BASIC APPROACHES TO DRAMA TRANSLATION

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Drama has a special status: it stands on the verge of literature and theatre. The issue of determining the specifics of a dramatic text are also complicated by the fact that the theatrical production of a dramatic work is the result of collective creativity – actors, director, decorators, technicians, etc. It is logical to assume that the process of transferring a dramatic text from one language to another is similar to the process of transposition (at the level of one language) of a written text of a drama onto a theatre stage.

According to some features of the dramatic work, which were mentioned above, strict requirements are placed on the translation strategy that go beyond the traditional approach to poetry and prose translation, because it is necessary to take into account that the text is intended not only for reading but also for stage performance.

As the Austrian scholar K. Bednarz noted, “the requirement to recognize theatrical and stage conditions in the concept of a dramatic text and make them visible in translation into another language is specific, because it does not correlate with the tasks of translating poetry and prose” [2].

There are different approaches to drama translation. Professor for Theatre Studies at the University of Kent in Canterbury (UK) Patrice Pavis, defines dramatic translation primarily in the context of its further stage production, while other researchers approach this problem somehow differently [3]. B. Schultz clearly distinguishes between a translation of a drama intended for further publication and reading, that is, a purely “literary text,” and a translation of a dramatic text for the purpose of further staging [4]. This is the “double nature of the dramatic text”, which characterizes the translation of the drama. A translated play may have two options – “text for reading” (literary text) and “text for staging” (stage version).

This is the reason why two approaches can be clearly observed: translation for page and translation for stage. The first one focuses on the accurate reproduction of the original text and the preservation of its linguistic and literary features. The translation for stage is aimed at translation considering the stage conditions. That is, the two sides of the drama are divided – literary and stage. Translation for page prevails among drama translators in Germany, where all attention is paid to the reproduction of the original text, and where the performance aspect is neglected. The second approach is almost compulsory for theatres in Great Britain. It is believed that only a playwright or a stage director can translate a play, and knowledge of the language and understanding of the text are secondary to knowing the stage laws and
understanding of the theatre.

Considering the translation of drama for the stage in his theory, the representative of the Czech translation school I. Levy proceeds from the main characteristics of the stage dialogue [1]. Firstly, stage dialogue is a special case of speech. The preservation of the stylized speech in translation is one of the necessary conditions for a dramatic work in general. Secondly, the stage dialogue has a complex semantic structure, since the utterances of the character can express attitude to objects on the stage or to the dramatic situations. In this case, a deictic translation is needed, preserving the actions for a certain reaction of the actor (gestures, facial expressions, movements) where they were established in the original. Moreover, the variety of recipients of the stage replica (it is perceived by several listeners simultaneously but often differently) means its inclusion in several “semantic contexts” at once, which requires consideration of its ambiguity in the translation. Thirdly, the dialogue on the stage is a verbal action, which in some cases is predetermined by the construction itself, “inspiring the actor how to pronounce a replica”, in others it is only subtly outlined in written text [1]. I. Levy suggests the task of the translator as preserving the principle of constructing a phrase that carries a certain charge of “stage energy” (tempo, rhythm, intonation). Finally, dialogue on the stage is not only a form of constructing the characters' speech, but also their characteristic. Talking about something, the character talks about himself. It is the lexical structure of speech that gives an initial motivation to an actor in working on an image. It is not always possible to reconstruct the character’s manner of speech, his or her speech characteristics in translation due to inter-linguistic and intercultural differences, the necessary slang, vernacular, dialect may be absent in the target language. However, the translator's increased attention to the details of linguistic design, should contribute to the representation of the character’s development perspectives in accordance with the playwright’s intention, his relations with other characters of the play, the sequence and extent of revealing certain features of the characters. The listed features of the stage dialogue determine the translation dominant, based on the function of translation the future stage performance [2]. A key point in the concept of the scholar is the understanding of the translated text of the play not as the final aim, but as a means to create stage images on its basis in interaction with the other elements of the performance. Such interaction requires a certain flexibility of the text, which is the result of the translator's versatile attitude to the text, since “sometimes it’s most important to accurately convey the subtlest shade of meaning, and sometimes its style or intonation” [1]. However, in general, the translator must translate and artistically reconstruct the entire text of the dramatic work. So, not only the phase of the interlingual change of the text of the play is included in the process of dramatic translation, but also the possible further transformation into a theatrical text. At the same time, relationship of interaction is established between the translation and the stage performance: on the one hand, making every decision, the translator should be guided by his representation of the main idea of the play. On the other hand, the interpretation of the play is of direct practical significance for the production, and sometimes is decisive, for example, in the issue of the interpretation of the characters on stage [1]. At the same time, these relations can remain quite free due to the phenomenon of translational plurality, which is the best alternative to receiving stage production. The theatre director, who wants to interpret the play differently than this is in the translation, will require significant changes in the text and significant efforts of the performers. Therefore, there isn’t unified or standard approach to drama translation.
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