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REVISITING SUBJECTIVE STRUCTURE OF THE PHENOMENON OF TRANSLATION RECEPTION

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of the subjective structure of the translation reception of a literary work – a triad consisting of three participants: an author, a translator and a reader. The authors study the attitude of researchers to the representatives of the triad, starting from the XVI century to the present day. In addition, the article provides a comprehensive analysis of all three participants in the triad. Despite numerous discussions of researchers on the roles of an author, a translator, and a reader, scientists have not yet come to a consensus on their role and their position in the triad. The purpose of this research is to study the representations of each of the participants of the triad and to determine the place and role of each of them in the subjective structure of the translation reception. The authors found that in the process of translation reception all three participants are important. An author is the initiator of a literary text; he gives birth to information desired to convey to a reader. A translator in the triad bears great responsibility before an author and a reader, and he is the most vulnerable category, since he is often the subject of criticism, unlike an author who created a text, and a reader. A reader is the main recipient of information from an author and a translator. Moreover, a reader closes the chain of reception passing from an author to a translator.

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Keywords: Translation reception, triad, author, translator, reader, literary text.



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1. Introduction

After reading a work of fiction in translation, can we be sure that we read exactly what the author wanted to convey to us? Did a translator contribute more to our understanding of a work than an original creator of it? Can we be sure that our perception of a literary art will be exactly that which an author or a translator expects? In order to answer these questions we need to turn to translation studies and receptive aesthetics.

Thus, the perception of a text by a translator as a result of reading and translation, the finished translation, as well as the perception of a translated text by a reader is called translation reception. Hans Robert Yauss, one of the founders of receptive aesthetics, believed that a literary text did not have autonomy, it came to life and made sense through reading by a recipient in his mind. In addition, Yauss (1995), adhering to the concept of the historicity of meaning, following Hans Georg Gadamer (1988) believed that the content and meaning of a work were subject to constant changes depending on the patterns of thinking of a recipient, as well as the historical and socio-cultural conditions of a reading period; therefore, the work was always open to future receptions (Gadamer, 1988; Yauss, 1995). Despite the possibility of a huge number of receptions, it should be noted that there are boundaries established by the content of a text beyond which various interpretations of the work do not pass.

The reception of a foreign-language literary work presupposes the presence of the following triad “an author – a translator – a reader”. For several centuries, researchers have endowed the participants in the game in the triad with various roles and values. The analysis of the structure of translation reception is determined by time, area and direction of research thought. It is important to note that previous studies in this area are aimed at one of the participants: an author, a translator or a reader, but have not received a comprehensive analysis of the role and tasks of each participant in the game in the triad.

The purpose of our research is to study the representations of each of the participants of the triad and to determine the place and role of each of them in the subjective structure of translation reception.

The French philosopher and literary critic of the 20th century, Roland Barthes, reduced the role and significance of an author to nothing, arguing that it is not necessary to look at a work through the prism of a writer. He believed that an author only conveys the ideas accumulated before him by society using language. Barthes, in contrast to the French literary critics and critics of the time Lanson and Saint-Beuve, who considered that, analyzing a work, it was important to plunge into the biography, correspondence, memoirs and other information available about the author, condemned the exaltation of the role of an author, stating that

In the complex of that image of literature that existed in our culture, an author, his personality, his life story, his tastes and passions reigned. Usually critics still consider Baudelaire’s work full of everyday inconsistency, they see all of Van Gogh’s work is in his mental illness and all the Tchaikovsky’s work is in his vice; every time they seek an explanation of a work in a person who created it, as if through the more or less transparent allegoricity of fiction, the voice of one and the same person – an author “confesses” each time. (Barthes, 1994, p. 32)

Foucault (1994) stated that society in its days was in a hurry to assess with a jaundiced eye a work according to its author, depending on preferences, and not on the content of a text. Foucault (1994)

postulated that it was acceptable for society to familiarize oneself with a work without knowing who the author was, only if this fact was a mystery.

Arguing that a work is capable of existing and succeeding in society without being tied to any particular creator, the philosopher cites fairy tales and other folklore works that circulate in society and have no fixed authorship as an example.

