SOURCE-TEXT RELIANCE IN POLISH-ENGLISH TRANSLATION

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In the *Stary Rynek* in Poznań a prominent shop front bears a sign reading: NIERUCHOMOŚCI – IMMOVEABLES. Presumably intended as a translation into English, 'immoveables' is so direct and literal that one is left wondering whether it is in fact intended as a joke, or as a particularly inspired piece of original branding, its superficially English character intended to convey an impression of fashion or imagined sophistication. Be that as it may, the first reaction of an English speaker familiar with Polish is likely to be that it is a singularly naive *calque*, additionally demonstrating a lack of knowledge of the usual English form on the part of the translator.

This example is a rather startling and graphic illustration of a feature which appears to be commonplace in Polish-English translation, at least in the present author's experience of reading non-literary translations. Translating into English as a second language is frequently a case of producing, in Duff's time-honoured phrase, a 'third language', with the resulting poor reputation of translation in the English-speaking world being attributed to the fact that "translation does not sound like English" (Duff 1981: 124). In this article I intend to probe this statement with the aim of attempting to explore the factors tending to produce unnatural-sounding English, and to suggest a possible ameliorating activity.

Since translation is a cross-cultural act of communication, it takes place within several contexts. Adelina Ivanova, of the Research Centre for English and Applied Linguistics at the University of Cambridge, has suggested that "translation has a very complex goal structure due to the fact that it is progressively embedded in a number of contexts – interlinguistic (L1 and L2 languages), intercultural (L1 and L2 cultures), communicative (ST writer – translator – TT readership), professional (agency – translator – client)" (Ivanova 1998: 95). Thus translation is not a solely linguistic activity, but its real-life task is highly complex. Nevertheless, as Basnett-McGuire states, "translation has been perceived as a secondary activity, as a 'mechanical' rather than a

'creative' process, within the competence of anyone with a basic grounding in a language other than their own". (Basnett-McGuire 1991:2). This appears to be confirmed by Korzeniowska and Kuhiwczak (1998: 12), who refer to the assumption that has arisen in Poland from the closeness of Polish to its related Slavonic languages, particularly Russian, where Poles commonly assume an ease of translation which does not characterise translation from Polish into English, a language pair which exhibits greater distance. A further assumption exists where it is commonly assumed that a knowledge of English (such as that formalised by a title such as *magister*) automatically qualifies one to translate. Such attitudes might be taken as constituting the 'culture of translation', since very often a translation is "what a culture takes it to be" (Gutt 1991: 5). A further 'social' factor in the preponderance of less than satisfactory English translations is the inherent isolation of the translator: "those who translate from Polish only rarely have a chance to receive any kind of feedback when their translations go out into the world" (Korzeniowska and Kuhiwczak 1998: 14). An interesting point is made by Hlebec (1989: 131) when he points out that it would be useful if research were carried out as to the reader's reactions to a translated text. Such information might be useful in future translation work. All too often a translation drops without trace into a void of silence, especially if there is no native-speaker proof-reading carried out. When there is feedback, however, this may be of a spectacularly critical nature, producing high emotion and acrimony.

With regard to the interlinguistic context of translation, it is perhaps salutary to recall two models of translation which appeared almost simultaneously at the end of the 1970s, in Germany and Britain. These are House's *A Model for Translation Quality Assessment* (1977, revisited in 1997), and Newmark's *Communicative and Semantic Translation* (1977, 1978, 1982). These exhibit some similarity in that they tend to perpetuate the age-old dichotomy of:

faithful – free (traditional)
formal equivalence – textual equivalence (Catford)
formal equivalence – dynamic equivalence (Nida)
overt – covert (House)
semantic – communicative (Newmark)

House (1997: 1) notes that generations of commentators on translation have offerred reflections on the merits and weaknesses of translations, in terms of criteria such as:

faithfulness to the original
retention of the original's special flavour
preservation of the spirit of the source language
or opposed to concentrating on:
a natural flow of the translated text
the pleasure and delight of the reader of the translation

This dual grouping of criteria reflects the Janus-like character of translation with its responsibility towards both the original and the translated versions, a question which permeates the literature on translation, particularly taxing as to the degree of 'bias' towards the original text on the one hand and to the intended reader on the other. As Newmark says: "The conflict of loyalties, the gap between emphasis on source and target language will always remain an overriding problem in translation theory and practice" (1977: 163). House (1997: 2-3) makes this a threefold responsibility; to the author, the reader, and the text, thus rejecting the idea of translation as a 'private affair', where:

"the hermeneutic understanding and interpretation of the original and fabricating of a translation are individual, creative acts that on principle defy systematization, generalization and rule giving".

