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CULTURAL ADAPTATION, MANIPULATION AND CREATIVITY IN TRANSLATION

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Abstract: This article not only discusses the concept of translation from the point of view of manipulation, creativity, and cultural adaptation, but it also provides examples of translations or adaptations in English and in Polish. I compare various definitions of manipulation, and conclude that manipulation seems to be the defining feature of translation, especially in the case of texts that do not require lexical precision and in which the choice of vocabulary may be, to a certain extent, random. In addition, manipulation should not be analyzed without reference to wider ideological and socio-cultural contexts in which it takes place. At the word level, however, manipulation often takes the form of simple, conscious or not, lexical substitutions meant to produce a faithful translation.

Text manipulation is inevitably connected with cultural adaptation which often involves a rather free translation directed at a special clientele with a different cultural background. Here, one can talk about the distinction between translation as being a largely idealized prototype (a craft) and adaptation as being a largely free translation (an art). It is noteworthy that in cultural adaptation studies the notions of domestication and foreignization are important. The translated text can be brought closer to the target reader (domestication) or it can remain close to the source language culture (foreignization). Usually, the more manipulated the text is, the more domesticated it is.

1. Some notes on cultural adaptation, text manipulation and creativity in translation

The paper aims to investigate the relationship between manipulation, cultural adaptation, and creativity in translation and to answer the following question about the nature of translation: *Is translation an art or a craft?* The three translation notions – manipulation, (cultural) adaptation, and creativity – seem to be interrelated, as they predominantly refer to the same phenomenon of introducing some alterations or changes in the translated text, including omissions and additions. However, what makes these concepts different is the reason for which the changes are made, the purpose they serve, as well as the way they are received by the target readers.

When considering the notion of manipulation, one needs to stress its negative undertone and frequent intentionality of the action. The following definition of manipulation can be quoted: “to manipulate: to control or influence sb/sth, often in a dishonest way so that they do not realize it” [*Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* 2000]. There are also numerous adjectives that serve the purpose of qualifying *manipulation*, such as – *careful, clever, skillful, conscious, cynical, deliberate, systematic, political* [*Oxford Collocations Dictionary* 2002]. It can be concluded that the verb *to manipulate* usually has a negative undertone. Although manipulation tends to be careful or deliberate, it may also refer to an unintentional action. Moreover, this noun also serves to refer either to a neutral or a non-negative phenomenon.

Kizeweter points out that translation studies view manipulation from the perspective of power, ideology, ethics, politics, intervention, source or target language and cultural dominance, rewriting, reshaping, and that it is:

(...) usually perceived as relating to ideological texts and/or to the translator’s ideological views; normally seen as an intentional, deliberate action on the part of the translator; not infrequently understood as an action that results in increased visibility/invisibility of the translator [Kizeweter 2011, 19].

Other researchers stress the reshaping of the target text with relation to its original, which often leads to the change of the source text meaning. And so, Tymoczko and Gentzler [2002] go along the following lines:

Translation thus is not simply an act of reproduction but, rather, a deliberate and conscious act of selection, assemblage, structuration, and fabrication – and even, in some cases, of falsification, refusal of information, counterfeiting, and the creation of secret codes. In this way translators, like creative writers and politicians, participate in the powerful acts that create knowledge and shape culture [Tymoczko and Gentzler 2002, xxi].

Bielsa and Bassnett [2009, 6-7] imply that manipulation in translation is the result of either the source or the target language being in a superior position to the other. In turn, Hatim [2001, 72] stresses the importance

of various pressures, namely – different linguistic, literary and cultural codes influencing one another in the translation process. What these researchers write or suggest approaches such phenomena like language interference and even borrowing.

The above considerations make it obvious that manipulation may hardly be analyzed without reference to wider ideological and socio-cultural contexts in which the process of translation takes place. It needs to be mentioned, however, that at the lexical level manipulation often takes the form of simple, either conscious or not, lexical substitution to secure the relationship of equivalence between the source and the target text to produce a relatively faithful translation. These choices at the lexical level may be of a nature that is neutral, ideology-free, socio-culturally irrelevant, and even stylistically barely significant or completely insignificant. Choosing one word or phrase over another does not have to influence the reception of the text as a whole.

