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UDC: 821.162.1.09-1 Павликовска-Јасножевска М.

81'255.4 Астафјева Н. Г.

orcid.org/0000-0001-9826-0561

**Alena Revutskaya\***

Minsk State Linguistic University

### EMPATHY IN POETRY TRANSLATION: THE CASE OF METAPHOR\*\*

**Abstract:** The present article addresses empathy in poetic metaphor translation. Numerous works being dedicated to metaphor translation (Dagut, 1979; Van den Broeck, 1981; Mason, 1982; Newmark, 2008), the ‘cognitive turn’ in translation studies (Tabakowska, 1993; Mandelblit, 1995; Schäffner, 2004; 2017) shifted the research focus from figurative language to figurative thought. However, poetic metaphor translation has not so far been theorized as a re-conceptualization nor identified as an empathic experience. This article focuses on metaphors for space in the ‘last years’ poems’ by the Polish lyric author Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska (1891–1945) translated into Russian by Natalia Astafiewa (1922–2016), the aim being to reveal empathy in the translator’s figurative thought. The parallel corpora of the study comprise 28 original poems created in 1942 and their Russian translations. Identified linguistically with the MIPVU (Pragglejaz group, 2007; Steen et al., 2010; Nacey et al., 2019) and conceptually with the MSDIP (Reijnierse, Burgers,

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\* e.a.revutskaya@yandex.by

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2023), the original metaphors are compared to their translation equivalents. Having analyzed the interaction between metaphor translation procedures (Newmark, 2008) and strategies (Delisle et al., 1999), we establish that empathy may parameter poetic metaphor translation.

**Keywords:** poetry translation, metaphor, space, metaphor translation procedure, metaphor translation strategy, empathy

### Introduction

Poetic discourse is heterogeneous in its sonority, density, and melody – due to countless poetic ‘approaches’ to reality. J. L. Borges, who translated Kafka, Melville, Whitman, and Faulkner, but also theorized literary translation, questioned the priority of the original, advocating the ‘unfaithful’ translation (Borges, 1997). According to literary translators, only *free translation* is capable of rendering the tone of the original poem (Gabastou, 2012).

A number of works being dedicated to metaphor translation (Dagut, 1979; Van den Broeck, 1981; Mason 1982; Newmark, 2008), the “cognitive turn” in translation studies (Tabakowska, 1993; Mandelblit, 1995; Schäffner, 2004; 2017) shifted the research focus from figurative language to figurative thought. However, existing studies rarely focus specifically on poetic metaphor. Moreover, poetic metaphor translation has never been identified as an empathic experience.

The metaphorical creation of the Polish interwar poet Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska (1891–1945) has been examined within literary (Smolińska, 2003), linguistic (Rychter, 2011; 2014), and cultural (Morzyńska-Wrzosek, 2020) research paradigms. However, existing studies of the Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska’s legacy reception (Bednarczyk, 2011) and translation (Osierda, 2024) are not specifically concerned with metaphors.

### Objectives

The present study focuses on metaphors for space identified in the “last years’ poems” by Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska translated into Russian by Natalia Astafiewa (1922–2016). The article aims at revealing empathy in the translator’s figurativeness.

### Materials & Methods

The parallel corpora of the study comprise Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska’s 28 original poems created in 1942 (Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska, 1997) and their Russian translations by Astafiewa (Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska, 1987). Identified linguistically with the MIP(VU) (Praglejaz group, 2007; Steen et al., 2010; Nacey et al., 2019) and conceptually with the

MSDIP (Reijnierse, Burgers, 2023), original metaphors for space are compared with their translation equivalents. Analyzing the metaphor translation procedures (Newmark, 2008) and strategies (Delisle et al., 1999) applied by Astafiewa, we verify whether empathy may parameter poetic metaphor translation.

### Theoretical Framework

Space is one of the main concepts of the human mind, constituting, along with time, the essence of being. Directly accessible – and thus less figurative – than time (Boroditsky, 2010; Piata, 2018), space is nevertheless conceptualized metaphorically, becoming a target concept for systematic metaphors.

Thus, space is often personified, being understood not as an object, but as equal to the subject of knowledge. The poetic conceptualization of space can be both “superficial” (conventional metaphor) and “deep” (new metaphor):

... в мире места лучше не найти / осенней, всеми брошенной  
Паланги (И. Бродский, 1967) ‘...there is no better place in the world than  
autumnal, abandoned Palanga’ (I. Brodsky, 1967).

