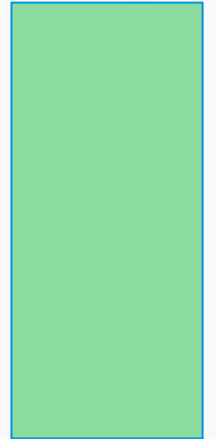


CONTRASTIVE LEXICOLOGY 4

TRANSLATIONALLY SYSTEMATIC AND TRANSLATIONALLY
UNSYSTEMATIC UNITS



A DUAL NATURE OF HUMAN LANGUAGE

- Being a reflection of a native speaker's mentality and way of thinking, language has always remained a system with a well-defined structure.
- Language in all its components is not only a matter of grammar and lexis as a container of factual information, but a far more complicated entity, involving a great number of various backgrounds (historical, social, cultural) as well as the speaker's emotions and attitudes towards reality.
- If a natural language were a purely logical system, there would have been no place for idiomatic or figurative descriptions in it. If it had emerged as a kind of a chaotic emotional signal, it would not have any systematic form intelligible for more than one recipient.
- Understanding of figurative and idiomatic expressions presupposes both types of features.

IDIOMS AND IDIOMATICITY

- The idiomatic meaning of an item may vary from opaque (*'blue spectacles'* – “regarding actions in the wrong light”) through semi-opaque (*'not worth a tinker's dam'* – “being worthless”) to transparent (*'lay one's cards on the table'* – “reveal intentions”).
- In compliance with idiomaticity feature, the field of studies is divided into **idiomatic** and **non-idiomatic phraseology**. Within the scope of the former are phraseological units and idioms proper, while the latter deals with native speaker semantic and syntactic choices or common collocations.

IDIOMS PROPER VS. PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN THE TARGET LANGUAGE

- Idioms proper (sayings and proverbs) may have no **lexical equivalents** in the target language but only **conceptual ones**: '*big fish*' – 'важная шишка' '*to bite the bullet*' – 'собраться с духом'.
- At the same time phraseological units consist of components which can be replaced in translation by a single word: '*as a matter of fact*' – 'действительно' or in phrasal verbs ('*come across*' – 'встретить кого-либо, что-либо') and phrasal collocations ('*come into being*' – 'родиться, появиться').

ENGLISH PHRASEOLOGY WITHIN GLOBALIZATION FIELD

- **Globalization** is a great clash of cultures, traditions, ways of thinking and actions breaking the bounds between countries and peoples of different nationalities. New ideas and concepts coming as a result of the process may affect native speakers' social mentality and ultimately their language.
- But remaining a feature of both dynamically changing structures – *language and human mind*, idiomatic figurative elements help to preserve language identity and heritage.

LANGUAGE AS A CODE (THE METALINGUAL FUNCTION)

- The **metalingual function** operates between the addresser and the addressee to check whether they use the same code (Jakobson, 1960: 354).
- Language code is a set of linguistic conventions, awareness of which is vital for the speaker because many choices that occur in speech are “**idiom-based**” rather than “**free**”.
- The ‘**idiom principle**’ was introduced by the British linguist John Sinclair to emphasize that speakers of a language select from a set of memorized semi-pre-constructed phrases, or idioms (Sinclair, 1991: 114).

IDIOMATICITY AND LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE

- Using idiomaticity in any language consists in knowing the standard expressions in the given language and the situations that require them.
- «Наряду с грамматической, или точнее синтаксической, сочетаемостью слов, существует и другая сочетаемость – **сочетаемость фразеологическая**» (Смирницкий, 1957: 53).
- Example: *flowing manner* – непринужденная манера, *flowing pen* – легкое перо, *flowing handwriting* – беглый почерк, *flowing waters* – проточная вода, *flowing dress* – ниспадающее платье.
- The Russian equivalents are selected to reflect the typical patterns of combining words in speech.

PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN TRANSLATION

- Based on metaphorical transfer of one or more words, phraseological units may preserve their motivation (transparence of meaning) and are characterized by **structural separability, semantic globality, and fixedness**. Their components can be partly or fully replaced in translation due to the rules of phraseological combinability.
- Examples: *the finishing touch* – заключительный аккорд, *a heart-to-heart talk* – разговор по душам, *cross the t's* – ставить точки над i, *heads or tails* – орел или решка.

