

Syllabus

Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures

2018: Spring Semester	Dr Aleksandr L'vovich Burak
RUS 4503 (04B9): Theory and Practice of Russian-English Translation 1 (3 credits)	Dauer Hall, room 254
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Final take-home exam paper to be submitted by 11.59 p.m. on April 30, 2018	Tel: (352) 273-3798
	Office hours: W, F – period 8 (3:00-3:50 p.m.) or by appointment

Course description:

The course provides a theoretical basis for and hands-on practice in resolving typical difficulties in conveying word, phrase, and sentence semantics in Russian-to-English and English-to-Russian translation. Prerequisites: RUS 3400 or the instructor's permission (3 credits).

Translation is a complex and fundamental human activity involving transfer of meaning between languages, cultures and forms of expression. Many of the texts we encounter in our everyday life are interlingual translations. Every act of communication, even within one and the same language, can also be viewed as a kind of translation because it involves encoding, transferring, and decoding messages. This course focuses on the theory and practice of conveying word semantics (the denotative and connotative components of meaning of individual word senses), sentence and paragraph semantics, and the aesthetic and cultural features of complete texts in Russian-to-English and English-to-Russian translation. Put differently, the central objects of analysis in this course will be predominantly words and "non-predicative" phrases, i.e. groups of words that do not constitute independent clauses or sentences; the tension between the syntactic and the semantic structures of sentences constituting paragraphs (sentence and paragraph semantics); and the pragmatics (the overall aesthetic and cultural effect) of complete texts. Translation is not, of course, about translating separate words, phrases, or even sentences – it is always aimed at carrying out complete acts of communication, however short or long these may be. We will therefore practice translating short but complete coherent and cohesive texts representing verbal discourse in all of its linguistic and extralinguistic complexity. The central aim of the course is to teach you basic written translation skills (mostly from Russian into English), using literary and topical social commentary texts of average difficulty. You will also have some practice doing consecutive interpretation (oral translation of oral speech divided by the speaker into segments of different duration enabling the interpreter to translate the speech segment by segment). The other, concomitant, aims of the course are to enhance your knowledge of Russian and English grammar,

expand your active and passive vocabulary, improve your writing skills in English and Russian, and deepen your understanding of Russian culture. Translation is an “exact art,” an “inexact science,” and a set of superior linguistic and interpretative skills, based on linguistic and cultural erudition, all rolled into one. As we translate different texts in this class, we will constantly experience firsthand the contingency and multiplicity of possible translation solutions, among which the translator has to make one definitive choice. You will need to purchase a course pack, which will include excerpts from my books *Translating Culture 1: Words* (2010), *Translating Culture 2: Sentence and Paragraph Semantics* (2013), *The Other” in Translation: A Case for Comparative Translation Studies* (2013), and *What It Takes To Be a Translator* (2014). In class we will translate/interpret discussion-provoking passages from current Russian and American print and electronic media focusing on cross-cultural differences between the Russian and American ways of life.

More specifically and separately, the course aims can be formulated as follows:

To use written translation as a means of linguostylistic analysis of Russian and English texts;

To teach students basic translation techniques of preserving the meaning of the Source Text (ST) in the Target Text (TT);

To teach students the criteria for assessing the quality of any type of translation;

To introduce students to Translation Variance Analysis – an analysis-and-synthesis method involving comparing and critically interpreting – from the perspectives of linguostylistics, methods of translation, and cultural-pragmatic impact – different published versions of famous narrative fiction texts;

To expand students’ Russian and English active and passive vocabulary through extensive use of Russian-English, English-Russian, and Russian and English monolingual dictionaries;

To enhance students’ lexical, grammatical and stylistic precision of self-expression in English and in Russian;

To enhance students’ cross-cultural awareness through translating culture-specific elements in the ST;

To encourage student discussions of the issues discussed in the texts being translated.

To facilitate students’ critical thinking that may be briefly defined as "the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action."¹

¹ Scriven, M., and Paul, R.W. *Critical Thinking as Defined by the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking*: <http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/defining-critical-thinking/766>

Theoretical issues to be covered:

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO TRANSLATION

1. Defining translation. 2. Levels of equivalence. 3. Basic translation techniques: 3.1 omission, 3.2 addition, 3.3 transposition, 3.4 substitution (using parts of speech and grammatical forms that are different from the ones in the original text), 3.5 compensation (making up for losses in translation), 3.6 concretization, 3.7 generalization, 3.8 antonymic translation, and 3.9 metonymic translation. 4. Text integration (analysis and synthesis at different levels of translation).

