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TRANSLATION AS INTER / INTRACULTURAL HERMENEUTICS

The paper deals with translation regarded as a universal cultural phenomenon and treated in the perspective of philosophical (hermeneutic) analysis, with the utmost goal of revealing its essentially hermeneutic nature, as well as its pragmatic and functional paradigms conditioning its operational modus. Based on its ambivalent nature, translation can be treated from at least two standpoints, i.e., functionally-pragmatic and essential ones. First, translation is the main channel of inter- and intracultural communication making it possible and determining its structure, format, and mechanisms. Second, translation presents itself as a chain of hermeneutic procedures in communication acts in time / space, each of the said acts being an integral part of the uniform poly-cultural discourse. In both cases, the utmost goal of translation is to ensure (the) maximum inclusion of those engaged in the communicative act into the discourse and thus reach adequate minimal understanding to further structure communicative discourse acts in both inter- and intracultural communication. This latter fact conditions the importance of translation between cultural languages (theatre and film versions of literary texts, illustrations to them, music based on fiction, etc.), languages of cultures and subcultures (various age, gender, social, professional, artistic, etc. groups) as well as between ethnic languages per se. The obvious conclusion one could come to is that humanity on the daily basis oscillates, even though not registering it, between various translation techniques and strategies ensuring communication as the means of existence (survival). Refs 10.

Keywords: translation, translator, culture, inter / intracultural communication, hermeneutics, discourse, understanding.

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ПЕРЕВОД КАК МЕЖ / ВНУТРИКУЛЬТУРНАЯ ГЕРМЕНЕВТИКА

Статья посвящена переводу, рассматриваемому как универсальный культурный феномен и анализируемому в процедурах философско-герменевтической методологии с целью описать сущностно герменевтическую природу перевода, а также его прагматическую и функциональную парадигмы, обуславливающие характерный для перевода способ функционирования в культуре. В силу своей амбивалентной природы перевод может рассматриваться, как минимум, с двух точек зрения: функционально-прагматической и сущностной. Во-первых, перевод представляет собой основной канал меж- и внутрикультурной коммуникации, обуславливая не только саму ее возможность, но и структуру, режим и механизмы меж / внутрикультурного взаимодействия. Во-вторых, перевод предстает как цепь герменевтических процедур, последовательно разворачиваемых в пространстве / времени коммуникативных актов, каждый из которых является составной частью единого поликультурного дискурса. Задача перевода в обоих случаях — обеспечить максимальное включение участников коммуникации в дискурс для достижения адекватного понимания и успешного структурирования коммуникативно-дискурсивных актов как в межкультурном, так и во внутрикультурном общении. В связи с последним, кроме собственно лингвистического перевода с одного этнического языка на другой, пристального внимания заслуживает герменевтический перевод между различными языками культуры (театральные и киноверсии литературных текстов, иллюстрации к ним, музыкальные вариации на литературные темы и пр.), равно как и между языками культур и субкультур (различных возрастных, гендерных, социальных, профессиональных, художественных и др. групп). На основании вышесказанного можно прийти к очевидному выводу о том, что в по-

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вседневной жизненной практике человечество, пусть и не осознавая этого, осциллирует между различными переводческими техниками и стратегиями, что делает возможной коммуникацию как способ существования (выживания). Библиогр. 10 назв.

Ключевые слова: перевод, переводчик, меж / внутрикультурная коммуникация, герменевтика, дискурс, понимание.

In most general terms, the problem of translation is that of understanding, and as such it became a subject of comprehending in pre-written times, since understanding is the core of any communication as is exemplified by the story of the Tower of Babel, where “The Lord confused the language of the earth” so that the citizens “may not understand each other’s speech” and “scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city” (Gen. 11: 7–8).

Translation and understanding are inseparable, forming a sort of a closed circle: to understand one has to translate but the latter is not possible without the former; and the way to understanding presents a long chain of questions and answers leading to new questions, that is aimed at the very core of a cultural text comprehended as a whole formed by its multiple parts. It’s evident that one should speak of the hermeneutic circle that presupposes a cyclic character of understanding conditioned by both explaining and interpreting, since to understand the whole one has to understand each and every part of it — and this is impossible without understanding the whole. The important thing is that the task consists not in the act of getting out of the circle but in the act of getting deeper and deeper into it, immersing oneself completely into the cultural text to ensure understanding, translation, and, ultimately, communication.

