

THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS THROUGH TRANSLATION

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*Language (is) a symbolic guide to culture.
(Edward Sapir)*

Title: “The Communication Process Through Translation”

Abstract: Translation is used to express in different languages the same communication content. To distinguish the content as such, modern communication theories are based on the distinction made by three levels or types of linguistic content. This study uses the terminology of Coseriu from *Textlinguistik* (1994). According to this author, three main types of linguistic content can be distinguished: the designation - the reference to the extra-linguistic reality, the signification – the given content of the individual language and the meaning - what the text or a text fragment 'meant' in a specific context and in a specific situation. For the communication process it is important, which from these three types linguistic content can be found in a text and must be transferred when translating into another language. The article offers a comparative research between the original French text from Charles De Coster „La légende et les aventures héroïques, joyeuses et glorieuses d'Ulenspiegel et de Lamme Goedzak au pays de Flandres et ailleurs” and its German translations. The study examines 129 Flemish words and idioms used by the Belgian author for his „Flemish language”. The analyze shows the difficulties in the communication process trough translation in order to maintain the content with all significations in a different language.

Keywords: *communication process; text content; signification; translation, Flemish language*

1. Text content in the communication process

In the communication process translation is used to express "in different languages the same text content" (Ulrich 1997: 255). To distinguish the text content as such, modern translation is based on the distinction made by three levels or types of linguistic content. This study uses the terminology of Coseriu from *Textlinguistik* (1994), "which seems otherwise to be the most common" (Ulrich 1997: 147). According to this author, three main types of linguistic content can be distinguished: the designation - the reference to the extra-linguistic reality, the signification – the given content of the individual language and the meaning - what the text or a text fragment 'meant' in a specific context and in a specific situation. Ulrich (1997: 147) emphasizes that these levels of linguistic content, with explicit reference to the translation, can be found by other authors as well such as by Leonid Barchudarov or Erwin Koschmieder.

2. Designation and meaning

For the communication process it is important, which from these three types linguistic content can be found in a text and must be transferred when translating into another language (see Ulrich 1997: 147). Coseriu says that when we translate we do not go directly from a language form to another language form; we first determine which is the term meant on the extra linguistic level. Only when we have identified this, we wonder how can we express the same name in the target language for the same extra linguistic reality, in other words, which is the designation, which is valid for the other language. The significations, i.e. what for significations for the chosen designation can be found in a specific language, cannot be translated. During translation you can therefore start from the meaning of the source language, then you can identify the designation and search in the target language, the meaning that corresponds to the designation in each context (Coseriu 1988: 129). Coseriu's idea is that the translation does not involve the level of the individual languages, just the level of the texts (see Ulrich 1997: 253). Therefore says Ulrich that the text content is made by "designation and meaning, but the signification is, by definition, part of the individual language" (1997: 211).

2.1 Meaning as a combination of all relations established by the linguistic sign

However, there are a whole series of other relations¹ that are constitutive of the meaning. Apart from the relations of the Organon model² the linguistic sign first works once in the speech by the relationships that may exist between him and other linguistic signs: It involves both relations, first with individual signs, as the linguistic signs can be set in relation in the text to other linguistic signs, both materially and in terms of content, secondly, with groups or categories of signs or even with all sign systems. Also other types of relations may be present in the text: relations with signs in other texts (repetitive speech, expressions), relations between signs and 'things' (imitation by the substance of the sign: by the sound image, by articulation and synesthesia, or imitation by the form of the sign), relations between signs and 'knowledge of matters' or with other contexts.

2.2 The evocation

After Coseriu the meaning is the combination of the functions of the linguistic sign proposed by Bühler and the evocation. The evocation contributes to the richness of the language; it encourages the ambiguity that can be seen as enrichment, as richness of language. Under evocation he understands all the functions, "which can not be reduced directly to the representative function" (COSERIU 1994: 137).

3. Communication limits in the translation of Till Ulenspiegel

"If you want to discover the secret behind one society," says Salman Rushdie in his novel *Shame*, "so you have to look at its untranslatable words" (Westheide 1995: 203). To see which communication limits, occur in the translation of the text

¹ Coseriu meant other relations than those proposed by Karl Bühler (see Coseriu 1994: 71f.).

