

LEXICAL PROBLEMS in TRANSLATION

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Types of meaning

- The systems of meaning in different languages are different. "Meaning, in our view, is a property of a language. An S.L. (Source Language) text has an S.L. meaning, and a T.L. (Target Language) text has a T.L. meaning". (J.C. Catford A Linguistic Theory of Translation, L.-1965 p.35)
- The semantic structures of correlated words of the Source Language and the Target Language cannot be co-extensive, can never "cover each other". A careful analysis invariably shows that semantic relationship between correlated words, especially polysemantic words, is very complex.

Types of meaning

- Three types of lexical meaning are distinguished and are to be rendered in translation: **referential, emotive and stylistic.**
- **Referential meaning** (logical, denotative) has direct reference to things or phenomena of objective reality, naming abstract notions and processes as well. We can distinguish between **primary and secondary referential meaning.**

Types of meaning

- **Emotive meaning**, unlike referential meaning, has reference not directly to things or phenomena of objective reality but to the feelings and emotions, associated with them.
- It is a connotative meaning created by connotations raised in the mind of the speaker and reader;
- it is inherent in a definite group of words even when they are taken out of context.

Types of meaning

- **Stylistic meaning** is based on stylistic stratification of the English vocabulary and is formed by stylistic connotations.
- Stylistic and emotive meanings are closely connected.
- Stylistically marked words possess a considerable element of emotive meaning.
- E.g. the slang-words "**mug**", "**phiz**" are undoubtedly more expressive than their neutral counterpart "face" and have a pejorative emotive meaning.
- In addition to the emotive and stylistic meanings, proper to the word as a linguistic unit, some emotive connotations may be acquired in the context. Both are to be rendered in translation.

Referential Meaning and its Rendering in Translation

- **Causes of lexical transformations** in the rendering of **referential meaning**:
 1. **Different vision of objects** of reality and **different usage**;
 2. **Different semantic structure** of a word in the source language and the target-language;
 3. **Different valency or collocability**.

1. Different vision and usage

- One and the same object of reality can be seen by different languages in different aspects. This is reflected in different usage,
- e.g. Hot milk with skin on it - Горячее молоко с пенкой.

English singles out the outer covering and Russian the boiling form.

- School-leavers - выпускники школы

In English teenagers leave the school while in Russian the school "releases" them into the world.

Different vision and usage

- **The city is built on terraces rising from the lake** (The Times, 1957) - **Город построен на террасах, спускавшихся к озеру.**
- **He folded his arms across his chest, crossed his knees** (Taylor Caldwell) - **Он сложил руки на груди, положил ногу на ногу.**
- This factor presents less difficulty for the translator into Russian than for the translator into English. The difficulty arises when such words are used figuratively as part of some lexical stylistic device.

Different vision and usage

- **"Instant history, like instant coffee,** can sometimes be remarkably palatable, at least it is in this memoir by a former White House aide who sees L.B.J. as "an extraordinary gifted President who was the wrong man from the wrong place at the wrong time under the wrong circumstance"(Time, 1969).
- «Современная история, **как и такой же современный продукт,** как растворимый кофе, иногда бывает удивительно приятна, по крайней мере это так в рецензируемых мемуарах бывшего помощника президента, который характеризует Джонсона как «удивительно способного президента, который был неподходящим человеком, родом из неподходящего места, в неподходящее время, при неподходящих обстоятельствах».

Different vision and usage

- Sometimes, due to a different vision the **meaning of a word in the source-language** is wider and less differentiated and corresponds to **two or more correlated words in the target language**. E.g. "Blue" corresponds to two Russian words: **синий, голубой**.
- The Russian equivalents of "purple" are **«пурпурный, фиолетовый, синий»**. The choice of the equivalent depends on the linguistic or extra-linguistic context: **purple robes of Roman emperors - пурпурные одеяния римских императоров; purple ink - фиолетовые чернила; purple shades - синие тени**.

Divergences in the Semantic Structure

- **Divergence in the semantic structure** is one of **the primary causes of lexical transformations**.
- Divergences are connected with peculiar features of a word or a group of words. Even words, which seem to have the same meaning in S.L. and T.L. are **not identical**.
- **Primary meanings** of such words **coincide** while their **derivative meanings do not**.
- "Semantic correlation between two languages is not to be interpreted as semantic identity. Due to complexity of semantic structure "one-to-one" correspondence between the semantic structure of correlated polysemantic words in the S.L. and T.L. is scarcely possible.

