

“False Friends of the Translator” in Terminology

We are well aware of the fact that international contacts are “phenomena vulgaris” in the modern world. We live during the epoch of wide and intensive international contacts, so in communication between the representatives of different linguistic communities translation gains the same importance. The translation and the translator are necessary during any interlinguistic contacts, since there does not exist a metalanguage, which could be used by people speaking different languages. And despite the development of computer technologies and computer software, it is still impossible to substitute a translator (and profound research in the field of machine translation has proved it).

It goes without saying that a translator’s work is a difficult enough and there are no certain prescribing rules for translation. In his/her work a translator faces different problems arising from divergences of languages in their grammatical, syntactical, and lexical structures. One of these problems is a special category of words, and the so-called “false friends of a translator”. These words can be found in every pair of languages: for example English and Ukrainian: English *partisan* which means “a person who belongs to a political party, group or course” does not coincide with Ukrainian “партизан”, English *decade* which means “a period of ten years” does not coincide with Ukrainian “декада” – “a period of ten days”; German – Ukrainian: “konkurs”, which means “competition”, does not correspond to the German *Konkurs* (insolvency, bankruptcy).

It should be noted in this connection that “false friends of a translator” are a problem not only for learners of foreign language but also for those whose command of foreign languages is excellent. And it is quite natural because the first reaction of a person to a foreign word resembling his/her native word is to consider its meaning as coinciding with the meaning of a similar native word. Moreover, the existence of the international vocabulary and borrowings can be misleading. The only way for a translator to distinguish “false friends of a translator” from international vocabulary and borrowings is to learn and to know them.

In any case their structure in general is the same for a native speaker of each of contrasted languages, varying only in terms of interlinguistic paronymy. For example, adjectives “absolute” and “абсолютный” coincide completely or quite completely in the majority of meanings and they are interchangeable in translation but it does not mean that the same correlation exists between adverbs *absolutely* and “абсолютно”: the Ukrainian word “абсолютно” is rarely translated by the English word “absolutely”, usually it is rendered by the following words: *entirely, perfectly, totally, utterly, at all, quite, irrespectively*.

It should be emphasized that the cases of interlinguistic homonymy and paronymy play an important role within “false friends of a translator.” Interlinguistic homonymy is always reversible, i.e. it is perceived as such by native speakers of

both languages. It can arise directly from by native contact and confrontation of languages.

Interlinguistic paronyms can also be reversible and bilateral, i.e. they can mislead native speakers of both languages, as it is often in cases when interlinguistic paronymy is based on intralinguistic paronymy. For example, English *specially* – *especially* can make difficulties even for Englishmen and certainly for the Ukrainians who identify it with Ukrainian “спеціально”. But, as a rule, the interlinguistic paronymy is unilateral (one-way). Thus, the confusion of words history-story, mayor-major is possible.

Before we go any further it should be mentioned that a necessity arises to take into account the possible divergences in stylistic characteristics. These divergences can accompany partial semantic differences of words. That is why we cannot understand a word completely and use it correctly not knowing its functional-stylistic and emotional expressive overtones and in some cases limitations of its usage. The divergences in functional-stylistic overtones, i.e. in permissibility of word usage mainly or exclusively in certain styles of speech can be seen in English – Russian confrontations. For example, “meeting of specialists” English consultation and Russian “консультация” do not coincide completely, since the former is stylistically neutral and the latter is bookish.

Although the problem of “false friends of a translator” has attracted attention of many scholars, there has not been any thorough and profound investigation of this category of words for most languages. However, there are several dictionaries of “the false friends of a translator”, as for example:

English-Russian and Russian-English dictionary of “the false friends of a translator” by Aculenco V.V.

German-Russian and Russian-German dictionary of “the false friends of a translator” by Gotlib K.G.

Russian –French dictionary compiled by Muraviev V.A. Faux amis или ложные друзья переводчика.

Generally speaking, these dictionaries contain only one specific lexical category, which makes the process of translation and foreign language study easier – words similar in form in both languages but different in meaning.

