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Towards the Artistry of Transcending Textual Conversion

Sztuka przekładu w kształtowaniu tekstu

Abstract

The present discussion, stressing the importance of interdependence between language and culture, somehow automatically directs our attention at the effective and expressive use of language, which is just the result of this sort of interrelationship. Undoubtedly, cultural competence combined with linguistic competence is responsible for expressiveness and thus, for success in communication.

In the course of views exchange, it becomes evident that a sensitive approach to the interpreter/translator's task is responsible for text shaping, no matter whether its form is written or spoken. Thus, it can be concluded that the interpreter/translator's ability to master text shaping may be viewed as an element of translatory artistry. Moreover, a sensitive approach to any text appears to be more important than interlingual rendition of the way of thinking, which is a risky process. The risk is that the so called mind-reading may result in misinterpretation and falsification due to the interpreter's fraudulent changes in the message.

Key words: *linguistic competence, cultural competence, language and culture, translator/interpreter, creative communicative competence, translatory artistry.*

Abstrakt

Obecna dyskusja, podkreślająca znaczenie współzależności języka i kultury, w jakiś sposób automatycznie kieruje naszą uwagę na efektywne i ekspresyjne użycie języka, które jest właśnie efektem tego rodzaju wzajemnych powiązań. Niewątpliwie kompetencja kulturowa w połączeniu z kompetencją językową odpowiada za ekspresję, a co za tym idzie, za sukces w komunikacji

W toku wymiany poglądów okazuje się, że za kształtowanie tekstu, niezależnie od tego, czy ma on formę pisemną, czy ustną, odpowiada wrażliwe podejście do zadania tłumacza ustnego/tłumacza. Można zatem stwierdzić, że umiejętność opanowania przez tłumacza umiejętności kształtowania tekstu można uznać za element kunsztu tłumacza. Co więcej, ważniejsze wydaje się wrażliwe podejście do tekstu, niż międzyjęzykowe oddanie sposobu myślenia, co jest procesem ryzykownym. Istnieje ryzyko, że tzw. czytanie w myślach może skutkować błędną interpretacją i fałszerstwem w wyniku oszukańczych zmian w przesłaniu dokonanych przez tłumacza.

Słowa kluczowe: *kompetencje językowe, kompetencje kulturowe, język i kultura, tłumacz/tłumacz ustny, twórcza kompetencja komunikacyjna, kunszt tłumacza.*

The question of true and genuine presentation of the message or situational events originally composed as a text and now translated into another language, has always raised controversy and dispute over the degree of communicative authenticity and thus – informational and esthetic value. No matter whether or not the translated text is of literary or non-literary type, the issue of a semblance of authenticity, a fake or forgery (even unintentional), is often at stake.

In Poland, the above signaled problem of translatability or text transmutability was in focus when in the 1980s, the translation of A. A. Milne's "Winnie the Pooh" by Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska appeared, offering a challenge to Irena Tuwim's much earlier translation of the same book for children. M. Adamczyk-Garbowska's translation split critics' opinions; some of them praised her boldness in interpretation which resulted in the creation of a literal translation version while others considered her interlingual rendition as manipulation and adaptation. (cf. Fornalczyk-Lipska, 2021) This was so because Irena Tuwim's translation of 1938 was a great success and acquired the status of the cult book, and by entering the Polish literary canon it became a part of Polish culture. In this respect, M. Adamczyk-Garbowska's version of "Winnie the Pooh" was entirely different from her predecessor's translation.

For the reason that the on-going here discussion on the artistry of translation is not aimed at the comparison of the two Polish translations

of A. A. Milne's book for children but rather attempts to mark possible results of the translator's approach to the original text and its treatment. Hence, it becomes evident that not only the translator's knowledge and skills are responsible for the final product and its public acceptance but also his or her sensitive approach to the original text and its translational handling in an imaginative manner (i.e. allowing for some margin of interpretational freedom marked by independence and creativity) - yet, in an approbative way.

To make the above presented assumption clear, let us consider and penetrate, at least roughly, the spheres of translation and interpretation, and find some relationship or interdependence between these two areas. Thus, **translation**, according to "*Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*" edited by Jack C. Richards and Richard Schmidt (2002, p. 563) is

"the process of rendering written language that was produced in one language (the SOURCE LANGUAGE) into another (the TARGET LANGUAGE), or the target language version that results from this process. Translation in which more emphasis is given to overall meaning than to exact wording is known as a **free translation**. A translation that approximates to word-for-word representation of the original is known as a **literal translation**".

