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**Situation of Alcohol Drinking: Semantics,  
Linguistics and Translation Aspects  
(Based on the Novel by M.A. Bulgakov  
“The Master and Margarita”  
and its Japanese Translation)**

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*This article is dedicated to the situation of alcohol drinking and its representation in Russian and Japanese languages. The material used was the novel by M.A. Bulgakov “The Master and Margarita” and its translation into Japanese.*

*Keywords: situation, semantics, translation, Bulgakov M.A., «The Master and Margarita», Japanese language.*

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**Introduction**

This work is an attempt to describe a fragment of Russian linguistics picture of the world associated with the theme of alcohol drinking in linguistics and language aspects. The material was the novel by M.A. Bulgakov “The Master and Margarita” and its translation into Japanese made by Tadao Mizuno in 1977.

Study of fragments of linguistics picture of the world is one of the most rapidly developing areas of modern national philology. As the part of the semantic approach to the language, examination and reconstruction of the linguistic picture of the world is carried out by describing such unit as a semantic situation, because various elements of extra-linguistic reality are reflected in it.

Syntactic semantic is not simply a union of meanings of separate word-forms in the cumulative meaning of the sentence on the basis of syntactic structure, but the content that is determined by extra-linguistic factor. Semantic-syntactic research credo consists in this understanding. These researches focus on denotative aspect of the theory of the sentence. An extra-linguistic fact is the basis for the sentence as a linguistic fact. In the theory of linguistics it is called denotation, which is not a separate subject, but the event or situation. Postulating the correlation and mutual influence of language and culture, it is possible to think over the possibility of examine the phenomenon of the material culture in linguistics, theory of translation and cultural linguistics. Such phenomenon includes

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the situation of alcohol drinking or drinking alcoholic beverages.

### Situation of Alcohol Drinking

Situation of alcohol drinking (hereinafter referred as SOAD), in the context of semantic syntactic, is a part of “action group” and a social-physical action. The minimum model of the situation is: a subject – a predicate of physiological action – an object. For example: a person consume an alcohol – *Иван Тимофеевич выпил почти всю кружку, (разделся и лег)* (V. Voinovich) [10:155].

SOAD as denotation of the similar process includes consumption of strong alcohol and snacks. The aim of such process “to reach alcohol intoxication and talk” in Russian language is represented by the verb *to drink*. A complex approach to the situation in Russian language is also possible, in particular: *a subject drinks + talks*. This model includes not only action of alcohol drinking, but the proposition of emotional and psychologistic condition and oral action, for example: *Приехал друг: сидим, выпиваем, вспоминаем былое; ор: (Выселение рабочих властью прокурора приостановлено. Пристав не знал, как себя вести. Растерялся и судья.) Пристав пришел к судье совещаться. Оба напились в стельку* (V. Shishkov. “Ugryum-reka”).

On the assumption of the above, it is clear that SOAD includes not only action proposition, but also proposition of emotional and psychologistic condition and oral action proposition. SOAD can also be represented through the perception predicates (visual and olfactory), for example: *Пищик. Видом видать, слухом слышать ... (Целуется с Лопахиным.) Коньячком от тебя попахивает, милый мой, душа моя. А мы тут тоже веселимся* (A. Chekhov. “The Cherry Orchard”).

SOAD representation can be a complex semantic model as well: 1) A subject – a predicate of physical action and condition, where SOAD is an indicator of permanent characteristic of the subject: *Елена Андреевна. Не в лесу и не в медицине дело (...). Такие люди редки, их нужно любить... Он пьет, бывает грубоват, но что за беда? Талантливый человек в России не может быть чистеньким (...)* (A. Chekhov. “Uncle Vanya”); 2) A subject – a predicate of physical action of alcohol drinking – predicates of subsequent actions of the subject, caused by alcohol intoxication, for example: *Напились так, что под забором валяется; Но как выпьет, тут уж держись: или хвастать начнет, какой он богатый, или в драку лезет. И ведь сколько уж раз учили, дурака, один раз голову стяжком проломили – нейметя! Налет глаза, и все нипочем: на пятерых, на семерых лезет* (V. Shukshin. Pechki-lavochki).

If in such description method of manifestation of alcohol intoxication is shown explicitly, we can assert a frequent implementation of the fact demonstration situation, where the following actants are represented: the fact – the subject of the fact (sf); perception – the subject of perception (sp); demonstrator [6: 8]. Regarding SOAD, it looks like this: *Проخور, по обыкновению, был под мухой – от него так и разило дешевым одеколоном* (F. Abramov. “The wooden horses”), where the fact is – *был под мухой*; sf and sp are – *Проخور*; Perception of demonstrator is – *от него так и разило дешевым одеколоном*; or: *Маргарита начинала пьянеть* (the fact), *отчего глаза у нее разгорались* (demonstrator) (M. Bulgakov. “The Master and Margarita”).

