CHANGING LANDSCAPES IN TRANSLATION AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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Abstract: The paper intends to raise awareness on the most recent advances in the fields of Translation Studies and Intercultural Communication and to underline the important influence of globalization in developing new approaches to the study of translation and to the training of translators. Here, we focus on a particular type of texts that require adaptation to new cultural contexts, namely vocative texts; and we analyze different translation strategies involved in the process, without disregarding the important role of the translator. The hands-on approach involves several types of vocative texts, from advertisements and instructions for use to political propaganda.

Keywords: Globalization, translation, intercultural communication, cultural mediator, vocative texts.

Introduction

One of the most important concepts that arise nowadays when discussing the new trends in translation studies and intercultural communication is globalization. Many definition have been provided for the term, all depending on the topic of research, but we aim to use it in its wider sense, as 'the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (Giddens, 1994:64) or, in other words, as a concept that encompasses all cultural and social phenomena and manages to undermine cultures and societies in their struggle for power and identity (Beck, 1999:28).

In the new global village translation plays a crucial part. Firstly, the growing interest in the field is generated by the need to gain viable insights and access to the unknown languages; and secondly, because of the rather new approach to translation as part of a cultural process.

Another concept that creates confusion, culture is regarded as a "fuzzy subset of the set of mental and public representations inhabiting a given social group" (Sperber, 1996:33). In a broader sense, cultures are seen as "systems of symbolically encoded conceptual phenomena that are socially and historically transmitted within and between populations" (Durham, 1991:8). Here, we would like to distinguish culture as a trait of a population and subject fields[1] as specific types of culture that generate specific text types that need a specialized translator to master them both actively and passively (Sandrini, 2006: 112). The role of the translator has also shifted from merely a bilingual interpreter towards a figure "whose role is to mediate between cultures" (Bassnett, 2011:95).

[1] A branch of knowledge encoded in textbooks and scientific writing, which in turn is the basis for the education of new experts.

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1. Translation and Intercultural Communication

Translation has long been established as a communicative activity involving the transfer of information from one language another. However, problems arise due to cultural and linguistic barriers and a total equivalence in translation has raised a lot of debate. The initial approaches to translation were the ones that followed the original text against those which interpreted it[2]. However, in the last decade attention has shifted towards the idea of equivalent effect and the importance of context in translation. Scholars, such as Eugene Nida, point out that language cannot be understood "outside the total framework of the culture, of which the language in question is an integral part" (1964a: 223). For Nida, contextual understanding is an important tool for achieving an optimal translation. With the emergence of translation studies as an interdisciplinary field of research encompassing linguistics, literary and cultural studies, history, anthropology, sociology and political science, attention moved beyond linguistic boundaries and, in this respect, the work of Catford (1965), who takes up the issue of cultural untranslatability, is considered ground-breaking research.

Even the profile of the translator has been reconsidered in recent years due to important scholars who argued for a more visible presence of the translator in a text and suggested translation strategies in order to secure the position of the translators in a translation[3].

An important development in translations studies came with the came with the so-called "cultural turn" in translation when the discussion was now focused on agencies, on the transformative aspect of translation and on the impact of translation in a given culture at a particular moment in time (Bassnett and Lefevere, 1998: 10). This is a flourishing time for translation and the sociocultural importance it bares should not be disregarded.

2. The translator as cross-cultural mediator

Given the recent changes in the political, social and economic systems worldwide and the massive movements of population, started at the of the 1980s, we underline that, linguistically speaking, important changes occurred. The mixture of culture and languages raised issues such as multilingual classrooms in schools or the need for translators in public service systems and, given the context, translators began to be regarded as "cultural interpreters", a term that implies recognizing the importance of the translation process and also the existence of cultural difference.

As Azade Seyhan argues, in a study of bilingual and bicultural writing:

> *"Once we accept the loss of stable communities and the inevitability of exile, then the interdependency of linguistic and cultural experiences both at the local and global level become self-evident. Thus, despite coercively manufactured and enforced national antinomies and fortified borers, history and geography are transfigured in new maps and new types of dialogic links."*
>
> (Seyhan, 2001:9)

[2] i.e. word-for-word translation vs. sense-for-sense translation.
[3] Venuti 's studies on foreignization and domestication in translation. (Venuti, 1995)

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Moreover, intercultural transmission beyond national boundaries is now conceptualized as "transnationalism".

Translators are surrounded by ambiguity and it is important to establish whether the writer and the translator of a text are defined as separate identities or if the translator is actually the substitute for another writer. The fact is, we agree to Katan's description that a translator is effectively a mediator between cultures and that his status of cultural mediator refers to someone who "facilitates communication, understanding and action between persons or groups who differ with respect to language and culture" (Katan, 2004: 17). He suggests translators are also interpreters of the intentions, perceptions and expectations of a cultural group and they have to be to some extent bicultural, in order to 'second-guess the unexpressed" (Bassnett, 2011: 102).

