

Challenges in Rendering Social Status Markers in the Translation of the XIX Century English Fiction

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Abstract. The article gives an overview of the notion of social status in reference to sociolinguistics and translation theory. It seeks to explore some specific challenges the translators of the XIX century English fiction face in rendering the markers of a literary character social status, and to identify the gains and losses in the translation strategies and tactics used in the passages under consideration.

Keywords: *literary translation, social status markers, XIX century English fiction, substandard language, deviations in speech*

World globalization and integration processes have given rise to new research in intercultural communication, particularly in the fields of applied linguistics and translation. Present-day theory of translation is based on numerous studies in literature and culture studies, sociology, sociolinguistics, stylistics, semiotics, pragmatics, ethnography, aesthetics, poetics etc. Nowadays linguistics and translation are mostly studied within an anthropocentric approach which focuses on the notion that everything revolves around a human being. And no one living in a culture can properly function without any social status. Therefore understanding the social status with its characteristics and functions in society, language and discourse in the context of cross-culturalism is crucial to further study of how it is realized in translation.

In search of effective ways of rendering the social status in literary translation scholars have to turn to sociology and sociolinguistics. O.Kade [3], L.Latyshev [9] and some other researchers believe that translation is the most important form of the social phenomenon of intercultural communication – linguistic activity that serves specific social purposes under definite social conditions [3, p. 7]. S.Maksimov defines translation as “a two-stage process of interlingual and intercultural communication when on the basis of analyzed and transformed text in the source language (SL) a translator creates another text, the target text (TT), in the target language (TL) which substitutes the source text (ST) in the target language and culture” [10, p. 99]. Consequently, translation, as well as language, is a socio-cultural and cross-cultural phenomenon and requires that the translator should possess extensive background knowledge which includes deep understanding of status relationships in both source and target cultures.

The notion of social status chiefly belongs to sociolinguistics which addresses a range of problems connected with those raised in translation. Moreover, one of the aims of translation theory is uncovering the impact of sociolinguistic and pragmatic factors on the process of translation [5, p. 36]. According to A.Schweitzer, both these disciplines face the problems of interconnection of language and social structure, language and culture, and language and sociology of a personality. These problems touch upon the following aspects of translation: translation as a means of reflecting the social world, translation as a socially determined communicative process and the social standard of translation [13]. Therefore, the translator is challenged to convey the hierarchy of the social world with its whole range of socially determined relationships in the SL into the

TL within the framework of translation norms existing in the target culture. This hierarchy is reflected in the socially based variation of language. In fiction, like in real life, it is expressed both directly and indirectly in characters’ speech, lifestyles and contacts [4, p. 31].

Understanding the notion of social status, that has not been thoroughly studied in translation yet, is essential to finding effective ways of fully rendering its characteristics into the TL. In sociology it is defined as the position or rank of a person or group, within the society, characterized by certain rights, obligations and functions [14, p. 54]. In the theory developed by Max Weber, a German sociologist, social stratification is based on three factors that have become known as “the three p’s of stratification”: property, prestige and power. Property refers to one’s material possessions and life chances, prestige means good reputation and high esteem, power is the ability to do what one wants, regardless of the will of others [15, pp. 180-195]. Without doubt, these three factors are foundational in determining the social status, be it a real human being or a fictional character. In this research social status is defined as a complex sociolinguistic as well as interdisciplinary notion that indicates the legal position or rank of a person or group in a social system, which has precise distinguishing features and is expressed through their speech, lifestyle and contacts. In translation it can be viewed through its different aspects, such as social roles, “the three p’s” etc. V.Karasik suggests that social status could be studied from a number of angles, such as socio-economic, sociometric, dynamic and typological angles, as well as from the point of view of role, distance, norm, ethnicity and culture [4, p. 19]. All these aspects of social status are relevant for more profound research of social status in the translation of the XIX century English fiction.

The XIX century English fiction represents England’s rich multifaceted life, covering every aspect of human activity – culture, tradition, entertainment, information etc. The translator has to tackle the problem of reflecting this culture in the TT with all the minute details presented by the author. What makes the task even more complicated is that literary translation is a very challenging activity mainly because creative writing itself is characterized by a very sophisticated, symbolic and figurative language. Besides, literary translation deals with whatever literary genre represented in poetry, drama and prose. Therefore, accurate rendering of social status markers requires thorough studies of genres and a variety of facts about the historical, economic and cultural development of the XIX century Britain. These

facts comprise the background knowledge for rendering the so called “associative train” in cultural concepts which T.Nekriach defines as “the conglomerate of all socio-cultural and historical associations triggered by a certain notion or concept in the minds of representatives of a definite culture in a definite epoch” [11, p. 8].

