

Lecture 14

Theme: EXPRESSIVE FUNCTION IN TRANSLATION

Plan

Emotiveness in translation in conferences

The use of stylistic expressive means

Pragmatic aspects of translation

The expressive, or emotive, function is closely connected with the interpersonal function, as it also shows a person's attitude to what s/he is talking about, the emotions s/he feels when saying something, irrespective of any response. It shows the mental state of a person in relation to what s/he is talking about. Most typically the expressive function is met in colloquial speech, in fiction, in journalistic register. Researchers have described some components that make up the expressive function:

- emotive semes (emosemes)
- expressive semes (expressemes)
- appreciative semes (appresemes)

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- stylistic semes (stylesemes)
- pragmatic semes (pragmemes)

Emotive semes, or emosemes, are bits of meaning, with the help of which a person expresses emotions. *"You old fool," said Mrs. Meade tenderly... (Mitchell)*

– *"Ах, ты, дурачок," – нежно сказала миссис Мид... The word *tenderly* shows positive emotions expressed in the first words, which makes a translator choose a diminutive form of address in Russian and reduce the adjective *old* (compare the opposite meaning of the phrase *"Ах, ты, старый дурак"*). As has been described in Part IV Chapter 9 §3, expressive affixes are a cultural and linguistic peculiarity of Russian. Though they exist in English (*-let, -ster, -ard, -kin, --ling*), affixes of this type are used far less frequently.*

Emotions (regret, annoyance, etc.) can be expressed not only by notional emotive words, but also by interjections: *Since we did not succeed, why, we must try again.* – *Раз мы потерпели неудачу, что ж, надо попытаться снова.* Modal verbs can also contribute to expressing emotions, for example, irony.

This is typical of the modal verbs *would, could* and *might*: *"And then Harry got drunk." "He would do, wouldn't he!" – "И затем Гарри напился." "Это так на него похоже!" You could help me with the dishes! – Мог бы помочь мне с посудой!*

Expressive semes (expressemes) intensify the denotative meaning either by special intensifying phrases or by creating an image through a metaphor or simile. Intensification can involve the use of adverbs. The position of an adverb can be decisive in meaning and it, therefore, effects the translation: *They attacked him violently.* – *Они напали на него со всей силой* (physical assault is implied.) *They*

violently attacked him. – Они подвергли его яростным нападкам (verbal assault is implied.)²³¹

In informal American English, the phrases *sort of* and *kind of* are used as intensifiers before any part of speech, including the verb: “*He doesn’t have any job,*” Maxwell explained. “*He just sort of hangs around various labs and lends a hand.*” (M. Wilson) – “У него нет работы,” – объяснил Максвелл. “Он вроде как крутится возле разных лабораторий и помогает.” *He is kind of clever.* – Он вроде умный. In Russian, particles and adverbs are widely used as intensifiers.

Special syntactic constructions are used to intensify the expression: *Don’t I know that!* – Мне ли не знать этого! *Who should come in but the mayor himself!* – Кто бы вы думали вошел – сам мэр! *Look here, Father, you and I have always been good friends, haven’t we?* – Слушай, папа, мы с тобой всегда были хорошими друзьями, правда?

Comparisons, similes and metaphors have good expressive power.* ...Я открыла глаза, смотрю: она, моя голубушка, сидит на постели, сложила вот так ручки, а слезы в три ручья так и текут (Л.Толстой). - ...I opened my eyes and looked: there she was, the darling, sitting on the bed with her hands clasped so, and the tears came streaming out of her eyes (Transl. by S. Lubensky).

The Russian idiom *течь в три ручья* is substituted here by a metaphorically charged verb, converted from a noun. This sentence illustrates another typical dissimilarity of Russian and English. Russian communicators tend to apply zoological metaphors to addressing people (in this sentence we deal with the appositive metaphor: *моя голубушка*). These images are alien to foreigners.

English-speaking people use quite a definite set of expressive means in this case.

Appreciative semes (appresemes) are responsible for the speaker’s approval or disapproval of a situation. It is interesting to know that in Russian and English semes for disapproval prevail over approbation semes (there are more words for blaming than for praising).²³² “*You are a fine honest rogue, Scarlet!*” *A rogue! Queer that the term should hurt her. She wasn’t a rogue, she told herself vehemently.* (M. Mitchell) – “Ты прекрасная убежденная плутовка, Скарлет!” *Плутовка! Странно, что это слово так ранило ее. Она вовсе не плутовка, яростно повторяла она. A sudden combination of words with different appreciative connotation does not soften the negative meaning of the word rogue and this contrast must be rendered in translation.*

Context plays a very important role in determining the appreseme. Depending on the situation, the phrase What a man! can be translated with approval: Какой человек! Ну и человек! Вот человек! Вот это человек! or with disapproval: Что за человек! Ну и тун! Prosody of the utterances would also be different.

Russian diminutive and pejorative forms of address (Ванечка – Ванька) are usually lost for an English-speaking person, unaccustomed to such forms: Ванечка, подожди минуту! (И. Куприн) – Vanya! Wait a minute. Stylistic semes (stylesemes) lower or

elevat the tone of speech. K. Chukovsky illustrates stylesemes with his well-known denotative synonyms:

Светловолосая дева, чего ты дрожишь? Рыжая девка, чего ты трясешься?
Stylistic semes regulate semantic agreement of words.

The following sentences seem odd or humorous because they include words with opposite stylistic charges: He commenced to scratch his back.

. Since not all stylistically charged words have equivalents of the same style in the target language, there is a possible trap for a translator to lose a styleseme or change it.

Pragmatic semes (pragmemes) arouse communicator's particular background associations. These semes are most difficult to render, since they may fail to coincide even for representatives of the same ethnic culture but of different generation (the phrase "союз нерушимый" will evoke nostalgic feelings of the former country, the USSR, with an elderly person, but it practically says nothing to a teenager, who does not know the anthem of the USSR and has no such association).

Translation from one language into another is far more complicated. Stars and Stripes, Star-Spangled Banner, Old Glory sound pompous to an American who recognizes the paraphrase for the national flag of the USA. But the representatives of other nations may miss this pragmeme.

Thus ethnic and cultural differences between peoples interfere with translation and require thorough investigation on the part of the translator and subtle work at conveying all expressive semes. How can a translator obtain adequate translation or, to use the term by E. Nida, dynamic equivalence?

Among the most frequently used techniques for obtaining the text expressive function in translation are compensation and substitution. Particularly common is asymmetrical compensation, that is, using a compensated element in some other place of the text. This can be illustrated with an extract from "The Catcher in the Rye" by J. Salinger. Holden is describing his brother: He just got a jaguar. One of those little English jobs that can do around two hundred miles an hour. It cost him damn near four thousand bucks. Some of the expressive words (damn, dough) are lacking in this translation. But their expressiveness is compensated by other words, (more emphatic than their English correspondence.

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