



# LEXICAL PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATION

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Lecture 4.



# Lexical problems

- As a rule, the object of translation is not a list of separate lexical units but a coherent text in which the SL words make up an integral whole.

# [ Lexical problems ]

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- Though each word in the language has its own meaning, the actual information it conveys in a text depends, to a great extent, on its contextual environment.

# Lexical problems

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- The meaning of any word in the text cannot be understood and translated without due regard to the specific context in which it is actualized.

# Lexical problems



- Some words, however, are less sensitive to the contextual influence than others.
- There are words with definite meanings, which are retained in most contexts, and are relatively context-free.



# Handling context-free words

- Context-free words are mainly found among proper and geographical names, titles of magazines and newspapers, names of various firms, org-ns,; ships, aircraft and the like;

# Handling context-free words



- among technical terms used by experts in all fields of human activity;
- the months and days of the week, numerals.
- Context-free words have permanent equivalents in TL which, in most cases, can be used in TT.



# Handling context-free words

- The permanent equivalents of context-free words are often formed by transcription (with possible elements of translation) or loan translation.



# Handling context-free words

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- ▣ *Proper and geographical names are transcribed with TL letters,*
- ▣ e.g.: Smith - Смит, Brown - Браун, John Fitzgerald Kennedy - Джон Фитцджеральд Кеннеди; Cleveland - Кливленд, Rhode Island — Род-Айленд, Ontario — Онтарио; Downing Street — Даунинг-стрит, Foley Square — Фоули-сквер.



# Handling context-free words

- The same is true about *the titles of periodicals* and *the names of firms and corporations*, e.g.: Life-Лайф», US News and World Report — «ЮС ньюс энд уорлд рипорт», General Motors Corporation - «Дженерал моторс корпорейшн», Harriman and Brothers — «Гар-риман энд бразерс», Anaconda Mining Company — «Анаконда майнинг компани».

# Handling context-free words

- Transcription is also used to reproduce in TL *the names of ships, aircraft, missiles and pieces of military equipment*: Queen Elisabeth — «Куин Элизабет», Spitfire — «Спитфайр», Hawk — «Хок», Trident - «Трайдент», Honest John - «Онест Джон».



# Minor exceptions

**First**, it is sometimes supplemented by elements of transliteration when SL letters are reproduced in TT instead of sounds.

- This technique is used with mute and double consonants between vowels or at the end of the word and with neutral vowels
- (Dorset —Дорсет, Bonners Ferry —Боннерс Ферри)

## Minor exceptions

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- as well as to preserve some elements of SL spelling so as to make the TL equivalent resemble some familiar pattern (the Hercules missile — ракета «Геркулес»,
- Columbia - Колумбия).

# Minor exceptions

- **Second**, there are some traditional exceptions in rendering the names of historical personalities and geographical names,
- e.g.: Charles I — Карл I, James II — Яков II, William - Вильгельм, Henry - Генрих, George - Георг,
- Edinburgh — Эдинбург.

# Handling context-free words

- Some geographical names are made up of common nouns and are translated word-for-word:
- *the United States of America* - Соединенные Штаты Америки,
- *the United Kingdom* — Соединенное Королевство,
- *the Rocky Mountains* — Скалистые горы.

# Handling context-free words



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- If the name includes both a proper name and a common name, the former is transcribed while the latter is either translated or transcribed or both:
- the Atlantic Ocean - Атлантический океан,
- Kansas City— Канзас-сити,
- New Hampshire - Нью-Хемпшир,
- Firth of Clyde — залив Ферт-оф-Кпайд.





# Handling context-free words

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- Transcription:
  - Iowa – Айова (не Иова)
  - Ohio – Огайо (не Огио, Охио)
- Transliteration:
  - Illinois – Иллинойс (но не Иллиной)
  - Michigan – Мичиган (но не Мишиган)
  - Kentucky – Кентукки (но не Кентакки)



# Handling context-free words

- *Names of political parties, trade unions and similar bodies* are usually translated word-for-word (with or without a change in the word-order):
- *the Republican Party* — республиканская партия,
- *the United Automobile Workers Union* — Объединенный профсоюз рабочих автомобильной промышленности,
- *the Federal Bureau of Investigation* - Федеральное бюро расследований.