This is not the only worth considering definition of translation. Many others, although essentially concentrate on the same or similar elements characteristic of the translation process, yet articulate such features as expressiveness, meaning retention or clarity and interpretation. These, undoubtedly are the spheres which the translator has to delve in and penetrate in a professional manner. Otherwise his or her final product might be viewed as a fake or mistranslation. Ignorance is very costly, that is why it is strongly recommended to rediscover the very sense of the process of translation as exemplified by numerous definitions. Just from them we learn that translation is

"the rendering of something into another language or a version in a different language; [also, it is] a change or conversion to another form, appearance, ... transformation. [Synonymously, translation is identified with a paraphrase which] is a free rendering of the sense of a passage in other words, usually in the same language". (*Webster's Encyclopedic ...* 1989)

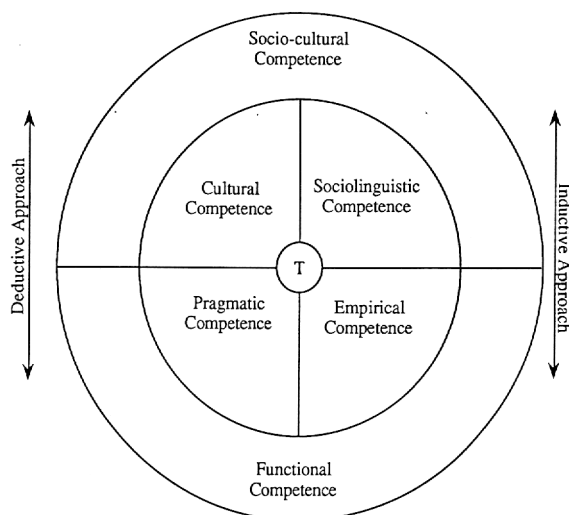
The above presented definition directs our attention to conversion to another form - appearance or transformation. Hence, the translator's rendering of the sense of a passage in some other words may often become a sheer conversion which, as a matter of fact, is a new shaping of the message encoded in the translated text. Although a new shaping of the text substance takes on a new form, the sense of the translated text and its meaning must remain unchanged and reflect the genuine thoughts, intentions or ideas of the original. Coping with this kind of task, the translator has no choice but to follow the rule of transformation

which gives him guidance regarding the conversion of one syntactic structure to another syntactic structure but in a different language. This is just the moment when the translator is able to verify the validity of the theory of mind which says that communication is based on the assumption that the contents of one mind can be transferred to another mind. Hence, it is believed that people are able to transfer their thoughts to other people's minds since those other human beings are able to understand them because they are equipped in a unique, characteristic of human beings system responsible for thoughts generation. Moreover, the application of the theory of mind is *conditio sine qua non* for the use of language, its understanding or translation, if necessary. (c.f. Everett, 2018, p. 225) The whole process of mentalizing is responsible for explanation, interpretation, prediction or expressiveness as far as intentions and emotions are concerned. Not only can linguistic factors be taken into consideration – thus, cultural factors directly related to human behavior, beliefs or desires are also in question as the theory of mind, in its widest scope, is directly related to the capability of inferring others' mental states. (Premack and Woodruff, 1978) In consequence, penetration and thus explanation and interpretation of a text which is a product of the other's mind require from the translator just explanation, prediction and interpretation of the way of thinking and behavior of others, employing simultaneously not only his linguistic competence, but social and cultural competence, as well. (Zygmunt, 2017)

Socio-cultural Competence and Functional Competence in text shaping

Not only is linguistic competence responsible for cohesion of a text (no matter whether it is the original one or its translation) but two other cohesion determining factors, such as cultural and social competences of the author or the translator whose work is expected to be a clear and comprehensive product. At this point it is vital to stress that both the author of the original text as well as its translator while working on it, (either in the sphere of creation or translation), have to demonstrate besides their linguistic competence also their deep knowledge of tradition and values shared by the society whose language they make use of.

Now, we have to admit that every act of translation, no matter whether it is free or literal, turns into a new shaping of the message encoded in the translated text. This is so because the element of free transmutability, even as a marginal component of the rendered text, is inevitable. In such a case the translator's creative communicative competence is a guarantee of text commutability.



