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Research article

Variation in Diachronic Translation of Bible

Georgy T. Khukhuni[1], Irina I. Valuitseva[2], Anna A. Osipova[3] ✉

[1,2]Moscow Region State University,
Vera Voloshina str., Mytishchi, Russian Federation, 141014

[3]Moscow Pedagogical State University,
1/1, Malaya Pirogovskaya Str., Moscow, Russian Federation, 119991
✉assya@yandex.ru

Abstract. Variation is one of the most commonly used concepts in translatology. To one degree or another, it becomes obvious in an interlingual transfer of texts of various genres; however, first of all, one has to deal with it when translating pieces of fiction (broadly speaking). This becomes especially evident in cases when one and the same source text has several versions in another language (or in other languages). First of all, this applies to the Bible, which surpasses other literary masterpieces in the number of existing translations into different languages and also has the longest tradition of interlingual transfers. Such fact determines the relevance of the subject of this article. Despite a large number of studies on various aspects of the Holy Writ translations, a number of issues related to their variation cannot be considered fully investigated, which makes it possible to speak of the scientific novelty of this article. A few fragments of the versions created in different languages were used as the material for this research, and the method of comparative analysis was applied for their study. The research results lead to the following conclusions: a) the variation in different translations of the selected fragments may be caused by both objective and subjective factors; b) the availability of the so-called "unclarities" in the source text, which allow for different interpretations, leads to significant differences in their representation in the target language; c) the aiming for pragmatic adaptation of the content for a foreign cultural audience in a number of cases entails the replacement of realities, sometimes distorting the actualness shown in the original text; d) modern translations may reflect issues related to political correctness, "an inclusive language", etc., which do not always correspond to the ideology of the source text.

Key words: variation, original, translation, the Bible, diachronic, pragmatic, reality

Introduction

From the middle of the 20th century, the characteristics of the last century as 'the century of translation" used to make frequent appearances, according to E. Cary. And the second half of the 20th century (as well as the first two decades of the 21st century) one could also name the age of the theory of translation taking into consideration a great number of works dealing with translation theory which came out in the period mentioned, and the variety of opinions they are discussing. At present, a few typical conceptions and approaches to translation itself could be found in [1—6] and several other works. We'd remark that a peculiar paradox is still observed in the field. On the one hand, it has already become a commonplace assertion stating that nowadays the English language is the international language of scientific, technical or any other information which makes the lion's share of publications (the figure is usually given up to 80—85%) — thus forming the factor which isn't instrumental either for the translation activity itself or the development of theoretical issues connected with it (except for translating into the global language the rest of 20—15% of those publications that are still appearing contrary to the predominating tendency). Israeli colleagues remark that nowadays "the God couldn't obtain any promotion at any faculty of the Jewish University in Jerusalem <…> if he had the only one publication, and it was not written in English" [4. P. 24—25]. On the other hand, discussions of modern translation theorists rather often reveal the trend to put forward and refer to the postulates running counter to the traditional apprehension of the essence and aims of translation and in particular, concerning interlingual transfer of speech products other than fiction or literary works. At that, they assert that "the translation of fiction is the most favorable material to create subjective, speculative, even radical theories, and non-viability of those could have been easily demonstrated when applying them to more utilitarian texts" [5]. However, when the author of the lines quoted thought it useful to give an example of variation in course of translating a sample, it was namely an abstract of a fiction text translated by a number of translators. Needless to say, that one has to deal with the problem of choice not just translating literary works — but it's hard to contest the fact that this is the very case when more often a researcher disposes a number of translation variations,

and their analysis gives an advantage to clear out these or those manifestations of translational variations on the given material. In this respect, the most indicative ones are the cases when the object of studies entails the texts that weren't just frequently translated, but refer to different epochs, i.e., when the translation is diachronic. And here the absolutely unique examples belong to the Bible translations both as to the number of existing versions (which is permanently growing) and the longevity of tradition of the interlingual transfer (starting from *Septuaginta* created over 2000 years ago). Despite the great and permanently growing number of studies devoted to various aspects of the Holy Writ interlingual translation, there's a number of things concerning the issue we are interested in as they can't be considered completely studied. The present article undertakes an effort to lighten a few of those issues.

Preliminary remarks

Assuming at large the variety and diversity of the second half of the 20th — the beginning of the 21st centuries translation conceptions, and their differences were analyzed not once by both foreign and Russian scholars, many of the conceptions possess one common characteristics though occurring in different forms. It's used to be characterized as a drift from "textual centricity" ([9], [10]), sometimes reaching the thesis of "the subversion of the original (source) text" [2. P. 164] and at first sight, seemingly paradoxical postulate according to which there could exist "a translation without texts translated" [5. P. 211].

