A Strategic Analysis of Translation Problems in a Polish Detective Novel: *Seans w Domu Egipskim*

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Abstract

The study explores the translator's decision-making process and implementation of strategies and techniques in the English rendition of the contemporary Polish detective novel entitled Seans w Domu Egipskim. *The main objective of the study is to analyse various translation problems, such as culturemes and idioms, and consider pragmatic gaps that may occur in their rendition from a language of limited diffusion, like Polish, to a dominating language, like English. Dynamic and contextualised strategic analysis conducted within the ARTS methodological framework and based on Pym's minimalist competence model (2003) leads to observations on the nature of cultural knowledge, awareness of cultural meanings encoded in culturemes and pragmatic assumptions in intercultural communication. Conclusions from the conducted case study emphasize the mediating role of the translator in "playing the strategic translation game" and overcoming communicative barriers imposed by the cultural distance.*

Keywords: cultureme, detective novel, Polish-English translation, strategic translation, translation problem, translation unit, translator's decision-making process

Streszczenie

Analiza strategiczna problemów tłumaczeniowych w polskiej powieści kryminalnej: „Seans w Domu Egipskim"

Artykuł ukazuje proces decyzyjny tłumacza oraz stosowanie strategii i technik przekładowych w tłumaczeniu na język angielski współczesnej polskiej powieści kryminalnej pt. „Seans w Domu Egipskim". Głównym celem studium jest przeanalizowanie problemów tłumaczeniowych, takich jak kulturemy lub idiomy oraz rozważenie luk pragmatycznych, które pojawiają się w procesie tłumaczenia powieści z polskiego na angielski. Dynamiczna i kontekstowa analiza strategiczna poprowadzona zgodnie z metodologią ARTS (badania w działaniu) oraz oparta na minimalistycznym modelu kompetencji według Pyma z 2003 roku, prowadzi do wniosków na temat istoty wiedzy kulturowej, świadomości znaczeń kulturowych zakodowanych w kulturemach, a także założeń pragmatycznych w komunikacji międzykulturowej. Wnioski z przedstawionego studium przypadku podkreślają mediacyjną rolę

tłumacza podczas „strategicznej gry tłumaczeniowej" oraz w pokonywaniu barier komunikacyjnych wynikających z różnic kulturowych.

Słowa kluczowe: jednostka tłumaczeniowa, kulturem, powieść kryminalna, problem tłumaczeniowy, proces decyzyjny tłumacza, tłumaczenie polsko-angielskie, tłumaczenie strategiczne

1. Introduction

The present study does not offer a new theoretical paradigm or model of an innovative research path; on the contrary, it is meant to explore the concepts that already have their established status in Translation Studies (henceforth: TS); such as a translation problem, translation strategy and technique, or translation unit analysis. Its goal is also to validate strategic translation, the translator's decision-making process, as a holistic approach in TS. Methodologically, it is a case study exploring a Polish detective novel as a sample of modern archaised crime fiction, through a dynamic and contextualised strategic analysis conducted within the framework of Action Research in Translation Studies (henceforth: ARTS) and based on Pym's minimalist competence model (Pym 2003). The data analysis conducted in the study is focused on the implementation of translation strategies and techniques. The conceptual framework based on it, leads to some observations on the nature of the translation process as a strategic game, and the mediating role of the translator in dealing with culturally-embedded fiction from a language of less global diffusion to a dominant one. The main objective of the study, which is designed as an exercise in strategic translating, is to enquire into rendition techniques of several types of translation problems and to consider pragmatic gaps that may occur in Polish-English translation of the studied novel.

2. Strategic translation as game playing

The study is a conceptual exploration of a translation method built on the two-level model of: a) a strategic, general approach to a given translation assignment (a strategy), and b) a procedural level, at which the translator takes a number of local, unit-level decisions and implements procedures or techniques in approaching that assignment and dealing with individual problems in particular units of the source text (ST)[1]. Thus, the translator's decision-

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[1] A two-level strategic model was first proposed for didactic purposes in the author's publications of 1998 and 2002, and subsequently presented in 2007/2017 and 2020 in print.

making process is understood as strategic translating. In order to start "the strategic game", we need to investigate the notion of strategic translation in more detail.

