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**TRANSLATING DIFFICULTIES OF PUNS AND WORD PLAY
IN THE LEWIS CARROLL'S "ALICE IN WONDERLAND" IN RUSSIAN
AND GERMAN TRANSLATIONS IN COMPARISON**

***Abstract:** the article deals with the peculiarities of puns and word play and difficulties of their translation in "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" by Lewis Carroll. The authors analyze and compare the ways and means of interpreting puns in three different translations into Russian performed by V.V. Nabokov, A.A. Tscherbakov and N.M. Demurova and in the German one by Lieselotte Remané in order to determine the optimum alternatives of translation from the original.*

***Keywords:** word play, puns, puns and word play, translation, difficulties in puns and word play translating, pun founding, pun resultant, associations chain, word consonance, interpreting puns by means of translating language.*

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**СРАВНЕНИЕ ТРУДНОСТЕЙ ПЕРЕВОДА КАЛАМБУРОВ И ИГРЫ
СЛОВ В РОМАНЕ ЛЬЮИСА КЭРРОЛЛА «АЛИСА В СТРАНЕ ЧУДЕС»
В РУССКОМ И НЕМЕЦКОМ ПЕРЕВОДАХ**

Аннотация: в статье рассматриваются особенности каламбуров и игры слов и трудности их перевода в повести Л. Кэрролла «Алиса в Стране Чудес». Авторы анализируют и сравнивают средства перевода каламбуров в трех вариантах перевода повести на русский язык – В.В. Набокова, А.А. Щербакова и Н.М. Демуровой и в переводе на немецкий язык Лизелотты Реманэ, чтобы определить оптимальные варианты передачи каламбуров и игры слов средствами переводящего языка.

Ключевые слова: игра слов, каламбуры, перевод, трудности передачи игры слов в переводе, трудности передачи каламбуров в переводе, основание каламбура, результирующий компонент каламбура, ассоциативная цепочка, созвучие слов, воссоздание каламбура при помощи средств переводящего языка.

Puns being regarded as "untranslatable text elements" arouse interest for researchers due to the difficulties in reconstructing in the translation text the original correlation between the form and the semantic content and the absence of the forming elements.

V.S. Vinogradov considers the requisite of a pun appearance to be a skillful usage of different consonance, full and partial homonyms, paronyms and such phenomena as polysemy and transformation of idiomatic expressions in order to reach the desired comic effect [7, pp. 202–203] and regards a pun as a binary formation whose every component can be a word or a word combination. V.S. Vinogradov calls the first component a specific lexical base, a "trigger of the pun sometimes leading to the individual word creation and always meeting the language norms as in word usage and orthoepic able to be referred to as a model". The second component, or resulting component representing the climax of the pun is a "twister" word or combination. The comic effect, a pun appears in the text after the second component emerging and its comparing with the model [7, p. 203].

The pun usage in their literary works is a distinctive feature of some authors' individual style. Nora Gal asserts "Dickens not to be Dickens without puns" [5, p. 164].

Bulgarian linguists Vlahov and Florin consider the main difficulty in translating puns as opposed to translating ordinary texts to consist in the need of reconstructing the original form – phonetic or graphic and point out at the cases when it is necessary to change meaning for the sake of the form, if it is impossible to preserve the original form, as the expression form may turn out to be much more important than the meaning [8, p. 292].

In transferring puns an absolutely exact translation can be reached only in an exceptional case, but here occur losses too. That is why a translator has to solve the question what to sacrifice: to transfer the original content more exactly refusing the wordplay or to preserve the pun at the expense of the meaning. Solving this question about the priority of the form and the content in the pun a translator should remember the words of Lyubimov: "If a pun is socially or politically addressed, the translator must do his/her best and transfer it with all accuracy. In cases of a barely phonetic play the translator may recede from the original, otherwise he/she won't be able to create the comic effect reached by the author" [6, p. 245].

