

Conclusion of the analysis

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Pages 97–106 of

Challenging the Traditional Axioms: Translation into a non-mother tongue

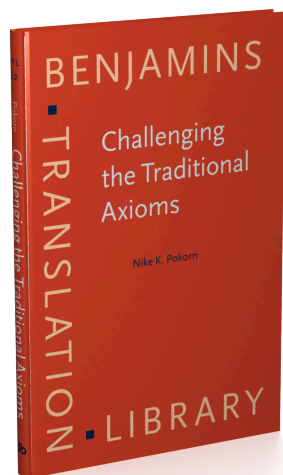
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Conclusion of the analysis

The visibility of nativeness and non-nativeness in translations

In the previous chapter we briefly analysed only those translations (seven in total) that were used in the questionnaire which we shall discuss in the next chapter. The initial study covered 50 translations of Cankar's works which mainly corroborated the findings stated above. Let us sum up and see whether the fact that the translator is a native or a non-native speaker of the target language influences his/her translation strategy, i.e. not only the basic method (either domesticating or foreignizing) adopted by the translator (see Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies 1998: s.v. "strategies of translation"), but also his/her individual and specific translational choices. An attempt shall also be made to ascertain whether the analysed texts support any of the general assumptions regarding inverse and direct translations.

Louis Adamic

Adamic's translation of *A Cup of Coffee* (1922) in many ways supports the claims of those translation theoreticians who are convinced that all non-native translators make unpardonable mistakes in the target language, so that their translations sound foreign and unacceptable to the target audience. However, this early translation by Adamic is not only linguistically weak and unusual, for example even introducing neologisms (e.g. "athrob"), but also reveals a specific approach to translation which allows the translator to freely remodel the text according to his political and literary convictions. Moreover, it seems that the most radical shifts in his translation – which are much more important for the understanding of the sketch than those which are the result of his negligent reading and poor knowledge of English – stem from Adamic's deliberate and conscious remodelling of the text and not from his limited mastery of the target

idiom (e.g. the omissions of the Holy Ghost and its replacement with the term “conscience”).

His later translations, revealing fewer or no problems with English, exhibit this tendency to change the original texts and attenuate the religious elements in them. For example, in his translation of another sketch by Ivan Cankar entitled *Her Picture* (1926) Adamic omits passages that are more explicitly religious in tone, changes the religious metaphors and secularizes them.

In the same year in 1926 his translation of Cankar’s novel *Yerney’s Justice* also appeared, first in a left-wing journal of Slovene immigrants in the USA *Prosveta*, then with the new publishing house Vanguard Press in New York. The comparison of those two publications reveals some interesting points: since the publication at Vanguard Press was linguistically revised by the editor, it offers us an insight into the nature of changes necessary to prepare the manuscript for publication. The changes are mainly stylistic, in particular grammatical and lexical collocations are corrected, some minor grammatical mistakes are corrected, the second text has fewer footnotes and fewer Slovene words are retained in the translation. The revisions are not numerous but they almost all fall into the category of collocatability, which might be used in support of Newmark’s claim that the greatest problem of non-native translators of the target language is that they do not master collocations in their foreign language.

Despite the fact that Adamic’s translations contain many unusual solutions in English, it would be difficult to classify his translations as typical of a non-native speaker. His translations are not faithful to the meaning or the style of the original and at the same time he does not adapt the text to the target culture, since he retains many elements of the original culture unchanged and thus creates opaque, “resistent” translated texts. His translation strategy is specific and consistent: for example, in his translation of the above mentioned *Yerney’s Justice* he censors many religious passages (in one instance even replacing the word “God” with “Great Nature”, see Kocijančič Pokorn 1999) and creates the work in accordance with his revolutionary political and artistic views. It thus seems that the crucial translational shifts in Adamic’s translations are the result of his deliberate remodelling of the text and not of his poor knowledge of the target language.

Agata Zmajić and M. Peters-Roberts

According to bibliographical data, it seems that the Croatian Agata Zmajić and M. Peters-Roberts collaborated only once, i.e. when translating Cankar’s *A Cup*

of *Coffee*. Their translation corresponds to the clichéd expectations one has from translators who are not native speakers of the source language since their translation is target-oriented, i.e. in accordance with the norm in the target culture, the sentences are redistributed into shorter paragraphs, the punctuation changed, some passages evoking Biblical wording are placed in apostrophes and some poetical metaphors are toned down. However, although both of them were non-native speakers of Slovene, they made only two mistakes which might be attributed to their poor knowledge of the source language.

Jože Paternost

The translation of *A Cup of Coffee* by the Slovene native speaker Jože Paternost is characterised by omissions of translationally more difficult items (e.g. “pred vrata na klanec”), negligent reading or even misunderstandings of the original text (e.g. using “thoughtfulness” instead of “thoughtlessness”, and comparing the mother carrying the coffee to a mother instead to a child), which is contrary to expectations, since Paternost is a native speaker of Slovene.

