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IS TRANSLATION A MEANS OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION?

Vadim V. Sdobnikov

Linguistics University of Nizhny Novgorod, Nizhny Novgorod, Russia

Abstract. The paper disputes the concept of "translation as cross-cultural communication". Anthropological turn in Translation Studies resulted in the emergence of the communicative-functional approach to translation which dictates the need to reconsider this most popular concept. Examples of translation events are considered from the perspective of this approach to prove that the actors (source text sender, target text recipient and translator) rarely communicate directly or indirectly. The only objective reality accessible to them is the texts in two languages; these texts serve as instruments of substantive activity performed by each of the actors. In many cases the purpose of translation differs from the purpose of the Source Text (ST) Sender, which makes communication between the ST Sender and the Target Text (TT) Recipient impossible. The translator's principal task is to create a text in the target language that would be useful for the TT Recipients activity. The principal purpose of the TT Recipient is to receive information which could be used successfully in his or her substantive activity. Actors in a translation event deal only with texts, not with each other (except in situations of oral communication in which interpretation is performed). Thus, "translation as cross-cultural communication" is a metaphor used to substitute the wish for the reality. The concept does not fit the mere definition of communication seen as giving information or exchange of information.

Key words: translation, types of translation, communication actors, cross-cultural communication, communicative-functional approach, communicative situation, translation event, purpose of translation.

ЯВЛЯЕТСЯ ЛИ ПЕРЕВОД СРЕДСТВОМ ОБЕСПЕЧЕНИЯ МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОЙ КОММУНИКАЦИИ?

Вадим Витальевич Сдобников

Нижегородский государственный лингвистический университет им. Н.А. Добролюбова,
г. Нижний Новгород, Россия

Аннотация. В статье подвергается сомнению представление о переводе как виде межкультурной коммуникации или способе обеспечить межкультурную коммуникацию. Показано, что антропологический поворот в переводоведении привел к появлению коммуникативно-функционального подхода, который диктует необходимость пересмотреть это популярное представление. Примеры «переводческих событий», в которых используется перевод, рассмотренные с точки зрения коммуникативно-функционального подхода, свидетельствуют о том, что участники коммуникативного акта (автор оригинала, получатель перевода и переводчик) редко вступают в непосредственную или опосредованную коммуникацию друг с другом. Единственная объективная реальность, доступная им, – это текст, выступающий в качестве инструмента осуществления ими предметной деятельности. Во многих случаях цель перевода не совпадает с целью создания оригинала, что делает коммуникацию между автором оригинала и получателем перевода в принципе невозможной. Основная задача переводчика – создать текст, который был бы полезен получателю в рамках осуществляемой им деятельности. Основная цель получателя перевода – извлечь из текста информацию, полезную

для осуществления предметной деятельности. Участники коммуникативного акта имеют дело, прежде всего, с текстами и не общаются друг с другом (за исключением ситуаций устного перевода). Утверждение «перевод – вид межкультурной коммуникации» – только метафора, используемая для того, чтобы выдать желаемое за действительное. Оно не соответствует определению коммуникации, понимаемой как предоставление информации или обмен информацией.

Ключевые слова: перевод, виды перевода, участники коммуникативного акта, межкультурная коммуникация, коммуникативно-функциональный подход, коммуникативная ситуация, переводческое событие, цель перевода.

Introduction

Translation Studies have seen dramatic changes in approaches to investigating the phenomenon of translating, and reconsideration of the overall paradigm of research. The purely linguistic approach to translation which is seen by many scholars as "a milestone in the development of translation theories" [Yan, Huang, 2014, p. 489] was enriched by functionalist approach. Different from the linguistic approach, the functionalist approach attached more importance to the function but not the language equivalence [Yan, Huang, 2014, p. 489]. Yet another milestone was the so called "cultural turn" in Translation Studies [Snell-Hornby, 2006] which paved the way to the Scopos theory of Hans Vermeer and Katarina Reiß [Nord, 2002, p. 33–34; Nord, 2007; Reiß, Vermeer, 2013]. The list of "turns" in Translation Studies would be incomplete if I do not mention Descriptive Translation Studies [Snell-Hornby, 2006, p. 47–50] and a "performative turn" [Wolf, 2017]. I do not intend to consider each approach in detail; all the more so as the literature on the approaches to translation and the overall development of Translation Studies is abundant. What matters the most is the change in the general perception of translation as an activity.