We may consider SOAD as a complex scenario, which includes not only the process of alcohol drinking, but also preparation for the process and its consequences. The first “phase” is preparation for SOAD (searching for the place, drinking companion, money, alcohol, buying alcohol), the

second “phase” is the process of alcohol drinking, and the third “phase” is consequences of alcohol drinking: there are two variants: conflict-free and conflict – the scandal, the fighting, etc. From these positions Eldar Ryazanov’s movie “The Irony of Fate, or I Hope You Enjoyed Your Bath!” can be interpreted as a realization of the complex scenario of SOAD [14].

As mentioned above, a semantic predicate *to drink* is the notional support for SOAD. The dictionary gives the following definition of the verb: Drink 1. *what*. Consume, swallow some liquid; drink a beverage. *Пить чай, воду, молоко. В жару хочется пить* (о жажде). *Не пьет молока* (не любит, не употребляет). 2. Consume, swallow the wine, alcohol. *Пить за здоровье друзей. Пей – не хочу!* 3. Constantly drinking alcohol, getting drunk. *Не пьет и не курит. Пьет запоем. Пьющий человек* (пристрастный к алкоголю) [4: 534 – 535]. The 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> definitions of the verb *to drink* are actual for SOAD.

“Russian semantic dictionary” interprets the verb *to drink* in the meaning “drinking alcohol” as follows: Drink 2. *what*. Swallow the alcohol poured in a shot glass (wine glass, glass, etc.). *Пить вино, коньяк, водку, пиво. Пить рюмку за рюмкой* [9: 370 – 371].

Besides, there is a separate group of verbs with the meaning “drunkenness”. In the center of this group is the verb *to drink* as well. Drink 3. Constantly drink alcohol, be on the drink, drink deep. *Пить запоем. Пьет без просыпу, беспробудно*. Phraseological expressions and idioms related to alcohol drinking are: *бутылку поставить, в рюмку заглядывать, залить глаза (шары, зенки), заложить за галстук (за воротник), лыка не вяжет, мух давить, не враг бутылке, прикладываться к рюмке* [9: 369 – 370].

It should be noted that, phraseological units, that can be typologies by the characteristic “the

amount of alcohol drunk” – from a small amount to a large amount, are markers of the predicate of physiological action *to drink*, which in its turn the cause of the subsequent physical condition *to be drunk* [11: 47-52].

### Situation of Alcohol Drinking in the novel “The Master and Margarita”

SOAD in M.A. Bulgakov’s novel is represented isomorphically by the predicate *выпить* as the result of *пить*, for example: *Никанор Иванович налил лафитничек водки, выпил, налил второй, выпил, подхватил на вилку три куска селедки...*

In addition, SOAD may be represented by visual and physical predicates of perception, for example: *Незнакомец не дал Степинуму изумлению развиться до степени болезненной и ловко налил ему полстопки водки.*

- А вы? – пискнул Степа.

- С удовольствием!

*Прыгающей рукой поднес Степа стопку к устам, а незнакомец одним духом проглотил содержимое своей стопки. Ог:*

*Он быстро приблизился к Маргарите, поднес ей чашу и повелительно сказал: – Пей! <...> Маргарита, не раскрывая глаз, сделала глоток, и сладкий ток пробежал по ее жилам, в ушах начался звон.*

The author describes the visual perception, and the very process of alcohol drinking is recorded by the predicates of physical perception, such as – *проглотить, сделать глоток*, the subjects of the process are the characters of the novel.

In the novel SOAD is a cause of the subsequent physical conditions follow after alcohol drinking. Demonstrators of such conditions can be external evidence or actions, such as: *Он быстро приблизился к Маргарите, поднес ей чашу и повелительно сказал: – Пей! <...> Маргарита,*

*не раскрывая глаз, сделала глоток, и сладкий ток пробежал по ее жилам, в ушах начался звон. <...> Маргарита, шатаясь, подошла к столу; После того как мастер осушил второй стакан, его глаза стали живыми и осмысленными.*

*От: – Простите великодушно, светлая королева Марго! Я обознался. А виноват коньяк, будь он проклят! <...> Через несколько мгновений перед Маргаритой предстал тот самый толстяк-бакенбардист, что так неудачно представился на том берегу. Он успел, по-видимому, смотаться на Енисей, ибо был во фрачном наряде, но мокр с головы до ног. Коньяк подвел его вторично: высаживаясь, он все-таки угодил в воду.*

