

CULTURAL PECULIARITIES IN TRANSLATION OF COLLOQUIAL VOCABULARY

Alsu A. Khafizova¹Natalia V. Antonova²

Abstract: The present article studies peculiarities of colloquial vocabulary of English, Russian and French languages on the material of fictional texts and their translation, particularly works by S. Maugham and their translation into Russian and French. Special attention is paid to the problem of preserving stylistic component when translating from one language into another. Since the languages demonstrate their own specific features in the aspect of word choice determined by cultural nature, development of functional styles and peculiarities of linguistic and stylistic norms, translators have to face certain difficulties when transferring the source text into another language. One of the problems in this aspect is that translator has to find not only corresponding lexical or phraseological units to preserve semantic components of the original, but also follow the stylistic mode of the text and at the same time do

not shift away from stylistic norms of the target language. The article shows how translators cope with this problem and try to solve both tasks.

Keywords: linguistics, intercultural communication, translation, culture, colloquial.

Introduction

We live in the world where there exist various cultures and each of them has its own peculiarities and brings its own sense. To be exact, it is culture that determines such notions as what is right, and what is wrong. In different cultural traditions these notions may in one thing be universal, and otherwise may have their specific national character in other. Culture is determined by Yu. M. Lotman as the complex of non-heritable information which is accumulated, kept and transformed by various groups of human society as well as it is the system

¹ Kazan Federal University (Russia). *E-mail:* AAHafizova@kpfu.ru. *Tel.* +79033417818

² Kazan Federal University (Russia). *E-mail:* AAHafizova@kpfu.ru. *Tel.* +79033417818

of prohibitions and prescriptions registered and fixed in linguistic form [1]. Major part of general culture has semiotic nature, i.e. it is realized in actions aimed at being perceived by other people. These actions form a system determined not only by social structure, but also by the definite epoch, national character, temperament, religious confession, etc. [2]. In connection with semiotic nature three important functions of culture can be pointed out, namely accumulative (mnemonic), communicative and generating (creative) [3]. Source and target languages demonstrate conceptual as well as cultural asymmetries encountered at all levels of language that give translators a challenge that require higher-order receptive, transfer and productive skills. This process involves source-text comprehension, problem awareness, problem identification, problem solving and the formulation of target-text concepts functionally analogous to those of the source text (Massey, 2017) [4]. Thus, translation appears to be a culturally contextualized pursuit determined by elements lying outside of what is typically perceived by language (Liddicoat, 2016) [5]. Therefore, in the light of various ideas,

translation is appreciated as a disposition of “intercultural communication” (Schäffner, 2003; Katan, 2009) [6, 7].

Methods

Language is undoubtedly a part of culture and it is through language that we can perceive soul and culture of nation. Language is the source of self-expression, and ability to accumulate different cultural senses is the peculiarity of any modern language. Cultural background is reflected in vocabulary pattern of the language. Words can accumulate and preserve cultural information. Close relation between language and culture creates word-connotation. Connotation is not only additional elements of lexical meanings, but also definite characteristics that represent evaluation of a thing or fact assumed in the society and reflect cultural notions and traditions connected with the word. In this sense the norms of the language should also be taken into account. It is noteworthy that norms and conventions from natural language usage are built upon in literary conversations [8, 12]. They reflect regular processes and developments happening in the language. Both language and stylistic norms show degree of codification of the

language and its possible variability or strictness.

Stylistic norms as well as the hierarchy of functional styles are diverse in different linguistic traditions (which should be taken into account during foreign language teaching and translation). Principles of language codification have not only historical cultural, but also national cultural specific features. For example, modern Russian language is characterized by blurring borders of literary language, variability of language norms and intensification of linguistic changes; that is why the pattern of its vocabulary tends to colloquial style. The norm of the French language was formed by classicists with their well-known purism and restriction of colloquialisms. That is why French neutral style shifts more to bookish speech. In England influence of classicism was not so strong as in France. Basically, in English speaking countries the strongest level of substandard norms in colloquial speech is observed in Australia, then come the USA and afterwards Great Britain. Referring again to the Russian language, it should be noted that the authority of literary language continues to remain rather high. Deviations from literary norm are

