ACADEMIC GYMNASIUM № 56



СOMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE TRANSLATION OF A POEM BY ENGLISH NATIVE SPEAKER AND RUSSIAN NATIVE SPEAKER

(USING THE EXAMPLE OF TRANSLATION OF THE POEM

"DON'T LEAVE THE ROOM" BY J. BRODSKY)

Research work

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**INTRODUCTION**

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There are a lot of Russian poems with different translations into English. A big part of them doesn’t convey the whole point and language features of the poem.

The problem of translation activity is that neither native nor not-native speakers can translate a product to perfection. Not-native speakers don't know the culture and features of the language of the original country, because of that during the process such translators may fail to follow the author's unique style and the essential point of the original work. As for native speakers, they cannot know the second language perfectly (in grammatical and lexical cases). As a result, such translations can be confusing for natives.

In our research, we will analyze different translations of the poem "Don't leave the room" by J. Brodsky. We are going to consider two kinds of translation: by English native speaker and Russian native speaker.

Nowadays attention to translators’ work is increasing. The problem of adequacy of translations by native and non-native speakers has become more meaningful. Accordingly, our research is actual.

**The goal of our research** is to compare translations by Russian native speaker and by English native speaker of the poem "Don't leave the room" by I. Brodsky and to analyze which one is more convenient for reading.

**The objectives**:

1. To analyze literary sources on the topic of translation;
2. To identify the translation comparison options;
3. To analyze the poem;
4. To analyze translations;
5. To compare translations of the poem with the original poem.

**The research methods** are comparison and analysis.

**CHAPTER I**

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**1.1 Biography of J. Brodsky**

Joseph Brodsky (1940-1996) is a Russian and American famous writer, poet, translator and teacher. He wrote his lyrics in Russian, but essays in English. He won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1987.

In February 1964 Brodsky was arrested. He was accused of parasitism (in the USSR it was criminally punishable). He was exiled to the Arkhangelsk region for 5 years. Interesting fact. On the trial, Brodsky was asked: “Why didn’t you work?” 24-year-old poet answered: “I worked. I wrote the poems.” - “Answer. Why didn’t you toil?” - “I toiled. I wrote the poems.” - “Why didn’t you study at the university?” - “I thought it was from God.” In 1964-1972 only 4 Brodsky’s poems were published. Due to the conflicts with the Soviet government, he was compelled to leave Russia in 1972. All these facts found reflection in his poems, particularly, in the poem “Don’t leave the room” which was written in 1970 (between those events).

**1.2 Criteria**

After learning and analyzing any sources of information about comparative literature, we have identified 4 main criteria of comparison:

1. analysis of saving the original poem's structure in translated poems;
2. parallel comparison of poems with analysis of speech patterns and means of artistic expression;
3. assessment of conveying the whole point of the original poem;
4. assessment of saving style of the author and of the poem;

**CHAPTER II**

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**2.1 Analysis of the poem**

There is the poem "Don't leave the room" by I. Brodsky in original (Russian) language:

Не выходи из комнаты, не совершай ошибку.

Зачем тебе Солнце, если ты куришь Шипку?

За дверью бессмысленно всё, особенно — возглас счастья.

Только в уборную — и сразу же возвращайся.

О, не выходи из комнаты, не вызывай мотора.

Потому что пространство сделано из коридора

и кончается счётчиком. А если войдёт живая

милка, пасть разевая, выгони не раздевая.

Не выходи из комнаты; считай, что тебя продуло.

Что интересней на свете стены и стула?

Зачем выходить оттуда, куда вернёшься вечером

таким же, каким ты был, тем более — изувеченным?

О, не выходи из комнаты. Танцуй, поймав, боссанову

в пальто на голое тело, в туфлях на босу ногу.

В прихожей пахнет капустой и мазью лыжной.

Ты написал много букв; ещё одна будет лишней.

Не выходи из комнаты. О, пускай только комната

догадывается, как ты выглядишь. И вообще инкогнито

эрго сум, как заметила форме в сердцах субстанция.

