

JĘZYKOZNAWSTWO

Marta Bogusławska-Tafelska
Katedra Filologii Angielskiej
UWM w Olsztynie

FRAME STRUCTURES IN THE TRANSLATION PROCESS

Today, the translator must face tremendous demands with regard to his/her expertise. Translatology has achieved the status of an interdisciplinary field of study, which combines such academic areas as: linguistics, cultural studies, sociology, psychology, psycholinguistics and cognitive lexicology (Pisarska 2000: 122). The ultimate goal of the considerations presented below is to reinforce the methodological necessity to educate future translation experts in the field of cognitive science (to be more precise, in the area of cognitive linguistics). Psycholinguistics and cognitive lexicology, embedded in the cognitive framework, may equip the translator with the knowledge of mental operations involved in the translation act, which make it possible for us first, to understand the source language (SL) text, second, to detect and approach possible translation problems, last of all, to produce acceptable, dynamic (in Nida's terminology) translation i.e. a target-language text (TL text).

My intention in this paper is to present the application of the frame structures model to the translation theory and/or practice. To begin with, I will discuss the notion of 'expectation structures', as introduced by Wolfgang Lorsch in his monograph *Translation Performance, Translation Process, and Translation Strategies* (1991). These mental constructs will be considered from the perspective of the frame-system theory. Later on, the frame analysis of the Polish legal term *powód* will be presented (in the legal register: "plaintiff"; other semantic realisations: "cause", "reason", "stimulant"; "leather band to lead a horse"). I shall examine the translation error committed by one of the subjects in the course of the translation experiment I conducted in 1999. The full account can be found elsewhere (Bogusławska 2001). Closer investigation of the very error is conducted from the point of view of cognitive lexicology.

1. Lorsch's expectation structures

According to Wolfgang Lorsch (1991: 270), expectation structures are mental constructs, developing along with the translation process, that contain both the translator's general linguistic competence (the top-down approach) and his/her assumptions, expectations and goals with regard to the target text (the bottom-up perspective). Expectation structures are optimal visions of the intended translation which crystallise out of the interaction between the SL text and the TL text. On the one hand, expectation structures direct the process of translating, on the other, they control it, pointing to translation snags or inadequacies. As Lorsch observed, expectation structures belong to the retrospective-prospective procedures which, generally speaking, refer to going back (while translating) and taking the antecedent information in order to proceed with the translation (Lorsch 1991: 268). In Paul Kussmaul's model of the creative translation process, expectation structures belong to the evaluation phase, and can be traced as early as in the first stage of the process, which is preparation (Kussmaul 1995: 40).

In the ensuing sections of this paper, I shall investigate the notion of expectation structures on the basis of the results of the Think-aloud experiment that was conducted to confirm the hypotheses put forth by psycholinguistically-minded scholars within the translation studies.

2. The parameters of the experiment

I prepared the Think-aloud session during which five subjects (each of them individually) were to translate the Polish text into English, verbalising all the thoughts that came to their minds while translating. The verbalisations were tape-recorded, transcribed and then analysed. The subjects, five Polish students of English philology (the females: Alicja, Dorota, Ela, Gosia and Iwona) at that time completing their studies at Poznań University, were supposed not only to activate their linguistic knowledge, but also their strategic skills. This is why, the text chosen to be translated from Polish into English was deliberately selected to be fairly difficult. It included word-play (the tricky title: *Lewa kasa*, the English version of which would be something like: "This money is not right", containing the idea of the illegal money belonging to the leftist politicians), a number of culture-specific elements (political parties with their social reception, or the "Wprost" weekly with its pro-reformist preferences); last of all, legal terminology, the example of which would be the term *powód* ("plaintiff") presented below.

The language of the verbalisations was not pre-selected, so that the subjects could be at ease and concentrate on the task itself. In most cases it was their native language – Polish – that was the medium, which seems

obvious, since students and speakers of English as a foreign language feel more confident and fluent with the native language than with English. In case of confessions in English, there would always be a risk of a deficient account, whereas what counts in the experiment of this kind is the precision of the verbal account.

