CHALLENGES RELATED TO THE TRANSLATION OF POLITICAL TEXTS

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with the problems related to the translation of political texts in the theoretical framework elaborated by the researchers working in the field of translation studies and reflects on the terminological peculiarities of the special language used for this text type. Consideration of the theoretical framework is followed by the analysis of a specific text spoken then written in English and translated into Hungarian and Romanian. The conclusions are intended to highlight the fact that there are no recipes for translating a political speech, because translation is not only a technical process that uses translation procedures and applies transfer operations, but also a matter of understanding cultural, historical and political situations and their significance.

Keywords: translation strategies, political language, political speech, adaptation

INTRODUCTION

The first part of the study examines some issues related to the theory of translation and presents the relationship between the source text and target text, sketching some ideas regarding equivalence in translation. The first part consists of three main subchapters: 1. The definition of translation. 2. Equivalence in translation. The second part of the study deals with the characterization of political language, it presents the relationship between language and politics and it highlights some of the most relevant problems associated with translating political texts. The third part of the study highlights some practical issues related to the translation of political speeches such as the exact rendering of the message without losing the spirit of the speech itself.

METHODOLOGY

Translation is an incredibly broad notion which can be understood in many different ways. For example, one may talk of translation as a process or a product, and identify such sub-types as literary translation, technical translation, subtitling and machine translation. According to Lederer, "translation is a process which attempts to establish equivalence between two texts expressed in two different languages. These equivalents are, by definition, always dependent on the nature of the two texts, on their objective, on the relationship between the two cultures involved [....]." (2003: 3) Translation can be defined as a process and as a product. Those researchers who consider that translation is just the result of a process (a text) argue that translation is nothing more than a product determined by cultural and historical needs. Product-oriented researchers consider that the area of research should be the description of individual translations.

DISCUSSION

Equivalence in translation has become one of the main areas of research for scientists. Almost all researchers deal in one way or another with the nature of equivalence. According to Kinga Klaudy, researchers can be divided in two groups if we regard their opinions about equivalence: the first group argues that equivalence is a basic condition for any translation, while the second group considers that texts in different languages can be equivalent in different degrees (fully or partially equivalent), in respect of different levels of presentation (equivalents in respect of context, of semantics, of grammar, of lexis, etc.) and at different ranks (word-for-word, phrasefor-phrase, sentence-for-sentence). This latter group can be divided into two further groups: the first one is called the normative group as it tries to prescribe for the translator how to reach equivalence, the second is called the descriptive group as it tries to describe how translators obtain equivalence during translation (2003). There is another concept, that of Katharina Reiss, who considers that equivalence depends on the type of text (1995). Nida considers that translating consists of reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the sourcelanguage message, first in terms of meaning and secondly, in terms of style. The closest natural equivalent is created through dynamic equivalence.

Political language and translation

Political and diplomatic languages belong to the category of the special languages used in social sciences, and as such are closely linked to the history of political thought. Both – as technical

languages – are in close contact with rhetoric, since these special languages can be considered the terminological core of many spoken genres. The scope and intent of political language are different from that of diplomatic language. While the latter is mainly used as the protocol language of official events and ceremonies, the former is adequate for carrying the utterances of historical genres as well (depicting historical events, personages and socially significant phenomena in the history of society, and presenting past representations of recent events whose social significance is recognized by contemporaries). As such, political language is suitable for recording data and facts (e.g. highlighting important legal and territorial changes and political events in the world, wars, treaties, etc.).

The terminology of political language is related to the special language of political philosophy, since this terminology aids the formulation of the most common questions regarding the relationship between the individual and society. However, it is also related to political theory since political terminology is used to formulate the descriptive theories of political phenomena, too (such as social criticism, the principles of justice, law, etc.). It would not have been possible to elaborate state theories without political language, and concepts such as "good government" or "right form of government" could not have been created. The description of political ideas (doctrines, ideologies, and political programs and policy objectives) is also an important domain for the manifestation of political language.

The problem of translating political speeches

A political speech is a speech which relates to government matters as opposed to the affairs of an individual or organization. It gives an insight into the political views of the speaker and may either sway listeners in their favor or not.

The most interesting element to translate is the metaphor shadow, which is meant to express the difficulties of the era following the war. Both the Hungarian and the Romanian translator succeeded in finding the adequate equivalent of the noun shadow, yet the feeling of the translated texts is different if compared to the source text. The original version is short and precise expressing the shock that the victorious nations had to suffer after the euphoria of the victory was over. The impact of this short and concise sentence is so strong that the audience may almost feel the shudder caused by the dark shadow. The Hungarian and the Romanian translations follow the spirit of the original, although they seem much more artificial yet they are faithful to the source text. We can say that something is lost in translation, in spite of the fact that transfer operations were successfully applied and a quite appropriate translation was elaborated.

CONCLUSION

Due to the features political speeches are hard to translate and they can sometimes be included in the category of untranslatable text. Politicians do not deliver their speeches to be translated for foreign audiences. Thus in some cases translators cannot produce parallel texts that are identical in meaning, or in their political and historical effect. Thus the translator's main task is to create a text that will transmit the core of the message included in the original text. To do so, the translator must be able "to understand not only what the words mean and what a sentence means, but also what political or historical impact could it have. They also have to know how to achieve that certain effect in the other language." (Quentel 2006: 3) Translators must be able to use language effectively to express the most important political concepts in order to achieve the desired effect. They must be familiar with the conventional rules and styles of political speeches (rhetoric, stylistics). Yet, there are many strategies for translating the untranslatable, like explicitation or using footnotes, but in all of these cases there is loss of the original meaning, which can be compensated for in other parts of the text or discourse

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