TRANSLATING MUSEUM TEXTS FROM ROMANIAN INTO ENGLISH

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The purpose of this study is to determine the role that translation studies play in translating museum texts from Romanian into English. The study is conducted by means of theoretical analysis, data collected from scholars in both domains, and practical analysis, by selecting and analysing conclusive examples of museum texts (wall texts, labels, signages) that demonstrate lexico-semantic, grammatical, and stylistic transformations.

1. Linguistic and translation peculiarities of museum texts

The spread of knowledge is a decisive factor for the wealth and advancement of any society. A place where anyone can benefit from such great knowledge is the museum. In order to achieve this, translation studies is necessary. According to the linguist Egon Werlich, the meaning of the word "text" is an extended structure made up of syntactic units, such as words, and of textual units marked by coherence and among the elements and completion [1, p. 23].

Language is the most important tool used for human communication. Museum texts, in order to fulfil the communicative goal, have their own style and function. According to the linguist Roman Jakobson, the functions of the language are the following: referential (it concerns descriptions or contextual information); emotive (focused on the addresser's personal attitude and emotional state); directive (concerned with influencing the behaviour of the addressee, thus to persuade); phatic (exchange of ritualized formulas and/or dialogues between speakers with the intention of prolonging communication); metalinguistic (concerned with utterances that deal with language itself); poetic/aesthetic (language's primary focus s is the beauty of the language itself and to please the hearer) [2].

In the setting of museum institutions, labels and museum texts can be written in the following styles: descriptive, narrative, persuasive, and expository.

2. Analysing types of transformations in museum texts

A corpus of 100 examples of museum texts were analysed. Consequently, we have identified that 32 examples show lexico-semantic transformations, 30 examples of grammatical trans-formations, and 38 stylistic transformations. Moreover, the types of translation techniques predominantly encountered in museum texts are: borrowing, literal translation, transposition, equivalence, addition or omission of information, cultural filtering/substitution, explicitness change, recognized translation, synonymy, translation by a less expressive/neutral word; lastly, were attested even translation

errors [3]. As follows, we shall evaluate several selected examples from our paper. Among the examples that show lexico-semantic transformations, we present:

RO: “Cosaș”

EN: “Grasshopper” [4]

The word “cosaș” is a polysemantic one that denotes both an insect and the person that mows grass or crops. The painting with this title depicts a man with a scythe. In this case we can see that the lexical meaning does not reflect the picture, most probably because of a translation error that was made by the translator not having had access to the picture.



Figure 1. Cosaș – Grasshopper, Moisei Gamburd, 1939

Among the examples that show grammatical transformations, we selected:

RO: “Țărăncuța”

EN: “Countrywoman” [4]

In this example we can notice two grammatical transformations: that the feminine gender in Romanian has been translated into English with the help of the word that carries the meaning of gender, in this case “-woman”; the diminutive form of the word in Romanian is expressed through the suffix “–uță”, while in English this aspect is missing.

RO: “Portretul unei necunoscute”

EN: “The portrait of a stranger” [4]

The feminine gender is present only in Romanian, while in English is omitted.

Lastly, some selected examples that represent stylistic transformations are:

RO: “La ușa infernului”

EN: “To the door of the underworld” [4]

The translation of the word “infernului” can be considered as an euphemism, because the translator opted for a more neutral word with less negative and expressive connotations compared with the word “hell”.

RO: “Proverb: Învață lucruri, vor fi utile”

EN: “Learn the art and put it aside” [4]

Similarity is in the message conveyed: to learn because the knowledge can be useful.

RO: “Arme şi echipament militar – o evoluție în timp”

EN: “Weapons and Military Equipment – Evolution throughout Centuries” [5]

In this case, we deal with a translation done with the help of hyponymy, because we con-sider the word “centuries” a hyponym of the word “timp”. Therefore, we have a word with a general meaning being translated by another word with a narrower meaning.

RO: "Populația locuiește în case de tip semi-bordei, încălzite cu cuptoare din piatră."
EN: "Population dwelled in huts which were half-depth in the ground and heated by stone ovens." [5]

Having analysed the phrase "în case de tip semi-bordei" and "in huts which were half-depth in the ground", we have concluded that the message changed in translation from "case" to "huts" and "semi-bordei" is rendered with an explanation "half-depth in the ground".

RO: "Plachetă din lemn. "Încoronarea lui Ștefan cel Mare". Sec. XVIII
EN: "Wooden plaque "Coronation of Ștefan the Great". 18th century [6]

The name "Ștefan" did not undergo any change most probably in order to preserve the cultural effect compared with the epithet 'cel Mare' that was translated into English.

3. Conclusions

Following the study undertaken, by means of the qualitative, contrastive, and deductive analysis, we have arrived to the conclusion regarding the inter-disciplinary character between translation studies and museology on the basis of the way the translation of museum texts from Romanian into English was performed. Thus, we have concluded that for providing a professional translation in the museology context, we must consider research and apply the style and the function of texts, socio-cultural and semiotic implications, as well as the translation strategies.

References:

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4. National Art Museum of Moldova.
5. National Museum of History of Moldova.
6. National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History.

Recommended by
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