



INTERACTION OF TRANSLATION WITH THE ENVIRONMENT

Ibragimova Feruzakhon Zafarjon qizi

Fergana Region Department of Higher Education,

Science and Innovation Dangara District Technicum School N°1

English Language Teacher

Abstract

The article examines translation as a dynamic system that exists in constant interaction with its environment and functions as an active and leading component within this interaction. Translation is analyzed not as an abstract phenomenon, but as a concrete communicative act unfolding in a specific time and space. Particular attention is given to the communicative situation in which the translator mediates between the author of the source text and the recipient of the target text, constructing mental models of both participants and adhering to ethical principles of accuracy, responsibility, and cultural sensitivity.

Keywords: Translation process, communicative situation, translator–environment interaction, source text, target recipient, worldview, realia, translation ethics, intercultural mediation, cognitive interpretation, translation strategy.

Introduction

Every system is characterized not only by the presence of connections and relationships between its constituent elements, but also by an inseparable unity with the environment, in interaction with which it shapes and manifests its properties, being the leading active component of this interaction.

Translation activity is also closely linked to the environment. The relationship between translation and the environment is complex and multifaceted. To most objectively determine the nature of translation's interaction with the environment, we must assume that translation is the leading and active component of this interaction.

First of all, when discussing translation, we must keep in mind that we are talking about a specific process of translation, an act of translation, so to speak, unfolding in a specific time and a specific space.

A specific act of translation presupposes a highly complex relationship with the environment.



The first and foremost reality for a translator is the communicative situation. In this situation, the translator always interacts with two other participants in the communication—the author of the source text and the recipient of the target text—ensuring interlingual mediation. They are always addressing the author of the original speech work, no matter how distant in time and space. Even when translating a work created many centuries ago, the translator develops their own ethic of attitude toward the author, which is expressed in how carefully they treat the author's thoughts and feelings, their imagery, and their style. Naturally, in this case, we are dealing with an imaginary author rather than a real person. The translator creates an image of the author in their mind, with whom they conduct an internal dialogue.

The situation is somewhat different when the author of the original message directly participates in the act of communication, as is usually the case in oral translation. In this case, the interpreter focuses not only on the author's speech and the thoughts and feelings contained therein, but also on their emotional state, as well as on non-verbal cues conveyed by facial expressions, gestures, and so on. They consider the author's authority and their position in the hierarchy of all communication participants, primarily in relation to the recipient of the translated message, i.e., the person or persons to whom the translation is addressed.

The communicative situation in which interpreting occurs often involves a mutual shift in the roles of the author and the recipient. This shift typically occurs during negotiations, when the negotiating parties alternate between being the author (sender) of the original message and the recipient. If there is only one interpreter at the negotiations, they also alternately translate the statements of one party and then the other, performing what is known as two-way interpreting. In this case, the translator's ethics implies equal attention to the thoughts and feelings of all participants in the communication between whom mediation is established, despite the fact that he is usually a "hired employee" of one of the parties and a representative of one culture, in whose consciousness one language dominates over the other.

The recipient of a translated message, like the author of the original, can be not only a tangible presence in the act of communication with the translation, but also an abstract figure, an image created by the translator. Such an abstract figure is the reader of the translated work. Of course, the reader exists objectively, in the real world, but only after the translation is completed and presented to the public. During the translation process, the translator interacts with the reader's model they have



constructed. When determining their translation strategy, the translator typically focuses on this model, although the characteristics of a specific individual may predominate. For example, one translator of fiction admitted that she tests all her translations on her teenage son: if he understands everything and likes the text, then the translation is a success. The concept of a generalized reader with refined tastes guided the actions of translators of the classical era.

The communicative situation presupposes the interaction of translation with many other environmental phenomena, influencing the decisions the translator makes.

The second reality with which a translator necessarily interacts is the source text. It is the source text that is presented to the translator through direct perception. The translator perceives the source text through auditory or visual channels under the specific conditions of a specific communication situation. The source text forms the basis of any translation process, as it contains all the necessary information subject to translational reinterpretation and interpretation. However, the source text is an external object to the translation, a fragment of the environment that interacts with the translation while remaining unchanged. This is why scholars who define translation as the process of transforming a text in one language into a text in another language stipulate that "the term 'transformation' is used metaphorically in translation studies"[1], that "the source text or original text itself is not 'transformed' in the sense that it does not change in itself."[2]

The source text, as an external object, can be presented to the translator in written or oral form, either once or repeatedly, before the translation process begins or simultaneously with the translation process.