2.1. The text

The text to be translated into English was preceded by a detailed assignment with the legal affair nicely signalled. The text reads:

Lewa kasa

"Od polityka wymaga się nie tylko wiedzy i wysokich kwalifikacji, ale również nieposzlakowanej opinii" – napisali adwokaci Leszka Millera, Krzysztofa Janika, Tadeusza Iwińskiego oraz Janusza Zemkego w pozwie przeciwko dziennikarzom "Wprost". Nasz tygodnik miał, zdaniem powodów, nadwerężyć ich nieposzlakowaną opinię (w artykułach *Lewa kasa* oraz *Pralnia SdRP*). W ubiegły piątek w warszawskim Sądzie Wojewódzkim odbyła się pierwsza rozprawa. Choć formalnie chodzi o ochronę dóbr osobistych liderów, w istocie partia wytoczyła proces reprezentantowi mediów – to ewenement w skali Europy. Co tak zdenerwowało polityków SdRP? Opisaliśmy, jak partia przejęła z kont PZPR 7,5 mln dolarów należnych skarbowi państwa i nie czekając na prawne rozstrzygnięcie rozdała je lub pożyczała za przyjaźnionym firmom. [...] Kiedy likwidator mienia PZPR postanowił odzyskać pieniądze, SdRP rozłożyła bezradnie ręce, twierdząc: "Przykro nam, pieniędzy nie ma. Źle zainwestowaliśmy".

(autor: S. Janecki)

3. The text as a frame structure

While analysing the text to be translated in terms of the content, we may adopt the approach of Lawrence W. Barsalou who regards whole texts (being the instances of discourse) as frames. In his view, a text is the most complex propositional representation (Barsalou 1992: 46). The text *Lewa kasa* depicts the setting of the legal civil action undertaken against the journalists to protect the plaintiff's intellectual property. The journalists of "Wprost", a Polish weekly, are presented as one side of the conflict (the sued), while the leftist politicians as the plaintiff. In the subsequent section the expectation structures detected in the protocols will be investigated; second, I will go into the analysis of translation problem spotted in one of the translations.

4. The traces of expectation structures

Marvin Minsky says that while entering a room 'you usually know enough to expect a room rather than, say, a landscape. You can tell just by the character of the door' (1980: 361). In terms of the frame structures model, having partial, preliminary evidence, we are forming first hypotheses about a given portion of the reality. It is only at the later stage that these expectations are tested, further confirmed or verified. While noticing some familiar face in the distance, it takes few seconds to approach this person close enough to see if the impression was right or not. However, there are hypotheses that require years to be confirmed. All depends on the time span necessary to obtain further data. When we focus our attention on an event or object, a frame with some default parameters is activated in our cognitive system. As the fundamental components of a frame are attribute-value sets, the attribute being the constant feature of a frame and the values being its realisations, the task of our cognition is to supply the fixed and already defined attributes activated with the concrete values. The more details the cognitive system is provided with (through the sensory perception), the less time consuming the operation will be. The closing phase in the matching process consists in transformation to another frame if the system is informed about too radical a change in the parameters.

As has been established above, expectation structures in the translation process emerge at the opening phase of preparation; these are the ideal, hypothetical visions of the TL text, that are formed in the mind of the translator. Having read the text, he/she is able to draft a very unspecific, panoramic sketch of the translation he/she aims at. It seems that what can be drafted at the very early stage, are the attributes (of the text being a frame structure); the concretisations, that is the values of the attributes, have to be worked out in the course of the translation operation. In my Think-aloud protocols, there are a number of traces constituting the evidence of the existence of some expectations about the ideal or wanted shape of the TL text. As a first illustration let me quote Dorota, one of the subjects, confessing during the experiment: 'Dobrze, to w takim razie takim brzydkim stylem... bo jakiś ładny nie przychodzi mi do głowy [...]. Dobrze zaczynam brzydkim stylem...' ("OK, in this case (let me start) in a bad style... as nothing in a good style comes to my mind [...]. OK, I start in a bad style..."). It is well evident that, not having started, she already has some idea of how the translation should sound and what will be stylistically acceptable.

Gosia, after translating the first sentence (generally, the result was acceptable) stated critically: 'To pierwsze zdanie coś mi nie wyszło' ("This first sentence came out badly"). She was not satisfied with the translation, i. e. she had not come up to her own expectations about the translation.

Ela quite straightforwardly expressed her thoughts: '*Ewenement* to jest coś rzadkiego [...] a unique event... chociaż to mi śmierdzi' ("*Ewenement* – this is something unique [...] a unique event... but it stinks somehow"). Ultimately, she chose 'a unique event in Europe'.

5. Polish legal term 'powód'

One of the most intriguing translation problems traced in the experiment was the intuitive choice on the part of one of the subjects while she was thinking over the term *powód* which she didn't know. Neither searching via paraphrasing nor context analysis were employed by her. She uttered: 'Teraz zastanawiam się nad słowem *powód*, którego nie znam zupełnie [...]. *Powód* to jest ten, co wezwał do sądu, tak? [...] Nie, to jest ten wezwany do sądu.' ("Now I'm thinking about the word *powód* which I don't understand [...]. *Powód* – this is the person who undertakes a legal action against somebody, is it?... [...] no, this is the person sued"). Below I will present the frame analysis regarding the text and the notion designated by the Polish lexeme in question.