Model of Creative Communicative Competence

T – target linguistic knowledge

Fig. 1. Competence – essentials of communication (Zygmunt, 2017, p. 17)

Focusing attention on text commutability it is essential to know that the phenomenon of commutableness refers both to written as well as oral translation. As oral, such a conversion of the text is defined as **interpretation**, which according to “*Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*” edited by Jack C. Richards and Richard Schmidt (2002, p. 269) is

“the act of rendering oral language that is spoken in one language (SOURCE LANGUAGE) into another language (TARGET LANGUAGE) for the benefit of listeners who do not understand (or who understand imperfectly) the source language. Oral translation after a speaker has finished speaking or pauses for interpretation is known as **consecutive interpretation**. If the interpretation takes place as the speaker is talking, providing a continuous translation that parallels the speaker’s speech, it is called **simultaneous interpretation**. Interpretation is often required in a variety of situations, such as conferences, community settings, and the courts”.

Hence, translation and interpretation are the domains of the modern and professional translator/interpreter who is distinguished from an amateur by his highly developed **creative communicative competence**.

Let us decide on determining key factors responsible for successful translation both written and spoken, defined as interpretation where the translator/interpreter, in many cases, is expected to cope with the instability

of the meaning of the rendered text. Moreover, interlingual rendition of the way of thinking is very risky as, in the case of simultaneous interpretation, the interpreter's reaction is instantaneous and time-limited. Hence, the so called mind-reading may result in misinterpretation and falsification due to the interpreter's fraudulent changes in the message. Such, although unintentional changes can easily appear when there is a substantial deficit in the interpreter's **creative communicative competence** which, as we can learn from the on-going here discussion, covers a wider scope of qualification quality, in comparison to the scope of qualities required by linguistic competence, as defined by Noam Chomsky (1965) or by communicative competence – the notion once introduced by Dell Hymes (1972).

As above, Figure 1 gives a sketchy presentation of those component parts of competence which can be acquired and developed by a language user in a deductive way, that is in the process of formal instruction or inductively, through language practice and experience outside an educational institution.

To reach the target, marked as "T" which, in the figure above, points to the top level of competence and shows a path for a free language creativity, a language user has to obtain and demonstrate skillfulness and knowledge pertaining to the four essential areas of competence such as: cultural, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, and empirical. Hence, cultural competence is marked with a language user's familiarity with a set of cultural beliefs, values, norms, or attitudes attributed to the representatives of the culture in question. Moreover, the current state of the language user's knowledge is expanded by literary, historical, political or artistic spheres. And, this state of knowledge is further deepened by sociolinguistic competence which gives evidence that the language user has a full command of the language in question, and can identify its variety (formal, colloquial, regional, etc.). The language user's mastery of these two areas results in **socio-cultural competence** which is responsible for the quality of his conscious and productive reaction in social interaction or interaction with the translated text, for example.

Another essential area of competence as discussed here, that is pragmatic, requires from the language user his practical knowledge guided by experience and utilized in transfer of forms or expressions from the L1 to the L2 and their proper application as far as politeness or indirectness are concerned. Generally speaking, pragmatic competence allows to avoid a comm failure and thus - message misunderstanding. And finally, empirical competence is the marker of the language user's knowledge usually gained from interaction with native speakers or his studies abroad. And again, these two areas of competence, that is pragmatic and empirical, determine **functional competence** of the language user who can demonstrate his skill in using the following language functions: (a) instrumental function, (b) regulatory, (c) representational, (d) interactional, (e) personal, (f) heuristic or (g) imaginative function. (cf. Halliday, 1973)

Bringing to a close the meaning of the component parts which compose Figure 1, we are made aware of the interpreter's or translator's requirements to carry on a productive interaction with an L1 text, turning it into a genuine and fully expressive L2 translation/interpretation. Thus, the quality of the rendered text gives evidence that an L2 language user's competence is very close to match the competence of native speakers, although they often use language in such a way that a non-native speaker's competence must be furnished with intuition. This often happens because:

“Native speakers of a language do more than just produce utterances – they also understand them, that is, they relate them to sentences and make sense of the latter. In many instances speakers can even say whether they find a sentence acceptable, though there are many instances where intuitions are not clear.” (Brown & Miller, 2012, p. 123)

Hence, this is the evidence that an L2 language user's **creative communicative competence** is not enough to compose a genuine text free of fraudulent parts and thus, having a misleading appearance. The art of rendering the L1 into the L2 would require from the interpreter/translator their demonstration of some other skills, not necessarily of a linguistic nature, to cope with the so-called ideal speaker-listener functioning in a completely homogeneous language community, and

“who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance”. (Chomsky, 1965, p. 3)