Nevertheless, in spite of all difficulties generated by the puns and wordplay in translation, the most researchers are of one mind: both puns and wordplay can be transferred in translation, which is though a difficult task [8, p. 287]. Lyubimov thinks "untranslatable wordplay" almost not to exist [6, p. 97]. Nora Gal considers the footnote «untranslatable wordplay» as "translator's admission of his/her impotence" [5, p. 165]. V.S. Vinogradov writes: "Not so long ago the translated fiction reader stumbling over the petrification of the literally recreated «untranslatable wordplay" was referred to the saving footnote explaining the meaning of the author's pun. Today all those footnotes have almost disappeared, and the characters of "Don Quixote of La Mancha" and "Alice in Wonderland" began making puns and joking in Russian, and the readers got rid of boring comments to funny puns [7, p. 201].

All the fiction world of Lewis Carroll's fairy tales is based on the speech semantics, which arouses special difficulties in translating his works. So, his characters' speech and many episodes of the book are based on the wordplay, metaphor use, on the literary interpretation of idiom components. For the comic effect to be reached the

author uses the original meaning of words and expressions, polysemy and homonymy of different kinds. In connection with this fact it is necessary to point out that the word play in the tale based on English lexis, English folklore, English literary associations, has a distinct national cultural identity. The composition of the Carroll's tales can not be transferred literally.

Puns can sometimes represent an intermediate part in an association chain originating from a word play or phonetic word similarity and leading from a beginning position to the end result. So in the Alice's talk to the Duchess as the beginning position serves the Earth rotation, while the end result is the Duchess order to chop off Alice's head part. The central of this chain putting the Duchess onto the idea of an axe is similar pronunciation of English words axis (an imaginary lines about which a body rotates [9]) and axes (tools used for chopping wood [9]) [2, p. 86]. In German language these two words sound similarly too (Achsen axis) – äxte (axes) [4, p. 91], that enables the translator into German Lieselotte Remané to recreate in translation the same chain of associations: the Earth rotation → axis → axes → order to chop off the head.

In translating into Russian for the logical passage from the original beginning position to the end result to be preserved translators are obliged to introduce into characters' phrases additional elements missing in the original text, but giving in Russian the base for forming another word play, generating associations perhaps somewhat different from the original ones, but still leading to the desired end result. In the translation of A.A. Tcherbakov such additional element is the introduced into Alice's speech words «вам пора бы...» (meaning "It's time for you to...") rhymed by the Duchess with «топора бы!» (axes), which leads to the original end effect (the order to chop off Alice's head) [4, p. 40]. Demurova makes a start from the word «оборот» (turnaround) (It takes the Earth 24 hour to make a turnaround») and introduces a new phrase into the speech of the Duchess «Возьмите её в оборот!» (Take her in hand) [1, p. 49].

It is not always possible for a translator to recreate the association chain in translation absolutely accurately till the word consonance generating the further required associations, but he/she can form an another chain with the beginning position and the end result equivalent to the original ones, with a different, but leading to the

same result intermediate association, in other words, replace the original word play by another one, in order to what it is sometimes necessary to introduce some additional elements into the translation text on the way to the desired end result. For example, in the episode with the Duchess she could have found any other excuse for chopping off the head. Assume, in response of girl's words about the Earth rotation she could have said: "She's too clever! Chop off her head!"

Sometimes puns can follow each other, with the resulting component of the previous one being the base for the next pun. In doing so puns form a «pun cascade». As for example, in Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland", when the Mock Turtle tells Alice about the subjects it took in the Turtle school. According to Demurova's comments following the translation by V.V. Nabokov, the subject names represent puns formed from the real denominations of school activities by their perversion or changing and inserting letters: "I only took the regular course". – said the Mock Turtle.

"What was that?" – inquired Alice.

"*Reeling and Writhing*, of course, to begin with" the Mock Turtle replied; and then the different branches of Arithmetic – *Ambition, Distraction, Uglification, and Derision*" [Carroll, p. 122].

"I have never heard of Uglification", Alice ventured to say. "What is it?" The Gryphon tries to explain the unknown word taking a start from the opposite meaning that generates another word play: The Gryphon lifted its paws in surprise. "Never heard of Uglifying!" it exclaimed. "You know what to beautify is, I suppose?"

"Yes" – said Alice doubtfully: "it means – to – make – anything – prettier". Well. then», the Gryphon went on, "if you don't know what to uglify is, you are a simpleton". [2, p. 123].

