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The Comparative Analysis of Fixed Comparisons in Russian and Swedish (Case study: Tove Jansson's "The Magician's Hat")

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The Comparative Analysis of Fixed Comparisons in Russian and Swedish (Case study: Tove Jansson's "The Magician's Hat")

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ABSTRACT

Fixed comparisons are of particular importance in the phraseological system of any language. They can reveal the specifics of vision of the world of a particular nation, presenting a system of assessments being characteristic of a particular culture.

Comparative analysis of set comparisons takes one of the leading positions among the numerous aspects of comparative phraseology, which emphasizes the relevance of the study.

The work in this vein makes it possible to explain the reason for choosing models of comparison, as well as the features of the development of fixed comparisons of a particular language.

This article presents a contrastive analysis of set comparisons in Russian and Swedish based on the story "The Magician's Hat" by Tove Jansson. The authors compared the original text of the works with two translations made by L.Y. Braude and V.A.

Smirnov, and came to the conclusion that in the Russian variant, set comparative expressions are used much more often. In the process of translation, not only Russian fixed comparisons to be equivalent to Swedish set comparisons were successfully chosen, but the author's individual comparative constructions of the Swedish-language original text were in most cases rendered by set comparisons in Russian that are close in meaning. A large number of set comparisons gives the text expressiveness, without making it heavier, but making it easier for understanding, since set comparisons do not require explanations, they are fixed in the minds of native speakers.

Keywords: fixed comparison, author's comparison, phraseological units, expressiveness, translation transformation, equivalence.



1. INTRODUCTION

Comparison, being in essence a logical procedure, a universal operation of human reasoning, is inevitably reflected in all languages without exception. In this connection, it is of great interest to study the general and the particular in the systems of means and ways of expressing comparative relations, as well as the analysis of the features of translating fixed comparisons from one language into another. From this point of view, of interest is the work by E.F.Arsentieva and A.R. Kayumova, which deals with complex modifications of phraseological units and methods of their translation (Arsentyeva,2014), or, for example, the work by V.G.Subich (2016), E.V. Gafiyatova (2016), D. R. Kochemasova (2016).

Not all comparisons are fixed in language. They are "subjected to a whimsical selection in accordance with temper and customs of the people, the peculiarities of its culture and history" (OgoltsevV,2001,p: 5). As a result, some comparisons become set, the rest remain the author's individual ones. A distinctive feature of fixed comparisons is their reproducibility and intensity of use by native speakers, while the author's comparisons "do not go back to collective-linguistic creativity, but to an individual-creative act" (Ogoltsev,1994, pp.5-7).

Fixed comparisons begun to be actively studied in the second half of the 20th century. Great contributions were made by Fernando (1996), Gibbs (1994), Kunin (1996), and Melerovich (2001).

Set comparisons are especially interesting in the context of understanding the linguistic world-image because "intergenerational translation of standards and stereotypes of national culture" (Telia,1996,p. 242) are "programmed" in them.

2. METHODS

Method of continuous sampling (the material for study was the works by Tove Jansson, in particular the story "The Magician's Hat"), comparative methods were used as the methods of research. In describing the examples taken from the works, the method of contextual analysis was used.



3. RESULTS

The analysis of the text material revealed a significant superiority in the use of set comparisons in Russian translations in relation to the Swedish original text. In the Russian-language text, the equivalents are matched for fixed comparisons in Swedish, and most of the author's individual comparisons are replaced by set comparative constructions.

4. DISCUSSION

In the text of the story "The Magician's Hat" in the translations by V.A. Smirnov and L.Y. Braude, one can find more than 30 cases of using comparative constructions, of which more than 20 examples, according to the dictionary by V.M. Ogoltsev (2001), are fixed comparisons. At the same time, in the Swedish-language text "Trollkarlens hatt" by Tove Jansson, the number of comparative expressions is noticeably smaller, and only some of them¹ can be referred to as fixed combinations, according to the dictionary "Svenskt språkbruk" (Svenska Språknämnden, 2011):

(1) **J:** Äventyren spände sitt vita segel och sköt som en pil ut mot horisonten.

(Jansson, 2014, 56)

S: С туго натянутым парусом «Приключение» стрелой неслось к горизонту.

