

TRANSLATION PROBLEMS IN YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE ON THE BASIS OF SPIRITED AWAY BY HAYAO MIYAZAKI (FROM ENGLISH TO RUSSIAN)

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ABSTRACT:

This study explores the challenges of translating Young Adult (YA) literature, focusing on cultural, linguistic, and contextual obstacles, with a specific case study of Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* translated from English to Russian. YA literature often includes unique cultural references, character language variations, and idiomatic expressions that present difficulties for translators aiming to maintain both the story's authenticity and its appeal to the target audience. By analyzing these translation issues, this study seeks to provide insights into strategies for enhancing the accuracy and cultural relatability of YA literature translations. The findings aim to inform both academic and practical perspectives on translating culturally rich texts for young audiences.

Keywords: Young Adult Literature, translation issues, cultural adaptation, *Spirited Away*, Miyazaki, Russian translation

INTRODUCTION

The translation of Young Adult (YA) literature involves unique challenges due to the genre's specific cultural and linguistic characteristics. *Spirited Away*, a masterpiece by Hayao Miyazaki, is not only a popular animated film but also exists in various textual adaptations, each with unique challenges in translation. This study focuses on translating *Spirited Away* from English into Russian, highlighting problems associated with cultural references, idiomatic language, and character nuances.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Cultural References One of the most significant challenges in translating *Spirited Away* from English to Russian is the abundant presence of cultural references specific to Japanese society and folklore. The story of *Spirited Away* is deeply rooted in traditional Japanese beliefs, rituals, and mythologies, including Shinto and Buddhist symbolism, yokai (supernatural beings), and various culturally significant symbols

such as bathhouses, spirits, and specific gestures. These elements are not always directly translatable, and Russian readers may lack the cultural context to understand them fully.

For example, the central setting—a bathhouse for spirits—represents the concept of purity in Shinto belief, which is significant in Japanese culture. The Russian audience, however, may not have an inherent understanding of such concepts, and merely translating the term without context could lead to confusion or a loss of thematic depth. [1, 45-65]. Translators must then decide between adding explanatory footnotes, which could disrupt the reading flow, or finding an equivalent that communicates the underlying cultural meaning while staying accessible to the reader. This often leads to the question of foreignization versus domestication: should the translator preserve the Japanese cultural references (foreignization) or adapt them to Russian cultural equivalents (domestication)?

Example of Strategy: A translator may keep "yokai" as a foreign term but follow it with a descriptive phrase such as "Japanese spirits" to clarify its meaning, blending foreignization with a touch of explanation. However, in some cases, the translator might choose a Russian mythological equivalent if the yokai's characteristics closely align with a creature in Russian folklore. For example, a mischievous or malevolent yokai might be likened to a character from Russian folklore, such as a domovoy, to bridge cultural understanding.

Idiomatic Language and Expressions. Language in YA literature often includes idioms, colloquial expressions, and informal speech that resonate with younger audiences but may not have equivalents in the target language. *Spirited Away* employs idiomatic language to reflect both the whimsical nature of its story and the unique personalities of its characters, creating a challenge in translating expressions that convey mood, irony, humor, or specific emotions.

Translating idioms becomes complex due to several factors:

Direct Translation Limitations: English idioms often have metaphorical meanings that may not carry over literally into Russian, leading to misunderstandings if translated word-for-word.

Emotional Impact: Many idiomatic expressions have emotional undertones that reflect the feelings of the speaker. Preserving this emotion is crucial, as idioms are a significant part of character and plot development.

For instance, the expression "hold your horses" could be used to signal impatience in English but does not have a Russian equivalent that would resonate in the same way.

