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Translating of Knowledge Cultures in the Context of Epistemic Justice

[Translacja kultur wiedzy w kontekście sprawiedliwości epistemicznej]

Streszczenie: Autorki omawiają proces translacji kultury wiedzy, a także tekstu stworzonego na jej podstawie. Problem ten rozpatrywany jest na podstawie koncepcji paradygmatów wiedzy naukowej amerykańskiego historyka nauki Thomasa Kuhna oraz koncepcji kultur epistemicznych niemieckiej filozofki nauki Karin Knorr Cetiny. Badaczki zastanawiają się, jakie są przyczyny niesprawiedliwości epistemicznej, czyli celowe lub niezamierzone straty wiedzy podczas jej przekazu na poziomie indywidualnym, wspólnotowym i instytucjonalnym. Celem analizy – na przykładzie kultury epistemicznej jako przedmiotu profesjonalnej translacji – ukazanie sprawiedliwości epistemicznej w translacji kultur wiedzy. Stwierdzono, że translacja tekstu naukowego z języka obcego lub na język obcy nie jest tylko kwestią lingwistyki, ale także tej nauki, której zagadnienia podlegają translacji. Profesjonalna translacja tekstu naukowego wymaga uwzględnienia całej integralności specyficznego doświadczenia akademickiego, które autor zainwestował w dany tekst naukowy. Ponadto ustanowienie sprawiedliwości epistemicznej dzięki adekwatnej translacji nie tylko tekstu naukowego, ale także kultury wiedzy (kultury epistemicznej), która stanowi jego fundament, zachowuje precyzję przekazu naukowego, ale również często zwraca uwagę na te aspekty badań naukowych, które wcześniej pozostawały niezauważone.

Summary: The article considers the situation of the need to translate first the culture of knowledge, and only then the text created on its basis. This problem is considered

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on the basis of the concept of paradigms of scientific knowledge by the American historian of science Thomas Kuhn and the concept of epistemic cultures by the German philosopher of science Karin Knorr Cetina. The causes of epistemic injustice are traced as deliberate or unforced losses of knowledge during its transmission at the individual, community and institutional levels. The purpose of the article is to consider, using the example of epistemic culture as a subject of professional translation, a more general situation of caring for epistemic justice in the translation of cultures of knowledge. It was found that the translation of a scientific text from or into a foreign language is not only a matter of linguistics, but also of that science, the issues of which are subject to translation. Professional translation of a scientific text requires taking into account the entire integrity of the specific academic experience that the author invested in a certain scientific text. Moreover, the establishment of epistemic justice thanks to the adequate translation of not only the scientific text, but also the culture of knowledge (epistemic culture) that lies at its foundation, not only preserves the accuracy of the scientific message, but also often draws attention to those aspects of scientific research that previously remained unnoticed.

Słowa kluczowe: kultura wiedzy, profesjonalna translacja, kultury epistemiczne, sprawiedliwość epistemiczna, niesprawiedliwość epistemiczna.

Keywords: knowledge cultures, professional translation, epistemic cultures, epistemic justice, epistemic injustice.

Introduction

A scientific text always represents a special linguistic phenomenon, which characterizes both its belonging to the specific language of science, which is always only partially understandable for the uninitiated, and the rather contextual and always partially non-standard situation of its creation, which requires the reader of this text to have the necessary professional competence and appropriate custom setting, from which the culture of knowledge, characteristic of a community of representatives of a certain science, grows later. However, far from all the conditions for an adequate understanding of a scientific text are explicit even for representatives of the most specific science to which a certain text belongs. Some things appear to be understood but not articulated, supposedly because they are self-evident. Other things are not noticed even by the representatives of the science itself, perceiving them as constant and background, that is, such that should be accepted in the *ceteris paribus* regime. Sometimes the latter conditions are discovered only when they become problematic. This happens relatively infrequently – as a rule, in the situation of a crisis of what the American philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) called a crisis of normal science, that is, a crisis that can not only stimulate the development of a certain paradigm

within the framework of a certain science, but can also lead to a scientific revolution, that is, the replacement of the old paradigm of scientific knowledge is new.

