

Having fun with a pun: specifics of rendering paronomasia in children's book "The BFG" by Roald Dahl

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Abstract: The article provides the research on the problem of rendering author's individual style and its dominant features in the target language. Paronomasia as the highest form of humor challenges the most professional translators, making them decide which of the two options is better: to save the form of the wordplay or to render the author's intention. In either case, the final target is to preserve the humorous effect of a stylistic device, which encourages translators to employ a variety of creative translation techniques.

Keywords: *individual style, linguistic and expressive means, paronomasia, translation, wordplay.*

The problem of style and its genre specifics draws the attention of linguists all over the world. Since the subject of scientific research comprises mainly the analysis of the author's dominant features displayed in his/her works, a great deal of investigation is conducted by literature theorists, who stress the style of any text to be determined by its author's goals and creative consciousness. Finding its expression not only in a certain literary text, but also in a literary trend or school, style is not limited purely by a set of linguistic means. It involves the categories connected with the author's mind, his/her aesthetic, religious and philosophic ideas and preferences, objectified with the help of language.

Having discovered a close link between the author and his/her works, scientists differentiate between the functional and individual styles, the latter determined as a combination of literary features inherent to the works of a specific writer. Linguistic aspect of the author's individual style reveals his/her uniqueness and distinctiveness in the depicted worldview. Currently, the studies of an individual style are of immediate interest to experts in literary criticism, psycholinguistics, communicative and cognitive linguistics, as well as in translation studies. Research on the author's individual style can be found in the works of such famous scientists, as L. Belekova, N. Bolotnova, V. Grigoryev, R. Jakobson, Yu. Karaulov, V. Kucharenko, D. Likhachev, Yu. Lotman, O. Selivanova, V. Vinogradov, O. Vorobyova, etc.

The category of the author's individual style was presented to the scientific community by V. Vinogradov, who emphasized a great role of the author in selecting and implementing a specific complex of linguistic means for reflecting reality in his/her works. However, the author's individual style is not limited by a set of most widely used linguistic means or stylistic devices; this is a reflection of his/her life experience combined with the accumulated experience of the whole nation. As a verbalized model of the author's consciousness, the individual style makes it possible to linguistically interpret the markers of the writer's linguistic persona and define the basics of forming the author's creed.

Unlike literature studies of the individual style, mostly dealing with idiolect of a specific writer and his/her creative laboratory, linguistic studies define theoretic basics for detecting stylistic peculiarities of the text through analyzing the functioning of lexical, phraseological, and syntactic means. Up-to-date linguistic approaches employ interpretation methods in terms of the linguistic heritage

to specify functional features of dominant linguistic symbols as characteristics of the author's individual style.

The author's image, which is at the core of his/her individual style, is formed within the whole writing period under the influence of objective and subjective factors depending on life circumstances [6, p. 187-188]. Style-forming factors of the author's individual style include social environment, historical context, the correlation of tradition and innovation in a specific work of a writer or his whole literary heritage, distinguishing generic and genre traits of a work, its emotional coloring, the author's worldview, talent, creativity freedom, artistic truth, and creative thinking [8, p. 27].

L. Cooper distinguishes a subjective and an objective sides of the style, where objective conditions include matter and purpose, i.e. the dominant idea of the theme and the target audience, whose recognition the author tends to win. Subjective conditions comprise the methods used by the author to embody his/her thoughts in the language, to verbalize and decorate his/her ideas, to put in a correct order, join or split the words. These two sides should never be disjoined, as it is impossible for either of them to exist alone, being the same form of the language, viewed from different angles. The text, devoid of subjectivity, lacks peculiar features, which make it unique, whereas excessive subjectivity results in an unreasonable mannerism, which is a result of overmastering the author's spiritual power. A distinctive manner, however, is always a mark of an unusual and talented author [11, p. 14].

Individual style is by far the most representative demonstration of dominant peculiarities of the author's cognition, with linguistic and stylistic means skillfully selected and interrelated. Therefore, the individual style is fully reflected in the texts with the help of expressive linguistic means. Every detail of the text is individual as it represents its author. When analyzing the author's individual style, literary work is referred to not as just a text, but rather as an aesthetic phenomenon, enriched with the elements of the author's inner world, objectified in distinctive forms. The author has the right to be unique in the limits, determined by the communicative conditions [2, p. 462].

