

LATIP 2021**International Conference on Language and Technology in the Interdisciplinary Paradigm****TRANSLATION OF CULTURALLY AND THEMATICALLY
MARKED LEXICAL UNITS IN THE LITERARY TEXT**

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olegpokhalenkov@rambler.ru**Abstract**

The paper explores the problem of the strategy of the literary text translation that is chiefly a result of the pretranslation analysis and deep preliminary work with the source text. The research is aimed at solving a diversity of translation problems when selecting equivalents for culturally and thematically marked lexical units in different kinds of literary fiction. While selecting proper correspondences in the target language it is crucially important to consider literary peculiarities of the source text and background information relevant to it. The article shows how to work on the translation of the said vocabulary cluster on the basis of the novel "Regeneration" by Pat Barker, a contemporary British writer. The central event of the plot is the Great War (WWI) and its consequences for individuals. The action focuses on the life story of a renowned British poet and military officer Siegfried Sassoon who has to struggle with a severe existential crisis after witnessing all the horrors of the war on the West Front.

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1. Introduction

The research accentuates important aspects of the strategy of literary text translation and certain translation methods and techniques aimed at solving a diversity of translation problems. The strategy of translation, in its general sense, is likely to outline the work plan for the translator which is normally carried out in the course of the preliminary study of the source text. It should be perceived as a complex of the translators' methods and techniques forming a special but not unique combination, which allows one to mind certain characteristic aspects of the source text.

More underpinning in favour of the suggested understanding of the notion «strategy of translation» can be provided while translating literary texts. In our case that is the novel "Regeneration" by contemporary British writer Pat Barker published in 1991. The book is the first part of the trilogy under the same name. The author explores the theme of the Great War and its affect and consequences for an individual, especially for a soldier or a military officer, also the problem of class and culture relations, that of poetry (especially "trench poetry") and some more. The point of our research interest is "war" culturally and thematically marked lexical units and their translation, thus war events and all the complications related to them such as a war trauma and its treatment that a man has to experience while restarting their after-war life are going to be in the focus.

The revival of the interest in the theme of the First World War in foreign literary studies is evidenced by the publication at the end of the XX century of a considerable number of literary works about the war. This process has been called the "second boom of war books" (Todman, 2005, p. 10), which can be compared to the boom of the 1920s and 1930s. The works which appeared during this period were different in terms of both their poetic value and orientation to the reading public: from children's stories to serious historical novels. They largely repeated the images inherited from the predecessors of the 1920s and 1930s, but also brought a new interpretation of already familiar plot situations. Authors such as Pat Barker, Sebastian Faulks, Jane Thynne, and Richard Burns continued the story of an officer who faced the horrors of war on the Western Front.

The year of 2018 marked the centenary since the First World War ended. Several past years have seen a lot of commemorating the event programmes and projects. Moreover, this significant milestone in the world history gave rise to numerous discussions in the European societies featuring causes and consequences of WWI, trying to assess and interpret the actions of those distant years. All this raised public and scientific interest in the event and at the end of the 20th – beginning of the 21st centuries there were published many literary fiction and fact based books devoted to it. It is not in vain that literary historians and theorists name it "the second boom of war books" (Todman, 2005, p. 10) and relate this to the 20 – 30s of the 20th century.

- Pat Barker's novel "Regeneration"¹ is the first part of a trilogy ("Regeneration" (1991), "The Eye in the Door" (1993), "The Ghost Road" (1995)). The author's reference to the First World War is explained, as already mentioned above, by the special position that the Great War occupies in the cultural life of Great Britain. The famous literary critic Hewitt (2007) in her

¹ Among the modern literary critiques devoted to the novel it is worth noting: (Knutsen, 2010; Westman, 2001; Patten, 2008: 17–29; Pellow, 2001: 130–146; Duckworth 2004: 63–67).

work writes the modern English novel in the context of culture. Commentary as a form of narrative notes: "If we try to define an event in modern Britain that became a turning point, then we must consider the First World War as such" (pp. 46-72).

- Pat Barker (born 1943) was educated at the London School of Economics and Durham University, where she studied international history. Prior to the release of her first works, "Union Street" (1982) and "Centure's Daughter" (1984), she taught history. The works of this period are devoted to the describing the difficult conditions of the working class in the north of England. The writer's attention to the topic of the First World War is partly dictated by the events of her own biography: Barker's grandfather took part in battles in France during the conflict of 1914-1917.

In the centre of "Regeneration" we can see a famous poet and war hero Siegfried Sassoon. The story begins with his famous letter to the British Parliament with a Declaration, in which he protests against the ongoing war and refuses to continue participating in it. But instead of subjecting Sassoon to a court-martial, he is declared mentally ill and sent to the Craiglockhart – a special treatment facility near Edinburgh. Over the course of two months, he meets and interacts with young poet W. Owen and psychiatrist Rivers.