(Jansson, 2004, p : 19)

B: ...лодка «Приключение» неслась как стрела (Jansson, 2017, p. 79)

(2) **J:** ...satte han av som ett skott till undsättning. (Jansson, 2014, p. 62)

S: Определив направление, он стремглав бросился на помощь. (Jansson, 2004, p. 21)

B: ...он помчался как стрела на помощь... (Jansson, 2017, p. 87)

(3) **J:** ...och molnen som flyger över det är röda som blod av rubinernas återsken. (

Jansson, 2014, 90)

S: ...и проплывающие над ним облака отсвечивают красным от их блеска. (Jansson, 2004, p 31)

B: ...а тучи, парящие над ним, красные, как кровь, от света рубинов. (Jansson, 2017, p 129)

As seen from the given examples, it was easy for the translators to choose practically an equivalent translation for set comparative expressions *som en pil* 'как стрела' and *röda som blod* 'красные как кровь'. It is essential to note that V. A. Smirnov's substitution



of the comparative construction *röda som blod* for the verb 'отсвечивать' in example (3) largely lowers the expressiveness and figurativeness of the image, as semantics of the verb 'отсвечивать' / 'shine with' implies illumination with the reflected light (Kuznetsov:2003, 482) and comprises less color intensity than in the construction 'быть красным, как кровь' / 'be red like blood'.

One can see an analogous decrease in the expressive coloring of the utterance in example (2), where the comparative phrase *som ett skott* in the translation by V.A. Smirnov is substituted for the adverb 'стремглав'/'headlong'. In addition, we should point out the discrepancy between the semantic fields of comparative expressions used in the Swedish text and in the Russian translation by L.Y. Braude, when the Swedish *skott* 'выстрел' / 'shot' is substituted for the Russian 'стрела' / 'arrow'. The need for such a substitution is evident in the analysis of the semantic load of the utterance. The comparisons with "shot" in the Russian linguistic mentality usually characterize loudness and abruptness of the sound and are not used to describe the impetuosity of movement.

Examples (4) - (8) demonstrate the use by Russian translators of fixed comparisons to convey the expressive and semantic nuances of Swedish comparative expressions that are author's ones:

(4) **J:** Båt efter båt gled de som skuggor fram bakom udden och styrde ut mot havet. (Jansson ,2014,p 72-73)

S: Их лодки одна за другой словно тени выскользывали из-за мыса и уходили в открытое море. (Jansson ,2004,p 25)

B: Лодки одна за другой выскользывали, будто тени, из-за мыса, держа курс в открытое море. (Jansson ,2017,p 102)

(5) **J:** Svart som kol tecknade sig dess kurva i stenens blottade inre. (Jansson ,2014,p 78)

S: ...черной как уголь линией обозначился ее путь по обнажившемуся нутру камня. (Jansson ,2004,p 27)

B: Черная, как уголь, обрисовалась внутри камня кривая пройденного молнией пути. (Jansson ,2017,p 109)

(6) **J:** Den var seg som gummi och omöjlig att få av... (Jansson ,2014,p 106)



S: Стебель был упругий, словно резиновый, и не выдергивался из земли! (Jansson ,2004,р 36)

B: Она гнулась, как резиновая, и никак не отламывалась... (Jansson ,2017,р 151)

It is noteworthy that in the examples above, the translators do not do transformations either at a grammatical, a lexical, or a pragmatic levels of the language system. The translation of comparative constructions is extremely precise and can be considered equivalent unless to take into account the factor of the reader's perception. The set comparisons that fix associative oppositions in the national linguistic image of the world appeal to the information already known for the language speaker, thereby creating the effect of recognizing and accepting the image in the reader's mind, while the author's comparisons encourage co-authorship, modeling the image in the process of reading. The expressive and stylistic coloring of fixed and author's comparisons in this case proves to be practically equivalent, but it is precisely the set comparative combinations that, owing to their reproducibility, find the shortest way to the reader's imaginative thinking, help Russian translations to be entrenched in the culture of the domestic literary tradition:

(7) **J:** Rubinen växlade som havet. (Jansson ,2014,р 132)

S: Рубин был изменчив, как море. (Jansson ,2004,р 45)

B: Рубин был изменчив, как море. (Jansson ,2017,р 187)

(8) **J:** Hela gläntan var täckt av dem som med en vit matta,.. (Jansson ,2014,р 61)

S: Словно белый ковер, они покрывали собой всю поляну,.. (Jansson ,2004,р 21)

B: Вся поляна была покрыта ими, словно белым ковром... (Jansson ,2017,р 85)

In a number of cases, only one of the translators turns to fixed comparisons, while the other manages with other lexico-grammatical means. In examples (9) - (10), the author's individual comparisons by Tove Jansson *som till fest* (как на праздник / like at holiday) and *som rosor* 'как розы' / 'like roses' find an analog of set comparisons in the Russian language. Here again, one can assess how the comparative phrases affect the expressive-meaningful tone of the sentences:

(9) **J:** Vild och lockande höjde den sig ur havet, kransad och krönt som till fest med vita bränningar och gröna träd. (Jansson ,2014,р 57)