Concentration on the part of the translator on the process of comprehension and interpretation may neglect the expectations of target text readers. House then re-states her model for translation quality assessment, which is based on the concept of 'functional equivalence' differentiated according to an empirically derived distinction into:

overt translation, where the function of the translation is to enable readers access to the function of the original in its original linguacultural setting, through another language;
covert translation, which imitates the original function in a different discourse frame, a different discourse world. Equivalence is sought by means of the new language for the function of the original in its linguacultural setting. One way of achieving this is through a 'cultural filter', "with which shifts and changes along various pragmatic parameters (e.g. the marking of the social role relationship between author and reader) are conducted"   (House 1997: 29)

It should be noted that this distinction is not a dichotomy but a cline. The model is based on a notion of equivalence related to the preservation of 'meaning' across two different languages, with reference to three aspects:

semantic – the relationship of reference or denotation;
pragmatic – meanings are related to language users/situation, illocutionary force/semantic situation;
textual – an equivalent type of text constitution is maintained in translation.

House's model of translation quality assessment closely resembles Newmark's discussions of 'communicative' and 'semantic' translation (1977, 1978, 1982), the first of these appearing at the same time as House's initial exposition. Put simply, communicative translation attempts to produce an effect on the target readership close to

that of the original on the original readership, while semantic translation seeks to render as closely as possible the exact contextual meaning of the original as far as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow (1977: 164). Thus communicative translation resembles House's 'overt' translation in its bias towards the target language reader, while semantic translation corresponds to 'covert' translation in its more 'faithful' reflection of the original text. According to Newmark, these two approaches will result in different features in the product. A communicative translation (Newmark 1977: 164) is generally likely to be:

> "smoother, simpler, clearer, more direct, more conventional, conforming to a particular register of language, tending to under-translate, i.e. to use more generic hold-all terms in difficult passages";

whereas a semantic translation

> "tends to be more complex, more awkward, more detailed, more concentrated, and pursues the thought processes rather than the intention of the transmitter. It tends to overtranslate, to be more specific than the original, to include more meanings in its search for one nuance of meaning. A semantic translation is likely to be shorter than a communicative translation – it is devoid of redundancy, phatic language, stylistic aids and joins"

As in House's model, the two approaches exist on a cline; Newmark notes that they may coincide, as in texts which convey general rather than culturally bound messages, and that there is no one communicative or semantic method of translating a text, but that the methods overlap widely (Newmark 1977: 165). A communicative translation is more functional and thus narrower in its scope; it is tailored to a particular readership, for a particular purpose. Unlike House, however, Newmark provides a stylistic distinction between the approaches. A value judgment is brought to bear, as Newmark suggests that a semantic translation is always inferior to the original since it involves loss of meaning (Newmark 1977: 167). A communicative translation, however, may be an improvement, since the translator is trying to write a little better than the original.

It is suggested that Newmark's distinction is the more useful, perhaps simply because the terms 'semantic' and 'communicative' are more easily distinguished in terms of their respective denotations than House's orthographically similar terms, especially for inexperienced students of translation. There is, however, a further sense in which Newmark's terms can be applied, and that is in the sense that they do not denote a conscious strategy on the part of the translator, but that, particularly with regard to 'semantic', there is a significant connotation of 'incompetent'. Rarely is it the case that the translator has made a conscious decision to adopt a 'semantic' rather than a 'communicative' approach to translation. In this sense a 'semantic' translation may be taken to denote one where, especially in translation into a foreign language, the translator does not demonstrate sufficient lexico-grammatical proficiency in the target

language. If an English speaker reads, for example, the following fragment of translated text:

> "... there are also postcards from the end of the 19th century *until 60s of the 20th century.*"
> [*...znajdują się także widokówki od końca XIX wieku po lata sześćdziesiąte XX w.*]

it may reasonably be assumed that the translator does not *know* the English form 'the 1960s', especially if this defective form appears consistently throughout the same text. Similarly, if

> *Jak za dotknięciem czarodziejskiej różdżki...*

is rendered as:

> "As with the touch of a *magic rod...*"

it will similarly be assumed that the translator is not familiar with the normal English collocation 'magic wand' (even though this is commonly given in bilingual dictionaries).

A failure to consider the conventions of the target language pertains to the use of titles and qualifications, where Polish conventions are assumed to be the same in English (despite cultural differences in 'power distance'). Thus we have 'eng.' as an invented title to correspond to the Polish *inż*. Additionally a strategy has been devised to cope with Polish professional titles:

> *mgr inż. arch. Tadeusz Gralik.*
> Tadeusz Gralik MSc and architect.

Needless to say, the strategy is a failure since English possesses no titles for 'engineer' or 'architect'; these would be indicated by the use of the relevant qualification inserted after the name (the well-known 'letters after one's name'). In this case, a better solution might simply be 'the architect Tadeusz Gralik'. When one reads titles fabricated in English such as MSc for *magister* or 'eng.' for *inż.* one similarly infers that the translator does not know that English does not possess a title 'equivalent' to the Polish *mgr* or *inż.*, or that 'MSc' appears only after the name. This 'kneejerk' production of assumed 'equivalents' (probably arising from the traditional, and now discredited, assumption that languages display a neat symmetry, thus enabling the relatively mechanical identification of linguistic equivalents (Snell-Hornby 1995: 22)) gives us such anomalies as that occurring in the English-language version of the official website of the city of Bydgoszcz. Numerous educational establishments are listed, each with its respective right to confer certain degrees. Irrespective of the type of academic establishment, *magister* is without exception given as 'MSc' (Master of Science), even

in the case of the Academy of Music. The translator is apparently unaware of the fact that music is an 'Arts' discipline.

