An Approach to Business Translations. A Functionalist Translation

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Abstract: The present article aims at presenting some aspects of the textlinguistic and functionalist approaches to translation and, at observing how the functionalist approach can be used in practice on a business text excerpt, placing an emphasis on the pragmatic equivalence and the features of the ST that have to be rendered accurately so as to create the same functionality of the TT as in the ST.

Keywords: business translation, functionalist approach, text-linguistics approach, equivalence

1. Introduction

Recently, national borders are becoming more and more blurred and international communication is spreading. It is therefore crucial that people speaking different languages and belonging to different cultural backgrounds establish contact.

In order to communicate effectively, translation is an important tool in conveying messages from one language into another. If the Romanian translation market used to be dominated mainly by literary texts, for some years now, it has been invaded by a wide range of pragmatic texts from the fields of business, legal, administration, politics and others. In this paper we shall focus on different translation techniques and problems, and the actual translation of an excerpt from a business journal (as sample of business-text genre).

2. Textlinguistic versus functionalist approach. Business text translated using the functionalist approach

Business, legal, scientific, mass media or tourist industry texts (to name just a few) are instruments of communication in everyday life. In the field of translation,

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they are called pragmatic texts, name given by Jean Delisle (1988). Due to the fact that these texts convey specific information to target groups, in practice, they are called professional genres.

There have been many debates on the types of translations that a translator should use. Translations can be either faithful or free, but in any situation, the texts have to be able to function properly

> "in a context different from that for which they were originally produced. The new context filled with people who have specific knowledge, expectations, and needs may require a translation which preserves the content, style, and function of the ST, but which may equally require a freer translation, an adaptation of the ST, which will be appropriate as long as it reaches its audience" (Superceanu 2009:17).

In this paper, we shall focus on two approaches to translations: the textlinguistic and the functionalist one, and see how the latter works on the creation of a functional TT.

The textlinguistic approach to translation goes back to the 1970s, and is based on a theory which considers that we do not translate words or grammatical structures, but texts. It focuses primarily on the issues of meaning and equivalence. According to the linguistic approach to translations, texts are not seen as independent structures taken without grammatical occurrence, but they are also referred to in relation to a situation and a culture. In this approach the focus falls on "the production of target user-oriented texts on the basis of the ST (semantic and stylistic) information input" (Greere, 2003: 30). The key elements in the translation process are the analysis of the communicative features and the purpose of the ST, together with the creation of a TT that should be meaningful to recipients.

Bühler (1934 qtd in Newmark, 1988:12) was a remarkable linguist who influenced generations of theorists. According to him, texts can be: informative, expressive and vocative. It means that texts focus on the content, are meant to have an aesthetic component on the recipient, and also, to trigger some kind of reactions on their readers, even if it implies some change in form or style. His theory was developed further by Reiss (2000) who mentions a forth type of text, the audio-medial text, which consist of a combination of linguistic and other kinds of communicative means, and "are written to be spoken (or sung) and hence are not read by their audience, but heard" (Reiss, 2000:166).

On the other hand, we have *the functionalist approach*, initiated by Hans Vermeer (1996). He states that the main factor of choices is the target text purpose (*skopos*) and not the source language text. This implies that the source text analysis and the identification of potential translation problems in advance are indispensable to the functionalist approach In this case, the translator has to be alert not only to linguistic aspects, but focus the same on cultural elements of the text and translate them accordingly.

As Christine Nord declares "translation is the production of a functional target text maintaining a relationship with a given source text that is specified according to the intended or demanded function of the target text" (Nord, 1991:28). According to the functionalists, the translator has to enable a correct understanding of

the text (taking into consideration several factors (such as linguistics, cultural space, stylistic elements) to people who are remote from each other.

Considering older or more recent translation problems, there are and have always been some rules and norms. In the functionalist approach, it is generally agreed that in order to render a proper translation of a text, one needs to conform to some linguistic and stylistic qualities:

- accuracy – meaning the quality of the TL of expressing the intended meaning in the SL;
- grammaticalness – the quality of translator of forming sentences according to the grammatical rules;
- syntax – even if the perfect reproduction of syntax is not possible sometimes, the translator should try to get the same effect by using an appropriate syntax in the TL;
- sentence structure complexity – the translator should respect the sentence structure in the TL, or should modify it, in order to facilitate understanding in TL.
- stylistic qualities – such as clarity, naturalness, fluency or semantic peculiarities, are used in all types of texts to create a particular effect. Whenever possible, the translator should retain these features.

In the case of pragmatic texts which are characterized by specific communicative purposes, the background of the translator should be a scholarly one. In her approach to translation, Holz-Mänttari (1984), mentioned by Greere (2003) sees the translator as a business consultant or a service provider who plays a decisive role in creating a basis of the TT. The theories of translation have evolved so as to incorporate besides linguistic knowledge, the cultural knowledge of the translator as well. He/she has to be well prepared in order to be able to provide linguistic, but also functional equivalence of the TT.

