

Translation Features of Chekhov's Language Image: Lingocultural Aspect

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Research Article

ABSTRACT

The article explores how Russian cultural realias can be rendered by English translators. The focus is on the complexities of literary translation and the article pays particular attention to the Russian playwright and short story writer who is considered to be among the greatest writers of short fiction in history. Anton Pavlovich Chekhov is an outstanding Russian short-story writer of the 19th century. His stories are flourished with unique humor, irony and subtext. He often uses original Russian words with subtle meaning. The goal of this article is to analyze cultural realias in the language context of Chekhov's short stories. One of the main obstacles is the difference between Russian and English cultural realias. This paper attempts to show the ways of translating cultural realias from Russian into English. In this paper we will give a systematic understanding of how realias contribute to Chekhov's short story "Man in a Case". We come to the conclusion by suggesting that realias should be translated taking into consideration broad and narrow contexts of a literary text.

Keywords: Cultural realias, Contextual translation, Culture and language, Literary translation, Russian literature, Anton Chekhov

INTRODUCTION

21st century was crowned with increasing of Chekhov's popularity throughout the world. His plays *Three sisters*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Uncle Vanya*, and *The Seagull* have been acclaimed by audiences at all renowned theatres including National Theatre, Broadway, Sydney Theatre and etc. His plays are set on the stage almost as often as Shakespeare's plays. Students in the USA universities tend to choose electives in Russian literature. In 2015 155th birth anniversary of Chekhov was celebrated. The project 'Chekhov alive' was announced where more than 700 people from all over the world were reading Chekhov's works online.

The primary focus of our paper is to analyze the translation of Russian cultural realias into English. The study is based on three translations of a short story 'Man in a Case' written by the Russian author Anton Chekhov: female translators Rosamund Bartlett (Great Britain) "*The Man in a Case*" (2004), Ivy Litvinova (Great Britain) "*The Man Who Lived in a Shell*" (1974) and male translator Ronald Wilks (Great Britain) "*Man in a Case*" (1982). Our work also touches upon issues concerning how much the translator shapes the original text.

The object of the research is the cultural realias. The research subject is a realization of the cultural realias in the translations of Bartlett R, Litvinova I and Wilks R.

The article is relevant, because the central issue in the translation studies is the language personality of the translator, who represents a complex cognitive and heuristic value. Moreover the article highlights the importance of cultural linguistics which is an increasingly important area in applied linguistics.

METHODOLOGY

This article follows a case-study design, with in-depth analysis of linguacultural realias in Chekhov's ^[1] artistic texts. Synthesis of interpretative and comparative approaches applied to the studied material allows to make use of a complex of methods: comparative-historical, descriptive, comparative, etymological methods of continuous sampling, the elements of statistical calculation and method of translation analysis.

RESULTS

It is necessary to note the following aspects when translating a literary text. It is important to consider the time the text was written and the place and the society described. Therefore, we should use the equivalents corresponding to the time. The period between the writing of *Man in a Case* and translations is 80 years. Thus, the analysis of the translation explored that the translators of the 20th century Litvinov and Wilkes transferred realias in the context of the source text and not as isolated phenomena in language system. We feel the Chekhov's intonation in their translations. Bartlett, as a modern translator adapted the original text to modern readers. The realia is the means of transmission of local and temporary national colouring. It is important to note that the task of the translator is to overcome not only interlingual but also intercultural differences during communication process. It is not enough for literary translator to speak two languages; you also need to understand the implication of a literary text and how to produce the desired effect on the reader with one's interpretation.

Great Russian writer Anton Pavlovich Chekhov was recognized by English speaking cultural world as classic writer. Plenty of articles and scientific papers have been devoted to his creative life and work; his stories are translated and recreated not only by professional translators, but also popular writers and playwrights. However research has consistently shown that linguistics lacks the analysis of translation ways of Chekhov's cultural realias. Throughout this paper the term cultural studies will refer to personal names, dialecticisms, things of material culture. Vinogradov VS ^[2] contributed to the investigation of cultural realias and classified them as:

Common everyday realias are clothes, dwelling, banknotes, national holidays, musical instruments) *kimono*: Japan

Ethnographical and mythological realias (*pagoda*: Buddhism)

Realias of natural world are plants, animals, landscape *savanna*: Africa

The realias of social life and public order (*belye* and *krasnye*: *White Army and Red Army at the beginning of 20th century in Russia*)

Onomastic realias are anthroponyms, toponyms

Associative realias are animalistic symbols, folklore symbols, vegetative symbols, historic symbols, literary symbols: *maple* is a symbol of Canada.

