THE PRAGMATICS OF STEREOTYPICAL SPEECH.
LOSS OF IDENTITY THROUGH TRANSLATION COMPROMISE

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ABSTRACT. *The Pragmatics of Stereotypical Speech. Loss of Identity through Translation Compromise.* This article explores the possibility of translating stereotypical language markers, from Japanese (source language) into Romanian (target language). The case study is conducted on a Japanese comic book (*manga*) titled *Rurōni Kenshin -Meiji Kenkaku Roman Tan-*, analysed in terms of pragmatic sense conveyed through the translations of certain deictics and appellatives used to differentiate between the two identities assumed by the main character. The translation compromises oftentimes required due to the lack of pragmatic equivalence lead to loss of pragmatic meaning, blurring out the differences in the personalities of the main character.

Keywords: stereotypical speech, multimodal text, pragmatics, linguistic politeness, deictics

REZUMAT. *Pragmatica limbajului stereotipizat. Pierderea identității prin compromisul de traducere.* Acest articol explorează posibilitatea traducerii marcatorilor lingvistici pentru stereotipuri de limbaj, din japoneză (limba sursă) în română (limba țintă). Studiul de caz este realizat pe o bandă desenată japoneză (*manga*) intitulată *Rurōni Kenshin -Meiji Kenkaku Roman Tan-*, analizată din punct de vedere al sensului pragmatic transmis prin traducerea unor deictice și apelative folosite pentru a diferenția cele două identități asumate de personajul principal. Compromisurile de traducere, deseori necesare din cauza lipsei de echivalență pragmatică, duc la pierderea sensului pragmatic, estompând diferențele dintre personalitățile personajului principal.

Cuvinte-cheie: limbaj stereotipizat, text multimodal, pragmatică, politețe lingvistică, deictice

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Introduction

The aim of this study is to analyse the changes that occur in the pragmatic meaning conveyed by translating *yakuwarigo* elements from Japanese, the source language, into Romanian, the target language. The focus will be on the pragmatic markers that fall into the category of stereotyped language attributed to samurai characters. The aim of the translations made by the author of this study is to convey the pragmatic message intended by the author of the source text in a linguistically and culturally acceptable manner for the target audience. Pragmatic equivalences will therefore be sought to produce a similar, if not identical, effect on the target audience as the source text has on the source readers.

The corpus of this approach consists of fictional discourse, the utterances containing the pragmatic markers analysed being taken from the *manga* titled *Rurōni Kenshin – Meiji Kenkaku Roman Tan*. In Japanese comics (*manga*), as well as in other fictional works from all over the world, language is also used as a means of expressing the individuality of characters.

Etymologically, the Japanese word *manga* is written using two *kanji* characters: 漫 (*man*) and 画 (*ga*). In the English literature, the term is usually translated as „whimsical pictures" or „improvised pictures" (Hernandez 2019, 7). In Japan, the term *manga* refers to all types of comics, regardless of the country of origin. For foreign audiences, however, *manga* means 'Japanese comic strip'. From a linguistic perspective, a *manga* is a multimodal text, therefore the page must be understood as a whole, although its individual components, the linguistic and graphic codes, have aesthetic and pragmatic autonomy. Comic characters are brought to life by the reader, who complements the graphic representation provided by the author through personal experience that helps him or her interpret the characters in unique ways, thus becoming an extension of the reader (McCloud 2019, 37–38).

The vocabulary of comics is composed of words and pictures (McCloud 2019, 47). For the present pragmalinguistic study, the focus will be on the linguistic elements of multimodal texts; the illustrations and the background, i.e., visual-verbal relations, and how they contribute to the formation of the multimodal message, are not of interest at this time.

Multimodal Text

Multimodal texts are units of meaning created by combining different modes which, although having their own independent meaning, are used as complementary components of a unified message. Comics are a form of multimodal

communication, combining two semiotic modes that create an interdependent relationship between image and text.

According to the American theorist Neil Cohn, comics are written using two languages: a verbal language expressed in writing (written texts in Romanian, English, Japanese, etc.) and a visual language expressed through images. He proposes the following definition: comics include a "network of ideas composed of their subject matter, format, readership, history, industry, the specific visual languages they use, and other cultural characteristics" (Cohn 2014, 2).