2.1. The notion of strategic translation

The initial inspiration for the idea of translation being a strategic process comes from Lévy's metaphor of translation as a game of chess:

> *Translating is a DECISION PROCESS: a series of certain number of consecutive situations – moves, as in a game – situations imposing on the translator the necessity of choosing among a certain (and very often exactly definable) number of alternatives.*

> *…the process of translating has the form of a GAME WITH COMPLETE INFORMATION – a game in which every succeeding move is influenced by the knowledge of previous decisions and by the situation which resulted from them (e.g. chess, but not card-games).*

(Lévy 1967: 1171–1182)

Translation appears to be a process of both interpretation and creation. Decision-making inherent in that process has its own structure in a semiotic system and involves semantic, syntactic and pragmatic aspects. The components of the decision process, according to Lévy, are the situation and the paradigm., hence the pragmatic factors and contextual dimensions are essential. There may be more than one translation variant for each unit of translation in a given situation – by choosing one of many options the translator decides to play one possible translation game. Translation means choosing among alternatives. An outcome of each set of choices (based on selective instruction) is called a translation variant. All variants belong to the paradigm which is given its form by definitional instruction. Both selective and definitional instructions follow the syntax of instructions, i.e. a number of instructions combined in a certain way in order to express the meaning most accurately. A translator usually has to make an interpretative decision (which can be necessary/unnecessary and motivated/unmotivated) due to the lack of equivalent. Lévy stresses the pragmatic aspect of translation - reaching maximum effect with minimum effort, a principle he calls the "minimax principle". According to the principle, the translator needs to weigh the relative importance of a particular linguistic element, its textual function and the expectations of the audience against the effort involved in choosing the equivalent, trying to achieve the most effective result at the lowest possible pragmatic and cognitive cost.

The translator's linguistic variants, selected from amongst a restricted paradigm of alternatives, are mutually interrelated - each decision of detail determines subsequent decisions and choices. In that way, subsequent decisions are interdependent and context-related. This generative process consists of stages: sketching a paradigm; excluding possible variants on the context-bound rationale; choosing the optimal and final translation variant. Often, due to language specificity, the translator has to make additional choices, absent during the original creation.

Research into translation strategies and techniques has mainly progressed since 1990. that mark its birth with a seminal monograph by Lörscher (1991) that was wholly devoted to the empirical analysis of psycholinguistic aspects of decision-making, and, a few years later, in 1998, an innovative multi-authored publication entitled *Translators` Strategies and Creativity* (Beylard-Ozeroff, A., Kralova, J. and Moser-Mercer, B. (eds) 1998), that addressed the issue of strategies and techniques. Lévy's ideas, in a way, have also a creative follow-up in one of the approaches to translator competence, namely Pym's minimalist competence.

According to Pym, the idea of competence is connected to the notion of strategic translating in the way that the former means two kinds of ability:

- "the ability to generate a series of more than one viable target text (TT_1 TT_2 …) for a pertinent source text (ST);
- the ability to select only one viable TT from this series, quickly and with justified confidence" (Pym 2003: 489).

Pym's minimalist approach reduced the need for numerous componential competence models created in the last two decades of the 20th century. In essence, it was rooted in acknowledging doubt as a starting point for problem-solving (cf. Pym 1993).

Overview of research into strategic translation brings us observations on an eclectic nature and constant re-labelling of the terms "strategy", "procedure" and "technique". Modern TS discourse on strategic translation originates in the contrastive taxonomy by Vinay and Darbelnet (1988–1995) and Venuti's dualistic argument of foreignization and domestication (1995). Various strategic taxonomies and overviews have been proposed since then. Comprehensive and clear-cut categorizations of strategies and procedures are difficult to achieve; what matters, however, is proper contextualization, to mention only a few of the first Polish systematic approaches to specific translation problems: Berezowski's strategies for rendering dialect, 1996; Jarniewicz's techniques in title rendition, 2000; Bogucki's procedures for subtitles in English-Polish AVT, 2004; Hejwowski's typology of techniques for the rendition of culture-bound elements, 2004.

To conclude, strategic translating is a complex process of cognitive operations, in which the human factor is important. It is a planned cognitive activity (non-automatic) in which problem identification and decision-making occur.

