

On The Translation of Metaphor and Simile in D. Tartt's Novel "The Goldfinch"¹

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Abstract

The paper discusses methods for rendering metaphors and similes. The practical material under study entails artistic devices and expressiveness used in D. Tartt's English-language novel "The Goldfinch", translated into Russian and German. The proposed research aims at the comparative analysis of the text in the source language (SL) and the texts in the languages of translation (TL); the study determines the main translation models for metaphors and similes used in the SL text by reference to the stylistic features of the studied literary texts; the given paper pursues to elicit the problems arising in the process of metaphor and simile translation into Russian and German.

Keywords: Translation; Rendering; Novel; Metaphor; Simile; Trope; Literary Text.

1. Introduction

Metaphor has become a domain of intensive study since the late 20th century. Nonetheless, the fascination with the topic itself is inexhaustible. In accordance with the definition proposed by the outstanding Russian linguist Arutyunova (1990), "metaphor is a figure of speech or a speech mechanism that implies the use of a word denoting a certain class of objects, phenomena, etc., to characterize or name an object belonging to another class, or designate another class of objects similar to this in any respect"⁴. Metaphor is in a systemic relationship with another trope or figure of speech, which is simile. Simile is regarded as a specific syntactic form of metaphor expression (Arutyunova, 1990).

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⁴ «метафора – троп или механизм речи, состоящий в употреблении слова, обозначающего некоторый класс предметов, явлений и т.п., для характеристики или наименования об"екта, вводящего в другой класс, либо наименования другого класса об"ектов, аналогичного данному в каком-либо отношении».

Over the past decade, there has been an increased focus on the problem of rendering metaphors into another language. The problem has been covered in a number of works by both Russian (Yevstafova, 2010; Marugina, 2008; Meshcheryakova, 2011) and foreign researchers (Cheetham, 2016; Massey & Ehrensberger-Dow, 2017; Pedersen, 2017; Schäffner, 2014; Schäffner & Shuttleworth, 2013). Metaphor translation is studied on the material of languages of similar (English - German) (Massey & Ehrensberger-Dow, 2017; Schäffner, 2014) and different structures (English - Arabic (Dickins, 2005); English - Russian (Bogdanova, 2016). Shuttleworth's monograph is of great interest; the author discloses the results of a metaphor translation study encompassing texts in Indo-European and non-Indo-European languages (Shuttleworth, 2017).

2. Methods

Regarding the study, we turned to the analysis of methods of metaphor and simile translation from English into Russian and German. We focused on D. Tartt's novel "Goldfinch" which served as the SL text. To reach the goal of our research, we designated the following tasks: to study theoretical background behind the issue related to metaphor translation theory; conduct a comparative analysis of the SL text and TL texts in Russian and German; identify the main translation models of metaphor and simile, taking into account the stylistic peculiarities of the analyzed literary texts; identify the main problems that arise in the process of rendition of a metaphor into another language.

Despite a significant number of works related to metaphor studies, the current research is relevant, since it relies on the study of texts in languages of similar and different structures. The novelty of the research is a comprehensive approach to studying the problem of metaphor translation on the material of the SL text translated into languages of different structures. On the one hand, such approach provides rich material for the analysis of texts in Russian, English and German; on the other hand, it indicates the reliability of the data obtained as a result of the study. The study will allow to identify patterns and the most successful translation strategies when rendering metaphors and similes into another language.

As material for analysis, we referred to the original text of the novel "The Goldfinch", printed by the publishing house "Abacus" in 2014 (Tartt, 2014). In addition, as part of the study, we analyzed the texts in Russian and German. For the first time, the third novel by Tartt was published in 2013, and two years later it was translated by Zavozova and published in Russian by "Corpus" Publishing House (Tartt, 2015). The novel in German is provided by "Wilhelm Goldmann" publishing house and translated by Schmidt and Lutze (Tartt, 2014).

