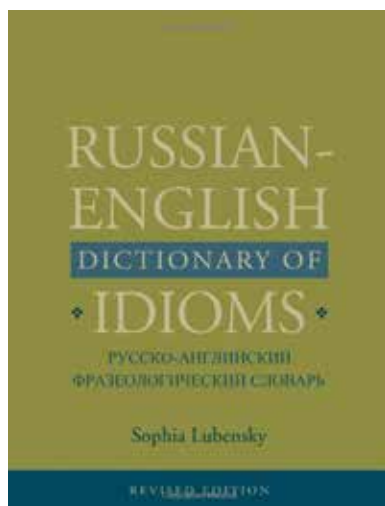


2015 SUSANA GREISS LECTURE:

THE TRANSLATOR AND THE DICTIONARY BY SOPHIA LUBENSKY

Reviewed by Lydia Stone



A copy of Sophia Lubensky's *Russian-English Dictionary of Idioms* has sat, far from idly, on my desk since the first edition came out. I consider it the gold standard for bilingual idiom dictionaries, of which I have an extensive collection. Over the years I have been most impressed by the number and appropriateness of idioms included, the accuracy and completeness of the explanation and equivalents, and the godsend of a key word index that sends you immediately to the entry you are searching for. But the aspects worth appreciating are far greater than these.

The majority of Lubensky's Greiss lecture described the process by which the author turned her nuanced understanding of the idioms in her native and acquired languages into the thick tome that many of us rely on in our work, as well as the decisions that informed this process. It is these conscious decisions based on the author's understanding of the needs of her primary target audience — us (or at least some of us) Russian>English translators — that now seem to me just as impressive as the magnitude of the endeavor.

Early in her talk she said:

As a user myself, I knew very well what kind of information I repeatedly failed to find in dictionaries, and I wanted to compile a dictionary that would offer users all sorts of information they might need. I will omit a long story of thinking and suffering, fighting my own conventionality, rejecting, accepting, changing, revising, starting from scratch and so on. Yet after this long period a few basic principles and approaches took shape...

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SLAVFILE WELCOMES NEW LANGUAGE EDITORS:

We are delighted to announce that two SLD members have volunteered to serve as language editors. They welcome any contributions pertaining to their languages and are happy to discuss ideas for potential articles. Note: if your language (including non-Slavic languages of the former USSR) is not represented by an editor and you would like to volunteer, we encourage you to do so. The time commitment is not onerous – we ask editors to contribute or recruit a minimum of two pieces per year (reprints are acceptable).

Paul Makinen will be editor for **Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian**. Paul is a founding member of SLD and an ATA certified Russia to English translator who also works from Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian, Montenegrin, Bulgarian, and Ukrainian to English. He spent a year in Zagreb in the 1980s. Like most translators who work with languages of limited diffusion his work has covered a wide range of subjects, including telecommunications, nuclear power, transportation, business correspondence, and health and personal papers. He also edits the work of other translators. Paul is currently working on a piece for *SlavFile* on translator associations in Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro. He may be reached at pmakinen_20712@yahoo.com.

Olga Shostachuk will be serving as editor for **Ukrainian**, the first one we have had in a number of years. She is currently a PhD Candidate in Translation Studies at Kent State University, Kent, OH, where she previously completed her M.A. in Translation. She also holds an M.A. in Education and Linguistics from Lviv National University in Ukraine and a paralegal degree from the Academy of Court Reporting in Cleveland, Ohio. She served as the Vice Chapter Chair for Ohio IMIA and is currently working on establishing a new language combination (Ukrainian >English) for the ATA certification program. Olga is a frequent presenter and trainer at various domestic and international conferences and has been actively involved in the language industry, working as a translator, editor, proofreader, and interpreter specializing in the legal and medical fields. Her research focuses on legal and medical translation, computer-assisted translation, localization, pedagogy, and assessment. Contact Olga at olgalviv27@yahoo.com.

COLUMN FOR NEWCOMERS. In the last issue of *SlavFile* we published an advertisement asking for newcomers to the profession or SLD to contribute to a column for, by and about newcomers. We plan to feature our first two volunteers in the winter issue. We are reprinting the ad on page 9 and hope that a number of you will be moved to answer. Being in *SlavFile* is a great way to increase your Googleability and enhance your Net presence. Don't be shy! Raise your visibility! Send us a profile or the newcomer's perspective on any topic you wish related to Slavic<>English translation, interpretation, or terminology. Contact: svetlana@beloshapkina.com.

The first decision that has to be made when creating a dictionary is what to include. (No one would argue, after all, that any print dictionary could possibly include everything any reader might encounter and try to look up in an idiom dictionary.) Lubensky used an operational definition of an idiom that is both reasonable and easy to apply: “a non-free combination of two or more words that acts as a semantic whole, the meaning of which cannot easily be predicted from the meanings of its components.” In addition to “traditional” idioms, however, she flexibly included and defined phrases not usually covered in other mono- or bilingual Russian dictionaries of this type. These include: intensifier phrases, interjections, formula phrases used in common communication situations, phrases serving the function of prepositions, conjunctions and particles, as well as some commonly used proverbs, sayings, and often-cited quotations. This decision is a boon to the user who, needing to look up the meaning of a Russian phrase that is idiomatic in the above sense, is not likely to be aware that it is not indeed a traditional idiom but instead technically belongs to another category of Russian phrases.

Most bilingual idiom dictionaries do not include information about how a source idiom can correctly be used. This one does, allowing users who are not native speakers of Russian to incorporate these idioms into their Russian conversation and writing. She uses “variables” to stand in for subject and object and presents verbal idioms with several complements as sentences, a practice that many of us have not encountered before in other idiom dictionaries. Here is her description of how she came to this decision:

The traditional presentation of verb idioms takes the form of the infinitive. When I became aware that this way of presenting verb idioms ties a lexicographer’s hands, I started looking for a better solution... Here I drew on the works of outstanding linguists Igor Melchuk and Yury Apresjan. My goal was to find a bridge between linguistic sophistication and accessibility. When I realized that, in addition to semantically correct equivalents, the user needed to know how those equivalents are used syntactically in various types of constructions, I made the decision to use variables (X, Y and Z) to indicate subject, object(s) and occasionally location [the example below, Д-219, illustrates how variables are used]. The decision to use the [three] variables did

not come to me easily. It took me time to realize that this approach is significantly more user-friendly than the traditional one and that it tremendously expands a lexicographer’s possibilities for presenting a greater number of faithful translations in a clear and understandable fashion. But when I finally made it, everything fell into place.

The speaker pointed out that most idiom dictionaries do not give an explanatory definition but merely provide equivalent idioms in the target language, some of which may only be appropriate to a specific context. This one does more! English idiomatic equivalents are preceded by definitions, which describe semantic nuances not conveyed by equivalents alone and thus help the reader determine which sense of an equivalent is intended in the given instance. This definition is followed by a range of English equivalents, intended to cover all possible contexts in which the Russian idiom might occur, as determined by extensive research.

To become convinced of how useful these features are one need only consider virtually any example from the dictionary. I have chosen a very simple two-word four-letter idiom as an illustration.

Д-219 • кому НЕ ДО кого-чего [Invar; the resulting PrepP is impers predic with БЫТЬ_о] s.o. does not have the time or desire, is not in the proper frame of mind etc to handle, think about, or deal with some person or matter: X-у не до Y-а ≈ **X isn’t (doesn’t feel) up to thing Y; X can’t be bothered with Y; X has no time for Y; this is no time for thing Y; X is not in the mood (in no mood) for Y; X is not concerned about Y; X has other things on his mind (than thing Y); X has better (more important) things to think about (than Y); [lim.] X doesn’t feel much like doing thing Y; X isn’t into it (thing Y).**

However, Lubensky acknowledges that no list of equivalents is going to be ideal for all possible contexts, and she tried to provide enough information for each idiom to allow a competent translator to create the equivalent most appropriate to his or her specific context. She felt justifiably gratified when she received a letter from an eminent translator and SLD member, Steve Shabad, after the first edition of her dictionary was published. In it he said that he much admired the way the dictionary either provided him with exactly the equivalent he needed for his context or, if not, gave him enough information so that he could readily think of the appropriate one on his own. This was precisely what she had been striving for!

Translators know that in our work, context is everything, and this precept is certainly followed in the Lubensky dictionary. Particularly striking and useful is the citation of what might be called conversational/emotional context. For example, consider the definitions of two potentially confusable but contextually quite different interjections.