In the above cited Brodsky’s poem “In Palanga” (1967), the famous Lithuanian seaside resort deserted in autumn is conventionally identified with an abandoned woman while in the “Lithuanian Nocturne” (1974) Brodsky describes space and time as the old enemies, conceptualizing space as a person who has decided on revenge:

Место, времени мстя / за свое постоянство жильцом,  
постояльцем, / жизнью в нем, отпирает засов (И. Бродский, 1974) ‘The  
place, taking revenge on time / for its constancy as a tenant, a lodger, / by living  
in it, unlocks the bolt’ (I. Brodsky, 1974).

In order to “treat the original text with care”, a literary translator often turns to literal translation – a strategy of preserving the formal features of the original text in the translated text while observing the grammatical rules and norms of the target language. Importantly, the concept of literality is applicable to both the meaning and the form of the text (Delisle et al., 1999). Nevertheless, according to M. Ballard, a linguistic unit is necessarily a ‘unit for translation’ (Ballard, 2006) – not a separate word or sentence but a unit of meaning.

Our study fitting into the cognitive research paradigm, we use the cognitive definition of *empathy* as the ability to share another’s viewpoint or mental state (Ratka, 2018). In accordance with the cognitive translation theoretical framework, the translator’s empathic commitment to the author’s mental state is demonstrated by *free translation*. Thus, recent

research in cognitive poetics (Freeman, 2009; Gavins, 2020; Stockwell, 2020; Tsur, 2008) has shown that “metaphorical creativity goes well beyond the metaphorical resources of everyday language (and thought)” (Semino, Steen, 2008: 237). Hence, poetry translation does not deal with two figurative languages, but opposes two figurative poetic systems. Therefore, literal translation is often considered to be inferior to free translation (Tröger, 2004) – a strategy in which a number of expressions in the original language are not always conveyed literally into the target language (Delisle et al., 1999).

Translating the “unusual logic” of figurative thought has always been considered a difficult task (Schweitzer, 1973; Dagut, 1976; van den Broeck, 1981; Newmark, 1988), with approaches ranging from full translatability (Dagut, 1979: 22) to total untranslatability (Mason, 1982: 149) of metaphoric image. Today, the translatability of metaphor is determined by linguistic and cultural differences (Newmark, 2008: 58). For instance, to classify metaphor translation procedures, A. D. Schweitzer introduces the criterion of preserving / abandoning the original metaphorical image (Figure 1). Thus, original metaphor can be: 1) preserved; 2) re-metaphorized (“replaced” with another figurative unit); 3) de-metaphorized (“replaced” with a non-figurative unit) (Schweitzer, 1973: 137–139).

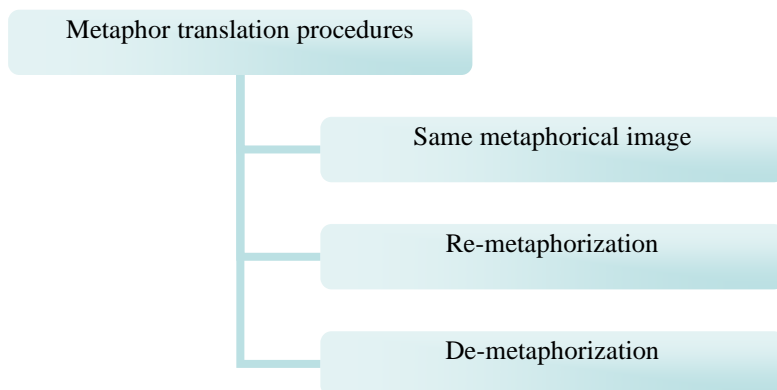


Figure 1. Metaphor translation procedures according to (Schweitzer, 1973).

In turn, P. Newmark classifies metaphor translation procedures as follows: 1) metaphor into metaphor; 2) amplification; 3) metaphor into different metaphor; 4) metaphor into simile; 5) metaphor into sense (Figure 2). According to Newmark, the metaphor translation procedure depends on the metaphor’s conventionality degree. Thus, a novel or creative metaphor is subject to literal translation, since it is inherent part of the author’s artistic conception (Newmark, 2008: 112).

