

# Some Issues of Translation of Idioms from English into Russian<sup>1</sup>

*Tatyana Vladimirovna Marsheva<sup>2</sup>, Natalia Albertovna Sigacheva<sup>3</sup>, Svetlana Mihajlovna Peretochkina<sup>3</sup>, & Ekaterina Vladimirovna Martynova<sup>3</sup>*

## Abstract

The relevance of the research is determined by the importance of intercultural and cross-language studies in order to identify similarities and differences in language systems. The aim of this study is to consider different translations of idioms from English into Russian comparing different time translations of the D.K. Jerome's novel "Three Men in a Boat (to Say Nothing of the Dog)" with the English original novel. Materials of the article can find application in the development of lectures and practical lessons on general and comparative linguistics, country studies, special courses in translation theory and intercultural communication theory. The research materials may be used in the practice of the improving the techniques and methods of translation from English into Russian.

**Keywords:** Linguistics; Translation; Idiom; Lexical Gap; Associative Gap.

## 1. Introduction

Intercultural communication carries universal and specific features of the language systems based on their comparative description, as well as ways to compensate for those links in the lexical system that are not nominatively marked by a singleword. Comparing the different languages and cultures discrepancies are revealed, which are nominatively unmarked, called lexical gaps.

The term "gap" was coined by scientists J. Vinay and J. Darbelnet who define it as "a phenomenon that occurs whenever a word of one language has no correspondence in another language". Many linguists give the definition of this term (V. L. Muravyov, A. O. Ivanov etc.). V. G. Gak describes gaps as "gaps in the lexical system of language, no words that should have been present in the language, if we

---

<sup>1</sup> Please cite this paper as follows:

Marsheva, T. V., Sigacheva, N. A., Peretochkina, S. M., & Martynova, E. V. (2019). Some issues of translation of idioms from English into Russian. *Journal of Research in Applied Linguistics*, 10(SP), 542-549.

<sup>2</sup> Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russia; [tatyana0509@mail.ru](mailto:tatyana0509@mail.ru)

<sup>3</sup> Kazan Federal University

base on its reflective function (i.e., its task is to define the phenomena of objective reality) and the lexical system of a language" (Vinogradov, 2001). Synonymic row also includes the following terms: weak equivalents (M. K. Golovanivskaya, N. V. Gabdreeva), background information (E. M. Vereshchagin, V. S. Vinogradov, V. G. Kostomarov), foreignism and exoticism (A. V. Kalinin, D. N. Shmelev, A. N. Ivanova), non-equivalent vocabulary, words-realia (N. K. Garbowski, A. V. Fedorov, I. Alexeeva). The lacunarity was studied by such linguists as V. N. Komissarov, S. Florin, V. G. Gak, V. L. Muravyov, S. Vlachov, Y. A. Sorokin, L. K. Bayramova. Gaps are learnt in different aspects: historical, comparative, theoretical.

We consider such a thing as lacunarity based on material obtained by comparison of the original text and translations of works by English writer D.K. Jerome "Three Men in a Boat (To Say Nothing of the Dog)" (Marsheva et al., 2017) Such prominent linguists as M.P. Alekseev, V. Komissarov, Y.S. Sorokin, B.A. Uspensky, G. Huttl Worth, E.E. Birzhakova, L.A. Voynova, L.L. Kutina wrote about the importance of the language translation study.

## 2. Methods

The main method we used, is widely known today, and G. Huttl-Worth was one of the first to apply it in Los Angeles in the 60-ies: a comparison of the original and the translation. Using the example of multi-temporal translations of M. Engelhardt, M. Salie, M.A. Donskoy and E. Linetskaya and their comparisons with the English original novel of D.K. Jerome "Three Men in a Boat (To Say Nothing of the Dog)" we describe the associative gaps, generating lacunarity in languages (Russian and English), as well as to develop principles of adequate transmission of information by reflection lacunar units in the translation process.

## 3. Results and Discussion

The story "Three men in a boat" was published repeatedly in Russia. According to our data, the book was translated into Russian by E. Tihomandritskaya, M.A. Engelhardt, N.A. Zharintsova, E.S. Kudasheva M.A. Salie, M.A. Donskoy and E. Linetskaya and others.

In this study, we compared the translations made by M.A. Engelhardt and M.A. Salie and the translation made jointly by M.A. Donskoy (I-X Ch.) and E.L. Linetskaya (XI-XIX Ch.). We consider different translations of idioms from English into Russian comparing different time translations of the D.K. Jerome's novel "Three Men in a Boat (to Say Nothing of the Dog)" with the English original novel. We also analyze different variants of translation of idioms from English into Russian.