Similarly, the fact that the use of everyday forms of address is conditioned by cultural usage is frequently not realised. Schoolchildren are taught that *Pan* and *Pani* are 'equivalents' of 'Mr' and 'Miss/Mrs/Ms', yet these titles are of course used in different ways. The Polish terms are honorifics; they are used to mark or confirm an established relationship and are not used by individuals introducing themselves, which of course the English titles are. Polish also has an effective mid-way stage between the formal honorific and the 'T' form, but one which does not translate easily into English; *Pani Ewa* does not furnish the same set of connotations as 'Miss Eva'. (The present author recalls his wedding reception in Poland, where the *wodzirej* (MC) addressed him as 'Mister Young' *(Pan Młody)*. When, after some difficulty, it was realised whom this referred to, the expression quickly gained currency among the young couple's English-speaking guests, such that the author was for some time afterwards forced to accept telephone calls from callers asking for 'Meester Young'.)

Thus it appears that, in translating into a foreign language, deficiency in the automation of low-level processing will tend to produce a translation which slavishly follows the lexical and grammatical form of the original, i.e. falling on the left side of the dichotomy tabulated above. In this sense 'immoveables' is a 'semantic' translation of *nieruchomości*. Adapting Newmark's examples illustrating semantic and communicative translation (1977: 167), to Polish-English translation we might have the following;

	wolne pokoje	*świeżo malowane*
Semantic:	free rooms	freshly painted
Communicative:	vacancies	wet paint!

In these cases clearly the communicative version corresponds to the standard expression institutionalised in the target language community. The semantic translation, often favoured by Polish translators, violates the norm for such performatives and thus appears strange or comical. ('Free rooms', seen on the Baltic coast, might actually suggest that accommodation is being offered free of charge!) Here of course *transposition* is required to target the appropriate semantic element. It is just such situations – performatives, notices, captions, tourist information – where the semantic translation is so often the cause of error. Of course unawareness of social usage in the target language is also a root cause; as Newmark notes, the "well-established formulae of notices or correspondence" (1977: 167) are often not familiar to translators working into a second language. In Newmark's terms the type of translation frequently encountered in Poland has not progressed beyond the semantic level (the "pretranslation process"), and has not received the rather more subjective attention required to render it communicative in terms of the target linguaculture, because of the translator's lack of knowledge of target text norms.

In examining pragmatic texts, which appear to constitute the bulk of translation activity being carried out in Poland, we therefore accept that the prescriptive viewpoint for our evaluation is communicative. Such texts should be communicative, but it appears

that the translation is more often than not semantic. A feature of this is language transfer; another, related feature, is lexis which leans more towards the original language than the target language. Such features, resulting from insufficient competence in the target language, tend to force the translator into a hermeneutic concentratation on the source text, and the production of a 'semantic' translation.

Numerous examples may be cited of faults which are lexical in nature. A selection is given below, culled from a recent publication on the Polish city of Wrocław[1], itself an example of many similar publications seeking to present and promote a particular municipality and to attract inward investment (suggested version in brackets):

…the *more-and-more acclaimed* area of tourism… ('increasingly significant')

The floods *didn't stop the* economic growth. ('did not halt')

Many investors came to the city after the flooding when *it struggled to remove its bad effects*. ('it was struggling to overcome the aftermath')

By the end of 1997 the unemployment rate *fell under* 6% ('had fallen below')

The biggest companies have *gone through the privatization path* ('undergone the privatization process' or perhaps 'gone down the privatization road')

It [the Town Hall] is *distinctly divided into three parts* ('divided into three distinct parts')

…renovation carried out in the Market Place *in the last years*… ('in recent years')

In the 12th century the *followers of Judaism* already lived in the area *of* today's university. ('Jews'; 'occupied by')

…the *place* of the Sakwowy Bastion on Partyzańków Hill *took* a charming architectural composition *engrossed* in lush vegetation. ('site/location'; 'formed'; 'set')

…bridges and footbridges *that are thrown across* the river ('spanning')

The famous *garden architect*… ('landscape gardener')

The city has been flooded *a couple of times* during its thousand-year history. ('more than once')

Ostrów Tumski and the Market Place were saved thanks to the *boldness* of the citizens. ('brave efforts')

Wrocław is also an exceptional venue for cultural *meetings*. ('events')

Prussian troops took it *deceitfully* during their passage through the town… ('treacherously')

The town found itself in *different* political circumstances. ('changed')

...the *civil* population ('civilian')

At the entrance are tombstones from the *non-existing* graveyard. ('former')

...the legacy left by the *died-out* line of Wrocław Piasts... ('extinct')

Streets running *perpendicularly* to the square *took the roles of* main roads. ('at right angles'; 'functioned as')

Such examples, representative of countless more, illustrate the difficulties facing the translator working into a foreign language. In most cases a lexical choice is made which deviates from that which is natural, i.e. likely to be used or expected by a native speaker. A lexical item may be misapplied in terms of context (10, 13, 15), or the appropriate English expression may not apparently be known (11, 18, 19). Unusual collocations appear (1, 3, 13). In some cases the mis-selection is compounded by other errors, such as inappropriate verb tense (3) or register (2, 12). Evidence of negative language transfer may be present (7, 14). The overwhelming impression is that imperfect lexical facility in the target language renders the translation 'foreign-sounding'; as mentioned above, a common complaint amongst target-language readers.

