

## **Two Schools of Translation – Two Concepts of Sign?** *A Contribution to the History of Russian Translation Studies*

In the post-revolutionary period and the early 1920s, translation became a significant political and scientific problem as it was supposed to contribute to the development of the new Soviet culture. In the atmosphere of an intense quest of theoretical foundations of translation, various ideas and approaches were discussed and debated.

Numerous sources dealing with the Soviet period in the history of Russian translation studies mention the coexistence of two opposite approaches, or “schools” of translation, in the 1920s–1930s. Their names can vary depending on the authors’ preferences.

One of them could be referred as: Marshak’s school, Kashkin’s school, school of realist/realistic, or free/creative translation, whereas the other bore the name of school of literal translation, of formal translation, formalism, literalism, or bukvalism (cf. Russian [bukva] – letter).

The essence of their controversy is often reduced to two major questions: “To which extent formal features of the original should be preserved in translation?” and, inversely, “To which extent the original sense could be neglected?”

On a first approximation, nothing else but a classical *verbum e verbo* <> *sensum de sensu* opposition is behind these problematics.

Nevertheless, attentive, in-depth analysis of theoretical views expressed by different representatives of the two ‘schools’ followed by an attempt to reconstruct their individual conceptions of sign lying behind their own declarations, demonstrate that the real situation of the period in question cannot be reduced to this simple binary opposition.

Obtained through semiotic reconstruction, these results allow us to agree with the idea that the real intellectual climate of the 1920s–1930s was schematized *aposteriori*. Indeed, according to certain scholars, the distinction between the two schools was traced later by the circle of Ivan Kashkin to justify their politics towards their opponents and ideological adversaries. As a result, in the late 1930s a purely theoretical, even though complex, discussion was transformed into a black-and-white field of ideological struggle, in the name of *the Great Soviet School of Translation* that pretended to have found solutions to all problems of translation. The *bukvalist* label became a kind of stigma, which, once stuck, was almost impossible for a translator to restore his tarnished professional reputation.

Thus, using the method of semiotic analysis, we would like to show that the opposition between two schools of translation is a mere concoction in the history of Russian translation studies, as each of Kashkin’s opponents worked in their own individual manner.

### REFERENCES

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