In order to translate a pragmatic text, one needs to undergo several steps: the specification phase, the source text comprehension, the source text analysis, the pre-translation stage, the translation stage and, the evaluation and revision stage.

The first stage, the specification phase discusses the extratextual factors as agreed by Ch. Nord (1991), which are: the sender/author, the receiver/user, the purpose, the channel/medium, the place and time of text production and reception, the reason of communication, the text function.

The comprehension of the source text involves the reading of the ST. The translator can construct a mental representation of the text only if he/she has some general knowledge about the topic: things, actions, economic background in our case. Before proceeding to the next phase, the translator needs to have a detailed reading in order to have a global understanding of the text together with the cognitive, pragmatic or linguistic details.

The source text analysis gathers under the same umbrella the analysis of intratextual factors as established by Nord: subject matter, content, presuppositions, text composition, non-verbal elements, lexis, syntactical structures. The next stage which anticipates translation coordinates discusses the prediction of the target text intratextual factors. In this case, the translator if not familiar with the background,

will need a guiding framework in order to establish the TT features. In this stage, Nord says that the translator can face certain problems and difficulties such as: pragmatic, cultural, linguistic or text-specific. (Nord, 1991: 158-160).

The actual translation stage is the process of producing a complete target text, which is rendered into the requested language according to pragmatic and stylistic instructions. Rendering the equivalence of concepts is very important nowadays and was widely discussed by many theorists such as Nida and Taber, Catford and others. Nida and Taber (1969/1982) talk about two types of equivalences: formal and dynamic. Formal correspondence "focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content", unlike dynamic equivalence which is based upon "the principle of equivalent effect" (Nida and Taber, 1964:159). Catford has a totally different approach since he had a more linguistic-based approach to translation introducing translation shifts. Baker's (1992) approach to translation includes a more detailed list of conditions upon which the concept of equivalence can be defined. She talks about equivalence at word or above word level, as any translator first takes a look at words as single units to find its equivalent. Anyway, the translator needs to take into consideration many other factors, such as number, gender, tense, etc. Grammatical equivalence is another aspect which is important in translation. Different grammatical structures may pose some problems in finding a direct correspondence. She believes that the translator should especially focus on number, tense, aspects, voice, person and gender. Textual equivalence refers to information and cohesion, while pragmatic equivalence discusses the strategies of avoiding certain structures in the process of translation.

The actual translation stage deals obviously with several translation procedures, whose result is the re-expressing of the source text in target text keeping faithfulness to meaning, grammar, lexical qualities. The final stage, the evaluation and revision stage is concerned with the final check and adjustments made on the text.

In the next section, I shall focus on the way translation stages are applied on a specific-purpose text, and on the potential translation problems.

(1) First example

The euro-zone economy
Asset-backed indolence

The euro-zone recovery has stalled and inflation is close to zero. Belatedly, the European Central Bank (ECB) is trying to galvanise a lifeless economy, in two ways beyond ultra-low interest rates: a funding scheme to boost banks' lending to firms and the purchase of private-sector assets. […] On September 18th it will conduct the first of two special lending operations this year that will make up to €400 billion ($520 billion, or 4% of euro-zone GDP) available to banks on extremely generous terms: for up to four years at a fixed annual interest rate of just 0.15%. The only condition is that banks raise the trajectory of their lending to business, which for many may mean that their stock of corporate loans keeps on shrinking but more slowly than before. In 2015 and 2016 more funding will be available provided that banks actually raise their net lending. (www.economist.com)

After a detailed reading of the text, the translator focuses on the extratextual and intratextual factors.

The extratextual factors are mentioned in table 1:

Sender	A financial publication
Receiver/target audience	Businesspeople from the financial area, financial journalists, people interested in the financial sector
Purpose and function	Informative material
ST producer	A financial journalist
TT producer	A Romanian translator
Medium	Newspaper article/online article
Place of reception	Newspapers, online newspapers

Table 1. Extratextual factors

Intratextual factors:

- The subject matter deals with the banking area and euro-zone recovery.
- The content focuses on strategies for the recovery of the euro
- Presuppositions are usually dealt with by adjusting the level of explicitness by paraphrasing, or by adjusting the level of redundancy. In our case, figures and percentages can be seen as forms of presupposition for the reader unfamiliar with the banking field.
- When analysing text composition, the translator has to take into consideration the relationship of dependency with other texts published together, the genre and the rhetorical modes. From point of view of intertextuality, our excerpt is just a fragment from a longer article on the same issue. The genre of the text is reflected in the target audience, in our case business and finance people, and the rhetorical mode is an expositional one.
- The non-verbal elements or graphic devices are titles in bold type
- Lexis or lexical items can be gathered under the technical language umbrella.
- Type of sentence: declarative and compound, dominance of present and future tenses, parenthesis.

After a detailed reading of the text and the analysis of the extra and intratextual factors, we focus on the translation problems. The types of translation problems that may arise in translations are: pragmatic, cultural, linguistic and text-specific.

