INTERGRATION OF LANGUAGE TESTING AND ASSESSMENT TERMS FROM ENGLISH INTO RUSSIAN

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Abstract

Today language studies are one of the most popular international practices, both for everyday purposes and academic reasons. That is why development and implementation of reliable tools and methods for testing and assessment of language proficiency have become an important goal for instructors and linguists across the globe. To promote a universal understanding of the concepts in this area of knowledge there should exist a comprehensive terminology system of testing and assessment. Borrowing of terms from a more developed terminology system has become a common practice, but whether it always brings satisfactory results remains to be seen. This research paper aims at describing the techniques of integrating English language testing and assessment terms into Russian. In order to establish those techniques we conducted the comparative analysis of the most frequently used English terms on language testing and assessment based on their appearance in specialized texts on the subject and their Russian equivalents. The analysis procedure involved examining the phonetic and orthographic form, definitions and contextual usage of both the original terms and their equivalent borrowed into Russian language. Based on that, we can point out the most productive ways of transferring these terms into Russian, in particular, using calques, half-calques and transformational translation. Those methods prove to be effective in terms of securing the transparency of the meaning and providing a universal understanding of the concepts behind the terms which is necessary for successful communication of the experts in the field on international level and development of valid testing instruments. Nevertheless, integration of some terms is less successful due to the significant discrepancies in meaning between the original and borrowed terms leading to misunderstanding and potentially faulty testing and assessment practices. Therefore, the subject matter of borrowing terms in the abovementioned area shall be addressed in a more thorough fashion, and there should be more studies conducted on this issue.

Key Words: testing and assessment, terminology system, term translation, language borrowing, calque, transformational translation, intercultural contacts

INTRODUCTION

Modern science is characterized both by its interdisciplinary nature and internationality. Accessibility of information in the Internet, frequent communication among researchers and teachers as well globalization trends in education determine specific conditions of interaction in science and education. One of the most crucial elements of successful communication in any sphere is transparency or universal understanding of the described phenomena, methods and tools used by researchers, and this transparency can be achieved through creation of specific terminology in the corresponding languages of communication that would facilitate adequate interpretation of terms and prevent misunderstanding of their meaning. Since national languages do not always have terminological system developed for all areas of knowledge, borrowing terms from other languages helps to fill these gaps.

One example of the sphere in need of such borrowings is testing and assessment in foreign language teaching. Standard tests designed for different purposes, including assessment of language proficiency have become very popular for both European and Asian languages. The need for their development emerged in the context of the current international migration processes, labor and educational mobility and opportunities for studying and communicating online. The most well-known language tests include TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), IELTS (International English

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Language Testing System), Cambridge Tests from YLE Starters to CPE and beyond, plus many others for English, TestDaF (Test Deutsch als Fremdsprache), DTZ (Deutsch-Test für Zuwanderer), DSH (Deutsche Sprachprüfung für den Hochschulzugang ausländischer Studienbewerber) for German, DELE (Diploma de Español como Lengua Extranjera) for Spanish, TORFL (Test of Russian as a Foreign Language) for Russian, DELF (Diplome d'etudes en langue Francaise) and DALF (Diplôme approfondi de langue française) for French, HSK (Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi) for Chinese, JLPT (Japanese-Language Proficiency Test) for Japanese, and TOPIK (Test of Proficiency in Korean) for Korean. Also, language testing is practiced at the national level where it serves different purposes – starting from formative assessment of language teaching and learning within one classroom or one institution to assessing language proficiency on a different scale. This stimulates the exchange of information and expertise in terms of testing and assessment methodology among experts from different countries.

Russia also starts to become increasingly interested in modern testing and assessment methods in foreign language teaching, especially in relation to English. This interest is determined by a plethora of factors, including the introduction of standardized tests for high school graduation/college application – the Unified State Exam in high school and the Basic State Exam in middle school, as well as taking international language proficiency tests for different purposes, availability of many text books and manuals published abroad, intensification of intercultural exchange with colleagues from all over the world, access to research papers on foreign language testing and assessment written in English.

