TRANSLATION AS A MODE OF INTERPRETATION AND MISINTERPRETATION OF LITERARY DISCOURSE

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The article focuses on the so-called Nadsat, an Argot invented by A. Burgess in his well-known novel A Clockwork Orange. Nadsat identifies the teenagers’ speech that causes plenty of confusion among readers. The confusion becomes visible even in the translations of the Argot both into Russian and into Armenian that very often leads to the target readers’ misunderstanding. The aim of the article is to distinguish a number of linguistic peculiarities of Nadsat in A. Burgess’ A Clockwork Orange and to specify the translation distinctions in the target texts, which are definitely caused by certain misinterpretation of the ST cognitive code. Translation itself may be identified as a transaction operation, when the language media specific of one cultural community is transferred into another with definite configurations specific to the other cultural community to meet the target recipients’ expectations with their cultural background, mentality, genetic knowledge and experience.

Key words: dystopian, Nadsat, transformation, modification, misinterpretation, ST cognitive code.

Introduction

Any literary text is a result of a writer’s creative activities based on his/her personal experience, personal views, personal world vision. This is whatever respectively designs the so-called author’s individual manner. This is whatever distinguishes one author from another. This is whatever shapes the language, structure and composition characteristics of any literary style and leads to the individual manner diversity. However, it should be noted that all the mentioned indicators are determined by the influence of the literary tendencies and specific genre features of these tendencies, the historical development and
period of time, respectively the political and social environment the piece of literature is created in.

A. Burgess is ranked among the outstanding British dystopian writers. Dystopian literature is usually defined as a negative reaction to the social and political disorder in a totalitarian society, the chaos and destruction dominating in this world. Different Internet sources suggest five characteristics of dystopian fiction, which may be taken into consideration for any research of this literary trend: government control, environmental destruction, technological control, survival, loss of individualism (What is Dystopian Fiction? 2021; “Dystopia”, 2022).

A rather interesting approach towards dystopia and critical dystopias is provided by a young researcher Jordi Serrano-Muñoz. In his article “Closure in dystopia: Projecting memories of the end of crises in speculative fiction” he writes: “The main trait of critical dystopias is their desire to engage with ongoing conflicts by imagining a parallel present or a potential future where the consequences of today’s ills provoke an undesired outcome for society. … Dystopias offer us a world that, in its spoiled state, exposes imperfection and, therefore, room for change and improvement” (Serrano-Muñoz, 2021, p. 3).

Dystopia as a reaction to Utopia, is characterized by a lack of mercy, a totalitarian governing system and environmental catastrophes, associated with the decline of society. But A. Burgess’ dystopia is rather individual and differs, if compared with other dystopian classics. He does not basically suggest his own solution of the problems the represented society faces; he involves his target reader into the process of revealing the conflict in between the state and the individual and coming to a certain solution of the defects and the harm such a society generates. His dystopia gets new characteristics which deviate from the genre norms and lead to a new comprehension and reproduction of its artistic manifestation. His novel A Clockwork Orange is identified as a dystopian satirical black comedy characterized by such genre specific features as near-future society with its chaos, disorder, catastrophes, disintegration and destruction.

The most vivid and colorful specificity of the novel is the teenagers’ Argot, which determines its linguistic spectrum and creates a definite stylistic value, so unique and distinctive. The so-called Nadsat in A Clockwork Orange is a specific Argot created by the author to identify a certain group of teenagers due to their worldview, intellect, range of interests and troubles.
The aim of the present article is to distinguish a number of linguistic peculiarities of Nadsat in A. Burgess’ *A Clockwork Orange* and to specify the translation distinctions in the target texts, which are definitely caused by certain misinterpretation of the ST cognitive code.

**Nadsat as a specific means of subculture identification**

To reflect the specific properties of the fictional youth subculture with its relevant language arsenal developed in the novel, A. Burgess invented a special Argot, the so-called Nadsat, which identifies the teenagers’ speech that causes plenty of confusion among readers. The confusion becomes visible even in the translations of the Argot both into Russian and into Armenian that very often leads to the target readers’ misunderstanding.

Nadsat is characterized by different features. The most significant among them is the use of Russian origin words, which are transmitted into English, such as *bitva*, *carmen*, *nozh*. Another peculiarity specifying the Argot in the novel is the use of English endings and affixes together with Russian origin words, thus applying English grammatical elements to the Russian forms like *razrezed*, *interesovatted*, *slooshying*, *undervesches*, or blending of Russian and English words as in *glaz lids* (Russian глаз + English lids). All the Nadsat elements are transmitted in Latin letters, though rather often the author combines the methods of transcription and transliteration and applies phonemic and graphical rules peculiar to the English language as double *e* (*ee*) for Russian *u* (*scoteena*, *cheest*), double *o* (*oo*) for Russian *y* (*minoota*, *pooshka*, *bezoomny*, *zoob*), *ew* for Russian *io* (*lewdiess*), double *s* (*ss*) for Russian *c* (*goloss*), *k* for Russian *x* (*brooko*, *ooko*) and so on.

