TEACHING LEXICAL ASPECTS OF TRANSLATION: NONCE WORDS IN VELIMIR KHLEBNIKOV'S POEMS

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Abstract

The paper deals with the peculiarities of translation of the Russian nonce words into German taught at the translation practice lessons with university students-linguists trained as interpreters and translators. The relevance of the study is in its practical value. When translating a source text, be it a piece of fiction or a media text, translators often face the problem of interpreting non-equivalent vocabulary into the target language. Nonce words, or occasionalisms, are referred to non-equivalent vocabulary which is the most valuable material not only in terms of linguistic heritage, but also in terms of language learning. At the translation practice lessons, students are taught to analyze the translation techniques applicable in interpreting non-equivalent vocabulary, including the author's neologisms, into the target language, German in particular. The knowledge gained by the students allows them to minimize translation errors in the future. The research was carried out on the example of nonce words in Velimir Khlebnikov's poetry. Velimir Khlebnikov is the brightest representative of the Russian avant-garde of the 20th century. He was one of the founders of the Russian futurism, a reformer of the poetic language and an experimenter in the field of new words creation. There are a large number of occasionalisms in his works, which causes certain problems in translation and requires creative translation solutions. Learning nonce words at the lessons helps students to identify and interpret them correctly. The aim of the paper is to study the features of occasionalisms in the Russian language, as well as to analyze the ways of developing translation skills necessary for interpreting these vocabulary units. The authors applied such research methods as descriptive and continuous sampling method. Material for the study was selected from the poems of V. Khlebnikov collected in the book "I am a star for you" and their translations into German performed by E. Berner, F. Mon and R. Erb. The analysis of the selected units identified phonetic, grammatical, lexical and semantic occasionalisms. As a result of the study, the authors compiled a set of exercises and tasks, on the basis of factual material, aimed at the developing translation skills in students trained as translators and interpreters.

Keywords: Teaching, linguistics, translation, language education, nonce word, occasionalism, non-equivalent vocabulary.

1 INTRODUCTION

Occasional vocabulary has been considered as an independent section in linguistics relatively recently. For a long time, such words were studied only in the context of the traditional word formation. In this regard, in

order to give definition to occasionalism, one should consider such linguistic phenomenon as neologism.

E. V. Rosen defined neologisms as "any words newly organized in the language which are considered to be new as long as they are marked as new words in the linguistic consciousness of native speakers". Thus, neologisms are all words at the initial stage of their existence in the language, i.e. at the stage when the recent appearance of the word, its novelty in the language and the reflection of its novelty in the minds of native speakers are relevant (Rozen, 1991, p. 78). After some time new lexical units often get fixed in the language vocabulary and become common.

A. A. Bragina classifies neologisms into linguistic (lexical and semantic) and author's, or individual stylistic neologisms (Bragina, 1981, p. 43). This article is devoted to the author's neologisms. A. A. Bragina writes that these neologisms "are created by writers and poets to give figurativeness to a literary text" (Bragina, 1973, p. 47). They cannot exist out of context and perform the stylistic function reflecting the creativity of the authors and unique character of their works. Such words are also called nonce words, or occasionalisms. The concept of a "nonce word" was first mentioned by the German philologist H. Paul in 1880 (Paul, 1960). The term "occasionalism" in relation to the Russian word formation was first used by N. I. Feldman in the article "Occasional words and lexicography" (Feldman, 1957, p. 56). According to V. V. Lopatin, there are other names for occasional words in the linguistic literature. For example: "individual words", "author's or individual-author's neologisms", "stylistic or individual-stylistic neologisms", "context neologisms", "one-time neologisms", "literary neologisms", "impromptu words", "poetic neologisms", "egologisms" (Lopatin, 1978, p. 94). All these names, one way or another, convey the essence of occasional words. However, the very term "occasionalism", which comes from the Latin *occasio* – "occasion", shows that these words were coined "once, on occasion".

In the "Dictionary of Linguistic Terms" by O. A. Akhmanova, the concept of "occasionalism" is defined as the word which is "not usual, not corresponding to the generally accepted use, but characterized by an individual taste, due to the specific context of use" (Akhmanova, 1969, p. 231). As a rule, occasionalisms do not come into general use and do not become a part of the language vocabulary, unlike neologisms.

