

TEACHING RUSSIAN THROUGH TRANSLATIONS

UČENJE RUSKOG JEZIKA KROZ PRIJEVODE

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the use of translation in the linguistic course. I suggest that by reading, analyzing and discussing translations students can improve their knowledge of Russian, learn about the functions of the language and understand how social relations of power are exercised and negotiated in and through discourses. Ideologically adapted translations were chosen for the practical step of the activity to raise the students' interest and to avoid mechanical word-for-word translation which is time-consuming and not so motivating. The chapter outlines the course in which the students are offered examples of ideologically adapted translations for analysis. The students were asked to identify lexical transformations and to use the dictionaries if necessary. In the second step of the activity the students shared their ideas with the teacher. After that the students translated those examples which were entirely adapted, bringing them closer to the original.

Unfortunately, translation has been considered useless and banned from the language classroom for quite a while. According to Radmila Popovic, it has been a "frequent object of ridicule by those eager to demonstrate their uncompromising allegiance to modern ways" /1/. In applied linguistics "very little attention has been given to the role of translation as either a means or an end of learning English" /2/. Many teachers, proponents for English only, are still uneasy about using or permitting the use of students' native language in the classroom /3/. Students are nonetheless dependant on their native language and in Widdowson's words even though "teachers try to keep the two languages separate, the learners in their own minds keep the two in contact" /4/. The question is whether students may prohibit from working with translations and if yes, how such an activity should be structured to avoid mechanical word-for-word translation which

Sažetak

Rad se usredotočuje na korištenje prijevoda na jezičnim kolegijima. Sugeriram da čitanjem, analizirajući i raspravljajući o prijevodu studenti mogu poboljšati svoje znanje o ruskom, učiti o funkcijama jezika i razumjeti kako se socijalni odnosi moći ostvaruju i vježbaju kroz diskurs. Ideološki prilagođeni prijevodi su izabrani za praktičnu aktivnost podizanja interesa studenata i izbjegavanje mehaničkog prijevoda riječ-za-riječ koji je dugotrajan i nije tako motivirajuć. Rad ocrta u kojem su studentima ponuđeni primjeri ideološki prilagođenih prijevoda za analizu. Studenti su zamoljeni da identificiraju leksičke transformacije i ako je to potrebno da koriste rječnike. U drugom koraku aktivnosti učenici dijele svoje ideje s nastavnikom. Nakon toga studenti su preveli one primjere koji su u potpunosti prilagođeni, stavljajući ih što bliže originalu.

is time-consuming and not so motivating. The aim of this paper is to draw attention to a possibility of including translation in linguistic courses. Thus, the paper focuses on my experience of offering ideologically based analysis of literary translations as a didactic instrument while working with the students of the Russian language at the School of Modern Languages and Cultures at the University of Glasgow. The purpose of using ideologically adapted translation in the language course was not to train professionals but to help learners develop their knowledge of Russian. By discovering, translating and analyzing ideologically adapted elements, I integrated vocabulary and writing practice. The students also learned about the processes which define translators' choices and about the importance of translators as intercultural and inter-ideological communication mediators. As I worked with the students with a good working knowledge of Russian, I found it necessary

to raise the interest level by using culturally adapted translations, concentrating on the ideological influence. The choice of ideologically marked translations seems logical, as all language use in Critical Discourse Analysis's view should be interpreted under the influence of different ideologies. Language represents a system of linguistic terms, which themselves realize discursive and ideological systems. As for texts in particular, they are selected and organized syntactic forms whose content-structure reflects the ideological organization of a particular area of social life. Leading authorities, such as politicians, courts, government and editors play a crucial role in shaping issues and in setting the boundaries of legitimate discourse /5/. CDA focuses on how social relations, identity, knowledge, and power are constructed through written and spoken texts in communities, schools, the media, and the political arena /6/. Thus, translation as an operation carried out on language use, is always a site for ideological encounters. Another reason is that translation functions not merely as a carrier of messages but also as a carrier of culture and culturally important components. Though learning language undoubtedly means acquiring adequate linguistic knowledge, cultural knowledge is no less important. This process automatically includes the importance of ideology as a crucial part of any culture. According to Fawcett, with the spread of deconstruction and cultural studies in the academy, the subject of ideology, and more specifically the ideology of power relations, became an important area of study, and claims about ideology proliferate in many fields, though they are not always well substantiated /7/. Students often experience major difficulties when encountering culture-bound elements and "get lost" if they are required to demonstrate a considerable level of cultural background relating to the target language. Though students often believe that they may decode the culturally-loaded content with a good dictionary, it is not that simple. As the students did not encounter the issue of ideological influence before, I decided to offer them explicit and clear examples of a strong ideological influence on literary translations which were not so difficult to decipher. The students were

