

PHILOLOGY

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LITERARY BILINGUALISM IN V. NABOKOV'S DISCOURSE

*[E.В. Муругова, А.Ф. Аитова**Литературный билингвизм в дискурсе В. Набокова]*

It is considered that V. Nabokov's verbal behavior as one of an active user of two different languages is to be formed under the influence of both linguistic cultures, and to some extent, it reflects the peculiarities of each of them. The article focuses on the literary aspect of Nabokov's bilingualism and its reflection in the discourse of the writer contributed to the creation of a unique, virtuosic style, in which along with a focus on classical language forms modernist experiments over a word, including word games, linguistic effects and the creation of words are reflected.

Key words: language, bilingualism, self-translation, literary creation, discourse, Vladimir Nabokov.

The importance of foreign language acquisition has been discussed since the oldest days. Learning another language gives a person the key to better understanding, the ability to step inside the mind and context of other cultures. Nobody would deny the fact that communication without cultural backgrounds is impossible. Moreover, eminent philosophers and writers have reviewed a great deal of scholarly disputation concerning the problem of language competence. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who was an outstanding German writer and political leader, ones said: "He who knows no foreign language, knows nothing of his own (Wer fremde Sprachen nicht kennt, weiß nichts von seiner eigenen)" [1].

It is universally known that the knowledge of a foreign language is called bilingualism among linguists. The classic definition of bilingualism and its characteristics highlight only the linguistic aspect of this phenomenon. Bilingualism (from Latin bi... and. lingua – language) is the use of two or more languages or different dialects of the same language, either by an individual speaker or by a community of speakers. The level of proficiency in each language and the distribution of spheres of

communication between them depend on many social, economic, political and cultural factors. Encyclopedia Britannica distinguishes two kinds of bilinguals – coordinate and sub-coordinate ones. A coordinate bilingual acquires the two languages in different contexts (e.g., home and school), so the words of the two languages belong to separate and independent systems. For a sub-coordinate bilingual, one language dominates [2]. For this study, we define bilingualism as the practical implementation of the ability to use two languages in various spheres of communication.

In modern linguistics, psychology and linguadidactics the study of the problem associated with bilingualism is especially important, as nowadays foreign language is the main tool of intercultural communication. As rightly pointed out by S. G. Nikolayev, speaking two or more languages is a prerequisite to "intellectual and professional survival" [8, p.10] in the modern world and, as a consequence, it is the norm in most countries of Europe, Asia and North America.

Real preconditions for the profound study of bilingualism existed since the days of feudalism, when as a result of Christianization or Islamization one or another nation acquired a religious language, on the basis of which the written language of the ruling class was mainly built. However, the problem of bilingualism became an object of a special study much later – only in the end of the 19th century. And even if many scientists (A.A. Potebnya, H. Schuchardt, etc.), used to believe that bilingualism inhibited language development of a personality and adversely affected the polyglot mind at the initial stage of research, now the beneficial effects of mastering a second (third and etc.) language raise no doubt.

In modern science, bilingualism is recognized as a multi-aspect phenomenon. Nowadays any of the bilingualism problems is an interdisciplinary problem investigated concurrently by several related sciences. After thorough analysis of various aspects of bilingualism, it is possible to allocate four basic trends in this area:

1. Linguadidactic, or methodological direction develops the problems of learning a second language, including psychological and pedagogical problems of native language learners. One of the first researchers in this direction were H. Grünbaum, E. Windisch, Cummins, Swain, H. Schuchardt, etc. [8, p.13].
2. Psycholinguistic, initially psychological direction explores different ways of acquiring bilingualism; the role of bilingualism in the development of the human personality; the correlation between second language and thinking; the process of foreign speech generation; the problem of the native language

dominance; bilingual education and others. The psychological trend more often studies the phenomenon of individual bilingualism or explores bilingualism in small groups. The representatives of the psychological trend in linguistics (V.B. Belyaev, E.M. Vereshchagin, Y.A. Zhluktenko, A.A. Zalevskaya, S.V. Semchinsky, etc.) consider bilingualism as a psychical mechanism that combines two language structures in the mind of a bilingual, and investigate the key features of bilingualism functioning.

