

## EQUIVALENCE IN TRANSLATING FROM RUSSIAN INTO ENGLISH

By Viktor Slepovitch

Equivalence in translation has been a central, albeit a very controversial, issue of research in the field of translation theory employing various approaches. Those approaches can be grouped along a line between a linguistic approach and the functionally oriented one, in which translation equivalence is considered to be a transfer of the message from the source language/culture to the target language/culture (Leonardi 2000).

The theoretical basis of this paper is that of Nida's theory of functional equivalence, according to which there may be no absolute correspondence, but the closest equivalence is quite important to find (Nida 1964). This theory finds its masterful development in Umberto Eco's discussion of practical aspects of translation in his book *Experiences in Translation* (Eco 2001). But a theory, according to Jean-Paul Vinay, being "valuable in itself, must be put within the reach of practitioners and even actualized especially for them" (Vinay 2008, 161). And this is what translator trainers are supposed to implement in their teaching practices.

The purpose of this paper is to draw the attention of practicing translators/interpreters to a very important issue of forming students' translation competence and skills by means of focusing on special difficulties in achieving grammatical equivalence of their translations from Russian into English (based on adjectives and adverbs). This has been my interest in research since the late 1990s due to a very productive combination of translation/interpretation experience I gained in assisting the IMF and World Bank missions in Belarus and teaching students of international business at the Belarus State Economic University (Minsk, Belarus). This experience has been applied in publishing a number of translation text-books that have proved to be functional and in demand both in the country and beyond (Слепович 2009, 2013, 2014).

One of the differences between Russian and the English adjectives and adverbs has to do with the mere fact that the English vocabulary is about four

times as rich as the Russian one. This leads to a greater abundance of polysemantic adjectives and adverbs in Russian in comparison with English, thus leading to the problem of *choosing* the proper equivalent depending on the situation and frequency of its usage, e.g.:

adjectives: *обязательный* (к исполнению) – *obligatory, mandatory* vs. *обязательный* (человек) – *compulsive* (person);

adverbs: *тяжело* (трудно) сделать – it's *hard* (difficult) to do vs. *тяжело* (по весу) нести – it's *heavy* to carry.

A common error in translating Russian adjectives into English is caused by the translator's lack of understanding of the shades of the words' meanings and the nature of paronyms, e.g.: *исторический* (период, место, факт) – *historic* (period, place vs. *исторический* (музей, общество) – *historical* (museum, society); *экономический* (рост, университет, политика) – *economic* (growth, university, policy) vs. *экономичный* (двигатель) – *economical* (engine), *экономный* (покупатель) – *economical, thrifty, frugal* (buyer).

Another difficulty in translating Russian adjectives into English is accounted for by the so-called attributive groups (N + N) that are common for the English language, e.g.: *городской совет* – *city council*.

In the context of the above example, it should be noted that, until recently, in the Russian language nouns have not been used as attributes, but this is what we are currently witnessing under the influence of English: *море продукты* – *sea food*, *бизнес-план* – *business plan*, and so on.

Quite typical for inexperienced translators is *carbon paper* (word-for-word) translation of the Russian adjectives and adverbs into English, which does not contribute to achieving grammatical equivalence in translation, e.g.: *актуальная проблема* – *actual* → *relevant* (burning, urgent, topical) problem; *библиотечный фонд университета* – the university's *librarian fund* → the amount of books.

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A special case to be considered is that of the Russian word's heterogeneous semantic content, e.g.: *трудоёмкий (процесс)* – labor-consuming / time-consuming (process) vs. *научоёмкое (производство)* – science-intensive (production); *эффективный* – effective (communication), i.e. producing a positive effect vs. *efficient* (production), i.e. involving certain time and costs).

In addition to the above, the following differences in the use of Russian and English adjectives and adverbs must be brought to students' attention:

\* Coincidence of some adjective and adverb forms in English (which is not the case in Russian), e.g.: *быстрый* (adj.), *быстро* (adv.) – fast.

\* Availability of more than one English equivalent of the Russian adjectives or adverbs, e.g.: *высокий* (adj.) – tall (ship), high (tower).

\* Cases of translating the Russian adverbs into English *only* with adjectives, e.g.: Она выглядит *хорошо* – She looks good.

\* The use of both the English adjectives and Participles II in translating one and the same Russian adverb, e.g.: *Здесь скучно* – It's boring here vs. *Мне скучно* – I'm bored.

\* The use of different English adverbs depending on whether they are followed by countable or uncountable nouns, e.g.: *меньше (друзей, времени)* – fewer (friends) vs. less (time).

\* Linguistic-cultural impacts on translation practice, e.g.: *в два раза меньше (дом, книг, воды)* – half as large (his house is half as large as mine); half as many (books); half as much (water).

### Conclusion

Expertise in achieving equivalence in translation from Russian into English requires translators' awareness of the differences between the two languages' systems. This also proves that "languages are differently equipped to express real-world relations" (Ivir 1981, 56), which inevitably shows in the translation.

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