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Abstract

Out of 1661 publication authored by 158 Latvian translatologists and terminologists forming the Latvian Translatological Publications Corpus Bibliography, articles in Latvian, English, German and Russian with titles containing terms meaning, nozīme, Bedeutung and значение were chosen in this study as a case study to illustrate the potential of the corpus. Presently the interest has mostly been in the intercultural, terminological and pragmatic aspects of meaning in translation, interaction of connotative meaning in the contexts of cultural transorientation in translation, linguistic and extralinguistic aspects of meaning in translation. In future a more clearly formulated analysis methodology will be worked out.

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Keywords: Translation; meaning; corpus bibliography; intercultural, terminological and pragmatic aspects.

1. Introduction

Origins of the corpus-based research project “Translation Theory and Applied Translation Studies in Latvia: 1991 – 2014” can be traced back to the year of 2000 when in the end of August and the first week of September students and academic staff members of three higher education establishments of Norway, Finland and Latvia – namely, the Department of Foreign Languages and Translation of the University of Agder (in 2000 – Agder...
For example, a publication dealing with terminological issues can be treated as a part of applied translation studies. A similar pattern can be observed in the case of lexicography and theoretical terminology science, or else be characterized as a publication concerning translation aids and thus being part and parcel of applied translation studies. A similar pattern can be observed in the case of lexicography and theoretical and/or applied translation studies, research in corpus linguistics and translation studies etc.

In a corpus (or one could call it a list, a database) of this type, as some translation scholars state (Grant, & Mezei, 2007, p. 80), creation and thematic arrangement of a thesaurus of translatological publication domains is a formidable challenge. The author of this article is still in the process of completing his monograph “Translation Studies in Latvia. Theoretical and Applied Research: 1991 – 2014” and is working on the chapters where the material is presented in the form of historically descriptive survey of theoretical and applied publications according to a thesaurus-type arrangement principle. As the work at the project that was started in summer of 2014 is still going on there is a temptation to update the corpus adding research articles and books published in 2015 and in the first half of 2016; so far the author has successfully withstood this urge. One of the challenges is the need to acquaint the international community of translation scholars with some of the findings of this research, and that has been partly achieved (see the beginning of the article and the list of references).

Going deeper and deeper into details of research in history of translation studies in Latvia the author has discovered that there are numerous cases of duality or overlap which make it problematic to define a research article, textbook or monograph as belonging to only one definite category, direction or sub-direction of translatological research. For example, a publication dealing with terminological issues can be treated as an application of problem-restricted research in theoretical translation studies, or it may be considered to belong to terminology science, or else be characterized as a publication concerning translation aids and thus being part and parcel of applied translation studies. A similar pattern can be observed in the case of lexicography and theoretical and/or applied translation studies, research in corpus linguistics and translation studies etc.

The problem of choice caused by the fuzziness and overlap of interdisciplinary borders characteristic to postmodernism often is further complicated by the intrinsic features of interdisciplinarity characteristic to the contemporary translation studies: structuring a variety of knowledge sources around a common topic and applying common tools, methods and approaches across disciplines. As Tim Woods had already noted almost twenty years
ago “postmodernism has acquired semantic instability or a shifting meaning that shadows and echoes its notes of indeterminacy and insecurity” (Woods, 1999, p. 3).

Sara Rovira Esteva, Pilar Orero and Javier Franco Aixelá (2015, p. 159) note that at present “there are over 110 living specialized journals in Translation Studies (TS) throughout the world, […] the number of scientific publications […] in our field exceeds 60,000 items, with over 40,000 in the last 20 years”. They have noticed that mostly books are cited by translation theorists, and if a translatologist’s research article is not published in a specialized Translation Studies journal then it “runs the risk of becoming invisible” (Esteva, Orero, & Aixelá, 2015, p. 159).

Once again, the aim of the present research article is to demonstrate how LTPCB containing more than 1600 publications can be used in a more detailed analysis of a concrete translatological issue. The issue of meaning in translation was a random choice to illustrate the possibilities of choosing a certain number of existing publications for a case study of one of the most general and simultaneously most essential problem of research in translation studies – namely, the problem of meaning in translation. By this example the intention of the author is not to give an in-depth and exhaustive scrutiny of the issue of meaning, because one could say that all publications in translation studies deal with the meaning problem in one or several of its intralinguistic, extralinguistic, interlinguistic and intercultural aspects, but just to demonstrate to effectivity of LTPCB.