# Handling context-free words

- *Terminological words* are also relatively context-free though the context often helps to identify the specific field to which the term belongs.
- The context may also help to understand the meaning of the term in the text when it can denote more than one specific concept.

## Handling context-free words

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- For instance, in the US political terminology the term "state" - a national state or one of the states within a federal entity.
- "Both the **state** and Federal authorities were accused of establishing a police **state**."
- In the first case the term "state" is contrasted with "Federal" and will be translated as «штат», while in the second case it obviously means «государство».

# Handling context-free words

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- As a rule, English technical terms (as well as political terms and terms in any other specific field) have their permanent equivalents in the respective Russian terminological systems:
- magnitude — величина, oxygen - кислород, surplus value - прибавочная стоимость, Embassy — посольство, legislation — законодательство.

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- Many Russian equivalents have been formed from the English terms by transcription or loan translations:
  - computer — компьютер, electron — электрон,
  - Congressman — конгрессмен, impeachment — импичмент,
  - shadow cabinet — «теневой кабинет», nuclear deterrent — ядерное устрашение.

# Handling context-free words

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- Quite a few among them are **international** terms:
- theorem — теорема,
- television — телевидение,
- president — президент,
- declaration — декларация,
- diplomacy — дипломатия.
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# Handling context-free words

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- In some cases there are parallel forms in Russian: one formed by transcription and the other, so to speak, native,
- e.g.: резистор and сопротивление,
- бустер and ускоритель,
- индустрия and промышленность,
- тред-юнион and профсоюз,
- лидер and руководитель.



# Handling context-free words

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- **Two common causes of translation errors:**
- **First**, English and Russian terms can be similar in form but different in meaning.
- A "decade" is not «декада», an "instrument" is not «инструмент», and a "department" in the United States is not «департамент».
- (false friends of translator!!)

# Handling context-free words

- **Second**, the translator should not rely on the "inner form" of the English term to understand its meaning or to find a proper Russian equivalent for it is often misleading.
- A "packing industry is not «упаковочная» but «консервная промышленность»,
- "conventional armaments" are not «условные» but «обычные вооружения»
- and a "public school" in Britain is not «публичная» or «общедоступная» but «частная школа».

# Handling context-free words

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- Translation of technical terms puts a premium on the translator's knowledge of the subject-matter of ST.
  - He must take great pains to get familiar with the system of terms in the appropriate field and make good use of technical dictionaries and other books of reference.
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# HANDLING CONTEXT-BOUND WORDS

- All words have meanings of their own which are defined in dictionaries but the context may specify or modify the word's meaning, neutralize or emphasize some part of its semantics.
- And before looking for an equivalent, the translator has to make a careful study of the context to identify the contextual meaning of the word that should be rendered in translation.

# HANDLING CONTEXT-BOUND WORDS

- Most of the words *are polysemantic*, that is, they have several meanings.
- As a rule, the word is used in the sentence in one of its meanings and the context must show what meaning has been selected by the speaker and cut off all other meanings irrelevant for the particular act of communication.

# HANDLING CONTEXT-BOUND WORDS

- If somebody complains that ‘Few Europeans speak Mandarin’, the context shows that it is the variant of the Chinese language and not a Chinese imperial official or the Chinese fruit.

# HANDLING CONTEXT-BOUND WORDS



- No less important is the role of the context in translating the words with a wide range of reference whose equivalents are too numerous to be listed in any dictionary.
- Rate – 14 meanings in the dictionary.

# HANDLING EQUIVALENT-LACKING WORDS

- Many English words have no regular equivalents, and a number of techniques has been suggested for rendering the meanings of such equivalent-lacking words in TT.
- (Some new-coined words in the source text or names of objects or phenomena unknown to the TL community (the so-called "realia").





# HANDLING EQUIVALENT-LACKING WORDS

- When new words come into being to denote new objects or phenomena, they naturally cannot have regular equivalents in another language.
- Therefore the translator coming across a new coinage has to interpret its meaning and to choose the appropriate way of rendering it in his translation.