From this perspective, translation should be regarded not as a purely linguistic but rather as a much wider philosophical and cultural phenomenon. The suggested approach by no means makes the linguistic part less important; on the contrary, it gives an opportunity to better understand it as the linguistic tradition in which an individual is deeply rooted makes both the subject and the basis for comprehending, while communication expands successively on the three major plains — those of the language, culture, and semiotic system. Thus it’s possible to offer a working hermeneutic definition of translation based on a) translation’s universal character as a form of human activity, b) its semiotic nature, c) its axiological and teleological characteristics, and d) its functional ones, hermeneutics treated as the art of comprehending the meanings of cultural signs (symbols), on the one hand, and as the theory and general rules of interpretation of cultural texts, on the other. I regard translation as an intellectual — operational continuum aimed at understanding, its form and function conditioned by its inherent ability for increasing development, and oscillating between cultures, subcultures, and individual existential and cultural experience. Striving for understanding is the cause and necessary basis for any communication; hence, translation can be regarded as the means and instrument of communication, both inter- and intracultural, in other words, for man’s intercourse with the outer world. In his lecture *On Various Methods of Translation* (1813) Friedrich Schleiermacher argued that translation is possible as an intra linguistic phenomenon as well due to the need «to translate for oneself the speech of another <...> person with different views and a different character when we feel that the same words said by both of us have a totally different meaning» [1].

In other words, every person in his / her life happens to be immersed into the element of translation trying to comprehend and appropriate the outer world to find the way of

dealing with it in the way that seems the only 'right' one to the person. Translation comes into play when an individual learns the ABC and masters the skill of making meaningful words, phrases and sentences out of the tiniest 'bricks' of letters and sounds; when he / she learns to use traffic rules, verbal and non-verbal etiquette formulas, ways of expressing his / her emotions and moods, and, ultimately, masters the skill of using all those and quite a bit more in his / her everyday life practices¹. For most of the people, the process under discussion is not an issue — they hardly ever even notice it, while for a professional translator the process is not less important than the result and always perfectly rational.

For a translator, translation is a never ending dual dialogue with the original text, its author, the language and culture in which it was created and also with the language and culture of the translation. This makes the ability to 'listen' and 'talk to' the text through which its author is speaking one of most important translator's skills. A translator's reading of the text is a conversation with it stretched in time, making a translator the most attentive of readers. Pliny the Younger was certain that «what has *escaped* the reader can't *elude* the translator» [3, p. 122; the italics are mine. — O. D.].

Before starting this dialogue, though, a translator has to face a number of essential issues: what author(s) / what text(s) to translate; for what purpose and for what reader(s) to translate; what system of aesthetic, artistic, moral values to rely on, as any translation is based on a certain cultural code a translator regards as his / her own, i. e. , on a certain axiological hierarchy; last but not least, how to translate, that is, what tasks to set and how to deal with them using certain strategies. In other words, pragmatics, teleology and axiology are the factors conditioning the aesthetic and artistic components of any translation. This, in its turn, conditions the evaluation of a translated text as «good» or «bad», depending on what is considered most important and valuable in the original and on the translator's perception of it from the culturally functional point of view. An original text can be regarded and used as some material for «bettering» which was typical of the French translation tradition; as a verbal sample for exact transposition into another language as all sacred texts usually have been in all times and cultures; as a source of new literary manners and devices; or as a means of developing / modernizing the language and culture of translation as was the case in Russia in the 18th century². As Natalya Avtonomova, one of contemporary Russian translators argues, another important thing to keep in mind is the «author — reader» perspective conditioning the translator's strategy. If the aim is to make the reader closer to the author the translator should be more attentive to the original text; in the opposite case, more attention should be paid to the language of translation and eventual readers cultural and intellectual characteristics and scope [5, p. 27].

The number of distortions / violations / «corruptions» of the original text is one of the factors conditioning the evaluation of a translation, distortion as often as not being understood rather widely which seems too general an approach. To start with, any translation per se is a sort of transgression / distortion of the original as it's a «remaking» it with the use of a different language and introducing the text into a different culture (the *traduttore — traditore* problem [6]). Dealing with distortions on a more specific level as with the translator's voluntary or involuntary violating the original author's intentions, it's essential to understand the reason that has caused it. The major one is the aesthetic incompatibility of cultures a translator has to face and overcome (the pathos of the original can become

¹ For detailed discussion of this perspective of understanding translation see [2].

