

Research Notes

CUJHSS, 2018; 12/1-2 (double issue): 125-134
Submitted: December 14, 2018
Accepted: December 20, 2018
Research Note

Approaches to Translating Poetical Prose Şiirsel Düzyazı Çevirisine Yaklaşımlar

Alexander Yemets
Khmelnysky National University, Ukraine

Abstract

Literary translation involves translating prose, poetry, and drama. Poetical prose is a special type of prose which is associated with emotions, images, romantic narratives. Prose can be called poetical from the linguistic point of view if several devices of the text organization are used: extended metaphors, intertextual allusions, text paradigmization (W. Schmid). In this paper the emphasis is made on another device of prose poeticalness—stylistic convergence. It can be considered the most foregrounded device as convergence involves the combination of different stylistic devices. Such concentration creates difficulties in translation. This paper concentrates on determining the ways of rendering stylistic convergence as a device of poeticalness in the short stories of such famous British and American writers as O. Wilde, K. Chopin, D. Thomas, as well as in modern flash fiction stories. The conclusions are made concerning the structure of convergences, and the Ukrainian translations of the fragments of poetical prose are suggested. The most efficient translation strategies of rendering metaphors and alliteration (in classical prose) and oxymoronic phrases and play of words (in flash fiction) are formulated. The prospects of research of poetical prose translation are suggested.

Keywords: Poetical prose, translation, Schmid, Wilde, Chopin, Thomas.

Öz

Edebiyat çevirisi düz yazı, şiir ve tiyatro eserlerinin çevirisini kapsar. Şiirsel düzyazı duyguların, imgelerin ve romantik anlatıların yer aldığı özel bir düzyazı türüdür. Dilbilimsel bakış açısıyla yaklaşıldığında, bir düzyazının şiirsel olabilmesi için metnin yapısında açılmış metaforlar, metinlerarası göndermeler ve metnin diziselleştirilmesi (W. Schmid) gibi birtakım araçlar kullanılmış olmalıdır. Bu makalede ise, bir başka şiirsel düzyazı aracı olan “biçimsel benzeşim” üzerine yoğunlaşmıştır. Çeşitli biçem araçlarını bir arada bulundurduğu için diğer araçlara kıyasla benzeşime daha büyük bir önem verildiği söylenebilir. Ancak bu durum çeviride zorluklar yaratmaktadır. Bu makale, günümüz çok-kısa öykülerinin yanı sıra, O. Wilde, K. Chopin ve D. Thomas gibi tanınmış İngiliz ve Amerikalı yazarların kısa hikayelerinde biçimsel benzeşimin bir şiirsellik aracı olarak ne şekillerde kullanıldığını saptamaya odaklanmaktadır. Makalede, benzeşmelerin yapısı belirlenmekte ve şiirsel düzyazıların kısım kısım Ukraynaca çevirileri verilmektedir. (Klasik düzyazı metinlerinin içerisindeki) metaforların ve aliterasyonların yanı sıra

(çok-kısa öykülerin içerisindeki) zıtlık oluşturan tümceler ve sözcük oyunlarının nasıl aktarılması gerektiğine dair en etkili çeviri stratejileri belirlenmektedir. Ayrıca, şiirsel düzyazı çevirisinin araştırılmasına ilişkin görüşler önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Şiirsel düzyazı, çeviri, Schmid, Wilde, Chopin, Thomas.

Introduction

Translation of literary texts, or literary translation, is known to include translation of poetry, translation of prose, and translation of drama. As distinct from texts of other styles, literary texts are characterized by peculiar features. Such features involve different types of foregrounding (parallelism, neologisms, metaphors), rhythm, and emotional character of narration. Theo Hermans singles out such peculiarities of literary text as foregrounding of language, the interdependence of different levels of linguistic organization, the perception of texts as both aesthetic objects and intertextual or self-reflexive constructs (79). The majority of linguists (R. Jakobson, J. Slavinsky, T. Hermans) agree that in literary texts the focus is on the message, not on the content. Klaudia Bednarova-Gibova justly states that “the most important feature of a literary work of art is that it is a bearer of an aesthetic function” (29).