2.2. ARTS – a strategic methodology

Action Research in Translation Studies is a methodology for strategic translation which, according to Hatim (2001: 189), equips the translator-researcher with self-reflective insight into the translation process, and helps in critical evaluation of translation quality of the product. Conscientious implementation of strategies and procedures is a cyclic process in which translating a text (professional practice) is accompanied by a thoughtful identification of problems (critical reflection) and then systematic analysis of gathered material (research), which leads to interpretation towards prospective application (strategic planning), and consequently, finding translation solutions and potential change (action). Feedback gained from self-reflective insight enhances the translation process and translator's cognitive effort.

ARTS is adequate for small-scale projects. It gives "hands-on" experience by combining translating and researching; and is reflexive – balances theory with its application and provides a link between the researcher's and practitioner's knowledge and experience. Its goal is solving authentic translation problems in the real world as its result is implementation of change as the outcome of self-reflective cognitive operations. Hence, the role of the researcher is active rather than passive.

On the basis of the sketched characteristics of ARTS methodology, it appears suitable for the purpose of strategic analysis of translation problems in the given examples in section 4.

3. Introducing the source text

The game of translation is played here with a Polish detective novel with the original title in Polish: *Seans w Domu Egipskim* [*A Séance in the Egyptian House*, transl. MP], published by a prestigious Polish Publishing House "Znak" in Kraków in 2018, and yet untranslated as of 2020. References are also made to another piece of crime fiction by the same author, namely *Tajemnica Domu Helclów* written in 2015 and translated into English as *Mrs Mohr Goes Missing* in 2018 by Antonia Lloyd-Jones, an acclaimed British translator.

The two detective novels build a series connected not by their plots but by the character of the main protagonist, Zofia Szczupaczyńska. Conscientiously, the name of the author has not appeared so far, because although the novels were, assumedly written by Maryla Szymiczkowa,

it is actually a pen name – a literary trick performed by two writers: Jacek Dehnel and Piotr Tarczyński who created the identity of the author to fit the style and aura of the book. She is amusingly introduced on the book cover as a "a *Przekrój* subscriber's widow, a queen of pischinger, a once star of the "Piwnica pod Baranami" club and proofreader of *Tygodnik Powszechny* […]. The very description of the author abounds in culturemes: *Przekrój* is already a culture-specific unit – a title of a Polish journal with ambitions to appeal to contemporary intellectuals, *pischinger* - a borrowed name of a local delicacy, *Piwnica pod Baranami* – the famous Cracovian club and cultural centre; *Tygodnik Powszechny* – all these units would undoubtedly require annotations for a non-Polish reader of the book in order to reduce the cultural distance creating pragmatic gaps in cultural background knowledge.

Zofia Szczupaczyńska, the wife of a professor at the Jagiellonian University, is the main protagonist of both novels. She makes every effort to maintain a respectable status in Kraków's elite and is a Cracovian socialite, living in the heart of the *fin de siècle* Galician city. On the other hand, she is a bored housewife and at the same time a keen amateur sleuth – in search of a villain, who is an enthusiast of crime detection and endeavours to solve the mysteries of murder.

Both books are crime mysteries with a feminist note and a tinge of cunning, rich in social nuance and satire based on allusive meanings and cultural references. The plot of *Mrs Mohr Goes Missing* is set in 1893 Kraków, the crime venue is the Helcel House, a Cracovian care home for the sick and elderly; *Seans w Domu Egipskim* – 1898 Kraków, with murder committed at the party in a Cracovian residence called "the Egyptian House". Both novels employ authentic historical characters, such as a famous 19th century historical realist painter, Jan Matejko, "Satan" Stanisław Przybyszewski or the Helcels – founders of the care home; as well as fictitious characters, such as Zofia Szczupaczyńska and her husband.

The ST that constitutes the game-ground for strategic translation vividly and explicitly evokes the aura of Agatha Christie's detective novels with their period charm, a defined, closed set of suspects that are assembled in a confined space, the mystery, the grand finale when the truth is revealed. A classic crime tale. At the cover of the novel there is a sentence that vividly recalls Christie's crime settings: "twelve persons have sat at the table; one of them will not

stand/get up." The echo of classic crime stories of the contemporary period and Christie's style are transparent in the novel.

