

Title: What's Fowler to Us? Russian-English Translators and the Heritage of English Usage Dictionaries.

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The rich heritage of English usage dictionaries that is associated preeminently with the Fowler brothers' cantankerous *Modern English Usage* (1926) is seldom, if ever, discussed in the context of Russian-English translation studies, practice and pedagogy. But this heritage of reference works—part applied linguistics, part prescriptivist “language mavenism”—represents an entire world of problems (and guidance for handling them) to which Russian-English translators automatically become heirs simply by virtue of joining the ranks of professional *writers of English*. These problems go far beyond the clichéd quandaries of “split infinitives” and whether one says “*a* historical” or “*an* historical.” They include such sophisticated and distinctly English problems as competition between *two* relative pronouns, *which* and *that*, the problems of “notional” plurals, *like* versus *as* both as a strictly English problem and also in relation to the Russian device *kak*, and many more. A critical awareness of this world of problems and its related field of reference works, I would argue, belongs fully to the second of three “core competencies” that Russian-English translators must cultivate throughout their careers—mastery of English as target language. This presentation begins with a brief sketch of the heritage of English usage dictionaries, concentrating on the twentieth century: the Fowlers, Sir Ernest Gowers, Strunk and White's *Elements of Style* (1935), a recent misguided backlash against Strunk and White, the brilliant work of E. Ward Gilman in the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary of English Usage* (1994, concise edition 2002), the recent revision of Fowler by Burchfield (1996) and its reception, *Garner's Modern American Usage* (1998, revised 2003), its “British” counterpart, Pam Peters's *Cambridge Guide to English Usage* (2004) and other titles. Any such sketch must of course note the battle lines between the “prescriptivist” and “descriptivist” camps, which I will here try to relate to underlying philosophical differences in outlook upon language itself (reverential “culturology” versus utilitarian “naturalism”). I will then raise briefly the question of identifying analogues to English usage dictionaries in the *Russian* lexicographical and linguistic tradition. I conclude by considering various attitudes toward this whole field that Russian-English translators could consider adopting. My own recommendation is a “metaprescriptivist” stance, in which the data organized so effectively by English usage dictionaries serves primarily to enrich the translator's palette of means for creating nuanced stylistic portraits of the many Russian “voices” encountered in source texts. As an introduction of sorts to this field of reference works, the presentation may be of particular interest to native russophone translators, who, unlike their native anglophone colleagues, are traditionally trained to translate both into and out of their native language.