I.Malynovska, Ph.D., A. Haponiev

CONCEPTUAL FRAME FOR A TEXTBOOK

ON SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS OF TRANSLATION

Language VS culture as an issue been alluded to for many years in general and applied linguistics since so obviously overlaps with questions about the nature of communication between people and their cultures. It also highlights issues in translation in general, insofar as it takes seriously the work done over the past few decades on the social nature of language and the impact this necessarily has on the expansion and deepening of international communication.

For the past 20 years, the apparently opposing issues of "language and culture" have been successfully examined not only as methodological paradigms for modern linguistic studies (for the recent studies see: R.Bell, W. Labov, A. Verzbitska, В.В. Воробьев, О.А.Донских, В.Н.Телия, В.А.Маслова, А.Д. Бєлова, И. А. Голубовская, О.В.Малікова) [1; 3; 6;7; 11;16] but as an efficient theoretical background for English language teaching practice (ELT). We can refer to a number of substantial university textbooks devoted to sociocultural issues, the first and most fundamental being "Язык и межкультурная коммуникация" by S. Ter-Minasova [12]. Today, both in terms of theory and the methods of ELT practices, the borders of cross-cultural communication have been significantly advanced to teaching translation, although this topic still tends to limit itself to brief comments on the texts studied and avoids addressing the above matters on an extended basis. It can be argued that contemporary and comprehensive, theoretically-based textbooks and manuals on translation are absent.

This gap should be, and could be overcome immediately by recognizing the developing awareness of multiculturalism in our world, especially as translation is deeply rooted in and indispensable from this domain. It should not be left solely to Sociology, Management and Marketing to drive our understanding of cultural diversity, while leaving linguists and translators to sort out the details in hindsight.

It has long been commonplace for translators to be intermediaries or mediators between two cultures and two societies. Their task does not consist just in performing linguistic operations, it involves sociocultural responsibilities which are rendering and even adapting social, ethnic and cultural as well as ideological implications.

Translation is a dynamic process and is performed within certain boundaries. Dynamism in translation is determined by the dynamism of language and culture, according to the linguistic, social and cultural changes of the SL and TL. Any translation (both as a result and creative process) is better understood at the backdrop of the social and linguistic conditions of its performing. A translation is never finite; it could (and sometimes should) be resumed with the passing of time. Each epoch has

created its own translations; a translation that is perfect at a certain moment may prove unsatisfactory later on. It is generally recognised that dynamism in literary translation is also determined by the translators; each version being unique, contributing to the prestige of the original text. Subjectivity dependent dynamism is no less pertinent to general/journalistic translation, his/her cultural, educational and ideological background. A good example is the play with words and languages when rendering present day and Soviet realia *рада, ради* from Ukrainian into English. Under the Soviet Union the name of the highest legislative body of Ukraine *Верховна Рада УССР* was translated only as the *"the Supreme Soviet of the UkSSR"* based on the Russian equivalent of the Ukrainian word *рада.* The method was applied in translation of the collocation *ради різних рівнів: "local soviets".* Today, when Ukraine is an independent state, one can encounter a number of explicit and implicit ideological associations embodied in the choice of this or that lexical unit. A variant preferred by translators would be either a transliterated borrowing *Verkhovna Rada* with the subsequent explanation *"Ukrainian Parliament"* or just the latter. An equivalent phrase for *місцеві ради* would be *local councils* following British and American administrative structures. This differs when it is necessary to refer to historical realia. A neutrally disposed translator will stick to the historically accepted semantic calques *the Supreme Soviet of the UkSSR* and *local soviets.* A more nationalistically sensitive translator will focus on transliterations of the Russian names, thus drawing a hard line between the present and the past and distancing the present-day Ukraine from the one associated with its former union with Russia: *"sov'etsky supreme legislator in Ukraine"* and *"sov'iety"*.

However, any translation presupposes loss and gain. When conveying such messages into the TL, losses are inevitable. Usually, the greatest losses appear in translation when the original text describes a situation with elements which exclusively pertain to a certain culture: its national history, institutions, geography, community, religion. In the above-mentioned case, the substitution or the transfer are approximate. When translating, one realises that he or she does not have the necessary knowledge about the author's life experience, which is absolutely necessary; the translator's knowledge about the author's universe of discourse is rather theoretical.

All kinds of losses can be compensated. By compensation the translator proves his presence in translation. Each version represents a re-formulation of the original. In this way, the literary work gains in terms of prestige. In translation, one cannot preserve all the language and style nuances, as each language possesses aesthetic values that cannot be transposed exactly. Another important issue in translation is equivalence. Equivalence depends on linguistic and cultural factors. The translation process depends on these factors. Following Eugene Nida, we distinguish two types of equivalence: formal and dynamic. Formal equivalence focuses on the message itself, in both form and content, whereas dynamic equivalence is based upon 'the principle of equivalent effect'. The disadvantages of formal equivalence would be the fact that it distorts the grammatical and stylistic patterns of the TL, and hence distorts the message, so as to cause the recipient to misunderstand or to labour unduly hard.

