

ON SOME DIFFICULTIES IN TRANSLATING FROM ENGLISH INTO ROMANIAN

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Essentially, and starting from Nida's opinion, the translation process is one in which a person who knows both the source and the target languages, decodes the message of the source language (SL) and encodes it into an appropriate equivalent of the target language (TL). In order to better describe translating, we have chosen, from among its numerous definitions, the one given by Nida and Taber, considered by some authors to be the most relevant and practical usefulness: "*Translating consists in reproducing in the target language the closest natural equivalent to be the message of the source language, first in meaning and secondly in terms of style.*" As the adopted definition emphasizes, meaning is to be given priority, for, in translating, it is the content of the message which is of prime importance; although style is secondary to content, it is nevertheless important, that is why, one should not translate poetry as if it were prose.

The cultural dimension of translation

The meaning of the message becomes clear when viewed in the broad frame of the cultural thought and behavioural structures of the receptors. In other words, when one proceeds from the level of words, one is obliged to interpret the meaning of the linguistic units in the light of the cultural context. Since the words are fundamental symbols for the features of culture, the translator, a mediator between two languages and cultures, should know the cultural context of both languages so that he should employ words which designate "the closest equivalence". It follows that the translator should have a keen insight into two cultural contexts, and that he requires a thorough knowledge not only of the two languages involved but also of the cultures behind them. Therefore, the translator, who participates in more than one cultural world, plays a dual role. As a receptor of the source language message, the translator anticipates in the original communication and belongs to the respective cultural context of the communication; as a source of the receptor language message, he belongs to the cultural context of the receptor language. Any deviation from the function of objective mediator of the two languages involved entails a disturbance of the message and a distortion of the interlingual and intercultural communication. Therefore, the translator's task of mediating between the two cultures is a highly complex one. He is expected, above all, to recognize and reduce cultural differences for they lead to more serious mistakes than those involving linguistic structures.

Consequently, the demands made on a good translator are numerous, including:
a. complete knowledge of the two languages involved or, as Straight points, a high degree of bilingualism, supplemented by knowledge of the people using the languages of the usage they make of their languages, preferably by regular direct contacts;

- b. a high degree of biculturalism and sensitivity to the differences in the cultural references involved;
- c. experience in language switching, intimate acquaintance with the subject matter, empathy with the original author and the content of the original work;
- d. facility of expression in the target language, sensitivity to, and a perception of communication events, circumstances and settings and mainly to the different presuppositions, expectations, practices and values of the receptors of the translated text.
- e. general knowledge on an encyclopedic scale.

Coming back to the definition of translating and to the translator's task defined as "*the reproduction in the target language of the closest natural equivalent to the content and form of the source language message*", we would underline that, in order to do it, the translator should preserve all the formal correspondences that are equivalent in meaning. If there are no identical and exact equivalents, the translator should seek to find a relative equivalent which is "*the closest natural equivalent*" to the source language, as called by the definition under consideration. It should be noted that the equivalent should be "*natural*", which means that the message is to be translated into the idiomatic every day target language; it should also be "*the closest equivalent*", so that where there are several ways of expressing the source message accurately and in a natural and meaningful way, the rendering which most closely resembles the form in the source language should be chosen. As clearly explained by Nida and Taber, the definition implies that translating must first and foremost aim at reproducing the message; for that purpose, the translator must make a number of grammatical and lexical adjustments. For instance, he will not translate idioms literally but meaningfully:

"De te-ar împinge păcatul să mai vii odată, vai de steaua ta să fie!" (I. Creangă)

"- Ia poftim de încalecă pe Bălan, jupâneasă! Zise părintele posomorât, să facem pocinog Sfântului Nicolai cel din cuiu. Și Smărăndița a mâncat papara, și pe urmă ședea cu mâinile la ochi ca o mireasă, de sărea cămașa de pe dânsa." (I. Creangă)

Din partea tatei, care ades îmi zicea în bătaie de joc: "Logofete, brânza-n cui, lapte acru-n călimări, chiu și vai pri buzunări!", puteam să rămân Nic-a lui Ștefan a Petrei! Vorba ceea: "Decât codaș în oraș, mai bine-n satul tău fruntaș". (I. Creangă)

- Should your evil star prompt you to come again, you'll rue the day when you were born!

