

HOW TO PRESERVE COLOURING IN TRANSLATION

Mustafoeva Durdona Ilyosovna

History and philology department

Asia International University Bukhara, Uzbekistan

Abstract

In translation studies, *colouring* refers to the psycho-emotional, stylistic, pragmatic, and cultural nuances that accompany the denotative meaning of a text. Preserving colouring in translation is a complex task, as these nuances are often implicit and deeply rooted in the linguistic and cultural system of the source language. Failure to maintain colouring may result in translations that are semantically accurate but emotionally neutral or pragmatically distorted. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks proposed by Peter Newmark, Eugene Nida, and Lawrence Venuti, this article examines the nature of colouring in translation, identifies key challenges in its preservation, and discusses effective strategies for maintaining psycho-emotional and pragmatic equivalence. The study emphasizes the importance of functional equivalence, cultural adaptation, and stylistic compensation in achieving translations that retain the expressive and communicative impact of the original text.

Keywords

Colouring in translation; psycho-emotional meaning; pragmatic equivalence; stylistic colouring; cultural adaptation; literary translation

Introduction

Translation is widely recognized as more than a mechanical transfer of words from one language to another. It is a complex interpretative process that involves linguistic, cultural, pragmatic, and emotional dimensions. One of the most challenging aspects of this process is the preservation of *colouring*—the psycho-emotional, stylistic, and pragmatic nuances embedded in the source text. Even when semantic meaning is accurately conveyed, the loss of colouring can lead to translations that feel emotionally neutral, culturally inappropriate, or stylistically inconsistent.

In contemporary translation studies, colouring is understood as a key component of meaning, particularly in literary, political, and expressive texts. Scholars such as Peter Newmark and Eugene Nida emphasize that successful translation must reproduce not only what is said but also how and why it is said. This article explores the concept of colouring in translation, examines the challenges involved in preserving it, and outlines practical strategies that translators can employ to maintain psycho-emotional and pragmatic equivalence.

1. Understanding Colouring in Translation

In translation theory, colouring refers to the additional layers of meaning that accompany the denotative content of a text. These layers shape the reader's emotional response and interpretation. Colouring can be divided into several interrelated dimensions:

Psycho-emotional colouring, which conveys emotions such as fear, irony, compassion,



tension, or nostalgia

Stylistic colouring, which includes register, tone, rhythm, and authorial voice

Pragmatic colouring, reflecting communicative intent, politeness strategies, and discourse function

Cultural colouring, encompassing connotations, culturally bound metaphors, and social norms

Newmark argues that meaning in translation consists of both semantic and communicative elements, with colouring playing a central role in communicative meaning (Newmark, 1988). Similarly, Nida's concept of dynamic equivalence prioritizes the response of the target audience, making emotional and pragmatic colouring essential to translation quality (Nida, 1964).

2. Challenges in Preserving Colouring

Preserving colouring in translation is problematic due to several factors. First, **linguistic asymmetry** between languages means that emotional intensity, modality, or evaluation may be encoded differently. For example, some languages rely heavily on lexical markers, while others use syntactic or contextual means to convey emotion. Second, **cultural differences** significantly affect emotional expression. An image or metaphor that evokes empathy in one culture may appear neutral or even inappropriate in another. As a result, literal translation often leads to emotional loss or distortion. Third, **genre conventions** influence how colouring functions. Literary texts tolerate and even demand strong emotional colouring, whereas academic or legal texts suppress it. Translators must therefore balance fidelity to the source text with genre expectations in the target culture. Finally, **translator subjectivity** plays a crucial role. Since colouring is often implicit, translators must interpret emotional undertones, which increases the risk of over-interpretation or neutralization.

3. Strategies for Preserving Colouring

To address these challenges, translators can apply several strategies.

3.1 Functional Equivalence

Rather than focusing on formal similarity, translators should aim for functional equivalence—reproducing the same emotional and pragmatic effect in the target text. This approach aligns closely with Nida's dynamic equivalence model (Nida, 1964).

3.2 Contextual Amplification and Reduction

When emotional meaning is implicit in the source language, it may need to be made explicit in the target language through amplification. Conversely, excessive emotional markers may require reduction if they conflict with target-language norms.

3.3 Stylistic Compensation



If colouring cannot be preserved in a specific segment, it can be compensated for elsewhere in the text. This technique is particularly effective in literary translation, where rhythm, imagery, or lexical choice can restore emotional balance.

3.4 Cultural Substitution

Culturally bound elements may be replaced with target-culture equivalents that produce a similar emotional and pragmatic response. This strategy helps preserve cultural colouring without sacrificing comprehensibility.

3.5 Preservation of Authorial Voice

Maintaining the author's voice is crucial for preserving colouring. Attention to sentence length, narrative distance, irony, and evaluative language helps retain the original emotional tone.

4. Colouring and Literary Translation

Literary translation places the highest demands on the preservation of colouring. In fiction, emotional tension, psychological depth, and narrative voice are inseparable from meaning. Scholars such as Lawrence Venuti argue that excessive domestication can erase the stylistic and cultural colouring of the source text, while excessive foreignization may alienate the target reader (Venuti, 1995).

Therefore, the translator's task is to strike a balance between faithfulness to the source text's emotional world and accessibility for the target audience.

Conclusion

Preserving colouring in translation is a complex but essential task that determines the depth, authenticity, and communicative effectiveness of the translated text. Colouring encompasses psycho-emotional, stylistic, pragmatic, and cultural dimensions that cannot be reduced to lexical meaning alone. As demonstrated in this article, loss of colouring often results from linguistic asymmetry, cultural distance, genre constraints, and subjective interpretation.

By applying strategies such as functional equivalence, contextual adaptation, stylistic compensation, and cultural substitution, translators can successfully maintain the emotional and pragmatic impact of the source text. Ultimately, preserving colouring requires not only linguistic competence but also cultural awareness, interpretative sensitivity, and a deep understanding of the communicative purpose of translation.

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