Though, it should be noted that the author is not always consistent in keeping the rules established by himself for the Nadsat. Thus, in the adjective *bolshy* (big) A. Burgess does not keep the digraph *oy* as an ending like in *bolnoy* (sick), *dorogoy* (dear) peculiar to Russian masculine adjectives (*-ой* большоый, дорогоый, больноый, молодоый) and the version *bolshy* does not correspond to Russian *bolshoy* as *bolnoy*, *molodoy* and *dorogoy* do. In case with *goober* the author adds ending *-er* whereas in Russian it is *губалгубы* and sounds as *goobalgooby*. The digraph *oo* is used for Russian *y*, but A. Burgess does not do the same with the Russian sounds *a* or *ы*, instead, he adds an unknown ending *-er* for Russian *губалгубы*. Once he uses double *t* (*tt*) for Russian *т* (*govorett* – speak or talk), in some other ones he does not keep it (*interesovat* – to interest, *kopat* – to dig). If follow the rules set by A. Burgess,
there should be *scoteena* instead of *scotenna* (cow) as in *shoom* (noise), *shoot* (fool).

Anyhow, even the deviations from the certain phonemic or graphical rules established by the author himself for the newly invented Argot, should have been considered by a translator and the TT should include all the specific language features of the ST in order to keep Nadsat as it was created in the original.

**Transformation modifications of Nadsat in Russian and Armenian translations**

Viewed from the perspective of cultural translation Nadsat may be determined as the tool of representing a definite subculture mode of thinking, lifestyle, behavior, relationship. Translation as a means of converting one code into another respectively presupposes such a transaction operation, when the language media specific of one cultural community is transferred into another with definite configurations specific to the other cultural community to meet the target recipients’ expectations with their cultural background, mentality, genetic knowledge and experience. Translation itself is a process of reinterpretation of a certain code created by someone in a definite situation, at a definite period of time, with definite intention and for a definite readership. Unfortunately, sometimes translation becomes unintentionally or even intentionally a tool of misinterpretation of the ST, which is mostly peculiar to the historical and political discourse and leads to distortion of facts. Although, in certain situations it occurs in a literary text translation because of misunderstanding of the ST cognitive code or the author’s intention.

There exist a great deal of researches of Nadsat and its translation into different languages (Benet, 2020; Eremeeva & Ostapenko, 2021; Ginter, 2003; Koval, 2018; etc.). This article focuses basically on the comparative analysis of E. Sinelshchikov’s and V. Boshnjak’s translations of Nadsat into Russian and Z. Boyadgyan’s translation into Armenian to identify which of them may be really considered a TL Nadsat.

The examination of Nadsat in the Armenian and one of the Russian translations (E. Sinelshchikov’s translation) reveals a lot of misinterpretation of the Argot in both versions. It is hard to declare whether the misinterpretation is a result of misunderstanding of the ST elements, or it is done intentionally. Nonetheless, the fact is that Nadsat has undergone certain modifications and as a result it has been damaged and is not retained as such in the translated
versions. When the two Russian translations are compared, one can easily see that V. Boshnjak’s translation is much more successful than the other one. That is because a definite approach towards Nadsat has been adopted by him due to his specific vision of the ST author’s systemic implementation of the linguistic elements peculiar to the speech of the teenagers’ group described in the novel. In this version a definite scope of language use is created by the translator similar to the ST and its adequacy is achieved by transmitting the majority of Russian origin words in Latin letters, and if A. Burgess configurated them with English endings and affixes, V. Boshnjak did the same with Russian auxiliary elements peculiar to the TL, such as 

тут же мелкую кисю отпустили, с плачущей девочкой, заскочил их, и-и-и-асть его tseppju по glazzjam and so on. Thus, V. Boshnjak’s translation keeps the linguistic features specific to the ST and the author’s individual manner of implementing the fictional Argot “Nadsat”.

E. Sinelshchikov’s translation is not so effective. The use of American slang elements and a rather rude vocabulary peculiar to Russian non-standard norms leads to misinterpretation and deformation of Nadsat. The same mix of different approaches towards the transformation of the ST elements into the TT occurs in the Armenian translation. The analysis will focus basically on the comparison of E. Sinelshchikov’s and V. Boshnjak’s translations of Nadsat into Russian and Z. Boyadgyan’s translation into Armenian.

