INVESTIGATION INTO THE PECULIARITIES OF SLOVAK TO ENGLISH TRANSLATION ON THE BASIS OF PARALLEL TEXTS

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1 INTRODUCTION

Parallel texts have been extensively exploited within the scope of computational linguistics for the elaboration and enhancement of the machine translation. Acknowledging the undisputed added value and application-related merits of this investigative approach, we would like to bring into spotlight the potential of parallel texts as sources of data that can help to improve the quality of the 'traditional' human translation. We assume that our analysis of the source texts and their translations could detect the points of collision between the two linguistic codes that become visible in the translation difficulties. Furthermore, it could outline the relation between the translator's cultural background (native language in particular) and the character of the translation technique of choice. This paper also explains the chosen methodological approach to translation and presents a factual overview of the empirical findings. We based the analysis on translations from Slovak, the majority of which were done by English native speakers.

2 METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF *PARALLELISM*

In the contemporary translation theory a ***parallel text*** (also referred to as *bilingual text*, or *bitext*) is understood to be a source text and its translation(s) into a foreign language (Ribeiro, 2000; Sripada, 2003; et al.). The given definition thus primarily links the phenomenon of parallel texts with the process of translation.

Seen from a broader angle, parallel texts function as constituent parts of ***parallel corpora*** that are comprised of source language texts and their translations. The generic notion of corpora explained by Baker covers *multilingual corpora* (texts in different languages selected on the basis of common criteria) and *comparable corpora* (a monolingual collection of texts and texts translated into the same language) (Baker, 1995). In relation to this distinction, it is necessary to point out that due to the relative novelty of the subject matter at hand, its terminology is still undergoing a process of fixation. Thus, McEnery (McEnery, 2003) distinguishes between *parallel corpora* and *comparable corpora*, with the translation factor being the major criterion of the classification. From this point of view, the comparable corpora are defined as non-translation, their constituent texts being of the same genre, coming

from various languages and having been collected in the same sampling period (McEnery, Xiao, 2007).

In a textbook on translation studies, composed by the Slovak researcher Daniela Müglová, parallel text is defined as "an authentic non-translated text in the language of the target text, which is thematically similar to or the same as the source text" (Müglová, 2009: 231). This definition evidently correlates with McEnery's definition of a comparable corpus rather than that of a parallel corpus. However, it also mentions a specific factor that should be taken into consideration when defining the notion of parallel texts, namely the subject matter of the analyzed texts or their underlying ***communicative situation*** (the term is borrowed from the field of communication studies). Linking the notion of *parallelism* purely with the translation process is an efficient way of avoiding ambiguity, but it does not completely answer the question of the classification of texts that have been created simultaneously in different languages to describe the same phenomena and (possibly) adapted to preserve the parallelism of constructions and meanings carried by them.

Worldwide news items represent yet another case that does not completely comply with the existing binary classification. News items are virtually parallel descriptions of the same event in different languages without a close adherence to the principle of direct equivalence. In this way news items essentially fulfill the main goal of translation, which is to describe a segment of reality by means of different language in such a way that creates an illusion that the information has not been acquired from any source text, but from elsewhere (Комиссаров, 1990: 161). Hence, we consider the common "*extralinguistic background*" of such texts to be an important factor, bringing the given text type closer to the scope of parallel texts on the basis of the notion's expansion. Moreover, it is worth noting that many news items of international significance are essentially translations of source news reports done by major news agencies, issued predominantly in English. These are later adapted by journalists for publishing in other languages. This fact may serve as a further justification of the application of parallelism to the translation process.

3 SCOPE OF RESEARCH

Based on the definition of parallel texts as translation equivalents, we conducted a research using Slovak source texts and their English translations. Although the texts selected for our analysis come from different sources, they share a number of features, which on the one hand, justify their consolidation within the given research, and on the other hand, have a greater demonstrative effect. Besides that, the impact of the results of our analysis is far-reaching.

