

## Раздел 3

# ЛИНГВИСТИКА, ДИДАКТИКА, ПЕРЕВОД

### 3.1. Размышления о переводе

Преподаватель Оксфордского университета Карен Р. Хьюитт (Karen R. Hewitt) более сорока лет преподает русскую литературу студентам отделения дополнительного образования, в том числе и в Летней школе университета. Ее студенты — взрослые люди, специалисты в разных областях, которые приходят в летнюю школу, чтобы узнать больше о литературе, прочитать или перечитать произведения классиков и обсудить их. Карен Хьюитт также много работает с университетами России, является почетным профессором Пермского Национального исследовательского университета, автором ряда монографий и статей в английских и российских журналах, редактором и издателем, постоянным участником конференций по компаративным исследованиям в рамках Международного Конвента УГИ.

Мы задали К. Хьюитт ряд вопросов по проблемам современного перевода, на которые она ответила. Эти вопросы К. Хьюитт освещала в своем выступлении на заседаниях конференции по компаративистике, которая проходила в УрФУ в 2023 г. Кроме того, она любезно предоставила нам размышления одного из своих взрослых студентов относительно перевода на английский язык романа М. Ю. Лермонтова «Герой нашего времени». Полагаем, они представляют интерес для отечественных филологов, поскольку демонстрируют живой отклик иностранного читателя на произведение русской классической литературы.

### ***Thoughts on Translation:***

My role: I am not a translator; my knowledge of languages other than English is limited to French and Russian at some intermediate level. I teach literature to British adults who are mostly highly educated but not working for any qualifications. Hence they have time to think about the expressive quality of the prose they are reading. We read and discuss literature written in English and a substantial amount of translated literature, most frequently from Russian. In other words, my students are precisely the people for whom literary translations are intended. They are the ideal target audience.

In Britain the Russian nineteenth century and twentieth century classics can be found in many different translations. Reference books are devoted to the best versions of foreign classics, with expert discussion of how effective this or that attempt is. Even when I recommend a particular translation, several students will have copies of *different* translations, so we frequently find ourselves in class comparing translations and discussing their weaknesses and virtues.

In answering questions from your questionnaire, I am thinking of such experienced readers.

(1) *“There is always something untranslatable left in translation.”*

Of course, there is something missing in any translation. Languages are different from one another. Take any significant word in any language and consider its implications, its context, the words with which it is typically associated. There is no exact synonym in another language; the translator is always making compromises from phrase to phrase, and the limitations of these compromises spread outwards.

(2) *Some classic works of literature have been well-translated into English and have become part of the recipient culture. Is there any need for new translations of the same books? Why?*

Some Russian classics have certainly become part of the literature which an educated British person expects to read. I do not know of any *translation* which has ‘become part of the recipient culture’. Constance Garnett was the first person to translate some major works of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Goncharov, Gogol, Turgenev and especially Chekhov. Her versions of these great writers were enormously important for the readers of her generation. But her translations, though still in print, have never

been seen as ‘classics’. How can they be? She has many competitors. Moreover, among knowledgeable critics there is considerable debate about her qualities as a translator: ‘She smooths out the prose too much’; ‘she is ingenious at solving syntactical problems’; ‘her language is old-fashioned but appropriate to the period when many of these Russian writers were themselves writing’. She was translating from the 1880s to the 1920s and her translations are still in print. So she is the nearest thing we have to a classic translator from Russian, but even so, most modern eager readers of Russian classics will have not heard her name. Other *English* translators of Tolstoy include Aylmer Maude, Rosemary Edmonds, Antony Briggs, Rosamund Bartlett, Kyril Zinoviev and Jenny Hughes. There are even more translations of Dostoevsky than of Tolstoy. In any decent English bookshop I can expect to find 3 or 4 different translations of, say, *Crime and Punishment* on the shelves, and many more which can be found by searching the internet.

(When thinking about translations, Russians should note that I have been commenting on *British* English translators. American English differs, sometimes quite strikingly, from British English, especially in tone and in differences of meaning in vocabulary; British readers can find American translations quite disconcerting, and no doubt Americans feel the same about British translations.)

So the question is not quite relevant. There *are* new translations every twenty or thirty years. All translations are inadequate compromises (see answer to the first question) so translators who love the work and want a challenge will try to improve on what is available. Publishers of classic novels such as Penguin and Oxford World’s Classics are also prepared to commission new translations for at least some money — though nobody makes a good living from translating classics. Publishers want something fresh, though not necessarily very ‘contemporary-sounding’, and they want to see how the new translator tackles the problem of turning distinctive, odd, satisfying Russian prose into distinctive, odd but satisfying English prose.

(3) *Can we imagine that some literary translations were made “for all seasons” (for a VERY long time) and there is no need to revise them? Can translations become obsolete?*

An interesting case is that of John Florio's translation of Michel de Montaigne's *Essays* [Montaigne]. The essays were written in the 1580s and translated by John Florio in 1603. Florio's translations were brilliant, idiosyncratic, but not always faithful to the original. However, they give a strong flavour of Renaissance styles and attitudes which are bound to be missing in later translations. So Florio's translation has become a 'classic', and is not 'obsolete'. But it is difficult to read, and sometimes the meaning is obscure for the modern reader. So I offer my students the chance to read either the Florio, or available nineteenth and twentieth translations.

I don't quite understand 'no need to revise them'. As I have said, all translations are by definition inadequate so it is always possible to find a different way to express the style, the emotions, the dialogue, the wit of the writer.

*And from your point of view, a good translator is ...*

The reader's response is crucial. So is the original work of the author. Consequently, there must always be a compromise which is compatible with the translator's sense of intellectual honour and love for both languages. I don't think you can say 'which is better' as if there is one alternative or the other. It's a complicated balancing act in which the translator's own voice will be heard.

