

ON TRANSLATING TITLES OF LITERARY WORKS

SŁAWA AWEDYK

ABSTRACT. In the paper translations of titles of literary works are discussed. The author analyses translations of titles of some Norwegian novels into Polish. The first part of the paper describes the distinction between translation of formal and dynamic equivalence. The analysis has been focused on one aspect, namely, whether the Polish title has an equivalent effect on the receptors.

In the past decades an increasing need for the translating of both scientific and literary texts has made it necessary to work out a theory of translation "... the main reason for formulating a translation theory (...) is the appalling badness of so many published translations.(...) The need to investigate the subject is urgent" (Newmark 1981: 4-5).

The principles of the science of translation were formulated, among others, by Nida, who defined translation as "... reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the message of the source language, first in terms of meaning and second in terms of style" (Nida 1975:95). The following three terms are essential for the translation theory, i.e., equivalent, natural, and closest:

"(1) equivalent (...) points toward the source-language message,

(2) natural (...) points toward the receptor language, and

(3) closest (...) binds the two orientations together on the basis of the highest degree of approximation" (Nida 1964:166).

In order to select the closest and the most natural equivalent the translator is often forced to modify the original text. The aim of such modifications is to adjust the structure of the source language (SL) to the structure of the receptor language (RL). Nida distinguished three types of modification: additions, subtractions, and alternation (cf. Nida 1964:226 ff).

Due to the differences between the structure of SL and RL there is only a certain degree of equivalence between the original and the translated text from the point of view of its communicative and functional content. "Total" equivalence between the two texts is practically unattainable since, in the case of such an ideal equivalence

one would expect to obtain the original text when translating back from RL to SL. Thus, the goal of the translator is to select the closest and the most natural equivalent in RL. Nida distinguished two types of equivalence¹: "(...), there are fundamentally two different types of equivalence: one which may be called formal and another which is primarily dynamic" (Nida 1964:159).

In formal translation attention is focused on the original text. The translator aims to reproduce literally the form and content of the original text by matching not only such elements as style and sentence structure but also such formal elements as punctuation, paragraphing, etc.

In dynamic translation "... one is not so concerned with matching the receptor-language message with the source-language message, but with the dynamic relationship (...), that is the relation between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message" (Nida 1964:159). A translation of dynamic equivalence relates then to the behavior of the receptor in RL within his own culture. A translation of this type does not require the RL receptors to understand the cultural patterns of SL: "A translation of dynamic equivalence aims at complete naturalness of expression, and tries to relate the receptor to modes of behavior relevant within the context of his own culture, ..." (Nida 1964:159). Thus, dynamic equivalence concentrates on the receptor and in RL and attention is focused on the pragmatic aspect of translation.

The differences between translation of formal and dynamic equivalence are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Differences between translation of formal and dynamic equivalence.

Translation of formal equivalence	Translation of dynamic equivalence
FOCUS	
- formal equivalence	- equivalent effect
- message in SL, its form and content, in order to reproduce the form and content of the original text	- equivalent effect on the receptor in RL and preserving the content of the original text
AIM	
- matching elements, both formal and contextual, of the message in SL with the elements of SL	- rendering the message in the most natural way for RL without paying attention to formal elements of SL (consequently, there are many modifications in the translated text)
- demonstrating cultural differences between SL and RL	- equivalent effect on the receptor in RL does not require the knowledge of cultural patterns in SL
COMMENTARIES	
- numerous footnotes whose function is to explain linguistic and cultural discrepancies, e.g., customs, puns, acrostic features of line initial sounds	- very few footnotes which are used only when it is impossible to translate the elements of the original text

¹ Other types of equivalence have been proposed by House (1977), Jäger and Müller (1982), Kade (1968).

In the following paragraphs translations of titles of Norwegian novels into Polish will be analyzed. The analysis will concentrate on one aspect only, namely, whether the Polish title has an equivalent effect on the receptors. The assumption is that the title of a literary work is not accidental but is the result of the author's deliberation. The title introduces the novel (drama, poem) and it may be characteristic of the author, too. For example, T. Vesaas's novels have one word titles consisting of a noun with a definite article, e.g., *Kimen* (*kim* "embryo" plus *-en* "the").

The title is a type of a text which has its concrete meaning and, similarly to other types of texts, it should evoke the intended effect. This effect may be also evoked by an "additional" meaning of the title, B. Bjørnson's "*Synnøve Solbakken*" (Pol. "Dziewczę ze Słonecznego Wzgórza", lit. "The Girl from the Sunny Hill"). Although the Norwegian title is composed of a first and last name, it carries additional meaning for Norwegians. And thus, *Synnøve* is associated with (1) bright sunlight (cf. Norw. *sollyst*), (2) the South (Norw. dial. *synnou*), and (3) the Sunniva myth. Therefore, Polish *dziewczę* (lit. "young girl") does not have the same effect as Norwegian *Synnøve*.

