

УДК 81'271.1

On Ways how to Translate Mass Media Metaphors and Language-game

Nataliya V. Lyagushkina*

Moscow City Pedagogical University
5b Maly Kazenny per., Moscow, 105064 Russia

Received 03.11.2013, received in revised form 09.11.2013, accepted 27.12.2013

Each culture enjoys its specific kind of humour thus its kind of a language-game as well. The article deals in the kinds of metaphors and language-game, including the visual ones widely used in mass media. Translators and especially interpreters being usually pressed for time face the challenge of how to tackle metaphor and language-game. The article suggests a translation heuristics. The first choice is to find the equivalent. Another way to render a metaphor or a pun is to rely on some other stylistic device. In some cases we can resort to loan translation with a commentary. The most common way is to reduce the expressivity and neglect the stylistic device. The last option is to leave the original text.

Keywords: mass media language, visual metaphor, visual pun, translation strategies.

Contemporary mass media authors tend to rely on various tropes, such as metaphors, allusions, hyperbolae, etc. This trend can be attributed to the need for persuasion the consumer to interpret the product through imposed associations, thus metaphor is a sort of a filter for a consumer to perceive the reality.

Traditionally linguistics deals with language metaphor – a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them. G. Lakoff and M. Johnson argue that metaphors are pervasive also in thought and action. They suggest a metaphor to be simply understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another. The authors provide several

examples of daily metaphors, such as *argument is war* and *time is money* (Johnson, Lakoff, 1980).

Recent years have seen another type of a daily metaphor – **visual metaphor** – to be spreading. The visual metaphor is framed not in words but in a picture or video portion. Such kind of metaphor is especially frequent in mass media and is also called practical. A. Serikov suggests practical metaphor to describe the experience related to one situation or one object transferred into another situation or attached to another object (Serikov 2007).

Fig. 1 illustrates visual metaphor in advertising. The authors of the poster are aimed to support the launch of Raiffeisen's new deposit program in Russia. They refer to a widely used

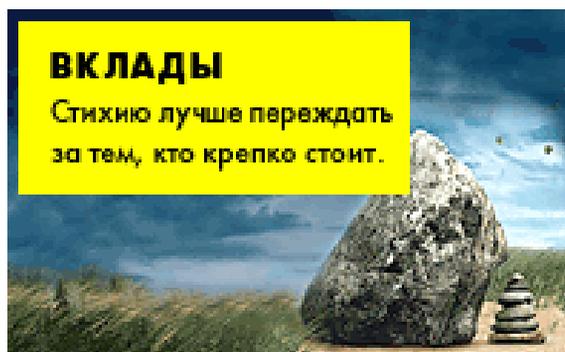


Fig.1 Visual Metaphor

Russian metaphors *переждать стихию* and *крепко стоять (на ногах)*.

To proceed with the ways how mass media authors appeal to the readers the wide usage of comic sense should be mentioned. Different types of language-game are frequent in press, internet data portals, sport commentary, etc. Comic sense is referred to contradiction and identity principles, ambiguity, contrast, etc. Contrast by-turn refers to such language means as simile, oxymoron, antithesis, metonymy, etc.

Many linguists have claimed that humour reflects national mentality. V. Karasik and A. Karasik conclude that English jokes based on puns or containing details of British life style being translated into Russian lose their comic sense and tend to be misunderstood or incomprehensible for Russians (Karasik 2001). The next two pictures illustrate the typical English jokes that are difficult for the foreigners to understand (Ford, Legon 2010) (Fig. 2, 3).

Since each culture enjoys its specific kind of humour the language-game varies as well, e.g. in English we can often see *chiastic* patterns, *A magician pulls rabbits out of hats. An experimental psychologist pulls habits out of rats.*

Mass media rely on phonetic stylistic devices, such as rhyme or alliteration. *Schneller voran mit Bus und Bahn; First against thirst;*

Lecker, locker, leicht; Making the most of your microwave. Play on proper names involved in a pun is gaining momentum, e.g., *If anyone can Canon can; Don't just book it, Thomas Cook it.* Last decades have seen various types of graphic play penetrating in our written texts. They include acronyms and abbreviations, e.g., *Польша приговорена Тевтонскими Узурпаторами Старательного Камердинера к приватизации* (the first letters form Polish leader's name D. Tusk), graphiohybrids, e.g., *Жемчужина эVOLVOлюции*, and other graphic elements, e.g., *Пролетарии всех стран, остерегайтесь! Just AAsk; Waagen fürs Leben.*

The next type of a language-game is based on word formation, e.g., *девочка Инчовочка* (from Eng. *inch*). Besides there occurs a play on similar morphemes in borrowings and words in the mother tongue, e.g., *В воскресенье в Москве завершилась конференция «Власть прессы и пресс власти».*