Most researchers (V. V. Lopatin, A. A. Bragina, O. I. Aleksandrova) are of the opinion that nonce words should be attributed to speech, while neologisms should be considered as language elements. According to N. G. Babenko, occasionalisms are created by a speaker or writer in a given speech situation and do not aim at wide-spread usage. Neologisms, in their turn, serve to name a new object or phenomenon of extra-linguistic reality and aim at the subsequent entry into the lexical system of the language (Babenko, 1997, p. 78). Explaining the functional difference between occasionalisms and neologisms, O. I. Aleksandrova defines neologisms as "new words that emerge and are formed as nominative (identifying) lexical units intended to perform an intellectual and communicative function", while "occasionalisms are new words that emerge and are formed as characterizing (predicate) units" (Aleksandrova, 1973, p. 24).

According to N. G. Babenko, poets and writers create occasionalisms for a number of reasons, such as: the need to express accurately a thought; the author's desire to express an idea briefly (a nonce word can replace a phrase and even a sentence); the need to emphasize the author's attitude to the subject, their assessment; to draw attention to the meaning of an occasionalism; to avoid tautology; to preserve the rhythm of the verse, to provide rhyme and achieve the necessary effect (Babenko, 1997, p. 80). Thus, nonce words help to convey the thoughts and feelings of the author more accurately, add originality to their works and make them unique.

2 METHODOLOGY

The aim of the paper is to study the features of nonce words in the Russian language, namely in V. Khlebnikov's poems, and to analyze the ways of developing translation skills necessary for interpreting them. The authors analyzed the definitions of occasionalisms, studied the peculiarities of these vocabulary units in the Russian language and identified translation techniques that are most often used to convert them into German.

The authors applied such research methods as descriptive, comparative and continuous sampling method. Continuous sampling method was used to identify 220 corpus examples of nonce words in V. Khlebnikov's poems collected in the book "I am a star for you" and their translations into German performed by E. Berner, F. Mon and R. Erb. The analysis of the selected material revealed phonetic, grammatical, lexical and semantic occasionalisms. As a result of the study, the authors compiled a set of exercises and tasks aimed at the developing translation skills in students trained as translators and interpreters.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Nonce Words: Linguistic Aspects

Velimir Khlebnikov, who proclaimed himself "the chairman of the globe", was the brightest representative of the Russian avant-garde of the 20th century and one of the founders of the Russian futurism. It is worth emphasizing the special contribution of Velimir Khlebnikov to the Russian poetry. The Russian word acquired something new, unearthly and "starry" in his poems. With his author's neologisms, the poet expressed his inner thoughts, feelings and attitude to ongoing historical events.

Continuous sampling identified 220 occasionalisms in his poems collected in the book "I am a star for you". The analysis of the corpus examples showed that prevailing 188 occasionalisms are lexical (*ненарекаемость, смеяльно, утровласа, лебедиво, etc.*), 29 – phonetic (*бобэоби, вээоми, пиээо, лиээй, гзи-гзи-гзиэо*), 2 – grammatical (*смугол, Солнца*) and 1 – semantic (*сечиво*).

One of the most common ways of translating nonce words from Russian into German is calque or half-calque translation. The replacement of an occasional word with a usual one, creation of an occasionalism in the target language, transcription and transliteration are also used. Omission, one of the ways to translate non-equivalent vocabulary, is rarely applied.

Calque translation is used to render into German occasionalisms from V. Khlebnikov's poem "Ya vedal: nenarekayemost' Boznichego…" ("Ich erkannte: die Unbezeichenbarkeit des Erscheinlichen"). The word *ненарекаемость* (*unnameability*) is translated into German as *Unbezeichenbarkeit*. The Russian nonce word *ненарекаемость* is formed from the word *нарекать* (to name) which has the German equivalent *bezeichnen* (to designate, to name, to indicate). The prefix *un-* carries negation in German adjectives and adverbs, so it is identical to the Russian prefix *не-*.

The names of the mythological deities were translated into German according to the same principle: *Огневичий – Feuerlichen, Водяничий – Wasserlichen, Полевичий – Felderlichen*. V. Khlebnikov built occasionalisms *Огневичий, Водяничий, Полевичий* on the analogy with the Russian word *лесничий* (forester)*,* using suffix *-ич.* E. Berner translated the roots of the Russian words and added the adjective suffix *-lich*.

