

The Peculiarities of Rendering Indicative Mood Tenses in Literary Translation

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Abstract. *This article examines the peculiarities of rendering indicative mood tense forms in literary translation. The study focuses on the functional and stylistic role of tense usage in fictional discourse and the challenges arising from systemic differences between source and target languages. Based on a qualitative comparative analysis of literary texts and their translations, the research identifies common translation strategies such as tense shifts, aspectual reinterpretation, and contextual adaptation. The findings demonstrate that the translation of indicative tenses is not a mechanical grammatical process but an interpretative activity guided by narrative coherence, stylistic adequacy, and communicative effect. The article emphasizes the importance of functional equivalence in preserving the temporal structure and aesthetic value of literary texts.*

Key words: *literary translation, indicative mood, verb tenses, tense shifts, aspect, narrative discourse, functional equivalence.*

Literary translation is a complex linguistic and cultural process that goes far beyond the mechanical replacement of words and grammatical forms from one language into another. It requires the translator to preserve not only the semantic content of the source text but also its stylistic, aesthetic, and pragmatic dimensions. One of the most challenging grammatical categories in this respect is the system of verb tenses in the indicative mood, which serves as the primary means of expressing temporal relations, factuality, and narrative perspective in literary discourse.

The indicative mood occupies a central position in fiction because it reflects events and states presented as real within the fictional world. Through tense selection, authors construct narrative time, control the pace of the story, and guide the reader's perception of events. In literary texts, tense forms are often employed not merely to indicate chronological sequence but to convey psychological states, foreground or background information, and create stylistic effects such as immediacy, retrospection, or anticipation.

However, languages differ significantly in their tense and aspect systems. While some languages possess a wide range of analytically expressed tense-aspect forms, others rely more heavily on contextual or lexical means. These systemic differences create considerable difficulties in literary translation, where direct grammatical equivalence is frequently unattainable. As a result, translators are often compelled to modify tense forms in order to maintain narrative coherence and stylistic adequacy in the target text.

Although general issues of tense translation have been addressed in works by scholars such as E. Nida, P. Newmark, J. Catford, and K. Reiß, the specific problem of rendering indicative mood tenses in literary translation remains insufficiently explored as an independent research topic. This article aims to fill this gap by analyzing the peculiarities of translating indicative tense forms in literary texts

and identifying the main strategies used by translators to preserve temporal meaning and artistic value.

The objective of the study is to examine how indicative mood tenses function in literary discourse and how they are transformed in translation under the influence of linguistic, stylistic, and pragmatic factors.

The research is based on a qualitative comparative translation analysis of literary texts and their translations. The empirical material consists of narrative and dialogic excerpts taken from English literary prose and their translations into other languages, primarily Uzbek and Russian. Special attention is given to passages where tense usage is stylistically marked or deviates from neutral narrative conventions.

The methodological framework of the study includes several complementary approaches. First, a grammatical analysis is employed to identify and classify indicative mood tense forms in the source text. Second, a contrastive analysis is conducted to compare source and target language tense realizations and to determine the nature of translation shifts. Third, a contextual and functional analysis is applied to evaluate the narrative role of tense forms and their communicative effect in both texts.

The study focuses on the three main temporal planes—past, present, and future—and examines their narrative functions, such as foregrounding, backgrounding, habituality, and immediacy. Translation strategies are identified and systematized on the basis of recurring patterns observed in the translated texts.

The analysis reveals several characteristic features in the rendering of indicative mood tenses in literary translation.

One of the most prominent phenomena is the frequent occurrence of tense shifts, where the tense form of the source text is replaced by a different tense in the target language. This is particularly evident in narrative passages, where English past tense forms are sometimes rendered as present or vice versa, depending on the narrative conventions of the target language.

Another significant finding concerns the translation of the historical present. In English literary prose, the present tense is often used to narrate past events in order to create vividness and immediacy. In translation, however, this stylistically marked form is frequently neutralized by converting it into a past tense, as the historical present may sound unnatural or stylistically inappropriate in the target language.

The study also highlights the role of aspectual reinterpretation. Since languages differ in how they encode aspectual meanings, translators often compensate for aspectual mismatches by choosing alternative tense forms or by adding lexical indicators of duration, repetition, or completion.

Furthermore, the results show that contextual factors dominate over formal grammatical correspondence. Translators prioritize narrative clarity, stylistic consistency, and reader expectations, even if this requires departing from the tense system of the source text. This confirms that tense translation in literary texts is guided by functional rather than purely grammatical considerations.

The findings demonstrate that the translation of indicative mood tenses in literary discourse is an inherently interpretative process. Tense forms in fiction are closely linked to narrative strategy and authorial intention, which means that their translation cannot be reduced to simple grammatical substitution.

From a functionalist perspective, tense shifts should be regarded not as translation errors but as legitimate adaptive strategies aimed at preserving the communicative and aesthetic effect of the original text. At the same time, excessive normalization of tense usage—especially the elimination of stylistically marked forms such as the historical present—may result in the loss of narrative expressiveness.

The study also underscores the importance of the translator's linguistic and literary competence. Successful rendering of indicative tenses requires a deep understanding of both the grammatical systems involved and the narrative conventions of literary genres.

The rendering of indicative mood tenses in literary translation is characterized by flexibility, contextual sensitivity, and functional adaptation. Translators employ various strategies, including tense shifts, aspectual compensation, and contextual restructuring, to reconcile differences between source and target language tense systems.

The peculiarities of indicative tense translation stem from systemic linguistic differences, genre-specific conventions, and the need to preserve narrative and stylistic integrity. A conscious and theoretically informed approach to tense translation contributes significantly to the quality and adequacy of literary translation.

Future research may expand this investigation through corpus-based methods or by exploring tense translation across a wider range of languages and literary genres.

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