

GRAMMATICAL EQUIVALENCE IN TRANSLATING RUSSIAN ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS INTO ENGLISH

VIKTOR SLEPOVITCH

*School of International Economic Relations
Belarus State Economic University
Belarus
vslepovitch@gmail.com*

Grammatical equivalence in translation is both a subject of research and an important issue of teaching. Grammatical choices are especially hard in the process of translating from one's mother tongue into a foreign language. This paper discusses some of the specifics of achieving grammatical equivalence in translating adjectives and adverbs from Russian (native source language) into English (foreign target language) based on the author's translating and teaching experience reflected in his publications in this field of studies.

Equivalence in translation has been a central, albeit very controversial issue of research in the field of translation theory (Vinay, Dalbarnet 1958; Jacobson 1959; Catford 1965; Nida 1964; Nida, Taber 1969; House 1977; Baker 1992). Translation theories, which studied equivalence in translation, employed different approaches. These studies can be grouped along the 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 Eugene 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* (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' (2008, 161). And this is what translator trainers and teachers of translation at universities are supposed to implement in their teaching practices.

Grammatical equivalence in translation being the focus of this research, it is noteworthy to refer to Mona Baker, who points out that grammar rules may vary across languages, which results in certain problems of finding a direct correspondence in the target language, with a possibility of changes in the way the message is transferred by means of adding or omitting information in the translation text (Baker 1992, 82–117).

The purpose of this paper is to draw the attention of practicing translators / interpreters and teachers of translation to the 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 research interest since the late 1990s, due to a very productive combination of translation / interpretation practices in my assisting the IMF and World Bank missions in Belarus and teaching experience to students of international business at the Belarus State Economic University's School of International Economic Relations. This combined experience of a practicing translator and a translation teacher has been applied in publishing a number of translation textbooks that have proven to be functional and in demand both in the country and beyond (Slepovitch 2004; *idem* 2005; *idem* 2009).

The focus of attention for students in the process of teaching translation for business and economics is made on the differences in grammatical choices which are drawn from a closed set of options and thus are obligatory, ruling out other choices from the same system (Baker 1992, 84). Given the above, with regard to translating Russian adjectives and adverbs into English, students need to keep in mind the major differences between and also the peculiar characteristics pertaining to the two languages' systems. These differences are well known to experienced translators, who possess the practical knowledge of what is called the 'art' of translation. Not to beginners or students, though (Vinay 2008, 161).

One of the differences between Russian and English adjectives and adverbs relates to 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 the Russian language in comparison with those in English, thus leading to the problem of *choosing* the proper word (equivalent) depending on the situation and frequency of its usage, e.g.:

- (1) adjectives: *обязательный* (к исполнению) – obligatory, mandatory
vs.
обязательный (человек) – compulsive (person);
- (2) adverbs: *тяжело* (*трудно*) сделать – it's hard (difficult) to do
vs.
тяжело (по весу) нести – it's heavy to carry.

The above notion of polysemy in translator training is of special interest to scholars and researchers in this field of studies. It was given an emphasis, for instance, in Leona Van Vaerenberg's paper (Vaerenberg 2009).

A common error in translating Russian adjectives into English is caused by the students' lack of understanding in the shades of the words' meanings and the nature of paronyms, e.g.:

(3) *исторический* (период, место, факт) – historic (period, place, fact)

vs.

исторический (музей, общество) – historical (museum, society);

(4) *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.:

(5) *городской совет* – city council,

студенческая конференция – student conference.

In the context of example (5), it should be noted that until recently, in the Russian language nouns have not been used as attributes, but this is what is currently being witnessed 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 Russian adjectives and adverbs into English (in this case, it can also be referred to as a translator's *faux-amis* = *false friends*), which does not contribute to achieving grammatical equivalence in translation, e.g.:

(6) *актуальная проблема* – actual à relevant (burning, urgent, topical) problem,

библиотечный фонд университета – the university's librarian fund à the amount of books.

A special case to be considered in the process of translator training aimed at achieving grammatical equivalence in translating Russian adjectives and adverbs into English is that of the Russian word's heterogeneous semantic content, e.g.:

(7) *трудоемкий* (процесс) – labour-consuming / time-consuming (process)

vs.

научоёмкое (производство) – science-intensive (production),

эффективный – effective (communication), i.e. producing a positive effect

vs.

эффективный (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, which often cause translation errors, draw the students' attention to a system of translator training exercises, including those covering the translation of word-combinations, sentences, short (one-paragraph) texts, and articles. They are also used in translation editing exercises designed by the author of this paper and aimed at raising the students' translation competences (Slepovitch 2004; *idem* 2009):

Coincidence of some adjective and adverb forms in English (which is not the case in Russian), e.g.:

- (8) *быстрый* (adj.), *быстро* (adv.) – fast,
прямой (adj.), *прямо* (adv.) – straight,

etc.