Epistemic injustice as a deliberate or unforced loss of part of scientific knowledge can occur not only for a person outside a certain science, but sometimes even for representatives of this science – in the case when this person belongs to a different epistemic culture, as it was well examined by Rarin Knorr Cetina in *Epistemic Cultures: How the Sciences Make Knowledge* (1999). Because even within one science, the presence of several epistemic cultures is possible, while for of different sciences, the situation of having a specific epistemic culture for each science is today rather a rule than an exception.

In this article, on the example of epistemic culture as a subject of professional translation, the more general situation of caring for epistemic justice in the translation of cultures of knowledge is considered.

The Need to Take into Account Unarticulated Personal Meanings in Scientific Work

Let us begin the consideration of the situation of epistemic injustice with the most obvious and most difficult situation – when the message to be interpreted is clearly damaged from the very beginning.

Researchers from the Netherlands Barbara Groot, Annette Hendriks, Elena Bendien, Susan Woelders, Lieke de Kock, Tineke Abma pay attention to implicit ethical regulations, which play an important role in the adequate reproduction of complex communicative situations in a scientific text (Groot B. et al., 2023). These regulations attract the attention of researchers only when certain ethical dilemmas arise in their theoretical research, which are the result of practical difficulties in their past scientific applied projects. These projects were devoted to the analysis of the peculiarities of the work of researchers working with „people with cognitive and/or language impairment” (Groot B. et al., 2023, p. 1). At the same time, it was found that some of the ethical issues were unknown to the researchers, some were incorrectly interpreted by them, and some were completely lost in the broadcast. All these situations create the effect of epistemic injustice, which is also a result of the complexity of the research subject itself: „...moral uncertainty and dilemmas can remain or can even become more tangible when someone cannot speak according to the norms within the academy and culture, e.g., cannot speak coherently, when words have no direct relation to intentions, and/or there is cognitive impairment. In those situations,

academics become aware that the relationship between knowing, cognition, language, and communication is very complex” (Groot B. et al., 2023, p. 6).

This specific research situation makes it possible to directly pose questions to the text that usually do not occur to actualize. But still, I believe that it can be considered as a model that can be applied to the analysis of all scientific texts as well. After all, even persons with certain cognitive and/or language impairments are generally quite adequate in communication, conscious and responsible speakers, able to report on what they do with their language as a whole.

Researchers Barbara Groot and her colleagues point out: „...having a language impairment does not necessarily mean that people cannot express themselves or that they lack the capacity to consent. Similarly, cognitive impairment does not necessarily compromise a participant’s ability to express themselves, including their capacity to consent. At the same time, having a certain form of cognitive impairment may cause impairment to the person’s capacity to express consent even if their language is not impaired” (Groot B. et al., 2023, p. 2).

An important role in identifying delicate ethical issues of communication with persons with certain cognitive and/or language impairment is played by a special additional discussion of one’s own experience of such communication between the social workers or psychologists themselves. These specialists have „sharing dilemmas and exchanging perspectives” (Groot B. et al., 2023, p. 8).

Close to the sphere of psychological and social work, situations of epistemic justice/injustice arise in the medical field (Khan M., Ewuoso C., 2024).

In many ways, this experience should be adopted in the translation activity: the translator should always accept as a mandatory guideline before starting the translation the possibility of the presence of completely unknown, incorrectly understood or overlooked essential details in the text to be translated. A much worse instruction for the translator would be his self-confidence in the fact that he knows in advance all the essential nuances of the text to be translated.

At the individual level of the development of the culture of knowledge, overcoming the lack, uncertainty and dubiousness of knowledge leads to the opposite pole of articulation and explicability of scientific knowledge, which consolidates and strengthens the honest and well-founded testimony of a scientist (Medvecky F., 2018).