In the poem "Rossiya zabyla napitki…" ("Großrussland vergaß die Gesöffe") the nonce word *немливо* was translated as *schweigewillig*. The Russian adverb *немливо* derives from the adjective *немой* (dumb), while its German variant – from the verb *schweigen* which is similar in meaning. In "Tam, gde zhili sviristeli…" ("Dort, wo Seidenschwänze weilten...") the author used unusual names of birds rendered into the German language by calque translation. The phrase *стая легких времирей* is translated as *Schwärme leichter Flatterzeit*. The occasionalism *времири* is a blend of two words, *время* (time) and *снегири* (bullfinch), and in German E. Berner used a compound word formed from the verb *flattern* (flutter) and the noun *Zeit* (time) and managed to render the meaning and originality of V. Khlebnikov's nonce word.

The occasional noun *поюны* (the ones who sing) is interpreted into German as *Singanten*, a noun which is built from the verb *singen* and Latin suffix *-ant* on the analogy with the word *Informant* derived from the verb *informieren*: *singen – Singant*. V. Khlebnikov also uses the short participle *поюнна* translated by E. Berner as *singendlich*, built from German participle *singend* (singing) by adding suffix *-lich*.

Calque translation is also applied in interpreting nonce words in the poem "Ya i Rossiya" ("Ich und Russland"). For example, the word *тысячеоконный* is translated into German as *tausendfenstrige*, from *Tausend* (thousand) and *Fenster* (window). The occasional compound adjective *синеокий* (blue-eyed) from "Detusya!" is translated by a word group *mit blauen Augen*. In the poem "Vshi tupo molilisya mne…" ("Dumpf beteten Läuse mich an") V. Khlebnikov introduced a new word *будетляне* (futurists), derived from the Russian auxiliary verb of future tense *будет*, and the translator E. Berner created the German occasionalism *Zukünftler,* derived from *Zukunft* (future). Other examples of calque translation include: *смеярышня – lächelnde Freulein, смехочества – lachender Feste, злоока – Zornblick* (from "Chernyi lyubir'" / "Schwarze Liebelei"), *крылышкуя – Flügelchen, золотописьмо – hämmernd die Goldschrift* (from "Grasshopper" / "Das Heupferd"). Thus, calque and half-calque translation allows more accurate and adequate translation of nonce words, mainly formed by using traditional word building means existing in the language.

Another technique to translate nonce words is to replace them by usual words. The occasionalism *кружеток* from "I ya svirel v svoyu sirel'…" ("Und ich schallte gemein mit meiner Schalmei") is translated into German by the word *Kreis* (circle), which lacks the stylistic colouring of a nonce word. Instead of diminutive

occasionalism *милари* in the poem "Chernyi lyubir'" ("Schwarze Liebelei"), the translator used the word *Liebchen* (dear, beloved). V. Khlebnikov's neologism *стыдесная* (from "Vesny poslovitsy i pogovorki…" / "Sprichwörter und Zungenbrecher des Frühlings") is translated as *verschämte* (bashful, shy, timid). In the poem "To Alyosha Kruchenykh" ("Für Alёša Kručёnych") the occasionalism *хорошеуки,* which is a blend of two words, *хорошие* (good) and *науки* (sciences), was also replaced by the usual equivalent *gutes Belehrn*. This translation method allows rendering the meaning of occasionalisms, however it does not convey the entire emotional spectrum of a literary work.

Transcription and transliteration are applied to translate phonetic occasionalisms. When translating the poem "Bobeobi pelis' guby…" E. Berner not only rendered the sound form of the nonce words, but also retained the author's graphic highlights – italics in spelling.

"Бобэоби пелись губы,

Вээоми пелись взоры,

Пиээо пелись брови,

Лиэээй – пелся облик,

Гзи-гзи-гзэо пелась цепь..." (Khlebnikov, 1999, p. 40).

"Bobäobi sangen Lippen,

Wääomi sangen Blicke,

Piääo sangen Brauen,

Liäääj sang das Antlitz,

Gsi-gsi-gsäo sang die Kette…" (Berner).

In the poem "I ya svirel v svoyu sirel'…" ("Und ich schallte gemein mit meiner Schalmei") V. Khlebnikov uses the occasionalism *хотель,* derived from the word *хотеть* (to want). It is transliterated into the German language as *Hotel* (hotel), which has a different meaning.