The hybrid text of the comics contains linguistic elements aided by visual strategies that convey phonological features such as accent, intonation, loudness, etc., completing the pragmatic meaning. As far as visual language is concerned, translation is impossible, so its interpretation depends on the reader's ability to decipher the intended message. This paper, however, is not concerned with this semiotic mode, but proposes an analysis of the elements related to verbal language expressed in writing, more specifically the consequences felt at the level of reception of the pragmatic message following the translation from Japanese into Romanian of the stereotypical language attributed to a character.

The signs and symbols that make up a multimodal text are polysemantic in nature. Their interpretation is therefore subjective, depending on the receiver of the message and their cultural context. As the Japanese sociolinguist Suzuki Takao (2001:17) points out, "in order to understand the contents of a given word, one must discover and describe the necessary and sufficient conditions that regulate its operations." Strategies that are related to the linguistic code itself are not sufficient for pragmatic understanding, so it is necessary to resort to extralinguistic processes, which allow the identification of the appropriate referent from a set of possible referents.

Both the production of texts and their reception are determined by social and individual factors. The sender and receiver become partners in a communicative situation, both influenced by their socio-cultural community and personal 'baggage'. These individual features, in addition to the uniqueness of the time and place of the communicative event, also affect the production and reception of the text. The communicative situation consists of the following factors: the cultural context, the specific environment in which the interaction takes place, the psychological and social circumstances of the communicating partners and the existing relationship between them (Reiss and Vermeer 2014, 17–18).

Translating Multimodal Texts – Equivalence and Translation Loss

In the case of comics, text and image are the stimuli that help us enter the fictional universe, using the reality in which we, the readers, exist. Both

codes are relevant as long as they are accessible. While the interpretation of visual language is strictly within the competence of the audience, written language undergoes a transfer from the source language to the target language.

Translation is a process of communication and an act of mediation involving three participants: the author of the source text, the translator, and the reader of the target text. As they are exposed to different cultural backgrounds, their perception of the world differs. Therefore, cultural transfer is as important as linguistic transfer (Reiss and Vermeer 2014, 1). Even so, the reader of the target text will spend more time and effort processing the translated text than the reader of the source text. The target text provides fewer contextual effects than the source text, which means that its relevance will also be reduced. Linguistic and cultural barriers constrain the interpretability of the target text. To mitigate this negative effect of transposition from one language to another, the translator must be familiar with the pragmalinguistic and socio-pragmatic aspects of the source text language. In this way they will be able to provide the necessary contextual information by making situational implications explicit, thus diminishing the discrepancy between the author's intention and the reader's expectations (Rafieyan 2016, 99).

A text is produced for the purpose of conveying a meaningful message at a particular place and time, involving a relationship between the author and at least one other person (Reiss and Vermeer 2014, 17). The act of translation becomes impossible if the paradigms of language cultures and the worldview characteristic of the sender and receiver are not assimilated by the intermediary (Reiss and Vermeer 2014, 4). Therefore, translators need to be familiar with both the source and the target cultures since the value of an event can change through translation. Language can be seen as communicative behaviour, which in turn is a specific form of interaction. From this point of view, translation presupposes a comprehensive knowledge of culture-specific behaviour (Reiss and Vermeer 2014, 25–31). In this case, the great differences between the way of thinking of the representatives of the source culture (Japanese) and the target culture (Romanian) make a simple literal translation insufficient.

Every transfer inevitably involves value shifts, which can, on the one hand, be accepted as normal in the act of translation, focusing mainly on the set of realities and values common to all people, or, on the other hand, treated as a fundamental problem for any translation. The decision depends on the purpose of the translation (Reiss and Vermeer 2014, 27). According to the theorists Reiss and Vermeer (2014, 85), just as every action has a purpose, the process of translation is also governed by its *skopos*. A word of Greek origin, *skopós* is used in translation theory with the meaning of a 'goal', 'aim' or 'objective' that determines whether, how, and what is translated (Reiss and Vermeer 2014, 89).

Translators have always been faced with the need to compromise and sacrifice, with the end product being, at times, an unsatisfactory imitation of the original. Literal translations satisfy the requirement of word fidelity, but often produce texts that are lacking in terms of style and syntax. Attempting to prioritize the message will lead to structural changes in the text (Reiss and Vermeer 2014, 33–38). It is important to establish a purpose for the translation to decide what kind of sacrifice is justified. The translator must know the intended audience and familiarize themselves with the target linguistic norms and culture in an effort to decide the relevant purpose of the situation. Even so, there is no guarantee that the message conveyed through translation will be captured and understood by the receiver in the desired manner.