Hence, one might conclude that building up and developing **creative communicative competence** in a language user, is not a guarantee of success in the job of the interpreter/translator. Such a conviction is faulty and misleading, as

“One perhaps likes to think that good interpreting should guarantee full understanding. [...] Yet complete understanding cannot be found except in a complete word. From a more global perspective, understanding is by necessity *partial and fragmentary*.” (Rommetveit, in Wadensjö, 1998, p. 200)

What is, then, the remedy for avoiding a partial and fragmentary rendering of an L1 text into another language. The simplest but at the same time a very reasonable answer to the above stated query would be tempting us to admit that there is no remedy because our ability to read somebody else's mind is limited if not imperfect. Although the Theory of Mind (Leslie, 2001) is preoccupied with the analysis of mental states and mind reading, the Theory of Literature (Głowiński *et al.*, 1967, see also Perrine, 1983), on the other hand, gives us

a warning that mind reading of the author of a text - its creator, is misleading and, as a matter of fact, impossible because we never know or at least are not sure what the author in question really intended to say. In support to the above presented opinion, it is advisable to remind us about the two forms of text shaping: free and literal, in the case of translation, for example. But we must not forget that translation is also a text creation, although in the Target Language. Moreover, translation viewed as a text creation requires from the translator/interpreter fruitful interaction with the text - written or spoken. Only then can he completely understand the coded message, feel the atmosphere created in the original text version, and, above all, make use of heuristic and imaginative functions, if necessary – thus, having in this way control over figurative language of the text. Therefore, it becomes evident that a successful interaction with a text, especially a literal one, demands from its translator a superb level of competence, especially in the socio-cultural and functional spheres. At this point of discussion it has to be stressed that interaction, as commonly perceived, is not only the way in which language is used and treated by speakers. Interaction is also the way in which language is used and treated by translators. A translator's interaction with a text, in this case a source text, is of paramount importance as it turns into an interactive play between the translator and the translated text. In the case of speakers, however, interaction is facilitated by a direct contact between interlocutors who, apart from linguistic devices, also use body language and create the atmosphere of the on-going conversation, for example. Nevertheless, translators and especially interpreters have to demonstrate such a competence of the Target Language which guarantees full understanding of the Source Text which they turn into a written or spoken message. Any deficit in creative communicative competence would result in misunderstanding of the message no matter whether in its spoken or written form. In Cecilia Wadensjö's opinion:

“Shared and mutual understanding by necessity concerns not all, but certain aspects of interaction, for instance, a topic, a participant's emotional status, a participant's role as a team member or goals and needs of individuals and groups. Lack of shared understanding may, moreover, be experienced by one interlocutor at the same time as others present in the same encounter see no such lack. Different views of the surrounding world, including the current exchange, can pass quite unnoticed. Equally, they can occasionally constitute a ‘trouble source’ of a ‘global’ kind. In any encounter, interlocutors’ preparedness to expect the unexpected and willingness to acknowledge the existence of different attitudes and opinions ideally promotes sharedness of understanding, while the opposite would suppress it.

[...] Lack of sharedness as regards vocabulary, intonation patterns and implicit norms of interaction – for instance, various understanding of the significance of overlap – could here constitute ‘trouble sources’ of a ‘global’ kind.” (Wadensjö, 1998, p. 233)

What, then, is a remedy to avoid constituting ‘trouble sources’ of a ‘global’ kind? Again, ignoring the problem and pretending that there are no ‘trouble sources’, is not a solution. Relaying on the so called mind-reading is illusionary, especially that the Theory of Literature underscores the validity of text explanation and interpretation by individuals. But we must not forget that individuals, even linguists or literary critics, differ in the scope of their competence and experience. In the case of a literary text analysis, for example, readers, critics or translators have, first of all, to determine the genre and decide upon the kind of literature they are dealing with. No matter whether the task is a critical text analysis or translation, the distinction between “escape literature” and “interpretive literature” is fundamental because:

“ESCAPE LITERATURE is that written purely for entertainment – to help us pass the time agreeably. INTERPRETIVE LITERATURE is written to broaden and deepen and sharpen our awareness of life. Escape literature takes us *away* from the real world: it enables us to understand our troubles. Escape literature has as its only object pleasure. Interpretive literature has as its object pleasure *plus* understanding”. (Perrine, 1983, p. 4)