The dominance of aesthetic function in prose and poetry poses a question about the similarities and differences between these two genres. The opposition of these two forms of verbal art is not absolute; the development of these genres involves their interconnection and mutual influence. As Yury Tynyanov states, the introduction of prose principles into poems and the introduction of poetical principles into prose enriches prose and poetry with a new sense (55). Thus, poetry and prose have peculiar intermediate forms.

One of such forms is poetical prose (or poetry in prose). The word “poetical” in relation to prose texts has actually become a catchword. At the same time, poeticalness is one of the major notions of poetics. Roman Jakobson regarded poetics as an integral part of linguistics (350). His definition of poetics proceeds from the role of the poetic function—poetics is defined as that part of linguistics which treats poetic function in its relationship to other functions of language (359). Thus, the dominance of poetic function in the literary text can be a sign of poetical text.

The aim of this paper is to determine the features of poeticalness in prose texts and to reveal the strategies and techniques of translating poetical prose. The principles of research consisted of choosing the most foregrounded text fragments of the classical texts by the British and American writers (O. Wilde, K. Chopin, D. Thomas) as well as the contemporary flash fiction stories. The selected short stories (fairy tales) have been translated by the well-known Ukrainian translators. The novelty of this investigation lies in the fact that there has not been detailed

analysis of poetical prose in the British and American literature, to say nothing of the devices of translating poetical prose.

Prose Poeticalness

From linguistic point of view the problem of prose poeticalness was investigated by the German Scholar Wolf Schmid. He defined prose poeticalness as the introduction of poetical features into a prose with the help of three main devices of text organization, such as: a) the introduction of mythical thinking into the text and the extension of tropes; b) the text paradigmization; c) the use of intertextual allusions (210-214). Mythical, or as it is traditionally called, mythological thinking is realized by means of tropes, in particular anthropomorphic metaphors. The paradigmization of a literary text involves the creation of the network of similarities (parallelism) or oppositions (antithesis), which is so typical for poetical texts. The use of intertextual allusions, especially systematic, makes a text polysemantic. At the same time, the two devices—the introduction of mythological thinking and the use of intertextual allusions—often overlap and even coincide, if the author refers to the Greek, Roman or Celtic mythology, to the Biblical stories to fairy tales. The example can be “The Martian Chronicles” by Ray Bradbury.

My investigation of the short stories by the British poet and prose writer Dylan Thomas and the American writer Kate Chopin resulted in the formulation of other devices of prose poeticalness. In my monograph, *Investigating Poeticalness of Prose*, I suggested that the most foregrounded device of poeticalness is stylistic convergence (9-10). According to Michael Riffaterre, stylistic convergence means the accumulation of different stylistic devices which add expressiveness to each other (172). On the one hand, convergence is an important trigger (signal) of pragmatically oriented information. On the other hand, it is generally recognized that the fragments with stylistic convergence are not easy to reproduce in the target text (TT), as the translator should take into account phonetical, tropeic, syntactical expressive means. Stylistic convergences are characteristic of short stories by V. Wolfe, D. Thomas, the fairy tales by O. Wilde and of the prose texts of such modern writers as John Updike, and Ray Bradbury.

Phonetic stylistic devices can be a component of stylistic convergence, but more frequently in poetry. The use of rhythm in prose can also create poeticalness, especially due to parallel constructions. Poeticalness can be emphasized when the author includes poems in his/her prose texts, as in the stories by D. Thomas, and R. Bradbury.

Prose poeticalness as the principle of literary text organization involves the foregrounding of some devices (dominant elements) and the deformation of others (Tynyanov 277). As a whole, poetical prose is such prose where some

devices of poeticalness are realized. Naturally, if the story is long, only some fragments can be pieces of poetical prose. A very expressive example of interaction of several devices of poeticalness is the paragraph from the story “The Visitor” by Dylan Thomas:

The candles must not be blown out, he thought. There must be light, light, light. All day and all night the three candles, like three girls, must flush over my bed. These three girls must shelter me. (26)

First of all, the extended metaphor *candles-girls* reveals the introduction of mythological thinking, but the mythology of modern times. The anthropomorphic metaphor used here represents the metaphoric paradigm of the twentieth century. Alliteration as a most typical phonetic stylistic device is used in this fragment 13 times in semantically important words, *light, girls, candles, blush*. The phonetic organization of the paragraph creates semantic unity and, at the same time, helps to express the idea of light as something very important and spiritual. The major device of prose poeticalness realized here is stylistic convergence which foregrounds the passage and creates a considerable emotional effect.