At first the intention was to apply a purely bibliometric (i.e., statistical analysis of written publications) approach to LTPCB - those publications where words meaning, nožīme, Bedeutung and значение were directly used in the titles. Unfortunately, the number of such publications seemed to be not quite sufficient and therefore several other articles and books thematically close to the ones already chosen were added.

Below is the description of the chosen material of publications where one of the categories of classification cutting across all the directions and subdirections of translatological research, is the issue of meaning in translation:

- Meaning - general linguistic and extralinguistic issues of translation and interpreting;
- Pragmatic meaning in translation and interpreting;
- Transformation of meaning in translation of terminology of different areas (philosophy, medicine, social care, as well as administrative terminology);
- Meaning in the process of cultural transfer;
- Meaning transfer of phraseologisms in interpreting.

(Fields like “meaning of anthroponyms in literary translation” and “translator’s false friends” - this significant issue is represented by around 20 publications and will be examined more closely in another future research project, are not included in the present analysis due to the maximum limit of 8 pages allowed by the publisher for an individual paper.)

2. Meaning: General linguistic and extralinguistic issues of translation and interpreting

In 2008 a textbook wholly devoted to the category of meaning (nožīme in Latvian) – “Nozīme valodā: lingvistiskie un ekstralingvistiskie aspekti” (Meaning in Language: Linguistic and Extralinguistic Aspects) was published in Latvian (Nītiņa, Iljinska, & Platonova, 2008). Authors pointed out that the textbook was “meant for those specializing in philology, linguistics or translation, as well as for those interested in linguistic issues” (Nītiņa, Iljinska, & Platonova, 2008, p. 3). Target readership of the textbook are also students to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the nature of language and modern linguistics.

Being a textbook the publication provides relatively general information on linguistic meaning and linguistic semantics, discusses meaning problems examined in linguostylistics, terminology science, as well as in contrastive linguistics and translation theory (tulkošanas teorija in Latvian). Here we are mainly interested in the last mentioned domain – survey of meaning-related issues in contrastive linguistics and “translation theory” (Nītiņa, Iljinska and Platonova, 2008, p. 200–222). It can be deduced from the 23 pages long text that the Latvian term tulkošanas teorija (translation theory) is used by the authors of the textbook in a wider sense, meaning translation studies (tulkojumzinātne or translatologija in Latvian) as problems discussed belong not only to “pure” or theoretical and descriptive translation studies, but also to applied translation studies where issues of translator training, translation aids and translation criticism are examined; as it can be seen, translatologija is mentioned on page 276 of the
It should be explained that the author of this article prefers to adhere to the “classical” approach of James Holmes in his *Map of Translation Studies* (Holmes, 1972/1988, p. 67–80) where Elena Zagar Galvão characterizes as “a place where many wonderful things can be found” (Galvão, 2007, p. 12). One can fully agree with Galvão and Gideon Toury, who saw this map as a legitimate starting point for further studies (Toury, 1995, p. 10).

Chapter 7 of the book has the title “Sastatāmā valodniecība un tulkošanas teorija” (Contrastive Linguistics and Translation Theory) provides a concise survey of contrastive research of meaning in both synchronic and diachronic planes. It is mentioned that contrastive studies of linguistic meaning can be traced back to the works of linguists in ancient India and ancient Babylon. The textbooks authors have pointed out the significant role of bilateral information flow and examples of joint research of contrastive linguists and translation theorists. This tendency has become especially topical since the end of the 20th century (Firbas, 1992). Nītiņa, Iļjinska and Platonova have allotted a separate subchapter (Nītiņa, Iļjinska, & Platonova, 2008, 212–215) to meaning in the so-called “eurotexts” and parallel Latvian terminology existing in their translation, referring to Andrejs Veisbergs’ publication “Mutiskā tulkošana un latviešu valoda (valodiskie aspekti)” (Interpreting and Latvian Language (language aspects) - Veisbergs, 2000, p. 168–177).