Markers of social status are defined as the means that indicate the social status of a real person or a literary character. These markers are varied in form and nature, and they can be grouped and classified according to different criteria. In this research they are grouped according to the above given forms of their expression in characters’ speech, lifestyles and contacts, namely, non-verbal communication [4, p. 31].

Speech is the main characteristic of social status. Thus, **speech markers** comprise the bulk of social status markers. The challenges of rendering characters’ speech are caused by a number of factors, such as systemic differences between the SL and TL, language norm, stylistic features, language use, morphological and word-formation differences, extralinguistic factors [5].

Distinguishing between the three expressive speech styles (high, middle and low) helps the translator clearly see and single out the markers of social status in the text. High-flown speech, the attribute of high-class aristocracy, is characterized by a great number of stylistic means and devices unlike the simplified, sometimes even primitive speech of servants. T.Ivushkina [2] and D.Kriukov [7], having thoroughly researched the specific traits of English aristocratic speech as a social dialect, have concluded that it abounds in the use of bookish and abstract vocabulary, old-style and archaic words, insets of foreign speech and slang words, euphemisms, biblical, historical, literary and mythological allusions. It is also marked by high modality and the use of complex grammatical constructions – gerundial, participial and infinitive, as well as parenthetical words and phrases [8]. All of these features can indicate one’s social status (i.e. become social status markers in a certain context) and can be challenging in rendering, requiring special tactics of translation. Besides, the complex hierarchy of British aristocratic titles creates an additional difficulty for the translator of a work of fiction as some of its details may be unknown or seem unimportant, and yet, when rendered inadequately, can change or twist the original meaning, so the status of the character will be perceived as lower than it was implied. For example, in W.Thackeray’s novel “Vanity Fair” the title of earl’s daughter *Lady Mary Mango* is translated into Ukrainian as *леді Манго – Lady Mango*, which lowers her status in Ukrainian, because if a woman’s title is followed by her surname in British society she is perceived not as a born title holder, but as someone who got her title through marriage and therefore has no right to keep the title after either a divorce or her husband’s death: “<...> **Lady Mary Mango, sir, daughter of the Right Hon. the Earl of Castlemouldy.**” [19] – <...> *своячка моєї дочки, сер, леді Манго, дочка високоповажного графа Кастлмоуді.* [26] This requires deep insights on the part of the translator into the historical and cultural milieu described in the original.

Another difficulty in rendering markers of social status in aristocratic speech is the use of insets of **foreign language** which in the Ukrainian translation tradition should be left untouched in the text and their translation should

be given in the footnotes. But some translators find ways to effectively compensate for the foreign piece through either foreignization or domestication strategies. For example, Jane Eire is talking to little Adel, who replies in French: “*Et cela doit signifier,*” *said she, “qu’il y aura le dedans un cadeau pour moi, et peut-etre pour vous aussi, mademoiselle. Monsieur a parlé de vous <...>”* [17, p. 82] – *А це означає, – провадила вона далі пофранцузькому, – що там є для мене подарунок, а може, й для вас, мадемуазель. Мосьє згадував про вас <...>* [21, p. 114]. The translator resorts to domestication and compensates for the original French through the use of domesticated French words *мадемуазель – mademoiselle* and *мосьє – Monsieur* adding the explanation that the girl is speaking French. This translation is easy to comprehend in Ukrainian, the reader doesn’t get distracted by the necessity of turning to footnotes, but the girl’s speech in the target text loses its status marking.

Allusions, which are not always easy to spot in the text, create another obstacle for the translator to overcome. Rendering allusions as social status markers requires retaining their associational background as close to the original implications as possible, as well as their stylistic functions and status marking, thus making them recognizable in the TL [6, p. 5]. For instance, in W.Collins’ novel “The Woman in White” the Italian count Fosco in his conversation with Marian Halcombe uses the biblical allusion *good news* which alludes to Archangel Gabriel’s bringing good news about the Savior’s birth to Mary: “*I only venture to disturb you because I am the bearer of good news.*” [18] – *Я наслідився потурбувати вас лише заради хороших вістей.* [23] The Ukrainian translator rendered this allusion with the help of the literal phrase *хороші вісті* which stripped the translation of the biblical allusion. As a result, the status marker of Fosco’s speech is considerably lowered.