In his other translations Paternost also displays his imperfect knowledge of both the source and target languages. For example, in a translation of another sketch by Cankar, *Her Portrait* (1956), Paternost in one case fails to use the irregular form of a verb in the Past Tense and at the same time also does not recognise the literary use of the conjunction “zakaj” (the same mistake Leeming made in his translation), despite the fact that he is a native speaker of Slovene.

As far as his translation strategy is concerned, it is not consistent, even if he publishes in the same newspaper: for example, in his translation of the sketch *Sin* (1957) Paternost attempts to approach the target audience more closely and changes the proper names (“Jože” becomes “Joe”, “desetica” (‘an Austrian coin worth ten kreutzers’) becomes “dime”), but in the sketch *Evening Prayer* he follows the original wording slavishly. In 1958 he combines both strategies when translating the sketch *Holy Communion*. The translation follows the original wording and keeps Slovene proper names, but some of the culture-specific words are replaced by near cultural equivalents in the target language (e.g. “vedomec” (i.e. a person who leaves his body when asleep and becomes an evil spirit) becomes “the Jack o’Lantern”).

Translations by Jože Paternost show insufficient knowledge of both the source and target languages, if not also cultures. At first sight, Paternost’s translation could be used to support Newmark’s claim that translations by non-

native speakers are necessarily linguistically deficient, but his translations also reveal poor knowledge of his own native language and culture, which is usually not attributed to native speakers.

Elza Jereb and Alasdair MacKinnon

Elza Jereb and Alasdair MacKinnon collaborated when translating a selection of Cankar's sketches which were then published in Ljubljana by the state publishing house. Their translation of *A Cup of Coffe*, as well as other sketches in this selection, are linguistically and semantically very thoroughly translated. All their translations are source-oriented: they keep the original paragraph divisions, while omissions and expansions of the text are extremely rare, almost non-existent. Slovene geographical and proper names and other culture-specific words are not adapted but are used in their Slovene spelling; if possible, they also try to reproduce the ambiguity and symbolical character of the original. Their translations are at the same time grammatically correct and read fluently; they do not correspond to any of the generalisations concerning native and non-native translators – the translators know the source culture and language well and at the same time master the expression in the target language.

Henry Leeming

Henry Leeming is the only English native speaker in the corpus who decided to translate Cankar into English on his own. His translation of *The Ward of Our Lady of Mercy* reveals certain consistent shifts occurring on different levels of the text. For example, the original long paragraphs and sentences are all shortened; the translation is also marked by numerous omissions: some of them do not affect the understanding of the text, while others change the tone of the whole novel (e.g. the omission of the religious vision at the beginning of Chapter 7). Some of the translation shifts are due to the fact that Leeming read the text as primarily a naturalistic work and thus changed it according to his horizon of understanding. All these shifts can hardly be attributed to the fact that Henry Leeming was a native speaker of the target language.

Leeming translates culture-specific terms literally or uses a more general term in English, and does not replace them with culture-specific terms in the target language. In this case, Leeming acts against expectations: although a native speaker of English he does not try to forcefully domesticate the text.

He does, however, in some, although very rare, instances indicate that he did not understand the source text correctly, especially when encountering archaic or literary use of certain conjunctions – which would correspond to our presupposed expectations.

If we assume that a translator who is a native speaker of a major target language and a non-native speaker of a marginal source language is likely to have poor knowledge of the source language and culture and therefore tends to over-domesticate the text and adapt it to the target culture, then the analysis of the translation *The Ward of Our Lady of Mercy* by Leeming does not support this claim. Contrary to expectations, translational shifts in Leeming's translation are extremely rarely the result of his misunderstanding of the source language. On the other hand, the assumption that Leeming as a competent native speaker of the target language who knows the source language and culture well shall undoubtedly create an "impeccable" translation should also be modified. Leeming's translation of Cankar's novel is in many ways specific: it is characterised by new paragraph divisions, changed punctuation, numerous extensions, changes of meaning and large omissions – and neither the translator nor the editor ever informs the readers that such important changes have been made. Thus *The Ward of Our Lady of Mercy* does not support the claims of the first group of theoreticians who are wary of translators who are non-native speakers of a minor source language and native speakers of a major target language, and it does not support the arguments of those who glorify the work of the native speaker of the target language, since Leeming's translation is predominantly, if not entirely, the result of individual interpretations and translational strategies.

Anthony J. Klančar

Anthony J. Klančar was born and lived all his life in the USA – he was therefore, despite his Slovene parents, put into the category of native speakers of English. He translated numerous works by Cankar, and all of them show the same flaws. In the translation of *Children and Old People* (1933) his English is weak, e.g. Klančar makes some grammatical mistakes, mixes different genres and styles, but at the same time he also does not understand the original well and makes mistakes regarding the meaning of the text. As far as culture-specific terms are concerned, he decides for foreignisation of the text and retains typical Slovene expressions in his translation.