S: Пустынный и манящий, возник он из моря в нарядном венце белоснежного прибоя и зеленых кущ. (Jansson ,2004,п 19)

B: Одинокий и манящий, вырос он вдруг из морских глубин, разукрашенный, как на праздник, в венце белопенистых бурунов и зеленых деревьев... (Jansson ,2017,п 81)

(10) **J:** Några molntappar som stormen glömt kvar blev skära som rosor...(Jansson ,2014,п 73)

S: Словнорозы, зарделисьзабытыебурейоблачка,.. (Jansson ,2004,п 25)

B: Несколько забытых бурей ключев облаков окрасились в нежно-розовый цвет,.. (Jansson ,2017,п 103)

Special attention should be paid to the examples where fixed comparisons appear in the Russian variants of the story as translation transformations at the level of pragmatic equivalence to convey expressive or figurative-expressive meanings in the Swedish language:

(11) **J:** Alldeles röd i ansiktet klev han fram och bockade sig.(Jansson ,2014,п 84)

S: ...красный как рак выступил он вперед... (Jansson ,2004,п 29)

B: Страшно покраснев, он выступил вперед и поклонился. (Jansson ,2017,п 119)

The Swedish adverb *alldeles* 'совершенно, слишком' /'utterly, too' (Lexin URL: lexin.nada.kth.se/lexin/ (assessed: 25.04.2017)), indicating the maximum degree of manifestation of the feature, is transposed in translation by V.A. Smirnov in to the set comparison "красный как рак"/ "red as a lobster". Undoubtedly, the translation by L.Y. Braude, using the adverbial-verbal combination 'страшно покраснев' / 'having terribly turned red in the face', is closer to the original text to a considerable degree. However, thanks to the introduction of the set comparison into the text, V.A. Smirnov gains a special expressiveness and representativeness of the feature.

Another translation solution for the adverb *alldeles* is suggested in example (12), where both Russian translators turn to the fixed comparison 'как рукой сняло' / 'it has vanished as if by magic':

(12) **J:** ...fick han syn på nånting som gjorde honom alldeles klarvaken.(Jansson ,2014,п 12)

S: ...сонснегокакрукойсняло... (Jansson ,2004,п 2)



В: сон с него как рукой сняло... (Jansson ,2017,п 13)

Example (13) also illustrates the situation when the set comparison in translation by V.A. Smirnov substitutes for the verbal construction, significantly intensifying the expressiveness of the whole phrase:

(13) **Ж:** Jag kan inte klara mig utan den!.(Jansson ,2014,п 134)

С: А без нее я как без рук! (Jansson ,2004,п 46)

В: А мне без нее не обойтись! (Jansson ,2017,п 190)

Inexample (14), L.Y. Braude substitutes the participle *förtrollad* for the set comparison 'как зачарованный' / 'under a spell' with the same semantic meaning 'entranced', 'enchanted' (17). The translation by V.A. Smirnov is in this case far from the Swedish original:

(14) **Ж:** Han stirrade förtrollad ner i det gröna djupet...(Jansson ,2014,п 57)

С: Это было страшно интересно — глядеть в зеленоватую толщу воды... (Jansson ,2004,п 19)

В: Как зачарованный смотрел он в бездну моря... (Jansson ,2017,п 80)

The departure from equivalence in favor of an effective transposition of the meaning of the utterance can be traced in example (15), where the verbal-adverbial construction *är hemma* is subjected to the translation transformation, substituted in both Russian texts for the fixed comparison 'чувствовать себя как дома' / 'feel at home':

(15) **Ж:** ...att ha en plats där de är hemma och kan vila sig lite och träffa bekanta.(Jansson ,2014,п 57)

С: ...место, где можно чувствовать себя как дома... (Jansson ,2004,п 19)

В: ...место, где они чувствуют себя как дома... (Jansson ,2017,п 81)

Such a substitution is more than justified and dictated, first of all, by the specific features of the syntactic model of the present tense in the Russian language, without involving the use of the verb 'БЫТЬ' / 'to be' when inserting nominal predicates into the structure of the sentence. Besides, an equally significant reason for the translation transformation is a slight discrepancy between the semantic fields of the verbs *vara* and 'БЫТЬ' / 'to be' with broad meaning in Swedish and Russian. In this example, a possible Russian variant of 'БЫТЬ дома' / 'be at home' translates only the meaning of a physical stay, of being at a certain point in space or time, which does not convey all the shades of



