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“Strong” Texts of the Russian Literature in Translations: Cultural and Language Comprehension

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The article addresses to “strong” literary texts of the Russian literature and culture in the space of target languages and cultures. The author especially focuses on such categories as aesthetical information ambiguity, inexhaustibility of the source text and translation multiplicity. The problems touched upon in this work are regarded through the example of translated literary texts of F.M. Dostoyevsky.

Keywords: “strong” text, literary translation, cultural reception, centre of translation attraction.

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Research area: philology, translatology, culturology.

Introduction

The entire history of literary translation clearly demonstrates that original “strong” texts constantly generate numerous secondary texts belonging to another languages and systems and constitute wide centers of translation attraction” (Razumovskaya, 2011). Their emergence and development are directly determined by the character of source-target texts relations described in the famous “The Task of the Translator” (*Gem. – “Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers”*) by W. Benjamin in 1923. His nonconforming statement that translation does not serve to the reader, but exists independently and remains the source’s stability and growth, has significantly influenced the translation studies and practices. In his article – a framework for

many generations of translators – W. Benjamin says: “Being brought up in the translation, the source text almost rises up to a higher and purer atmosphere” (Benjamin, 1972).

Information ambiguity and inexhaustibility of a “strong” literary text

One of the inherent peculiarities of the literary texts and regular categories of the literary translation is ambiguity. This feature especially characterizes aesthetic information which directly relates to emotional information and possesses a high degree of subjectivity. It is exactly aesthetical ambiguity that makes the “original” readers interpret information in the literary text in various ways within the “original”

culture and language. The aesthetic information implied in the literary text leads its recipient to different aesthetic feelings, often diametrically opposed on emotional and evaluation scales. Whatever makes one reader feel highly positive, it may be extremely negative perceived by the other (even of similar age, education, life and cultural experience) – down to a complete rejection and ignorance. It is therefore of critical importance that the readers are likely to appreciate much the literary classics or contemporary works mostly because of such a great publicity of certain literary works can be a wake-up call for the other members on their cultural identification and spiritual and educational development, rather than a simple fact of appealing (since we don't even know whether they have read this literature or not). Comprehension and evaluation of the literary text are always ultra-subjective and individual matters.

Thus, as a rule, the ambiguity emerges when considering the literary text in the context of "original" culture and language as well as when re-coding this text with the "target" language and the "target" culture, accordingly (Razumovskaya, 2013). Undoubtedly, the information ambiguity grounds such categories of the literary translation as inexhaustibility of the source text and translation plurality which have entered the literary translation framework quite recently. These very categories maintain polyvariety and polylinguality of any literary text as an object for aesthetic perception, literary translation and hypothetically unlimited interpretations. The number of possible interpretations of the literary text can be equal to a potential number of its readers. Multiple comprehensions of the text's information by the original reader (by both native speakers and those who speak the original language as foreign one) bring numerous interpretations for the text's sense which are represented by the translation.

Extensive information exhaustibility is obviously an essential part of "strong" texts which remain popular in the culture, fit into different levels of education and represent constant translation units (Kuzmina, 2009). Secondary texts are generated with the information ambiguity of the source text and formally fix its interpretations.

The existence of secondary literary texts protects the phenomenon of original polyvariety defined as a possibility of several versions of the source literary text in different text forms (retelling, annotation, rewording) within one language and culture. In this context, there the original meaning should be translated into the target one, with the same content but of a different form within one language. The secondary versions of the source text are caused by intralingual translation (following R. Jakobson). In the famous "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation" R. Jakobson explains this type of translation (rewording) as an interpretation of verbal signs with other verbal signs of the same language (Jakobson, 1959). There are several ways of how intralingual translation can be explained (R. Jakobson, A.P. Miniar-Beloruicheva, Ye.S. Petrova and others). It is highly important that this translation can be further classified into two major types – diachronic and synchronic. A classic example of diachronic intralingual translation is the texts created in forms of pre-contemporary languages and then translated into the modern ones. Thus, "Beowulf" (an Old-English epic) and "The Canterbury Tales" (a Middle-English text) have been translated into the contemporary English language. In the Russian culture, there is also "The Lay of Igor's Warfare" with its modern variant in this language. The main intention for this translation strategy to be applied is to make a relevant text of the "original" culture more available for the current culture. The archaic language forms significantly occlude

comprehension of the original aesthetic information.

