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**On the Encoder's Perception of Occurrences:
A Parallel Corpus-based Study of Transposed Tense Usage
in *Kolymskie rasskazy* by Varlam Šalamov and *Sumchi*
by Amos Oz and Their Hebrew and Russian Translations**

Abstract. This study focuses on the comparative analysis of verb tense meanings in Russian and Modern Hebrew. Despite belonging to different language families, both languages feature the past, present, and future tenses of the indicative mood,¹ which may indicate a corresponding similarity in meanings. While these forms often objectively reflect real-time relationships, systematic discrepancies are observed between the meanings of verb tenses and their actual uses in each language. To address this, we propose invariant meanings for each tense that will underlie all its uses, including transposed ones. Based on the Columbia School sign-oriented linguistic framework (see Diver, 1981; 1995; García, 1975; Tobin, 1990a, 1995), we focus on verb tense usage in *Kolyma Tales* (*Kolymskie rasskazy*) by Varlam Šalamov (2013) and *Sumchi* by Amos Oz (1978), along with their literary translations into Hebrew (2005) and Russian (2015), respectively. On the one hand, we postulate that the tense systems of both languages share a common semantic content, which relates to the speaker's or writer's perception of actions, states, or events at the moment of speaking or writing. This explains the similarity in tense usage between original texts and their translations. On the other hand, differences in

¹ While Russian has forms, traditionally categorized as perfective and imperfective verbs, and Hebrew possesses a so-called compound past tense expressing hypothetical or habitual actions in the past, these facts are beyond the scope of this paper.

tense usage are more likely attributed to language-specific communicative strategies – standardized ways of combining invariant meanings to convey particular messages, as described within Columbia School theory.

Keywords: invariant meanings; tense; Columbia School; Russian/Hebrew and Hebrew/Russian translations.

1. Introduction

There is a significant interest in dealing with translation corpora as empirical semantic data to describe differences and similarities between languages. In literary translation, the objective is generally to communicate the literary message of an original or source text (hereafter ST) using a target language (hereafter TL), producing what is referred to as the target text (hereafter TT). When aligned, ST in one language and its corresponding translation (TT) form a parallel corpus (see Altenberg & Granger, 2002; pp. 7–8; Malmkjær, 1998, p. 539).

The writer's literary intention is reflected by his/her choice of grammatical forms (not necessarily conscious, of course), based on their meanings in a source language (hereafter SL) and the contextual messages that these meanings convey. Setting aside individual stylistic choices, in substance, the translator's task is to match two systems by deciding in favor of one or the other way of expressing the writer's message, based on the inventory of the grammatical forms with their meanings and contextual messages in TL. This leads us to the fundamental question: why does the writer use certain grammatical forms, and why does a translator render them this way?

To explain the use of linguistic forms both in ST and TT, we must determine the basic units of analysis. Contrary to common assumptions, in literary translation, extensive texts – such as books, chapters, paragraphs – and even individual sentences do not constitute primary linguistic data. Columbia School theory (hereafter CS), adopted in this study, considers Saussurean signs and their invariant meanings (Saussure, 1983, p. 67) as basic analytical units, distinguishing them from individual words and sentences. Given its universal or cross-cultural nature, this sign-oriented approach can be applied to any translation analysis (see Sangster 2013, p. 9). Having said this, we must make a reservation that we are not suggesting the existence of language universals, nor are we asserting that languages differ in their formal

structures, merely using different forms to convey the same meaning. On the contrary, we believe that each language reflects a distinct worldview, and therefore, should be studied in its own right. Even so, the fact remains that languages can be compared to establish their similarities and differences.

In our research, we start from Jakobson's premise that "on the level of interlingual translation, there is ordinarily no full equivalence between code-units, while messages may serve as adequate interpretations of alien code-units or messages" (Jakobson, 1959, p. 233). Jakobson introduces the idea of "equivalence in difference" (Jakobson, 1959, p. 233), implying that "translation involves two equivalent messages in two different codes" (Jakobson, 1959, p. 233). In other words, though languages are universally made up of signs, organized into various grammatical systems, we assume that the structure of these systems differs from language to language. Therefore, translation from one language into another is always approximate and consists of communicating equivalent messages by using the signs of individual languages. Then our task will be defining "what unifies and what differentiates the two languages in their selection and delimitation of grammatical concepts" (Jakobson, 1959, p. 234).

This study compares how the category of tense is used in a Russian-Hebrew parallel corpus. For convenience, we use the term 'tense' throughout this paper. However, we claim that neither Russian nor Hebrew verb forms do not inherently express tense in the traditional sense. Rather, we show that what is conventionally referred to as "tense" reflects the speaker's or writer's (hereafter *encoder's*) perception of actions, states, or events (hereafter *occurrences*) at the moment of speaking or writing, regardless of whether these occurrences have actually happened or are yet to happen.

Specifically, our study aims to investigate how shifts (transpositions) in temporal perception of occurrences in ST are conveyed in TT. To do so, we conduct qualitative and quantitative analyses based on a Russian-Hebrew parallel corpus, composed of two STs – Varlam Šalamov's *Kolymskie rasskazy* (*Kolyma Tales*, 2013) in Russian and Amos Oz's story *Sumchi* (1978) in Hebrew – along with their respective literary translations – *Sypurey Kolyma* (2005) in Hebrew, and *Sumxi* (2015) in Russian. English translations are provided for clarity.