The examples above are taken from a text translated by an experienced professional translator. Many translations, however, are produced by individuals considerably less skilled, and many of these reach publication. The next example is one such. It is a tourist brochure promoting kayak tours on the river Brda[2], aimed at overseas visitors.

The English-language version includes an introductory passage not given in the Polish original. As translated, it is as follows:

> THE EAST POMERANIA REGION is situated in northern part of Poland between two big cities: *Gdańsk* and *Bydgoszcz*, and the river *Vistula*. Fresh postglacial forms, the biggest forest complex in Poland – *Bory Tucholskie*, and hundreds of lakes give us a chance for unforgettable meeting with the nature. As many zones preserved for animals, plants and ecosystems *Bory Tucholskie National Park* is the proof of natural values of this area.
> THE RIVER BRDA flows through *East Pomerania* and falls into the river *Vistula* in *Bydgoszcz*. *Brda* is twisting between open sander hills, greengrasses and deep dark of trees. On its route you can meet still and clear water, birds sanctuary and fished lakes with forested banks.
> The kayak route on the river Brda is recognized as one of the best water-tour projects in Poland and was awarded by the EU experts.

This is a typical example of the myriad translations from Polish to English seen on almost a daily basis. Concentrating solely on errors which might be considered 'lexical', we may make the following comments:

...hundreds of lakes give us a <u>chance</u> for <u>unforgettable meeting</u> with the nature...

'Chance' is frequently chosen where its rather low tenor is inappropriate; here 'opportunity' would be better. 'Unforgettable meeting with the nature' is another typical instance of Polish-English 'translationese'. Here the translation is wholly semantic; no awareness seems apparent of the likely tone created in English. Basically it sounds unnatural and faintly comical, perhaps 'unforgettable encounter with nature' would be more felicitous, yet still preserving the dramatic properties of the original. The term 'meeting' is frequently used in Polish in instances where it would be stylistically unnatural in English, such as with reference to concerts, shows etc. (Incidentally confusion often exists over the use of articles with 'nature');

...the <u>proof of natural values</u> of this area.

A suggested improvement here would be: 'evidence of the natural assets'; 'natural assets' being a more natural collocation;

...was <u>awarded by</u> the EU experts.

A common occurrence is the misuse of 'award'. In its verb form it is usually transitive, as in the examples given by the corpus-based <u>*Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*</u>:

> *The referee awarded a free kick.*
> *The judge awarded substantial damages to the victims of the explosion.*
> *She's been awarded a scholarship to study at Oxford.*

In the above instance perhaps the noun variant would have been better: 'has received EU awards'.

Thus a picture begins to emerge of translation which inclines to the literal, with deviant lexical choices. Let us now look at a recently-published translation[3] in a little more detail. It is generally recognised that one of the most basic exigencies incumbent on the translator is that of not offending against the syntax of the target language. This point is often made, if at all, in passing in the literature as such an obvious truism that it needs no further discussion. However, in the white-hot crucible of actual translation practice this principle is often transgressed. In Polish-English translations it is frequently manifested in placing a prepositional phrase with *in* before the noun to which it is adjunct, viz.:

> *To największy bydgoski stadion.*
> It is the largest in Bydgoszcz sports stadium.

> *Fara jest jedynym w Bydgoszczy sanktuarium maryjnym.*
> The Fara church is the only in Bydgoszcz sanctuary of Mary.

> *Unikatowe w skali kraju i tej części Europy badania DNA...*
> Unique in Poland and this part of Europe examinations of DNA...

pierwsza w Polsce parkowa galeria rzeźb wybitnich kompozytorów i wirtuozów...
the first in Poland sculptures park gallery of outstanding composers and virtuosos

In these examples literal translation (defined by Bell [1991: 70, based on Wilss 1988: 97-9] as "the replacement of source language syntactic structure by target language structure [normally at clause level] which is isomorphic [or near isomorphic] in terms of number and type of of lexical item and synonymous in terms of content") has preserved almost the original syntax, permissible in Polish but not in English. This is one of the most commonly encountered phenomena in Polish-English translation.

