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Strategy and Tactics of Translating Special Texts

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The article highlights the strategy and tactics of translating a special text on the basis of the communicative-functional approach to translation. Definitions of such key notions as a translations strategy, a translation tactic, a translation operation, a special text are given and tactics of translating a special text are explained.

Keywords: translation strategy, strategy of communicatively equivalent translation, translation tactic, translation operation.

1. Definitions

Some key notions must be defined before discussing the topic of the article. As it is seen from the title, the notions of “translation strategy”, “tactics of translation” and a “special text” are the most crucial ones. To this list one more notion must be added, namely, the notion of a translation operation. In terms of the communicative-functional approach to translation, an act of translation is described as an activity performed in a certain communicative situation. At the stage of the situation analysis a translator is supposed to decide what goal is to be achieved in the given situation, what strategy is compatible with the goal, what tactics must be used and what operations should be performed. Apparently, the results of the decisions made by the translator have hierarchal relations and may be placed at different levels: the set of the situation parameters determines the translation

goal which, in its turn, determines the choice of a translation strategy; tactics of translation are predetermined by the translation strategy while translation operations are dependent upon the tactics used.

Thus, the levels of a translator’s decision-making include:

1. analyzing the communicative situation;
2. determining the translation goal;
3. choosing a translation strategy;
4. choosing translation tactics;
5. choosing translation operations.

Translation strategy is defined by us as a general program of the translator’s activity worked out on the basis of the general approach to translation in a specific communicative situation (CST), determined by the particular parameters of the situation and the translation goal and, in its turn, determining the character of the translator’s professional behavior. We postulate

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the existence of three translation strategies that are used in different communicative situations of cross-cultural communication: the strategy of communicatively equivalent translation, the strategy of tertiary translation and the strategy of redirection. The strategy of communicatively equivalent translation is defined as the program of translation activity aimed to ensure the communicative effect desired and required by the ST author. The strategy of tertiary translation is defined as a program of translation activity aimed at satisfying the needs of a third person who plays a role that differs from the role of the initial communication actors and whose goal is not in line with their goals. The strategy of redirection is a general program of translation activities aimed at producing a target text addressed to an audience with different social characteristics (as compared with the ST audience). It goes without saying that the same communicative effect is not desired, expected or planned when the strategy of tertiary translation is applied. When the strategy of redirection is used, the communicative effect changes in comparison with that produced by the ST but still it can be close to it.

Tactics of translation are a systematized set of translation operations performed to implement a chosen translation strategy and to achieve the translation goal. A translation operation is any action of a translator within the process of creating a text in the TL. We differentiate between two types of translation operations: the use of correspondences (equivalent forms) when they are available, and the use of transformations. Transformations can be subdivided into two groups depending on the character of the problem to be solved by means of transformations: those transformations that are predetermined by differences between the systems and structures of the two languages, and transformations necessary to achieve the goal of translation within a certain translation strategy. The latter are not related in

any way to the differences between the language structures.

The term a “special text” is used in this article in a broad sense. It means any text of non-literary character, a text the principal function of which is to convey information. The category of special texts comprises such texts as scientific, technical, economic and other texts of the kind. True, there are texts of non-literary character that perform both the function of conveying information and the function of producing an impact on the recipient. First and foremost, these are texts of journalistic genre. In this article I am not going to discuss the probable strategies and tactics of translating such texts; I intend to focus on the peculiarities of translating those special texts that perform only one function – that of conveying information.

2. Strategy of Translating a Special Text

As it has been said above, the function of a special text is to convey information, and this function is congruent with the intention of the text author and is a natural outcome of the conditions in which communication takes place. It should be borne in mind that in a situation of inter-lingual communication the author of a special text addresses not only the speakers of the SL but the speakers of the TL as well (let us recall the classification of texts developed by A. Neubert according to which a special text belongs to the texts of the 1st type, i.e. texts addressed both to the SL audience and the TL audience). The translator’s goal is to produce a target text that would convey the same information as conveyed by the ST; the amount of the communicatively relevant information in the TT must be the same as in the ST. If the goal is achieved, the communicative effect produced by the TT is equal to that of the ST, and the ST author’s intention is realized too. Since the function of a special text is to satisfy

the needs of recipients in information, we can and should specify the category of people who need this information. The category comprises developers and researchers, managers, experts, performers of some technical operations and users of equipment.

