

**DIFFICULTIES IN CONVEYING RUSSIAN HUMOR WHEN  
TRANSLATING INTO ENGLISH**

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**Annotation:** The issues of humor translation in works of fiction are always relevant due to cultural and historical features. This paper examines the difficulties that arise when translating a comic based on the work "Monday Begins on Saturday" by A. N. and B. N. Strugatsky, which is the novelty of the study. The purpose of the work is to examine the comic moments of the original text and their translation in order to identify the transformations applied and determine whether the comic effect has been preserved.

**Keywords:** comic, translation transformations, humor, culture, communicative effect

**Аннотация:** Вопросы перевода юмора в художественных произведениях всегда актуальны в связи с культурными и историческими особенностями. В данной работе рассматриваются трудности, которые возникают при переводе комического на основе произведения «Понедельник начинается в субботу» А. Н. и Б. Н. Стругацких, что составляет новизну исследования. Цель работы – рассмотреть комические моменты текста оригинала и их перевод для выявления примененных трансформаций и определения того, сохранен ли комический эффект.

**Ключевые слова:** комическое, переводческие трансформации, юмор, культура, коммуникативный эффект

**Annotatsiya:** Badiiy asarlarda hazilni tarjima qilish masalalari madaniy va tarixiy xususiyatlar bilan bog'liq holda doimo dolzarbdir. Ushbu asarda A. N. va B. N. Strugatskiyning "Dushanba shanba kuni boshlanadi" asari asosida komiksni tarjima qilishda yuzaga keladigan qiyinchiliklar ko'rib chiqiladi, bu tadqiqotning yangiligini tashkil etadi. Ishning maqsadi – qo'llanilgan o'zgarishlarni aniqlash va komik effekt saqlanib qolganligini aniqlash uchun asl matnning kulgili daqiqalarini va ularning tarjimasini ko'rib chiqish.

**Kalit so'zlar:** komik, tarjima o'zgarishlari, hazil, madaniyat, kommunikativ effect

**Introduction.** Humor is an integral part of human life. It is a universal of human existence and is present in absolutely any linguistic and cultural reality. However, until now, the comic as an aesthetic setting remains a "black box" not only for cognitive sciences, but also for translation studies.

The uniqueness of humor lies in the fact that it can be timeless and possess national and historical specifics that will be understandable only to native speakers. "It is well known that the comic is based on a discrepancy between the meaning of a sentence (literal meaning) and the meaning of an utterance (indirect meaning)".

Humor is "a reflection of the national mentality and the most pressing problems of modern life related to historical and cultural realities". Due to these features, it is difficult to translate the text into other languages and, as a result, to understand it by foreigners.

Russian humor is peculiar. A Russian-speaking person often resorts to using puns, jokes, comic allusions, "talking" surnames, jokes and wordplay in his speech. The problem of humor translation has been studied since the very beginning of the development of translation studies. While working on ways to convey humor, L. S. Barkhudarov considered that it is not enough to adequately convey only the meaning of the text, it is necessary to make sure that the reader understands it completely with all its humorous orientation. To achieve this, the translator needs to use various techniques, stylistic means, as well as translation transformations that are necessary to achieve translation equivalence.

**The methodology** of this study is to identify the difficulties of translating humor from Russian into English in fiction. Russian fiction writers Boris Natanovich and Arkady Natanovich Strugatsky are among the most prominent representatives of modern Russian literature who have resorted to subtle Russian humor. An example of a successful humorous work, which contains both folklore and satire, is the story "Monday begins on Saturday." "Monday Begins on Saturday" is a mix of satire and science fiction, featuring characters from classic works and fairy tales, presented in completely uncharacteristic roles and under questionable conditions (Vasily the cat, NK Gorynych, Merlin). And such a mix of styles and playing with readers' expectations can become an obstacle when translating into other languages. Our tasks included to consider whether the humorous context of this work has been conveyed, whether the features of Russian humor have been preserved when translated into English, and what difficulties the translator has encountered.

For this purpose, the English translation of the novella ("Monday Starts on Saturday") by the British translator of Russian classical and modern literature Andrew Bromfield was chosen as the research material. Any utterance has the ability to have a certain pragmatic effect on the listener or reader. Consequently, any utterance has a pragmatic potential, which is realized in different ways in specific acts of communication. Thus, it can be concluded that pragmatic adaptation of humor plays an important role in the translation of humor.

