

I. ROZPRAWY I ANALIZY

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Exploring the dimensions of linguistic worldview in translation education

Eksplorowanie wymiarów językowego obrazu świata w dydaktyce przekładu

Abstract: The article considers the application of the concept of linguistic worldview in translation education at the university level from the perspectives of both the teacher and the students. Special attention is paid to those dimensions of translation that linguistic worldview can help elucidate, and thus help to formulate a strategic approach that balances creativity with awareness of the cultural specificity of the source material. By treating the source text as an expression of a specific linguistic worldview, students can gain increasingly more sensitivity to intercultural and pragmatic aspects of translation, and thus build their cultural competences, as well as confidence in approaching subsequent tasks. The research material was inspired by translations prepared by students pursuing their bachelor's degree in translation, as well as feedback obtained from them on completion of their first year of specialised translation programme. The latter includes a course in intercultural pragmatics and an introduction to translation. This study examines how approaching translation as the reconstruction of a linguistic worldview can provide young translators with a deeper insight into the texts they translate, guide them towards a coherent approach to the translation process, and thus help them find a balance between creativity and fidelity to the original text.

Keywords: linguistic worldview; intercultural pragmatics; translation education; creativity in translation; translation strategy

Introduction

For students in their first year of the translation programme, knowledge of translation has not yet been established. Although BA students at the

Institute of English Studies at the University of the National Education Commission in Krakow choose their specialisation in their second year, when they can already use English at an advanced level, the theory and practice of translation is for them just a blank slate. At the outset, the majority treat translation mechanically, simply as transferring a source text into the target language word by word, as evidenced by their very first translations and comments – only after that do they experience their first moments of reflection and initial attempts to take account of context. As a translation teacher, I have witnessed this process for years, discreetly providing some hints, the relevant contexts, and the first essential elements of translation theory, thus accompanying students on their first steps. Despite a relatively constant repertoire of source texts in the translation courses I teach, each year I am surprised by new translational solutions proposed by new students, especially when I consider them in the light of the concept of linguistic worldview, an approach that links all components of those courses.

This article aims to present selected elements of this process, including the perspective of the students, not just the teacher. What emerges from these experiences is the image of translation as a tool for building not only practical language-related skills but also a broader understanding of how languages and texts are embedded in cultures and worldviews, as well as how to balance creativity with faithfulness to the original text. Apart from greater linguistic sensitivity, the young translators-to-be begin to build confidence in undertaking subsequent translation tasks as they learn to look at texts as reflections of worldviews and the process of translation as the reconstruction of linguistic worldviews.

The background

According to Adam Głaz, linguistic worldview can be “approached from the perspective of translation as a process and translations as texts”, which he describes as a “relatively new” direction (2019: 2). He indicates that “the problems that translation both reveals and brings with it lie at the heart of the linguistic worldview research” (2022: 41). Among the (few) other researchers who address the topic of translation from this linguacultural viewpoint are, for example, David S. Danaher (2013), Agnieszka Gicala (2014; 2015; 2018a; 2018b/2021) and Anna Wyrwa (2025). Danaher, in his *Foreword* to the volume *Languages–Cultures–Worldviews. Focus on Translation* (ed. by Adam Głaz), views “translation as an operation performed not on languages *per se*, but rather on worldviews that inform those

languages” (2019: vi). In her monograph (2018b/2021), Gicala proposes a model of literary text translation as the reconstruction of a source-text’s non-standard linguistic worldview.

In translation education at the university level, the concept of linguistic worldview has been introduced and tested in the classroom by Agnieszka Gicala (e.g. 2024) as well as Anna Dąbrowska and Agnieszka Gicala (2025). Its importance in teaching translation, especially at the stage of translation post-editing as well as in source and target text analyses, is described by Anna Wyrwa (2025). However, to the best of my knowledge, these are just isolated attempts, designed in the form of translation courses by these individual teachers, rather than elements of a systematic approach that would have its official place in any university curriculum. Interestingly, the role of linguistic worldview has been recognised in related domains, one of which is foreign language teaching, where it is investigated by Romualda Piętkowa (e.g. 2007), while another is teaching the Polish language and culture in secondary education in Poland (cf. e.g. “Językowy obraz świata”, n.d.; Wierzbicka-Piotrowska 2015; Udzik 2023).