Captions, whether to physical objects such as paintings or museum exhibits, or to illustrations in a book, constitute a text type in themselves. Consequently they can be critically evaluated as texts. They may not be particularly short:

> *Siedziba Polskiego Radia Pomorze i Kujaw S.A. przy ul. Gdańskiej 50.*
> *Budynek, według projekta berlińskiego architekta Hildebranta, powstał*
> *w latach 1896-1897. Mieszkał w nim właściciel fabryki traków,,Carl*
> *Blumwe i syn". W latach 1930-1939 Klub Polski, w czasie okupacji*
> *niemieckiej – m.in. siedziba powiatowej NSDAP.*
> The Seat of the Polish Radio of Pomorze and Kujawy S.A. at 50
> Gdańska St. The building was erected according to the design of the
> architect from Berlin, Hildebrant in 1986-1897. Lived here the owner of
> the "Carl Blumwe and Son" track factory. In the years of 1930-1939 –
> the Polish Club, during German occupation – also the seat of the district
> branch of the NSDAP.

Employing the phrase 'according to the design of' is of course a frequently occurring type of calque, which, though grammatical, is clumsy and unnecessarily long. '*Siedziba*' is inappropriately rendered as 'seat', as is often the case where 'head office' or 'headquarters' would be more natural. 'Seat' suggests a position of pomp and majesty, importance or power, such as 'seat of government' or 'seat of learning'. Its use in instances such as:

> 'the seat of Gasworks Dept.'
> 'the seat of the Urban Conservator of Monuments'

sound incongruous. Cohesion is badly mauled in the sentences:

> 'The Polish Radio of Pomorze and Kujawy S.A. at 50 Gdańska St. The building
> was erected according to the design of the architect from Berlin, Hildebrandt in
> 1896-1897.'

It is confusing as to whether the building was erected or designed in the years 1896-7, and 'the architect from Berlin' suggests there has only ever been one, a common

article error. Unnatural as it is, some processing effort is required on the part of the reader. A possible improved (and more succinct) version might be:

> "The Polish Radio (Pomorze and Kujawy) building at 50 Gdańska St., built 1896-7
> to a design by Hildebrandt of Berlin."

Later the translator seems to give up the attempt to produce cohesion as the final sentence degenerates into a series of dashes, which as Macpherson notes (1996: 140), are not acceptable replacements for verbs. It is regrettable that no attempt is made to expand or explain 'NSDAP', thus reducing the information content of the text, and what exactly is a 'track factory'? (Here, however, the translator may have been faced with the not uncommon problem where the original source text is not clear on a particular point.)

In examining large numbers of Polish-English translations it is difficult to evade the conclusion that the process of translation is understood as little more than the most basic token-for-token translation. The natural instinct of language learners in the early stages for word-for-word translation sometimes appears not to be superseded:

> *Zbiornik na wieży miał pojemność 1260m³, a woda z niego spływała do miasta*
> *grawitacyjnie.*
> The reservoir on the tower had the volume of 1260m³ and the water was flowing to
> the city gravitationally.

Here the translator seems to have opted for the simplest direct translation, with the somewhat dubious addition of three definite articles and the equally doubtful choice of past continuous tense. Such an example is typical of the unnatural and artificial result so often encountered, and one possible explanation of the oft-noted phenomenon that translations are longer than their originals, since here the translation simply consists of the Polish words replaced by English 'equivalents' and articles and prepositions thrown in for good measure.

Such loan (*calque*) translations are rife, and suggest the hypothesis that this is how the craft of translation is frequently understood. The phenomenon is particularly noticeable in captions, signs, notices and other performatives:

> *Hall kasowy dworca kolejowego.*
> Cash hall of the railway station.

Here the translator seems to assume that everything that is required for an adequate translation is embodied in the source language words; no appreciation of the possibility of the target language having an established expression such as 'booking hall' or 'ticket office' seems to spring to mind.

> *Widok na prospekt organowy od strony ołtarza.*
> View on the prospect of organs from the altar.

Throughout this book the translator has given 'view on' with incorrect preposition, presumably deriving from the Polish *na*. The effect of this sentence is rendered comical by the use of the plural form 'organs'. In English the musical instrument is singular, whereas the plural form refers to human or animal organs found inside the body! Even simple bilingual dictionaries make this distinction clear.

Handling the inflected Polish genitive frequently causes difficulties:

Widok na scenę teatru.
View on the theatre's stage.

Przewodniczący Zrzeszenia Bydgoszczan.
President of the Association of the Inhabitants of Bydgoszcz.

Selecting the 'Saxon genitive' or the repeated prepositional form in these examples gives equally clumsy and unsatisfying results.

Lexical mismatches and infelicitous word choices are again particularly noticeable in this text, as in *'Wrocław'* above. Frequently the point is not appreciated that a Polish lexeme may have a much wider denotation than the English 'equivalent' selected. As noted by Kozłowska (1998: 86) *nauka* is a case in point, where it is routinely translated as 'science' and *naukowy* as 'scientific', where English would select from a wider range of possibilities. Kozłowska points out that the Polish publishing house *Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN* is usually translated as 'Scientific Publishers', which is misleading, since English uses 'science' to denote the exact sciences: physics, chemistry and biology and their sub-disciplines. The preferred English translation would of course be 'Academic Publishers'. Such naive translations become, with experience, predictable; it can be expected that a translator will render the original in a certain way. Indeed, the translator of *Bo To Jest Bydgoszcz* gives *pracowni naukowych* (of the city library) as 'scientific press room'. The same property of predictability can be extended to other lexical items. One can reliably predict that *impresje* will invariably be rendered as 'impressions', as in:

Bydgoskie Impresje Muzyczne
Bydgoszcz Musical Impressions.