The change can be illustrated with examples of definitions of translation provided by various scholars. Peter Newmark is right to say that "there is no one classical basic text that defines translation" [Newmark, 2003, p. 55], yet he believes that we can do with the following definition: translation is "taking the meaning from one text and integrating it into another language for a new and sometimes different readership" [Newmark, 2003, p. 55]. Obviously, this standpoint is deeply rooted in the purely linguistic approach to translation. The same is true for the definition offered by Juliane House: "translation is a process of replacing a text in one language by a text in another" [House, 2013, p. 4]. At the same time, a wider approach allows her to "see translation as a service; it serves a need human beings apparently have to transcend the world to which their own particular languages confine them" [House, 2013, p. 3]. J. House says nothing about more practical needs of people who use translation in their everyday or professional lives, but it is clear that translation scholars are still in the grip of opposite – linguistic and functionalist – approaches, at least when it comes to defining translation in general. Translation is viewed either as a substitution of a text in one language by a text in another or as a translator's verbal activity that serves the needs of the target text user in a certain communicative situation (see, for example [Sdobnikov, 2015, p. 46–47]).

Strange as it might seem, different approaches to investigating translation have not resulted in any drastic reconsideration of one assumption that seems common, if not universal, for all translation schools. I mean the widespread belief that translation is a means of cross-cultural communication. In this regard the statement by Juliane House is most illustrative: "Translations mediate between languages, societies, and literatures, and it is through translations that linguistic and cultural barriers may be overcome" [House, 2013, p. 3]. Sonia Vandepitte states explicitly: "There is no question in translation studies that translation is an act of human communication... Since an important characteristic of translation is the fact that the source and target discourses usually belong to different cultures, the translation activity is also a intercultural process" [Vandepitte, 2008, p. 570]. The statement is axiomatic in Translation Studies, and it seems there is no reason

to doubt it. Yet, the mere development of Translation Studies that has resulted in the emergence of functionalist approach (communicative-functional approach in Russian Translation Studies) forces us to reconsider some basic concepts of the science of translating, and the idea that translation is cross-cultural communication is among them. Thus, the aim of this paper is to substantiate another idea: translation activity is not always a means of cross-cultural communication.

Translation and cross-cultural communication: an overview. As it has been mentioned above, translation is commonly seen as a means of cross-cultural communication or even as cross-cultural (intercultural) communication *per se* in Western, Eastern and Russian Translation Studies. Vilen Komissarov argued that cross-cultural communication performed through translation reproduces the process of direct verbal communication where communicators use the same language [Komissarov, 1990, p. 43]. It follows that communication through translation is most similar to one-language communication, and a translator serves as a mediator who ensures unhampered interaction between people who speak different languages. Later, this idea was voiced by Slavic scholars. For example, H. Kuzenko stated that "translation as a type of mediation is a means not only of interlingual but also of intercultural communication. Serving as a means of communication between peoples of various ethnic groups, translation is a means of interlingual and intercultural communication" [Kuzenko, 2017, p. 40].

David Katan, referring, certainly, to conditions in the Western Translation Studies, states that "the idea that translation should be considered a form of 'intercultural mediation' (IM) has been popularised in academic circles ever since the 'cultural turn' of the 1980s" [Katan, 2016, p. 365]. According to Daniel Dejica, "...phrases like 'raising cultural awareness', 'translating across cultures' or 'cultural proficiency' have become common in translating and interpreting" [Dejica, 2013, p.15]. He argues: "In my approach to translation, I see translators as mediators who are working with different languages and who invariably... continually absorb elements from different cultures" [Dejica, 2009, p. 41]. Apparently, Dejica shares the view of

B. Hatim and I. Mason who suggested that "the notion of mediation is a useful way of looking at translators decisions regarding the transfer of intertextual reference" [Hatim, Mason, 1997, p. 128].