In this paper, we relied on the classification of translation strategies by P. Newmark, as well as the concept of A. Deigan, D. Gabris and A. Solska, which goes back to the doctrine of conceptual metaphor. Both classifications, despite the

difference in approaches, categorize similar ideas regarding metaphor translation. As for the first translation strategy, P. Newmark focuses on the possibility of preserving a similar metaphorical image in a text in the TL – a similar conceptual metaphor and equivalent linguistic expression by Deigan, Gabris and Solska. Secondly, Newmark notes the likelihood of replacing one image with another, more familiar to the representative of another culture. Here we can also talk about using a different conceptual metaphor (Deignan et al., 1997). Thirdly, the researcher describes the translation of a metaphor using comparison (a similar conceptual metaphor and other linguistic expression [Ibidem]). Another possibility that P. Newmark points to is the preservation of a similar metaphorical image with the addition of explanatory information, as well as the translation of a metaphor by paraphrasing (Schäffner, 2014). In the current study, we consider various types of metaphors to identify possible translation models.

3. Results

3.1. Conventional Metaphor Translation

By conventional, we imply traditional metaphors that are frequent in a language. Unlike dead metaphors, conventional ones are recognized by native speakers as tropes. According to researcher Van den Broeck, living metaphors are easier to translate than conventional ones, since creative metaphors “... are less culture-bound and are therefore able to dispense with culture-specific information”. (Shuttleworth, 2017) The following are the examples of conventional metaphors translation into Russian and German.

In the first chapter of the novel, the protagonist Theo is in a hotel room. He is carefully studying its interior: “*I spent an unreasonable amount of time scrutinizing a tiny pair of gilt-framed oils hanging over the bureau ... nothing special, though I studied them as if they held, encrypted, some key to the secret heart of the old Flemish masters*” (Tartt, 2014). D. Tartt uses the conventional metaphor “the key to one’s heart” (“hidden essence”). Translated into Russian, the passage reads as follows: “*Neprostitel'no mnogo vremeni ya provel, razglyadyvaya paru krokhotnykh kartinok maslom, visevshikh nad byuro... – kartinki dlya dekora, nichego osobennogo, no ya izuchal ikh tak, budto v nikh byl zashifrovan klyuch k samym sokrovennym tainstvam starykh flamandskikh masterov*” (Tartt, 2015). The translator made a good choice in favor of replacing the image: “*some key to the secret heart*” - “*klyuch k samym sokrovennym tainstvam*”; the word “*serdze*” (“*heart*”) in the TL text would have sounded incorrect and distorted the meaning, since the expression “*klyuch k serdtsu*” (“*key to the heart*”) is interpreted in the framework of interpersonal relationships, which is not relevant to the context. In the text in German, the translators used a similar metaphorical image to render the conventional metaphor (“*some key to the secret heart*” – “*die Chiffre eines geheimen Schlüssels zum Herzen*”): “*Ich verbrachte unvernünftig viel Zeit damit, ein winziges Paar goldgerahmter Ölbilder*

über dem Sekretär hingen. ... dekorative Reproduktionen, nichts Besonderes, aber ich studierte sie, als enthielten sie die Chiffre eines geheimen Schlüssels zum Herzen der alten flämischen Meister” (Tartt, 2014).

To create the image of the protagonist’s mother, the writer uses a large number of animalistic metaphors, i.e. such tropes based on associations and comparisons with wildlife. Thus, the decisiveness, energy and, to some extent, the fighting character of the heroine are described using a conventional metaphor. In the framework of this allegory, the image of the tiger is associated with the above mentioned characteristics of the character: “... *she gives off a watchful, tigerish air of steeling herself against attack*” (Tartt, 2014). The translation into Russian was realized with the help of a metaphor and preservation of a similar image: “...*v ney chuvstvuyetsya pristal'noye vnimaniye tigra, kotoryy ves' skhvatyvayetsya stal'yu pered pryzhkom*” (Tartt, 2015). This example is of interest due to the fact that in the original text we observe a context saturated with metaphors; the same artistic image was conveyed by the translator into Russian: “*steeling herself against attack*” - “*skhvatyvayetsya stal'yu pered pryzhkom*”. Translated into German, a similar animalistic metaphor has survived: “*sie scheint sich auf wachsam tigerhafte Weise gegen einen Angriff zu wappnen*” (Tartt, 2014). The choice of the verb “*wappnen*” in the meaning of “*prepare, arm*” (*before the attack*) is of interest.