Associative Gaps are lexical items, which can evoke the native speakers of this language certain language associations. These associations can be reserved to other words in other language or do not exist (Vlahov & Florin, 1986). In this case,

it is only persistent associations that are associated with the national extralinguistic reality, i.e. associations created by the national thinking and existing in the majority of native speakers of the language. This kind of gaps covers more specific historical facts, folk concepts, the state of this community and others (Garbovsky, 2004). Here is what the lexical entry is given, for example, for the word Henley (the city on the Thames in Oxfordshire; here is held the annual regatta [Henley Regatta]). In the lexical entries of all dictionaries regatta is mentioned. That is, this city is associated with the traditional international rowing competitions held on the Thames in Henley.

Associative realities can also be attributed to language allusions – they contain a hint of any idiom, proverb, saying, a catch phrase or phraseological unit. In the language there are phrases that do not occur in speech but are used in it as ready-made verbal blocks. These are the so-called set / non-free / phrases or, as they are often called, phraseological units / combinations / or just phraseological units. They are very diverse in their grammatical patterns and characteristics. Most phraseological units are stylistically significant, have emotional expressive shades (Kunin, 1984).

The possibilities of achieving a full-fledged dictionary translation of phraseological units depend mainly on the relationship between the units of the foreign language and the language into which the translation is done. In this case, there may be the following options for the transfer of phraseological units to the language of translation: equivalent, variant (analogue), some other not phraseological unit. There is no single accepted scheme of translational classification of phraseological units. The basic rule is to try to translate an idiom as an idiom. S. Vlahov and S. Florin do not absolutize this rule; they simply believe that such a translation as an ideal should be sought first and look for other ways, having only made sure that the phraseological translation in this text is inexpedient (Jerome, 1959).

Let's consider the examples of the translation of some idioms in different Russian translations.

To a "T" – «na vse sto», «v tochku», po vkusu ("one hundred percent," "to the point," to taste) (Gabdreeva & Marsheva, 2016). The expression (right) to a T (obsolete expression to a tittle) v sovershenstve, ideal'no, toch'-v-toch'; kak raz, v tochnosti; ~ tyutel'ka v tyutel'ku (perfect, exactly; just, exactly) [T is the first letter of the word tittle. The expression to a tittle was used long before the appearance of the expression to a T] (Jerome, 1957). In the Russian translations, this expression was translated "one hundred percent," "to the point," to taste. Let's consider an example from the original and one of the translations. The example: "Harris said, however, that the river would suit him to a "T". I don't know what a "T" is (except a sixpenny one, which includes bread and butter and cake ...)." (Jerome, 1911) – «Garris dobavil, odnako, chto reka udovletvorila by yego «na vse sto». Ya ne znayu, kakiye eto «sto», no oni, vidimo vsekh udovletvoryayut, chto sluzhit im khoroshey rekomendatsiyey.

» (Harris added, however, that the river would satisfy him “one hundred percent”. I do not know what this “hundred” is, but they seem to satisfy everyone, which serves as a good recommendation.” (Jerome, 2010). All translators tried to find an analogue of the English phraseological unit and its meaning was conveyed. But the homophony of the abbreviation and the separate word that the author plays with in this passage could not be conveyed. The English letter “T” is pronounced like “tea” (a word that sounds the same as the indicated letter of the alphabet). Consequently, the passage (the dialogue of the characters in the story, that is, oral speech and they do not see how the word is written) in which this phraseological unit is used can be understood in two ways. The first option – the river is what you need (talking about travel); the second is the river suits for “tea”. And further, there is the play on words. I don’t know what a “T” is (except a sixpenny one, which includes bread and butter and cake ...). In the Russian translation above *one hundred percent* was used in both sentences. In the remaining translations, the last phrase was omitted (Ivanov, 2006). As Garbovsky notes, one of the reasons forcing the translator to deform the text is the impossibility of transmitting the original text fragments containing the so-called wordplay, i.e. the area where the asymmetric phonetic, semantic, and cultural-associative characteristics of the contacting languages occur in (Gabdreeva & Marsheva, 2016).

*Lose heart - opuskat' ruki, teryat' vkus, obeskurazhit* (give up, lose taste, discourage). Lose heart - padat' dukhom, otchivat'sya, vpadat' v unyniye, teryat' bodrost' dukha, muzhestvo; ~ ruki opustilis' (to lose courage, to despair, to become disheartened, to lose courage; ~ hands dropped) (Gabdreeva et al., 2017). “He seemed to lose heart in the business after that.” (Tishkina, 2008) - «V rezul'tate u Dzhordzha sovsem opustilis' ruki» “As a result, George’s hands completely fell” (Kopteva, 2009). Literally phraseological unit lose heart means «poteryat' serdtse». The translator picked up an analogue of the English idiom, i.e. such a Russian phraseological unit, which is adequate in value to English, but differs from it in a figurative manner.