The problem of literary translation is not of 'details' but of style — of what can be contained within the generous bounds of the target language. A good translator must be able to write English prose (in this case) which the English reader can delight in. If the translation suggests that the translator has a 'tin ear' in English, why should we think that he is a sensitive reader of Russian?

Therefore, the translator should be a native speaker of the target language. (Translations by Russians into English, however conscientious, are embarrassing. I have read many of them, but no ordinary reader would wish to do so.) However, the translator of literature must be well-acquainted with the formal and informal practices, the culture, the values of the country whose literature he is translating. He should have room to move within his adopted language. No doubt English translators are often not fully aware of all the implications of Russian culture. I am quite sure that many Russian translators have very inadequate and outdated understanding of English culture. For example, how many translators

from English to Russian can recognize humour in the source language? They can maybe recognize ‘jokes’ or ‘anekdoty’ but I am thinking of the shades of humour in tone and style, the wit and irony of language.

For rendering humour we need outstanding translators. The writing of Mikhail Bulgakov poses many problems for the translator, including a witty and inventive language that can cope with constant changes from one genre to another, from drama to farce, from the fantastic to human tragedy. At least four translations of *The Master and Margarita* are currently available, of which one American and highly praised version has been found to be heavy and unreadable by keen students of mine. But they all love the translation of Michael Glenny because he writes inventive witty *English* that is so obviously delighting in Bulgakov’s Russian. One very small example from the first paragraph of *The Master and Margarita*.

«... аккуратно выбритое лицо его украшали сверхъестественных размеров очки в черной роговой оправе» [Булгаков, с. 7] — which Glenny translates as *his neatly shaven face was embellished by black horn-rimmed spectacles of preternatural dimensions* [Bulgakov, p. 5] The prose is in the natural shape and rhythm of English, with the brilliant choice of ‘preternatural’ where other translators have used ‘supernatural’ or some flatter alternative. ‘Preternatural’ is accurate, it has the right associations, and it is much *funnier* than the alternatives. The reader does not know what he is going to meet in the next few pages, but he is already smiling appreciatively at the language.

We have good translations, sometimes excellent translations of Russian literature, although none of them is so perfect that we don’t need new translations. But for me, Michael Glenny will always be the best translator of Bulgakov, and I am ready to defend my choice by constant reference to the qualities of his *English*.

**Tim B.** (a physicist), aged 64, one of Karen’s mature students, writes on Lermontov’s novel *The Hero of Our Time* in English translation:

This is a really great kind-of novel (‘m really not too worried about it fitting any particular definition of novel, but there are a few problems — not a complaint about Lermontov who sadly didn’t have time to revise or produce anything more for a typically Russian reason). I think there’s some kind of genius in this work & for work produced by the age of twenty-six I would have to invoke Buchner and Mann for any comparison. The

mountain scenes reminded me a little of *Lenz*, but *Princess Mary* is clearly the crucial part (albeit substantially enhanced by the preceding stories). *The Fatalist* is excellent — indebted to *Queen of Spades* and that Gogol story with a pig I guess — but somehow doesn't quite fit; an anti-climax after *Mary*, I think, as one critic says.

I had serious problems with the Randall translation but found the Philip Longworth version inspired (may not be easy to find though). I haven't seen other translations. Difficult to quickly show just what's wrong with the former, but it's mostly on the lines of the Pevear & Vokhonsky versions: basically bad writing. There are obvious mistakes, too, and may be some in the Longworth (the two directly contradict each other in a number of places), but for me these are not crucial. I'd question most of Randall's end notes though, which, for me, impede readability with little benefit.

A few examples from *Princess Mary*:

Near beginning — May 11, second page:

Randall, p. 76: "My Petersburg-cut frock coat led them to an initial illusion, but as soon as they recognized the army epaulets they turned away with indignation."

Longworth, p. 86: "The St. Petersburg cut of my coat deceived them, but quickly noting my army epaulettes they turned away in disdain."

'An initial illusion'? 'Indignation'? Longworth's word choice here (and on most pages) just seems much better.

June 7

Randall, p. 122: [Werner speaking] "How many excellent young men have I seen ... Even, believe me, some want to marry me!"

But it's not that kind of novel!

Longworth: "I've seen so many marvelous young people...would you believe it, they even wanted to get me married!" — which seems to make a lot more sense.

Randall, p.124: "[women] ...It is inappropriate for me to speak of them with such malice — me, a man who has loved nothing in the world except them — who is always ready to sacrifice them for serenity, ambition, life...

He loves nothing except women but is always ready to sacrifice them? Surely Longworth (p. 140) has it right:

“I should not talk about women with such malice — I who love nothing in the world apart from them — I who have always been ready to sacrifice my peace of mind, my ambition, my life for them...” — and I think expresses Pechorin’s thought rather better too.

June 12

Randall, p. 126: “...My cheek almost touched her cheek. Flames wafted from her.”

Longworth p. 142: “...My cheek was almost touching hers. She was burning hot.”

‘Flames wafted from her’: really?

I could quote examples from nearly every page. Throughout Longworth’s version has a drive (worthy of Buchan), an intelligibility, a poetic quality that Randall’s mostly lacks. It reads like a labour of love rather than another day in the office. It has style!

### Sources

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## 3.2. Проблемы художественного перевода

В условиях мощного развития средств массовой коммуникации в современном мире роль перевода с одного языка на другой / другие языки постоянно возрастает — перевод охватывает практически все сферы человеческой деятельности. Очевидно, что все более важное место — и по социальной значимости, и по объему — занимают переводы текстов специального характера: экономические, техни-