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## **Translator's paratext: channeling the author's future in target culture**

**Abstract.** Over the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> and well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, translation studies have embraced an ever more cross-disciplinary inquiry as both translation scholars and translators themselves realized the wealth and complexity inherent in the translating the text from source culture into the target one. As a result, translators' paratext of any form, a previously neglected topic in authorized translatology, becomes a valuable insight into the production and consumption of translated texts by drawing attention to their undeniable attractors, originality and concepts, thus, channeling and shaping the translation reception. The current study aims at identifying the content configuration of translatorial prefaces with special reference to Inostrannaya Literatura (<http://inostranka.ru/> – World Literature) translated publications of English-writing authors. The study corpus of 226 translatorial prefaces obtained by computer search in the journal archive serves the basis for analyzing the plethora of conditions, criteria and factors affecting the text translation, reception and naturalization in the target culture. In contrast to many current study approaches, the author treats the translator's preface on a broader scale, thus, producing a more compact comprehensive model of translator's preface. The findings of the research have been devised into the model of translatorial paratext and paratranslation discourse, which largely lies in Genette's (1997) and Dimitriu's vein (2009) and epistemic approach to translation space by M.P. Kotyurova (1996), L.V. Kushnina (2009) and Yuste Frías (2012). Results indicate that translators' prefaces bear eight relevant quanta of meaning in terms of their content: source text attractors, the author consecration, translation legitimizing, contextualizing, re-contextualizing, recommending the translation, appeal to the reader and translator's comment, with the source text attractors being the dominant center quantum of this conglomeration of interdependent and interrelated quanta. Functionally, the translatorial preface exegetes and explains the author's intent, valorizes the text and actualizes the translator's work; it is explicative and introductory as well as linguistically persuasive, earning the author a certain literary capital and face symbolic value of his/her text in the target culture.

The researcher has no claim of being pervasive, on the contrary, it is suggested that the findings should be seen as an initial step in circulating the epistemic approach for the analysis of translatorial prefaces that ensure the social status of translators, circulation and acceptance of the translated texts.

**Keywords:** translatorial preface; translator's paratext; translation space; epistemic approach; translatorial preface configuration; quanta of meaning; translation symbolic value

### **Introduction: what are we looking at?**

In Genette's framework of paratexts, translator's preface is only one of its numerous dimensions. Neither translation itself nor translator's preface were of specific interest to the author: translations are defined to be paratexts since they "serve as commentary on the original text" [1, p. 405], translator's preface is once mentioned in the footnote and is suggested to "possibly comment on, among other things, his (*translator's*) own translation" [ibid, p. 264]. Though, looking back on the history of translation studies, it comes as a revelation that many its concepts and theories, principles and approaches were first articulated in translator's prefaces: in the *Advertisement* to her 1790 translation from Salzmann's *Elements of Morality*, Mary Wollstonecraft advocated cultural context adaptation, similarly, Ivan Turgenev, a famous Russian classic, uses his prefaces to dwell on the adequacy in translation and introductory and explanatory functions of the preface [2; 3].

Interestingly enough, it's not only the publication of Genette's *Seuls* but also its translation into English entitled *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* that accelerated a new concept, paratranslation. As Genette maintained that there is no text without paratext, likewise J.Y. Frias claims there can be no translation without paratranslation. Frias highlights that "paratranslation is what makes translation appear as a complete translation" [4, p. 118]. A new concept and term coined by Translation and Paratranslation research group at University of Vigo holds paratranslation as a methodological tool to "analyze the time and space needed to translate any paratext that surrounds, wraps, accompanies, extends, introduces and presents the translated text" [ibid, p. 118] accompanied followed or, in some cases, by everything that ensures the translated text existence, reception and consumption.

Seemingly, of all kinds of paratext the translator's preface or 'translatorial preface' [5] comes of a crucial importance as it primarily addresses the reader guiding him through the text, it is a "hotbed for translator's conscious decision making" [6, p. 311]; it is impacted by ideological and cultural conditions of the target culture, it is self-analysis and self-promotion as ambassadors of foreign cultures and those who can influence and innovate their own ones [7–9].