Не выходи из комнаты! На улице, чай, не Франция.

Не будь дураком! Будь тем, чем другие не были.

Не выходи из комнаты! То есть дай волю мебели,

слейся лицом с обоями. Запрись и забаррикадируйся

шкафом от хроноса, космоса, эроса, расы, вируса.

We are going to analyze the poem from point of view the meaning of every line of the poem. It will help us in future research.

Difficulties in understanding the point of the poem we can find in the very first line. Just a few people know that Brodsky doesn't advise us to go out into the street but to go out into the corridor of communal flat (about 40 percent of flats in Leningrad were communal). References to this topic have taken place during the poem.

"The Sun" and "The Shipka" are brands of Bulgarian cigarettes. They had the same price, but different treasure. This wordplay can be understood in another way. Why would you need sunlight if you have cigarettes?

The first reference of Soviet atmosphere turns up in the third and the fourth lines of the first verse like “happy clucks'' of neighbours, “restroom” in the corridor.

In the first verse, Brodsky advises to refuse taking a taxi and to kick a girl. Then, we see the topic of the communal corridor again. It ends by the counter, maybe of electricity or water but maybe of life.

The next verse tells us that corridor can make us maimed. There are also several points of view: the hall can be maimed and after visiting this place a person returns from injury (из увечий) or the hall makes a person maimed.

Bossanova in the fourth verse is the dance. The line about a coat on a naked body and shoes on bare feet marks the poverty of lyrics’ character. The smell of ski grease and cabbage are special symbols of the communal flat. The cabbage represents money and the ski grease symbolizes an unusual kind of transport. “Extra letter” is like an extra year for a person whose interests are limited on a chair and a cupboard.

“Incognito ergo sum been said rashly to form by substance”, - in this line, Brodsky gives an imitation of Dekarts’ aphorism “Cōgitō ergō sum” (lat. I am thinking, therefore I am). The poet says that ‘I am, because I’m unknown’. The next wordplay is in the line “На улице, чай, не Франция”. “Чай” in Russian language means drinking and old-slang word (means ‘sort of’). So we can understand it from 2 points of view.

At the end of the poem, Brodsky said that in conclusion you must differ from others and merge with the room by locking chronos, cosmos, virus, eros, race.

Let’s make up a comparison table:

| **The phrase** | **Understanding in a common point** | **Understanding in a philosophical point** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Не выходи из комнаты, не совершай ошибку. | The room and the corridor are in the communal flat. | The room can mean Brodsky’s exile or his writing for the desk drawer. The corridor means moving to another country. |
| Зачем тебе Солнце, если ты куришь Шипку? | “Sun” and “Shipka” are brands of Bulgarian cigarettes. | Sun - sunlight. “Shipka” are cigarettes. |
| За дверью бессмысленно всё, особенно — возглас счастья.  Только в уборную — и сразу же возвращайся. | The unusual happy clucks, the door, the restroom are references of Soviet atmosphere. | Lyric character lives in his own world. Happy clucks are outside this world. The door is a portal from unloved Soviet life to abroad. Restroom can mean just a trip abroad, because he must come back. |
| О, не выходи из комнаты, не вызывай мотора. | “мотор” - taxi. | “мотор” - kind of transport which can move him out of exile or abroad. |
| Потому что пространство сделано из коридора  и кончается счётчиком. | the communal corridor ends by the counter, maybe of electricity or water. | the corridor is a vital way and the counter is the counter of life. |
| В прихожей пахнет капустой и мазью лыжной. | the smell of ski grease and cabbage are symbols of the communal flat. | the cabbage represents money and the ski grease symbolizes an unusual kind of transport. |
| Ты написал много букв; ещё одна будет лишней. | the liric character is writing and the author advises him to stop doing it because it is enough. | “extra letter” is like an extra year for a person whose interests are limited on a chair and a cupboard. |
| И вообще инкогнито  эрго сум, как заметила форме в сердцах субстанция. | Brodsky gives an imitation of Dekarts’ aphorism “Cōgitō ergō sum” (lat. I am thinking, therefore I am). | The poet means ‘I am because I’m unknown’. |
| Не выходи из комнаты! На улице, чай, не Франция. | “чай” is tea. | “чай” is an old-slang word (means ‘sort of’). |

In the course of the poem, Brodsky repeats the phrase “Don’t leave the room”. He wants to compel us to follow this specific rule.

