

# HOW CAN METAPHORS BE SAVED IN TRANSLATION?

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## INTRODUCTION

So many notions in our life come twofold and we tend to study them in their dichotomy. Tenor and vehicle, target domain and source domain, an author and a translator, a book and its reader...

This research constitutes a relatively new area which has emerged from growing interest in the issue of metaphor translatability, its topology, modes, generalizations possible regularities (Nida 1964, van den Broeck 1981, Newmark 1988, Mandelblit 1995, Kovecses 2005, Al-Hasnawi 2007, Bojovic 2014).

One of the major topics to be presented in this poster is metaphor translatability in non-fiction. It is not our objective to dwell upon the dichotomy of literary vs non-literary translation, but we will be happy to prove that there is more to the issue of translating nonfiction than just claiming that "the first comprises the world of the mind and the imagination; the second, the world of reality, of facts and events", or that "one is art, while the other is science".

As far as we know, no previous research has been conducted on non-fiction metaphor translatability by the direct collaboration of a linguist and a practicing translator. Dr. Elena Isakova and Maksim Isakov have translated several books together and their ultimate goal now is to use that experience to add to the existing methods of metaphor translation as well as to give practical advice on how to help the translators who work in pair Russian-English.

## METHODOLOGY

Different theories and approaches have been proposed regarding metaphor translation, each has tackled the problem from a different point of view (Nida 1964, Reiss, 1971, van den Broeck 1981). The beginning of the twenty-first century has witnessed a considerable shift in worldwide research objectives. More and more papers are now appearing on cogno-cultural translation of metaphors (Mandelblit 1995, Kovecses 2005, Al-Hasnawi 2007) which is much favored by the authors of this paper. Following the methodology proposed by Z. Kovecses (2010) and personal translation experience we have made an attempt to single out several practical strategies that any translator working with Russian-English texts can use in their practice. To illustrate and justify the existence of these strategies we conducted several surveys at Tver State University, Russia. The participants of the surveys were students of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Cross-Cultural Communication.

## RESEARCH AND RESULTS

In 2005, 2010 Zoltan Kovecses examines the interrelations among metaphor, discourse, and metaphorical creativity. He proposes that metaphorical creativity in discourse can involve several distinct cases and conceptualizers rely on a number of contextual factors when they use novel metaphors in discourse.

In this paper we assert that the notion of creativity is also crucial in modern translation practices. Creativity in metaphor translation does not necessarily imply constant production of novel metaphors, but definitely involves different strategies the translator has to use to be able to save all the authorly metaphors.

In this poster we will portray four strategies of translating metaphors creatively. We can't but agree that there can be more strategies, but in this paper we will outline four of them.

## FOUR CS OF CREATIVITY IN METAPHOR TRANSLATION

Schaffner pointed out the difficulty of verifying whether differences in ST and TT metaphors are the result of conscious and strategic decisions or simply "ignorance" on the part of the translator (Schaffner, 2004). That is why the fact that this research has been carried out by both linguists and translators can be a certain verification of the obtained results and produced conclusions.

It may be fairly impossible to speak about creativity in translation in "barren language" or in ordinary words. This can explain the choice of the methodology and the names for the strategies. So, we have decided to call them "The four Cs of Creativity". Each strategy was brought out by the work on a particular book and the examples for every C were mainly taken from them.

Thus, we will speak about the following non-fiction books that were translated by Dr. Elena Isakova and Maksim Isakov:

- 1) *Crowned in a Far Country: Portraits of Eight Royal Brides*, first published in 1986, by HRH Princess Michael of Kent
- 2) *Fluke: The Math and Myth of Coincidence* 1st Edition, by Joseph Mazur
- 3) *What to Think About Machines That Think: Today's Leading Thinkers on the Age of Machine Intelligence* by John Brockman, Brett Barry, et al.
- 4) *How Language Began: The Story of Humanity's Greatest Invention* 1st Edition by Daniel L. Everett

## The first C: Culture-Induced Creativity

It is common knowledge that translation is a dialogue between two cultures. But are both cultures even partners in translation? On the one hand we have an author, while on the other hand there is a translator, an editor, a publisher and several other people. Some of these people know only one language, represent one culture. The work on *Crowned in a Far Country* for the first time demonstrated that we should be persistent and creative to be able to save the original ideas of the text. What was perfectly normal in Source Culture, was a shock for the Target Culture. We even had a situation when we had to use a metaphor where there was none to save the sense.

