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LEXICAL AND PHRASEOLOGICAL INACCURACIES IN THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF ABDULLA QODIRIY’S NOVEL “O‘TKAN KUNLAR”

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Abstract The article analyses lexical and phraseological inaccuracies in the 2017 English translation of Abdulla Qodiriy’s novel “O‘tkan kunlar” (The Days Gone By). Four fragments of the original are compared with the published English text, drawing on the notions of natural equivalence, collocation, culture-specific items and overt and covert translation errors. The idiom tayoq yemoq is translated literally, pismiq is consistently rendered as “clandestine”, vakolat (authorisation) is confused with “consensus”, and og‘ir gap becomes the unnatural collocation “difficult fortune”. The article classifies these errors, proposes corrected versions and shows that the most serious losses occur where ordinary words carry cultural meaning or shape a character.

Key words: literary translation, translation error, idiom, collocation, culture-specific item, equivalence, Abdulla Qodiriy.

ЛЕКСИЧЕСКИЕ И ФРАЗЕОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ НЕТОЧНОСТИ В АНГЛИЙСКОМ ПЕРЕВОДЕ РОМАНА АБДУЛЛЫ КАДЫРИ «МИНУВШИЕ ДНИ»

Аннотация В статье анализируются лексические и фразеологические неточности в английском переводе романа Абдуллы Кадыри «Минувшие дни» («O‘tkan kunlar»), изданном в 2017 году. Четыре фрагмента оригинала сопоставлены с опубликованным английским текстом с опорой на понятия естественной эквивалентности, коллокации, культурно-специфичных элементов, а также явных и скрытых переводческих ошибок. Идиома tayoq yemoq переведена дословно, слово pismiq последовательно передаётся как “clandestine”, vakolat (полномочие) смешано с “consensus”, a og‘ir gap превращается в неестественное сочетание “difficult fortune”. Ошибки классифицированы, предложены исправленные варианты; показано, что наиболее серьёзные потери возникают там, где обычное слово несёт культурный смысл или формирует образ персонажа.

Ключевые слова: художественный перевод, переводческая ошибка, идиома, коллокация, культурно-специфичный элемент, эквивалентность, Абдулла Кадыри.

ABDULLA QODIRIYNING “O‘TKAN KUNLAR” ROMANI INGLIZCHA TARJIMASIDAGI LEKSIK VA FRAZEOLOGIK NOANIQLIKLAR

Annotatsiya Ushbu maqolada Abdulla Qodiriyning “O‘tkan kunlar” romanining 2017-yilda nashr etilgan inglizcha tarjimasidagi leksik va frazeologik noaniqliklar tahlil qilinadi. Asliyatdan olingan to‘rt parcha tarjima matni bilan qiyoslandi; bunda tabiiy ekvivalentlik, kollokatsiya, madaniyatga xos birliklar, ochiq va yashirin tarjima xatolari tushunchalariga tayanildi. Tayoq yemoq iborasi so‘zma-so‘z o‘girilgan, pismiq so‘zi izchil ravishda “clandestine” deb berilgan, vakolat “consensus” bilan chalkashtirilgan, og‘ir gap esa ingliz tiliga xos bo‘lmagan “difficult fortune” birikmasiga aylangan. Xatolar tasniflanib, tuzatilgan variantlar taklif etiladi. Eng jiddiy yo‘qotishlar oddiy so‘z madaniy ma’no tashigan yoki qahramon obrazini yaratgan o‘rinlarda yuz berishi ko‘rsatiladi.

Kalit so‘zlar: badiiy tarjima, tarjima xatosi, ibora, kollokatsiya, madaniyatga xos birlik, ekvivalentlik, Abdulla Qodiriy.

INTRODUCTION

Translating “O‘tkan kunlar” into English is hard for a simple reason: much of the novel’s meaning lives in everyday words, idioms and forms of address that have no ready counterparts in English. In 2017 the Tashkent publisher Mashhur-Press issued an English version, The Days Gone By, by I.M. Tukhtasinov, O.M. Muminov and A.A. Khamidov. In the foreword the translators openly ask for “the readers’ comments on the quality of the translation” [11; 4], and this article can be read partly as an answer to that request.