And finally, the most complex aspect of translation is its interaction with the reality described in the source message and reproduced in the target text. The complexity of translation's interaction with this reality lies in the fact that it is usually presented to the translator not as a direct sensation, but as an abstraction, an ideal entity materialized in the signs of the source language. Indeed, when perceiving the source message, the translator encounters not the reality itself, but rather an image of a fragment of it, reflected in the consciousness of the source text's author. This author's picture of reality may be a more or less accurate reflection, an ideal copy of a real object. It may provide a distorted view of the objective world, and sometimes it is fictional, i.e., an ideal construct modeled by the source text's author. In translation, the author's picture of a fragment of reality collides with the translator's perceptions of that fragment. By deciphering the signs of the source text, the translator creates a mental picture of the fragment based on their subjective



cognitive experience and their ability to penetrate the meanings encoded in the signs of the source language. The translator's understanding of a given fragment of reality is just as subjective as the author's, so complete agreement is unlikely. Sometimes, the translator's understanding of the real world proves more complete and accurate than the author's. This raises the complex ethical issue of whether the translator is allowed to alter the original text's semantic system—that is, the author's understanding of a given fragment of reality. This issue can be resolved in various ways. Naturally, modern translators, convinced that the earth is round, will not correct ancient authors who based their understanding of the world differently. Their task is to convey a certain level of knowledge, including the misconceptions inherent in a given era. A translator encountering, for example, inaccurate dates in a scientific source text will likely leave them unchanged but will supplement the translation with a clarifying comment. In oral communication, a translator encountering an inaccuracy in the original message may leave it to the author's conscience without making any changes. However, this puts them at risk, as they become "co-authors" of an erroneous understanding of the real object, and in the absence of a written record of the original text, the error may be attributed to them. Therefore, if a translator has the opportunity to negotiate disputed points with the original author, they should certainly take advantage of this opportunity to avoid misunderstandings.

A translator's understanding of the real world may be less precise than that of the source text author. In this case, the translation process may result in the substitution of a new, false understanding of reality for a true one, especially when the source text contains ambiguity. Such situations can arise, for example, when translating utterances involving proper names that have the same form in both the masculine and feminine genders. For example, the French name Dominique has a single form for both male and female names, and neither gender nor surname changes in French. Therefore, a translator unfamiliar with the real person denoted by the name will experience difficulty translating a simple phrase where the name is followed by a verb in the past tense, such as: Dominique Aury a écrit la préface. Which form of the verb should be used: wrote or wrote! Lack of precise knowledge of reality will force the translator to transform the utterance in a way that avoids possible distortions. Therefore, instead of Dominique Ory writing (or writing?), the preface might appear, for example: Dominique Ory is the author of the preface.

A translator's inaccurate understanding of the reality reflected in the original speech work turns out to be a serious source of translation errors, especially when it comes



to so-called "realia," i.e., objects of reality that exist in the world of the source language and have no exact analogues in the culture of the target language.

As an example, consider the following statement from M.A. Bulgakov's "Heart of a Dog" and its translation into English:

"Now I'm the chairman, and however much I steal—it all goes on the female body, on crab necks, on Abrau-Durso."

In one of the many English translations of this Bulgakov work, we read: "Now I'm Chairman, and however much I steal—it all goes on the female body, on chocolates, on Crimean champagne."¹ Crab necks end up in English. A variant of chocolate candies. The translator mistakenly associated the concept of crayfish necks with the name of a well-known Russian candy. But the caramel, which is what "Crayfish necks" are, seemed too shabby for this scene, so he transformed the caramel candies into chocolate ones, which was more in keeping with his ideas of luxury and chic in Russia in the 1920s. Thus, crayfish necks, a refined dish even in early 21st-century Russia, became chocolate candies in the translation.

But there is another worldview, that is, a reflected reality with which the translation interacts—the recipient's worldview, or more precisely, the translator's perception of this worldview. We recall from the experience of our predecessors that it was precisely the translator's doubts about the reader's familiarity with the reality described in the original texts that forced them to resort to various kinds of transformations. Jacques Amyot used additions, while other translators simply omitted descriptions of those fragments of reality that they believed might be incomprehensible to the imaginary reader, and also used more general concepts to convey this reality, or replaced descriptions of foreign objects with descriptions of more familiar ones, native to the target culture.

Thus, the surrounding reality finds itself in close and varied interaction with translation as a systemic process.

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