

TRANSLATING RACIALLY MARKED VOCABULARY IN JOHN GRISHAM'S  
"A TIME TO KILL".

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**Abstract:** *This article examines racially marked vocabulary in John Grisham's A Time to Kill and its rendering in Yu. Kiryak's Russian translation Пора Убивать. The analysis focuses on ethnonyms, racial slurs, Klan-related expressions, and protest slogans that verbalize racial hostility, social hierarchy, and ideological polarization in the novel. The study is based on the works of Teun A. van Dijk, Ruth Wodak, V. A. Lazarev, Valerii M. Mokienko, Mukhtasar Abdullaeva, and Dilafruz Hasanova. Using comparative, contextual, and functional analysis, the article identifies the main translation tendencies in the target text, including preservation, intensification, mitigation, omission, and generalization. The findings show that the Russian translation largely retains the emotional force of racial conflict, but not always its historical and cultural specificity. The article concludes that the translation of racially marked vocabulary requires a balance between semantic accuracy, pragmatic effect, and cultural recognizability.*

**Key words:** *racially marked vocabulary, literary translation, racial conflict, culture-specific elements, racial slurs, pragmatics.*

## INTRODUCTION

Racially marked vocabulary is one of the most sensitive areas of literary translation because it carries ideological, historical, and emotional meanings in addition to direct reference. Van Dijk [1993] and Wodak [2001/2015] treat racism as a discursive practice reproduced through language, while Lazarev [2016] and Mokienko [2022] examine invective and pejorative vocabulary in Russian. In Uzbek scholarship, Abdullaeva [2021] and Hasanova [2025] address the translation of culture-bound lexical units and the problem of non-equivalence. Together, these approaches make it possible to view racially marked vocabulary as a culturally and pragmatically loaded part of discourse.

These issues are especially relevant to John Grisham's A Time to Kill, where racial conflict is expressed through slurs, ethnonyms, Klan-related language, and protest slogans. The present article examines how such vocabulary is rendered in Yu. Kiryak's Russian translation and analyzes the extent to which the target text preserves or modifies the ideological and emotional force of the original.

Research methods.

The study employs comparative, contextual, and functional analysis to examine racially marked vocabulary in John Grisham's A Time to Kill and its rendering in Yu. Kiryak's Russian translation Pora ubivat'. The material includes ethnonyms, racial slurs,

Klan-related expressions, and protest slogans taken from the English source text and the Russian target text. The analysis focuses on the semantic, pragmatic, and ideological functions of these units, as well as on the extent to which they are preserved, intensified, mitigated, generalized, or omitted in translation.

Results and Discussion.

Racially marked vocabulary in *A Time to Kill* forms a multilayered system rather than a set of isolated lexical items. Grisham uses a broad range of ethnonyms and racially charged expressions, from relatively neutral identifiers to openly derogatory slurs, thereby embedding racial tension into everyday speech, legal discourse, and narrative perspective. In this way, racial vocabulary becomes one of the key linguistic means through which the novel constructs the social reality of the American South.

Criminal clients, especially the blacks...(p.101)	Клиенты по уголовным делам, особенно чернокожие...(p.102)
...he was kin to ... a few of the whites. (p.8)	...успел также породниться кое с кем из белых. (p.7)
They were nice people, the Swedes...(p.141)	Они были неплохими людьми, эти шведы... (p.144)

This group represents the least marked layer of racial and regional nomination in the novel. Although such units are not overtly insulting, they still reflect the binary social structure of the Southern world. In translation, their basic classificatory and distancing function is preserved, allowing the target text to maintain racial and regional differentiation without noticeably increasing evaluative force.

A more unstable layer of vocabulary is represented by openly offensive expressions, where the translation reveals significant variation. In some instances, the Russian text strengthens the insult by adding harsher colloquial or abusive coloring than is present in the original. In others, explicit racial markers are softened or removed altogether. This fluctuation is important because it reshapes not only the emotional impact of particular utterances, but also the broader ideological character of racial discourse in the novel. As a result, the translation moves unevenly between intensification, attenuation, and omission.

A black girl was raped by two white men...(p.10)	Говорил, это была прелестная черномазая девчонка. (p.11)
...cleaned himself with the little nigger's shirt...(p.4)	стрихивать с себя ...ее...майкой. (p.2)

The term rednecks occupies a distinct place in this system. It denotes not merely poor rural whites, but a socially and ideologically marked Southern type associated with racism and aggression. In the novel, the label signals a predictable racial attitude, combining class, region, and hostility in a single designation. The exact rendering varies according to context.

...an all-white jury full of rednecks...(p.130)	...в жюри присяжных входили только белые, какая-нибудь деревенщина... (p.132)/
...depicting us all as racist, ignorant rednecks. (p.78)	мы будем выглядеть невежественными чурбанами-расистами. (p.78)

Racialized hostility in the novel is directed not only at Black characters, but also at white figures associated with them. This indicates that racial discourse is structured not solely by ethnic difference, but also by mechanisms of loyalty, exclusion, and ideological control. In this way, language functions as a means of policing cross-racial solidarity and reinforcing the binary social order of the Southern world.

The range of racial hostility extends beyond Black–white relations. Vietnam War references introduce offensive labels for other ethnic groups, suggesting that verbal aggression operates within a wider system of exclusion. In translation, such historically specific slurs are often replaced with more general derogatory terms, which preserve their insulting effect but reduce their cultural and historical precision.

...the gooks was usin' us for target practice. (p.111)	...узкоглазые решили попрактиковаться на нас в стрельбе. (p.112)
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Overall, these examples show that racially marked vocabulary in *A Time to Kill* constitutes a complex linguistic system reflecting both explicit racism and subtler social positioning. In the Russian translation, this system is preserved unevenly: while the emotional force of racial conflict remains strong, it is variously intensified, softened, omitted, or generalized. As a result, racial hostility remains prominent in the target text, though often in a form that is less historically and culturally specific than in the original.

**Conclusion.**

The analysis shows that racially marked vocabulary in *A Time to Kill* is a key means of representing the social and ideological reality of the American South. Ethnonyms, slurs, Klan-related expressions, and protest slogans verbalize racial hierarchy, hostility, and social tension, forming an essential part of the novel’s cultural texture.

The Russian translation preserves this conflictual force to a considerable extent, but with varying precision. Some units retain their emotional and ideological charge, while others are intensified, softened, generalized, or omitted. As a result, the target text reproduces the atmosphere of racial confrontation, though not always its full historical and cultural specificity.

The findings suggest that the translation of racially marked vocabulary depends not only on semantic accuracy, but also on the preservation of pragmatic effect and cultural recognizability. In *A Time to Kill*, the Russian version largely maintains the emotional force of racial conflict, even where some of its culturally specific nuances are reduced.

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