FORMAL CORRESPONDENCE AND FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE IN TRANSLATION

- Eugene Nida suggested two types of equivalence: **formal correspondence and functional equivalence**. Formal correspondence “focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content”, while **dynamic (functional) equivalence** is based upon “the principle of equivalent effect” (Nida, 1964: 159).
- If in lexicography we deal with formal or established equivalents from bilingual dictionaries, in contrastive analysis we focus on both system-related and contextual correspondences that may occur in actual speech acts.

CONTEXTUAL (FUNCTIONAL) EQUIVALENTS

- According to Я.И. Рецкер, «никакой словарь не может предусмотреть все разнообразие контекстуальных значений, реализуемых в речевом потоке, точно так же, как он не может охватить и все разнообразие сочетаний слов» (Рецкер, 1974: 9).
- Questions of style, register, and rhetorical effect should invariably be taken into account because a would-be stark equivalent may turn out to be pragmatically inappropriate.

SYSTEMIC INVARIANT AND VARIANT CORRESPONDENCES

- **Invariant correspondences** present the most sustainable way of translating the source language unit, they are used in almost all cases of its occurrence in the original and in this sense are relatively independent from the context (*the Panama Canal* – Панамский канал, *June* – июнь, *twelve* – двенадцать, *combustion chamber* – камера сгорания).
- In the case of **variant systemic correspondences**, one word of the source language has several equivalents in the target one. Most of them are reflected in a bilingual dictionary, and a translator must choose which one of several options fits the context best.

VARIANT CORRESPONDENCES: EXAMPLE

- “***She heard a call***” – based on the polysemy of the noun ‘call’, there can be a number of options in translation: “*she heard a phone ringing*”, “*an animal sound*”, “*a call to action*”, or she could be an actress who has successfully made her debut on the stage two minutes ago...
- The ambiguity is resolved by the context – this is what the adequate translation equivalent depends on.

CONTEXTUAL (FUNCTIONAL) CORRESPONDENCES

- **Contextual correspondences** occur when a translator is not satisfied with the equivalent suggested by a bilingual dictionary. The required meaning may not be included in the semantic structure of the word or recorded in dictionaries as it has been produced only in a specific narrow, wide, or extralinguistic context.
- A **syntactic transformation device** is used in the following case changing an attributive nominal phrase into a verbal predicative one:

“The sun had got more powerful by the time we had finished breakfast, and the wind had dropped, and it was as lovely a morning as one could desire” (J.C. Jerome)

«Когда мы кончили завтракать, солнце уже порядком пригревало. Ветер стих, и более очаровательного утра нельзя было пожелать»

NO CORRESPONDENCE

- The term was introduced by E. Vereshagin and V. Kostomarov to define non-equivalent vocabulary as *“words used to express concepts that are not found in another culture or language and relate to specific cultural elements, i.e. elements that are unique to culture A and absent in culture B, as well as words without equivalents in another language, in short, those that have no equivalents outside the language to which they belong”* (Vereshagin, Kostomarov, 1990: 62).
- Methods of translation used: 1) transliteration (кокошник – kokoshnik), 2) transcription (management – менеджмент), 3) calque (mass-media – масс-медиа).

LEXICAL AND SYNTACTIC UNITS

- Word-combinations can be divided into **lexical units** which reflect the common properties of objects of reality and perform the informative function, and **syntactic units** which are intended to add a certain effect or mood to the information conveyed.
- It is obvious that not all cases can be neatly divided as belonging to one category or the other. Indeed, **the borderline cases** do exist.
- On the whole, **lexical units** are an easier task for a translator as they have become part of the lexicon and can be found in dictionaries.

SYNTACTIC UNITS

- **Syntactic units**, conversely, presuppose a wider selection of lexical items that can be used to modify a given word. They are linked with an almost endless variety of options, i.e. a choice in its own right.
- That is why units of this kind do not only convey a message, but **produce an impact on the reader** or listener through the use of particular style. Such syntactic combinations become '**personal indicators**' manifested by means of the individual, sometimes unusual, choice of words.
- For example, "*sickening and uselessly sophisticated cocktails*" or "I picked a careful way through the lobby and thought of the ten *drizzling miles* to Handleyford" strike one as deviant from the commonly shared ways of combining words and belong to '**individual usage**'.