3. Social, including sociolinguistic trend, works with the problems of sociological interpretation of bilingualism, the influence of social conditions on the genesis and functioning of bilingualism, the distribution of public functions between native and second languages, the interaction of two or more languages, etc. Sociolinguists explore mass bilingualism on the vast geographic space. They have created "the theory of language contact" and it is still actual (the founder is U. Weinreich).
4. Purely linguistic trend studies critical issues such as linguistic interpretation of bilingualism based on the level of proficiency in a foreign language; the possibility of the same fluency in two or more languages; the degree of language systems interference in the speech of a bilingual; the comparison of the interacting languages; the problem of linguo-theoretical understanding, etc. (V.A. Avrorin, R.A. Budagov, V.V. Vorobyev, Y.D. Desheriyev, N.B. Mechkovskaya, V.Y. Rosenzweig, L.V. Shcherba, etc.).

Throughout the history the studies on bilingualism have had various definitions that mainly specified its psychological and/or sociological characteristics. For example, many modern linguists rely on the definition of bilingualism given by L. V. Shcherba. He defines bilingualism as "the ability of certain groups of people to understand and speak two languages". Then L. V. Shcherba explains that being bilingual means the belonging to two different social groups simultaneously because "language is a function of social groups" [9, p.313].

In modern linguistics, it is also possible to observe two approaches to understanding the essence of the phenomenon of bilingualism within the framework of the individual ability. In the context of narrow understanding, bilingualism is defined as equal fluency in two languages when the notions of "native" and "non-native" languages are extremely difficult to highlight or the differences between them are insignificant. The second, a broader understanding of bilingualism, is when any

person having active/productive (speaking, writing) and/or passive/receptive (reading, listening) communicative skills in two languages is called bilingual, i.e. the person is able to use two languages in certain spheres of communication.

The verbal ethno specifics of two or more linguistic cultures behavior is most evident in their interaction or when compared. In the mind of a bilingual there is the interaction between two different cultures. However, when it comes to foreign language application in the literary creativity, the problem becomes much more complex and it appears to have no consensus among researchers. While the subject of bilingualism is considered in detail from linguistic, psychosocial, neuropsychological, or ethno-cultural points of view, there are very few studies of bilingualism as a literary problem.

The aim of the article is primarily to investigate the literary aspect of bilingualism. Bilingualism as a phenomenon of literary creation is a peculiar trend that takes place throughout the twentieth century and, in particular, in Russian and Soviet literature. Such poets and writers as M. Tsvetaeva, G. Ivanov, I. Brodsky, Vasil Bykov, Chingiz Aitmatov and others are worth noting here. Therefore, the consideration of the literary side of bilingualism is now acquiring a special actuality in connection with the study of creative works not only by a particular author, but also by a number of bilingual writers, poets, playwrights. One of the most prominent bilingual writers is Vladimir Nabokov.

Vladimir Nabokov is known as a great Russian-American novelist, poet, playwright and critic. The personality of Vladimir Nabokov is unique: he equally well spoke Russian, English and French languages as all his childhood he was surrounded by English and French nannies, governesses and teachers, as well as numerous multilingual books. In our study, we consider the phenomenon of Nabokov's individual bilingualism as simultaneous bilingualism, when a child becomes bilingual by learning two languages from birth.

As part of a broad approach, bilingualism is classified according to a number of different parameters. Some researchers identify more than 30 kinds and types of bilingualism [10]. According to the status of the speech mechanisms inherent in a bilingual individual Nabokov pertains to an effective bilingual who is able to communicate by generating his own speech [7, pp. 22-24]. Taking into account the type of bilingualism Nabokov belongs to the literary creative bilingual, whose activities are related to the literary translation.

