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*The paper analyses a modern English translation of Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales" to determine the major features of the Middle English text which justify diachronic translation and to define the lines along which the translator modernizes the text.*

**Keywords:** *intralingual translation, diachronic translation, adaptation, text transformation.*

#### Introduction and background

Translations of early texts for the modern reader in the same language call for proper investigation in terms of translation theory and practice. In the framework of translation studies, an impulse to theoretical recognition and, as a result, further research, of translation within the same language was given by R. Jakobson, who distinguished intralingual translation or rewording as an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language. (Jakobson, 1985: 362-363). In case of "rewriting" old texts for the modern reader in the same language the concept of intralingual translation acquires a more definite historical or diachronic perspective.

Perception of literature by the reader was viewed as a historical category by V. Vinogradov, who emphasized that the original text, itself fixed in time, is differently perceived by each new generation (Vinogradov, 2001: 121). Even though the original text has a definite "date of birth", it stays unchanged only in terms of its formal expression. Its complex inner content comprising semantic, stylistic and pragmatic "filling" of the text, once created by the author, continues living the life of its own. This life is determined by both linguistic and extralinguistic factors – evolution of the language and the society. V. Vinogradov argues that perception of a work of literature by the general reader develops in accordance with circumstances of social life, growth of the speakers' educational level, changes in culture, everyday life, morals etc. (Vinogradov, 2001: 122).

When the time distance between the original text and the reading audience reaches a certain critical value, it inevitably affects the comprehension of the literary text, which results in distortion of the author's message to the reader, affects appreciation of the work's artistic value and its place in the cultural heritage. G. Kolshanskiy argues that the correctness of perception of a literary text depends on the reader's overall knowledge and mastery of the language code. Without mastering the language code, adequate decoding of the text produced in a different historical epoch and understanding of its author's artistic principles and individual style is hardly possible (Kolshanskiy, 1976: 73-75). Texts

which are important to be preserved for the generations to come need careful transferring into a newer form, which has to meet two major requirements – on the one hand, it has to make the text formally accessible, comprehensible to the modern reader, and on the other hand, the formal modernization has to keep intact and, if necessary, resuscitate the original content of the text in the complexity of its constituents and deliver the author's message to the reader in the way the author would have wanted it delivered. O. Kundzich, a Russian translator, wrote that translation is not only reproduction of a work of literature in a new ethnic and language context, but also restoration of a text in a new age (Kundzich, 1968: 231). To define this process, V. Vinogradov uses the term "diachronic translation" (Vinogradov, 2001: 139). The fact that V. Vinogradov is mostly concerned here with translations of foreign texts of early historical periods into another language (Russian) does not bear on the conceptual importance of his contribution, which encourages translation theorists to look deeper into the historical aspects of translation.

The traditional interlingual translation and intralingual diachronic translation were tentatively correlated by V. Komissarov when he wrote that "a translator often deals with an original created in another historical epoch, also in the translator's native language which has changed over time so much that its former state looks like another language" (Komissarov, 1990: 224). The concept of diachronic translation is still being developed; it requires a more distinct differentiation between translation within one language and translation between languages, as well as definition of specific parameters of each of these two subtypes and criteria for translators' work. The study of translation in diachronic perspective calls for a clearer terminological differentiation of such notions as "diachronic translation", "rewording", "adaptation", "historical stylization" etc. The intralingual diachronic translation still has to go a long way to become a full-fledged resident of the translation realm, both theoretically and practically.

Against the background of many works of translation theorists dedicated to the contribution of interlingual translation and translators to the continuity of human civilization, the historic mission of intralingual diachronic translation is still waiting for proper recognition. Obviously, with time, a larger scope of texts written in earlier centuries will be of necessity "modernized" for the general readership and such practice will inevitably stimulate theoretical discussion on the issues involved in the process.

#### Aims, object of research and materials

This paper looks at some aspects of translating a Middle English text for the modern English-speaking reader with the following two major aims in view: to determine the principal factors that make such modernization necessary and to define the lines along which a translator modernizes the text. The text under analysis is the translation of Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales" performed by Gerard P. NeCastro, Professor of English at University of Maine at Machias, who hosts the eChaucer website. Professor NeCastro is, of course, not the first person to undertake the task of bringing Chaucer across to the modern English-speaking reader. His translation was chosen for analysis for



several reasons. It seems to be the latest available and probably the one with the largest access, being placed on a website. Another factor which contributed to the choice of this translation is that it is a prose translation, which gives a translator essential freedom to reproduce the letter and the spirit, if not poetic form and rhythmical contour, of the original work. No less motivating is the fact that Professor NeCastro kindly encourages readers to offer their comments, modestly referring to his translation as penultimate draft. As the critical review of Professor NeCastro's impressive work has not been intention of this paper, his "penultimate draft" gave us sufficient material for analysis of his translation choices and motives behind them. Modern versions of Chaucer's masterpiece have already been the object of analysis in translation studies. Structural-semantic aspects of intralingual translation of Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales" were closely researched by Olga Zhuravliova (Zhuravliova, 2003). In her thesis she focused on structural-semantic transformations on the levels of phrase and sentence, analyzing translations performed by John Tatlock and Percy MacKaye (1929), R. Lumiansky (1948), Nevill Coghill (1977) and David Wright (1985). Being limited by the scope of an article, we will take a broader, if only cursory, look at some changes happening to the original text in G. NeCastro's translation – on the lexical, morphological and syntactical levels. Our primary interest lies in defending the case of diachronic intralingual translation through establishing the factors which make rewriting Chaucer for the modern reader necessary. Chaucer's original text in this paper is cited from Riverside Chaucer, 1990 and G. NeCastro's translation from his eChaucer website.

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