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LEXICAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE FRENCH TRANSLATION OF A. S. PUSHKIN'S "THE CAPTAIN'S DAUGHTER"

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Abstract

This article presents a research that is aimed at discovering translational transformations and infelicities on the lexical level in the French translation of the novel "The Captain's Daughter" by A.S. Pushkin. The relevance of this article is explained by the controversy between the growing interest to literary fiction of Russian classic authors and their translations (not always of high quality). In the research we use the methods of componential analysis, continuous sampling, comparative and mathematical data processing. The article contains a brief review of literature on the issue of interpreting translational transformations. The authors suggest an algorithm to prepare for translating a literary text to the French language in the given article. The completed qualitative and quantitative analysis of lexical transformations in the translation proves that the most frequent translational transformations are: substitution, addition, omissions and transpositions. The reasons of the decrease in the quality of translations are discovered to be the following: difficulties in translating non-equivalent lexis, geographical names, objects of culture and household, proverbs and idioms, as well as presence of implicit information. The authors of the research suggest variants of translation for the sentences that are absent in the authentic text, as well as the fragments of the literary text containing discrepancies and mistakes in the target language (French). Further development of the research requires elaboration of the issue of translational transformations on the syntactic level.

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1. Introduction

Russia's success in all the areas of economic and political life contributed to the increase of interest to Russian cultural heritage: music, art, literature, and especially to the masterpieces of the classic authors of the previous centuries: A.S. Pushkin, F.M. Dostoevsky, I.S. Turgenev, I. Bunin, et al. French writers and translators (A. Gide, P. Merimee, R. Labrie, M. Vitmay, E. Selikov et al.) carried out translation of Russian classical authors to the French language.

A significant amount of literary works by French authors, such as L. Aragon, A. France, O. de Balsac, V. Hugo, A. Camus, F. Sagan, A. Dumas et al, are translated into the Russian language.

2. Problem Statement

The relevance of the article is caused by the controversy between the increasing interest to the literary works of Russian classical authors and their translation, which often contain discrepancies and even mistakes. This problem can be explained with the fact that a translation of a literary text (literary translation) is different from a scientific translation: in the literary text there is a lot of metaphors, tropes and figures of speech, idioms, proverbs and sayings, imagery of language, the presence of realia and complex sentences.

The review of literature on translation and translational transformations proved that the given issue was elaborated by such scholars as Komissarov (2013), Minyar-Beloruhev (2016), Retsker (2016), Barkhudarov (2017), Gil-Bardají (2010), Mounin (2004), Sakhno (2006), Ricoeur (2016), Fusari (2002), Gasset (2013), Lederer and Seleskovitch (2014), Vinay and Darbelnet (2003).

However, the translational transformations on the lexical level requires a more meticulous research, as this phenomenon is not covered enough in the theoretical and practical works of domestic and foreign scholars.

3. Research Questions

According to opinions of numerous theorists and practicing translators, translation of literary texts is the most complex and difficult type of translation, because it demands the translator to possess wide encyclopaedic knowledge, which can cover not only the contemporary era, but also previous centuries, the author's talent, and deep comprehension of the original language as well as the foreign (target) language.

The translator must be an expert in all the possible areas: history of the countries, literary works, customs and traditions, celebrations – in other words, all the cultural heritage of the people that take part in this cross-cultural communication, which can take both oral and written forms.

The translator must also know the culture, tempers, law, etiquette and realia not only of the culture of the original language, but also the culture of the target language speakers. The translator should know how to transmit the background knowledge. Explication of the background knowledge which may be left unknown for the carriers of a different culture might be demonstrated by the following example: "He went off to war on the 22nd of June". For an Englishman or a Frenchman this date would probably mean nothing in particular. But a Russian person would understand that this date is the first day of the Great

Patriotic war. So, the appropriate translation would be the following: “He went off to war on the 22nd of June, - the day when Germany attacked the USSR”.

In the course of professional activity, a translator can put infidelities, discrepancies and even mistakes in their translation of a literary text, which may be explained with the difficulties in translating paroemia, idioms, non-equivalent words (lexical units of original language with no match in the target language (Komissarov, 2013)), and the differences in the world view. For instance, a Frenchman would say “A vos souhaits!”, which literally means “Let your wishes come true”, an English person would say “Bless you”, and a Russian person would say what literally means “Be healthy”.

The translation of a literary text is different from scientific translation due to the abundance of metaphors, figures of speech, tropes and complex grammatical structures.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study include:

- to analyze translational transformations on the lexical level;
- to find and correct faults and infidelities in the translation of the literary text;
- to suggest a more appropriate variant of translation.

5. Research Methods

The research methods used by the authors include:

- theoretical (analysis and generalization of scientific and methodical literature on the topic of literary translation);
- empirical (the method of continuous sampling, method of statistical material processing, analysis of translational transformations).

The research is based on the French translation of the historical novel “The Captain’s daughter” by A.S. Pushkin.

6. Findings

Before starting to work with a literary text, the translator must get to know historical annals in advance, as well as the chronicles of the previous years, manuscripts, and all sorts of cultural heritage of the people whose literary work they need to present to the foreign readers.

The translating process supposes a conscious determination of relations between the given original language and target language. These relations presuppose the translation, because any interpretation of the original is connected with the choice of verbal means from the contents of the target language. Lexical, grammatical and stylistic difficulties are explained by discrepancies between units of the original and target languages. To eliminate them a translator might use special linguistic methods, called translational transformations, or in other words, some methods of interlinguistic substitute, aimed at achieving equivalence between original and target languages. By this term Komissarov (2013) understands “a conversion which makes it possible to carry on a transfer from units of the original language to the units of the target language” (p. 14).

