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PRESERVING IMPLICIT MEANING AND PRAGMATIC FORCE IN DIALOGUES AND MONOLOGUES: A LINGUOPRAGMATIC APPROACH TO TRANSLATION

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Abstract: The preservation of implicit meaning and pragmatic force represents one of the most complex challenges in translation, particularly when transferring dialogues and monologues between languages with different linguistic, cultural, and communicative conventions. Unlike explicitly expressed information, implicit meaning is often conveyed through contextual assumptions, indirect speech acts, presuppositions, implicatures, irony, politeness strategies, and culturally determined communicative patterns. The translator must therefore reproduce not only the propositional content of an utterance but also its intended communicative function and potential effect on the target audience. This article examines the linguistic and pragmatic mechanisms through which implicit meaning and pragmatic force are constructed in dialogues and monologues and considers strategies for preserving them in translation. Drawing on speech act theory, Gricean pragmatics, relevance theory, and functional approaches to translation, the study applies qualitative analytical and comparative methods to illustrative English–Russian translation examples. Particular attention is paid to indirect requests, conversational implicatures, irony, rhetorical questions, evaluative statements, and persuasive monologues. The analysis suggests that pragmatic equivalence cannot always be achieved through formal or lexical correspondence. Instead, successful translation requires context-sensitive interpretation, attention to speaker intention, and the strategic adaptation of linguistic forms to target-language conventions. The article concludes that preserving pragmatic force involves maintaining the communicative purpose and interpretive potential of the source text while avoiding unnecessary changes to its interpersonal and rhetorical effects.

Keywords: implicit meaning, pragmatic force, dialogue, monologue, translation equivalence, implicature, speech acts, communicative intention, pragmatic adaptation, English–Russian translation.

Translation is not merely the replacement of linguistic units in one language with their equivalents in another. It is a complex communicative process in which the translator interprets the source message, identifies its intended meaning, and reconstructs that meaning for a new linguistic and cultural audience. This complexity becomes particularly evident when the source text communicates important information indirectly rather than through explicit verbal expression.

Implicit meaning is an essential feature of everyday communication, literary dialogue, political discourse, academic presentations, interviews, and persuasive speeches. Speakers frequently rely on shared knowledge, situational context, social relationships, and cultural expectations instead of articulating every element of their intentions. Consequently, the interpretation of an utterance often extends beyond its literal semantic content.

Pragmatic force refers in this article to the communicative function and interpersonal or rhetorical impact of an utterance, including such functions as requesting, warning, refusing, criticizing, persuading, reassuring, and expressing irony. In speech act theory, the related concept of illocutionary force concerns what a speaker does in saying something, whereas the

perlocutionary effect concerns the consequences that an utterance produces in its recipient (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969).

The distinction is particularly important in translation. A sentence may be translated accurately at the lexical and grammatical levels while losing its indirectness, politeness, emotional intensity, irony, or persuasive effect. For example, a tactful suggestion may become a direct command, or a rhetorical question intended to criticize an action may be interpreted as a genuine request for information.

Dialogues and monologues present different but interconnected challenges. Dialogue depends heavily on interaction, turn-taking, shared knowledge, and the interpretation of responses. Monologue, by contrast, often develops a sustained communicative intention through argumentation, rhetorical structure, evaluation, and audience-oriented strategies. Both forms, however, require the translator to recognize meanings that are not fully encoded in individual words.

The purpose of this article is to examine how implicit meaning and pragmatic force can be preserved when translating dialogues and monologues, with particular attention to English–Russian translation. The study addresses three research questions:

1. What linguistic and contextual mechanisms contribute to implicit meaning in dialogues and monologues?

2. Which translation difficulties arise when the pragmatic force of an utterance differs from its literal meaning?

3. What strategies can help translators preserve communicative intention and pragmatic impact in the target language?

Implicit meaning refers to information that is not directly stated but can be inferred from linguistic form, contextual information, shared assumptions, or communicative conventions. It may arise through presupposition, conversational implicature, indirect speech acts, irony, understatement, and other pragmatic mechanisms.

Grice's theory of conversational implicature provides a fundamental framework for explaining how hearers infer meanings beyond the literal content of utterances. In Logic and Conversation, Grice (1975) argues that interpretation depends partly on assumptions about the cooperative nature of communication and the relationship between what is said and what is contextually implied.