K-12 • БОТ КАК *coll* [Invar; fixed WO] **1.** [Interj (an exclamation or question)] used to express surprise, astonishment etc, occas. mixed with incredulity, indignation: **is that so (right, it)?; really!; I see!; so that's how it is (what's going on etc)!; well now!; dear me!; upon my word!; how about that!**

and

T-8 • БОТ ТАК...! *coll* [Particle; Invar; foll. by NP; fixed WO] used in exclamations to accentuate the speaker's ironic, condescending, scornful etc attitude toward s.o. or sth., or to express his opinion that the person or thing in question does not deserve to be called by a certain name (as specified by the NP that follows): **what a [NP]!; nice [NP]!; [NP], my foot!; some [NP] (one is)!; one calls himself a [NP]!**

A common way of rendering the influence of context in idiom dictionaries is to provide an example of the “naturally occurring” use of the word or phrase being defined and, if the dictionary is bilingual, a translation of the example, including enough surrounding material so the reader understands the situational/conversational and semantic context of the particular use. Lubensky has chosen to use examples from Russian prose literature and memoirs along with available published English translations, at times more than one translation of a single work. The list of sources she used runs 15 large double column pages and includes authors born between 1745 (Fonvisin) and 1968 (Gallego). One cannot help but be stunned by the amount of work that it took to locate all these idiom examples in Russian and English, especially when one realizes that most of it was done before computers made certain (though certainly not all) aspects of such searches a great deal faster, if not always reliable. Where examples from literature were not available or appropriate, Lubensky asked other native speakers of Russian to invent examples, and then had her own team of graduate students, who worked on the dictionary with her and who had excellent knowledge of Russian, translate them.

In her talk, Lubensky explained that she searched all available English translations of the usage examples citing, of course, only those she considered correct. However, she shared with the audience the fact that she found errors even in the works of well-known translators.

The most amusing example she shared pertained to the idiom *попка дурак*. *Попка* has more than one meaning: it is a diminutive of the Russian word *попа* “buttocks,” usually used in reference to children, or a shortened form of the Russian word *попурай* “parrot.” Two translations of Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin’s *The History of a Town*, where this phrase occurs, came out almost simultaneously in the early 1980s. One translator, who couldn’t figure out what the phrase means, interpreted *попка* as a disparaging form of the Russian word for priest — *поп* — and rendered the phrase “The old priest is a fool.” But *попка дурак* is not about a foolish old priest — it is the standard phrase taught in Russian to parrots, corresponding to *Polly wants a cracker* in English. That’s how this phrase was translated by the talented American translator, Susan Brownsberger. In conversation with me about this incident, Lubensky used a phrase that we might all take as a maxim: “If a translation does not make sense in context, it is almost certainly wrong.”

An interesting question Lubensky addressed in her talk concerned the entries that were easiest and hardest to write. By far the easiest, she says, are idioms based on classical or biblical references common to both cultures, *Achilles heel* or *Judas kiss*, for example. The most difficult, she reports, were interjections, which can have any number of different equivalents depending on the context, including emotional and what might be called conversational contexts. Some surprisingly simple-seeming Russian idioms turned out to be quite difficult to render adequately, for example *по счёту*, which is defined in Lubensky’s dictionary as follows:

C-844 • ПО СЧЁТУ [PrepP; Invar; usu. used with ordinal numerals and with *последний, какой* etc] taking the place or number indicated by the ordinal numeral (or a word such as *последний, какой* etc that replaces it) if counted from the beginning, one at a time: [usu. omitted when used with an ordinal Num] *третий (седьмой и т.п.) по счёту* ≈ **third (seventh etc)**; [in limited contexts; usu. with small numbers] **second (third etc) to have existed**; || *последний по счёту* ≈ **the last; the latest**; || *какой это по счёту X?* ≈ **how many Xs have there been (so far)?; how many Xs has one had so far?; how many Xs does (will) this make (for s.o.)?; which number will X be?**

Finally, I, the reviewer, have one recommendation for you: even if you generally do not read the introductions to books you rely on, read this one!

Diary of an Administrator

Lucy Gunderson, SLD Administrator



I'm sure I'm not the only one among us guilty of procrastinating when it comes to marketing. First my children were too young, then I had enough work, then I got busy with my SLD responsibilities, and so on and so on. Now, when I'm busier than I ever was when I thought I was too busy, I am at long last undertaking some new (for me) marketing efforts.

What finally inspired me to really get going on my marketing plan was Tess Whitty's new book *Marketing Cookbook for Translators*, which was published this past December and is available on Amazon. In this book, Tess magically turns seemingly overwhelming tasks into recipes consisting of small pieces (the ingredients), which can be combined to serve up a robust action plan. It was this breakdown of marketing work into manageable chunks (goals) that really gave me the push I needed to get started.

For example, one of my long-standing goals has been to create a website. I have worked on this in fits and starts over several years, but I just could never see a way to achieve the final product. After reading Tess's outline for building a website, I realized that the overall goal of a website consists of many steps that can themselves become goals independent of the end goal. Now I have a timeframe for completing each part of the recipe and a deadline for the final goal of combining all the ingredients. This has made the process of launching a website much less daunting for me.

Another important lesson that I came away with was that as translators we are service providers, not job applicants; after all, we already have jobs — we are business owners! This key idea helped me take a critical look at my résumé and online profiles from the standpoint of my target clients and rework them in a way that will (I hope) grab the interest of these target clients. It also brought home the understanding that if I present myself as a service provider, I will be paid accordingly.

So, if you are looking to breathe new life into your marketing efforts, I would highly recommend Tess's book. I read it over several days and was immediately able to take some quick steps and make some long-term plans to grow my business and find the kind of work that is most satisfying to me on both a personal and a financial level.

In addition to being active marketers, it is also essential for us to be active in our professional associations. It is easy to fall into the habit of grumbling about decisions issued from on high without committing ourselves to attempt any change. Sometimes I myself have been known to hem and haw about the

seeming intractability of the ATA Board, but a recent experience has given me a deeper understanding of how the Board works and how the Directors are there to help us.

As an active member of the New York Circle of Translators, I approached this group's program director about co-hosting an event with the SLD. We got to talking and came up with the idea of holding a literary translation symposium featuring Russian into English translator Antonina Bouis. When I approached ATA HQ about receiving a token amount of funding for this event, I was told that HQ could only provide assistance to publicize the event and that no money was available.

I spent the next couple of months silently fuming. It was my opinion that chapters would be less likely to want to partner with divisions to host events if there was no ATA funding available. Finally, I approached Karen Tkaczyk, chair of the Divisions Committee, about this issue. She suggested submitting a Board Action Request for the then-upcoming Board Meeting. I took her advice and the Board approved my request. In this way I was able to obtain \$100 to support the NYCT event and, even more important, I was instrumental in the Board's decision to support these kinds of events as a matter of policy.

The lesson here is that it is possible to have a real impact on how your association works. As you become more involved, you begin to have increasing name recognition and increasing opportunities for influencing significant decisions. It is also important to remember that there are issues which Directors are simply not aware of. It is our job as responsible association members to bring these matters to their attention and request action.

Likewise, it is your job as responsible division members to bring your concerns and ideas to me (russophile@earthlink.net) and Fred (frdgrasso@satx.rr.com). We are doing our very best to provide excellent division services to you, but sometimes we need to be reminded of or made aware of certain topics. Please don't be shy! We need to hear from you to do our jobs well!

On that note, I would like to thank everyone who participated in our social media survey. Please see Ekaterina Howard's report on the results on page 10.

By the summer issue of *SlavFile*, I hope to have some news to share about speakers and SLD events for the Miami conference.

Until then, enjoy the spring!