Divergences in the Semantic Structure

- Similar meanings of Russian and English words may differ in some components. This phenomenon is usually reflected in dictionaries where more than one Russian equivalent is listed under the same meaning of the English word.
- E.g., the primary and the secondary meanings of the adjective "gloomy" are rendered in English-Russian dictionaries by two Russian words:
1) тёмный, мрачный 2) мрачный, унылый.
- The use of two Russian equivalents proves that the semantic volume of the English meaning is wider and requires two Russian words for an adequate rendering.

Divergences in the Semantic Structure

- The analysis of the polysemantic word "**mellow**" shows that it can apply to a variety of objects and notions: fruit, wine, soil, voice, man. Each sphere of its application corresponds to a different derivative meaning and each meaning has two or more Russian equivalents.
- 1. **спелый, мягкий, сладкий, сочный** (о фруктах);
- 2. а. **выдержанный, старый**; б. **приятный на вкус** (о вине);
- 3. **подобревший, смягчившийся с возрастом** (о человеке);
- 4. **мягкий, сочный, густой** (о голосе и красках);
- 5. а) **рыхлый**; б) **плодородный, жирный** (о почве);
- 6. *разгов.* **весёлый, подвыпивший**. /БАРС/

Different Valency

- **The aptness of a word to appear in various combinations is described as its lexical valency or collocability.**
- The lexical valency of correlated words in different languages is not identical. This is only natural since every language has its syntagmatic norms and patterns of lexical valency.
- **Words, habitually collocated, tend to constitute a cliché,**
- e.g. **bad mistake, high hopes, heavy sea (rain, snow),** etc. The translator is obliged to seek similar clichés, traditional collocations in the target-language:
- **грубая ошибка, большие надежды, бурное море, сильный дождь (снег).**

Different Valency

- The key word in such collocations is usually preserved but the collocated one is rendered by a word of a somewhat different referential meaning in accordance with the valency norms of the target-language:
- **trains run** - **поезда ходят**;
- **a fly stands on the ceiling** - **на потолке сидит муха**;
- **It was the worst earthquake on the African continent (D.W.)** - **Это было самое сильное землетрясение в Африке.**

Different Valency

- Different collocability often calls for lexical and grammatical transformations in translation though each component of the collocation may have its equivalent in Russian
- "Britain will tomorrow be welcoming on an official visit one of the most **controversial** and youngest Prime Ministers in Europe" (The Times). «Завтра в Англию прибывает с **официальным визитом** один из **самых молодых премьер-министров Европы, который вызывает самые противоречивые мнения**».

Translation of Monosemantic Words

- **Monosemantic words** are comparatively few in number.
- There are the following lexical group of monosemantic words:

- 1) **antroponyms,**
- 2) **geographic names,**
- 3) **names of institutions, organizations, periodicals,**
- 4) **scientific and technological terms.**

Monosemy is typical of **numerals, names of months, days of the week,** etc.

Rendering of Antroponyms

- The function of antroponyms is purely nominative. They help to identify a person. There are two ways of rendering them: **transcription and transliteration.**
- **Transcription is now universally accepted.**
- Mary - Мэри, Jack - Джек, Hailey - Хейли , etc.
- Tradition, however, still plays an important role.
- **George Bernard Show - Джордж Бернارد Шоу (not Шо). King George is - король Георг, King Charles I - король Карл Первый.**
- Some "telling names" in fiction are translated:
- **Тяпкин-Ляпкин - Slap-Dash, Humpty-Dumpty - Шалтай-Болтай.**

Rendering of Geographical Names

- **Tradition** is very strong in rendering this group of words. They are often rendered according to the usage of earlier days, e.g. **Dover - Дувр, Texas - Техас, Hull - Гульь**, etc.
- But in some cases the tradition has been abandoned in favour of transcription. So **Virginia** is now **Вирджиния**, not **Виргиния**, and **Hull** is often rendered as **Халл**.
- Extended names are often translated: **the Cape of Good Hope - Мыс Доброй Надежды**.