As it was mentioned above, one of the striking features of the target texts is the difference in approaches towards the transformation of the ST elements into the target texts. It is rather well illustrated in the example below.

*There was me, that is Alex, and my three droogs, that is Pete, Georgie, and Dim. Dim being really dim, and we sat in the Korova Milkbar making up our rassoodocks what to do with the evening, a flip dark chill winter bastard though dry. The Korova Milkbar was a milk-plus mesto, and you may, O my brothers, have forgotten what these mestos were like, things changing so skorry these days and everybody very quick to forget, newspapers not being read much neither. Well, what they sold there was milk plus something else. They had no license for selling liquor, but there was no law yet against prodding some of the new veshches which they used to put into the old moloko, so you could peet it with vellocet or*
synthemesc or drencrom or one or two other veschches which would give you a nice quiet horrorshow fifteen minutes admiring Bog and All His Holy Angels and Saints in your left shoe with lights bursting all over your mozg. Or you could peet milk with knives in it, as we used to say, and this would sharpen you up and make you ready for a bit of dirty twenty-to-one, and that was what we were peeting this evening I'm starting off the story with. (Burgess, 2016, pp.16-17)

First it should be noted that all the rules invented by the ST author are accurately retained and no deviation can be registered in this particular extract. The Russian origin words droog, korova (корова), rassoodock (рассудок), mesto (место), skorry (скорый), veschch (вещь), moloko (молоко), peet (пить), horrorshow (хорошо), Bog (Бог), mozg (мозг) are transmitted by Latin letters. Besides, the English suffixes -s of plural and -ing of continuous forms remain unchanged when adopted by the author for the newly invented Argot: droogs, rassoodocks, mestos, veschches, peeting.

One can easily notice that V. Boshnjak’s translation stands rather close to the ST.
shtutshed, от которых идет тихий baldiozh, и ты минут пятнадцать чувствуешь, что сам Господь Бог со всем его святым воинством сидит у тебя в левом ботинке, а сквозь mozg проскакивают искры и фейерверки. Ещё можно было пить «молоко с ножами», как это у нас называлось, от него шел tortsh, и хотелось dratsing, хотелось gasitt кого-нибудь по полной программе, одного всей kodloi, а в тот вечер, с которого я начал свой рассказ, мы как раз это самое и пили. (Burgess, 2011)

As the author of the ST, the translator has created his own scope of Nadsat. Concerning the vocabulary, he has transmitted several Russian origin words in Latin letters like drug, Korova, pitt, etc. Besides, he used some semantic synonyms again in Latin letters instead of the SL elements, as mozgoi instead of SL rassoodocks, zavedenije instead of SL mesto, shtuchka instead of SL veschch, baldiozh instead of SL horrorshow. Furthermore, the translator invented several new words again in Latin letters, which are missing in the ST: glupyi, plevatt, tortsh, dratsing, kodla. The other feature of Russian Nadsat refers the grammar rules applied to the elements used in Latin letters. As the author of the ST configured the Russian origin words with English endings and affixes, the translator did the same with Russian auxiliary elements peculiar to the TL: kodloi, zavedenija, shtutschek. In the extract above only one word falls out of the principles established by the translator. This is dratsing, where the root is of Russian origin драться plus an English suffix -ing as it is in the ST.

The analysis of the extract proves that due to the translation by V. Boshnjak the ST has undergone a number of modifications, but the transformations of Nadsat elements do not lead to misinterpretation of the ST cognitive code. The author’s intention is well-mirrored in the TT and the method of addition does not absolutely influence upon the adequate comprehension of the ST author’s conceptual vision of the fictional subculture and the Argot used by its representatives.

Unfortunately, the vision of the fictional subculture and the Argot used by its representatives undergoes a great deal of modifications in E. Sinelshchikov’s version and does not correspond to the original. The same may be registered in the Armenian translation. Thus, the extract above is translated by E. Sinelshchikov the following way:
Это – я, Алекс, а вон те три ублюдка — мои фрэнды: Пит, Джорджи (он же Джоша) и Кир (Кирилла-дебила). Мы сидим в молочном баре «Коровяка», дринкинг, и токинг, и тин-кинг, что бы такое отметить, чтобы этот прекрасный морозный вечер не пропал даром. «Коровяка» — место обычной нашей тусовки — плейс как плейс, не хуже и не лучше любого другого. Как и везде, здесь серв обалденное синтетическое молоко, насыщенное незаметным белым порошком, который менты и разные там умники из контрольно-инспекционных комиссий никогда не распознают как дурик, если только сами не попробуют. Но они предпочитают вискарь-водяру под одеялом...