Staying Trendy in Slavic: Translating Polish (and Russian) Constructions Expressing Changing Trends, Ratios, and Numerical Figures

Presentation by Daniel Sax

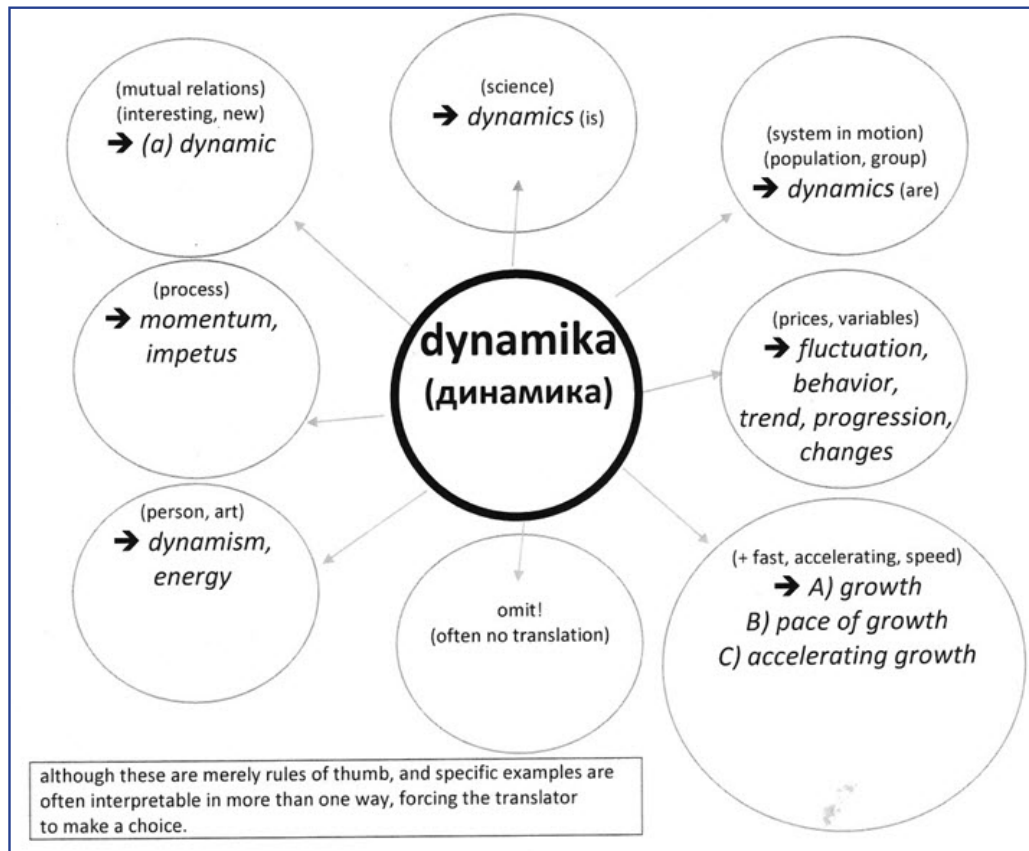
Reviewed by Christine Pawlowski

One Saturday morning last November, at the ATA Annual Conference in Chicago, yet another splendid variation was played upon the theme executed so elegantly by Natalia Strelkova in her 2013 Susana Greiss lecture. Dan Sax returned us to the subject of the art of translating, avoiding false cognates when transplanting terminology into a different culture and different subject area, and, when necessary, granting ourselves “omission permission” (Strelkova’s phrase used by Jen Guernsey and John Riedl as the title for their 2014 presentation). Dan was a first-time conference attendee. He is an American who has been living in Poland for 20 years. He runs a translation company and teaches translator training courses at the University of Warsaw. The company works with both academic and commercial clients. He noted at the beginning of his talk that he welcomed the business cards of his colleagues translating into and out of Slavic languages. His contact information is: sax.translations@gmail.com.

The core of Dan’s lecture dealt with the word *dynamika* and the translation challenges it presents in the fields of math and science, the social sciences, and business and with the Polish word *coraz* as it appears with adverbs of degree (e.g., *więcej* [greater]). Dan maintained that the same sets of translation issues occur in both of the above instances.



What are the shared meanings of *dynamika* and where do they occur? In science, *dynamika* translates readily as “dynamics” and uses a singular verb: “fluid dynamics is....” However, *dynamika* as an interaction of forces, although singular in Polish, will translate as plural in English: “the dynamics are....” These, according to Dan, are the “safe home base.” Things get tricky when we move to meanings that are not shared in English. A Polish or Russian graph showing



How Do You Translate Dynamika? Let Us Count The Ways.

a fluctuating pattern of change (especially over time) illustrates the *dynamika*. Such is not the case in English, which will express this as a “trend.” Dan then pointed out an English meaning of “dynamics” — the underpinning of a phenomenon — which does not occur in Polish. In other words, “market dynamics” in English does not translate into *dynamika rynku* in Polish, which would refer to price or rate fluctuation.

He gave a word of caution to us as translators when using such sites as proz.com, noting that just because a phrase fills the bill in terms of the subject matter, it may not be the right choice in the particular context.

There are other meanings: *dynamika* as “dynamic quality,” “the dynamic” in English, which requires translation into Polish using the idea of relationships. Dan’s suggestion was that the use of *dynamika* here in Polish is an Anglo-semanticism that has crept into the language.

No doubt it was the teacher in Dan that led him to get us off our mental duffs to suggest our own *mots justes* for his examples, both Polish and Russian. There was a lively dynamic in the room as we pored over Dan’s Polish and Russian examples. Again we were led in some cases to “use words only when necessary” à la St. Francis in his preaching of the Gospels.

The underlying principle here is this: a graph or chart depicting a *dynamika* has no need of added verbiage to make its point. In other words, the word *dynamika* need not appear in the heading. Dan also reminded us of the need to study an appended chart or graph when a specific textual translation of *dynamika* is required in English, particularly in a business context.

The lessons we learned from Dan’s discussion of *dynamika* can also be applied to translating usages of *coraz* with adverbs of degree.

As translators and interpreters we have daily encounters with deceptively simple words that demand great care in our translation of them into the target language. (One example that comes to mind is *zmiana* in its various medical renderings.)

Upon hearing the word *dynamika*, several of us were transported to Galczyński’s beloved poem: “Liryka, liryka tkliwa dynamika”. Dan threw out a challenge to us to offer our own translations of this word in this poetic context. Let mine be the first... “Poetry, poetry, tender the give and take.”

Christine Pawlowski is a freelance Polish and Russian translator with an M.A. in Slavic Languages and Literatures from Indiana University, “Tsvetograd”. She is retired from teaching elementary music and enjoys being called “Busia” by her 10 grandchildren. She is ATA certified (Polish-English). She may be reached at pawlow@verizon.net

IS THERE A PROPER ENGLISH WORD FOR IMPROPER ENGLISH WORDS?

Lydia Stone

In the article on page 12, Svetlana Beloshapkina uses the expressions “explicit” and “obscene” language for the terms she discusses – those commonly known as four-letter words. Although we all understand what she is referring to, “explicit” is a euphemism, since medically correct terms are also prime examples of the “explicit.” “Unprintable,” a past euphemism, cannot be used in its literal sense now that everything is printable. “Obscenities” and “obscene” describe only sexual terms, thus omitting excremental expletives, a lexical mainstay of Hollywood screenplays. “Obscenity” and “indecency” have actually been defined by our government. The FCC says that to qualify as obscene speech, material must appeal “to the prurient interest”; “describe, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct”; and “lack serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.” Indecent material “contains sexual or excretory references that do not rise to the level of obscenity.” So “indecency” might be a good term, although it has a prudish, dated ring to it.

The English words “profanity,” “cursing,” and “swearing” extend to religious terms used as interjections and for otherwise religiously inappropriate purposes. Indeed the words swearing and cursing

originally alluded to the use of religious terms to establish credibility (*I swear by God’s wounds*, euphemized into *Zounds*) and/or to express displeasure with someone or something (*God damn it*, euphemized, into for example, *dang it*). In contrast, phrases such as *Боже мой* (*my God*) seem to be used freely in non-religious contexts by even extremely pious Russians. “Vulgarity” may connote bad social manners (e.g., burping loudly in public) at least as much as bad language. The terms “offensive” and “taboo,” in reference to language, are defined on the basis not of their content but of their audience’s reactions. To further complicate matters in English, each of the time-honored Anglo-Saxon bad words has a huge number of synonyms, ranging from just as offensive as the original, to significantly milder but slangy, to “kiddie” words, to euphemistic homonyms of completely inoffensive words. Given Russian word-formation practices, the Russian authorities felt able to ban the offensive by simply prohibiting any word that contains one of four specified roots, whereas a similar listing in English would go on for pages. As complicated as it may be to classify these words, we all know exactly what Beloshapkina is referring to – “we know ‘em when we hear ‘em.”