A translation should offer equivalence not only between the words of the source and target languages, but also at the level of the message implied. Mona Baker (2018) distinguishes between grammatical equivalence, textual equivalence, semiotic equivalence, and pragmatic equivalence. Grammatical equivalence refers to finding equivalent grammatical terms in different languages. The difficulty arises from the variety of grammatical rules across languages, since differences in grammatical structures may significantly change the way the message is carried across (Baker 2018, 94–126). Textual equivalence refers to equivalence that may be achieved in terms of cohesion and information. The analysis and comprehension of the source text help translators produce a cohesive and coherent text in the target language (Baker 2018, 134–183). Achieving semiotic equivalence is of importance for multimodal texts. The process of translation implies exploring the combination of visual and verbal elements in genres such as comics, films, graphic novels, children's literature and so on, in order to maintain the verbal-visual cohesion between the semiotic modes (Baker 2018, 279–298). The type of equivalence most important for the present study is pragmatic equivalence. For the intended message of the source text to be recreated in the target text and for it to become accessible and comprehensible to the target audience, a translator should bear in mind the need to obtain pragmatic equivalence (Baker 2018, 235–267).

Yakuwarigo – A Linguistic Strategy of Assigning Vocabulary and Grammar to Characters

Since 2000, a new concern in linguistic research in Japan and beyond has been the association between various types of pop culture characters and the specifics of their expression. From the perspective of traditional linguistics, discourse analysis involves examining the linguistic phenomena in *real-life* communicative acts. On the other hand, *yakuwarigo* proposes the analysis of

character-specific linguistic phenomena in *fictionalised* acts of communication. The authors of Japanese comics use a variety of iconic conventions, including various linguistic stereotypes associated with certain types of characters.

The theoretical foundation of these linguistic studies is based on the concept proposed and defined by the Japanese linguist Kinsui Satoshi (金水敏), which in Japanese is called *yakuwarigo* ('role-assigned words') and has been translated into English as 'role language', 'character language' or 'stereotypical speech'. Semantically, the term *yakuwarigo* (役割語) is composed of 役 (*yaku*) – 'role', 割 (*wari*) – 'cast' and 語 (*go*) – 'word', so it could be translated into English as 'words assigned to a particular role'. *Yakuwarigo* is a universal linguistic strategy to give personality, originality, and memorability to a character, and it is not only found in the Japanese context. However, the Japanese language differs from other languages in that it uses a multitude of lexemes and morphemes, that allow for a diversification of the pragmatic markers used.

Stereotypical Speech

From a sociological perspective, stereotyping is the attribution of traits, characteristics or behaviours to a person, based on shared and generalised beliefs about the social groups to which they belong. It is a pervasive human tendency that stems from a need to classify, simplify, and process the complex world around us. The social meaning of stereotypical language is context-dependent and only emerges in relation to listeners' already existing beliefs and attitudes towards the typology represented by the characters (Levon 2014, 540).

For the following pragmatic analysis, language stereotypes based on concepts that are not found in the reality of contemporary society are of interest. These are generalisations made about a group based on its linguistic features and almost always associated with a nonlinguistic feature. In other words, relating the attitudes and behaviours of a group to the language or variation of the language they speak. This study takes into account the correlation between linguistic behaviours and social classes that are representative of a particular historical period; specifically, the stereotypical association between the pre-modern Japanese language spoken in the Edo era and samurai-type characters. From this perspective, stereotyping and stereotyped speech are not related to social prejudice, discrimination, or inequality. The language stereotypes attributed to characters are complementary elements for creating individuality, personality, contextualisation, and emphasis.

Role language analyses the relationship between the language of characters in works of fiction and the image projected in the mind of the reader

or listener. These speech patterns are constructed based on linguistic, social, and cultural stereotypes existing in Japanese society, including elements of vocabulary, grammar, phonetic features, fixed expressions, etc. that evoke certain attributes of the speaker such as gender, age, social status, region of origin, race, etc. (Teshigawara and Kinsui 2011, 37–58). The assignment of language stereotypes is not unintentional or automatic, but a conscious, intentional choice by the author to construct a memorable character. Such stereotypes are based on social and temporal variations, being determined by the framework of communication, social subordination relations, and the theme of the message conveyed (Lungu-Badea 2012, 134). Language stereotypes place the character in a certain social category, are characteristic of women or men, can provide information about age, occupation, etc. and, finally, are determined by the character's personality or help shape it.

