

The Existential *byt'* in the Translations of I.A. Bunin's *The Gentleman from San Francisco* into English and Japanese

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1. Introduction

We examined translations of sentences containing the Russian existential verb *byt'* in I.A. Bunin's *The Gentleman from San Francisco* from Russian to Japanese and English. Bunin's use of *byt'* is inseparably connected to the problem of being, *bytie*. The noun *bytie* originates from the passive participle of the verb *byt'*, although its concept cannot be identified with the semantic sphere expressed by *byt'*, as confirmed by Shatalova (Шаталова 2008, 16). We aim to elucidate how being was represented in Bunin's work and its translations into Japanese and English by considering the use of *byt'*. While the Russian *byt'* is used both as an auxiliary verb and as a full verb, as studied by Chvany (1975), our study focuses on the latter.

However, the full verb has a varied classification, with more than 30 meanings (Шведова 2001, 5). In the dictionary of Russian verbs edited by Babenko (Бабенко 1999), *byt'* is found in three sections: "Verbal Group for Existence (Strictly)," "Verbal Group for Realization of Event," and "Verbal Group for Existence in Time and Space." Despite the variety of classifications, these three categories are distinguished, and their differences have been studied. Arutjunova (Арутюнова 1976, 231) discussed the difference between the functions of the verb in expressing the existence of things and the realiza-

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tion of events. She suggests that things are related to space, whereas events are related to time. Negative existential sentences are another important aspect of the study of existential sentences. Babby's research (Babby 1980) on this theme led Partee and Borshev (2007) to re-examine the distinction between locative and existential sentences from the viewpoint of what they call "perspective structure." According to them, "an 'existence/location situation' may be structured either from the perspective of the THING or from the Perspective of the LOCation" (Partee & Borshev 2007, 156).

A crosslinguistic study by McNally ([2015] 2016) showed different constructions of existential sentences in different languages. Among the studies of English existential constructions, Ward and Birner (1995) discussed the types of hearer-new noun phrases in *there*-sentences, and McNally (1997) argued for the role of locativity in existential sentences. The Japanese language uses a pair of verbs, *iru* and *aru*, to express existence. Among the numerous studies concerning this problem, Iida (2007) analysed the noun phrases in existential sentences, suggesting a similarity of these constructions to what is called *there*-insertion in English.

Our previous study on Bunin's collection of short stories, "Dark Avenue," showed that the verb *byt'* has been frequently used to express the existence of something or someone special and incomparable (Миягава 2022, 126).

This study deals with Bunin's famous story, *The Gentleman from San Francisco*, translated into foreign languages, including Japanese. The main character, a gentleman from San Francisco who worked all the time, decided to take a break and went on a 2-year journey to the Old World on a cruise ship with his wife and daughter. However, he died unexpectedly at a hotel in Capri, Italy. The hotel manager was concerned only about the hotel's reputation. Thus, the gentleman's body was placed at the bottom of the ship and sent home.

The central theme of this story is the problem of being, "the catastrophe of human life and the vanity of the search for eternal happiness" (Соколов 1999, 75). Analyzing the full verb *byt'* helps us reveal a significant aspect of Bunin's work on the problems of being. We also compare translations of sentences with *byt'* to discover cross-linguistic differences that may reflect each culture.

2. Typical differences between Japanese and English translations

We compare Japanese translations with English versions to disclose the characteristic representations of a gentleman's being in the original text and its translations into Japanese. We employed five confirmed English versions translated by D.H. Lawrence with S. Koteliensky (Bunin 1917), A. Yarmolinsky (Bunin 1918), B. G. Guernsey (Bunin 1923b), O. Shartse (Bunin 1979), and D. Richards (Bunin 1984), and four Japanese versions by K. Hara (Bunin 1923a), K. Umeda (Bunin 1925), S. Kimura (Bunin 1965), and S. Kusaka (Bunin 1976). The story was published in 1915, highly reviewed, and became famous abroad after it was included in the book of his collected works with the same title as the story published in 1920 in Paris. The editions used by

the translators are unclear, except for a few; however, it seems that there are no different versions of the sentences we examined among the texts that were possibly used by the translators¹.