# HANDLING EQUIVALENT-LACKING WORDS

- "In many European capitals central streets have been recently pedestrianized."
- 1-st, to recognize the origin of "pedestrianize" which is coined from the word "pedestrian" — «пешеход» and the verb-forming suffix *-ize*.

## HANDLING EQUIVALENT-LACKING WORDS



- 2-nd, to realize the impossibility of a similar formation in Russian (опешеходить!) and to use a semantic transformation: «движение транспорта было запрещено», «улицы были закрыты для транспорта» or «улицы были отведены только для пешеходов».

# Equivalent-lacking words referring to various SL realia

- The translator tries to transfer the name to TL by way of borrowing, loan word or approximate equivalents.
- Many English words have been introduced in Russian in this way:
- «бейсбол» (baseball), «небоскреб» (skyscraper), «саквояжники» (carpet baggers), etc.



# Equivalent-lacking words

- Quite a number of equivalent-lacking words of this type, however, still have no established substitutes in Russian, and the translator has to look for an occasional equivalent each time he comes across such a word in the source text.
- “Filibustering”, “baby-sitter”, “know-how”, and many others.

# Equivalent-lacking words



- *We are the **not-wanted**s.* (neologism)
- Wanted + s = derived from the adj. noun in plural form
- Мы-то как раз здесь и не нужны.
- Нам-то здесь как раз и не место.

# Equivalent-lacking words

- Special attention should be paid to English conjunctions and prepositions which are often used differently from their apparent equivalents in Russian and are, in fact, equivalent-lacking.
- Such common conjunctions as "when, if, as, once, whichever" and some others are not infrequently the cause of errors in translation and should be most carefully studied.

# Equivalent-lacking words

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- The same situation can be observed in case of productive English "semi-suffixes" as *-minded*, *-conscious*, *-oriented*, *-manship*, etc.
- *Such cases force the translator to resort to some semantic transformation.*



# HANDLING TRANSLATOR'S FALSE FRIENDS

- There are words in the source and target languages which are more or less similar in form.
- Such words are of great interest to the translator since he is naturally inclined to take this formal similarity for the semantic proximity and to regard the words that look alike as permanent equivalents.

# [ HANDLING TRANSLATOR'S FALSE FRIENDS ]

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- Very few international words have the same meanings in different languages.
- “Parliament, theorem, diameter” and their Russian counterparts «парламент, теорема, диаметр».

# [ HANDLING TRANSLATOR'S FALSE FRIENDS ]

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- Astronomy - астрономия
- Biology - биология
- Computer - компьютер
- System - система
- Million - миллион

# HANDLING TRANSLATOR'S FALSE FRIENDS



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- In most cases, however, the semantics of such words in English and in Russian does not coincide and they should rather be named "pseudointernational".
- Their formal similarity suggesting that they are interchangeable, is, therefore, deceptive and may lead to translation errors.

# HANDLING TRANSLATOR'S FALSE FRIENDS

- For that reason they are often referred to as the *translator's false friends*.
- "decade, complexion, lunatic" and the like.
- (Десятилетие, цвет лица, сумасшедший).

# TRANSLATOR'S FALSE FRIENDS

- Accurately - точно
- Activity – учреждение, деятельность
- Aggressive – напористый, целеустремленный
- Agony - скорбь
- Artist - художник
- Aspirant - претендент
- Exploit - использовать

# TRANSLATOR'S FALSE FRIENDS

- Figure – цифра, человек
- Fortune – состояние, богатство
- Insult - оскорбление
- Intelligent – умный, разумный
- Master – хозяин, главный
- Mixture - смесь
- Pioneer - первооткрыватель
- Pretend – притворяться, делать вид

# TRANSLATOR'S FALSE FRIENDS

- Public - общественный
- Routine – запланированный, заведенный порядок
- Specific – конкретный, заданный
- Sympathy – сочувствие, жалость
- Typical – характерный, обычный
- Universal – общий, всеобщий





# Lexical transformations

- Lexical transformations are not simple special methods of translation.

# Lexical transformations

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- They are the methods of logical thinking by means of which we convey meanings of foreign words in the context and find their analogues in the language of translation which do not coincide with a dictionary.



