

## Unit 3. **Basic Transformations in the Process of Translation**

### Основные преобразования в процессе перевода

---

At the sentence level, the most common transformations every translator makes are: 1) omission, 2) addition, 3) transposition, 4) change of grammatical forms, 5) loss compensation, 6) concretization, 7) generalization, 8) antonymic translation, 9) meaning extension, 10) metonymic translation, 11) sentence integration, and 12) sentence fragmentation.

These transformations are caused by differences in the grammar and vocabulary of the source language (SL) and target language (TL).

A few examples:

#### 1. **Omission (опущение).**

Summer rains in Florida may be violent, while they last. —  
Летом во Флориде бывают сильные ливни.

From the point of view of the Russian language, the clause “while they last” is redundant and would make the Russian sentence sound very unnatural if it were to be translated.

#### 2. **Addition (добавление).**

The policeman waved me on. — Полицейский помахал мне рукой, показывая, что я могу проезжать. *Or:* Полицейский рукой просигналил (показал), что я могу проезжать.

The compact English phrase “to wave on” has no compact equivalent in Russian.

#### 3. **Transposition (изменение порядка слов).**

Transposition involves changing the order of words in the target text (TT) as compared to the source text (ST). Typically, an English sentence has a “subject + predicate + object + adverbial adjunct + place + time” word order:

A delegation of Moscow State University students arrived in Gainesville yesterday. — Вчера в Гейнсвилль прибыла группа студентов из Московского государственного университета.

A typical Russian sentence would generally have a reverse word order: time + place + predicate + subject + object + adverbial adjunct.

#### 4. Change of grammatical forms (изменение грамматических форм).

For example, in the Russian translation of ...*Prime Minister Tony Blair was hit by a tomato...* the original Passive Voice construction is changed to an Active Voice construction: ... *в британского премьера попал помидор...*

#### 5. Loss-of-meaning compensation (компенсация смысловых потерь)

involves adding to or reinforcing a TT in one place to compensate for something that hasn't been translated in a different place in the ST:

I ain't got no time for that kind of thing! — Нет у меня времени на такую фигню!

The impossibility of preserving the expressive impact of the substandard double negation in the English ST is compensated for on a lexical level in the Russian TT by using the more expressive Russian slang noun *фигня* for the English expressively-neutral noun *thing*. Similarly, to compensate for the double negation in *You ain't seen nothin' yet!* an emphatic syntactic construction can be used in the Russian translation — *То ли еще будет!*

#### 6. Concretization (конкретизация)

is used when something in the TL is usually expressed using concepts with narrower meaning or when preserving the original concepts with broader meaning would result in an awkward translation:

There were pictures on all the walls and there was a vase with flowers on the table. — На всех стенах комнаты висели картины, а на столе стояла ваза с цветами.

#### 7. Generalization (генерализация)

is used when something in the TL is usually expressed using concepts with broader meaning or when preserving the original concepts with narrower meaning would result in an awkward translation:

She ordered a daiquiri (= a sweet alcoholic drink made of rum and fruit juice). — Она заказала коктейль. Or: There used to be a drugstore (a Walgreens pharmacy) around here. I need to buy some soda water. — Здесь раньше был магазин. Мне надо купить газированной воды.

In the latter example, translating *drugstore* or *Walgreens pharmacy* as *аптека* or *аптека «Уолгринз»* would not only be baffling to a Russian — because in Russia they do not sell *газированную воду* in аптеках — but it would also be unnecessary as for the purposes of communication *магазин* is just as good in this context. The more specific *drugstore* or *Walgreens pharmacy* is translated here by the more general term *магазин*.

**8. Antonymic translation (антонимический перевод)**

involves translating a phrase or clause containing a negation using a phrase or clause that does not contain a negation or vice versa:

I don't think you're right. — Я думаю, что вы не правы.

**9. Meaning extension or sense development (смысловое развитие)**

involves translating a cause by its effect or vice versa:

You can't be serious. — Вы, должно быть, шутите.

(Cause is translated by its effect: Since you can't be serious, it follows that you must be joking).

In the above example, meaning extension is combined with an antonymic translation. Another example:

He answered the phone. — Он поднял трубку.

You can't speak on the phone unless you have lifted the receiver. The effect *answered* in the ST is translated by its cause *lifted the receiver* (=«поднял трубку») in the TT.

**10. Metonymic translation (метонимический перевод).**

A metonymic translation is similar to meaning extension. Metonymy is a figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated, as in the use of *Moscow* for the *Russian government*. Using a part for the whole, the whole for one of its parts, or one of two contiguous concepts for the other are typical metonymic figures of speech. E. g.:

School broke up for the summer recess. — Занятия прекратились. Все ушли на летние каникулы.  
(Or: Начались летние каникулы.)

**11. Sentence integration (объединение предложений)**

involves combining two or more sentences into one:

Your presence isn't required. Nor is it desirable. —  
Ваше присутствие не требуется и даже нежелательно.

**12. Sentence fragmentation (членение предложений)**

involves splitting one complex or compound sentence into two or more simpler sentences:

People everywhere are confronted with the need to make decisions in the face of ignorance and this dilemma is growing. —  
Люди везде сталкиваются с необходимостью принятия решений при отсутствии достаточной информации. Эта проблема возникает все чаще и чаще.

Both sentence integration and sentence fragmentation are prompted by considerations of text cohesion (связность текста) and coherence (логичность изложения). Cohesion is the network of surface relations which link words and sentences in a text. Coherence is the network of conceptual relations which underlie the surface text. Both concern the ways stretches of language are connected to each other. In the case of cohesion, stretches of language are connected to each other by virtue of lexical and grammatical dependencies. In the case of coherence, they are connected by virtue of conceptual or meaning dependencies as perceived by language users.

**Exercise 1.** Comment on the transformations made in the translation of the sentence below.

Prime Minister Tony Blair was hit by a tomato Tuesday as he encountered a group protesting the sanctions the United Nations imposes on Iraq.<sup>1</sup>

Во вторник, во время встречи премьер-министра Великобритании Тони Блэра с группой демонстрантов, протестующих против введения ООН санкций против Ирака, в британского премьера попал помидор, брошенный кем-то из демонстрантов.

**Exercise 2.** Translate the second half of the passage *Оптимисты* into English on a computer, using double-spaced intervals between the lines. In the course of translating, identify the types of transformations you have to make and highlight them in your hard copy. Bring the hard copy of your translation to class for discussion and editing. The paragraphs in the passage are numbered for quicker reference while discussing variants of translation.

Text for translation:

**Оптимисты<sup>2</sup>**  
(окончание)

*Алексей Туробов*

6. Передача была по ТВ в прямом эфире, как выпутываться из долгов. Звонит зритель, обращается к ведущему:

— Как вы?

— Прекрасно! А как вы?

— О, спасибо, просто прекрасно!

— В чем вопрос?

— Да я тут потерпел банкротство... Тяжко. Такое чувство, что весь мир ополчился против меня.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Gainesville Sun, January 10, 2001, p. 3 A.

<sup>2</sup> А Туробов Америка каждый день. Записки натуралиста. Оптимисты. «Новый Мир», № 4, 2000, стр 2-3