Consequently, Kizeweter [2011] is correct when she says that it seems that manipulating the target text at the level of words may result in the potential manipulation of the target reader, whereas in ideological manipulation (where power plays a role) the desire to manipulate the target reader results in text manipulation. To sum up, manipulation seems to be a defining feature of translation, especially in the case of texts that do not require lexical precision and in which the choice of vocabulary may be, to a certain extent, comparatively free or random. However, it must be agreed upon after Kizeweter [*ibid.*, 25] who claims that manipulation is a defining feature of any translation. In other words, some researchers believe that manipulation and translation refer to the same action as manipulation is inherent in translation or – at least – it implies a certain dose of manipulation [Wojtasiewicz 1957; Hermans 1985; Salich 2011; Kizeweter 2011].

Demonstrably, manipulation can be regarded as a process involved in translation since the source text manipulates or influences the translator's mind and becomes manipulated by the translator's mind when it is received/comprehended. To be more specific, one can also observe different degrees of manipulation, but the general rule that may be drawn is as follows: the more unrestrained the translation is, the higher the level of manipulation. The extent to which a translator manipulates the source text depends on numerous text-internal and text-external factors, such as the lexical relations within the text, as well as the source and the target audience, culture and text function [Lefevere 2009, 229-230].

One of the text-external factors which determines whether the level of manipulation within a text is acceptable or not is the judgement of the target audience. If the manipulation applied in a translated text is well received by translation practitioners and theorists, as well as authorities and readers, then the translator and the product of his/her translation are said to be creative.

Sternberg and Lubart [1999, 3] define creativity as the capability to produce a text that is not only new but also generally appropriate.

Very often a high level of manipulation in translation does not prevent the target text from being accepted by the target readers. Umberto Eco [1984, 14] postulates that “(...) a translation can express an evident ‘deep’ sense of a text even by violating both lexical and referential faithfulness.” Raffel [1988] calls for aesthetic coherence in the translated text as an indispensable basis involving creativity in translation. Boase-Beier and Holman [1999, 17], in turn, claim that the constraints connected with the presence of the source text enhance the creativity of the translation act because the translator has to strive to overcome them.

Generally, a high level of text manipulation and creativity in translation treated as ‘writing in its own right’, accompanied by a warm welcome or acceptance on the part of translation practitioners and theorists, results in the fact that translation is perceived as an art rather than a craft. In target-text and target-culture-oriented approaches to translation studies, it is often claimed that any translation of a source text into a target language inevitably involves alterations of some kind – no matter if it is called rewriting, manipulation or adaptation [Lefevere 1992a, 9; Oittinen 2000, 5-6].

Reiss [2000, 90], in turn, defines text adaptation (as well as paraphrases and summaries) as those texts whose purpose and function differ from the original and which are directed at a special audience. Consequently, adaptation contrasts with translation – a text in the target language aimed at reproducing the source text very closely in terms of the textual type, the linguistic arrangement, and the non-linguistic determinants.

Shuttleworth and Cowie [1997, 3] point out that the term adaptation is “(...) traditionally used to refer to a target text in which a particularly free translation strategy has been used”, which usually implies considerable changes to make the text suitable for a specific audience or to fulfill the purpose the target text has. It is noteworthy that texts that are called adaptations can depart from the model of faithful translation in numerous and varied ways and to a different degree, which makes the concept of adaptation somewhat vague. In the process of adaptation, the content of the source texts can be rendered with or without omissions or additions, with or without the same organization, structure, style and level of detail.

In practice, the difference between translations and adaptations is a matter of degree, and one can hardly speak of any clear-cut boundary between them. Bogusławski [1978, 41] points out that a realistic description of translations which accounts for practice allows for fuzziness and cannot precisely define or describe the type and frequency of acceptable departures from the original text. In turn, Chesterman [1998, 208] postulates that there is a combination of values that constitutes a *default prototype* that may be defined as – a set of general conventional expectations with regard to a translated text.

According to Szymańska [2011, 48], the vague distinction between translations and adaptations results from the notion of translation being perceived as a largely idealized prototype, characterized by a set of properties (such as, for example, function, content, structure, style¹, domestication, etc.), from which actual target texts differ in various aspects, to various degrees, and for various reasons. In this framework, translations are more prototypical examples of the category – a craft, while adaptations are less prototypical examples – an art, exhibiting membership gradience, which is one of the classical prototype effects [Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 2007, 145].

In addition, in cultural adaptation studies one can talk about domestication as opposed to foreignization [Venuti 1995], depending on whether the target or source culture elements are more visible or dominant in the translated text. In general, foreignization ensures adequacy of translation and domestication determines its accessibility and general readability.