Dynamic equivalence is defined as a translation principle according to which a translator seeks to translate the meaning of the original in such a way that the TL wording will trigger the same impact on the TL audience as the original wording did upon the SL audience. Thus, Nida is in favour of dynamic equivalence, as a more effective translation procedure. Nida states that 'dynamic equivalence is far more than mere correct communication of information.

The notion of equivalence has been analysed, evaluated and discussed from different points of view and has been approached from many perspectives, since it is one of the most problematic and controversial areas in the field of translation theory.

There are two culturally biased segments within a lexicon which require creative rendering, here called EBUs (ethnically biased units) and IBUs (ideologically biased units)). Cognitively, CBUs (culturally biased units) are based on cultural information accumulated by a given community over centuries of its historical development. They comprise realia words and phrases as well as other cultural lacunae in the TL (*hetman, hopack, povzunets, plakhta, varenics, rada, salo* etc.). On the contrary, IBUs are formed not so much on the information background of the speaker, as on his/her value settings which demonstrate a collection of lingual, cultural and pragmatically accentuated artefacts. These may be labeled *ideologemes*. The definition of ideologeme implies such interpretation of the concept of ideology, which emphasizes both its Weltanschauung function and its belonging to a vast continuum of culture [5]. The division between these units is subtle with a lot of intermediate transitive forms. Usually it is the context that assigns this or that status to a lexical unit.

Lets consider a passage from *Day*:

«Поняття «шароварщина» з'явилося, з одного боку, від дуже вузького сприйняття української культури, а з іншого — від специфічного викривлення лише одного її сегмента — шаровар, як елемента одягу, який потім навмисне-ненавмисне, свідомо-несвідомо «нашарувався» на українську культуру загалом. І, в результаті, на перше місце виводиться карикатурний і дещо водевільний сегмент — шаровари як головний і єдиний, відкидаючи інші складові української культури. «Щоправда, — додає арт-директор мистецької агенції «Арт-Велес» Тарас Грималюк, — існує думка, що поняття «шароварщини» походить від прізвища відомого режисера, колишнього художнього керівника Всеукраїнського державного центру фестивалів і концертних програм Бориса Шарварка, який культивував в Україні тип псевдофольклорної культури, яка й увійшла в історію під назвою «шароварщина»[День].

The journalist explains how the word *sharovary* (an item of Ukrainian men's national costume) has become a realia, attempting to overlap Ukrainian culture per se, placing it in exceptionally rural ethnic tradition. Translating the abstract we face the challenge of cultural clash. Whether it is possible at all to covey the idea, the question must be raised how to render adequately not only factual information but the whole range of emotions, bitter satire and indignation of the author, who seems to be personally abused by the primitive segmentation of national culture. The latter has

been unknown in Great Britain since the end of the era of medieval conquest. Of course, direct explanation can be employed: the word *sharovary* means wide trousers which are a part of the national costume that has significant historical importance to Ukrainian men and carries with it national sentiment that may be lost by careless translation or rendering. The abstract noun *sharovarstchyna* derived from it, on the contrary, implies neglecting national feelings by speaker, showing the clothes outdated, funny and non-civilized (non-European). The above comment, good or bad as it is, will take more time than translation/interpretation itself. The question of value arises when translating such a brief journalistic column. Moreover it isn't in compliance in terms of oral translation, the issue being highly volatile and disputable at press-conferences, political round tables and seminars. Avoiding loss of attention from the listener/reader we can try discussing with students the necessity to be less abstract and more understandable:

*If you still wear **sharovars** (folk trousers) everyday, you exaggerate and even distort the role of folk elements in modern Ukrainian culture which is much richer than just a set of historical reminiscences (artefacts). What you achieve by doing this is nothing but a caricature of Ukrainian culture. However, according to Taras Hrymaluik, art director of the 'Art Veles' agency, the idea of the '**sharovars culture**" could have been drawn from the family name of Borys Sharvarko, a well-known director and former art-director of the All-Ukrainian Festivals and Concerts Center. It was he who implanted a pseudo folk culture in Ukraine which entered in history under the name of '**sharovars culture**".*

The lexeme *sharovars* seems to be more appropriate as it is morphologically adapted to the English language better than the calque term *sharovary* and may be explained by utilizing a typical English word formation in order to be fully understood. Following Anna Wierzbicka, we are well aware of a vast area of settings, values and of expectations implied by this word and its usages [**17,** 304].