The first corpus we analyzed consisted of speeches given by Slovak politicians and the second included articles of Slovak scholars, all dealing with the examination of the current Slovak linguistic situation seen from a political perspective. The evaluation of corpora at hand revealed that they combine features of both written and spoken text. Despite the format-induced inclination towards the oratory and scientific style respectively, both corpora are characterized by genre diffusiveness. According to Miko's style-defining categories, the given texts cannot be unconditionally placed at the end of the genre-defining scale as they are aimed at both providing factual information as well as explaining the essence of processes (the criteria of „*pojmovosť*" – notionalness, and „*obraznosť*" - iconicness). Thereby they attempt to make a certain impression, encourage the recipients to undertake a desired action or adopt a particular opinion (the criteria of „*zážitkovosť*"- experience orientation, and „*operatívnosť*" - responsiveness) (Miko, 1970). From the linguistic point of view, this duality can be considered a benefit. Each genre determines the use of respective linguistic means, which, by extension to translation equivalents, makes the findings applicable to texts of the given genre. From the translation point of view, the feature of being factual, but at the same time being

aimed at making a certain emotional impact, poses a difficulty since the translation process itself puts certain limitations on the preservation of the mentioned features in the output text.

Apart from taking note of the generic factor, the analyzed texts were chosen with respect to the translator factor, i.e. translator's native language. In relation to this, it is necessary to distinguish between two sorts of output translations, namely a translation done by *a native speaker of the source language* (Type A) and a translation done by *a native speaker of the target language* (Type B). These two types of translation reveal a certain degree of difference, which can be explained by the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: the language is not only an instrument for verbalizing the mental set, but it is an underlying factor as well. Thus, we might assume that, regardless of the level of competence, translators will (subconsciously) give preference to the structures and forms of their native language, which they deem most adequate. Therefore, a translation into English done by a Slovak-speaking translator is marked by a certain degree of a source language interference. Even if the respective grammar and syntax norms are preserved, the source language interference can lower the translation's quality due to the defiance of broader, not so clearly spelled-out communicative and situational rules, which are perceived by the native speakers of the target language as a norm. By contrast, translations done by an English-speaking translator adhere to the standards of the target language and as such comply with the criterion of "*naturalness of expression*", viewed as the key requirement for a successful translation (Nida in: Munday, 2001: 42).

Adherence to the source text structures leads us to a conclusion that the word-for-word translation is a technique commonly used with Type A texts, whereas the sense-for-sense translation is more typical of Type B texts. However, our analysis of the factual material only partly validates this hypothesis. In fact, word-for-word translation turns out to be the first option of choice in translations of both types and is abandoned (confirming Vinay and Darbelnet's assertion) "because of the structural and metalinguistic requirements" (In Munday, 2001: 57). In case of Type B texts, translators are naturally more aware of the norms of the target language since it is their mother tongue. Hence, they find it necessary to turn away from the original structures more often than the non-speakers of the target language. Type A and Type B texts differ from each other according to the steps translators follow when they encounter a difficulty, encoding or decoding the meanings. As far as Type A texts are concerned, the translator abandons the source structures more often and looks for translation equivalents by elaborating on the original meanings. In case of Type B texts, the translator who does not entirely understand the meanings of a source text prefers to carry them over into the translation in a word-for-word manner.

4 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Parallel texts show a functional usage of linguistic units in a certain context, which affects their selection and rules of their combination. Our research method presupposes that we single out the selected linguistic units from the source text, compare them with their foreign language equivalents, and analyze the possible modifications introduced by the translator. We further deal with categorization of similar instances into *prototypical situations,* characterized by a certain communicative function, which influences the choice of a subsequent translation technique.

The equivalents singled out from the analyzed texts range from single lexemes to entire sentence units. However, our primary interest are word combinations and syntactical structures. Namely, these linguistic units pose the biggest problems to foreigners who are inherently used to a different way of combining and structuring different parts of speech.

Below we list examples of some of the most frequent techniques employed by an English-speaking translator in relation to the prototypical situations in the analyzed Slovak source text.

