BG Pulse Journal USA
ISSN:1947-2536 http://www.bgpulseusa.com/index.php/bg

EXISTENTIAL RESONANCE AND THE AESTHETICS OF "NEW SINCERITY" IN JOHN GREEN'S THE FAULT IN OUR STARS: A SEMANTIC AND PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS

Nosirova Dilnoza Rizokulovna
Second-year doctoral student
at Asia International University
Assistant Lecturer, Department of Foreign
Languages and Social Sciences,
Asia International University

Abstract

This study explores the semantic and pragmatic mechanisms through which John Green's The Fault in Our Stars embodies the aesthetics of New Sincerity and constructs an existential narrative within contemporary Young Adult literature. The research examines how semantic fields, metaphorical systems, speech acts, implicatures, and linguistic foregrounding contribute to the representation of identity, mortality, and emotional authenticity. Drawing upon Grice's Cooperative Principle, Speech Act Theory, and Relevance Theory, the analysis demonstrates how Green's characters employ irony, dark humor, and personalized communicative codes to negotiate existential anxiety and terminal illness. Particular attention is given to the metaphors of the grenade, water, and infinities, which function as central semantic frameworks shaping the novel's philosophical discourse. The study further investigates the translation of these semantic and pragmatic features into Russian and Uzbek, highlighting the differing translation strategies of foreignization and cultural adaptation. The findings reveal that while the Russian translation largely preserves the original pragmatic and stylistic effects, the Uzbek version prioritizes cultural acceptability, resulting in the omission or modification of several key semantic and pragmatic elements. The research concludes that Green's use of New Sincerity successfully bridges authorial intention and reader empathy, demonstrating how language can articulate profound existential experiences and maintain emotional resonance across cultural and linguistic boundaries.

Keywords: John Green, The Fault in Our Stars, New Sincerity, semantics, pragmatics, Young Adult literature, speech acts, linguistic foregrounding, metaphor, translation studies, existential discourse, intercultural communication.

Introduction

The dawn of the twenty-first century has witnessed a profound paradigm shift in the global literary landscape, marked by a decisive departure from the detached irony and pervasive cynicism of the postmodern era. This movement, often termed "New Sincerity," privileges absolute emotional transparency and a rejection of totalizing mockery in favor of radical veracity. Within the architectural evolution of Young Adult (YA) literature, John Green has emerged as a definitive strategist. By moving beyond the didactic maturation tropes of the twentieth century, Green has refashioned the genre into a sophisticated vessel for exploring ontological insecurity and the "authentic voice." This evolution is part of a broader genre transformation—evidenced by benchmarks like Suzanne Collins's The Hunger Games and Angie Thomas's The Hate U Give where YA fiction has shifted toward exploring systemic social complexity and the raw, anti-

metaphorical honesty demanded by digital-native audiences (Generation Z and Alpha). The objective of this analysis is to decode how Green utilizes specific semantic and pragmatic mechanisms to construct an existential narrative that retains its resonance across disparate cultural and linguistic boundaries.

To understand the "authentic voice" of the protagonist, one must employ a rigorous linguistic framework that looks beyond literal definitions. The strategic deployment of linguistic pragmatics specifically the study of Speech Acts, Implicatures, and Gricean Maxims is essential for decoding how meaning is negotiated in contemporary fiction. Central to this inquiry is the concept of "linguistic foregrounding," where an author intentionally deviates from linguistic norms to disrupt the reader's automatic processing, forcing them into an active role of meaning construction. Our analysis utilizes the Cooperation Principle of Paul Grice alongside Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory to explain how authors flout maxims to generate complex implicatures. At the heart of Green's narrative lies the philosophical framework of Dasein, or "Being-towards-death." By explicitly linking the "side effect of dying" metaphor to the protagonist's condition, Green moves the discourse from a mere medical state (cancer) to a profound ontological state, establishing a semantic axis around which the entire character discourse revolves.

Green's language serves not merely as a narrative tool but as a "psychological shield" for characters confronting terminality. Through the creation of a survival-oriented sociolect, he enables Hazel and Augustus to navigate a reality that defies conventional linguistic markers. The semantic field of illness is anchored by the neologism Phalanxifor; its etymology, suggesting a "phalanx" or a defensive shield, reframes the medical treatment as a tool that "buys time" within an existential siege. Similarly, the concept of "Cancer Perks" ironically refashions medical tragedy into a series of cynical social negotiations, distancing the characters from the role of passive victims.