Similarly, *Solbakken* is not merely a sunny hill, it refers also to a farm situated on the sunny (i.e. southern) slope of a hill. Thus, even the translation of a seemingly simple title consisting of proper names may present a problem.²

In Table 2 Polish translations of the titles of some Norwegian novels are presented together with their "back translations".

As back translations demonstrate, the Polish version often differs from the original. For example, S. Hølmekvold's "*Fimbulvinter*" (cf. Old Norw. *fimbulvetr* "severe and long winter") was translated as "Tamta zima" (lit. "That winter"). The Polish title is not the closest natural equivalent and the relation between the Polish receptor and the message is not the same as the relation between the Norwegian receptor and the message.

Similarly, the translation of K. Gulbrandsen's "*Gull og grønne skoger*" violates the principle of equivalent effect. The Polish title "Po złote runo" (lit. "Looking for golden fleece") is not an equivalent of the original title (cf. *å love gull og grønne skoger* "to promise wonders"). When the title is a proverb or an idiom, the translator can reach "situational equivalence" (cf. Vinay and Darbelnet 1977:52) by using a dynamic equivalent in RL, i.e., by relating to the cultural context of the receptors in RL. In this case a situational equivalent of the Norwegian title would be "Złote góry" (lit. "Golden mountains" cf. the Polish idiom: *obiecywać złote góry* lit. "to promise to give sb gold mountains").

The aim of this article is to highlight some problems that the translation of titles of literary works present. The role of the translator is here even more prominent than in the case of other types of texts. As pointed out by Grucza, the subjects of translation science are "... the objects i.e., man or machine performing the function of the translator" (Grucza 1985:33; translation S.A.). This statement is especially

² Naturally, not every title consisting of a proper name carries such an amount of additional information, e.g. S. Undset's novel "*Ida Elisabeth*". In this case only a phonological adaptation is required (Pol. "Ida Elzbieta").

Table 2. Polish translations of the titles of some Norwegian novels and their back translations.

Author	Norwegian title	Polish title	Back translation of Polish title
Bjørnson, B.	Synnøve Solbakken	Dziewczę ze Słonecznego Wzgórza	Jenta fra Solbakken
Christov, S.	Tilfellet Martin	Na przykład Martin	For eksempel Martin
Duun, O.	Olsøyguttane	Bracia z Olsøya	Olsøybrødrene
Egge, P.	Hansine Solstad	Życie Hanzyny	Hansines liv
Egner, T.	Folk og røvere i Kardemomme by	Rozbójnicy z Kardemonu	Røverne fra Kardemomme
Gullbransen, K.	Gull og grønne skoger	Po złote runo	(Gå) etter gullrunnen
Kielland, A.	Skipper Worse	Kapitan Worse	Kaptein Worse
Hølmebakk, S.	Fimbulvinter	Tamta zima	Den vinteren
Borgen, J.	Lillelord	Mały lord	Den lille lorden
Lie, J.	En maktrøm	Otchłań	"Avgrunn" el. "Avgrunnen"
Vesaas, T.	Kimen	Nocne czuwanie	"Nattevakt" el. "Nattevaking"
Undset, S.	De kloke Jomfruer	Wiosenne obluki	Vårens skygger

pertinent in translating the titles of literary works. The translating of titles, which are a special type of texts, should receive more attention in the science of translation.

(Received October 1988)

Sława Aweżyk
Katedra Skandynawistyki UAM
Al. Niepodległości 4
61-854 Poznań

REFERENCES

- Gruca, F. 1985. "Lingwistyka, lingwistyka stosowana, glottodydaktyka, translatoryka". *Materiały z VIII Sympozjum zorganizowanego przez Instytut Lingwistyki Stosowanej UW. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.* 19-44.
- House, J. 1977. *A Model for Translation Quality Assessment.* Tübingen: Günter Narr Verlag
- Jäger, G., D. Müller. 1982. "Kommunikative und maximale Äquivalenz von Texten". In Jäger, G., A. Neubert (ed.). *Äquivalenz bei Translation.* Leipzig: VEB Verlag Enzyklopädie. 42-57.
- Kade, O. 1968. „Kommunikationswissenschaftliche Probleme der Translation". In Neubert, A. (ed.). *Grundfragen der Übersetzungswissenschaft, Beihefte II zur Zeitschrift Fremdsprachen.* Leipzig: 3-19.
- Newmark, P. 1981. *Approaches to Translation.* Oxford: Pergamon Press
- Nida, E. 1975. *Language Structure and Translation,* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press
- 1964. *Toward a Science of Translating.* Leiden: E.J.Brill
- Vinay, J.P., J. Darbelnet. 1958/1977. *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais,* Paris: Didier