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## Tenor in Shakespeare Drama Translation

**Evgenia Yu. Kunitsyna\***

*Irkutsk State Linguistic University,  
8, Lenin St., Irkutsk 664000 Russia<sup>1</sup>*

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*The translation problem tackled in this article relates to handling literary discourse, namely Shakespeare's drama. The article addresses the problem of identity to be attained in translation when rendering interpersonal relationships of the communicants commonly referred to as tenor of discourse. In the context of the proposed analysis tenor is viewed as what can be called a "monarchical point" (the term is borrowed from P.A. Florensky (Florensky, 2000)) of the space of drama translation discourse, where 'monarchical' stands for 'particularly valuable'. The analysis is based on Hamlet, Prince of Denmark and its XIX-XXI centuries' Russian translations.*

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Drama translation as an aesthetic and cultural phenomenon despite its long history appears to have been given limited scholarly attention (Anderman, 2000). One of the reasons for this situation may be the very nature of drama which is meant not only for the page but first and foremost for the stage. Therefore, the concept of phenomenological identity associated with adequacy and pertaining to literary (poetic) translation and attained through the translator's intention "to conform to the effect" (Voskoboinik, 2004)<sup>2</sup> in drama translation may be specified as involving 'acceptability' and 'performability' (Anderman, *ibid.*: 71). The linguistic requirements of performability to be satisfied in translation entail adjustments on different levels (the rendering of dialect, slang, terms of abuse or endearment, hypocoristics and

etc.). The level we are going to focus on is in fact a macrolevel, that of the tenor of discourse.

Tenor is one of the three integral features of the context of situation or otherwise discourse along with Field and Mode. According to M. Halliday, tenor refers to "who is taking part, to the nature of the participants, their statuses and roles" (Halliday, 1991: 12). Being characterized by the degree of formality and hierarchiness (Karasik, 2002: 27) of interpersonal relationships which, in turn, are determined by age, sex, education, etc. as well as by socio-cultural conventions, tenor needs the translator's special attention and care. M. Baker emphasizes that getting the tenor of discourse right in translation can be quite difficult. "It depends on whether one sees a certain level of formality as 'right' from

\* Corresponding author E-mail address: kunitsyna@yandex.ru

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that identity manifests itself on the translator's cognitive horizon as the antinomy – phenomenological vs. positivistic. To attain positivistic identity, the translator follows the intention "to conform to the structure". Identity as the unity of the two parts of the antinomy is hardly ever attainable (Voskoboinik, 2004: 168).

the perspective of the source culture or the target culture” (Baker, 1997: 16). The translator has to choose between retaining the original tenor so as to give the flavour of the source culture and changing the tenor to suit the expectations of the target reader / spectator (see also (Hatim and Mason 1999)).

A far-from-trivial picture with all richness and variety of “colours” and “hues” is represented by the communicative interaction of the personages in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Three case studies of interpersonal relationships in Polonius’s family will be demonstrated here with reference to the XIX-XXI centuries’ Russian translations. I shall refer to the translations by M. Vronchenko (M.V.), N. Polevoy (N.P.), A. Kroneberg (A.K.), K. Romanov (K.R.), N. Rossov (N.R.), M. Lozinsky (M.L.), A. Radlova (A.R.), B. Pasternak (B.P.), V. Poplavsky (V.P) and A. Chernov (A.Ch.)<sup>1</sup>.

Let us consider the first example.

Scene one – Laertes is taking his leave of Ophelia (I, 3). He asks Ophelia not to “sleep” but let him hear from her. Then a long soliloquy ensues in which Laertes puts his sister on the guard in her relationships with Prince Hamlet and reminds her of honour and virtue. Both brother and sister address each other using pronouns *you* and *your* that in Shakespeare’s time were deemed

formal (and polite) as opposed to informal *thou / thee / thy*. This distinction is analogous to the opposition *мы – вы / Вы* in Russian, *tu vs. vous* in French and *Du vs. Sie* in German<sup>2</sup> but not to be found in English any longer. Thus, the usage of *you / your* in Laertes-Ophelia’s dialogue unambiguously points to a formal, institutional<sup>3</sup> character of the brother-and-sister relationships prescribed by social conventions of that time. Scene two – Ophelia enters, “fantastically dressed with straws and flowers” and singing songs. Laertes whose heart almost broke with pain and sorrow pronounces a short monologue where, this time, he addresses his sister using the informal *thy*:

By heaven, *thy* madness shall be paid by weight,

Till our scale turn the beam. O rose of May!

Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia! (IV, 5)

Although Ophelia does not understand her brother, does not hear him and Laertes is in fact speaking to himself, his words are anyway meant for Ophelia.

