

Equivalence Of Translation

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Annotation: There are always two texts during translation, and one of them is initial and is created independently on the second one, and the second text is created on the basis of the first one with the help of some certain operations - the inter language transformations. The first text is called "the text of original"; the second text is called "the text of translation". The language of the text of original is called "the source language" (SL). The language of the text of translation is called "the target language" (TL)¹.

We need to define the most important thing: why do we consider that the text of translation is equivalent to the text of original? For example, why do we speak that the Russian sentence "Мой брат живет в Лондоне" is the translation of the English sentence "My brother lives in London", while the Russian sentence "Я учусь в университете" is not the translation of the English sentence given above - to say in other words - is not equivalent to it? Obviously, the replacement of the text in one language by the text in the other language is not always the translation.

Key words: Translation, text, equivalent, the equivalence of the original and the translation.

The same idea can be expressed in the other way: the process of translation or the inter language transformation is realised not arbitrary, but with the help of some certain rules, in some strict frameworks. And if we do not observe these rules, we have already no rights to speak about translation. To have the rights to be called the translation, the text on TL should contain in it something that the text on SL contains. Or else, while replacing the text on SL by the text on TL it is necessary to keep some certain invariant; the measure of keeping of this invariant defines by itself the measure of the equivalence of the text of translation to the text of original. So, first of all, it is necessary to define what is the invariant in the process of translation is in the process of transformation of the text on SL in the text on TL.²

At the decision of this problem, it is necessary to take in account the following. The process of translation directly depends on bilateral character of a mark, as it is called in a mark systems science - semiotics - It means that any mark can be characterised from two sides, or plans the plan of expression or form and the plan of contents or meaning. It is known that the language is a specific mark system that is why the units of language are also characterised by the presence of two plans, both forms and meaning. Thus the main role for translation is played by that fact that different languages contain different units and these units differ from each other in the way of expression that is by the form but they are similar in the way of the contents by the meaning. For example, the English word "brother" differs from Uzbek word "брат" in the way of the expression, but coincides with it in the way of the contents, that is has the same meaning³.

The English word "brother" has not only the meaning "брат" but also some meanings expressed in Russian language by the words "собрат", "земляк", "коллега", "приятель" etc. And the Russian word "брат" in the combination "двоюродный брат" corresponds not to the English word "brother", but to the word "cousin", which means not only "двоюродный брат" but also "двоюродная сестра". This phenomenon, namely, the incomplete concurrence of systems of meanings of units in different languages, complicates the process translation. Taking in account this fact we can say, that if we replace the English word "brother" by the Russian word "брат", the process of translation takes place here, as these words, differing in the way of expression that is by the form coincide or are equivalent in the way of the contents, that is by the meaning. Actually, however, as the minimal text is the sentence, the process of translation is always realised in the limits of minimum one sentence. And in the sentence, as a rule, the discrepancy between the units of different languages in the way of the contents is eliminated. Proceeding from this, we can give now the following definition of the translation:

¹ Komissarov V. N. Translation manual. - M.: 1965 p.97

² Komissarov V. N. Translation manual. - M.: 1965 p.176

³ Komissarov V. N., Korollova A.A. Translation practicum. - M.: 1990 p. 312

The translation is the process of transformation of the speech product in one language into the speech product in the other language by keeping the constant plan of the contents that is the meanings.

About “the keeping of the constant plan of the contents” it is possible to speak only in the relative, but not in the absolute sense. During the inter language transformation some losses are inevitable, that is the incomplete transference of meanings, expressed by the text of the original, is taking place⁴.

So, the text of translation can never be complete and absolute equivalent of the text of original; the task of the interpreter is to make this equivalence as complete as it is possible, that is to achieve the minimum of losses. It means that one of the tasks of the theory of translation is the establishment of the order of transference of meanings. Taking into account that there are various types of meanings, it is necessary to establish which of them have the advantages during the transference in the process of translation, and which of them it is possible “to endow” so that the semantic losses would be minimal while translating.

To finish the consideration of the question about the essence of translation, it is necessary to answer one question yet. This question arises from the definition of translation equivalence based on the keeping of the constant plan of the contents that is the meaning, given above. It was already marked that the opportunity of keeping of plan of the contents, that is the invariance of meanings while translating, assumes that in the different languages there are some units that are similar in the way of meaning.

The divergence in the semantic systems of different languages is a certainty fact and it is the source of numerous difficulties arising before the interpreter in the process of translation.