LEXICOGRAPHICAL ASPECTS OF TRANSLATION

5. A beginning translator's "must-have" set of reference of paper and online sources: Russian-English and English-Russian (bilingual) dictionaries; English-English and Russian-Russian (monolingual) dictionaries; encyclopedias. 6. A step-by-step strategy of tracking down lexical items that seem to be missing from the dictionary.

WORD SEMANTICS

7. Word sense, seme, sense core and sense periphery. 8. The semantic structure of a word. 9. The frequency-of-usage factor in translation. 10. Translation by paraphrase. 11. The denotative and connotative components of a word sense. 12. The concept of functional style (register). 13. The concept of dialect. 14. Semantic mismatches of seemingly identical Russian and English words: cross-cultural cognates, or "the beginning translator's false friends" in Russian and English. 15. Translation (interlingual) synonyms. 16. How to define word-senses. 17. Specialist / technical terms (translation for specific purposes). 18. The translator's levels of informational capacity. 19. Semantic engineering in translation: the main types of semantic approximations in translation.

SYNTAX SEMANTICS

20. Syntax and Communicative Structures (Theme vs. Rheme).

PRAGMATIC ADAPTATIONS OF TRANSLATIONS

21. Pragmatics. 22. Strategies of pragmatics: 1) neutralization; 2) domestication (naturalization); 3) foreignization; 4) contamination; and 5) stylization.

Note: All the theoretical issues of the course will be considered in the practical context of translating specific texts.

Primary course text (required):

A course pack, **RUS 4503 (04B9) Theory and Practice of Russian-English Translation 1** (to be bought at Target Copy, 1412 W. University Ave.)

Main sources on which the course pack is based:

Burak, A. L. *Translating Culture- 1: Words. Перевод и межкультурная коммуникация - 1. Слова.* Москва: Издательство «Р.Валент», 2010. – 216 стр. ISBN 978-5-93439-308-4.

Burak, A. L. *Translating Culture - 2: Sentence and Paragraph Semantics. Перевод и межкультурная коммуникация - 2. Семантика предложения и абзаца.* Москва: Издательство «Р.Валент», 2013. – 208 стр. ISBN 978-5-93439-425-8.

Burak, A. L. *“The Other” in Translation: A Case for Comparative Translation Studies.* Bloomington, Indiana: Slavica, 2013. ISBN 978-0-89357-415-4.

Typical Classroom Activities:

Appointment of Translator of the Day

1. Discussion/Quiz: Unit concepts/definitions/examples/solutions
2. Assigned translation analysis/assessment/editing/improvement: in “focus”/expert groups of 3-4 students each and/or as an all-class discussion
3. Chorus “shadowing” of the Russian passage under discussion
4. Two-way “back/reverse translation” in pairs of the analyzed Russian text

5. Tension/fatigue-easing interlude: students' comments on the paired translation experience/problems; discussion of relevant cultural issues; answering students' questions; discussing awkward/embarrassing translation/interpreting situations (episodes posted online or sequences from films) and amusing "translators'/interpreters' tales;
6. Semantic analysis of "translator's false friends," problematic denotative & connotative elements of style and dialect, and of text pragmatics:
 - 1) Analyze 1-2 examples;
 - 2) Suggest translations;
 - 3) Compare suggested translations with dictionary entries
(<http://lingvopro.abbyyonline.com/en>; <http://www.multitrans.ru/>)
7. Translating culture:
 - 1) Russian and English proverbs and sayings
(http://masterrussian.com/proverbs/russian_proverbs.htm#b);
 - 2) Russian "anekdoty" (jokes) (<http://anekdot.ru/>)
 - 3) Russian "mat" (vulgar swearing vocabulary) (<http://www.russki-mat.net/page.php?l=RuEn&a=П> – Russian-English; http://www.russki-mat.net/e/mat_slovar.htm - Russian only)
 - 4) Chastushki (humorous verses or ditties: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chastushka>), etc.
 - 5) Funny Interpreting: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNKn5ykP9PU> (6 min.)
 - 6) Putin and Obama – first meeting:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCT5qtVUWMk&feature=related> (3 min.)
 - 7) Film excerpts. For example, the interpreting episode from "Dushka";
 - 8) Humorous sketches. For example, "The Scottish Accent":
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YsPYzfwNqko&feature=share> (3:34 min.)
8. Spontaneous (unprepared) oral (consecutive) translation (interpretation) of a topical TV/online interview/report, etc.