The research material and methodological foundations

The research material analysed in this article comes from two courses that are part of the translation specialisation at the BA level, offered at the Institute of English Studies, the University of the National Education Commission in Krakow: *Intercultural Pragmatics for Translators* (which I teach in the first semester) and *Introduction to Translation* (the first and second semester, of which I teach the latter). For the last few years, the number of students – participants in this specialisation – has ranged approximately from sixty to one hundred, providing me as their teacher with many opportunities to observe some regularities in how the students work. Only in the last academic year did I ask them for feedback at the end of the academic year, i.e. upon completion of both courses. The material for this study comes from the last academic year (when there were approx. eighty participants in the first year of the translation specialisation). It includes selected translation tasks and results of their discussion in class, as well as the students’ final reflections. Each exercise is designed to take up one meeting (90 minutes long) so as not to delay its completion, discussion or summary to the next class. Students are usually free to choose to either do a task individually or in pairs or small groups, in accordance with their different personalities and preferences.

The sequence of translation theory elements – with linguistic worldview as their “binding agent” – is designed to gradually build and enrich the basic toolkit necessary for translators-to-be to grasp the entire task (as much as possible at this early stage in their translation education) from general to specific details (cf. e.g. Hall 1989 [1976]; Munday 2006). The aim is to help young translators become more and more aware of the cultural grounding of a source text and develop a range of solutions at their disposal. The concept of linguistic worldview is introduced gradually; it is intended to serve as an umbrella term encompassing the various angles of the source material and thus throwing light on the subsequent translation tasks. With this “equipment”, a beginning translator can become more confident in their attempts at experimenting, i.e. applying a certain amount of creativity and relying on intuition.

In order to pave the way to the concept of linguistic worldview as a guideline in translation, the course *Intercultural Pragmatics for Translators* first makes future translators aware of the cultural and situational contexts in which texts are embedded. The initial step is to define the terms present in the course title, i.e. pragmatics, culture, and translation, and to encourage the participants to examine different perspectives on the phenomena being defined. The definition of pragmatics adopted for the purposes of the course follows Mona Baker’s concise formulation as “the study of language in use [and] the study of meaning, not as generated by the linguistic system but as conveyed and manipulated by participants in a communicative situation” (Baker 1992: 217). Moreover, the students are made familiar with several approaches to the concept of culture, with particular attention paid to the model of culture as an iceberg proposed by Edward T. Hall (Hall 1952 and 1989 [1976]), and its adaptation in the field of Translation Studies by David Katan (Katan 2009), who wove into this model the role of the translator as a mediator in intercultural communication, also discussing the concepts of context as well as cultural (and other) filters. The cultural iceberg model makes it possible to view the text itself as the tip of the iceberg, while what lies “underneath”, or “below the surface”, are culture-bound norms, customs and traditions, and even deeper – the unquestioned assumptions of people as members of a given culture: their mentalities, presuppositions, and core values.

As the iceberg model of culture corresponds in meaningful ways with the concepts of linguistic relativism and linguistic worldview, the students are made familiar with these concepts and their history, starting with the ideas of Wilhelm von Humboldt (1999), Edward Sapir (1929) and Benjamin Lee Whorf (1956). This leads to current approaches, *inter alia* those proposed

by Anna Wierzbicka (1997), Renata Grzegorzczkova (2008) and Jerzy Bartmiński (2006, 2012 [2009]). What is then adopted as the working definition of linguistic worldview to be applied in translation practice is the definition proposed by Bartmiński as “the interpretation of reality encoded in a given language” as either “entrenched” in it or “implied” by its various forms (Bartmiński 2012 [2009]: 76), and situated in the context of translation, understood as a reconstruction of that worldview (Gicala 2021).

Following the above definition, the students are encouraged to treat each text that they translate as a “window” to a given worldview, which can be considered in relation to the three levels of the iceberg. Texts are linguistic records of worldviews; they carry linguistic images – or interpretations – of reality, captured by their authors as individuals and, at the same time, as members of their cultures. Texts are bound by linguistic and extralinguistic norms and display various degrees of objectivity and subjectivity. The task of the translator is to recognise and reconstruct those images in meaningful ways.

