

LECTURE 11

Translation problems

Plan: Violation of Phraseological Units and its Rendering

Foregrounding and Translation

Foregrounding of Articles

Foregrounding of Degrees of Comparison

The substitution of a component element may be achieved by a synonym or an antonym, by a word with a resembling sound form, or by any word prompted by the context or by the writer's intention. Another stylistic device which may also be described as national is the so-called violation of phraseological units or renovation. This device is used in all types of phraseological units: fusion, unities and collocations. But despite their stability, phraseological units are easily broken by some lexical element which is either added or substituted. Evidently the ties binding the components are not indissoluble, which is probably due to a wide and flexible collocability of the English language. These substitutions are always occasional and unpredictable, e.g.

Every country on the old continent has a fine collection of skeletons in the cupboard.

У всех европейских стран есть немало неблагоприятных тайн, которые они скрывают от других.

The meaning is fully rendered but the device is not reproduced in the translation. It is a typical case of semantic but not of stylistic equivalence.

The President is not going to be a bull in the economic china shop.

В вопросах экономики президент не собирается вести себя как слон в посудной лавке.

The device is rendered by a detached construction.

Substitution based on the phonetic principle can be illustrated by the following example from Winston Churchill's speech in the Commons after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour:

I hesitate to express opinions about the future, because things turn out so very oddly, but I will go so far as to say that it may be Japanese, whose game is what I may call "To make hell while the sun shines" are more likely to occupy themselves in securing their rich prizes in the Philippines, the Dutch East Indies and the Malayan Archipelago".

Я всегда колеблюсь, когда приходится высказывать мнение относительно будущего, потому что события разворачиваются таким непредвиденным образом, но я позволю себе сказать, что, возможно, японцы, игра которых заключается в том, чтобы, пользуясь благоприятными обстоятельствами, натворить как можно больше бед, скорей всего будут стараться закрепить за собой свои ценные приобретения на Филиппинах, в Голландской Ост-Индии и на Малайском архипелаге.

The effect of this violation is enhanced by a play on words resulting from combining two phraseological units: a proverb “to make hay while the sun shines” and a collocation “to make hell”.

Only semantic equivalence is achieved in the translation, as the corresponding Russian proverb *Куй железо пока горячо* would be irrelevant here.

Substitutions also occur in allusions and epigrams, e.g.

The family was at this moment divided, unlike Gaul, into four parts.

В этот момент, в отличие от Галлии, семья разделилась на четыре части.

This is an allusion to the well-known opening line of Caesar’s “De bello gallico”. The English translation of the original sentence runs as follows: “*Gaul as a whole is divided into three parts*”. Besides substitution, the allusion is extended by means of a lexical addition and is structurally altered.

Violation may also be achieved by a shifting of component elements, as was done, for example, by Evelyn Waugh:

“There’s danger in numbers; divided we stand, united we fall”.

In the first phrase E. Waugh substitutes the noun “*danger*” for “*safety*” (*there is safety in numbers*); in the second, he shifts the components (*united we stand, divided we fall*).

The following translation may be suggested:

В единении слабость. Раздельно мы устоим. Вместе мы погибнем.

The revival of a faded metaphor or metaphoric element may be regarded by the introduction of some word or words which restore and bring to mind the original transference of meaning.

I wanted to give her not a piece but the whole of my mind. (S. Maugham)

In phraseological unity “to give a piece of one’s mind – откровенно высказать кому-нибудь свое неодобрение – one of the components is a faded metaphor (*piece*) but the additional word “*the whole*” brings back the original meaning of the word “*piece*”. Naturally the device cannot be preserved but can be compensated by means of expressive synonyms and an intensifier.

Я хотел не только откровенно высказать ей свое неодобрение, но буквально выложить все, что я о ней думал.

Set expressions (collocations) are easily violated as the ties between the elements are rather loose. This fact is confirmed by the existence of synonymous variants, e.g. to cast a glance, to dart a glance, etc.

Phrases containing repetition (of the type “*day by day*”, “*step by step*”) are also sometimes broken by an additional word.

The clocks of Silverhill ticked away minute by slow minute. (P. Whitney).
Часы в Сильверхилле медленно отсчитывали минуту за минутой.

Foregrounding and Translation.

Modern English writers and journalists often give preference to foregrounding over, traditional stylistic devices. By foregrounding is understood the use of neutral linguistic means for stylistic purposes. A grammatical form or structure thus acquires great expressiveness and may be regarded as a stylistic device.

Foregrounding reveals and brings forth the potentialities which are inherent in linguistic means. Just as a poet a writer senses the expressive possibilities of a word, he sees potential expressiveness in a grammatical structure or form and skillfully uses it. Foregrounding is always individual; is displayed in unexpected contexts and possesses a high degree of unpredictability. Practically every grammatical form and every part of speech may be foregrounded, that is used for expressiveness.

Foregrounding of Articles.

The rendering of the meaning of articles has already been considered in the chapter dealing with grammatical problems.

In the following example Iris Murdoch effectively reveals the stylistic force of the two articles, their expressive possibilities and their effective use for stylistic purposes.

Perhaps he would achieve some sort of piece, the piece of an elderly man, a piece of cozy retirement...

Возможно, он обретет какой-нибудь душевный покой, такой покой, покой, свойственный пожилым людям, такой покой, который дает приятное уединение.

The foregrounded articles are compensated lexically.

Foregrounding of Degrees of Comparison.

Degrees of comparison can also be foregrounded. Such foregrounding may be achieved in two ways: either by semantic or by morphological violation of the norm. The semantic violation of the norm is applied to descriptive adjectives which by virtue of their semantics do not admit of comparison. Yet for the sake of expressiveness they are used either in the comparative or in the superlative degrees.

“Very good, sir”, said the groom, at his most wooden, and sprang down into the road. (Georgette Heyer)

It should be pointed out that in this case the superlative degree with the preposition “at” and a possessive pronoun forms a special model and is used absolutely as an elative, which implies that the object described possesses a certain quality beyond comparison.

“Слушаюсь, сэр”, сказал глум с самым, что ни на есть деревянным выражением лица и прыгнул на дорогу.

The meaning of the elative is rendered by a colloquial intensifier (*что ни на есть*).

Another example of semantic violation:

The station is more daunting than the Gare du Nord: golder, grander.

(E.Bowen)

Этот вокзал подавляет своим величием больше чем Северный вокзал в Париже, он еще более золотой, еще более пышный.

The device is preserved in the translation.

The foregrounding of descriptive adjectives is sometimes found in newspapers style as well.

The report's proposals were handed over to a much more "political" committee...

Предложение доклада были переданы комитету, который ведал политикой на гораздо более высоком уровне.

The inverted commas indicate that newspapers style is more conventional than imaginative prose.

Morphological violation may be described as violation of established grammatical norms for stylistic purposes and the degrees of comparison become functionally charged.

“Curiouser and curiouser”, said Alice. (Lewis Carroll)

Polixena Solovieva, the translator, takes recourse to the same device.

“Странче и странче”, сказала Алиса.

“Annie, could you give me a quart of coffee in a carton?”

“It'll have to be two points, Eth.”

“Good. Even gooder”. (J.Stainbeck)

“Анни, дай мне кварту кофе в пакете”.

“У меня пакеты по две пинты”.

“Ладно, даже распреладно”.

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