Samurai Language – Himura Kenshin

Himura Kenshin is the hero of the comic titled *Rurōni Kenshin – Meiji Kenkaku Roman Tan (るろうに剣心–明治剣客浪漫譚–)*, a Japanese *manga* series written and illustrated by Nobuhiro Watsuki. The story begins in the 11th year of the Meiji era (1878) and follows the adventures of a former Bakumatsu[2] assassin known as Hitokiri Battōsai. Having ended his fight against Bakufu[3], Hitokiri Battōsai disappears, the character assuming a new identity and personality, becoming Himura Kenshin. In the new modernized society after the end of the war, Kenshin becomes a ronin (*rōnin* 浪人) who protects the Japanese people vowing never to take another life.

To produce a successful series, the author's work cannot be limited to creating a character with whom the audience can empathise, but it is desirable to give him uniqueness. With the purpose of defining the personality of comic book heroes, authors use both physical appearance and style of expression. Linguistically, there is a deliberate selection of linguistic means and strategies which in many cases deviate from the norm. Such individualised language use underlies the concept of *yakuwarigo*. In this paper, the language behaviour of Himura Kenshin will be analysed from a pragmatic perspective, which I have classified as stereotyped language – samurai language.

Samurai are ubiquitous in Japanese popular culture, being represented in films, animated productions, comics, video games, etc. *Manga* magazines incorporate samurai culture, imagery, and themes into their stories, creating

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[2] The final years of the Edo period (1853–1868).
[3] Term used for a shogun's office or government.

some of the most famous archetypes of all time. However, the accuracy of the 'reality' portrayed by these productions is questionable. The scripts rely on stereotypes and partial truths to propagate the heroic image of Japanese knights.

The language stereotypes attributed to samurai characters in pop culture productions are based on the pre-modern Japanese language spoken in the Edo era (近世語 – *kinseigo*, spoken between 1603–1868) (Labrune 2012, 6–7). These means of expression do not specifically represent a samurai, but any individual of the language community of that period. The policy of isolation in the Edo period resulted in a segmented society characterised by a rich variety of dialects, so that there can be no talk of a samurai language, as there were major differences between the dialects spoken by these warriors in different parts of the country. From a linguistic perspective, Edo was a period of dualism in the history of the Japanese language: on the one hand, spoken and written Japanese were very different, on the other hand, within the spoken language there were also divisions between the Japanese spoken in Edo (Tokyo) and that spoken in Kyoto, between different regional dialects and between different social classes within a dialect (Gottlieb 2019, 16–17).

Meiji is the historical period that represents a turning point for the Japanese, as the state implemented a process of rapid, forced modernization in order not to give foreigners a chance to colonize. Influences from abroad lead to the first generations of young people starting university studies, learning foreign languages such as English, and the first international student exchanges.

The Meiji Revolution and the modernisation that followed brought essential and inevitable changes, not only to the structure of the community, but also to the spoken and written language. For society to be able to adapt and keep pace with the changes imposed by foreign influences, language underwent a reshaping, a simplification, leaving behind obsolete features that made it difficult to convey the message. In other words, the modernization of society has led to the reform of language so that it can meet the demands of the society it serves (Gottlieb 2019, 1–7). A modern colloquial style evolves, the lexicon expands through an influx of foreign borrowings and the introduction of neologisms to reflect the multiplicity of new foreign concepts, institutions, and objects in Japanese society. Syntactic changes also occur under the influence of foreign languages or in response to changes in patterns of thought and logic as a result of newly adopted values (Gottlieb 2019, 9–12).

Himura Kenshin's Linguistic Behaviour

Considering the inexistence of a 'samurai language' specific only to this social and occupational category, the linguistic behaviour of the character Himura Kenshin can be classified as stereotyped language. This decision was made

since a process of restricting the linguistic characteristics of an entire society and attributing them to the samurai class to which Kenshin belongs is taking place. In what follows, I will highlight a series of deictics and appellatives that are characteristic of the main character's linguistic behaviour.