Uzbek scholars have already discussed the translation. M.J. Chorieva writes about the difficulty of conveying the novel’s national colouring and warns that long explanations make the text tiresome [4]; D.B. Olimova describes the procedures used to render the characters’ personalities, such as modulation, transposition and borrowing [9]; Z.M. Bazarov links translation quality to the translator’s linguoculturological competence [3]. These studies deal with strategies and cultural units in general. Much less has been said about particular sentences in which the English text misreads an ordinary Uzbek word or turns a natural phrase into an unnatural one, although it is at this level that a reader forms an impression of the characters. The aim of the article is to analyse such inaccuracies, classify them and suggest more accurate versions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The material is drawn from the Uzbek edition of the novel published in 2018 [10] and the English translation of 2017 [11]. Four fragments noticed while reading the translation were checked against both editions, and for pismiq we also examined its other occurrences in the novel. The study combines comparative analysis of source and target texts, component analysis of word meaning and contextual analysis. The corrected versions are offered as possible solutions rather than final ones.

E. Nida and C. Taber define translating as “reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style” [8; 12]. The definition joins two demands that often pull apart in

literary translation: a version may follow the dictionary meaning of each word and still sound foreign.

Naturalness depends largely on collocation. M. Baker shows that collocational patterns are arbitrary and differ between languages [2; 52–54], and P. Newmark puts it memorably: “if grammar is the bones of a text, collocations are the nerves” [7; 213]. Idioms add another difficulty. According to Baker, the translator first has to recognise an idiom, since many idioms also allow a literal reading, and then choose between an idiom of similar meaning and form, one of similar meaning but different form, paraphrase or omission [2; 71, 75]. A literal rendering of an idiom therefore changes what the sentence reports, not only how it sounds.

J.F. Aixelá defines culture-specific items by the problem they create: an item becomes culture-specific when its function and connotations cannot be carried over because the referent is absent from the target culture or has a different status there [1]. In our view, this explains why words such as kundash (co-wife) or vakolat (authorisation at the marriage ceremony), which look ordinary to an Uzbek reader, are among the hardest in the novel. To classify the errors, we use J. House’s distinction between overt errors, that is, mismatches of denotative meaning and breaches of the target language system, and covert errors, which concern register, tone and the relationship between speakers [6]; the model has also been applied to literary texts [5].

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. A literal reading of an idiom. The chapter “Chaqimchiliq” describes a character who has just learned of Otabek’s marriage:

“Uning Qo‘qondan qaytishi ikkala xotini uchun ham ulug‘ bir falokat bo‘ldi. Chunki arzimagan bir sabab bilan ikkalasi ham yaxshig‘ina tayoq yeb oldi. Shuning uchun ikki kundash uning oldig‘a kirishdan qo‘rqib…” [10; 64]

“His arrival from Qoqon was a great disaster for both his wives because for nonsense they both were beaten with a stick. That’s why two rivals were scared to enter his room…” [11; 67]

Tayoq yemoq works as a set phrase meaning “to be beaten”; the noun in it need not refer to a real stick, and the passage says nothing about how the beating was done. The translators rendered the components one by one and gave the reader an object the original never mentions. The intensifier yaxshig‘ina is lost, and arzimagan bir sabab bilan (over a trifle) becomes “for nonsense”, a word English uses for foolish talk rather than for the cause of a punishment. Kundash turns into “rivals”, which keeps the hostility but not the fact that the women are wives of the same man. A paraphrase solves these problems: “…they had both taken quite a beating over some trifle. That is why the two co-wives were afraid to go in to him…”

2. A character-defining word and a mother’s curse. In the chapter “Xushro‘ybibi va Zaynab” the narrator contrasts the two sisters:

“Zaynab egachisining aksicha o‘z yaqinlaridan “pismiq” deb ism olg‘an, onasi bo‘lsa achchig‘i chiqg‘anda “ming‘aymas o‘lgur” deb uni qarg‘ar edi.” [10; 321]