² The model proposed by Bühler.

content, I compared the Flemish expressions that occur in *Ulenspiegel* novel by Charles De Coster, namely the French original (De Coster 1966) with those from the German (De Coster 1936) translation. In case of differences³ it was taken in consideration a new Dutch translation of the original text (De Coster 1998) and a Romanian text (De Coster 1986).

The Belgian *Ulenspiegel* version (1868) of Charles De Coster is considered the “national Bible of the Belgians” (see LOPE 1983: 36). To the historical impact of this novel contribute a variety of translations in foreign languages, numerous films, theater and television productions and even famous painters like Franz Masereel and Felicien Rops (Lope 1983: 36f). De Coster consistently used a French archaic language conformed to the 16th century and not the language of this century. He tries to avoid anachronisms, “by attempting to suggest the language attitude of the 16th century in Flanders” (Lope 1984: 51). Lope emphasizes that he assures himself thereby using a complex rhetorical system of the expressive possibilities given by the “archaïsme par évocation⁴”, whose appeal Schiller already knew.

3.1 Environments⁵

Flemish elements are among the main characteristics of the text (KLINKENBERG 1973b: 283). Consequently, the Dutch vocabulary is very rich⁶. Several pages are full of Flemish words like: *opperst-kleed*, *Galgenveld*, *guild*, *plat landt*, *rivet*, *keet*, *speel-wagen*, *stockfish*, *truxman*, etc., a lot of pubs name: *Blauwe Gans*, *Blauwe Lanteern*, *Blauwe-Toren*, *In de Bie*, *In de Ketele*, *In de Meermin*, *To ouden Haen*, *In de Reghen-boogh*, *To Rooden Schildt*, *In de Pelicaen*, *In de Zoeten Inval*, *To zingende Zwaen*, *In't Bondt verkin*, *In't Roode Valck*, *In't Vagevuur* etc .; and complete quotes: *Staet op! Staet op! Ik't bevel, vuilen hond! Keyser Karel is Op't groot Marckt! 'H tijd van de beven de klinkaert! Liever the Turc than Paus, as god met ons is how tegen ons zal zijn?* etc. There are so many toponymics and patronymics, that they had to be considered in the text analyze. Many of these mentioned categories are archaisms⁷. After Klingenberg (1973a: 96) they create a special aura. It is normal for the author to use words like *opperst-kleed* or *rommel-pot*, because it would evoke in this way “the whole of Flanders.” Klingenberg (1973a: 95n) refers here to Coseriu distinction between zone and area in the study of environments (in the original German text of Coseriu: *Umfelder*)⁸

³ The orthography is not uniform (miesevinger and meesevinger, kuyt and cuyt) or is outdated

⁴ Klinkenberg (1974b: 9f) distinguishes the “archaïsme par évocation” (the evocative archaism) from “archaïsme de civilization” (the archaism of civilization) and the “archaïsme stylistique” (the stylistic archaism). The long title of the novel would be also an example for this purpose (Klinkenberg 1973b: 19).

⁵ For this concept see Coseriu (1994: 124f.).

⁶ In the present article 129 Flemish words and expressions were analyzed.

⁷ Klingenberg (1973b, 283) emphasizes that the archaism is one of the most important stylistic tools.

⁸ The linguistic zone is the area in which the word is known throughout the region (ámbito) refers to the region in which the signified for everyday life belongs. The result is a very special kind of evocation, if a sign is used outside the range of his designation. Since the zone and the region are different, stylistic features are recognizable, such as exotic coloring. This is the case with words like samovar or geisha (see also Coseriu 1994: 121f.).

Klinkenberg's opinion is that the author could put these interesting terms out of their spatial significance in a time dimension, thereby evoking Flanders. Such words include:

- Names of currency: *negen mannekens* (coins of low value), *patard* (a quarter), *daelder* also *rycksdielder*, *rixdaelder* or so called *Richsthaler*.

- Military expressions: *Landsknecht* (equestrian), German mercenaries who came to France under Charles VIII, many other military terms: *voet-looper* (messenger), *stockmeester* (prison guards), *stocksknechten* (helper with sticks), *red-meester* (captain), *hoerweyfel* (guards of prostitutes who went together with the army) etc.

- Musical instruments such as: *scalmeye* or *rommel-pot*.