Being studied in terms of a cognitive approach, the author's individual style is defined as a linguistic and mental portrait of a writer, represented through the author's specific conceptualization of reality, conditioned by the system of his/her personal values [1, p. 175]. Analyzing

individual characteristics of the author's style is almost impossible without comparing it with the literary language of his/her epoch as a certain constant, serving a background that helps define the peculiarities different from it, as well as with individual styles of contemporary and writers-predecessors. Besides, one should take into account the author's texts of different styles, such as publicistic, epistolary, scientific prose, essays, life-time interviews, and public speeches.

When translating fiction, it is much more important to render the images of the story rather than its content and to provoke readers to certain emotions and associations with the help of linguistic and stylistic means available in the target language [9, p. 5]. Any translation as a communication act is subject not only to the norms of the target language, but also to the norms of the genre it belongs to and the author's individual stylistics. The translator has to feel the author's style and follow it to render the author's individuality in the translated text [4, p. 103]. However, the influence of the translator's creative character happens to become so significant that it can distort both the style of the story and the author's main idea. Using seemingly inconsiderable techniques, the translator subjects the author to his/her own style. Moreover, following his/her habitual manner of writing, mostly different from the author's one, the translator falls back upon his/her own worldview, that can move the author into the background. Any kind of unthreatening deviations from the author's style proves to become a disruptive power that can turn the most talented writer into a worthless one. The translator's ingenuity consists in his/her complete invisibility in the translated text [10, p. 51].

The differences of linguistic and stylistic peculiarities in the original and translated texts are caused by typological characteristics of the languages, having quite different range of available linguistic and expressive means, as well as by the pragmatic aim of the translation activity [7, p. 118]. Such structural discrepancies make the translator use different translation techniques to render adequately semantic, stylistic, and pragmatic characteristics of linguistic elements, taking into account both norms of the target language and communicative traditions of the target culture. However, it does not mean that the translator can "decorate" a translated text to make it look better than the original. Since the translator's choice of linguistic and stylistic means is subject to his/her worldview, one can face the problem of the translator's individual style, which can be detected through analyzing all his/her translations. Though undesired, this phenomenon is considered to be inevitable in the process of translation, since any literary translation has its own creator, linguistic material and its life in the language, literary and social environment, quite different from the environment of the original text. Being subject to the original text, the translated text is to some extent independent, since it belongs to the language it is translated into. This is the reason for differences not only between the original text and its translation, but between the translations of the same text made in different languages [3, p. 24-30].

Individual style of Roald Dahl, one of the most fabulous storytellers for kids, is distinguished by weird and often dark humor, featuring fierce confrontation between vulnerable children and villainous adults. Known as

Dahlesque, the author's style is so breathtaking and inimitable, that 2016 saw the publication of *Oxford's Roald Dahl Dictionary*, containing a variety of revised and newly drafted entries connected to R. Dahl and his works. Ranking among the world's fiction best sellers, R. Dahl's books have been translated into nearly 60 languages. The writer depicts serious problems in terms of irony, sarcasm, and caricature. Proceeding from the genre of folklore fairy-tale, he points out the ambivalence of its traditional functions discrediting its didactic purposes, and enhances plot twists through expressive dialogues and grotesquely depicted characters.

Following the traditions of absurdity and paradox in English literature, R. Dahl enriches them with various elements that form his individual style. Devoid of any sentimentality, Dahl's fairy-tales are sometimes too frank and straightforward, even when it comes to the most uncomfortable topics. One should pay attention to the special relationship between R. Dahl and the reader of his children's works. The narrator is either implicitly present, or directly addresses the reader, often showing his own attitude to the depicted events or characters. Expressive dialogues abound in obscenities and slang words, making the speech of the characters rude and vulgar. Besides, emotionally colored linguistic elements have a wide range of synonyms that reproduce the peculiarities of the characters' speech accurately to the utmost. A great amount of dialogues, filled with emphatic constructions and inversion, do not describe the characters directly, thus provoking readers to awaken their imagination. R. Dahl's figures of speech compliment the description of the depicted characters, exaggerating their traits of character, thus making them look either worse or better.

Being famous for an exuberantly inventive use of the language, R. Dahl is fond of playing with words, making paronomasia, also known as a pun, one of the dominant features of his individual style. Hence, language becomes a central theme of his stories. R. Dahl's linguistic inventions do not absolutely lack sense, being always understandable to readers. Encouraging children to value the richness of the language, R. Dahl's wordplay is enormously precious. Aimed to entertain the kids, it can be also appreciated by adult readers. The most translated of all R. Dahl's books is *"The BFG"*, a story of a good friendly giant whose speech overflows with paronomasia, making translators both have great fun and face a great challenge, inventing their versions of intricate words.

