are time and event. In the present article, we analyze the particle как бы in the novel The Brothers Karamazov by Fyodor Dostoevsky and the problems associated with the translation of this particle into Spanish. We have chosen Dostoevsky rather than other writers because of his specific style of writing. Words and expressions that are common in the Russian language, acquire a special meaning in Dostoevsky's books.

Keywords: world-view, modal indetermination, Dostoevsky, Russian, Spanish.

Introduction

One of the most interesting aspects of language studies is understanding the world-view of native speakers. In a communicative act like translation, in which two languages interfere with each other, the translator faces the challenge of understanding the different ways speakers of these languages conceptualize reality.

Essentially, theories of world-view were developed in the "Sapir and Whorf theory" (Sapir, 1921; Whorf, 1960, 1966) or "Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis". According to this theory, a language gives its speakers its own particular way of seeing the world. This theory was reflected in the scientific works of A. Wierzbicka (1996), U. Apresyan (1995) and others. According to the

works of these authors the main points of the theory are:

1. Each language has its own way of conceptualizing reality. All native speakers of a particular language share the same collective philosophy formed by the meanings that are expressed in the language.
2. The typical way of conceptualizing reality for a given language includes both elements that are common to all languages (which helps us compare different languages) as well as specific traits which allow speakers of different languages to see the world in accordance with their native language.

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All languages have their own characteristics. The specific typological characteristics of each language are of interest both to scientists and translators. Russian linguists such as Arutyunova (1976, 1988, 1998), Apresyan (1995), Tsivyan (1990), Yakovleva (1994), Bulygina (1997), Shmelev (1997, 2002), Gak (1998), and Nikolaeva (1983) reflect these theories in their work.

Obviously, the typological differences between languages make their study more attractive. All languages are different and this becomes even clearer when the typological difference between the languages is greater. Literature helps us realize the extent to which a language can acquire particular functional categories. In general, we can state that, typologically, Russian and Spanish have different visions of reality. In terms of typological categories, *space*, *time*, *object* and *event* demonstrate that Russian and Spanish work in different directions. In the Russian language, the categories of *space* and *object* dominate, as opposed to Spanish, in which *time* and *event* take precedence. The individual, as a part of this reality, acquires a special vision. Spanish is an egocentric language (there is usually an active subject that executes the action expressed by the verb). On the other hand, in Russian individuals often seem to detach themselves from what is happening, which can be corroborated by a large number of impersonal constructions and subjects in the dative case.

Compared to Spanish, Russian has many peculiarities in terms of categories of impersonality which are expressed by forms of the subject that do not necessarily have to be in the nominative case—e.g. *мне не хочется, сегодня не пишется, хорошо поется, что-то не получилось, мне нужно*—or the category of indetermination or existential constructions—e.g. *У него есть машина* (here, the main stress falls on the nominative part instead of the verb).

Clearly, several linguistic phenomena can potentially attract our attention in a comparative study of Russian and Spanish.

In order to analyze the problems of translation we have chosen Dostoevsky. This can be explained by the fact that in his books typical Russian words and expressions acquire special connotations. We can distinguish the following:

- adverbs which indicate imminence like *вдруг/ de pronto*,
- impersonal constructions,
- adverbs and constructions that reflect uncertainty, such as *как будто/ al parecer, будто /como si , словно/ como, como si, вроде/ como, parecido a, похоже/ parece, кажется/ parece*,
- indetermination, both modal *как бы* and adjectival *какой-то, какой-нибудь, кое-какой, некий*.

This first evaluation of a phrase can help a student of Russian predict possible connotations of certain functional categories. In translation, the problem can occur when the text in the original language expresses peculiarities that, when translated, sound unnatural to the target language reader. The present article is mainly dedicated to the study of indetermination in general, and to modal indetermination expressed by the particle *как бы*, in particular.

In the Russian language, this functional category is extremely common but despite this, Russian authors express it in different ways. For example Bunin, who is famous for his style, tends to omit the features of indetermination leaving the reader with the impression that something is missing. For our study, we have chosen Dostoevsky and his novel *The Brothers Karamazov* because in his works indetermination acquires special connotations.

