

УДК 81.2+81'25

## On Translating Verbal Etiquette Phrases

**Tatyana P. Tretyakova\***

*St. Petersburg State University*

*7/9 Universitetskaya nab., St. Petersburg, 199034, Russia*

Received 21.11.2013, received in revised form 12.12.2013, accepted 26.12.2013

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*The paper deals with the problem of finding general integrative models for translating speech etiquette forms. It is argued that these forms exist as a part of the interactive scenario that is aimed at establishing social contacts through verbal polite ritual phrases. The first part of the article concerns several areas in research of the etiquette that provide integrative components of the semantics: first, different types of polite cultures and historical pragmatics data; second the context of stereotyping and third, the contrastive analysis and inter-cultural rhetoric. Further, translation examples of etiquette forms in English and Russian show the necessity of integrative components for presenting correct equivalents in interpretive and sequence translations. Time and social environment can change the meaning of some etiquette forms but the interactive situational scheme remains the same.*

*Keywords: Speech etiquette, speech stereotypes, integrative semantics, communicative situation, contrastive analysis, inter-cultural rhetoric, translation theory.*

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### Introduction

Multidimensional communication patterns in global communication lead to the development of certain polite verbal ritual which is known as verbal etiquette. Etiquette was a part of ritual and ceremony and to a certain degree supported universal order and affirmed its continuation. Societies change and entail the change of ritual and consequently etiquette. Nowadays a rather vague status of etiquette is connected with cultural norms, traditions as they are mostly reflected in professional communication within institutionalized patterns such as diplomatic protocol, patient and doctor dialogue, classroom etiquette etc. Etiquette can be defined as a collection of specific features of behaviour aimed at sustaining socializing through the “interplay” of communicative status of partners

in the communication (Baiburin & Toporkov 1990:5). Thus role-play competence reflecting the stereotypes of verbal behavior becomes very important for communication process.

The aim of this paper is to show the relevance of incorporating integrative semantics in the analysis of etiquette phrases as stereotypes and to show examples proving that contrastive analysis is indispensable for translation studies of etiquette phrases as polite speech stereotypes.

The methodological background lies within the framework of context studies carried out at the department of English Philology and Translation studies of St. Petersburg University. The idea of constant and variable context was introduced by Natalia N. Amosova in 1961 and later developed in a number of research areas in St. Petersburg State University (Context 2012). One of them lies

in the field of context pragmatics which allows incorporating into research life-situational models in the context of different cultures where etiquette phrases belong.

### Major theoretical trends

There are several important aspects integrated in the study of etiquette phrases – the concept of politeness in different cultures, and different historical periods, context analysis and the process of stereotyping and contrastive analysis. All these approaches are very important for translation studies.

1. Traditionally scholars dealing with polite speech ritual look at concept of etiquette from the vantage point of effective socializing. They are concerned with the ceremony of exchanging speech formulas in a certain rigidly structured format, i.e., small talk, business negotiations, corporative meetings, etc. for creating cultural awareness of the communicative situation. In this case the concepts communicative culture and politeness are included in most language studies. There are such well known definitions as high context and low context communication cultures, or positive and negative politeness cultures in the framework of cross-cultural studies (Brown and Levinson 1987; Hofstede 1980; Ogiermann 2009, Jucker 2012). In the majority of cases polite verbal interaction is as a social memory, looked upon as a cognitive scheme, a collective programming of the mind, that allows to distinguish one group of people from another. It can also be defined as “unwritten rules of the social game”. All cultures have devised different models for polite socializing. The grading of politeness is not necessarily connected with the abundance of polite clichés. It only means a different cultural model. Studying Polish and Russian acts of socializing against their English counterparts one might draw the conclusion that “Poles/Russians are never polite” (Leech 1983: 84). This statement

appeared only because of the lack of cultural awareness and other expectations in a similar politeness context of socializing.