Similarly, experience shows that *wielki* will equally invariably be given as 'great' regardless of context, as in *Wielki Teatr* ('Great Theatre'):

Wielki Konkurs Wiedzy o Bydgoszczy.
Great Competition on the Knowledge of Bydgoszcz;

rather than 'grand' which would be more appropriate in these cases.

Inappropriate lexical choices often result in effects which are comical, helping to give that hilarity of which Newmark speaks (1998: 3). A caption to an illustration:

Do boju zagrzewały urodziwe mieszczki.
Charming townswomen cheering up;

The title of a children's art competition:

„Bydgoszcz pachnąca kredkami"
"Bydgoszcz smelling of crayons"

The publisher of this book – *Towarzystwo Miłośników Miasta Bydgoszczy* – is given as:

Bydgoszcz City Fans Society;

'Fans' being singularly inappropriate in tenor; 'friends' as frequently used in English in association with cultural institutions such as libraries and museums would be a more natural choice, but not 'Society of Friends' as this would denote the religious denomination otherwise known as Quakers.

Choice of verb often gives unfortunate results:

Po Rusach przyszło kilka tysięcy Tatarów. Wydarli, co tamci zostawili jeszcze.
Russians were followed by the Tartars who ripped the city off anything that was left over.

Here 'ripped off' is of very low tenor and is suggestive of 1960s 'hippy' sociolect.

Apartament upamiętnia to wydarzenie.
The apartment memorizes the night when A. Rubinstein stayed here.

Suffice it to say that an apartment cannot memorise anything. A common feature, illustrated here, is to alter the conventional target-language manner of referring to famous personages, often perpetrated by students and teachers of literature; Graham Greene does not appear as 'G. Greene' in conventional English text.

We now turn to some examples of what is traditionally regarded as 'cultural' elements in translation, i.e. those concerning a particular geographical area, typically the names of buildings, festivals, events, food, etc. Illustrated publications present the text type of captions, and when these are matched with cultural items, problems may arise. To take one example, typical of many texts describing the history, culture and topography of a given area, we will focus on the cultural frame 'churches'. It is worth noting how translators manage the dedication element of church names. The translator of *Bo To Jest Bydgoszcz*, unsurprisingly, has resorted to direct word-for-word translation, with predictably childlike results [standard English form in square brackets]:

Św. Krzyża
St. Cross
[Holy Cross]

Kościół p.w. św. Ignacego Loyoli.
The church under the invocation of St. Ignacy Loyola.
[The church of St. Ignatius Loyola]

Ignacy is the Polish form; the founder of the Jesuit order was not Polish but a Spanish soldier – does the translator believe that the Polish form of the name is used in the English-speaking world? (The *Wordsworth Dictionary of Biography*, an inexpensive paperback available in linguistic bookshops in Poland gives the English form of this name.) Throughout this substantial publication the translator has rendered the Polish *pod wezwaniem (p.w.)* as 'under the invocation of' which is simply not used in English church dedications. The *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture* gives two definitions under the heading 'invocation:

the act of invoking: *their invocation of diplomatic immunity in order to escape arrest*
a form of words calling for help, esp. from God or the gods; prayer.

In the latter sense, the expression 'the invocation of saints' is encountered, but this refers to prayer, especially Roman Catholic or pre-Reformation practices. Here its use in picture captions appears comically pompous. After a while, presumably growing weary of writing 'under the invocation of', the translator treats us to a coining of an entirely new English abbreviation:

Kościół p.w. Najświętszego Serca Pana Jezusa.
The church u.i. of the Jesus Lord's Holy Heart.

This reflects the oft-seen non-standard abbreviation 'f.ex' used by Polish students and teachers for 'for example' instead of 'e.g.'. Other transfers of Polish abbreviations may occasionally be seen, such as 'am. oth.' for *m.in. (między innymi)*. A translation of the official brochure of a Polish *Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna* included the abbreviation 'H.P.S.', without any expansion, presumably denoting 'Higher Pedagogical School' although this was left for the English-language reader to work out for themselves. Of course 'Jesus Lord's Holy Heart' is ridiculous; 'Sacred Heart' is the standard English dedication. This book abounds in naive mis-translations; a small selection from the "ecclesiological" chapter include the following:

Wniebowzięcia Najświętszej Maryi Panny
The Holy Mary the Virgin's Assumption.
[The Assumption of the Holy Virgin Mary]

Obraz Matki Bożej z Różą.
Picture of God's Mother with a Rose.
[The Virgin Mary with a Rose]

Matka Boża z Dzieciątkiem.
God's Mother with Baby.
[The Virgin Mary with the Christ-child; or:
Madonna and Child]

Kościół Wniebowzięcia NMP
Holy Mary the Virgin's Assumption Church
[Church of the Assumption]

Św. Wincent a Paulo
St. Vincent a Paulo
[St. Vincent de Paul]
(again the *Wordsworth Dictionary of Biography* gives the standard English form)

miejsce modlitwy
worship place
[place of worship]

Most such expressions have their standard English-language equivalents; they are not from the small stable of 'untranslateable' expressions denoting concepts not existing in the target linguaculture. Europe shares a common Christian cultural heritage, therefore it should not come as a great surprise to a translator to discover that another European language has its established linguistic conventions for ecclesiastical concepts, even if, as in the example 'St Vincent de Paul', English does use a foreign borrowing, in this case from French. These examples illustrate the lengths to which source-text reliance can be taken; the reader is induced to conclude that the translator believes that such terms can only be arrived at *ab initio* from the Polish version, and that they can only be introduced into English via the translator.