Famous linguist Latyshev LK ^[3] suggests a detailed explanation of translation methods of cultural and national realias from English into Russian. They are:

Transliteration

Replication

Functional analogue

Elimination of national and cultural features

Descriptive translation

Transformative translation

In this essay, we attempt to defend the view that there are certain specific ways of translating linguacultural realias in an artistic text. Zyryanova MV investigated concepts of realias suggested by Kretov AA and Fenenko NA.

R-realias (from French *réalité*- realia) - (nature fact, artefact) are denotations presented extralinguistic realia and being part of natural, material and cultural environment that surrounds native speakers.

C-realias (from French concept *culturel*- cultural concepts)-(mental fact) are designatia, notions, ideas comprising mental and intellectual environment of native speakers.

L-realias (from French *lexime*- word)-(nomination of a cultural concept) are nominative items forming vocabulary of a certain language.

According to dictionaries *realia* is a thing, phenomenon, notion that is typical to a certain nation's history, way of life and culture. Gak VG [4] discussing asymmetry of *culturem* suggests that *culturem* can be considered as a combination of certain signs (*culturems*). Any sign represents connection of two sides- formal and substantial- and it correlates with a certain element of reality for expressing and indicating some *realia*- a thing or a situation /NA Dudik/.

We have chosen the translations belonging to different time periods. This approach allows us to trace the dynamics of translation decisions.

This paper analyses language personality of three translators who worked with Chekhov's short stories. Rosamund Bartlett is a leading British cultural historian with the expertise in Russian literature, music and art. Her books include *Wagner and Russia* and *Tolstoy: A Russian Life*. She has also written a biography of A. Chekhov, and published translations of his short stories and letters. Her new translation of *Anna Karenina* was published in 2014. She is Trustee of the Anton Chekhov Foundation, for which she is currently overseeing the Early Chekhov Translation Project [5].

Bartlett defended her doctoral thesis in Oxford on Russian culture under the influence of Wagner. Bartlett unravels unusual trait in Chekhov's lyrical works, which is noticed by Tchaikovsky and Shostakovich: his stories are melodic. That musicality guided Bartlett in the translation process. As a result, she is more inclined to stick to the original, often with detailed translation. She often tries to preserve the stylistic structure of Chekhov's phrases that are alien to English speech, but there is an effect of the originality of statements.

It was interesting to compare modern translations with translations of the last century. The translator, Ronald Wilks studied Russian language and literature at Trinity College, Cambridge, and later Russian literature at London University, where he received his Ph.D. in 1972. Then he worked as a naval interpreter. He translated the leading classics of Russian literature Gorky, N. Gogol. It can be assumed that the work in the military sphere had an impact on his linguistic identity. The most characteristic feature of the military discourse is the compressed form of statements, reduction. Wilks often reduces the length of the original text, and summarizes the main idea. His translation differs in brevity of presentation, non-equivalent vocabulary, he tries to compensate, and thus creates new words in English, while saving Chekhov's humor [6].

English female translator Ivy Litvinova was born in London in 1889, and then she married a Soviet diplomat M. M. Litvinov. Since 1918 she lived in the USSR. Ivy Litvinov taught English in Soviet Russia, and created an artificial language, Basic English. In 1972, after the death of her husband she moved to their homeland in the UK, where she was dealing with translations of Russian writers, such as Tolstoy LN, Chekhov AP, Turgenev I, Maxim Gorky for the American magazine "The New Yorker".

This study provides an exciting opportunity to advance our knowledge of lexical units- *realias* in the work of A. P. Chekhov "Man in a case". Surveys such as that conducted by V. Vinogradov showed the analysis of lexical *realias* in translation; we analyzed the use of linguistic and cultural *realias* in fiction based on his research [7].