In English, the construction “there is/are” is employed to express existence. Simultaneously, the verb *have* is also used to translate Russian existential sentences, which is typical of English as a have-language (Isačenko 1974, 44). In Japanese, existence is expressed using the verbs *aru* and *iru*. Currently, *iru* is generally used for living organisms, whereas *aru* is used for non-living objects. We will refer to this difference later.

Russian and Japanese are defined as be-languages, which are different from English². A typical difference between Japanese and English is obvious in the translation of a following sentence in the story (Бунин 1966, 308):

[original] Для такой уверенност-и у него бы-л тот довод
 [glosses] for such-GEN conviction-GEN at he-GEN be-PST.M that reason.NOM
 [literal translation] he had the reason for such a conviction

In English versions, the possessive verb *have* was naturally used: “This conviction had a two-fold reason” (Bunin 1918, 32); “he had his reasons” (Bunin 1923b, 280); “he had his own reasons” (Bunin 1979, 265). In Japanese, the existential verb *aru* was used in the past tense, *atta*, with “the reason” as the subject, which was different from English versions where “he” or “his conviction” was the subject: “Sōtōna riyū ga atta” (Bunin 1923a, 216); “Sore dake no riyū ga atta” (Bunin 1925, 374); “Kare nari no iibun ga atta” (Bunin 1976, 223).

Meanwhile, the English verbs *have* and the Japanese *aru/iru* are not always applied to Russian existential sentences. We can find varied translations of existential sentences in the story, including the construction “there is/are” in English versions. Sentences with the verb *byt'* are also translated into various Japanese constructions. The table shows the number of translations for the phrases, wherein the verb *have* was not used in English, that employed the existential constructions of English “there is/are” and Japanese *aru/iru*.

¹ The note of the 4th volume of the Bunin’s collected works published in 1966 mentions the history of his revisions (Михайлов 1966, 483-88). The early two translations in English must be based on the first edition published in Russia, and Hara confirmed that he had used the version published in Paris in 1920.

² Analyzing Russian “possessive” relation *u* + GEN constructions, Isačenko argued that although Russian had a verb *imet'* that introduced have-constructions, it “preserved its status as a typical B-language” (Isačenko 1974, 77). Japanese language has been defined as a be-language in studies where it is compared with English (Mathesius 1975, Ando 1986, Ikegami 2006). Asazuma and Golovina (2016) analyze the commonality of Russian and Japanese as become-languages.

Russian original							(A)	(B)
Glosses								
Literal translation into English								
Нечто	монгольское	бы-л-о	в	его	желтоватом	лице.	4	3
Something	Mongolian	be-PST-N	in	his	yellowish.LOC	face.LOC		
Something Mongolian was in his yellowish face. (Бунин 1966, 311)								
Бы-л-и	и	другие	приезжие				4	2
be-PST-PL	and	other.PL	visitor.PL					
There were also other visitors (Бунин 1966, 317)								
[...]	не	бы-л-о	солнц-а.				2	0
[...]	NEG	be-PST-N	sun-GEN					
[...] there was no sunshine. (Бунин 1966, 315)								
[...]	не	бы-л-о	сомнени-я				2	3
[...]	NEG	be-PST-N	doubt-GEN					
[...] there were no doubts (Бунин 1966, 318)								
Бы-л		он (=бал)					2	0
be-PST.M		it (=a ball)						
There was it (=a ball) (Бунин 1966, 327)								

(A) English versions with construction “there is/are” (out of 5)

(B) Japanese versions with construction “aru/iru” (out of 4)

Sentences about the sun and the ball are preferably translated with other verbs, both in English and Japanese. For the first sentence, verbs “appear,” “come out,” “miss” are used with the sun as the subject in English, while in Japanese versions, two of the translators used the verb “mieru” that means “see” or “can be seen” and others translated it with expressions such as “sugata o miseru” that means “show itself” or “appear,” and “hi ga sasu” that means “the sun shines in.” The sentence about the ball is preferably translated with the verb that means “hold” both in English and Japanese.