The contemporary Russian linguist Gregory Solganik suggests the term “prose stanza” (77). The term “stanza” is borrowed from poetics where it signifies a group of verses which constitute metrical, semantic and syntactical unity, a verse paragraph. Correspondingly, the fragments with close semantic and structural unity of sentences in prose texts can be called prose stanzas.

Stages of Investigation

For the investigation of poetical prose texts from the point of view of their translation, I chose one fairy tale “The Star-Child” by Oscar Wilde, two short stories by Kate Chopin “The Night Came Slowly” and “A Harbinger,” two short stories “The Dress” and “A Story” by Dylan Thomas, the texts by modern writers written after the year 2000—“Oliver’s Evolution” by John Updike, “My Date with Neanderthal Woman” by David Galef, “Bullhead” by Leigh Wilson. Certainly, such choice was caused by the retrospective reading and analysis of the texts of these authors.

The investigation revealed that the major device of poeticalness in these stories is stylistic convergence. In classical texts (O. Wilde, D. Thomas) convergences spread to several prose stanzas, while in modern fiction only one paragraph, usually a final paragraph, contained stylistic convergence. Text paradigmaticization as a device of prose poeticalness was not so foregrounded, but it played an important role in the fairy tale “The Star-Child” by O. Wilde, in the stories “The Night Came Slowly” by K. Chopin and “My Date with Neanderthal Woman” by David Galef.

Until the present moment, no comprehensive investigations on rendering poeticalness of prose in translation have been made. Though different aspects of

translating original metaphors, including extended metaphors, have been deeply analyzed and formulated (Newmark 88-91). The translation of stylistically colored lexical units has received much attention. At the same time, each device of prose poeticalness is a complex phenomenon and requires systematic analysis for translation. I tried to elaborate the methodology of translating poetical prose, step by step.

The first stage involves determining the device(s) of prose poeticalness in the given text. As it was previously mentioned, only some (or one) devices can be foregrounded. The second stage consists in characterizing the language units which are used to create the poeticalness effect. The third stage involves choosing the necessary techniques for translating the language units of poeticalness (metaphors, hyperboles, epithets, sound repetitions, etc.). The fourth stage is translation proper, when we render the language units in the target text; it could be even literal translation. And the fifth stage presupposes editing the translated fragments taking into account the interconnection and interdependence of the language units which create poeticalness.

One of the best stories by Dylan Thomas “The Dress” is an example of poetical prose. The introductory prose stanza contains stylistic convergence. Here convergence involves extended metaphors and the repetition of phonetic stylistic devices. Here I give two sentences from the paragraph which constitutes the core of the convergence: “But the mist was a mother to him, putting a coat around his shoulders [...]. The mist made him warm; he had the food and the drink of the mist on his lips; and he smiled through her mantle like a cat” (50). The extended anthropomorphic metaphor *mist-mother* unites two semantically distant notions—a natural phenomenon (mist) and a human being (mother). From the context it is clear that the main character is running, wanting to hide from the people who are following him. He is afraid, and when the mist comes from the sky and hides him from the followers, the man feels relieved. That is why the mist seems a mother to him, the mist protects him. In the two sentences an important role belongs to initial alliteration—anaphora, which is repeated in semantically important words 10 times. All in all, in the introductory prose stanza the dominant sound [m] is repeated 29 times. It is characteristic of not only Dylan Thomas, but other prose writers (O. Wilde) because the choice of lexical units for the components of the metaphor, the tenor and the vehicle, is connected with their sound similarity. The repetition of the sounds in the key words creates semantic unity. As Roman Jakobson noted, in poetry similarity in sound form leads to similarity in meaning (372).