The main purpose of our article is to create an exercise that will assist a translator during the reflective phase and before the translation of any

text. When translating an author like Dostoevsky into a target language that is typologically distant, e.g. Spanish, the translator needs to analyze the author's style in depth. To do so, a translator has to

1. analyze the relevance of the particle *как бы* in the original text and evaluate how the meaning changes if it is present or if it is omitted,
2. evaluate the level of usage of the potential target language equivalents,
3. find the best way to achieve a high quality translation into the target language text.

For the purpose of this study we have chosen *Полное собрание сочинений Достоевского* published in 1994 and edited by Leksica, and its three translations into Spanish: the first by Ledesma Miranda published in 1999 by Edaf, with a preface by Guillermo Sauzo Pascual; the second, by Augusto Vidal, edited by Natalia Uzhanova and published by Catedra in 1999; and the last, by Rafael Cansinos Assens, published by Aguilar in 1961.

Before analyzing the central issue of our study, we offer a short overview of the contents of the novel and of general features of Dostoevsky's style.

The contents of the novel and an analysis of Dostoevsky's style

The Brothers Karamazov was Dostoevsky's last novel. The plot is that of a detective story that discusses profound questions of both morality and philosophy. The murder of Fyodor Karamazov serves as the motive for this discussion. According to Guillermo Sauzo Pascual, Dostoevsky "uses the morality of human acts in this particular case the murder to analyze them from all points of view" (Sauzo Pascual, 1999: 29). The accusation of Dmitry (an innocent man) when the actual murderer was Smerdiakov (who simply carried

out the will of others) and the indirect guilt of Ivan (who indirectly caused what happened) are at the center of the novel.

The story-line unveils a number of conflicts facing human beings. We have to remember that Dostoevsky was first of all a great psychologist. Psychological and philosophical reality surrounding his characters is more important for him than the story-line. The moral and psychological conflicts that interest Dostoevsky are introduced by means of the characters.

In *The Brothers Karamazov*, we can divide the characters into two main opposing groups. On the one hand, the negative characters: Fyodor Pavlovich (the father) and Smerdiakov (servant); on the other, the spiritually pure characters: Alyosha (the younger son) and Zosima (the starets). It is more difficult to categorize Dmitry (the elder brother accused of his father's murder) and we gain a more profound understanding of his character from the direct conflict between them that Dostoevsky creates.

Taking this into account, we might suggest that Dostoevsky put all his thoughts and lifelong concerns as a writer into his final novel.

However, researchers of Dostoevsky's works still argue about his attitude towards his characters. There are two main ways of interpreting this: some think Dostoevsky allows his characters to live their lives, pretending not to interfere with the plot, whereas others believe he leads us to certain conclusions that he himself had reached.

Despite this controversy, it seems clear that Dostoevsky's intention is to give his characters a free will. That is why we observe a surprising skepticism towards their behavior, which is expressed by the elements that indicate indetermination.

From the very beginning, the characters act with a complete independence that is even expressed in the language. The author enters their

inner world and tries to reflect this by creating conflicts. Dostoevsky describes characters that, in theory, are excluded from reality, but in his novel they are permanently placed in specific situations: “scandals, hysterics, anger, sufferings are almost normal states for Dostoevsky’s characters and they explain the lack of correspondence between the psychological discourse and their behavior” (Arutyunova, 1999: 856). In this way, the author tries to make the plot sound more realistic: “Everything my characters say in the text I have sent you is based on reality” said Dostoevsky in a letter to his editor (Grossman, 1959: 516).

The structures that are the center of our analysis can be found precisely in the psychological context of the novel and in the parts of the text that express the author’s understanding.

For the author, “the understanding of INNER MAN is something that cannot be reached by both the observer (narrator) and any person or the individual himself” (Arutyunova, 1999: 849). In order to reflect the psychological aspect of his characters, Dostoevsky uses many lexemes that express indetermination: *как-то, почему-то, зачем-то, какой-то, как бы*, among others. The author appeals to his characters’ subconscious throughout the novel, which influences its whole structure: “Dostoevsky invites us to contemplate the novel, the inner structure of which is not absolutely complete” (Arutyunova, 1999:849). In other words, Dostoevsky refuses to be an omnipresent author and control all the details of the plot. For translators, in many cases it is very difficult to understand and transmit the lexemes which express indetermination and give additional meaning to the text.