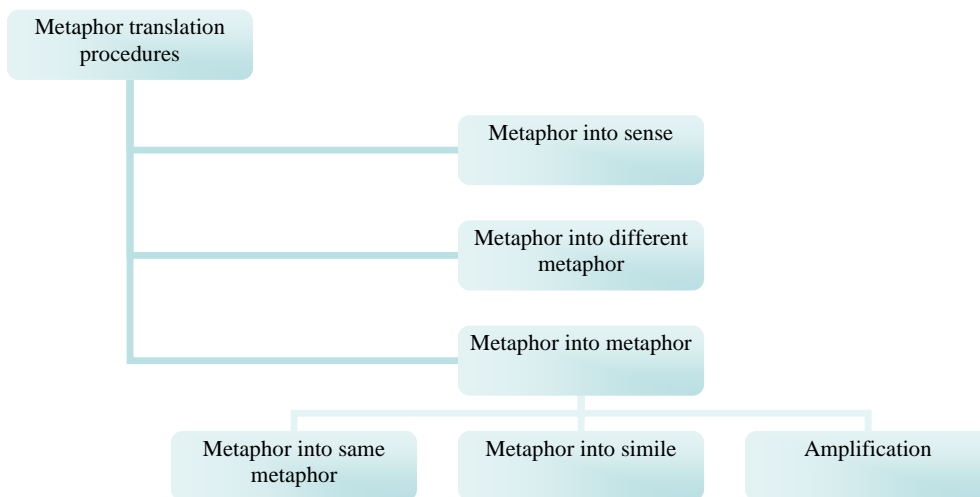


Figure 2. Metaphor translation procedures according to (Newmark, 2008).

Most translation studies, even those having taken the cognitive turn, still apply the translation principles described within the traditional approach: 1) metaphor into same metaphor; 2) metaphor into simile (or vice versa); 3) metaphor into different metaphor; 4) metaphor into sense; 5) zero translation. This taxonomy does not explain the essence of translation though, but only summarize the analytically observed divergences between the original and translated texts. According to the ‘translation as modeling’ theory (Kolesnikov, 2010), those divergences result from a complex modeling process.

Modeling in translation requires the translator to have extremely refined analytical skills that call upon knowledge stored in mental models of the world that pre-exist the act of translating and reside in the consciousness and the subconscious of the subject carrying out the modeling (Kolesnikov, 2010: 128). Thus, translation is a complex cognitive process including the interpretation of the original text, the generation of the translation text and the simultaneous establishment of a ‘correspondence relationship’ between the two texts within the systemic (e.g., grammatical rules) and extra-systemic (e.g., background knowledge common to the author and the recipient of the translation) constraints and taking into account the parameters of communication (Delisle et al., 1999). It will be shown below that empathy may be one of such parameters.

### Results & Discussion

Analyzing the interaction between the metaphor translation procedures and the metaphor translation strategies (Table 1), we establish that a ‘metaphor into same metaphor’

translation equivalent may result in at least four linguistic variants: a) metaphor into metaphor; b) simile into simile; c) metaphor into simile; d) simile into metaphor.

Table 1. Interaction between the metaphor translation procedures and strategies

	Metaphor translation procedure	Metaphor translation strategy	
		Literal translation	Free translation
1.	Metaphor into same metaphor		
	a) metaphor into metaphor	+	+
	b) simile into simile	+	+
	c) metaphor into simile	+	+
	d) simile into metaphor	+	+
2.	Metaphor into different metaphor	–	+
3.	Amplification	–	+
4.	Metaphor into sense	–	+
5.	Zero translation	–	+

As we see, free translation strategy provides eight possible metaphor translation variants, while literal translation provides only four. In other words, free translation strategy allows a greater range of translation equivalents for rendering a metaphoric image than literal translation. Importantly, the ‘metaphor into same metaphor’ procedure can be considered as a literal translation if, for example, a ‘dictionary’ equivalent is used. At the same time, a literal translation cannot be considered a ‘copying’ of the original. The cases from our parallel corpora analyzed below show how metaphor translation procedures and strategies interact to express empathy.

Firstly, the ‘metaphor into metaphor’ literal translation can be identified in Astafiewa’s translation of the “English Impressions” (*Wrażenia*, 1942) by Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska. The jewel – ‘a crown of stone’ – is identified with England – the last “foreign land” of the poet, who was forced to leave Poland on the eve of World War II:

Stary kościół – kamienna korona / W drzew obrębie, w oparów smudze... / Dolo moja niewydarzona, / Jakie to wszystko cudze! (M. Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska, 1942) ‘The old church – a stone crown / Among the trees, in the haze of fog... / My unfortunate fate, / How alien it all is!’ ‘Старый храм – корона из камня / Сквозь деревья, за сизой мглою... / Доля ты моя нелюдская, / До чего же тут все чужое!’ (transl. by N. Astafiewa) ‘The old temple is a crown of stone / Through the trees, beyond the gray haze... / My ugly fate, / How alien everything is here!’