Thus, the translation of metaphors should be done as exactly as possible. According to Peter Newmark, one of the basic techniques in rendering original metaphors is reproducing the same image in the target language (TL) (306-307). During our literary translation classes, my senior students translated the first

sentence literally (“Туман був для нього матір’ю”). Some students preferred to translate the metaphoric phrase by a simile which does not contradict to the writer’s idea and the principles of translation (“Туман був для нього як матір”) (like mother). The sound effect seems to be reproduced. However, in the target language (Ukrainian) the word *туман* is of the masculine gender, which contradicts the logic and the metaphoric sense. It is conceptually important to choose the word of the feminine gender for the vehicle (or object) of the metaphor (*mother – матір*). The leitmotif of the story as well as the title reflects the dream of the main character’s meeting with a young woman who will protect and help him. Fortunately, in the Ukrainian translation, the appropriate word synonymous to *туман* was found—it is *імла* which completely corresponds to the lexical and grammatical aspects of the extended metaphor.

The second sentence of the core metaphor could be translated with certain translations, in particular modulation and grammatical substitution: (“Імла зігріла його, нагодувала і напоїла, і він посміхнувся крізь її мантию, як кошеля”). Of course, there are fewer words with alliteration in the target text compared with the source text, but the sound effect was partially retained in three words –імла, посміхнувся, мантия.

Literary translation is such type of activity which involves the translator’s creativity. Daryna Radiyenko, a famous Ukrainian translator of Oscar Wilde’s fairy tales, revealed her talent and creativity in rendering stylistic convergences in the story “The Star-Child”. Like other fairy tales by Wilde, this text is a brilliant example of poetical prose. There are several convergences in this fairy tale, in particular in the introductory prose stanzas (the first page) and later, in the description of the main character:

So the Star-Child was white and delicate as sawn ivory, and his curls were like the rings of the daffodil. His lips, also, were like the petals of a red flower, and his eyes were like violets by a river of pure water and his body like the narcissus of a field where the mower comes not. (Wilde 230)

Similar to the stylistic convergence in the story by Thomas, here convergence as a device of poeticalness includes several tropes, basically five similes which constitute an extended biomorphic metaphor, *boy is a flower*. Here similes also interact with alliterations; the sound [I] is repeated as epiphora in 12 words. Another element of stylistic convergences is realized in this prose stanza in 4 sentences—parallelism: “his curls were like”; “his eyes were like”. Parallelism creates semantic equivalence of sentences, but it also plays an important rhythmic role.

In this fairy tale we can speak about tropeic-phonetic-syntactical convergence, or three-component convergence. In the story “The Dress” the two-component convergence was observed. The more components are used for poeticalness, the more challenging it is to translate. The stylistic convergence in “The Star-Child”

was reproduced into Ukrainian with good skill and talent by D. Radiyenko, At the same time, the creative translator made small changes in the target text:

Отже Хлопчик-Зірка був білолиций і стрункий, мов статуя зі слонової кістки, а його кучері були золотисті, мов завитки гіацинту. Його ніжні вуста були наче пелюстки червоної троянди, а очі – мов фіалки на березі тихої річки. Він був схожий на дикий нарцис, що вільно росте у нескошеному полі (Radiyenko 232; Wilde 231).

The translator skillfully reproduced all the metaphoric similes, so typical for Wilde who liked to describe a man's beauty. Also, the sound effect is partially rendered with the same alliteration [I]—"білолиций, пелюстки, фіалки". Moreover, Radiyenko emphasized the effect by choosing other alliterating words: "стрункий, мов статуя"; (slender like statue); "золотисті, мов завитки" (232).

Quite logically, the Ukrainian translator substituted a more general word *flower* by a more specific noun *троянда* (rose), the adjective *pure* (water) by a synonymic word *тиха* (quiet). Only the omission of the word *body* in the target text seems to be not very appropriate as the word is essential in the description of the Star-Child's appearance.

