

Abstract

“The Dutch verb *zeggen* in indirect speech translated into Polish and Russian”

The paper examines the rendering of a Dutch verb of speech *zeggen* (to speak or say), in indirect speech, in the Polish and the Russian translations of a children’s novel *The Cat Who Came in off the Roof*. The Dutch original, *Minous*, was written in 1970 by a Dutch author Annie M. G. Schmidt. The story is about a cat who turns into a young lady. The Polish translation *Minu* was made by Joanna Borycka-Zakrzewska (2006) and the Russian translation *Murli* by Ekaterinia Lubarova (1997).

A comparison between the original text and the translated texts revealed the huge variety of verbs used for the act of speech in the Polish and the Russian translations. In the translated versions of *The Cat Who Came in off the Roof*, the Dutch verb *zeggen* is replaced by a considerable number of different verbs e.g. *ponaglić*, *zirytować się* or *вздохнуть*, *фыркнуть*. The stylistic and linguistic conventions of the cultures receiving the translation, which do not tolerate so many frequent repetitions as appear in the original, cause a departure in the translation process from Schmidt’s simple and repetitive style.

The tension between the lexical repetitions, which dominate Schmidt’s style, and the need to vary the translated text, is apparent in the translators’ interventions. The translators, Joanna Borycka-Zakrzewska and Ekaterinia Lubarova, try to exploit the stylistic richness of the Polish and the Russian language and vary the translated texts with numerous imprecise synonyms for the Dutch *zeggen*. This is quite understandable, because frequent repetition in Polish and in Russian of the same verb for the speech act, as happens in the original, would amount to a serious breach of the Polish and the Russian culture code, and the texts would be felt to be incompatible with accepted conventions. The repetitive style of Schmidt’s books is considered to be a stylistic strategy, facilitating their reception by readers.

Apart from lexical equivalents of the Dutch verb *zeggen*, spoken replies in the Polish and the Russian versions also vary according to emotional characteristics, where additional paralinguistic elements are also stressed, including sound effects, movements, and mimicry. Emotional markings, emphasis on the expressiveness of the text, the positive or negative stance of the interlocutors expressed in their utterances, as well as the function of interrogative sentences, are strongly supported in the translated text by the lexis and punctuation.