DISCUSSION

Recently, researchers have shown an overgrowing interest in Chekhov's creative work. In the past two decades, a number of researchers undertook attempts to analyze the perception of Chekhov's literature by non-Russian readers. They are Zabelina LN, Adam EA, Muralova SA, Alenkina TB. Despite the importance of analyzing translation difficulties, there remains a paucity of evidence on translation plurality which depends on personal characteristics of the translator: nationality, occupation, age, sex, an epoch he is working in, his cultural identity. A systematic understanding of how the language personality contributes to the translation of original text is still lacking. Moreover surprisingly, the effects of cultural *realias* have not been closely examined.

The translation of classical literature has been always the most interesting aspect in written translation. Russian classical literature comprises lifestyle of people, the philosophy of the Russian nation, which is described by Russian novelists in hard-to-translate equivalents. The brightest of the examples are Chekhov's short stories: due to the fact that his stories are laconic and ironic in style it is very complicated to transfer the author's idea and language into another language and culture. One of the greatest challenges in translation studies is the lack of coincidence of Russian and English cultural and national *realias*.

In this paper we will give a systematic understanding of how *realias* contribute to Chekhov's short story "Man in a Case". In the following dialogue the heroine Varenka is talking to the main hero Belikov. Here we come across with plenty of national and cultural *realias* in **Table 1**. Translators must convey to the English reader the differences among Russian, Ukrainian and South-Russian dialect.

Chekhov A

“U hohlov tykvy nazyvayutsya kabakami, a kabaki shinkami, i varyat u nih borshch s krasnen'kimi i s sinen'kimi «takoj vkusnyj, takoj vkusnyj, chto prosto — uzhas!»”

Litvinova I

“Pumpkins are called marrows in the Ukraine, and they make a delicious borsch with blue egg-plant and red capsicum, ever so good, you know!”

Bartlett R

“She explained that Ukrainians used the Russian word for tavern to mean pumpkin, and that they had another name altogether for taverns. And the bortsch they cooked with tomatoes and aubergines was ‘just so incredibly, amazingly delicious!’”

Wilks R

“Ukrainians like calling pumpkins ‘pubkins’, that’s the way they talk there. And they made borsch with sweet little red beets, ‘Oh, so delicious- frightfully tasty!’”

Table 1. National and cultural realias.

| Chekhov A | Litvinova I | Bartlett R | Wilks R |
|----------------------|----------------|------------|------------------------|
| <i>Kabak (tykva)</i> | Marrow | - | Pubkin |
| <i>Krasnen'kie</i> | Red capsicum | Tomatoes | Sweet little red beets |
| <i>Sinen'kie</i> | Blue egg-plant | Aubergines | - |

All three translators in different ways interpreted the names of vegetables. Ivy Litvinov replaced the pumpkin with marrow. Rosamund Bartlett omits the translation. In order to keep homonyms *kabak* (pumpkin) and a *pub* (Ukrainian tavern, pub) Noticing Wilks’s tendency to use creativity and freedom in choosing equivalents, we marked that he compensates Ukrainian ' *tavern*' as in wordplay, although in Russian these are two different words (*tavern-pumpkin*): he creates a new word similar in sound to *the pumpkin*, but the root of the word is a pub: *Pubkin*.

In the frequency dictionary of the language of Chekhov's works, edited by Anatoly A. Polikarpov it is clarified that in the South of Russia tomatoes and eggplants are called "*krasnen'kie*" and "*sinen'kie*". Ivy Litvinov translated "*krasnen'kie*" like *red capsicum* that is a lexical replacement. However, the heroine of Chekhov Varenka emphasized the exquisite taste of the bortsch, highlighting the two main vegetables, one of which is certainly tomatoes.

Bartlett R accurately conveyed the meaning but lost the stylistic coloring of the Russian suffix – *en'k* (positive emotional attitude of the speaker). Wilks R applied lexical substitution: "*krasnen'kie*" is translated as *beets*, but it retained the stylistic colouring with a lexical addition of *sweet little*.