The use of parallel corpora is justified by the fact that they contain texts intended to convey equivalent messages. This allows us to establish correspondences of form uses across languages. Based on these correspondences,

we can identify how particular meaningful distinctions are encoded in both Russian and Hebrew.

One might question the representativeness of a corpus composed of only two literary works and their translations. However, it is essential to note that the tense choices analyzed here – made by the authors and translators – encompass a wide range of tense uses that exist in both languages. Therefore, while the corpus is relatively limited in size, it is nonetheless sufficiently representative for addressing the linguistic issues under consideration.

2. Russian and Hebrew Tense Systems: Hypotheses

Instead of creating a catalog of temporal functions, we will apply the CS view on language to propose an alternative, sign-oriented analysis of tense uses in Russian and Hebrew. Both languages feature formal distinctions traditionally referred to as past, present, and future tenses of the indicative mood.² This similarity in the inventory of tenses may imply a corresponding similarity in their meanings. Based on invariant meanings postulated for each form in the two languages, this cross-linguistic analysis will highlight the similarities and differences in their usage between STs and TTs.

Following Tobin's analyses of Hebrew (1988; 1989; 1990b), we claim that Russian and Hebrew verb tenses represent a semantic interlock of two systems, related to the encoder's "spatio-temporal-existential and sensory-experiential perception of [occurrences] at the 'here-and-now' point of speaking and/or writing" (Tobin, 1990b, p. 464). The meaning or semantic substance of the first system deals with "*whether 'an [occurrence] has been experienced or is/was accessible for manifest' [...] to the senses of the encoder at the point of speaking or writing, i.e., the 'here and now' of the speech act*" (Tobin, 1990b, p. 467, emphasis added). Tobin (1989; 1990b) refers to this deictic system as

² Russian and Hebrew are considered aspect-oriented languages. Therefore, in Russian linguistics, the category of tense is often analyzed in conjunction with the category of aspect, serving as a contextual framework or a prism through which the meaning of the aspect is manifested. For more details, see Forsyth (1970), Knjazev (2007), Maslov (2004), Padučeva (1996), Zolotova (1975, 2002), and Zolotova, Onipenko, and Sidorova (2004). Hebrew features a periphrastic (compound) past tense, formed by combining the past tense of the copula *lyhyot* ('to be') as an auxiliary along with the inflected present tense of the respective verb. Due to space constraints, we will not delve into these subjects in detail unless they are essential for understanding tense usage in ST and TT.

the System of Experience. We hypothesize that in both Russian and Hebrew, the System of Experience has two invariant meanings:

- (a) *Experienced*, meaning that the occurrence has been perceived or experienced;
- (b) *Not-Experienced*, meaning that the occurrence has not been perceived or experienced.

Thus, the meaning *Experienced* will be invariably related to the morphological forms traditionally associated with the present and past tenses in Russian and Hebrew. The meaning *Not-Experienced* will be invariably related to the morphological forms traditionally associated with the future tense in both Russian and Hebrew. The meaning *Experienced* encompasses occurrences directly related to the moment of speech, as well as those that happen regularly or irregularly, including general truths that extend beyond the moment of speech. When the context describes an occurrence unrelated to the moment of speech, the encoder refers to prior experience, emphasizing its relevance to the time of speaking or writing, either because the occurrence is habitual or generally applicable, or because the encoder presents it as already completed, “rather than past time per se” (Sangster, 2013, p. 38), regardless of whether it has actually happened.

When Jakobson (1984, p. 6) writes about the Russian preterite (as he calls the past), he states that “this form expresses, in fact, no particular time, but solely a break in the direct connection between the subject and the action”. Bondarko (1962, p. 31), commenting on Isachenko’s work (Isachenko, 1960, pp. 444–445), argues that both the past and future tenses emphasize a break from the moment of speech, whereas the present tense signifies a direct connection between the subject and the action (Bondarko, 1990, p. 24). We assume that by referring to present occurrences, the encoder does not signal any perceptual distance between these occurrences and the moment of speech or writing. In other words, such references imply that the occurrences are in spatial, temporal, or existential proximity to the encoder. Considering this, we postulate a second system that constitutes an interlock with the System of Experience and distinguishes present occurrences from past and future occurrences in Russian and Hebrew. Following Tobin (1989; 1990b), we call this system the Space-Time-Existence System, whose semantic substance deals with *the placing of an occurrence in relation to its perception by the encoder at the point of speaking or writing* (see Tobin, 1990b, p. 466). In

both Russian and Hebrew, the Space-Tense-Existence Systems have two invariant meanings:

- (a) *Proximate*, meaning that an occurrence is in spatio-temporal-existential proximity to the encoder and invariably related to the morphological forms traditionally associated with the present tense in Russian and Hebrew; and
- (b) *Remote*, meaning that an occurrence is in spatio-temporal-existential distance from the encoder and invariably related to the morphological forms traditionally associated with the past and future tenses in Russian and Hebrew.