2. The second semantic aspect integrated in the translation studies of the situation situation deals with the degree of relevant information necessary for interpretation of situational pragmatic meaning. This relevance of interpretive technique allowed scholars belonging to historical pragmatics to describe speech etiquette of remote times. In synchronic and diachronic studies one can find necessary data for calculus of polite language forms used in a particular period of language development. Moreover, recent studies showed there is enough language data for describing polite socializing models relevant to different epochs (Jucker 2012; Jucker, Taavitsainen. 2003; Третьякова 2012). Present-day research on the English polite language development showed that it is possible to spot a certain politeness phenomenon even in an Anglo-Saxon world with its feuds and militant hierarchy (Tretyakova 2013). One more example is the etymological description of the Russian etiquette is undertaken by A.Balakai with unique information of place and time the etiquette phrase was/is used.( Балакай 2001).

3. Context analysis in this paper is connected with the interpretation of etiquette forms as stereotype phrases used within a particular social context. Knowledge of this stereotypical context is important for translation. By stereotyping here we mean a cognitive process of creating a speech idiom used as a cliché in representation of some typical situation of verbal polite communication. This situation itself is constructed by polite rudimentary phrases the main goal of which is to provide polite socializing. In this case these phrases are called communicative etiquette clichés. The formulas of greetings, farewells, turn taking, apologizing and so on make the repertoire of the etiquette field. The context semantics of

these phrases, lies in the field of cultural habits and social memory. The only verification which can be applied to them is whether these phrases are acceptable or non-acceptable in a particular context. Stereotyping can be presented in a frame model in a most generalized manner. Etiquette verbal stereotypes in diverse types of discourse provide necessary contact ritual that can be brought into the following scheme:

[I come into contact and express <my positive attitude>--<I receive your positive contact and respond<with best wishes>; I express {gratitude, congratulations, toast, best wishes}>; [I close the contact and express <best wishes> >--<I receive best wishes and say good bye ].

Most general components of the etiquette scheme remain of course <addressant> and <addressee> whose main goal is exchanging stereotypes as pragmatic markers showing speaker's cultural background, organizational choice of future conversation. The addressant should have maximum of information on the addressee so that he/she uses just the right etiquette cliché in response.

As long as etiquette clichés can be initials and feedbacks, the two aspects of speech activity—speech production and perception—prove to be equally relevant for the social situations. It is the social factor, the distance between the speakers, their interpersonal relations and the power and social status that come into the variety of options for semantic description.

This formula can be applied to any etiquette situation and the interpretation technique is connected with the acceptability of the phrase in a particular setting. This idea is close to the concept of “practical context” introduced by Eugene Nida (Nida 2001). By practical context he means the circumstances of communication: its stimuli, participants, their relation to one another and to circumstances and the response of the listeners.

One more practical issue is worth mentioning in discussion of the context. The scheme discussed above is relevant to any etiquette situation in any language but the repertoire of the slots in the scheme is to be compiled for different registers and languages Independently. By retrieving the components from the scheme, the language learner or translator actually is decoding the communicative stereotype in order to shift the etiquette form to another context which can be called “bi-context” as cognitive etiquette situation may be entirely different.

4. Contrastive and comparative analysis is a very efficient way for finding equivalents in relatively similar contexts. Moreover, contrastive rhetoric starting with the analysis of written matter, we believe, could be applied in to the study of etiquette models as discourse practices.. U.Connor offers in his work the expansion of the topic of contrastive rhetoric to cross-cultural and intercultural studies. In addition, intercultural studies are sensitive to context and they consider influences both due to inter-person and inter-culture influences (Connor 2008). When integrating this matter in the analysis of translation the etiquette situation one can look for cross-cultural divergence on one hand and intercultural technique of persuasion on the other. In this case the matrix for interpretation might include comparative analysis of different languages and different media forms, e.g. netiquette (electronic (virtual) communication etiquette).

The four mentioned above trends could be integrated in the analysis of translation studies.

### **Translation examples**

In this part we return to intercultural rhetoric mentioned above (Connor 2008) and to the context which provides a mapping for mishaps in translation. Let us look at two types of etiquette translation presentations. One type deals with stereotype phrases and situations they represent

in the source and target languages. Here we rely on lexicographic interpretation of etiquette phrases. The other type of translation concerns sequences of dialogical turns and their literary translation.