Analysis of the usage of *как бы*

After analyzing the philosophical and moral aspects of Dostoevsky’s novels, we will try to investigate how they are reflected by means of the particle *как бы*.

We can define *как бы* as an operator of approximation, and the author uses it to express a subjective meaning of what happens in the novel. The usage of this particle helps Dostoevsky clarify the fact that his description does not have to coincide with reality. That is why its usage dominates in his novel. For example: *он как бы дрожал/ parecía como si temblara* and *Он дрожал/ Él temblaba*. The usage of this particle makes it clear that what Dostoevsky writes is a result of his interpretation of reality. Although it may seem obvious, the frequent usage of the particle throughout the text attracts the attention.

Here follows an overview of some parts of the novel *The Brothers Karamazov*:

1. Рассказывали, что молодая супруга выказала при том несравненно более благородства и возвышенности, нежели Федор Павлович, который, как известно теперь, подтибрил у нее тогда же, разом, все ее денежки, до двадцати пяти тысяч, только что она их получила, так что тысячки эти с тех пор решительно как бы канули для нее в воду (Т. 6, p.11) // Dicen que la joven se mostró mucho más digna y noble que Fiodor Pavlovich, el cual le escamoteó desde el principio, como más tarde se supo todo su capital: veinticinco mil rublos de los que ella no volvió a oír jamás (R. Ledesma Miranda p. 43) // Contaban que la joven esposa se mostró mucho más noble y digna que Fiodor Pavlovich, quien, como ahora se sabe, le sustrajo de una vez todo el dinero, los veinticinco mil rublos que acababa de recibir, de modo que, fue como si desde aquel entonces, aquellos miles de rublos se le hubieran caído al río (Augusto Vidal p. 77) // Referían que la joven esposa demostró en esto incomparablemente más nobleza y alteza de miras que Fiodor Pablovich, el cual, según ahora se sabe, le sacó entonces mismo de un golpe todos los dineros, hasta veinticinco mil rublos que recibiera; de modo que esos miles, hasta ahora, para ella, como si

se hubieran caído en el agua. (Rafael Cansinos Assens p. 24).

2. Он прямо ему объявил, что желал бы взять воспитание ребенка на себя. Он долго потом рассказывал, в виде характерной черты, что когда он заговорил с Федором Павловичем о Мите, то тот некоторое время имел вид совершенно не понимающего, о каком таком ребенке идет дело, и даже **как бы** удивился, что у него есть где-то в доме маленький сын (Т. 6, р. 14) // ...**pareció** por un momento no darse cuenta del todo de qué niño se trataba, **e incluso extrañarse de tener un chiquillo en casa** (R. Ledesma Miranda p. 45) // ... *aquél estuvo un buen rato haciendo ver que no comprendía de qué niño se trataba y hasta hizo como si se sorprendiera de tener en su casa, no se sabe dónde, un niño pequeño.* (Augusto Vidal p. 80) // ... *puso éste un rato cara de no entender en absoluto de qué niño se trataba, y hasta pareció asombrarse de que allí, en su casa, hubiera ningún chico* (Rafael Cansinos Assens p. 26).

Dostoevsky's frequent use of this particle leads translators to adopt different strategies.

In the translations analyzed, we observe two tendencies in transmitting the meaning of the particle *как бы*: Ledesma Miranda mostly prefers not to translate it, while Augusto Vidal and Rafael Cansinos Assens usually—but not always—try to transmit the meaning of *как бы*. In the majority of cases, it is very hard to understand why the author uses the particle.

Before analyzing the aforementioned translations, we will try to evaluate the relevance of the particle *как бы* in the text. First of all, we should define the frequency with which the particle *как бы* appears throughout *The Brothers Karamazov* (Arutyunova, 1999: 852).