That’s why, many researchers consider that the equivalence of the original and the translation is not based on the identity of expressed meanings. From the numerous statements on this theme we shall quote only one, belonging to the English theorist of translation J. Ketford: “... The opinion that the text on SL and the text on TL “have the same meaning” or that there is “a carry of meaning” while translating, have no bases. From our point of view, the meaning is the property of the certain language. The text on SL have the meaning peculiar to TL; for example, the Russian text has Russian meaning, and the English text, that is the equivalent of it, has the English meaning⁵.”

For the benefit of translation it is possible to state the following arguments:

In the system of meanings of any language the results of human experience are embodied, that is the knowledge that the man receives about the objectively existing reality.

In any language, the system of language meanings reflects the whole external world of the man, and his own internal world too, that is the whole practical experience of the collective, speaking the given language, is fixed. As the reality, environmental different language collectives, has much more than common features, than distinguishes, so the meanings of different languages coincide in a much more degree, than they miss. The other thing is that these meanings (the units of sense or “semes”) are differently combined, grouped and expressed in different languages: but it concerns already not to the plan of the contents but to the plan of the language expression.

The greatest difficulties during translation arise when the situation described in the text on

SL is absent in the experience of language collective - the carrier of TL, otherwise, when in the initial text the so-called “realities” are described, that is different subjects and phenomena specific to the given people or the given country.

The ability to describe new unfamiliar situations is the integral property of any language; and this property makes what we speak about to be possible.

The translation was determined above as the process of transformation of speech product in one language into the speech product in the other language. Thus, the interpreter deals not with the languages as the systems, but with the speech products, that is with the texts. Those semantic divergences, that is in the meanings, which we are talking about, concern, first of all, to systems of different languages; in the speech these divergences very often are neutralised, erased, brought to nothing.

The concrete distribution of elementary units of sense (“semes” or semantic units) on separate words, word combinations or sentences of the given text is defined by the numerous and complex factors. And, as a

⁴ Komissarov V. N. Translation manual. - M.: 1965 p.29

⁵ Komissarov V. N. Word about translation. - M.: 1973 p.120

rule, it does not coincide in the text on SL and text on TL. But it concerns not to the plan of the contents, but to the plan of expression and is not the infringement of a principle of semantic equivalence of the texts of original and the text of translation⁶.

Last give an example to prove the fact given above. In the story of the known English writer S. Moem "A Casual Affair" we can see the following sentence: "He'd always been so spruce and smart; he was shabby and unwashed and wild-eyed ". This is the Russian variant of this sentence: "Прежде он был таким щеголем, таким элегантным, а теперь бродил по улицам Сингапура грязный, в лохмотьях, с одичалым взглядом. (translation of Litvinova M) On the first sight the Russian text do not seems to be the equivalent to the English one: there are such words as "прежде, а теперь, бродил по улицам Сингапура" in it, which have not the direct conformities in the text of original. But really, the semantic equivalence is available here, though here is no verbal equivalence, of course. The thing is that the Russian words "прежде" and "а теперь" transfer the meanings, which are expressed not by the words, but by the grammatical forms in the English text: the opposition of the forms of the verb "to be" -"had been" and "was" expresses that the first event is taking place before the second one, which has the logical expression through adverbs of time in Russian language⁷.

Words "бродил по улицам Сингапура" transfer the semantic information, which the initial English text contains too, but in one of the previous sentences, not in the given sentence (He didn't been the job in Sumatra long and he was back again in Singapore). So, the semantic equivalence is provided not between the separate words and even not between the separate sentences here, but between the whole text on SL and the whole text on TL as a whole⁸.

So, the semantic divergences between the languages cannot serve as the insuperable obstacle for the translation, by virtue of that circumstance, that the translation deals with the languages not as the abstract systems, but with the concrete speech products (texts). And in their limits there is the complex interlacing and interaction of qualitatively diverse language means being the expressions of meanings - of words, grammatical forms, and "super signments" means, transmitting this or that semantic information together. That semantic equivalence of the texts of the original and the text of translation, which we regard as the necessary condition of the process of translation, exists not between the separate elements of these texts, but between the texts as a whole. And inside the given text the numerous regroupings, rearrangement and redistribution of separate elements are not only allowed, but frequently they are simply inevitable, ("translation transformations "). So, while translating, there is a strict rule - the principle of submission of elements to the whole, of the lowest units to the highest⁹.

References:

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⁶ Linguistic encyclopedia. - M.: 1990 p.65

⁷ Komissarov V. N. Translation manual. - M.: 1965 p.90

⁸ Komissarov V. N. Word about translation. - M.: 1973 p.37

⁹ Miniar-Beloruhev R. K. Theory of translation and interpreting. - M.: 1980 p. 176