Home assignment.

Final course grade components:

Regular attendance, homework preparation, and participation in class discussions and activities, – 40% (equaling 45 50-minute periods, with the absences subtracted pro rata).

This means being present in class, having read the assigned pages of the theoretical material closely and having done the assigned exercises and written translations by the set deadlines, as well as participating actively – and in an informed way – in the class discussions of theoretical issues and your classmates’ translations. I will closely monitor instances of absenteeism, unpreparedness, and unresponsiveness to class activities and factor them into your final grade. (I will proceed on the understanding that there may be two unexcused missed 50-minute class periods; the rest will be taken into account pro rata.)

Midterm take-home written test – 20%.

The test will consist of a written translation into English of a 200-300-word text. You will have to email me your translation by 5:00 p.m. on February 28, Sunday.

One 10-15-minute oral presentation in front of the class, dealing with some specific translation problem/s, during the last three weeks of classes (April 9 – 25) – 10%.

This presentation will need to cover the following questions:

- 1) Briefly characterize the textual and cultural features of the text suggested by the instructor for your final exam. / Alternatively: Why did you choose a particular Russian text for translation?
- 2) How do you understand and/or sense the cultural-pragmatic impact of the original Russian text on Russian readers? In other words, what aesthetic, informational, entertaining, and persuasion value does the text have in the Russian culture from your perspective?
- 3) What audience do you think the original text speaks to and do you think your translation will speak to a comparable sociocultural constituency in America?
- 4) What difficulties (linguistic, cultural, and those involving knowledge of translation theory and strategies) are you experiencing in translating the text?
- 5) Describe/show those difficulties to the class, propose ways of resolving them, and invite your classmates to contribute to resolving them, if you want to.
- 6) What overall translation strategy and “little strategies” are you using to make your translation produce on the prospective readers of your translation an effect similar to the effect that you assume the original Russian text has on the Russian audience?
- 7) How well do you think your proposed translation solutions take into account the expectations, educational background and cultural awareness of the target audience? To what extent should they?

Final take-home exam – 30%.

Your final exam paper will be a written translation into English of a previously untranslated (or looked at) Russian fiction or cultural commentary passage of approximately 900 words, followed by a written rationale/illustration of the adopted translation strategies in translating two or three most difficult points in the text. You have a suggested text for your final exam in the course pack, but if you have good reasons for translating a different text – one of your own choice – your chosen passage for translation will need to be discussed with and approved by me by April 6 at the latest. The final exam translation will be prepared by each student at home mostly in the course of the second half of the semester and during the reading week and submitted to me by e-mail by 11:59 p.m. on April 30 (Monday), 2018 at the very latest.

The following scale will be used in evaluating the quality of your work in class, grading your mid-term and final course papers, and calculating your overall grade for the course:

A = 95 – 100% (4 points)	B - = 75-79% (2.67 points)	D + = 55-59% (1.33 points)
A - = 90 – 94% (3.67 points)	C+ = 70 – 74% (2.33 points)	D = 50 – 54% (1.0 point)
B+ = 85 – 89% (3.33 points)	C = 65 – 69% (2.0 points)	D - = 45 – 49% (0.67 points)
B = 80 – 84% (3.0 points)	C - = 60-64% (1.67 points)	E = 40 – 44% (0 – Failure)

Expected class demeanor:

Please, come to class on time. No cell phone use, tweeting, texting, instant messaging, or computer use unrelated to class work will be permitted. I would also appreciate it if you would refrain from eating, drinking or chewing gum while the class is in progress.

Make-up quizzes, tests, or home assignments:

A student will only be allowed to make up a missed quiz, test, or assignment if s/he has a doctor's sickness note or other official documentation specifying valid reasons for missing the class. If any serious personal reasons preventing you from writing a test/quiz or attending a class should arise, please, let me know about them before you miss the test/quiz/class so that we can work out an accommodation. No unexplained absences will be excused (see the attendance policy section above).

Classroom accommodation:

Students requesting classroom and/or test/exam accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/home/contact-us>). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

Schedule of classes, readings, topics for discussion, and translations:**Please note:**

- **This schedule of topics, readings, and translations is not set in stone and may change as the semester progresses, depending on the progress of the class and, consequently, time availability.**
- **All the reading and translation assignments must be completed in full by the beginning of the class period indicated. Being unprepared in class will be noted by the instructor and factored into your final grade.**

Week 1 (Jan 8, 10, 12)

Course aims. Course pack: Unit 1. Basic translation terminology.
Unit 2. Dictionaries.