Deviations from the literary norm can also indicate social status, mostly a lower one, and are usually challenging to render. Such deviations form a substandard language characterized by the use of colloquialisms, dialect, slang, vulgar and curse words, various phonetic deviations, grammatical and spelling mistakes. In fiction they are mostly aimed at creating a unique imagery and comic effect [9]. The Ukrainian substandard language differs from the English one in the way that it is richer in phatic linguistic units, has certain morphological peculiarities and lacks phonetic and grammatical mistakes typical of English. Speech deviations are not confined to a definite class, but in terms of social status they usually signify a low- or low-middle class speaker. Thus, in G.B.Shaw’s play “Pygmalion” an ignorant flower-girl, after having been taught an impeccable pronunciation, gives away her lower status by the use of specific vocabulary: “*Liza [piling up the indictment] What call would a woman with that strength in her have to die of influenza? What become of her new straw hat that should have come to me? Somebody pinched it; and what I say is, them as pinched it done her in.*” [20] *Еліза (додаючи нові аргументи). Ну, скажіть ви, на милість, чого б оце така здоров’яга та й померла від інфлюєнзи? А хто тепер знає, де її солом’яний капелюх – той, що до мене мав перейти?! Поцупили – точно вам кажу! Тут справа ясна, хто капелюха поцупив, той і тітку замочив!*

[28] The translator compensates for Eliza Doolittle's slang with Ukrainian colloquialisms and colloquial syntax in this way retaining the original comic effect and status marking of the character's speech. However, it gets even more challenging to render phonetic peculiarities such as Cockney: "The flower girl. *Wal, fewd dan y' de-ooty bawmz a mather* (Well, if you'd done your duty about him as a mother) should, *eed now bettern* (he'd know better than) to spawl a *pore gel's flahrzn* (poor girl's flowers) than ran awy *atbaht pyin* (without paying)." [20] Квіткарка. Ну, *я'би в' 'го луче навчили, то ни мікав би він геть, коли **россинав** квіточки бідній дівчині, а запла- тив би за шкоду!* [27] / Квіткарка. *Нічо' не ска'еш, виховала мамуся! Це ж **тре'**: вивалював мені всі хвілки в грязюці і втік! **На'іть** не заплатив бідній дівчині!* [28] Both Ukrainian translators render the stylistic and status characteristics of the girl's speech accurately. Along with the use of colloquialisms, they turn to "clipping" some syllables and letters to render the t-glottalization, h-dropping and different kinds of vowel alteration characteristic of Cockney (я'би – якби, 'го – його, нічо' – нічого, ска'еш – скажеш; *тре'* – треба, на'іть – навить). Besides these tactics phonetic deviations typical of Ukrainian are used, but O.Mokrovolsky uses the mistakes that are only perceived in reading, but cannot be heard in the theater (*ни мікав, россинав*), i.e. his translation is meant entirely "for page", while M.Pavlov, by choosing his translation tactics, clearly seeks to gain the "translation for stage" effect. Rendering grammatical mistakes, however, seems to be the hardest task to complete due to the differences in the grammatical structure of SL and TL. They are sometimes made up for by colloquialisms, but, in most cases, are not reflected in translation, thus causing the loss of markers of social status in the TT, e.g.: "*There has been better ladies, and there has been worsser, Hester,*" was Miss Horrocks' reply to this compliment of her inferior. [19] – Були краці за мене леді, а були й гірші, Естер, – казала міс Горокс у відповідь на лестощі своєї улюблениці. [26] "You're **поан** so far fro' Thornfield now." [17, p. 82] – Ми вже недалеко від Торнфілда. [21, p. 91] / – Ми вже зовсім недалеко від Тернфілду. [22, p. 106]. In these fragments the grammatical mistakes are not rendered at all, so the social status of these characters can only be understood from the context, but the comic effect of their speech is surely lost. Yet, there are better chances of rendering the grammatical mistakes with minimal losses when they are combined with spelling and phonetic mistakes, together with some stylistic misuse. For instance, in W.Thackeray's "Vanity Fair" Miss Crawley's servant, Firkin, sounds ridiculous when gossiping about Becky Sharp due to a great number of speech deviations characteristic of someone who pretends to possess a higher status than in reality: "Miss B., they are all **infatyated** about that young woman," Firkin replied. "Sir Pitt wouldn't have let her go, but he **daredn't** refuse Miss Crawley anything. Mrs. Bute at the Rectory **jist** as bad – never happy out of her sight. The **Capting** quite wild about her. Mr. Crawley **mortal** jealous. Since Miss C. was **took** ill, she **won't** have **nobody** near her but Miss Sharp, I **can't** tell for where **nor** for why; and I think **somethink** has **bewidged** everybody." [19] – Вони там усі **показилися** через неї, міс Бігс, – відповіла місіс Феркін. – Сер Пітт нізащо