In Russian community paratranslation studies stem from V.B. Kashkin's concept of metatext and metatranslation that reflects translator's cognitive efforts and experiences as a linguistic persona, his or her knowledge with which he/she approaches the translation assignment and the whole metadiscourse that is formed directly around the translator and his/her actual translation [10]. The concept is further circulated and evolved via the epistemic approach by M.P. Kotyurova and translation space theory articulated by L.V. Kushnina [11; 12]. The whole terrain of largely liminal paratextual elements is seen by the researchers as inherent to the translation process that takes place in a spatiotemporal translation space.

### **Methodology Choice of Data**

*Inostrannaya Literatura* (<http://inostranka.ru/> – *World Literature*, further referred to as *WL*) – is chosen for its particular place, first in Soviet, then in Russian literary tradition of translated literature in a variety of genre. Established in 1955 it is a quality Russian journal which specializes in publication of translations from foreign literatures, faithful to the classics and sharp-sighted of budding authors. Its social influence was at the top during the Soviet period when for many it was the only chance to read foreign authors whose books were published rarely or not published either for ideological reasons. Nowadays it is still a very reputable journal that is both culturally influential and economically efficient as it is able to compete with major publishing houses by offering their readers translations that have

not yet made their way to the publishing press or e-book. “Read tomorrow’s classics!” is the journal’s slogan. Best Russian translators take it their duty, pleasure and responsibility to work for the journal, thus providing high quality translations.

The corpus for the study included original translatorial prefaces, i.e. prefaces written by translators for the journal edition. The author did a computer search in the journal archive with special attention to publications from English-speaking authors published in the *WL* between 1990–2015 (the time scope was decided with the availability of electronic text in mind since many earlier issues of the journal have not been digitized yet and are scarce in print format). The timing is also significant as during this period the country has moved from ‘perestroika’ to its contemporary condition, the fact that could have influenced or affected prefatorial text culture, consequently increasing the reliability of the corpus. Then each publication had to be checked whether it had any preface or not, and whether the preface was written by a translator. Thus, almost half of the publications had to be discarded and, ultimately, a corpus of 226 translatorial prefaces was formed, this total makes 48 % percent of all publications examined. Table 1 shows the division of the corpus between the genre according to the year of publication.

**Table 1**

**Translations with translator’s prefaces**

Year of publication	Prose		Poetry	Second (third) translation	
	fiction	non-fiction		prose	poetry
2015	2	2	4	-	2
2014	4	4	-	-	1
2013	-	5	2	-	-
2012	-	4	-	-	2
2011	2	2	6	-	-
2010	3	2	2	-	-
2009	3	6	2	-	-
2008	5	1	2	-	-
2007	4	4	4	-	-
2006	4	2	5	-	-
2005	3	-	5	-	-
2004	4	3	1	-	-
2003	2	5	5	-	-
2002	4	3	3	-	-
2001	3	-	4	-	-
2000	2	1	3	-	-
1999	4	1	3	-	-
1998	5	2	5	-	-
1997	6	-	2	-	-
1996	4	2	3	-	-
1995	2	1	1	-	-
1994	3	2	2	-	-
1993	2	1	2	-	-
1992	2	2	3	-	-
1991	3	3	2	-	-
1990	5	1	4	-	-
<b>Total:</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5</b>

*Developed by the author*

**Instruments**

In this research, instrumentation, data collection and analysis could not be categorized separately as the whole process was very recursive. Micro analysis, empiric observations and research

merged to form macro analysis and interpretation. Like many qualitative researches, this research was supplemented by extensive reading and thematic analysis. The findings of the research have been devised into the model of translator's paratext and paratranslation discourse, which in many ways as most artificial models may have overlaps and is open for further interpretation.

### Key terms

Since the European and Russian linguistic communities do not share uniform terminology on the subject ('paratext' and 'metatext', 'paratranslation' and 'metatranslation', 'paradiscourse' and 'metadiscourse' respectively with both the prefixes meaning 'about/near/surrounding'), to avoid ambiguity, the researcher adopts the term 'paratext' as it is commonly used in the European linguistic community. Thus, the current study uses 'paratext' to identify the secondary texts that surround the main text. Translator's preface or translatorial preface is a cover term for prefaces written by translators. 'Translation space' and 'paratranslation discourse' are used to define the spatiotemporal area – translation space – a new form of translator's spirit and matter that unites and reflects the meanings of the source and target texts, reflects and reverberates their interrelations [12]. It is occupied by translators who 'face a translating assignment with the knowledge that the quality of the final product depends on taking the appropriate decisions regarding both texts and paratexts' [4, p. 119].