Minyar-Beloruhev (2016) believes that “a transformation is a change of formal (lexical and grammatical transformations) or semantic (semantic transformations) components of original language with no loss of information that is meant to be transferred” (p. 16).

According to Minyar-Beloruhev (2016), “lexical transformations are a translational deviation from the dictionary equivalents, which means a substitute of particular lexical units of the original language to some lexical units of the target language, which are not equivalent to each other” (p. 23).

Barkhudarov (2017) distinguishes four types of transformations that might take place during translation. They are transpositions, substitutions, omissions and additions. That is the classification that the authors support, because it allows to thoroughly research lexical transformations, which is precisely the purpose of this article.

To make a translation of high quality the translator must go through a very meticulous preliminary preparation. The authors of the article suggest an algorithm of preparation for translating a literary text to a high standard:

- to read the whole work in original;
- to elaborate all the decrees, resolutions and laws of the given era;
- to research about all the outstanding personas of the epoch under study;
- to study archive documents from that era;
- to get immersed into the daily life of the work’s characters;
- to study all the rites and traditions;
- to determine the realia in the text;
- to elaborate and translate the paroemia of the authentic text;
- to distinguish implicit information that needs to be deciphered for the reader;
- to make an effort to transfer the manner of writing and the “language” of the author.

During the working process the translator might face some difficulties while interpreting the literary text, which they eliminate with the help of lexical transformations.

In the historical novel by Pushkin (2018) called “The Captain’s daughter” the French translator used the following lexical transformations while translating realia (troika, samovar, altyn, versta, ukaz, verшок): omissions, substitutes, additions.

The analysis of the French translation of Pushkin’s novel “The Captain’s Daughter” allows us to uncover the translational transformations on the lexical level, which are partly presented in the Table 01.

Table 01. Translational transformations

Original Russian text in transliteration	French translation by R. Labrie	Lexical transformation	Translation from French to English	Suggested translation
“borzogo kobelya”	D’un lévrier	Omission	Borzoi (sighthound)	D’un lévrier mâle
“parikhmaher”	Perruquier	Substitute	Wigmaker	Coiffeur
“podi von, Savelietch, ya chayu ne hochu”	Va t’en. Je ne veux pas de thé.	Omission	Go away. I don’t want tea.	Va t’en, Savélitch;, je ne veux pas de thé.
“zapisku ot I.I. Zurina”	... un billet de la part de Zourine.	Omission	...a note from Zurin.	... un billet de la part de I.I.

				Zourine.
“ty ne napyalish ego na svoi okayannye plechischi”	Tu ne pourrais même pas en affubler tes énormes et maudites épaules.	Addition	You won’t pull it on your damned large shoulders.	Tu ne pourrais même pas en affubler tes maudites épaules.
“poltinu na vodku”	Un deüi-rouble de pourboire	Substitute	Half a rouble tip	Un demi-rouble pour la vodka
“da escho i pri dvuh svidetelyah!”	Et encore devant les témoins.	Omission	And even with witnesses	Et encore devant deux témoins.
“ty lzhash samym besstydnim obrazom!”	-	Omission	-	Tu ments d’une manière la plus odieuse
“Rebyata, strelyai!”	Feu, des gars	Transposition	Fire, fellows!	Gars, feu!
“Bashkirskaya klyacha”	La rosse kirghize	Substitute	Kirghiz hatrack	La rosse bachkire

Analyzing the translation of the historical novel “The Captain’s Daughter” by A.S. Pushkin we have found the following lexical transformations: substitutes (84 cases), omissions (10 cases), additions (17 cases), transpositions (8 cases). That concludes the following percentage: substitutes - 70,6%, additions - 14,4%, omissions - 8,3%, transpositions – 6,7%.

Let us discuss some discrepancies in the French translation of A.S. Pushkin’s “The Captain’s Daughter”. In the first example the translator omits the detailing of the dog’s sex: “borzoi kobel” (male sighthound). We suggest to keep this detail.

In the second case the translator mixes up the words “barber” and “wigmaker”.

In the third case the translator omits the reference Saveliech.

In the fourth case the translator omits the initials of Zurin (I.I.), which shows that for the French it’s not important, as they address each other mostly by the family name only.

In the fifth case the translator added the epithet “énormes” – large, but in fact Pugachev didn’t have a bulky build.

In the sixth case the translator changed the phrase “na vodku” (for the vodka) for “pourboire” because that is traditional tip for the French.

In the seventh case the translator omits the number of witnesses at a duel.

The sentence from the eighth example is absent in the translation at all. We suggest the following translation: “Tu ments d’une manière la plus odieuse”.

The next case contains a transposition. We suggest the following variant: “Gars, feu!”.

In the tenth example the translator changer the word “Bashkir” to “Kirghiz”, so we suggest to correct this detail.

We believe that all the suggested variants will add more national color, expressivity and accuracy to the French translation.

7. Conclusion

Having analyzed the translational transformations in the translation of the historical novel “The Captain’s daughter” by Pushkin (2018) on the lexical level, we could make a conclusion about the main reasons why the translation lacks accuracy. These reasons are:

- The difficulty in translating realia and paroemia;
- Differences in the linguistic world view;
- The omission of toponyms and proper names;
- Incomplete knowledge of the translator about historical events and documents, which have references of people’s ranks and titles in the novel’s era (lieutenant, sergeant-major).

A significant number of omissions proves that the translator had some particular difficulties in translating realia and a tendency to reduce language means, which is characteristic for the French language.

We are assured that the further investigation of the translational transformations on the syntactic level is a very perspective direction of study.

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