Rendering of the Names of Institutions, Periodicals, Hotels, Streets, etc.

- **Transcription** is now universally accepted. **General Motors - Дженерал Моторс, Times – Таймс, Hotel Carlton - отель «Карлтон», Bayswater Road - Байсуотер Роуд.**
- **“Telling names”** of old inns and the names of streets in **historical novels are translated;**
- **The Red Lion - гостиница «Красный Лев».**
- **The "Economist" publishing office is in Threadneedle street - Редакция журнала «Экономист» помещается на Треднидл стрит,**
- **but "tailors lived in Threadneedle street" - Портные жили на улице «Иголка с ниткой»**

Translation of terms

- **Terms** are generally associated with a definite branch of science.
- They are characterized by a tendency to be **monosemantic in a given branch of science and technology** and therefore easily call forth the required concept:
- E.g. **calorie - калория, equator - экватор, polysemantic - многозначный**, etc.

Translation of terms

- One and the same term may have **different meaning in different branches of science**,
- e.g. **line 1) конвейер, поточная линия 2) трубопровод.**
- In some cases the recent terminological explosion has produced polysemy even within the same branch
- e.g., поджигающий электрод - in electronics may be **keep-alive electrode** or **trigger electrode.**

Translation of terms

- A group of **words of terminological nature: names of animals, birds, etc,**
- e.g. **tiger-тигр, cat-кошка, swallow-ласточка.** These words may acquire **a figurative meaning** in the source - language which has **no equivalent** in the target-language,
- e.g. **tiger** had a transferred meaning (now rare) **"smart-liveried small boy as groom"** (Concise Oxford Dictionary) - **маленький жокей, мальчик-жокей.**

Translation of terms

- **Names of plants**, e.g. **oak - дуб, lily-of-the-valley - ландыш,**
- **names of natural elements, names of the days of the week, of months and numerals: oxygen - кислород, Thursday - четверг, July - июль, thousand - тысяча, million - миллион.**
- **Despecialization of terms** in news media may occasionally pose a translation problem,
- e.g. **the launching pad for his career - трамплин для его карьеры.**

Translation of Polysemantic Words

- Different meanings of polysemantic words are revealed in the context.
- The term "**context**" is understood as the **minimum stretch of speech diagnosing each individual meaning of the word**. The context individualizes the meanings, brings them out.
- The context reveals concrete or abstract meanings of a word, its direct or transferred meaning

Translation of Polysemantic Words

- e.g. the word **"truth"** is used in its concrete everyday meaning in the phrase **"Tell me the truth"** - **«Скажи мне всю правду»**,
- **"To understand and to know the reality, it is necessary to have a theory of knowledge corresponding to truth (R. Fox, Marxism and literature) - the word "truth" is used in its abstract philosophical meaning «истина». – “Для того, чтобы постигнуть и понять действительность, необходимо иметь теорию познания, соответствующую истине”.**

Translation of Polysemantic Words

- The **context** reveals **direct and transferred** meanings of the word "**to cripple**". "**Smith was crippled in the war**" - «**СМИТ БЫЛ ИСКАЛЕЧЕН НА ВОЙНЕ**» (direct meaning), "**Reactionaries cripple the national movement in Africa**" - «**Реакционеры подрывают национально - освободительное движение в Африке**» (transferred meaning).

Translation of Polysemantic Words

- The **context** also reveals **a free or bound use** of the word.
- **He made a pace or two forward, (free) - Он сделал шага два вперед.**
- **He kept pace with the times (bound) - Он не отставал от века.** In this case the word "pace" forms part of a phraseological unity and is translated by a corresponding phraseological unity.