Consider the following illustrative example:

Source text:

A: “Are you coming to the meeting?”
B: “I have an appointment at three.”

Possible Russian translation:

A: «Ты придёшь на встречу?»
B: «В три часа у меня назначена встреча».

The second speaker does not explicitly refuse the invitation or answer the question with “no.” Nevertheless, the response may imply that attendance is impossible or unlikely. Its interpretation depends on the circumstances, the timing of the meeting, and the participants' shared knowledge.

A translation that replaces the response with «Нет, я не приду на встречу» may communicate the likely practical conclusion but eliminate the indirectness of the original. Such an explicit version could be appropriate when clarity is more important than preserving conversational form. However, if indirectness contributes to characterization, politeness, hesitation, or interpersonal tension, the change may weaken pragmatic equivalence.

This example illustrates a central principle: implicit meaning is not an isolated property of a sentence. It emerges through the relationship between linguistic expression and communicative context.

Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) demonstrate that utterances function as actions as well as linguistic expressions. A speaker may use a declarative sentence to make a request, an interrogative sentence to criticize, or an apparently neutral statement to warn someone.

For instance:

Source text: "It is getting rather cold in here."

Depending on the situation, this statement may function as a simple observation, an indirect request to close a window, or a suggestion to turn on the heating.

Possible Russian translation: «Здесь становится довольно холодно».

The translation preserves the propositional content. However, whether it preserves the pragmatic force depends on the surrounding context and the target audience's interpretation. If the statement functions as an indirect request, translating it as «Закрой окно» would make the intention explicit and increase directness. The more explicit version may be communicatively effective in some contexts, but it does not reproduce the same interpersonal strategy.

A translator must therefore distinguish between what an utterance literally states and what the speaker accomplishes by producing it. This distinction is especially important when the original text relies on indirectness to express respect, disagreement, authority, uncertainty, or emotional restraint.

Relevance theory emphasizes the role of contextual assumptions and inferential processes in communication (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). According to this approach, the interpretation of an utterance depends not only on linguistic decoding but also on the inferences that the recipient makes in a particular context.

For translators, this means that a source-text expression cannot always be interpreted adequately in isolation. A short response, pause, metaphor, or apparently irrelevant remark may acquire its communicative significance from the preceding discourse.

The translator consequently performs two related tasks: first, interpreting the intended meaning in the source context; second, selecting a target-language expression that enables the intended audience to recover a sufficiently similar interpretation.

This process does not require identical wording or identical linguistic structures. It requires an appropriate relationship between the source speaker's intention, the target utterance, and the interpretive conditions available to the target reader or listener.

The article adopts a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach. It combines conceptual analysis of relevant pragmatic and translation theories with a comparative examination of illustrative English–Russian utterances.

The examples were constructed for analytical purposes rather than collected from a representative empirical corpus. They demonstrate recurring pragmatic phenomena, including indirect requests, conversational implicatures, rhetorical questions, irony, and persuasive discourse. Each example is examined according to four criteria:

1. **Semantic content:** whether the basic propositional meaning is preserved.
2. **Communicative intention:** whether the target text conveys what the speaker intends to accomplish.
3. **Interpersonal positioning:** whether the relationship between speakers, including politeness, authority, distance, or disagreement, remains reasonably comparable.
4. **Rhetorical or emotional impact:** whether the target expression retains the relevant persuasive, evaluative, or emotional effect.

The analysis distinguishes between semantic correspondence and pragmatic equivalence. Since the examples are illustrative, the discussion offers qualitative observations rather than statistically generalizable findings. The proposed criteria can nevertheless provide a framework for subsequent corpus-based or experimental research.

Dialogues frequently contain indirect requests whose form differs from their intended function. Such expressions can reduce the force of an imposition, maintain social distance, or present a request as a question about the listener's ability or willingness.

Consider the following example:

Source text: “Could you possibly send me the report today?”

Russian translation: «Не могли бы вы прислать мне отчёт сегодня?»

The Russian version preserves the interrogative form, the polite modal construction, and the request's non-imposing character. By contrast, «Пришлите мне отчёт сегодня» communicates the practical requirement directly but changes the interpersonal force.

The choice between these versions depends on the communicative setting. In a formal workplace interaction, the indirect version may be more suitable when the source speaker intends to soften the request. In an urgent instruction, the direct version may be justified if the target context calls for greater explicitness.