However, unlike the situation with people with certain cognitive or language dysfunctions, where all deviations from cognitive and language standards are either too general or too individual in nature, the translation

of a scientific text should take into account to a greater extent the epistemic culture that the author of the text shares with his scientific community. Cognitive or language dysfunctions are either typical and standard, which should be classified according to general scientific norms, or individual, which are subject to careful description, accounting and memorization. In both cases, their appearance and reproduction do not require communication with others similar in communication errors – they make up the personal history of a specific cognitive or language development of a specific person. In the case of a scientific text, it primarily expresses values and beliefs that are openly shared among themselves and intensively used publicly by scientists who create their own communicative community as a relatively self-sufficient lifeworld. In the situation of the community, certain unarticulated ethical aspects of the content of communication weaken or disappear altogether, but others are added to them, related to the need for agreement between community members of common scientific positions. These aspects can also be ethical, but a significant part of them already goes beyond ethics and has both a specifically professional nature and a legal, political, economic nature, and can also relate to ethnic, age, gender, religious issues.

Creation of Cultures of Knowledge and Community Principles of Support for Epistemic Justice

Undeniably, the key theme of community formation based on epistemic justice is the theme of education: it is education based on the diversity of values and cultural traditions of teachers and students that forms integrated cultures of knowledge. After all, it is here that «exchanges at the center of the acquisition, generation, sharing and auditing of knowledge constitute value-laden processes» take place (Dunne G., 2023, p. 285). Epistemic justice is the agreement of the ideas of all learning participants regarding the values of knowledge. After all, the values of knowledge are not only universal academic values, but also those particular non-academic values that can act as motivators for learning, and can, on the contrary, hinder it.

„Too often cognizers/knowers are sacrificed in service of sterilized knowledge – knowledge immune to the pathogens embedded in salient agential particularist features, interdependently-calibrated zetetic principles, and novel epistemic environments. Predictably then, there are times when educators might fail to live up to their moral-epistemic obligations” (Dunne G., 2023, p. 285).

Thus, education should remove the social marginalization of individuals, and not increase it. For this, educational institutions and educational communities should be oriented towards a broad understanding of the principle of inclusiveness of education and its wide implementation in life.

Overcoming epistemic injustice in education forms the foundation for future citizens to achieve other forms of justice – political, legal, economic, etc. (Omodan B.I., 2023).

Sufficient knowledge is necessary for choosing a profession that is adequate to the demands and inclinations of the individual, a worthy entry into the professional community and a subsequent successful professional career. All this forms epistemic justice in career guidance (Bengtsson A., 2022).

An important type of epistemic injustice is the restriction of access to information to only qualified experts: in part, such injustice is inevitable, because not everyone can be an expert in everything. However, there are often cases when the exclusivity of experts' access to databases is unjustified and excessive. The question of how to optimize the balance between public information and closed information goes beyond the competence of the experts themselves and should be a matter of public discussion and the development of each time a contextually sensitive special policy for access to knowledge in the form of databases (Symons J., Alvarado R., 2022).

Educational practices of creating cultures of knowledge also cannot be limited to the level of individual communities: coordination of their activities is necessary. Such coordination is provided by knowledge policies. Such policies of knowledge are necessary in various areas, although the most universal in terms of coverage of all citizens are the policies of knowledge in the field of education and the field of medicine. Thus, in the medical field, knowledge that is part of the patient's private life cannot be shared, but it is definitely necessary to involve him in knowledge about his own health (Kuhn T., 2020). Successful practices of physician-patient interaction are based on informed consent and other forms of providing patients with knowledge about their health (Rosen L.T., 2021). An example of how such dissemination of knowledge is consolidated thanks to the appropriate policy in the epistemic culture of the medical field is given by the health insurance policy (Moes F. et al., 2019). Also, overcoming epistemic injustice plays an important role in reducing the threat of ableism through the dissemination of information about employment opportunities for people with disabilities and the implementation of appropriate educational and social inclusion policies (Peña-Guzmán D.M., Reynolds J.M., 2019).