The traditional Russian system of pedagogic assessment and the foreign methodology have been developing mostly independently. That resulted in creation of two terminological systems that are basically different from each other despite having some correlation. Today these systems "exist in parallel universes, borrowing tools and justifications of their usage from different methodological approaches, thus creating chaos in everyday teaching practice" (Gvozdeva, 2014). This situation becomes even more complicated due to introduction of many terms borrowed without proper understanding of the concepts they represent. For instance, alternative assessment becomes equal to formative assessment (Klimenko, 2015) while teachers dwell on the advantages of using IELTS method of teaching, even though IELTS is a test, not a teaching method or tool (Vernigorova, 2010), and try to determine whether a test is reliable before its results are obtained (Sukhorukova, Martysheva, Sentsov, 2011). The term "test" is set against the traditional Russian term "контрольная работа (literal translation – control work/assignment)" by numerous non-existing parameters while their similarity is neglected (Kashkareva, 2016). These are few of the examples that confirm difficulties that Russian teachers and researchers face in the relatively new field of Testing and Assessment.

The amount of scientific and instruction materials on language testing and assessment in English is enormous. It suffices to say that many leading publishing houses such as Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, Routledge, etc. publish special series devoted to this particular topic. Moreover, there is a multitude of specialized journals devoted to language testing and assessment. As for the thematic dictionaries, it is worth mentioning the Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics having a significant amount of terms related to language testing and assessment, the Dictionary of Language Testing (272 p.) by A. Davis, Multilingual Glossary of Language Testing Terms containing terms in 10 languages (unfortunately, Russian not being one of them), An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language Testing (1026 p.) by A. Mousavi.

Russian language covers much fewer aspects of both testing and assessment and pedagogic supervision. Mostly these problems are discussed in a handful of articles, while, unfortunately, there are no journals completely dedicated to this area of applied linguistics.

There are few specialized dictionaries as well. In this respect we can mention a quite extensive New Dictionary of Methodological Terms and Concepts by Azimov E.G. and Schukin A.N. that contains some terms of the abovementioned sphere, English-Russian Reference Book on Methodology of Foreign Language Teaching by Kolesnikova I.L. and Dolgina O.A. that has a section devoted to testing and assessment terms, Thesaurus of Methodological Terms on Foreign Language by Zharkova T.I. and Sorokovykh G.V. that also has a section on terms related to assessment of foreign language skills, and the Dictionary of Terms and Concepts of Testing by T. M. Balykhyna that shows some discrepancies between the terms in English and Russian, but, unfortunately, the examples are given

without any systematic approach. All these factors prove the topicality of more thorough research of translating language testing and assessment terms from English into Russian.

Studying the peculiarities of terms translation shall be commenced with describing a term as a linguistic unit. The ambiguous nature of this concept is denoted by many researchers (Danilenko, 1977; Golovin, 2008; Tsitkina, 1988). The main difficulty in defining and describing terms comes from basic linguistic principles, in particular, a distinction between linguistic representations of everyday and professional world outlook, idea of vocabulary registers, complexity of a word meaning, etc. (Kandelaki, 1977:4), as well as an existing variety of approaches to describing this linguistic phenomenon. V.M. Leichik cites the definitions of a term from philosophical, logical, semiotic, informational and linguistic standpoints, also providing his own definition from the perspective of terminology studies. He states that a term is "a lexical unit of a certain language used for specific purposes, denoting a general – concrete or abstract – theoretical concept from a specific area of knowledge or activity" (Leichik, 2007:31-32). A broader definition is given by Khomenko S.A. who defines a term as "a word or word partnership naming a certain concept of a specific area of knowledge – science, technology, art, being a part of standard vocabulary and having the same properties, but devoid of emotional colouring" (Khomenko, 2004:24).