The varieties are supposedly formed because of a different reception of the original sentences, whether the sentence is about the existence or realization of events. As we mentioned, in Russian, the realization of events is also expressed using the verb *byt'*, but the translations show that it is rare for English and Japanese, which may prove the Russian inclination toward sentences that contain *byt'*.

3. The sentence about the gentleman's death

Now, we examine a phrase from a sentence depicting the gentleman's death:

Сизое, уже мертвое лицо постепенно стыло, хриплое клокотанье, вырывавшееся из открытого рта, освещенного отблеском золота, слабело. Это хрипел уже не господин из Сан-Франциско, – его больше не было, – а кто-то другой (Бунин 1966, 323).

(The bluish, already dead face gradually became cold, the hoarse wheezing blowing out from his open mouth, illuminated by the reflection of gold, weakened. It was not the gentleman from San Francisco, who wheezed, he was no more, – but someone else).

The existence of the gentleman from San Francisco is denied in the phrase in the second sentence above “ego bolʒše ne bylo.”

[original] егo бoльшe нe бь-л-o
 [glosses] he more NEG be-PST.N
 [literal translation] he was no more

In four of the English versions, the phrase was translated as “he has no more,” except for Guerney’s “he no longer existed” (Bunin 1923b, 304). Meanwhile, we have varied Japanese versions that reflect the translators’ interpretations.

Translator	Japanese translation Glosses Literal translation from Japanese into English
Hara (Bunin 1923a, 251)	Kare-wa mō konoyo ni i-nai hito-deat-ta. he-TOP already this.world inbe-NEG person-be-PST He was the man who was not in this world any longer.
Umeda (Bunin 1925, 398)	Kare-wa mohaya konoyo ni sonzaisite-i-nakat-ta. he-TOP already this.world in exist-STAT- NEG-PST He didn’t exist in this world anymore.
Kimura (Bunin 1965, 151)	Kare-wa mō konoyo no hito-de-wa nakat-ta. he-TOP already this.world of.GEN person-be-TOP be-NEG-PST He was not the man of this world any longer.
Kusaka (Bunin 1976, 238)	Sudeni kare-wa seizonshite-i-nakat-ta no-dearu. already he-TOP exist-STAT-NEG-PST no- COP He was not alive by now.

What is characteristic of Japanese translations is that the negation of the gentleman’s existence is specified by his absence from this world. While Kusaka’s translation does not include the word “konoyo” that means “this world,” it is clear that the gentleman does not exist as a very living creature. In either in English or in Russian, the denial of the gentleman’s existence is enough for readers to understand that he is no longer alive. However, it was necessary for the Japanese translators to clarify that he was not alive, implying that it was not in this world where he was not.

This characteristic of Japanese translations is related to their views on life and death. Such a sentence about the existence of a being in the real world or death of a being with verbs *aru* or *iru*, which is called as “seishi-bun,” a sentence about life and death by Satoshi Kinsui (2006, 21), is often negative and tends to be accompanied by the expression of locations, such as “in this world” and “nowhere.”

According to Kinsui (2006, 22), this is because Japanese people understand life and death as locational movements, which is reflected in the Japanese translation of the Russian sentence about the gentleman's death. Thus, the Japanese translation indicates the continuity of existence after death.

4. The sentence about something given

We can see the specificity of Japanese sentences about life and death by comparing the phrase about the gentleman's death with another negative existential phrase.

Пароходик, жуком лежавший далеко внизу, на нежной и яркой синеве которой так густо и полно налит Неаполитанский залив, уже давал последние гудки – и они бодро отзывались по всему острову, каждый изгиб которого, каждый гребень, каждый камень был так явственно виден отовсюду, точно воздуха совсем не было (Бунин 1966, 325).

(The little steamer, lying far below like a beetle, on the delicate and bright blue, which the Bay of Naples was so densely and entirely full of, was already giving the final whistles, – and they lively echoed all over the island, whose every bend, every ridge, every stone, was so clearly visible from everywhere, as if there was no air at all).

The last part of the sentence “точно воздуха совсем не было” where the existence of air is denied interests us.

[original] воздух-а совсем не бы-л-о
 [glosses] air-GEN at all NEG be-PST-N
 [literal translation] there was no air at all

Its translations both in English and Japanese are different from those of the phrase “ego bol'she ne bylo,” although they both are negative existential phrases.