A translator, being an intermediary between an author and a reader, also occupies an important position in the triad. Garbovski (2004), in favor of previously expressed opinions about the predominant role of a reader in the triad, believes that a text, after reading by a reader, loses touch with an author and becomes the property of a reader, as a reader puts meaning into it based on his individual picture of the world. In accordance with this, Garbovski (2004) believes that there is an illusion of the possibility of equating the role of a translator and an ordinary reader, since the latter also projects his cognitive experience on the work he reads and translates. “With such a position, one will have to admit that translation as such does not exist, since each translator will create his own work, by virtue of his mind and talent, only partially resembling what was in original work” (p. 50).

In the light of the above mentioned aspects, we believe that the goals of reading a text for a translator and reader are significantly different. The purpose of a reader is to obtain aesthetic pleasure, to draw new knowledge, information and experience; a translator, while reading a text for subsequent translation, carries out a complex analysis of the lexical and stylistic means of meaning; and for him, reading is the penetration both in the laws of speech representation of meaning by an author of original text, and in the atmosphere of a work and an author, in the era and culture, and sometimes the history of the people whose language are used to write a text.

French philologist and translation theorist of the twentieth century Georges Mounin (1994) added colored glass to the transparent glass metaphor, endowing each of the glasses with a different degree of refraction of original image, which metaphorically very successfully shows the pluralism of approaches in translation. The strategy of transparent glass implies such adaptation of a text during translation, in which it would seem to a reader that original text was written in translated language, while the details of an original text cannot always be preserved. The colored glass strategy may be a more accurate translation of an original, in which all cultural and linguistic details are preserved, and the events and moods of the era are conveyed as much as possible.

Lawrence Venuti, an American translator and theorist, used another optical metaphor to describe a good translation. Thus, Venuti (1995) believes that in a high-quality translation, a translator is invisible. The better the translation, the better it reveals an author and the meaning of an original text (author’s translation). Venuti (1995) criticizes the approach to translation as transparent glass, believing that such work will distort an original text.

Kostikova (2010) believes that translation can be represented as a mirror, since translation is a reflection of an original text. However, a mirror can be “distorting”, “truthful”, “concave”, and “convex”. The quality of this mirror, according to the researcher, determines the personality of a translator, his attitude to “his own” and “stranger”, as well as his translation abilities.

The French poet of the 16th century, Joachim du Bellay, considered “loyalty” to original text and “loyalty” to an author the main criterion for a good translation. He called translators, who do not adhere to this provision, “traitors” developing a metaphor of fidelity (Du Bellay, 1981).

Garbovski (2008) speaking about the essence of translation did not accept any of the aforementioned optical metaphors, emphasizing that translation was neither transparent glass nor a mirror, but a completely new product created by a translator based on his own cognitive representations.

2. Problem Statement

With the advent of receptive theory, hermeneutics, receptive aesthetics and translation studies, each of these areas of research asks what the reception of a literary text is. Whose role in the subjective structure of translation reception in an author-a translator-a reader triad is major, and whose role is not so significant? The absence of a clearly developed theory about the role and influence of the triad “an author – a translator – a reader” on a literary text negatively affects further studies of receptive theory and translation studies.

The existing distribution of roles in the triad is rather controversial. Thus, if according to R. Barthes the role of an author in the reception of a literary text is not so significant compared to a reader, then according to Benjamin (1974-1989), not a single object of art is oriented to a recipient: “Not a single poem is intended for a reader, not a single picture to a viewer, nor one symphony to a listener. Is translation intended for readers who do not understand the original?” (p. 43). Michel Foucault, following R. Barthes, condemns the excessive attention paid to an author of a work, as well as the attribution of a text to an author’s property, arguing that the emergence of this historically established tradition was connected with the possibility of punishment if the content of a text violated permissible norms: “... To find an author contemporary criticism uses works that are very close to Christian exegesis, when the latter wanted to prove the value of the text through the sanctity of an author” (Foucault, 1994, para. 9).