The comic strip hero's life begins on June 20, 1849, when he is born into a peasant family and is given the name Shinta. Surviving a difficult childhood, Shinta is rescued and apprenticed to a master swordsman, Hiko Seijūrō, who changes his name to Kenshin. After a few years under Seijūrō's tutelage, at the age of 14, Kenshin learns of a revolution taking place across Japan. He is drawn to the ideal of removing the oppressive shogunate from power and ushering in a new era of peace for the common people. Joining the revolutionaries, Kenshin becomes notorious for his fighting skills, claiming hundreds of lives and becoming known as Hitokiri Battōsai. After completing his mission as a killer, Kenshin assumes a new identity and personality, beginning his life as a wanderer with a promise to protect the innocent and take no more lives. However, Kenshin and Battōsai continue to coexist within the character.

Throughout the story, the transition from one personality to another is also illustrated by the pragmatic markers used by the author. Kenshin is a gentle, cheerful, friendly, caring person, always eager to help and protect those around him. His speech is characterized by the Japanese quality of humility, referring to himself using the archaic deictic *sessha*. The use of polite language in colloquial forms is also noticeable, showing Kenshin's desire to express respect and create closeness with the interlocutor. When Kenshin returns to his old identity as a ruthless swordsman, there is a noticeable change in his speech. The humble attitude is replaced by masculinity and superiority, the polite expression becomes colloquial and direct.

The language assigned to the main character is not meant to create the historical context of the comic. This is emphasised by the fact that none of the other characters in the series resort to archaic patterns of expression. Even Kenshin, in his childhood years, does not display such linguistic behaviour. The striking difference between his speech patterns and those of the others accentuates Kenshin's personal and intentional choice to use this style of speech, highlights his now peaceful personality, as well as the fact that he finds it difficult to adopt and accommodate to the new norms imposed by the transitional period in which he lives.

Translating Kenshin's Politeness

Politeness, a phenomenon characteristic of human society, can also be seen as a form of communication that offers value to the interlocutor at the expense of the self (Leech 2014, 3). There are varying degrees of linguistic politeness, with some societies and languages developing a complex grammatical and lexical

system to express both respect for the interlocutor or a third person, and to present a humble attitude towards the dialogue partner. The lexical-grammatical resources of language, their meanings, their frequency, and the way they are used as linguistic strategies of politeness differ from society to society, from language to language (Leech 2014, 9–14). One of Kenshin's main desires is to avoid conflict, to treat those with whom he interacts with proper respect. This can be inferred as the main reason for his deliberate choice to use polite forms of expression in an era where the aim is to eliminate elitism and replace it with social egalitarianism, based on foreign models.

However, the strategies used to express politeness are never exclusively linguistic. There is a high degree of dependence between social factors and the chosen strategy, the choice being influenced by the speaker's preferences and intentions as well as by the parameters of the communicative situation. In Japanese society, politeness is a "social deictic" (Ciubancan 2020, 4), therefore, participants in dialogue conform to pre-established rules of behaviour. Japan is a group-conscious society with a hierarchical structure, with social relations created on a vertical axis and importance given to people of higher status. In comparison, in Romania, the principle of individualism prevails, the emphasis is on social equality among community members, and social relations are created horizontally (Won 2020, 33).

Characteristic not only of Japanese society, but also of other Confucian societies such as Korean and Chinese, the principle of showing humility of self and respect for others underlies polite behaviour. Therefore, in Japanese, the differentiation of the idiomatic styles used is based on the relationship between the interlocutors, with the sender being able to place themselves on a level of equality, inferiority, or superiority to the receiver.

In Japanese, the following methods of expressing politeness can be used: at the lexical level, there are different words for the same designate (*watakushi – watashi – ore* = R. *eu* / E. I; *anata – omae* = R. *tu* / E. you); from a morpho-syntactic perspective, there are different endings for verbs or adjectives that act as predicate of the sentence (*mizu wo no**mu** – mizu wo nomi**masu*** = R. *beau apă* / E. I drink water); at the level of specialised idiomatic procedures for constituting speech, depending on the distance between the interlocutors (degree of intimacy).

The Japanese language distinguishes three basic styles of linguistic politeness: Informal/colloquial style– does not involve expressing respect to the interlocutor (an interlocutor of equal or lower status); neutral/standard style does not afford the possibility or need to identify an inferior/superior interlocutor and does not indicate subjective-individual involvement with the interlocutor; formal/polite/respectful style expresses polite address to an interlocutor with a status/position of superiority. There are two ways of showing

respect, either by elevating the status of the interlocutor using the honorific style, or by lowering the status of the speaker through a humble style.