3.1. Reception of Maryla Szymiczkowa's novels

Although the major focus of this study is on Maryla Szymiczkowa's second novel, yet unpublished, references and comments concerning the reception of the first one in the series, which was translated into English as *Mrs Mohr Goes Missing,* may be relevant and helpful in understanding strategic choices made in the analytical part of the study. Thus we refer to it in order to grasp why the book received both acclaim and criticism, which may assist in analysing translation choices in the problem analysis in section 4.

A Nobel Laureate 2020, Olga Tokarczuk, called *Mrs Mohr Goes Missing* "an ingenious marriage of comedy and crime," (HMH Books, 23rd March 2021). Other readers' opinions included comments like:

- "written with abundant wit and flair" (HMH Book reviews);
- "Oh, how I wish I liked this novel. But from the very beginning my personal tastes did not agree with the writing style which can either be attributed to the translation or the original novel, I have no idea."; (anonymous, Good Reads);
- "the trouble with international mystery books is that so much depends on the translator. This was written in Polish and I don't think the translator did a particularly good job, not a bad job just not a particularly good one." (S. Johnson, Good Reads);
- "This excellent 2019 translation to English maintains the quality and flavor of the original Polish, I believe." (anonymous, Good Reads).
- "it was wonderfully translated" (anonymous, Good Reads).

The reception of both, the Polish original and its English translation, has evoked mixed responses on the part of the readers. While referring to *Mrs Mohr Goes Missing* the translator herself described the original in the following manner:

> This book has something for everyone: grisly murders, puzzling intrigue, pompous aristocrats, real historical colour, beautiful Kraków, sinister nuns, rude mechanicals, a no-nonsense heroine, and plenty of good jokes.

(From an interview with Antonia Lloyd-Jones[2])

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2 Source: https://przekroj.pl/en/literature/the-art-of-translation-with-antonia-lloyd-jones-przekroj. Date: 10 November 2020.

Similar comments would easily be applicable to the book that serves as the ST in the study. Obviously, presenting the readers' points of view opens up merely one perspective on the book's reception; however, for the purpose of a strategic exercise, it is functionally valid to understand what kind of a text the translator (also a potential one) is dealing with and what the strategic priorities are in translation. In many readers' comments, presentation of the social, historical and cultural background in both originals was noted as the key asset of Szymiczkowa's detective series.

4. Detective novels in strategic analysis – translation problem analysis

The selected corpus of ST units provides ample material for a strategic game of translation. Only selected units have been considered in order to illustrate the point in question, which is implementation of strategy and techniques in text rendition process. An important consideration here is directionality; the translation analysis is conducted on the examples of potential rendition variants from a language of limited diffusion, which is Polish in this case, to a dominating language, which is English here. The problems created because of such a direction of translating are not minor, as discussed below.

It is the translator's job to evoke the aura of the place and time, which considering the specific cultural background and the setting in Szymiczkowa's novels, is by no means easy. A particular historical era with vivid descriptions of manners, toponyms and protagonists – both historical and fictitious is depicted in the novels. Presenting the turn-of-the-century Kraków, with its intellectual elite and the Jagiellonian University academic circles; addressing the issue of a strong female character in the plot; confronting some social issues, creating a parody and pastiche on splendor, social success, formal etiquette and aspiration to career and high standing in the society – all these features of the original are not to be overlooked by the translator. It is literature for entertainment – funny and amusing, and such should be the translator's priority and TT skopos, as well. The question is, how to achieve this goal, having such an abundance of idioms and expressions deeply rooted in local culture, of which the English reader may be totally unaware of and unfamiliar with.

To conduct the analysis at the strategic level, it needs to be acknowledged that the English reader should have a similar feeling for the place and time – the aura of 1898 Kraków in the novel is to be transcreated, and some, at least, pragmatic gaps in background knowledge should be bridged with explicitation procedures or additional explanations. In the translated novel *Mrs Mohr Goes Missing,* a strategic decision taken during the translation process was to add the

Author's Preface in which a description of the locale and historical background of partitioned Poland were provided. Explanation of Poland's partitioning by Russia, Prussia and Austria in the 18th and 19th centuries gives the English reader an insight into Polish turbulent history, thus enabling them to understand, at least partially, the context for the plot in Szymiczkowa's novels and references to historical figures and events.