In his translations of other sketches by Cankar *The Captain*, *The Sun!* ... *The Sun!* ... and *Rue de Nations* (all published in 1933), Klančar again reveals a poor knowledge of both the source and the target languages: he makes some basic grammatical mistakes in the target language (e.g. he uses the conditional in if-clauses and does not use the Present Perfect Tense when appropriate) and in every translation at least once misunderstands the Slovene original – he sometimes misunderstands a word or two, sometimes a whole structure. With culture-specific terms he is inconsistent: some proper names retain the original spelling and diacritical marks (e.g. “Tomaž”), sometimes he omits the diacritic (e.g. “Primož” instead of the original “Primož”), and then again sometimes he modifies the spelling to assure the right pronunciation (e.g. “Krishtof” instead of the original “Krištof”) – and all this in one and the same sketch. He often fails to recognise geographical names (e.g. “Carigrad”, which is the Slovene name for Constantinople, is not replaced by the English equivalent in translation; he does not recognise the name of one of the major streets in Vienna “The Ring” and uses “Ringo” in his translation, etc.).

His later translations were even worse; let us mention only the most extreme one, i.e. his translation of the sketch *Her Grave* (1935). The narrator describes the funeral of his mother:

- (1) Prišli smo na pokopališče, da nisem vedel kako in kdaj, nato smo stali kraj globoke črne jame, iz ilovnate prsti izkopane. Pevci so zapeli; kakor iz daljave sem slišal zamolkle moške glasove, besed nisem razumel.
(Cankar 1974:278)

Klančar: We arrived at the cemetery. I knew neither how nor when. We stood beside a deep black hole, dug by hands covered with loam. The singers began their song, I heard low voices of men, as though coming from a distance. I did not understand their language. (Cankar 1935:3)

LT: We arrived at the cemetery, although I did not know how or when, we stood by a deep black pit, dug in clay. The choir started to sing; I heard the men's dull voices from a distance, I could not grasp the words.

In the original, the grave is dug in clay where “prst” (LT: “soil”) can also mean “finger” if the gender of the word is changed, but as it is it cannot be understood in the meaning of ‘a digit of the hand’ in this sentence. This apparent similarity, however, most probably caused Klančar to translate that the hole was dug by hands covered with loam. The narrator tries to convey how deeply hurt he was when he lost his mother, so much so that he could not even understand the songs the choir sang. In Klančar's translation he could not understand their

language. This translation thus creates a morbid but also somewhat comical situation: the son stands at the grave of his mother which was dug by hands and listens to funeral songs sung in some foreign language unknown to him.

Translations by A. J. Klančar can thus be either source- or target-oriented: the translator is inconsistent in his choice, sometimes changing strategy even within the same text. His translations reveal, besides a poor knowledge of the source language and culture, which is often associated with translators of central linguistic communities translating a text from a minor linguistic community, also a surprisingly poor knowledge of the target language and therefore do not correspond to presupposed expectations.

Anthony J. Klančar and George R. Noyes

Anthony Klančar was obviously aware of his deficient knowledge of English. He therefore revised some of his translations with the American linguist George R. Noyes and published them in 1933/34 in the London journal *The Slavonic Review*. The revised translation of *Children and Old People* compared to the earlier version by Klančar is more fluent, natural and grammatically correct. The artificial, foreign sounding words are replaced by more neutral ones, grammatical mistakes are corrected. The translation is however revised only stylistically, and mistakes concerning the meaning and understanding of the original are not amended. The translators also in this case decide for the retention of original spelling of proper names and thus keep elements of foreign, source culture in their translation.

The translations of the sketches *The Captain*, *The Sun! ... The Sun! ...* and *Rue des nations* are also revised stylistically and grammatically (e.g. the conditional is no longer found in if-clauses, the correct tenses of the verbs are used) and the texts are made stylistically unified. With all of the texts the original paragraph divisions are retained, except in one, *The Captain*, where the sentences and paragraphs are shortened. But in these translations, too, the mistakes concerning the meaning of the source text are not amended; therefore it seems plausible to claim that Noyes only stylistically revised the translations and was not involved in the process of translation itself. In these translations the spelling of proper names is inconsistent, although not completely following the earlier Klančar version (e.g. the earlier version had “Krishtof”, the revised version has “Krištof”, but it keeps “Tomaz” and “Buchar” which were used also by Klančar instead of the original “Tomaž” and “Bučar”). The texts are expanded and shortened in the same places as in earlier Klančar versions. Some

of the factual mistakes are corrected (e.g. some geographical names are spelled correctly in the revised version), and some are not (e.g. “Carigrad” is changed into “Tzarigrad” and not replaced by “Constantinople”; the Viennese Ring is still spelled Ringo).