While the stories by Wilde and Thomas contain several stylistic convergences, usually two or three, the short stories by the well-known American writer Kate Chopin include one, or maximum two devices. A very poetical, romantic and somewhat ironic story "A Harbinger" contains a narration of the first love of the young painter Bruno to his model Diantha who posed for him. The text is very short, and the second and third prose stanzas constitute stylistic convergence:

And then there was the gentle Diantha, with hair the color of ripe wheat, who posed for him when he wanted. She was as beautiful as a flower, crisp with morning dew. Her violet eyes were baby-eyes [...] Bruno sighed a good deal over his work that winter. The women he painted were all like mountain-flowers. He tried not to think of sweet-eyed Diantha.

I present here a part of the convergence which includes alliterations (not so numerous, as in the text by Wilde and Thomas) and several similes, metaphors and epithets. The key tropes are biomorphic as the main woman character and other women are compared with mountain flowers. It is interesting to note the symbolic name of the main character—the girl's name Diantha means "divine flower" from the Greek "dios" (God) and "anthos" (flower). The young translator Yuliya Dudchak transcoded the name and gave explication in the footnotes. The name of the girl and the key tropes in the text create semantic unity. The comparison of the girls with mountain flowers can be interpreted in two ways: 1) they are beautiful and unique; 2) they are too difficult to reach. Such associations make the narration even more romantic and poetical.

The biomorphic similes in the text which are the basis of the convergence are rendered exactly by the talented translator Y. Dudchak: "Її краса цвіла неначе

квітка, оми́та ранковою росою; Жінки, зображені на його картинах, були прекрасні, наче гірські квіти” (271-272). In the target text, the transformations are minimal: the grammatical substitution of the adjective *beautiful* by the noun *краса* (beauty) and the addition of the adjective *красиві*. The phonetic aspect of poeticalness is realized by using alliterations with other sounds that create semantic unity of similes in the target text: “Краса цвіла, наче квітка; ранковою росою; чарівні очі” (271).

A very short story “The Night Came Slowly” contains a small, but an expressive stylistic convergence of the metaphoric-phonetic type: “The katydids began their slumber song: they are at it yet. How wise they are. They do not chatter like people. They tell me only: sleep, sleep, sleep. The wind rippled the maple leaves like little warm love thrills” (Chopin 366). The use of anthropomorphic metaphors is a manifestation of the author’s world picture, how she admires the nature, how poetical her stories are. Here the sound effect is created not by repeating the sound [I], but by indirect onomatopoeia (sleep) by which Chopin ascribes the properties of human beings to the object of nature. The onomatopoeic words, “sleep, sleep, sleep” which produce the impression of imitating human speech can be reproduced by literal translation: “Спи, спи, спи”. The brevity and rhythm are similar to the source text. The final sentence of the convergence includes the multiple repetition of the sound [I] combined with the original simile. It is well known that in many languages this sound is associated with positive feelings, with something pleasant, tender, and beautiful. In translation, I rendered the stylistic effect: “Вітер колихав кленове листя, неначе надсилав теплі любовні послання”. In this fragment, the 7-fold alliteration is rendered, only one lexical substitution is made (*thrills* - *послання*).

While the classical British and American short stories contain several devices of poeticalness, the contemporary flash fiction stories involve mainly one device of poeticalness, usually convergence. Convergences can be observed in strong positions—endings of the texts. Flash fiction stories are very short texts, 2-3 pages long. In such texts devices of poeticalness are especially foregrounded. In this paper, I analyze the texts of the collection of stories “Flash Fiction Forward” (2006). All the stories were written after the year 2000.

The text by Leigh Wilson “Bullhead” begins and ends with the same phrase: “Every story is true and a lie” (56). Thus, text paradigmization is partially realized, and such frame repetition creates distant cohesion. But the final paragraph contains a small, but expressive stylistic convergence: “Every story is true and a lie. The true part of this one is: Love and the memory of love can’t be drowned. The lie part is that this is a good thing” (57). This small prose stanza includes oxymoron, antithesis, metaphors of love and parallel construction. Therefore, this convergence can be called tropeic-syntactical. The challenge in translation was rendering the oxymoron *true and a lie*, as it includes two different parts of speech,

and finding a Ukrainian synonym to the word “lie” (брехня). I used two adjectives, “Кожна історія є правдивою і неправдивою водночас” (Every story is true and untrue at the same time), making a grammatical substitution. Thus, the contrast between the two words is not so strong and corresponds to the context—the story of an old woman who still remembers her first love.