In Russian, a phrase like "подожди немного" ("wait a little") might convey a similar meaning but lacks the metaphorical playfulness. Here, the translator could opt for "остановись" (stop), which conveys urgency, or use a Russian idiom with a similar meaning, such as "не гони лошадей" (don't rush the horses), if the tone aligns with the scene. [2, 74-76]

Moreover, the imaginative setting of *Spirited Away* often prompts creative use of language that blends reality with fantasy, making it essential for translators to capture the whimsical essence. This is particularly true for dialogue between spirits and gods, where certain expressions are deliberately archaic or formal, contrasting with the protagonist's more casual tone. Translators, therefore, need to ensure that such stylistic contrasts remain apparent, as they reveal the social hierarchy and relational dynamics in the narrative.

Character Nuances and Dialogue Style. The language of each character in *Spirited Away* reveals specific age, personality, and emotional depth, which are vital for connecting with the YA audience. YA literature typically uses dialogue to convey character authenticity, presenting challenges when translating these nuances into Russian without altering the character's intended image.

Chihiro, the protagonist, often uses simple, informal language reflective of her young age and naivety, while other characters like Haku and Yubaba speak with a formality that reflects their respective authority and wisdom. These shifts in dialogue style are crucial in establishing the characters' personalities and relationships. If not accurately translated, they can disrupt the reader's perception of these dynamics. Additionally, a character like Yubaba uses language that is slightly archaic, imposing, and sometimes humorous, adding a layer of complexity to her personality. In Russian, maintaining the balance between her formal authority and comedic tone requires a delicate approach, possibly using older Russian phrases or incorporating diminutives to soften her language when she addresses Chihiro.

Strategy for Character Nuances: In cases where a character's language indicates their age, status, or emotional state, a translator might employ Russian slang or colloquialisms suitable for YA readers, adjusting formality levels to reflect the hierarchy within the bathhouse and among spirits. For example:

Yubaba's Speech: Translating her dialogue might involve using formal or "high Russian," with some archaic or theatrical phrases to match her authoritative, eccentric demeanor.

Chihiro's Innocence: Translators can employ contemporary, informal Russian phrases that Russian teens might use to reflect Chihiro's naivety and evolution over the story. Maintaining Tone and Emotional Resonance. YA literature is often distinguished by its emotional relatability and tone, qualities that must be carefully preserved in translation. The tone in *Spirited Away* oscillates between whimsy, suspense, and introspection, making it essential to replicate these shifts without altering the narrative's mood. Since readers of YA literature are drawn to stories with dynamic emotional journeys, any failure to capture this tone in the translation risks diminishing the text's impact.

Example: If a scene is lighthearted but includes a foreboding element, as is often the case in *Spirited Away*, a translator must select words that retain this tonal contrast. For instance, lighthearted scenes may include playful Russian language, while darker or more intense moments may employ harsher consonants or specific descriptive words in Russian that amplify suspense. Translators should avoid neutralizing emotional language, ensuring that the humor, tension, or sentiment remains vivid. [3, 41-46]

Techniques for Overcoming Translation Problems. Translators of YA literature often employ several techniques to maintain the original text's engagement, accessibility, and emotional depth:

- **Adaptation:** Adapting cultural terms to be relatable for Russian readers while keeping the Japanese context clear. Footnotes or a glossary can be used minimally in YA literature to avoid breaking immersion.
- **Modulation and Transposition:** These techniques involve rephrasing or reordering parts of the sentence to better fit the target language's grammatical structure and style without changing meaning. For instance, translating Chihiro's expressions of fear in a way that resonates with the Russian concept of childhood vulnerability.
- **Addition of Contextual Elements:** When cultural concepts are essential but hard to grasp, short additions may help, such as describing specific customs or practices as "traditional Japanese" to add clarity for readers unfamiliar with them. [4, 89]

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the translation of *Spirited Away* for a Russian YA audience requires an intricate balance between preserving the Japanese cultural elements and making the story accessible. Through techniques like modulation, careful selection of idioms, and adaptation, a translator can retain the story's essence while making it relatable to

Russian readers. *Spirited Away* offers an excellent case study in the challenges and strategies involved in translating culturally dense YA literature, showcasing the need for translators to be both linguistically skilled and culturally sensitive to effectively capture the story's unique charm and depth.

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