

ETYMOLOGY AND HISTORY OF LITERARY TEXTS TITLES

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This article addresses the issue of semantic difficulties that may be encountered in the process of translating the titles of literary texts. The purpose of this article is to identify the semantic difficulties of translating the titles of literary texts, to analyze them and to present methods by which the translator can cope with these difficulties.

Old English *titul*, reinforced by Old French *title*, both from Latin *titulus* means ‘inscription, label, title, ticket, heading’. The word originally denoted a placard or inscription placed on an object, giving information about it, hence a descriptive heading in a book [1].

The history of the study of literary texts titles goes far into the past. The first books, which were scriptures, did not have a title. They were named after the first word of the text itself. The works of Ancient Greek Literature had titles that consisted of a single word that was not the first word of the text: *The Iliad* is the story of Ilion (Troy), the Trojan War; *the Odysseia (Odyssey)* that of Odysseus (Ulysses). Before the invention of printing, the significance of the title for a literary work was not great, it was purely functional. To make the content of the book easy to recognize, it was customary to print on the top page the title, which consisted of several words written in large letters so that they could be read from a greater distance. The invention of printing changed society’s attitude to the book and allowed the author of a work to earn money by selling printed copies. The concept of authorship has become much more important. Now the author’s name is also indicated on the title page. Over time, more and more information appeared on the title page: place of printing, printing house, publisher and date.

The first serious researcher of the poetics of literary texts titles was Krzhizh-anovsky. He defined the concept of a title and compiled its classification. Later, the English philologist Levin first used the term **titology** in the field of studying the title of a literary text. After some time, the French theorist Genette introduced the concept of *paratext*. According to Genette, **paratext** represents those important elements in a book that are an integral part of it (author’s name, title, introduction, preface, illustrations). Paratext can be compared to the frame text, but paratext is a deeper concept. It is “a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of transaction: a privileged place of pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that [...] is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more perti-

ment reading of it” [2, p. 2]. These added elements form a frame for the main text, and can change the reception of a text or its interpretation by the audience. Genette first considered the title as an independent, paratextual element that affects the perception and interpretation of the entire literary work. As Genette mentions, “the title raises problems of definition and requires careful analysis” [2, p. 55]. Regardless of whether the literary title is part of the text or an independent element, it performs important functions of the text and expands its meaning for readers. The title is not just a key element on the book cover and on the title page, but a key element for understanding the entire literary work, through which the intentions and strategies of the author are conveyed.

In the early era of the development of fiction, titles did not yet exist. In the history of England, many outstanding works did not have a title, as they were passed down orally from generation to generation. The appearance of the title is caused by the need to name individual literary works and distinguish them from each other. It was only after the introduction of Christianity literate monks wrote down various myths and legends. In the 16th century, works with distinctive titles were those of Shakespeare. He titled chronicle plays from the history of England by the names of the heroes-monarchs, and he gave titles to tragedies by the names of the main characters. In the 18th century, titles were detailed phrases and even sentences and literally conveyed the entire content of the literary text itself. Such titles occupied almost the entire title page and touched upon even the smallest details of the plot. Readers were interested in fascinating journeys to distant countries and people of amazing fate, about which there were the 18th century books.

The famous English writer and literary scholar Lodge notes in his research that in the 19th century the earliest English novels were named after the main characters of the literary work (e. g. *Tom Jones* by H. Fielding). The use of the name suggests that this particular character is distinct or worthy of note in some way. Works in the titles of which there was a female name acquired particular dissonance and popularity. At the same time, in addition to the names of the main characters, the names of geographical areas were also used in the title. Later, small additional descriptions began to appear in the title next to the character’s name, which draw the reader’s attention to the style of narration. In the 20th centuries writers realized that the title could indicate the text theme, contain its idea, intrigue the reader or promise a particular atmosphere (e. g. *Sense and Sensibility* by J. Austen). Titles of the 20th century are distinguished by their expressiveness, emotionality and figurativeness. These titles say a lot more about a literary work than just the name of the main character. In their titles, authors contrast the key concepts that appear in the work in order to interest the audience. Later poets and writers used in their titles the allusion, metonymy, synecdoche and quotation to the works of other authors (e. g. *For Whom The Bell Tolls* by E. Hemingway). Using a literary device as a title gives the author leeway to develop the plot broadly. The great modernists put a symbol and metaphor in the title, and later novelists often “favored whimsical, riddling, off-beat titles” [3, p. 193]. Among the modern trends of book

titles, there is also a tendency to reduce to a letter or number. Such titles attract the attention of the reader and, due to their unusual form, are better remembered.

For centuries, the writers used different means of expressing their ideas to the readers using the title as the linking unit between the author and the reader and the whole literary text as well. Titologists argue that there are popular formulas and archetypes for texts titles that have been used by various authors over the years and capture the literary imagination of readers. According to their researches, catchy titles are often grouped around specific words (e. g. “all”, “last”). Nevertheless, several key factors influence the author’s choice when creating the literary text title. It must necessarily reflect the substance of the literary work: it must be associated either with the theme of the work or with its idea. It is also important to take into account the time and place of creation of the work, the genre of literature and the fashion of the current era. Finally, the choice of literary texts titles reveals the individuality of the author, his/her personal sympathies and preferences.

The process of literary texts titles rendering is a “creative transposition”, so it is very important for a translator not only to translate the title from one language to another, but to reflect the source culture, author’s idea and intentions in the target title. The literary text title should be organic and comprehensive to the target readers so that they get the impression they are reading the source title.

Vinokur emphasizes that the main task of the title “is not just to point out its [text’s] events and name, but also to solve the problem of external amusement, to captivate the reader with an attractive plot” [4, p. 89]. Being an integral part of a literary text as a cultural product, the title creates a contact between the author and the reader. After reading, new horizons are opened to the reader, and the title becomes a vivid symbol that expands these horizons even more.

Bibliography:

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Recomandat

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