The concepts of literal translation, ‘word-for-word’ translation and ‘loan translation’ should not be confused. ‘Word-for-word’ translation is a type of literal translation in which elements of the original text are transferred to the translation text without changing their order. ‘Loan translation’ is a translation technique in which the internal structure of a word or phrase in the original text is reproduced element by element in the translated text (Delisle et al., 1999).

Secondly, the ‘simile into simile’ literal translation can be identified in the poem “Light in the Darkness” (*Światło w ciemnościach*, 1942), created by Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska during the war years, after her forced departure that ruptured the connection with her hometown – physical, but not spiritual. Researchers note that in her wartime lyrics, the poet addressed exclusively her own memory, but not the “unaccepted reality” (Kisiel, 2016: 261):

Na białej poduszce, pod pledem, / kończą się smutki. / Tydzień ma  
całych dni siedem / i siedem nocy zbyt krótkich / Leżysz, Polsko, pod moją  
poduszką / jak w dzieciństwie ukochana książka. / Pragnę czytać, czytać całą  
duszą! / Potem budzik – potem światło w oczy – / Żegnać muszę odzyskany  
eden. / Dzień mój potrwa do dziesiątej w nocy – / tydzień ma całych dni  
siedem... (M. Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska, 1942) ‘On a white pillow, under a  
blanket, / sorrows end. / A week has seven whole days / and seven nights too  
short / You lie, Poland, under my pillow / like a beloved book in childhood. / I  
want to read, read with all my soul! / Then an alarm clock – then a light in the  
eyes – / I must say goodbye to the regained eden. / My day will last until ten at  
night – / a week has seven whole days...’ ‘На белой подушке, в постели, / под  
пледом, уснут печали. / Я тоскую семь дней недели, / воскресая только  
ночами. / Польша, ты у меня под подушкой, / будто в детстве любимая  
книжка... / Но будильник – с обретенным раем / я прощусь – дни ночей  
длиннее – / и весь день, весь день прозябаю, / тоскую семь дней недели...’  
(transl. by N. Astafiewa) ‘On a white pillow, in bed, / under a blanket, sorrows  
will fall asleep. / I yearn for seven days of the week, / I am resurrected only at  
night. / Poland, you are under my pillow, / like a favorite book in childhood...  
/ But the alarm clock – to the acquired paradise / I will say goodbye – the days  
are longer than the nights – / and all day, all day I vegetate, / I yearn for seven  
days of the week...’

Born in Warsaw and having subsequently become a poet of the Russian language, Natalia Astafiewa reflected on the traumatic experience of Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska in her translations of ‘On Krakowskie Blonia’ (*Blonia*, 1942), ‘Planty’ (*Planty*, 1942), and ‘Light

in the Darkness' (*Światło w ciemnościach*, 1942) – three wartime texts created by the Polish poet in exile (Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska, 1997: 919–926). Astafiewa prepared the largest number of Russian translations of Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska's legacy. In May 1986, a selection of poems translated by Astafiewa was published in a literary journal, and in 1987, a book of selected lyrics sorted out (Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska, 1987). At the beginning of the 21st century, other translations by Astafiewa were published in anthologies (Bednarczyk, 2011: 115). The connection with native culture made Astafiewa a 'co-author' of Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska's metaphorical creation and determined the strategy of literal translation. Thus, comparing her native country, her native city, to 'a beloved book from childhood' the lyrical heroine let the reader know that neither the city nor home can 'talk' to her any longer.

Już i Wisła – już krakowski klimat – / już tramwajem dzwoni Zwierzyniecka – / już dom widać ten, z którym od dziecka / związaniśmy jak muszla i ślimak M. Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska, 1942) 'The Vistula is already there – the atmosphere of Kraków is already there – / the Zwierzyniecka is already ringing with the tram – / we can see the house, the one with which we have been connected since childhood like a shell and a snail' 'Вавель, Краков, улицы, Висла, / уж трамвай звенит на Звежинецкой – / вот уж дом мой виден наконец-то, / он мне раковина, я улитка' (transl. by N. Astafiewa) 'Wawel, Krakow, the streets, the Vistula, / the tram is already ringing on Zwierzyniecka – / now my house is finally visible, / it is my shell, I am a snail'