Interpreting for International Visitors: Hot Pursuit of Happiness

Presented by Irina Jesionowski

Reviewed by Eugenia Sokolskaya

For beginner translators like me, interpreting can seem like a foreign and intimidating field. One of my goals during my first-ever ATA conference in Chicago was to see some real-life interpreters and hear a bit about their careers. So when, bright and early on a Saturday morning, I found Irina Jesionowski's presentation "Interpreting for International Visitors: Hot Pursuit of Happiness" in the schedule, I thought: here's my chance.

Compared to presentations I had attended the previous day, the setting was almost intimate: due to an 8:30 AM start, attendance was relatively low. Everyone in the audience knew Russian, with a healthy mix of experienced interpreters and newcomers like me. The theme of the presentation was what Jesionowski called "домашние заготовки": not jams and pickles, but pre-set equivalents, researched and prepared at home, that allow the experienced interpreter to keep up with the unyielding pace of simultaneous interpreting.

To bring us all up to speed on why such preparations are necessary, Jesionowski cited a pair of examples from her own experiences as a newcomer to the profession. When she started interpreting in court, she had no formal training, so she was able to describe to us in graphic detail how horrifying it was to be unprepared for the speed and complexity of the language used in court. To give us a taste of that horror, she played a clip of a judge reading out charges – the first of several video clips used to great effect in the presentation. Even with subtitles and a written version of the charges read, we could not keep up with the convoluted, drawn-out syntax.

For Jesionowski, this trial by fire was educational: from then on, she always made sure to research the type of case and the charges before starting an assignment, so that she would not have to untangle the mess of legalese on the fly. However, assignment-specific preparation turns out to be only one part of the puzzle. Research cited in the presentation showed that experienced interpreters spend the same amount of time listening, but less time deverbalizing and converting meaning to the target, than their less experienced colleagues. Where do they save time? A significant advantage is experience – at least 50,000 hours, Jesionowski suggested, revising [Malcolm Gladwell's 10,000-hour](#) estimate of how many hours of practice it takes to become successful in a field – which means

encountering the same problems repeatedly and having solutions ready.

The other advantage, more directly tied to Jesionowski's theme, was the ability to anticipate within a given subject field – roughly speaking, knowing in advance what the speaker was likely to say. Any English speaker can complete the phrase "innocent until proven..." (guilty); someone with some experience in legal terminology can finish the related phrase "innocent until guilt has been proven..." (beyond a reasonable doubt). In addition to knowing what may come next, the interpreter's job is also to know how to interpret the whole phrase into normal, native-sounding Russian. Otherwise they risk sounding silly. When Jesionowski cited "вы привлечены к суду из-за misdemeanor-a" as an equivalent she once heard for "you have been brought to court on a misdemeanor charge," the audience chuckled, but as it turns out, this kind of on-the-spot borrowing is lamentably common in court interpreting.

This first half of the presentation had persuasively demonstrated the need for research, experience, and anticipation, but at this point I was beginning to wonder what "international visitors" had been intended by the title. Fortunately, the presentation was one step ahead of me: just as I began to wonder, Jesionowski brought up the topic of citizen diplomacy and the various associated exchange programs, with a few of which she herself has been involved for twelve years. Citizen diplomacy – the political concept of average citizens engaging as representatives of a country or cause either inadvertently or by design – is the soft-power counterpart to formal diplomacy and was started by the United States Department of State in the 1930s as a counter to Nazi propaganda. What better way to convince foreigners of the superiority of the American way than by showing it to them directly? The approximately two dozen national and numerous local exchange programs cover a broad range of fields – journalism, politics, agriculture, education – and create a high demand for simultaneous interpreters.

Jesionowski compared the work involved in interpreting for these programs very favorably with other major types of interpreting, such as court and medical



interpreting. In addition to the variety in subject matter, the programs provide interpreters with the opportunity to meet interesting people among the visitors and see parts of the country and places they might not otherwise visit. According to Jesionowski, working in this field is “more emotionally uplifting than [in] the legal or healthcare domains.” However, she also lamented the fact that despite the large number of interpreters working in this field, it has very little professional recognition, and there are no conferences dedicated specifically to this kind of work.

Returning to her main point, Jesionowski argued that in spite of the variety of tasks, places, and situations involved in interpreting for these exchange programs, there were several “common denominators,” predictable elements of each visit for which the interpreter can reasonably prepare. For example, every visit begins with sessions on the American system of government, which means the interpreter must be familiar with concepts such as federalism, checks and balances, and due process. In addition, many such interpreting assignments feature numerous political speeches and quotes from famous speeches of the past. For the rest of the presentation, Jesionowski focused on the peculiarities of American political rhetoric, drawing heavily from videoclips of speeches made by President Obama.

Here, finally, the subtitle of the presentation, “Hot Pursuit of Happiness,” became clear, as we listened to a simultaneous interpreter for Voice of America

fumble through the famous line from the Declaration of Independence that starts “We hold these truths to be self-evident...” This particular interpreter had listed the God-given rights as “жизнь, свобода и право преследовать свое счастье.” As Jesionowski pointed out, undoubtedly the Declaration of Independence has been translated before. Had this interpreter done his research, he would have been able to avoid implying that all Americans have the right to “persecute” or “prosecute” their happiness, chasing it down like a criminal.

In the second half of the presentation, Jesionowski offered more and more opportunities for audience participation, by challenging us to provide equivalents and even simultaneously interpret speeches as she played us clips. These impromptu interpretation exercises were challenging, and somewhat intimidating to a newbie like me, but at the same time they clearly showed the value of what Jesionowski was talking about: you cannot be a good interpreter without doing your homework.

Eugenia Sokolskaya has been translating for about five years, primarily Russian to English, as well as English to Russian and French to English. She is currently pursuing a Master's in Translation at Kent State University. She may be reached at geniasokol@yahoo.com.

CALLING ALL NEWCOMERS TO SLD, NEWLY MINTED SLAVIC TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS, TRANSLATION STUDENTS

You are the future of SLD and we would like to start getting to know you better.

Announcing the birth of a Newcomers Column in *SlavFile* to be compiled by Svetlana Beloshapkina (a relative SLD newcomer).

You are invited to start sending her profiles of yourself and your translation interests, as well as any comments you have concerning SLD and *SlavFile*, and suggestions for further column content, or even a better column title.

Contact Sveta at: svetlana@beloshapkina.com.

SLAVIC LANGUAGES DIVISION CONTENT STRATEGY FOR 2015: SURVEY RESULTS

SLD Online Presence and Social Media Development Survey

Ekaterina Howard

First, a thank you to everyone who participated in the survey sent to all SLD members! If you volunteered to provide content for the SLD blog, please do not forget to get in touch with SLD Administrator Lucy Gunderson (russophile@earthlink.net).

Survey Overview

The survey, which was originated by Ekaterina Howard and coordinated with SLD administrators and ATA Headquarters, ran from February 20 to March 7; two notifications were sent out. Sixty-four SLD members participated in the survey, although the number responding to some questions was smaller. Based on figures from October 17, 2014, 64 is a little over 5% of the division's total membership (1,175). Due to the low number of responses, these results cannot be considered an accurate representation of opinions within the SLD. However, I believe that conducting the survey was worthwhile and provides a *suggestive* guide to improving the SLD's on-line efforts.

Overall Satisfaction

It appears that, overall, SLD members are quite happy with the SLD online presence.

- When asked to rate their overall satisfaction with SLD's digital presence (*How satisfied are you with SLD's digital presence?*) on a 10-point scale from 10 (very satisfied) to 1 (not satisfied), the mean rating was 6.70.
- To the question *How satisfied are you with the amount of content created by SLD?* on the same scale, the mean rating was 6.97.
- When asked *Do you find online content created by SLD useful?* on a 10-point scale from 10 (very useful) to 1 (not useful), the mean rating was 6.98.
- To the question *On which social media channels are you following SLD?* (with multiple answers permitted), 54.7% of respondents cited the LinkedIn group, and 26.6% subscription to the blog. The answer "Other" was selected by 48.4%, mainly specifying non-social-media means of communication such as email blasts and reading *SlavFile*.

Content Planning

It is interesting, that despite the general level of satisfaction, 60.3% of respondents answered "Yes" to the question: *Do you think that SLD needs to be more active online?*



The rest of the survey was designed to determine which direction(s) respondents felt SLD's social media strategy should take.