Nabokov not only wrote freely in two languages, but also skillfully translated works of the English writers into Russian and the Russian classics into English. His first experience in this field was the translation of the poems of Irish poet S. O. Sullivan in June 1921. Then there were the translations of R. Brook, A. Tennyson, W.B. Yeats, George G. Byron, J. Keats and W. Shakespeare. In 1923 Nabokov's free adaptation of the tale by L. Carroll "Anya in Wonderland" (in Nabokov's work Alice was translated as Anya) was published in Berlin.

According to the correlation of linguistic and referential systems, which are possessed by a bilingual individual, i.e., correlation of the speech mechanisms, following U. Weinreich's, S. Ervin and Charles E. Osgood we can allocate subordinate, mixed (in the terminology of E.M. Vereshchagin – "medial" [7, p. 48]) and coordinative types of bilingualism [6, pp. 157-163]. Nabokov represents a mixed bilingual who is fluent in a second language and who uses it in different spheres and genres of verbal communication.

In terms of modern psycholinguistics Nabokov presumably can be attributed to balanced bilinguals who speak two languages on a comparatively high level when the asymmetry of the two codes in the minds of a bilingual is minimal or virtually invisible. Nabokov's verbal behavior as one of an active user of two different languages is to be formed under the influence of both linguistic cultures, and to some extent it reflects the peculiarities of each of them. Thereafter, pragmatic linguistic features of bilinguals' speech behavior are to be manifested in the features of the automated choice of speech signals of grammatical and textual categories in speech in both languages. These features can carry a mark of the cultural linguistic traditions of one or both cultures. The important point in understanding the characteristics of bilingual speech behavior is the problem of verbal thinking of bilingual individuals, in particular prospective thinking features of productive bilinguals.

Vladimir Nabokov was constantly asked what language he thought and the writer had always said what he thought in images. Thinking in images is a specific feature of a natural bilingual, it is not verbal, as "images are always wordless", but then this thinking is followed by the verbalization of images, and, according to Nabokov, "a silent movie suddenly starts talking, I recognize its language" [3].

The main feature of a bilingual thinking is that every time he chooses between the two signifiers with the same meaning, switching from one language code to another. The complexity of the choice consists in the fact that these two

signifiers refer to two different national languages, i.e. to the various, sometimes uncorrelating with each other semiological systems, two different linguistic and cultural codes. In the mind of a speaker, the preference is given to one of these two systems: in case of, for example, subordinate and, apparently, mixed bilinguals it is given to the first language of the individual, i.e. the first linguistic and cultural code. Over the bilingual life, the dominant language maybe changed to one or the other. This change can happen more than once throughout a person's life and depends on his communicative needs in the current period. Unlike monolinguals, each productive bilingual is characterized by the linguistic, cultural and behavioral interference, manifested in the implementation of speech behavior features of one culture in the communication with the other.

Coordinative bilingualism inherited by Nabokov is one that has no dominant language; however, the writer gives a specific role to each of the acquainted languages in his creative life: "My head is English, my heart is Russian..." [3]. A more detailed explanation of his language treatment Nabokov gives in a television interview to Bernard Pivot (May 1975): "The language of my ancestors in fact is the language where I completely feel at home. But I will never regret my American metamorphosis. <...> Needless to say, I love Russian language, but English surpasses it in terms of convenience as a working tool. It's more prolific and generous when used in a dreamy prose or in the political lexicon" [3]. The comments on the structural differences between Russian and English languages by Vladimir Nabokov appear to be quite interesting: "English is much richer than Russian in the number of words. This is particularly evident by an example of nouns and adjectives. The insufficiency, obscurity and clumsiness of technical terms are one of the most uncomfortable features of Russian language. For example, "to park a car" would be "to leave a car to stand somewhere for a long time" in the reverse translation from Russian. "On the other hand, Russian is richer in means of expression of certain nuances of movement, human gestures and emotions. So, changing the beginning of a verb (for that purpose there are half a dozen of prefixes in Russian language to choose from) it is possible to obtain the expression of extremely subtle shades of the duration and intensity of the action. Syntactically, English is an extremely flexible tool, but there are more subtle twists and variations available in Russian" [3].