It is obvious that the translation of texts created in each of these academic or scientific communities requires thorough knowledge of the nuances of knowledge cultures specific to these communities. Otherwise,

the literal translation of the texts would create a risk of losing not some parts of the meaning, but the very core meaning of the translated texts.

Institutional Principles of Establishing Epistemic Justice

In contrast to the personal and community levels of formation of epistemic culture, one should also distinguish the institutional level, which creates general framework conditions for the development of epistemic culture. This level can be represented both in the national and in the international dimension. In the latter case, the formulation of the question often looks universal and global (Labisch A., 2023), and therefore obviously philosophical. Chinese researcher Huiren Bai draws attention to the need to balance the situation of diversity in science and its interdisciplinary integration (Bai H., 2020, p. 220). This gives an outlet for local epistemic cultures to the international level. Bioethical studies of justice problems as equal participation in solving the problem and receiving benefits from such a solution – „benefit sharing” (Dauda B. et al., 2016) are also of global importance.

Turkish philosophers Faik Kurtulmuş and Gürol Irzık investigated the institutional foundations of epistemic culture as the epistemic basic structure of a society.

„By this we mean the institutions that have a crucial role in the distribution of knowledge, that is, in the production and dissemination of knowledge, and in ensuring that people have the capability to assimilate what is disseminated by providing them with the necessary educational background and intellectual skills” (Kurtulmuş F., Irzık G., 2016, p. 2).

According to these researchers the proper distribution of knowledge in society needs to consist of three main component: successful production of knowledge, wide spread dissemination of knowledge and Ensuring individual capability for assimilation of knowledge (Kurtulmuş F., Irzık G., 2016, p. 9). It should be noted that all three processes, the importance of which for the proper representation of knowledge in society are emphasized by these Turkish philosophers, include an element of high-quality translation of scientific texts into the national language. The fact is that despite the fact that the modern lingua franca of science is English, it is not available at a high level of proficiency to the majority of the population of those countries of the world where English is not the official language. Thus, knowledge of English as a foreign language creates a kind of high threshold for the availability of scientific knowledge created abroad for the majority of the population of a non-English-speaking country.

Such a situation significantly increases the importance of quality translations from English into local national languages and turns professional translation of scientific texts into a necessary condition for achieving epistemic justice on a scale of the entire society.

Conclusions

Often it is the translation into another language that reveals certain usually imperceptible meanings hidden in the scientific text, and in particular, the so-called self-evident and often unwritten rules that exist in every science. It happens that the problem goes beyond the scope of finding an adequate language form for already known things, but turns out to be a problem of insufficient research on the subject of a certain science. As a result of the analysis of situations of epistemic injustice, it was found out what is possible both a situation when a real and ripe scientific problem requires the development of the language of science for a more accurate description of it, and the exact opposite situation, when a more thorough description of the subject of science using a specialized language of science leads to the discovery of a new scientific problem or the need for a better organizing knowledge about already known scientific problems.

Consideration of epistemic culture at the individual, community, and institutional levels gave grounds for clarification that the translation of a scientific text from or into a foreign language is not only a matter of linguistics. Of course, this is also a matter of that science, the problems of which are subject to translation. And we are not only talking about the specific thesaurus of this science, but about the need during translation to take into account the entire integrity of the specific academic experience that the author invested in a certain scientific text. To a person who is an outsider to this science, some nuances of posing and solving problems within this science will not only be incomprehensible, but often even imperceptible. This is one of the most important manifestations of epistemic injustice – the unforced loss of a part of scientific knowledge.

One of the main tasks of professional translation is the consistent and systematic overcoming of epistemic injustice and the expansion and deepening of the guaranteed conditions for achieving epistemic justice. Thus, professional translation appears as a key element of the translation of cultures of knowledge.

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