While defining the term, it is also important to emphasize a crucial difference between terms and common words that is reflected in a functional aspect dominating over a nominative one, as some researchers point out (Gak, 1974:69; Golovin, 1972:30-31; Vinokur, 1939:3-54). The functional spectrum of a term is defined by the amount of areas where it is applied (Leichik, 2007:90). The functional spectrum of a term is quite broad and includes the functions characteristic of any other element of vocabulary, such as nominative, signifying, definitive, communicative, pragmatic, epistemic and metalinguistic functions, and the latter one is entwined with the communicative and epistemic ones (Popova, 2011:35).

The origins of terms are also heterogeneous, and the methods of their creation include morphological, syntactical, morpho-syntactical and semantic ones, with borrowing being classified as a part of the latter type. Semantic methods are considered to be less popular when it comes to creating new terms, but for emerging terminological systems they are used more frequently (Grinev-Grinevich, 2008:125, 128). Sometimes borrowing of terms is considered as a separate method (Vinogradov, 2003:118-119). Rivlina A.A. notes that nowadays borrowings resulting from the contacts of English and Russian tend to have a root from the original language with an added Russian morpheme or inflexion (Rivlina, 2010:11), but this method does not guarantee the semantic transparency of the word that is important for its correct interpretation and functioning. Lotte D.S. singles out the translated terms from the borrowed ones and divides them into literally translated and modified ones, stating that this type of borrowings makes it difficult to talk about dominance of either language, since the forms of these borrowed units appear to be fully adapted to the receiving language. Their only distinguishing feature is the simplicity or complexity of their structure (Lotte, 1982:12).

Translation of terms is a challenging task for many reasons, namely, because of the subject nature of this process that depends on both a translator's personality and the context where a certain term functions (Bazalina, 2009:102-103), as well as on ambiguousness and possible errors in the term interpretation when there is not enough information about the functioning of this term in a certain terminological system (Marshman, 2014:227). Another difficulty comes from such properties of terms as complex structure and polysemantic nature (Kovalenko, 2003:256-261).

The main approach to translation of foreign terms involves finding a regular equivalent that is contextually independent. Such equivalents can completely or partially cover the original meaning spectrum, they can also be absolute (having the same properties and connotations) and relative (Retsker, 2007:13). Another classification includes one-way (term interpretation in one possible way) and two-way (term interpretation in two possible ways) equivalence (Shveitser, 1973:19). Also translation of terms is affected by variation when the target language does not have a certain equivalent, and choosing from several possible variants depends on both a specific terminological system, and the context (Alimov, 2015:64). If we translate an element that is new for the target terminological system, we need to aim for unambiguousness and minimal variability of the new term so that it would not have an unclear meaning. But if the frequency of borrowing terms from one language into another grows, it results in so called "terminological dependency" of a target language from its donor, thus indicating

the asymmetry of their relationship. In order to lower the level of this dependence it is important to maintain a semantic equivalence rather than a structural one (Ibáñez, 2014:172, 192 -195).

Translation of terms includes two basic types: literal or word-by-word translation that is possible if there is structural or metalinguistic parallelism of information, and it can be achieved through mechanical copying or calques, and non-literal translation, involving transformations (Komissarov, 1990:166-169). This research aims at discovering the most widely-used methods of translating testing and assessment terms.