1. There are a number of examples that L. Visson describes as possible address forms and greeting phrases in a polite context that may have difficulty with Russian speakers (Виссон 2003:86-114). It may bring misunderstanding among speakers. For example a response *I am good* to the greeting *How are you?* is impossible in an American standard situation. The phrase *I am good* sounds like a descriptive one and it is never used as a greeting.

The etiquette phrase *How are we today?* entails the situation of doctor–and patient–dialogue and the greeting cliché as an etiquette formula addressed not to many patients but to one person only. Compare Russian : *Ну, как мы себя чувствуем сегодня?*

There may be examples of *OK* not as a marker of agreement, but a part of closing sequence in closing the conversation: *Okay. Bye-bye*. The English form of greeting *How do you do?* keeps being misinterpreted as a general greeting formula, whereas the prescription goes that this utterance is used only when people meet for the first time.

There is difference in English *Please* and Russian *Пожалуйста*. *Please* is escorting English directives and in this case it is close to the Russian equivalent. If we turn to Russian examples the situation of request is never translated directly – there is either the difference in the word order or in the wording of an etiquette phrase:

«Садитесь, пожалуйста» – *Please, sit down/ Please have a seat*

«Дайте мне пожалуйста» – *Could you please give me...* (Виссон2003:97).

There can be a functional shift with *Please* from escorting a directive act to rendering a

certain amount of irritation. In the latter case it is pronounced in a specific way *puh-leeze*. (“pu(h)leez(e).”) In this case it means *Give me a break!*

«Avatar is here and there taken perfectly seriously as a kind of caring, environmental parable. My own response to this is: *puh-leeze*». The suggested translation into Russian is the following: *То тут, то там «Аватар» на полном серьезе называют притчей о заботливом, этичном отношении к природе. Я лично по этому поводу могу сказать только одно: Как же, как же!* Other options of translating the version of *please* are *Ну да!, Конечно!, Ещё чего!, Да ладно.*

If we look the Russian etiquette formula *Пожалуйста* it is used mostly in four major cases: 1) an intensifier in requests ;2) an invitation to do something; 3) a reply to “Thank you” ;4) a reply to begging pardon. This polite formula is not always translated with English *Please*.

1) – Будете чай? Да, *пожалуйста*. (Would you like some tea? – Yes, *please*.)

2) – Можно я налью себе еще чаю? – *Пожалуйста, угощайтесь!*» (Can I have some more tea? – *Sure! Help yourself!*)

3) *Пожалуйста* – *you're welcome*.

4) – Спасибо. – *Пожалуйста* – (It's OK/ It's fine/Never mind) and it is synonymous in Russian with phrases like «Ничего»/«Ничего страшного»/«Пустяки».

What makes the situation tricky with etiquette formulas are their functional shifts that make translation on lexemic level impossible. If we take Russian greeting phrase *здравствуйте* and add it to *пожалуйста* and use special intonation pattern the meaning of *здравствуйте – пожалуйста* would be an ironic comment to some unpleasant situation. Functional shifts which are a part of communicative social knowledge do not always appear in dictionaries which makes the translation of etiquette phrases

even trickier than looking for descriptive interpretations in dictionaries.

The lexicographer is doomed to quit from a structural syntactic presentation of the etiquette verbal formulas, concentrating on the fact that utterances express degrees of polite attitude and cooperative interaction. Many modern dictionaries and reference books of etiquette utterances don't provide enough information. Etiquette formulas of social interaction demand on the part of a professional lexicographer a very tentative approach, because immediate understanding may be insufficient. That is, only double checking of possible interpretations of the components of communicative situation, especially of the remote epochs, can provide us with reliable data. This refers to the changing of address forms to women in English in the end of the 20-th century ( Ms). The reference to some address forms that are not used any more even more difficult: For example it is extremely difficult to find equivalents to Russian XIXth c. address forms. *Ваше сиятельство, Ваше благородие, Ваша светлость, Ваша милость, Ваша честь* in reference to people of a higher rank or *друг мой, душа моя, голубушка, душечка маменька, тятенька, батюшка* when addressing some very close people from the family and friends. The same is relevant to *барин (барыня), сударь (сударыня), милостивый государь (государыня)*.