In conclusion, this poem includes a lot of metaphors, wordplays, speech figures of Russian language and other features. Accordingly, the poem ‘Don’t leave the room’ by Brodsry is very hard in translation.

Compositionally, throughout the poem, Brodsky uses a pair type of rhyme. In the second verse fourth line there are two rhymes (“разевая” - “раздевая”).

**2.2 Defining the hardest lines to translation.**

We have defined the 7 hardest lines:

1. “Только в уборную — и сразу же возвращайся”
2. “Танцуй, поймав, боссанову”
3. “В прихожей пахнет капустой и мазью лыжной”
4. “И вообще инкогнито эрго сум, как заметила форме в сердцах субстанция”
5. “На улице, чай, не Франция”
6. “То есть дай волю мебели, слейся лицом с обоями”
7. “Запрись и забаррикадируйся шкафом от хроноса, космоса, эроса, расы, вируса”.

We think that these lines are more difficult to translate for a number of reasons. Firstly, there are a lot of metaphors and language features in them. Secondly, there are many words which can be translated in different ways. We explain that in Chapter 2.2.

**CHAPTER III**

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In this chapter, we will analyse two translations of the poem and compare them.

*The first one* by Psychonaut 4:

Don’t leave the room, make no mistake.

You need no Sun, just more cigarettes to take.

Outside all is pointless, especially bliss and pain.

Go to the bathroom and come back again.

Oh, don't leave the room, don't call the motor.

Because the space is made of the corridor

Which ends with a counter. And if comes alive

your sweetheart, cast her out, just don’t connive.

Don't leave the room; think you're caught a cold.

What can be more interesting than a chair and a wall?

What for to go out and get back in the night

the same as you were but highly maimed?

Don't leave the room; dance, catching the jazz heat,

Wearing a coat on naked body, with shoes on bare feet.

The hallway smells like ski grease and cabbage.

You’ve written a lot of letters; one more will be overmuch.

Don't leave the room. Oh, let solely room

guess how you look like. Incognito ergo sum

been said rashly to form by substance.

Don't leave the room! Out, there is not France.

Don't be a fool! Be what others were not, whether sure.

Don't leave the room! Give vent to furniture,

Blend in with the wallpapers. In any case,

isolate thyself from chronos, cosmos, virus, eros, race.

*The second* one by Daniel Veisbort:

Don't leave the room, don’t make the mistake and run.

If you smoke Shipkas, why do you need Suns?

Things are silly out there, especially the happy clucks.

Just go to the john, and come right back.

Oh, don’t leave the room, don’t ring for a car.

Because space consists of a corridor

And ends with a counter. And should a floozy slip in,

Flashing her teeth, make her scram without stripping.

Don’t leave the room, feign that you’ve caught a chill.

What could be more fun than four walls and a chair?

Why leave this place only to come back late in

The evening same as you were, moreover, mutilated?

Oh, don’t leave the room. Dance the bossa nova

In shoes but no socks, a coat over your naked bod.

The hallway reeks of ski wax and cabbage.

You wrote a lot of letters: one more would be too much.

Don’t leave the room. Oh, just let the room imagine

What you look like. And generally, incognito

Ergo sum, as form was told in anger by substance.

Don’t leave the room! Methinks out there it ain’t France.

Don’t be a fool! Don’t be like the others.

Don’t leave the room! I.e., let the furniture have its druthers,

Lock up and let the armoire.

Keep chronos, cosmos, eros, race, and virus from getting in the door.