Let us consider the case of the implementation of a dead metaphor in the literary text under analysis. At the beginning of the novel, Theo Decker reflects on his misadventures, which are covered in the press. In the original text, the author uses the orientational metaphor hidden in the language “*beyond the reach of one's comprehension*”: “*The Herald Tribune had no news of my predicament but the story was all over the Dutch papers, dense blocks of foreign print which hung, tantalizingly, just beyond the reach of my comprehension*” (Tartt, 2014). This passage was translated into Russian using a cliché – an equivalent metaphor: “*V “Gerald Trib'yun” o peredryage, v kotoruyu ya popal, ne bylo ni slova, zato eta istoriya byla v kazhdoy gollandskoy gazete: plotnyye stolbtsy inostrannogo teksta muchitel'no prygali pered glazami, no ostavalis' za predelami moyego ponimaniya*” (Tartt, 2015). The translator used a different image when transmitting the verb “*hung*”: “*hung, tantalizingly*” - “*muchitel'no prygali pered glazami*”. Thus, here we can talk about replacing the image which is more comprehensible for the speaker of Russian. The paraphrase was used in the German translation: “*Die Herald Tribune brachte keine Meldung über mein Problem, aber die holländischen Zeitungen waren voll davon, dichte Blöcke von ausländischen Druckbuchstaben, aufreizend knapp außerhalb dessen, was ich verstehen konnte*” (Tartt, 2014).

3.2. Creative Metaphor Translation

Tartt (2014) uses the following creative metaphor to describe Christmas atmosphere in one of the scenes of the novel: “*In the afternoons, an amateur band*

played *Christmas carols that hung tinny and fragile in the winter air*". Thus, Christmas songs are in the air, like snowflakes. The author also uses the adjective "tinny" ("harsh metal sound") to describe them. This metaphor is translated into Russian using another expression: "*Blizhe k vecheru lyubitel'skiy orkestr zavodil rozhdestvenskiye pesenki, kotoryye, khrupko pobryakivaya, povisali v zimmem vozdukh*" (Tartt, 2015). The adjective "tinny" was rendered using the participle "*khrupko pobryakivaya*". The translation into German was made using a similar metaphor; in addition, it is syntactically more accurate, because the translators chose the adjective "*blechern*" ("tin, rattle") for the description: "*Nachmittags spielte eine Amateurkapelle Weihnachtslieder, die blechern und zerbrechlich in der Winterluft schwebten*" (Tartt, 2014).

The following case is the example of an animalistic creative metaphor that conveys Theo's mother state: "*Her forehead was shiny and her eyes were still a little unfocused; she had the slightly ruffled aspect of a sea-bird blown off course*" (Tartt, 2014). In the Russian text, the translation was implemented using a similar metaphor: "*Lob u neye po-prezhnemu blestel, a vzglyad ostavalsya nemnogo steklyannym; ona napominala slegka vz'yeroshennuyu morskuyu ptitsu, kotoruyu vetrom sneslo s kursa*" (Tartt, 2015). The same imagery and word for word translation is used in the German text: "*Ihre Stirn glänzte, und ihr Blick war immer noch ein bisschen unsteht. Sie hatte das leicht zerzauste Aussehen eines Seevogels, den der Wind vom Kurs abgebracht hat*" (Tartt, 2014).

The following example shows the case of using a creative metaphor that conveys the anxiety of the protagonist: "*Often ... I drifted in and out of sleep, and my dreams for the most part were muddied with the same indeterminate anxiety that bled through into my waking hours ...*" (Tartt, 2014). In the translation into Russian a different imagery was used by replacing the verb "muddy" with the verb "soak": "*To i delo ... ya zasypal i prosypalsya, i sny moi po bol'shey chasti byli propitany toy zhe besformennoy trevogoy ...*" (Tartt, 2015). When translating the passage "anxiety that bled through into my waking hours" into Russian, a different syntactic structure of the sentence was used: "... *Besformennoy trevogoy, kotoroy krovotochilo moye bodrstvovaniye*". Another related image is used for the translation of the verb "muddy", which is more understandable to the native speaker of German ("pollute, stain" - "darken, blur"): "*Oft dämmerte ich ... im Halbschlaf vor mich hin, und meine Träume waren größtenteils von der gleichen unbestimmbaren Bangigkeit getrübt, die auch durch die wachen Stunden sickerte ...*" (Tartt, 2014). In the subordinate clause, we observe the replacement of the image "bleed" to "sickern".

3.3 Simile Translation

Similes in a literary text also present difficulties for the translator: "Creative similes, unlike conventional ones, represent an individual view of a particular object

or phenomenon, or similarity with another object or phenomenon”¹ (Fedortsova & Koshcheyeva, 2013). It is worth noting that simile is one of the common tropes in the novel. Similes are expressed at the lexical level using marker words.