These theoretical foundations of the course are therefore followed by practical guidelines of either domestication or foreignization of the source text – the two translation tendencies, or strategies, described by Lawrence Venuti (1995). Following Maria Piotrowska’s two-stage model of the translation process (cf. e.g. Piotrowska 2016), strategies are understood as global decisions taken at the very beginning of the translation process, and concerning the translation task as a whole. Applied in the subsequent stage, (ideally) as consequences of the selected strategy, translation procedures/techniques are local decisions, concerning specific translation challenges. The students learn that, for their translation to be consistent, their global decision should guide the specific treatment of all, or most, individual points in the translated text, so as to show the target reader a coherent textual image (or: linguistic worldview).

The lower-level solutions applied to deal with local culture-specific problems in a text come from the classification by Krzysztof Hejwowski (2015), who recommends nine translation techniques based on his critical evaluation of previous, widely known methods, proposed *inter alia* by Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet (2000), Peter Newmark (1988), as well as Sándor Hervey and Ian Higgins (1992). Hejwowski’s solutions range from those representing extreme foreignisation of the translated text (the technique of ‘pure transfer’) to domesticating ones (e.g. using functional equivalents). Besides, his classification includes: syntagmatic translation (i.e. literal translation of a phrase or longer passage); established equivalent (the already existing equivalent in the target culture, such as a proper name); descriptive translation (a description of a culture-specific item under

consideration); explicitation (disambiguation of figurative meanings); the use of a hyponym or a hyperonym; and, finally, omission. The very presentation and discussion of these techniques in class is illuminating as it shows students that one element can be translated in more than one way, how a given solution can be situated in relation to the global strategy, and how this affects the ultimate goal of reconstructing the linguistic worldview contained in the source text.

This initial grounding in translation theory, bound together by the overarching concept of linguistic worldview, is carried over from *Intercultural Pragmatics for Translators* to the complementary course *Introduction to Translation*, where it is further applied and extended to new aspects of translation as worldview reconstruction. The participants are guided through the meanders of such translation challenges as selected dimensions of the cognitive-linguistic concept of imagery (including the figure-ground contrast, subjectification/objectification, vantage point), the presence of metaphor (Tabakowska 1993, 2003; Lakoff, Johnson 1980), intertextuality (Orr 2003) and, lastly, the problem of deformations in translation (Berman 2000). Apart from practical translation tasks, including an attempt at self-translation (Gicala 2023), the students trace linguistic worldviews in the textual material also *via* other means, such as analyses of selected source texts and their existing, published translations and retranslations.

The following section provides exemplification of how the concept of linguistic worldview can illuminate the process of translation of culturally-embedded texts. The increasingly complex translation tasks, described below, were meant to give the students glimpses into the worldviews that the texts express. While gaining some greater awareness of how languages are embedded in cultures and worldviews, the future translators also made attempts to balance faithfulness to the original text with some creativity and freedom.

Case studies: dimensions of linguistic worldviews in selected translation tasks

As described above, the tasks presented in this section have been selected from the two translation courses under analysis so as to show both the expected difficulties (i.e. the ones planned to be shown by the teacher) and, in some cases, also unexpected problems and findings that transpired in the translation process. Both kinds of challenges had educational value – not only for the translation trainees but the teacher as well.

Translation task 1: Expected and unexpected gaps in the worldview

The first translation task that the students received consisted of several short examples (one or two sentences long), chosen to introduce the approach of viewing texts as exemplifications of linguistic worldviews, and to signal the various knowledge gaps that can hinder the translator's access to the source-text view of reality. Consider:

Archaeologists dug up that vessel in the ground. It was excellently preserved with tar.

In this example, what the students were guided to discover was the impossibility of literal translation due to the double meaning of the noun *vessel*, a hyperonym in English that requires a choice among several hyponyms in translation to Polish (*naczynie* 'dish, kitchen vessel' and *statek* 'ship' or *łódź* 'boat'). This translation challenge was related to the lack of extralinguistic context, making it impossible to reconstruct the original linguistic view of the situation in an unequivocal way, which stimulated alternative reconstructions of its various parameters.