*“What the eye doesn't see, the stomach doesn't get upset over.”* (Vlahov & Florin, 1986) - Chego glaz ne vidit, togo i zheludok ne chuvstvuyet. Chego ne vidit oko, togo i ne chuvstvuyet zheludok (Antipov, et al., 1989). What is not visible to the eye does not upset the stomach. In the piece, Jerome paraphrases a famous saying. What the eye doesn't see, the heart doesn't grieve over - the proverb «chego glaz ne vidit, po tom serdtse ne bolit; ~ s glaz doloy – iz serdtsa von. “what the eye doesn't see, that heart does not hurt; ~ out of sight - out of mind (Jerome, 1957). In all the translations, it was possible to transmit the phrase invented by the author. Moreover, the phrase may well be perceived as a phraseological unit, and in the Russian translation there is a connection with the proverb “What the eye doesn't see, the heart doesn't grieve over.”

Cling like grim death - sudorozhno tseplyat'sya, utsepit'sya obeimi rukami (clinging convulsively, clinging with both hands). Cling (hold on) like grim death - derzhat'sya izo vsekh sil, otchayanno tseplyat'sya; vtsepit'sya mertvoy khvatkoy (hold on with all your might, desperately cling; cling to death grip) (Jerome, 1957). Referring to the source under investigation. "By clinging like death to the gunwale, we just managed to keep inside the boat ..." (p. 133) - «Utsepivshis' obeimi rukami za planshir, my ukhitrilis' ne vyletet' iz lodki ...» ("With our hands on the gunwale we managed not to fly out of the boat ...") (Salier, p. 236) The literal translation of the phraseological unit «vtsepit'sya kak besposhchadnaya smert'» ("to cling like a merciless death"). In this example, the English phraseological unit is not transmitted as a phraseological unit [16]. In one of the translations (Engelhardt), a passage in which this phraseological unit is used is omitted.

An old hand - znatok, opytnyy (rybak) (an expert, experienced (fisherman)). An old hand - opytnyy (v chem-libo), znatok, master, master svoeyo dela; byvalyy chelovek; ~ strelyanny vorobey, tertyy kalach (experienced (in anything), a connoisseur, master, master of his craft; ~ Sparrow, shot, shredded roll. (Kunin, 1984). «... no znatoki uveryali, chto ya nikogda ne sdelayus' nastoyashchim rybolovom ...» "... but I'm never really a fisherman ..." (p. 178, Salye). The literal translation of the phrase an old hand is «staraya ruka». The idiom was replaced by the word connoisseur, which conveys the meaning of the English stable expression, but it was not possible to translate "idiom phraseology into idiom".

"I put my arms, my legs, and my back into it." (P. 64) - «Ya pustil v delo ruki, nogi, spinu.» ("I put my arms, legs, back into the work.") (Engelhardt, p. 84). The sentence includes the phraseologism put one's back into something, which was transferred deystvovat' spinoy, puskat' v delo spinu. Consider the information provided in the phraseological dictionary A.V. Kunina. Put one's back into something - 1) vkladyvat' vse svoi sily, ne zhalet' sil (obykvenno pri greble, podnyatii tyazhestey i t.p.) (put all your strength, spare no effort (usually when rowing, lifting weights, etc.) 2) vkladyvat' vsyu dushu vo chto-l., otdavay' vse sily chemu-l. (put your whole soul into smth., give all your strength to smth). (Kunin, 1984). In Jerome's quoted phrase to put one's back into something, he added the words arms and legs. Perhaps the author would like to emphasize how "overly helpful" the hero leaned on the oars or to beat a steady expression. In the studied sources, the sentence was translated literally into Russian (Aminova & Khafizova, 2014). However, the Russian-speaking reader does not notice the phraseological unit transformed by the author, since the Russian language does not contain a similar phraseological turnaround, and although all components of the original phraseological units are saved, the phrase is perceived as a normal sentence and does not cause any associations to the reader (Makhmutova, 2017). The meaning of the statement is clear, the hero diligently carried out his work

Cultural connotation is an important component of phraseological units. It is determined by the values of a certain culture and is specific to a particular nation, culture. Cultural connotation arises as a result of the interpretation of the associative and figurative basis of phraseological units through its correlation with cultural-national stereotypes, as a result of which the cultural-national meaning and nature of phraseological objects are revealed (Muravyev et al., 1980).

#### **4. Summary**

Each language reflects a certain way of perceiving the world. Language picture of the world is composed by the body of knowledge about the world, reflected in this or that language form, but also language specific world-view.

Cultural connotation is an important component of phraseological units. It is determined by the values of a certain culture and is specific to a particular nation, culture. Cultural connotation arises as a result of the interpretation of the associative and figurative basis of phraseological units through its correlation with cultural-national stereotypes, as a result of which the cultural-national meaning and nature of phraseological objects are revealed.