Secondary texts may also have other (non-language) semiotic forms – theater performance, film adaptation, comics, songs, opera, ballet or graphics – which can be defined as intersemiotic translation (R. Jakobson) as well. The cases of intersemiotic translation are clearly illustrated through music compositions themed on the primary literary texts. Thus, "Carmen" (1845), a novel by French writer Prosper Merimee has become the main scenario for the same-named opera by Georges Bizet in 1875 and also the one-act ballet "Carmen-Suite" (1967) based on the music text of Bizet's work and orchestrated by Rodion Shchedrin. As so, the novel's text has undergone a chain of semiotic translations. Another striking example of intersemiotic translation is secondary non-language texts of the "Notre Dame de Paris" (1831), a historical novel by Victor Hugo. Upon the intersemiotic translation the text has appeared as a number of screen adaptations under different titles ("Esmeralda" in 1905 and 1922; "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" in 1911, 1923, 1939, 1966, 1977, 1982, 1986 and 1997; "Quasimodo" in 1999; "Notre Dame Cathedral" in 1956 and "The Hunchback of Notre Dame Cathedral" in 1939). "Esmeralda" – an opera by A.S. Dargomyzhsky – was created between 1938 and 1941 and performed in the Bolshoi Theatre in 1847. In 1996, the Disney Studio also released "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" as an animated musical cartoon. Then, in France, in 1998, there was a musical "Notre Dame de Paris", and in 2002, Ju. Kim translated and adapted its text into Russian, so the musical was also successfully premiered in Moscow. In some unique cases the intersemiotic translation can be conducted by the original author (some sort of "self-translation") especially if the author can feel synesthesia (co-perception). In this sense, Mikalojus Čiurlionis (1875–1911), a Lithuanian painter and composer,

in his arts activities made interesting attempt to synthesize different arts and seek for any equivalence between music and painting. The most prominent are such works as "Sonata of the Sun. Scherzo", "Sonata of the Spring. Andante" and "Sonata of the Stars. Allegro" introduced through painted and musical texts and perceived in audio and visual environments together.

Translation multiplicity as an original text "reincarnation"

The phenomenon of polyvariety (multiplicity) of the literary text is quite often combined with an allied polylinguality which, in turn, can mean a possible existence of several foreign variants of the source literary text that is mainly caused by the interlingual translation. It is worth noting that a maximum number of possible translations can be determined not only by the current amount of languages (possible target languages). Potentially, the number of foreign interpretations of the source text can be equal to the number of potential translators of the original text-stimulus. Obviously enough, the number of translated variants can also increase through the production of several synchronic and diachronic intralingual translations of one and the same text-stimulus. Sometimes the intersemiotic polyvariety of the source literary text goes together with its polylinguality. Such examples can be found in foreign-language dubbing of a film based on the source literary work.

Numerous translations of the literary text belonging to any particular culture into one or more languages generated by the original's inexhaustibility cause the phenomenon of translation multiplicity which has quite recently been investigated in some studies addressing the problems of literary translation. This notion was introduced into the scientific framework by A.F. Fedorov (1982) and Ye.V. Shor [1989] and further detailed in the works related to

the reasons and conditions of translations' emergence and existence (Ortega y Gasset, 1991; Chaikovky, 1997). Those, who address the problem of multiplicity in translation note that this phenomenon is grounded in a complex information nature of the literary source, different conceptions and selected translation strategies, in inevitable obsolescence of previously translated versions and also in such extra-linguistic factors as market requirements and publishing developments (Sherstneva, 2009).

Contrary to polylinguality which suggests possible occurrence of secondary (translated) versions of the source text (literary or not), translation multiplicity considers establishing a set of text-translations with the means of one or many language systems. The category of translation multiplicity is quite a new category in translation studies which has been mainly identified for the literary translation. Comparative literature studies as well as translation studies represent different views on the nature of translation multiplicity. Thus, Yu.D. Levin, a translation and literature analyst, suggests his own understanding of this phenomenon as a form of literature's life (Levin, 1982) and, if within a culture, defines it as "a possible existence of numerous translations of one foreign literary work which, as a rule, originally has only one version" (Levin, 1992: 213).

R.R. Chaikovsky and his followers have also significantly contributed to the theory of translation multiplicity. Thus, arguing with Yu.D. Levin, R.R. Chaikovsky rejects the variety of possible translations of the "foreign" literary text in "this national culture" and propose considering translation multiplicity in the context of translated literature as some sort of "third literature" intermediating between the foreign and target literature (Chaikovsky, 1997: 9-10). A deep insight into the phenomenon of translation multiplicity allows R.R. Chaikovsky and his

followers to conclude that every original literary text has an in-built capacity to be translated: "... the original text brings a certain energy field which may generate translation" (Chaikovsky, Lysenkova, 2001: 186). In some literary works this field appears so much powerful that can preserve its energy within decades or even centuries.