It is obvious that in order to achieve the goal of translation in such a situation it is required to implement the strategy of communicatively equivalent translation. The implementation of this strategy determines the use of certain tactics that, in practice, come down to a set of translation operations. Here I would like to note, in passing, that we shall deal only with those operations that would be used to implement the strategy of communicatively equivalent translation and would not be used to overcome purely linguistic obstacles.

3. Tactics of Translating a Special Text

Since the translator's goal in dealing with a special text is to reproduce information of the ST in a TT, the principal tactic used for the purpose is *the tactic of precise and complete information transfer*. It is well-known that the units that contain the main information in a special text are terms, so the major part of operations to be used in the translation process is directed to terminology. These operations are of two kinds: a translator either uses a corresponding term when the equivalent is available (*a reactor core – активная зона ядерного реактора, a primary circuit – первый контур ядерного реактора*) or creates a new term in the TL (when the equivalent does not exist) employing such transformations as transcription, transliteration or description (e.g., *merchandise – мерчендайзер* or *сотрудник компании, обеспечивающий наличие товара в торговой сети*). It is noteworthy that any approximation in rendering the meaning of the SL term in the situation is not appropriate and even

more so – it is out of the question: the recipient needs the *precise* information.

Implementation of the tactics of precise and complete information transfer requires observance of the rules of presenting information by means of figures and numbers, in particular, performing the following translation operations:

- to change the order of date and month while translating from American English into Russian and vice versa: 11/12/2011 → 12.11.2011;
- to substitute spaces for commas in many-digit numbers while translating from English into Russian: 250,412,500 → 250 412 500 (i.e., two hundred fifty million four hundred twelve thousand five hundred);
- to substitute commas for dots between the integer part and the fractional part of a decimal number while translating from English into Russian: 65,536.32 → 65 536,32;
- addition of an international ZIP code to a telephone number when this code is not indicated in the ST;
- substitution of brackets for the minus sign in negative numbers while translating from Russian into English:

Чистая прибыль	-195 512	→	Net income	(195,512)
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Another tactic of translating a special text is *the tactic of explicating implied information*. It has been noticed that the way of expressing ideas in English is more open to various implications than in Russian. Boris Klimzo has differentiated between several types of implications that can be found in special (technical or scientific) texts in English (Климзо, 2010). It is most essential to remember that such implications are not typical of the way ideas are expressed in a special text in Russian. In each case, dealing with a certain

type of implications, a translator needs to use appropriate translation operations to ensure the conformity of the TT to conventions of the target language (i.e., to the rules of expressing certain types of information taking into account implications of a speech segment). The most commonly used operation is addition of words in the TT that serve to render the information implied in the ST, for example:

The James [2] and Smith [3] correlations show essentially the same predictive reliability, and are somewhat poorer than Murdock (второй тип импликаций – опущение сравниваемого существительного).

«Корреляционные выражения Джеймса [2] и Смита [3] обнаруживают практически одинаковую точность и несколько менее точны, чем выражение Мардока» (Климзо, 2010).

Besides, it is known that the use of elliptical word-combinations is characteristic of the English scientific style. Such combinations are rendered into Russian with the use of words that can be considered as a means to restore the omitted English words, i.e. to restore the implied information. The following examples may be given: *measured endurance ratio – относительная выносливость, вычисленная по результатам измерений, stress-life exponent – показатель степенной зависимости между напряжением и долговечностью, plastic design – расчет с учетом пластических деформаций.*

Another manifestation of the tactic of explicating of implied information is the operation of concretization. This operation is used to render English words with broad meaning that are used in a special text as substitutes for words of specific meaning that are not appropriate in an English text for purely stylistic reasons. For example:

Special considerations insure the reliable operation of these thyristor drive system.

«Надежная работа тиристорных систем электропривода обеспечивается специальными мерами».

In relation to a special text a question arises: is such a text absolutely devoid of any expressiveness and emotiveness? Can it contain any aesthetic information? Irina Alekseeva says that in a scientific text cognitive information blocks emotional and aesthetic information (Алексеева, 2004). This statement may be opposed to the opinion of Irina Serebryakova who points out that the use of various stylistic devices is not abnormal in an English scientific text; they do not contradict the norms of the genre, instead they contribute to the expression of the author's individuality and his/her attitude to the facts described. As for the Russian scientific text, it is stylistically neutral (Серебрякова, 1994). It should be noted that not all expressive elements in an English scientific text are the author's individual creations: they can be referred to as trite metaphors (sandwich beam – «композитная балка», moment arm – «плечо пары сил»). They are not perceived by native speakers of English as expressive elements at all, but when literally translated into Russian they will be felt as extremely expressive. Thus, regardless of the character of expressive means in an English scientific text, i.e. regardless of their being traditional or individual, they must be neutralized in a Russian translation. Otherwise, they will produce a greater impression on the Russian reader than their English terminological equivalents produce on the English reader.

Aware of the fact, a translator employs *the tactic of text stylistic adaptation*. One of the practical means of this tactics implementation is the operation of omission. “When there are no serious grounds for preserving these stylistic peculiarities of an English special text, they are omitted in translation to ensure the same stylistic impact on the Russian reader as produced on the English reader” (Комиссаров, Рецкер, Тархов,

1965). But omission is not the only operation used to implement the tactic of text stylistic adaptation. It is clear that in some cases omission can result in a loss of relevant information, which is hardly admissible in translation of a special text. Another operation, no less frequently used for the purpose, is replacement of an expressive unit by a neutral one without any loss of the denotative meaning.

Obviously, these operations are used as practical means of the tactic realization only in translation from English into Russian. While translating in the opposite direction it is expedient to use expressive means in order to impart some expressiveness to the target text in English and, thus, to ensure its conformity to the conventions of this genre of English scientific literature.

One should bear in mind that the category of a special (scientific) text is heterogeneous: roughly, apart from scientific articles it comprises popular scientific texts and educational texts (manuals, text-books, etc.). As far as their style is concerned, these sub-categories are different: a popular scientific text targeted at the readers who are not specialists in the field admits a greater number of expressive means than a purely scientific article. The fact can be explained if we look at the functions performed by popular scientific texts: they are meant not only to inform the readers of some fact but also to convince, to provoke interest, to prove that the author's opinion and evaluations are correct and can be shared. In this respect popular scientific texts in different languages are practically similar, which means that a translator is supposed to render the stylistic peculiarities of a source text in the translation. This is usually done with two aims in view: to ensure the conformity of the TT to the conventions of the genre and, which is even more important, to ensure the communicative effect similar to that of the ST. The task is fulfilled by means of *the tactic of rendering stylistic peculiarities of the*

ST. The tactic is implemented through the use of inter-lingual (lexical, syntactical and semantic) correspondences (when they are available) and transformations of the text necessary to secure the same effect that is produced by stylistic devices in the ST (when correspondences are not available).

The strategy of communicatively equivalent translation also requires presentation of the information contained in a special text in the most correct way, i.e. in accordance with the rules of presenting certain types of data in a given language. True, non-conformities to the rules that can be found in the TT do not result in misunderstanding on the part of the TT recipient. But they make it more difficult for the recipient to perceive the information as the way the information is presented is not what the recipient has got accustomed to. Thus, we can speak of *the tactic of correct presentation of information* in the TT. Among the translation operations made to implement the tactic we can find:

- use of inverted commas with names of companies while translating from English into Russian. Yu.Plakhtiy (Плахтий, 2011) cites the following example:

This technology has been developed by Exxon.

Incorrect translation: Эта технология разработана Эксоном.

Correct translation: Эта технология разработана компанией «Эксон».

Correspondingly, in translation from Russian into English inverted commas are omitted.

- Replacement of full denominations of physical quantities by their abbreviated denominations in translation from English into Russian: 5 metric tons – 5 т, 100 meters – 100 м, 45 degrees – 45°, etc.
- Use of TL correspondences of SL proper names (Los Angeles – Лос-Анжелес,

not Лос-Анджелос or Лос-Анжелос; Houston – Хьюстон, not Хаустон).

- Replacement of capital letters by lowercase letters in the names of documents, text titles and terms defined while translating from English into Russian; the use of the full-stop instead of a semi-colon after the word «Таблица» (“Table”); the use of abbreviation «Рис.» instead of “Figure”.

It is commonly believed that special texts, especially scientific ones, are devoid of any features related to the source culture. In other words, elements of culture are not represented or revealed in a special text. But one should keep in mind the diversity of special texts; the category embraces – apart from purely scientific texts – popular scientific texts and such texts as, for example, texts about history of the nation (historical books), biographies, booklets about places of interest in a region designed for foreign tourists, local lore articles and the like. The culturally specific information in such narrations can be differentiated into two categories: (1) communicatively irrelevant information, not intended to produce any specific communicative effect (the perception of such information by the reader is not seen by the author as something indispensable for the perception of the whole text); (2) communicatively relevant information. The failure to grasp this kind of information could result in the incomplete understanding or misunderstanding of the meaning of the text or its segment.

Obviously, the information of the first kind is not treated as something which must be rendered into another language by all means. Moreover, when the things mentioned in the ST are not known to the reader and, thus, are difficult to understand, being at the same time irrelevant in terms of text perception, omission or generalization may be employed by a translator as translation operations within *the tactic of*

pragmatic text adaptation. Suffice it to give the following example: in a booklet about the Nizhny Novgorod region some persons are mentioned who apparently are not known to foreigners (Ivan Kulibin, Valery Chkalov). In translation of the booklet into another language the names may be replaced by a generalizing phrase of the kind: “and other celebrities/famous people”.

Yet quite different are the actions of a translator when a text comprises elements of communicatively relevant information, yet unknown to the TT reader. In this case among the means of implementing the tactics of pragmatic text adaptation such operations may be of use as addition of information (required to explain the meaning of a certain text element) or footnotes (used for the same purpose). For example, in a Russian text there is such a sentence: «Для читающего сообщества Ветлугу навечно запечатлел В.Г.Короленко в известном очерке “Река играет”». There is no doubt that the name of Vladimir Korolenko is in the key position in the sentence. Realizing that the name is hardly known to foreign readers of the English translation, a translator is bound to add some information concerning the person in the text or in the footnote (e.g., “a famous Russian writer”).

So we see that to solve the problems of pragmatic nature a translator of a special text can use the same means of pragmatic text adaptation as are used in translation of texts of other genres.

It should be also noted that the tactic of pragmatic text adaptation is not the one which is used any time a special text is translated from one language into another. The necessity for this tactic depends on the contents of a text, on whether the text contains elements of culturally specific information or not. Yet it does not mean that the tactic of pragmatic text adaptation is of secondary importance. Just the opposite: when such information is met with in a text, the tactic assumes the same importance as any other tactic

employed in the process of translation of a special text.

Thus, the following tactics may be used in translating a special text in accordance with the strategy of communicatively equivalent translation:

- the tactic of precise and complete information transfer;
- the tactic of explicating implied information;

- the tactic of stylistic text adaptation;
- the tactic of rendering stylistic peculiarities of the ST;
- the tactic of correct presentation of information;
- the tactic of pragmatic text adaptation.

Simultaneous use of the above tactics, i.e. their use in combination, ensures the realization of the strategy of communicatively equivalent translation and achieving the goal of translation.

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Стратегия и тактики перевода

специальных текстов

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В статье рассматриваются стратегия и тактики перевода специальных текстов на основе коммуникативно-функционального подхода к переводу. Даются определения таких ключевых понятий, как стратегия перевода, тактика перевода, переводческая операция. Предлагается классификация тактик перевода специального текста.

Ключевые слова: стратегия перевода, стратегия коммуникативно-равноценного перевода, тактика перевода, переводческая операция.