It is obvious that the most common terms – and the terms that seem to be indispensible in considering translation issues – are "mediation" and "mediator". Mona Baker states as follows: "mediation would be the same as reporting what someone else has said or written, in the same or another language, in speech or in writing" [Baker, 2008, p. 15]. The premise is significant; it implies that communication is possible when the content of a text becomes known, understandable and – as the case might be – useful to the text's recipient. The important point is that, in the case of translation, it takes effort to solve the task of making the text understandable and, thus, useful. The reason is evident: cultures are different from one another. Evgeniia Erenchinova and Natalia Chumanova refer to E.T. Hall who "noticed that misunderstanding arose not through language but through other, 'silent', 'hidden' or 'unconscious' yet patterned factors. In short, cultural differences" [Erenchinova, Chumanova, 2018, p. 117–118]. Hence, close attention is paid to culture-specific elements which are embodied in a source text and which require additional effort on the part of any translator. Apparently, due to it abundant research is devoted to ways of rendering culture-specific elements, in a broader sense – to ways of overcoming barriers between cultures resulting from the use of such elements in a source text. Examples are numerous (see: [Dejica, 2009, p. 43–45; Glodjović, 2010]). The research resulted in classifications of elements that potentially can make it difficult for the target-text recipient to understand the text. Brake et al. used Iceberg Theory to demonstrate that the most important part of any culture is hidden. They argued that laws, customs, rituals, gestures, ways of dressing, food and drink and methods of greeting, and saying goodbye are all part of the culture, but they are just the tip of the iceberg. "The most powerful elements of culture are those which lie beneath the surface of everyday interaction. We call these value orientations. Value orientations are preferences for certain outcomes over others" [Brake, Medina-Walker, Walker, 1995, p. 34–39]. The presence of culture-specific elements in the source text implies that a translator is expected

to be an expert in the source culture and in the target culture to be able to bridge the gap between them and to serve the task of cultural mediator in cross-cultural communication.

Regardless of the paradigm used by translation scholars, the approaches to considering relations between culture and translation are similar. They differ mostly in the depth of consideration and the angle at which the problem is investigated, and result in almost the same conclusions. Communicative-functional approach to translation suggests entirely different vision of the role of translation in the interaction of ethnicities.

Foundations of communicative-functional approach. Communicative-functional approach did not start from scratch in the 1980s. Its emergence was due to still another "turn" in Translation Studies which I would call "anthropological turn", when translation scholars began to pay attention to human beings who use translations for certain purposes. It is rooted in previous theories that had paved the way to its development. Among the precursors of communicative-functional approach I should mention Eugene Nida who voiced the idea that target text (TT) must evoke a certain reaction from its recipients [Nida, 1964]. The closer the reaction is to that of the source text recipients the better translation is. Actually, the correspondence of the reaction of the TT Recipient to the reaction of the source text (ST) Recipient is a prerequisite of the dynamic equivalence of the two texts. At the same time, the reaction of the TT Recipient must conform to the intention of the ST Sender.

Nida's ideas laid foundation for the theory of Alexander Schweizer, a Russian linguist and translation scholar, who specified three most important parameters of the situation in which translation is performed, namely: the communicative intention of the ST Sender, the functional parameters of the text, the communicative effect produced by the text [Schweizer, 1988]. Obviously, the focus is on the participants of the communicative situation: we can hardly speak of any intention or communicative effect if there are no humans who have the intention or experience some influence of the text; moreover, a text can function only when it is perceived by humans, not in a vacuum.

Schweizer's theory implies consideration of the communicative situation in which translation is performed. But the list of the situation components specified by Schweizer is incomplete: it does not comprise a parameter which was included into the scheme of the act of communication by Evgeny Sidorov [Sidorov, 2008; Sidorov, 2010]. I mean the activities performed by the communication actors. It is the activities that trigger communication between people, therefore, they are of vital importance. To perform them, people want their needs to be satisfied, and the needs can be satisfied only through communication, in our case – through interlingual communication. Unlike Schweizer's model, Scopos theory is devoid of this drawback. It is based on the assumption that translation is performed only when there is a need in it; therefore, the purpose of translation dictates what the translator does to achieve it. In other words, "the end justifies the means".

Taking into account the ideas of Western and Russian precursors of the communicative-functional approach, I formulated its foundations [Sdobnikov, 2015, p. 40–47].