In their translations translators into Russian V.V. Nabokov, A.A. Tscherbakov, N.M. Demurova and the translator into German Lieselotte Remané tried to transfer the names of school subjects using the same means as the author of the original: deformation of the real school subject names: «чесать» и «питать» (instead of «читать» and «писать» eng. "read and write") [2, p. 253]; «чихали» (eng. sneezed) and «пищали»(eng. peeped) [1, p. 78], both new words in Russian being in consonance

with the words meaning "read" and "wrote"; in German: "Es began natürlich mit Lehen und Schreiten" formed from "Lesen" (reading) and "Schreiben" (writing) [4, p. 148]. Arithmetics are formed in the same way: «служенье» (from «сложение» eng. addition) in Russian sounds like "service" and has nothing to do with arithmetic, «выметание» (from «вычитание» eng. subtraction) [2, p. 253]; in German: "Unterzählen, Malnebeln und Abzwacken" [немецк., с. 148]. All translators tried to reconstruct in their translations the word play generated by one of the subject names Uglification → uglify – beautify [2, с. 123]: А.А. Тscherbakov replaces «умножать» (eng. multiply) by a non-existing word «глупожать». The word «умножать» can be divided into two parts: «умно» (eng. cleverly) and «жать» (eng. press), this enables the translator to invent a new word in order to reconstruct the pair word play to replace the first part of the word by its opposite «глупо» (eng. stupidly) [3, pp. 63–64].

To reconstruct in his translation the school subject name "uglification" formed apparently from "multiplication" V.V. Nabokov invents a new word «уморжение» by changing the existing name of an arithmetic «умножение» so that the new word has in it the part «морж» (eng. walrus). The name of an animal provides the base for the further word play: «укротить крота» – «уморжить моржа» [2, с. 253]. «укротить крота» in English means "to tame a mole" Russian word «укротить» (eng. to tame) has a part «крот» (eng. mole) inside. The translator replaces an animal (mole) by another one (walrus), forming in this way a pair of opposite word combinations. N.M. Demurova uses «причитание» apparently formed from «читать» (eng. to read) and sounding in Russian as "lamentation" and lets the Gryphon explain it to Alice through «читать» [1, p. 78].

Sometimes the author introduces the pun resulting element before its base appearing in the text, which comparison to the resulting element provides a comic effect. Before the second pun element introduction the readers are not able to recognize a pun in the text, to understand the author's logic and to appreciate his/her humour. Only with the pun base being introduced the readers get a hint on a pun in the text and, sometimes, explanation of the way the pun is formed. Such anticipation of the pun resulting element takes place in the mentioning of the old teacher in the sea school:

"...We went to school in the sea. The master was an old Turtle – we used to call him Tortoise". "Why did you call him Tortoise, if he wasn't one?" Alice asked.

"Why did you call him Tortoise, if he wasn't one?" Alice asked "We called him Tortoise because he taught us", said the Mock Turtle angrily [2, p. 122]. This word play is based on the homophony of the word "tortoise" and the combination "taught us". The explanation of the nick name origin appears in the text later causing the readers puzzlement. In this pun there marked out two components to be transferred in translation: the nick name of an old sea school teacher consonant with an animal denomination and a characteristic of its activities (taught us) or some other features. Combining in the translation these both components contributes to a more accurate pun reconstruction. All the translators did their best to reconstruct both components in their translations. Still, as the most accurate variant the translation by A.A. Scherbakov must be recognized. He gives to the old teacher the nick name «Жучиха» [3, p. 62] which on the one hand, can be accepted as an illiterate form for a female beetle and by the other hand, seems to be derived from the verb «жучить» (eng. sermonize). The Turtle's explanation runs: "She wasn't a beetle, but she sermonized us". Both conditions (the nick name and a characteristic of school activities) are met in this variant. V.V. Nabokov and N.M. Demurova chose an another animal for the old teacher's nick name – «спрут» (eng. octopus) resembling in Russian to the word «прут» (eng. twig), with the preposition «с» (with) making the presence of a twig to the teacher's characteristic «он всегда ходил с прутиком» (eng. He always walked around with a twig) [1, p. 251].

The tale of the Mouse is graphically represented in the text in the form of a mouse tail, which is made possible by the foregoing word play based on the phonetic identity of English words tale and tail: "Mine is a long and a sad tale!" said the Mouse, turning to Alice and sighing.