Translation of Polysemantic Words

- Sometimes **macro context** (a paragraph, a chapter or even a whole book) is necessary for a correct interpretation of the meaning.
- E.g., describing Becky Sharp Thackeray writes: **"The wretched woman was in a brilliant full toilet"**. Knowing Thackeray's negative attitude toward Becky, of the two meanings of the word **"wretched"** - **(1) несчастная, (2) негодная**, the latter should be used in the translation of this sentence: **Негодная (коварная) женщина была в ослепительном туалете.**

Translation of Pseudo-International Words

- The so-called **pseudo-international words** constitute a special difficulty for the translator
- The pseudo-international words **differ in meaning from language to language** either **completely**,
- e.g. **commutator- КОЛЛЕКТОР, complexion - ЦВЕТ ЛИЦА,**
- **or partially**, e.g. **elevator- 1) элеватор, 2) лифт.**

Translation of Pseudo-International Words

- They are known as the translator's "false friends". Translators are often deceived by formal resemblance into making errors.
- E.g., **There were attempts to sabotage key services in Santiago** (the Economist, 1974) - **Делались попытки вывести из строя основные объекты коммунального обслуживания в Сантьяго.**

Translation of Pseudo-International Words

- The word «**прогресс**» is monosemantic and has positive connotations. The meaning of the English "**progress**" is neutral and can apply to any movement
- E.g., Hogarth's picture "**Rake's Progress**" - «**ЖИЗНЬ ПОВЕСЫ**»,
- **Her progress about London during that first week was one thrilling adventure** (H. Walpole) - **Её знакомство с Лондоном в ту первую неделю было сплошным увлекательным приключением.**

Translation of International Words

- Sometimes **the meaning of international words is identical** in English and in Russian but the **collocation pattern is different** which prevents the use of the Russian word in translation.
- E.g., **Never before in the history of the world have there been so many persons engaged in the translation of both secular and religious materials** (E. Nida and Ch. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*).

Translation of International Words

- Although the meanings of the words "religious" - религиозный and "materials" - материалы are identical, the collocation «религиозные материалы» is quite impossible in Russian.
- An adequate translation would be:
- Ещё никогда в истории человечества столько людей не занималось переводом как светской, так и духовной литературы.

Rendering of Contextual Meanings

- A contextual meaning arises in the context.
- It should not be regarded as part of the semantic structure of the word.
- Every word possesses an enormous potentiality for generating new contextual meanings. These occasional contextual meanings are not arbitrary, but are always predetermined by the semantic structure of the word. It largely depends upon the semantic context.
- A contextual meaning possible in one language is impossible in another.

Rendering of Contextual Meanings

- In an atomic war women and children will be the first **hostages** (D.W.) - **Первыми жертвами в атомной войне будут женщины и дети.**
- In this sentence the contextual meaning of the word "**hostage**" is the "**victim**". This contextual is evidently implicit in its dictionary meaning. A similar contextual meaning cannot be generated by the Russian word «**заложник**». Thus the word «**жертва**» is the only possible equivalent.

Rendering of Contextual Meanings

- Britain's worldwide **exploitation** was shaken by colonial Liberation Movement. (D.W.)
- The contextual meaning of “**exploitation**” was formed metonymically: every colonial system is based on exploitation which is the foundation of colonial power. The Russian word «ЭКСПЛУАТАЦИЯ» can not generate similar contextual meaning.
- A possible equivalent will also be formed metonymically:
- **Колониальное могущество Англии было потрясено до основания национально-освободительным движением в колониях.**

Rendering of Contextual Meanings

- **Contextual meanings** often produce a strong effect, performing a stylistic function of **"deceived expectancy"**.
- The translator is confronted with a double difficulty:
- he should **avoid toning it down** and **must not violate the norms** of the target-language.

Translation of "Non-equivalents"

- “Non-equivalents” are the words of the source-language which either have no equivalents in the target language or no equivalent denotatum in the target culture.
- 1) the so-called **realia-words** denoting things, objects, features of national life, customs, habits, etc., e.g. **House of Commons, thane, coroner, teach-in, drive-in, cricket**, etc.
- 2) words, which for some linguistic reason have **no equivalent in the target language: conservationist, readership, glimpse**, etc.

Ways of Rendering Non-Equivalents

- 1) **direct borrowing (transliteration or transcription):** impeachment - импичмент, thane - тан, mayor - мэ́р, know-how - ноу-хау.
- 2) **translation loans.** House of Commons - Палата общин, backbencher - заднескамеечник, brain-drain - утечка мозгов.
- 3) **descriptive or interpreting translation.** Landslide - победа на выборах с огромным перевесом голосов, a stringer (Am.) - частично занятый корреспондент, труд которого оплачивается из расчета количества слов, wishful thinking – принятие желаемого за действительное.