As has been stated above, the frame is composed of the attribute-value sets. Its attributes are constant features, concepts that describe given aspects of at least several category members (Barsalou 1992: 30). Each attribute may adopt several possible values, which are context-dependending. Considering the text presented during the Think-aloud session as the frame structure, its most valid attributes would be: THE SIDE IN THE CASE ("strona procesu"), TRIAL ("rozprawa"), DEFENCE OF THE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTIES ("ochrona dóbr osobistych").

If we focus our attention on the attribute THE SIDE IN THE CASE, we will come up with two possible values that this attribute may have, which are: THE PLAINTIFF ("powód") and THE SUED ("pozwany"). So, the two legal terms which turned out to be troublesome for the subject of the experiment are of the same hierarchical position in the frame structure of the text; they are complementary with regard to each other. The plaintiff and the sued constitute the values that can be added to the attribute THE SIDE IN THE CASE. It depends on the context, the situation itself, which is to be chosen. In order to know which to choose a translator has to study these two values together; moreover, he/she must study the place of these values in the overall structure of the frame in question. In accordance with Garrett's suggestion, he/she should simply contrast these two variants (Garrett 1992: 14). While putting the frame THE SIDE IN THE CASE into the target language the translator has to be context sensitive to detect which value of the attribute under consideration is added to this attribute in the original and which he/she is to realise in the translation.

In the text given, the subject baffled by the tricky term could have inferred the value of the attribute, simply, from the context. What she did, instead, was discussing the unknown term in isolation, as a result, intuition could only have been reached for. The mental lexicon is governed by sounds, priming, the word superiority effect, freshness and frequency (Akmajian 1990: 368). It seems that, not knowing the meaning of *powód*, the subject of the translation experiment associated its form with the the Polish verbs 'wodzić kogoś' or 'powieść kogoś' which convey the idea of leading or dragging somebody somewhere. The error of understanding was evoked by incorrect graphic and phonological association, which led to forming a delusive mental scene with 'powód' being the side of the conflict 'dragged' to court.

6. Conclusion

What needs to be balanced in a good translation, are: faithfulness to the original and, simultaneously, respective functional effectiveness of the product translation. Along the road to the desired results, the translator encounters numerous traps, i.e. linguistic asymmetry, cultural colouring or, simply, specific features of one's own cognitive system. Such factors may distort the translated text. To avoid pitfalls and produce a translation that will meet all the requirements of the trade, it is inevitable for the translator to possess the background knowledge regarding the process (not only the product) of translation. The meta-knowledge will facilitate the procedure of self-monitoring and professional self-awareness on the part of the translator.

References

- J. Aitchison (1994) *Words in the Mind. An Introduction to the Mental Lexicon*. Oxford, Blackwell.
- L.W. Barsalou (1992) *Frames, Concepts and Conceptual Fields*. W: *Frames, Fields and Contrasts: New Essays in Semantic and Lexical Organisation*. Red. E. Feder, A. Lehrer, 21–74.
- M. Bogusławska-Tafelska (2001) *Psycholinguistic Mechanisms in Translation*. Acta Neophilologica III.
- Frames, Fields and Contrasts: New Essays in Semantic and Lexical Organisation* (1992) Red. E. Feder, A. Lehrer. New Jersey, Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. Publishers.
- M. F. Garrett (1992), *Lexical Retrieval Processes: Semantic Field Effects*. W: *Frames, Fields and Contrasts: New Essays in Semantic and Lexical Organisation*. Red. E. Feder, A. Lehrer, 377–397.

-
- P. Kussmaul (1995) *Training the Translator*. Amsterdam – Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- W. Lorsch (1991) *Translation Performance, Translation Process, and Translation Strategies. A Psycholinguistic Investigation*. Tübingen: Gütersloher Verlag.
- M. Minsky (1980) *Frame-System Theory*. W: *Thinking in Cognitive Science*. Red. P. N. Johnson-Laird, P. C. Wason, 354–376.
- Multis Vocibus De Lingua* (2000) Red. S. Puppel, K. Dziubalska-Kołodziejczyk. Poznań 2000. Dziekan Wydziału Neofilologii Uniwersytetu im. A. Mickiewicza.
- A. Pisarska (2000) *Some Myths in Contemporary Translation Studies*. W: *Multis Vocibus De Lingua*. Red. S. Puppel, K. Dziubalska-Kołodziejczyk, s. 121–127.
- Thinking in Cognitive Science* (1980) Red. P. N. Johnson-Laird, P. C. Wason
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.