Thus, based on the proposed hypothesis, the Russian and Hebrew interlocked systems can be represented as follows:

- (a) references to present occurrences simultaneously signal the meanings *Experienced, Proximate*;
- (b) references to past occurrences simultaneously signal the meanings *Experienced, Remote*;
- (c) references to future occurrences simultaneously signal the meanings *Not-Experienced, Remote*.

It follows from the above that in both languages, the use of tense morphology is determined primarily by the encoder's perception of occurrences at the point of speaking or writing, rather than by their actual real-time realization (though tense uses often reflect it).

3. Similarity in Communicative Strategies of Tense Usage between ST and TT

The postulated meaningful contrast is employed in both STs and TTs for various communicative purposes, which are commonly referred to as communicative strategies in CS theory (see Diver, 1995; García, 1975; Reid, 1991). We mean a regular, standardized, or idiomatic combination of a specific meaning with other meanings to convey particular messages. The postulation of communicative strategies represents a tendency towards conformity and the systematic use of linguistic signs. This results from the "pressure"

that a social group exerts “on its own members in the direction of a standardized usage” (Diver, 1995, p. 78), ultimately enhancing communication. The most common communicative strategy involves using verb tenses to reflect objective real-time relationships in both STs and TTs. In this analysis, we will examine examples of the use of tense morphology in both STs and TTs to illustrate additional communicative strategies, all of which are consistently motivated by the postulated invariant meanings.

Moreover, we will statistically evaluate the hypotheses formulated above. Given the postulated similarity of the invariant meanings in both Russian and Hebrew, we expect that the quantitative distribution of forms in STs and their corresponding TTs will *not* show statistically significant differences across communicative strategies.

3.1. The ‘Historical’ Usage of the Present Tense

Examples (1)–(2) demonstrate a so-called stylistic or metaphoric use of the present tense to describe past occurrences “as if they *were* being witnessed at the ‘moment of speaking’” (Forsyth 1970, p. 150).

- (1) *V tridcat' sed'mom v Ulan-Batore idëm my po ulice s tovariščem. Vremja obedat'. Na uglu - kitajskaja stolovaja. Zaxodim. Smotrju menju: kitajskie pel'meni.* (Šalamov, 2013, p. 145)

by-shnat shloshym u-sheva, be-ulan-bator, 'any holekh 'ym haver be-rehov. 'aruhat tsohoraym. ba-pyna – mys'ada synyt. nykhnasym. 'any bodeq 'et ha-tafryt: kysanym synnym. (Shalamov, 2005, p. 150)

In thirty-seven, in Ulan Bator, I **am walking** with a friend down the street. Lunchtime. On the corner – a Chinese restaurant. We **are entering**. I **am checking** the menu: Chinese dumplings.

- (2) *lyf'amym halamty ba-layla she'esty matsby'a alay pyt'om ba-rehov ve-tso'eget “ganav!” “ganav!” ve-'any nyvhal ve-mathyl lyvroah ve-hy rodefet ve-kulam rodfym, [...] ve-ha-redyfa nymshekhet al-pney mygrashym ve-hatserot, al-pney gderot ve-gruta'ot, hurbot ve-symta'ot, ve-kol ha-rod-fym myt'ayfym ve-le'at-le'at hem mathylym levater ve-lefager me-'ahor, ve-raq 'esty ratsa aharay bly leharfot u-va-sof shneynu levadenu ratsym ve-megyym kym'at yahad le-eyze maqom nydah...* (Oz, 1978, p. 12)

Inogda po nočam mne snilos', čto, stolknuvšis' so mnoj na ulice, Èsti vdrug ukazyvaet na menja pal'cem i kričit: "Vor! Vor!" Ja v ispuge puskajus' bežat', a ona gonitsja za mnoj, vse ostal'nye brosjutsja v pogonju... – vse begut za mnoj. My pereseakaem pustyri i dvory, minuja zabory i svalku, nesěmsja pereulkami, no vot presledovateli potixon'ku otstajut, i tol'ko Èsti bez ustali gonitsja za mnoj, i togda nakonec my bežim tol'ko vdvoëm i počti odnovenno okazyvaemsja v kakom-to tainstvennom meste... (Oz, 2015, p. 13)

At night sometimes, I dreamed that Esti suddenly **points** at me in the street and **shouts**: "Thief!" "Thief!" And I **am frightened** and **begin** to run away and she **pursues** me and everyone **pursues**, [...] and the pursuit **continues** across lots and backyards, over fences and junkyards, ruins and alleyways, and all the pursuers **get tired** and gradually **start** to give up and lag behind, and only Esti **runs** after me without leaving me alone and in the end both of us **run** and **arrive** almost together to some remote spot...

In example (1), the narrator, who is staying in a Kolyma labor camp, recalls an episode from his earlier life in Ulan Bator, the capital of Mongolia. The memory of Chinese dumplings on the menu forms a sharp contrast with the constant starvation he experiences in the camp. In example (2), the narrator recounts a recurring nighttime dream that reflects his fears, desires, and mainly his infatuation with a girl named Esti.