The discussion in class concerned the contextual clue provided by the noun *tar*, denoting a toxic substance not usually used to protect vessels designed for cooking or storing food and drinks. Even after excluding the choice of *naczynie*, the ambiguity remained because of the unknown size of the vessel (a large ship or a small boat). One of the students proposed yet another Polish equivalent: *kapsuła* 'capsule', explaining that it might have been a time capsule left in the ground by an ancient or even alien civilisation. Although rather improbable, the latter solution could not be ruled out, and provided an unexpected opportunity to learn. Last year's students turned out to be particularly inquisitive and, to the teacher's surprise, also experimented with the sequence of information in the source text, and with the gender of the plural noun *archaeologists* (in Polish, either the masculine *archeologowie/archeolodzy*, or the feminine *archeolożki*), developing a longer discussion of the specificity of archeological expeditions and the typical, mostly male membership of such research teams.

Translation task 2: Creativity in worldview reconstruction

As the translation of children's literature is usually enjoyed by students, another task was a short passage from Alan Alexander Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh*, chosen both to keep up the enthusiasm of the young translators and to provide an opportunity for their creativity. The passage is part of the story in which Eeyore, the donkey, loses his tail, and Winnie-the-Pooh helps him to find it. To seek advice, they both visit Owl, who is considered wise, and they find two notices on the door of Owl's home:

Owl lived at the Chestnuts, an old-world residence of great charm, which was grander than anybody else's or seemed so to Bear, because it had both a knocker and a bell-pull. Under the knocker there was a notice which said:

PLES RING IF AN RNSR IS REQIRD

Under the bell-pull there was a notice which said:

PLEZ CNOKE IF AN RNSR IS NOT REQID (Milne 1991 [1926]: 55-56)

There are two published Polish translations of *Winnie-the-Pooh*, one of which, created by Irena Tuwim in 1937 and entitled *Kubuś Puchatek* (here: Milne 2001), has become a text of culture, occupying – probably permanently – an established position within the Polish literary system as well as outside it (e.g. in the form of thematic cook books for children, cartoons, mascots and countless gadgets). The other Polish translation, published in 1986 under the title *Fredzia Phi-Phi* by Monika Adamczyk, appears not to be so widely loved by target readers, and remains mostly treated as an alternative, experimental version.

Before reading the two published translations, the students were asked to prepare their own Polish versions of the passage in question. Interestingly, throughout the years of doing this task in class, no person has ever proposed changing the protagonists' names to names other than those present in Tuwim's classical rendering – which shows that it is her translation that has gained the status of a text of culture in the Polish literary system. On the other hand, the participants made full use of their inventiveness in their attempts to translate the two notices on Owl's door into Polish. However, they did not use their creativity entirely freely but took into consideration the linguistic worldview present in the original, i.e. the fact that, *via* specific linguistic means, the source text conveys the image of the world of a small child (too small to spell correctly). Here is the notice on Owl's door in the two published translations and two done by the students:

Irena Tuwim:

PRO SZE ZWONIDŹ JEŹLIKTO HCE PO RADY
PROSZĘ PÓKADŹ JEŹLIKTO NIEHCEPO RADY (Milne 2001: 44)

Monika Adamczyk:

PROSZEM ZWONIDŹ JEŹLI KTO POTSZEBUJE OTPOWIEDŹI
PROSZ PÓKACI JEŚLI KTO NIE POTSZEBÓJE OTPOWIEĆ (Milne 1986: 43)

Student 1:

PSZE DZONIĆ GDY TSZA ODPOWIEDZI.
PRZE PÓKAĆ GDY NIE TRZA OPOWIEĆ.

Student 2:

PROSZE ZWONIC JESI POCZEBUJESZ OD POWIEDŹI.
PROSZE PÓKAC JESI NJE POCZEBUJESZ OD POWIEDŹI.

By deliberately breaking numerous principles of Polish spelling, all the translators successfully rendered the original worldview, expressed by imitating the spelling of young children who are still learning to write, and therefore do not yet know all the correct letter combinations, syllable division rules and other principles.

Translation task 3: Worldview reconstruction in the academic context and its participants

The translation task that the students receive every year responds to the needs of their own university – when the university's central office sends a request for an English translation of Christmas or Easter greetings. Every year, the Polish text is slightly different but always short and formal: features which make it seem simple. In last year's greetings, however, translation problems arose immediately in the first line. The Polish version starts with an object (rather than the subject of the sentence) and is an impersonal statement: it is not made explicit who extends these wishes and to whom. The translation problem appears to be grammatical but, in fact, involves the extralinguistic context, i.e. the configuration of the scene and explicitness of the presence of its participants. This shows the young translators the role of grammar in constructing the view of the world in a given text. In these greetings, it is the world of the university in its official context, involving the implied presence of the authorities as well as other, unspecified participants:

Pełnych spokoju i radości
Świąt Wielkanocnych,
wypoczynku w rodzinnym gronie
oraz
optymizmu, energii i nadziei
na lepszą przyszłość!