не хотів відпускати її, але боявся відмовити міс Кроулі. Місіс Б'ют, дружина пастора, ще гірше – без неї жити не може. І капітан теж у неї **вклепався**. Містер Кроулі **смертельно** її ревнує. Відколи міс Кроулі **заслабла**, то не хоче нікого бачити коло себе, крім міс Шарп, а чому, я не можу сказати, не інакше як вона всіх **напоїла чарами**. [26] The translator compensates for Firkin's mistakes by using colloquialisms only. Seeking the most effective tactics of rendering this passage I carried out a little experiment among university students which pointed out that the problem does have a solution, and it is quite possible to find Ukrainian bookish words misused by the speaker of low educational and social status: «Міс Б., ця дівчиця їх усіх там **обсолютно** причарувала,» – відповіла Фіркін. – «Сер Пітт ніколи б її не відпустив, але він не наважився іти проти **волевильвання** міс Кроулі. Місіс Б'ют у **Ректорстві** не на багато краща – у неї **сйфорія** тільки коли вона оту бачить. А **копитан** той просто від неї **божеволіє**. Містер Кроулі ревнує **надсамовито**. Відколи міс К. занедужала, вона нікого до себе не підпускає, окрім міс Шарп. Не скажу вам де або чому, але, гадаю, **де-що геть усіх почарувало**.» The chosen tactics helped retain the comic effect and status marking of Firkin's speech in the abstract and proved that Ukrainian has enough language resources to translate such deviations with maximum adequacy.

As for the markers of social status referring to a character's **lifestyle**, here belong socially marked objects and phenomena surrounding them in their everyday life, their relationships and behaviour (clothing, appearance, furniture, games, food, objects of art etc.). The greatest challenge for the translator is recognizing these social status markers in the ST, as they are not always explicit. Rendering them demands extensive background knowledge in the first place. For example, in J.Austen's novel "Pride and Prejudice", Mrs. Bennet indicates Miss Long's lower status by saying that the latter came to the ball in a hack chaise: "<...> everybody says that he is eat up with pride, and I dare say he had heard somehow that Mrs. Long does not keep a **carriage**, and had come to the ball in a **hack chaise**." [16] – <...> усі твердять, що його зриває гонор, і я підозрюю, він десь почув, що місіс Лонг не має власної **карети** і приїхала на бал у **найманому екїпажі**. [25, p. 20] The phrase "hack chaise" (*hack* – a horse kept for hire [CED]; *chaise* – a light open horse-drawn carriage, esp one with two wheels designed for two passengers [CED]) has been accurately translated as *найманий екїпаж* (a hired chase), which in Ukrainian also implies the lower status of a person using it compared to those having a personal carriage.

Non-verbal communication of literary characters may also indicate their social status. It includes the use of visual cues such as body language (kinesics), distance (proxemics), voice (paralanguage), touch (haptics) and eye contact (oculesics). Paralanguage implies voice quality, rate, pitch, volume, and speaking style, as well as prosodic features such as rhythm, intonation, and stress. The efficiency of translating descriptions of non-verbal communication depends on the personal communication skills of the translator, their ability to "read between the lines" and see the nuances of characters' status qualities, among other things that have been mentioned above. For in-

stance, the asymmetric body language exchange between Jane Eyre and the ladies visiting Mr. Rochester speaks of their status inequality louder than words: *"I rose and curtseyed to them: one or two bent their heads in return, the others only stared at me."* [17, p. 149] – *Я встала й зробила реверанс: одна-дві ледь кивнули, деякі тільки зиркнули на мене.*" [21, p. 165] / *Я підвелася і вклонилася їм; одна або дві кивнули у відповідь, інші тільки ледь кинули на мене оком.* [22, p. 194]. The ladies demonstrate obvious disrespect towards the governess by staring at her (*stare* – to look or gaze fixedly, often with hostility or rudeness [CED]) in reaction to Jane's polite curtsey. In both variants *stare* is translated into Ukrainian

as *glance* which still conveys the connotation of contempt towards Jane, thus retaining status marking, but loses the implication of hostility and rudeness.

So, the translators of English fiction have to cope with the following challenges in rendering highly specific markers of literary characters' social status: discerning in the ST and singling out such social status markers as allusions, objects and phenomena of everyday life, non-verbal communication. Finding effective ways of rendering different kinds of speech, lifestyle and non-verbal communication markers of social status into the TL, as well as reflecting their "associative train" with maximum adequacy and minimum loss should be the creative creed of any translator.

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