The usage of *как бы* reflects the lack of correspondence between the action and its meaning. In other words “there is no correspondence between the word and denotation”

(Arutyunova, 1999:853). Other authors usually pay full attention to describing the action, but Dostoevsky goes even further. The independence he gives his characters makes him skeptical and insecure when he describes their behavior. Dostoevsky not only describes actions. Using *как бы*, he makes it clear that he is telling us what he thinks his characters perceive: their feelings, behavior and reactions. In Dostoevsky's concept of the human being, the behavior of the individual has nothing to do with his inner life, that is, with his true feelings. “There does not have to exist any correspondence between the contents and the expression” (Arutyunova, 1999:855).

Arutyunova describes the way *как бы* affects the meaning of the phrase:

1. It serves as the sign of non-correspondence or incomplete correspondence of the external symptom which is correlative to his psychological phenomenon. This psychological phenomenon is more complex than the description that interprets this phenomenon.
2. *It transmits the external symptoms into a different psychological or metaphoric level giving the following word the symbolic meaning.* (Arutyunova, 1999: 858).

Hence, the external features of *как бы* usage may acquire a double meaning which arises from the state of a character (from a psychological point of view) to symbolize more profound circumstances.

We will continue our analysis of some examples and their Spanish translations and try to understand the shades of meaning that are added by the use of *как бы*. First, we will analyze simple examples and continue with the parts we consider most significant. We will add three different translations after each example that will help us compare the strategies chosen by each translator.

3. Он не договорил, **как бы захлебнувшись**, и опустился в бессилии предеревянною лавкой на колени. (Т. 7, p.59) // *No terminó de decirlo, como si se atragantara, y se dejó caer de rodillas impotente ante el banco de madera...* (Augusto Vidal p. 822) // *No terminó, como si le faltase la voz, y se dejó caer en un banco de madera* (R. Ledesma Miranda p. 596) // *No acabó, cual si le faltase el aliento, y desplomándose sin fuerzas, de rodillas, junto al banquito de madera* (Rafael Cansinos Assens p. 437).

There is no doubt that in this phrase Dostoevsky describes more than a simple action; it is even difficult to understand the intensity of the action described. He definitely pays more attention to the description of the tension that the character feels (preoccupation and desperation) than to the physical phenomenon itself (Ilyusha seems to be choking). In other words, the particle *как бы* almost excludes the physical origin of an action in order to find a more profound physiological cause. By using *как бы*, the author makes his interpretation and the sign appear to be joined together, even in the text itself. In this case the three translations analyzed preserve the shades of meaning reflected in the Russian original.

However, *как бы* can also be applied to internal features so that these (physical phenomena) and their further interpretation seem to be united (Arutyunova, 1999:854):

4. Но вдруг он **как бы** сдержал себя. Он стоял и **как бы** что-то обдумывал (Т.7, p. 102) // *Pero se contuvo, parecía meditar* (R. Ledesma Miranda p. 637) // *De pronto pareció que se dominaba. Estaba parado y como si meditara algo* (Augusto Vidal p. 879) // *Pero de pronto pareció dominarse. Estaba parado y recapacitaba* (Rafael Cansinos Assens p. 467).

The translators adopted different strategies for this part of the text. Augusto Vidal chose to maintain the shade of meaning added by *как бы*

in both sentences, while Ledesma Miranda and R. Cansinos Assens decided to keep it in one case and omit it in the other.

Now, we are going to analyze the fragments of text that reflect the most important moments of the novel:

5. Метель еще продолжалась. Первые шаги прошел он бодро, но **вдруг как бы стал шататься**. «Это что-то физическое», - подумал он, усмехнувшись. Какая-то словно радость сошла теперь в его душу (Т.7, p. 137) // *La tormenta continuaba. Al principio marchaba con paso firme pero enseguida empezó a vacilar* (R. Ledesma Miranda p. 666) // *La tempestad de nieve proseguía. Iván caminó de momento con paso firme, mas de pronto pareció como si empezara a tambalearse* (Augusto Vidal p. 919) // *Seguía la ventisca. Avanzó los primeros pasos con animación, pero de pronto empezó a tambalearse* (Rafael Cansinos Assens p. 490).