² See [4].

pathetic in the translation; the funniest original joke isn't at all funny in a different cultural tradition; the most exquisitely elegant phrase can turn into a stylistically neutral, banal or ugly one, etc.)³. Among other reasons for such violations one could name a translator's individual set of artistic values, censorship demands and restrictions, or misunderstanding on the translator's part due to his / her lack of knowledge of either linguistic or cultural issues — or both. The latter case, which is as a rule combined with the exact grammatical translation, brings to life the style which Natalya Trauberg called «a mixture of *kantselyarit* and *fenya*» [5, p. 505].

The ambivalent «twinkling» nature of translation has brought to life a great number of its definitions given by translators themselves, highlighting its various aspects and characteristics, from purely aesthetic and artistic to genre and intertextual ones. Taken together, they form some phenomenological invariant presenting translation as the phenomenon of dual aesthetic nature oscillating between the possible and the impossible, the objective and the subjective, the rational and the artistic; as an art among other relative or comparable ones, both verbal and not.

Ju. Levin introduced the term «translation multiplicity» [8] to name the phenomenon known to both translators and scholars and up to this day remaining an arguable issue — that of «an ideal translation» According to Avtonomova and quite a few other translators, «there can't be an ideal translation good enough for all times». The reason for this argument is more than obvious: for a professional translator, translation is a never ending dual process of hermeneutic interpretation, i.e. that of decoding of the original text taking into consideration the semiotic paradigm of the original culture in general and the author's personal semiotic and axiological paradigm in particular, on the one hand, as well as recoding the said text in accordance with the laws of the language and culture of translation, their semiotics and axiology included, and the translator's personality based on his / her system of values, on the other (to say nothing of eventual readers for whom the translation is performed). It's evident that the densely multi-layered cultural nature of the original text combined with the impossibility to exhaustively render all the plentitude of it into a different language call for a multitude of interpretations every one of which will be conditioned by the translator's personality. Besides, neither culture not the translator's / readers' personalities are static in time, and every new epoch allows for new variants of interpretation and hence — new translations of original texts. As the saying goes, «every generation has the right for a translation of their own». Alongside with this, there have been periods of simultaneous appearance and parallel coexistence of several different translations if that was called for by the needs of a / the culture of translation.

Translation does make the life of an original text longer and more varied; this applies not only to verbal translation(s), but to all possible transpositions of verbal / literary texts into other arts' languages. In the latter case, the mechanism of communication is substantially more complicated due to increasing of interconnecting cultural and semiotic systems, with the resulting cultural text becoming syncretic, thus presupposing essentially different strategies of perception and understanding on the part of the public, in other words, translating the text into a familiar language. The important thing is that the new syncretic text will be perceived on the background of the well-known verbal one regarded as the original, while all the possible variants of coding and decoding it will be based on a

³ For detailed treatment of cultural semiotics problems in translation see [7].

certain invariant «image» of the original text loaded with all the cultural stereotypes active in this or that culture.

Book illustration comes first in the row of non-verbal translations, as it is the type of a transposition to which practically every poetic or prosaic text is subjected. Illustrations translate all the meaningful wealth of a verbal text into the language of painting and graphics using the ABC of colour, form, volume, line, perspective, etc. In a way, one could treat it as a mirror image of writers' and poets' attempts to express all those using words.

A classic case of very close visual “translation” (transposition) of a verbal text is a complete set of stanza for stanza illustrations for Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman* made by Alexander Benois. The project took the artist slightly more than two decades, the book published in 1923 in Soviet Petrograd. Starting with the title page, the illustrations present Benois' cultural statement, making the artist's cultural preferences as well as his orientation to and associating himself with pre-1917 Russian culture as manifested by its Golden Age variant quite evident.

Another set of examples present three different approaches to the verbal text (N. Gogol's *The Diary of a Madman*) made by three different artists. Ilya Repin's approach could be termed the «outside» external one, the artist using typical devices of his time to give a pictorial and graphic images of madness. In Oleg Besedin's illustrations the two texts merge, the graphic one coming through the background of the verbal one, while Olga Mattern's illustration presents the artist's attempt to treat madness from the inside depicting the character's state of mind using well known cultural allusions and quotations of modern art.