Ways of Rendering Non-Equivalents

- The action of Congress and of North Carolina and Tennessee statesmen, aided by gifts of wise **conservationists**, have set this land aside as a **Great Smoky National Park**. (National Geographic, 1964).
- Эта местность на берегу реки Смоуки-хилл была превращена в Национальный парк благодаря усилиям Конгресса и государственных деятелей штатов Северная Каролина и Теннесси, а также благодаря пожертвованиям **любителей природы, понимающих важность ее сохранения.**

RENDERING OF EMOTIVE AND STYLISTIC MEANINGS

- **Translation of words with emotive meaning**
- **Emotive meaning** may be regarded as one of the **objective semantic features proper to words** as linguistic units and should not be confused with contextual emotive meaning that words may acquire in speech.
- Emotive meaning varies in different word classes. In some of them, for example, in interjections, the emotive element prevails whereas in function words it is practically non-existent.

RENDERING OF EMOTIVE AND STYLISTIC MEANINGS

- The emotive meaning is **based on connotations - positive, negative or neutral**. Russian is rich in **emotive suffixes** whose meaning is **rendered by using additional lexical items**
- e.g. **ДОМИШКО** - **small, wretched house**
- or **different lexemes**
- cf.: **ДОМ** - **house, ДОМИШКО** - **hovel**.

RENDERING OF EMOTIVE AND STYLISTIC MEANINGS

- Some words may acquire a negative or positive connotation in different contexts. The noun "**glamour**" and the adjective "**glamorous**" may illustrate this point.
- **R. was captivated by the vulgar glamour and the shoddy brilliance of the scene before him. -**
- **Р. был пленен вульгарным блеском и дешевой роскошью окружающего.**
- (As a matter of fact both collocations "**vulgar glamour**" and "**shoddy brilliance**" are synonymous):

RENDERING OF EMOTIVE AND STYLISTIC MEANINGS

- ...who were attracted for the moment by **the glamour** of the dancer or the blatant sensuality of the woman. - ...которых на мгновение привлек **романтический ореол танцовщицы** или её откровенная **чувственность**.
- Cf.: the following example from a newspaper review:
- Hirsh's Richard is not lacking in **glamour**. **Facially he is a smiling fallen angel** (The Observer Review, 1973). **Ричард в исполнении Хирша не лишен обаяния. У него лицо улыбающегося падшего ангела.**

RENDERING OF EMOTIVE AND STYLISTIC MEANINGS

- Sometimes **differences in usage or valency** do not allow the use of the Russian referential equivalent, and the translator is forced to resort to **a lexical replacement with the emotive meaning preserved**.
- **In the general strike, the fight against the depression, the antifascist struggle, and the struggle against Hitlerism the British Communist Party played a proud role** (The Labour Monthly, 1970).
- **Во время всеобщей забастовки, в борьбе против кризиса, в антифашистской борьбе и борьбе против гитлеризма Коммунистическая партия Великобритании играла выдающуюся роль.**

RENDERING OF EMOTIVE AND STYLISTIC MEANINGS

- The emotive meaning of some adjectives and adverbs is so strong that it suppresses the referential meaning (I. R. Galperin. Stylistics. M., 1971, p.60.) and they are used merely as intensifiers. They are rendered by **Russian intensifiers** irrespective of their reference.
- Even judged by Tory standards, the level of the debate on the devaluation of the pound yesterday was **abysmally low** (M.S., 1973).
- Даже с точки зрения консерваторов дебаты в Палате общин по вопросу о девальвации фунта происходили на **чрезвычайно /невероятно/ низком уровне.**

RENDERING OF EMOTIVE AND STYLISTIC MEANINGS

- The emotive meaning often determines the translator's choice.
- The English word "endless" is neutral in its connotations, while the Russian **бесконечный** has negative connotations - boring or tiresome (**бесконечные разговоры**).
- "the endless resolutions received by the National Peace Committee" - the word "endless" should be translated by Russian adjective "**бесчисленные**" or "**многочисленные**".
- **Многочисленные** резолюции, полученные Национальным комитетом защиты мира.