As we noted above, there are also conflicting statements on the role of a translator in the triad. Researchers describe two types of translation: the first type most accurately conveys the content, trends of the era, cultural features described in original text; the second type of translation smoothes a text, bringing it as close as possible to the linguistic and cultural features of target language. The choice of translation strategy depends entirely on a translator, however, in our opinion, choosing any of these types it is advisable to avoid extremes. From ancient times, during the translation, it was considered important to convey content. Thus, Cicero, speaking of his translation of the oratory speeches of Aeschineus and Demosthenes into Latin in the first half of the first century BC, wrote: “I translated not as a translator, but as an orator, preserving all ideas and thoughts in our usual language. It was important for me to convey not every word, but the basic style and power of the word” (Cicero, 1949, p. 21).

In the nineteenth century the American poet and translator H. Longfellow described his translation of “The Divine Comedy” as follows:

The only merit of my book is that it accurately conveys the words of Dante, without any speculation of a translator. In other words, although my translation is rhythmic, I tried to make it literal, like a prosaic translation ... When translating Dante, something should be sacrificed. Do I need a beautiful rhyme that blooms at the end of the line, like a honeysuckle on a hedge? No, you

need to save something more valuable: accuracy, correctness, that is, the life of the honeysuckle itself ... A translator must communicate what an author says. And to explain what he meant is the commentator's business. (Venuti, 1995, p. 42)

A different understanding of translation is not limited to the use of various kinds of metaphors. It should be noted that the same transparency metaphor for different researchers has a different meaning. Thus, for Walter Benjamin, a German essayist and translator, one of the most influential philosophers of twentieth-century culture, a transparent translation is a translation that does not obscure original text, but to the maximum extent conveys the meaning of original, literally reflecting syntactic constructions (Benjamin, 1997). This understanding of transparent translation is the opposite of "transparency", understood by other researchers. Thus, it can already be seen from the above mentioned interpretations that the degree of proximity of original and translation, as well as the means to achieve such proximity, is one of the main subjects of discussion of translation scholars and similar pluralism of approaches, in our opinion, systematically updates the concept of translation reception, which arises, in fact, on the foundation of ambiguity in understanding the goals and objectives of a translator in general and a translator of a literary text in particular.

In this study, we set the goal of studying previously done studies about each participant in the triad of translation reception and to conduct our own analysis of the place and role of each participant.

3. Research Questions

The object of research is the translation of the reception of a literary text. The subject of the study is the subjective structure of the translation reception – the triad of translation reception "an author – a translator – a reader".

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of our research is to study the representations of each of the participants of the triad and to determine the place and role of each of them in the triad of translation reception.

5. Research Methods

In order to achieve this purpose, compositional analysis, descriptive and narrative research methods were used.

6. Findings

Despite various points of view on the role of the first participant in the triad – a writer, we believe that a writer is the main creator and initiator of the ideas and plots presented by him in a work. No matter how laminated a text that passes through the final recipient – a reader, the frame of a work created by an author will remain unchanged.

The second participant of the triad of translational reception – a translator, is the intermediary between an author and a reader, and it is on him that the perception of a text by the final recipient – a reader, depends.

The third participant of the triad of translation reception – a reader – is the main recipient and, therefore, the main participant in the process of translation reception.

The work, having gone from an author to a translator and from a translator to a reader, acquires its complete meaning for each reader in accordance with the cognitive knowledge, beliefs of a reader at the time of reading. Returning to the polemic about the role of an author, it should be added that a reader, before or after reading the work, may feel the need to get acquainted with information about an author in order to create a more complete picture of a work. On the other hand, for a translator, acquaintance with any available information about an author is a need.

At the same time, it seems quite obvious to us that it is necessary to clearly distinguish between an author's goal, which he pursued during the creation of a work (and this goal may not be related to readership), and the goal of a translator, which is just consists in acquainting a reader with an original unknown to him for objective reasons. Thus, the goals of original author and translator can be completely different with regard to readership.

7. Conclusion

Summing up the analysis of the significance of the participants of the triad of translation receptions “an author – a translator – a reader”, the importance and co-creation of each of them should be indicated. An author is the initiator of a literary text; he gives birth to the information that he wants to convey to a reader.

A translator in the triad bears a tremendous responsibility to an author and a reader, and is the most vulnerable category, as it is often the object of criticism, in contrast to an author, who created a text at his will, and a reader.

A reader is the main recipient of information from an author and a translator. Moreover, a reader is a co-creator of a literary text, as it closes the chain of reception passing from an author to a translator, from a translator to a reader of the work of art at the time of reading.

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