This issue is closely related to politeness theory. Brown and Levinson (1987) explain how speakers use linguistic strategies to manage face needs and interpersonal relations. However, politeness conventions differ across languages and situations; therefore, a structurally similar expression does not automatically produce an identical social effect.

Translators should evaluate the relative formality, social distance, power relationship, and degree of imposition involved. Preserving pragmatic force may require a target-language construction that differs grammatically from the source but performs a comparable interpersonal function.

4.2. Conversational Implicature and Indirect Refusal

Indirect refusals are another important challenge in dialogue translation.

Source text:

A: “Would you like to join us for dinner?”

B: “I have to get up very early tomorrow.”

Possible Russian translation:

A: «Не хочешь поужинать с нами?»

B: «Завтра мне нужно очень рано вставать».

The second speaker does not explicitly decline the invitation. Instead, the explanation encourages the interlocutor to infer a refusal. Translating the response as «Нет, я не хочу идти с вами на ужин» would introduce an explicit negative meaning and potentially suggest unwillingness to spend time with the group rather than a practical scheduling difficulty.

The distinction is important because a refusal can threaten interpersonal rapport. Speakers may therefore provide reasons, express regret, or rely on indirect explanations to reduce the social impact of declining an invitation.

The translator should preserve the relationship between the stated reason and the inferred refusal whenever that relationship is relevant to the text. If the indirect response is retained, the target reader can infer the intended meaning while experiencing a similar degree of ambiguity and interpersonal restraint.

Irony frequently depends on a contrast between literal meaning and contextual interpretation.

Source text: “What a brilliant idea!”

Context: The speaker is reacting to a decision that has caused a serious problem.

Possible Russian translation: «Ну и гениальная идея!»

In this context, the expression conveys criticism rather than genuine admiration. Its pragmatic force emerges from the contrast between the positive wording and the negative situation.

A literal translation such as «Какая блестящая идея!» may preserve the positive lexical meaning but fail to reproduce the ironic interpretation if the context does not sufficiently signal the

speaker's attitude. Conversely, adding an overtly negative adjective could eliminate the ambiguity and make the criticism more explicit than in the source.

Irony is especially sensitive to intonation, punctuation, shared knowledge, and cultural conventions. In spoken dialogue, vocal emphasis and timing may signal an ironic intention; in written dialogue, contextual details and surrounding turns often perform this function.

The translator must therefore consider the complete interaction rather than treating an ironic expression as an isolated sentence. Where the target language offers a conventional ironic expression with a comparable function, replacing the original wording may preserve pragmatic force more effectively than a word-for-word translation.

Presuppositions allow speakers to present certain information as already accepted or accessible to the interlocutor.

Source text: “Have you finally started taking your studies seriously?”

Possible Russian translation: «Ты наконец-то начал серьёзно относиться к учёбе?»

The adverb finally presupposes or strongly suggests that the relevant change has been expected or delayed. The question may therefore function not merely as an inquiry but also as criticism, surprise, or approval after a period of disappointment.

Removing finally would weaken this evaluative dimension. Similarly, changing the question into a neutral statement would alter its interpersonal function.

Presuppositions may be particularly difficult to preserve when the target language uses different grammatical or lexical means to encode temporal, evaluative, or shared information. Translators should identify what the utterance treats as given and determine whether that background meaning remains recoverable in the target text.

Unlike dialogue, a monologue does not necessarily depend on immediate verbal responses from another participant. Nevertheless, it remains interactive in a broader communicative sense because the speaker anticipates the audience's knowledge, beliefs, expectations, and possible objections.

Political speeches, academic presentations, public lectures, personal narratives, and persuasive statements may use rhetorical questions, repetition, evaluative vocabulary, contrast, metaphor, and indirect appeals to guide audience interpretation.

The pragmatic force of a monologue is therefore distributed across the discourse rather than concentrated in individual sentences. A translator who preserves every sentence separately but weakens the logical progression, emotional development, or rhetorical emphasis may fail to reproduce the communicative impact of the whole text.

For this reason, monologue translation requires attention to discourse structure, cohesion, register, and the relationship between explicit argument and implicit evaluation.

Rhetorical questions are common in persuasive discourse because they invite the audience to reach a conclusion that the speaker considers obvious or desirable.

Source text: “How can we expect progress if we refuse to change?”

Russian translation: «Как мы можем ожидать прогресса, если отказываемся меняться?»

The question is not primarily a request for information. It challenges the audience to recognize a contradiction between the desire for progress and resistance to change.