The question *What should the primary content creation goal be?* (with multiple answers possible) was answered as follows:

- Educational (original, informative content) – 72.4%
- Informational (sharing information from other resources) – 55.2%
- Organizational (share news about SLD events, articles in *SlavFile*, conference sessions, etc.) – 44.8%.

To the question *In addition to division members, do you think that the SLD should also try to interact with other target groups? If yes which do you think are the most important groups?* (with only one answer permitted), respondents' answers broke down as follows:

- Just SLD membership (27.6%)
- Clients (29.3%)
- Students of Slavic languages (22.4%)
- People interested in Slavic culture (20.7%).

Note: since only one answer was permitted, it is quite possible that those who chose one of the nonmember groups would also be in favor of outreach to the other two.

Depending on whether they chose just SLD membership or one of the other possible responses, respondents were then redirected either to a *Content for SLD members* section (N=16) or to a *Content for non-members* section (for all those who selected the last three of the four answers shown above).

Content for SLD members (15 respondents)

To the question *What should the goal of the SLD content creation be?* (with multiple answers permitted), respondents chose:

- Education: facilitate experience exchange between members – 80%
- Networking: help members learn more about each other – 66.7%
- Information: provide information on conference sessions, *SlavFile* articles, SLD events – 53.3%.

To the question *Which types of content should SLD be creating for its members?* (with multiple responses allowed), respondents chose:

- Language or specialization-specific content: style guides, glossaries, translation or interpreting solutions and challenges – 100%
- Coverage of translation-, interpretation- and language-related events – 53.3%
- Member profiles – 46.7%
- Business-related topics – 46.7%
- Non-Russian language-related contributions – 26.7%.

According to this group, the most important social media channels for SLD membership would be the SLD blog (53.3%), followed by LinkedIn (33.3%).

Content for non-SLD members section (39 respondents)

To the question *What should the goal of the SLD content creation be?* (with multiple answers permitted, asked only of those who approved contact with nonmembers), responses were:

- Educational (help potential clients and/or aspiring translators or interpreters learn more about translation or interpreting to/from Slavic languages) – 76.9%
- Promotional (profiles of Slavic translators and interpreters, highlight their expertise to potential clients) – 53.8%
- Informational (present information about Slavic-related topics that might be of interest to target audiences) – 53.8%.

As the preferred social media channel for information to outreach groups, 53.5% chose the SLD blog, 38.5% the LinkedIn group, and 33.3% “Other.” Only 6 people selected Twitter, even though multiple answers were permitted.

Results Summary

It is not surprising that the types of content most in demand are the ones that require the most member participation and effort. It is not very hard or time-consuming to retweet or repost news or events that might be of interest, but the creation of thoughtful, interesting and relevant articles for a blog on a regular schedule would not be possible without contributions from SLD members. Such contributions can be an excellent opportunity not only to increase a member’s own visibility and the visibility of Slavic translators and interpreters in general, but also for members to learn more about each other and to network.

Thank you again to all survey participants who volunteered to provide content for the SLD online media. Even if you do not have a contribution ready now, please let Lucy Gunderson know that you plan to contribute in the future.

If you did not participate in the survey but would like to comment on content or the SLD’s online strategy, or if you have links or resources you would like to share, please get in touch with Lucy (russophile@earthlink.net) or with me (ekaterinahoward@gmail.com).

Some of the comments and suggestions:

“...*SlavFile* content should be integrated into the blog.”

“Offer some educational courses for Slavic languages for specialized translation.”

“How and where a freelancer working with Slavic languages could find a job, more information about specialized trainings.”

“The LinkedIn group is more conducive to discussion, the blog more conducive to educational articles and notification of events.”

Ekaterina Howard is an English to Russian and German to Russian translator working in the business, marketing and real estate fields. An ATA and CATI member, she tweets at @ATA_SLD for the Slavic Languages Division. You can find additional information about her at pinwheeltrans.com or connect with her on Twitter (@katya_howard).

SAY WHAT?!...

Rendering Hollywood's explicit language in Russian

Svetlana Beloshapkina

On July 1, 2014, an amendment to the 1996 law “On State Support of Cinematography in the Russian Federation” that bans obscene language in film, literature, media, and live culture and arts events went into effect in Russia. People of my parents’ and even of my generation remember well the times — Soviet times — when watching films and reading books and magazines free from obscenity was the norm. Those were the times when obscene vocabulary had been collectively labeled *нецензурная лексика* and *непечатная лексика* (unprintable vocabulary / vocabulary subject to censure). Not that obscene language did not exist — on the contrary, it was very much alive, just as it has been since the invention of language. In fact, Wikipedia states, “Obscenities are among the earliest recorded attestations of the Russian language (the first written swearwords date to the Middle Ages).”

Statistics prove that since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the use of obscene vocabulary by individuals has remained stable. According to the Levada Center, a Russian non-governmental polling and sociological research organization, in the past 20 years the percentage of self-reported regular users of strong language in Russia has fluctuated only negligibly: 53% in 1992, 59% in 2000, and 59% in 2014 (Levada.ru, 03.21.2014).

So, if everyday use has remained constant, why is public swearing once again off-limits? In its online edition, *Kommersant* (02.09.2015) cited the opinion of Professor Maksim Krongauz, PhD, Head of the Russian Language Department at the Russian State University for the Humanities (RSUH), saying that at the beginning of perestroika the intelligentsia itself had launched a process by which taboos began to gradually disappear. Cultural restrictions were being shattered along with the political ones. We witnessed an attempt to break free from the past as a whole, to achieve absolute freedom. This played a nasty trick on the arts in particular. When swearwords were first heard on stage and on screen, they made a strong impression; they represented a sort of energy release. However, the weaker the taboo, the weaker the effect its violation produces. In this sense, today's use of obscenities no longer makes the same impression — it is just a repetition of the verbal filth heard every day.

Many in Russia's cultural world are against any censorship, including that of obscene language, in the arts. *Ekho Moskvy* reported in January that a group of

Russian cinematographers had sent a letter to Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev asking for a revision of the law with regard to explicit language. Clearly, the regulation has provoked controversy, yet *dura lex, sed lex*, and we, as translators, must follow it. For those of us, who, like myself, have been blessed (or cursed) with working in the area of audiovisual translation into Russian, knowing what exactly constitutes violation would be helpful, if not required. Let us take a look at the exact language of the new rule.



Article 2 of the Federal Law No. 101-ФЗ dated May 5, 2014 (which was published in *Rossiyskaya gazeta* last May) states, “Прокатное удостоверение на показ фильма не выдается в случае, если фильм содержит нецензурную брань.” (A distribution certificate for public screenings will not be issued to films containing explicit language.) Okay, now what exactly do they mean by “нецензурная брань”? Is there a list of prohibited words? I didn't find a specific list in the text of the law (something that in my opinion, it should have included. How is it going to be enforced without a clear definition of what is being prohibited?). Luckily, further search brought me to a list compiled by Roskomnadzor (the Russian equivalent of the FCC) with the help of the Russian Language Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences. It is, actually, short — only four “root” words: two of them represent male and female genitals, one indicates intercourse, and the fourth one refers to a promiscuous woman. Just the four words, and, oh yes, their derivatives. That's where matters get a bit more complicated. The plasticity of the Russian language allows it to produce a large number of obscene derivations. I could tell you a joke consisting entirely of derivatives from the noun that signifies the male external reproductive organ, but I am afraid that even the very tolerant editors of this publication will undoubtedly want to censor it.

The real question for us film translators who work from English into Russian, is how long the list of obscenities found in Hollywood films is, and how we deal with it when we're trying to produce Russian versions that comply with the law.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the adjectives “obscene” as “relating to sex in an indecent or offensive way” and “explicit” as “open in the depiction of nudity or sexuality.” So far, it seems that Roskomnadzor and Merriam-Webster are in agreement. Add to these obscene and explicit swearwords relating to bodily functions, and you get the dirty dozen most often heard in Hollywood movies. A number of solutions can help us to make sure that a film we translate (either in the form of subtitles or as a dubbing script) will be distributable in the Russian Federation. Techniques 1–3 are referenced



from V. S., Modestov, *Художественный перевод: история, теория, практика* [Literary translation: History, Theory, Practice] (Moscow: The Maxim Gorky Literature Institute Press, 2006).

1. Use the middle of a synonymic row.

Compare the English *backside* – *bottom* – *butt* – *ass* with the Russian *корма* – *зад* – *задница* – *жопа*.