'Source text full value' identifies its sum of human, social and cultural values that meets the needs and is inherent of the source culture concept of good and evil. In translation, every semiotic code and value of the source text has to be interpreted and translated into the target culture; the translator's paratext reconstructs this full value of the original for the target reader in the minimum amount – 'symbolic face value'. The author adopts this term to define the author's literary capital – his/her deferred credit or an unearned advance in the target culture the translator's paratext gives to the author [13].

### Results: translators' prefaces – form and function

As the title suggests the corpus and related literature were studied and it was concluded that in terms of content translator's prefaces may be categorized according to the quanta of meaning (trustworthy thematic informants) they are formed of.

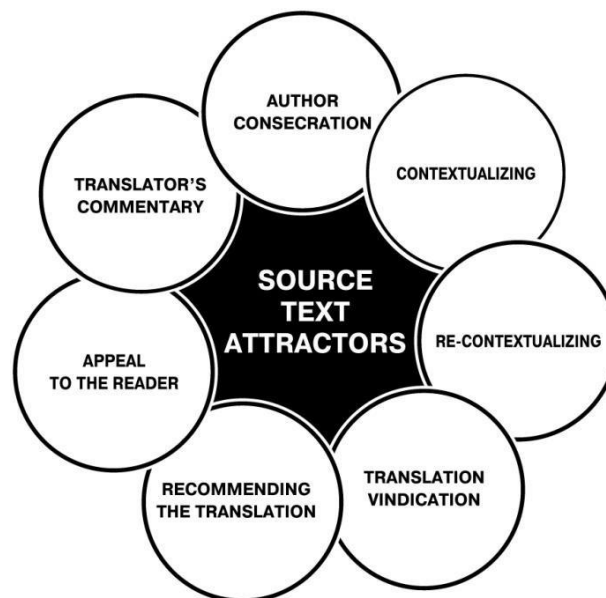
To analyze the content, the epistemic approach proposed by M.P. Kotyurova supplemented by the concept of translation space by L.V. Kushnina were applied [11; 12]. The interpretative analysis showed that thematically the translatorial preface bears eight relevant quanta of meaning: source text attractors, the author consecration, translation vindication/legitimizing, contextualizing, re-contextualizing, recommending the translation, appeal to the reader, translator's comment:

1. Source text attractors include a brief introduction to most distinctive features of the source text that motivate the reader: themes, protagonists i.e. translator's opinion about and a brief introduction to the original.
2. The author consecration is aimed at adding or even creating some literary capital for the author through critical appraisal of both the author and his or her text.
3. Translation vindication is a translator's attempt to explain and legitimize the reasons and necessity for translating the original in the first place. The translator speaks of imperishable values of the literary work he/she translated and highlights its prospective cultural significance for target readership.
4. Contextualizing the text the translator fills in or replenishes gaps in the reader's knowledge about the author, his time and literary trends, fashions and tastes, etc. – the

linguistic and extralinguistic context crucial for comprehending and interpreting the text by the non-native target reader.

5. Re-contextualization the translation is a preemptive translator's move to embed the translation into the familiar domestic framework making it more relevant and attractive for target readership and evoke a certain emotional bond with the original, establishing metonymic proximity between the source and target cultures.
6. Recommending the translation is aimed at implanting the idea for the reader to become 'authentic' about the work of literature translated.
7. Appeal to the reader includes establishing a bond between the author and the reader via the translator; appeal to the reader's emotion to seek this bond. The translators use 'I' referring to him/herself and 'you' referring to the reader; resort to conversational strategies and refer to the author and protagonists as 'familiar friends/objects'; ask for feedback to make the reader feel explicitly and implicitly included into the metonymic relationship.
8. Translator's commentary is where the translators speak for and about themselves, the time and effort it took to translate, the strategies chosen and decisions taken, acknowledgments and confessions made, apologies making [Plastinina, 2016].

Together, these quanta from a cohesive integrative synergetic whole that draws on and is devised of inter-quanta collaboration and support, thus forming a complex meaning of the entire paratext which is greater than the sum of the meanings provided by each quantum alone. Source text attractors seem to be the dominant center quantum of this conglomeration of interdependent and interrelated quanta, it delineates the conglomeration's spatial and temporal boundaries within the paratranslation discourse (see fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** *Translator's preface configuration: the quanta model (developed by the author)*

The quantitative corpus analysis showed that the devised model applies to translatorial prefaces irrespective of the fiction genre (prose vs poetry) as shown in table 2.