Communicative-functional approach implies consideration of a translation event in a certain, frequently imaginary, supposed, yet realistic environment within which this event happens or *may* happen. The term "environment" may be replaced by the more traditional and specific concept of "communicative situation". It implies an interaction of human beings. As I have already noted people interact only when they need to or have to. The necessity to interact arises when any substantive work performed by people cannot be done unless they communicate. It is self-evident that a translator is supposed to take into consideration the aims with which they get engaged into the communication process, the needs and requirements of their substantive work, possible or definite ways in which they will use the target text. Edwin Gentzler states that "...a client who hires a translator has specific goals that need consideration; the receiving audience has certain expectations that need to be addressed; translation is a form of action, a communicative interaction" [Gentzler, 2001]. Only after the translator has realized the needs and expectations of the target audience, he/she is able to understand and formulate the purpose of translation.

The notion of the purpose of translation is widely discussed and even widely disputed by

many translation scholars. Those who admit the relevance of the notion offer various definitions of the purpose of translation, according to the approach they use. The main purpose of translation is not to simply produce a text that would be acknowledged as equivalent to the ST by an idle outsider who is capable of comparing the TT to the ST. It is noteworthy that in real life a translation is rarely assessed by professional critics or by those who pretend to be "critics". It is communication actors who eagerly or reluctantly assess the translation in terms of its usefulness for the activities they perform. It is not incidental at all that Christiane Nord emphatically titled her book as "Translating as a Purposeful Activity" [Nord, 2007]. Thus, generally speaking, the genuine purpose of translation is to produce a text that would be instrumental in the activities performed by its end users.

Consequently, translation must be viewed as the instrument of any substantive work being done by communication actors. As Raviddin Shamilov argues: "The TT user not only receives, reads and perceives the TT but, figuratively speaking, consumes the information contained in it. The result of such consumption is that the knowledge acquired due to the information received is used in practice" [Shamilov, 2015, p. 112]. It follows that in a professional setting, a translation event is always triggered by some aim or intention. But the question arises: whose intention is it? It seems that it is the intention of the communication actors that triggers a translation event, which is not always true. The personality of another actor is most essential in our considerations, and the actor is the initiator, or commissioner, of translation. As Edwin Gentzler points out, it may be a person, a group, or an institution whose goals or aims may be different from those of the source-text author, the target-text receiver, and the translator [Gentzler, 2001]. It is always he (or, maybe, *it*, in case of some institution) who defines the character of the translation setting, the purpose of translation and, ultimately, determines the translation strategy.

It is noteworthy that in real-life situations the purpose of translation may differ from that of the source text. From this it follows that the communicative effects produced by the ST and the TT, i.e. impacts made on their respective audiences, can differ too, though in the traditional

Translation Studies the following requirement is presented as a fundamental truth, as an axiom: communicative effects produced by the ST and the TT must coincide in nature. But we shall see that in some situations it is not required and even can be impossible.

Results and Discussion

Using the provisions of the communicative-functional approach I shall try to answer the question: is translation a form or a means of cross-cultural communication?

But first, let us address the mere notion of communication. Macmillan Dictionary defines it as "the process of giving information or of making emotions or ideas known to someone; the process of speaking or writing to someone to exchange information or ideas" (Macmillan Dictionary, p. 277). From the definition it follows that communication is *direct* or *indirect* interaction of people with the aim of sharing information or ideas; in other cases it implies exchange of information. In any case, a message produced to share or exchange information is *addressed* to a *certain* recipient.

Another notion that needs to be clarified is that of "cross-cultural communication". Evgeny Vereshchagin and Vladimir Kostomarov define cross-cultural communication as "adequate mutual understanding between two actors in the act of communication who belong to different national cultures" [Vereshchagin, Kostomarov, 1990, p. 26]. The definition implies that two (or more) actors belonging to different cultures communicate intentionally, apparently, to exchange information.

If we accept these definitions as universal truth, the traditional belief that translation is a form of cross-cultural communication becomes even more doubtful. My doubts are aroused when I consider closely the communicative situations in which various types of translation are performed.

Initially, the science of translation was focused on literary translation and translation of religious texts. From the perspective of the literary translation recipient, the translation is an instrument of his or her recreational activity, a means of aesthetic satisfaction. We can speak *ad infinitum* about the need to ensure the effect expected by the ST author, to make sure that the author's intention is realized, the need to reproduce

the stylistic peculiarities of the text and the peculiarities of the author's individual style, to familiarize the TT audience with the author's art in general through loyal translation (and we hope that it does happen in reality). But does communication really happen between the ST Sender and the TT Recipient, for example, between the translation reader and William Shakespeare? One might say that what happens is indirect communication between the author and the TT Recipient. But I view this assumption as an attempt to present the act of translation as an act of spirit rapping. For no exchange of information (see above definitions) happens in this case. The readers (both ST readers and TT recipients) communicate with the texts, and only with the texts, trying to realize what message has been encoded in the text by its creator and, ultimately, to experience aesthetic effect.

