
COMMON MISTAKES IN ENGLISH-BULGARIAN TRANSLATION

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Abstract: The paper focuses on the translation-translator relation as a way to explain the mistakes that Bulgarian learners make in translation English texts into Bulgarian. What does it mean to be a good translator? First and foremost, it means that a translator is a kind of a co-author. So he is responsible for the accuracy, clarity, naturalness and acceptability of the translated text. Translators are people who have to interpret the text in the most accurate way in the target language so that the text will remain as close as possible to the source language. On the other hand, a translator should also be able to recreate the text using his own means, to use idiomatic expressions if necessary in order to avoid literary translation. He should be able to use his imagination and implement a sense of balance between precision and the natural sound of the translation. The question that arises is what skills are needed to promote translating ability.

The purpose of the paper is to review recent research in the dynamics of translation. All subjects were Bulgarian learners of English and were recruited in one academic year (October 2020 – April 2021). The participants were students in English Studies at the University of Shumen, in their second year of education whose CEFR level was taken into consideration with respect to their background linguistic and pragmatic awareness.

The analysis of the Learner Corpus reveals several common mistakes that are made when translating texts from English to Bulgarian and this paper means to point them out. These include the inability to differentiate between a good and a bad translation, the “I give up” translation, exaggerating or misunderstanding the meaning of some words, ambiguity, replacing the Bulgarian word with the English one, keeping the original English word order after translation, ignorance of basic Internet terms, online sources, or cultural unawareness, as well as literal translation.

The paper comes to the conclusion that it is the translators’ task to create conditions under which the source language author and the target language reader can interact with one another. Translation studies have been recognised as an important discipline, which is separate from foreign language studies.

Keywords: translation, mistakes, target language

1. INTRODUCTION

The paper focuses on the translation-translator relation as a way to explain the mistakes that Bulgarian learners make in translating English texts into Bulgarian. What does it mean to be a good translator? First and foremost, it means that a translator is a kind of a co-author. So he is responsible for the accuracy, clarity, naturalness and acceptability of the translated text. Translators are people who have to interpret the text in the most accurate way in the target language so that the text will remain as close as possible to the source language. On the other hand, a translator should also be able to recreate the text using his own means, to use idiomatic expressions if necessary in order to avoid literary translation. He should be able to use his imagination and implement a sense of balance between precision and the natural sound of the translation.

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The students have translated quite different topics during the classes – ranging from dog beauty shows to topics on Economics. The analysis of the Learner Corpus reveals several common mistakes that are made when translating texts from English to Bulgarian and this paper means to point them out.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Some of the most common mistakes in English-Bulgarian translations can be explained by:

- Inability to differentiate between a good and a bad translation

Distinguishing between the two is an important aspect of a translator’s job since he himself is the first critic of his own writing. A translator should not rely only on his editor to check his text for mistakes and errors. The translator should be able to evaluate his translated text objectively. Many good interpreters re-read their translations several so that they can grasp the literary creativity of the text.

- The “I give up” translation (intentional omissions)

In addition to the inability to make the difference between good and bad translated texts, Bulgarian learners omitted phrases or expressions because they didn’t know how to interpret them in the target language.

Skipping proverbs like *Every cloud has a silver lining*, for example, does not solve the problem.

- Exaggerating or misunderstanding the meaning of some words

Novice translators as the learners in the study are sometimes have the habit of complicating the translation with complex and cluttered sentences. However, in professional translations the goal is to have a text that sounds naturally in the target language and conciseness is not always a bad thing, if the meaning is properly preserved.

Failure to understand the purpose of the text and the audience it is aimed for can have a serious impact on the quality of the translation, too, because slight nuances, tone or emotions in the text should also be expressed.

- Ambiguity

Not only translators but learners of English as well are aware that there is a group of words in English that are ambiguous. This can affect the style and the meaning of the text:

wish – *желая* as well as *искам*

tip - *бакишии* as well as *върх, заострен край*

- Replacing the Bulgarian word with the English one

In the age of technology, there are many foreign words that are written in Cyrillic and are being used in everyday life. It is always better to use the Bulgarian equivalent of English words unless it is specialized terminology. However, we must not forget that the translated text should be comprehensible and linguistic resources should be strictly selected.

target – *таргет* – *цел*

meet – *мийт* – *среща*

- Keeping the original English word order after translation

Word order varies in different languages. That is why translator's linguistic competence in both native and target language is of great importance.

