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SENTENCE LENGTH IN THE ORIGINAL AND ITS TRANSLATION

Summary. Sentence length depending on a discrete or generalized character of the realization of reality, on dynamic or static character of the described situation contributes to the content and stylistic colouring of the text. All these facts prove the importance of faithful reproduction of this syntactic element in translation.

Key words: sentence length, applied linguistics, addressee, predication, styleforming.

The problem of the sentence is one of the urgent problems developed in modern linguistics. **The investigation of this problem** has a considerable importance not only for creating an adequate syntactic model of one or another language but also for solving many important linguistic problems connected with the other humanities – philosophy, logics and psychology.

The sentence length has been investigated for a long time rather intensively on different language material. The dynamics of sentence length and change of its structure have been treated both synchronically and diachronically in connection with language development during several centuries. The correlation between size and content characteristics of the sentence and between the genre and the type of the text; interdependence between the sentence length and paragraph length; correlation between this parameter and the content are placed into the scope of modern scientists attention. In other words, an attempt to find a correlation between sentence length and sentence structure is made in the majority of modern investigations because “sentence volume as a quantitative characteristic becomes a qualitative one” [1, p. 9]. Indeed, semantic processes on the syntactic level include a complicated correlation between the quantitative and qualitative aspects of a sentence because such peculiar feature of the sentence as its volume (size, length) is quantitative by its nature but it can't be investigated without consideration of the qualitative character.

The fact is that the differences in the use of language means, “having a quantitative character, as a rule, reveal the qualitative peculiarities in the process of their interlinguistic comparison” [2, p. 43]. In the linguistic literature two different terms are equally used dealing with the problem of sentence length: sentence length and sentence size. Both terms define the number of words enfolded in the interval between two full stops or signs that substitute a full stop. In this article the terms are used as full synonyms.

The aim of the present investigation is to analyse the sentence quantitative and qualitative parameters in the original and translation.

A word is accepted as a unit of sentence length by all the authors. Theoretically, there is no sentence consisting of n -words, to which one can not add one more word. The idea that the number of elements which the sentence consists of is not limited was expressed by many scientists regarding that there exists no bound to limit the sentence length, although each given sentence has to be finite by its length.

Therefore, sentence length is not a strictly fixed quantity, i.e. this quantity has no upper limit. It is generally accepted that the author is free to decide where to put a full stop and to begin a new sentence. Even in the text of one author the organization and distribution of sentences with different length does not have any successive character. But it depends not only on the author's wish. Under real communicative conditions the sentence must comply with the demands of “probability” and “capacity” – ability to contain and distinctly express the acquired content for the process of full realization by the sentence of its communicative functions [3].

The success of the directed communication to a great extent depends upon the ability of the addressee to receive the given information adequately. The compilation of this information into the language units of different length is based on the abilities of human memory. Only “taking into account human memory limits it is possible to understand many complicated featured of the English syntax” [4, p. 52]. It is proved by psycho-linguistic investigations that the capacity of the human memory limits the sentence length.

From here descends the interest in an average sentence length and in the distribution of the majority of the sentences of the average size in the text. It is proved that they are static characteristics of the language syntax, which makes it possible to judge about the system differences between the languages. The main bulk of sentences in the Russian artistic prose is made up by 20-30 – word sentences. The amount of sentences with the number of words exceeding 30 words is gradually decreasing.

The importance of sentence size for many linguistic aspects is based upon the existence of several scientific approaches to this problem. The main approaches are:

- 1) investigation of the sentence length as a syntactic phenomenon;
- 2) investigation of the sentence length from the point of view of stylistics;
- 3) quantitative and qualitative analysis of the sentence length made in the field of applied linguistics solving the problems of the text automatic review, machine translation, creation of artificial languages, etc.

The first, grammatical aspect, is connected with the significance of word-combination in the formation of the sentence with the corresponding length. We define the sentence length as a grammatical category rather than a stylistic one. The sentence length is treated as one of the syntactic characteristics of the sentence together with the other characteristics which were studied earlier to a different extent. The particular attention is paid to the development of two processes: the shift of the sentence capacity, i.e. its filling with the lexico-grammatical material, and the shifts in the forms of the sentence structural organization, and also the correlation between the sentence length and other structure-contential factors. Shifts in the sentence length can serve as a means of “express information” about changes in sentence structure [5]. The thing is that the sentence length depends upon the type of predication and the number of predicate centers. The smallest size has a sentence of noun predication comprising 3 words; the average sentence size of verb predication is 6 words.