The technique can be adjusted and used as a guideline for non-native speakers of English who come across the given prototypical situation and have difficulty finding an appropriate translation equivalent.

a) ***Dissolution of subordinating relation*** *between clauses of a compound sentence with a relative pronoun as a conjunction,* achieved either by rearranging the syntactical roles of words in a sentence and introducing the infinitive or gerund construction, or by splitting the original utterance in two independent clauses or sentences.

bez vymedzenia kontrolných mechanizmov, ***ktorými*** sa sleduje dodržiavanie ustanovení zákona	without definition of control mechanisms (*which?)* to monitor observance of law (*infinitive as an attribute*)
[obmedzovanie vyučovania slovenského jazyka], ***ktoré*** sa dialo posilňovaním štátneho školstva	[reduction of the teaching of Slovak] as a result of the strengthening of the state schools (*prepositional phrase introducing the gerund*)
ďalšie vážne fakty, <...> ***ktoré*** podporujú	further serious facts. ***These*** support... (*sentence splitting, source subordinate clause is transformed into a separate sentence with a demonstrative pronoun as the subject*)
Zaiste to nie je jediný podobný výstup, ***ktorý*** má svoje dôsledky	It is certainly not the only such action and ***this*** certainly has its consequences. (*introduction of an independent clause with a demonstrative pronoun as the subject*)

b) ***Replacement of uncountable abstract/collective nouns*** *by nouns with a higher degree of denotatum tangibility* (with or without introducing additional specifying words). This entails reorganization of the immediate word combination around a lexeme with a higher degree of denonatum tangibility; the parts of speech used to verbalize the related notions within a semantic syntagmatic unit are chosen with regard to the valency of lexemes, their semantic combinative features and limitations of the context.

„spravodajská objektivita"	„objective news" (*semantic reconsideration of the word combination resulting in the leading position given to a more tangible noun and the abstract notion shaped as an adjective*)
tendenčné a zámerné skresľovanie výsledkov štatistických údajov	tendentious and distorted statistics (*semantic contraction with simplification of the original combination pattern and a concurrent omission of the translation equivalent ‚purposeful'*)
deklaratívnosť jazykového zákona	the declarative ***aspect*** of the language (*specification of the abstract notion by adding a countable noun; translation equivalent thus verbalized as an attributive word combination*)
v porovnaní so svetom	in comparison with other ***countries*** in the world (*semantic specification by adding a countable noun into the original syntagmatic unit*)

c) ***Preservation of the original semantic (not syntactic) word order*** *while transferring Slovak reflexive verbs/constructions into English*. This may include a change of voice or a rearrangement of the subject-predicate roles in a sentence. A syntagma reflecting this prototypical situation is predominantly reorganized in such a way so as to introduce a formal (nominal or pronominal) subject or relate the unit to a subject-predicate cluster already present in the sentence.

sa pri *sčítaní obyvateľstva* sledovalo	the *census* traced (*adverbial changed to subject, the unit is thus completed with an actant*)
Naopak, prehĺbila sa *bipolarita* sveta.	On the contrary, it deepened *the bipolarity* of the world. (*the original subject changed to object, preserving the given order of lexemes)*
ktorého *rozhodnutiu* sa museli podrobiť	whose *decisions* had to be accepted (*object changed to subject with concurrent change of the voice from Active into Passive*)
aby ... sa spochybnila jej *schopnosť*	to cast doubt on its *ability (the unit is related to the predicate of the sentence, being verbalized as an infinitive construction in the role of an adverbial modifier of purpose)*

d) Rearranging complex source constructions *according to the „actant – predicate" pattern* with a possible introduction of a doer of the action expressed by the verb. The main goal of this technique is to loosen the original structure by either splitting the sentence into clauses or forming a separate sentence.

so vznikom moderného slovenského spisovného jazyka	***when*** the modern Slovak standardized language was established
a ďalším rozvinutím tohto ústavného ustanovenia bolo prijatie osobitného zákona	This constitutional provision was further developed by the passing of the separate Act.

The application of this technique partly validates Baker's observations of simplification being one of the universal translation principles (Baker, 1993). On the other hand, its occurrence may be explained by the grammatical and syntactical requirements and limitations of the English language with a marked inclination towards a more rigid sentence structure as opposed to Slovak, which offers more flexible combinatory possibilities, including omissions and different (sometimes broader) subordination patterns.

Native speakers of the target language in the role of translators are obviously more aware of the limitations of the target language and are able to come up with the most adequate equivalent in line with the norms of the target linguistic code. Yet, native speakers of the source language are more apt at revealing the encoded information and the nuances, which the non-speakers may oversee.