When translating terms into another language, it is not their original form that shall be rendered in the first place, because literal approach to translation can interfere with understanding and interpretation of these terms without a constant reference to the original language. A term needs to be transparent, if possible, so that its form will allow to understand the concept behind it, but without violating the rules of collocation existing in the target language. That is why both literal translation, i.e. calques and half-calques, and transformations, as well as combination of these methods are possible in terms of transferring a term from one language into another.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research paper studies basic English terms related to the sphere of testing and assessment that were selected for The Dictionary of Language Testing and Assessment (by Yulia Polshina) using such criteria as their frequency, topicality and practical application in the abovementioned area. The terms were selected from such fundamental reference books as The Dictionary of Language Testing by Alan Davies, Multilingual Glossary of Language Testing Terms, Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning, The Routledge Handbook of Language Testing as well as works of such acclaimed researchers in the sphere of testing and assessment as L.F. Bachman, A.S. Palmer, K.M. Bailey, C. Weir, J.D. Brown, C.A. Coombe, G. Fulcher, A. Green, A. Hughes, T. McNamara, S. Messik, N. Underhill and others. In total, there were used over 70 English language sources. As a result, 153 terms that had been translated from English into Russian were discovered.

The next stage of the study involved comparative analysis of original English terms and their equivalents in Russian language from the standpoint of their structure and meaning. The structural analysis was conducted to determine the most productive way of borrowing terms from this area of knowledge. This stage included phonetic, orthographical and morphological analysis of the material. Analysis of definitions and contextual meaning allowed to discover discrepancies between the meanings of the original term and the borrowed one. This stage was necessary to establish whether a term can be considered universal, and what the spheres of functioning exist in the area testing and assessment in different cultures. Divergence of the terms can indicate erroneous interpretation of the original unit and/or inaccurate application of the term that might lead to miscommunication in professional discussion and creation of faulty instruments of testing and assessment in the target culture.

RESULTS

The analysis of the original and translated units showed that the majority of terms had been transferred into Russian using calques (26%) and mixed calques (26%), while half-calques and transformations were used less frequently (20% and 16% respectively). Mixed half-calques, transcription and transliteration were the least used methods (4% each).

The examples of calques and mixed calques include the following ones: альтернативное оценивание (alternative assessment), аналитическая шкала (analytic scale), цикл оценивания (assessment cycle), прямой тест (direct test), формирующее оценивание (formative assessment), холистическая шкала (holistic scale), метод расщепления (split-half method), etc.

The group of half-calques is represented by such terms as балльная валидность (scoring validity), прогностическая валидность (predictive validity), степень трудности тестового задания (item difficulty), тестовая батарея (test battery), ретестовый метод (test-retest method), etc.

The terms created with transformation can be distributed into several groups depending on the transformation type. They involve metonymic translation (19 examples, e.g., погрешность измерения (error score), метод параллельных форм (parallel form reliability)), modulation (15 examples, e.g., беспристрастность (absence of bias), прямой тест (performance test)) and explicatory translation (10

examples, e.g., степень трудности тестового задания (item facility), дифференцирующая способность тестового задания (item discrimination)). Less frequently used transformations were reduction, addition, specification (8 examples each), substitution of noun number category (4), part of speech substitution (3), metaphoric translation (2), conversion (2), generalization (1).

DISCUSSION

The data show that calques and mixed calques are the most frequently used means of transferring English terms of testing and assessment into Russian. It is necessary to point out that in this research paper calques are defined as a literal translation of all elements of the term, while mixed calques are a combination of literal translation and transformation (if a unit consists of two or more elements rendered in a different way). These methods appear to be more productive (26% for each group, 52% combined) due to their ability to preserve the core semantic component of the term without significant alteration of the whole meaning which is important for the correct functioning of a new term in the target language and allows to avoid misunderstanding between the expects with different language backgrounds.

Recreation of the original term structure facilitates its understanding and helps to create a homogenous environment for the experts' communication as well as develop an adequate system of testing and assessment. Failure to achieve that can result in developing faulty measurement instruments and unreliable tests. Nevertheless, some examples appear to do exactly that due to their incorrect rendering. A special attention should be paid to the term "error of measurement" that means a difference between a measured value and a true value of some parameter. The Russian equivalent is a result of its literal translation (ошибка измерения), and it can be interpreted as a mistake made during the measurement which shows a significant discrepancy with the original meaning of the term and can lead to serious misunderstanding.