The plot develops round real events and starts with "A Soldier's declaration" made by the main character of the novel, Siegfried Sassoon, a poet and a war hero. The declaration² was read out in the Parliament and published in a number of British newspapers, such as "The Times". In this document Siegfried blamed the government for prolonging the war action deliberately³. He claimed that the whole generation of the British had suffered and he refused to be involved in it any more. However, instead of the court martial he had expected, the medical board found him suffering from shell shock. So he was dispatched to Craiglockhart, a war hospital near Edinburgh, to be cured of his post-traumatic stress. It turned out to be a very stressful and demoralizing time for the main character, on the one hand; but on the other hand, he got two very important friends there: Wilfrid Owen, a young poet later helped and encouraged by Siegfried, and William Rivers, a psychologist and anthropologist, who has become a real father figure for Sassoon. In Green's book (2012), "Trauma Inscribed on the Body in Pat Barker's "Regeneration Trilogy" it is emphasized: "In the initial book in her sequence, 'Regeneration', Barker (2008) is specifically interested in the ways in which the physical symptoms of war neurosis communicate the nature of an internal crisis" (p. 10)

2. Problem Statement

The plot part and the narration itself, the main character and his evolution are likely to be clear to the majority of the readers if supported by some commentary and background information. The most challenging element is the language of the novel as the wording includes many culturally (realias) and thematically marked elements (war, trauma and its treatment vocabulary) which need to be explained and which require special techniques of their translation. Thus it should be minded that there are many realias

² For more information, see the text of the "Declaration": (Barker, 2008, p. 3). Further references to this edition will be given in the text.

³ For a detailed account, see Boyers R. *The Dictator's Dictation: The Politics of Novels and Novelists*. Columbia University Press, 2005; Furst, L.R. (2003). *Idioms of Distress: Psychosomatic Disorders in Medical and Imaginative Literature*. SUNY Press.

among thematically marked lexical units; consequently, they do not have proper direct correspondence and fixed equivalents in the target language (Russian) and refer to the zero-equivalent word cluster. Indeed, they may cause translation problems and for that reason their methods of translation and their possible Russian equivalents should be considered in the course of the pretranslation analysis and later reflected in the strategy of translation.

3. Research Questions

The research is aimed at solving a diversity of translation problems when selecting equivalents for culturally and thematically marked lexical units in different kinds of literary fiction.

4. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to carry out the most acceptable and adequate methods and techniques of the culturally and thematically marked lexical units translation and to include them in the strategy of translation of the novel "Regeneration" by Pat Barker. It becomes notably important in case of 'war' lexical units as they make a very important thematic set of words in the novel under study. Their inadequate translation can destroy the cultural relevance of the book, the author's messages and the original meaning of the plot lines.

5. Research Methods

While carrying out the research we have used a variety of the methods. The most frequently referred ones are pretranslation analysis of the source text in order to work out the strategy of translation, critical reading in order to catch the implications, analysis of background information relevant to the novel in order to be aware of the cultural colouring, comparative analysis of the source and target lexical units.

6. Findings

It is important for the translator to save the most important properties, sense, communicative and cultural value of the source text. Thus, the wording and structures used to transfer all the information is crucially important. Dancygier in "The Language of Stories: A Cognitive Approach" states:

Understanding narratives relies on very similar processes: emergence, construction, and negotiation of meaning through specific language choices. The choices may be found at the lowest level of linguistic structure (...) or they can pertain to text-wide decisions on narrative structure (...), but they are language choices readers rely on in the construction of narrative meaning (Dancygier, 2012, p. 6).

Consequently, the translator is to carefully choose the linguistic units when transferring the information of any kind into the target text. The translator is to be certain as to the actual and contextual meanings of the lexical units a lot of which are polysemantic and many of which are shortenings with a great number of abbreviations among them. Some abbreviations can be qualified as realias and simultaneously they belong to the thematically marked units, such as names of military ranks and

positions, medals and other honours, names of divisions and detachments and other groups of troops, ships or aircraft, etc.

Second lieutenant (literally "второй лейтенант"⁴) is a military officer rank (the lowest one) in the British army. The corresponding military rank in Russian is "младший лейтенант". If used in the target text of the novel "Regeneration", it would destroy the cultural colouring of the situation. Thus such Russian equivalent can be considered unacceptable and therefore the literal, loan translation unit seems to be the most adequate choice:

"A *second-lieutenant*, no less, saying The war must stop" (Barker, 2008, p. 13) – "Сам *второй лейтенант* говорит: Война должна закончиться".

VC (Victoria Cross) (literally "Крест Виктории") is the highest award in the British Armed Forces bestowed for acts of valor and ingenious courage shown in battles. It is not advisable to search for some similar award in the Russian honours system for the same reasons. The most adequate method is loan translation again: "I told them about last year when he took a German trench single-handed and got recommended for the VC" (Barker, 2008, p. 22) – "Я рассказал им, как в прошлом году он в одиночку захватил немецкую траншею и был представлен к Кресту Виктории".

The abbreviation "conchie" used colloquially originates from the WWI times and is a result of condensing the word-combination "conscientious objector". It may correspond to two translations "принципиальный противник войны", а также как "уклонист". Both are found in the novel:

"Can you imagine what our dear Director of Medical Services is going to say when he finds out we're sheltering 'conchies'..." (Barker, 2008, p. 4) – "Вы можете себе представить, что скажет наш дорогой начальник медицинской службы, когда узнает, что мы укрываем принципиальных противников войны..."

"People can accept a breakdown. There's no way back from being a conchie" (Barker, 2008, p. 21) – "Люди могут принять нервный срыв. Но нет прощения уклонистам".

7. Conclusion

There are many culturally and thematically marked lexical units in the novel "Regeneration" and it is always challenging to find their proper translation in the target language. The choice of the equivalent should be preceded with a profound study of the relevant background information and cultural context. The analyzed examples show that loan translation is more suitable than some similar lexical unit of the target language as than the cultural relevance is destroyed. To avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the plot, setting, cultural background of the novel by the target readers, the translator is to save the original communicative and cultural value of the text.

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⁴ Here and further translation in Russian is done by the authors.

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