viewed by society rather negatively and as the representation of low cultural level of the speaker. In English sociolinguistics otherwise it is emphasized that Standard English is only one of the variants of the English language appropriate in one context and inappropriate in another [9]. The Standard dialect and the Received Pronunciation accent represent jointly the high-prestige varieties of British English, although these are far outnumbered by many non-standard regional varieties. As all speech and writing is framed in a dialect of some sort, whether it be standard or non-standard, high-prestige or low-status [10], it becomes very important during translation from one language into another take into account national cultural and stylistic peculiarities of this or that register. Among the diversity of functional styles colloquial style and colloquial speech as its representation stand out noticeably. Being quite stylistically flexible colloquial speech comprises the whole diversity of language, i.e. from scientific terms to low-colloquial words and phrases, dialectisms, jargonisms and vulgarisms. And it is on the border of colloquial and low-colloquial vocabulary where

different approaches of defining norms of the English, Russian and French languages reveal itself, and this raises special scientific research interest. In this respect, in our research we apply comparative method and method of semantic and stylistic analysis.

Results and discussion

Stylistic peculiarities of different languages (in our case certain features of colloquial style) are vividly revealed when we turn to the analysis of fictional texts translated into other languages (Russian and French). Novels and stories by S. Maugham are well-known in many countries and have been translated into different languages. His style is considered to be mostly literal and rather bookish, but at the same time the English writer artistically uses common colloquial speech sometimes even with the shades of familiarity. This combination of colloquial and bookish registers makes language of his works specific and original. So in S. Maugham's works we can find a number of lexical and phraseological units marked by the dictionaries as colloquial and low-colloquial, e.g. *my sweet, my pet, poor lamb, old boy, you're a brick, old cow, you brute, old hag, a mug, the*

dirty skunk, the damned fool, rotten hound, you bloody swine, vulgar little beast, crusty old dowager, to go on a bat, to fork out, a quid, old fogey, the blasted fool, little pipsqueak, go to hell, to lead smb. a dance, as clever as paint, like two peas in a pod, get down to brass tacks, as poor as a church mouse, to roll in money, to have one's eyes open, to knock smb. all of a heap, to cry over spilt milk, to play one's cards well, a smack in the eye, etc. The examples show that lexical and phraseological units belong to various thematic fields. Here can be found lexemes expressing physical and psychological state of the speaker, his mood, character, actions, intellectual abilities, appearance, material state, etc.

The aim to express all semantic shades of meaning of the word arouses certain translational difficulties due to denotative, connotative and interlinguistic semantic components which play important role in translation process. The highest degree of equivalence is gained when a word in a target text corresponds to the source one not only on the content level, but on the stylistic level as well. Quite often equivalents belong to different functional styles and stylistic component of the original may be lost. The following

examples of translation from English into French and Russian illustrate this tendency, and we can see lexical units where the first word is stylistically marked and the second one is stylistically neutral: *pigsty – la porcherie (pigsty)*, *beast – le voyou (hooligan)*, *shut up – Motus! (Not say a word!)*, *le brocard (a mock) – abuse, to fork out – risquer (to risk), to pop up – zajty (to come in), raspekat' (to scold) – to bully*, etc. When analogues of this type are used, stylistic equivalence of the words is violated. Such violation may be compensated in the context surrounding as stylistic component of the meaning colours not only the word itself, but the whole phrase.

The process of translation may cause certain omissions of words and expressions in the target text. These divergences occur due to the peculiarities of the target language, style of translation and sometimes unintentional cases of tautology which do not bring stylistic sense but sometimes take place in the source text. A peculiar role in translations may be given to amplifications (or additions). They sometimes appear under the influence of the rhythm and stylistic mode of the whole phrase. The intention of a

translator to recreate certain undertones or hints expressed in the original text, hidden citation and expressive content lead to inserting new lexical or phraseological units in the target text. Such tendency is quite common in the practice of translating from English into Russian. In English literature we can often find stylistically neutral words and expressions which due to peculiarities and principles of Russian stylistics are replaced in translation by emotionally coloured and expressive ones. This is one of the important types of transformations in translation called expressive concretization. Sometimes the context of the original text may require certain expressive substitutions [11]. Method of compensation involves translating semantic meaning of the word or its stylistic colouring not where it is expressed in the original text and not by the same means as in the original. If a translator has to sacrifice either stylistic colouring of the word or phrase, or its expressive meaning, it is highly recommended to preserve primarily the expressive meaning, and if it is not possible try to find such conforming unit by applying method of compensation to minimise losses. Method of compensation is quite frequent in

translating jargon words and colloquialisms that do not always have adequate equivalents in the Russian language. One of the common compensation means is reference to Russian phraseological units in order to impart certain imagery and vivacity to the text in those parts of it where translator had to forgo these peculiarities.

