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THE ECOLOGY OF TRANSLATION: TRANSLATION ERROR*

SUMMARY. The paper views the problem of translation error definition and classification. The translation error is understood as a principal factor of the intralingual aspect of ecolinguistics.

KEY WORDS. Ecology of translation, translation error, translation quality.

Currently we can observe the proactive development of the greening trend of various branches of knowledge. Greening process in science leads to new hybrid fields of research. Thus, at the intersection of linguistics and ecology, a new interdisciplinary science — ecolinguistics — appeared. At present it is possible to distinguish three aspects of it: intralingual, interlingual and translingual. Since in this article we consider translation errors, we are interested in the first one, which is associated with the culture of speech, style, rhetoric. It involves the research of violations of correctness, clarity, consistency, expressiveness, and other communicative characteristics of speech.

In this connection, it is postulated that within the ecolinguistics a new trend of the theory of translation — ecology of translation — is evolving. And we believe that the main research subject in the area could be the translation quality. It is well known that in a real translation process the customer tries to get a final product (translation) of the highest quality, which in its term facilitates communication. To confirm what has been said we can quote the words of Vladimir Sdobnikov, who believes that the category of translation quality is “the dominant category of translation, while all the rest categories are subordinate” [1].

As a rule, the level of translation quality is directly related to the amount and nature of errors made. In addition, each participant of the translation process — the client, the author of the source text, the translator, and the editor — treats the concept of “translation error” in his own way and hence there are difficulties in determining the universal parameters of translation quality.

In addition different types of translation require various quality criteria and typology of errors. In this paper we consider only training written translation, which is defined in the following way: *a special kind of translation, whose goal is to develop and consolidate basic universal skills of practical translation.*

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In this regard the main aim of the paper is to classify the translation errors made by students and find out the stage of the translation process, students often make mistakes at.

In the dictionary under D.N. Ushakov error in general is defined as “abnormality in the actions, deeds, sayings, and thoughts. The error is understood as a margin of error” [2].

In fact, errors occur in all spheres of human life, and in any activity they can lead to tragic events. For example, due to air traffic controller error aircraft can stray off the course and crash, due to a medical error a patient may die and an error of a cook can lead to customers poisoning. Unfortunately we face it almost every day. Errors of translators, as well as in any other activity can lead to tragic consequences, especially when it comes to the technical literature. However, there is still no consensus among the scholars about the definition of the translation error and the ways to assess “the degree of harm” of errors in a text. In this regard, we consider it necessary to analyze the existing definitions of translation errors, and bring our own definition of an error in translation, which could be applied to the conditions and objectives of the training written translation.

The majority of the scholars understand the translation error as an invalid deviation from the norms of equivalence. A. D. Schweitzer considers an error “as a content deviation of the target text from the source text” [3]. R.K. Minjar-Beloruhev — as a “measure of the mismatch of the target text to the source text” [4]. V.N. Komissarov — as a “measure of a misleading impact on the reader” [5]. V.K. Lanchikov, doing literary translation, proposes to consider an error in translation as “unintentional error”, the one that was not the intent of the author and thus, it is spontaneous [6].

E.A. Knyazheva notes that the translation error is characterized by the fact that the translator makes it “unconsciously” and mainly because of a low level of his/her professional competence [7].

There is a reference to the translation error in the works of international scholars as well. Thus, Ch. Nord approaches to the definition of the translation error from two sides. According to her, from the standpoint of the interpreter a translation error is “a deviation from the chosen model of translation activity” but from the standpoint of the recipient it is “the discrepancy of the expected target text” [8]. She also notes that in order to determine the translation quality it is not enough to analyze and identify the errors. It is necessary to classify them. However, she does not offer any classification of translation errors. In her view, the customer himself develops translation requirements and determines the goals of translation (skopos). These words are proved by many practicing translators and they say the customers (not being experts on translation) set their own criteria for assessing translation quality and the criteria for errors in translation. Very often such criteria are at variance with literary norms of the target language. In this regard, the current Russian translation market is experiencing the “flood” of the low standard books in translation and the lack of any unified standards of the quality by which one can assess the target text.

M. Magris proposes to define an error in translation as a “violation of the communicative effect exerted by the recipient of the target text, and as a violation of the source text content. The linguists B. Mossop and A. Chesterman understand

the translation error as a “violation of norms” [9]. Thus, we see that Russian and international linguists agree on the definition of the translation error. Representatives of the two schools stand out any violation of the norm as the main characteristic of the translation error, deviation from the source text content, the mismatch of the communicative effect of the source text to the communicative effect of the target text and “unintentionality” of making a mistake.

Thus, summarizing the known information about the translation itself and taking into account the definition of error in general and the definitions of translation errors, proposed by the linguists, we can derive our own definition of the translation error. Based on the fact that the error involves abnormality, one should find out what correctness (normality) means in translation. In other words, it is necessary to determine the so called “subject” of the violation which will fail the translation.

Let’s start with the general understanding of translation which is defined as “an exact reproduction of the source text by means of another language while preserving the unity of content and style” [10].

The translator chooses a translation strategy — under which it is understood “the order and nature of translator’s actions when translating a particular text” [11] — in every single situation of translation. To implement it, h/she uses various techniques that serve to improve the translation quality and to achieve its communicative purpose. The failure to implement the translation strategy leads to errors that violate the norms of equivalence and lower the translation quality. But if the techniques are of conscious nature (they are thought over) then errors occur unconsciously and unintentionally [12].

It is possible to formulate the following normative requirements for the target text. They are:

1. The norm of translation equivalence.
2. The genre and stylistic norm.
3. The norm of the translator’s parole.
4. The pragmatic norm of the target text.
5. The conventional norm of translation.