explained that when we speak about ideology in literature or in literary translations, we think about the different moral, social and political concepts which an author or a translator consciously or subconsciously interlaces in his/her work and in this way models the readers' views, presumptions, expectations, etc. The degree of ideological influence depends on the historical place and extension of an ideology as well as on the role it is permitted to have within a literary work /8/. For the practical part of the activity, I chose Samuil Marshak's translations of Robert Burns which suffered from severe ideologically influenced transformations. Close reading reveals that Marshak took many liberties working with Burns, including numerous substitutions and changes of words or transposition of whole lines. Marshak's translations perfectly exemplify how dominant ideology is compromised in literary translation. Analysis of ideological dimensions at a micro-stylistic level shows that they were influenced both by lexical (deliberate selection or avoidance of certain words) and grammar (substituting defining generic nouns for less specific pronouns, avoidance of agency by using passive structures, etc.) choices. The activity was practically constructed. In the first step I asked the students to read the originals and the Russian translations carefully and to identify major lexical changes. Students could work in pairs and were explained that they would be uncovering potentially hidden meanings, deciphering linguistic structures, 'reading between the lines' and unveiling the subliminal. Naturally the term "uncover" which suggested a form of a play with the text, while uncovering something "hidden", attracted students' attention. The students were also encouraged to use dictionaries to translate unknown words. This part of the activity promoted guessing strategies amongst students and encouraged them to work towards transferring meaning. In the second step we analyzed the students' observations, suggesting which ideological constraints may have motivated translator's choice. I explained the students that our suggestions were subjective, as we could only assume what a translator had in mind. Students discovered several important ideological constraints, while working with

vocabulary. For instance, the first ideologically based decision the students noticed was an omission of mentioning Scotland in Russian translations. The students underlined the names of Scottish cities, rivers, places, names in the originals and quickly figured out that they were missing in the translations. The same was true for personal names. The students also noticed omission of nouns "king" and "queen" and a verb "to pray" as well as any other allusion to the Bible. When I asked them to think about possible explanation, the students responded that as monarchy was strongly criticized in the soviet discourse, it was probably not appropriate to mention the main enemy, the king. The same was true for religion. Students found it amusing that Marshak almost completely erased erotic context, as they noticed that verbs "to kiss" and "to hug" as well as the nouns "darling" and "my love" were deleted or substituted in Russian translations. In several cases students figured out that the translation differed significantly from the original. We translated these adapted lines together, bringing them closer to the original, while the students were encouraged to help each other to choose a more precise lexical item. In the final stage of the activity we discussed the results. Students reported that they found the method beneficial. They enjoyed the atmosphere of support and student centered learning. Ideologically favourable constraints could only be identified in a process of close reading, which required that the students read the examples carefully and used dictionaries to translate unknown words. They were motivated to work with vocabulary and to think about how a certain noun or a verb functioned in the context. This strategy allowed students to expand their vocabulary. The activity also involved a high degree of involvement on the part of the students who were encouraged to be creative and to share their ideas. The students also had an opportunity to learn how language works in practice and how it can be manipulated. Students

worked independently of the teacher, as the method allowed them interpretative freedom. There were practically no "wrong" answers. The only requirement was to understand the meaning of the words. The students expressed interest in continuing a discussion about ideological influence on literary translation.