the semantics of the Swedish verb. Indeed, it is difficult to find a more suitable translation for the Swedish *är hemma* 'быть, являться' / 'to be' than the chosen 'чувствовать себя как дома' ('feel at home') by V. A. Smirnov and L.Y. Braude. Example (16) demonstrates how the set comparative expression 'остановилась как вкопанная' ('she stopped dead') in the translation by V. A. Smirnov figuratively and subtly conveys the intentions of the original Swedish text, conveyed with the help of the adverb *plötsligt* 'внезапно' ('suddenly') and the following sentence *hennes hjärta började dunka* 'ее сердце забилося' ('her heart started beating'), since the semantics of the Russian set expression, according to phraseological dictionaries (Mikhelson, 2004; Kurilova, 2009), contains the meaning 'встать внезапно', 'неподвижно, замерев на месте от ужаса или удивления' ('stand up abruptly', 'motionless, stood put with horror or surprise':

(16) **J:** Och då stannade hon plötsligt och hennes hjärta började dunka. (Jansson ,2014,p: 82)

S: ...ивдруг остановилась как вкопанная... (Jansson ,2004,p 28)

B: И вдруг остановилась с внезапно забившимся сердцем. (Jansson ,2017,p 116)

V. A. Smirnov carries out a similar translation transformation in example (17). In this case, the fixed comparison "словно к земле приросла" ('as if rooted to the spot') replaces the verb *stannar* 'останавливаться' ('to stop') with the subsequent adverbial modifier of manner *i den största häpnad* ('in greatest astonishment'):

(17) **J:** Snorkfröken tog några bävande steg och stannade i den största häpnad. (Jansson ,2014,p 82)

S: Фрекен Снорк сделала несколько робких шагов и словно к земле приросла от изумления... (Jansson ,2004,p 28)

B: Фрекен Снорк сделала несколько неуверенных шагов и остановилась в величайшем удивлении. (Jansson ,2017,p 116)

In examples (18) - (20) L. Y. Braude refers to fixed comparisons, transforming the Swedish compound adjectives that combine two semantic meanings:

(18) **J:** Det var redan augustimörkt ute och trädgården var full av sammetssvarta skuggor. (Jansson ,2014,p 117)



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S: На дворе уже было по-августовски темно, сад окутали бархатисто-черные тени.
(Jansson ,2004,р 40)

B: ...сад был полон черных мягких как бархат теней... (Jansson ,2017,р 166)

(19) **J:** Men Kungsrubinen lyste som ett rött öga mot den nattmörka jorden... (Jansson ,2014,р 143)

S: Король рубинов сверкал красным глазом на окутанной ночной тьмою Земле...
(Jansson ,2004,р 49)

B: А Королевский рубин сверкал, как красное око, на фоне темной как ночь земли... (Jansson ,2017,р 203)

(20) **J:** Efter honom kom en helsvart katt och sträckte ut sig i gräset(Jansson ,2014,р 145)

S: За ней выбежал черный кот и, вытянувшись, лег на траву(Jansson ,2004,р 50)

B: За ним появилась черная как смоль кошка и растянулась на траве(Jansson ,2017,р 206)

It can be observed that in example (18), V. A. Smirnov is semantically closer to the equivalent transposition of the lexical-grammatical units of the Swedish language into the Russian language reality, having translated *sammetssvarta skuggor* by means of the nominal phrase with a complex adjective 'бархатисто-черныетени' ('velvet-black shadows'). The translation of this construction, presented by L.Y. Braude, is less precise, but at the same time, it has more expressiveness via the use of a literary trope. The examples (19) - (20), on the contrary, demonstrate L.Yu. Braude's striving for more accurate and meticulous translation of the Swedish text. The comparison 'темной как ночь' ('dark as night') contains both semantic meanings of the adjective *nattmörka* without any additional connotations of meaning, whereas in the translation by V.A. Smirnov, a personification appears: 'окутанной ночной тьмою' ('shrouded in night darkness') instead of designating the feature of the object. In comparison 'черная как смоль' ('coal-black'), the expressive tinge of the Russian phraseological combination at the pragmatic level of the language conveys the intensity of the feature, expressed in the Swedish text with the compound adjective *helsvart* ('completely black').



5. CONCLUSION

Thus, the nature and intensity of the use of fixed and author's individual comparisons in the texts under study are explained by the difference in the tasks facing the authors. In the Swedish source text, the number of set comparisons fixed by dictionaries is not so great, because Tove Jansson uses a large number of author's individual comparisons, which makes the text lively and original. The text has no clichés and empty phrases, and each comparison prompts the reader to dialogue with the author. In the target Russian texts, the set comparisons occur more often. This allows of making the text conventional and familiar to the reader, and helps the translation work to stand in line with the best samples of Russian literature.

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