The issue of culture-clash overlaps practically all the conceptual areas of national mentality. There are a number of key pedagogical issues to face when determining how this topic should be taught to students of English and translation. Experience shows a very basic division in the students' approach: Business and Social Science students want to know *why* whereas Linguistics students want to know *how*. This it reflects many differences in the educational systems of Ukraine and English-speaking countries. Any empirical approach will immediately find fundamental differences.

For example, *pedagogy* is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as the *'art or science of teaching'* whereas in Ukraine this discipline is invariably *наука*. An Arts subject implies subjectivity and creative thinking whereas a Science subject implies objectivity and conformity to paradigms. Hence the root terminology immediately adopts linguistic interpretation from near contrary viewpoints. The consequence of this variance in approach may be seen in the mission statements of

universities, where every Ukrainian university seeks to 'train specialists' while, for example, Manchester University '…generates and shares new ideas and is committed to providing a dynamic working and learning environment, where every member of our community is valued for their contribution and individuality'[5].

The CBU values are unusually high for many linguists, because we observe ideologemes that reflect the original work of Jameson, in a context where ingrained societal values from childhood direct both the behaviours and the attitudes of the linguists and pedagogues studying this very topic.

It may be argued that the key teaching task is to permit students to appreciate the importance of IBUs in both critical areas. The first is that of the semiotics applicable to, in our case, Ukraine and the key English-speaking countries. The better a student may be persuaded to examine *why* in respect of the fundamental areas of semiotics, and perhaps build their own, individual taxonomic superstructure for the subsequent application of translation techniques to linguistics most affected by the underlying ideologemes, the more effective they will be as translators and interpreters.

The second question is where translation overlaps greatly with Linguistics, in the determination of language, communication and lexical equivalence in the comparison of the SL and the TL. A linguist may apparently achieve normative adequacy in the study of languages and treat diachronic change as a manageable, even predictable, process. A translator has to render through appropriate techniques and allow communication that may even be puzzling to a linguist. In this case it may be argued that *how* must be a creative Arts discipline for successful translators. A number of examples is given below.

It may be judged that there arises another consequent dichotomy in the perceptions of Ukraine and, say, Britain. Ukraine has a tendency to historical linguistics (often called philology) as a monitor of diachronic change and has even tended to translate the discipline of 'Linguistics' as 'філологія'. The most recent dictionaries no longer do this and use 'мовознавство' or 'лінгвістика'. Britain will focus more on Sociolinguistics. For the record, historical linguists examine how people in the past used language and seek to determine how subsequent languages derive from previous ones and relate to one another - essentially a scientistic approach utilizing scientific methodology. Sociolinguists study the origins of language change and aim to explain how societal value systems and changes in society influence language. The principal methodology of sociolinguistics utilizes creative subjectivity that has no ultimate "proof" in scientific quantification of value systems [11,14].

In this paper we will take a single root of sociocultural variance – that of State bureaucracy - and describe three examples of how resulting ideologemes have caused drastic confusion in the rendering of their terminology.

The instigation of the Soviet Union brought with it many rigid control systems that were either not present in Western society, or subsumed in more forgiving mechanisms for the management of the State. Max Weber defined and harshly criticized the "Ideal Bureaucracy" that was adopted by the Soviet Union, yet deviated from, during the early 20th century in the West in favour of the State serving the Public and not vice versa as determined by Soviet leadership.

Societal structure from this particular implementation of ideology has caused many linguistic terms to have evolved where translation techniques and methodology are inadequate without the application of sociocultural understanding of core concepts and their associated rites and practices.

One example of where this concept appears today is in the effectively untranslatable term *приймальні години*. The Western mind does not see a difference between this and *режим роботи.* Yet every Ukrainian from childhood faces this procedural paradigm and the rites associated with this functioning of Ukraine's *civil Service* (UK) *or public Service* (US) (*державні установи*) and its relationship with its *clients* (also known as the Public who in the contemporary Ukrainian social context are described more formally by the concrete noun *громадяни* which literally means *citizens* or *Ukrainian nationals*). If a translator understands *why* better, then the *how* of translation or rendering becomes effective. It is postulated in this paper that without the semiotic background, without examination of the ideologemes created by what is ultimately culture-clash, translators may never reached a meeting of minds in the conversion process of SL to TL.

Another example is the concept of *оформлення на роботу* where there is no elegant direct translation and standard methodology used by translators that may appear to be adequate, such as descriptive translation, also usually fails for sociocultural reasons. The Ukrainian mind perceives this concept as a standard step in the employment of an individual and the bureaucratic process involved, whereas an English native speaker perceives an auspicious result of recruitment and selection processes in a Human Resources context. Consequently a descriptive translation for the term such as 'formalization of employee records' sounds extremely clumsy and unnatural and indeed would probably never be used in native English. A culturally-equivalent phrase such as 'to welcome on board a new recruit' in back-translation will usually lead a Ukrainian translator to drift off to military terminology in the TL rather than Human Resources terminology, whereas in the SL this is standard Business English and has no direct relationship to any military mind-set or military terms of reference.