In both ST and TT, the present tense, meaning *Experienced*, *Proximate*, is used for occurrences that are the most stirring and emotional to the encoder, producing the effect of a live experience.

To assess whether the observed distribution of forms differs significantly between STs and TTs in both translation directions, and given the relatively small sample size, we evaluate the frequency with which the 'historical' present is retained or translated into the past by applying Fisher's exact test.

This test is especially appropriate for 2X2 contingency tables when one or more values are below 10. It determines whether the observed distribution of form usage is likely to have occurred by chance. In our case, a *p*-value lower than 0.05 would indicate that the choice to maintain or shift the 'historical' present is statistically significant and, therefore, it is not randomly distributed.

Table 1 presents the frequency distribution of the ‘historical’ present across STs and TTs in Russian and Hebrew. It shows the number of instances where the ‘historical’ present is preserved between STs and TTs (“Coinciding Use”), and those where different forms are used (“Non-Coinciding Use”).

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of the ‘Historical’ Present Across Russian and Hebrew ST-TT Pairs

Source-Target Pair	Coinciding Use (‘Historical’ Present)	Non-Coinciding Use (‘Historical’ Present vs. Past)	Total
Russian ST → Hebrew TT	71	7	78
Hebrew ST → Russian TT	15	3	18
<i>p</i> (Fisher’s Exact Test)	0.391		

As shown in Table 1, the *p*-value calculated using Fisher’s exact test is 0.391, suggesting no statistically significant difference in the use of the ‘historical’ present between STs and TTs. This result supports our hypothesis that the distribution of forms is not statistically different across STs-TTs pairs.

3.2. The Use of the Present Tense for Future Occurrences

In examples (3)–(4), found in both Russian and Hebrew, the present tense, meaning *Experienced*, *Proximate*, is used to describe planned future occurrences, as if they were already happening “relevant and most salient to the speaker’s point-of-view at the ‘here and now’ point of speaking” (Tobin, 1989, p. 67).

- (3) *Čto ty igraeš’?* - *procedil skvoz’ zuby Sevočka s beskonečnym prezreniem: èto tože sčitalos’ xorošim tonom načala igry.* (Šalamov, 2013, p. 50)

‘al ma ‘ata mesaheq? – *synen sevočka beyn shynav be-buz eynsofy: gam ze nehshav ke-gynunym nekhonym le-ftyhat myshaq.* (Shalamov, 2005, p. 51)

“What **are** you **playing**?” – muttered Sevochka through his teeth with endless contempt: this was also considered proper manners in a game-opening.

- (4) ‘any **nykhneset** ‘*akhshav* la-myta ve-**mystovevet** la-qyr, she-tukhal lehystader beyntaym. (Oz, 1978, p. 75)

Ja sejčas ložus' i povoračivajus' k stenke, čtoby ty smog ustroit'sja na noč'.
(Oz, 2015, p. 54)

I **am getting** into bed now and **turning** to the wall so you can bed down in the meantime.

Example (3) depicts a scene of interaction between inmates, mostly professional criminals and repeat offenders, within the world of the Soviet forced labor camps, just as a game of cards begins. Sevochka, a cardsharp of the criminal elite, asks another thief what he is putting up to wager. By using the form, meaning *Experienced*, *Proximate*, Sevochka creates a sense of immediacy, suggesting that “playing” is not a plan, but an already initiated negotiation.

A similar effect is illustrated in example (4) in both ST and TT, where Esti, the girl whom the narrator loves, and at whose home he is staying, tells him that she is getting into bed and turning toward the wall so he can also lie down and make himself comfortable. By using the form with the meaning *Experienced*, *Proximate*, Esti likewise conveys immediacy, presenting the action as ongoing rather than planned.

Table 2 presents the distribution of the present tense when used to express future occurrences in Russian and Hebrew STs and TTs. It compares instances where the present tense is preserved in translation (“Coinciding Use”) with those in which it is replaced by a future form (“Non-Coinciding Use”).

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of the Present for Future Occurrences Across Russian and Hebrew ST-TT Pairs

Source-Target Pair	Coinciding Use	Non-Coinciding Use	Total
Russian ST → Hebrew TT	17	9	26
Hebrew ST → Russian TT	14	13	27
<i>p</i> (Fisher’s Exact Test)	0.2772		

As shown in Table 2, the use of the present tense to refer to future occurrences yields a *p*-value of 0.2772, which is well above the conventional significance threshold of 0.05. This indicates that there is no statistically signifi-

cant difference between translation direction and the likelihood of using the present for future occurrences. These results suggest that translators tend to treat this communicative strategy similarly in both directions, supporting our hypothesis that the distribution of form usage in STs and their corresponding TTs remains statistically stable across communicative strategies.

3.3. The Use of the Future Tense for Present Occurrences

The future tense, in combination with negation and non-referential subjects, can be used to express the (im)possibility to perform an action at the moment of speech rather than its occurrence in the future, as illustrated by examples (5)–(6).

