TRANSLATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF DISCOURSE ANALYSIS[1]

Abstract: *This paper focuses on several aspects of discourse analysis, more specifically speech acts theory, which are important in the work of translation / interpretation from English into Romanian. An accurate reconstruction in the target language implies more than knowing and finding the most appropriate equivalents, but also interpreting the meaning in context offering as much as possible from the 'hidden substance' of the speaker's discourse. For such interpretation, there are rules, principles of communicative interaction, and set types of speech acts which may help the translator / interpreter to fulfil his work with professionalism and at a high standard.*

Key words: *speech act, pragmatics, additional meaning, context translation/interpretation, encyclopaedic knowledge.*

The aim of this paper is to illustrate the ways in which translation is influenced by the speech acts theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1999) and the use of utterances in context (pragmatics), taking into account the existence of additional meanings (Griffiths, 2006:132) which appear when we have language use in context. Speech acts are more than utterances since they appear in particular contexts, contexts which are specific to them (inner semantics) and are an external situation of communicative interaction.

For the translator, it is not very difficult to give an accurate translation if "the speaker utters a sentence and means exactly and literally what he says" (Searle, *op.cit*.:30), but it may be rather challenging if the utterance is interpreted "on the basis of shared assumptions between speaker and hearer over and above the linguistic content of the sentence used" [...] and "all speakers seem to know that utterances can convey messages which do not bear any necessary relation to the propositional content of the sentence used" (Shoshana,1981:90). Moreover, some of the speech acts, namely the indirect speech acts[2], represent a challenge for the translator / interpreter: "In hints, insinuations, irony, and metaphor - to mention a few examples - the speaker's utterance meaning and the sentence meaning come apart in various ways" (Searle, *op.cit*.: 30).

Some questions have to be asked in order to understand the way the meaning is produced in TL, such as: How does the translator manage to maintain

[1] **Clementina NIŢĂ**, University of Pitesti, Romania
clementina_nita@yahoo.ca

[2] In Indirect speech acts "one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by way of performing another" (Searle, *op.cit*.:31).

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the form of the SL text in TL and to render the meaning with accuracy? Does the interlocutors' intention in communication weigh more than the meaning of the text? Is there a balance between intention, meaning and inference which may help the translator? Is there any help for the translator/interpreter as regards the extralinguistic value of a sentence?

It is fundamental to understand that translation is "the rendering of a SL text into a TL so as to ensure that the surface meaning of the two will be approximately similar and the structures of the SL will be preserved as closely as possible but not so closely that the TL structures will be seriously distorted" (Bassenett, 1991:2) and that "To the extent it is assumed by a subject who 'means' (bedeuten), language has 'deep structures' that articulate categories. These categories are semantic (as in the semantic fields introduced by recent developments in generative grammar), logical (modality relations, etc.) and intercommunicational (those that Searle called 'speech acts' seen as bestowers of meaning[1])" (Kristeva, 1984:20). Moreover, translation is considered relevant ("A relevant translation would therefore be, quite simply, a «good» translation, a translation that does what one expects of it, in short, a version that performs its mission, honors its debt and does its job or its duty while inscribing in the receiving language the most relevant equivalent for an original, the language that is the most right, appropriate, pertinent, adequate, opportune, pointed, univocal, idiomatic, and so on"; Derrida & Venuti, 2001:177) and "a secondary communication" (Reiss, 1981:121).

Therefore, in rendering a good, relevant translation, translators use more than grammar concepts and lexis because they need to analyse "the structure of individual speech acts [...] the linear structure of speech act sequences [...] and the global, overall structure of the communicative interaction" (Van Dijk, 1992: 232) in order to find the most appropriate linguistic and paralinguistic means to render the text or discourse form SL into TL. The question is if there are any rules (general or specific to each and every language) translators should observe. Thus, the research on meaning and the attempt to find a method for a better rendition have led to the emergence of new aspects which have changed the translation approach "from word and sentence level to the utterance and, above all, the textual level" (Dimitriu, 2002:41). The translator /interpreter needs to understand other aspects involved in the process of translation, such as the semantics, the syntax, the stylistics and the pragmatics of the SL text / discourse, but also the equivalent structures in the TL text / discourse.

