



O'ZBEKISTON RESPUBLIKASI OLIY VA O'RTA  
MAXSUS TA'LIM VAZIRLIGI



SAMARQAND DAVLAT CHET TILLAR INSTITUTI

# MUSTAQIL ISH

MAVZU: Types of Equivalents of Komissares

Bajardi: Zukurov U  
Tekshirdi: Tabbarxodov D

## TYPES OF EQUIVALENTS OF KOMISSAROV

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#### 1. Theory of equivalence of Komissarov.

The structural similarity of ST and TT implies that relationships of equivalence are established between correlated units in the two texts. TL units in TT that are used to render the meaning of the respective SL units in ST can be said to substitute for the latter as their functional equivalents (or correspondences). Since language units are often used in their accepted meanings many SL units have regular equivalents in TL which are used in numerous TT as substitutes to those units.

Some of the SL units have permanent equivalents in TL, that is to say, there is a one-to-one correspondence between such units and their equivalents. Thus "London" is always rendered into Russian as «Лондон», "a machine-gun" as «пулемет» and "hydrogen" as «водород». As a rule this type of correspondence is found with words of specific character, such as scientific and technical terms, proper or geographical names and similar words whose meaning is more or less independent of the particular contextual situation.

Other SL units may have several equivalents each. Such one-to-many correspondence between SL and TL units is characteristic of most regular equivalents. The existence of a number of non-permanent (or variable) equivalents to a SL units implies the necessity of selecting one of them in each particular case, taking into account the way the unit is used in ST and the points of difference between the semantics of its equivalents in TL.

Depending on the type of the language units involved regular equivalents can be classified as lexical, phraseological or grammatical.

Coordinated words in two languages may correspond to each other in one or several components of their semantic structures, while not fully identical in their semantics. The choice of the equivalent will depend on the relative importance of a particular semantic element in the act of communication. For instance, the English word "ambitious" may denote either praiseworthy or inordinate desires. Its translation will depend on which of these aspects comes to the fore. Thus "the ambitious plans of the would-be world conquerors" will be translated as «честолюбивые планы претендентов на роль завоевателей всего мира», while

"the ambitious goals set by the United Nations" will give «грандиозные цели, поставленные ООН» in the Russian translation.

A variety of equivalents may also result from a more detailed description of the same object in TL. The English word "attitude", for instance, is translated as «отношение, позиция, политика» depending on the variant the Russian language prefers in a particular situation. Here the choice between equivalents is determined by TL factors.

Even if a SL unit has a regular equivalent in TL, this equivalent cannot be used in TT whenever the unit is found in ST. An equivalent is but a potential substitute, for the translator's choice is, to a large extent, dependent on the context in which the SL unit is placed in ST. There are two types of context: linguistic and situational. The linguistic context is made up by the other SL units in ST while the situational context includes the temporal, special and other circumstances under which ST was produced as well as all facts which the receptor is expected to know so that he could adequately interpret the message.

It is only by assessing the meanings of SL units in ST against the linguistic and situational contexts that the translator can discover what they mean in the particular case and what equivalents should be chosen as their substitutes. Thus in the following sentences the linguistic context will enable the translator to make a correct choice among the Russian equivalents to the English noun "attitude":

- (1) *I don't like your attitude to your work.*
- (2) *There is no sign of any change in the attitudes of the two sides.*
- (3) *He stood there in a threatening attitude.*

It is obvious that in the first sentence it should be the Russian «отношение (к работе)», in the second sentence — «позиции (обейх сторон)», and in the third sentence - «поза (угрожающая)».

As often as not the correct substitute cannot be chosen unless the situational context is brought into play. If somebody is referred to in ST as "an abolitionist" the choice of the substitute will depend on the period described. In different historical periods abolitionists were people who sought the abolition of slavery, prohibition laws or death penalty.

Accordingly, in the Russian translation the person will be described as «аболиционист», «сторонник отмены «сухого закона», или «сторонник отмены смертной казни».