Фирменный коровий напиток поистине хороши. После каждой дозы минут пятнадцать видишь небо в алмазах, на котором трахается Бог со своими ангелами, а святые дерутся, решая, кто из них сегодня будет девой Марии...

Я и мои фрэнды как раз заказываем по четвертой поршин. Покеты у нас полны мани, так что отпадает наш обычный эмьюзмент трахнуть по хэду или подрезать какого-нибудь папика и уотч, как он будет свымать в луже собственной блад и юрин, пока мы чистим его карманы. Не надо также пэй визит какой-нибудь старухе еврейке в ее шопе и сажать ее верхом на кассу, выгребая у нее на глазах дневную выручку. Но! Как говорится, мани не главное. Хочется чего-нибудь для души. (Burgess, 1991)

One can easily see that a method of addition is rather often used by the translator. He implements a number of devices, which do not exist in the ST: дринкинг, токинг, плейс как плейс, серв, покеты, мани, эмьюзмент, хэд, уотч, свымать, блад, юрин, пэй визит. These elements are missing in the ST. Besides, if V. Boshnjak’s translation is characterized by the use of the Russian origin words in the similar way the ST author does, transmitting them in Latin letters, E. Sinelshchikov changes them into English words in Russian letters with Russian endings and affixation. Moreover, as it is mentioned in the article by A. Eremeeva and S. Ostapenko, the use of reduced and coarse vocabulary
led to the fact that the content of the text is misrepresented (Eremeeva & Ostapenko, 2021). It may be well illustrated by the following examples:

… три ублюдка, Кирилла-дебила, что бы такое отметить, обалденное синтетическое молоко, на котором трахается Бог со своими ангелами, подрезать какого-нибудь папика, пока мы чистим его карманы, он будет ссывать в луже собственной блад и юрин, дурик, трахнуть по хэду, сажать ее верхом на кассу. (Burgess, 1991)

The difference is seen even in the name of one of Alex’s friends. In the original it sounds Dim and it is the ST author’s idea to name him this way, as the adjective dim is often used to denote something indistinct, vague. The character is like this: Dim being really dim. This is how the ST author identifies Dim. In V. Boshnjak’s translation the name is respectively changed into Tём, with its corresponding explanation within the text причем Тём был и в самом деле парень тёмный, в смысле глупый, where the method of addition in case of глупый is quite motivated, to show the ST author’s reason to name the character this particular way. In E. Sinelshchikov’s translation Dim is renamed Кир with an explanation in brackets Кирилла-дебила. The translator has likely used this version to rhyme the name with дебил – idiot (Кир – дебил), which may be reasonable but not adequate if compared with the ST as here it does not sound so coarse.

In the Armenian version the name becomes Դում with its corresponding explanation Դում էլ ճիշտ որ դդում էր Դում-Դում, which likewise in E. Sinelshchikov’s translation provides a sort of addition, but does not adequately transfer the ST author’s intention and the stylistic quality of the device.
The Armenian translation seems a mix of the Nadsat features adopted by V. Boshnjak and E. Sinelshchikov. The translator does not use any Latin-lettered transformations of Russian origin elements as E. Sinelshchikov does. They all are transmitted in Armenian. Like V. Boshnjak he keeps the ST devices with Armenian affixes and endings: Կառովիկ, դռուգ, մոզգներիս, մեստերը, սկոռուվռազ, շտուկներով, շտուկի, Բոգ, etc. But in case of Կառովիկ the translator adds a diminutive suffix of Armenian origin -իկ like in several other examples (դևուշիկ, բաբուշիկ, դոբրիկ, չուդեսիկ, կլուչիկ) and in սկոռուվռազ a compound adjective is created, where the first part is of Russian origin and the second one of Armenian origin սկոռ + վռազ. What for? Maybe to create Armenian Nadsat? Rather hard to answer. The ST rassoodocks is transferred into մոզգ, Bog – into Բոգ էրկնավոր like in V. Boshnjak’s translation (możg, Господь Бог). But in case with milk with knives V. Boshnjak keeps the original expression translated into Russian молоко с ножами whereas in the Armenian version it is transferred as ասեղնավոր
կաթ (needle-punched milk) with explanatory addition կամ (as we say in our language), which is missing both in the ST and the Russian TT and leads to misinterpretation of the original device.

