

The Notion of Norm in The History of Translation: Pragmatic Aspects

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The notion of norm (or adequacy of the translation) has been discussed from different points of view in Soviet linguistics: the literary norm, the norm of the target language, the stylistic norm, the norm of equivalence (the latter is further divided into several categories-phonetic, lexical, grammatical, communicative) /Komissarov, 1980/.

In this paper we shall consider the pragmatic aspects of translation that are connected with the participants in the translation act: the Sender (S), the Reciever (R), the Translator (Tr).

Most East European and Soviet linguists view translation as indirect cross-language and cross-cultural communication (Jager, 1975: Komissarov, 1980: Shveitser, 1988). Translation is necessitated when participants do not share a common language; due to this, direct communication, which is a two phase process (creation of the text by S and perception of the text by R), indirect communication via a Tr has in addition an intermediate stage, of transforming the text expressed in one language code into the language code of the R. The task of the Tr is to facilitate the contact between participants who do not share a common language, and to retain an equivalence between the original text and the text that results from the transformation. The translator's role is complicated by the fact that the primary communication act and the secondary communication act may be taking place in different historical, temporal and cultural locations. The author of the original text and the eventual receiver do not only speak different languages but also belong to two

different cultural systems. The Tr on the other hand, is both bi-lingual and bi-cultural, and he has not only to translate the text, but to "transport" the culture. It is only through the translation that we experience other people's worlds, other people's lands, other people's cultures. Indeed, a great deal of our culture is "la cultura traducida" (Santoyo, 1983: 41). Russia got Heine through Zhukovsky, Shakespeare through Marshak and Pasternak, Hemingway through Kashkin and Cervantes through Lubimov. The specific bilingual and bi-cultural nature of the Tr's position in the indirect communicative act has a two-fold effect on his performance in the roles of the Sender in the primary communicative situation, and the Sender in the secondary communicative situation.

While perusing the original text, the Tr takes special notice of those components that might present difficulty to his potential R, who has a different cultural background. In fact, for the Tr the perusal stage is a sort of a pre-translation phase.

His role as Sender is much more complicated than the role of the primary Sender who is motivated by his own communicative intention. The creation of the text by the Tr is heavily constrained by such factors as the temporal and cultural distance that separate the primary R and the secondary R. This causes two problems: should this distance be maintained or eliminated?

How should the temporal and cultural divergence be communicated? It is up to the Translator to choose the solution, but his decision is greatly influenced by the contemporary translation norm and his own position.

Some think that the Tr must be faithful to the text in which the author's communicative intention is manifested, and should try to do his best to convey the historical and cultural features specific to the original. Others, however, consider that the Tr should be faithful to the reader and preserve the original relations between the author and his primary Receiver, who in the primary communication were not separated by any cultural or temporal gap. As Levy puts it "Cervantes wrote his *Don Quixote* in the language that for his readers was neutral and devoid of archaic or regionally coloured words. It is only logical to assume that he should be translated into a language which is neutral and comprehensible for the contemporary reader". (Levy, 1974:128). This way the Tr is more likely to convey the communicative intention of the author and achieve a pragmatic equivalent of the translation.

We shall consider the position of different translators of Lewis Carroll's book *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in the Soviet Union. The fantastic

fairly tale created by an Oxford professor of mathematics in 1865 is probably one of the best known in the world. It has been translated into 50 languages (including Swahili, Australian Aboriginal language and Esperanto). It has been translated into Russian ten times within the span of a hundred years. The first translation appeared in 1879, the last came out in 1971.

We can differentiate two main trends in these translations:

1) the addressee oriented translation, and 2) the text oriented translation. The addressee oriented translations are based on a pragmatic assumption of the cultural difference between the primary and the secondary Receiver. This was typical for the first translations and is best represented in the translation undertaken by Vladimir Nabokov in 1923. (Nabokov, 1989)

Nabokov's pragmatic adaptation of the text for a Russian child's perception was achieved by the following means:

The substitution of Russian names and forms of address for the British: Alice becomes Anya, Pat and Bill are changed into Pet'ka and Yashka (popular everyday names) and the white Rabbit also gets a Russian name and the title "dvoryanin", he is addressed as "barin" and "vashe blagorodie";

- the replacement of English realia by aspects of Russian life: the jar that Alice picks up while falling down the rabbit hole is a jar of strawberry jam, because orange marmalade was unknown in Russia, the fence is called "pleten" and the injured man is given water, not brandy;
- the change of historical events: the Mouse comes to Russia with the Napoleonic army and not to the British Isles with William the Conqueror; to dry the animals in the Pool of Tears the Mouse reads a dull passage about the history of Kiev Rus' and not about the Norman Conquest;
- the use of popular Russian verses and rhymes to make parodies: Pushkin and Maikov are quoted instead of Watts Langford and South, and well known proverbs and sayings are employed for puns and plays on words.

To adopt Carroll's syntax to the Russian language norm Nabokov resorts to various transformations cutting down complex sentences into simpler syntactic structures, replacing semi-predicative constructions by full sentences, etc. However, the language of Nabokov's translation

sometimes sounds rather old-fashioned due to the use of words and constructions which are no longer common in contemporary Russian (vorotilas, sperva, stkyanochka, konfekty, budet, tebe, rassudila etc.)

The result of these adaptations is somewhat strange. The heroes have Russian names and are placed in a Russian setting, but their behaviour is unmistakably British. This discrepancy does lessen the communicative effect of the book for the contemporary reader.

Test oriented translators try to be faithful to the original text and take pains to convey its specific features. This tendency is best illustrated by Natalya Demurova (a well known scholar and literary critic) in her translation first published in Sofia, and reproduced in the academic edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in 1978. (Demurova 1978).

Demurova makes wide use of translator's notes, which allow her to reveal the meaning of the literary and historical allusions in the book, and to convey all the specific features of British life without simplifications. She seldom employs syntactic transformations unless absolutely necessary, and when she does she builds on the basic structure of the sentence and uses both grammatical and lexical methods to convey the meaning. Out of possible syntactic variants, she chooses those which are the most structurally parallel to the original, although they may not be the most common ones in contemporary Russian.

While translating lexical items Demurova gives preference either to neutral or bookish words (verno, rasmishlat', naskuchilo, vposledstviu etc.). As a result, her Alice sounds dry and bookish because Demurova faithfully reproduces in her translation, late C19, middle class English, the characters lose much of their vigour and vitality, and perhaps credibility. Consequently, the communicative intention of the author is irreparably damaged, if not lost.

A more successful attempt to "transport" Alice to Russia was made by the well-known children's writer Boris Zhachoder in 1971 (Zhachoder 1971). He achieved this by using two devices: he preserved the cultural background of the original and boldly transformed the language, adapting the syntax and vocabulary to contemporary colloquial Russian. He also reinforced some of the stylistic devices of the book—the magic, and the feeling of suspense. The changes were so fundamental that he had to supplement his translation with the subtitle "a fairy tale told by Boris Zhachoder". The result was worth the effort: his Alice remains an English girl with English manners and English ways, she is unmistakably foreign,

but not distant or remote. Her image is not blurred by the dust of time, but stands clear and vivid in our imaginations.

We shall refrain from passing a final judgement on the quality of the translations reviewed here, because we have to consider the opinion once expressed by Fray Luis de Leon: "de lo que es traducido, el que quisier ser juez pruebe primero que cosa es traducir poesias elegantes de una lengua extraña en la suya sin añadir ni quitar sentencia y guardar cuanto es posible las figuras de su original y hacer que hablen en castellano y no como nacidas en el". (Luis de Leon 1987: 67)

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