A translation that converts the question into «Мы не можем ожидать прогресса, если отказываемся меняться» preserves much of the propositional meaning but changes the rhetorical form. The declarative version may be appropriate in a formal analytical text, yet it loses some of the audience-directed pressure generated by the original question.

Rhetorical questions often combine logical reasoning with emotional involvement. Their effectiveness depends on the audience's participation in the inference, even when that participation is imagined rather than spoken.

Consequently, translators should preserve rhetorical questions where their function remains natural in the target language. If a direct structural equivalent sounds unnatural or fails to produce the intended interpretation, a functional alternative may be justified, provided that the change does not distort the speaker's stance.

Repetition can perform several functions in a monologue: reinforcing an argument, expressing emotional commitment, organizing a speech, creating rhythm, and increasing persuasive intensity.

Consider the following illustrative passage:

Sourcetext:

“We need courage to begin, courage to continue, and courage to change.”

Russiantranslation:

«Нам нужна смелость, чтобы начать, смелость, чтобы продолжать, и смелость, чтобы меняться».

The repeated noun courage establishes a parallel structure and gives the statement rhetorical rhythm. The Russian translation retains the repetition and the progression from beginning to continuing and changing.

A translator might be tempted to remove repeated words for stylistic economy. However, this could weaken the emphasis and reduce the cumulative force of the statement. In rhetorical discourse, repetition is not necessarily redundant: it may be central to the intended effect.

At the same time, not every repetition should be reproduced mechanically. Some repetitions are accidental, while others are purposeful discourse markers. The translator must distinguish stylistic emphasis from unnecessary redundancy by considering the genre, speaker's intention, and rhetorical organization.

Monologues frequently communicate evaluation indirectly through lexical choices, metaphors, contrastive structures, and presupposed assumptions. A speaker may present a policy as ambitious, reckless, necessary, or controversial, thereby shaping the audience's interpretation without explicitly stating a complete judgment.

For example:

Source text: “The proposal raises serious questions about accountability.”

Russian translation: «Это предложение вызывает серьёзные вопросы относительно подотчётности».

The statement does not explicitly declare the proposal unacceptable. Nevertheless, the expression raises serious questions signals concern and invites critical evaluation.

A translation such as «Это предложение неприемлемо» would intensify the speaker's position by converting a cautious criticism into an explicit negative judgment. In academic, diplomatic, and political discourse, such changes can significantly affect the representation of the speaker's stance.

Preserving pragmatic force therefore requires sensitivity to degrees of commitment. Hedging, understatement, and evaluative implication may be essential to the communicative strategy, especially when the speaker seeks to criticize without making a categorical accusation.

The examples above suggest that translators need a flexible set of strategies rather than a single procedure for all pragmatic phenomena. The following strategies can help preserve communicative intention across dialogues and monologues.

The translator should examine the surrounding text, the participants' relationship, the communicative setting, and relevant cultural assumptions before selecting a target expression. An utterance that appears neutral in isolation may function as a refusal, warning, criticism, or indirect request in context.

When a literal translation does not reproduce the source utterance's communicative function, the translator may select a different linguistic structure that performs a comparable function in the

target language. Functional equivalence is particularly useful for indirect requests, idiomatic expressions, irony, and conventional politeness strategies.

Pragmatic adaptation involves modifying an expression to accommodate target-language communicative conventions while preserving the relevant intention. Such adaptation should be controlled: an indirect statement should not become unnecessarily aggressive, and a cautious evaluation should not become an unequivocal accusation.

Sometimes a pragmatic effect cannot be reproduced at the same point in the target text. Compensation allows the translator to convey a comparable effect elsewhere, for example through word choice, discourse markers, punctuation, or a later phrase. This strategy may be useful in literary dialogue and rhetorically structured monologues.

Ambiguity should not automatically be treated as a defect requiring clarification. If the source deliberately leaves the speaker's intention uncertain, a translation that resolves the ambiguity may change characterization, interpersonal tension, or rhetorical meaning.

However, preserving ambiguity does not mean reproducing obscurity mechanically. The translator should distinguish between intentional interpretive openness and accidental confusion caused by differences between languages.

The translator should consider the degree of formality, emotional distance, politeness, authority, and familiarity expressed by an utterance. Lexical accuracy alone is insufficient if the target version changes the relationship between participants or misrepresents the speaker's social position.