To sum up, a prototypical approach captures the fact that the traditional difference between translations and adaptations is a matter of degree rather than of any precise dividing line. Consequently, the process of translation may be viewed as either an art or a craft, or a combination of both, depending on several linguistic and non-linguistic factors, such as the degree of manipulation or the cultural and ideological adaptations involved.

2. Examples of manipulation, adaptation and creativity in Polish translations

By and large, the nature of the present paper is theoretical rather than analytical. However, to answer the question about the relation between the three terms, that is: manipulation, adaptation, and creativity in translation, some illustrative examples that are aimed to feature the mechanisms discussed are given in what follows.

As has been said, manipulation often takes the form of simple, conscious or not, lexical substitution to make sure that the relationship of equivalence between the source and the target texts produces a faithful or an approximate translation. These lexical choices may be of a nature that is neutral, ideology-free, socio-culturally irrelevant, and often stylistically insignificant. Note that here manipulation is understood as an inherent feature of translation. Kizeweter [2011, 23] provides a sentence extracted from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*:

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife [Austen (1813) 1994, 5].

¹ According to [Bell 1991], language style is audience design.

The Polish translation of this sentence by Anna Przedpelska-Trzeciakowska reads:

Jest prawdą powszechnie znaną, że samotnemu a bogatemu mężczyźnie brak do szczęścia tylko żony. Literally: 'It is a well-known truth that a lonely rich man needs only a wife to be happy' [Austen 2002, 5].

However, the sentence analysed here can obviously be translated in other ways, for example:

Powszechnie wiadomo, że / (wszyscy wiedzą, że) samotny i bogaty mężczyzna/ (zamężny kawaler) do szczęścia potrzebuje tylko żony / (towarzyszki życia). Literally: 'It is commonly known that / (everyone knows that) for a lonely and rich man (a rich bachelor) to be happy, he only needs a wife (a partner in life²)'.

The multitude of other possible translations is determined both stylistically and semantically. It is evident that this sentence can be translated in several ways with different stylistic and semantic nuances.

As has already been mentioned, adaptation³ in turn is traditionally used with reference to a target text in which a particularly free translation strategy has been applied, which usually implies introducing considerable changes (including addition and elimination), to make the target text suitable for a specific audience or to fulfil a specific purpose. As stated above, texts that are called adaptations can differ from the model of faithful translation in numerous ways and to different degrees. Consequently, adaptation is chiefly possible only in the translation of specific text types such as – popular-science texts, novels, stories or other works of literature, but not in the translation of legal documents because they need to be word-for-word faithful to the original text. It follows that free translation and adaptation have more to do with translation as an art than a craft. On the other hand, the translation of documents and faithful translation, though requiring a lot of skill, practice, and knowledge on the part of the translator, can be treated as a craft or a skill that can be mastered by many of those who undertake it. The example of cultural adaptation given below is taken from Szymańska [2011, 44] and it comes from William M. Thackeray's *The Rose and the Ring*, a brilliant parody of Victorian fairy tales translated into Polish by Zofia Rogoszówna:

Paflagonia, ten or twenty thousand years ago, appears to have been one of those kingdoms where the laws of succession were not settled: for when King Savio died, leaving his brother Regent of the kingdom, and guardian of Savio's orphan infant, this unfaithful regent took no sort of regard of the late monarch's will; had himself proclaimed sovereign of Paflagonia under the title of King Valoroso XXIV, had a most splendid coronation, and ordered all the nobles of the kingdom to pay him homage [Thackeray 1953, 12], (1 sentence).

²This is a hypernym – a word with a more general meaning.

³A number of examples of cultural adaptation in Polish popular-science articles are given in Bołtuć [2016].

Zdaje się, że w owych czasach, tj. przed dziesięciu czy dwudziestu tysiącami lat, dziedzictwo tronu, przechodząc z ojca na syna, nie było w Paflagonii prawem państwowym zabezpieczone. Król Seriozo, czując zbliżający się koniec, zawezwał do śmiertelnego łoża brata swego Walorozę i przekazał mu opiekę nad małym synaczkiem Lulejką, mianował go regentem Paflagonii na czas nieletności królewicza. Wiarołomny Walorozo zdradził położone w nim zaufanie, bo ledwo wieko trumny zamknęło się nad zwłokami króla Seriozy, kazał się obwołać królem Paflagonii pod imieniem Walorozy XXIV, po czym odbyła się uroczysta koronacja [Thackeray 1953, 10], (2 sentences).