In so far, the discussion of the issues named isn't concerned as the aims of this work, we'd confine ourselves to the reference that following the classical theory of the home translation school, the article submitted treats the translation directly as the interligual transformation of a source text into a target text. In course of detecting the reasons specifying variations of the underway transfer, which sometimes lead to rather significant differences between these or other versions, there are taken into consideration those factors which aren't limited just to intertextual issues. In this respect, the L.S. Barkhudarov's postulate (1970-s) seems quite valid, while his conception is sometimes regarded as a kind of the quintessence of the "textual centricity" approach. He qualified the theory of translation as a "macrolinguistics" discipline and emphasized the fact that it couldn't be formed "on the pure linguistic basis without considering extra-linguistic factors, i.e., the phenomena lying beyond the language structure itself, though not directly connected with it" [11. P. 30—31].

As to the momenta concerning the personality of an interlingual mediator, i.e., those momenta having a subjective character to a greater extent, could be attributed to the "macrolinguistic" ones. Many authors wrote about their significant role to choose various means of translation (compare the title of one of the chapters of the book "Translation is a self-portrait of a translator" by

K.I. Chukovskij [12. P. 31]). In the context of the Holy Writ translations some more specific momenta could be added.

Source text: the issue of choice

Normally, the discussion on interlingual transfer issues is started with the pre-translational analysis of a source text, which includes such momenta as gathering information about the text, the characteristics of the source and recipient, the type of the information input, the communicative aim of the translation, the genre of the original text (for more detail, see, in particular, [13. P. 324—332]). When it is referred to Biblical translations, they are preceded by a rather important question, as to the topic of the discussion: what is it that could be considered the original (source) text?

Principally, the question could arise on the basis of the diachronic translation in relation to other ancient texts if they have a few versions, and the "canonicity" of any of them is not universally acknowledged. However, in case of Biblical translations, as the many a century history of their creation shows, in the foreground, there is often advanced such a momentum as *the confessional belonging* of a translator / translators.

The source language of the Old Testament books in full compliance with the ethno-cultural and religious environment where they were created, is the Hebrew (in it in this article, the question of the occurrence of some pieces in Aramaic (Chaldean) is not touched upon), as to the New Testament books, correspondingly, it is Greek (once again, we'd put aside the discussion on their occurrence in the Gospel of St. Matthew of its preceding version in Aramaic). But in reality, the case is rather more complicated. The Hebrew Biblical text existing now — the so-called Masoretic text — was accomplished after the New Testament was translated into Greek which led to the certain rather significant differences between them. And because the momenta of religious confrontation added to the philological debate about the very version itself which has better conserved "the pure, untainted genuine text", so far already in ancient times, the Christian sophists expressed the idea that the Greek translation is "more genuine" than the existing originally Hebrew source text. In particular, St. Augustine (Augustine of Hippo) wrote about it, and he thought that St. Jerome, the Vulgate creator would have hit the right path if to take not the Hebrew but the Greek Septuaginta text as in relation to the Old Testament, it is the most authoritative, reliable source text (Septuaginta interpretum, quod ad Vetus Testamentum attinet, excellit auctoritas) [14. P. 80].

This specific momentum reflected itself in the home tradition of the Bible's translations. It was just the Greek version that the Church Slavonic Bible based itself upon; and nowadays, Metropolitan Ilarion of Volokolamsk emphasized its greatest significance for the Orthodox Church. In particular, he made reference

to the development that "the Septuaginta might be used to the re-creation of the initial genuine New Testament text in those pieces where the standard Hebrew (the so-called Masoretic) text contained errors" [15], at the same time ascertaining that such evaluation doesn't mean neglecting other versions, first of all, the Hebrew one itself. This dualism had an impact on the most authoritative modern Synodical translation firstly published in 1887, which "beyond the liturgy has acquired the status of the universal and even official translation of the Russian Orthodox Church. Consequently, and we continue to quote Metropolitan Ilarion, "There are contradictions and differences between the quotations from the Holy Writ of the Fathers; between the Bible adopted by the Greek Church and the Church Slavonic Bible; between the Church Slavonic texts of the Bible and for the Synodical translation recommended to read at home" [15]. Therefore, in this case, one can prove the vividly expressed translation variations.