"It's a long tail, certainly", said Alice..." [2, p. 56]. In this case translators have a challenge of preserving in translation the original author's idea of the graphic appearance of the tale. For this result to be reached, it is necessary to restore in the translation text the prerequisite, namely a tail mentioning. To solve this problem translators choose different ways: V.V. Nabokov and N.M. Demurova introduce into translation text new

additional elements missing in the original and similar in Russian with «ХВОСТ» (eng. tail). At Nabokov's variant this addition is a new description of the tale «ПРОСТ» (eng. simple) [2, p. 180], N.M. Demurova, in her turn, uses in the Mouse's exclamation the word «ПРОХВОСТ» (eng. scoundrel [AbbyLingvo]) having in Russian parts «ПРО» and «ХВОСТ» [1, p. 29], which can be understood as "about" and "tail". This seemingly misplaced and illogical addition still leads to the required result mentioning a tail.

A.A. Tcherbakov rejects the word play affixment to "tail" and construct a totally new pun on the base of a characteristic of the tale, its length by introducing the word canzonette meaning a "little canzone" and sounding in Russian as «КОНЦА НЕТУ» (eng. no end, endless), making Alice to suggest the tale to be very long, for it has no end [3, p. 21]. The translator introduces the pun resulting element ("canzonette") before the appearance of the pun base («КОНЦА НЕТУ»), comparison to which arose the comic effect, with the readers getting a hint on a pun in the text and being able to appreciate the author's humour. Lieselotte Remané translator into German leaves word play apart at all, but to save the graphically form of the Mouse's tale she introduces a new element also characterizing the tale not into the text, but into the chapter title – "schwanzlange Geschichte" (eng. a tail long tale) [4, p. 37].

Thus, comparing all these four translations of word plays one must recognize the translation by V.V. Nabokov as the most accurate one, as it justifies the following graphical form of the text and in opposite to the variant by Demurova does not seem unnatural.

Lewis Carroll describes a ceremonial procession of playing cards making a word play on the denomination of their suits: First came ten soldiers carrying clubs, next the ten courtiers: these were ornamented all over with diamonds. <...> After these came the royal children: there were ten of them: they were all ornamented with hearts [2, p. 105]. So soldiers are armed with the clubs, but at the same time "club" means a cart suit (denoted by a black trefoil [AbbyLingvo]), courtiers have their clothes decorated with diamonds designating a card suit denoted by a red diamond [AbbyLingvo], the hearts on the the royal children mean the card suit hearts denoted by a red heart-shaped figure [AbbyLingvo]. polysemanticism of the card suit names

generating the word play is explained by N.M. Demurova in her comments in the end of the book [1, p. 302]. The resemblance between the names of card suits and those of real subjects enables the translators to reconstruct this word play in their translations. The denomination of the spade card suit in both Russian and in German coincides with that of an arms kind ("lance"), that is why the translators arm the procession members with lances [2, p. 237; 1, p. 65; 4, p. 119].

V.V. Nabokov and N.M. Demurova play on the Russian diamond card suit denomination «бубны» coinciding with the name of a musical instrument (eng. tambourine [9]) – in their translations court jester carry tambourines [2, p. 237; 1, p. 65]. A.A. Scherbakov unfortunately did not notice the correlation between clubs as arms and the name of a card suit, translating this text fragment literally: his soldiers are armed with cudgels, but there is no reference to the card suit of clubs in his translation [3, p. 52].

Comparing four translations of Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland" (three into Russian by V.V. Nabokov, A.A. Scherbakov and N.M. Demurova and into German by Lieselotte Remané) makes it possible to distinguish the following means of transferring puns and word plays in translation:

- the literally pun reconstruction followed by comments explaining the meaning of the original pun (not found in any of the studied translations of "Alice in Wonderland");

- replacement of the pun;

- reconstruction of the pun using the translation language means;

- introduction of an additional element;

- forming a new logical chain while preserving both starting and the resulting points.

Transferring puns in the original author's form is a challenge within the powers of the people not only perfectly mastering the translation language but also being literary talented, possessing a creative taste and knowing the means of transferring different stylistic text peculiarities.

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