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COGNITIVE-SEMANTIC ASPECT OF THE CONCEPTUAL SPHERE OF
MEDIEVAL EASTERN COURT DISCOURSE IN RUSSIAN TRANSLATIONS OF
THE “BABURNAMA”

Majidiy Kamolaxon Nabijon qizi

Lecturer, Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages,
Department of Russian Language Theory and Translation Studies

Annation: *The article is devoted to a linguo-cognitive and semantic analysis of medieval Eastern court discourse based on Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur’s memoirs, the “Baburnama,” and their Russian translation by M. Salie. The study focuses on the explication of dominant units within the conceptual sphere of power, hierarchy, and court ceremonial. Through comparative and conceptual analysis, the author identifies key cognitive metaphors and lexical-semantic groups that convey the structure of medieval etiquette. Particular attention is paid to the deformation and transformation of mental codes in the transition from the Turkic-Islamic linguistic culture into a Slavic linguistic environment, as well as to the principal strategies used to adapt cognitive lacunae in translation.*

Keywords: *linguo-cognitive studies, conceptual sphere, Eastern court discourse, “Baburnama,” Babur, literary translation, M. Salie, cultural code, frame analysis.*

The study of medieval Eastern historical and autobiographical narratives within the anthropocentric paradigm of contemporary linguistics makes it possible not only to explicate the lexical composition of the languages of past epochs, but also to reconstruct the cognitive maps underlying the thinking of people in the medieval East. Court discourse represents a particularly significant layer in this context, as it functioned within the rigidly hierarchical institutional frameworks of the Timurid and Mughal states. Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur’s prose work, the “Baburnama,” constitutes a valuable source for investigating the mental models, communicative rituals, and social frames of that period (the sixteenth century).

The relevance of the study is determined by the need for a comprehensive description of the conceptual sphere of medieval Eastern court etiquette from the perspectives of linguo-cognitive studies and translation theory. Despite the substantial body of historical and literary scholarship devoted to this monument, its cognitive-semantic organization and the specific features of its transmission into a foreign, Russian-speaking linguocultural environment remain insufficiently studied.

The aim of the study is to identify the dominant concepts that constitute the conceptual sphere of court etiquette in the original “Baburnama” and to analyze the cognitive-semantic transformations arising in their translation into Russian.

The methodological framework of the study comprises research in linguo-cognitive studies, linguoculturology, and translation studies, including the works of L. S. Barkhudarov, V. N. Komissarov, V. A. Maslova, and G. G. Slyshkin. The study employs conceptual, frame-based, contextual, and comparative methods of analysis. The empirical



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material consists of the original “Baburnama” in Old Uzbek and its classical Russian translation by M. Salie.

The conceptual sphere of medieval Eastern court discourse in the “Baburnama” constitutes an ordered system of concepts that model the social space surrounding the figure of the padishah. In the course of cognitive modelling, two core macro-concepts were identified: “submission / service” (itoat / xizmat) and “royal favour / ceremonial” (inoyat / marhamat).

Each macro-concept is verbalized in the original through an extensive system of frames and cognitive metaphors which, in M. Salie’s Russian translation, undergo inevitable pragmatic adaptation and stylistic transformation.

The analysis of the macro-concepts of court etiquette has revealed the following.

When translating expressions containing this concept, M. Salie frequently resorts to rationalization, adapting the medieval Eastern worldview to the perceptions of the contemporary Russian-speaking reader.

Let us consider the macro-concept “submission / service” (itoat / xizmat). This segment of the conceptual sphere regulates the speech and behavioural etiquette of subjects in relation to the ruler. The cognitive basis of this etiquette rests on the concept of “self-abasement / humility,” whereby the subordinate symbolically effaces the self in official discourse.

M. Salie encounters a pragmatic lacuna, since a literal translation in twentieth-century Russian would acquire an excessively negative expressive connotation. The translator therefore employs the strategies of stylistic neutralization and contextual substitution: “Uydan kirg‘ach, uch yukundim. Xon ham ta‘zim qilib, qo‘ptilar. Ko‘rushub, yonib yukungandin so‘ng, yonlariga tilab, qalin shafqat va mehribonliklar ko‘rsattilar” [p. 51] / “Войдя в шатёр, я трижды преклонил колени; Хан поднялся и тоже поклонился. Когда я поздоровался и отступил назад, [снова] преклонив колени, Хан приказал мне сесть с собой рядом и проявил большое благоволение и ласку...” [p. 41].

The cognitive marker of the author’s self-presentation is completely neutralized and transformed into a neutral personal pronoun, thereby attenuating the medieval hierarchical distance.

The analysis of the macro-concept “royal favour / ceremonial” demonstrates that Mughal court ceremonial constitutes a rigid dynamic frame consisting of such subframes as “audience” (ko‘rinish) and “bestowal of robes of honour” (xil‘at kiydurmoq) during the reception ritual for envoys.

The linguo-cognitive specificity of these frames in the original lies in the high density of non-equivalent vocabulary and ritualized verbal combinations. For example, the frame “Audience / Greeting the Ruler” is verbalized through the verb ko‘runush, which denotes not merely “meeting” or “seeing someone,” but performing a strictly regulated bow involving kneeling. For example: “Andijonga kirib, ulug‘ xon dodam va kichik xon dodamg‘a ko‘runush qildim” [3, p. 100] / “После этого ... мы вступили в Андижан. Я поклонился моему дяде, Старшему хану, и моему дяде, Младшему хану” [1, p. 100] / “Sulton Alovuddinni chorlab o‘lturg‘uzib, xossa xil‘at inoyat bo‘ldi” [2, p. 164] / “Я



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пригласил Султан Алауддина, посадил его [возле себя] и пожаловал ему почетный халат” [1, p. 174].

To convey the cognitive core of such frames, M. Salie employs a descriptive and commentary-based translation method. This approach makes it possible not only to render the semantics of the action, but also to preserve the ethnocultural conceptual code of the Timurid era.

Similar transformations can be observed in the translation of the ritual of approaching the palace with an escort: “Xon dodamning eshigiga borsam, goh bir kishi bila, gohi ikki kishi bila borur erdim ... Xon dodamg‘a ko‘runush qilib” [3, p. 89] / “Пойду к воротам Хана, моего дяди, иногда с одним человеком, иногда с двумя Поклонившись Хану, моему дяде” [1, p. 87]. “Ko‘runushga kelur kishi kema bilan kechib kelgaylar. Shanba kuni, Ismoil Mitakim ... bir gaz otimi yer kelib, ta‘zim qilib yondi” [3, p. 248] / “Люди, приезжавшие ко мне на поклон, должны были переправляться на лодке. В субботу Исмаил Мита ... Спешившись на расстоянии полета стрелы, он отвесил поклон и отошел” [1, p. 275].

The study makes it possible to draw the following conclusions:

1. The conceptual sphere of medieval Eastern court discourse in the “Baburnama” is based on hierarchical macro-concepts of power, submission, and ritual, which are closely intertwined with the religious worldview.

2. The Russian translations, particularly M. Salie’s translation, demonstrate a modernization of the medieval conceptual sphere. The use of neutralization and contextual substitution strategies leads to a reduction in the density of its expressions of allegiance and subjecthood.

3. Despite the inevitable lexical-semantic transformations caused by differences between the cognitive spaces of Old Uzbek and Russian, the core semantic content of Mughal court etiquette is conveyed adequately owing to the translator’s skilful use of commentary-based and descriptive translation methods.

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