- Designations of the society structure: *markgrave* (Markgraf, German Prince), *stadhouer* (a kind of president by the Dutch government), *baes und baesinne* (used mostly for the host and the hostess), *school-meester* (schoolmasters, teachers), *kooldraeger* (miner), *smitte* (blacksmith), *miesevangers* or *meesevangers* (titmice catcher), *hooghoorters* (the rich citizens well located in the society), *bakker* (even *kwaebakker*, the grim baker), names of brotherhoods: *pater- noster knechten*, *smaedelyke broeders*, forms of address like : *signorkes* and *pagaders*, *signorkes* and *signorkinnes* (ladies and gentlemens) or juicy swear words: *dikzak*, *vetzak*, *leugenzak*, *papzak*, *bloed-zuyger*, *bloed-hond*, *papeter*, *wysneus* etc.

- Table habits/name of food and drinks: many types of beer: *bruin beer*, *Clauwaert*, *simple* and *dobbel-kuyt* or *cuyte*, *dobbel-beer*, *dobbel-knol* and *dobbel-knollaert* - which are drunk in the *musicos*⁹ and *kaberdoesjes*, also *inglische bier* (English beer), the *peterman* and *dobbel-peterman* from Leuven. Other drinks are: *rhywyn* or *lantwynen* for food like: *waterzoey*, dumpling from Germany or muske *conyn*. Specific dishes are: *choesels*, *rystpap*, *olie-koekjes* (or *olie-koeken*), fish (*fisch*, *schol* and *zuurtje*) supplemented with desert (*waefels*, even *wafels met brabantse knopen*, *koekebacken* or *heete-koeken*), not forgetting the *zennip* or *peper-koek*. Such words can tell a lot about the eating and drinking habits.

3.2 Language processing in communication trough translation

Between the two translations (into German and Romanian), there are no significant differences. However, for the German translator - and probably also for the German reader - some Flemish phrases sound familiar and the German translation can add the German word to the original word: *oliekoekjes* (*Ölkuchen*), *rakstekers* (*Rochenbeschörer*) or use just the German correspondent: *Scholle* (fish), *Dicksack* (swear word), *Silbertaler* (silver coin), *Werwolf* (werewolf), *Lang lebe unser Bruder Ulenspiegel!* (Long live our brother Ulenspiegel!). But even with such related languages such as the Dutch and the German some differences can be noted, as the words are linked to certain ways of speaking and therefore put for the translator special requirements (see WESTHEIDE 1995: 216). There are therefore great differences in the reproduction of the text content.

⁹ Pubs where music is played (by J. Hanse in De Coster 1966: 475).

3.2.1 Transfer of Designation

There is little difficulty with the designation in the translated text because almost all words in italics are explained by De Coster implicitly or explicitly: by detailed descriptions as for Rommelpot in the first book, chap. 21, by the context: "seventeen pints dobbel cuyt", "the dobbel-peterman flowed into their stomach like a torrent", "mieseangers from Antwerp, they catch titmice at night with an owl" or a swear word like *papeter* can be understood in an enumeration of other expressions with the same purpose. Another solution is to add an explanation for the words whose meaning is not clear from the context: "dumpling from Germany" or "I will prepare you *heete-koeken* - these are *crêpes* from France"¹⁰. Thereby there are few errors that occur in the translation of specific names: for example, Dulle Griet called in the Romanian translation a "Great Tower" (Turnul cel Mare) instead to explain that it is the designation for a cannon.

3.2.2 Difficulties of the communication process - the meaning

As for the text content it is not only the designation important but also the meaning, there are difficulties to grasp the meaning. In the translation, the evocation plays no longer the same role. Therefore errors already appear in the transmission of the text: for example, the German translator confuses the words: *hetekoeken*, *koek* and *oliekoeken* and generates the word *eete-koeken* which does not exist in the original text and, actually, in the Dutch language. The meaning emerges not as in the original version, because it doesn't work anymore all the signs relations:

- Relations with each sign in terms of content. There are words with possible associations, which are triggered by motivated signs such as *Goedzak* and *dikzak*.