TRANSLATIONALLY SYSTEMATIC AND TRANSLATIONALLY UNSYSTEMATIC COMBINATIONS

- In contrastive analysis, **lexical** and **syntactic combinations** roughly correspond to **translationally systematic** and **translationally unsystematic** ones (Salkie, 2002: 55).
- When it comes to stereotyped lexical items, most of them allow for systemic variant or even invariant correspondences.
- For example: 'picturesque view' / 'живописный вид'; 'popular film' / 'популярный фильм'; or 'severe complications' / 'суровые последствия' are rendered into Russian by means of direct correspondences discoverable in dictionaries.
- Similarly the cliché-ed expressions 'hard work' / 'тяжелая работа'; 'moral values' / 'моральные ценности'; 'a perfect example' / 'отличный пример'; 'a large number' / 'большое число', 'true love' / 'настоящая любовь'; 'the sole purpose' / 'единственная цель', etc., although based on collocational properties of the component words, demonstrate a fair amount of equivalence.

TRANSLATIONALLY UNSYSTEMATIC COMBINATIONS

- When the process of combining words goes beyond systemic correspondences, it becomes creative. The speaker may make a series of conscious or unconscious choices that arise from the immediate context and affect the development of discourse. While searching for a parallel expression in this case, a linguist should not miss the point and realize that “it is **the context** rather than the word which is doing most of the work” (Salkie, 2002: 54).

SPEECH CLICHÉS IN FICTION

Lord Goring. **Thanks awfully**, but I think I'd sooner be engaged before lunch.
(Oscar Wilde)

Лорд Горинг. **Очень благодарен**, но я уж решил кончить это дело до завтрака.

“*Thanks awfully*” is a speech cliché which has become quite common. It can also be translated without an intensifier “**Ну спасибо!**”. But in this case we should pay attention to the stylistic effect of the phrase as it is used by a representative of ‘polite’ society. “**Премного благодарен**” would also be adequate here as a functional correspondence given the period of time and the conventions of the epoch.

CONTEXTUAL (FUNCTIONAL) CORRESPONDENCES

“The slaves were naked, but for a ragged loin-cloth, and each man was chained to his neighbour. **The hot sun beat brightly upon them**, and the negroes ran up and down the gangway and lashed them with whips of hide”.

(Oscar Wilde “The Young King”)

«На рабах были лишь ветхие набедренные повязки, и каждый из них был прикован цепью к соседу. **Над галерой полыхало жаркое солнце**, а меж рабами бегали негры и полосовали их сыромятными ремнями».

(Перевод М. Кореневой)

The verb ‘*to beat*’ is not a common collocate of the adverb ‘*brightly*’ (compare: ‘*the sun was shining brightly in the gardens*’ // «*солнце ярко светило в садах*»). In this case ‘*brightly*’ actually refers to the subject of the sentence: we observe a complex metasemiotic **transformation of the adverbial modifier into a nominal one**. This is **a contextual correspondence in translation** with an enhanced connotative effect of the adjective ‘жаркое’ (солнце) and the expressive verb (‘полыхало’).

OPAQUE VS. TRANSPARENT IDIOMS IN TRANSLATION

- **Opaque idioms** are more likely to draw the translator's attention because of their illogical structure. **No matter whether the original figurativeness of the idiom has been preserved or changed, the translation variant should be figurative in general as much as possible** (Рецкер, 1974: 151).
- Phraseological items can be divided into two types: one type standing for **culture-specific idioms** with a broad extralinguistic concept background including socio-cultural knowledge, and the other – for **idioms related to simple concepts** that usually exist in many languages.

CULTURE-SPECIFIC IDIOMS VS. COMMON IDIOMS IN TRANSLATION

- In spite of their original features, **culture-specific idioms** are usually rendered into the target language by methods of *paraphrases, descriptive or literal translation and lexical substitutions*. The use of their dictionary equivalents can be treacherous and should be avoided as it may produce weird constructions and have the effect of excessive domestication.
- **Common idioms**, on the contrary, are usually translated by means of *an equivalent idiom, an analogous parallel rendering, or a paraphrase*.

CULTURAL UNTRANSLATABILITY

- Culture-specific idioms may contain alien segments of reality (*“to carry one’s coals to Newcastle”* // *“ехать в Тулу со своим самоваром”*) which must be properly transferred into something familiar to the reader without ruining **the semantic-stylistic integrity of the source text**: the process involves a certain degree of **domestication**: *“to learn to say before you sing”* / *“азбуки не знает, а читать садится”*, *“little strokes fell great oaks”* // *“вода камень точит”*.
- *“There is nothing like leather”* – is a proverbial saying referring to the toughness and durability of leather. Its use was recorded at the end of the 17th century, although it goes back to one of Aesop’s fables where the discussion about fortifying the city with leather took place.
- There are no Russian concepts that could match this idiom, so it will require **a commentary or notional compensation**.