The grammatical approach connects the sentence length with the types of syntactic structures containing not only short sentences but also long complex constructions. Their wide distribution can be explained by the importance of the grammatical aspects of the language reflected in the choice of the parallel forms and structures. Though the bulk of information in the text is conveyed by its lexical elements, “the semantic role of grammatical forms and structures should not be overlooked by the translator” [6, p. 91]. Grammatical analysis of the sentence length has revealed “a tendency for its change in modern languages common to the development of the grammatical structure of a language” [1, p. 12].

Stylistic aspect of the sentence length investigation is also closely connected with the functional approach: physical characteristics of the sentence (sentence length) emphasize the stylistic character of the text. The sentence length mainly correlates with its proper sense, distribution in the coherent text and stylistic function [6], this correlation explains considerable difference in the sentence length in different functional and individual styles, types and genres of the texts, forms of compositional discourse.

The first detailed investigation of the sentence length belongs to G.U. Yule [7]. He used statistic data to define the belonging of the arguable or anonymous text to one or another author proceeding from the assumption that the sentence length is a constant characteristic of the author’s style. G. Yule also proved that the received data help to identify the peculiarities of the individual styles of different authors. The importance of the text investigation for different linguistic conclusions is self-evident. The result of such investigation showed that there is a quantitative difference dealing not only with the sphere of usage of different language units but also with their distribution. It was also acknowledged that the statistic data of the use of different language units vary in texts of different styles more vividly than in the texts written by different authors but related to one and the same style. Therefore, the distribution of the sentence length does not usually coincide in different functional styles. Within the limits of one and the same style it may not coincide in different historic periods.

This statement puts the sentence length into the number of differentiating features of the functional style and emphasizes its “styleforming meaning”. Various works on calculation of

the absolute and average sentence lengths in the texts belonging to different genre and style give evidence that “Sentence length and paragraph length are those specific characteristics with the help of which belles-lettres and publicistic styles can be contrasted” [7, p. 374]. A succession of similar sentences may make the translated text monotonous, too many exclamatory sentences may result in “affected rather than affective rhythm” [6]. Too many words in sentences are perceived as a nuisance and produce an effect of incoherence between form and content.

Sentence length, as well as the majority of other features of style, reveal a strong dependence on the time factor: the texts of the same genre and/or style belonging to different periods of language development have evident differences in the sentence length. This statement is also true for different periods of one author’s activity. What is more, considerable variations of sentence length in different texts of one author confirm substantial shifts in his own style and subject-matter, i.e. they serve as an indicator of the artist’s creative evolution.

The main conclusion at which nearly all the scientists investigating the problem of the sentence length arrive connects this element with the content of the information it expresses. Both denotative and connotative aspects are taken into consideration. “The more concrete the content is, the more often short sentences are employed in the text” [8, p. 25]. The average sentence length is of greater importance in the texts of higher expressiveness. The non-observance of the norm can be used for emphatic reasons.

In other words, the sentence length does depend upon the author’s individual manner, the latter is not defining. The sentence length is so closely connected with its content that there is an idea of treating it as a “stylistically thematic characteristic of the text” [5, p. 218].

All the above mentioned facts give an opportunity to state that the sentence length (size) is not a casual quantity defined only by the author’s choice and wish. It is naturally connected with the meaning this sentence expresses, which first of all explains the variety of lengths within the limits of one text and also calls in a question of attributing the text judging by this parameter only.

Sentence length depending on a discrete or generalized character of the realization of reality, on dynamic or static character of the described situation contributes to the content and stylistic colouring of the text. All these facts prove the importance of faithful reproduction of this syntactical element in the translation.

In the process of translation, the syntactic characteristics of the text suffer changes extremely irregularly. Specific translation problems emerge when the translator has to handle grammatical forms and structures which have no analogues in the target language. He has to resort to some procedures dealing with these equivalent – lacking elements. The broader context will enable the translator to make the correct choice. Translating such sentences always involves some kind of restructuring.

Taking into consideration all the variety of statements on this topic, it goes without saying, that the major part of problems of translation are solved within the sentence – the main syntactic unit. Syntactic characteristics are extremely important for the analytical languages. Syntax is of a special significance for understanding, and translation of the original

text. Every word in the text is used in a particular grammatical form and all the words are arranged in sentences in a particular syntactic order. Grammatical forms and structures do not only provide for the correct arrangement of words in the text, they also convey some information which is part of its total contents and important for the communicants. The ability of different texts to fulfil a similar function also plays very important part in the theory and practice of translation because "the exchange of texts and their units is carried out by the function" [9, p. 30].

The investigation of the sentence length in the original and in the author's translation of Nabokov's novel "Lolita" has revealed a strong tendency for the reduction of the sentence length in translation: to the longest sentence in the SL consisting of 121 words corresponds the sentence consisting of 104 words in the TL.