Availability of more than one English equivalent of the Russian adjectives or adverbs, e.g.:

- (9) *высокий* (adj.) – tall (ship), high (tower),
высоко (adv.) – high (up in the sky), highly (somebody / something is highly valued).

Cases of translating Russian adverbs into English *only* with adjectives: after *it is* and *verbs of sense perception* ('look', 'feel', 'sound', 'taste', and 'smell') as in examples (10) and (11), respectively, e.g.:

- (10) *Сегодня жарко.* (adv.) – It's hot today. (adj.)
Уже темно. (adv.) – It's already dark. (adj.)

Elliptical forms are also included here:

- (11) *Очень жаль.* (adv.) – Too bad. (adj.) [= It's too bad.]
Она выглядит хорошо. (adv.) – She looks good. (adj.)
После массажа хорошо себя чувствуешь. (adv.) – It feels good after massage. (adj.)

The use of both the English adjectives and Participles II in translating the one and the same Russian adverb, e.g.:

- (12) *Здесь скучно.* (adv.) – It's boring here. (adj.)
vs.
Мне скучно (adv.) – I'm bored. (P. II)

The use of different English adverbs depending on whether they are followed by countable or uncountable nouns, e.g.:

- (12) *мало* (друзей, времени) – few (friends) *vs.* little (time),
меньше (друзей, времени) – fewer (friends) *vs.* less (time),
в меньшей степени – to a lesser extent.

The homonymy of the Russian comparatives leading to the usage of different English equivalents, e.g.:

- (14) *больше < большой, много* → larger, more
Его дом больше моего. – His house is larger than mine.
vs.
У него больше возможностей. – He has more opportunities.

A lingual-cultural impact on the translation practice, e.g.:

- (15) *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). [The form *twice as small* (*few, little*) is wrong.]

The translation of the Russian comparatives into English has got a few specifics that are worth mentioning in this article. With regard to the Russian comparative adjective 'меньший', the following ones are of grammatical interest: *littler* (colloquial), *lesser* (to a lesser extent), *younger* (brother).

The same Russian adjectives and adverbs have got different English equivalents depending on the British (BE) or American (AE) variety of the English language, e.g.:

- (16) *старший* (сын) – elder (BE), older (AE) (son),
действительно (хороший) – really (BE), real (AE) (good).

The Russian substantives can be translated into English either by means of adjectives or adverbs, e.g.:

- (17) *бедные* – the poor, *будущее* – the future
vs.
столовая – a canteen, *рабочий* – a worker.

A special difficulty is that of translating the Russian *compound adjectives* into English. The following ways of their translation into English have been identified, which are used in the teaching process (Slepovitch 2005, 116–118):

- (18) Noun: *солнцезащитные* (очки) – sun (glasses).
Adverb + Participle II: *широкоизвестный* – widely known.

Adjective: *денежно-кредитная (политика)* – monetary (policy).
Adjective + and + Adjective: *черно-белый* – black-and-white.
Adjective + Adjective: *темно-лиловый* – deep purple.
Noun + Adjective: *водонепроницаемый* – water resistant.
Noun + Noun: *противоударный* – shock proof.
Noun + Participle I: *энергоёмкий* – energy consuming.
Numeral + Noun: *двухнедельный (отпуск)* – (a) two-week (vacation).
Compound adjective: *электродвижущий* – electromotive.
Adjective + Noun: *краткосрочный* – short-term.
Preposition + Participle II: *вышеупомянутый* – the above mentioned.
Adverb + Adjective: *полнодоступный* – fully accessible.

The above specificities of translating Russian adjectives and adverbs into English based on their structural and semantic differences in the two languages have been systematized in the translation course curriculum and implemented in the process of teaching by the faculty members of the Department of Business English at the Belarus State Economic University School of International Economic Relations.

CONCLUSIONS

Expertise in achieving grammatical equivalence in translation in general, and that in translating Russian adjectives and adverbs into English in particular, requires a systemic approach aimed at university students' being aware of and keeping in mind the differences between the structures and systems of the two languages. This means that grammatical equivalence in translating Russian adjectives and adverbs into English can only be achieved through the employment of translation algorithms specific for the two languages in question that were considered in the paper. This also proves that 'languages are differently equipped to express real-world relations' (Ivir 1981, 56), which is inevitably found in the translation's grammatical equivalence.

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GRAMATINIS EKVIVALENTIŠKUMAS VERČIANT RUSŲ KALBOS BŪDVARDŽIUS IR PRIEVEIKSMIUS Į ANGLŲ KALBĄ

VIKTOR SLEPOVITCH

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