[in literal translation:
Full of peace and joy
Easter,
rest in the family circle
and
optimism, energy and hope
for a better future]

The target text constructed by the young translators after much discussion (in which successive groups reflect on and improve the version created by the previous groups) begins with the plural subject – the general *we*,

representing the university's authorities – and specifies the recipient as also plural and general *you and your families*. Other changes include the text's layout as well as the use of toned-down adjectives to describe the Easter being wished for, where a choice had to be made e.g. between target equivalents such as *happy* or *joyful* (again, after a group discussion concerning the conceptual differences between happiness and joy). The resulting target version is as follows:

We wish you and your families
a peaceful, happy, and restful Easter holiday,
as well as optimism, good energy, and hope
for a better future!

Translation task 4: Subjectivity as a linguistic worldview parameter in self-translation

The last challenge under present analysis is an exercise in self-translation, and for this reason the students are always asked to do it individually. In order to create their own source text (with comparable parameters, enabling its discussion), the students are asked to describe and comment on a picture in Polish, their native language, and then to translate their own text into English. The picture is usually a random, anonymous, free image found on the Internet, likely to evoke emotional responses. An image chosen for one of the recent classes depicted a crowded scene on the bus or train, rendered in tones of grey, where everybody seems to be asleep and only one passenger (drawn in bright colours) is looking out of the window, smiling. The students are then asked to identify any differences between the two textual worlds created by the same author: themselves.

Interestingly, the discrepancies usually belong to the cognitive-linguistic category (or: dimension) of objectification/subjectification, i.e. the author's presence in (or absence from) their text, exemplified by specific choices of vocabulary, such as evaluative adjectives, the first person pronoun, etc. What the students usually discuss in this task are, *inter alia*, the names of emotions (such as the English *happy* versus the Polish *szczęśliwy*) in the two languages and cultures and the use of words and phrases referring to themselves and their view of the described scene. The following three examples from the students' descriptions are statements ranging from the most to the least subjective (the author is less and less present as the observer in this scene):

Source text:

Everybody seems to be asleep.

Alternative target texts:

Wydaje *mi* się, że wszyscy śpią. [in literal back-translation: It seems *to me* that everybody is asleep.]

Wydaje się, że wszyscy śpią. [in literal back-translation: It seems that everybody is asleep.]

Wszyscy śpią. [in literal back-translation: Everybody is asleep.]

Learning *via* translation: feedback from the students

On completion of their first year in the translation specialisation, the participants of the two courses described above were asked to provide feedback concerning what they had learnt about and through translation. They were also encouraged to comment on the concept of linguistic worldview as a “window” to the source text and a “lens” through which to look at the translation task. Although none of the students referred to linguistic worldview directly, some of their replies proved valuable to me as their teacher, revealing how their view of translation and the translator’s role had changed. Starting from the initial belief in word-for-word rendering as the only, and obvious, possibility, it evolved to a more complex awareness of the active role of translation in reconstructing the original image, encompassing both its uniqueness and immersion in a broader worldview embedded in its language. Let the sample replies below (quoted in their original, sometimes less-than-perfect spelling) serve as a summing up of the students’ first steps on the path towards becoming translators:

Student 1: *Before the course, I wasn’t aware that one can translate a text in different ways (domestication or foreignization). A translation is not a copy of the original.*

Student 2: *In the self-translation task, I realised that sometimes I can’t understand exactly what I meant in the original even if i had written it a minute or so earlier.*

Student 3: *I realized how hard it was to translate your own thoughts into another language. [...] I constantly tried to “fix” my translation as I wasn’t satisfied with what it said (how it sounded, even though it was faithful to the original) [...]*

Student 3: *Before the course, I didn’t notice the translator’s work and if i read sth in Polish, I didn’t know if it was the original text or not [...]*

Student 4: *... how metaphors can influence the understanding of the text [...].*