- (5) *My eli v polnoj temnote – baračnye benzinki osveščali kartočnoe pole, no, po točnym nabljudenijam tjuremnyx starožilov, ložki mimo rta ne pronesëš'.* (Šalamov, 2013, p. 51) [= **ne možeš' pronesti**]

'akhalnu be-ḥashekha muḥeletet, be-'od menorot ha-benzyn meyrat 'et sade myšḥaq ha-qlafym, 'akh al-smakh nesyonam ha-meḏuyaq shel vatykey-kele – ha-kaf lo taḥty 'et ha-pe. (Shalamov, 2005, p. 15) [= **lo yek-hola lehaḥty**]

We ate in total darkness, while the gasoline lamps illuminated the card playing field, but based on the precise experience of prison old-timers – the spoon **will not miss** the mouth.

- (6) *shum koaḥ she-ba-'olam, shum mykhshol, lo yukhal la'atsor adam kaze be-tseto legalot aratsot lo-noda'ot.* (Oz, 1978, p. 25) [= **lo yakhol/mesugal la'atsor**]

Nikakaja sila v mire, nikakie prepjatstvija ne ostanovjat takogo čeloveka na puti k novym, eščë ne otkrytym zemljam. (Oz, 2015, p. 21) [= **ne moguť/sposobny ostanovit'**]

No power in the world, no obstacle, **can** stop such a man from going to discover unknown lands.

Example (5) describes the conditions under which Soviet Gulag prisoners eat their meals in the barracks. Despite the lack of light, the outcome is con-

sistently the same: nobody ever misses their mouth with the spoon. While in both ST and TT, the forms used are morphologically associated with the future tense, they do not refer to a specific future occurrence. Instead, they express an expected outcome, suggesting that under known conditions, a particular result is likely to follow. This aligns with the postulated invariant meaning of the future tense as *Not-Experienced, Remote*.

A similar effect is observed in example (6) in both ST and TT. It describes a fantasy in which the young narrator imagines himself a bold explorer whom nothing – no force or barrier – can deter from discovering unknown lands. In both Russian and Hebrew, forms morphologically associated with the future tense are used to express the encoder's conviction that a particular outcome is expected, rather than to signal a chronological future. This corresponds to the postulated invariant meaning of these forms as *Not-Experienced, Remote*.

Table 3 presents the frequency distribution of the future tense used for present occurrences in both Russian and Hebrew STs and their corresponding translations (TTs).

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of the Use of the Future for Present Occurrences Across Russian and Hebrew ST-TT Pairs

Source-Target Pair	Coinciding Use	Non-Coinciding Use	Total
Russian ST → Hebrew TT	8	6	14
Hebrew ST → Russian TT	2	1	3
p (Fisher's Exact Test)	1		

As shown in Table 3, the *p*-value calculated using Fisher's exact test is 1.0 (the maximum possible value from Fisher's exact test), indicating no statistically significant difference in the distribution of Coinciding and Non-Coinciding Uses of the future to signal present occurrences across translation directions. This result supports the hypothesis that the distribution of forms remains stable between STs and TTs across communicative strategies.

3.4. The Use of the Future Tense for Imperative Messages

In Russian and, especially, Hebrew, the future tense morphology can be used to convey requests, wishes, and desires instead of the imperative morphol-

ogy. The imperative is employed to prompt action, which is relevant for actions that have not yet been performed. In this regard, it shares semantic similarity with the future tense, meaning *Not-Experienced*, *Remote*. However, within this imperative strategy, the future tense does not have the same degree of prompting force as the imperative. The future tense is preferred over the imperative when “an immediate or precise fulfilling of the implied request, order or demand is not necessarily of primary importance” (Tobin, 1990b, p. 476), as in example (7).

- (7) *Posle **zajdēs'**, - skazal Ivan Petrovič. - **Napraviš'**. A teper' vot kolun... I potom **složiš'**, tol'ko ne v koridore, a prjamo v kvartiru tašči".* (Šalamov 2013, 147)

*“**aḥar-kakh tykanēs**”, amar yvan petrovyč, “**ve-teyasher** et ha-masor. beyntaym qah garzen... kshe-tesayem, **terakez** et ha-’etsym le-’arema, ‘aval lo ba-mysdaron – qah otam yashar la-dyra”.* (Shalamov, 2005, p. 153)

“**Then come in**”, said Ivan Petrovich, “and **straighten** the saw. In the meantime, take an axe... When you are done, **gather** the wood into a pile but not in the hallway – take it straight to the apartment”.

In example (7), Ivan Petrovich, presumably a higher-ranking individual or even a camp functionary, gives instructions to a young prisoner named Vas'ka on the labor he is to perform. By using the future tense rather than the imperative, he softens his requests and distances himself from issuing explicit commands. This is especially evident in the use of sequential connectors – “Then, you'll do this. When you are done, do that” – which aligns perfectly with the postulated invariant meaning of these forms as *Not-Experienced*, *Remote*.

In Hebrew, these forms are favored when used to express prohibitions, which are introduced by the word *‘al*, meaning “do not” or “don't”, as in examples (8)–(9). In Russian literature, a similar usage is considered more colloquial (see Švedova, 1980, pp. 619–620, 634), as illustrated by example (8), with the imperative remaining the preferred option, as in example (9).