Here Smerdiakov, after a long conversation with Ivan, confesses to him that he killed his father. This fragment describes how Ivan left the *izba* after the conversation. The “reeling” that is mentioned in the text “*как бы стал шататься*” shows the moment of profound weakness, unnatural for an intelligent and skilled person like Ivan Fyodorovich. Ivan, who decided to tell everything and was even ready to confess to being an accomplice to his father’s murder, experiences an instant of profound weakness. But he does not explain the reason for this. *Как бы* makes it clear that the origin of his “reeling” is not physical but moral. This “reeling” is only the external sign of the growth of the terrible internal tension which the character is experiencing at the time, and it is surprising that at this very moment the character seems to be absolutely sure about the way he is behaving. However, this weakness shows the feeling of concern and insecurity that later invades the protagonist (he decides to

postpone the meeting with a prosecutor until the next day). In this case, only Augusto Vidal tries to preserve the meaning added by *как бы*. Rafael Cansinos Assens omits it and R. Ledesma Miranda, although omitting this particular meaning, translates *шататься* as *vacilar*, a form of a lexeme that balances the physical and psychological aspects.

One of the topics that most preoccupy Dostoevsky is the inner weakness of an individual. The most interesting part in this case is that Ivan, who is an atheist, is assailed by doubt (in the beginning he seems unaffected by religious pressure); throughout the novel he is cool and hardheaded. This inner struggle becomes more evident if we bear in mind the fact that Dostoevsky considers Ivan indirectly responsible for his father's murder, as it was he who in one way or another provoked Smerdiakov into committing the crime.

A situation of similar tension can be found in a conversation between Alyosha and Dmitry:

б. Алеша, говори мне полную правду, как пред господом богом: веришь ты, что я убил, или не веришь? Ты-то, сам-то ты, веришь или нет? Полную правду, не лги! - крикнул он ему исступленно.

Алешу как бы всего покачнуло, а в сердце его, он слышал это, как бы произошло что-то острое (T.7, p.97) Alioscha se tambaleó, se le oprimió el corazón (R. Ledesma Miranda p. 632) // Aliosha tuvo la impresión de que se tambaleaba y sintió como si algo afilado le atravesara el corazón (Augusto Vidal p. 872) // A Aliosha pareció desplomársele todo, y en su corazón sintió, al oír aquello, como si se lo traspasasen (Rafael Cansinos Assens p. 463).

Dmitry tells Alyosha off, making him say whether he thinks he is the murderer. Emotionally involved with Dmitry, Alyosha does not know what to respond, which provokes the following physical reaction: *Алешу как бы всего*

покачнуло, а в сердце его, он слышал это, как бы произошло что-то острое.

These two examples demonstrate the topic of a person's inner weakness. All these reflections have to be made while recognizing a fundamental fact: by using *как бы*, the author tells us that his impression as a mere observer may be erroneous. In this case, Ledesma Miranda prefers to omit the meaning added by *как бы*, while Augusto Vidal and Rafael Cansinos chose to keep it.

We can observe that Dostoevsky as a narrator not only tells us what happens around the characters but he also investigates their inner reality, their feelings and passions, in an attempt to understand them. By using *как бы*, the author invites us to go beyond the description and submerge ourselves in the inner world of a character, thus showing us his own point of view. There are key moments when Dostoevsky seems to refuse to make any blunt affirmations about the characters because, from the moment the story starts, it develops in its own independent way.

Nevertheless, the use of *как бы* is not limited to the cases mentioned above. The use of the particle in the description of Dmitry draws special attention:

7. Дмитрий Федорович, двадцативосьмилетний молодой человек, среднего роста и приятного лица, казался, однако же, гораздо старше своих лет. Был он мускулист, и в нем можно было угадывать значительную физическую силу, тем не менее в лице его выражалось как бы нечто болезненное. Лицо его было худощаво, щеки ввалились, цвет же их отливал какую-то нездоровую желтизной. Довольно большие темные глаза навывкате смотрели хотя, по-видимому, и с твердым упорством, но как-то неопределенно. Даже когда он волновался и говорил с раздражением, взгляд его как бы не повиновался его внутреннему настроению и выражал что-то другое, иногда совсем