**Table 2**

**Quanta configuration in prefaces to poetry and prose (percentage)**

Quanta of meaning	Poetry	Prose
Source text attractors	100	100
Author consecration	100	100
Contextualizing	100	100
Re-contextualizing	55	62,5
Translation vindication/legitimizing	100	100
Appeal to reader	47,5	65
Recommending the translation	71,5	67
Translator's commentary	65	62,5

*Developed by the author*

Functionally, the translatorial preface, much as R. Dimitriu introduced, fall into three: explanatory (explaining the translation to the readers), normative/prescriptive (providing instructions for or sharing the views with other translators and language workers) and informative/descriptive (offering various kind of information about the source text or its socio-cultural context) [14]. In fact, applying this typology in practice proved challenging at times because in some cases the prefaces served more than these three functions and in some cases one function seemed to predominate, e.g. in prefaces written to second or third translation explanatory function referring to the translator's challenge 'why translate something already translated' or in prefaces written to poetic texts whose authors are half forgotten in their native cultures, the informative function are of weighty predominance. The researcher, thus, had to devise functional categories that draw on (1) Dimitriu's typology, (2) the content synergy. These functions are: exegetics and explanation, translating the author's intent, valorizing, explicative and introductory functions, linguistic persuasion, actualization of translator's work. It is worth mentioning that the devised categories lie in Dimitriu's vein of the three main functions.

### **Discussion**

Discussing the signifying thematic content of the translatorial preface, the study critically reflects on recent studies on the narrative analysis models of translatorial prefaces. The research shows that when it comes to thematic configuration of the translatorial preface, defining and naming its major themes, the researchers either end up devising fractional manifold of themes (M. Hosseinzaden) or, by indicating less categories, though, focus primarily on diachronic changes in the translator's content (XIA Jin-yi, SUN Zhi-xiang) or meaningful relationship between the text and its paratextual elements (Allen, Pomaro, Oja) [6; 15–18]. In contrast, the current study approaches the translator's preface on a broader scale which allows the researcher to produce a more compact comprehensive model of translator's preface.

Consequently, this study argues that the named and described quanta of meaning can be defined as universal. Though changing one part of the conglomeration affects other parts and the whole system, but with quite predictable patterns of behavior: the model may change when applied, for example, to prefaces written for technical or scientific texts, but the interaction of quanta and the whole system remains operative.

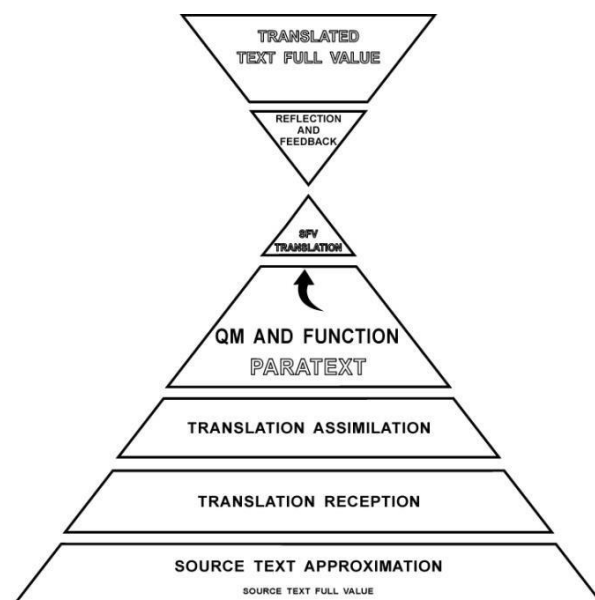
The research also manifested that neither the varied lengths of translatorial preface nor their diachronic changes have significantly influenced the thematic synergy.

The framework of the research has no claim of being pervasive, on the contrary, it serves an initial step in circulating the epistemic approach for the analysis of translatorial prefaces.

As mentioned earlier, translators can co-author the original text as artists of their own right and stake positions as cultural agents through paratext only.

Paratranslation discourse is where the invisible efforts of a translator and translation assignment take their visible form in actual translation and paratext. Although the translator is the first reader of the original text, he/she doesn't read it for him/herself but for a prospective target reader – in other words he/she is the first who takes the text through all three stages that a translated text should go through: approximation, reception and assimilation. Translators have to study and examine the original to foresee and eliminate the difficulties the target reader may have, they should gap the cultural bridges and mend the 'black holes'. Metaphorically, translators are first to 'receive the Roman law', not wholesale, but apply the original text to the principles of the target culture and receive it in the form of translation.