Translations by Anthony J. Klančar and George R. Noyes are essentially stylistically revised translations by Klančar, since both versions differ primarily in the fact that the revised versions are more fluent and grammatically correct in the target language. The flaws concerning the understanding and meaning of the source text in general remain uncorrected. The texts in both versions attempt to keep some of the specific elements of the source culture, which is manifested in an attempt to retain Slovene proper and geographical names. However, some shifts in these translations also reveal inaccurate knowledge of the source language and culture, which would correspond to stereotypical assumptions concerning the abilities of translators who are members of a central linguistic community and are translating a work from a minor culture.

Native speakership in the analysed translations

The analysis of prose works by Ivan Cankar translated into English more than once does not offer a clear dividing line between the translation strategies used by native speakers and those used by non-native speakers of the target language, where the term translation strategy (see Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies 1998: s.v. “strategies of translation”) means not only the basic method (either domesticating or foreignizing) adopted by the translator, but also the specific choices the translator has made in his/her translation. For example Leeming, as a translator from an English-speaking culture who translates the text into his mother tongue, does not domesticate the text and thus follow the normative translation strategy in English-speaking world (see Venuti 1995), nor show inadequate knowledge of the source language and culture. Leeming changes the text according to his interpretation of the novel and transforms the originally impressionistic text into a more naturalistic one, but this change of tone could not be attributed to the fact that he is a native speaker of English. Anthony J. Klančar, despite the fact that he would be granted the status of a native speaker of English, in his translations reveals limited knowledge of both the source and the target languages and creates hybrid texts, in part source- and in part target-oriented. When rewriting some of his translations with the help of another English native speaker, George R. Noyes, he still retains the elements of Slovene culture and revises only the style of the translation. On

the other hand, Agata Zmajić and M. Peters-Roberts, despite the fact that they were both non-native speakers of the source language, do not seem to have had problems understanding the text or formulating the target text, which is again against expectations. They do, however, remodel the text radically but retain Slovene proper names.

Nor do translators who translated from their mother tongue into their foreign language correspond completely to Newmark's theoretical assumptions. For example, Louis Adamic, whose translations are primarily source-oriented, in his first translations does commit collocational and grammatical mistakes, but his later translations are influenced primarily by his political and literary views and not by his deficient mastery of English. On the other hand, Jože Paternost, who changes his translation strategy from source- to target-oriented depending on the text at different stages of his translational career, always produces translations that are deficient in English. Moreover, he not only has problems with the target language but also with the source language and often does not understand the original, which is again contrary to expectations. And finally, the translation pair of Elza Jereb and Alasdair MacKinnon – where the directionality would be difficult to define since the translators worked out and into the mother tongue, one of them being a native speaker of the source, the other of the target language – creates source-oriented translations and seems to have problems with neither the source nor the target languages.

This means that none of the stereotypical assumptions on directionality in translation is valid. Almost all of the analysed translators created source-oriented or a mixture of source- and target-oriented translations. Henry Leeming, a representative of a major linguistic community translating from a minor language, would be expected to have problems in understanding the source text and culture, but his translation does not substantiate this claim, since his translation shows satisfactory knowledge of both of them, in fact, superior to some of the native speakers of Slovene included in this study. If we assume that translators who are native speakers of the target language master the use of that target language, then Anthony J. Klančar convinces us that this is not so, since his translations contain numerous grammatical and stylistic flaws and mistakes. If we claim that translators translating from their mother tongue into their foreign language do know the source language and culture but are deficient in mastering the foreign language and culture, Paternost's translations show that a translator can be deficient in mastering both languages involved in the translation process, and that s/he may even have problems with his mother tongue. The only generalisation that can be deduced from the above is that none of the presupposed assumptions is absolutely valid: it is not necessary

that the translators from major linguistic communities who translate texts from minor linguistic communities have inadequate knowledge of the source language and culture; on the other hand, it is also not necessarily the case that translators master their mother tongue. Although it is true that translators who are native speakers of the target language more often have problems with understanding the source text and that translators engaged in inverse translation more often create translations that are linguistically deficient, these generalisations are not absolutely valid. Native speakers of the target language can be deficient in their mother tongue (e.g. Anthony J. Klančar) and native speakers of the source language can have problems in understanding the original (e.g. Jože Paternost). It seems that the quality of a translation, its accuracy and acceptability in the target language depend primarily on the individual abilities of the particular translator, his/her translation strategy, his/her knowledge of the source language, culture and the topic discussed, and not on his/her mother tongue or the directionality of translation.

In order to evaluate the results of the textual analysis and at the same time minimise the subjectivity of the conclusions, the general validity of which could be dismissed with the claim that they reflect only an individual's interpretations and assumptions, a questionnaire was designed and administered.