We use the hardest lines of the original poem (which defined in the chapter 2) to compare it with translations. Let’s make up the comparison table to analyse and compare the translated poems with the original one.

| **Original version** | **The translation by \_\_ native speaker** | **The translation by \_\_ native speaker** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Только в уборную — и сразу же возвращайся. | Go to the bathroom and come back again. | Just go to the john, and come right back. |
| The word “уборная” is translated as “bathroom” and “john”. In this case, more appropriate the second version, because john is something necessary for life. | | |
| Танцуй, поймав, боссанову... | dance, catching the jazz heat | Dance the bossa nova. |
| The first version more distinctly grasps the mood of the liric character due to the word “catching”. The author tells us not to dance bossa nova, but to catch the bossa nova. However, the word “ jazz heat” don’t convey the whole point, because Bossa nova isn’t only jazz dancing, but Brazilian folklore too. Therefore, neither \_\_\_ native translator nor \_\_\_ native translator translated this line correctly. | | |
| В прихожей пахнет капустой и мазью лыжной. | The hallway smells like ski grease and cabbage. | The hallway reeks of ski wax and cabbage. |
| The word “reek” means to have a strong bad smell (вонять), but Brodsky write “пахнуть”, so the word “smell” is more appropriate. | | |
| И вообще инкогнито  эрго сум, как заметила форме в сердцах субстанция. | Incognito ergo sum  been said rashly to form by substance. | And generally, incognito  Ergo sum, as form was told in anger by substance. |
| In this line the second version is more convenient for reading. It conveys the meaning better than the first one. | | |
| На улице, чай, не Франция. | Out, there is not France. | Methinks out there it ain’t France. |
| In the first translation there is a statement that out of the room isn’t France. In the second one there is just surmise. The first one is more appropriate, because Brodsky write that outside exactly is not France. | | |
| То есть дай волю мебели,  слейся лицом с обоями. | Give vent to furniture,  Blend in with the wallpapers. | I.e., let the furniture have its druthers, |
| The reduction in the second version isn’t pertinantly, because it contradicts the style of the author. In the second one there aren't any words about wallpapers. Due to these facts, the first one is more correct. | | |
| Запрись и забаррикадируйся  шкафом от хроноса, космоса, эроса, расы, вируса. | In any case,  isolate thyself from chronos, cosmos, virus, eros, race. | Lock up and let the armoire  Keep chronos, cosmos, eros, race, and virus from getting in the door. |
| In spite of the fact that in the first translation there is no mention about the armoire, this one is more correct than the second one, because it violates the meaning of the line. | | |

As for rhymes, in the first translation the pair type of rhyme is kept. However, in the second one it’s violated (in the third, fourth and fifth verses). Moreover, there aren’t rhymes (in the third, fourth and fifth verses too).

Evaluating translations according to the criteria from the Chapter 1.2:

1. *In David Graf’s* translation the translator used the same type of rhyme as Brodsky used. Division into the paragraphes is right.

*In Daniel Veisbort’s* translation there are some violations in rhymes. Division into the paragraphes is right.

1. The comparison table shows that *in David Graf’s translation* the meaning conveys better.
2. *David Graf* violated the word order.

*Daniel Veisbort’s* used the reduction and violated the word order.

As a result, the first translation is more understandable and convenient for reading.

**CONCLUSION**

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In our research, we have analyzed different translations of the poem "Don't leave the room" by I. Brodsky. The goal of our research was to compare translations by Russian native speaker and by English native speaker of the poem "Don't leave the room" by I. Brodsky and to analyze which one is more convenient for reading. Objectives were:

1. To analyze literary sources on the topic of translation;
2. To identify the translation comparison options;
3. To analyze the poem;
4. To compare translations of the poem with the original poem;
5. To analyze translations.

After comparing translations by Russian native speaker and English native speaker, we have defined that the first one is more convenient for reading and understandable.

Our goal and objectives are accomplished.

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