RENDERING OF EMOTIVE AND STYLISTIC MEANINGS

- The Russian word «озарила» conveys **positive connotations**,
- e.g. "**Ее лицо озарила улыбка**",
- where as its **English referential equivalent** is evidently **neutral**.
- **Horror dawned in her face** (Victoria Holt). - **Её лицо выразило ужас.**

Rendering of Stylistic Meaning in Translation

- Every word is stylistically marked according to the layer of the vocabulary it belongs to. **Stylistically** words can be subdivided **into literary and non-literary**. (See I. R. Galperin, op. cit. - p.63.)
- The stylistic function of the different strata of the English vocabulary depends not so much on the inner qualities of each of the groups as on their interaction when opposed to one another.(I. R. Galperin, op. cit. - p.68.)
- Care should be taken to render stylistic meaning

Rendering of Stylistic Meaning in Translation

- “If you don't keep your yap shut“...”
(J.Salinger) - “Если ты не заткнёшься”
(пер. Э. Медниковой)
- Then he really let one go at me (ibid.) - Тут он мне врезал по-настоящему.
- It would be an error to translate a neutral or a literary word by a colloquial one.

Translation of Phraseological Units

- According to academician Vinogradov phraseological units may be classified into three big groups:
 - **phraseological fusions,**
 - **phraseological unities and**
 - **phraseological collocations.**

Translation of Phraseological Units

1) **Phraseological fusions** are usually rendered **by interpreting translation**:

- **to show the white feather - БЫТЬ ТРУСОМ; to dine with Duke Humphrey - остаться без обеда.**
- Sometimes they have **word-equivalents**: **red tape - ВОЛОКИТА, to pull one's leg - одурачивать, мистифицировать.**
- The meaning of a phraseological fusion may often be rendered by **a series of alternative phrases**,
- e.g. **to go the whole hog - делать что-либо основательно, доводить до конца, не останавливаться на полумерах, идти на всё** (словарь А. Кунина).

Translation of Phraseological Units

2) According to the principles of their translation **phraseological unities** can be divided into four groups;

- 1) Phraseological unities having Russian counterparts with **the same meaning and similar images**. They can often be traced to **the same prototype**: biblical, mythological, etc.
- **All that glitters is not gold. - Не всё золото, что блестит.**
- **As a man sows, so he shall reap. - Что посеешь, то и пожнёшь.**
- 2) Phraseological unities having **the same meaning** but expressing it through **a different image**.
- **To buy a pig in a poke. - Купить кота в мешке.**

Translation of Phraseological Units

- Phraseological units of the source-language sometimes have **synonymous equivalents** in the target-language. The choice is open to the translator and is often determined by the context.
- **Between the devil and the deep sea - между двух огней, между молотом и наковальней; в безвыходном положении.**
- In the **absence** of a correlated phraseological unity the translator **resorts to interpreting translation.**
- **A skeleton in the closet (cupboard) - Семейная тайна, неприятность, скрывающаяся от посторонних.**

Translation of Phraseological Units

- Target-language equivalents having a local colour should be avoided.
- **"To carry coals to Newcastle"** should not be translated by the Russian - ~~ездить в Тулу со своим самоваром.~~
- In this case two solutions are possible:
- a) **to preserve the image** of the English phraseological unity - **ездить в Ньюкасл со своим углём,**
- b) **to resort to interpreting translation** - **заниматься бесполезным делом.**

Translation of Phraseological Units

3) Phraseological unities having **no equivalents** in Russian are rendered **by interpreting translation.**

- **Little pitches have long ears. - Дети любят слушать разговоры взрослых.**

4) Phraseological unities having **word equivalents:**

- **shake a leg - отплясывать,**
- **hang fire - мешкать, медлить, задерживаться.**

Translation of Phraseological Units

- **Phraseological collocations** are motivated but they are made up of words possessing **specific lexical valency** which accounts for a certain **degree of stability** in such word groups.
- They may be translated by **corresponding phraseological collocations** of the target-language: **to take part - принимать участие, to throw a glance - бросить взгляд.**
- They may be also translated **by a word** (**to take part - участвовать**) or **a free word group** (**to take one's temperature - измерить температуру**).