

Translation Problems in Modern Russian Society

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Abstract: *The development of trade and industry has always given rise to changes in the evolution of communities, bringing about new social forms and stratification of society. This in its turn accelerated the appearance of businesses and factories, arrival of new professions, and urbanization. Since the times of Perestroika (which was started in 1989 by Mikhail Gorbachev) Russian society has been experiencing dramatic changes that affected the country's politics, economy and social life. In the past 15 years people's attitudes to certain things have changed gradually but profoundly. We have gotten so used to these new attitudes that it is hard to believe it hasn't always been like this.*

Keywords: terminology, economic, translation, modern society, technological growth, modern reader, category, computer terms

1. INTRODUCTION

Translation is undoubtedly a social phenomenon. Translator's choices are influenced not only by the source language text and the peculiarities of the target audience, but also by the era to which the translator belongs—in translating for the modern reader it is necessary to take into consideration creative traditions, literary norms and conventions that are familiar to the reader of a certain society. Nowadays, due to various political changes and dynamic economic and technological growth, the Russian language has acquired numerous terms, which very quickly migrate from the class of neologisms to the category of familiar and frequently used words. Few of these words (computer terms, for example) do not possess the corresponding equivalent in Russian; many of them do have a Russian (very often explanatory) equivalent. For instance, such nouns as brand, merger, summit, default, deposit, site, spam, tuner, web surfing and adjectives as local, creative, top have equivalents in Russian, but the new "foreign" word is usually preferred (the tendency as a rule is started by the mass media). This may be explained by the fact that a borrowing often has a semantic "compactness," whereas a Russian equivalent has a descriptive character—in some cases a whole sentence must be used. So translators have to deal with the problem of either choosing a "popular" borrowing or go with the equivalent already existing in the language. Translators of a "new generation" prefer not to translate so-called Americanisms and foreign food names, as they are familiar to people of all countries, and "the translator no longer has the absolute need to always find a translation of a term in the target language if this would make the target-language text lose credibility. This is ... called excessive translation. An excessive translation is a translation that fails to foreignise/exoticise, i.e., use source-language terms in the target-language text, to the degree that is now acceptable". Those educated in the 60s, 50s and earlier strongly believe that foreign equivalents should be avoided, especially when a corresponding term or notion exists in the language: "In very rare cases, only when it's absolutely necessary for the narration of a character to use a foreign word, a Russian equivalent is always better and more appropriate. This holds true for newspapers and journals, and is hundredfold more important in fiction."

2. MAIN BODY

With the arrival of the 21st century we have experienced changes in the economic, legal, technological and other areas which affect our everyday lives. Social changes entail linguistic transformations. Russians in their everyday life got used to certain terms to the point that they no longer consider them "terms"—ATM machine (банкомат); deposit (депозит); account (счет); contract (контракт); download (загружать); etc. "The terminology of international development is constantly evolving as new socioeconomic concepts emerge. In over 10 years ... the writer has witnessed the appearance of a number of neologisms, either entirely new terms or established terms used with a different meaning ...". In different societies this process may take different directions depending on the needs and wants of its people. In Russian society an explosive growth of terms pertaining to the economic and computer areas can be observed. Russians largely borrow these terms from the languages of countries with a longer capitalistic and technological tradition (like the USA, for example), thus bringing English words and expressions into the language. Though some of these borrowings have corresponding equivalents in Russian, the English terms are being extensively used by the population, as further evidence of the social changes that have taken place in the country (a similar process would have been inconceivable in the cold war period).

3. DISCUSSION

Certainly appearing of new criteria to what should be called an adequate translation affected the translation of fiction. That's why new translations of novels already translated into Russian appeared recently. The most popular ones are the translations

of F.S. Fitzgerald's novels "The Great Gatsby" and "Tender is the Night." The general tendency is a frequent use of anglicisms in the TL, even though they are not present in the text of the original:

"Now it has become a summer resort of notable and fashionable people; in 1925 it was almost deserted after its English clientele went north in April; only the cupolas of dozen old villas rotted like water lilies among the massed pines". The phrase "a summer resort of notable and fashionable people" in Russian corresponds to "many various bungalows have been built" (Это сейчас тут понастроили много разных бунгалов). For no obvious reason, the translator uses a nowadays "fashionable" world "bungalow", which is not even present in the original English text. Other examples might include the following translating inconsistencies ("fraternity" was translated into Russian translation by the equivalent of "student corporations"; "market umbrella" was translated as "huge tent"). In all cases Russian equivalents could be used (as were in the previous translation by E.D. Kalashnikova).