Goedzak means 'good-hearted person' while *dikzak* has a negative coloring, as well as all other swear words: *slokkenzak*, *wulpszak*, *leugenzak* *vetzak*, *papzak*. Then in the case of all patronyms: *Stercke Pier*, *Dierick Slosse*, *Willem de Zwyger*, *Jan van Zuurmoel*, *Jost Kwaebakker*, *Roosebeke*, *Grypstuiver*, *Pieter van Steenkiste*, *Diedrich van Schoonenbergh*, *Water Signorke*, *Heer van Geenland* and toponyms: *Cruys-poort*, *Duivenland*, *Koolkerke*, *Minne-water*, *Steen*, *Dulle Griet*, *Luytleckerlan* etc. A special position is occupied by the name of the main character. *Ulenspiegel* is the prototype of the Flemings, a representative of the young Belgian nation and a Flemish hero. The choice of his name reflects the rebellion against the Spanish government and the Inquisition, but also against the attempt to restrict the free spirit. *Ulen* also means in Flemish *vegen* (to sweep) and *spiegel* (mirror) is known in the hunter language for the *butt* (*achterste*), so the point would be: *je kunt me kont afvegen* ("you can kiss my ass"). The possibility that the first name *Till* (*Thyl*) is also related to the verb *tillen*, a synonym for *oplichten* (to trick), can't be excluded.

- Relations with groups or categories of signs: words like *Muskin*, *mannekin*, *Soetkin*, *Boelkin*, *Michielkin* stand by their meaning not only with each sign in

¹⁰ In the selected German version it says "German dumplings" or "I bake *heete-koeken* - these are donuts".

relation, but also to a category of signs (diminutives)¹¹.

- Relations with signs in other texts: the name of the alarm bell *wacharm* comes from the hazard warning: "*Eilaas! Wacharmen!*" (De Coster 1998: 567) and such a relation can't be established by the reader in another language.

- Relations between signs and 'knowledge of things': *Vierschare* (*vierschaaer*) – means the Civil Court with four banks, used in the Middle Ages as technical term for the courtroom; another technical term is *papegay* used by the shooters. A *Panch Kermis* is in the north of Belgium a fest in the time of slaughtering pigs, *pater-noster knechten* and *Smaedelycke broeders* are brotherhoods (*broeders* means brothers, but also brotherhoods members). Then the previously mentioned typical Flemish dishes: *peper-koek* - was eaten for breakfast, *muske Conyn*, *waterzoey*, *choesels*, *knoedel*, *zuurtje* are main courses and *heete-koeken*, *koekbakken*, *pannenkoeken*, *olie-koekjes*, *rijstpap* or *waefels* are names for deserts. For drinks are named different types of beer, each coming from a different city: *Clauwaert* from Gent, *kuyt* or *cuyte* from Bruges, *knol* from Antwerp, *dobbbele knollaert* from Kortrijk. The *dobbel-peterman* can only be a beer from Leuven, because here is the famous Saint Peter's Church and after this church was not only named the beer so, but also the citizens of Leuven (cf. Van Dale 1999: 2546).

4. Conclusion

The Flemish elements remain marked by italics in most translations. Because the author explains already most of them, there are a few errors that occur in the translation of the designation. However, some names like pinnemakers or ragsteker cannot be understood without comment, as it is unfortunately the case in the examined translations. While the published version of Hanse and the new Dutch edition explain some of the words, there are no explanations in the German and Romanian translated text. The text content is in the translation not the same, because many relations of linguistic signs are lost for the readers in other languages.

The German reader can perhaps restore some of the relations due to the similarity that exists between the German and Dutch language (such as in *vetzak* or *galgen-veld*), but not the Romanian readers.

In the translation, the evocation does not play the same role as in the case of the original text and probably the evocation of a certain time doesn't work, so as Klinkenberg highlights (for example *Vierschare* as technical term outside of a certain *àmbito*).

¹¹ See also the note by the Dutch translator in De Coster (1998: 561). Words with *-kin* are diminutives.

Because the text content has to reflect not only the designation but also the meaning it becomes clear with the chosen example, that there are difficulties to grasp the meaning in language processing. The here discussed examples show that the translation comes to language limits. As for the translation of De Coster's novel even if it is not about untranslatable words, one can no longer speak in the translated text of a 'Flemish language'¹².

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¹² Klinkenberg (1973b: 287) characterizes De Coster's language in Ulenspiegel with the quote from Remy de Gourmont about Verhaeren: “Sa langue (...) n'est ni classique, ni romantique, ni symboliste: elle est flamande”.

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