I have never seen a more beautiful sight in my life.

**Аз не съм никога виждал по-красива гледка в живота си.*

Никога не съм виждал по-красива гледка в живота си.

Reordering the words in a language, on the other hand, can even change its meaning.

- Ignorance of basic Internet terms, online sources, or cultural unawareness

Regardless that quite a big part of the entrepreneurs nowadays use the Internet on a daily basis, there are still some that do not get to knowing the language trends online or the Internet slang and abbreviations being used, they do not make an effort to learn them.

Every translator should be aware that words and phrases are always evolving, their meanings change, and new ones are constantly coming into being. For example, in the past, nearly 20 years ago, when saying “to hang up the phone”, people meant to put down the earpiece into which they spoke onto the body of the telephone. Nowadays, the new generations do not even know where the phrase comes from or why they use it because all they have to do is press a red button on the screen of their phone in order to “hang up”.

Translators should avoid making mistakes because of cultural unawareness. One word sometimes stands for different meanings in a text:

Stir the mixture until it is light and fluffy – making an apple pie

His words made something in my chest stir – a fictional romance (compare ambiguity)

Using dictionaries is a technical skill in itself. Although learners had the opportunity to use dictionaries, they did not know how to use them appropriately. Words have different meanings in different contexts, and usually monolingual dictionaries are of utmost value in this regard. Students need a great deal of practice to find the intended meaning of words in a particular context.

A good translator is someone who has a comprehensive knowledge of both source and target languages. Students should read different genres in both source and target languages including modern literature, contemporary prose, newspapers, magazines, advertisements, announcements, instructions, etc. Being familiar with all these genres is important, since they implicitly transfer culture-specific aspects of a language. Specialised readings are also suggested: reading recently published articles and journals on theoretical and practical aspects of translation. The articles will not only improve the students' reading skill in general, but also give them insights which will subconsciously be applied when actually translating.

Furthermore, one of the most important points to consider in the act of translating is understanding the value of the source text within the framework of the source-language discourse. To develop this understanding, the translator must be aware of the cultural differences, customs, and social settings (Hatim and Mason 1990) as well as the various discursive strategies in the source and target languages.

- Literal translation

The translator should be alert to pick up various expressions, idioms, and specific vocabulary and their uses, and store them in his mind to be used later. Literal translation is the most common mistake. It is mainly observed when translating English idioms:

Break a leg!

Успех!

*Счупи крак

Burn the midnight oil.

Ще уча/работя цяла нощ.

*Изгори среднощното олио

Birds of a feather, flock together.

Красавите магарета и през девет баира се познават/ От един дол дренки.

*Птици с еднакви пера се събират

It's raining cats and dogs.

Вали като из ведро.

*Вали котки и кучета

Once bitten, twice shy.

Парен, каша духа.

*Веднъж ухапан, дважд срамежлив

How could we recognise a good translator? From the analysis of the results we can conclude that the skills that are needed to promote translating ability can be described as follows:

- The translator is a linguistic expertise. He should have a good ear for both source and target language.
- Good translators appreciate the cultures they represent through their translations.
- The translator is aware of the evolution of language.
- The translator holds specialised knowledge.
- The translator pays attention to details.
- The translator accepts criticism.
- The translator has time management skills.
- The translator has passion for language.

3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is the translators' task to create conditions under which the source language author and the target language reader can interact with one another (Lotfipour 1997).

Therefore, translation studies has now been recognized as an important discipline and has become an independent major, separate from foreign-language studies, in universities. This reflects the recognition of the fact that not everybody who knows a foreign language can be a translator, as it is commonly and mistakenly believed. Translation is the key to international understanding. So in this vast world of communication and information overload, we need competent translators who have both the theoretical knowledge and practical skills to do their jobs well.

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