The pragmatics of dark humor in the novel frequently rely on the flouting of the Maxim of Quality. For instance, when Hazel employs ironic understatement or litotes she manages existential terror through a perlocutive act that asserts intellectual control over biological decay. This is further supported by three dominant metaphorical systems:

1. **The Grenade:** A pragmatic strategy of "casualty minimization," where the self is viewed as a kinetic weapon whose eventual detonation must be managed.
2. **Water/Drowning:** A semantic representation of terminal breathlessness and physical instability.
3. **Infinities:** A mathematical abstraction used to verbalize a "forever" within the constraint of "numbered days." The transformation of the mundane marker "Okay" into a performative "marriage vow" represents a significant Illocutionary Act, creating a private communicative code that functions as a stand-alone reality for the characters.

Translating "New Sincerity" presents a profound challenge when navigating the tension between translational equivalence and adequacy, particularly when moving from the individualistic American context to different linguistic landscapes.

The Russian translation primarily adopts a source-oriented (semantic) approach, maintaining Venuti's "foreignization" to preserve the author's stylistic deviations. Conversely, the Uzbek translation leans toward a target-oriented approach (Skopos Theory), emphasizing Nord's "loyalty" to the reader's ethical comfort.

The following table evaluates how specific cultural filters were applied:

Element	Original Context	Russian Translation	Uzbek Translation

Taboo Topics	Sarcastic link between "First Period" and "Die."	Retained (Semantic fidelity).	**Eliminated.** Replaced with a generalized mention of becoming a "grown girl."
Metaphors	"Amber Ale" comparison for lung fluid.	Retained.	**Eliminated.** Removed due to cultural taboos regarding alcohol.
Emotional Intensity	The "Earthquake" of the father's sobbing.	Retained as a powerful physical metaphor.	**Softened.** Replaced with the term parvona (a moth circling a flame), a cultural archetype of parental devotion.
Intertextuality	References to Beckett's Waiting for Godot.	Retained, assuming reader erudition.	**Eliminated.** Replaced with transparent emotional declarations.

The use of "Elimination" in the Uzbek version suggests a strategic priority for "ethical comfort," yet it results in a significant "pragmatic desaturation" of Green's original intent. Most critically, the omission of the "Always/Okay" communicative code constitutes a "semantic amputation." By removing this central semantic axis, the final "I do" in the target text loses its illocutionary force as a marriage vow, rendering the existential climax less impactful.

In conclusion, The Fault in Our Stars stands as a testament to the power of New Sincerity to bridge authorial intent and reader empathy through linguistic "deviations." The novel's success lies in its ability to use metaphors of grenades and mathematical infinities to reveal universal truths. The final illocutionary act "I do, Augustus" serves as the ultimate triumph of love over biological decay, transforming a narrative of loss into a "little infinity." Ultimately, YA literature serves as a vital global space where the authentic voice of the digital native engages in profound philosophical reflection, proving that language can construct a "forever" even within the confines of numbered days.

References

1. Austin, J. L. (1962). How to Do Things with Words. Oxford University Press. Black, E. (2005). Pragmatic Stylistics. Edinburgh University Press.
2. Chbosky, S. (1999). The Perks of Being a Wallflower. MTV Books; Pocket Books.
3. Collins, S. (2008). The Hunger Games. Scholastic Press.
4. Eco, U. (1979). The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts. Indiana University Press.
5. Green, J. (2014). The Fault in Our Stars. Penguin Books.
6. Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and Conversation. Academic Press.
7. Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (2003). Metaphors We Live By. University of Chicago Press.
8. Nikolajeva, M. (2009). Power, Voice and Subjectivity in Literature for Young Readers. Routledge.
9. Nord, C. (1997). Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained. St. Jerome Publishing.
10. Searle, J. R. (1969). Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language. Cambridge University Press.
11. Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. (1995). Relevance: Communication and Cognition. Blackwell Publishers.

12. Thomas, A. (2017). The Hate U Give. Balzer + Bray.
13. Venuti, L. (1995). The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation. Routledge.
14. Vinay, J.-P., & Darbelnet, J. (1995). Comparative Stylistics of French and English: A Methodology for Translation. John Benjamins.