Notes

- /1/ Popovic, R. The Place of Translation in Language Teaching, Bridges, Issue 5, 2001, pp. 3-8.
- /2/ Cook, G. A thing of the future: translating in language learning, International journal of applied linguistics, Vol. 17, 2007, Issue 3, pp. 396-401
- /3/ Attkinson, D. The mother tongue in the classroom: a neglected resource?, ELT Journal Vol. 41, 1987, Issue 4, pp. 241-247
- /4/ Widdowson, H.G. Defining issues in English language teaching. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- /5/ Henry, F and Tator, C. Discourses of Domination. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002
- /6/ Popovic, R. The Place of Translation in Language Teaching, Bridges, Issue 5, 2001, pp. 3-8.
- /7/ Fawcett, P. Ideology and Translation. In Baker, M. (Ed.), Routledge Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies, pp. 106-111. London: Routledge, 1998.
- /8/ Kaloh Vid, N. Ideological translations of Robert Burns's poetry in Russia and in the Soviet Union. Maribor: Filozofska fakulteta, 2011.

Appendix:

Translation activity

Aim: Raising linguistic awareness/learning new vocabulary

Step 1: Ask the students to read the originals and the translations closely and to identify major lexical changes which occurred in the translations. Encourage them to use dictionary if necessary.

Step 2: The students share their ideas with the teacher and the rest of the group.

Step 3: The students translate those lines which are entirely changed in small groups and try to agree on the best version.

| Robert Burns's original | Samuil Marshak's translation |
|--|---|
| Farewell, ye dungeons dark and strong. / The wretch's destinie! (<i>MacPherson's Farewell: 1-2</i>) | Привет вам, тюрьмы короля, где жизнь влачат рабы. |
| O what is death but parting breath? (9) | В полях войны среди мечей, встречал я смерть не раз. |
| I've liv'd a life of sturt and strife (17). | Я жизнь свою провел в бою. |
| A prince can mak a belted knight, / A marquis, duke, an' a' that! (<i>A Man's a Man for a' That: 25-26</i>). | Король лакея своего назначил генералом. |
| The honest man, tho e'er sae poor, / Is king o' men for a' that (15-16). | Кто честным кормится трудом, того зову я знатью. |
| Then let us pray that come it may (33). | Настанет день и час пробьет. |
| And for your lawful King his crown, / Bonie, Highland laddie. (23) | Чсть свою добудь в бою, славный парень. |
| For lack o thee, I leave this much-lov'd shore, / Never, perhaps, to greet old Scotland more! (<i>Lines written on a Bank-note: 11-12</i>) | А без тебя нуждой гоним, я покидаю край родной. |
| That I for poor auld Scotland's sake / Some useful play or book could make. (<i>To the Guidwife of Wauchope House: 18-19</i>) | Одной мечтой с тех пор я жил, служить стране по мере сил. |
| Farewell to the Highlands, farewell to the North (<i>My Heart's in the Highlands: 5</i>) | Прощай моя родина, север прощай! |
| Drucken or sober, here's to thee, Katie, / An blest be the day I did it again! (<i>Kissin my Kattie: 15-16</i>) | Что милей человеку на свете, чем свобода, покой и любовь? |
| And make my bed in the collier's neuk, / And lie down wi' my collier laddie. (<i>My Collier Laddie: 24-25</i>) | Я заберусь в свой уголок, мой угольщик со мною. |
| Cast off the wat, put on the dry, / And gae to bed, my Dearie. (<i>The Ploughman: 11-12</i>) | Переоденься, милый мой, и ужинать пожалуй |
| <p>It warms me, it charms me</p> <p>To mention but her name</p> <p>It heats me, it beats me</p> <p>An sets me a' on flame!</p> <p>(<i>Epistle to Davie, a Brother Poet: 109-112</i>)</p> | <p>Довольно невольню мне вспомнить имя Джин.</p> <p>Тепло мне, светло мне.</p> <p>И я уж не один.</p> |
| Or were I monarch o the globe, / Wi thee to reign, wi thee to reign, / The brightest jewel in my crown / Wad be my queen, wad be my queen. (O, Wert Thou in the Cauld Blast: 13-16) | И если бы дали мне в удел, Весь шар земной, весь шар земной. С каим бы счастьем я владел, Тобой одной, тобой одной. |