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ФОРМУЛЫ ЭПОСА “МАНАС”

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Рассматривается использование постоянных эпитетов в поэтических формулах и способы их перевода на иностранный язык.

Ключевые слова: постоянные эпитеты; семантическая общность; вне/контекстное употребление; коннотация.

THE FORMULAS OF THE “MANAS” EPIC

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The article deals with the use of constant epithets in poetic formulas and ways of their translation into foreign languages.

Keywords: constant epithets; semantic unity; non/contextual use; connotation.

The monumental epic Manas is the most treasured expression of the national heritage of the Kyrgyz people. The “Manas” epic is the top centuries-old masterpiece of the Kyrgyz people. It is the largest epic of the world according to its size and significance. It does not only have a great historical value, but as a work of art and from linguistic point of view, it has always attracted attention of greatest scholars.

Researchers have frequently mentioned the existence of constant “frequently repeated” elements in the folk genre, namely, in the epic. These elements were called “formulas”. So called “poetic formulas” hold a special place among these formulas; they were pointed out by the famous scholar M. Bowra [1]. According to M. Bowra, “poetic formulas are the combination of epithets and nouns”. A. Lord described a formula as a thematic cliché description (description of the hero, fight, a duel, a wedding feast, etc.).

A.N. Veselovskiy, when characterizing the use of epithets in folk epic poetry, pointed out their “fixed nature when used with definite words” and noted that the abundance of “repeated epithets... as well as the repetition of verses and a number of verses, and the richness of common places are just the epic device, which does not create, but repeats and chants something new, but in the old forms. This reminds of akyns’ art: their art is in combination of ready-made verses/formulas...” [2, p. 65].

In fact, if to take the Kyrgyz “Manas” epic, one can see the wide use of epithets, many of which are constant and form some kind of poetic formulas together with the words defined by them. Thus, for example, the following epithets are mentioned when talking

about Manas: *эр – храбрец, герой; канкор – храбрый, герой; арстан – лев; кабылан – леопард; кок жал – сивогривый; айкол – благородный, великодушный*, etc. All these epithets, except for the last one, form some kind of semantic paradigm united by the common semantic component “*courageous/brave*”.

Based on this very semantic unity, E.D. Polivanov noted that when providing a poetic translation, “the use of constant epithets depends on a poet- translator. If for example, in the text, Manas is called “*leopard*”, then a translator can substitute “*leopard*” for “*lion*” or for some other word (from constant epithets of “Manas”) according to the requirements of rhythm or according to some other ideas” [3, p. 67].

Moreover, not only the semantic unity of epithets allows the substitution of one epithet for another. As F. Mickloshich mentioned, a constant epithet may not have any relation to the depicted situation, or, in other words, it may not be connected to the context and not be motivated by it [4]. Thus, for example, the use of the epithet “*канкор*” at the beginning of the second book of the “Manas” epic is not motivated by context.

Канкор Манас баатырдын
Караборк катын алганы.
Кан атасы Жакып бай
Калкына кабар салганы [5, p. 8].
Храбрый богатырь Манас
Взял в жены Караборк [6, p. 9].
Brave hearted warrior Manas
Brought home as wife Karaberk to us [7, p. 8].

Such use of the epithet is called “non-contextual use”. When using epithets in such cases, they can be substituted for other words without a significant dam-

age for meaning; thus, it is possible to substitute epithets in the original text:

Кок жал Манас баатырдын
Караборк катын алганы.

Ор :

Арстан Манас баатырдын
Караборк катын алганы.

However, in some cases, it is impossible to replace epithets, for their use becomes motivated. As, for example, in

Арстан Манас атагын
.....
Падыша экен суйлошу.
Арстан экен суйлошу.
.....
Арстан эрди болорбу
Алманбеттин суйбосу.

In this case, the use of the epithet “*арстан*” is motivated further in context by the metaphor and by the repetition of the epithet, as well as by parallelism: падыша – арстан. Such use of the constant epithet can be called “contextual” and in such cases, it is impossible to replace one epithet by another one.

Another problem when translating constant epithets is finding constant equivalents in the target language and their systematic use in corresponding cases. This requirement, being the basis of epic poetry, is not always fulfilled in translation. Thus, for example, when translating the Kyrgyz epithet “*Канкор*”, which is one of the constant epithets of Manas, translators employ two equivalents “*храбрый*” (brave/courageous) and “*кровожадный*” (bloodthirsty). “*Кровожадный*” is the basic meaning of the word given in dictionaries [8; 9].

However, in the defining dictionary of the Kyrgyz language [8], as well as in the Kyrgyz – Russian dictionary by K.K. Yudakhin [9], there is the meaning “*храбрый*” (courageous) when used as a constant epithet in epics [8; 9]. The word “*храбрый*” (brave/courageous) has a positive connotation and, on the whole, corresponds to Manas’s characteristics and to the system of epithet use in the epic; whereas, “*кровожадный*” (bloodthirsty) has a negative connotation and is contrary to “*храбрый*”. Moreover, the translation of “*канкор*” as “*кровожадный*” (bloodthirsty) does not correspond to the context almost in all cases. Thus, for example, Manas’s herald informs of Manas’s arrival in the translated version in the following way:

Поехал гонцом юный Айдар,
Сказал: “Прибыл *кровожадный* Манас...” [6, p. 339]

Soon the ears of Aidar it found.
He said: “*Bloodthirsty* Manas is here!” [7, p. 338]
The contradiction of epithets to context is not a

rare phenomenon in the epic. A.N. Veselovskiy explains it by “freezing” of the epithet, when “there occurs the oblivion of the real meaning of the epithet with its consequences: with the senseless use of one epithet instead of the other one, when, for example, the French *trouvere* uses different nicknames (Arabic, Aragonic, Gaskonskiy) for naming one and the same horse, or in one of the Serb epics, according to translation, “even a Moor has white hands”, etc [2, p. 66].

The impossibility of translation of “*канкор*” as “*кровожадный*” (bloodthirsty) is proved by the following examples:

Подъехав, Кошой слово сказал:
“Ну что, приехал *кровожадный*?” [6, p. 339]
Having met, he began to speak,
“Well then, old *bloodthirsty*, you’re arrived” [7,

p. 338]

And turning to Manas, he adds:
“Почему же, *кровожадный* наш,
С опозданием приехал ты?” [6, p. 340]

It is clear that this translation cannot be explained by “freezing” of the epithet; it does not only contradict linguistic norms of translation, in this case Russian, but what is worse, it is erroneous.

Thus, having considered the above, it is possible to draw the following conclusions:

- The use of constant epithets in poetic formulas can be divided into “contextual” and “non-contextual” use;
- In cases of “non-contextual” use when translating, it is possible to substitute one epithet for another one from the common system of epithets used with definite words;
- It is important to find a constant equivalent of a poetic formula in the target language and to systematically use it in corresponding cases;
- It is important to distinguish between a linguistic and epic or folklore meanings of words, as a basic meaning of a word given in a dictionary does not always correspond to its folklore meaning and sometimes can even be at variance with it.

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