2. Substitute accepted euphemisms, or “surrogates,” for explicit vocabulary. E.g., *s****, *p****, *f**** (used as an exclamation) can be rendered as черт, блин, мля, ё-моё; to *f**** (denotation of intercourse) as трахать(ся), шпокать(ся), перепихиваться; *f***ing* (invective adjective) as чертов, долбанный, грёбанный.

3. Omission of the most unacceptable part of an obscenity.

E.g., *Go f*** yourself!* – Да пошел ты..!

4. Using only the initial letter of an obscene word and replacing the rest with either asterisks or ellipsis marks (mostly for subtitling).

E.g., *That boyfriend of yours is just a piece of s***.* – Этот твой дружок такое г...!

5. Extracting the intended meaning and using standard register target vocabulary.

*Don't s*** on your own doorstep.* – Никаких интрижек на работе!

NB. This example is taken from the film *My Week with Marilyn*. The line belongs to a character (Orton) who is hiring a young male assistant (Colin) for Marilyn.

These techniques for rendering obscenities can apply successfully to film translation, where we must take into account the length constraints of utterances in the original language, and (particularly in the case of dubbing) maximize the synchrony with the movement of the character’s lips (lip synchrony). The above suggestions are just a small part of a film translator’s arsenal of creative tools. Very often translators of film (as well as those specializing in other areas, no doubt) rely primarily on their own intuition, their perception of the source piece and their knowledge of the target cultural equivalents.

As an illustration and in conclusion, I would like to share some examples of how translation of explicit language was handled in translating American films into Russian, taken from my professional experience. I must admit that I personally try to avoid using obscenities in translation as much as possible. Not once in my 8+ years of film translation experience have I used the first three words on the Roskomnadzor list, and perhaps, only once the sixth word (referring to a promiscuous woman), and then only because it was warranted. You will see from these examples (taken from films I translated both before and after the law went into effect) that I did not need the law to avoid using obscene language in translation: my own internal law was already guiding me. I am convinced that cultural knowledge, creativity, tact and taste are far better tools in translation than the ability to slap a dirty word on a page. For, as they say in Russia, “Дурное дело – не хитрое” (It doesn’t take a genius to do bad things).

If readers would like to suggest their own versions of the lines below or to send comments, I will welcome them at Svetlana@beloshapkina.com.

Svetlana Beloshapkina is a self-employed translator from English, French and Italian into Russian with 15 years of in-house and freelance experience. She specializes in translation for film subtitling and dubbing, marketing, advertising, and healthcare. She has an MA in Translation and Interpretation from the Monterey Institute of International Studies and an MA in French from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She is a member of the ATA’s Slavic and Literary Divisions and is a rostered candidate with the United Nations language services.

Sample Translations of English Hollywood Language

August: <i>Osage County</i> (2013) (translated for dubbing)	
(Beverly) “Why don’t you go back to bed, sweetheart?”	— Иди-ка ты ложись, дорогая.
(Violet) “Why don’t you go f*** a f***ing sow’s ass?”	— Иди-ка ты к черту и чертовой матери!
(Barbara) “If it’s your father, tell him to f*** off.”	— Если это твой отец, скажи, чтоб отвалил.
(Barbara) “I mean, we f***ed the Indians for this?”	— Ради этого... стоило вырезать индейцев?
(Barbara) “She got a parakeet for some insane reason, and the little f***er croaked after two days.”	— Она сдуру купила себе попугайчика, а эта зараза сдохла через два дня.
(Violet) “And I have got cancer in my mouth. And it burns, look. It burns like a bullsh***.”	— У меня во рту рак! И мне жжет, смотри! Так жжет, как сволочь!
<i>My Week with Marilyn</i> (2011) (translated for dubbing)	
(Orton) “Lesson two – Don't s*** on your own doorstep.”	— Урок второй: никаких интрижек на работе!
(Green) “That would drop us all in a whole ocean of s***.”	— Тогда мы все окажемся в большой куче дерьма.
(Sir Laurence) “We can't have two f***ing directors.”	— У нас же не может быть двух режиссеров.
(Sir Laurence) “I'm a f***ing star.”	— Я тоже звезда.
(Jacobs) “She's the greatest piece of ass on earth. With tits like that you make allowances.”	— У нее самая знаменитая задница в мире. За такие титьки дают поблажки.
(Sir Laurence) “But why can't you get here on time, for the love of f***?!”	— Но почему вы не можете приходить вовремя, черт вас поberi!
<i>Trust Me</i> (2014) (subtitled)	
(Nate) “Ma'am, get the f*** back!”	— Отойди, зараза!
(Nate) “Get that s*** out of my face!”	— Убери эту дрянь от меня!
(Ray) “No, you're stuffing your mouth full of that p**** and biting off more than you can chew with that dancer.”	— Да, а ты зато с головой лезешь куда не надо с этой танцовщицей.
(Nate) “Don't start in with that Freud s***.”	— Ой, ладно, Фрейд нашелся.
(Ray) “That skinny bitch ain't my type. Plus, she's a c*** tease.”	— Такие худосочные вообще не в моем вкусе. Кроме того, она же стриптизерша. <i>NB: As far as I know, there is no direct equivalent for this particular idiom in Russian. Therefore, I chose to go with стриптизерша (stripper), which implies sexual teasing without the actual sex. Using a descriptive phrase would not be possible due to space constraints.</i>

PS FROM THE EDITORS

A propos of the article on pages 12-14: The new Russian law is not the first (though perhaps the most widespread) attempt to protect the ears of Russian speakers from bad words. The following table reprinted on numerous sites of the Russian language internet was purportedly issued by the management of a factory in Barnaul sometime during the Soviet era. For those who do not speak Russian we have included an approximate translation below.

ВМЕСТО	НАДО ГОВОРИТЬ
ох...еть!	я поражен!
эти пид...ы	в данном случае они не правы
какая нах... разница	разница не принципиальна
Пошел на х...	Не отвлекайте меня, пожалуйста, я занят!
Зае...ли	Простите, но вы слишком назойливы
Что за х...ня?	Мне кажется где-то ошибка
Блядь!	Меня переполняют эмоции
Распи...яй	Ваша степень ответственности оставляет желать лучшего
Прое...ли	Кажется мы кое-что упустили из виду
Ох...ли что ли	Ваше поведение не соответствует моим ожиданиям
Эта х...ня	Всем известный предмет
Его нужно вые...ть	Я буду вынужден сообщить об этом начальству
Б...ха-муха	Боже мой!
... твою мать!	Вау!

Rules for Language on the Factory Floor

F*** me! — I am astonished.

Those c***s***-ers! — What they did was not justified.

What's the f***ing difference. — This is not a critical distinction.

F*** off! — Please do not distract me — I am busy.

You're a f***ing pest. (Or Keep your f***ing nose out of my business.) — Pardon me for saying so, but your interference is unwarranted.

What the f***! — I fear a mistake has been made somewhere.

Son of a b****! — I am overcome with emotion.

You're a f*** up. — Your sense of responsibility leaves something to be desired!

We're f***ed! — I am afraid we have neglected something.

That's a load of bulls***! — That's a bunch of you-know-what!

He needs to be f***ed over but good for this. — I regret I will be compelled to inform our superiors about this matter.

Transparent euphemism for an oath relating to a woman of ill-repute. — Oh, fiddlesticks!

Mother*****! — Wow!

SLAVFILE LITE: NOT BY WORD COUNT ALONE

Lydia Razran Stone

The other day I accessed a website about the O.J. Simpson trial in order to get the answer to a crossword puzzle clue (yes, I know it is cheating). I was highly amused to find the following factoid, which I do not remember from the time (1995): “When Yeltsin stepped off his plane to meet President Clinton, the first question he asked was, ‘Do you think O.J. did it?’” After a bit of reflection I decided that the most striking thing about this trivial incident was my own reaction to it, paraphrasable as “Oh, if only we were still living in those simpler and more amicable times!” What have we come to when international obsession with a murder trial evokes a thought like this!

As a sign of the times we are now living in, I might cite something in yesterday’s *Washington Post* about current anti-American feeling in Russia. Evidently, while many Russians still crave McDonald’s food, the brand’s glaring U.S. associations evoke hostility. An advertising agency in Moscow has attempted to assuage this cognitive dissonance. Last week, one McDonald’s billboard in the heart of Moscow read “Made in Russia for Russians.”