A further, predictable, phenomenon in this ecclesiastical cultural frame is the repeated translation of *Ewangelicki* as 'Evangelical' when referring to a church, rather than the normal English term 'Protestant'. This perhaps reflects German influence, but is yet another instance of the translator's insistent reliance on the source language and ignorance of target language usage. Thus we have the bizarre translation:

Kościół ewangelicko-metodystyczny.
Evangelic-Methodical Church.

This would surely amuse the millions of members of the *Methodist Church*!

Examples occur in other contexts:

Hala Targowa
Bazaar Hall.
[Market Hall]

Dom Towarowy.
Shopping Mall.
[Department Store]

Pałac Młodzieży
Youth's Palace.
[Youth Centre]

Frequently the intended meaning is so confused that understanding is effectively denied:

Pomnik Walki i Męczeństwa Ziemi Bydgoskiej.
Fight and Martyrdom of the Bydgoszcz Land Monument.

This might suggest that the fight and martyrdom concerns a particular monument known as 'the Land Monument'!

Yet another related phenomenon is the wholly original translation of the names of various internationally-known works of art, music and literature. It is naivety to a surprising degree to assume that English, with its estimated 400 million native speakers, has not succeeded in coming up with versions of well-known works, and that the translator must translate these *ab initio*. Nevertheless, we meet such phenomena as *Opowieści Hoffmanna* translated as 'Hoffmann's Stories', instead of the conventionally established 'Tales of Hoffmann'.

Two related major factors appear to be at work in Polish-English translation: an inadequate knowledge of the target language as it is used, and the consequent tendency towards slavish source-rext reliance. These factors reflect Campbell's (1998: 125) identification of significant insights into translator competence, one of which concerns the pattern of omissions and closeness to normative lexical choices, which allows the postulation of the disposition of a translator, which can be located on two dimensions:

risk-taking ⇔ prudent
persistent ⇔ capitulating

In this sense a 'prudent' or 'capitulating' translator would tend to produce a 'semantic' translation, closely relying on the source text. Here we have the crux of the matter. All that is required to translate, it seems, is a linguistic representation of the source text, everything necessary being present in that source text. No account is taken of the semantic properties of English lexis, or of the norms of expression found in the target linguaculture.

Of course overt source-text reliance is in contravention of current functional theories of translation, where translations are adapted to their intended function in the target linguaculture (Hönig and Kussmaul 1982), and where the traditional prescription that a translation should preserve as much of the original as possible is replaced by 'as

much as is necessary for the function of the translation'. In this way the source text is, in Vermeer's terms, 'dethroned', that is, especially in pragmatic texts, the source text is seen as an 'offer of information' as a means to a new text (Nord 1997)). This 'dethroning' (*Entthronung*) of the source text then 'frees' the translator to produce a text in the target language commensurate with TL culture, text types and requisite style. This clearly places severe demands on the translator in terms of familiarity with target linguaculture norms, and leads to further requirements: a knowledge of text linguistics, and a high degree of writing skill in the target language.

An essential activity in functional translation would seem to be to ascertain how a particular text would be produced in the target linguaculture. A useful suggestion has been made by Weatherby (1998), that translator training adopt a target-text oriented approach. Faults such as many of those instanced above could be avoided by discovering how English-language texts about Polish history and topography express the concepts the translator needs to translate. For example, Polish texts often contain references to historical items such as persons or positions no longer existing (at least in the same form), such as *starosta*, terms often ignored by modern bilingual dictionaries. Reference could be made to English-language works treating Polish historical subjects, such as, for example, Adam Zamoyski's *The Polish Way* (1987). Such an authoritative work, written originally in English by a truly bicultural author, might be a useful precedent for solutions to the translation of culturally and historically specific terminology.

A feature of English is that it readily accepts words of foreign origin, especially to denote culture-bound concepts, for example food items (Newmark 1996). Thus in *Poland: The Rough Guide* (1991) the part of a Polish city, usually translated by Polish translators as 'Old Town Square', 'Old Market Place' etc., is given as *Stary Rynek*. A very recent example occurs in *BBC History Magazine* for December 2000 where there is a short feature on the Christmas cribs of Kraków (Monte 2000). Apart from the British English tendency to preserve the spelling 'Krakow' ('Cracow' seems to be favoured by Americans), we find the following:

"Every year in the southern Polish city of Krakow, on the first Thursday in December, people gather at the foot of the monument to the national poet, Adam Mickiewicz, to display their Christmas Cribs or *Szopki*, as the Poles call them";

while later we read:

"At midday when the bugler sounds the *hejnal* from St Mary's...."