Nabokov's creative work researcher Jean Blot characterizes the writer's English language in the following way: "This language is very peculiar and, of course,

is marked with the origin of its speaker, i.e. both in form and in the intellectual richness it has a fairly strong Russian accent. Nabokov has won the bet: his universe, his style of feeling and thinking laughs at languages and geography, ascending his identity not only to transnational and transcultural levels, but also to translinguistic and transcendental ones"[4, p.168].

The translation of his own novel "Lolita" into Russian language became, in fact, the last of his Russian works for Vladimir Nabokov, and it took two years of hard work. As it is noted by linguists and neuroscientists, the self-translation is particularly difficult, because it destroys the barriers between languages, which protect the writer's mentality, in the consciousness of a bilingual person. But "also the thing was that modern American language and American slang required appropriate knowledge of Russian language and more or less advanced jargons awareness. Even if many of the words for American realities had their equivalents in Russian language, Nabokov could not know them. Moreover, a lot of laconic English phrases couldn't be translated into Russian either concisely or accurately enough. Psycholinguists claim that the equal knowledge of two languages bothers to translate and "disturbs linguistic balance" [5]. According to J. Blot, "although "Lolita" is translated into Russian by Nabokov, this is his only novel that is radically alien to Russian language" [4, p. 187].

Nabokov's bilingualism, as an important feature of his language consciousness, is reflected in the discourse of the writer and determines his fixation to the literal transfer of an original text in the process of translation. The writer was worried about the problems of the theory and practice of translation throughout his whole literary life. Translation as a key tool of an interlingual and intercultural communication has always been important for the writer who strived for the genuine authenticity in the transference into a foreign language both his own works and works of Russian classics. Prone to creative reflection, Vladimir Nabokov was in constant search for adequate forms of literal translation, which would be the key to the "spirit of language" and the culture of a different nation.

In addition, Nabokov's bilingualism has determined his attraction to unusual and subjective forms of speech. Thus, bilingualism of the writer as a necessary component of Nabokov's discourse contributed to the creation of a unique, virtuosic style, in which along with a focus on classical language forms there are reflected modernist experiments over a word, including word games, linguistic effects and the creation of words.

In modern science, bilingualism is an interdisciplinary problem, which is subject to study as a multi-aspect phenomenon. Bilingualism as the ability to use two or more languages in real communication is characterized by various degrees of communicative competence of a bilingual. The highest manifestation of bilingualism is considered to be an individual fluency in the second language acquisition in those types of discourse that require the finest differentiation of the meaning, stylistic nuances and cultural associations. This type of bilingualism is inherent in the elitist linguistic personality and can be qualified as artistic bilingualism essential to literary creation in another language.

Vladimir Nabokov is a bilingual writer who became a classic of both Russian and American cultures. The duality of his thinking was reflected in the writer's outlook and erudition and helped him to create his own unique author's style. The idiostyle of a bilingual writer is subject to certain principles of creative thinking common to works written in two different languages, and at the same time it reflects some features of a formal nature due to the specific structure of languages.

Nabokov's bilingualism as an important feature of his speech is reflected in the work of the writer and defines the search for adequate forms of translation. The more subjective the interpretation of the original text by a translator is, the more clearly his personality is reflected in this translation. The ultimate objective of the pragmalinguistic experiment is to diagnose individual qualities of the author by his speech. The texts' producer automatically implements individual strategies to explicitate verbal behavior of the authors in the form of their speech portrait fragments, and thus to diagnose their individual qualities. The content of the implicit pragmalinguistic units are the nuances of meaning and the form of their actualization are speech signals, i.e. of grammatical and textual forms that reflect automatical author's actualization of his implicit intentions at an unconscious level in the process of the speech act.

The theoretical significance of the research introduces new provisions into better understanding of creative thinking of a bilingual writer, the problems of the correlation of bilingualism and literary creativity, and that its results can be used for further study of individual literary bilingualism, other components of the image system of Vladimir Nabokov, and also the ways of creative thinking expressing in the idiostyles of other bilingual writers.

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