- (8) *la-rehov ge'ula 'al **tered**, ky sham mytrotsetsym nehagym brytym my-maḥane shneler.* (Oz, 1978, p. 22)

*Na ulicu Geula ty ne **poedeš'**, tam vseгда nosjatsja britanskije šofëry iz lagerja "Šneler" (Oz, 2015, p. 19)*

You **will not go down** to Geula Street, because it is too full of the comings and goings of the British drivers from the Schneller Barracks.

(9) ***tokhal, tokhal** le-te'avon. 'al **taḥshosh**.* (Oz, 1978, p. 68)

*Eš', eš' na zdorov'e. **Ne stesnajsja**.* (Oz, 2015, p. 50)

Eat, eat to your heart's content. **Don't be** afraid.

In example (8), the narrator's father gives him a bicycle but immediately sets strict rules for its use, emphasizing the need to avoid dangerous zones, specifically Geula Street, due to the presence of reckless British military drivers. In example (9), the father of the girl, whom the narrator loves, warmly offers him a piece of a sweet treat, encouraging him to enjoy it without hesitation.

When used in negative imperative constructions, these forms are not interpreted as predictions about future occurrences, but rather as expressions of a desire to prevent those remote possibilities from becoming reality. In such contexts, the encoder has "the least amount of control over the realization of their request or command" (Tobin, 1990b, p. 479), a characteristic that is consistent with the postulated invariant meaning of the future tense as *Not-Experienced*, *Remote*.

Table 4 presents the frequency with which the future tense is used to convey imperative messages in STs and TTs in Russian and Hebrew.

Table 4. Frequency Distribution of the Use of the Future for Imperative Messages Across Russian and Hebrew ST-TT Pairs

Source-Target Pair	Coinciding Use	Non-Coinciding Use	Total
Russian ST → Hebrew TT	13	60	73
Hebrew ST → Russian TT	5	36	41
p (Fisher's Exact Test)	0.594		

As shown in Table 4, while the majority of instances involve a shift between the forms with future reference and the imperative, Fisher's exact test

($p = 0.594$) confirms that these shifts are not statistically significant, indicating directional symmetry. The prevalence of non-coinciding uses reflects a preference in Hebrew, where the future commonly functions as the default form for prompting action. These findings support our hypothesis: despite a high number of form shifts, there is no evidence that they are more likely to occur in one TT than the other.

4. Differences in Communicative Strategies of Forms' Usage between STs and TTs

It would be erroneous to claim that the tenses of STs are consistently preserved in TTs throughout the texts. The discrepancy in the use of verb tenses between STs and TTs results from differences in communicative strategies for using one tense over another between SLs and TLs. While SL as a system favors certain communicative strategies, TL may prioritize others and omit those favored by SL. These distinctions are illustrated by examples (10)–(17) below.

4.1. Descriptive Present Tense in Past Context in Hebrew ST vs Past Tense, Adverbial and Present Participles in Russian TT

The present tense, meaning *Experienced*, *Proximate*, allows encoders in Hebrew to describe ongoing occurrences that happen simultaneously with other occurrences, even if those occurrences refer to the past. In Russian, however, the past tense or non-predicative forms are used instead, as shown in examples (10)–(11).

- (10) “*akhshav sheva shloshym ve-shesh*”, tsyyen ‘aba, **hosem** be-gufo ‘et petah ha-bayt u-**menyya** rosho kama pe’amym my-lemala lemata, ke-**magyya** lydey masqana metsa’eret akh bylty-nymna’at. (Oz, 1978, pp. 55–56)

Sejčas sem' tridcat' šest', — soobščil otec, zagorodiv telom dvernoj proëm i pokazyvaja vsem svoim vidom, čto on prišël k pečal'nomu, no absoljutno neizbežnomu vyvodu. (Oz, 2015, p. 42)

“Now, it is seven thirty-six”, Dad pointed out, **blocking** the doorway of the house with his body and **nodding** his head up and down many times as if he **reached** a sad but inevitable conclusion.

- (11) [...] *Potašnikov dobralsya do mesta raboty, edva **volocha** nogi.* (Šalamov 2013, p. 58)

[...] *higi'a potashnikov le-mekom ha-'avoda, **gorer** be-koshi et raglav.*
(Shalamov 2005, p. 27)

[...] Potašnikov made it to his workplace, barely **dragging** his feet.

In example (10), the narrator, a young boy, plans to run away from home after losing everything (a development that gives the chapter its title, “Everything is Lost”): his bicycle, the toy railway for which he traded the bicycle, and the dog for which he traded the railway. However, his father unexpectedly blocks the door, wordlessly displaying his disappointment.

Example (11) depicts a typical morning in a Kolyma camp, emphasizing the monotony and physical exhaustion endured by the prisoner Potašnikov as he reaches his work site for yet another day of forced labor in the region’s freezing climate.

In the Hebrew version of both examples, the occurrences are simultaneous and, by nature, temporally proximate to each other. Besides their vividness to the encoder, this proximity reflects how close something feels, which aligns with the postulated invariant meaning of *Experienced*, *Proximate*. Russian, by contrast, has alternative means to express simultaneity without relying on forms traditionally associated with the present tense. The meaning of these forms lies beyond the scope of the current analysis.