Indra Grietēna (2011) examines the interrelations between *word* and *sense* in interpreting (adopting the term once used by St. Jerome as a synonym of *meaning*). Grietēna stresses the need to reformulate the source language utterance in a way that produces a pragmatically equivalent effect on the audience; successful solutions and also failures have been provided as illustrative material, revealing the ambiguous nature of meaning in translation and interpreting, viewing sense as a result of both human verbal and mental activity (Grietēna, 2011, p. 167).

### 3. Pragmatic meaning in translation and interpreting

Andrejs Veisbergs in “Pragmatic Meaning in Language, Translation and Interpreting” (2008, p. 223–241) writes that meaning in relation to context traditionally used to delimitate pragmatics and semantics. The latter deals with context-independent meaning while pragmatics emphasizes the functional relatedness of language with other factors of human life (Verschueren, 1998, p. 9). Thus, meaning should not be seen as a fixed counterpart to linguistic form, but rather is dynamically generated in the process of using language. We have to look at the meaning in general in order to delineate pragmatic meaning as it envelopes so many things – deference, indirectness, politeness, manipulation, vagueness, ambiguity, hidden message.” (Veisbergs, 2008, p. 224). This kind of Veisberg’s treatment of deference, indirectness etc. may be of the same nature as John L. Austin’s “illocutionary acts” (Austin, 1962/1975, p. 121, 139) where meaning of words and other linguistic units containing meaning can be seen as context-bound and always being in a state of flux.

Veisbergs, similarly to the representatives of the Manipulation School, states that any transfer of meaning from the source text to the target text is a manipulation which is of a twofold nature: on the one hand, it is a conscious attempt of the translator made for the sake of the target text readership, on the other hand, it is of a subconscious character determined by translator’s “personality traits, thinking paradigms, social environment, translation history” (Veisbergs, 2008, p. 232). Here Andrejs Veisbergs is of a similar opinion with Andrew Chesterman who in his “Memes of Translation” has warned that translators should be aware and take responsibility of the manipulative character of decision making in the translation process (Chesterman, 1997, p. 163).

Author of the article focuses his attention more on expressive texts and less on vocative and informative texts – this naturally does not belittle the importance of the above-mentioned pragmatic aspects in relation to other text types.

Andrejs Veisbergs continues evaluating translatorial manipulations (or interpretations) of meaning, finding differences in these manipulations in comparing the previously described translators’ approach to interpreters activities. He finds that “in some ways” interpreting is less manipulative as far as the receiver is concerned. Still, Veisbergs notes that the extent of manipulations in interpreting grows, but manipulations in interpreting are often caused by the use of coping tactics (Gile 1995, p. 191–201) resulting in ungrammatical and “clipped” sentences, merging of semantically similar constructions etc. – manipulations not being consciously introduced.

Veisbergs comes to several conclusions, firstly, recreation of pragmatic meaning in the target language influences the target text much more than different structural differences, secondly, this consideration makes translator to be maximally precise in all the nuances of reproducing the original in all the shades of its pragmatic meanings. Author
ends with a question if translator’s approach has been far from precision: “Can the target text in this case be regarded as a translation of the original text?” (Veisbergs, 2008, p. 341). This approach to a certain extent goes back to admitting translation’s stricter adherence to the original in all linguistic and extralinguistic aspects and indirectly opposes the approach of another Latvian translation scholar Ieva Zauberga (1999, p. 96–101) who, following poststructuralists (i.e., Derrida), argues that “the meaning of the text depends on interpretation, i.e. on the translator” (Zauberga, 1999, p. 97).

4. Transformation of meaning in translation of terminology

4.1. Philosophical terminology

Zaiga Ikere’s central theme of research in the domain of translation studies has been closely connected with her translations of philosophical texts, mainly from English into Latvian, that began with her involvement in a long-term project of publishing series of books that formed an anthology of translations of excerpts from the works of 25 world’s great philosophers; the project started in the first part of 1970s. She started her research with an article on the meaning of philosophical terms in the beginning of the 1980ies and since then has had more than 40 publications and a monograph (Ikere, 2010) dealing with the meaning problem in translation and terminology.