не соответствующее настоящей минуте. «Трудно узнать, о чем он думает», - отзывались иной раз разговаривавшие с ним (Т.6, p.77) // Sin embargo, su rostro adelgazado deflácidas mejillas y su tinte amarillento malsano le daban una expresión enfermiza... Incluso cuando estaba nervioso y hablaba irritablemente, su mirada no se correspondía con el estado de su alma y expresaba otra cosa a veces en completa desarmonía con el momento presente (Ledesma Miranda p. 105) // No obstante tenía su cara un aire algo enfermizo... Habría dicho que incluso cuando se inquietaba y hablaba irritado, la mirada no se subordinaba a su estado de ánimo y expresaba alguna cosa distinta, que, a veces, no se correspondía en absoluto con el momento dado (Augusto Vidal p. 159 // No obstante expresar su rostro algo enfermizo... Hasta cuando se emocionaba y hablaba con nerviosidad su mirada no parecía responder a su disposición interior y expresaba algo distinto, que en modo alguno guardaba relación con el momento presente (Rafael Cansinos Assens p. 70).

The way in which the different authors translated this fragment shows their respective strategies in transmitting the meaning of the lexeme. Ledesma Miranda and Augusto Vidal avoid transmitting the meaning of *как бы* (it is even more evident in the case of Vidal, because he normally tends to transfer its meaning). However, Rafael Cansinos Assens preserves its meaning in the second case and omits it in the first. The reason the first two translators omitted the particle might have been that the precautions Dostoevsky adopts by adding this shade of meaning of assumption to *как бы* seemed excessively artificial to them.

We have to point out that in his description the author uses the particle *как бы* on purpose, because he only applies it to the elements he does not want to sound definite about: *как бы не*

повиновался его внутреннему настроению, в лице его выражалось как бы нечто болезненное. Speaking of Dmitry, in order to show the psychological features of the individual, the author does not just describe his physical aspects. This is in contrast not only to the other elements of description but also to its absence in other descriptions, e.g. that of Alyosha (Book 1, Chapter 4). This might be due to the fact that the narrator (Dostoevsky), knowing his characters, probably has a more profound understanding of Alyosha's personality than Dmitry does.

Conclusion

What should a translator do with this phenomenon? Can the translation of the phenomenon change the meaning of the novel to such an extent that the Spanish reader will find it difficult to understand the text? Do we need to use the strategy of equivalence or adequacy? Does possible adequacy spoil the result in the target language—in this case Spanish—too much? Is it appropriate to adapt the contents of the text in order to facilitate its understanding in the target language?

Following our analysis, we consider the importance of *как бы* to understanding the text is obvious. The fact that Dostoevsky uses this particle frequently, and on purpose, and only if the shade of meaning which is added by *как бы* is necessary, proves this (without paying attention to the categories of impersonality and indetermination in the Russian world).

Despite the fact that this tendency does exist in the Russian world-view, we believe that there is no reason why the translator should omit this aspect of text, even on the pretext of adequacy. In the Spanish translation, the presence of elements which are equivalent to *как бы* (*al parecer, en cierto modo, de alguna forma, como si*) not only helps us understand the text correctly, it also enables us to catch its subtle shades of meaning.

The reader has to bear in mind the fact that he is reading a novel which was originally written in a language that is considerably different from his own mother tongue.

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**Перевод с русского на испанский
модальной индетерминации
в романе Ф.М. Достоевского
«Братья Карамазовы»**

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Теория картины мира, столь актуальная в современной науке, получила свое развитие во многом благодаря теории лингвистической относительности Сапира и Уорфа, согласно которой язык наделяет своих носителей особенной формой восприятия мира. Категории пространства/времени и предмета/события – основные и универсальные, с типологической точки зрения - проектируются разнонаправленно в русском и испанском языках. В русском языке преобладают категории пространства и предмета, в испанском – времени и события. В центре нашего исследования – произведения Ф.М. Достоевского. Данный выбор не случаен и обусловлен наличием определенных средств выражений, являющихся частотными в русском языке и приобретающих в произведениях этого автора особую значимость. В данной статье мы сосредоточились на рассмотрении модальной неопределенности, выраженной с помощью частицы как бы, на материале произведения Ф.М. Достоевского «Братья Карамазовы» и попытались найти ответ на один из важнейших вопросов сопоставительных исследований – вопрос вариантов перевода данной русской частицы на испанский язык.

Ключевые слова: картина мира, модальная неопределенность, Достоевский, русский язык, испанский язык.