Almost all the characters that live in Soviet Moscow in M.A. Bulgakov's novel drink, including the "devildom" Voland and his retinue. For instance, a hard drinking cat for Moscow citizens is just a phantasmagoria or ravings of a madman: *Но оказались в спальне вещи и похуже: на ювелирном пуфе в развязной позе развалился некто третий, именно – жутких размеров черный кот со стопкой водки в одной лапе и вилкой, на которую он успел поддеть маринованный гриб, в другой. Свет, и так слабый в спальне, и вовсе начал меркнуть в глазах Степы. «Вот так, оказывается, сходят с ума!» – подумал он и ухватился за притолоку. <...> Тут кот выпил водку, и Степина рука поползла по притолоке вниз.*

The analysis of linguistic material showed that the gender affects on the selection of alcohol: male characters prefer vodka and cognac, female – champagne and wine. The main hero of the novel was surprised when she was offered spirit as a beverage:

(Кот) налил Маргарите какой-то прозрачной жидкости в лафитный стакан.

– Это водка? – слабо спросила Маргарита.

Кот подпрыгнул на стуле от обиды.

– Помилуйте, королева, – прохрипел он, – разве я позволил бы налить даме водки? Это – чистый спирт!

As a rule there is a company for drinking, for example:

*- Ничего, ничего, ничего, – шептал Коровьев, извиваясь возле мастера, – ничего, ничего... Еще стаканчик, и я с вами за компанию...*

The character drinks alone only when it is a part of his lifestyle, for example, during the dinner; or the character is in particular psychological condition, such as melancholy: *Более того, в тот же вечер Никанор Иванович, на которого смерть популярного артиста навела массу тягостных воспоминаний, один, в компании только с полной луной, освещающей Садовую, напился до ужаса.*

Among the subjects of alcohol drinking preferred by the characters of the novel, the first place takes vodka, which is not only an alcohol drink, but also a remedy after hangover:

*- Дорогой Степан Богданович, заговорил посетитель, проникательно улыбаясь, никакой пирамидон вам не поможет. Следуйте старому мудрому правилу – лечить подобное подобным. Единственное, что вернет вас к жизни, это две стопки водки с острой и горячей закуской.*

Other beverages in the novel are: spirit, cognac, wine and champagne.

Instrumental role is realized by actants that indicate drinking tableware, for example: vodka is drunk from ordinary glass or lafitniy glass, with wine they use bowls, with champagne – wine glasses, cognac – ordinary glasses or shot glasses: 1) – *Чашу вина? – Белое, красное?;* 2) *Козлоногий поднес ей бокал с шампанским, она выпила его, и сердце ее сразу согрелось.*

We can not fail to notice the fact that the novel's characters can drink vodka, wine and

cognac from ordinary glasses, for example: *Больной (мастер) взял стакан и выпил то, что в нем было, но рука его дрогнула, и опустевший стакан разбился у его ног. (...) – Еще! – приказал Воланд. После того как мастер осушил второй стакан, его глаза стали живыми и осмысленными. Он: Ты покинул бедного Бегемота, променяв его на стакан – правда, очень хорошего – коньяку!*

This point is worth being enlightened in more details. Analysis of the data showed that in the novel the characters drink from different vessels that were discussed above. The *lafitny glass (lafitnik, lafitnichek)* takes a special place in M.A. Bulgakov's novel. We have never met *lafitny glass* in the analysis of SOAD in the anecdotes and A.P. Chekhov's plays. Most likely, *lafitnik* has completely disappeared from the life of modern citizens; therefore, *lafitnik* is not represented in the modern urban folklore. In Chekhov's plays we see traditional (or customary) vessels for alcohol: for vodka it is a shot glass, for champagne and wine it is a wine glass.

*Lafitnik* is a shot glass or a small elongated wine glass for red wine – *Lafita* [8: 344; 1: 698]. Returning to the theme of the glasses, the novel characters drink from, considering the contexts that refer to the glasses, the issue is the *lafitniy glass*, rather than a facet glass. The facet glass is more suitable for tea in a catering and, as noted by O.P. Ermakova, “they all disappeared from the modern life for nearly twenty years ago: *Майка* [американца – О.Е.] *почему-то больше всего заинтересовал сосуд, из которого придется пить* [он слышал, что в России водку пьют «гранеными стаканами». – О.Е.], *так как за всю сорокалетнюю жизнь... ему ни разу не доводилось держать в руках ничего напоминающего «граненый стакан»... Официант после продолжительного перечня пожеланий объяснил, что водки есть много и разной, но вот последний граненый стакан*

*был замечен в их славных пятизвездочных стенах лет десять тому назад (G. Kulikova. «Blondinka za uglom»)* [2: 66-67].