For translators, meaning is what they aim at. There are two ways of understanding it, depending on its source: the utterer (author's intention) or the utterance (the meaning of the text) (Heath et al., 2004: 386). The difference is between what the speaker says and what he intends while saying it. On one hand,

[1] Cf. John R. Searle, *Speech Acts, an Essay on the Philosophy of Language*, Cambridge University Press, 1969.

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the discussion is about the illocutionary force of a speech act (i.e. the content propositions are involved in different ways) and about the perlocutionary effects: the speaker utters a sentence, means what he says, but also means something more, an additional meaning[1]. On the other hand, it is about a superior linguistic competence of the translator and the ability to perceive all potential illocutionary forces in the prepositional content of an utterance, a compulsory stage during translation, and the ability to predict the translability potential of that utterance.

To better see the inseparable relation between speech acts and translation, several aspects need to be clarified. Therefore, as the definition states, the illocutionary act, as the minimal unit of human communication, "consists of an illocutionary force F and a propositional content P" (Searle&Vanderveken, 1985:1). This illocutionary force is what makes the difference between grammatically similar sentences: "Illocutionary forces are realised in the syntax of the actual natural languages in a variety of ways, e.g. mood, punctuation, word-order, intonation contour, and stress [...]" (*Ibid*). Moreover, the properties of the illocutionary forces are studied by the illocutionary logic: "No matter whether and how an illocutionary act is performed, it has a certain logical form which determines its conditions of success and relates it to other speech acts" (*Ibid*, p. 2).

Identifying the type of speech acts with variation of illocutionary force supposes to know and easily identify the features of these acts (such as a promise, a threat, a warning, a suggestion). Also, there are rules which derive from a specific language and a specific linguistic community, a variety of conditions implying cultural and language specificity, necessary to observe while translating. These rules illustrate the difference between the way the translator understands and renders the semantic meaning from SL to TL, and the way he can grasp the communicative value (Bell, 2000: 194) and seize the existence or non-existence of the translability potential of the utterance. The suppositions, the expectations, and the assumptions of the interlocutors give the speech acts the characteristic value of a threat, a promise, a suggestion or a statement.

If we analyse the following utterances from a grammatical point of view, we notice that the Imperative Mood of the verb is a characteristic feature. However, at a deeper level of understanding meaning from the speaker's point of view, these utterances represent different speech acts (*Ibid*: 190) such as: an order ("Go away!"), an invitation ("Help yourself!"), a request / an order ("Call me later!"), a polite request ("Call me later, will you?").

[1] "For example, a speaker may utter the sentence 'I want you to do it' by way of requesting the hearer to do something. The utterance is incidentally meant as a statement, but it is also meant primarily as a request, a request made by way of making a statement. In such cases a sentence that contains the illocutionary force indicators for one kind of illocutionary act can be uttered to perform, in addition, another type of illocutionary act. There are also cases in which the speaker may utter a sentence and mean what he says and also mean another illocution with a different propositional content. For example, a speaker may utter the sentence 'Can you reach the salt?' and mean it not merely as a question but as a request to pass the salt" (Searle, 1999:30).

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The utterance, "I'm sure your government will support me in this issue" is a statement and its perlocutionary effect is the accomplishment or non-accomplishment of the propositional content. Moreover, while saying this utterance, there are some presuppositions which become evident. On one hand, as mentioned above, these "shared background assumptions" (Griffiths, *op.cit*.: 143) are what links the interlocutors in a communication: they know each other, they know what they can do, they realise they talk about the same thing. On the other hand, the interpreter is not, in general, a person with the same knowledge advantage as the two interlocutors. Rendering it into Romanian may not cover the whole meaning intention of the speaker: „Sunt sigur că guvernul dumneavoastră mă va susține / va dori să mă susțină în rezolvarea acestei chestiuni"