Procedural analysis is presented in sub-sections 4.1 – 4.9, and it is preceded by two extracts selected for demonstration: the introductory previews to chapters 8 [ST A] and 12 [ST B] in the untranslated novel *Seans w Domu Egipskim*. Owing to the lack of a published translation, both passages have been rendered by the author of this study.

[ST A]

Rozdział VIII

• *W którym* <u>*Zofia Szczupaczyńska*</u> *przechodzi* <u>*spod pawia pod pawia*</u>*,* <u>*z ukontentowaniem*</u> *ogląda* <u>*szpile wbijane wrogom przez wrogów*</u>*, dowiaduje się nieoczekiwanych rzeczy o jadzie straszliwym, z trudem wytrzymuje głupoty o ciałach astralnych i wreszcie otrzymuje kłopotliwe zaproszenie.* [2018: 153]

Chapter 8

[TT, transl. MP] <u>*Zofia Turbotyńska*</u> *goes* <u>*from peacock to peacock*</u> *and is* <u>*delighted*</u> *to see* <u>*pins stuck in enemies by enemies*</u>*, learns about formidable venom, hardly withstands stupid things said about astral bodies, and finally receives a troublesome invitation.*

Translation units:

  [ST A Unit 1] Zofia Szczupaczyńska
  [ST A Unit 2] spod pawia pod pawia
  [ST A Unit 3] z ukontentowaniem
  [ST A Unit 4] szpile wbijane wrogom przez wrogów

[ST B]

Rozdział XII

• *W którym* <u>*dorożka krąży po mieście jak zaczarowana*</u>*,* <u>*w sprawie zwłok nie da się dłużej grać na zwłokę*</u>*,* <u>*profesorowa*</u> *odwiedza cieplarnię na* <u>*Sławkowskiej*</u>*, słucha* <u>*o skandalu z kuzynką cesarza*</u> *(choć nie tego, co trzeba) i wreszcie nie może się nadziwić geniuszowi pewnej osóbki.* [2018: 239]

Chapter 12

[TT, transl. MP] *<u>The carriage circles the city as if enchanted</u>, <u>the issue of a dead body cannot be kept dead any longer</u>, <u>Mrs Professor</u> visits a greenhouse <u>in Sławkowska Street</u>, hears about <u>a scandal with the Emperor's cousin</u> (not the right one, though) and finally is amazed at the genius of a certain little person.*

Translation units:

> *[ST B Unit 1] dorożka krąży po mieście jak zaczarowana*
>
> *[ST B Unit 2] w sprawie zwłok nie da się dłużej grać na zwłokę*
>
> *[ST B Unit 3] profesorowa*
>
> *[ST B Unit 4] na Sławkowskiej*
>
> *[ST B Unit 5] o skandalu z kuzynką cesarza*

Source text units selected for the analysis pose a range of complex translation problems whose spectrum is relatively wide: proper names and culturemes, idioms and wordplays, historical references and archaic expressions – there exists some overlapping between these categories and all of them genuinely constitute a challenge in Polish-to-English rendition. Undoubtedly, the analysis of each unit might be much more extensive and more in-depth; however for the purposes of the study, it suffices to illustrate the translator's decision-making process and understand their "justified confidence" in selecting a viable variant from two or more potential target text units (cf. Pym 2003).

The majority of translation problems occurring in the analysis are related in some way to culture-boundedness. The studied novel is rich in culture-specific items (CSIs) or culturemes, hence our interest in them. For the purpose of the present study, a working definition quoted after *Słownik polskiej terminologii przekładoznawczej* (2019) is adopted: "a cultureme is a unit of language (for instance: a word or a phrase) having particular cultural content and embedded in culture." Such a narrowing down of the concept, assumedly, will make it clear and unequivocal in the present discussion. Culturemes are linguistic bearers of culturally valid meanings. Transferring them across language barriers may be perceived as a form of intercultural communication; hence the role of the translator in decoding pragmatic assumptions and cultural allusions that culture-specific items may carry for the recipients of the ST and then encoding them properly for the TT readership is vital. The attribute "properly" here appears vague; however, it needs to be understood in the functionalist perspective as efficient, contextually meaningful and relevant rendition that is appropriate for the purpose of the text. Out of many culturemes present in the books, such as local toponyms, names of historical

buildings, local dishes[3], and others, nine have been selected from the two chapter introduction previews and considered in qualitative analysis.