There is also a number of colloquial words and expressions unnecessarily used in the new translation:

"café" is translated as "kafeshka" (a diminutive form for café);

"specious reasoning" is translated as "tufta" (a colloquial word, meaning "malarkey, crap");

"horse-trader" as "torgash" (a derisive synonym of "merchant", could be translated as "torgovets" or, as it was in Kalashnikova's version, "barishnik");

"world's bazaar" received an equivalent of "world market" (it sounded so much nicer in Kalashnikova's translation as "life's fair"—"jarmarka zhizni").

The only positive trend in the new translation philosophy is that, instead of generalizing or omitting certain notions (which didn't exist in the Soviet society), the exact specific equivalent can be used: "terrier" is now present in the Russian language, although in the first translation it had to be translated as "little dog" (pjosik); "cauliflower" had to be translated as "cabbage". The use of these nouns is possible thanks to the economic transformations on the Russian market, not because of a translator's talent.

First translations of the novels that weren't published in Russia before due to a number of reasons, for example, explicit descriptions of sexuality, have also appeared. John Updike's novels, known for his "pointillist style"⁵ filled with sharp realistic descriptions, have just recently become available to the Russian reader. On the whole, the artistic qualities of Updike's style are not lost in these translations. However, certain translating choices are not very clear mostly due to the fact that the effect produced by the original is not the same as the one produced by the translation. In "Rabbit, Run", Updike's most famous novel, there are instances when women characters appear less appealing in Russian than in the original. Rabbit's wife, who, being compared to his mistress, is described as "mysterious, an opaque and virginal wife"⁶ in Russian turned into an "incomprehensible, sullen and indifferent boulder"⁷ (непонятной, угрюмой, безучастной ко всему глыбой)—clearly, the translator is "taking" the mistress's side in this situation. The same mistress, when Rabbit is thinking about returning to her, reasonably inquires "How would you support me?". In Russian this stylistically neutral phrase changes into a rude vulgar expression meaning "On what a fig would you feed me?" (Na kakie shishi ti budesh' menja kormit'). The references that we have about certain phenomena are not always taken into consideration. When describing the Springers the author remarks on some of their qualities, which are "thoroughly meshed into the strategies of middle-class life." In Russian "strategies of middle-class life" become "petit bourgeois way of life"(мелкобуржуазный образ жизни)—an expression that has a very negative connotation for the Russian reader. Somehow, in other situations, rather emotional English equivalents are substituted by neutral Russian words. In the phrase "The reason Fosnacht keeps getting Billy all this expensive crap is probably he feels guilty for leaving him" the word "crap" which shows Rabbit's negative and scornful attitude to the discussed problem is translated by the noun "things" (shtuki), in translation the whole communicative aim of this situation is lost.

Russian linguists, who assign great importance to the communicative function of the process of translation, are certainly concerned about the quality of the published translations. Maybe this is one of the reasons why so many articles devoted to the problems of Linguistic Pragmatics are being published. Linguistic Pragmatics underlines the necessity of interpreting the situation and analyzing the communicative possibilities of how it can be perceived by those involved in this communicative process, thus providing the basis for human interaction. The translation, viewed within the framework of Linguistic Pragmatics, concentrates not on the semantic meaning of the SL text, but on its communicative aim.

Questions about translation quality push Applied Linguistics to a new stage of development (because it includes the science of translation). Arguments on how to treat numerous neologisms and borrowings arriving into the Russian language have revived the advancement of Lexicography—the science of dictionary compiling. Online dictionaries gain more significance for

both specialists and amateur users. As online dictionaries can be regularly updated, their users won't have to deal with the problem of outdated vocabulary, which will still exist in the database, but with the necessary markers. Specialized vocabulary is duly marked and all the possible combinations are represented in the database, for e.g. the noun "balance" has many meanings pertaining to different spheres such as aviation, automobile industry, banking, biology, mining, bookkeeping, etc., but hyperlinks take users to the needed meaning in seconds.

4. CONCLUSION

Therefore, in the 21st century, when effective communication has become the center of our professional lives, the importance of finding better ways of translating is increasing. Due to globalization and establishment of transnational corporations, new criteria appear of what can be regarded as an adequate translation. Introducing neologisms and borrowings into translation of articles from magazines and scientific journals might be viewed as a modern and "open-minded" approach; however, translators should be extremely careful about not overloading fiction with unnecessary foreign expressions. It is important to remember at whom the translation is targeted and what communicative effect it is supposed to produce. The debates about what can be considered an equivalent translation give rise to a new stage of development of Applied Linguistics and other linguistic sciences, which are becoming more and more concerned about achieving communicative excellence in the modern world.

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