To set the city scene, the author uses the following imagery: “*Gloomily, I watched the crowd of workers streaming off the cross-town bus, as joyless as a swarm of hornets*” (Tartt, 2014). In the translation into Russian and German, the simile is rendered using the “*kak*” (“like”) and “*wie*” conjunctions: “*Ya ugryumo smotrel, kak tolpa rabochikh vytekayet iz gorodskogo avtobusa – mrachnaya, kak osinyy roy*” (Tartt, 2015) - “*Düster beobachtete ich die Horden von Angestellten, die aus dem Crosstown-Bus quollen, freudlos wie ein Schwarm Hornissen*” (Tartt, 2015).

Describing his condition, Theo Decker compares himself to a prisoner: “*During those restless, shut-up days, I got to know every inch of the room as a prisoner comes to know his cell*” (Tartt, 2014). In the Russian-language text, the simile is rendered using the conjunction “*kak*” (“like”) and omission: “*Za eti bespokoynyye dni, provedennyye vzaperti, ya izuchil kazhdyy santimetr svoey komnaty, kak uznik kameru*” (Tartt, 2015). In the German text, the trope was translated using of the adverb and conjunction “*genau wie*” and the omission: “*In diesen rastlosen Tagen des Eingesperrtseins lernte ich jeden Zentimeter meines Zimmers kennen, genau wie ein Häftling seine Zelle*” (Tartt, 2014).

To draw a portrait of the protagonist’s mother, D. Tartt uses the following simile: “*... and she liked to make me laugh by calling herself an Okie even though she was as glossy and nervy and stylish as a racehorse*” (Tartt, 2014). Translation into Russian and German was carried out with the original imagery preserved, but with the omission of a polysyndeton: “*... ona lyubila smeshit' menya, govorya pro sebya “oki-doki”, khotya vsya byla loshchenaya, nervnaya, tonkaya, budto skakovaya loshad*” (Tartt, 2015); “*... und sie brachte mich gern zum Lachen, indem sie sich selbst als Okie bezeichnete, obwohl sie hochglänzend, nervös und elegant wie ein Rennpferd war*” (Tartt, 2014).

4. Discussion

It is essential to note that when translating a conventional and dead metaphor into another language, translators can opt for a rendition of the original image that is understandable to the native speaker of that language. In other words, the metaphorical image is replaced by an equivalent metaphor in the TL. In the absence of an equivalent metaphorical image in the TL, the translator can also refer to the use of paraphrasing (Khisamova et al., 2015).

According to the analysis, metaphor translation strategies and their choice depend on the kind of metaphor itself: conventional metaphors have analogues or

¹“Avtorskiye sravneniya, v otlichiye ot ustoychivyykh, reprezentiruyut individual'nyy vzglyad na tot ili inoy predmet ili yavleniye, ili zhe na skhodstvo s drugim predmetom ili yavleniyem”.

equivalents in the languages of different structure, which greatly simplifies the work of a translator; at the same time, creative metaphors are open to interpretation. Unlike Van den Brook (Shuttleworth, 2017), we believe that the translation of a creative metaphor seems equally time-consuming: translators sometimes encounter the problem of choosing the most suitable image that would be familiar and understandable to a native speaker (Aminova & Khafizova, 2014).

Thus, similes at the lexical level, expressed by marker words, are rendered retaining the original imagery, using translation transformations, for example, omissions. Simile in a novel as trope conveys the originality of images, being one of the most common tropes in the literary text under analysis.

5. Summary

According to the study, the most common metaphor translation model is a word for word translation when a similar metaphorical image is preserved. Word for word translation is unacceptable if there is no similar or analogous metaphorical image in the target language. In this case, the metaphorical image is replaced with an equivalent metaphor in the TL; translation can also be implemented using paraphrasing. Even if the original imagery is preserved, translators can refer to the use of translation transformations, including omissions. In addition, the kind of metaphor can affect the way it is rendered: conventional metaphors have analogues or equivalents in languages of different structures, which greatly simplifies the work of the translator; at the same time, creative metaphors are more open to interpretation. Simile is one of the most common tropes in the text of the work and is rendered with the preservation of the original imagery. Thus, the translation of metaphor into another language presents both difficulties and enormous scope for creativity. As a result, the choice of a particular translation model is often determined by subjective factors.

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