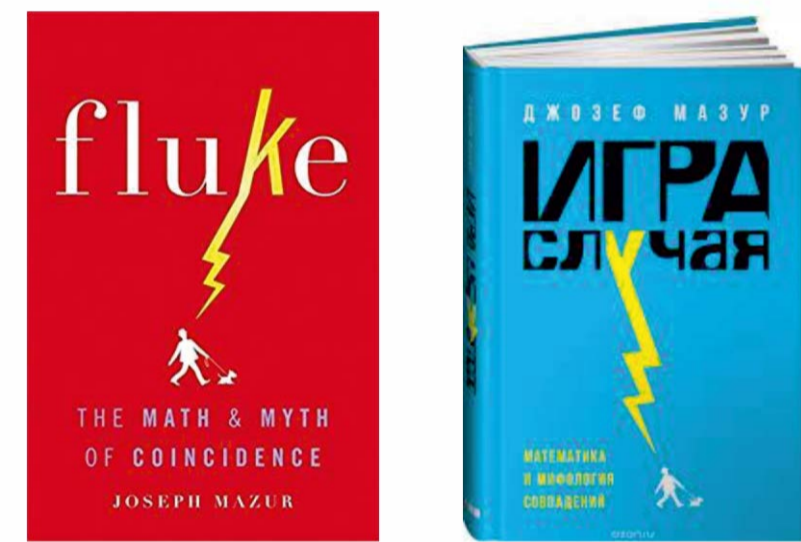


One of the princesses had to live in a pretty cold castle which gave her chilblains. There is a perfect match in Russian (ознобыши). The editors were not happy with the term, though, so the whole team worked hard to come up with a concise descriptive translation.

Another princess loved horses and was an accomplished rider. When her favourite mare died she kept its ears and forelock preserved in a box on the desk. The translators were really excited about this detail in the text, however the editors blacked out the ears. The translators did their best to help ears remain by giving an extensive commentary (on how close a rider and its mount can be) and employing metaphor in translation (by replacing a more technical term 'preserved' with what is closer to 'kept' – сохранила).

## The second C: Calligraphy-Stimulated Creativity

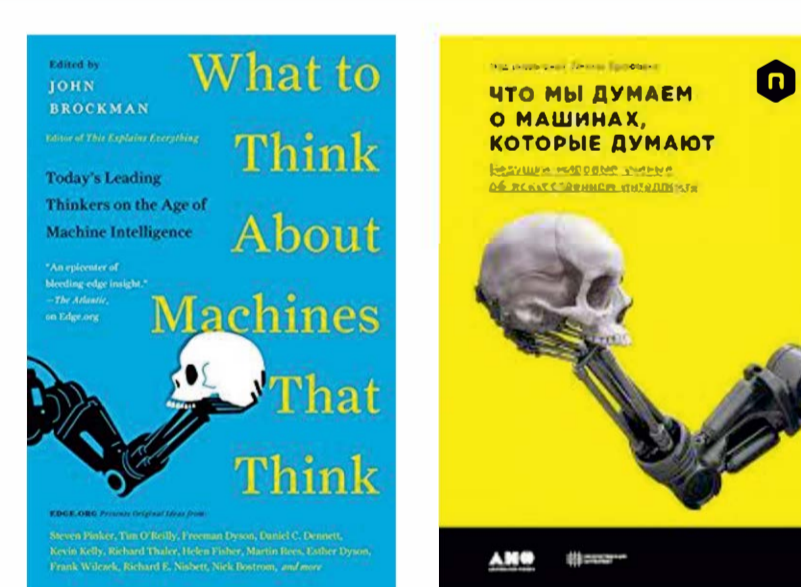
The work on *Fluke* had proved that translation of non-fiction is pure art. Have you ever heard of poetry in non-fiction? Here they are. The process of translating them was extremely creative. Most of the poems in *Fluke* were translated by putting a pen to paper rather than a computer (though a good dictionary of homonyms came in handy), which proved to stimulate the creativity of the translation. Many bestselling writers say that handwriting helps them create. Assuming that there could be a link between creativity and fine motor skills, we decided to look for works on the subject but found very little in terms of translation studies.