If to turn to the Western tradition, there as well the authors confessional belonging could have influenced rather significantly on the choice of the source text, and accordingly, on its interlingual transfer. Thus for quite a long time in the Catholic world, there existed the tradition to recognize as the genuine variation the Latin version of St. Jerome, the author reproached by St. Augustine for the wrong choice of the source text. By the middle of the 19th century R. Knox, widely known as one of the most popular writers of detective novels), turned to it and emphasized that "the genuine Catholic" translation meant for the official use could rely on the Vulgate only (for all official purposes a Bible translation must take the Vulgate as its standard) [16].

However, where the linguistic variation was not traced, and the influence of the confessional factor might not be influential (at least, directly), translation variations couldn't be eliminated. The translations of the New Testament revealed the fact, in particular. The overwhelming majority of home translators rendered the Greek source text. But the occurrence of numerous versions in Greek, the critical review of those is still an ongoing process until now (see, e.g., [17]) bringing out the discrepancies in the target text translated. For example, the Russian reader, acquainted with the Synodic translation text while turning to some new Russian-language Bibles could find that some of their text fragments look different which is noted in corresponding marginalia and comments. Let's confine ourselves just to one example. The "Acts of the Apostles" (28: 16) read, "When we came in Rome, the centurion passed the prisoners to the military commander, and Paul was allowed to live separately with the soldier watching after him", which is similar to the Church Slavonic, «Егда же приидохом в рим, сотник предаде узники воеводе, павлу же повеле пребывати о себе, с соблюдающим его воином». In one of the modern versions published by the Russian Biblical Society [18], the corresponding abstract looks differently,

«Когда же мы прибыли в Рим, Павлу было разрешено снять себе жилье и жить там с охранявшим его воином» (lit.: 'We we arrived in Rome, Paul was allowed to rent a dwelling and live there with the guardian'). However, as the marginalia says, in the number of manuscripts, the phrase in Russian «"центурион передал заключенных префекту преторианской гвардии, а Павлу было разрешено"» (lit.: "the centurion passes the prisoners to the Praefect of the Paetorian Guard, and Paul was excused") [15]. Similar situation is seen in the other modern translation — the so-called "Zaokskaya Bible"; "Some manuscripts add: *and the centurion passed the prisoners to the Praefect of the Paetorian Guard*" [19. P. 1642]. Let's remark that all versions reviewed (and in translations into other languages) explain differently the Greek word of στρατοπεδάρχης, that amounts to another example of translation variability connected with rendering realia.

Unclarity, or "deem places" as the source of variations

While tackling the issues referring to the problem of diachronic translation (long before the term itself was introduced) the majority of authors paid attention at the so-called "deem places" — unclarity in the source text, which either entail different interpretations, sometimes significantly influencing the content on the corresponding text fragment, or containing the units reflecting unknown or not quite clear meaning. Speculations and reasoning on the issue could already be found in classical works by A.F.T. Tytler [20] and W. von Humboldt [21], at this, the solutions proposed by them differ greatly.

In Bible translations, the most well-known example of the kind is the rendering of the Joshua remarkable prophesy (Joshua, 7: 14), and rather often its discussion steps beyond the scope of the prophesy. The Holy Writ translators were exposed to other cases as well, when the source text entertain a possibility of a number of interpretations determining variations to render them. Of late, form this point of view, the text fragment of the "Second Book of the Kings" (12; 31) has attracted attention: it tells how King David acted with the citizens of the ammonite cities. The Jewish tradition and translations into European languages, this is the Second Book of Samuel. The traditional point of view given in the majority of classical versions of the Bible in different languages, including the Synodic translation and the Orthodox Bible of Elizabeth, tells about their torturous execution, in Russian: "положил под пилы, под железные молотилки, под железные топоры и бросил их в обжигательные печи / положи на пилы и на трезубы железны и секиры железны, и превождаше их сквозе пещь плинфяну" (lit: it speaks of iron and fire). However, there are other interpretations. On the one hand, as was remarked, the corresponding fragment of the source text could be interpreted in two ways — both traditionally and as to oblige with forced labour, in Russian: "поставил к пилам, молоткам

и топорам" (lit: 'gave them saws, and hammers, and axes') [22] (for the information about this Bible edition we tender thanks to the Yu.D. Budman, the teacher of the Maimonide Academy of the RGU n.a. A.N. Kosygin). Exactly this variation is most widely spread in modern translations including the new Latin Vulgate version, though some of them make a reserve about the possibility of traditional understanding [19. P. 437]. We'd like to add that basing on the number of representatives of the Jewish tradition, one of the Russian translations, made in Israel proposes one more interpretation, in Russian: «вывел и положил их под пилы и бороны железные, и под железные секиры; и таскали их по кирпичам улиц» [23] (lit.: 'brought them and put under the saws and iron axes; and draw the along the bricks of the streets').

