

TRANSLATION INTO A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: THEORETICAL ASPECT

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INTRODUCTION

Translation into a foreign language has gained a rather controversial reputation among scholars and practicing translators, and that namely due to its challenging nature. This challenge, as well as the notion at hand in general, becomes visible from individual-oriented paradigm, in other words – from such a paradigm by which we consider the translation process from the perspective of a translator as a person possessing a certain set of generalizable characteristics of broader sociocultural nature. From this perspective, a translator's role can schematically be outlined as the task of building a viable textual invariant from the meanings interpreted from the source linguocultural system, on the ground and with the means furnished by another linguocultural system. Essentially, all features, competence, experience and skills that a given translator can list in support of their mastery of both systems mentioned influence the quality, or viability, of translation output. The ideal situation here would be the case if the two lists balanced. Such a balance, or the state close to it, can be assumed to be achievable if the acquisition and subsequent application of both systems has run in an identical manner and to an identical extent. Practically though, the odds are on

the side of one system, which plays the dominant role and casts its influence over the activity of an individual within the realm of the second system. On the premises of linguistic determinism, it can be assumed that the dominant role naturally belongs to the system which has facilitated the process of world cognition by an individual. This, if transferred to the narrower linguistic plane, leads us to assuming the dominant role of one's native language in the sphere of mental operations, where the processes of decoding and encoding, as traced in translation, obviously belong.

Assuming that creation can mainly occur on the foundation of cognition, it is possible to explain the stance of those who call upon translators to create only in the sphere which is known by them to the adequate extent. In a very simplified form, this approach is often reduced to an assertion that 'translation into a language should only be done by a native speaker of that language'. The weakest point in it is the uniform category of a 'native speaker' which in this case is void of proficiency gradation and thus implies, that, say, a high-school graduate will create a text with the same characteristics and quality as a professor of linguistics, basing only on the unity of language they speak. In the academic sphere the assertion at hand can lead to a sad situation when training in translation into a foreign language is minimized or altogether ignored as unnecessary, which breeds quite a large group of one-sided translators with more or less developed receptive but poor creative side to their language and broader translating competence. Ignoring the peculiar character of translation into a foreign language leaves open the pitfalls created by subconscious dominance of one's primary language system, which results in the source language interference and subsequent defiance of communicative norms of the target language.

In the perspective of immediate reality, there is a considerable demand for translation into English, mainly in the sphere of non-literary texts, which, given a modest number of English-speaking translators who are also proficient in Slovak, should, to a large extent, be met by domestic translator force. This brings into limelight the issue of translation into a foreign language and calls for adequate scientific coverage of the given subject matter with the aim of producing tangible practical results.

1 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

It is necessary to provide a terminological clarification with respect to the two types of language mentioned earlier. Under the term **native language** (also first language, or L1), we understand a language an individual has learned from birth and masters the best, as contrasted to a **foreign language** which is acquired at any

subsequent stage after a person started developing as a linguistic individual, and is introspectively defined as secondary. In scientific writings, the term ‘foreign language’ is used interchangeably with the term ‘second language’. We subscribe to the opinion that there is a difference between the two notions which has implications on the acquisition, use, and ultimately command of respective languages. Specifically, Bilash (2009) connects the term ‘**second language**’ (L2) to a situation when a language learner “*is exposed to the target language outside of the classroom in a variety of settings*”, while in the case of a foreign language environment the exposure to the target language outside the classroom is rare, or altogether absent (ibid.). For the aims of this paper, we choose to refer to the English language as foreign for Slovak-speaking translators and define their translation into English as **translation into a foreign language**. However, the two given notions have a successive character, while the transformation of a ‘foreign language’ into a ‘second language’ in every specific case is conditioned by external exposure to it.

The notion of ‘**native speaker**’, as examined by N. Pokorn, can be defined to include the “*intuitive capacity [...] to distinguish between acceptable and deviant forms of a particular language*” (Pokorn, 2005, p. 22). This virtually splits the concept of **linguistic competence** into two general, intertwined components: the standard code of a language, which is described in rules and thus can be learned, and the immeasurable intuitive variable, which is cultivated through the contact with the environment (compare with ‘the target language exposure’ mentioned in relation to the second language). Hence, the author admits that a person “*exposed to a foreign language [can] attain fluency and competence comparable to that of native speakers*” (ibid.), but recognizes the existence of certain age limits for that, which are not, however, known exactly. The author further modifies the binary relation between the status of one’s first language and one’s competence in it by inserting a core additive, which is transferable to the situation when the language status turns foreign: “*Having a language as one’s first language is a decided advantage in achieving competence in it; however, it seems that native speakership is often also a question of education, individual aptitude and extralinguistic factors*” (ibid.). As far as translation activity specifically, A. Keníž emphasizes the broader, consolidated character of **translation competence**, which oversteps the language factor and reaches into the realm of the individual. According to him, “*translator’s craftsmanship [is] a superstructure over [philological erudition]. Philological erudition is the question of long-term lifelong studies, while translator’s craftsmanship is the question of stylization talent, intuition and other special creative properties, which to the largest extent determine the commensurable relation of the original and the translation*” (Keníž, 2005, p. 42; all quotes from non-English sources are translated by the author of the paper).

