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Review: *Russian Function Words: Meaning and Use*

Brendan Nieuburt

Evelina Mendelevich

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Nabokov's change in attitude toward Pushkin—a change from passive worshipper of Pushkin to self-assured interlocutor with him—he remains quiet about why Nabokov's theory of translation changed so radically concerning *Onegin*. Shvabrin sets 1955 as the year of Nabokov's "literalist" turn, though he makes little matter of the date itself. I wonder about the potential influence of surrounding events. Before he adopted his literalist rhetoric, which presented the translator as a meticulous scholar, Nabokov claimed that a translator must be a "creative genius" on par with the original poet. In 1955 Nabokov also published the novel that he knew to be proof of his own genius. How might *Lolita*, and the attention it brought, have inflected his always histrionic self-presentation vis-à-vis Pushkin? And what of Nabokov's many recent years of teaching, during which time he also devoted himself with particular zeal to publishing his lepidopterological research? How might these experiences have shaped the ways the translator felt about scholarship's methods and objectives, about the responsibilities of enlightening an unfamiliar audience? Such questions likely do not have fast answers, but they merit consideration.

All told, by focusing on his extra-*Onegin* translations, Shvabrin unfetters Nabokov from the single work that came to define his reputation as translator to thus provide a more nuanced portrait of Nabokov's practice. And while I lament the depth to which Shvabrin traces other writers' "vestiges" in Nabokov's work, I do so appreciating the immensity of such a project. His gestures in this direction undoubtedly indicate many new paths for further inquiry. With these achievements, *Between Rhyme and Reason* will be a valuable resource for Nabokov scholars of all stripes.

Brendan Nieubuurt
University of Michigan

Rojavin, Marina, and Alexander Rojavin. 2019. *Russian Function Words: Meaning and Use*. London and New York: Routledge. 269 pages.

Function words, such as particles and interjections, are ubiquitous in authentic speech and texts and are often essential to fully grasping the author's or speaker's attitude, tone, and position. Yet most of the time —

for understandable reasons — they receive little attention from teachers and textbook authors. Sometimes, however, these small words present major difficulties for Russian learners and translators, and it is such problems of meaning and use of conjunctions, interjections, parenthetical words, particles, and prepositions that Marina and Alexander Rojavin aim to address in their new book *Russian Function Words: Meaning and Use*.

This small book is designed to meet the needs of “anyone who is interested in Russian” (vi), including Russian learners of all levels, translators, and instructors, “who can utilize it for methodological materials” (vi). The primary goal of this book, as stated by the authors, is “to illuminate the use of [function words] by focusing on semantics based on a comparative analysis of their meanings in Russian and English” (vi). Thus, the most important feature of this book is the examples from spoken and written contemporary Russian “with translations into English that are not literal, but rather equivalent and appropriate to the given circumstance” (vi).

The book opens with an introduction from the authors that provides an overview of content and structure of the book. It is followed by “Abbreviations,” “Terminology,” and “English-Russian and Russian-English Glossary” sections. Students will appreciate the terminology section with its clear and succinct explanations of referenced grammatical terms, such as adverbial modifiers, complex and compound sentences, etc.

The main part of the book consists of entries in alphabetical order. Each entry has the following structure: the word itself with a part (or parts) of speech to which it belongs clearly indicated next to the term. For words that function as multiple parts of speech, there is a separate sub-entry for each part (low-frequency and archaic uses are excluded). Every entry or sub-entry includes a standard dictionary translation, followed by an explanation and a brief discussion (in English) of semantic, grammatical, stylistic, and, where applicable, sociocultural contexts in which the word is used. The explanations are clear and concise and are usually presented in simple, accessible terms (as mentioned before, special grammatical or linguistic terminology can be easily looked up in the corresponding section of the book). The explanations address the function(s) of a given word within a sentence and specifics of its use in various contexts. Applicable punctuation

rules are also addressed here. These explanations are followed by parallel authentic Russian-English sentence-length examples that not only illustrate previously discussed meanings and functions, but also encourage comparative analysis of its usage in the two languages. Where appropriate, the authors also list idiomatic expressions, proverbs, and sayings at the end of the entry with English equivalents (but not literal translations, which can be very useful when learning idiomatic expressions). It should also be noted that the authors' suggestion that the book will enable learners to "acquire skills that allow them to *use* [emphasis added] function words in typical life situations" is a slight exaggeration as the book does not (and is seemingly not designed to) allow for practice and application of the learned material, nor is the number of examples – typically 1-3 per usage – always sufficient to provide learners with patterns they can replicate.

Nevertheless, the parallel examples succeed in illustrating the meaning and certain nuances each word brings to the discourse and are the book's main value along with explanations that aim to "deliver a sophisticated level of theoretical knowledge" (vii). I could see it as a useful reference for undergraduate students in communication-centered courses, advanced students and translators working with authentic texts, as well as graduate students and instructors who need to provide their students quick explanations and examples of function word usage. The selection of entries is comprehensive without being overwhelming: it includes most commonly used prepositions, conjunctions, particles, interjections, and parenthetical words across a range of registers and styles, from highly colloquial to academic and literary.

Overall, *Russian Function Words* is a useful reference for learners, teachers, and translators who seek to understand the meaning, function, and use of Russian prepositions, conjunctions, particles, interjections, and parenthetical words across different registers. It may not be the richest source of examples involving these words, but in the age of Google and online language corpora, that is a minor weakness that does not diminish the overall value of the book.

Evelina Mendelevich
New York University