Now let us consider situations of specialized translation. They are utterly diverse, and include, for example, scientific and technical translation (translation of scientific works, manuals, technical documentation, official documentation, just to mention the few). The only thing the TT Recipient needs is information about the author's views on a scientific problem or about scientific achievements or, in other cases, about the rules of equipment maintenance, the terms of commercial deals, etc. But it is true with one reservation: in case of commercial (or any other) correspondence, translation is really a means of communication between the ST Sender and the TT Recipient and vice versa because here we have not only perception of information extracted from the text and its further use in practical activities but direct exchange of information. But in case of a commercial contract or an international agreement, communication is nil: the function of such a document is to fix what the parties to the contract or agreement have agreed to, to contain legal grounds for further actions which can be performed by the parties independently (e.g., the seller dispatches the goods, the buyer makes payment).

Recently, researchers have paid a lot of attention to peculiarities of audiovisual translation (AVT). The same question arises: do movie viewers or gamers, as the case might be, communicate with those who have created the products? Certainly, not. They just use the products for their own purposes. (In passing, I shall note that the purposes of those who create movies or computer games and those who use the products are different: the former perform their commercial activity while the latter perform recreational activity. And, again, no *exchange* of information happens).

More complicated are situations in which publicistic materials or advertisements of various kinds are translated. They can be characterized as dual-purpose materials: their function is both to share information and to produce some emotional effect on recipients. In case of translating advertisements, the second function is of paramount importance. It is noteworthy that the advertiser does take into account the peculiarities of the target audience, i.e. of the TT Recipients, intending to involve them in some activity, meanwhile the TT Recipients deal only with the target texts and do not see advertisers behinds them. Again, no communication happens.

The situation of translating publicistic materials is still more complicated. As a rule, a publicistic text is created in the environment of a specific culture and is addressed to those who belong to this specific culture. While the author intends to produce a certain effect on his or her audience, translation is aimed to inform representatives of another culture about the author's views and position, about events in the political, social, economic life of the author's home country, or to make sure that consumers of translation (journalists, political scientists, economists, human rights activists, ecologists, etc.) would be able to use the information extracted from the TT for their own purposes which always differ from the purpose of the ST Sender. We may admit that when the US President tweets or speaks to the public he does communicate with his compatriots. But no real communication happens between him and people from other countries when his speeches are translated into other languages. The more so as the US President *intends* to address *his compatriots* and does not address Russians or residents of other countries, as the case might be.

And here we've come to a very important issue: a purpose of translation can differ dramatically from a purpose of the source text (ST). Translation can be consumed and used in the way that is not foreseen by the ST Sender,

within the framework of utterly different substantive activity. Mikhail Zwilling termed such cases as "tertiary translation", i.e. translation in the interests of third persons, and illustrated it with a very interesting example: "It would be utterly absurd to treat as interlocutors a resident of the foreign intelligence service who gives instructions to his agent and an officer of the home intelligence service who is bugging or tapping their conversation" [Zwilling, 2009, p. 83]. In his opinion (which I share), in such cases translation is not integrated into the act of communication; it is an independent activity aimed at extracting information from the communication between the partners in the interests of the outside observer who does not take part in the communication [Zwilling, 2009, p. 83]. There is no question that the TT Recipient does not communicate with the ST Sender when tertiary translation is performed. Even in the case of communicatively equivalent translation, e.g. literary translation, one should bear in mind that at the moment when the ST was being created no one intended to translate it. Indeed, William Shakespeare could hardly dream of his plays being translated into other languages, and, certainly, never thought about people who would read his plays in other countries and in other languages many centuries after his death.

Another situation occurs when people who speak different languages meet at the same time and in the same place to perform some common activity. The success of their activity is dependent on the mediation of the interpreter who assists them. Thus, I should admit that oral interpretation is the only type of translation activity which presupposes and is aimed at establishing communication, whereas the texts uttered by the interlocutors and the interpreter are instruments of communication.