Translators ensure ways and means of naturalizing their translations in the target culture thus assimilating it in it. The devised model (see fig. 2) illustrates the paratranslation discourse as the complex grinding effort of the translator to approximate the original, reconstruct it in translation and naturalize it in the target culture via paratext. The paratext (mainly preface) serves a tool to translate the full value of the original text in the source culture into the symbolic face value of the translation in the target culture and manipulate the reader into reading the text the way the author would have liked it to be read. The full value of the translation can be measured by the readers' reception, reflection and feedback only. The lower pyramid in Figure 2 illustrates the metacognitive process of translation in translation space. Much of the text approximation and translation is a recursive process: the pyramid shape symbolically illustrates the way the quantity of full value of the source text is gradually coiled up into the symbolic face value in the paratext. The small inverted pyramid at the top shows the reader's part – the field where the translated text starts a new lease of life in the target culture.



*Figure 2. Translator's paradiscourse model (developed by the author)*

## Conclusion

Hence, the changing status of paratext in general and translatorial prefaces in particular proves they are a rare opportunity and an underdeveloped resource for translation studies.

A relatively neglected topic in authorized translatology, paratexts can offer a valuable insight into the production and consumption of translated texts by drawing attention to their undeniable attractors, originality and concepts, thus, influencing and shaping text's readings.

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## **Переводческий паратекст как предопределение будущего автора в принимающей лингвокультуре**

**Аннотация.** Во второй половине XX-го и в начале XXI-го века исследования в области переводоведения стали приобретать междисциплинарный характер, поскольку и исследователи и сами переводчики осознали богатство, сложность и разнообразие факторов и влияний, присущих процессу перевода текста из исходной культуры в культуру принимающую. В результате, переводческий паратекст, ранее игнорируемый авторитетным академическим переводоведением, становится ценным источником информации о переводе, рецепции и ассимиляции текстов в принимающей лингвокультуре. Переводческий паратекст привлекает внимание к неоспоримым аттракторам текста, его оригинальности и концепциям, влияя, таким образом, на восприятие текста в иноязычной среде. Настоящее исследование направлено на определение конфигурации содержания переводческих предисловий на основе переводческих предисловий к переводным публикациям англоязычных авторов в журнале «Иностранная литература» (<http://inostranka.ru>). Корпус из 226 переводческих предисловий, полученных с помощью компьютерного поиска в архиве журнала, служит материалом для анализа множества условий, критериев и факторов, влияющих на перевод, восприятие и натурализацию текста в целевой культуре. В отличие от многих современных подходов к исследованию переводческого предисловия, автор трактует предисловие переводчика в более широком масштабе, что позволяет создать более компактную, исчерпывающую модель предисловия переводчика. Результаты исследования были воплощены в модели переводческого паратекста и парапериодического дискурса, которая в значительной степени основана на концепциях Ж. Женетта (1997), Р. Димитриу (2009) и эпистемическом подходе к переводческому пространству, изложенному в работах М.П. Котуровой (1996), Л.В. Кушиной (2009) и Юсте Фриаса (2012). Результаты исследования показывают, что содержательно предисловия переводчиков несут в себе восемь релевантных квантов смысла: аттракторы текста оригинала, возвышение автора, оправдание перевода, контекстуализация, реконтекстуализация, рекомендация перевода, апеллирование к читателю и комментарий переводчика. Аттракторы исходного текста являются доминирующим центральным квантом этого конгломерата взаимозависимых и взаимосвязанных квантов. Функционально, переводческое предисловие толкует и объясняет замысел автора, оценивает текст и актуализирует работу переводчика. Предисловие инициирует прочтение текста, обеспечивая автору «литературный капитал» и некую символическую (условную) ценность переведенного произведения, которую порождает переводчик в своем предисловии. Автор полагает, что результаты исследования могут рассматриваться как первоначальный шаг в распространении эпистемологического подхода к анализу переводческих предисловий, обеспечивающих социальный статус переводчиков, а также рецепцию и ассимиляцию перевода.

**Ключевые слова:** переводческий паратекст; переводческое предисловие; переводческое пространство; эпистема перевода; кванты смысла; символическая ценность текста перевода

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