We present some example cases, which posed a difficulty to English native speakers:

i. Modal particles and adverbs used to introduce, arrange or highlight information. These are predominantly omitted from the output translation.

no ***vzápätí*** nezabudne dodať (=*immediately*)	but does not forget to add
Štatistika je ***síce*** dobrá na poznanie skutočného stavu (=*however, nevertheless*)	statistics is good for knowledge of the real state
ba pre autora takej formulácie ***priam*** nebezpečná (=*furthermore, even*)	and such formulation was dangerous to its author

ii. *Idiomatic expressions and other means of* ***conveying figurative meanings****.* The translation techniques presented here might lead to the distortion of the original meaning – literal translation, which erases the idiomatic nature of the source utterance, or selection of a translation correspondence on the basis of false interpretation.

ale ***nechoďme ďaleko*** (=*issues we need are just at hand*)	but ***let us move on*** (*change of meaning)*
postoj odrážajúci filozofiu „***ani ryba, ani rak***“ (=*indefinite, without distinct characteristics*)	position reflecting philosophy ***“neither a fish nor a crab”*** (*literal translation which does not preserve the idiomatic character*, original English idioms with the same meaning but a slightly different reference are “neither fish nor fowl” or “no good red herring” (Oxford) and “neither fish, flesh, nor fowl” (Collins).
Preto ho treba ***vykazovať za dvere*** už v zárodku (=*eradicate*)	Therefore, it is necessary to ***look behind doors*** already at the beginning (*change of meaning*)
Vidno, že tvorcovia zákona a zákonodarcovia ***trafili do čierneho*** (=*hit the right target*)	They naturally ***blackened*** the image of the proposes of the act and the legislation (*change of meaning*)

iii. Lexemes with a ***different semantic scope*** as opposed to English equivalents. This tendency only rarely entails serious distortions of meaning and results mostly in either some minor lexical inaccuracies with not a very accurate preservation of the original logical relation or in the contraction of units with overlapping semantic potential.

strata *sa týkala* (=*concerned*)	the loss *meant*
Nezávisle od toho, že (=*regardless of)*	*in spite of* the fact
Táto *skutočnosť* (=*fact*) bola neskôr aj potvrdená	This *reality* was also later confirmed
máme na mysli *rovnováhu (=balance*) či *rovnovážnosť* (=*equal weight, importance*) medzi domácimi zdrojmi	we have in mind *balance* of domestic resources

5 CONCLUSIONS

Parallel texts serve as a tangible representation of the translation process from the viewpoint of its output results. Translation as a transmission of information from one linguistic code into another is related to the area of the intersection of these codes and the translation as such is thus influenced by both the source structures and the target communicative norms. Due to their linguistic background (speaking of the mother tongue in particular), translators naturally slip into one of the given directions. The quality of translation can be lowered either by the source language interference with subsequent defiance of the communicative norms of the target language, or by the insufficient understanding of the source meanings and their subsequent omission or distortion. Slovak-English parallel texts processed by an English-speaking translator give valuable information on the typical translation techniques, which can help other translators meet the English language standards, namely the ones covered by the notion of “naturalness of expression”. Conclusions derived from the prototypical situations may serve as practical guidelines for non-English speaking translators working with the Slovak-English translation pair. In case of Slovak students, these can serve as a means to reduce their native-language interference in the translation activity and to prevent possible mistakes and inaccuracies determined by it.

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Resumé

Príspevok sa venuje problematike využitia paralelných textov pri skúmaní osobitostí prekladateľského procesu zo slovenčiny do angličtiny. V teoretickej časti objasňuje autorka obsah pojmu *paralelnosť* z hľadiska korpusovej lingvistiky. V praktickej časti uvádza prehľad výsledkov kontrastívnej analýzy pôvodných textov a ich prekladov do angličtiny. Osobitú pozornosť venuje prekladom vykonaným rodenými hovorcami cieľového (anglického) jazyka. V rámci jednotlivých prototypických situácií naznačuje typické prekladateľské postupy a tiež niektoré ťažkosti v slovenčine, s ktorými sa stretáva anglicky hovoriaci prekladateľ. Na základe vymedzenia typických postupov sa autorka usiluje o sformulovanie zákonitostí, ktoré by mohli pomôcť neanglicky hovoriacim prekladateľom pri preklade do angličtiny.

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