4.1. ST A Translation Unit 1: *Zofia Szczupaczyńska or Turbotyńska?*

The name of the protagonist, *Zofia Szczupaczyńska,* is a translation unit that is common in both Szymiczkowa's novels and equally problematic in both. In the translation of the first book, Antonia Lloyd-Jones rendered the name as *Zofia Turbotyńska*, which may appear unjustified at first; however, phonetic difficulty is probably the translator's argument. To compare the two units, let us present their phonetic – semantic correspondence:

Zofia Szczupaczyńska [PL = s*zczupak*, E = *pike*]

Zofia Turbotyńska [PL = *turbot*, E = *turbot*]

Both versions include the meaningfulness of denotative reference to fish, both preserve the Polish feminine gender – *ska.*

    Arguably, pronunciation ease is a debatable choice; also the sound of "szcz" [shtsh] in the name is so characteristically Polish that giving it up in translation causes a loss of an additional humorous effect. Another aspect is a modern translation tendency to translocate proper names in order to preserve their exoticism and valorise their local cultural value. Hence, of the two potential TT variants:

[ST A, unit 1] *Zofia Szczupaczyńska*

[TT1 A, unit 1] *Zofia Turbotyńska*

[TT2 A, unit 1] *Zofia Szczupaczyńska*

the preferred one would rather be TT2.

4.2. ST A Translation Unit 2: *spod pawia pod pawia*

The ST unit here touches the problem of idioms that are notoriously difficult in translation. Additionally, there is a double play – idiomaticity is enhanced with a play on the Polish word *paw* [Eng. *peacock]* that has a double meaning of feeling sick after heavy drinking in a Polish collocation whose one component is present and the other, a missing verb back-translated as *throw,* is implicit. *The peacock* is also the name of the house where the main couple live, and also a famous Cracovian bar and dancing club. In that way, literal meanings coincide with

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[3] A Master's Thesis (unpublished) was written under my supervision at the Podhale State College in 2020. The author of the thesis, S. Kmak titled her work as "Techniques used in the translation of Maryla Szymiczkowa's crime novel *Tajemnica Domu Helclów."*

associative and metaphorical ones to create an expression that is very problematic in translation. The suggested variants do not seem optimal in this case, however TT1 has been chosen as a preferred option.

[ST A, unit 2] *spod pawia pod pawia*

[TT1 A, unit 2] *from peacock to peacock* (literal rendition loses the word game effect)

[TT2 A, unit 2] *from one drinking establishment to another* (explanation clarifies merely one semantic layer of the expression and loses reference to a direct location).

4.3. ST A Translation Unit 3: *z ukontentowaniem*

The third ST A unit refers to the phenomenon of archaisation of the text and the translator's decisions with reference to linguistic units that may be perceived as archaic or old-fashioned. Overall, it is a strategic decision as it concerns the totality of the text; however, in individual local cotexts, like this one, the phrase *z ukontentowaniem* will need to be rendered in line with the translator's holistic approach; in the case of Lloyd-Jones's version – archaisation. The proposed TT version *delighted* carries a tinge of formal and old-fashioned expression in this context:

[ST A, unit 3] *z ukontentowaniem*

[TT1 A, unit 3] *with pleasure* (current expression)

[TT2 A, unit 3] *delighted* (more formal and old-fashioned).