Zaiga Ikere has examined translation tradition as an integral part of a nation’s spiritual culture (Ikere, 2010, p. 147). In her monograph “Translating English Philosophical Terminology into Latvian: a Semantic Approach” (ibid.) she concentrates upon translation history of Immanuel Kant’s term Vernunft into Latvian by analysing decisions made by six translators in the period of time from 1638 to 1872, as well as presents opinions of several respected lexicographers (Kārlis Mīlenbahs, Jānis Endzelīns, & Carl Christian Ulmann) and follows the stabilisation of the translation of Vernunft up to the late 1930s, shows the traditional translation as a sum of experience of numerous authors. Every new translation challenges all the previous ones and may reject previous choices, but tradition undoubtedly serves as a launching pad for newer and better solutions.

In the mentioned monograph (Ikere, 2010) the author examines issues directly related to translation of philosophical terms: meaning theories and meaning interpretation, the processes of Synonymy and Polysemy in Latvian Philosophical terminology, history of the formation of Latvian Philosophical terminology, as well as the invariability of original linguistic forms of General philosophical concepts across “cultures and centuries” Ikere, 2010, p. 7, 187–204).

In “Translating Ordinary Language Words Used as Terms in the Philosophical Discourse” (2012, p. 39) Zaiga Ikere points out that the lexical items of the ordinary language belonging to the neutral layer of the literary vocabulary are used as terms in the philosophical texts. Translating these as terms in the context of a philosophical discourse involves a number of problems.

When philosophers use ordinary language words as terms of their scientific discipline the ordinary language words acquire a specific meaning – a good example here can be John Austin’s “How to Do Things with Words” (Austin, 1962/1975, p. 121, 139). The translator has to be aware of this distinction and adequately render it in the target language. It is this imprecision in the distinction these words involve that translators of philosophical texts have to deal with.

In texts of this type (i.e., texts dealing with philosophy as science) translators have to cope with translation of the polysemy of categories present in the semantic scope of the source language words. The problem of ambiguity refers to words displaying features, in their semantics belonging to different categories simultaneously. These are terms referring to the theory of knowledge, namely, epistemology: these are such epistemological terms as reason, understanding, judgement, the Kantian term Erkenntniss, etc. The paper deals with instances of translation into Latvian.

4.2. Administrative terminology

In the article “Interpretation Problems in Translation of Names of Institutions and Administrative Posts” (Silis, 2004, p. 249–254) an opinion is expressed that these problems occur mainly because of the lack of terminological standardization in Latvian terminology due to the domination of Russian in the period of time between 1945 and
1990. Later on terms reflecting Soviet administrative culture had to be functionally “reinterpreted” according to the administrative tradition of the European Union, finding names of Latvian institutions, organizations and structures functionally corresponding to the Western ones. Names of institutions and denominations of administrative posts cannot be perceived as terminological units in their classical understanding, therefore the translation and interpreting problem here is that of cross-cultural compatibility.

4.3. Terminology of medicine and social care


The initial definition of invalid as noun in Latvian was “a serviceman having lost the ability to perform military service and is provided assistance by the state” (Baltiņš, 2002). In connection with generalization of meaning of Latvian invalids a translation problem of international documents has emerged, especially if the source language was English. The problem is related to the fact that, although invalid in the meaning of a feeble, weak person exists in English, it has never been used neither in legal acts regulating social safety, nor in cases when individual capacity for labour is described.

Māris Baltiņš advises to use synonyms of invaliditāte (the state of being an invalid or a disabled person) relying on classification provided by the “International classification of impairments, disabilities and handicaps” (ICF, 2001) that offers several synonyms: impairment corresponding to Latvian neveselība, disability corresponding to Latvian nespēja, and handicap corresponding to Latvian nevarība.

It is interesting to note that the term handicap exists in Latvian in the form of handikaps, but traditionally it has a positive meaning of advantage, boon or preferential treatment that “in sport competition is granted to weaker participants” (Baldunčiks, 1999).

Therefore, handikaps cannot be used in the context of impairment or handicapped person.

5. Meaning in the process of cultural transfer

Ieva Zauberga has examined the interrelation between connotational meaning and culture transorientation in translations (Zauberga, 1995, p. 89, 1996, p. 86–96), as well as analyzed the interconnection of ideology and meaning (Zauberga, 2000, p. 26–29).