The story of an unusual giant, one of the author's best-loved characters, was written in 1982. Having seen total sales of the UK editions of about 37 million, *"The BFG"* has won numerous awards, appeared in the Guardian's list of the 100 greatest novels of the last 300 years, has been adapted into a newspaper comic, staged and filmed. Being a typical R. Dahl's fairy-tale, the book is full of dark humor, loathsome big creatures and a defenseless child.

Sophie, a kind-hearted and brave protagonist of the story, is once snatched out of her bed in the orphanage by a strange giant creature and taken to far away lands. Fearing the worst, the girl is involved into the most exciting journey of her life. Taking Sophie to his cave, the Giant doesn't eat her, because, unlike other bloody giants, he is far too kind to eat human beings. In order to save the world from the villainous giants, galloping to different

countries all over the world to swallow little children, Sophie persuades the BFG to come to the Queen of England and ask her for help. The ingenious plan proves to be effective and all the giants are carried to London and imprisoned in a deep pit. Afterwards, Sophie and the BFG live happily in London, where the latter writes a story about his adventures, which is then referred to as the novel itself.

Paronomasia, which is believed to be the highest form of humor, has to be adequately rendered in the translated text, making translators face a difficult choice between rendering the author's intention or preserving the form of paronomasia, because being successful in both cases is a hard, if not impossible, task. The problem may even arise with understanding humor, since some linguistic elements have both literal and idiomatic meanings. If the translator chooses to save only the form, he/she sacrifices the wordplay and as a result, the author's aim to provoke the readers to laughter.

Among the existing types, paronomasia in R. Dahl's book *"The BFG"* occurs of three types:

1) homophonic, with the words sounding the same or alike, but having different spellings and meanings:

"He went off to Baghdad to bag dad and mum and all the little kiddles!" [12].

– Він гасати до Бахтата, щоб костнути тата, маму і всіх маніпулісичних дітолахів [5, p. 223].

In this example, the author uses the name of the capital of Iraq *Baghdad* and the same-sounding word combination *bag dad* to make up a wordplay. Translator V. Morozov changes the name of the city, using a fictional onym *Бахтат* to make it assonant with the word *тато* in the accusative case. The translator emphasizes the expressiveness with the help of the nonce word *костнути*, which, in our opinion, could be substituted by the nonce word *бахнути*, the beginning of which sounds similar to the name of the city. The number of nonce words in the translation (*костнути*, *маніпулісичних*, *дітолахів*) triples in comparison with the original text (*kiddles*), being enhanced by the violation of grammatical form (*він гасати*), absent in the original (*he went off*).

Let's take a look at another example:

"We is off to Mrs. Sippi and Miss Souri to guzzle them both!" [12].

– Ми газуємо до місіс Сіні і міс Сурі, щоб згризти їх обох! [5, p. 144].

In this example, the author takes advantage of the titles *Mrs.* and *Miss* used before surnames *Sippi* and *Souri*, both of which sound like the names of major rivers in North America – *Mississippi* and *Missouri*. Since these proper names sound the same in Ukrainian (*Miccicini*, *Miccypri*), V. Morozov, using transcription, manages to preserve both the form of the paronomasia and its humorous effect. The translator uses the slang word (*газуємо*) to compensate the violation of grammatical form (*we is off*) present in the original.

2) homographic, with the words having the same spelling, but different meanings:

"He says Turks from Turkey is tasting of turkey" [12].

– Каже, що туркецькі турки смакують, як курки [5, p. 25].

Being fond of playing with proper names, R. Dahl employs the name of the country *Turkey*, having the same

spelling with the name of a game bird *turkey*. Due to the absence of homography between these two words in Ukrainian, V. Morozov changes the word sequence in the word combination *Turks from Turkey* into *туркецькі турки* and the type of the domestic game bird *курки*, which shows to advantage in this particular example. However, the distorted name of the country seems strange, since its real equivalent *турецькі* would not lessen the expressivity of the utterance.

Another example:

"What do the people of Wellington taste of?" Sophie asked. "Boots", the Giant said. "Of course", Sophie said. "I should have known" [12].

– А які вони на смак, ті веллінгтонці? – поцікавилася Софія. – Як чоботи, – відповів Велетень. – Ну, так, – погодилася Софія. – Гумові чоботи-веллінгтони. Їх так у нас називають. Я мала б здогадатися [5, p. 30].