Members of SOAD in the novel «The Master and Margarita» pay sufficient attention to snacks, for example: *Степа, тараща глаза, увидел, что на маленьком столике сервирован поднос, на коем имеется нарезанный белый хлеб, паюсная икра в вазочке, белые маринованные грибы на тарелочке, что-то в кастрюльке и, наконец, водка в объемистом ювелиршином графинчике.*

Он: *Бегемот отрезал кусок ананаса, посолил его, поперчил его, съел и после этого так залихватски тянул вторую стопку спирта, что все зааплодировали.*

On the other hand, participants of SOAD may not take snacks at all due to the prevailing habits of drinking, for example: *Прожевывая кусок икры, Степа выдавил из себя слова: – А вы что же... закусить? – Благодарствуйте, я не закусываю никогда, – ответил незнакомец и налил по второй.*

In dramatic text time and place of SOAD are unspecified, as it is set up by the chronotope of the novel.

From our point of view, we can discuss the topic “the culture of alcohol drinking” that is represented in the novel. For instant, Voland and Margarita show the culture of alcohol drinking of bygone aristocratic era, the choice of drinks, snacks and vessels point at this: Voland drinks vodka only from a crystal carafe, carefully chooses snacks for his retinue. This culture of alcohol drinking is opposed to the “new” culture of alcohol drinking of Soviet Moscow, demonstrated by Likhodeev, Nikanor Ivanovich, Bosoi, visitors of Massolit restaurant and etc.

M.A. Bulgakov's novel “The Master and Margarita” as an outstanding work of the twentieth century Russian literature has repeatedly become an object of translation. Being published in Russia

in 1966-67, in 1967 the novel was translated and published in different countries around the world. It is now known seven translations of the novel into English, made by the U.S. and the UK translators, eight Chinese translations; novel was translated into German, French, Spanish, Polish and Ukrainian languages.

In Japan, the novel “The Master and Margarita” initially was translated from Italian by Yuko Yasui in 1969 and had the title “The Devil and Margarita.” In 1977, T. Mizuno’s translation of the novel appeared in print. In 2000, the third translation of M.A. Bulgakov’s novel was performed by Ayako Hoki and was printed in two volumes [5].

The existence of foreign translation of the fiction broaches an issue of the quality of the translation. In terms of linguistic theory of translation, the problem of the quality of translation can be reworded as the problem of translation identity. Examination of the correlation between the original and the translated text requires explication of the translation connections, responsible for the transmission of literary images. In this context, the asymmetry of linguistic form of a literary text is a significant problem.

Numerous references to the issue of the status of the category of isomorphism and its constitutive categories and characteristics in linguistics and translation, indicates the absence of a common language and translating concept of isomorphism [12]. The consideration of the translation isomorphism as the ratio of the structural identity between the original text and translated text, that is fixed at a certain level of language through the certain linguistic means is unquestionable. The examination of the relation of fragments of the original and translation shows that, basically the semantics situation and its predicates and actants are the same. At the same time there is an asymmetry in the translation. On

the one hand, the asymmetry appears because of the text itself: when translation is at the lexeme level, the semantic components of the original either appear as the new one or disappear at all. On the other hand, this asymmetry appears due to the differences of cultures involved in the translation process.

Let us consider these theoretical and practical issues in more detail. When translator translates a literary text, the translator should avoid stereotypes about a nation which culture is the subject of his analysis, be objective and impartial interpreter of unfamiliar realities of different ethnic culture. The researches of translations of Russian and Soviet literature into English and Chinese show, “tenacious” stereotypes that are deeply ingrained in the minds of translators may cause a superficial interpretation of the original idea of the text and distort it in the translation [7; 3: 201; 13].

In the novel the group of SOAD verbs with a general meaning *to drink* represented by the following verbs. They close to each other in the basic meaning, but differ in the semantic and stylistic nuances.

The verb *to drink* as an indicator of a certain stage of SOAD has a component *быстро*; *выпить до дна – выпить быстро и без остатка в питейной посуде; выпить залпом – выпить быстро, сразу, без передышки; осушить – выпить содержимое чего-нибудь до дна (разг.); осушить залпом – выпить содержимое чего-нибудь до дна (разг.), сразу, без передышки; тянуть (прост.) – выпить спиртного; выпить очень проворно – выпить быстро и ловко, играючи.*

The Japanese translator Mizuno Tadao chooses a verb 飲みほし, which means “to drink strong alcohol in one gulp”, so the author’s nuances are lost.