It is surely not so easy to illustrate all the misinterpretations within the frames of a single example. Nonetheless, a few more inefficient devices of the Armenian version may be proposed: lomtics of black toast – սև հլեբի լոմտիկներ, dedoochka – դեդուշ, choodessny – չուդեսիկ, merzky – մերզոտ, poogly – պուգլիվ, mallshiki – պառնիշներ etc., whereas there exists the letter խ in the Armenian language and instead of հլեբ the translator could have used խլեբ, and the cases with դեդուշ, մերզոտ and պուգլիվ will lead to the Armenian readership misunderstanding.

Conclusion

Thus, the so-called Nadsat invented by A. Burgess in A Clockwork Orange is a specific Argot created by the author to identify basically a certain group of teenagers due to their worldview, intellect, range of interests and troubles. This is the most vivid and colorful specificity of the novel, which determines its linguistic spectrum and creates a definite stylistic value so unique and distinctive. Viewed from the perspective of cultural translation Nadsat may be determined as the tool of representing a definite subculture mode of thinking, lifestyle, behavior, relationship. Unfortunately, translation, as it has been mentioned above, sometimes becomes unintentionally or even intentionally a tool of misinterpretation of the ST, because of misunderstanding of the ST cognitive code or the author’s intention.

The comparative analysis of two Russian versions and the Armenian translation of Nadsat reveals the fact that the latter has undergone certain modifications, and as a result it has been damaged and is not retained as such in the translated versions, though V. Boshnjak’s translation is much more successful than the other two. That is because a definite approach towards Nadsat has been adopted by him due to his specific vision of the ST author’s systemic implementation of the linguistic elements peculiar to the speech of the teenagers’ group described in the novel. In this version a definite scope of language use is created by the translator similar to the ST and its adequacy is achieved by transmitting the majority of Russian origin words in Latin letters, and if A. Burgess configurated them with English endings and affixes, V. Boshnjak did the same with Russian auxiliary elements peculiar to the TL.
Though in V. Boshnjak’s translation the ST has undergone a number of modifications, the transformations of Nadsat elements do not lead to misinterpretation of the ST cognitive code. The author’s intention is well-mirrored in the TT and the method of addition does not absolutely influence upon the adequate comprehension of the ST author’s conceptual vision of the fictional subculture and the Argot used by its representatives.

Unfortunately, the vision of the fictional subculture and the Argot used by its representatives undergoes a great deal of modifications in E. Sinelshchikov’s version and does not correspond to the original. The same may be registered in the Armenian translation. E. Sinelshchikov’s translation is not so effective because of the use of American slang elements and a rather rude vocabulary peculiar to Russian non-standard norms, which lead to misinterpretation and deformation of Nadsat. The same mix of different approaches towards the transformation of the ST elements into the TT occurs in the Armenian translation. Besides, it seems a mix of E. Sinelshchikov’s and V. Boshnjak’s approaches towards Nadsat. Like E. Sinelshchikov the translator does not use any Latin-lettered transformations of Russian origin elements. They all are transmitted in Armenian. Like V. Boshnjak he keeps the ST devices with Armenian affixes and endings.

The translation techniques more often used by all the three translators are primarily transcription, transliteration, calque and addition.

One can definitely conclude that among the three versions analyzed in the article, V. Boshnjak’s translation is the best, it is rather accurately done and transmits properly the ST author’s fictional code, linguistic indicators, intention and the communicative functional properties of the ST. This is the version which can be exactly termed as “Russian Nadsat”.

References

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Sources of Data


Սույն համար գրվել է չորս լեզուներում, իսկ ամենամեծ համակարգերում կարող է օգտագործվել հանրագրքի բարձրություններում.
թյունները, խնդիրները և տագնապները: Այս ամենը վերարտադրելու նպատակով բանագրի հեղինակը ձևավորել է համապասխան լեզվական նստաշարը, որի տեքստի առաջին գլխին է նշվել հաղորդակցական գործառույթները: Հայկական առաջաբանը ձևավորել է համապասխան լեզվական զինանոց, որի ոճական արժեքը ու նշանակությունը անտարկ են: Նադսատի երեքներկայացված թարգմանվածքներից առավել հաջողվածը կարելի է համարել Վ. Բոշնյակի տարբերակը, որն էության նպատակով փոխակերպում է հեղինակի գեղարվեստական կոդը, լեզվական ցուցիչների համար փոխակերպում և հապաղթականության փոխանցումից կողմից ընտրվող տարբերակը: Հայկական առաջաբանը երկու փոխակերպում ռուսական Նադսատի պատճառով: բանալի բառեր` `դիստոպիա, Նադսատ, փոխակերպում, ձևափոխում, տարընթերցում, բնագիր տեքստի ճանաչողական կոդ: