METHODOLOGY OF ASSESSING THE QUALITY OF TRANSLATION AND ITS ROLE IN THE TEACHING PROCESS

R.A. Ayupova*, K.M. Dullieva, M.A. Kulkova

Kazan Federal University, 2 Tatarstan Street, Kazan, 420021,
Republic of Tatarstan **(RUSSIAN FEDERATION**
*Corresponding author: rozaayupoa@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The paper is devoted to the problem of translation quality assessing. After the study of various translation quality assessment methods proposed by theorists in the field of translator training methodology the conclusion is made that the translation process, being quite a complex process, requires a holistic approach to its evaluation. The proposed article describes the research into translation assessment process, the classification of errors found in translations, and correction of mistakes, viewing the last one as an inherent part of teaching translation. The study is carried out within the confines of traditional contest of literary translation by the systematically working jury members. The researchers use three methods proposed by modern methodology of translation quality assessment, preliminarily adapting them to literary translation evaluation. The authors of the current paper add retaining the image of the literary text to one of the methods, which includes the transfer of the character image and the basic descriptions. Systematic application of these methods in correction of mistakes during 4 years led to a serious enhancement of quality of translation executed by the project participants. Especially notable success is observed in translation of national realia, idioms and fixed or set-expressions, which is explained by the fact of their data base accumulation by the students, learning specificities of such linguistic units meaning and translations.

Key words: translation quality assessment, transfer of content, transfer of the character image, national realia, idiom, set-expression

1. INTRODUCTION

The methodology of teaching translation is a relatively young branch of translation theory. Consequently, due to a number of factors, it is one of the least developed issue, though it plays a very important role in the process of teaching translation. One of the aforementioned factors is the lack of elaborated criteria for translation quality assessment, some of which being based on subjective opinions. Then, the comparison of different translations of the same text, which may be matching at certain language levels, may go beyond a purely linguistic description encompassing the plane of psychology, cultural studies, etc. Moreover, there are no criteria of translation quality assessment when dealing with different types and genres of texts. And these are not all challenges that we face when trying to assess translation quality.

However, it should be noted that the understanding of this problem and the attempt of its solution by such researchers as V. Komissarov [Komissarov, 1990], S. Campbell [Campbell, 1991], H. Sager [Sager, 1989], etc. were observed as early as in the late 80-s of the last century. So, in 1989 Juan Sager proposed, that during the evaluation of translation quality we must take into account not only the type of errors, but also the impact of each individual error on the overall translation quality. He defined 3 types of this influence: 1) linguistic; 2) semantic; 3) pragmatic [Sager, 1989]. Sager also noted that an absolute translation quality standard does not exist; there are translations, which are more or less suitable for the function which they are designed to perform.

Miroslav Bázlik in his work devoted to the analysis of translation errors during the work with legal texts wrote about the following requirements for the translation adequacy: appropriateness, conceptual adequacy, grammatical correctness, stylistic adequacy, correct spelling, graphical quality. As the factors which cause difficulties in the process of translation, he calls polysemantic words, synonyms, collocations, faux amis, grammar influencing meaning, different views of the same reality [Bázlik, 2009].

Campbell determines three factors of translation quality: «lexical coding of meaning, global target language competence and lexical transfer competence» [Campbell, 1991, p. 231].

The work of a Russian researcher, M. Kunilovskaya pays attention to the necessity of developing the common criteria for translation quality assessment. The author proposes to develop these criteria on the basis of statistical analysis for translation evaluation schemes by different teachers working in different conditions and in different audiences. However, she suggests a special coefficient «inter-rater agreement called Krippendorff's alpha» be used [Kunilovskaya, 2015].

C. Stansfield and his colleagues believe that there are two groups of translation competence, on which the translation quality depends: 1) an adequate transfer of an original text content into a target language; and 2) the adequacy of this content expression within a target language [Stansfield et al, 1992].

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

As the empirical material for our research we took the works of senior students from schools of Tatarstan Republic and other regions of Russia carried out within the confines of Tatar-English literary translation contest. The selection of an unusual direction of translation - the translation into a foreign language - is related to the main goal of the contest, which is to draw the attention of the talented youth to brilliant works of native Tatar literature. Nearly 300 students participate in this traditional event annually. The jury members systematically working with the submitted papers decided to organize classes for participants of the contest. The focus of these classes was analyzing and correcting the most typical mistakes found in works submitted in previous years. As the result, within 2-3 years the teachers could observe enhancement of the quality of submitted papers.

The unique methods for translation quality assessment were developed by the teachers carrying out this research. After the study of abovementioned works of theoreticians we came to the conclusion that the most relevant approach to the evaluation of translations quality is a versatile approach proposed by Waddington [Waddington, 2001], which includes 4 assessment methods. The method A taken from Hurtado [Hurtado, 1995] is based on the analysis of errors, which are grouped as follows:

«(i) Inappropriate renderings which affect the understanding of the source text; these are divided into eight categories: contresens, faux sens, nonsens, addition, omission, unresolved extralinguistic references, loss of meaning, and inappropriate linguistic variation

(register, style, dialect, etc.).

(ii) Inappropriate renderings which affect expression in the target language; these are divided into five categories: spelling, grammar, lexical items, text and style.

(iii) Inadequate renderings which affect the transmission of either the main function or secondary functions of the source text» [Waddington, 2001, p 313].

Method B also performs error analysis, but focusing on their negative impact on the overall quality of the translation. However, considering whether or not each mistake influences rendering the meaning of the text in the target language, one should previously determine the character of a mistake, if it is a mistake in translation or language use.

The method C evaluates the translation from two points of view: the accuracy of the source text content transfer and the quality of expression in the target language. As the result the translation is given one of the following five translation evaluation marks: successful (10, 9 points); almost successful (8, 7 points); adequate (6, 5 points); inadequate (4, 3 points); totally inadequate (2, 1 point).

Method D is the combination of Methods B and C.

Alongside with the above described method, our study uses a number of others, among which are: the method dictionary definition, which allows us to identify individual semes in the semantic structure of language units; method of comparative analysis – to determine the degree of original and translation text equivalence. Study results were calculated and analyzed with the help of the method of statistic analysis. Descriptive method was used to describe the progress of our research.

3. RESULTS

Since the subject of our evaluation is a literary translation (an extract from a work of a Tatar writer consisting approximately of 440-460 words), the abovementioned methods proposed by Waddington were altered to some degree. Accordingly, Method A, called "Improper translation, due to the misunderstanding of an original text" includes:

- The change of a word, phrase, sentence meaning, etc.;
- The addition of a word, phrase, etc.;
- The omission of a word, phrase, etc.;
- Misunderstanding the extra-linguistic situation, denoted by a national realia, idiom or set-expression;
- An inadequate linguistic variant, i.e. translation using a linguistic unit of a different functional style.

Method B, «Inappropriate renderings which affect expression in the target language», is used without alteration and it includes the following types of errors:

- Spelling;
- Grammar;
- Lexical;
- Text, i.e. an incorrect sentence, paragraph, structure, etc.;
- Style.

In 2009 we analyzed the errors found in the works of 50 students from those schools which showed a particular interest in this contest. All errors were classified according to Method A and Method B and the most common mistakes were found. According the classification by Method A, the most common mistake is alteration of a word, phrase, or even whole sentence in translation. The reason for that is misunderstanding

these components of an original text. The second frequent errors are those which take place because of misunderstanding extralinguistic situation expressed by a national realia, idiom or set-expression (see Table 1).

From 2010 on special classes and workshops devoted to preventing those common mistakes were organized before the start of the contest. It is not only students participating in the contest, but also their teachers were active in attending these classes. Thus they were getting translation experience.

In 2013 permanent jury members, noting the gradual improvement of quality of submitted translations decided to perform the statistical analysis of errors found in the works of 50 pupils of the same schools as in 2009. The analysis results demonstrate significant reduction of the number errors related to misunderstanding the extra-linguistic situation, denoted by a national realia, idiom or set-expression (the amount of error reduction by 55.5%: 299 - 133). One should emphasize here that the teachers in their classes paid special attention to the translation of these linguistic units. Firstly, we familiarized the students with such units of the Tatar language. Secondly, they were given assistance in developing database of national realia, idioms, set-expressions, etc. Thirdly, the students were taught how to translate them on a great number of examples.

The classification of errors according to Method B is related mainly to the linguistic competence rather than translation one. Therefore, the number of errors reduction presented in Table 2 is an indication of contestants' language competence enhancement, undoubtedly with the help of our classes.

Table 1. Inappropriate renderings because of a source text misunderstanding

		Alteration of meaning	addition	ommision	unresolved extralinguistic references	inappropriate linguistic variation
SL		теге проводница; гимнастерка	Халык яңа ханбикәгә үлеп гашыйк иде	Бу калфак, ефәк көлтәсенә чолганган гөл чәчәге шикелле	Син шуны колакка киртеп куй; Сөембикәнең атта йөрүен	җирән ат
TL		That stewardess; military suit	Everybody was looking only at Syuyumbike. People loved the new khanbike. They were madly keen on her.	This kalfak was like a rose.	make a notch on your nose; how skillfully Syuyumbike was leading the horse	red-haired horse
Suggested variant		That conductor; soldier's blouse / tunic	Everyone was enchanted by the new khanbike.	This kalfak made out of ruffled silk looked like a rose.	put that in your pipe and smoke it; the way Syuyumbike was riding a horse	chestnut horse
Total number of mistakes	2009	302	46	243	299	196
	2013	168	34	203	133	122

Table 2. Inappropriate renderings which affect the expression in a target language

		Spelling	Grammar	Lexical unit	Text	Style
SL		Күрше;	Бу хатын сап-сары чәчле	Күңел юаткычым	Шәкерт; мәдресе	әүвәлге елларда
TL		Neighbor	She had a fair hair;	the joy of the soul	Student; school	In the past
Suggested variant		Neighbor	She had fair hair	sweetheart	Shagird; madrassah	in bygone years
Total number of mistakes	2009	208	212	197	218	309
	2013	153	176	167	169	207

Method B in this case can be called a multi-faceted approach to a literary text translation evaluation. Since «the translation process is not mere substitution of linguistic units of the source language by the ones of the target language, but it is a complex mental operation performed according to some strategy» [Ayupova, 2014, p. 215] Method B estimates three translation parameters:

- Quality of retaining the content or accuracy of source text content transfer;
- The quality of expression in the target language presupposes assessing the balance of language units concerning their functional styles, the number of idioms and special emphatic constructions etc.;
- The quality of a literary text image transfer, which includes: 1) the transfer of the image of characters, retaining the original emotiveness in its picturing (approval, admiration, affection, disapproval, condemnation, contempt); 2) the transfer of the main descriptions, keeping the overall evaluation (a positive or a negative one).

Table 3. Holistic approach for fiction text translation evaluation

Level	Accuracy of transfer of content	Quality of expression in TL	Accuracy of transfer of images of personages	Accuracy of transfer of major descriptions	Degree of task completion	Mark
5	Complete transfer of ST content; only minor	Nearly the same is the number of bookish or colloquial words, idioms	The images of the personages are transferred accurately and	Major descriptions are rendered accurately and arouse the same	Successful	10, 9

	mistakes are observed.	and special emphatic constructions as in the ST.	they arouse the same emotions as in the ST.	emotions as in the ST.		
4	Transfer of ST content quite accurately; some mistakes lead to some inaccuracy of details.	The number of bookish or colloquial words, idioms and special emphatic constructions is not the same as in the ST.	The images of the personages are transferred quite accurately and they arouse nearly the same emotions as in the ST.	Major descriptions are rendered quite accurately and arouse nearly the same emotions as in the ST.	Almost successful	8, 7
3	Transfer of ST content is not accurate.	The number of bookish or colloquial words, idioms and special emphatic constructions is different than in the ST.	The images of the personages are not transferred quite accurately and they arouse a bit different emotions than in the ST.	Major descriptions are not rendered accurately and they arouse not the same emotions as in the ST.	Adequate	6, 5
2	The content is changed a lot.	The number of bookish or colloquial words, idioms and special emphatic constructions is much different than in the ST.	The images of the personages are transferred inaccurately and they arouse quite different emotions than in the ST.	Major descriptions are rendered inaccurately and they arouse different emotions than in the ST.	Inadequate	4, 3
1	The content is quite different.	No linguistic properties of the ST are rendered.	The images of the personages are totally different and they arouse contrary emotions than in the ST.	The major descriptions cannot be even recognized.	Totally inadequate	2, 1

Such linguistic units as national realia, phraseological and paremiological units, set-expressions, etc. are endowed with special information [Zamaletdinov, 2015; Saliyeva, 2015; Kulkova, 2015]. Moreover, phraseological units included in this list have the feature «to change their composition, i.e. a different range of variability transformative potential» [Davletbaeva, 2015, p. 242]. And «contextual functioning of phraseological units is inextricably related to such terms as rhetoric and stylistics» [Soboleva, 2015, p. 282]. Therefore, one has to approach very carefully to translation of these linguistic units.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The research conducted demonstrates an undoubted role of correction of mistakes in the process of teaching translation or translator training. Classification of mistakes according to their type and a purposeful work directed to reducing each type of mistakes is an essential part of teaching translation. It should be borne in mind that the work on every type of error requires a methodologically correct approach, considering the nature of mistakes and their causes.

5. SUMMARY

Each three error classification methods perform their function in the process of teaching translation: Method A provides an opportunity to identify the causes of errors, so its systematic application in the process of teaching translation leads to the enhancement of translation quality, because this work is related to the understanding meanings of individual language units (national realia, idioms, etc.), the accumulation of their database by students, and mastering the translation technique. Application of Method B in the course of teaching translation generally results in a higher language competence (a target language is meant). Application of Method C for the evaluation of translation and error correction should be one of the urgent steps while working with literary texts, as the analysis of an artistic image and its linguistic realization are provided within it.

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