According to V. N. Komissarov, "the translator needs to take care of achieving the desired effect on the recipient, depending on the purpose of the translation, either

reproducing the pragmatic potential of the original or modifying it. That is why the study of pragmatic aspects is one of the central tasks of translation theory". Quite a lot of works have been written about the translation of humor, but most of them deal with the translation of linguistic humor. There are almost no works devoted to a pragmatic approach to the translation of humor, but M. V. Ignatovich's PhD thesis, which explores the application of a pragmatic approach to the humorous novels of Terry Pratchett, can be called an exception. In it, he pays great attention to such a rare way of pragmatic adaptation as replacing realities with their functional counterparts within the framework of the features and culture of the original work [2]. A successful translation is characterized by the fact that it should elicit the same reaction from its recipients as from the readers of the original.

Especially when it comes to humor. In order to understand the difficulties that arise when a translator has to translate humorous aspects, it is necessary to identify and analyze them. In connection with this goal, comparative analysis of the original and translated texts was chosen as the main research method.

The very first **difficulty** that can immediately raise questions from the translator is the pun. There is a character named Vasily the Cat in the novel. At the very beginning, the main character still does not understand that this is a real cat and such a phrase arises:

*Какой КОТ? – спросил я. – Комитет Оборонной Техники?*

The hero takes the word "cat" for an abbreviation. This phrase was translated into English as follows:

*«What CAT's that?» I asked. «The Committee for Advanced Technology?»*

In this case, it seems irrelevant to convey semantically the same meaning as in the original, the main thing is to show that the hero mistook the word "cat" for some kind of abbreviation. Phonetic language game is a consonance game. The Russian language is flexible enough to produce non-standard phonetic language game techniques, which makes their translation difficult. There is a character in the novel with the "talking" surname Vybegallo. Vybegallo is a combination of the Russian verb "to run out" in the past form and the formant-lo, characteristic of the surnames of residents of Ukraine or Finland. With a double "l", the surname sounds rather exotic and comical to the Russian ear. She gets ridiculed from time to time:

*– Выбегалло забегалло?*

*– Забегалло, – сказал я*

The authors play up the comicality of the character's last name due to the fact that they change the implied verb of the past tense "ran away" to the word "zabegallo" consonant with the last name, as if emphasizing its absurdity.

This passage was translated into English as follows:

*«Did Vybegallo just drop by?»*

«He did,» I said

The translator, as can be observed, does not convey the resulting comedic effect and does not compensate for it. This is due to the fact that English is an analytical language, in which grammatical meaning is expressed through function words, word order, etc.

Russian, on the other hand, belongs to the synthetic type, where morphemes are added to the root word to give it grammatical properties. The authors of the story took advantage of this by adding the formative suffix "-lo" to the verb "zabegal" (забегал). Doing this in English is impossible because the surname was translated using transcription while preserving the Russian root. It is impossible to combine this Russian root with an English motion verb that is phonetically similar to it.

The Strugatsky brothers often resort to deliberate word deformation, which is also quite difficult, first, to notice and understand, and second, to translate.

*Потому что уже был прен-цен-дент: сбежал черт и украл луну.*

*Because we've already had a press-eedent: when a devil got out and stole the moon.*

As can be seen, the word "прецедент" was deformed into "пренцендент" to emphasize the character's lack of literacy and his tendency to use words he does not even know how to pronounce correctly. In English, the translator also alters the word "precedent" to "preseedent."

However, in some cases, the translator does not succeed in conveying this word deformation.

*В таком вот аксенте.*

*That's the way of things.*

In this case, the word "аспект" was distorted. It can be observed that the author did not convey this distortion in the translation, choosing instead to render the overall meaning of the phrase.

The phrase "в таком вот аспекте" is quite popular among Russian speakers, which is why the translator focused on using a phrase that is commonly used by English speakers.

**As a result**, the translator manages to convey the character's speech patterns and his tendency to repeatedly use the same phrase, albeit not as strictly as in Russian.

An analysis of the comedic moments in *Monday Begins on Saturday* and their translation allows us to draw conclusions about the challenges that may arise in the process of translation. Humor is characterized by national-linguistic and national-cultural specificity, which is reflected in the novel, where folklore characters, Merlin, and heroes of Pushkin's poems are intertwined.

Very often, humor emerges within a national-cultural context, especially considering that the novel itself was written in response to contemporary issues. At

times, the most effective solution is to adequately convey the overall meaning of a phrase rather than focusing on wordplay or distortion.

Undoubtedly, further work is needed to explore all possible ways of overcoming the difficulties that arise when translating humor from Russian into English.

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