- Just come out here, young lady and mount Dapple Grey, said the priest now quite sternly, and let us put St. Nicholas, where hanging from the nail up there, to his proper business! And little Smaranda got a good hiding and afterwards sat crying into her cupped hands like a bride, so that the very blouse shook on her back.

As for my father, he would often tease me: "Scrivener, no cheese for you, inkhorn full of milk that's sour, moil your woe and pockets dower"; if he had his way I might well have stayed where I was well off, like Nică, Ștefan's son and Petre's grandson! As the saying goes: „Better a big fish in a pond than a small tiddler in the ocean”.

Similarly, although the passive voice exists in both Romanian and English, the following examples show that such a correspondence cannot always be preserved:

Până nu se vor obține informații suplimentare pentru analiză, nu este indicat să se tragă concluzii din aceste cifre.

Until further information can be obtained for analysis, it would be unwise to draw any conclusion from these figures.

The definition under consideration also implies that the translator must strive for equivalence rather than identity, which is just another way of emphasizing that the reproduction of the message is more important than the preservation of the form.

In the following example the aim of the Romanian to English translator having been to reproduce the message, the preservation of the form of the source language message has been of minor importance:

În România, vă așteaptă zeci de locuri pitorești de o frumusețe inegalabilă. De pildă litoralul românesc al Mării Negre: o climă agreabilă, o vegetație odihnitoare, o plajă largă orientată spre răsărit care înaintează lin în mare, totul scăldat de un soare generos de la primele ore ale dimineții până târziu la asfințit.

Scores of matchless beauty spots are awaiting for your arrival in Romania. Take, for instance, the Black Sea Coast with its glooming climate and vegetation restful to the eye, with a widespread east-facing beach sloping gently into the sea while basking in generous sunshine from sunrise till sunset.

Note that “*zeci de locuri pitorești de o frumusețe inegalabilă*” has been reproduced as “scores of matchless beauty spots”, “your arrival” has been added as it was implicit in the source language text; “*vegetație odihnitoare*” has been rendered as “vegetation restful to the eye” to avoid possibly connotatively negative “restful vegetation”; “*de la primele ore ale dimineții până târziu la asfințit*” has been translated as “from sunrise till sunset” based on alliteration, more expressive in terms of the communication.

As a conclusion, it emerges clearly that the translator is constantly faced with a series of polar distinctions which oblige him to choose *content* as opposed to *form*, the *closest equivalence* as opposed to *any equivalence* and *naturalness* as opposed to *formal correspondence*. In order to help translators to choose meaningfully between the above mentioned opposing sets of defining features as well as to show them what should be done in specific instances, Nida and Taber have established certain fundamental criteria, a set of priorities, which reflect different perspectives of form and of comprehensibility. From among them, we have selected those which may help the Romanian to English translators:

- a. *contextual consistency* has priority over verbal consistency, viewing a translation in terms of its linguistic forms;
- b. *dynamic equivalence* has priority over formal correspondence, being based on the reactions or responses of the receptors and viewing translation work from the perspective of comprehensibility.

Contextual consistency relies on the following facts: 1. since words cover areas of meaning and they are not mere points of meaning; 2. in different languages, the semantic areas of corresponding words are not identical, the choice of the right word in the target language for a word in the source language text depends more on the context than upon a fixed system of verbal consistency. It means that one should translate a word and an expression by that word and expression which is most appropriate in each context, rather than by some word or expression in all contexts.