There is no single accepted scheme of translational classification of phraseological units. The basic rule is to try to translate an idiom as an idiom. S. Vlahov and S. Florin do not absolutize this rule; they simply believe that such a translation as an ideal should be sought first and look for other ways, having only made sure that the phraseological translation in this text is inexpedient (Jerome, 1959).

“How successful the choice of translator and his attempts to compensate for possible losses by other means within the broader context depends on the skill and taste of the translator” (Jerome, 2010) “... the absolute translation, i.e. absolutely accurate, without any distortion, reproduction of the original text by the translator is impossible. And the translation is only an approximation, more or less complete, but never absolute, to the original text.” (Gabdreeva & Marsheva, 2016).

#### **5. Conclusion**

Thus, in the paper asynchronical translations of D. K. Jerome, which were the source of the description and the penetration of new concepts and phenomena in the Russian language, are identified and compared, the types of associative gaps in Russian are analyzed, different ways of translation are discussed.

#### **Recommendations**

Materials of the article can find application in the development of lectures and practical lessons on general and comparative linguistics, country studies, special

courses in translation theory and intercultural communication theory. The study materials can be used in the practice of the improvement of techniques and methods of translation from English into Russian.

### Acknowledgements

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

### References

- Aminova, A. A., & Khafizova, A. A. (2014). Evaluative nomination in translation. *Journal of Language and Literature*, 5(4), 85-88.
- Antipov, G. A. et al. (1989). *Tekst kak yavleniye kul'tury (Text as a phenomenon of culture)*. Novosibirsk: Science. Sib. Department.
- Gabdreeva, N. V., & Marsheva, T. V. (2016). *Lakuny I Perevod (Lexical gaps and translation)*. Bulletin of the Chuvash State Pedagogical University.
- Gabdreeva, N. V., Tishkina, D. A., Musina, Y. V., Marsheva, T. V., Martynova Ye. V. (2017). Some issues of achieving the adequacy of translation. *Australian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3-4, 43-50
- Garbovsky, N. K. (2004). *Teoriya PEREVODA: Uchebnik. (Translation theory: Textbook.)*. Moscow: Publishing House of Moscow. University.
- Ivanov, A. O. (2006). *Bezekvivalentnaya Leksika: Uchebnoye Posobiye. (Equivalent words)*. Saint Petersburg: Publishing house of S. Petersburg University.
- Jerome, K. (1911). *Jerome Troye V Odnoy Lodke (Krome Sobaki)*. Moscow. Publishing «Pol'za» V. Antik and K °.
- Jerome, K. (1957). *Jerome selected works in two volumes*. Volume 1 Troye v odnoy lodke, ne schitaya sobaki. Moscow: State Publishing House of Fiction.
- Jerome, K. (1959). *Jerome Troye v lodke (ne schitaya sobaki)*. Leningrad: State Children's Literature Publishing House of the RSFSR Ministry of Education.
- Jerome, K. (2010). *Jerome three men in a boat (to say nothing of the dog)*. Novosibirsk: Sib. Univ. Publishing house.
- Kopteva, O. V. (2009). *Lakunarnost' v angliyskom yazyke na fone russkikh sootvetstviy: na materiale angliyskogo perevoda romana A. S. Pushkina «Yevgeniy Onegin»: avtoref. (Dissertation)*. Nauk. Kazan.
- Kunin, A. V. (1984). *Anglo-russkiy Frazeologicheskiy Slovar (English-Russian Phraseological dictionary)*. Lit.
- Makhmutova, A. N. (2017). Dependence of pragmatically implied meaning on aspectual-temporal semantics (based on the English and Russian language material). *XLinguae*, 10(1), 87-97.

- Marsheva, T. V., Peretochkina, S. M., & Gatiyatullina, G. M. (2017). Gaps in the Lexical System of different-type Languages. *Revista Publicando*, 4(13 (2)), 459-468.
- Muravyev, V. L. (1980). *Problemy Voznikoveniya Etnograficheskikh Lakun. (Problems of ethnographic lexical gaps)*. Vladimir.
- Tishkina, D. A. (2008). *Frazeologicheskiye yedinitsey s komponentom-zoonimom v angliyskom i russkom yazykakh: Sopostavitel'nyy analiz (Phraseological units with the zoonym component in English and Russian: Acomparative analysis (Unpublished Dissertation))*. Kazan: Nauk.
- Vinogradov, V. S. (2001). *Vvedeniye V Perevodovedeniye: Obshchiye I Leksicheskiye Voprosy (Introduction to translation: General and lexical issues)*. Moscow: IOSO RAO.
- Vlahov, S. I., & Florin, S. P. (1986). *Neperevodimoye v Perevode (Untranslatable in translation)*. Moscow: High School.