Table 5 presents the distribution of forms used to refer to present occurrences within past-time contexts across STs and TTs in Russian and Hebrew. It contrasts instances where this strategy is retained in the TT with those where such forms are replaced by forms referring to past or other non-predicative expressions.

Table 5. Frequency Distribution of the Use of Descriptive Present Occurrences in Past Context Across Russian and Hebrew ST–TT Pairs

Source-Target Pair	Coinciding Use	Non-Coinciding Use	Total
Russian ST → Hebrew TT	1	45	46
Hebrew ST → Russian TT	3	55	58
<i>p</i> (Fisher’s Exact Test)	0.6279		

As shown in Table 5, forms associated with the present tense within past-time contexts are predominantly translated using alternative means, leading to a high number of Non-Coinciding Uses in both translation directions. Fisher's exact test ($p = 0.6279$) indicates that these distributional shifts are not statistically associated with the direction of translation. The result supports our hypothesis that form distribution remains statistically consistent across communicative strategies, regardless of ST-TT orientation.

4.2. Future Tense in ST vs Past Tense in TT

In Russian, the future tense can also be employed to convey routine past occurrences. This shift in temporal perspectives is achieved by adding elements such as *byvalo*, ("used to be"), as shown in example (12), by expressions like *vsegda* ("always"), *inoj raz* ("sometimes"), *slučalos'* ("there were times when") (see Isačenko, 1960, pp. 428–429, 450–453), or by the broader context, as illustrated by example (13).

- (12) *Byvalo i takoe: razveděš' s utra kostër požarče, čtoby v obed bylo gde sogret' nogi i ruki, založiš' pobol'she drov i uxodiš' na rabotu.* (Šalamov 2013, p. 71)

'era gam kakh: hev'arta 'al ha-boqer medura ha-guna kedey she-be-'aruḥat ha-tsohoraym tukhal leḥamem 'et ha-yadaym ve-ha-raglaym, henaḥta kama she-yoter 'etsym ve-yatsata la-'avoda. (Shalamov 2005, p. 49)

Sometimes it would happen this way: you'd light a great bonfire in the morning so that you could warm your feet and hands at lunch, you'd put in as much firewood as possible, and go to work.

- (13) *My znali, čto v našej vole prekratit' ètu žizn' xot' zavtra, i inogda rešalis' sdelat' èto, i vsjakij raz mešali kakie-nibud' meloči, iz kotoryx состоit žizn'. To segodnja budut vydavat' «larëk» – premial'nyj kilogramm xleba, – prosto glupo bylo končat' samoubijstvom v takoj den'. To dneval'nyj iz sosednego baraka obeščal dat' zakurit' večerom – otdat' davnišnij dolg.* (Šalamov, 2013, p. 76)

yad'anu ky be-khoḥenu lyqto'a 'et ha-ḥaym ha-'ele afylu maḥar, ve-ly-fraqym haynu maḥlytym la'asot zot, 'akh kol pa'am hefry'u kol myney

*dvarym shel ma be-khakh, she-me-hem murkavym ha-khaym. o she-be-dyuq be-oto yom **hilku** "lahmanyia" – hatava shel me'a kylogram lehem, ve-haya pashut metupash lehyt'aved be-yom kaze. o she-ha-toran myn ha-tsryf ha-shakhen hyvtyah she-yten lekha le'ashen ba-'erev – ve-yahzyr hov yashan.* (Shalamov, 2005, pp. 55–56)

We knew that it was within our power to interrupt this life even tomorrow, and at times, we would have decided to do so, but each time, all kinds of little things would interfere, things that life is made of. Either on that very day, they **would be handing out** a "bun" – a perk of a kilogram of bread, and it was just stupid to commit suicide on such a day. Or the watchman from the neighboring shack would promise to let you smoke in the evening, to pay back an old debt.

Examples (12)–(13) illustrate the routine cycles of daily survival in the Soviet labor camps. The morphological future forms used here do not refer to actual future occurrences. Rather, they emphasize the repetitive nature of these experiences, portraying them as predictable and potentially recurring beyond the point in the past from which they are recalled (see Potebnja, 1941, p. 106). This usage is consistent with the postulated meaning *Not-Experienced, Remote*. In the Hebrew TT, this strategy is instead rendered using past forms, meaning *Experienced, Remote*.

On the other hand, in Hebrew, forms traditionally labeled as future tense can be used to express either intended occurrences, as seen in examples (14)–(15), or desired ones, as in examples (16)–(17). By contrast, in Russian STs and TTs, these same messages are conveyed using forms typically associated with the past tense, meaning *Experienced, Remote*, and introduced by conjunctions such as *čtoby* ("so that"), as illustrated by examples (14)–(15), or *liš' by* ("if only", "as long as...", "provided that..."), as in examples (16)–(17).

- (14) *she 'al kakh hehlyfu 'etslenu be-ydysh, she-lo 'avyn, eyzo lehysha mud'egat u-ve-sofa tasesa tamyd ha-myla "meshygener", klomar – meshuga.* (Oz, 1978, p. 18)

*O djadinyx pričudax govorili u nas na idiše, čtoby ja ne **mog** ponjat', vse eti reči zaveršališ' trevožnym šepotom, i v samom konce vseгда šipelo slovečko "mešiginer" ("sumašedšij").* (Oz, 2015, p. 18)

To this, at home, they would exchange some worried whisper in Yiddish so that I **would not understand**, and at the end, the word 'meshigener', meaning – "madman", always came up.