I've known him a good many years, you know. He gets a lot of fun out of talking about other people's business («The Razor's Edge») [12].

Ne zabudte, my s nim davno znakomy. Ego khlebom ne kormy, day tol'ko posudachyt' o chuzhykh delakh. / Don't forget, we've known him for quite a long time. You may not feed him with bread, but give him a chance to gossip over others affaires [13].

This example shows that in the Russian text there appear phraseological units and some lexemes which also represent certain national cultural peculiarities of the language. The method of compensation thus appears to be very productive among translators.

Translations into French language are of special interest, because on the one hand the task of the translator is to express all shades of meaning of the

original text, and on the other hand, he has to stick to stylistic norms of the target language. We know that the notion of norm varies in different linguistic traditions, and French norm was created by classicists and tends more to literal language. It is not so much flexible and free as norms of the English and Russian languages. Of course, our linguistic material from French target texts (i.e. novels “Theatre” and “Razor's Edge” by S. Maugham) demonstrates lexical and phraseological units of quite diverse stylistic registers, but in the whole bulk of translated units, i.e. the original text and translation into Russian, we can deduce that translators into French follow stylistic norms and do not use colloquial and low-colloquial words in the same number as they occur in the source text. Let's consider the following lexical examples from English text and corresponding French equivalents that demonstrate a certain degree of divergence of stylistic marking: *vulgar beast* – *la dernière des dernières* (i.e. *the worst of the worst*), *woman* – *la créature* (i.e. *creature*), *pip-squeak* – *freluquet* (i.e. *a plain person*), *old bitch* – *vieille rosse* (i.e. *old mean person*), *bloody bitch* – *la dernière des dernières*, *the slut* – *cette petite* (i.e. *this little*), *dirty little*

bitch – *sale petite grue* (i.e. *dirty little fool or woman of loose morals*), *bloody good actress* – *bougrement bonne actrice* (i.e. *develishly good actress*), *flappers* – *gamines* (i.e. *street girls*) etc. In these lexical units the first phrase is marked as low-colloquial or even vulgar and the second one tends to be not so offensive and stylistically low. In translations into French, some lexical units with so-called neutral and even elevated semantic and stylistic components in certain contextual situations may acquire strongly negative connotation and low stylistic register, like the lexical pair *woman* – *la créature* (i.e. *creature*), in other words though this unit has rather elevated external form, its inner meaning is quite opposite. In some cases, in French target text we can find addition of new elements like inserting personal pronoun *vous* (i.e. respectful form of *you*), which also elevates the whole style of translation, though lexical unit itself is translated with the corresponding stylistically low equivalent, like in “*You dirty little bitch, you’ve made me cry*” [14] and the French variant “*Taisez-vous, petite garce! Vous m’avez fait pleurer*” (i.e. *Don’t speak, little bitch. You’ve made me cry*) [15]. In the French text there is

omission of a lexeme ‘*dirty*’ and amplification of the phrase ‘*taisez-vous*’. Though stylistic register of coarse words like *bitch* – *la garce* is preserved, the whole phrase is stylistically smoothed.

In French texts we may observe certain omissions when some low-colloquial lexemes are left untranslated. In the following example such lexemes as ‘*the devil*’ and ‘*blasted*’ are omitted.

“*What blasted fools they are,*” he said. “*What the devil do they think they’re going to get out of it?*” [14].

– *Quelle toques! disait-il. Qu’espèrent-elles, je me le demande?* (i.e. *What fools! he said. What do they hope for, I wonder*) [15].

Sometimes the whole style of the sentence may be influenced by grammatical arrangement of the phrase and the choice of words, i.e. whether the noun is abstract or concrete. Let’s view the following example: “*I think an actor’s a perfect fool to marry young*” [14]. – *Pour un acteur c’est une folie de se marier jeune* (i.e. *For an actor it is a foolishness to marry young*) [15]. Here the substitution of concrete noun ‘*fool*’ to abstract noun ‘*une folie*’ and omission of the attribute ‘*perfect*’ makes the whole phrase sound less colloquial than the original sentence. Or in the next pair of

sentences amplification of abstract noun 'quel culot' (i.e. *what impudence*) also elevates the style of the whole phrase "How he could say a thing like that? The fool. The blasted fool" [14] – "Quel culot, ce morveux, comment avait-il pu dire une chose pareille?" (i.e. *What impudence, this greenhorn, how could he say a thing like that?*) [15].