Thus, it is possible to distinguish certain variable factors of external (studies)

and internal (talent, intuition) nature that contribute to the creation of a quality translation, and are not directly linked to the status of a given language as native or foreign for the given individual. This justifies our assumption that translation into a foreign language is a highly demanding activity (from the point of view of both linguistic and broader translator's competence to be acquired), which, nevertheless, should not be viewed as impossible or taboo. Being void of advantages of translation into one's native language, it rather deserves additional attention in training, which should be proportionate to the amount of efforts it requires.

2 TRANSLATION INTO A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AS A SPECIFIC TYPE OF TRANSLATOR'S ACTIVITY

Translator's activity unfolds on the borderline of two linguocultural systems and is therefore exposed to the influence from both of them. This twofold influence can already be traced on the stage of interpretation. According to J. Levý, *"It is frequently the case that the target language does not have at its disposal an expression that is as semantically broad or ambivalent as an expression found in the original. The translator must then specify the meaning, selecting a narrower concept, and this demands knowledge of the reality behind the text"* (Levý, 2011, p. 38). This process calls for the adequate mastery of the source linguocultural system (specification of meaning based on the knowledge of the reality) and subsequently – for the comparable mastery of the target system (verbalizing the narrower concept selected). The linguistic asymmetry between the source and target language requires certain alterations, or shifts; the ability to sense the need for them as well as their nature depend (solely from the linguistic perspective) on the linguistic competence, which brings us to the status of target language of the translator. S. Campbell distinguishes the following peculiarities of translation process connected to the role of a foreign language as a source or a target one:

"In translating from a second language, the main difficulty is in comprehending the source text; it is presumably much easier to marshal one's first language resources to come up with a natural looking target text. In translating into a second language, comprehension of the source text is the easier aspect; the real difficulty is in producing a target text in a language in which composition does not come naturally" (Campbell, 1998, p. 57).

This statement can be used to derive the following implications: first, both translations into the first and the second language are prone to overlooking the need for semantic adjustment of translation equivalents, and as a result, to mistakes or inaccuracies, which, in the linguistic perspective, come from the insufficient competence in the source and the target language respectively.

In addition to linguistic asymmetry, another influence comes unilaterally from the side of the language of the original in the form of linguistic interference, which can either be mediated by the first language, or intensified by the foreign language in the target position. Thus, J. Levý points out that *“the language of the original [...] has both a direct and an indirect influence on the translation. The direct influence of the source text is both positive and negative, i.e. in terms of the presence of awkward constructions based on the original and the absence of target language means of expression which the source language does not have at its disposal”* (Levý, 2011, p. 51). In the case of translating into a foreign language, a translator should be particularly careful to double check the chosen translation solution for awkwardness, as the level of susceptibility to them is directly related to the linguistic and broader communicative competence in the given language.

The text of the original plays a special role in translation process also from the point of view of its style. In A. Popovič's interpretation, style comprises *“representative phenomena that characterize the given text of translation”* (Popovič, 1975, p. 20) and represents the integral component that allows classifying texts into distinctive functional types. The functional classification can be taken down from textual macro-level to the lexico-syntactic micro-level and be used to generalize which units are predominantly used to secure and implement the given function.

On the basis of F. Miko's style-defining categories (Miko, 1970), it is possible to distinguish two main poles of opposite character that can be verbalized in form of objectives that attract specific types of linguistic units, the functional orientation of which is compatible with, and instrumental to, the achievement of the given objective. Thus, units that are characterized by conceptuality and iconicity pursue the objective of providing factual information and explaining the essence of processes and, from linguistic perspective, are orientated internally, towards the semantic core. The criteria of expressionality and operativity pursue the goal of using the facts to create a certain impression among recipients and urge them to do certain actions or to adopt a desired perspective, which ensures the external orientation of corresponding linguistic units towards the pragmatic aim.

The two poles mentioned above can also be defined as factual and emotional, or informative and expressive which in translation perspective influences both instruments and materials chosen to create a textual invariant. According to A. Keníž, *“genre and quality of a source text to a large degree determine translator's approaches, methods and procedures and naturally make different demands on translator's training”* (Keníž, 2005, p. 43). Furthermore, factual orientation narrows the scope of communicative competence required from a translator, keeping to minimum its receiver-oriented component, thus narrowing the limits of *‘naturalness of expression’* from what is perceived as natural by a receiver to what is agreed to be natural in the scope of the given genre. Consequently, the closer

a given text is to the factual pole, the more its successful translation depends on the mastery of stylistic (generic) requirements and the more approachable it is for a translator into a foreign language. This idea is validated by A. Popovič's assessment of a specialized text (**odborný text**), which "*represents sign processes that fix theoretical cognition in terms*"; and is thus translated giving preference to content over form: "The form of a specialized text is not marked so much; there is no aiming at the form as an end in itself" (Ferenčík, 1982, p. 95). The form is thus static and does not play a meaning-creating but rather meaning-restricting role. Therefore, *Pokorn's acceptable and deviant forms*' are determined by their context-related use in this case, and are extractable from other texts of the same functional and generic orientation, thus the chance of approaching near-native competence in this case is higher.