2) Sequential translation is connected with the presentation of etiquette episodes that show several turns of <addresant-addressee> relations. In English translations of two etiquette episodes taken from A.P. Chekhov's plays one can easily find a few discrepancies which violate the stereotypes of communication practice. Examples are taken from the *The Sea-Gull*.

The first episode deals with the greeting situation. Such a common Russian phrase as «Здравствуйте» gets sometimes weird

translations as *good evening* and *how do you do*.

Нина:(выходя из-за эстрады). Очевидно, продолжения не будет, мне можно выйти. **Здравствуйте!** (Целуется с Аркадиной и Полиной Андреевной.)

(1) Nina:[comes in from behind the stage] I see that the play will never be finished, so now I can go home. **Good evening.** [She kisses ARKADINA and PAULINA.]

(2)NINA. (coming from behind the stage). Evidently we're not to go on. I can come out. **How do you do?** (Kisses ARKADINA and PAULINE.).

The second episode is farewell situation.

Аркадина: До свиданья, мои дорогие... Если будем живы и здоровы, летом опять увидимся... [Горничная, Яков и повар целуют у нее руку] Ну, не поминайте лихом. (Якову.) Я дала рубль повару. Это на троих.

Повар: Покорнейше благодарим, барыня. Счастливой вам дороги! Много вами довольны!

Яков: Дай бог час добрый!

When these clichés are translated into English, the necessity of stereotypical comment becomes obvious. Here are two translations of the scene:

1) Arkadina: **Good-bye, all!** We shall meet again next summer if we live. [The maid servant, Jacob and the cook kiss her hand] *Don't forget me.* [She gives the cook a rouble] *There is a rouble for all three of you.*

The Cook: **Thank you, mistress; a pleasant journey to you.**

Jacob: **God bless you, mistress.**

2) Arcadina: **Good-bye, everyone.** If we're alive and well, we shall meet again in the summer. (Housemaid, man-cook and Yakof kiss her hand.) *Don't forget me. (Giving the cook a rouble.) There's a rouble to divide among you.*

Cook: *Our humblest thanks, lady. A good journey to you! We are very content with you!*

Yakof: *Heaven send you happy times!* (Chekhov, 2006).

In these translations neither of the addresses *Мои дорогие, барыня*, nor the expression of thanks by servants *Покорнейше благодарим, Много Вами довольны* adequately reflect Russian etiquette forms. Time and social environment wrongly understood changed the interactive scheme. Thus we can state that this translation shows ineffective socialising and produces a wrong impression on the readers and spectators.

## Conclusion

Etiquette verbal forms provide a system of “filters” used in the dialogue for effective socializing. They work as formulas encoding social memory, situational context and pragmatic meaning. Integrated semantics of etiquette phrases lies in the fields of cultural studies, context analysis and the schemata of stereotyping. The general model of translation process includes contrastive analysis and intercultural rhetoric where mapping for equivalents is connected with the place of the etiquette formula in the schemata if communicative situation.

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## **К вопросу об интегративном характере перевода этикетных высказываний**

**Т.П. Третьякова**

*Санкт-Петербургский государственный университет  
Россия, 199034, С.-Петербург, Университетская наб., 11*

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*Статья посвящена проблемам перевода этикетных высказываний как элементов интерактивного сценария, отражающего основные компоненты коммуникативной ситуации. В качестве методологической основы исследования послужили принципы контекстологических исследований, позволяющих разрабатывать интегративный подход к описанию этикетных формул. В первой части статьи рассматриваются теоретические вопросы интегративной семантики речевых этикетных формул. К ним относятся представление следующих направлений исследования: во-первых, принадлежность к определённому типу культурного и исторического контекста; во-вторых, представление этикетной формулы как речевого стереотипа в рамках интерактивной ситуации; в-третьих, взаимодействие разных культур с использованием элементов контрастивного анализа и интеркультурной риторики. Далее в статье рассматриваются примеры русских и английских переводов некоторых этикетных формул и определяется необходимость учета интегрированных компонентов значения этикетной формулы при переводе в рамках минимального и последовательного контекста.*

*Ключевые слова: речевой этикет, речевой стереотип, контекст, интегративная семантика, коммуникативная ситуация, контрастивный анализ, теория перевода.*

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