The above quotation gives a strong evidence in support of the role which the socio-cultural competence plays in a literary text analysis or translation. Undoubtedly, this kind of competence is the key which enables to enter and penetrate the sphere of culture whose product in the form of a piece of literature is to be analyzed or translated. Moreover, equipped with this kind of knowledge which covers both social and cultural spheres, literary critics or translators are able to decode and understand the text message which is the product of the other’s mind. Only then can literary critics and translators engage, at least partially, their process of mentalizing which gives them guidance to explanation, interpretation, prediction or expressiveness coded in the text they are dealing with. Moreover, the socio-cultural competence of researchers or translators shows them the way to cultural factors demonstrated by the analyzed text, such as human behavior, believes or desires, thus, expanding their capability of inferring others’ mental states. Nevertheless, the socio-cultural competence is not sufficient to guarantee a complete decoding and understanding of the rendered text. Both researchers and translators need to be adequately qualified for a typical linguistic penetration of the text they consider in detail. They have to know the rules of transformation which direct them at the conversion of one syntactic structure to another syntactic structure but in a different language. Moreover, prior to this, they have to identify and determine the kind of literature the converted text represents (cf. Perrine, 1983), and its language as far as functions are concerned (cf. Halliday, 1973). Now, it becomes evident that the socio-cultural competence as combined with functional competence might be viewed as a remedy for a successful text

analysis and especially - translation which preserves all values and messages the text contains, particularly - beliefs, desires or intentions.

Conclusions

The present discussion undoubtedly shows that the notion of linguistic competence as designed by Chomsky (1965) is too general and too narrow in its scope of application. The discussion also point to some similarities between Halliday's (1973) concept of communicative competence and the discussed here model of creative communicative competence, showing simultaneously that the latter strongly supports and articulates the importance of interrelationship and interdependence between language and culture. The importance of this sort of interrelationship is even doubled when we become aware of the way in which the lexicon is constructed and developed.

Moreover, the present discussion, stressing the importance of interdependence between language and culture, somehow automatically directs our attention at the effective and expressive use of language, which is just the result of this sort of interrelationship. Undoubtedly, cultural competence combined with linguistic competence is responsible for expressiveness and thus, for success in communication.

In the course of views exchange, it becomes evident that a sensitive approach to the interpreter/translator's task is responsible for text shaping, no matter whether its form is written or spoken. Thus, it can be concluded that the interpreter/translator's ability to master text shaping may be viewed as an element of translatory artistry. Moreover, a sensitive approach to any text appears to be more important than interlingual rendition of the way of thinking, which is a risky process. The risk is that the so called mind-reading may result in misinterpretation and falsification due to the interpreter's fraudulent changes in the message.

Although the ability to make use of the so called way of thinking of others is viewed as risky, once such a quality is possessed, it facilitates, to some extent, the translator's approach to a given text, helping him in interpretation and prediction, and finally – in text rendering. Hence, such a mental power of the interpreter/translator becomes instrumental in the whole process of text shaping where the meaning of the translated text must remain unchanged and reflect the genuine thoughts, intentions or ideas of the original.

With reference to the so-called 'trouble sources' of a 'global' kind, as mentioned by Wadensjö (1998), one of those trouble sources of prime importance, is the lack of shared understanding. At this point we have to stress that sharedness of understanding may refer both to the direct and indirect contact with the L2. The direct contact is experienced by an interpreter who is rendering

a text orally, while the indirect contact is reserved for an interaction between a translator and a written text. The discussion reveals that the lack of sharedness often results in the syntactic and lexical misuse in the context of the translated piece of writing. In the case of oral text rendering – i.e. interpretation, apart from vocabulary also intonation patterns and implicit norms of interaction are endangered. Nevertheless, it seems that there is a remedy for elimination of problems as those listed above. The success in translatory problems elimination is directly connected with the interpreter/translator's approach to the text – transmitted orally or in a written form. It is mandatory that the approach must have a solid foundation of the current state of knowledge covering the spheres of cultural, sociolinguistic, pragmatic and empirical competence. These four competence spheres, once mastered by the interpreter/translator, would guarantee the overall appropriateness of text rendering as they make up two pillars upon which creative communicative competence is set up, that is socio-cultural and functional competence.

To close concluding, it is advisable to underscore the fact that **creative communicative competence** of the interpreter/translator appears to be a *conditio sine qua non* for not only a successful but also genuine rendering of a text, retaining its meaning, atmosphere, emotions - thus, inferring others' mental states. Hence, such a shaping of the message is the evidence of the interpreter/translator's translatory artistry.

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