As for the ingredient "the aubergine", which people from Southern Russia call the "*sinen'kie*", R. Bartlett and A. Litvinov gave the exact denotative meaning of the lexical unit - aubergine - British, eggplant - the American version. Although they failed to transfer stylistic component.

The next sentence is abundant in various linguo-cultural realias:

Chekhov A

“Postnoe est' vredno, a skoromnoe nel'zya, tak kak, pozhaluj, skazhut, chto Belikov ne ispolnyaet postov, i on el sudaka na korov'em masle, — pishcha ne postnaya, no i nel'zya skazat', chtoby skoromnaya.”

Litvinova I

“Lenten fare did not agree with him, but he could not eat meat or people might say that Belikov did not observe Lent. So he ate pike fried in butter - it was not fasting but neither could it be called meat.”

Bartlett R

“He thought that Lenten food was harmful, but non-Lenten food was forbidden, and so in order to prevent people saying that he did not observe the fasts, Belikov ate perch cooked in butter, which is not Lenten food, but it wasn't exactly non-Lenten either.”

Wilks R

“Fasting was bad for you and as he couldn’t touch meat on days forbidden by the church- or people might say Belikov didn’t observe fasts- he would eat perch cooked in animal fat, food that couldn’t be faulted, being neither one thing nor other.”

Fasting is the tradition of abstain from some kinds of food and drink on certain days as a religious observance. Translators Bartlett and Litvinov, apply specification (*Lent*) as a translation transformation. But Lent in Western Christianity is only Easter fasting. However Chekhov implied general fasting. In Russia fasting is observed not only before Easter. Ronald Wilkes in this example managed to convey the meaning of fasting.

In Russian there is a word that has a meaning of food that can be eaten when you don’t observe fasting that is meat, fish, milk, sweets: skoromnaya pitsha. Litvinov and Wilkes applied elimination of national and cultural features. So they translated it as a meat, because this word is native Russian word and doesn’t have full equivalent in English. Bartlett uses antonymous translation (*non-Lenten food*).

As for the translation of the fish that Belikov ate, the indigenous habitat of Russian *sudak* is the basin of the Azov, Caspian, Black seas. However, in Western Europe it is impossible to find it. Litvinova replaces it with English *pike*. The area of the pike is widespread in the countries of the UK, and also in the Taganrog Bay of the Azov Sea.

Bartlett and Wilkes transferred *sudak* using the English *perch*. Perch is also common in the Sea of Azov, so the semantic content is distorted not much.

Chekhov A

“On derzhal povara Afanasiya, kotoryiy kogda-to sluzhil v denschikah i umel koe-kak stryapat.”

Litvinova I

“He kept a male cook, Afanasy, who knew how to cook from having served as a batman some time in his life.”

Bartlett R

“He did have a cook called Afanasy, who had once been a batman in the army and could just about, drum up a meal.”

Wilks R

“He had a male cook, Afanasy, who had once been a batman in the army and who could knock up a meal of sorts.”

In the following example, we come across with the dialect Russian word *stryapat* which is translated as “to prepare some dish very quickly”. It also has a figurative meaning of creating something hastily, poorly and carelessly.

Chekhov A

“On derzhal povara Afanasiya, kotoryiy kogda-to sluzhil v denschikah i umel koe-kak stryapat.”

Litvinova I

“He kept a male cook, Afanasy, who knew how to cook from having served as a batman some time in his life.”

Bartlett R

“He did have a cook called Afanasy, who had once been a batman in the army and could just about, drum up a meal.”

Wilks R

“He had a male cook, Afanasy, who had once been a batman in the army and who could knock up a meal of sorts.”

The Russian National Corpus states that it is an archaic word. Litvinov lost stylistic coloring of the word and translated it with a neutral equivalent to cook. Bartlett and Wilkes use functional analogues-dialect words drum up, knock up. Drum up has the connotation of inventing anything, but not food. Wilkes picks up a good idiom knock up that means to cook food quickly.