Translator	English translation
Lawlence and Koteliansky (Bunin (1917) 1922, 33)	there were no atmosphere at all
Yarmolinsky (Bunin 1918, 54)	there were no air between heaven and earth
Guerney (Bunin 1923, 308)	there were absolutely no such thing as atmosphere
Shartse (Bunin 1979, 284)	there were no atmosphere at all
Richards (1984) (Bunin 1987, 34)	there might have been no atmosphere at all

As the table above shows, in English, all the translators used the construction “there is/are,” which is used when the information of the subject newly appears, so personal pronouns cannot become the subject. Therefore, the phrase about the

gentleman's death cannot be translated into a sentence using this construction. However, it is natural to apply it to air. Therefore, there is a technical difference between translations.

In Japanese, the adjective *nai* which is employed to deny the existence expressed by *aru* is found in the latter two versions. These sentences were translated more literally than the phrase about the gentleman's absence. Here, we can see a technical approach not only in English but also in Japanese translations, although Hara and Umeda translated the phrase in a different way without verbs.

Translator	Japanese translation Glosses Literal translation from Japanese into English
Hara (Bunin 1923a, 259)	Shinkū-no tenchi Vacuum-GEN heaven.earth in vacuum heaven and earth
Umeda (Bunin 1925, 402)	Shinkū no sekai Vacuum-GEN world in a vacuum world
Kimura (Bunin 1965, 152)	Kūki nado mattaku nai Air or.something completely exist.NEG there were absolutely no such thing as atmosphere.
Kusaka (Bunin 1976, 241)	Kūki sae mo mattaku nai Air even also completely exist.NEG there were even no air at all

We have mentioned the difference between *aru* and *iru*, but it is worth referring to another distinction presented by Japanese linguist, Akira Mikami. According to him, *iru* is used when a living creature with its own history occupies a certain place, whereas *aru* is used when something or someone exists as given "suddenly" (Mikami 1972, 109-10). The latter is equivalent to the English construction "there is/are," if we consider that both are used to express the existence of something or someone without its history. Although his classification may be considered insufficient for further studies of Japanese linguistics (Kinsui 2006, 5), it helps us understand a certain aspect of the problem of the translation of Bunin's story. When the gentleman's death is represented as a transfer from this world to the other, he is represented as a being not only in space, but also in the continuous passage of time, which differs from the representation of air, which is regarded as something given unexpectedly without history.

Both phrases concerning the gentleman's death and the absence of air were constructed using the verb *byt'* in the original Russian text. However, while air is represented as something given without history in English and Japanese, the representation of the gentleman's being connotes his history. The different modifiers for these phrases also show differences in the characteristics of these existences. The phrase about the gentleman's death accompanies the word *bol'she*, "anymore," while that about the air has *sovsem*, "at all." *Bol'she* indicates

the history of the gentleman's being, but *sovsem* appears without assuming a history of the existence. Furthermore, in the Japanese translations, his being can continue in the other world even after death, which is regarded as a transfer to another world.

5. Life, existence, being in *The Gentleman from San Francisco*

Now, we need to consider the image of a human being in the original text, which is related to the essential theme of this story, in which a human being is represented as something in vain. Our study of existential expressions reveals the image of a being in Bunin's text in relation to time and space.

In the beginning of the story, we can find other existential verbs defining the gentleman's being, *žit'*, to live, and *suščestvovat'*, to exist: "До этой поры он не жил, а лишь существовал, правда очень недурно, но все же возлагая все надежды на будущее" (Бунин 1966, 308) ("Until then he had not lived, but had only existed, though, it is true, very well, but nevertheless putting hopes on the future"). In this sentence, we can see that the difference between to "live" and to "exist" refers to time.