Student 5: *For me, it’d be self-worth. As my translation started to getting to more people, it made me realize that people like what I do.*

Student 6: *It made me realise differences in perception [...] and [...] that a [given] language shapes how we think [...]*

Student 7: *I found that the way we translate something has a direct impact on the feelings that the reader is gonna feel while reading [...]. We can impact the reader in many ways.*

Student 8: *[...] that it is crucial not to lose the soul of the text [...]*

Having witnessed their initial attempts at translating, accompanied by initial comments, the teacher could then see the growth of sensitivity to meanings and contextual factors as well as greater self-awareness. Hopefully, this growth will continue as a lifelong process, and the prospective translators will, as declared by one of them, always do their best “not to lose the soul of the text”.

Final remarks

What emerges from the students’ first ever year of practising translation and learning about translation as a process of linguistic worldview reconstruction is certainly the increased awareness of the role of the translator as a mediator of meanings immersed in culture-specific contexts: the translator needs to be, above all, a particularly attentive reader not only of the source text itself but also of their own rendering of it in the other language. Most often, this role comes close to that of an archaeologist or a detective, who searches for clues and explanations outside the text and its linguistic components, bearing in mind the vast expanses of the cultural icebergs on the maps of the source and target worlds.

Among the roles of translation possible to investigate even at the initial stage of translation education described above, there certainly are: translation as an act of very close reading, as well as an act of discovery and interpretation of worldviews hidden in texts, thus making translation not only a practical skill but also an educational tool in itself. Last but not least, translation practice may be viewed as an area in which creativity can be practised, which – when balanced with a sound pursuit of knowledge (and discipline in improving language skills) – strengthens the young translators’ trust in their own intuition when exploring the cultural icebergs. While translation theory and education can certainly be (and has been) effective without resorting to the concept of linguistic worldview, the above approach – as illustrated by the translation tasks described – has proven beneficial in my own teaching practice: it has shed new light on the translation process.

To recapitulate, by analysing the idea of translation as a reconstruction of a linguistic worldview and its usefulness in translation education at the university level, this article attempted to identify and suggest for further testing some possible areas of application of this concept. These include: (1) the possibility of gaining deeper insight into source texts as products of their respective cultures, as well as their translations (both the existing ones

and those prepared in class), (2) a way of thinking about translation that guides the formulation of a coherent approach to the translation process, and (3) a formula for finding balance between creativity and fidelity to the original text. Thus, this study hopes to have contributed to the still small but promising line of research that bridges the concept of linguistic worldview and the field of translation and translation education, signalling some possibilities to explore this bridge as a new dimension in both fields.

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Streszczenie: W artykule rozważane jest zastosowanie koncepcji językowego obrazu świata w dydaktyce przekładu na poziomie uniwersyteckim z perspektywy zarówno nauczyciela, jak i studentów. Szczególną uwagę zwrócono na te wymiary tłumaczenia, które językowy obraz świata może pomóc rozjaśnić, dzięki czemu może on posłużyć do sformułowania strategicznego podejścia równoważącego kreatywność ze świadomością specyfiki kulturowej materiału źródłowego. Traktując tekst źródłowy jako wyraz danego językowego obrazu świata, studenci mogą stopniowo zyskiwać wrażliwość na międzykulturowe i pragmatyczne aspekty tłumaczenia, budując w ten sposób swoje kompetencje kulturowe, a także pewność siebie w podejściu do kolejnych zadań. Inspiracją dla materiału badawczego były prace tłumaczeniowe studentów przekładoznawstwa na poziomie studiów licencjackich, a także ich opinie uzyskane po ukończeniu pierwszego roku specjalizacji przekładowej, obejmującej m.in. kurs pragmatyki międzykulturowej oraz wprowadzenie do przekładu. W artykule analizuje się, w jaki sposób ujęcie przekładu jako rekonstrukcji językowego obrazu świata może dawać młodym tłumaczom pełniejszy wgląd w tłumaczone teksty, wskazywać im spójne podejście w procesie przekładu i tym samym pomagać znaleźć równowagę między kreatywnością a wiernością tekstowi oryginału.

Słowa kluczowe: językowy obraz świata; pragmatyka interkulturowa; dydaktyka przekładu; kreatywność w przekładzie; strategia tłumaczeniowa