4.4. ST A Translation Unit 4: *szpile wbijane wrogom przez wrogów*

Another instance of idiomaticity in translation is exemplified by the fourth ST A unit. *Wbić szpile* literally stands for putting pins in something. Explication of the phrase clarifies its sense [*how enemies of enemies make their life very unpleasant*] and deprives it of idiomaticity. In this instance the translator, however, is lucky to have a corresponding expression in the target language whose literal and idiomatic senses match like in the original (TT2):

[ST A, unit 4] *szpile wbijane wrogom przez wrogów*

[TT1 A, unit 4] *how enemies of enemies make their life very unpleasant*

[TT2 A, unit 4] *pins stuck in enemies by enemies.*

4.5. ST B Translation Unit 1: *dorożka krąży po mieście jak zaczarowana*

The image of a horse-driven cart, so characteristic of the Cracovian old town, is still very much alive for tourists who visit the medieval Market Square. What may; however, be lost in

translation, is the poetic allusion to one of the best-knows poems by one of the most famous Polish poets of the first half of the 20th century. "Zaczarowana dorożka" by K.I. Gałczyński (1946) circling the city as if enchanted, creates the magic of days gone and a place transformed in the course of time. This magical aura, only alluded to in the brief phrase verbalised in the chapter introduction, is hardly transcreated by the English translation[4]. For comparison, two versions of the first stanza of the poem are quoted:

"Zaczarowana dorożka"

K.I. Gałczyński (1946)

I
Allegro
Zapytajcie Artura,
daję słowo: nie kłamię,
ale było jak ulał
sześć słów w tym telegramie:
ZACZAROWANA DOROŻKA
ZACZAROWANY DOROŻKARZ
ZACZAROWANY KOŃ

"The Enchanted Carriage"
(transl.) M. Gałczyński (2010–2020)
I
Allegro
Arthur will surely confess
I swear that I don't lie,
But six words, no more, no less
Were contained in that wire:
ENCHANTED CARRIAGE
ENCHANTED COACHMAN
ENCHANTED HORSE.

Inevitably, not providing the intertextual reference to Galczyński's poem, which would be so important at the strategic level, will create a translation loss. It is worth noting, that this intertextual allusion is not always legible to Polish recipients, either. *The carriage circling the*

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[4] Source: http://www.kigalczynski.pl/english/wiersze/zaczarowana_dorozka.html?p=_wi, Date: 17 October 2020.

city as if enchanted potentially, at least, recreates the image of the old-fashioned Cracovian means of transport still in tourist services in the Old Market Square.

4.6. ST B Translation Unit 2: *w sprawie zwłok nie da się dłużej grać na zwłokę*

The ST unit is another idiomatic example in the analysis. It is hardly the case that two language systems involved in a transfer have the same resources to create the wordplay based on exactly the same verbal expressions. On the contrary, a certain gap usually occurs – either of a formal feature and denotative meaning, or idiomaticity. The meaning of the idiom *grać na zwłokę* is "to stall, to buy time, to drag out, to make sth continue for longer than necessary" (Macmillan Dictionary, online). Such a rendition, however, does not recreate the play on the literal sense of *zwłoki,* "a corpse", which is essential in a crime story, hence the witty effect disappears. Several TTs may be suggested that play the wordgame differently[5]:

[TT1 B, unit 2] *this death must be treated dead seriously*

[TT2 B, unit 2] *when it comes to the corpse, one cannot play a waiting game*

[TT3 B, unit 2] *the dead person's time is up, so we can no longer play for time*

[TT4 B, unit 2] *the issue of a dead body cannot be kept dead any longer.*

None of them fully renders the pragmatic connotations of the original because there is no equivalent wordplay on the lexeme "dead body" or "corpse" in English that would allude to the central motif in the story that is murder. Double meaning of the Polish idiomatic phrase *grać na zwłokę* and wordplay on the reference to *zwłoki* is unique in the ST.

4.7. ST B Translation Unit 3: *profesorowa*

There is no satisfactory translation solution to the problem posed by Unit 3. Two possible TTs:

[TT1 B, unit 3] *the professor's wife*

[TT2 B, unit 3] *Mrs Professor,*

are mere approximations to the original sense of the expression. What needs to be culturally understood is that Polish women in the past would have had their social rank raised through marriage with their husbands' prestigious professions like lawyers, doctors or professors. This is precisely the case here; also a reason for humour and satirical comments in the novel; Szczupaczyńska craves for prestige and high social standing, which the role of a wife to a

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[5] The three TTs were suggested by students during translation exercises in a course at the Chair for Translation Studies conducted by the author in academic year 2019/2020.

Jagiellonian University professor guarantees, in spite of the fact that she is an outsider to the Cracovian elite. Neither of the suggested TTs transfers those cultural associations.

