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APPROACHES TO TRANSLATING PROVERBS OF “KUTADGU BILIG”

Abstract: The article comparatively analyzes the proverbs of the poem “Kutadgu bilig” by Yusuf Balasaguni in English. In particular, the research aims to investigate the questions of translations by R. Dankoff and W. May. The author gives adequate versions of authentic proverbs in modern English and Uzbek.

Key words: “Kutadgu bilig”, proverbs, original and translation, translator skills.

Language: English

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Introduction

Yusuf Khos Hajib’s epic “Kutadgu bilig” is a work of art that combines the advanced socio-political and moral-educational views of his time. It contains the author’s views and opinions on the state and power of the Karakhanids of the XI century, the ruler and his courtiers, their duties and responsibilities, various social strata, their role in society and the spiritual and moral image, the role of science and enlightenment in life, human qualities. Yusuf Khas Hajib’s views on the above issues are also noteworthy for his fine art and elegant poetics. As noted by one of the great “Kutadgu bilig” scholars B. Tukhliev, Yusuf Khos Hajib’s work “Kutadgu bilig” has an important place in the history of literature of the Turkic peoples and is one of the brightest examples of artistic discoveries in world literature. The creation of “Kutadgu bilig” marks the first period in the history of Turkic literature in the development of classical poetry. The emergence of this work is not accidental, but reflects all the achievements of Turkish poetry as a legitimate phenomenon of the development of poetry of the Turkic peoples with an ancient history” [1]. Indeed, the symbolic images in the work, beautiful metaphors, sentimental parables, threats, allegories, repetitions, cries, such as impressive poetic arts, take the epic to a high artistic and aesthetic level. “Yusuf Khos Hajib has a keen sense of the power of words and the inner potential of the mother tongue. He writes, “I knew Turkish words like a wild mountain deer, but I taught them to how to behave” [2]

Methods and materials

The preparation and publication of the scientific-critical text of the work by the Turkish scholar Rashid Rahmati Arat in 1947 served as a basis for many Turkic scholars and translators. In particular, the epic was rewritten in English and Russian in 1983 by the American Turkologist and translator Robert Denkof (“Wisdom of royal glory”) and the Russian poet and translator Sergei Ivanov (“Blagodatnoe znanie”) on the basis of this scientific and critical text. Based on Ivanov’s translation, the second English translation of the work, Walter May (“Beneficent knowledge”), saw the light of day. This work, which is the first example of the literature of the Turkic peoples, has become a spiritual treasure of the peoples of the world due to the hard work and skill of the translators. One of the factors that ensured its success was the fact that the translators also tried to reflect the art of the work vividly in the translation.

Proverbs created as the cream of centuries-old life experiences and conclusions of mankind have a special place in the folklore of the peoples of the world. Proverbs reflect the mentality of each nation, that is, their life experiences, conclusions, teachings, based on their worldview, way of life and thinking. In all genres of fiction, proverbs are used to prove ideas, to summarize, to brightly reveal the character traits of the protagonists. It is well known that the science of the art of using proverbs in a work of art is called the art of proverbs.

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One of the arts actively used in the epic is “irsoli masal” (fable). “Irsoli masal (fable) is the art of using proverbs, parables and wise sayings in a speech or poem through a parable for a specific purpose”[3]. The poet proves his thoughts and opinions through folk proverbs, and before quoting them, he refers to the proverbs as “Turkish parable”, “Turkish word”, “Hear”. English translators translate the phrases “Turkish parable”, “Turkish word”, “Hear what he says” as “the Turkish proverb”, “the Turks have proverb”, “Listen”, “Hear”.

Below we consider the translations made by R. Denkoﬀ and W. May of the examples of parable art used in “Kutadgu bilig”.

Yusuf Khas Hajib quotes the following proverb in the chapter on the virtues and benefits of language:

*Сөзүнни көддэгил башын бармасун
Тилинни көддэгил тышын сынмасун*[4].

Meaning:

Be careful what you say

Be careful with your tongue so that your teeth do not break.

The above Turkic proverb in modern Uzbek has the following variants:

*Тилингни тийгин, тишинг синмасин,
Бу ерда турганлар сенга кулмасин.;
Тилини тийган бошини қутқарар.;
Тилиннг бўшлиги бошга етар.;
Тил ёмони бўйинга сиртмоқ солар.;
Тил бошни ейди, қўл – ошни.;
Тил узунни бош ейди* [5].