In this example, the name of the capital of New Zealand *Wellington* has the same spelling as the name of a knee-length waterproof boot *wellington*, which is not mentioned in the text, due to the fact that native speakers understand what is really meant under the generic name *boots*, unlike Ukrainian readers, who are not likely to know what it really is. Therefore, V. Morozov employs an explanation of the word *чоботи*, as well as its equivalent *веллінгтони*, which sounds similar to *Wellington's* inhabitants *веллінгтонці*.

3) compound, having two or more puns in the sentence:

"Human beans from Chile is very chilly" [12].

– Людські чворіння з Холландії хвацько холоднаві [5, p. 72].

Another example of playing with proper names involves the name of the country in South America *Chile* which sounds like something unpleasantly cold (*chilly*). The translator uses the fictional onym *Холландія*, probably deriving from a real one *Голандія*, and a nonce word *холоднаві*, which, in our opinion, lacks similarity in their phonic forms, lessening the humorous effect in the translated text.

Mixing spelling and pronunciation of some words is a dominant feature of the Giant's idiolect, making it a source of paronomasia. By saying *human beans*, the BFG actually means *human beings*, which has a humorous effect, since his variant sounds like the name of an edible seed. In the translation we can see a nonce word *чворіння*, probably deriving from the usual word *створіння*, easily decoded by the reader.

"For instance, human beans from Wales is tasting very whooshey of fish. There is something very fishy about Wales". "You mean whales," Sophie said. "Wales is something quite different". "Wales is whales", the Giant said [12].

– Наприклад, мешканці Сардинії дуже-байдуже пахнуть сардиніями. – Ви маєте на увазі – сардиніями, – виправила його Софія. – Сардинії – це сардинії, – огризнувся Велетень [5, p. 28].

The subject of the next wordplay is the name of the country in Great Britain *Wales*, which sounds exactly like the name of a marine mammal *whale* in its plural form. Besides, the author takes advantage of the assonate words *fish* and *fishy*, having different meanings. Trying to pre-

serve the humorous effect, the translator employs another real toponym, the name of a large Italian island *Сардинія*, matching it with the name of a marine creature *сардина*, assonate with it, thus rendering the author's intention. Unfortunately, the *fish/fishy* paronomasia is only partially rendered in the translation through using a nonce word *сардинія*, thus making it part of the previous wordplay.

Thus, having analyzed different types of paronomasia as one of the dominant features of Roald Dahl's individual style, and specifics of its rendering into Ukrainian by V. Morozov, we can draw the following conclusions. R. Dahl's individual style is a complex comprehensive system, which comprises not only a set of linguistic means, used by the author to display his thoughts; it is the way of representing reality as it is seen by the author. As if boasting his own linguistic freedom and unconstraint, the author takes advantage of the most extraordinary expressive means and linguistic tricks.

The author of children's literature has to see the world in two dimensions – from the viewpoints of both a child and an adult, to be able to feel and treat the life as a child,

to open this world together with a child. Otherwise, a real masterpiece can turn into a cheap imitation of a children's world with tiresome moralizing. At least, this is the way R. Dahl works: writing his fairy-tales he turns into a child over and over again. Translating Dahl's fairy-tales, translators face a dilemma – to moderate writer's eccentric, sometimes bully, sense of humor or to preserve it at its best, finally choosing the latter, because if the writer himself trusted his readers, letting them decide what is good and what is bad, what is allowed and what is not, why should translators deprive foreign-language readers of this opportunity.

Taking into account structural characteristics of the English and Ukrainian languages, we can admit that V. Morozov did his best to render paronomasia adequately into the target language, trying to preserve the unique *Dahlesque* style in his translation and to show real Roald Dahl to the audience. Whether he succeeded in the accomplishment of the aim to make a successful translation or not can be measured by the author's immense popularity among Ukrainian readers of different age.

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Сумбурний каламбур: особености перевода паронимазии в детской книге Роальда Дала "БДВ". Т.В. Миколишена
Аннотация: В статье рассматриваются особенности перевода паронимазии как доминантной черты индивидуального стиля одного из самых эксцентричных и непредсказуемых писателей детской литературы XX в. Роальда Дала. Свообразный стиль писателя отличается нивелированием языковых норм, проявляющихся на всех языковых уровнях, что требует от переводчика наличия тонкого языкового чутья, а также умения чувствовать стиль автора и передать его во всей красоте на целевом языке.

Ключевые слова: индивидуальный стиль, языковые и стилистические средства, паронимазия, перевод, игра слов.