It may be safely concluded that such a passage would provide the translator with invaluable insights into the natural style of an original English source text, including the wholly natural (and expected) provision of Polish language terms in italics. It might be reasonable to propose that such texts be studied to a much greater extent in translation courses. As Rosemary Mackenzie suggests (1998: 15):

"Even an excellent knowledge of two languages and cultures does not
make a professional translator. The translator also needs knowledge of
text types and communication strategies in the languages and cultures
concerned, and must be able to make decisions about what is needed in a
particular situation and how to produce it."

Works by authors of Polish origin written in English would seem to constitute a
useful resource for the translation student. Cited above are the particular text types of an
academic history text (Zamoyski), a popular travel guide (*Rough Guide to Poland*) and a
'middle-brow' magazine (*BBC History Magazine*). Further examples of text types might
include autobiography, especially since such works are frequently written in a very
accessible style, and thus eminently suitable for foreign language students. Two
examples may be given here. The first is Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation* (1998), the
first part of which is a lyrical description of the author's Polish-Jewish childhood in
Kraków. Salutary examples are given of the natural tendency in English to preserve
foreign words in italics, often with a gloss or explanation. The above-mentioned
problem with translating personal titles, for example, is simply and effectively dealt with
thus:

"There's my mother, her best friend, Pani Ruta – *Pani* means something like
Madame – and several other ladies…" (p. 17);

thereafter *Pani* is used with female surnames without italics: Pani Ruta, Pani Orlovska,
Pani Witeszczak, Pani Konek…Other Polish culture-specific terms are also explained
smoothly without disturbing the flow of the narrative:

"I am suffering my first, severe attack of nostalgia, or *tęsknota* – a word which adds
to nostalgia the tonalities of sadness and longing" (p. 4);

(Subsequently *tęsknota* is used in italics without further gloss);

"*Ciocia* means 'Auntie'…" (p.20);

"…what my mother calls *dama*, which means, approximately, a grande dame." (p.
45);

"The best compliment that a school exercise can receive is that it has *polot* – a word
that combines the meanings of dash, inspiration and flying" (p. 71).

Mentioned above is the tendency for English speakers to preserve characteristic
topographical names in their original form (cf. *Champs Elysées*); *Stary Rynek* often
being more natural than its translated versions. Eva Hoffman conforms to this tendency:

"Sundays, aside from being visiting days, are for strolling along the *Planty*, the
broad, tree-lined park-boulevards, which used to form the border of the old city."
(p.40)

Logically, *Planty* frequently occurs in italics without further gloss.

The second example is Radek Sikorski's *The Polish House* (1997). Here is a useful
and significant solution to the oft-seen and tiresome 'translation' of Polish academic
examinations and degrees etc:

"This was my final year of secondary school and I should have been cramming for
my *matura*, the final exams…" (p.57);

"In May, I passed my *matura*…" (P. 70);

"Five days after the *matura* result came through…" (p. 70).

Thus the frequent infelicitous fabrications such as 'maturity exam' are obviated.
Numerous instances of Polish words preserved and often explained occur throughout
this book, written by a bicultural and Oxford-educated Polish author:

"A Pole sees himself as the proud resident of a *dwór*, a manor house, or *dworek*, a
little manor house" (p. 7);

"We called her 'Skarpeta', which means sock…" (p. 28);

"But *lustracja*, as the proposal to weed out former informers was called, also had a
more important, political dimension" (p. 218).

At least one occasion sees the rendering of a snippet of conversation in Polish,
lending a realistic and rich flavour to the writing:

" '*Będzie wojna*', she often told me when I came to visit her: 'There will be war'."
(p. 91).

It would, therefore, seem reasonable to propose the incorporation of extensive study
of English-language texts (particularly those about Poland) into translator training
courses, and perhaps also with some benefit into university English Philology courses.
With reference to many text types, the simple technique of referring to a sample of the
relevant text type in the target linguaculture before translating into that culture is
established in theory (Katan 1999: 201), but seems as yet to have had little impact on
actual translation practice, certainly judging by the preponderance of 'semantic' Polish-
English translations. The study of target language texts might lead to greater awareness
of target linguaculture norms and help translators extract themselves from the mire of
producing foreign-sounding 'third-language' translations arising from their lack of
proficiency in the target language and subsequent reliance on lexical and syntactic
choices suggested by the source text.

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Notes

[1] [Various authors] Wrocław. Translated by Andrzej Lis. Bydgoszcz: Unigraf, 1999

[2] Greń, Krystyna. Szlak Brdy. Translated by the author. Bydgoszcz: PTTK, 1999.

[3] [Various authors] Bo To Jest Bydgoszcz. Translated by Aneta Robakowska. Bydgoszcz: Towarzystwo Miłośników Miasta Bydgoszczy, 1999.