For instant, in M.A. Bulgakov’s novel: *Маргарита покорно выпила, думая, что тут*

*же ей и будет конец от спирта; М. Tadao's variant: Думая, что, выпив это, она точно умрет, Маргарита покорно выпила все до капли. Ор: Сидели мирно, совершенно тихо, закусывали... translated variant: Мирно, тихо сидели, ели...*

When we compare the original and translation it becomes clear that, in translated fragment a certain meaning is lost: in this case the verb *закусить* is an indicator of SOAD, i.e. the participants of the situation were chatting and drinking together, and in Japanese variant this meaning was lost, because the verb *закусить* is replaced by semantically empty verb *есть*.

There may be several factors explaining this. According to the Japanese tradition of alcohol drinking and due to the low alcohol drinks (about 16 degrees), in Japan it is uncustomary to snack after drinking. The word *закуска* was adopted from French word “*hors d'oeuvre*” («a small amount of cold food served before the main course»). The meaning of this word is different in Japanese and Russian: (In Russian) “the food that people usually eat after drinking alcohol” [8: 251], that is why in Japanese there is no verb *закусить* in a narrow meaning *заесть выпитое вино*, in a wide meaning – *выпивать*. For this reason, in Japanese translation the snack “has lost” its sophistication and aristocratism.

Analysis of the translated text fragments, namely, the objects of drinking, beverage vessels and its volume and the starter, showed that generally these fragments are isomorphic.

For the Japanese translator it was difficult to translate the word *снупт*. In the text there is an English lexeme *alcohol* アルコウル(arukoru) which is used for translating the word *снупт*. This lexeme shows a non-Japanese origin of the drink (traditional, as we have already noted, Japanese drinks have 15 degrees proof), but there

is also a Japanese lexeme 混じりけのないアルコール“crude alcohol”. The original: *он совершенно перестал пить портвейн и пьет только водку, настоящую на смородиновых почках, отчего сильно поздоровел*; the translation: *Портвейн пить вообще перестал, а если и пьет, то только водку, настоящую на смородине*. There is no such word as “currant” in Japanese language that is why the phrase “vodka infused on currant” has no meaning for the Japanese readers. The author does not explain its denotative meaning and Russian tradition infuse strong alcohol on berries and plant roots.

To show the amount of alcohol drunk the translator uses lexeme 杯 (*hai*) with the meaning “a glass, cup.” It should be noted that its primary meaning “the capacity for the drink”. The additional meaning it gets in the context. For example, *hai* + coffee = a cup coffee, *hai* + vodka = a glass of vodka, *hai* + wine = a glass of wine. However, along with hieroglyphic *hai* the translator uses English word *glass* グラス as a synonym for the Japanese character *hai*. It is difficult to determine where the translator adheres to the symmetry in the translation and where not, since the choice of beverage vessels is not always clear. Bulgakov's *лафитный стакан (стопка на ножке для водки удлиненной формы, объем – 125 г.)* was translated as a wine glass – ワイングラス, thus it changes not only the quantity of the drink, but the drink itself.

## Conclusion

There is a clear asymmetry in the translation of the literary text from Russian to Japanese. Stylistic and semantic features of the verbs and nominatives of drinks are often neutralized. According to our reckoning, the reason is in the semantics of the Japanese verb 飲みほし, which meaning is smaller in volume than the Russian verb *to drink* and its synonyms; besides, in the semantics of the Japanese verb there is some *do*

дна, до капли, which the Russian verb does not have. The method of drinking (*проглотить, осушить, тянуть*) is absent in Japanese language. There is asymmetry in the translating of the beverage vessels: in our opinion, there is no motivation in choosing beverage vessels, the translator rather freely substitutes one kind of vessels to another, resulting in the asymmetry in the translation of the amount of alcohol drunk.

Consequently, it can be argued that perception of the Russian national character, in particular, a predilection for the strong alcohol beverages and its excessive consumption, is a stereotype, which includes the translator himself. The existence of stereotypes leads to a superficial interpretation of the literary text, as well as distortion in the translation, thereby creating and perpetuating stereotypes in the minds of the readers of the translated text.

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**Ситуация винопития:  
семантический, лингвистический  
и переводческий аспекты  
(на материале японских переводов романа  
М.А. Булгакова «Мастер и Маргарита»)**

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*В данной статье рассматривается быденная ситуация винопития, ее семантика и репрезентация в русском и японском языках. Материалом послужил роман М.А. Булгакова «Мастер и Маргарита» и его перевод на японский язык.*

*Ключевые слова: ситуация, семантика, перевод, М.А. Булгаков, «Мастер и Маргарита», японский язык.*

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