The creation of an occasionalism in the target language in the process of translation deserves special attention. To translate the name of the mythological deity *Бозничий* (from "Ya vedal: nenarekayemost' Boznichego…" / "Ich erkannte: die Unbezeichenbarkeit des Erscheinlichen"), E. Berner created a nonce word *Erscheinlichen*, presumably from the verb *erscheinen* (appear). The lexical occasionalism *свирел* from "I ya svirel v svoyu sirel'…" ("Und ich schallte gemein mit meiner Schalmei") is translated by the German nonce word *schallte gemein.* In his poem "Grasshopper" ("Das Heupferd") V. Khlebnikov mentions a bird *Зинзивер* whose name includes the root *вер-* (faith, belief). The translator introduced the German occasionalism *Glaubisch* and explained its meaning in the footnote as "glaube ich" (I believe). In "Chernyi lyubir'" ("Schwarze Liebelei") the name of a berry *куманка-заманка* is rendered into German by an occasionalism *Heide-Leiderkraut*, and V. Khlebnikov's neologism *хохочества* – by a nonce word *Lächenlippenbanner* (banner with laughing lips), which, on the one hand, has a different semantic structure, but on the other hand, contains the seme *'laughter'*. The creation of a nonce word in the target language is a good way to convey to the German readers the features of Velimir Khlebnikov's poems, his mood, emotions and ideas.

The cases of omission of nonce words in translation are rare. The translator omitted the word *тенета* in the poem "Vesny poslovitsy i pogovorki…" ("Sprichwörter und Zungenbrecher des Frühlings"): the phrase *сеть тополевых тенет* was interpreted as *das Fangnetz der Pappeln.* Occasionalisms *смехистелинно* and *губирь* are omitted in the poem "Chernyi lyubir'" ("Schwarze Liebelei"). It is acceptable to use this translation method in some cases unless it interferes with the perception of a literary work.

It can be concluded that the most popular and common way of interpreting occasional words into the target language is calque translation. When applying this method, the translator can render the originality of the text, its expressiveness and emotional intensity.

3.2 Translation of Nonce words from Russian into German: Methodological Issues

Students trained as translators and interpreters often encounter the problems of interpreting non-equivalent vocabulary, including nonce words. At the translation practice lessons, students are taught to identify

occasionalisms, define their meaning and analyze the translation techniques that can be used in certain cases. Translation is a complex process during which many difficult tasks are solved. The translation of occasionalisms involves such problems as understanding the text with the author's neologisms, conveying not only the meaning of nonce words, but also linguistic, cultural and historical features of the source language, as well as the literary style of the authors, their ideas and aims.

Translation tasks are solved at different levels of the text, and first of all, at the lexical level. So the first group of exercises for training students should be aimed at developing skills necessary to deal with occasionalisms as a certain lexical phenomenon of the language. It is necessary to teach students how to work not only with bilingual dictionaries, but also with specialized ones, with various thesauri, lexicographic corpora, etymological dictionaries and dictionaries of synonyms. The students are offered such exercises as: to analyze the semantic structure of nonce words, to select equivalents to occasinalisms, to analyze the existing options for translating occasionalisms proposed by different translators.

As for grammatical occasionalisms, students carry out the structural and morphological analysis of these lexical units and define their peculiarities. Thus, the students have an opportunity to understand the principles of formation of a nonce word and their influence on the lexical meaning.

The next stage is devoted to the syntactic level, namely the usage of occasionalisms, their compatibility with other lexical units and their functioning in the language. Here students do various tasks including gap filling, matching and multiple choice tasks. The final task at this stage is to translate phrases with nonce words from one language into another.

The last stage of work on the translation of occasionalisms is at the text level. It is important not only to identify a nonce word in the text, but also to perform an adequate translation. At this stage, it is necessary to carry out a pre-translation analysis of the text in order to find the most suitable translation of an occasionalism. The translation strategy depends on many factors, such as: the time when the text was written, the author's aims (explicit and hidden), the style and genre, the topic of the text, the target reader and the socio-cultural features both of the source and the target language.

4 CONCLUSIONS

This study showed that nonce words in the language, the problems of their translation and teaching the translation of these lexical are relevant issues. The authors consider it necessary to conduct further research, including experiential learning, and describing its results in articles.

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