Thirdly, perhaps rather simple example, is that in English the word *militia* means "a military force, a temporary body of soldiers, especially one conscripted in an emergency, such as the onset of civil war". And in Ukrainian this should be translated from English as *народне ополчення*. In the Soviet Union this word was used as a borrowing to mean 'police' and the name has stuck in some Slavic

languages. The translation of 'міліція' into English should be '*police*' in all instances, yet the majority of translators tend to invariably forget this.

Embedded cultural values and societal norms need to be challenged when linguistically travelling across cultures in order to achieve pride in the achievements of our students and pushing the boundaries of **why** will give our students a better intuitive feel for their second language while living in the culture of their first language.

From such a foundation of theoretical issues and practical considerations we proceeded to writing a textbook on the sociocultural aspects of translation for students taking their master's degree.

The textbook is designed to combine two educational strategies: introduce students of translation to a number of linguistics topics (national picture of the world, verbalized cultural concepts and ideologemes, culturally and ideologically rooted lacunas in the SL and TL and the methods of their rendering in translation), as well as discussions of preparatory reading materials with professor-led input and hands-on analyses of linguistic data and texts by students. The book also comprises a compendium of texts of various genres (basically, jounalistic columns, official information and interviews from mass-media sources) for homework. The skills to be developed are as follows: true adequacy in translation and interpretation of texts containing socio-cultural information together with other transferable skills, including enhanced communication and discussion skills in written and oral contexts; the ability to analyze and evaluate different textual materials, the ability to organize information, and to assimilate and evaluate competing arguments.

Structurally the textbook consists of two parts: English – Ukrainian and Ukrainian – English. Thematically it involves a number of tricky subjects which, as we know both from academic literature and our own experience, present a real headache for translators. As may be judged from the above discussion, it overlaps a wide spectrum of topics from the concept of proximity in English and Ukrainian mentalities to the concepts of tradition and bureaucracy in Great Britain compared to the role of a "zhek" and the Verkhovna Rada in modern Ukrainian life.

Thus we implemented our approach by attempting to systematise and to expand linguistic and cultural factual material that we have encountered in both our academic and practical experience, in a manner similar to that used in «Мой несистематический словарь» by Pavel Palazhchenko [8], while at the same time introducing briefly the societal and cultural theoretical background that directs students to think about **why** in order to help the process of judgmental rendering of previously unknown terminology when met for the first time in perhaps an unfamiliar context.

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У статті розглядаються концептуальні підходи до висвітлення питань взаємодії мови і культури у підручнику з соціокультурних аспектів перекладу для студентів університетів. Переклад з англійської мови на українську і з української на англійську показаний як багатостороння діяльність, яка неможлива без урахування культурних, соціальних та ідеологічних феноменів і понять. Вибір варіантів перекладу ідеологічно або культурно пов'язаних лексичних одиниць відбувається через подолання складності їх інтерпретації, а іноді – неперекладності, які спричинені неспівпадінням концептів, що вербалізуються в обох мовах, та лінгвістичної ментальності двох народів.

Ключові слова: *міжкультурна комунікація, конфлікт культур, переклад, усний переклад, ідеологема, культурно пов'язані лексичні одиниці*

В статье рассматриваются концептуальные подходы к освещению вопросов взаимодействии языка и культуры в учебнике, посвященном социокультурным аспектам перевода, предназначенном для студентов университетов. Перевод с английского языка на украинский и с украинского на английский показан как многогранная деятельность, осуществление которой не возможно вне учета культурных, социальных и идеологических феноменов и понятий. Выбор вариантов перевода идеологически или культурно связанных единиц осуществляется через преодоление сложности (вплоть до непереводимости) их передачи, которая коренится в несовпадении вербализуемых в обоих языках концептов и лингвистических ментальностей двух народов.

Ключевые слова: *межкультурная коммуникация, конфликт культур, перевод, устный перевод, идеологема, культурно связанные лексические единицы.*

The paper deals with the interaction of language and culture issues as related to the teaching of translation to university students. Outlined have been conceptual approaches to writing a unique textbook on the sociocultural aspects of translation. English↔Ukrainian translation is considered to be a multi-faceted activity performed with the view of considering a number of cultural, social and ideological artefacts and concepts. The choice of ideologically and culturally biased lexical units is made by appraising their difficulty or even untranslatability, resulting from the lack of coincidence between the concepts they verbalize in the SL and TL as well as differences in lingual mentalities of the two peoples.

Key words: *cross-cultural communication, clash of cultures, translation, interpretation, lingual mentality, ideologeme, culturally biased lexical units.*