## 2. Types of equivalence according to Komissarov's theory.

The fact that a SL unit has a number of regular equivalents does not necessarily mean that one of them will be used in each particular translation. True, in many cases the translator's skill is well demonstrated in his ability to make a good choice among such equivalents. But not infrequently the context does not allow the translator to employ any of the regular equivalents to the given SL unit. Then the translator has to look for an ad hoc way of translation which will successfully render the meaning of the unit in this particular case. Such an exceptional translation of a SL unit which suits a particular context can be described as an occasional equivalent or a contextual substitute. It is clear, for instance, that none of the above-mentioned regular equivalents to the English "attitude" can be used in the translation of the following sentence:

He has a friendly attitude towards all.

An occasional equivalent may be found through a change of the part of speech: *Он ко всем относится по-дружески.*

The particular contextual situation may force the translator to give up even a permanent equivalent. Geographical names have such equivalents which are formed by imitation of the foreign name in TL. And the name of the American town of New Haven (Conn.) is invariably rendered into Russian as «Нью-Хейвен». But the sentence "I graduated from New Haven in 1915" will be hardly translated in the regular way since the Russian reader may not know that New Haven is famous for its Yale university. The translator will rather opt for the occasional equivalent: «Я окончил Йель-ский университет в 1915 году».

The regular equivalents are by no means mechanical substitutes and their use or replacement by occasional equivalents calls for a high level of the translator's skill and taste.

The same goes for phraseological equivalents. Phraseological units or idioms may also have permanent or variable equivalents. Such English idioms as "the game is not worth the candle" or "to pull chestnuts out of the fire for smb." are usually translated by the Russian idioms «игра не стоит свеч» and «таскать каштаны из огня для кого-л.», respectively. These equivalents reproduce all the aspects of the English idioms semantics and can be used in most contexts. Other permanent equivalents, though identical in their figurative meaning, are based on different images, that is, they have different literal meaning. Cf. "to get up on the wrong side of the bed" — «встать с левой ногой», "make hay while the sun shines" — «куй

железо, пока горячо». Now an English idiom may have several Russian equivalents among which the translator has to make his choice in each particular case. For instance, the meaning of the English "Do in Rome as the Romans do" may be rendered in some contexts as «С волками жить - по-волчьи выть», and in other contexts as «В чужой монастырь со своим уставом не ходят». But here, again, the translator may not infrequently prefer an occasional equivalent which can be formed by a word-for-word reproduction of the original unit: «В Риме поступай так, как римляне».

The choice of grammatical units in TT largely depends on the semantics and combinability of its lexical elements. Therefore there are practically no permanent grammatical equivalents. The variable equivalents in the field of grammar may be analogous forms in TL or different forms with a similar meaning. As often as not such equivalents are interchangeable and the translator has a free choice between them. In the following English sentence "He was a guest of honour at a reception given by the Soviet government" both the Russian participle «устроенном» and the attributive\* clause «который был устроен» can be substituted for the English participle "given". And the use of occasional equivalents is here more common than in the case of the lexical or phraseological units. We have seen that in the first three types of equivalence no equivalents to the grammatical units are deliberately selected in TL.

Semantic dissimilarity of analogous structures in SL and TL also result in SL structures having several equivalents in TL. For instance, attributive groups are common both in English and in Russian: "a green tree"—«зеленое дерево». But the semantic relationships between the numbers of the group are broader in English, which often precludes a blue-print translation of the group into Russian. As often as not the English attributive group is used to convey various adverbial ideas of location, purpose, cause, etc. Consider such groups as "Madrid trial" (location), "profits drive" (purpose), "war suffering" (cause). Such groups may also express various action-object relationships. Cf. "labour movement" (movement by the workers), "labour raids" (raids against the workers), and "labour spies" (spies among the workers).

A word within an attributive group may sometimes alter its meaning. So, "war rehabilitation" is, in fact, rehabilitation of economy after the war, that is, "post-war rehabilitation" and "Communist trials in USA" are "trials of Communists" or "anti-Communist trials".