In the case of the sentence "It's hot in here" there are some elements the translator needs to identify from the beginning. Thus, if the speaker is the guest, the his intention is to convey, in an indirect way, his need to immediately have a window open („Vă rog să deschideți fereastra, este foarte cald aici!"); if the interlocutors know each other very well, and one of them says it, this may mean that he or she has just realized how hot is in the room where they are ("It's hot" vs "It's warm /cold") ("Chiar e foarte cald aici" / „Mi-e bine că e așa de cald aici!" or „E teribil de cald aici" / „Nu mă gândeam să fie așa de cald!", and expresses his surprise or disappointment; if there is some tension in a communication context, one of the interlocutors may try to relax the atmosphere by changing the subject („Ce zici/ziceți, nu-i prea cald aici?").

Thus, the problem in perceiving the whole meaning of an utterance is twofold. First, the translator needs to be aware of the fact that the speaker says a thing and, by the same words, he/she expresses more, a different, additional meaning (his inner intention). And second, the translator/interpreter needs to realize whether the hearer has the ability to understand the other meaning and to accomplish the requested action, having the appropriate tone, channel, and topic and being co-operative[1]. The following utterance "Can you reach the salt?" and "I would be grateful if you would get off my foot" (being requests as speech acts) are reconstructed into Romanian using not a word-for-word translation, but modulation, the most appropriate rendition in the specific sociolinguistic reality: „Poți să-mi dai sarea, te rog?" and „Ți-aș fi recunoscător dacă ai vrea să nu mă mai calci pe picior?".

Translating specific types of discourse in characteristic context is a more challenging situation for the translator. Two types of discourse, with their prominent and characteristic speech acts, are the material for analysis in order to illustrate translation difficulties: political and advertising discourse. In the case of

[1] The interlocutors have to observe the general principles of cooperative conversation set by Grice in order to have a coherent intercommunication.

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the advertising and of the political discourse[1] there is a wide variety of speech acts to be performed such as to protest, to legitimize, to intimidate and to persuade (Woods, 2006: 50).

The following example is from a speech given by Tony Blair, the ex British prime minister, in a formal setting, at a conference of his party: "Britain should also remain the strongest ally of the United States. I know there's a bit of us that would like me to do a Hugh Grant in *Love Actually* and tell America where to get off. But the difference between a good film and real life is that in real life there's the next day, the next year, the next lifetime to contemplate the ruinous consequences of easy applause" (Labour Party Conference, 27 September 2005[2]). In this case, the discourse is planned, but it is not formal, it is based on metaphor (see *infra*) and it is has persuasive illocutionary force. A possible translation in Romanian may be the following: „Marea Britanie ar trebui să rămână cel mai puternic aliat al Statelor Unite. Știu că puțini dintre noi ar vrea să fiu ca Hugh Grant în *Love Actually* și să le spun americanilor să ne lase în pace / să nu ne mai plictisească. Dar diferența dintre un film bun și viața reală este aceea că, în viața reală, există a doua zi, anul viitor, următorul moment pentru a contempla consecințele dezastruoase ale unor aplauze obținute prea ușor".

In the example above, the translator and the Romanian audience may not understand the allusion if they do not have the specific knowledge about the subject matter of the film *Love Actually* and the actor who played the part, Hugh Grant, in order to grasp the meaning of the speaker's words. The use of the colloquial terms (both the high-risk metaphor "to do a Hugh Grant" and the low-risk "tell America where to get off" aim at identifying the speaker as one of the ordinary people in the street) (Woods, *op.cit*.: 55).

The same aspects are noticed in the discourse of advertising, based almost entirely on metaphor. In the following example, the attempt to translate Del Boy's most characteristic catchphrase, "lubbly jubbly"[3] is more than challenging for the translator, being full of rhyming resonance with attraction potential for the target audience. The word "jubbly" has been acquiring new meanings in Britain such as "money", "wonga", and "dosh" fact proved by a simple search on the Google search engine in February 2006, which achieved almost 60,000 hits (*Ibid*: 192). Now the phrase "lubbly jubbly", searched on the internet, is defined as a British

[1] A perfective definition for the political discourse, from the point of view of discourse analysis, is given by George Orwell: "The stuff [that was coming out of him] consisted of words, but it was not speech in the true sense: it was a noise uttered in unconsciousness, like the quacking of a duck' (p.47)"; this definition offers a plastic illustration of the language characteristics in the political discourse. (*Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 1954, first published 1949, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books in association with Martin Secker & Warburg).

