Пугачёва А.С.

Научный руководитель: старший преподаватель А.Р. Лебедев Муромский институт (филиал) федерального государственного образовательного учреждения высшего образования «Владимирский государственный университет имени Александра Григорьевича и Николая Григорьевича Столетовых» 602264, г. Муром, Владимирская обл., ул. Орловская, 23 Е-mail: alin4ik.pug@yandex.ru

Pseudo-International words in English, German and Russian

There are some words which are similar in spelling and / or pronunciation, often with a common origin, but have different meanings in different languages. They are called pseudo-international words (false friends of a translator). It is important to analyse them in order to avoid misunderstanding in intercultural communication and translation.

The following words are false friends of an English-speaking translator from German or Russian and a German-speaking or Russian-speaking translator from English:

- German Gymnasium and Russian гимназия (both mean 'a grammar school' / 'a high school') and English gymnasium (it means 'a room or building equipped for gymnastics, games, and other physical exercise');
- German Chef and Russian шеф (both mean 'a boss', 'a head') and English chef (it means 'a professional cook, typically the chief cook in a restaurant or hotel') [1, 2, 3, 4, 5].

The following words are false friends of a German-speaking translator from English or Russian and an English-speaking or Russian-speaking translator from German:

- English angel and Russian ангел (both mean 'a spiritual being believed to act as an attendant, agent, or messenger of God, conventionally represented in human form with wings and a long robe') and German Angel (it means 'a hinge', 'a fishing rod');
- English critic and Russian критик (both mean 'a person who expresses an unfavourable opinion of something', 'a person who judges the merits of literary or artistic works, especially one who does so professionally') and German Kritik (it means 'criticism') [1, 2, 3, 4, 5].

The following words are false friends of a Russian-speaking translator from English or German and an English-speaking or German-speaking translator from Russian:

- English family and German Familie (both can mean 'a group consisting of two parents and their children living together as a unit') and Russian фамилия (it can mean 'a family name');
- English magazine and German Magazin (both can mean 'a periodical publication containing articles and illustrations, often on a particular subject or aimed at a particular readership') and Russian магазин (it can mean 'a shop') [1, 2, 3, 4, 5].

Further research into other pseudo-international words can contribute to intercultural communication and translation.

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