What do we have in translation? Notably, out of the ten translations only one translator – Anna Radlova – resorted to foreignization and relayed Shakespeare’s tenor using different pronouns in these two scenes. The tenor of discourse of the translation has come to be identical with that of the original, and – without “infringing the rights” of the Russian receptor. The rest of the translators opted for the domesticating strategy and in both of the scenes used *мы / мое* by which they immediately suited the expectations of the Russian reader- and spectatorship concerning brother-and-sister relationships, at that having completely graded difference in the degree of closeness / distance of the personages in the two scenes.

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that most of these translations were stage-oriented, some of them to enjoy success and others to suffer failure, in terms of the above-mentioned performability. N. Polevoy’s translation enjoyed tremendous success with the spectatorship and was found hard to replace despite numerous attempts. And his was a free translation. Similar acclaim was later received by B. Pasternak’s translation that drove out from the stage those by M. Lozinsky and A. Radlova. It is also noteworthy that N. Rossov was an actor who performed the part of Hamlet and it was his personal experience that made him set about translating the tragedy himself. There is another theatre man – Vitaly Poplavsky, a stage director, philologist and translator. A. Chernov’s translation stands out as the new Shakespeare translation to have been recently performed. Andrey Chernov is a philologist, scholar and translator. Their translations were published in 2001 (V. Poplavsky) and 2003 (A. Chernov). A. Chernov’s translation was performed at the Moscow Stanislavsky’s Theatre in October 2002.

<sup>2</sup> In 1960, Brown and Gilman published a study of the pronouns of address in European languages with special attention paid to this distinction (Anderman, 2001: 74).

<sup>3</sup> The terms *institutional* and *personal* come from V.I. Karasik’s typology of discourse (Karasik, 2000).

Two points can be made about Radlova's attempt to preserve in Russian the original tenor shift. First, the translator has "highlighted" the Other, their values and peculiarities of speech behaviour determined by the social status of the speakers. The social status of woman in the Shakespeare time was entirely institutionalized and perceived as a position, that of mother, wife, daughter, sister, etc. (Rakityanskaya, 2007). The first of the scenes is a graphic illustration of institutionalization extrapolated on familial discourse. Second, Radlova has retained the *contrast* between the two scenes of Laertes-Ophelia communication before the tragedy (death of Polonius) and after. Radlova did her best not to deprive the Russian reader of the opportunity together with Laertes to *live through* the bitterness and anguish caused by what he saw and *experience* Laertes' giving up the institutional register for the sake of personal and intimate<sup>1</sup> one. Cf.:

Клянусь, я отплачу *твое* безумье,  
И перевесит мечь. О роза мая,  
Сестра Офелия, *девочка моя!*  
(A. Radlova)

Undoubtedly, different translators perceive events created by artistic means differently. Perception is internalized and can manifest itself only as an experience in the so called internal time of the ego of the translator (Voskoboinik, 2004: 36). What is especially remarkable about the above example is that the nine translators who have unanimously "overlooked" the shift of the tenor from formal to informal, the shift from institutional to personal communication are men, and only *the translator* has taken good notice of and relayed this shift in her translation. Is it a mere coincidence or the gender factor coming into play? Anyway, the gender factor in Shakespeare translation calls for special attention and detailed consideration to be given in some other paper. In

effect, A. Radlova managed to ensure identity as the above-mentioned unity of the antinomy which was instrumental in approximating the Russian reader's experience to that of his / her English counterpart.

Let us turn to another example. We have to go back to the very first scene – Laertes' leave-taking. In response to Laertes' instructions and admonitions, Ophelia, promising to "keep the effect" of her brother's "good lesson", also permits herself to warn him not to "...as some ungracious pastors do, show" her "the steep and thorny way to heaven, / Whilst like a puff'd and reckless libertine, / Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads, / And recks not his own read" (I, 3). And Laertes says: *O fear me not*. The translations read as follows: *Не бойся!* (M.V.), *Нет!* (N.P.), *О нет* (A.K.), *О, за меня не бойся* (K.R.), *Не бойся за меня* (N.R.), *О, не бойся* (M.L.), *О нет, не бойтесь* (A.R.), *За меня не бойся* (B.P.), *За меня не беспокойся* (V.P.), *О, не пугай меня!* ... *На этот раз ты несговорчива на удивленья* (A.Ch.). As one can see, A. Chernov's translation proves to be totally different from the other nine.

