Title: Translating Skaz as a Whole-Text Realium
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The paper is part of a larger project in which I compare two most recent translations of Tolstoy’s War and Peace – one into British English by Anthony Briggs (Leo Tolstoy, 2006) and the other into American English by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (Leo Tolstoy, 2007). In my paper, I will focus on comparing Brigg’s and Pevear and Volokhonsky’s translations of a small clearly defined segment of the novel – Platon Karatayev’s parable about two merchants (Л.Н. Толстой, 1963).

I submit that Platon Karatayev’s story is written in the form of skaz as defined by the Russian Formalists (Б.М. Эйхенбаум, 1969; В.В. Виноградов, 1980). More specifically, Platon Karatayev’s story represents the type of skaz which is meant to evoke the immediacy of a character’s oral speech as distinct from the speech of the author/narrator. Realia (plural of realium) are usually defined as discrete culture-specific lexical items (more rarely, sentences - proverbs, popular sayings, etc.) that have no equivalents in the translating language (С.И. Влахов, С.И. Флорин, 2006). I will argue that skaz as another’s speech embedded in the speech of the author/narrator is also a type of realium but at the level of text (i.e. a whole-text realium). Skaz has its distinctive lexical, grammatical, and stylistic properties organized by the author/narrator (whether intentionally or unconsciously) in a way to produce a certain intellectual, emotional, or esthetic impact on the reader.

While having reservations about the universality of the common precept that a translation should read as an authentic target language text while retaining the flavor of the original (T. Savory, 1959), I believe that this precept is applicable to translating skaz. Translating skaz does not follow a single algorithm; it is contingent on the poetics of the narrative as perceived by the translator. I will discuss domestication, foreignization, neutralization, and stylization as the main strategies of translating skaz and will argue that the translator’s choice of a particular combination, variation, or interplay of these strategies should be determined not only by the nature of the individual stylistic devices and realia used in the skaz part of the narrative but also by the translator’s interpretation of the perceived communicative purpose of skaz as a unified whole in the author’s narrative.

Works Cited

Влахов, С.И. and С.П. Флорин. Непереводимое в переводе. Изд. 3-е, испр. и доп. М.: Р.Валент, 2006, с. 19-21; 49-60.