Pragmatic equivalence refers to the strategies the translator has to use in order to convey the same effect on the reader in both languages. The translator needs to work out an implied meaning in order to transmit the message in the TL. The role of the translator is to recreate the message into another language, taking into account

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specific cultural elements, in such a way that enables the reader to understand clearly the text in the TL.

Pragmatic equivalence may also occur in the case of titles or headings, such as *Asset-backed indolence* in the title of the original text, while in Romanian it was translated as *Neglijenţa cauzată de investiţiile în imobilizări.* Here, we had to adjust the translation according to the actual goal of the ST author. As in Romanian there is no direct equivalent for *asset-backed*, we needed to provide an explanation of the term, to make sure that the reader of the TT understands the essence of the published article. In the following case there is another example of pragmatic equivalence when rendering into Romanian a sentence such as *The only condition is that banks raise the trajectory of their lending to business* as *Singura condiţie este ca băncile să crească tendinţa acordării creditelor către companii.* As cultural problem, we may notice the second title, where due to different notions in the business field, the Romanian translator faced some difficulties in translation.

The linguistic problems arise when the translator perceives several versions of the ST translation, such as different tenses, especially the present perfect, which does not have a Romanian equivalent and can be translated by some tenses according to context. In our case,*inflation has stalled* is translated by the Romanian present *stagnează*. Another example of linguistic problems is the change in word order necessary because of each language's topic. In this case, we name the first title of the text.

The translation stage is in fact the core of the translation activity. After having prepared by reading the document, deriving information and doing research, the translator has already constructed a framework within which he/she will actually place the grammatical, lexical and textual choices. In the translation process, equivalence can sometimes be reached through a paraphrase which expresses the ST word or phrase: *is close to* becomes *tinde către*, as the technical text implies a tendency of the European financial market. The author of the text resorts to use a technical verb in a technical text *is trying to galvanise a lifeless economy* which was translated by *încearcă să revigoreze o economie fără vlagă* using here the pragmatic approach in translation. As part of the same technical terms, the economic term *interest* is used in the text with its economic meaning *dobândă*, but *interest rate* has two different ways of translating according to context. In the first case *in two ways beyond ultra-low interest rates* becomes *în două moduri, pe lângă dobânzile foarte mici*, while in the second *a fixed annual interest rate of just 0.15%* becomes *cu rată fixă anuală a dobânzii de numai 0.15%.* In the first situation, the receiver of the TT either specialised or not in the technical field understands the translation by omitting the word *rate*, while in the second case, all the words need to be translated to have a correct understanding besides the important change in word order. In this excerpt we can also find an example of loan translation/calque with the translation of ECB into the Romanian   BCE. Also, GDP turns into PIB in the Romanian version, an abbreviation which does not need further explanation, especially if we think about the target audience (economic journal readers). The TT translation requires some

explicitations: *it will conduct*, where the Romanian translation is *BCE va organiza*, as the subject is not clear in the TT otherwise, or *special lending operations*, where the translation in the TT mentions *operatii speciale de acordare a împrumuturilor*.

The final translation:

(2) Second example.

Economia din zona euro
Neglijenţa cauzată de investiţiile în imobilizări

Revenirea zonei euro stagnează şi inflaţia tinde către zero. Cu întârziere, Banca Centrală Europeană (BCE) încearcă să revigoreze o economie fără vlagă în două moduri, pe lângă dobânzile foarte mici: o schemă de finanţare care să incurajeze împrumuturile băncilor către firme, şi, achiziţionarea bunurilor din sectorul privat.[...] În 18 septembrie, BCE va organiza prima din cele două operaţii speciale de acordare a împrumuturilor din acest an, care vor ajunge până la 400 mild €, (520 mild USD sau 4% din PIB+ul zonei euro) disponibili băncilor în conditii foarte avantajoase: până la 4 ani, cu rată fixă anuală a dobânzii de numai 0.15%. Singura condiţie este ca băncile să crească tendinţa acordării creditelor către companii, ceea ce ar putea însemna pentru mulţi faptul că stocul creditelor corporatiste va continua să scadă, dar mai încet decât înainte. În 2015 si 2016 vor avea loc mai multe finanţări având în vedere faptul că băncile vor creşte împrumuturile nete.

To conclude on the translation of this excerpt taken from an economic journal, although the translator has to keep in mind the characteristics of the technical text, we have word-for-word translation, explicitation, omission, calque and pragmatic translations that are performed in the translator's mind in the previous stages undergoing the TT production. The actual creation of the TT summarizes the content, grammar and layout features. The functionalist approach to translation has made a notable switch from the previously established modes, making translation a respectable profession. The models of translations prior to the functionalist model have all contributed to the emergence of the model initiated by Vermeer and established by Nord. The secret of a good translation consists in a proper preparation in advance in order to get to the *skopos*, which determines the translator's choices throughout his method.

3. Conclusion

Considering all these facts, translation is not a simple process, a mere word-for-word translation, it is in fact the translator's quest for the appropriate word, paraphrase or grammatical question that gives the TT full meaning in accordance to the ST.

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