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Literary translation of text and its perception by students

Tamara Gurtueva^{a*}, Hulya Arslan^b

^aFaculty of Humanities, Anadolu University, 26470 Eskisehir, Turkey

^bFaculty of Art and Sciences, Okan University, 34959 Istanbul, Turkey

Abstract

In our papers we estimated to student's perception of a literary translation of the text in historical and cultural context. The best translation of any text from one language to another is not simple translation of some words and sentences. There are necessary an adaptation and interpretation. And also means difference between languages and cultures with these languages are connected. In our opinion it is given an important place in this process to translator, who goes through a number of perception phases, from acquiring outline background of the original text, to the high level, when this perception becomes systematic. The thoughts put forward in the theses are specified on the Russian poetry.

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1. Introduction

Perhaps no other form conveys an understanding of foreign-language text, as verse translation. Verse translation is specific, since the “poetic language is a structure of great complexity. It's much more complicated than natural language” (Lotman, 1984:17). Due to the difference between poetic cultures the translation process inevitably leads to the transformation of a literary text.

The specifics of any literature lie in its *verbal imagery*. Since the word is a public, every-day communication material, a writer's job it to create a sense of wonder at the beauty of words, at their diversity and power to create unique artistic images. Accordingly, the lessons in literary translation of

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +90-222-335-0580; fax: +90-222-320-6101.

E-mail address: tgurtueva@anadolu.edu.tr.

Russian literature orient students to the ability to analyze literary text, to develop their skills in understanding the aesthetic value of literary works. Practical work with foreign students is aimed at forming the idea that real literature forms the foundations for education of an intelligent person, who in the way of his spiritual evolution will shape his taste in art and develop his aesthetic sense.

Demand for the best representatives of Russian culture in the field of art and literature is the definite proof of the necessity of dialogue in the spiritual sphere. In this process, an important role is played by the translator who builds a bridge between two foreign poetic cultures. Thus, translation is the most important link in the process of interrelations of literatures. High-grade translation of any text from one language into another means not only a simple translation of separate words and sentences, it also assumes adaptation and interpretation taking into account the distinction not only between languages, but also between their respective cultures.

The world of sensations and associations constitutes an important part of any culture. During the work on the original text, the translator goes through a number of perception phases, from acquiring outline background of the original text to the high level when this perception becomes systematic. Such an approach makes it possible to enter the area of typological signs of psychology of translational activity and at the same time to consider a literary translation as a factor of formation of international poetics. The thoughts put forward in the theses are specified on the material of the translation of Boris Pasternak's poem "Зимняя ночь" ("Winter night") into the Turkish language.

2. Methodology

Speaking of specifics of the original text, we would like to point out two stages originating both from differences in the socio-cultural circumstances and non coincidence of stages in development of Russian and Turkish literatures. Attention of the students is drawn to the fact that perception of foreign literature, particularly poetry, involves the readers in the orbit of different world views, traditions of creative thinking, ideas, images, emotions of the original author, when the text is seen as immanent closed structure. And this in turn leads to varying and uneven degrees of perception of aesthetic information. Imagination halts on the components of the text which "pour out" the images already outlined in the creative imagination and developing in the course of exposure to the original, but not finding any impulses for systematic expression. Uneven concentration of figurative-expressive means often leads to individual, perhaps even minor, structures being more prominent, that has been repeatedly confirmed by the students, for example, when trying to translate into Turkish language *Mikhail Lermontov's poem "Sail"*.

In the next stage the poetic perception and interpretation are examined within the historical and cultural context, while *analytical* knowledge of the text comes into the foreground. In this process quite an important role is played by the translator who building a bridge between the two foreign-language poetic cultures. He becomes a co-author of the translated work by subjecting the laws of his own art to the poetics and style of the translated work. But it is not always possible to overcome the difficulties associated with the fact that the source and target languages belong to different cultures. The success of a translator, as a rule, depends not only, and perhaps even not as much, on the proximity of his translation to the original, as it does to a greater extent on the aesthetic strength of the translated work and the ability to represent the spiritual world of his hero. To give a specific example for this theory, we turn to the translation into Turkish of a brilliant poem by *Boris Pasternak "Зимняя ночь" ("Winter Night"* (Pasternak, 2001). A starting point for the analysis of this translation was the recognition of the author who denied his contemporaries' views regarding the art of translation.

3. Poetical Analysis

The poet has repeatedly argued that he is devoted to the point of view of the last century, when translation was viewed as primarily a *literary* task. Saturation of symbols and metaphors makes the poem of Pasternak not only difficult to understand, but even more so - to translate it into another language. And his mere understanding of a text is not enough, a translator must put in an additional *aesthetic* effort to get profoundly feel the poem and lines by line wholly represent the outlook and philosophy of the poet.

Perhaps like with no other poet, the outer world of Pasternak's poem, with its fairly clear outlines, differs from the internal state of his lyrical hero. Almost nothing is mentioned about him, everything exists on the *preverbal* level. Inner secrets are unspeakable, protected by images, symbols; it's as if it accomplishes a kind of sacrament. We can arbitrarily speak about the relationship between the poet's attitude to the era and historical collisions, but what about the piercing expression of loneliness, "homelessness", and the tragic feel passed to the music of his verse? The music conveys motion, the glance stop at the image without which the "way up" is impossible - the image of a burning candle. But first comes the image of a *snowstorm* ("Мело-мело по всей земле / Во все пределы..."; "It swept, it swept on all the earth/at every turning ..."). Snowstorm - *cleansing* or a *diabolical element*? "*Winter Night*" carries a powerful philosophical potential based on the faith in the existence of God in the soul of each person. And personal matters, dissolving, fade into the background.