For preliminary evaluation of the positive effect provided by handwriting in metaphor and poetry translation, we interviewed 20 students of Tver State University having asked them to translate a poem first using a pen and paper, then using only a computer. Nine out of 20 students agreed that writing poems down made their mind work in a more creative way. We are going to do more research on the subject.

## The third C: Character-Induced Creativity

The work on *Machines that think*, where we had almost 200 authors representing various cultures, styles, and modes of life speculating about one general metaphor machine as a living being, has taught us to investigate, to learn everything possible about the author at hand.

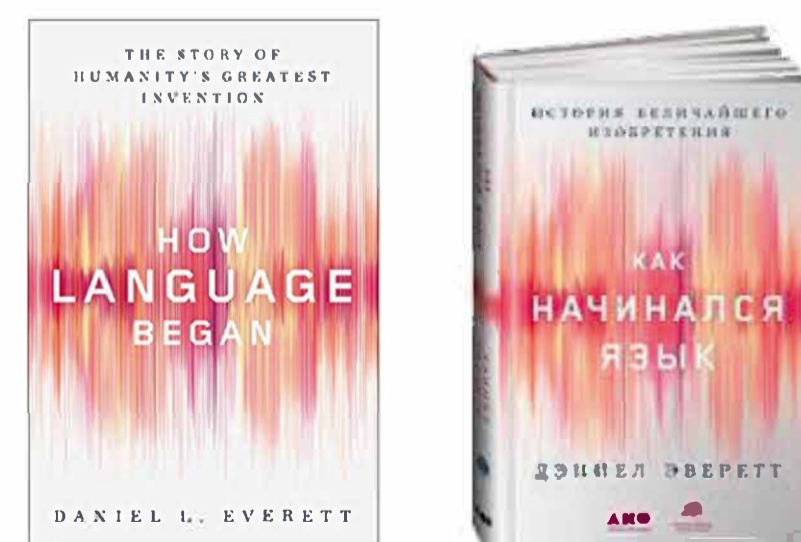


With very little context from the book itself (on average, articles were under 1,200 words) we had to find it in other works by the same authors. When we realised that this approach would require at least 20 months only to finish the translation (while the deadline for the whole project was way shorter) we rediscovered YouTube. A video of a lecture, seminar, or a Ted talk can give valuable insights about the person behind the text.

The particularly hard translation problem was wetware (as opposed to hardware and software) meaning human brain. Work on this word alone took over six hours. When it was safe to assume that no precedent Russian translation exists, we employed metaphorical translation (биологический компьютер).