At this point, Nida and Taber specify that contextual consistency is one aspect of dynamic equivalence. Therefore, the concept of *dynamic equivalence* points to the fact that a translator frequently changes the form in order to preserve the meaning, thus following the principle of contextual consistency. He will render the message of the original text in the target language in such a way that the response of the receptors of the translated text will be similar to that of the original receptors. The following example illustrates the correctness of the above mentioned priority:

În acest context, fără îndoială, largul profil al celei mai importante manifestări expoziționale internaționale bucureștene conferă premise favorabile unor contracte directe între specialiști și oameni de afaceri.

No doubt, against this background, the congress of the most outstanding of Bucharest's international fairs offer a great opportunity for establishing direct contact between experts and businessmen.

It should be mentioned that when speaking about verbal consistency, attention is primarily given to the way in which specific words are translated. However, words are not the only formal features involved in formal consistency: one may have formal consistency of word-order (the most difficult to retain in a translation), as well as of phrase and clause-order and they must often be changed, as the following examples will plainly show:

Nu se poate evita acest pericol.

La reuniunea de înființare a institutului, au luat parte personalități marcante ale vieții politice.

Stresul și reumatismul, bolile inimii și ficatului sunt tratate pe tot mapamondul cu pastile. Pe toate meridianele globului, este semnalat și condamnat abuzul de medicamente. Chimia sofisticată a împins în anonimat un mijloc de alinare a suferințelor cunoscut și folosit de mii de ani – apele minerale.”

This danger is unavoidable.

The participants in the meeting for the setting up of the Institute, were distinguished personalities of political life.

It is a pity that mineral waters, which have been a means for alleviating human suffering for thousands of years, have sunk into oblivion, being replaced by ever more sophisticated chemicals. For it is a matter of common knowledge that nowadays, diseases of every kind, whether stress or rheumatism, heart or liver complaints, are treated with pills the world over, and everywhere people make excessive use of medical drugs.

In addition, the problem of formal consistency also arises in terms of sentence length for one cannot mechanically reproduce the length of sentences from the source language into the target language. Consider the following example:

Iată-ne ajunși în pragul deschiderii celei de-a 15-a ediții a Târgului Internațional București care-mi oferă plăcuta ocazie să vă adresez din partea organizatorilor un călduros bun venit.

It is a great pleasure for us to be here with you on the eve of the opening of Bucharest International Fair, and we heartily welcome you on behalf of the organizers.

There is also formal consistency in terms of classes of words when nouns are translated by nouns, verbs by verbs, etc. If one insists on translating in such terms, the message may be distorted, hence the word classes must be changed, if necessary, as illustrated by the following examples:

Tribunalul își are sediul la Haga.

Creșterea rolului Națiunilor Unite este o preocupare constantă a țărilor în curs de dezvoltare.

The Court sits in the Hague.

To have the United Nations play a greater role has been a permanent concern of the developing countries.

All of these formal features combine to produce what is called *formal correspondence* (or *formal equivalence*) of which verbal consistency is merely one element.

Dynamic equivalence implies that translations are viewed in terms of the receptors rather than of their respective forms, the comprehensibility of the translation being primarily judged in terms of the total impact the message has on the respective receptors.

With the emphasis shifted to the receptors and their response to the translated text, the bilingual person is expected to ask the receptors of the translation how they understand the translated text; he is thus in a better position to evaluate its dynamic equivalence. Unless there is a high degree of equivalence of response, the translation fails to accomplish its purpose. Consequently, it is the manner on which the monolingual receptors respond to the

message and not the personal judgement of a bilingual person familiar with the text, which is decisive in assessing the accuracy and legitimacy of a translation. This emphasizes the active and essential role of the receptors in the translation process. It is plain that a response is elicited not only as a result of the comprehension of the information. Communication is not only informative, it is also expressive, emotive, imperative and phatic. Therefore, if a translation is to serve the basic functions of communication then its functions may be:

- a. it must provide information which the receptors can fully understand → *informative function*
- b. it must present the message in such a way that the receptors can feel its relevance → *expressive function*
- c. it must produce a clear and explicit message so that it may have real impact on the receptors → *imperative function*

Consequently, dynamic equivalence in translation means:

- *Correct communication of information, affected by or thoroughly understandable translation.*