If at least one of these requirements is violated the translation will contain an error. Therefore, we conclude that *the unconscious violation of any normative requirements for the target text* is a translation error.

Now let’s turn to the description of the general classification of translation errors made in the training written translation. We first examined ten classifications of translation errors proposed by Russian and international linguists (D.M. Buzadzhi, N.K. Garbovsky, V.N. Komissarov, V. Lanchikov, L.K. Latishev, A.G. Minchenkov, V.V. Sdobnikov, Ch. Nord, J.-R. Admiral, and F. Shiaffino Ziari). We analyzed each classification in terms of its strong and weak sides. Working out the classification we take into account the fact that the most effective analysis of translation errors is the one which considers the stages of the translation process. Due to this fact, the N.K. Garbovsky classification based on the hermeneutic approach was adopted for the purpose. We also took into account the classification by other scholars — Cr. Nord, J.-R. Admiral, and F. Shiaffino Ziari. Based on all this we developed the classification that has the following form:

1. Errors at the stage of the source text perception.

- “Denotation — Concept” errors
- “Denotation — Complex Concept” errors
- “Denotation — Content” errors

2. Errors at the translating stage.

- Errors of fact
- Lexical errors
- Grammatical errors
- Aesthetic errors: *stylistic errors; loan translation; translation licence.*
- Formal errors: *punctuation errors; spelling errors; text composition errors.*

Working out this classification, we tried to take into account the degree of influence of these errors on the translation quality, as well as the degree of compliance/non-compliance with the normative requirements for translation.

Thus, the violation of any norm of translation equivalence is reflected in the errors that occur at the stage of the source text perception (perception stage), as well as in the errors of fact and translation licence. These types of errors are directly related to the content of the text. Violation of the genre and stylistic norm is reflected in the errors at the translating stage, namely, in the stylistic errors. Violation of the norm of the translator’s parole is reflected in the lexical and grammatical errors. Loan translation is also related here, since the presence of these errors in the target text “shakes” the norm and usage of the target language.

The violation of the pragmatic norm, in fact, is reflected in all types of errors listed in the above classification, since the degree of pragmatic capacity reproduction depends on the compliance/non-compliance with any norm of translation. All types of errors manifest unconscious disregard of conventional norm of translation, because it includes all of the above norms.

Further we illustrate the examples of the most common translation errors and present the results of the research. The data for study — translations of the articles from the American journal *Structure* made by the students studying for the additional qualification “Translator in the field of professional communication”.

According to the research results the most common errors are at the perception stage. Among them lexical errors at the level of word group translation are the most common (“Denotation — Complex Concept” errors). For example:

Source text: The new structural system developed in this process, the braced spine, is an efficient concept for super-tall buildings.

Back translated text from Russian: The new efficient construction system with kernel hardness, developed in this process, is an efficient concept for ultra-high buildings.

Here a student translated the two word groups (underlined) without taking into account their unique equivalents among the construction terms.

The results of error analysis at this level allow us to conclude that it is difficult for the students to understand complex concepts in English. In the case it was also complicated by the specific terms (construction and architecture ones) which were translated wrong in most cases.

At the perception stage the errors are associated with the lack of knowledge of the international language (English). The errors at this stage are resulted from the

incorrect translation techniques. A student-translator refers the given denotations to the wrong concepts: these denotations do not reflect these concepts. These errors can also occur when a student is faced with the translation of ambiguous words or words-exoticisms.

The grammatical, aesthetic, and formal errors were the most common ones at the translating stage.

Grammatical errors are the errors of non-compliance with word-formation and syntax norms.

The analysis of the selected grammatical errors shows that the majority of the students make mistakes in agreeing the Noun with the Adjective in gender, number, and case, as well as in the wrong choice of mood and verb aspect.

The aesthetic errors are associated with the violation of the aesthetic impact of the target text. The translation licence was among such the most common errors.

Loan translation means unreasoned omission of a translation unit (a minimum meaningful lexical unit to be translated), or its addition. For example:

Source text: The structural challenge lies in addressing the nonstandard conditions that arise due to its unusual form.

Back translated text from Russian: The challenges lie in addressing the nonstandard conditions that arise due to its unusual shape.

Here a student-translator for no apparent reason omitted the translation of the adjective *structural* which is used as a term in this context.

As a result, we found that the students often omit translation of adjectives, subordinate parts of sentence, and they use semantic modulation that is not proved by the context.

The formal errors are directly related to the plane of expression. The errors of this type are mainly due to the violations of the rules of punctuation and spelling. The analysis of the translated texts showed that the students make the largest number of punctuation mistakes associated with the placement of commas and spaces between words. In most cases, students are missing or conversely, put an extra comma between the parts of a complex sentence marking participial constructions, and introductory structures.

Thus, we found that the majority (87%) of the errors are made at the translating stage, less (13%) — at the perception stage.

58% of the errors at the translating stage involve a violation of the formal structure of the text (punctuation, spelling, composition errors). The students make less aesthetic and grammatical errors (15% and 14% respectively). And the errors of fact are rarer (2%).

In conclusion we can say the following. Firstly, the proposed classification of the translation errors is simple and intelligible enough to be applied in a training translation course (with the help of it the students can assess themselves in the process of self-editing). Secondly, this classification takes into account the theoretical knowledge in the field of the theory of translation. Thirdly, it clearly reflects the manifestation of the intralingual aspect of translation process.

It is planned (on the basis of the classification) to develop a set of recommendations to reduce the errors of each type.

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