In contrast, functional relation between linguistic units and textual structure is less restricted, and, as stated by J. Levý, "*the greater the role of language in the artistic structure of the text, the more difficult translation becomes*" (Levý, 2011, p. 48). Less replicable (if at all) structures, the translation of which demands "*greater flexibility and greater freedom overall*" (ibid.), make the translation process more dependent on translator's creative powers based on the broadest possible mastery of the target language at hand, which is logically more probable in the case of native speakership.

Functional orientation of a text can be aggregate, comprising linguistic units of both functional scopes, depending on its broader communicative aim. For example, a sociopolitical article can be based on factual information, but if this information is used for persuasive aims, the functional type of the given text sways closer to the expressive pole. Expressive connotation of certain units on micro-level creates additional points of requisite shifts in translation process, the successful execution of which is again primarily conditioned by the mastery of the target level on a high level beyond sheer linguistic competence. It should be pointed out that stylistic sensitivity in these cases is also necessary with respect to the source language, as the translator should be able to detect where the author departed from formally neutral exposition towards persuasion, in which the form turns into a separate meaning-creative element and can thus need certain processing for this meaning to be adequately rendered in the text of translation.

Another argument why rendering meanings into a foreign language can subjectively be easier is mentioned by I. Alexeeva in respect to interpreting, but can in principle be applied to translation as well. The author highlights that "*the volume of knowledge from one's native language is always more fundamental, it is more comprehensive and refined*", but "*all this knowledge lies predominantly in the underwater part of the iceberg, that is in the passive reserve*". Hence, "*the active reserve of knowledge in a foreign language often turns out to be larger than the active reserve of knowledge from one's native language*" (Alexeeva, 2003, p. 15). It can be

inferred that the author conditions translator's competence in this case by active application of a respective language and its borders, pushing to the background the mode of its acquisition. Discussing the level of linguistic competence from the qualitative perspective, the author points out that the knowledge of one's native language is "more variative, and the width of choice, especially if a part of variants lies in the passive reserve, complicates the choice itself and slows down the translation process" (ibid.). Consequently, the translation process into a foreign language can be enhanced by keeping the active reserve of target language means as broad as possible. In the case of informative translation of texts with a fixed non-expressive format, the active reserve should comprise contextual equivalents, which are frequent, and acquirable by permanent dealing with texts of the given nature in both the source and the target language.

CONCLUSIONS

Translation into a foreign language is a challenging but not altogether unmanageable activity, due to the need for secondary acquisition of another linguocultural system, simultaneously with, or subsequently to, one's primary linguocultural system, which, given its secondary nature, is more limited. The limited character of knowledge in the foreign language does not create an impediment for translation activity in the case of informative text with a fixed format which conditions the linguistic units used in its creation. The majority of difficulties that emerge in the course of translating into a foreign language is found on the stage of text production, partly due to the inherent influence of the source text, partly also due to the influence of the source linguistic code, the strength of which is inversely proportional to the competence in the target language. It is worth noting that both types of influence are not peculiar to translation into a foreign language only, but of the translation process as such. Thus, the quality of translation depends on translator's competence as a combination of linguistic craftsmanship and translation proficiency, which is not conditioned by one's native language, but rather depends on individual abilities and adequate training.

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RESUMÉ

Príspevok prináša teoretický pohľad na preklad do cudzieho jazyka ako osobitný druh prekladateľskej činnosti, ktorý má svoje špecifiká. V metodologickom priereze sa pozornosť venuje stručnému kritickému rozboru termínov „rodný jazyk“ a „cudzí jazyk“, na základe ktorého dospievame k záveru, že nielen lingvistická, ale aj širšia prekladateľská kompetencia je pri tvorbe kvalitného prekladu do cudzieho jazyka dôležitejšia než jazykové znalosti. Nasledovný výskum rozoberá vplyv takých činiteľov ako lingvistická asymetria, štruktúra a štýl východiskového textu a poukazuje na orientačné body, ktoré preklad do cudzieho jazyka buď uľahčujú, alebo ho naopak sťažujú. Príspevok ďalej poukazuje na skutočnosť, že paralelných odborných textov je pri preklade do cudzieho jazyka k dispozícii oveľa väčšie množstvo než textov umeleckých.

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