As to the units with unknown/unclear meaning of the source text, it's more often that in diachronic translation, they are detected among the realia translation. The authors of the one of the most widely known English language versions of the Bible of nowadays remarked there is a variety of lexical units — of illness names up to measurement units, — the exact meaning of those couldn't be determined and as a consequence, they could be rendered approximately [24], which makes a vast source of translation variations. There is the well-known dispute dating back to the early Christianity epoch about which plant exactly — an ivy or a pumpkin is mentioned in the Book of Jonah, the Prophet, that caused especially hot discussion between St. Augustine and St. Jerome [25]. As indicative as is the example of the word *кесита*, which is interpreted in various versions — from the ancient times till nowadays — in many different ways: either literally, rendering 'natural original' meaning (a hundred of sheep/lambs), or as a monetary unit or the unit of weight which helped buying a piece of land or one hundred sheep, as the coin/silver tablet bared the engraved image of a sheep, or as an ingot of a proper weight in the form of a sheep (in more detail see: [26]). In some translations one could detect the use of transcription/transliteration (*кесита* / *kesita*) with the comment or marginalia, which mentioned one of the given interpretations.

If in the examples analyzed, the differences in translation are conditioned by the character of the text itself, which provokes translation variations, there are also possible the cases of principally different type, when the source text fragment doesn't contain any ambiguousness or unclarity, but it is re-created differently (rather often with variations wh8ile one of those doesn't coincide with the source material). As a rule, such variation is caused by pragmatic reasons which is particularly seen in translating realia.

Bread, rice or fish? (variations and pragmatic adaptation)

In the 1990-s, K.S. Danelia examining the ancient Georgian versions of the Holy Writ and saying that "the original could contain <…> some parts which in

course of the work of a few translators independent form one another, one couldn't practically except the full coincidence", gave an example of the word collocation "our daily bread" and assigned it to those ones that 'might be rendered as complete equivalents" [27. P. 8].

However, one of the recent works on Bible translation treats especially this very "our daily bread" as an example of quite illustrious translation variation due to lingua-cultural reasons. The author of the work also remarks» that the word *daily* isn't "as trivial as that" paying principle attention to the information about the peoples "whose main traditional alimentation wasn't bread at all. They know what bread is, but don't use bread to name alimentation as a whole". As a consequence, the translation into Chinese introduces "our daily *rice*", and the translation into Aleut, the language of the islanders in the north of the Pacific Ocean use "our daily *fish*". This is the main food of those cultures., the one you can't live without (as against *bread*)" [28].

Without going into detail now, the issue of how such changes having already been theoretically approved ibn the works by E. Nida in mid-20th century, help recipients form an estimate giving any close impression to the reality about the places where the events described in the Holy Writ take place, (especially when referring to *rice*); we'd remark that during the last decades such substitutions are mentioned not only in translations for the Chinese or the Aleutians, but also for the Western world auditorium of recipients. In one of the German versions [29], claiming the closeness to modern readers, Biblical characters self-confidently use meters, kilograms, liters, etc. One can hardly say that for the culture principally based on the Luther Bible being of prime importance during five centuries, traditional measurement realia used in the version mentioned are as alien as bread for the Aleutians. The pragmatic adaptation and accordingly, the use of such variations in translating realia, which could be hardly qualified as functional analogs even conventionally, adjoin the versions where the "smoothing" of cultural lacunas overlaps the tendency to eliminate regional differences as well, — with hope that such tactics helps eliminate or at least soften the rejecting effect on behalf of the translation recipients. The vivid example of the rind could serve "The Oriental Translation", proposed in a number of variations for the recipients confessing Islam (see: [1; 30]). One of the variations is intended for the most conservative recipients and it starts with the words: "Firstly, Allah created heavens and earth" [31]. The Synodic phrase in Russian "Тогда приходит Иисус из Галилеи на Иордан к Иоанну креститься от него" (St. Matthew 3: 13) (lit.: 'Then Jesus comes from Galilee to John to the Jordan River to be baptized by him') correlates with the Russian phrase of «И вот из Галилеи к Иордану пришёл Иса, чтобы пройти обряд погружения в воду у Яхии» (lit.: 'And so Isaiah (Joshua) came from Galilee to the Jordan River to get baptismal service to douse at Yahve'), and so on.