Thirdly, applying the 'simile into metaphor' translation procedure (*już dom widać ten, z którym od dziecka związaniśmy jak muszla ślimak* 'the house with which we have been connected since childhood, like a shell and a snail' into 'he is a shell to me, I am a snail') in the penultimate stanza, Astafiewa follows the strategy of literal translation, thereby emphasizing her commitment to the author's idea, 'sharing' the author's pain of separation from her hometown and thus demonstrating empathy through her translation. Astafiewa also 'completes' the Krakow urban space with its iconic attributes – the image of the home as a 'snail shell' is preceded by the symbol of the Polish historical capital – Wawel – and the streets of the Old Town.

Finally, Astafiewa remains faithful to the literal translation in the "Poems about Krakow" (1942). Krakow is present in the poet's early and very last poems, created in exile and published posthumously. While Krakow is metaphorically conceptualized as a book, it is also described as music:

I gdzież jest drugie miasto tak liśćmi pokryte, / Jakby strzechą zielonej wokoło dachówki? / Kasztany – pień obok pnia – / Nokturn cienisty za dnia (M. Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska, 1942). ‘And where is the second city so covered with leaves, / As if with a thatched roof of green tiles all around? / Chestnuts – trunk next to trunk – / A shadowy nocturne by day’ ‘Где найдешь еще город в кольце многолиственных Плант, / Черепичные кровли зеленой стрехой окруживших? / Там каштанов раскидистых сень – / Как тенистый ноктюрн в жаркий день’ (transl. by N. Astafiewa). ‘Where else will you find a city surrounded by many-leaved Plants, / Tiled roofs surrounded by green eaves? / There the canopy of spreading chestnuts is / Like a shady nocturne on a hot day’

On the other hand, the amplification of the ‘mother earth’ metaphor in the Russian version of “Elegy” (*Elegia*, 1940) corresponds to free translation strategy:

Trzęsienie ziemi, ludzką nie objęte wolą, / Niszczyło miast kwitnących gniazda różnobarwne, / Więc nie ufano matce strząsającej z kolan / Dzieci w nagłym porywie gniewu – ciemnej matce! (M. Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska, 1940) ‘The earthquake, beyond the control of human will, / Destroyed the colorful nests of blooming cities, / So they did not trust the mother who shook off her knees / Children in a sudden outburst of anger – the dark mother!’ ‘Землетрясение по воле темных недр / Цветущих городов уничтожало гнезда, / Земля, как злая мать, детей своих с колен / Внезапно сбрасывала, гнев являя грозно’ (transl. by N. Astafiewa) ‘An earthquake, by the will of the dark depths / Destroyed the nests of blooming cities, / The earth, like an evil mother, suddenly threw her children from her knees, / Showing menacing anger’.

Both in the original text of the ‘Light in the Darkness’ (*Światło w ciemnościach*, 1942) by Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska and in the Astafiewa’ translation discussed above, the home, likened to a favorite book lying under the pillow, is conceptualized as paradise. This paradise ‘among borders and thunders’ (*wśród granic i gromów*) is distant and unattainable until the forced stay in a foreign country ends:

Mary senne, nostalgię kojące, / od niezulej ważniejsze są jawy. / Gardzę wami, codzienne sprawy, / dnie tutejsze, tygodnie, miesiące / Świat mój własny, bezsilny, bezradny, / sny jedynie ma ku pomocy! / W Labiryncie nić Ariadny / świeci po nocy... / W głodzie serca, wśród granic i gromów, /

nieistotną żywię się manną. / Pod poduszką mam świat mój i dom mój... / Raj – i chustkę na łzę poranną (M. Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska, 1942) ‘Dreams, sleepy, soothing nostalgia, / reality is more important than insensitive. / I despise you, everyday matters, / these days, weeks, months / My own world, powerless, helpless, / has only dreams to help! / In the Labyrinth Ariadne’s thread / shines after night... / In the hunger of the heart, among borders and thunders, / I feed on insignificant manna. / Under my pillow I have my world and my home... / Paradise – and a handkerchief for a morning tear’ ‘Сон, смягчающий боль ностальгии, / ты действительно грубой яви. / Пренебрегаю вами, / дни пустые, дни никакие! / В этой жизни моей безотрадной / сном лечу себя и морочу. / В Лабиринте нить Ариадны / светит мне ночью... / Голод сердца, в беде огромной, / нереальной кормлю я манной. / Под подушкой – мир мой и дом мой – / рай мой желанный’ (transl. by N. Astafiewa) ‘Sleep, softening the pain of nostalgia, / you are more real than the crude reality. / I neglect you, / empty days, days of nothing! / In this joyless life of mine / I heal and fool myself with sleep. / In the Labyrinth, Ariadne’s thread / shines for me at night... / The hunger of the heart, in great trouble, / I feed with unreal manna. / Under my pillow is my world and my home – / my desired paradise’.