This is also evident in other parts of the story. *Žizn'*, the noun of the verb *žit'*, life, is represented to be in the passage of time: "жизнь на нем протекала весьма размеренно" (Бунин 1966, 309) ("life on it flowed quite regularly"), or "Жизнь в Неаполе тотчас же потекла по заведенному порядку" (*ibid.*, 313) ("Life in Naples at once started to flow in the orderly manner"). Meanwhile, *suščestvovanie*, existence, is represented as a unity of the past time: "в семь повещали трубными сигналами о том, что составляло главнейшую цель всего этого существования, венец его..." (*ibid.*, 310) ("at seven, the bugles signaled about what was the main purpose of all this existence, its crown"); or as something occupying a space: "Острова Капри совсем не было видно – точно его никогда и не существовало на свете" (*ibid.*, 315) ("The Island of Capri was completely invisible, – as if it had never existed in the world"). Thus, life is realized when the gentleman is represented as a being in the passage of time, whereas the passage of time is not essential for existence related to space or represented as a unity, even if it exists in the passage of time.

To clarify the feature of the verb *byt'* which is not identified with either live or exist, it is worth considering the phrase that follows the phrase "ego bol'she ne bylo," "he was no more," "kto-to drugoy," "but someone else"³. Someone occupies a certain space, but this is not the gentleman's being. Here, his being, which is rep-

³ It also worth mentioning that it is not "čto-to", something, but "kto-to", someone. In Lawrence and Koteliansky's translation, it was translated to "something" (Bunin 1922, 29), Guerney translated the phrase to "some other" (Bunin 1923b, 304), while in other translations the word "someone" is used (Bunin 1918, 51; 1979, 281; 1987, 31). In Japanese versions we can see varied translations. Umeda's version uses an ambiguous expression using hiragana, the Japanese cursive syllabary, by which the word can be understood either about someone or something. Other translators made it clear that it was someone.

resented without a name throughout the story, becomes something only and incomparable. Something only and incomparable, which is often represented with *byt'* in other Bunin's works, is represented out of the passage of time, like existence, which is different from life. In addition, in the story, *byt'* is distinct from to exist because *byt'* belongs to the present, whereas in the story, existence is always related to the past. Thus, in the original text, we can clearly see how the gentleman's being changed: from existence to life, then into a being.

Japanese translators employed varied expressions to translate *žit'* and *suščestvovat'* in the phrase in the beginning of the story, whereas in all the English versions, *žit'* is translated into the verb "live" and *suščestvovat'* into "exist." The verb *žit'* is translated as *seikatsu*, meaning life. However, it is obvious that the translators had to contemplate how to translate the word for *suščestvovat'*, since we can find various versions for it. Kusaka translated it using the word *sonzai* (Bunin 1976, 223), meaning existence, and Hara used the word *seizon* (Bunin 1923a, 216), meaning existence and life. However, in other two translations, the meaning of existence was lost: Umeda used the word *seikatsu* (Bunin 1925, 374), which was the same word as the word used when he translated the verb *žit'*, Kimura translated the verb *suščestvovat'* as "sonohi sonohi o kurasu" (Bunin 1965, 142), "live day by day." The difference between *žit'* and *suščestvovat'* cannot be expressed straightforwardly in these translations. This variation was possibly caused by the fact that the Japanese language did not have a definite term for the concept of being or existence until the second half of the nineteenth century (Yanabu 1982, 109). Languages change with time, and the Japanese translations reflect the change in some parts; however, it seemed difficult for all translators during the twentieth century to find the proper Japanese word to translate the verb *suščestvovat'* which contrasts with *žit'*.

6. Conclusion

The Gentleman from San Francisco is one of Bunin's most important stories, containing the metaphysical problems of life and death, space, and time. This study discusses some of these problems.

Referring to the image of the gentleman's being, the characteristic changes was highlighted. In the Bunin's text, each of the verbs, *suščestvovat'*, *žit'* and *byt'*, differently represents the gentleman's being from the viewpoint of time, showing us how it changed in the developing story.

Moreover, by analyzing the translations, we found a different understanding of being in different languages. In the Japanese versions, we can see a reflection on their understanding of life and death. The difference between *žit'* and *suščestvovat'*, related to time, is not represented as something essential in Japanese translations as seen in the original, whereas the gentleman's death is represented as a transfer in space, which is not seen in the original.

Thus, the gentleman's life and death, considered from the viewpoint of the problem of time in Bunin's text, are represented in the Japanese understanding as a problem of space in the translations.

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