I hope most of you who work with Russian know about Michele Berdy’s columns in *The Moscow Times* (www.themoscowtimes.com). They are about the Russian language, and they are wonderful! A fairly recent column (January 29, 2015) touched directly on the theme of how the times are a-changin’ and how this directly affects translation. Berdy writes that at *The Moscow Times* language desk they have kept track of translation gaffes in official statements over the years. In the old days “only translation nerds were interested in the nuances.” Those days are gone forever. “Now translation is just one more weapon in the propaganda wars.” She goes on to report that President Obama’s then-recent statement that Russia’s economy was “in tatters” was initially translated by unnamed Russian commentators as the somewhat stronger: “разорвана в клочья (torn to pieces).” And then picked up by another commentator as “Барак Обама выразился конкретно — порвёт Россию, как Тузик грелку. (Barack Obama expressed himself precisely — he’s going to tear Russia apart like a dog rips apart a rubber toy.)”

I noticed a similar English mistranslation of a Russian phrase in the *Washington Post*, although it went in the opposite direction, making the original seem more innocuous and less like a threat. A photograph accompanying a March 9 article showed part of

the “Defense of the Fatherland” parade in Moscow; in it was a (presumably fake or at least unloaded) missile with the words “Обаме лично в руки” printed in large letters on the side. Literally: “To Obama, to be put directly in his hands.” The English caption rendered this slogan as “Privately to Obama,” which I feel was overly mild. A better translation would be IMHO “Special Delivery: To be given personally to Obama.” Or something of the sort. Do you have a better rendering?



A few weeks ago Reuters published an article available on the Internet in which a Belarusian delegate to the Geneva-based U.N. Conference on Disarmament was described as voicing concern about opening up the meetings to the general public, on the grounds that it might possibly lead to a, er, sticky and even dangerous situation such as “topless women throwing jars of mayonnaise” from the gallery onto the discussion floor. My friend Laura Wolfson, who translates Russian, among other languages, for the UN, was asked by a non-Russian speaking colleague whether this scenario referred to some mistranslated idiom or particular aspect of Belarusian culture. When Laura emailed me about this, I wondered whether this reported fear was based on a memory of some dream, either nightmarish or wish-fulfilling. Not knowing the gentlemen in question, I could not decide.

However, wishing to get to the bottom of this, I consulted the Yahoo Russian Translators Club, which has never yet failed me. Indeed, Dr. Eugene Begalov, who previously explained to me everything I needed to know about likely interactions between wounds caused by 19th-century firearms and the climate of Dagestan when I was examining translations of Lermontov’s “Dream,” explained the topless mayonnaise business to me and other participants virtually immediately. While I would not exactly call his information a *rational* or simple explanation of the delegate’s concern, to me it seems no more outlandish than a great deal of what we read about in the news these days. Here is what I found out:

FEMEN is self-described as an “international women’s movement of brave topless female activists painted with slogans and crowned with flowers.” It was founded in Ukraine (!) in 2008. The Belgian Ambassador was assaulted last December, evidently

for his economic austerity program, by women belonging to what was once the Belgian affiliate of FEMEN but has now separated from that organization. The Belgian women involved may have been brave, but they were reported to have been fully dressed. Not only was mayonnaise indeed their weapon of choice, but it was accompanied by French fries. (Evidently this food pairing is endemic in Belgium and Holland.) I was relieved to hear that the jars (presenting a potential danger of glass shards) mentioned in the Belarusan statement were, like the toplessness, not actually a feature of the Belgian assault. Indeed the condiment was squirted from a short distance away from one of those plastic condiment containers you see sometimes in casual restaurants.

In my teaching of English, I often ponder why the language is so difficult for non-native speakers. I have come up with a number of reasons, beyond the infamously and atrociously irrational spelling. One of them involves the unusually high number of homonyms, combined with the fact that it is frequently not detectable from the form of a word whether it is being used as a noun (the light is too dim), a verb (light the fire), an adjective (light green) or an adverb (traveling light), and further exacerbated by the frequent use of words alone or in phrases to signify something other than their primary dictionary meaning. I have begun to notice how often this feature is used to enhance the difficulty of crossword puzzles, of which my husband and I do an inordinate number. Here are some examples:

March 1: *Washington Post*: Clue: Battery regulators; Solution: Tort law; Explanation: The phrase evokes an electrical battery, but the solution pertains to the legal crime (tort) of battery (assault). Same puzzle 6 clues down: Clue: Battery composition; Solution: Tests. Explanation: Electrical or tort? Neither! The reference is to the phrase *test battery*, a set of tests given to the same person at more or less the same time or for the same purpose. Same puzzle: Clue: It may produce sound waves; Solution: Yacht. Explanation: The acoustic phenomenon, right? Wrong! When a boat, such as a yacht, travels on a sound it surely will produce waves, and who could object to their being called sound waves?

March 1, *Washington Post* (another puzzle): Clue: Utter; Solution: Sheer. Explanation: There are many synonyms for the verb utter = to speak, but here the connection is with the not obviously related adverb meaning complete or absolute. Clue: How clubs may be served; Solution: On toast. Explanation: The words *club* and *serve* evoke some (indefinite) sport, but the

reference is to a club sandwich, a three-decker evidently originally served as a specialty of some club.

March 1: *The New York Times*: Clue: Pass; Solution: Enact. Explanation: Pass, meaning to enact a law, is the 11th (submeaning a) of 12 meanings of the transitive verb. There are also 19 meanings of the intransitive verb, and a mere 11 of the noun. Clue: Port authority; Solution: Wino. Port authority is a phrase with a specific meaning, but one who drinks wine frequently may well be an authority on the Portuguese red known as *port*.

March 7: *The New York Times*: Clue: Something you might make a stand for; Solution: Lemonade. Explanation: The phrase *make a stand for* suggests someone espousing principles or beliefs without backing down. A lemonade stand is a primitive structure children (or their parents) put together on hot days to sell lemonade to thirsty passers-by in front of their houses. Clue: Speaking part; Solution: Larynx. Explanation: Speaking part is a set phrase, every beginning actor's dream, but one cannot argue that the larynx is a part of the body that enables us to speak.

Well, I guess you get the idea by now!

**CHILDREN DON'T HAVE TO BE BILINGUAL;
EVEN BEING AROUND MULTIPLE LANGUAGES
BOOSTS THEIR COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

*Public Announcement from the University of Chicago,
May 11, 2015*

Young children who hear more than one language spoken at home become better communicators, a new study from University of Chicago psychologists finds. Effective communication requires the ability to take others' perspectives. Researchers discovered that children from multilingual environments are better at interpreting a speaker's meaning than children who are exposed only to their native tongue. The most novel finding is that the children do not even have to be bilingual themselves; it is the exposure to more than one language that is the key for building effective social communication skills.

Addicted to Limericks: My Eight Years with Edward Lear

By Vladimir Kovner



Let me begin from the end, to be exact, from the happy conclusion. In the middle of March 2015 my new book of translations, *Эдвард Лир. Полное Собрание Абсурдных Стишков-Лимериков с Рисунками*, was completed and submitted to the publisher. This is a bilingual edition in a format reminiscent of those of the 19th century, with one limerick and picture per page. It includes close to 300 drawings, mostly by Edward Lear. In addition, I commissioned ten drawings by a fine artist, theatrical designer and illustrator Felix Braslavsky. Lydia Stone went over all the English commentary, so blame her if there is something wrong there!

Why have I chosen Edward Lear? Edward Lear (1812-1888) was a brilliant 19th-century English writer of absurd literature. A person of many talents, he was multilingual, a poet, artist, composer and performer, ornithologist, and ... a wanderer. He published four *Books of Nonsense* with highly amusing and absurd drawings and verses. Although, in his own words, he “originally made and composed them for parents,” children responded with “uproarious delight and welcome at the appearance of every new absurdity.” And parents and children still do. He was truly a genius creating works for all ages and all times. Lear was a person of inexhaustible humor and the most generous and unselfish soul, who signed one of his letters: “3 parts crazy — & wholly affectionate Uncle Edward.”

In this article, I will refrain from discussing my approach to translating limericks, because Lydia Stone and I laid out our ideas first in our presentation at the ATA Annual Conference in 2011 (see <http://atasld.org/sites/atasld.org/files/slavfile/winter-2011.pdf>,

p. 30 for a review), and in our article V. Kovner, L. Razran Stone. “The limerick packs laughs anatomical, but translating limericks is not a laughing matter.” *Bridges* («Мосты»), R. Valent, 1(33)2012.