Mstislav Dobuzhinsky's (1923) and Ilya Glazunov's (1983) illustrations to Dostoevsky's *White Nights* present two drastically different readings of the original text and the idea of St Petersburg. In the former's graphic black-and-white illustrations the famous city sights as well as the characters' appearance are just hinted at, expressing the writer's idea of the story as oscillating between the real and the imaginary, the Dreamer's visions. In the latter's colour ones both the characters and the surroundings are quite real in their somewhat mysterious beauty, presenting a typical picture compatible with the expectations of the general public, based on the idea of St Petersburg of the white nights period, on the one hand, and on the traditional school reading of Dostoevsky's text, on the other.

None of the illustrations manage to render the whole set of the authors' ideas, but each of the visual texts highlights some of them making a part of the original meaningful complex explicit; taken together, illustrations form a visual paradigm of a wide range of possible variants of understanding the original. “Talking” to the eventual public of various cultural origins, illustrations help them communicate with their own and foreign cultures and ultimately, with each other.

Music, theatre, and cinema are three other channels of translating a verbal text, each of them using the strategies and language of its own. Not all the attempts are successful, failures often conditioned both by the specific characteristics of the original text and by the incompatibility of the chosen techniques of translation caused by the utmost aesthetic and practical goals set by the makers of musical, theatrical and film versions. A perfect illustration of the above said is presented by the long story of Pushkin's *The Queen of Spades* in its musical, theatrical and cinema versions, some of which not only transformed the original story but also changed its genre. The well-known Tchaikovsky's opera with Modest Tchaikovsky's libretto turned Pushkin's philosophical *povest'* (long short story) into a

musical melodrama for the upper-class public, while the first Russian mute fifteen-minute screen version (1910; director P. Chardynin) used Pushkin's text as a "cultural pretext" for a sensational salon melodrama for lower classes. The second, full length mute screen version by Ya. Protazanov (1916, 63 min.), with Ivan Mozzhukhin playing Hermann, was based on the famous Moscow Art Theatre performance and presented the story of obsession with a certain idea resulting in madness, thus highlighting one of most important issues explicit in Pushkin's writings⁴. Two other versions were made by Russian directors in 1927 (Andrey Razumnyi; black and white, mute) and 1937 (Fedor Otsep; black and white, sound)⁵. The former was shot in Germany with almost exclusively German actors; the latter appeared in France, with the French cast, even though the sets and costumes were designed by the Russian émigré artist Yuri Annenkov. Both versions were typical translations of the Russian original into European cultural languages, with all the stereotypes of the «Russianness» preserved and highlighted for the foreign public. In 1931, Annenkov designed the settings and costumes for the Russian émigré theatre version of the story staged in Nikita Baliev's cabaret theatre *Letuchaya mysh* (The Bat) in Paris and presenting Pushkin's story as Hermann's violent retrospective ravings in the madhouse.

The British 1949 (director Torold Dickinson, black and white, full length, with mostly British actors) version turned *The Queen of Spades* into a sort of contamination of the English Gothic and family novels mixed with quite a bit of *razvesistaya kliukva*; the present day Internet genre description of it is «a thriller». The 1960 Soviet *film-opera* (full length, colour) was an attempt to combine the languages of the opera and the cinema, with film actors pretending to be singing looking into the camera to the real opera phonogram as the soundtrack. As the result, the dramatic effect turned into the comic one due to the wrong strategy of triple translation between incompatible cultural languages. In the Soviet 1982 screening Pushkin's horror of the horrible turns into the horror of everyday life routine, with the actor playing the part of Hermann lacking the two basic characteristics of resembling both Napoleon and Mefisto and playing quite an ordinarily looking person under pressing circumstances.

Last but not least, the two ballet versions by Roland Petit should be mentioned. The first one was based on Tchaikovsky's opera (the music, not the libretto); it was staged in 1978 for Petit's Marseille ballet troupe and meant as Mikhail Baryshnikov's mono ballet depicting the passion for gambling. The second one was staged to Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony in the Bolshoi in 2001 for Nikolai Tsiskaridze and Ilze Liepa as the tragic story of an acute conflict of two central characters' wills, making explicit Pushkin's philosophical ideas of obsession, will for power, Fate turning to Fatum, ultimately — of Life and Death, thus adequately translating the Russian 1830s story into the language of international modern ballet.

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For citation: Demidova O. R. Translation as inter / intercultural hermenevtics. *Vestnik SPbSU. Philosophy and Conflict studies*, 2017, vol. 33, issue 3, pp. 289–295. DOI: 10.21638/11701/spbu17.2017.304.

Received 07.02.2017

Accepted 16.03.2017