Week 2 (Jan 17, 19; No class on Jan 15 MLK Day)

Course pack: Unit 3. Basic transformations in the course of translating.
Unit 4. What is a word sense, a seme, a sense core, and a sense periphery?

Week 3 (Jan 22, 24, 26)

Course pack: Unit 5. The semantic structure of a word.
Unit 6. Translating by paraphrase.

Week 4 (Jan 29, 31; February 2)

Course pack: Unit 7. Denotative and connotative meaning.

Week 5 (Feb 5, 7, 9)

Course pack: Unit 8. Functional Style.
Unit 9. Dialect.

Week 6 (Feb 12, 14, 16)

Course pack: Unit 10. The translator's "false friends."
Unit 11. Three types of relationship between word senses.

Week 7 (Feb 19, 21, 23)

Course pack: Unit 12. Defining word senses.
Unit 13. Technical translation.

Week 8 (Feb. 26, 28; March 2)

Course pack: Unit 14. The translator's informational capacity.
Unit 15. "Semantic engineering" and levels of translation.

**Midterm take-home exam to be emailed to me by 11:59 p.m. on March 2 (Friday) at the very latest.
The text for your midterm translation exam – Что же значит быть русским? (its first 4 paragraphs) –
can be accessed here:**

<http://www.buro247.ru/lifestyle/expert/byt-russkim.html> (7 октября 2015)

The exam text can also be found on pp. 127-128 of your course pack.

March 3 – 10: Spring Break (No classes)

Week 9 (March 12, 14, 16)

Course pack: Bringing it all together: Review of the material covered up to this point (pp. 109-125).
 “The Other” in Translation (excerpt): How do you translate “supercalifragilisticexpialidocious” into Russian? (pp. 125-127)
 Analysis of your midterm translations.

Week 10 (March 19, 21, 23)

Course pack: Unit 16. Non-predicative and predicative word combinations (phrases). How to translate some Russian compound words into English and some English paired near-synonyms into Russian. The rule of semantic correspondence in translation.
 Unit 17. Free collocations, fixed expressions and idioms.

Week 11 (March 26, 28, 30)

Course pack: Unit 18. Proverbs, popular sayings and "winged phrases."

Week 12 (April 2, 4, 6)

Course pack: Unit 19. Syntactic and information/communicative structures of sentences. Theme and rheme.

Week 13 (April 9, 11, 13)

Course pack: Unit 20. Means of marking theme and rheme in English and Russian.

Week 14 (April 16, 18, 20)

Course pack: Unit 21. Predicates expressing themes.
 Unit 22. Transforming initial Russian adverbial adjuncts into English thematic subjects: Patterns 1 – 1.5.

Week 15 (April 23, 25)

Course pack: Bringing it all together 2: A brief review of the material covered during weeks 9-14.
 Final exam instructions and the text to be translated.

Final paper deadline and length:

Your write-at-home final course paper (your translation of a selected Russian text into English) is to be emailed to me no later than 11:59 p.m. on April 30 (Monday), 2018 (preferably earlier than that). It should be sent as an attached Microsoft Word file (!). The text of the paper should be double-spaced, using a size 12 font. If, by special arrangement, you select your own Russian text (excerpt from a text) to translate into English, the Russian passage for translation should be about 900 words long, and your commentary on the translation, should not exceed 600 words.

Referencing your final paper:

Your final paper should be properly referenced: All the sources that you have used in preparing and writing your final paper should be included as footnotes or endnotes. (You may need to look up some cultural, historical and other references to get a better understanding of the culture-specific terms and cultural/historical allusions in the text to be translated.) For books, include the name/s of the author/s, title, place of publication, publisher, total number of pages, and the pages you are specifically referring to. If the source is a translation, you also need to give the name of the translator and the year the translation first came out or the translation copyright was registered. Any references to texts, or visual, or audio-materials online should be supplied with the relevant Internet address (in a footnote or endnote) followed by the word "Accessed" and the date the source was accessed. Don't forget to include your own first and last names followed by your email address in front of the title/topic of your final paper.

Students with Disabilities:

Students with physical, learning, sensory or psychological disabilities will be accommodated in accordance with the relevant policies adopted at UF (for details, please, visit <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>).

UF Student Honor Code:

(Please, refer to the following webpage: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>).