Against the background of the snowstorm ruling in "*Winter Night*" a symbol of infinite faith in Christ, and therefore also faith in love (for God is Love), and the persistence of life on earth, is the image of a persistently burning candle. And it will not go out as long the faith in Jesus Christ remains. A lone human soul resists the devil's dance of the snowstorm and however easy it might be to get lost in this whirlwind of snow pulling you into its darkness, the person, led by the angels, will resist the temptation and the circle of loneliness will break to show that the only way to finding the light is the way to Christ. Cleaning happens on the ontological level, enlightenment takes the soul to piercing heights of the Holy Spirit.

[...]

На озаренный потолок
 Ложились тени,
 Скрещенья рук, скрещенья ног,
 Судьбы скрещенья.
 И падали два башмачка
 Со стуком на пол.
 И воск слезами с ночника
 На платье капал...
 (Pasternak, 1989: 174)

[...]

Entangled shadows spread across,
 The flickering ceiling,
 Entangled arms, entangled legs,
 And doom, and feeling.
 And with a thud against the floor
 Two shoes came falling,
 And drops of molten candle wax
 Like tears were rolling.
 (Ter-Minasova, Fatoushenko, 1993:12)

[...]

Işıyan tavana az az,
 Yerleşir gölge,
 El çapraz ayak çapraz,
 Çapraz kader de.
 Tıkırtıyla düştüğü an
 Pabuçlar yere,
 Mumun gözyaşı lambadan
 Damlar eteğe.
 (Pasternak, 2001: 71)

Is this not reminiscent of the crucifixion of Christ? Quiet melody, barely audible, so as not to overshadow the image of the crucified Jesus. The universal tragedy played out before our eyes: the real objects, disappearing, reveal the inner essence of the tragedy - the crucifixion; the metaphor used (“И воск слезами с ночника / На землю капал”; “*And drops of molten candle wax / Like tears were rolling*”) is perfectly revealing of this act. The sentence opening with the initial conjunction *and* goes back to the Old Slavic tradition, which, again, is not a chance occurrence in the structure of the poem. Both sentences are working to create an image of the Christ. And a drop falling from the lamp creates wonderful associations with a drop of blood flowing from the forehead of crucified Jesus.

The poem is bridged by the refrain “Свеча горела на столе / Свеча горела”; “*A candle on the table shone / A candle, burning*” (“*Bir mum yanıyor masada, Mum yanıyor, bak*”). In the Gospels the image of a candle is directly related to the antithesis of *light / darkness*. And if the snowstorm appears in the poem in various guises, the candle is unchanged and in the last stanza its space is even expanded, taking up greater number of lines.

What difficulties can be encountered by students when working translating the text of the poem into Turkish? To answer this question, we turn to the original text and its Turkish equivalent.

In the first line of the original text the antithesis used by Pasternak (image of the *snowstorm* is contrasted with the *candle* which embodies eternity) does not find an adequate expression in the translation into Turkish. The candle, which in the first place symbolizes faith, speaks of its constancy, for the extinction of a candle is equivalent to extinction of faith, and the latter equals extinction of human life itself. Snowstorm as an element does not spread beyond the *corners*, in the original poem the persistent repetition of *candle burning ...* speaks of its constancy; in translation, however, even replacement of the verb in the past tense *to burn* with a participle *burning (yanan)* reduces the space, limiting the effect to lighting just one room.

In the 2nd stanza Pasternak (“Слетались хлопья со двора / К оконной раме”; “*Snowflakes flew up towards the pane / in flocks together*”) in the translation the verb *to fly* (again, in the present tense) is unreasonably juxtaposed with the verb *to look* expressed in the imperative form *see* (“Как летом поем мошкара / Летит на пламя / Слетались хлопья со двора / К оконной раме...; in Turkish translation: “*Sinek nasıl yaz geldi mi / Ateşe uçar/ Uçuyor bak onun gibi / Pencerede kar*”).

In the third stanza as a result of replacing *snowstorm* (метель; *tipi*) with *wind* (ветер; *rüzgar*) the image of the snow disaster is decreased. In addition, the refrain repeated four times *A candle on the table shone / A candle, burning* - is the very pivot on which rests the entire structure of the poem, whereas in the translation it's given only twice, which not only destroys the integrity of the verse composition but also blurs the clear picture of Time and Destiny.

In the last stanza the refrain is again modified. The image of eternity and faith are reduced to the everyday - a burning candle *warms the room*. Alas, not only the space of the candle is reduced, but moreover - it loses its symbolic nature, and not without the help of translators the image dissolves. The Turkish version doesn't feature the *illuminated ceiling*, and neither has an indication of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (original: “Вздмал, как ангел, два крыла / Крестообразно”; “*It lifted up two crossing wings / As of an angel*”; in Turkish translation: “*Mumu üfürür bir yandan / Tutku ateşi / Kaldırılır kanatlarından / bir melek gibi*”) and not even the hope of resurrection, or in other words the stability of the Faith.

4. Conclusion

Pointing out to students that the word is a shared, public means of communication, we bring them to understand that a translator must put in efforts to create a sense of wonder at the beauty of the words, at their diversity and ability to create unique artistic images, especially when it comes to co-creation with

the great masters of Russian poetry. It is well known that poetry exists only in the poetic word, but to recognise the poetry behind a word is an incredibly difficult task. Russian poetry convinces us that it has extraordinary power, representing a whole world of sensations and associations. Although the undisputed fact is that nobody, not even the best expert, is able to recognise in a text the full range of meanings attached to it by the author, again and again we continue to undertake these attempts, hoping to introduce the students from a different philological culture to the brilliant works of our classics.

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