In this example we also face administrative reality *denschik*. It is a soldier of the Russian Royal Army at the beginning or 20th century, which worked for the officer in the army for personal services. In the UK the official name of *denschik* during the First World War was soldier-servant, and during the Second World War it was changed into *batman*. Therefore, all three translators select the partial equivalent of *denschik*, translating it as a batman. They have identical semantic meaning; however, these words were used at different historical times, which lead to the loss of associative relations.

Chekhov A

“Ne ponimayu, kak vyi perevarivaete etogo fiskala. Vyi chinodralyi.”

Litvinova I

"I can't understand you, how can you tolerate that sneak of a man? You're nothing but a pack of place-hunters."

Bartlett R

"I do not understand how you can put up with that old sneak. You're time-servers, that's what."

Wilks R

"I just don't understand how you can stomach that ugly little sneak. You're lousy bureaucrats."

Chekhov's hero Kovalenko Mikhail Savvich blames the teachers of the gymnasium in particular Belikov in disbelief to each other, in reporting and tattling and calls Belikov *fiscal*.

The position of a *fiscal* in Russia was established by Peter I. A fiscal was to snitch about all the violation of law to law officers. The post was abolished by Catherine II. Later the word kept the denotation of the informer and the spy and it was used in informal language.

All three translators have picked the best option from a stylistic point of view and from the point of view of time period. According to the Oxford dictionary the word *sneak* is a British, outdated with a disapproving meaning. The denotation of the informer partially changed (a person especially a child who tells sb about sth wrong another person has done). The denotation of a sneak doesn't involve the job of an official, because *the fiscal* was the original Russian occupation.

The hero Kovalenko condemns teachers in pettiness and calls them *chinodralyi*. It is an obsolete word with a meaning of bureaucrat. Ivy Litvinov selects a functional analogue of the *place-hunter*, which corresponds to the archaic and low-style coloring. Bartlett selects a neutral word *time-server*, but stylistic coloring is lost.

Wilkes applies lexical addition=*lousy* (disgusting, low). It transmits low style and Kovalenko's negative attitude towards Belikov and to all teachers.

Chehov A

"Naznachili k nam novogo uchitelya istorii i geografii, nekoego Kovalenko, Mihaila Savvicha, iz hohlov."

Litvinova I

"We were sent a new teacher for history and geography, one Kovalenko, Mikhail Savvich, a Ukrainian."

Bartlett R

"A new history and geography teacher was appointed at our school, a certain Mikhail Savvich Kovalenko, a Ukrainian."

Wilks R

"A new history and geography master was appointed, a Ukrainian called Mikhail Savvich Kobalenko."

There is a contrast between Belikov's 'encapsulation' and Kovalenko's youth, enthusiasm, love for life and freedom, frankness, who came from a Ukrainian village.

As for the translation of administrative realias the Dictionary of Vladimir Ivanovich Dahl defines the word *hohol* as "a Ukrainian". In the 19th century the territory of Ukraine was called *Malorossia*. The word *hohol* came from the region Zaporozhye, inhabited by Cossacks. N. I. Gogol was born in Poltava province in the Ukraine. He said about himself: "I do not know what is in my soul, Ukrainian or Russian. I only know I do not give any advantage to Russian or Ukrainian". In connection with the events in modern Ukraine Gogol's views on the Ukrainian question is particularly relevant today. As in English it is impossible to show the historical difference in names, translators use the partial translation.

CONCLUSION

As a literary translator Bartlett aims at a more poetic translation. Therefore, her translation is abundant in stylistic devices, so she shows the fidelity of the original text.

Therefore, the traditional translations of Anton Chekhov made in the 20th century are different from the work of a contemporary translator. Furthermore, we should also take into consideration personal characteristics of the translator: nationality, occupation, age, sex, an epoch he is working in, his cultural identity. In conclusion, the occupation and professional interests had a great impact on the translators' language. Bartlett being a lecturer of the Russian literature is more inclined to stick to the original text often by means of a detailed interpretation. She often illustrates the stylistic structure of Chekhov's phrases and uses modern expressions. The analysis of the translation explored that the translators of the 20th century Litvinov and Wilkes transferred realias in the context of the source text and not as isolated phenomena in the language system.

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