As a result, many attributive groups are polysemantic and are translated in a different way in different contexts. "War prosperity" may mean "prosperity during the war" or "prosperity in the post-war period caused by the war". "The Berlin proposals" may imply "proposals made in Berlin" (say, at an international conference), "proposals made by Berlin" (i.e. by the GDR), "proposal on Berlin" (of political, economic or other nature).\*

No small number of SL units have no regular equivalents in TL. Equivalent-lacking words are often found among SL names of specific national phenomena, such as the English words "coroner, condominium, impeachment, baby-sitter" and the like. However, there are quite a number of "ordinary" words for which TL may have no equivalent lexical units: "fluid, bidder, qualifier, conservationist", etc. Some grammar forms and categories may also be equivalent-lacking. (Cf. the English gerund, article or absolute participle construction which have no counterparts in Russian.)

The absence of regular equivalents does not imply that the meaning of an equivalent-lacking SL unit cannot be rendered in translation or that its translation must be less accurate. We have seen that words with regular equivalents are not infrequently translated with the help of contextual substitutes. Similarly, the translator, coming across an equivalent-lacking word, resorts to occasional equivalents which can be created in one of the following ways:

1. Using loan-words imitating in TL the form of the SL word or word combination, e.g. tribalism — трайбализм, impeachment — импичмент, backbencher — заднескамеечник, brain-drain — утечка мозгов. As often as not such occasional formations are adopted by the members of the TL community and get the status of regular equivalents.

2. Using approximate substitutes, that is TL words with similar meaning which is extended to convey additional information (if necessary, with the help of foot-notes), e.g. drugstore — аптека, witchhunter — мракобес, afternoon — вечер. The Russian «аптека» is not exactly a drugstore where they also sell such items as magazines, soft drinks, ice-cream, etc., but in some cases this approximate equivalent can well be used.

3. Using all kinds of lexical (semantic) transformations (see Part I, Ch. 4) modifying the meaning of the SL word, e.g. "He died of exposure" may be rendered into Russian as «Он умер от простуды» or «Он погиб от солнечного удара».

4. Using an explanation to convey the meaning of the SL unit, e.g.

landslide-победа на выборах подавляющим большинством голосов, brinkmanship — искусство проведения политики на грани войны, etc.

This method is sometimes used in conjunction with the first one when the introduction of a loan-word is followed by a foot-note explaining the meaning of the equivalent-lacking word in ST. After that the translator may freely employ the newly-coined substitute.

There are also quite a number of equivalent-lacking idioms. Such English phraseological units as "You cannot eat your cake and have it", "to dine with Duke Humphrey", "to send smb. to Coventry" and many others have no regular equivalents in Russian. They are translated either by reproducing their form in TL through a word-for-word translation or by explaining the figurative meaning of the idiom, e.g.: People who live in glass should not throw stones. — Люди, живущие в стеклянных домах, не должны бросать камни; to see eye-to-eye with smb. - придерживаться одних взглядов.\*

Equivalent-lacking grammatical forms give less trouble to the translator. Here occasional substitutes can be classified under three main headings, namely:

1. Zero translations when the meaning of the grammatical unit is not rendered in the translation since it is practically identical to the meaning of some other unit and can be safely left out. In the sentence "By that time he had already left Britain" — К этому времени он уже уехал из Англии the idea of priority expressed by the Past Perfect Tense needn't be separately reproduced in TT as it is made superfluous by the presence of "by that time" and "already".

2. Approximate translations when the translator makes use of a TL form partially equivalent to the equivalent-lacking SL unit, e.g.: I saw him enter the room — Я видел, как он вошел в комнату. The Russian language has no complex objects of this type but the meaning of the object clause is a sufficient approximation.

3. Transformational translation when the translator resorts to one of the grammatical transformations (see Part I, Ch. 4), e.g.: Your presence at the meeting is not obligatory. Nor is it desirable — Ваше присутствие на собрании необязательно и даже нежелательно (the syntactical integration).

As has been emphasized, equivalents are not mechanical substitutes for SL units but they may come handy as a starting point in search of adequate translation. The translator will much profit if he knows many permanent equivalents, is good at selecting among variable equivalents and resourceful at creating occasional equivalents, taking into account all contextual factors.

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