At the same time, the French target text has a number of lexical units that have the same stylistic register as the original text, e.g. *old hag* – *ce vieux chameau* (i.e. *this old witch*), *the old cow* – *vieille chipie* (i.e. *old witch*), *damned fool* – *imbécile* (i.e. *imbecile*), *the bloody fool* – *le fieffé imbécile* (i.e. *notorious imbecile*), *blasted idiot* – *sinistre crétin* (i.e. *sinister cretin*), *damned rotter* – *un salopard* (i.e. *scoundrel*). Though these units are marked as low-colloquial they mostly demonstrate differences in the semantic components of the word.

Summary

Colloquial style examined on the example of several novels by S. Maugham and their translations into Russian and French performs various stylistic functions, i.e. function of emotional and expressive strengthening, characterising and communicative

functions. The individual style of the author is also revealed in the artistic usage of diverse number of colloquial and low-colloquial forms in author's speech as well as characters' speech for their verbal characteristics. Translation of stylistically marked lexical and phraseological units raises some difficulties because these units seldom coincide in different languages what is determined by different views on the norm in different linguistic traditions. Our lexical material shows that translators in most cases find corresponding analogues which also reflect linguacultural peculiarities of the languages under study. At the same time on the lexical level it is not always possible to preserve all semantic components of the word, especially if the lexical unit is stylistically coloured. In this case we can speak about differences in lexical systems of the languages and differences in cultural notions that are revealed in lexical and phraseological units. The volume of semantic meaning also does not coincide. The reason of various transformations in translation is determined by the necessity to express communicative meaning of the source text in spite of the asymmetry of linguistic and cultural systems.

Conclusion

Comparative analysis of translations made it possible to distinguish certain linguacultural peculiarities of colloquial vocabulary of the English, Russian and French languages and also determine that actions of translators in most cases are dictated by the norms of the target language and individual preferences.

Acknowledgements

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

Bibliography

- Lotman, Yu. M. 1994. *The Talks about Russian Culture. Life and Traditions of Russian Nobility of the 18th – beginning of the 19th centuries*. St. Petersburg: Art-SPb.
- Norman, B. Yu. 2009. *The Language Theory. Introductory Course*. Moscow: Phlinta: Science.
- Tokarev, G. V. 2014. *Introduction into Semiotics*. Moscow: Phlinta: Science.
- Massey, G., M. Ehrensberger-Dow. 2017. Translating Conceptual Metaphor: the Process of Managing Interlingual Asymmetry. *Research in Language*, vol. 15, no 2, pp. 173-188.
- Liddicoat, A.J. 2016. Intercultural Mediation, Intercultural Communication and Translation. *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*, vol. 24, no 3, pp.354-364.
- Schäffner, C. 2003. Translation and Intercultural Communication: Similarities and differences. *Studies in Communication Sciences/Studi di scienze della comunicazione*, vol. 3, pp.79-107.
- Katan, D. 2009. Translation as Intercultural Communication. In: M. Baker, ed. *Translation Studies*. London & New York, NY: Routledge, pp. 74-92.
- Norgaard, N., B. Busse. 2010. *Key Terms in Stylistics*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Germanova, N. N. 2014. *The History of Norming the English Language: Linguacultural Bases of the British Normative Grammar*. Moscow: Lenand.

Simpson, P. 2004. *Stylistics*. London: Routledge.

Retsker, Ya. I. 2016. *The Theory and Practice of Translation*. Moscow: Auditoria.

Maugham, W. Somerset. 1999. *The Razor's Edge*. Moscow: Manager.

Maugham, W. Somerset. 2005. *The Moon and Sixpence. The Razor's Edge. Novels*. Translated by M. Lorie. Moscow: AST.

Maugham, W. Somerset. 2000. *Theatre*. Moscow: Manager.

Maugham, W. Somerset. 2005. *La comédienne* [The Actress]. Translated by Le Rocher. Paris: Domaine étranger.

Abusyarova D., Takhtarova S. Conflict communication: linguoecological aspect // *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict*. Volume 20, Special Issue 2, 2016 / Ed. Courtney R. Kernek, Southeastern Oklahoma State University. - Jordan Whitney Enterprises, Inc., USA, 2016- P.154-158.