Japanese speakers use two types of pragmatic politeness strategies: receiver-oriented and sender-oriented (the principle of modesty, of humility). In Romanian, linguistic politeness is reflected in speech aimed at the interlocutor or a third person, but since the concept of politeness–humility does not exist in the Romanian mentality, no grammatical procedures for expressing modesty of the self have emerged.

In addition to strategies related to the pragmatics of language, there are morphological elements used to differentiate the level of politeness, such as the politeness pronoun *dumneavoastră* used for the singular 2nd person and the second person plural form of verbs (*tu **bei** apă – dumneavoastră **beți** apă*). (Ciubancan 2020, 4).

Linguistic Analysis of Pragmatic Markers Used as *Yakuwarigo* Elements

In this part, a pragmatic analysis of some linguistic strategies whose use is representative of the acts of dialogue performed by Kenshin will be carried out. The aim is to exemplify the language structures most often attributed to the character, by looking at changes in lexicon, syntax, and register. All the translations into Romanian were made by the author of the present study. I do not claim that they are exhaustive, but I will focus on the changes that occur at the level of pragmatic message according to the equivalence found between the units of meaning in the source and target language. While searching for pragmatic equivalence between the source and target languages is of priority, to avoid unnatural expressions in the target language, compromises might be needed.

A deictic word attributed to samurai in the fictional universe is *sessha* (拙者), a common noun used as a personal pronoun. I would like to draw attention to the fact that, in Japanese, there is no lexico-grammatical class of pronoun, therefore, grammatical equivalence cannot be achieved. The words used as correspondents for the Romanian personal pronouns are nouns in Japanese. This explains the diversity of parts of speech used to refer to oneself – *watakushi*[4], *watashi*[5], *boku*[6], *ore*[7], *washi*[8] and so on (English equivalents 'I', 'me'); to refer to

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[4] Used by both men and women; the politest pronoun; addressee is in the speaker's out-group and socially higher; used frequently in official conversations.

[5] Used by women and older men; can be used in almost every situation; if used by a younger man it expresses politeness; nowadays it tends to become a neutral female pronoun.

[6] Male pronoun used in almost every situation that doesn't imply rude or polite attitude; it tends to become neutral male pronoun.

[7] Male pronoun used when the addressee is in the speaker's in-group and socially lower or equal.

[8] Used by older men; it is old-fashioned and shows superiority in age.

the interlocutor – *anata[9]*, *kimi[10]*, *omae[11]* and so on (English equivalent 'you'); and, finally, those referring to a third person – *kare* ('he'), *kanojo* ('she'), etc.

The first example I will dwell on is: 「拙者は流浪人。あてのない旅の剣客でござるよ。」 (Watsuki 1994-1999, 10) – *Sessha wa rurōni. Ate no nai tabi no kenkaku degozaru yo*, translated into Romanian as 'Sunt un rătăcitor, un spadasin care călătorește fără țintă' (E. 'I am a wanderer, a swordsman on an aimless journey.'). The target language sentence does not provide a pragmatic equivalence since it does not maintain the relationship between the speech act and its sender.

The element of interest is the deictic *sessha*. According to the Daijisen dictionary, this term is a "personal noun in the first person, often used by samurai to refer to themselves in a humble way but can also be used in an arrogant manner."

In Romanian, there are two personal pronouns, the first person singular *eu* and *io*. In the following table, I indicate the information contained in the three deictic words:

Sessha	Eu	Io
common noun	personal pronoun	personal pronoun
1st person, singular	1st person, singular	1st person, singular
archaism	current, common use	demotic form
respectful register – humble politeness (attitude of inferiority of the sender to the receiver)	neutral register (equal relationship between interlocutors)	neutral register (equal relationship between interlocutors)
male speaker		
in *manga*, attributed to samurai		

The deictic reference used by the speaker of the source-language message contains more varied and partly different information from that expressed by the target-language equivalents. Despite being different parts of speech, all three variants refer to the first person singular. In the Romanian language, the speaker's gender, male or female, is referred to by adjective or participle agreement, as *eu* and *io* have no gender inflection (GALR 2008, 44). *Sessha* can be seen as a historical cultural term for which no relevant translation solution can be found to render the humble attitude of the male speaker, who is a samurai.

I believe that the comic strip author's insistence on phrasing almost all of Kenshin's utterances with this deictic has to do with the need to mark the character's identity in that episode. By translating into Romanian, the information on the identity of the speaker is lost.

