

POSSIBLE CRITERIA FOR THE CRITICISM OF TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH

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Introduction

In the era of globalization, when the need for almost instant translation is evident, there emerge more and more examples of inadequate and unacceptable translations into English in all the media, and hence the necessity for translation criticism arises.

Generally speaking, translation criticism links translation theory with its practice since it takes into account all the factors and elements in the process of translation (e.g. intention, function, register, strategies, principles, constraints, audience, etc.). Translation criticism is the complex and complicated process, not just a mere identification of errors nor subjective and intuitive judgement of translation as good, bad, adequate, incorrect, faithful, etc. This process involves thorough analysis and interpretation of errors as well as the quest for talent in writing, sensitivity to language, internal consistency, semantic, structural and dynamic equivalence, creative recreation of the cultural allusions, the spirit of the original, precision in and mastery of style and grammar, idiomatic usage, fidelity to the intent of the original author and the text type (Reiss 1971).

1. Established criteria in translation theories

The majority of translation critics compare the original with the translation in terms of their profiles and functions, whereas others focus on the product of translation in the context of the target culture rather than on the translation process. In this paper the comparative approach is favoured and emphasized.

Many authors have presented certain models or criteria regarding the quality of translations. Nida (1964) postulated three criteria for an **optimal translation**: (1) general efficiency of the communicative process, (2) comprehension of intent and (3) equivalence of response. In other words, he proposed the communicative approach and the term 'dynamic equivalence' defined as the manner in which receptors of the translated text respond to it must be equivalent to the manner in which the receptors of the source text respond to the source text. Reiss (1971) has tried to solve the problem of criticism by providing multifarious categories and criteria to structure thinking about the vital issue of translation criticism.

Darbелnet (1977: 16, in Williams 2001: 328) identifies nine levels, or parameters at which the quality of translation should be assessed, and these are: accuracy of individual translation units, accuracy of translation as a whole, idiomaticity, correctness of target language, tone, cultural differences, literary and other artistic allusions, implicit intentions of author and finally, adaptation to end user. The evaluative criteria of Beaugrande (1978) address the presuppositions and expectations about texts shared by readers and writers in each language.

Newmark (1988) offers a five-part model including analysis of source text and target text, their selective but detailed comparison as well as evaluation and assessment of

translation, while focussing on two crucial factors: (1) the intended author's and translator's purpose and (2) the intended readership. He introduces the following criteria: accuracy, economy, both according to the translator's and to the critic's standards, and with reference to the target text: smoothness, naturalness, readability and absence of interference.

Hatim and Mason (1990) outline a set of comparative parameters and take into consideration not individual words but a 'thread of discourse which is sustained through a communicative transaction' (1990: 10). Their principal interest is in the cultural semiotics of language.

House (1997), unlike the previously mentioned authors, adopts a functional-pragmatic model based on pragmatic theories of language and the analysis of linguistic-situational particularities of source and target texts. The basic requirement for equivalence is that the translation should have a function which is equivalent to that of the original, where the function consists of an ideational and an interpersonal functional component and represents the norm against which the translation is measured. The degree to which the textual profile and function of the translation match the profile and function of the original is the degree to which the translation is adequate in quality.

2. The aim of the paper

The prime aim of this paper is to point out possible categories and criteria when evaluating and/or criticizing translation into English by illustrating the examples of translations from Serbian into English. It also intends to help future translation critics determine translation quality, thoroughly analyzing whether and to what extent the original and the given translation correspond, by following the suggested criteria, which must encompass four levels of analysis, namely, lexical, grammatical, orthographic and discoursal along with the subcategories of each.

This paper does not aim at generating overall quality nor passing overall judgements, but rather recognizing different types of errors, which should serve as the starting point for any translation criticism.

In Newmark's terms, the emphasis here is put on detailed comparison between the original and the translation, whilst the further steps of evaluation and assessment can follow only when the former process is completed. Many theorists have attempted to deal with the evaluation of translation in terms of faithfulness and readability, but currently the dominant concept is that of equivalence. However, the discussion of translation evaluation and the search for standards for quality assessment go beyond the scope of this paper.

4. Suggested criteria

The categorization of errors suggested here is based on rather a simple twofold distinction between (1) the micro level, focussing on words and phrases, and (2) the macro level, focussing on sentences and texts.

The following criteria, based on the most relevant parameters, are proposed according to which translations into English are to be evaluated and discussed with regard to their fidelity on lexical, grammatical, orthographic and discoursal level.

No attempt is made to differentiate between major and minor errors. In addition, since 'there are no generally accepted objective criteria for evaluating the quality both of translations and of interpreting performance' (Williams 2001: 327), establishing absolute standards that meet all requirements and setting criteria applicable to assessment of any type of translation would be unrealistic and impossible, because of the number of parameters or criteria, the complexity of their relationships, and the time and resources required to implement it (Larose 1998: 175 in Williams 2001: 333).

The examples given below are taken from the corpus consisting of texts found on food and drink labels on Serbian products and their English equivalents. More Serbian-

English pairs of words for all levels can be found in Lazović (2008, 2009). The sign asterisk (*) stands for incorrect translation, whereas the question mark (?) indicates either the missing element or the necessary modification, whilst the third column contains the suggested alternative.