A literal back translation would be: It seems that in those times, that is, ten or twenty thousand years ago, succession from father to son was not secured in Paflagonia by state law. King Seriozo, feeling his approaching death, summoned his brother Walorozo to his bed and requested he take care of his very young son Lulejko and appointed him Regent of Paflagonia till the Prince came of age. Unfaithful Walorozo betrayed his confidence because immediately after the lid of the coffin was closed over the corpse of Seriozo, he immediately proclaimed himself King of Patagonia under the name of Walorozy XXIV and a festive coronation took place.

The Polish version of the book and the book excerpt quoted above can be considered an adaptation as the information underlined has been added in the Polish translation and is not to be found in the English original text.

Bołtuć [2016] stresses that adaptation is also commonly used in the translation of popular-science texts into Polish. For example, *National Geographic* headlines (that appear in the table of contents) in the Polish translation of this magazine are usually longer and more informative than the ones in the original English texts [Bołtuć 2016, 129]. For example, the English sub-headline of the article *Restless Genes – Niespokojne Geny* (January/Styczeń 2013) is as follows: “What drove us out of Africa and on to the moon?”

The Polish sub-headline of this article in turn reads:

Homo sapiens podbił cały świat, zasiedlając najróżniejsze ekosystemy. Co umożliwiło ten sukces? Istnieje trop wskazujący, że za naszą nieokiełzaną ciekawość świata odpowiada jeden gen. Bardziej prawdopodobne jednak, że kluczowe okazało się sprzężenie zwrotne między naszym genetycznym garniturem a kulturą.

This Polish sub-headline literally yields the following English text:

Homo sapiens conquered the whole world, populating various ecosystems. What made this success possible? There is some track indicating that one gene is responsible for our untamed curiosity about the world. It is more probable, however, that the feedback between our genetic material and culture turned out to be crucial.

The general impression is that the style of the translated articles in this magazine is also more scientific and academic-oriented in comparison to the original English texts, which are more popular or informal in style [Pikor-Niedziałek 2009]. There are more stylistic devices of different kinds, and especially novel metaphors, in English headlines than in the corresponding Polish headlines of the *National Geographic* magazine [Bołtuć 2016, 184-185].

The reason behind these differences and alterations is that Polish texts need to conform with Polish popular-science textual and/or stylistic norms and the expectations of the Polish readership. In addition, it needs to be stressed that the popular-science genre has a much longer history in the English language than in Polish, the factor that may ultimately contribute to a relatively informal register of this genre in Anglophone countries.

Finally, the notion of creativity seen as a warm reception of a translation seems to have more to do with adaptation as such than with simple manipulation at the level of words; though it needs to be stressed that the choice of words in translation also contributes to a warm or a cold perception of a translated text.

3. Conclusions

It goes without saying that translation must be approached from different perspectives such as: linguistic, cultural, socio-political, literary and purpose-oriented. In actual practice, translators often try to recast the original in terms of the poetics of their own culture to please a new audience and to ensure that the translation of the original text will be as effective as possible in the target culture and will be both understood and appreciated [Lefevere 1992b]. In other words, in a way, the translator gives life to the original by giving it the air of cultural relevance it would not otherwise have.

In modern society, the translator's decisions are always influenced by multiple factors including political, poetic, cultural, social, economic as well as interpersonal ones. Thus, translators translate a source text according to the social cognition of their group (domestication), often to the detriment of the source group. Undoubtedly, the position of the translator as meaning-maker, however, can be questioned or challenged as an imposition of unearned authority.

The paper makes attempts to make it clear that the notions of manipulation, creativity, and cultural adaptation, though distinct in themselves, are in fact mutually interrelated. It should also be stressed that the line between the concept of language-specific elements and culture-specific elements is both highly ambiguous and subtle. Language-specific items largely depend on the particularities of culture and mentality of the target audience. Language is the mirror of culture, its treasury, its medium as well as its instrument [Ter-Minasova 2000, 14-15], and this perspective seems to support the interpretation of translation as an essentially cultural practice [Hermans 2007].

Finally, there is no clear answer to the question of whether translation is an art or a craft because it depends on a multitude of various factors such as text type, for example, that influence the process of translation. In the same

way, as manipulation and adaptation can be graded, the translation process involved can be viewed as an art or a craft, or a combination of both. It is also evident that the practice of creative writing in a native or foreign language enhances translation skills and adds to its quality.

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