The possibility of literary texts to be translated reasoned by the information ambiguity and believed of potential multiplicity, probably ensures polytextuality (a variety of foreign incarnations) of any literary work. Following R.R. Chaikovsky, the original literary text produces its translation, but the polytextuality index varies depending on different factors: linguistic, cultural, translational, historical, political or economic – both objective and subjective. As the main reasons for the translational multiplicity there are: original information ambiguity peculiar to the literary text and resulting in an increased potential translation multiplicity given the flexibility of possible translation interpretations of the entire and invariable source text; translator's creative individuality based on the competition principle, driven by their desire to introduce the best translation that would leave behind all the previous versions; and frequently need to create new translations on the back of the previous ones due to their incompatibility with the cultural, literature and linguistic traditions of the target language.

Dostoyevsky's creative legacy "destiny" in other cultures

The works, belonging to F.M. Dostoyevsky's literary heritage, are conventionally considered as "strong" texts of the Russian culture and, consequently, as a constant focus for the literary translation. Specialists in the problem of the Russian literature reception in the world's literary and cultural space agree that in the 20th

and 21st centuries Dostoyevsky has been the most recognizable and readable Russian writer, and his prose is more popular abroad than L.N. Tolstoy or A.S. Pushkin. It is Dostoyevsky's works – original or translated – have influenced and are still influencing greatly the whole world's literature (Motyleva, 1961; Fridlender, 1985; Kay, 1992). The original and translated versions of his texts form wide centres of translation attraction involving full-text, shortened and fragmentary, as well as adapted translations into the world's languages, or, even broader, – his texts translated with the means of other semiotic systems.

According to the UNESCO Translation Index, the most translated text is "Crime and Punishment", a socio-psychological novel, which dominates in his famous "Pentateuch" and reveals the eternal question of "good vs. evil". In the following two or three decades after this book had been published, the novel was translated into most European languages (French, German, Italian, Czech, Polish, Serbian, Bulgarian, etc.).

The year of 2016 was marked by the 150th anniversary of the novel. The celebration held a number of events among which a great importance was given to the XVI Symposium of the International Dostoyevsky Society, at the University of Granada, where this novel was considered in the context of all Dostoyevsky's works and of the entire world's culture and literature. As Ante Marković, a translator of Dostoyevsky's works into modern French, points out, by the beginning of the 21st century, Dostoyevsky has become the most well-known foreign writer in France, and that remarkable

amount of translations still keeps increasing (Marković, 1996). For the period, regarded by Marković (the late 20th and early 21st centuries), there were nine Japanese translations (Nakamura, 1999). The first Chinese fragmentary re-translation of this novel was made.

In 1922, also for the first time this novel was fragmentarily re-translated from the English version into Chinese; this translation then was followed by Han Shighan in 1930, Geng Jingzhi in 1937 and Wei Sunyu in 1956. At this point we know about thirteen full-text Chinese translations of "Crime and Punishment" (Chen, 2013). The bibliography and historiography of the novel's translations into each particular language together with the features of its reception in the target languages are likely to become an up-top topic for the researches providing detailed information on how this translation attraction's centre with the "strong" original attractor – "Crime and Punishment" – is organized.

Conclusion

The translation historiography of the Russian literature's "strong" texts into foreign languages and into artistic semiotics, alongside with the features of their perception in various cultures demonstrate the original's "strength" and the degrees and forms of its comprehension. The centres of translation attraction caused by translation represent interesting cases for the theorists of literature, culture and translation. All these may well support an integrative approach to the analysis of "strong" texts as bright phenomena of the Russian and world's cultures and literature.

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«Сильные» тексты русской литературы в переводах: культурное и языковое осмысление

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Настоящая работа посвящена вопросам существования «сильных» художественных текстов русской литературы и культуры в пространствах культур и языков переводов. Особое внимание уделяется категориям неоднозначности эстетической информации, неисчерпаемости оригинала и переводной множественности. Исследуемые вопросы рассматриваются на материале иноязычных переводов текстов Ф.М. Достоевского.

Ключевые слова: «сильный» текст, художественный перевод, культурное освоение, центр переводной аттракции.

Научная специальность: 10.00.00 – филологические науки, переводоведение, 24.00.00 – культурология.