Intercultural issues was the most widely examined domain in the beginning of the 1990ies.

Ieva Zauberga has been one of the most productive authors to analyze interaction of the national and international factors, conduct research on problems of transference of culture background in translations, as well as pinpoint the culture imperatives of Latvian translation, she also has written about the interaction of meaning and cultural transorientation in translation. During the second half of the decade Ieva Zauberga became interested in the nature of translations as hybrid texts viewing them as a natural consequence of crossing cultural barriers. Ieva Zauberga pointed out that hybridity is an inevitable feature of cross-cultural communication. She also has displayed concern for Latvian language when stressing the necessity for translation of marginalized literature into major languages, and showed that through translations into the major languages of the world assume the role of “gateways” for minor literatures. Zauberga pointed out that the receiving culture (target culture) is nowadays determining translation strategy; but the target culture must also be receptive to the otherness of the source culture. Ieva Zauberga was the first translatologist in Latvia to draw attention to translational norm in advertisement transfer.

Ieva Zauberga has been rethinking translator’s reliability and has pointed out that translation is no longer regarded as a mere copy of the original, it is oriented towards target audience; because of this translator/interpreter is no longer a mere reproducer. This presentation made at the 1st Ventspils University College conference “Interpreting and Translation as Intercultural Communication: Theory, Practice, instruction Methods” (October 29 - 31, 1998) created lively discussion, because so far it had been unusual to give translator, and especially interpreter, this degree of freedom. A separate article by Ieva Zauberga has provided an insight into the developments of translation theory in the end of the 20th century (particularly the impact of feminism). Ieva Zauberga has also characterized the variables of quality assessment in interpreting.
6. Meaning transfer of phraseologisms in interpreting

In her article “Phraseologisms in Interpreting” (Gaile, 2011, p. 145–152) Linda Gaile begins with a range of definitions where the term “meaning” (nozīme) is mentioned: phraseologism as a combination of at least two words where the meaning has not been derived from the meanings of the separate words forming phraseologism. According to Andrejs Veisbergs, a phraseologism consists of at least two components where one or all components are used in figurative (transferred) meaning (Veisbergs, 1999, p. 5). Linda Gaile also mentions the viewpoints of Maigone Beitiņa, Werner Koller, Julia Sevilla Muñoz, singling out similarity of approaches from the point of view of translation studies. She points out that proficiency level in the job of an interpreter must be so high as to know the usage patterns and the meaning of phraseological units both in the source and target language in order to skillfully reproduce phraseologisms in the interpreted version. The strategies to be chosen by the interpreter are use of equivalent phraseologism, substitution, use of a phraseological unit or expression semantically similar to the original, choice of a more literal target language version (Gaile, 2011, p. 150).

7. The translational research potential of LTPCB

To sum up what was said before, the author would like to repeat that publications described in this study represent just an illustrative insight into a Translation Studies research issue, which simultaneously is of a most general and most specifically targeted domain. As it was stated earlier, the research of meaning in translation is present in practically all translational publications not only in Latvia, but on a global scale. The present article is an impressionistic attempt to demonstrate how this all-embracing issue of translation theory and applied studies could be used in a rather limited glimpse into what aspects of meaning have caused interest of Latvian authors in the last quarter of century.

The idea to look into the research potential of something that can be called a temporally (1991 – 2014) and spatially (Latvia) limited corpus bibliography of publications in Translation Studies as a research discipline was not the initial aim of the author. This goal crystalized in the process of finding a justification for the rather “unscientific” primary choice of publications for a sketchy survey. Surprisingly enough it has led to an unexpected metadisciplinary turn probably important for publications review in any branch of science.

In her research project concerning quantitative research methods and study quality in the UCL Learner Corpus Magali Paquot (Paquot, 2015) points out that theoretical methodological and empirical findings in a corpus-bibliographical research pertaining to a specific scientific discipline are rarely summarized, especially in a specific area of study. Paquot uses techniques of research synthesis and meta-analysis. Partly this is also true of the sphere of translational publications analysis.

The author of this article believes that use of this corpus bibliography will methodologically benefit any translational research not only dealing with historiography of Translation Studies in Latvia and elsewhere, but also in examining any issue of translatology, be it of a major or minor theoretical and applied research scale.

References