In its definitions the dictionary follows the tradition of unilateral bilingual dictionaries which consider the meanings of a word of one language in terms of meaning of the other language. The meanings are described mostly as explanations, short as a rule, and then as equivalents existing in the other language. For example,

accompany vt 1* сопровождать (кого-л.); провожать (кого-л.). They were accompanied by Mr. N. Г-н Н. проводилих./ You will accompany me to the station. Вы проводите меня до вокзала. 2 Сопровождать пение музыкой или игру на одном музыкальном инструменте игрой на другом музыкальном инструменте; аккомпанировать. The singer was accompanied at the piano by Miss N. Мисс Н. аккомпанировала певцу на рояле. 3* выполнять одновременно ряд действий, процессов.

аккомпанировать гл. перех. = to accompany 2.

As far as their typology goes “false friends of a translator” can be divided into the following groups:

Words which are formally (graphically or by sound) similar and semantically different. For example, accurate – “аккуратный”, decade – “декада”, formal – “формальный”.

Words which in the plural have another meaning. For example, difference (различие) – differences (разногласия), development (развитие) – developments (события, обстоятельства), security (безопасность) – securities (ценные бумаги).

Words which, in English and Russian, do not coincide in number. For example, policies – “политика”, weapons – “оружие”, elections – “выборы”.

It goes without saying that differences in lexical combinability of the corresponding Russian and English words make considerable difficulties in the process of language teaching and translation. For example, in English in collocations of the word *accurate* the words *description, information, translation, timing, watch* can occur and in Russian in collocations of the word “аккуратный” one can see the following words: “работник, комната, почерк, человек”. The English word *extra* is compatible with words “качество, класс”; the English word *familiar* is compatible with *sight, face*, while Russian “фамильярный” is compatible with “тон, обращение, поведение”. The word *general* can be seen in collocations with words *education, meeting, usage, reader, impression, terms, idea*, while Russian “генеральный” is usually used in the following word combinations: “генеральный директор”, “генеральная репетиция”, “генеральная уборка”; English *intelligence* is mostly used in the following collocations: Intelligence Department, Intelligence Service, intelligence officer, while the Russian word “интеллигенция” can be used with the following words: “трудовая, русская, новоготипа”.

The word *dramatic* is often rendered by a translator as “драматический” instead of “внезапный, волнующий”. While rendering *dramatic* into Russian a translator transfers the usual meaning of a native word to the foreign word which has another meaning. As a result the content of the original is distorted. Repeating the form of the international word a translator often forgets that complete identification rarely

exists on the level of content and gives a false equivalent. But if a translator pays attention to the collocations of Russian and English words then it is obvious that these words cannot be interchangeable since English *dramatic* is usually used in the following collocations: dramatic change, dramatic possibility, dramatic progress and Russian “драматический” is used with the following words: “актер, произведение, кружок, театр”. Examples can easily be multiplied:

actual – in actual fact, actual number, actual investment, actual exports,

актуальный – актуальная тема, актуальный вопрос, актуальная проблема, книга, статья;

address – opening address, formal address, address on current problems,

адрес – точный адрес, переменить адрес, служебный адрес, дать адрес;

audience – to delight one’s audience, to interest one’s audience, wide audience, large audience,

аудиенция – дать аудиенцию, просить аудиенцию, получить аудиенцию, частная аудиенция;

mayor – mayor of a city

майор – звание майора, майор милиции;

meeting – meeting of powers, private meeting, meeting in camera, plenary meeting,

митинг – митинг протеста, митинг в поддержку кого-л. или чего-л.

panel – panel of experts, federal panel, panel of judges,

панель – деревянная панель, полированная панель, дом из крупных панелей;

popular – popular government, popular election, popular opinion, popular will, popular opposition, popular ballot,

популярный – популярный артист, популярный журнал, популярная песня;

service – diplomatic service, bus service, security service, financial service, secret service,

сервис – приятный сервис, ненавязчивый сервис.

None of the various translation models can be fully applicable to such a translation phenomenon as “false friends of a translator”. Thus, it should be emphasized that

in the process of teaching translation “false friends of a translator” are to be considered as a specific category, are to be classified and streamed, and learned in collocations.