

LECTURE 13

Theme: Interpersonal function and modality in translation

Plan: Interpersonal functions of translator
Problems of modality in translation
Usage of function of modality

Interpersonal function as the expression of attitude is actualized through the category of modality, which is an obligatory feature of any utterance. The term „modality“ determines a wide range of the speaker’s attitude toward reality and the content of the utterance. Modality includes utterance oppositions on the basis of whether they assert or deny, whether they denote real, hypothetical or unreal information, whether the speaker is sure or hesitant, whether s/he finds the information necessary, advisable, etc. There are two types of modality - objective and subjective. Objective modality is obligatory for any sentence. It is expressed by the grammatical category of mood*, sometimes supported by particles (*Пусть люди будут счастливы! Above all, I’d like to declare the following...*)

Mood expresses the speaker’s attitude to the action, whether it is real or unreal. The borderline between real and unreal actions is expressed in English by a modal verb: *He might have lost his sight. – Он чуть не ослеп.* In Kazakh and Russian the corresponding meaning is stressed by the particles *чуть не*. Whereas particles are very important in Kazakh and Russian, modal verb and subjunctive mood forms are more frequent in English: *Don’t you think it would be wise? – Разве так не разумнее?*

Some particles require special attention to their usage in translation, especially such as *hardly, scarcely*, positive in form but negative in meaning: *It’s hardly my fault. – Это не моя вина. I’d scarcely have done it if I didn’t think it was absolutely necessary. – Я, конечно же, не сделал бы этого, если бы не думал, что это так важно.*

Assertion and denial of facts is another kind of objective modality. Comparing English and Kazakh and Russian utterances from this angle, researchers point to a greater degree of categoricalness in the speech of Kazakh and Russians, which often leads to antonymous translations**:
I don’t want people playing the piano at all hours of the day and night. – Я против того, чтобы на пианино играли день и ночь.
John didn’t disobey his father. – Джон послушался своего отца.

“Will you be in for supper?” asked her mother, sticking her head out from behind the kitchen door. “I don’t think so,” shouted Sally. (J. Archer) – «Ты будешь ужинать дома?» – спросила мать, выглядывая из кухни. «Думаю, что нет», – крикнула Сэлли.

When sentence negation is used for pragmatic purposes - to contrast the subject matter to common habits and customs.²²⁶ The case may be illustrated by the description of a character’s appearance from the play *Orpheus Descending* by T. Williams: ...*Val enters the store. He is a young man, about 30, who has a kind of*

wild beauty about him ... He does not wear Levis or a T-shirt... Val's clothes do not match the image of a typical young man of the time. To give this background information, a translator extends the sentence, giving necessary comments: ...Вэл входит в магазин. Это молодой человек около 30 лет, необычайно симпатичный. ... На нем нет привычных для молодежи джинсов и майки.

Another problem regarding the positive and negative type of speech is the problem of enantiosemy, or a linguistic paradox, when a word or a sentence develops contradictory meanings, both positive and negative (*лихой наездник* „dashing rider“ – *лихой человек* 'slashing fellow').

An enantiosemic utterance can be used ironically in the sentence and the connotation should be rendered in translation: *You are a beauty!* – *Хорош ты, нечего сказать!* *A pretty business!* – *Хорошенькое дельце!* *A fine specimen!* – *Вот так тун!* In Kazakh and Russian modality here is expressed by an inverted word order and intonation.

Language can fix evaluative connotations with different words. In this case they become paronyms and can be easily confused in translation: *a terrible accident* „страшная авария“ – *a terrific speed* „замечательная скорость“. Subjective modality reveals the speaker's attitude to the content of the utterance. This may reveal **assuredness** or **hesitation**. The means of expressing this type of modality in English are modal verbs (*must, can, may, will*), modal words (*probably, perhaps, evidently, etc.*), syntactic constructions (*He is said to be clever* – the speaker does not assert the statement definitely). In Kazakh and Russian, these means are also modal words (*возможно; должен, нужно*), constructions of the type “*Говорят...*”, and particles (*ведь, неужели, хоть*). In expressing this type of modality, particles play a more important role in Kazakh and Russian than they do in English: *After us, the deluge.* – *После нас хоть потоп.* *There can't have been a hundred people in the hall.* – *Вряд ли в зале было около сотни человек.*

One should keep in mind a range of subjective modal meanings expressed by English modal verbs:

incredulity, verbalized by the negative modal verb *can/could*:

They can't be waiting there. – *Не может быть, что они нас ждут там.*

Or a little more categorical: *He могут они нас там ждать.*

doubt, expressed by *can/could* in the interrogative structure:

Could he have said it? – *Неужели он так и сказал?*

uncertainty, expressed by *may/might (not)*:

He may be quite at a loss now. – *Возможно, он сейчас растерян.*

And now that Cicely had married, she might be having children too. – *Теперь, когда Сесили вышла замуж, у нее тоже могут быть дети.*

You might have been right. – *Может быть, вы были правы. (Наверное...)*

near certainty, expressed by *must*:

The cooling process must have begun several billion years ago. – *Процесс*

похолодания, очевидно, начался много миллиардов лет назад. In Kazakh and Russian

this modal meaning is also expressed by the words *должно быть, вероятно, скорее всего*, and others.