Astafiewa’s translations equal the original poetic texts in linguistic figurativeness. The difference is nevertheless observable at the conceptual level: the metaphor of a picture, absent from the original text, is created by the translator:

Gdzie znajdziesz taki obszar, zdany w upominku / Ludności? Błonia... kwadrans piechotą od Rynku... (M. Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska, 1942) ‘Where can you find such an area, given as a gift / to the people? Błonia... fifteen minutes’ walk from the Market Square... ‘И толпы горожан, прелестных, как картинка... / На Блоньях... в двух шагах от Ратуши и Рынка...’ (transl. by N. Astafiewa) ‘And crowds of townspeople, lovely as a picture... / At Blonie... two steps from the Town Hall and the Market...’

## Conclusions

The interaction between metaphor translation procedures and strategies applied by Astafiewa in her translations of Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska’s ‘last years’ poetry’ shows that empathy may parameter poetic metaphor translation. The ‘metaphor into same metaphor’ equivalents being predominant in the translations’ corpus, the original metaphors for space are nevertheless recurrently recreated with amplifications and ‘metaphor into different

metaphor' equivalents. Moreover, a metaphor of a picture absent from the original text but identified in the translated corpus evidences of empathy in the translator's poetic thought. The metaphorical creativity identified in the corpus of Astafiewa's translations thus suggests that literary translator not only reinterprets (Eco, 2010) but re-conceptualizes the original thought. More specifically, empathic experience identified in poetry translation may give the poetic metaphor deliberateness theory (Piata, 2020) further development.

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Alena Revutskaja

**EMPATIJA U PREVOĐENJU POEZIJE: ULOGA METAFORE**

**Sažetak:** Ovaj članak proučava prostorne metafore u „pesmama iz ’poslednjih godina“ poljske međuratne lirske autorke Marije Pavlikovske-Jasnoževske (1891–1945), koje je na ruski prevela Natalija Astafjeva (1922–2016), sa ciljem da se otkrije empatija u prenešenom jeziku prevodioca. Pitanje prevođenja metafora ima dugu istoriju istraživanja (Dagut, 1979; Van den Broek, 1981; Mason, 1982; Newmark, 2008), a „kognitivni zaokret“ je preusmerio studije prevođenja sa figurativnog jezika na figurativno mišljenje (Tabakovska, 1993; Mandelblit, 1995; Schäffner, 2004; 2017). Međutim, prevođenje poetskih metafora do sada nije identifikovano kao empatično iskustvo. Korpus ove studije obuhvata 28 originalnih pesama nastalih 1942. godine, paralelno sa njihovim ruskim prevodima. Primenjujući specifične metode za analizu metafora, kako u lingvističkom (MIPVU; Pragglejaz group, 2007; Steen et al., 2010; Nacey et al., 2019), tako i u konceptualnom kontestu (MSDIP - Reijnierse, Burgers, 2023), originalne metafore se upoređuju sa njihovim prevodnim ekvivalentima. Nakon analize interakcije između postupaka prevođenja metafora (Newmark, 2008) i strategija (Delisle et al., 1999) koje je Astafjeva primenila u svojim prevodima „poezije iz poslednjih godina“ Pavlikovske-Jasnoževske, zaključujemo da empatija može uticati na prevod poetskih metafora. Iako su ekvivalenti „metafore u istu metaforu“ dominantni u korpusu prevoda, amplifikacije i ekvivalenti „metafore u različite metafore“ originalnih metafora za prostor se ponavljaju. Štaviše, metafora koja je odsutna iz originalnog teksta, ali je identifikovana u prevodu, svedoči o empatiji u poetskoj misli prevodioca. Empatikan odnos identifikovan u prevodu poezije može dati novi pravac u daljem razvoju određenih teorija poetske metafore (Piata, 2020).

**Ključne reči:** prevod poezije, metafora, prostor, postupak prevođenja metafore, strategija prevođenja metafore, empatija

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