[2] Fairclough, N., 2000, *New Labour, New Language?*, London: Routledge in Woods, 2006:55.

[3]The catchphrase is normally uttered when easy money is in sight; it includes the name of the product, Jubbly, which was an orange drink sold in the 1950s in a triangular carton. (Woods, *op.cit*.:3)

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slang expression of approval or one's happiness[1]. The translation is difficult because the translator may not know the etymology of the word, its semantic history and the context in which it is used at present. Finding an appropriate equivalent is another troublesome aspect in the work of translating it, even impossible work, the translatability level being non-predictible.

Another example is that of *Tropicana* fruit juice advertised as "100% pure sunshine" (*Ibid*: 23). In the mind of the hearer this advertisement should release a mixture of sunshine, hot weather, fresh juicy fruit, fun, leisure time, relaxed atmosphere, getting a tan on the sand. The translation into Romanian should imply at least the general characteristics of the English phrase, with the same potential illocutionary force of persuasion contained in the metaphor. A rendition into Romanian is not possible, the translator being forced to replace it with a partially corresponding phrase, a modulation of the meaning, such as „100% portocaliu proaspăt şi luminos ca soarele verii"

The metaphor (low-risk or high-risk metaphor) is an important element in translation being a frequent stylistic means of discourse, at all levels of communicative interaction. In translation, metaphorical collocations represent a challenge. The risk of not identifying and rendering them in the TL is that of not grasping the whole meaning and, thus, not giving the most appropriate equivalence, or losing the metaphorical meaning through a non-metaphorical rendition. In the case of low-risk metaphors which, in general, do not always convey the core of the message, the communication loses some of its stylistic value: "These metaphors are 'low-risk' because conversationalists do not intend to convey any *additional* meaning by using them: addressees need do no extra deductive reasoning in their interpretation" (Carter, 2003:147). Thus, some of them are not very carefully constructed, being *on - the - spot creations*. Moreover, using such metaphors, from Grice's point of view (see *infra*), is violation of the maxims of quality and quantity, trying to *explain* the metaphor by a non - metaphorical transposition and may imply metaphorical interpretation, which is sometimes misunderstood. Even at the conversational level, it is important for the translator / interpreter to be familiar with the idiomatic usage[2] of the SL and TL[3]. For example, the idiom "under the

[1]http://www.encyclo.co.uk/define/Lubbly%20Jubbly;http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Lubbly%20jubbly.

[2] The misunderstanding and the poor rendition of idioms, especially in literal translations, implies that the translator is incompetent (Dollerup, 2006:56)

[3] The following examples are quoted from Carter, *op.cit*.: "«And pigs might fly» - a fixed phrase used to frame an unlikely event, when a friend, who is notoriously unreliable at remembering to repay debts, promises to repay a small loan the following day: *A:* Thanks I won't forget this time. Till tomorrow OK? // *B:* Brian, can you see those pigs over my left shoulder, moving slowly across the sky… *[A and B burst into laughter]*" (p. 163) ; and [Two friends are discussing a third friend's stormy marriage and the fact that, as a result of continuing infidelity, relations between the couple are 'frozen' and they are barely talking]: *A:* …he's at it again but he really wants you know just to sit down. // *B:* Like they just talk about how they both feel. // *A:* Out of the frying pan into the deep freeze this time.(p. 213)

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weather", for a non-specialist may not signify very much, but for a competent translator / interpreter the meaning should be known, i.e., "ill".