The second widely used technique of transferring English terms into Russian is using half-claques that combine literal translation of one part of the terminological unit with transcribing or transliterating another part, i.e. using the letters of the target language to render the original phonetic or orthographic form the of the term. As the data show, this method is used a little less frequently than the previous one (20% vs. 26%), and this small difference can be attributed to that fact of half-calques are a transitory stage between the calques and mechanical copying. The majority of half-calques are words with transcribed or transliterated root and a Russian affix or inflection that determines what part of speech the term belongs to and how it functions in the Russian syntax.

The terms created with transformation of original units represent a smaller percentage of the studied material with 16%. This method of borrowing terms is used when a term might be unclear or incorrectly understood in case of literal translation or using transcription/transliteration. A more frequent application of metonymic translation modulation and explicatory translation in comparison with the others (reduction, addition, generalization/specification, substitutions of grammar categories, metaphoric translation, conversion) can be explained by the fact that they allow to achieve a higher level of term transparency. For instance, in case of metonymic translation, the elements of the original term and their the Russian equivalents correlate with each other based on the contiguity of denoted concepts, mostly belonging to the cause-and-effect type of relationship and emphasizing the result of the test rather than a process. Modulation involves a logical development of the original notion that makes it clearer for the recipients of the target language. Explicatory translation is used when it is impossible to translate the original term with a single word and retain the clarity of its meaning. As a rule, such terms describe a concept that is non-existent or very complex for the target language and can be classified as a lexical gap. Examples of such gaps are "washback effect", "washback" or, less frequently, "backwash" (in Russian - обратное воздействие/влияние/эффект) that refers to either positive or negative influence that a test has on the teaching methods used in a classroom and students themselves. Introduction and using this test or another assessment tool makes them do something that can either stimulate better results in foreign language acquisition (positive washback effect), or inhibit this process (negative washback effect) (Messik, 1996:241). Washback effect of a test or any other assessment tool is most frequently reflected in the way a teacher holds classes, what and how student are taught, what amount of information is provided and how it is structured, what attitude towards the

content and methods of teaching is displayed by the participants of this process (Fulcher, 2010:277). It should be taken into account that many foreign testing experts distinguish the concepts of "an impact" and "a washback/backwash", with the former being a term with a more general meaning, an effect produced on a certain person by the test, standards and protocols of studying methods in a class, school, educational system or even a society as a whole (Wall, 1997), while a washback/backwash is more specific and education-related, like in the following example: "For example, if a test requires that students spell a number of unusual (or "low frequency") words and recite their definitions, then students facing this test are likely to spend their time memorizing the spelling and the definitions of such words. This would be an instance of negative washback in a course promoting communication skills, since these endeavors would probably not promote the learners' abilities to use the target language for their day-to-day communication needs" (Bailey, 1998:3). Obviously, it is the complexity of washback/backwash that results in creation of several equivalents in the Russian language.

As it was mentioned before, mixed half-calques (combination of a half-calque with transcription/transliteration or transformation), transcribed and transliterated terms (4% each) are used less of all. This qualitative difference in comparison with other methods can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, these techniques are more convenient when transferring one-word terms, since in this case there is no need for coordinating the syntagmatic and semantic structure of the word partnership. Our selection mostly includes complex units consisting of more than one word that is why other methods are more relevant in order to acquire a necessary level of transparency for a Russian equivalent of the original term. Secondly, some terms or term elements already exist in the target language in transcribed or transliterated form, so using a different way of translating these terms seems irrelevant. Testing and assessment in foreign language teaching is currently on the rise. Undoubtedly, a uniform understanding of concepts and procedures in terms of testing and assessment, synchronizing terminological systems in the English and Russian languages that terminology translation is ultimately aiming at, will allow to deal with existing issues of understanding, or rather misunderstanding, and interpretation of certain terms and concepts they denote, thus promoting better testing and assessment practices and quality research of this area.

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