4.8. ST B Translation Unit 4: *na Sławkowskiej*

The name of a well-known Cracovian street *Sławkowska* demonstrates one of very typical translation problems connected with culturemes, namely that of toponyms. In texts like the analysed detective novels set in a particular cultural context of the most historic Polish city, where every architectural detail, every building, every street and event mentioned have great and long histories, using a standard procedure for toponym translation such as translocation will not be functional. Names of places, streets, houses, restaurants and others illustrate very prominent cultural phenomena, identify and depict contemporary reality and create the period charm in the books; hence it is strategically important for the translator to attempt recreating such an effect. Unfortunately, the transference of the street name *Sławkowska street* into English provides the additional information that it is a street, which in the original is redundant and therefore implicit, but it loses all its connotative meanings.

Several translation options are available, each with different pragmatic implications:

[ST B, unit 4] *na Sławkowskiej*

[TT1 B, unit 4] *in Sławkowska* (full information about the street is not accessible to the English reader, it may even be obscure that it is a street)

[TT2, unit 4] *in Sławkowska Street* (the reader gets the information that Sławkowska is a street only)

[TT3, unit 4] *in Sławkowska Street, one of the most ancient and prestigious streets in the heart of the city* (additional explication introduces the reader of the English translation to the aura of the street although its full picture is only available through native experience and cultural background knowledge).

4.9. ST B Translation Unit 5: *o skandalu z kuzynką cesarza*

The cultural meaning encoded in the phrase in Unit 5, whose direct rendition is:

[TT B, UNIT 5] *about the scandal with the Emperor's cousin,*

may not be easily decoded either by the target audience, or, for that matter, by the source audience. The phrase rests on the background knowledge about a certain period of the European history; the end of the 19th century, to be precise; and alludes to the Emperor of Austrian and Hungarian Empire, Joseph Franz, which is not necessarily obvious to every reader. The scandal

refers to the Emperor's cousin-wife Elisabeth, named Sisi; exactly the scandal of her death in 1898, as she was stabbed in the street of Geneva by an Italian anarchist. This historical allusion may not necessarily be deciphered by the book readers in either Polish original or English translation, hence a pragmatic gap will ensue. Whether the gap affects comprehensibility of the text or not, is the translator's decision in evaluating the expected level of the reader's historical expertise.

Owing to the richness of cultural nuance in the original books, their translation undoubtedly poses many dilemmas for the translator. Inevitable loss occurs in many units as it is hardly possible to transfer all the cultural references, allusions and meanings for a member of a culture that lacks unique historical experience of Kraków. The presented study is fragmentary and illustrative, rather than systematic and exhaustive, also it may be subject to various interpretations when it comes to individual translation units, but even such a brief sketch, highlights the importance of the translator's decision-making and signals basic mechanisms involved in making both holistic and detailed decisions during the translation process.

5. Conclusion

This study was prepared in order to demonstrate that theoretical assumptions and methodological framework activated in the process of strategic translation seem to cross the boundaries and narrowly perceived contexts of textual genres and translation types; strategic translation may be viewed as a holistic and relatively universal approach to undertaking various translation assignments and transferring various text types and genres. Conclusions from the strategic translation analysis of the presented case study provide observations on the nature of cultural knowledge, awareness and significance of cultural meanings encoded in culture-bound elements and pragmatic assumptions; they emphasize the mediating role of the translator in the act of intercultural communication via translation in overcoming communicative barriers imposed by the cultural distance.

The pandemic, in a way, has demonstrated the need for a transition movement from global to local. Szymiczkowa's detective novel highlights the colourful, historical features of a very specific and local world, which is, precisely owing to that local aura, problematic in translation. Specificity of *fin de siécle* Kraków is what creates dilemmas in rendering culturemes and making them transparent and universally understood in English translations of the novels. Strategic translation is a process of synergic researcher-translator insight linked to Translation Studies procedural knowledge related to a particular type and context of translation. Reception

studies that combine literary and translation approaches, assist in devising a strategy for translating a literary text. Theoretical assumptions and the methodological framework activated in the process of strategic translation cross the boundaries of textual genres and seem to be applicable widely to any kind of text as the translator's universal approach in bridging the cultural gap in translation.

Source Texts

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