- (15) *Ljudej otpuskali tol'ko togda, kogda rabota byla sdelana, s tem čtoby oni mogli vyspat'sja...* (Šalamov, 2013, p. 130)

ha-anashym shuh̄reru raq ka'asher hushlema ha-avoda, ve-gam ze haya raq kedey she-yukhlu lyshon... (Shalamov, 2005, p. 128)

People were only released when the work was done, so that they **could** get some sleep...

- (16) *ve-raq she-lo ye'abed ly ha-meḥaded ha-tov ha-ze...* (Oz, 1978, p. 64)

Liš' by ne poterjalas' moja čudnaja točilka. (Oz 2015, p. 47)

And if only this good pencil sharpener **doesn't** get lost.

- (17) *...i daže pjat'sot grammov ržanogo xleba, tri ložki kaši i miska židkogo supa v den' mogli voskrešat' čeloveka. Liš' by on ne rabotal.* (Šalamov, 2013, p. 208)

...ve-'afyly khamesh-me'ot gram shel lehem shyfon, shalosh kapot daysa u-qe'arat maraq dalyd be-yom hayu yekholym lehakym 'adam le-tehyya. ha-'iqar she-lo ye'alets la'avod. (Shalamov, 2005, p. 233)

...and even five hundred grams of rye bread, three spoonsful of porridge, and a bowl of watery soup a day could resurrect a man. As long as he **didn't** work.

In example (14), the narrator, a young boy, recalls how adults would whisper anxiously in Yiddish – a language he did not understand – to react to his unrealistic or socially inappropriate dreams or ambitions.

Example (15) comes from Šalamov's recount of the brutal conditions of Soviet camp life, where prisoners were released from forced labor only when the assigned task was completed, simply to keep them physically functional and return them to work again.

In example (16), the narrator, still a boy, wants to keep a pencil sharpener he found by chance after losing several emotionally significant possessions. The sharpener thus becomes something reliable and meaningful.

Example (17) reflects Šalamov's view on life in a Soviet Gulag, particularly on how not working, even while sick and weak, offered the only opportunity for the body to begin recovering.

In Hebrew, these uses imply that the described occurrences have yet to happen and that their realization remains uncertain, which aligns with the postulated meaning *Not-Experienced*, *Remote* of these forms. In Russian, the presence of the particle *by* ("would") in these constructions indicates that the forms, meaning *Experienced*, *Remote*, are used in a non-past context, similar to their use for hypothetical scenarios.

Table 6 presents the distribution of instances where forms with future-time reference are rendered using forms with past-time reference in translation, and vice versa.

Table 6. Frequency Distribution of the Use of Future vs Past Across Russian and Hebrew ST-TT Pairs

Source-Target Pair	Coinciding Use	Non-Coinciding Use	Total
Russian ST → Hebrew TT	0	23	23
Hebrew ST → Russian TT	0	12	12
<i>p</i> (Fisher's Exact Test)	1		

As Table 6 shows, all instances in both translation directions involve a shift in temporal reference – from future-time reference in STs to past-time reference in TTs, or vice versa. However, Fisher's exact test ($p = 1.0$, the highest possible value) confirms that this tendency is not statistically associated with translation direction. These findings support the hypothesis that form choice is motivated by language-specific considerations rather than systematic asymmetry between Russian and Hebrew ST-TT pairs.

5. Conclusion

To summarize, this study has shown that analyzing mutual correspondences between source texts (STs) and target texts (TTs) provides valuable insights into the languages being compared. It allows us to uncover both similarities and differences, even between typologically distant languages such as Russian and Hebrew.

We have demonstrated that the analysis of verb tense morphology using the Columbia School (CS) notion of invariant meanings within interlocked systems – rather than relying on diverse meanings based on real-time temporal relationships – offers a more consistent explanation of how tenses function in both STs and TTs.

In doing so, we have also illustrated the cross-linguistic applicability of the adopted CS sign-oriented approach, contributing to a deeper understanding of both language-internal and cross-linguistic functions (see Serpollet, 2008, p. 190).

One limitation of this analysis lies in the still unresolved question of why Russian and Hebrew, despite sharing invariant meanings associated with corresponding tenses, exhibit differences in their usage. Simply attributing these differences to communicative strategies alone is, strictly speaking, not a sufficient explanation. Traditional grammatical aspect – while not the focus of this study – may underlie some of these asymmetries. For instance, Bondarko (1971, p. 172) observed that the transpositional potential of Russian perfective forms in the future, and especially in the past, is considerably higher than that of imperfective forms, which are rarely transposed. This observation may help explain some of the asymmetries we see in the data and could serve as a starting point for further investigation.

Future research might also explore how the use of forms in translated texts differs from their use in original texts written in the same language. This is because the use of forms in the target language (TL), affected by the source language (SL), may differ from their use in the native language (see Xiao & Hu, 2015, p. 20).

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