The following table summarizes the principal analytical considerations.

Pragmatic phenomenon	**Potential translation risk**	**Recommended strategy**
Indirect request	Becoming too direct or commanding	Preserve indirectness where appropriate
Conversational implicature	Making an inferred meaning unnecessarily explicit	Reconstruct the contextual inference
Irony	Reproducing literal praise instead of criticism	Use contextually appropriate ironic wording
Presupposition	Losing background assumptions or evaluation	Retain relevant lexical and structural cues
Rhetorical question	Replacing audience engagement with a neutral statement	Preserve rhetorical form when functional
Repetition	Weakening emphasis through unnecessary omission	Maintain purposeful repetition and parallelism
Hedging	Turning cautious criticism into certainty	Preserve the original degree of commitment
Ambiguity	Resolving an intentional double meaning	Retain ambiguity where it serves a communicative purpose

These strategies are not mutually exclusive. A single utterance may require contextual interpretation, functional equivalence, and register adjustment simultaneously. The translator's task is to determine which features are essential to the communicative purpose and how they can be reproduced most naturally in the target language.

The analysis demonstrates that the translation of implicit meaning requires an interpretive process that extends beyond semantic correspondence. Dialogues and monologues differ in their organizational features, but both rely on the relationship between linguistic expression, speaker intention, and contextual inference.

In dialogue, pragmatic meaning often emerges through interaction. A refusal may be expressed as an explanation, criticism may appear as praise, and a request may take the form of a question. The interpretation of such expressions depends on the previous turn, the expected response, and the interpersonal relationship between participants. Translators must therefore consider the sequence of turns rather than evaluating each utterance independently.

In monologues, pragmatic force is often constructed cumulatively. Rhetorical questions, repetition, hedging, evaluative vocabulary, and argument structure work together to guide the audience toward a particular interpretation. A translation that preserves the meaning of individual sentences but removes these discourse-level features may weaken the overall persuasive or emotional effect.

The findings of the qualitative analysis also support a distinction between preserving communicative intention and reproducing identical linguistic form. Structural similarity may be useful, but it is not always the most reliable indicator of pragmatic equivalence. A grammatically different target expression may preserve the source function more effectively, while a literal rendering may distort the speaker's stance.

Nevertheless, pragmatic equivalence is not an absolute or universally measurable condition. Different target audiences may interpret the same expression differently because of differences in cultural knowledge, genre expectations, age, social relationships, or communicative setting. A translator can seek to preserve the most salient pragmatic features, but cannot guarantee an identical response from every reader or listener.

The present article is limited by its reliance on illustrative examples rather than a large bilingual corpus or experimental reception data. Future research could examine authentic English–Russian dialogues from literary works, films, interviews, and institutional communication. Experimental studies involving bilingual readers or listeners could also investigate whether alternative translations produce comparable interpretations of indirectness, irony, politeness, and persuasive force.

Such research would make it possible to compare translators' decisions with actual audience responses and to identify which pragmatic features are most vulnerable to translation loss.

Preserving implicit meaning and pragmatic force in dialogues and monologues is a central challenge in translation because communicative meaning frequently extends beyond the literal content of an utterance. Indirect requests, conversational implicatures, irony, presuppositions, rhetorical questions, repetition, and implicit evaluation all contribute to how a message is understood and how it positions the speaker in relation to the audience.

The analysis indicates that successful English–Russian translation requires attention to three interconnected dimensions: the semantic content of the utterance, the communicative intention of the speaker, and the interpersonal or rhetorical effect produced by the expression. These dimensions may overlap, but they are not identical. A translation can preserve the first while weakening the second or changing the third.

In dialogues, translators should focus on contextual inference, turn-taking, indirectness, and interpersonal relationships. In monologues, they should additionally consider rhetorical structure, repetition, evaluative positioning, and the cumulative development of persuasive force.

Contextual interpretation, functional equivalence, pragmatic adaptation, compensation, preservation of ambiguity, and register alignment provide useful strategies for addressing these challenges. Their application must remain sensitive to the specific text, communicative setting, and intended audience.

Ultimately, pragmatic translation should not be understood as a mechanical transfer of linguistic forms. It is a process of reconstructing communicative intention across languages and cultures. The translator's objective is to produce a target text that enables its audience to recover

the relevant meanings and recognize the speaker's intended communicative action without introducing unjustified changes in tone, stance, or rhetorical intensity.

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