Before we proceed, I should like to remind the reader that A. Chernov's and V. Poplavsky's translations appeared quite recently, in the 2000s. Both translations are modern (postmodern in fact) interpretations of the tragedy. The translation by A. Chernov who sought to change the existing Hamlet paradigm (Chernov, 2003) really presents a new *Hamlet*. A far more novel *Hamlet* is that by V. Poplavsky. But both, V. Poplavsky and A. Chernov as well as their predecessors pursued a common objective – to understand Shakespeare's text and stay faithful to it in translation. All Shakespeare translators had it their solemn duty to carefully study the original as well as literature on the author and his work and everything that could throw more light on Shakespeare's text. A. Chernov is no exception. And if any responsible translator is always a close reader, this time it

<sup>1</sup> Of significant interest are the dynamic effects of tenor changes in Hamlet-Gertrude dialogues.

is Chernov who seems to have “outread” (i.e. surpassed in close reading) his colleagues.

Let us now consider the translations. In seven of them, Laertes *comforts* Ophelia and asks her *not to be afraid*. N. Polevoy and A. Kroneberg have omitted the verb and retained only *not* (*нет*), which can be interpreted as a promise “no, I’ll not be like that” entailing logically “don’t be afraid”. A. Chernov has it *О, не пугай меня* (don’t frighten me). The verb *fear* has among its meanings *to inspire with fear*, *to frighten*. Cf. also: *It fears me = I’m afraid* (obs.) (OED) (see also Webster, BERD). But the translator does not seem to be satisfied with the mere rendering of the meaning of the verb and of the phrase. He feels it appropriate to add words which are not there in Shakespeare – *На этот раз ты несговорчива на удивление* – but which come to enhance the illocution of the preceding speech act.

Apparently, the fact that so many generations of the translators till nowadays (V. Poplavsky) interpreted the phrase in question as “*не бойся / не бойтесь за меня*” can be accounted for by the so-called *habitualness factor* (*faktor privychnosti*) (Rogov, 1973). It was habitual to see Laertes perceiving Ophelia’s words as a token of her love and care about him and his soul. Chernov presents a different picture. His Laertes is *astonished* by the words with which his usually humble and obedient sister parried his lengthy lesson. In Chernov’s translation, Ophelia thus appears to keep a high profile and defiantly break the norms of those very obedience and humbleness prescribed to woman by the society and that embraced all spheres of woman’s life including her communicative behaviour. In the contemporary linguistics this phenomenon is referred to as gender asymmetry implying communicative discrimination of women, men’s control of women’s utterances and men’s verbal aggression towards women (Rakityanskaya, 2007: 7).

The *fear me not* example is of interest and value also owing to the fact that it overtly demonstrates fluctuations of the original illocutionary meaning in translations. In nine translations the directive speech act *Не бойся за меня* has a strong commissive effect which, proceeding from the overall discourse analysis, makes it possible to classify it as an indirect commissive (I promise / I assure you that I’m not going to be like this / that it won’t happen to me). Chernov’s speech act is definitely (and solely) a directive. The Shakespearean “hue” or otherwise “touch” of expressive illocution propositionally marked by the affective *O* is to be found only in four of the translations. At that, in Chernov’s translation, in its wider context, the force of the expressive may be determined as disapproval (censure) whereas it is more like protest<sup>1</sup> in others. What about Shakespeare himself? It looks like both varieties of the expressive force of the given speech act can be found in Shakespeare. As M.M. Bakhtin said, different interpretations complement and enrich each other and, in the final analysis, complement and enrich the work itself (Bakhtin, 1986). With this in mind, I can only underline that different translations-interpretations help obtain a “multidimensional image” of Shakespeare with his pervasive, all-encompassing play of semantic and pragmatic meanings.

There is one example of rendering the tenor of discourse I should like to present. This time we shall consider familial relationships of Ophelia and Polonius and once again I should like to draw the reader’s attention to the social status of woman in the Shakespeare time identified with her gender role (or roles) and institutional constraints placed on her communicative behaviour.

Scared to death and overwhelmed with anxiety after her meeting with Hamlet who

<sup>1</sup> D. Vanderveken’s classification of speech acts is being used (Vanderveken, 1990).

saw the Ghost, Ophelia *enters* her father's room (*вбегаем* in A. Chernov's translation – *comes running* or *rushes in* – we shall get back to this direction a little bit later).

Polonius: How now, Ophelia! what's the matter?

Ophelia: Alas, *my lord*, I have been so affrighted! (II, 1).

The translations have Ophelia say: Ах, мой родитель, я так испугалась! (M.V.), Ах! боже мой! Я вся дрожу от страха (N.P.), Ах, как я испугалась, о мой боже! (A.K.), Отец мой, ах отец! Я так перепугалась! (K.R.), Ах, отец мой, я так перепугалась! (N.R.), О господин мой, как я испугалась! (M.L.), *Милорд, милорд*, как испугалась я! (A.R.), Боже правый! Я вся дрожу от страха! (B.P.), *Милорд*, клянусь, – какой-то тихий ужас! (V.P.), Отец, отец, я так напугана!.. (A.Ch.). As a result, the original appellative *my lord* is rendered by *родитель* (1), *отец* (3), *господин* (1), *милорд* (2) and is omitted with the interjection *боже мой / боже правый* added in three cases.