DOUBLE ACTUALIZATION – INTERPRETATION OF AN IDIOM IN BOTH LITERAL AND FIGURATIVE MEANINGS

“The little ducks were swimming about in the pond, looking just like a lot of yellow canaries, and their mother, who was pure white with real red legs, was trying to teach them how **to stand on their heads** in the water”.

“You will never be in the best society unless **you can stand on your heads**”, - she kept saying to them; and every now and then she showed them how it was done. But the little ducks paid no attention to her. They were so young that they did not know what an advantage it is to be in society at all” (O. Wilde “The Devoted Friend”)

«Маленькие утята плавали в пруду, желтые, точно канарейки, а их мать, белая-пребелая, с ярко красными лапами, старалась научить их **СТОЯТЬ В ВОДЕ ВНИЗ ГОЛОВОЙ**.

- Если вы не научитесь **СТОЯТЬ НА ГОЛОВЕ**, вас никогда не примут в хорошее общество, - приговаривала она и время от времени показывала им, как это делается.

Но утята даже не глядели на нее. Они были еще слишком малы, чтобы понять, как важно быть принятым в обществе» (Пер. А. Соколовой)

In spite of the fact that “*to stand on one’s head*” (“to impress someone by hard work or difficult feats”) has the dictionary equivalent in Russian – “лезть из кожи вон”, the translator quoted **the lexical wording of the original** to convey the ironic message.

A PARALLEL ANALOGUE OR LITERAL RENDERING (LEXICAL WORDING)?

“I hate people **who cry over spilt milk**. But when I think that they might lose their only son, I certainly am very much affected” (O. Wilde “The Remarkable Rocket”).

«Ненавижу людей, которые **плачут о пролитом молоке**. Но когда я подумаю о том, что они могут потерять своего единственного сына, я прихожу в такой аффект...» (Пер. Т. Озерской)

In Russian, there are other concepts and images that may present the case of parallel analogues: “Слезами горю не поможешь”, “Что упало – то пропало” (the second one can be used as a colloquial-functional correspondence). The translator, however, decided not to pick up the Russian analogue but to preserve the original item which is an instance of **lexical translation**. The idiom is quite transparent, and its understanding in the present context does not present a problem for the reader.

DESCRIPTIVE TRANSLATION (PARAPHRASES)

“High above the city, on a tall column, stood the statue of the Happy Prince“...- ‘Why can’t you be like the Happy Prince’? asked a sensible mother of her little boy who was **crying for the moon**. – The Happy Prince never dreams of **crying for anything**” (O. Wilde “The Happy Prince”)

«На высокой колонне, над городом, стояла статуя Счастливого Принца... ‘- Постарайся быть похожим на Счастливого Принца!’– убеждала разумная мать своего мальчугана, **который все плакал, чтобы ему дали луну**. ‘– Счастливый Принц **никогда не капризничает!**’» (Пер. К. Чуковского)

Descriptive translation is by far the most frequently used strategy in translation of phraseological items when unsystematic or contextual correspondences are adopted. In this case, the Russian parallel unit “**желать луну с неба**” / “**достать луну с неба**” would not fit the context: in the original text we observe **a ‘double’ reading of the idiom** which is achieved by means of repeating the same verb in “The Happy Prince never dreams of **crying for anything**”. In the translation, the word-play has not been preserved leading to the loss of the idiom, but retaining the emotional colouring.

A PARALLEL PHRASAL ANALOGUE OR A DESCRIPTIVE TRANSLATION?

“ ‘Well, won’t you come and see the memorial window?’ – ‘I would not even see that, so he **fired his last shot**’.”
(Jerome K. Jerome “Three Men in a Boat”).

1) « ‘Может быть, вы посмотрите надгробное окно?’ – ‘Я не согласился даже на это, и старик выпустил **свой последний заряд**’». (Пер. М. Салье)
2) « ‘Но все-таки вы посмотрите историческое окно?’ – ‘Я отказался даже от исторического окна, и тут он **выпустил свой последний козырь**’». (Пер. Донского и Линецкой)

In a dispute, “**to fire the last shot**” means to have only one persuasive argument left and to use it at the last attempt to win the discussion. It can be translated into Russian as ‘**предпринять последнюю попытку**’, ‘**использовать последнее средство**’, or ‘**выпустить последний козырь**’. While the first variant is a ‘free’ descriptive equivalent, the second one can be regarded as satisfying **the criterion of idiomaticity**. Following a well-established practice, phraseological phenomena are better rendered into another language by phrasal items even if at the lexical level they consist of different words and project different images. From this point of view, the second translation looks a better option.