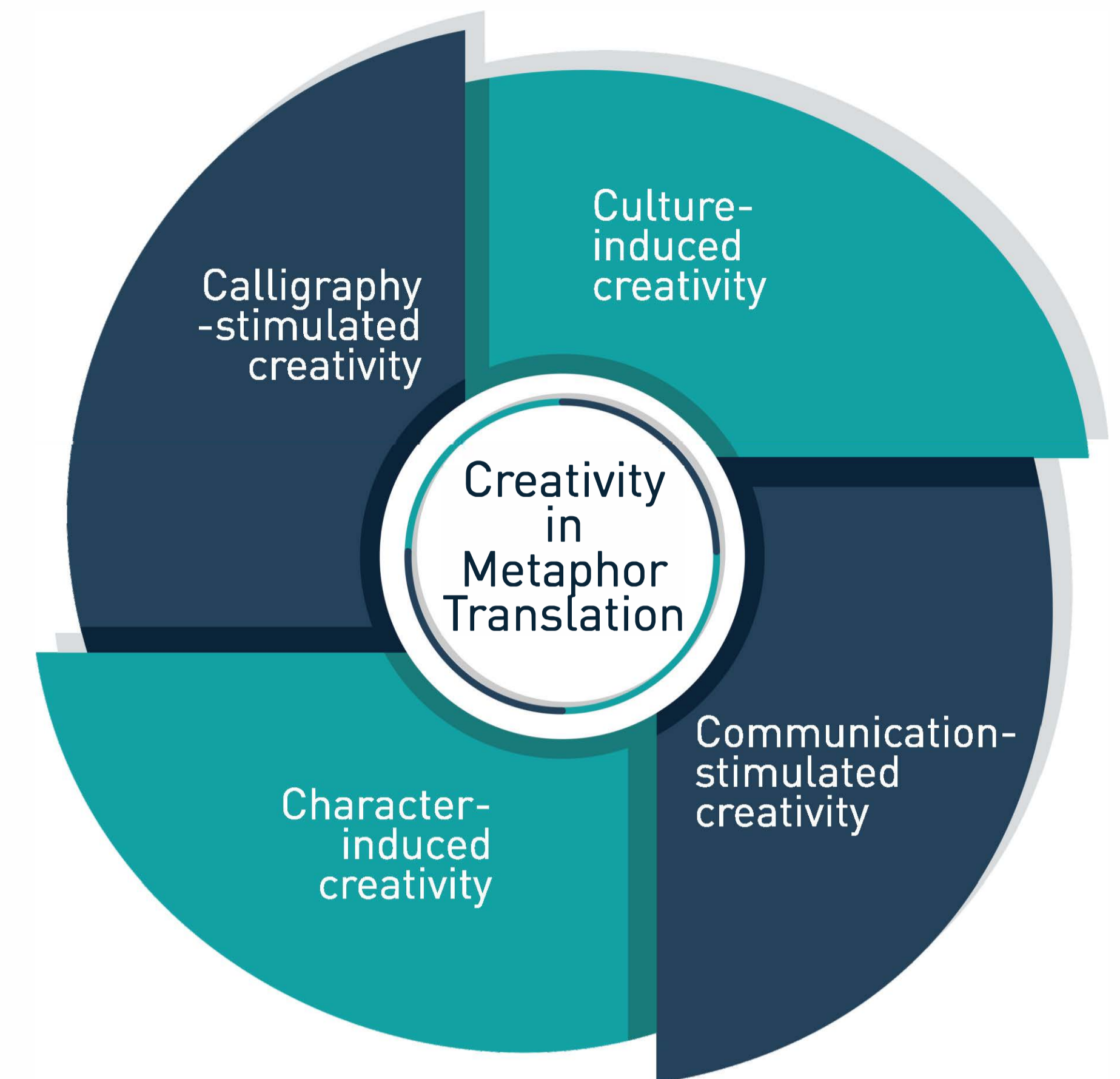
## The fourth C: Communication-Stimulated Creativity

Translating texts written by contemporary authors has its benefits. There is no need to guess what they meant here and there. Get in touch with your author – that will enrich your translation. Besides saving valuable time spent in guessing games it can come in handy for both parties – we are all human, there is no shame in asking for clarification, and even experts make typos sometimes. If in doubt, do not hesitate to ask – a quick google search can lead you to either your author's or their agent's email.



When we were halfway through the project, we wrote Dr. Everett an email asking for some clarifications. He kindly replied in under ten minutes, and we started a long conversation about the book. This relationship was symbiotic – we had found a couple of critical typos while the author resolved some ambiguities. With more insights on the personality of the author, we found that we wanted to come back to some of the chapters that had already been completed and make subtle adjustments to make them sound more like (what we thought) the author was.

## Creativity in Metaphor Translation



## Take-Home Message

- #1 Culture: reach out to your team: things that are obvious and intuitive for you may be enigmatic for someone else.
- #2 Rhythm: reach for a pen, take it slow – if you are dealing with a dozen lines of poetry, when you are finished, you can probably call it a day.
- #3 Visualization: reach beyond the text – YouTube can show you stuff. Also, it will probably offer you more similar stuff (i.e. valuable context).
- #4 Personality: write your author an email – most likely you will both benefit from what happens next.

## Acknowledgements

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