*Гапиргандан гапирмаган яхшироқ,
Гапирувдим тегди бошимга таёқ.;
Ёмон тил бошга бало келтирар*[6].

(Keep your tongue, do not break your teeth,
Let not those who stand here laugh at you;
He who restrains his tongue saves his head;
The emptiness of the tongue reaches the head .;
The tongue puts a bad noose around the neck;
The tongue eats the head, the hand eats the soup;
The tongue eats a long head [5].

Better a poor horse than no horse at all.

I spoke and touched my head with a stick;
Bad language brings trouble to the head [6].)

The skill of both translators in translating the above article into English is commendable. In particular, Denkoﬀ uses the conjunction “lest” so skillfully that as a result, the compound form of the proverb is preserved, even if the adverbial conjunction without the original conjugation becomes a conjunctive adverb in translation. The phrase “be careful” is recreated in translation using the word “guard” – “guard, control”, which in turn indicates that the content is stored in a form close to the original:

“Guard your speech lest you lose your head, and guard your tongue lest you break your teeth [7].

(Control your words so that your head does not move, control your tongue so that your teeth do not break.)

U.May’s translation:

So bridle your speech - and thus good health you choose,

So bridle your tongue - and your teeth you won’t lose! [8].

(Curb your words - you will have chosen a healthy health,

Curb your tongue - you won’t lose your teeth)

Although May skillfully used the word “bridle” to enhance stylistic coloring, he thus removed the meaning from the original by saying “thus good health you choose”. One of the important factors in the change in content in May’s translations is that the translation was done from the translation, not from the original. Although S. Ivanov referred directly to the translation, May uses Ivanov’s translation as a subtext in translating the epic. Here is the Russian version of the above article:

*Придерживай речь – будешь цел и здоров,
Язык придержи – не лишишься зубов!*[9].

The compound “будешь цел” in Ivanov’s interpretation is omitted in May’s translation, and only the compound “будешь здоров” is included in the translation. Hence, it is not only a question of indirect translation, but also of the fact that the translator does not fully understand the meaning and, consequently, shortens the expressions. We think that if May had given up the abbreviations, the above verse would have sounded different:

So bridle your speech - thus will be safe and sound,

So bridle your tongue - you won’t be left teeth without!

“Safe and sound” is one of the most active compounds in modern English, meaning “целый и невредимый” [10] in Russian and “eson-omon”[11] in Uzbek.

The above proverb currently has the following versions and options in English:

One’s tongue runs before one’s wit [12];

A still tongue makes a wise head [12];

Speak when you are spoken to [12];

A closed mouth gathers no feet [13];

If you keep your mouth shut, you won’t put your foot in it [14].

If we look at the etymology of the above proverb in English, its core goes back to the judgments in religious sources. In particular, we can see the following proverbs in the covenants of Solomon:

An English standard version: whoever guards his mouth preserves his life; he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin [15]. (He who guards his mouth saves his life; he who opens his lips wide will perish).

An American standard version: he that guards his mouth keep his life; but he that open wide his lips shall have destruction [15]. (He who guards his mouth saves his life; he who opens his lips wide will be ruined.)

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There is a proverb in the chapter “Kutadgu Elig tells Aytuldi what the qualities of justice are”:

*Өрүн сүт билә кирсә эдгү қылық
Өлүм тутмағынча эвүрмәс йорық [4].*

Meaning:

A good deed comes in with white milk,
It does not change its style until death comes. [4]

This proverb now occurs in the following forms:

Enter with milk and come out with soul;

A customer who enters with milk comes out with a bone;

The good deed that enters with milk is not broken until death;

He who enters with blood comes out with the soul [5].

Denkof’s translation:

“If a good character enters a man with his mother’s milk, it does not leave until death takes hold” [7]. (Good behavior enters a person with breast milk and does not leave him until death comes)

May’s translation:

“He, who with his mother’s milk, goodness did suck,

Till death he’ll count goodness as best of good luck”[8].