# Reasons for making LT

- There are **four reasons** for using lexical transformations:
- different languages choose different features of the same phenomenon or notion in the meaning of the word,
  - *e.g. glasses- очки*  
*school leaver - выпускник*



# Reasons for making LT

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- differences in the semantic structure of the word.  
*e.g. brittle-хрупкий, ломкий (English word is wider)*
- additional meaning: brittle temper – вспыльчивый характер, brittle manner – нервная манера;
- but “хрупкое здоровье” - delicate health (not brittle health).



# Reasons for making LT

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- **Heavy** – 1) тяжелый (вес, пища, вода. бедствие, известие, бремя, удар и др.)
- 2) сильный (дождь, гроза)
- 3) обложженный (небо)
- 4) бурный (море)
- 5) интенсивный (уличное движение)
- 6) обильный (урожай, снегопад)



# Reasons for making LT

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- 7) густой (туман)
- 8) вязкий, глинистый (дорога, почва)
- 9) буйный (растительность)
- 10) жирный (линия)
- 11) серьезный, толстый, солидный)
- 12) серьезный, большой (ответственность)
- 13) скучный, неинтересный (постановка, лит. произведение)
- 14) строгий, суровый (отец, дядя, человек)
- 15) невыносимый (жизнь)
- 16) обременительный (налог)

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# Reasons for making LT

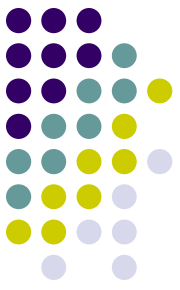
- different norms of **combinability**.
  - *e.g. trains run – поезда ходят;*
    - *rich feedings- щедрое угощение;*
    - *worst earthquake – сильное землетрясение;*
    - *rich sunlight – яркий солнечный свет;*
    - *rich memory – цепкая память;*
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# Reasons for making LT

- Blue calculating stare – холодный оценивающий взгляд;
  - Full attack – наступление по всему фронту или крупномасштабная акция нападок;
  - To gain heavily – одержать крупную победу;
  - To be deadly serious – быть крайне серьезным.
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# Reasons for making LT

- there are traditional for each language usage of words or word combinations.
- It can be different clichés, orders and so on.
- *e.g. no smoking- курить запрещено*



# Reasons for making LT

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- A word may be more widely used in one language, while in another it may have a narrow or even terminological meaning.
- The choice of one of the meanings of a word depends merely upon the environment of a given word.

# Reasons for making LT

- It is often the context that makes the translator choose the right correspondence in the TL, either stylistically marked or unmarked.

## **Reasons for making LT**

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- The choice of a correspondence may depend upon different connotations of a word.
- In case of polysemy everything depends upon the environment of the word which usually motivates the meaning of the word.

# Definition

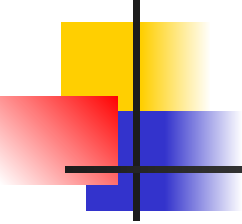
*Translation transformation is deliberate deviation of structural and semantic parallelism between the source and translation texts.*

**Transformations can be lexical, grammatical and lexical-grammatical.**

# Translation transformations

<b>Lexical transformations</b>	<b>Grammatical transformations</b>	<b>Lexical-grammatical transformations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Transcription</li><li>•Transliteration</li><li>•Calques</li><li>•Lexical-semantic replacement (concretization, generalization, modulation or sense development)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Sentence fragmentation</li><li>•Sentence integration</li><li>•Change of grammatical forms</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Antonymic translation</li><li>•Explicit or descriptive translation</li><li>•Compensation</li></ul>

# Lexical transformations:

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- Transcription/transliteration;
  - Descriptive way of translation;
  - Word-for-word translation;
  - Concretization;
  - Compensation;
  - Generalization;
  - Antonymic translation;
  - Functional substitution;
  - Logical (sense) development.