<p><i>Descoperirile arheologice confirmă viața economică, socială și politică proprie a dacilor pe întreg teritoriul României iar urmele puternicelor așezări ale înfloritoarei cetăți dacice a lui Decebal pot fi și azi văzute și admirate la Deva, în munții Orăștie ai Transilvaniei.</i></p>	<p><i>Archaeological findings have ascertained that the Dacians had an economic, social and political life of their own throughout the territory Romania occupies today, and the vestiges of the mighty settlements, of Decebalus' flourishing age may still be viewed by admiring tourists at Deva, in the Orăștie Mountain of Transylvania.</i></p>
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In this example, *urme* has been rendered by “vestiges”, *puternicele așezări* by *the mighty settlements* while *tourists* only implicit in the source language text has been added for the sake of clarity.

- *The expressive factor, for the receptors must also feel as well as understand what is said.*

<p><i>În ciuda vârstei sale, atestată documentar de peste 5000 de ani, Bucureștiul este un oraș mereu tânăr.</i></p>	<p><i>Although Bucharest is five hundred years old, as documents testify, it has always moved with the times.</i></p>
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- *Emphasis on the imperative factor:*

De aceea sper că toți participanții își vor îndrepta atenția... – I hope, therefore, that all participants in the meeting will focus their attention on... .

When engaging in translation work, the translator should, above all, know exactly what type of translation he is to produce i.e. whether he is to follow as closely as possibly the structure in the source language in words and grammar or he is to try to express the meaning in the source language text in such a manner that the receptor of the translated text should respond to it very much like the original receptors.

This specification has brought us closer to formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence aimed at, the two methods or orientations taken up in translating:

- a. Formal equivalence → source-oriented :

- Lays stress on the message itself, in terms of both content and form;
- The message in the target language should match as closely as possible the different elements in the source language;
- In order to determine standards of accuracy and correctness, the message in the target language culture is constantly compared with that in the source language.

- b. Dynamic equivalence → receptor-oriented :

- It is primarily concerned with the dynamic relationship of the various receptors to the respective message and not merely with matching the target language message to the source language one;

- The emphasis is thus on communication, more precisely on the third term of the communication relationship, on the receptors i.e. the receptors of the translation, within the context of their own culture should be able to respond to the message as given in their own language, in the same manner as the original receptors responded to the message communicated to them, in their own language and within the context of their own culture.

The translation is not measured merely in terms of whether the words are understandable (the sentence is grammatically correct) but also in terms of the total impact the message has on the receptors.

In this particular context, we shall set side by side a formal equivalence translation and a dynamic equivalence translation of the same Romanian text:

Apreciem că o cerință fundamentală a zilelor noastre este trecerea la măsuri concrete de dezarmare generală și, în primul rând, la dezarmarea nucleară.

We appreciate that a fundamental requirement of our days is the passing to concrete measures of general disarmament and, in the first place, of nuclear disarmament.

We consider it a fundamental necessity of our times that a switch over be made to practical measures of general disarmament, and primarily of nuclear disarmament.

Progresul, pacea și securitatea în zilele noastre sunt nemijlocit legate de lupta pentru lichidarea subdezvoltării.

Progress, peace and security in our days are directly linked with the fight for the liquidation of underdevelopment.

Nowadays, progress, peace and security are closely bound up with the struggle for eliminating underdevelopment.

Whereas in the formal equivalence translation there are clumsy structures because of the translator's concentration on the source text, the dynamic equivalence translation, in which the translator has had primarily the receptors and their response in the focus of attention, is a natural, fully clear and understandable message. As Nida points out, the choice of a particular type of translation by the translator depends on: the nature of message, the purpose of the author and the translator, the type of audience.

To conclude with, translating is more than a compromise, it means a continuous balancing. The translator's task finally consists in weighing one factor against another but the result of this conscious work, creative in a way of its own is sure to be a better translation than one in which all the above considerations have not been taken into account. What we need in the translation of Romanian texts is a text which speaks to the people employing the inner language of the heart.

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