Everybody got so fed up with this that I soon dropped the project completely, and only toward the end of my twenty months of cold labour (as one of the botanists jocosely put it) concocted a perfectly spurious and very racy report that the will find published in the Annals of Adult Psychophysics for 1945 or 1946, as well as in the issue of Arctic Explorations devoted to that particular expedition; which, in conclusion, was not really concerned with Victoria Island copper or anything like that, as I learned later from my genial doctor; for the nature of its real purpose was what it termed 'hush-hush', and so let me add merely that, whatever it was, that purpose was admirably achieved [11, p. 148].

Всем это так приелось, что я бросил – и только в конце моей «приполярной каторги» (как шуточно выразился один из ботаников) настроил сплошь выдуманный и очень красочный рапорт; любопытный читатель найдет его напечатанным в Adult Psychophysics за 1945 или 1946 год, а также в выпуске Arctic Explorations, посвященном нашей экспедиции, – которая, замечу в заключение, не имела в действительности никакого отношения к медным залежам на Острове Виктории и тому подобным пустякам, как мне впоследствии удалось узнать от моего благодушного врача, ибо настоящая цель экспедиции была, как говорится, «секретного» порядка, и посему позволю себе только добавить, что в чем бы цель ни была, она была полностью достигнута [12, с. 156].

The average length of the sentence in the SL is 27,5 words, in the TL – 24,9 words.

The results of this investigation contradict the common impression that the Russian translation is always longer than the original – the books really look thicker. The specific character of these two languages inevitably leads to the rise in the text volume reaching 25% or even more in the process of translation from English into Russian. Therefore it is clearly seen from the number of words in the original and translation that the translation is by 10% shorter than the original. The reader's impression is based on the differences in the word length, which is, on average, much bigger in Russian than in English. It is predetermined, apparently, by the inflectional character of the Russian language.

There are some vivid examples:

I also decided that anything was better for Lo than the demoralizing idleness in which she lived [11, p. 170].

Я решил, кроме того, что для Лолиты все будет лучше, чем деморализующее безделье, в котором она пребывала [12, с. 181].

Some of them ended in a reach flavour of hell [11, p. 93].

Окончание некоторых из них бывало приправлено адовым снабдьем [12, с. 102].

He wrapped his arms around Lo [11, p. 85].

Он ласково обнял Лолиту [12, с. 96].

Did I mention the name of that milk bar I visited a moment ago? [11, p. 64].

Не помню, упомянул ли я название бар, где я завтракал, в предыдущей главке? [12, p. 71].

In the first example, having the same number of words (17 and 17) the Russian sentence exceeds the English one in letters by 14%. In the next examples, the English sentence has 2% more words than the Russian, therefore, it is 32% shorter as for the number of letters, which makes approximately 30% of the graphical capacity of the text. These numbers explain the statement that a faithful translation reveals a tendency for its text lengthening.

The investigation of the author's translation gave the results that differ from those of the translation made not by the author but by the professional translator which can be easily accounted for. There is a 1,2% decrease in the number of sentences in the author's translation are compared with the original. There is a 3,5% increase in the number of sentences in translation. The causes of differences in length of the original and translated sentences are not homogeneous. One part of these differences is conditioned by the system differences of the two languages, it is of inevitable and objectively stipulated character, the other part is explained by the translator's influence – the level of his proficiency, language competence, creative aim, i. e. the subjective factors.

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Кирилова М. Д., Воробйова К. В. Довжина речення в оригіналі та перекладі

Анотація. Довжина (обсяг, розмір) речення – величина не випадкова, зумовлена тільки смаком і примхою автора. Вона закономірно пов’язана з висловлюваним змістом, що пояснює варіативність довжин у межах одного твору і ставить під сумнів можливість атрибуції тексту тільки на підставі цього параметра. Довжина речення, що залежить від дискретного або узагальненого характеру втілення дійсності, від динамічного або статичного характеру зображуваної дійсності, робить свій внесок у зміст і стилістичну тональність тексту. Звідси впливає важливість адекватної передачі цієї синтаксичної характеристики в перекладі.

Ключові слова: довжина речення, прикладна лінгвістика, адресат, предикація, стилеутворювальний.

Кириллова М. Д., Воробьева К. В. Длина предложения в оригинале и переводе

Аннотация. Длина (объем, размер) предложения – величина не случайная, определяемая только вкусом и прихотью автора. Она закономерно связана с выражаемым смыслом, что объясняет вариативность длин в пределах одного произведения и ставит под сомнение возможность атрибуции текста только на основании этого параметра. Длина предложения, зависящая от дискретного или обобщенного характера воплощения действительности, от динамического или статического характера изображаемой действительности, вносит свой вклад в содержание и стилистическую тональность текста. Отсюда самоочевидна важность адекватной передачи этой синтаксической характеристики в переводе.

Ключевые слова: длина предложения, прикладная лингвистика, адресат, предикация, стилеобразующий.