We have an interesting picture here as well. Three translators retain the original father-and-daughter institutional communication, using the corresponding *господин* and *милорд*. I should like to note that in this scene Ophelia uses *my lord* addressing her father four times. And, again, only A. Radlova maintains the emphatic institutionality of the discourse by a triple repetition of *милорд*. Four translators come up with a personalized discourse, replacing the highly formal *my lord* by informal if reverential *отец / родитель* eo ipso shortening the distance between the personages. Let us now get back to the stage direction preceding the Ophelia-Polonius dialogue which appears to be here what, following E. Pound, I would call 'a luminous detail'(see (Gentzler, 1993)) – *Enter Ophelia*.

Ophelia does *enter* (*входит*) in nine translations including those where the translators

transformed the institutional discourse into the personal one. The personalization of the discourse, apparently determined by the translators' experience of Ophelia's state of mind as utter anxiety and horror clashes with the above direction, describing the heroine's actions (and thus directing the prospective actress) which as well as her speech behaviour are subject to the conventions of the institution. A. Chernov, unlike other translators, opted for contextual concretization and by using *вбегаем* balanced the usage of the verb denoting a swift action commonly performed in the state of agitation and excitement, on the one hand, and the personalized form of address – *отец* which is pronounced twice, on the other hand. So, one can assume illocutionary dependence (see (Baranov, Kreidlin, 1992)) of the speech act on the stage direction introducing it.

I should like to draw the reader's special attention to the translation by V. Poplavsky which is distinguished by theatre critics for its greater performability (Zhuravlev, 2001). His Ophelia *входит* (*enters*) and says: "*Милорд, клянусь, – какой-то тихий ужас*". This translation seems to be highly reflective of the *Zeitgeist* of postmodernism. The translator has the institutional character of the discourse marked by the formal address *милорд* clash with the personal tonality of the unfolding discourse. The register opted for by the translator (*какой-то тихий ужас* along with the concomitant *клянусь*), in my view, carnivalizes the event: Ophelia who in Shakespeare suffered a painful shock at the distressful sight of the man she loved, in translation appears to be almost an extreme-show fan who a couple of minutes ago happened to witness her friend's or, rather, boyfriend's extremely strange behaviour. As far as the stage direction is concerned, I could probably add that taking into account the dialectic interdependence of the part and

the whole, one can project the following circle of its stage interpretation: *Входит Офелия, удобно устраивается в кресле*, or something of the kind.

I shall allow myself to note that Poplavsky's Polonius does not mind slang either. For example, after seeing Laertes off and learning that he has talked with Ophelia about Hamlet, Polonius is eager to know the truth, so he says: *Как далеко зашло у вас? Колись* (I, 3). The juvenilizing (or criminalizing?) of the discourse of the father of the family seems to take place in the translation bringing about implicatures which are very unlikely to be found in the original. Shakespeare's discourse dating back to the late Renaissance episteme (Foucault's term (Foucault, 1994)) handled in translation this or similar way gives rise to the problem of *compatibility* of signs of the two communicating cultures. So, in the present day context the above version looks quite performable but the question is how identical it is to the original.

Other questions arise, too: Is the contemporary Russian Shakespeare better on the page or on the stage? Do A. Chernov's or V. Poplavsky's translations have a chance to drive out from the stage B. Pasternak's translation whom they both actually rival? More generally, can there be a ratio of performability and identity

(phenomenological identity) established? What should this ratio be like to stage a *translation*, not a remake? Does performability of the translation heavily rest on the domesticating strategy? Does not a heavily domesticated and modernized text sound an ostentation anyway? Does it make it more, or less performable? Etc. As one can see, drama translation poses many questions (let alone Shakespeare who has more riddles and mysteries and play in store for us than we can imagine).

In conclusion, it is important to stress that the tenor of discourse is a "monarchical point" of the discursive space of the drama work. Its particular value is associated with the energy it "charges" the work with. Shifts of the tenor and type of discourse in the source text are discursive phenomena which have to be handled in translation by ensuring that characteristics of use and user and peculiarities of interaction are reflected. According to our analysis, the changing of the original tenor, the transformation of the institutional discourse into personal (or vice versa) in translation may be accompanied by the corresponding shift of the illocutionary semantics of the translated text – all manifesting the experience, the living-through in the internal time of the ego of the translator. The analysis has brought to the fore the problem of the *compatibility of signs of culture* – the source and target cultures belonging to different epistemes.

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