It should be noted that puns in mass media are often combined with other stylistic devices, such as allusion. The example of such a combination are *advertising slogans*, cf. *The Old Man and the Seafood* (alludes to *The Old Man and the Sea* by E. Hemingway) *For Whom the Dinner Bell Tolls* (alludes to *For Whom the Bell Tolls* by E. Hemingway), *The Ketchup in the Rye* (alludes *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger),

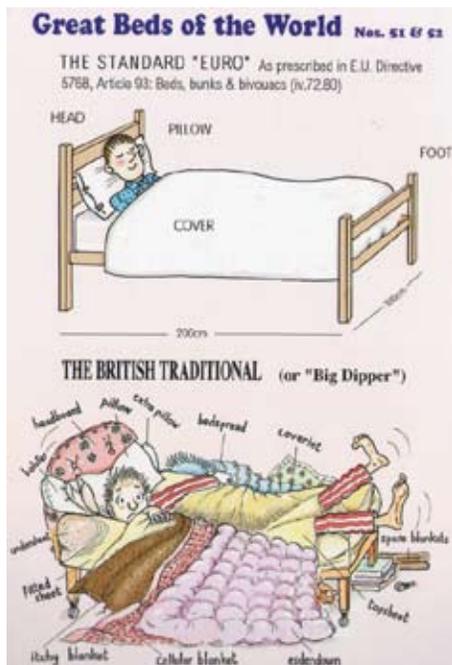


Fig. 2. Typical British Joke



Fig. 3. Typical British Joke

Lord of The Fries (alludes to *The Lord of the Flies* by W. Golding). The slogans above refer to British and American literature. English allusions to foreign novels are spread as well, cf. *War and Peas* (alludes to *War and Peace* by L. Tolstoy), *The Brothers Karamatzoh* (alludes to *The Brothers Karamazov* by F. Dostoyevsky), *The Count of Monte Crisco* (alludes to *The Count of Monte Cristo* by A. Dumas). The next slogan refers to the contemporary film: *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* – *The Grill With The Dragon Tattoo*.

Being typical of advertising discourse allusions are likewise spread in the political one. Thus, political leaders of the end of the previous century used to rely on them in their speeches, cf. R. Reagan: *We have it within our power to begin the world over again* (allusion to one of the Founding Fathers Thomas Paine).

Similarly to visual metaphors *visual pun* is gaining momentum in contemporary mass media language. Again it is framed not in words

still in a picture or video portion. The surprise effect created provokes the frame transformation resulting in laugh reaction. The striking example of a visual pun is the *Shyrli-Myrli* scene where proper names, such as *Oslo*, *Glasgow*, etc. undergo the sign language translation. The comic sense appears due to similar sounds in Russian words, cf. *Oslo* – *осел*, *Glasgow* – *глас*.

Publicists often opt for visual puns, e.g., the Chevrolet poster advertising car and its insurance (Fig. 4) is based on the homophony of the insurance abbreviation (KACKO) and Russian noun *каска* (*hard hat*). In addition to the similar sounding the word *каска* represents the metaphors of building and security that are beneficial for such an advertising issue.

Political and advertising discourse is extremely rich in individual and creative tropes. Thus, Russian leaders tend to tailor their speeches with metaphors and puns usually relying on one in each public appearance, ditto TV commercials, advertising slogans and newspaper articles'



Fig.4 Visual Pun

titles. Rendering such tropes is a challenge for interpreters and translators.

Many linguists claim that such tropes fail to be translated in an adequate way. E. Budaev underlines common metaphor patterns in Russian and American political discourse: elections in both languages are associated with football matches. Still American football as a game has its own rules, thus rendering some football metaphors from American English into European languages and vice versa provides challenges (Budayev, 2009). Metaphors and puns based on national concepts (such as 'хрущевка', 'Лубянка') provoke the same difficulties.

Let us deal with the strategies of how to translate metaphors and language-game. A. Nemirovskaya sums up six ways how to render metaphors: whole translation, interpretation, image change, metaphoric equivalent, transformation, addition and omission (Nemirovskaya 2009).

Acknowledging the author's approach we would like to suggest a little different heuristics of how to translate metaphors and language-game.

- 1) The first choice is to find the **equivalent**.

Rendering political speeches translators aim to convey the expressive language. The next three utterances illustrate how the challenge is successfully met. *Я только что узнал, что господин Баррозу обсуждал с Президентом Медведевым проблемы **строительства правового государства** – I have just learned that Mr Barroso has discussed the problems of **building a rule-of-law state** with President Medvedev.*

*Резкие колебания политической и экономической конъюнктуры, **турбулентность мировой экономики** не станут поводом для **демонтажа демократических институтов** – The sharp fluctuations in the political and economic situation, the **turbulence in the world** will not serve as a pretext for **dismantling democratic institutions**.*

*Всё это очень хорошая **подушка безопасности** и в то же время хороший ресурс для реализации всех наших проектов с французскими партнёрами – This is a good **safety cushion** and a good resource for implementing all of our projects with French partners.*

2) The second way is to rely on the **equivalent adding some other element** more familiar to the recipient.