The other category is that of "high-risk" metaphors, created by those who challenge their interlocutor(s) to solve riddles, the situation in which the interpreter needs to use paraphrase and does not observe Grice's maxims any longer: "Indeed, it is precisely in this sense that messages derived from violations of Grice's maxims are «paraphrases», that is, meaning **deduced** from the literal content of the utterance plus background encyclopaedic and contextual information. However, since the deductive paths to a solution are, in principle, infinite, depending upon the various knowledges that individual interpreters bring to their tasks, a creative metaphor, also in principle, eludes a definitive interpretation" (Carter, *op.cit*.:147).

Sometimes, interlocutors may use creative ("high-risk") metaphors extracted from their experience with literature, the situation in which a good knowledge of literature, culture, and civilisation is always indispensable. Both types of metaphor, high- and low-risk, have an evaluative character, a core set of items used to create them, different from the common ones ("heart, head, tree, jewel, key, door, hand"[1]): "Changing cultural and hence communicative needs may tend to shift particular items deeper within or rather further away from our notional core of common metaphorical items. Items once creatively metaphorical may become progressively frozen (or dead metaphors, in conventional terminology) and as a result have an increasing likelihood of finding their way into the lexicon and of having a conventional meaning fixed to them (*Ibid*: 150-151).

Interlocutors engaged in communication, generally speaking, know and accept the communicational norms (Grice's cooperative principle[2]), the attitude which reflects inference (implicature). Moreover, they predict, using their encyclopaedic knowledge, the relevant meaning of the utterances in that context, and they, and the translator/interpreter, too, rely on "shared background presuppositions" trying to identify the relevant parts of the message. (Griffiths, *op.cit*:134-143). This action is sometimes difficult to perform in the case of a formal meeting (although, in this situation, the interlocutors have an idea what they are going to talk about and the translator is also informed about it, the discourse being "semi-planned", (Hyland&Paltridge, 2011:156) where the communicative interaction is between strangers, who, unlike people who know each other and have shared various information between them, do not know each other and making presuppositions is, therefore, impossible. Another aspect the translator has to consider is cultural diversity. For example, in the case of a polite type of speech act, rules for politeness may vary from country to country, from one speech

[1] "key move, key policy" (McIntosh, 1966, p. 149)

[2] "He [the speaker] has said that *p;* there is no reason to suppose that he is not observing the maxims, or at least . . . [CP]; he could not be doing this unless he thought that *q;* he knows (and knows that I know that he knows) that I can see that the supposition that he thinks that *q* is required; he has done nothing to stop me thinking that *q;* therefore he intends me to think, or is at least willing to allow me to think, that *q;* and so he has implicated that *q*" (Grice, 1975:50).

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community to another speech community: "the social distance of the interlocutors (i.e. is one of higher status than the other?), the formality of the context, the closeness of the conversational participants, their age, and their gender" (Brinton&Brinton, 2010: 350).

All the aspects presented above are stages in the process of rendition / reconstruction (Ionescu,Popa, 2007:28) into the target language. Mastering the language implies more than its words, sentences, special usages, it is a work which requests a broad knowledge of various social, cultural, and philosophical fields of study. Discourse analysis with speech acts typology and pragmatics are some of the tools the translator / interpreter needs to know in order to enrich his understanding of the target language and to improve his competence.

The examples in this paper are attempts to illustrate the functionality of the theoretical background presented, as regards the spoken discourse during a formal meeting, an informal conversation on the one hand, and in the discourse of advertising and politics on the other hand where an interpreter/translator's presence is required. In all these situations the translator needs to identify the intention of the speaker, the additional meaning and to know the context and the specific cultural features of the communicative situation in order to give an adequate rendition from SL (English) into the TL (Romanian). His linguistic competence and the ability to seize the translability potential of the utterance are compulsory qualities. Moreover, the identification of the illocutionary force and of its perlocutionary effects together with the additional meaning, the interpretation of the metaphor and a good knowledge of the TL are aspects to be taken into account in translation. Therefore, discourse is more than words with a recognizable organisation it is a live environment in which the interlocutors use all their linguistic and paralinguistic weapons, a virtual place for a translator to prove his language mastery.

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