As far as the idea of translation confronting the untranslatable is concerned, we followed Walter Benjamin's studies (in Bhabha, 1994) on the subject and the findings suggest translation is a process that ensures the survival of a text in a new context while the translator is the one responsible for the elements of a text that are untranslatable as well as for bringing the text across into this new context.

Bassnett (2011: 104) also makes an interesting characterization of the translator as a cross-cultural mediator and argues that within this new globalized world, the rising significance of translation is undeniable. Moreover, she points out that linguistic competence is no longer a sufficient prerequisite to determine a good translator, and acknowledges intercultural competence as the new leading asset. Focus should be placed on teaching intercultural awareness, on training programmes in business and managements studies; and she has already noticed how the information found in recent guides to intercultural business is now concerned with aspects regarding work ethic, timekeeping, the significance of the formal and so on.

3. Strategies for translating vocative texts

Before embarking on a study regarding vocative texts, first we have to determine what vocative texts are and then establish a framework for their translation. Hence, we followed the "classical" text typologies, based on Karl Bühler's tripartite model of the functions of linguistic signs, centering Katharina Reiss's work on text typology and Peter Newmark's contribution.

First of all, the vocative functions of language places emphasis on the readership or the addressee. The term 'vocative' is used in the sense of 'calling upon' the readership to 'act, think of feel, in fact to 'react' in the way intended by the text (the vocative is the case used for addressing your reader in some inflected languages)' (Newmark, 1988:41).

A consensual categorization of the typical vocative texts encompasses notices, instructions, publicity, propaganda, persuasive writing (requests, cases, theses) and, to some extent, popular fiction, because the purpose is to sell the book/entertain the reader. (Newmark,1988:41)

Vocative texts today address a readership rather than an individual reader and we consider two representative factors for vocative texts: on the one hand, the relationship between the writer and the readership and, on the other hand, an easy accessible language used in writing the texts. The connection with the readership is established via social or

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personal grammatical relations or forms of address: '*infinitives, imperatives, subjunctives, indicatives, impersonal, passives, first/family names, titles, hypocoristic names, tags,'* etc. for the sole purpose of obtaining the desired relationship with the readership, may it be of '*power or equality, command, request or persuasion'* (Newmark, 1988: 41). Moreover, Reiss talks about the appellative language function and a dialogic dimension when discussing vocative texts. (Munday 2001: 73-75)

A translation method suitable for vocative texts aims for the target text reader to experience the same intended message in the source language text, therefore the aim of the translation should be 'the production of identical behavioural reactions' (Reiss 1977/1989: 97-100). For this reason, the 'adaptive' method is considered the best solution because of the equivalent effect created among the target text readers. In other words, the translator must consider the extra-linguistic effect intended by the text, even if he has to change both form and content. (Hatim, 2004: 181)

As we have established above, advertisements represent typical examples of vocative texts. Titela Vîlceanu (2005) notes that the translation of vocative texts and, implicitly, that of ads, can be achieved by communicative translation and the effect upon the target public is essential.

The changes in an advertisement when translated from one culture into another have been noted by many translation theorists. As David Katan comments, "[...] translating for the advertising industry across cultures means distorting the surface message to successfully retain the hidden." (Katan 1999: 192).

According to Guy Cook (1992) the most suitable translation strategy in the case of advertisements is *copy adaptation*. The same term is used by Christina Schäffner when explaining the identical reactions that must be triggered both by the original text and its transposition into the target language: "The translation of appellative or operative text types (e.g. advertising) aims to provoke in the target readers identical behavioural reactions to those of the reader of the source text, and the translation method called for is *adaptation*." (Schäffner 2009: 116)

Despite the selected translation strategy for vocative texts and especially in the case of ads, the most important tools are considered creativity and effectiveness, intuitive leaps, and the free flow of the translator's imagination (Robinson, 2007).

4. A hands-on approach

The corpus analysis encompasses a number of advertisements for the cosmetic industry, as their target population is large, mostly consisting of young and energetic people, highly familiar with the new technologies and advances on the market, particularly in this field. Therefore, translators should play close attention to the technicalities and practicalities of these type of ads, in order to achieve the equivalent effect in the readers of the translated text into Romanian.

In what follows, we shall focus on the difficulties in translating three English advertisements into Romanian:

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1. *Difficult to define. Impossible to resist* – Allure, Chanel

Clean and sheer, warm and sexy. Difficult to define. Impossible to resist. ALLURE is a fragrance that evokes each woman's own very special allure.Floral, fresh oriental. A faceted fragrance that mixes notes of the Orient with abstract flowers. A simple jewel that combines six complex facets. In ALLURE you'll find Bergamot, Mandarin, Water Lily and Magnolia, Jasmine and May Roses, Vetiver and, finally, the velvety sensuality of Vanilla.