But let us come back to culture-specific elements used in texts. Usually, after mentioning that translation is a clash of two cultures, translation scholars write a lot about classifications of culture-specific elements (realia, proverbs, culture-specific metaphors, etc.) and methods of rendering them into another language. I think that what they discuss comes down to solving purely technical problems, and in this respect not much has been achieved since S. Vlahov and S. Florin published their book "Untranslatable in

Translation" [Vlakhov, Florin, 1980]. After all, the overall goal of using the methods of rendering culture-specific elements is to give the TT Recipient an opportunity to fully comprehend the text, i.e. to extract the information required for performing some substantive activity. Certainly, the TT Recipient is expected to understand peculiarities of the source culture, to understand why personages of a book of fiction act in the way they act, what the ST Sender refers to in his or her publicistic article, what are the characteristics of the social institutions in the country where the ST was produced, i.e. the TT Recipient is expected to fit the situation described in the text into the "reference frame" of the source culture. At the same time, the TT Recipient remains an outside observer of what is being narrated in the text; he or she creates some vivid "pictures", or images, in his mind, follows closely the events described but does not communicated with the ST Sender, i.e. the creator of the "pictures".

The above considerations push me to reconsider the ideas I (as well as many other translation scholars) previously had concerning the notion of "communicative situation" in relation to translation. The notion implies communication between people but, as we saw, real communication, i.e. exchange of information, rarely happens when translation is made. Thus, the term "translation event" seems to be more appropriate as it means a combination of activities performed by the ST Sender, the TT Recipient and the translator. Most often, these activities are time-spaced, which means that they do not coincide in time and space, and, therefore, no communication is possible. Taking into account such factors as time and space, one might say that the notion of translation event is not convenient either (Macmillan English Dictionary defines "event" as "something that happens, especially something that involves several people" (Macmillan Dictionary, 2006, p. 472)). The qualifier "especially" does not change radically the meaning of the word since it implies that an event does not obligatory involve several people. Thus, the term can be used to describe more realistically what happens when translation is made, for it implies the real distribution of activities of individuals in time and space and relations between them.

Conclusion

The above provisions and examples allow me to conclude that in all cases the translator deals primarily with texts in the source language. In this, he or she performs a dual role: on the one hand, the translator analyzes the ST to comprehend the author's communicative intention and to specify the linguistic means employed to implement this intention; on the other hand, he or she takes into account the purpose of translation, the needs and expectations of the prospective TT consumers, the conditions in which the TT would be used. All this allows the translator to choose the way (strategy) in which the text would be translated. Moreover, the analysis results in the understanding whether the purpose of translation correspond to the purpose of the ST. Performing his/her activity, the translator rarely communicates with the ST Sender directly or indirectly. In the majority of cases, the TT Recipients do not communicate with the ST Sender either, not even think of or remember the ST Sender. In cases when the purpose of translation differs from that of the source text, communication between the TT Recipient and the ST Sender is utterly impossible: addressing the text with different purposes, they can hardly be united in a common activity.

The only objective reality accessible to the translator, the ST Sender and the TT Recipient is the texts – perceived, analyzed or produced. The TT Recipients deal only with the texts performing their substantive activity, and it is the outcomes of translator's activity which determine whether the TT Recipients activity would be successful.

It means that "translation as cross-cultural communication" is a metaphor used to substitute the wish for the reality. As any metaphor, or a "hidden comparison", it implies some likeness, or similarity, between the situations of a single-language communication and situations of using two languages. In reality, these two types of situations can hardly be compared, for they are entirely different in nature: while situations of using one language may be treated as acts of communication, situations with the use of translation do not fit the commonly accepted definition of communication as exchange of information. Thus, the view according to which translation is a means of cross-cultural communication does not fit the reality of translator profession; or, maybe, the reality does not fit Translation Study concepts?

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Information About the Author

Vadim V. Sdobnikov, Doctor of Sciences (Philology), Associate Professor, Head of the Department of English Language and Translation, Linguistics University of Nizhny Novgorod, Minina St, 31A, 603155 Nizhny Novgorod, artist232@rambler.ru, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4717-2980

Информация об авторе

Вадим Витальевич Сдобников, доктор филологических наук, доцент, заведующий кафедрой теории и практики английского языка и перевода, Нижегородский государственный лингвистический университет им. Н.А. Добролюбова, ул. Минина, 31А, 603155 г. Нижний Новгород, Россия, artist232@rambler.ru, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4717-2980