# Lexical transformations

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- **Concretization** is a linguistic case when the SL word or word combination with wide primary meaning is replaced by the TL word or word combination with narrow meaning.
- *e.g. Have you had your meal?*
- *Вы уже позавтракали?*



# Lexical transformations

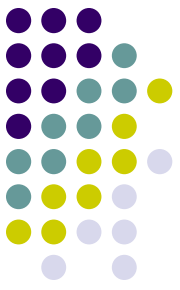
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- **Generalization** is a case when the SL word with some special meaning is substituted for the TL word with general (wide) semantic meaning.
- e.g. *He visits Jane every weekend.*
- *Он навещает Джейн каждую неделю.*



# Lexical transformations

- **Logical development** is the replacement of one notion by another provided that they are connected as cause and consequence.
- *e.g. acid test – лакмусовая бумажка.*



# Lexical transformations

- **Antonymic translation** is a complex system of lexical-grammatical substitutions in the process of which affirmative sentences and positive constructions are substituted for the TL negative ones, or one word for its antonym.
- *e.g. Never drink unboiled water – пейте только кипяченую воду.*

# [ Lexical transformations ]

- **Compensation** is the complex replacement by means of which the information lost in one place of the SL text is rendered in another and quite often by different units in the TL text.

# Lexical transformations

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- We resort to compensation in order to achieve stylistic and emotional charge of the original text.
- *e.g. entailment (запутанность, затруднительное положение)*
- *перевод: «когда тебе прищелят хвост».*



# Lexical transformations

- **Descriptive way of translation-** is usually used together with transcription and used to translate terms, unique objects, special cultural notions.
- *e.g. krujalo - wing-shaped base of cupola of the wooden church.*

# Lexical transformations

- **Functional substitution**- is used, when no one of the analogues given in the dictionary suit in a particular context.
- It is used while translating neologisms or words which are not fixed in the dictionaries.
- *e.g. French window - стеклянные двери.*
- *Mushroom millionaire – ч-к, который быстро разбогател.*

## **Lexical transformations**

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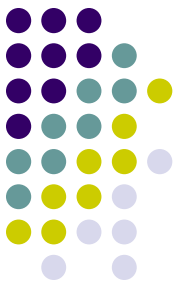
- **Transcription/Transliteration-**  
is used, when we reproduce each phoneme letter of the SL by means of phonemes or letters of the TL.



## Lexical transformations

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- We usually transcribe or transliterate proper and geographical names, sport teams, titles of periodicals, names of firms, corporations, etc.
- *e.g. Minnesota- Миннесота,*
- *Michigan – Мичиган.*



# Lexical transformations

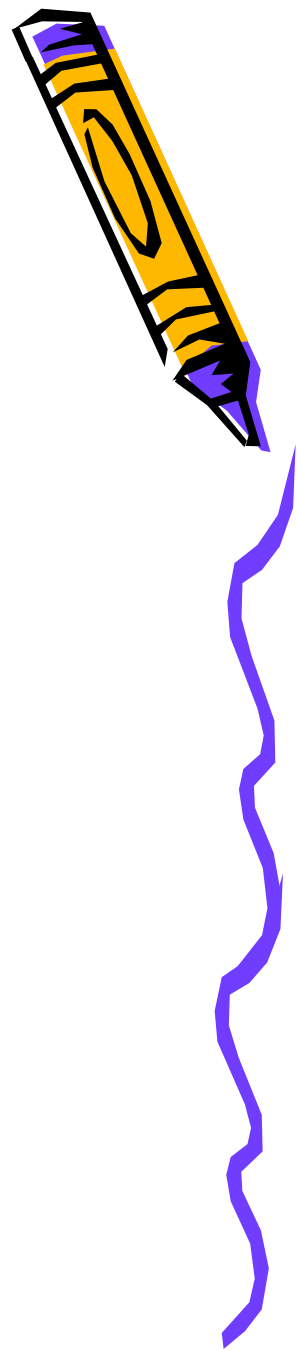
- **Word-for-word translation**- when we reproduce not the phonetic structure but elements of the word-for-word combination when components of the combination are translated by respective elements of TL.

## Lexical transformations

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- *e.g. Supreme Court-  
Верховный Суд*
- *The united States of America –  
Соединенные Штаты  
Америки.*

# Questions for the seminar:



Петренко Н.М.

Практикум з перекладу

pp. 26 ex. 1, 4, 5, 10.

pp.36-37 ex.6

Definitions of all the lexical transformations with your own examples.