– Suggested Translation :

Greu de definit. Imposibil să îi rezişti – Allure, Chanel

Curat şi limpede, cald şi sexy. Greu de definit. Imposibil să îi rezişti. ALLURE este un parfum care evocă alura specială a fiecărei femei. Prospeţime orientală, florală. Un parfum faţetat care combină notele orientale cu florile abstracte. O bijuterie simplă ce combină şase faţete complexe. În ALLURE vei găsi Bergamot, Mandarin, Nufăr şi Magnolia, Iasomie şi Trandafir, Vetiver şi, la final, senzualitatea catifelată a vaniliei.

– Comments:

The translation follows closely the strategy of manipulation used by the original text. *Sheer* – is used as an intensifier in English, translated via compensation strategy in Romanian: *limpede*, yet, the effect is the same as in English since the Romanian sentences combines four epithets one after another.

Fragrance vs. Romanian *parfum* drives to semantic loss.

The English synonymic series has no equivalent in Romanian.

English: perfume - scent - fragrance

Romanian: parfum - miros

2. *The touch-up is now history* – Colorstay Ultimate Liquid Lipstick

The first and only one step lipstick that has it all.

Food-proof lipcolor with a built-in, ultra-conditioning topcoat

One-step application- No topcoat required for comfortable wear

Stays comfortable and wears beautifully for up to 12 hours

Does not feather or fade; no touch-ups required, even after meals

Available in 20 full-coverage, soft satin shades.

- Suggested translation:

Retuşurile sunt acum istorie – Ruj lichid Colorstay Ultimate

Primul şi unicul ruj cu o singură aplicare, chintesenţa rujurilor.

Rezistent la transfer, cu un strat hidratant incorporat

Aplicare unică, fără să necesite un alt strat

Se fixează perfect şi se menţine până la 12 ore

Nu pătează şi nu îşi pierde din culoare, nu necesită retuşuri, chiar dacă aţi mâncat.

Disponibil în 20 de nuanţe fine, satinate, ce oferă o acoperire completă.

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– Comments:

That has it all – is a frequently used phrase in English in the neutral style.The direct equivalent in Romanian - *care le are pe toate* – would not have the same impact, being rather colloquial.

Food-proof – rezistent la transfer – uses the compensation strategy (modulation) as it would have sounded ackward *rezistent la mancare*.

One-step application – aplicare unică – the version highlights the process whereas the Romanian one favours the effect.

Even after meals – chiar dacă aţi mâncat – we preferred this rendering instead of *după masă*, as the latter would remind of medicine instructions.

A special mention here concerns the density of compounds in the English version in comparison to the Romanian simple words.

3. *Full or sheer. Rewind the years* - Age Rewind Cream Foundation

Mineral Power Natural Perfecting Foundation with micro-minerals is a lightweight, luxurious liquid formula that provides a luminous, natural coverage. Discover the power of micro-minerals:

Only our formula combines micro-minerals with a liquid in a lightweight texture for a healthier, more natural finish;

Naturally breathable, seamlessly blendable;

Provides buildable, even coverage; Talc-Free ; Oil-free; Fragrance-Free;

Non pore-clogging; SPF 18 sunscreen; Medium Coverage;

– Suggested translation:

Puritate integrală. Intoarcere în timp – Fond de ten Age Rewind

Fondul de ten Mineral Power Natural Perfecting cu micro-minerale are la bază o formulă lichidă îmbogaţită, care asigură o acoperire strălucitoare naturală. Descoperiţi puterea micro-mineralelor

Doar formula noastră combină micro-minerale cu un lichid într-o structură uşoară

Pentru finisaje cu aspect mai sănătos, mai natural

Lasă pielea să respire, se poate amesteca consistent

Acoperire fină, care rezistă; Fără talc; Fără ulei; Fără parfum;

Nu acoperă porii; Factor de protecţie solar SPF 18; Acoperire medie;

– Comments:

The density of technical terms is used to make a convincing device: *luxurious liquid formula that provides a luminous, natural coverage*. *Luxurious liquid formula* translated as *îmbogăţită* is a toning down element. The intensity of *sheer* is recaptured in the Romanian as *integrală* and it is translated via compensation strategy.

The compounding method: *oil-free, talc-free, fragrance-free* is a highly productive means of word formation in contemporary English unlike Romanian.

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Conclusions

The corpus-based approach validated our work hypothesis. Drawing on the general features provided by the theoretical framework, we can add a set of particular traits encountered in the samples we have chosen. From the semantic loss in translation, where English outnumbers Romanian with respect to synonymic series (lexical gaps), to the compounding method, which is highly productive in contemporary English, (favours simple words), we also encountered a high number of in technical items, the an expert testimony and the scientific terms, highly persuasive devices used in vocative text translation, particularly advertisements. These highly effective strategies of manipulation, also encompass methods used to avoid or to bridge cultural gaps, such as explicitation.

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The Corpus

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