“On the contrary Zaynab was stuck a nickname of “clandestine”, at times getting angry her mother would curse her: “damn you, silent”.” [11; 356]

Pismiq describes a person who keeps her feelings and intentions to herself, quiet on the surface, with a hint of slyness. English clandestine is normally said of activities and relationships kept secret, as in a clandestine meeting, not of a person’s temperament. The choice is consistent: Oftob oyim’s warning “Kundashingning ko‘rinishi bayovga o‘xshasa ham, ammo o‘zi pismiq ekan…” [10; 319] becomes “Your rival looks like a simpleton, in fact she is clandestine” [11; 353], and the mother’s question “Ming‘aymas, pismiq o‘lgur, tag‘in nima jin urdi seni?” [10; 321] becomes “Silent, damn you, clandestine, what the devil do you want?” [11; 356]. Since Zaynab later poisons Kumush, the early label pismiq prepares the reader for the plot, and “sly” or “secretive” would keep that function.

The curse is a different case. Ming‘aymas is close to “silent”, so the meaning is roughly kept, but o‘lgur is a formula of everyday grumbling, typical of a mother scolding her child. “Damn you” is harsher and profane, and “silent” used as a form of address is not idiomatic. This is a covert error: the denotation survives, but the relationship between mother and daughter is distorted. “You tongue-tied wretch” would keep both the irritation and the domestic tone.

3. Authorisation turned into “consensus”. At the marriage ceremony the bride is asked:

“Sizkim Kumushbibi Mirzakarim qizi, o‘zingizni toshkandlik, musulmon Otabek Yusufbek hoji o‘g‘liga bag‘ishlamoq vakolatini amakingiz Muhammadrahim Yo‘ldosh o‘g‘liga topshirdingizmi?” [10; 59]

“You, Mirzakarim’s daughter, would you grant yourself to muslim Otabek, the son of Yusufbek Khoji from Tashkent and do you agree to your uncle Muhammadrahim Yuldosh’s consensus?” [11; 61]

The original is one question: has the bride given her uncle the authority (vakolat) to marry her to Otabek? She does not answer the groom directly; she acts through a male relative. The English splits the sentence in two, “grant yourself to” suggests that she gives herself directly, and “consensus”, which means general agreement within a group, replaces the idea of authority. This overt error removes the legal logic of the scene. The same passage shows two smaller departures: domla becomes “the priest”, a word tied to Christian clergy, and the question repeated olti, yetti (six or seven) times is repeated “five-six times” [10; 59], [11; 61]. A closer version would be: “Kumushbibi, daughter of Mirzakarim, have you authorised your uncle Muhammadrahim, son of Yo‘ldosh, to give you in marriage to Otabek, son of Yusufbek Hoji, a Muslim of Tashkent?”

4. An unnatural collocation. In the first chapter Rahmat shares his view of marriage:

“– Uylangach, xotining tab’ingga muvofiq kelsa, bu juda yaxshi; yo‘qsa, munchalik og‘ir gap dunyoda bo‘lmas.” [10; 15]

“If the wife you married matches your nature, it is good, if not – there is no more difficult fortune in the world!” [11; 10]

Here gap means “matter”, not “word”, and og‘ir means “hard to bear”. The English is grammatical, but fortune (luck, fate, wealth) does not naturally combine with “difficult”, and the past tense “married” narrows a general statement (uylangach, “once you marry”). A more

natural version would be: “If the wife you marry suits your temperament, all is well; if not, there is no greater misfortune in the world.”

CONCLUSION

The comparison reveals three kinds of inaccuracy in the 2017 translation of “O‘tkan kunlar”: literal renderings of idioms, lexical choices that change denotation or characterisation, and grammatical but unnatural collocations. Several recur, which points to a reliance on dictionary equivalents rather than to isolated slips. Unlike earlier studies, which focus on strategies and cultural units in general, this article examines concrete errors at the level of the word and the phrase and offers corrected versions. The results can be used in a revised edition of The Days Gone By and in translation courses.

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