(1) Micro level (words and phrases)

A) Lexical level:

I False friends

<i>konzerva</i>	- *conserve	-	can
<i>neto</i>	- *netto	-	net weight

II Misused words

-too narrow meaning of English words

(resulting in overtranslation)

<i>mališani</i>	- ?infants	-	children
<i>ishrana</i>	- ?meal	-	daily nutrition

-too wide meaning of English words

(resulting in undertranslation)

<i>pšenične mekinje</i>	- ?bran	-	wheat bran
<i>prehrambena veštačka boja</i>	- ?colour	-	artificial food colour

-inappropriate collocates

<i>kuhinjska so</i>	- *kitchen salt	-	(table) salt
<i>biljna mast</i>	- *plant fat	-	vegetable fat
<i>mutiti mikserom</i>	- ?stir with a mixer	-	use a mixer, mix

III Literal translation of fixed expressions, stock metaphors and idioms

<i>neto</i>	- *net, *net content	-	net weight
<i>bez konzervansa-</i>	*without preservers	-	no preservatives

IV Inaccurate translations of words and phrases

<i>litar</i>	- *pint	-	litre, 2 pints
<i>jabuka plod</i>	- *apple peel	-	apple, apple fruit

B) Grammatical level

I Articles

-articles missing

<i>oznaka serije</i>	- ? serial number	-	the serial number
<i>analizu izvršio</i>	- ? analysis performed	-	the analysis performed

-inappropriate articles used

<i>još 3-4 min</i>	- for *a further 3 to 4 minutes	-	for further 3-4 minutes
<i>sadržaj kesice</i>	- the content of *a bag	-	the content of the bag

II Prepositions

-prepositions missing

<i>obogaćena vitaminima</i>	- enriched ? vitamins	-	enriched with vitamins
<i>uz mešanje 1-2 min.</i>	- stirring ? 1-2 min.	-	stirring for 1-2 min.

-inappropriate prepositions used

bogat sadržaj vitamina - rich *with vitamins - rich in vitamins
na sobnoj temperaturi - *on room temperature - at room temperature

III Countability of nouns

-singular instead of plural

namenjen osobama - intended for *person - intended for persons *priprema*
 - *direction - directions (for use)

-plural instead of singular

belančevine - *albumens - albumen
sadržaj masti - fat *contents - fat content

IV Other ungrammatical constructions

-word order

čokolada u prahu - *powder chocolate - chocolate powder
aroma kajsije - *flavour apricot - apricot flavour

-premodifiers

prirodna boja - *nature colour - natural colour
ekskluzivni izvoznik - *exclusive imported - exclusively imported

-verb forms

može sadržati - may *contains - may contain
prisutni vitamini regulišu - presence of vitamins *optimize - optimizes

C) Orthographic level

I Misspellings

preporučen - *recomended - recommended
ekstra - *exstra - extra

II Capitalization

sadrži - *Contains 1 litre - contains
izvoznik - imported *By - imported by

III Punctuation marks

1,5 l - *1,5 l - 1.5 l
paprika, kurkuma - paprika ? turmeric - paprika, turmeric

(2) Macro level (sentences and texts)

D) Discoursal level

I Unnatural translations

uz postepeno dodavanje - ?with gradual adding - gradually adding
čuvati na hladnom - *care on cold - keep cool

II Inconsistency in word choice

aroma - flavour, flavouring, aroma
kakao masa - cocoa mass, cocoa liquor

III Inappropriate register and style

izlupate žicom za šne - if you beat it with a beater - if you beat it
sa dodatkom leda - on the rocks - over ice

IV Unjustified omission or addition of phrases

<i>sušeni list nane</i>	- ? peppermint leaves -	dried peppermint leaf
<i>obrano mleko u prahu</i>	- ? milk powder -	skimmed milk powder

V Inadequate function and effect conveyed

The following examples are taken from everyday life, not from labels:

<i>Poštovani gospodine Smit</i>	- *Respected Mr. Smith -	Dear Mr. Smith
<i>Kako si?</i>	- *How do you do? -	How are you?

All the listed errors do affect the meaning of the intended message to a greater or lesser degree, hence they have to be avoided no matter the text type.

Conclusions

The purpose of this paper was threefold. First, it attempted to describe a set of criteria which can indicate the problems of the analyzed translation on two levels, the micro level and the macro level. Further, by suggesting the easy-to-implement criteria encompassing four levels, namely, lexical, grammatical, orthographic and discursual, the paper aims to help future translation critics determine translation quality, thoroughly analyzing whether and to what extent the original and the given translation correspond. Finally, it also aims to help future translators improve the quality of translation by avoiding the most common translation traps.

Translation criticism should not be neglected and the importance of adequate translation should not be underestimated. Translation is the complicated process of finding the closest and most natural equivalent in the target language for the message expressed in the source language while avoiding interference with the source language; therefore, the quality of translation needs to be scrutinized for the benefits of future readers.

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