Let us deal with the Nissan Qashqai trailer where the city makes a series of attempts 'to kill' the car, still the last one manages to escape every paintball and 'wins the battle'. The slogan *More tough, more stylish. Urbanproof Mastered* supports the trailer. The suggested rendering runs as *Ярче стиль, круче нрав. Бросая вызов городской стихии*. The video portion is based on the visual metaphor of a battlefield and victory, the linguistic level provides the English adjective *tough*, translated into Russian *крутой*. Besides the Russian translation adds the idea of challenge, which is singled out from the picture.

3) Another way to render a metaphor or pun is to rely on some **other stylistic device**.

The Russian title *Тбилиси «бушует» накануне визита президента США* contains a pun based on the US president's name. Since there is no equivalent in English the translator opts for colloquial phrasal verb *to spruce up* – *Georgia spruces up for Bush visit*. Thus, negative author's vision is rendered with the help of lower stylistic register.

4) In some cases we can resort to **loan translation**.

Now that the age of leverage is over, «Chimerica» – the partnership between the big saver and the big spender – is key – ... Химерика (Chimerica – каламбур, составленный из двух слов – Китай (China) и Америка (America)). Оно означает, что главным в мировой экономике в последние 10 лет стали отношения между Китаем и Америкой... Original phrase enjoys blending – combining parts of two or more words. The translation applies loan translation coupled with a commentary. Another way could be similar blending in Russian – *Химерика (Китай + Америка)*.

The next example deals with English idiom *to take a bite out of the apple of knowledge* rendered in Russian word for word. The translator could have opted for the common idiom *грызть гранит науки*, nevertheless suggested solution can be regarded as a reasonable one as in that case the pun would be omitted and the comic sense would be lost.

*But it was the shiny apple with the big bite taken out of it, the symbol of Apple, Inc., that has most entranced me in its profound theological implications. The megabytes, the multiple units of information storage on a computer, are somehow also a way to take a bite out of the apple of knowledge – Но на глубокие теологические размышления меня навело именно сияющее надкусанное яблоко, символ Apple. Мегабайты, многочисленные единицы информации, хранящейся в компьютере, тоже в некотором роде являются способом **вгрызться в яблоко знания** (игра на созвучии английских слов *byte* (байт) и *bite* (откусывать)).*

It should be mentioned that while choosing between an equivalent and a calque a translator has to select the option with the similar message.

Let us compare two translation variants of B. Obama's **remarks at the National Academy of Sciences annual meeting. The first translation is official, the second one was published in alternative newspaper Troitsky Variant.**

*This is America's story. Even in the hardest times, against the toughest odds, we've never given in to pessimism; we've never **surrendered our fates to chance**; we have endured; we have worked hard; we **sought out new frontiers**.*

(1) *Такова история Америки. Даже в самые трудные времена, под самыми жестокими ударами мы никогда не поддавались пессимизму; мы никогда не **полагались на волю случая**; мы терпели; мы без усталости работали; мы **открывали новые рубежи**.*

(2) *Такова история Америки. Даже в тяжелейшие времена, в самых неблагоприятных обстоятельствах, мы никогда не впадали в пессимизм, никогда не отдавали свои судьбы на волю случая. Мы выдерживали все испытания. Мы много работали. Мы искали новые рубежи.*

The comparison reveals different approaches of how to translate metaphors. Thus, *in the hardest times* is rendered by Russian equivalents *в самые трудные времена* and *в тяжелейшие времена*. The fact that the idiom *against the toughest odds* lacks the analog in Russian results in the translators' need to search for another image familiar to the reader – *под самыми жестокими ударами* and *в самых неблагоприятных обстоятельствах*. The second way seems to be more appropriate being common in Russian. Alternative translators suggested an equivalent *отдавать свои судьбы на волю случая* for English metaphor *surrender one's fates to chance*, while the official edition omits the image of *fate* – *полагаться на волю случая*. Such an omission seems to be reasonable in the case. The third metaphor *seek out new frontiers* is rendered in two ways as well: literal translation (*искать новые рубежи*) and changing of the predicate to meet the Russian language tradition (*открывали новые рубежи*).

To sum up the comparison we can say that the official translation appears to be more adequate.

5) The next way how to deal with the language-game and metaphors is to reduce the expressivity and neglect the stylistic device.

The metaphor in the sentence *В общем, у нас целая палитра взаимодействия в самых разных областях* is lost in the translation – *In general, we are cooperating in many diverse areas*.