[9] Nowadays, it is mostly a female pronoun; formerly it was considered rather polite.

[10] Nowadays, it is mostly a male pronoun; the addressee is in the speaker's in-group; expresses familiar attitude.

[11] Used by both men and women; it expresses a superior rude attitude.

The next example is also related to a deictic used by the main character. As mentioned above, the narrative thread follows the duality of Kenshin – Battōsai, a duality also expressed through the linguistic behaviour manifested. Thus, Kenshin's humble and conciliatory personality leads him to refer to himself using *sessha*, while Battōsai prefers the colloquial *ore*, more appropriate to his stoic and ruthless character.

In the Japanese phrase 「俺が殺すと言った以上、お前の死は絶対だ。」 (Watsuki 1994-1999, 94) – *Ore ga korosu to itta ijō, omae no shi wa zettai da*, in translation 'Din momentul în care am zis că o să te omor, moartea ta este un lucru sigur.' (E. 'Now that I've said I'll kill you, your death is certain.'), a change in the register and tone used by the character can be noticed. The air of superiority and harshness takes the place of modesty and kindness.

This time as well, I focus on the deictic word *ore*, which is defined in the Daijisen dictionary as a "personal noun in the first person; originally used by both men and women, but in modern times it is used only by men in relation to their peers or inferiors."

Ore	Eu	Io
common noun	personal pronoun	personal pronoun
1st person, singular	1st person, singular	1st person, singular
current, common use	current, common use	demotic form
colloquial register	neutral register	neutral register
male speaker		
evokes masculinity, superiority		

As can be seen from the table above, there are several points of equivalence between *ore* and *eu*, both being markers for the first person singular, in current language usage. The non-correspondence of the Romanian pronoun lies in the fact that it makes no reference to the masculinity or superiority of the speaker. The *manga's* author uses the differences in pragmatic meaning between *sessha* and *ore* to signal the shift from one identity to the other. This change of personality will go unnoticed by readers of the target text, regardless of whether the deictic word is translated or omitted from the translation.

The double personality of the main character is marked not only by the choice of the 1st person singular pronoun, but also by the appellatives used for the interlocutors. Here again the difference between people whom Kenshin considers close and worthy of respect is noticeable, in which case he will use the person's name followed by a polite suffix, and people whom the character despises. One of the appellatives used, along with a colloquial expression, in relation to negative characters is *omae*.

An example is the following: 「黒幕のお前はこの程度では済ませられんな」 (Watsuki 1994-1999, 50) – *Kuromaku no omae wa kono teido dewa sumaseraren na*, translated as ‚Nu te pot lăsa să scapi aşa uşor, pe tine, cel care ai tras sforile' (E. 'I can't let you, the mastermind, get away with this.').

Japanese *omae* is the equivalent of the Romanian 2nd person singular pronoun *tu*. It is interesting to note its evolution over time – from the register of honorific politeness to colloquial, pejorative expression. The Daijisen dictionary definition says, briefly, that the noun *omae* comes from the word *ōmae* (大前 *ō* – big, *mae* – in front), which was used as a sign of respect in the presence of gods, Buddha, and noblemen. Therefore, it originally appeared as an appellation for superiors, but from the late Modern Era it gradually came to be used for peers and those of lower status. Nowadays, it has a pejorative, derogatory connotation. Such a term demonstrates that there is no politeness outside of a well-defined context – Kenshin's use of the appellative *omae* could have positive connotations, given the era in which the action takes place, and yet it is used in a pejorative sense.

Depending on its role in the sentence, *omae* can be translated as *tu*, *tine*, *ţie*, *te*, etc. In the above example, *pe tine* is used to ensure equivalence, because in the Romanian sentence it plays the role of direct object, in the accusative case. In the source text, *omae wa* is the sentence topic, so an *ad litteram* translation would be *cât despre tine*, *în ceea ce te priveşte* (E. 'as for you', 'as far as you're concerned'). Whichever formulation is chosen, the problem remains the same – the target language version is neutral, having neither positive nor negative connotations in terms of the degree of politeness expressed towards the interlocutor.

The situation becomes even more complex when we shift our attention to the following examples which offer other items used for referring to the receiver – *onushi*, *kisama* – all part of the main character's usual vocabulary.