Winston Churchill once said, “Writing a book is an adventure. To begin with, it is a toy and an amusement; then it becomes a mistress, and then it becomes a master, and then a tyrant. The last phase is that just as you are about to be reconciled to your servitude, you kill the monster, and fling him out to the public.” Sometime around 2007 I came across a limerick of unknown origin with a footnote “After Edward Lear” and immediately translated it:

A diner while dining at Crew
Found a rather large mouse in his stew.
Said the waiter, “Don’t shout
And wave it about,
Or the rest will be wanting one too.”

Человек в ресторане в Лиможе
В супе мышшь увидал. О, Боже!
Метрдотель шепнул: «Тишшшь,
Не крутите так мышшь,
А то все захотят её тоже».

The result was predictable: I began searching for more interesting limericks to translate and found a limerick that was included in the “Mother Goose” collection.

As I was going to Bonner
Upon my word of honor,
I met a pig
Without a wig,
As I was going to Bonner.

Я поклясться могу чем угодно,
Хряк гулял по дороге на Гродно.
Он сваял дурака,
Выйдя без парика.
Ведь парик — это шик, это модно!

Then I discovered the *Books of Nonsense* by Edward Lear. Fully in accordance with Churchill’s analysis, I continued translating until I had consumed absolutely all the limericks (I hope!) by Lear, eventually producing 267 translations. True, I never became a slave of my book while working on my translations. I was so happy and full of joy that, in Churchill’s terms, I would call this period a prolonged mistress *phase*.



But to complete my book, to kill the monster-tyrant, I had to read over, look over, and sometimes comb page by page through a great many works — not only by Lear himself but by collectors, custodians, and researchers into his body of work such as Lady Strachey, Lord Cromer, Angus Davidson, Herman W. Liebert, and especially Vivien Noakes. Her book *EDWARD LEAR. The Complete Verse and Other Nonsense*, compiled and edited with an introduction and notes by Vivien Noakes (Penguin Books, 2002) became my main source of limericks and drawings collected from different works by Lear, including his letters to friends and his diaries. I am wholeheartedly grateful to all those authors, my predecessors in addition to Lear's nonsense of genius.

Lear is enormously popular in Russia. I have found some very good translations of Lear's limericks, especially those produced by Grigory Kruzhkov, whose book *Эдвард Лир. Большая книга чепухи* (St. Petersburg, 2010) is the most complete translation of Lear's *Nonsense Books* and includes some of his other poems and letters. On the internet, I have also found some good translations by Boris Arkhiptsev from his book *Эдвард Лир. Полный Нонсенс* (Moscow, 2008), and by Mark Freidkin (*Английская абсурдная поэзия*, Moscow, 1998) and some others. However, as far as I know, none of those authors translated any limericks beyond the 212 from the *Books of Nonsense*.

The book *Anecdotes and Adventures of Fifteen Gentlemen*, published in 1822 (author or authors unattributed), was introduced to Lear at the home of Lord Stanley, Earl of Derby. This book and especially the best-known limerick, "There was a sick man of Tobago," gave Lear the idea of using this poetic form to accompany his nonsense drawings for children. That is how the foundation for Lear's *Books of Nonsense* was laid.

There was a sick man of Tobago
Lived long on rice-gruel and sago.
Till one day, to his bliss,
The physician said this —
"To a roast leg of mutton you *may* go."

Жил больной старичок из Тобаго
Лишь на рисовой каше и саго.
Врач пришел на подмогу:
«На баранью ногу
Перейди — не во вред, а во благо!»

Let me introduce you to a number of eccentric old men who can be encountered in Lear's *Books of Nonsense* of different years.

There was an Old Man with a beard,
Who said, "It is just as I feared!—
Two Owls and a Hen,
Four Larks and a Wren,
Have all built their nests in my beard!"

Жил старик с сединой в бороде,
Он сказал: «Так и знал, быть беде! —
Две совы, два стрижа
И четыре чижа
Свили гнёзда в моей бороде!»

There was an Old Man with a flute.
A "sarpint" ran into his boot;
But he played day and night,
Till the "sarpint" took flight,
And avoided that man with a flute.

Дед на флейте играл кое-как.
Заползла ему кобра в башмак;
Он играл день и ночь,
Уползла она прочь,
Больше слушать невмочь — ну, никак!

There was an Old Man with a nose,
Who said, "If you choose to suppose
That my nose is too long,
You are certainly wrong!"
That remarkable man with a nose.

Старичок по прозвищу «нос»
Произнёс: «Кого гложет вопрос —
Длинноват ли мой нос?
Тот ещё не дорос,
Чтоб понять, как прекрасен мой нос».

There was an Old Man of Nepal,
From his horse had a terrible fall;
But, though split quite in two,
With some very strong glue
They mended that Man of Nepal.

Жил старик в королевстве Непал,
Он с коня неудачно упал;
На две части распался,
Но клей отыскался —
Чинят всех в королевстве Непал.

There was an Old Man of Peru,
Who watched his wife making a stew;
But once by mistake,
In a stove she did bake
That unfortunate Man of Peru.

Любопытный старик из Канзаса
Наблюдал, как жена тушит мясо;
По ошибке, в ночи
Она в жаркой печи
Испекла муженька-лоботряса.

There was an Old Person of Tring,
Who embellished his nose with a ring;
He gazed at the moon
Every evening in June,
That ecstatic Old Person of Tring.

Старичок с вдохновенным лицом
Длинный нос свой украсил кольцом;
Весь июнь, ну и ну! —
Он глазел на луну,
Попивая то виски, то ром.

There was an Old Person of Harrow,
Who bought a mahogany barrow;
For he said to his wife,
“You’re the joy of my life!
And I’ll wheel you all day in this barrow!”

Дед для бабки купил на заначку
Всю из красного дерева тачку;
Он сказал: «Мне, жена,
Ты на радость дана!
Буду всюду возить тебя в тачке!»

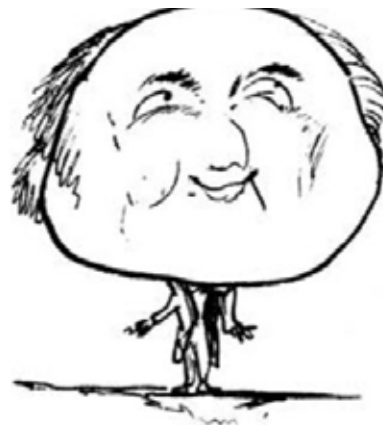
Now I’d like to show a couple of limericks from
Lear’s letters to his friends. The first one thematically
could have been composed in old Russia.

There was an Old Person of Paхо,
Which complained when the fleas bit his back so;
But they gave him a chair
And impelled him to swear,
Which relieved that old person of Paхо.

Деду жутко блоха докучала,
Злясь, он просто чесался сначала;
Ему дали совет:
«Матерись на чем свет!»
И тотчас старику полегчало.

POETRY CONTEST

In the last issue, we told you that Cardinal Points magazine would be running a contest for translation of poems by Boris Slutsky. At that time details about the 2015 contest for the **Compass Translation Award** had not been posted on the website. Now it has. The deadline for submission is August 1.



The second limerick has quite an interesting story. Lear had drawn a picture and had written only the limerick’s two first lines. Then I translated those lines into Russian and completed the limerick in Russian. After that, Lydia Stone created a counterpart in English.

There was an old person who said:
“Do you think I’ve a very big head?
A huge pumpkin—no less.
It’s been swelling, I guess.”
Said his wife, “By your ego it’s fed.”

Дед спросил, отдышавшись едва:
«Не огромна ль моя голова?»
Бабка ахнула: «Боже,
Как на тыкву похожа!»
Дед обиделся: «Ты неправa».

In conclusion, I would like to quote a short poem, not a limerick, which I found in one of Lear’s letters the day before I completed my book. Thank you, Mr. Lear.

No more my pen, no more my ink;
No more my rhyme is clear.
So I shall leave off here I think –
Yours ever,
Edward Lear.

Нет чернил и нет пера,
На душе — покой и мир.
Нет и рифм — кончатъ пора.
Ваш навеки,
Эдвард Лир.

PS By Lydia

A dear friend named Volodia (or Vova)
Read Lear’s limericks ova and ova,
Till he was diagnosed
With translation psychos.
Now, we fear he will never recova.