Another romantic and poetical text in the collection of flash fiction is “My Date with Neanderthal Woman” by David Galef. The title contains an anachronic and oxymoronic phrase and creates foregrounding. The author tells a fantastic story how the Transworld dating agency arranges a date of a modern man with a Neanderthal woman. Again, just the last prose stanza contains a small but very emotional and expressive stylistic convergence with metaphors, antithesis and parallel structures. One of the translation challenges was to reproduce the play of words: “I like rock music and she likes the music of rocks”. The play of words is a part of antithesis and is based on homonymy. My senior student Inna Protokovska rendered the pun using paronomasia: “Я люблю слухати рок музику, а вона—музику рік” (the music of rivers). In Ukrainian, the play of words and the metaphors, music of rivers, are fully adequate to the original.

Conclusion

Poetical prose is such prose where one or several devices of poeticalness are foregrounded. It does not mean only formal, traditional use of stylistic devices. The texts of poetical prose are usually emotional (Chopin, Wilde, Galef), romantic (Chopin, Wilson), have certain moral (Wilde). Our investigation involves the short stories of only some British and American writers but these authors are outstanding and original writers who influenced the British and American literature.

The conducted research shows that the most foregrounded and efficient device of poeticalness is stylistic convergence. Convergences in the short stories by Chopin, Wilde, Thomas are mainly tropeic-phonetic, with extended metaphors and alliterations. As a rule, in classical stories there are several convergences. The convergences are not big and embrace two-three paragraphs, or prose stanzas. Translating poetical prose involves rendering original anthropomorphic or biomorphic metaphors as adequately as possible. Usually, such tropes are translated literally or with the use of lexical substitutions. In many cases alliterations are rendered by the same phonetic device and, ideally, with the same dominant sound.

Modern flash fiction stories contain mainly one convergence, usually in the ending. The translation difficulties are connected with rendering oxymoronic phrases and play of words. In such cases, synonymic substitutions are possible as

well as compensation by another phonetic (lexical) device like homonymy→paronomasia.

Since there are few investigations of poetical prose translation, this direction of research is very promising. Also, it is connected with “the satisfaction from the text” from reading emotional, romantic, colourful texts, both in the original and in translation.

Works Cited

- Bednarova-Gibova, Klaudia. *Non-Literary and Literary Text in Translation*. Presov University, 2012.
- Hermans, Theo. “Literary Translation.” *A Companion to Translation Studies*. Multilingual Matters, 2007, pp. 77-91.
- Jakobson, Roman. “Linguistics and Poetics.” *Style in Language*. The M. I. T. Press, 1964, pp. 350-377.
- Newmark, Peter. *A Textbook on Translation*. Prentice Hall, 1988.
- Schmid, Wolf. “Prose and Poetry in Povesti Belkina.” *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, vol. 29, no. 2-3, 1987, pp. 210-227.
- Riffaterre, Michael. “Criteria for Stylistic Analysis.” *WORD*, vol. 15, 1, 1959, pp. 154-174. DOI: 10.1080/00437956.1959.11659690.
- Solganik, Gregory. *Syntactic Stylistics* (in Russian). LKI Publishers, 2007.
- Tynyanov, Yuri. *Poetics. History of Literature. Cinema* (in Russian). Sovetsky pisatel, 1977.
- Wilde, Oscar. *The Canterville Ghost* (with parallel Ukrainian text). Folio, 2009.
- Yemets, Alexander. *Investigating Poeticalness of Prose*. Lambert Academic Publishing, 2012.
- . *English Stylistics*. KhNU, 2018.
- Вайлд О. *Кентервільський привид*: переклад Д. Радієнко, Фоліо, 2009.