The following statement exemplifies the use of *onushi* to express a condescending attitude towards the conversation partner:「お主姿形はまだ子供だが心根は立派に一人前でござるな。」(Watsuki 1994-1999, 86) – *Onushi nari wa mada kodomo daga kokorone wa rippa ni ichininmae degozaruna*, in translation ‚Eşti încă un copil în aparenţă, dar eşti un bărbat în suflet, asta eşti.' (E. 'You may still be a child in appearance, but you are a man at heart, that you are.').

From an etymological perspective, *onushi* consists of a polite prefix *o* and a noun *nushi* which has the meaning of 'master', 'patron', 'ruler' etc. However, according to Daijisen, this second person singular personal noun began to be used in the Muromachi period (1333–1573) for persons of the same rank and lower rank for both men and women. In the *manga*, this appellative is used by Kenshin to show kindness and consideration towards people of lower status,

such as children. For the Romanian translation, I preferred to omit the personal pronoun 'tu', as it is implied in the lexical context. Including it in the utterance would have been redundant and would have had no valid pragmatic input.

Battōsai's talent in wielding the sword is also reflected in his speech acts, as he is sharp-tongued against those who offend him. One such example is the personal noun *kisama*, used in contexts such as「刃衛貴様ア！！」(Watsuki 1994-1999, 62) – *Jin'e kisamaa*!! ,Jin'e, tu!!!' (E. 'Jin'e, you!!!'). Compared to Kenshin, Battōsai shows excessive harshness in expression, *kisama* being an insulting word for the receiver. This appellation underwent the same evolution as *omae*, originally expressing respect for a superior person. However, since the late Modern Period it has received the same meaning as today: the rudest male pronoun that expresses an unfriendly attitude. Again, a translation into Romanian by the personal pronoun *tu* is unsatisfactory from a pragmatic perspective.

The last example of an appellative word used by our hero is *gojin*, a term of respect for a third person. For the statement「そう言えば、あの御仁確かこの間も居たかと...」(Watsuki 1994-1999, 25) – *Sō ieba, ano gojin tashika kono aida mo ita ka to...* which I translate as 'Apropo, cred că dumnealui a fost aici zilele trecute...' (E. 'By the way, I think that man was here the other day...').

In the present context, I consider that there is an optimal pragmatic equivalence between the Japanese word *gojin* and the personal pronoun of politeness *dumnealui*. The person designated by this appellative is a male person, older than the sender and the relationship between the two is neutral. This information is successfully conveyed by both the term used in the source text and its Romanian equivalent.

Conclusions

In Japan, *manga* magazines can be a joy and an escape from the real world for both children and adults. The *Skopos* of comics translation should be transfer the intended pragmatic message through translation towards offering the same joy to foreign audiences.

Best reflected by the characters of this culture that emerge through *manga*, the concept of *yakuwarigo* ('words assigned to a specific role') demonstrates the complexity and expressiveness of Japanese language and culture. Viewed from a translation perspective, it represents a problem of adaptation and compromise, as the transfer into another language can lead to a loss of pragmatic meaning.

From a pragmatic point of view, the examples under discussion were examined in terms of the comic strip author's intention, the split personality of the main character and the transfer of the implicature from the source language

to the target language. The Romanian translations made by the author of this study had as *skopos* finding a pragmatic equivalence, so that it would be possible to convey the implicatures of the source text. However, the linguistic analysis revealed differences in the pragmatic message recreated in the target language sentences. In most cases, information about the identity of the interlocutors was compromised. For example, using the personal pronoun *eu* (E. 'I') as an equivalent to *watakushi*, *watashi*, *boku*, *ore*, *sessha*, etc., shows inevitable loss in translation.

Based on the linguistic analysis conducted, I would conclude that rendering the pragmatic message of humility of the sender poses many challenges, as it is a characteristic of Japanese strategies of politeness and does not find equivalence in the Romanian culture and language. However, it is possible to convey the respectful attitude towards the interlocutor or a third person since both the source and the target language have developed grammatical and lexical systems to show receiver-oriented politeness.

The losses suffered at the pragmatic level through the translation into Romanian could not be eliminated, making it impossible to achieve the initial aim of conveying the pragmatic message intended by the author of the source text in a linguistically and culturally acceptable manner to the target audience. Despite the pragmatic losses suffered through translation, *manga* characters continue to be brought to life not only by Japanese readers but also by international audiences. Reading comics does not rely solely on the linguistic mode. The linguistic elements aided by the visual narrative that contribute to the formation of the multimodal message create a source of entertainment that appeals to a wide variety of readers.

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