□ prediction or supposition based on expectation rather than fact - *will/would*:
Jolyon is late. I suppose it'll be June keeping him. – Джюлион опаздывает. Должно быть, Джун задержала его.

That would be his father, I expect. – Я полагаю, это его отец.

Like any other verb expressing this type of modality, *will* may be used with the perfect infinitive. Forms like these signify supposition close to certainty:

My honourable friends will have heard the tremendous news broadcast throughout the world. – Мои distinguished друзья, по всей вероятности, уже слышали потрясающую новость, переданную радиостанциями всего мира.

□ ability and possibility denoted by *can, may*. It is necessary here to draw attention to Kazakh and Russian and English asymmetry. While English uses modal verbs to

show physical ability or possibility, the Kazakh and Russian utterance is apt to be devoid of any forms with this meaning: *I can hear footsteps, who's coming? – Я слышу шаги, кто там идет?*

Possibility can be expressed by the modal verbs *can* and *may*, though they are not always interchangeable. Along with stylistic discrepancies (informal and formal, respectively), they differ in degree of objectivity, with *may* expressing a possibility depending on circumstances, and *can*, on the subject. A good example of “colliding” these modals is provided in an extract from Mikes: *A foreigner cannot improve. Once a foreigner always a foreigner. There is no way out for him.*

He may become British; he can never become English. This difference in modal verb meanings can be translated through explanation: *Иностранец не может измениться к лучшему. Иностранец есть иностранец. Для него нет выхода.*

Он может получить английское гражданство, но он никогда не сможет стать настоящим англичанином.

Another set of modal meanings is **necessity, compulsion, prohibition**. In Kazakh and Russian they are mostly expressed by the modal adjectives *должен, нужно*. These meanings range from very formal to informal and increasingly subjective:

□ very formal necessity caused by schedule, plan, or formal agreement is expressed by *be to*: *The prime-minister is to go to Paris on a two-day visit. – Премьер-министр должен отправиться в Париж с двухдневным визитом.*

□ the expression *be supposed to do* is a neutral and informal way to say that it is the accepted way of behaving, the right thing to do according to the rule: *I didn't know what I was supposed to do so I just waited for Mr. Garcia to come back. – Я не знал, что мне делать, поэтому я просто ждал, пока вернется господин Гарсиа.*

□ *the expression be expected to do is used to show that people think you should do a particular thing because of your position, age, etc. “Can I help myself to something to eat?” “Of course, you are expected to, you are our guest.” – “Можно я положу что-нибудь себе поесть?” “Конечно, нужно. Вы же наш гость.”*

□ *circumstantial necessity is rendered in English by have to and is equal to the Kazakh and Russian вынужден, приходится: My CD player had a design fault so I didn't have to pay to have it repaired. – У моего проигрывателя компакт-дисков был конструкторский дефект, поэтому мне не пришлось платить за его ремонт.*

□ *a moral or legal duty is shown by the modal verb should: Technically, you should ask permission before you use the computer, but most people don't bother. – С формальной точки зрения, необходимо спрашивать разрешения на пользование компьютером, но большинство людей даже не задумываются об этом.*

□ *authoritative necessity, admonition (“I think it would be good for you”) is expressed by must and need: Carolyn's behavior is getting worse and worse – we must do something about it. – Кэролин ведет себя все хуже и хуже; нам нужно что-то делать. I think you need to defrost your refrigerator. – Мне кажется, тебе нужно разморозить холодильник.*

□ *the expression it is better shows that it is the fairest or most polite thing to do in a particular situation: The keys were in her dad's car but she thought she'd better ask him before she took it. – Ключи были в отцовской машине, но она подумала, что, прежде чем взять машину, надо спросить разрешения отца.*

□ *advisability is signaled by the modal verb ought to, especially to stress one's personal opinion (more formally it is expressed by should). This verb corresponds to the Kazakh and Russian следует: Do you think we ought to call the police? – Ты думаешь, нам следует вызвать полицию*

Modal verbs, varying from formal to informal style, may indicate interpersonal relations between communicators. Such pragmatic characteristics must be taken into account in translating. Sometimes, according to the functional principle of translation, it is necessary to make a translation substitution of a modal verb, even if it has a direct equivalent in Kazakh and Russian. This can be illustrated by an extract from a modern novel: “Can I have the stamp?” Goober asked. “May I,” Hellen corrected. “Дай мне марку,” – попросил Губер. “Пожалуйста,” – напомнила Эллен.

The modal verb may, being more formal than can, sounds more polite in the described situation. In Kazakh and Russian, the translators M. Loriye and E. Kalashnikova expressed politeness with the etiquette word пожалуйста. A kind of etiquette phrase, expressing invitation, is the modal verb will /would. Its etiquette usage is predetermined by its modal meaning of consent, volition: *If you will come this way, I'll see if the principal is free. – Пройдите,*

пожалуйста, сюда, я посмотрю, свободен ли директор. Here also the modal verb is substituted with the parenthetical word пожалуйста.

When translating modal verbs from English into Kazakh and Russian, one should be careful of polysemy. A modal verb may have several meanings; which one to choose can be decided only in context. For example, He may live here can be equal to Ему можно здесь жить (permission), Он, возможно, живет здесь (possibility or uncertainty).

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