"Politically correct Bible"

In one of the sections of the report mentioned above "On impermissibility of liberal and biased translation", Metropolitan Ilarion speaking about "the practice of modern Western Biblical translations possessing two things unacceptable for the Orthodox consciousness" strongly emphasized the negative attitude to "such "politically correct" versions of the Holy Writ, which contrary to direct meaning of both the Old and New Testament texts try to legitimize be means of admittedly false translations the things that the Bible considered and considers immoral and sinful" [15].

The political correctness phenomenon has actually become of the most evident one and in a way even the dominant feature of the modern Western culture couldn't escape the various-in-form translations of the Holy Writ, as well. Let's remark here that in the report of Metropolitan Ilarion, the principle attention was paid, first of all, to its gender aspect/ It's quite understandable taking into account the influence of "feministic theology" with one of its manifestations to apply the so-called gender-neutral ("inclusive"0 language in course of elaborating the Bible translation versions. This variation abolishes with respect to God, the use of pronouns and nouns, having masculine marker, then there are amplified the text passages speaking about "brothers" with mentioning "sisters" and there are used other means to create the text permeated with "gender equality". Analyzing these versions, th author of the report says, "This phenomenon mostly concerns the Bible translations into English, which traditionally denote "the God" with the pronoun "He" [15]; among the "feminizing" he- or she-translators similar antagonism rouses the use of this pronoun as the general denotation of both men and women, and the authors of one of such versions devoted the large passage to discuss the issue [24. P. VI—VII]. However, one has to admit that the speculation is not limited to the English-speaking world, and for example, the evidence to this is "The bible in correct language" (Bibel in gerechter Sprache) published in Germany; its authors don't disclaim the fact that the Holy Writ actually reflects the patriarchal world and they state that nowadays "the pure philological translation" is inappropriate and it's necessary to proceed from the premise of the denotations which could have been used "in our today's language" (in unserer heutigen Sprache) [32. P. 10]. Approximately similar standpoint is shared by the creators of "The Good News Bible" (Gute Nachricht Bibel), exercising the E. Nida's principle of "demonic equivalence" which sometimes looks like the calque of the corresponding English language version. Its authors thought it necessary to emphasize specially that it's the first German version to have made visual the significance and role of women as to use the addition mentioned above: "brothers" are amplified with "sisters" in proper passages [33]. If in such cases it's correct to talk about the proper *translation variations* or rather refer to *text substitution* — it's rather disputable issue.

Conclusion

The Bible versions existing in different languages contain a lot of examples of translation variations which is explained by the multiplicity of translations themselves, the long-time tradition of their realization and various orientations of the authors, reflecting both objective (linguistic proper and extra-linguistic) factors, and the momenta of subjective character stipulated by a translator's personality. In this connection, the significant role belongs to the choice of the version that would be used as the original source one, the occurrence of so-called "deem places" in it, i.e. the text fragments supposing various interpretation, and lexical units of non-established or established meanings, as well as pragmatic reasons concerning, first of all, the rendering of the realia of the source text, which sometimes could be substituted as well, In the latest decades, the most significant source of translation variations could be considered the ideas of political correctness previewing the use of the so-called "inclusive language", primarily concerning the gender aspect. As in a number of cases such versions involve the direct deviation from the original source not only from lingua-cultural but also from ideological point of view, so they cause non-unique equivocal reaction to themselves. Consequently, the question concerns the very possibility to qualify such kinds of texts as the manifestation of *translation variations*, but not the conscientious *replacement of both the form and the content of the original source*, in relation to which the proper notion of "translation" becomes doubtful.

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Information about the authors:

Georgy T. Khukhuni, DSc. in Philology, Full Professor, Head of the Department of the Theory of Language and English Studies Moscow Region State University. *The sphere of research* includes Theory and History of Translation, History of Linguistics, Theory of Language. Comparative Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, Psycholinguistics; *e-mail*: khukhuni@mail.ru

Irina I. Valuitseva, DSc. in Philology, Full Professor, Head of the Department of the Theoretical and Applied Linguistics Moscow Region State University. *The sphere of research* includes Theory of Translation, Theory of Language. Comparative Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, Psycholinguistics; *e-mail*: irinaiv-v@yandex.ru

Anna A. Osipova, DSc. in Philology, Full Professor of the Department Translation and Communication of Moscow Pedagogical State University. *The sphere of research* includes Theory and History of Translation, Comparative Linguistics, Teaching Russian as foreign Language; *e-mail*: assya@yandex.ru