Выход – это, извините за каламбур, приход, это приход этих предприятий в

технопарки – *What's the solution? The solution lies in these small businesses becoming part of the technology parks*. The pun in the original utterance is based on prefixion typical of the Russian language, still English being inefficient in such morphological device can't suggest the equivalent.

Another example when the language-game is neglected by the translator is the title *Jobs and Jobs* – *Джобс и рабочие места*. The author plays on coincident forms of American entrepreneur's surname and a noun, the Russian language fails to suggest such a pun.

6) Moreover in some cases a commentary could be of great help as it makes up for the lost comic sense or expressiveness. Sometimes the commentary resembles a definition.

The so-called Great Firewall of China – «Великая китайская стена огня» – это английский каламбур с использованием слова *Firewall*, которым называется система компьютерной безопасности – брандмауэр – и которое дословно переводится как «стена огня».

«Infinitea» boasts tables made of tea bushes and a slew of bold new tea concepts – Столики в заведении под названием «Infinitea» (каламбур, составленный из двух английских слов: «infinity» – бесконечность и «tea» – чай) вырезаны из чайных кустов.

The first case deals with the word-for-word translation followed by a detailed commentary. The second rendering suggests the original English acronym followed by the translation of its parts.

7) The last way of how to deal with metaphors and language-game is to leave them in the original language. Such an approach is gaining momentum due to globalization and penetrating American culture. It should be mentioned that this trend relates mostly to visual metaphors and language-game.

Let us analyze the commercial of Renault Koleos. The trailer shows a clan of meerkats lying on the sun when heard a new Renault approaching. The animals urged to put on tuxedos and line up to meet the car. Thus, the picture refers to the metaphor of courtliness. The commercial is accompanied with Turandot's aria by *G. Puccini*, the attendant slogan runs *Widely civilized*. We can resume that *the combination of the picture, sound and slogan are targeted at producing the image of civilized gentlemen that definitely clashes with our notion of wild African animals*. The Russian localization team

decided to neglect any translation leaving the English version.

Conclusion. Thus, the strategy of how to translate a metaphor or a language-game in mass media is to search for the equivalent. Failing this the translator is to look for another stylistic device. The next option can be loan translation with or without a commentary. The simplest way is to neglect the trope and suggest an ordinary rendering. And the last but not the least way is to leave the original metaphor or language game expecting the reader (or mostly viewer) to understand the stylistic effect.

References

1. Budayev, E.V. Comparative Analysis of Political Metaphor [*Sopostavitel'nyj analiz politicheskoy metafory. Izv'estiya Ural'skogo federal'nogo universiteta*] Proceedings of Ural State University, 2009. No 3. Pp. 106-114.
2. Ford, M. & , Legon, P. The How To Be British Collection. – London.: Lee Gone Publications, 2010. 64 p.
3. Karasik, A.V. & Karasik, V.I. Misunderstanding of Humour in Crosscultural Communication [*Neponimaniye jumora v mezhkul'turnom obschchenii. Jazyk, kommunikacija i social'naja sreda*] Language, Communication, Social Environment, 2001. No 1. Pp. 13-27.
4. Lakoff, G &., & Johnson, M. *Metaphors We Live By*. (IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980. 276 p.), Chapters 1–3. (pp. 3–13).
5. Nemirovskaya, A.V. Metaphor in Turkish Fiction as a Translation Object [*Metafora tureckogo hudozhestvennogo teksta kak object perevoda. Vestnik Irkutskogo gopsudarstvennogo lingvisticheskogo universiteta*] Bulletin of Irkutsk State University, 2009. No 4. Pp. 57-62.
6. Serikov, A.E. Metaphor and Metonymy in Practical Use [*Metafora i metonimija v prakticheskom dejstvii. Vestnik Samarskoj gumanitarnoj akademii*] Bulletin of Samara Academy for Humanities, 2007. No 1. Pp. 132-142.

Способы перевода метафор и каламбуров в массмедиаальном дискурсе

Н.В. Лягушкина

*Московский городской педагогический университет
Россия, 105064, Москва, Малый Казенный пер. 5б*

Юмористический дискурс в различных лингвокультурах имеет свои особенности. В статье рассматриваются различные виды метафор и каламбуров, используемые в языке СМИ, в том числе визуальные метафоры и каламбуры. Стратегии перевода представляют собой: передачу каламбура или метафоры на том же языковом уровне; компенсацию эффекта, созданного в оригинальном тексте, каламбуром/метафорой другого типа или иными стилистическими средствами; комментарий или примечание; утерю комического эффекта; отсутствие перевода как такового.

Ключевые слова: массмедиаальный дискурс, визуальная метафора, визуальный каламбур, переводческие стратегии.