(Whoever sucks good with breast milk,

He considers goodness until death to be the best of luck)

To fully understand the byte created by May, we turn to the translation of S. Ivanov:

*“Кто доброе в детстве всосал с молоком,
До смерти он только к добру и влеком” [9].*

(Whoever soaked the good in milk in his youth,

Doing good until death becomes his constant good deed)

The translation made by Denkof fully reflects the content of the proverb. The phrase “does not change its style” is translated by the American translator as “does not leave”, and this is the meaning expressed in the verse. There is some confusion in May’s translation. As a result of the translator’s understanding of the Russian word “всосал” by replacing it with “сосал”, “absorb” becomes “suck”. In English, these words differ from each other only by the preposition “in”.

The author of the article speaks of “the absorption of goodness in mother’s milk” and implies that “only death deprives of good habits and qualities.” At the end of the byte, the misunderstanding of the content intensifies. The root of the word “влеком” in Ivanov’s translation is “влекъ”, which means “to lead”, “to attract”, “to drag and pull”[16]. But it is unclear to us why the translator used a completely different expression. Still, we tried to recreate the byte that May converted a bit:

He who with his mother’s milk sucked in goodness,

Till death he will surely led to goodness.

In the chapter “A Conversation with the Soldiers in the Palace”, Ogdulmish advises Ozgurmish about friendship and enmity:

*Бир-өк душман эрсә мин-ул йаслығы
Минин достун эрсә бир-ул азлығы [4].*

Meaning:

Even if the enemy is one, the damage is thousands,

Even if you have thousands of friends, a few are equal together.

Through this proverb, which is embedded in the verses, Yusuf Khas Hajib emphasizes that gaining more brothers and sisters means that the harm of a single enemy is greater than the good of a thousand friends. There are different versions of this proverb today:

*Дүстинг минг бұлса ҳам – кам,
Душманинг бир бұлса ҳам – күй [5].;
Умрим узоқ, бұлсин десанг, душман
орттирма.;*

Йўлдоши кўннинг – қўлдоши кўп.;

Ақли кўпни дов олмас,

Дўсти кўпни ёв олмас.;

Дўст қидирмаган киши ўзига душман.;

Улфат қанча кўп бўлса,

Кулфат иунча оз бўлади [17].

(Even if your friend is a thousand - less,

Even if the enemy is one - many [5].;

If you want me to live long, do not make enemies;

Many companions - many companions.;

The mind can't do much,

His friend can't hunt much;

He who does not seek a friend is an enemy to himself;

The more friends,

The disaster will be so small.)

In Denkof’s translation, examples of sentimental art are also found in poetic form, and we have analyzed only the proverbial part of the quartet translated into English:

A thousand friends are no better than one;

One enemy causes a thousand woes. [7].

It is clear from the translation that the translator did not fully understand the content of the verse: the phrase “even if you have a few thousand friends” is misinterpreted as “one faithful friend is better than a thousand false friends.” As a result, the semantic inconsistency of the proverb in the original and the translation becomes apparent. The second component of the translation of the proverb is in line with the author’s opinion: “a single enemy brings thousands of misfortunes and sorrows.” Apparently, the translation of some of the articles in Denkof’s translation is also a bit far from the original. So how accurately did May translate the above proverb?

“Though foes may be few - great the woes they bring you

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You have many friends - but they seem to be few! ” [8]

(Although the enemy is small, they are of great concern,

Even if you have a lot of friends, they seem rare.)

Traditionally, here is S.Ivanov's translation:

И мало врагов, да велик от них вред,

И много друзей, а как будто их нет![9].

(Although the enemy is small, he loses a lot of them,

It seems like you don't have many friends)

Apparently, May was able to maintain the unity of form and meaning in this proverb, revealing the meaning of the verses.

Conclusion

Of course, translation is a complicated process. While the task of fully and accurately translating the content that the author intends to express is the most

important condition of translation, it is not always possible to accomplish it. It is obvious that the proverbs in “Kutadg’u Bilig”, which are examples of parables, have been translated in different ways, but R. Denkoff, U. May and S. Ivanov have translated them in English and Russian. Most of the proverbs in the work are directly translated, i.e. the descriptive narration of the proverb appears to be the main method in both English translators. While this certainly ensured that the content of the articles was understandable to the English reader, the fact that the translators did not resort to creative translation in the translation process, i.e., did not cite alternative variations and variants of the articles in English, is a simple instruction. In our opinion, it would be appropriate for the translators of the work to cite the equivalent variations of the proverbs and proverbs that are included in the verses as an appendix at the end of the work.

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