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**Multilingualism and translatorial decisions – selected examples
from translations of the European Union source text****Introduction**

One of the basic questions that appear during discourse analysis may be the following: why do members of a given group use language in a particular manner? This makes discourse analysis a subdiscipline of linguistics, one whose findings constitute a significant contribution to the development of translation studies. And although answering this question requires using conceptions beyond the scope of linguistics, offered by such disciplines of learning as sociology, psychology, or anthropology, it is precisely linguistics that appears to be the discipline that comes particularly close to providing an answer¹. For translation studies this question is especially important, since it concerns the communicative aspect of language, which gains additional significance in a situation in which the process of communication occurs between two (or more) cultures; that is, when the process of translation is employed.

In the present publication, the question about the manner in which language is used will be posed with reference to translated texts (into Croatian and Polish) created as part of the operation of the European

¹ Conf. T.A. van Dijk, *Dyskurs jako struktura i proces* [*Discourse as a structure and a process*], Warszawa 2001, p. 11.

Union institutions. A source text from this corpus was selected because the progressing standardisation of EU texts means that the language found in them possesses certain characteristic features, typical exclusively for them. Therefore, it appears justified to ask about specific decisions made by translators, and consequently, about their specific choices in using the target language.

The first section will describe the language situation in the European Union and characterise the specificity of translations taking place in its institutions. Next, two translated texts will be compared to the source text and analysed, in search of elements whose use may arouse doubt about correctness in relation to the source languages. On this basis, an attempt will be made to pose a hypothesis about the reasons why translators made given choices in translated texts.

Multilingualism of the EU and translation processes

Translation is not only a simple process of language transfer, but an actual communication act, more complex in fact than the one taking place when only one system of signs is used. It is an attempt to transmit specific information with the use of a different language system, and as such is a complicated process, since it requires perfect knowledge not only of two languages but also two cultures. What is more, the translator must keep in mind both the author and the audience, the grammatical/lexical reservoir or conventions of language and culture present in the source text, as well as in the target text. Of no less importance is the translator's correct reading of the communicative function performed by the source text, in order to preserve it in translation.

These assumptions acquire even more significance in communicative situations occurring in an environment as diverse in terms of culture and language as the European Union. This is because the principle of multilingualism, included in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union is a phenomenon with no equivalent in any other economic/legal system in the world². It requires the institutions of the EU to respect linguistic diversity, forbids any form of discrimination on grounds of the language used, and ensures that the citizens of the united

² Conf. K. Michałowska-Gorywoda, *Śłużby lingwistyczne Unii Europejskiej [Linguistic services of the European Union]*, „Studia Europejskie” 2001, 3, p. 81.

Europe have the right to communicate with its institutions in any of its official languages.

The issue of the influence of the gradual expansion of the Community on the processes related to translation is extremely interesting. Here, the question of the possible combinations of languages between which the need for translation may appear is of primary importance. In the European Union there are currently twenty four official languages, in which legal documents (such as the Official Journal of the EU), among other texts, are published. According to the law of the Union, correspondence may be sent to EU institutions in each of these languages and reply must be provided in each of them. After the establishment of the European Economic Community in 1958, the need appeared for translations between four languages: Italian, German, French, and Dutch. The gradual accession of new countries to the Community involved the increase in the number of official languages and of possible combinations in translating: in 1973, English and Danish were added, in 1981 Greek, in 1986 Spanish and Portuguese, in 1995 Swedish and Finnish, in 2004 Slovenian, Slovak, Polish, Maltese, Lithuanian, Latvian, Hungarian, Estonian, and Czech, in 2007 Romanian, Irish, and Bulgarian, and finally in 2013 – Croatian. After the departure of Great Britain from the EU, which took place on 31st of January 2020, English remained an official language of Ireland and Malta. The current number of official languages means that there are 522 possible combinations in translation³.

A significant factor influencing the translation processes of EU texts is the fact that the languages are assigned a specific status: authentic, official, and working languages. Authentic languages are the original languages of the EU Treatises, which is ensured for example by the regulations contained in the *Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties* from 22nd of May 1969. Official and working languages are defined in detail by *Regulation No 1 determining the languages to be used by the European Economic Community* (Official Journal of the EU 1958), which states in its most recent annex from 2013 (Article 1): „The official languages and the working languages of the institutions of the Union shall be Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian,

³ Data provided at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/interpretation> [access: 15.02.2021].

Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish and Swedish”⁴. Additionally, Article 6 of *Regulation No 1* states that each institution of the European Union may introduce internal regulations concerning working languages, which is reflected in practice.

Let us therefore look at how these questions are regulated by four institutions of the European Union, whose activity generates most demand for translation.

Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament determine questions related to languages in Article 167⁵:

Article 167: Languages

1. All documents of Parliament shall be drawn up in the official languages.
2. All Members shall have the right to speak in Parliament in the official language of their choice. Speeches delivered in one of the official languages shall be simultaneously interpreted into the other official languages and into any other language that the Bureau may consider to be necessary.
3. Interpretation shall be provided in committee and delegation meetings from and into the official languages that are used and requested by the members and substitutes of that committee or delegation.
4. At committee and delegation meetings away from the usual places of work, interpretation shall be provided from and into the languages of those members who have confirmed that they will attend the meeting. These arrangements may exceptionally be made more flexible. The Bureau shall adopt the necessary provisions.
5. After the result of a vote has been announced, the President shall rule on any requests concerning alleged discrepancies between the different language versions.

More detailed regulations on the issue are contained in „Code of conduct on multilingualism adopted by the Bureau on 16 June 2014”.

Also Article 14 of the Rules of procedure of the Council of Europe includes regulations concerning translation⁶:

1. Except as otherwise decided unanimously by the Council on grounds of urgency, the Council shall deliberate and take decisions only on the basis of

⁴ Regulation No 1 determining the languages to be used by the European Economic Community, 2013, p. 2.

⁵ Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, 2017, p. 98.

⁶ Council Decision of 1 December 2009 adopting the Council’s Rules of Procedure.

documents and drafts drawn up in the languages specified in the rules in force governing languages.

2. Any member of the Council may oppose discussion if the texts of any proposed amendments are not drawn up in such of the languages referred to in paragraph 1 as he or she may specify.

On the other hand, Article 18 of the Rules of procedure of the European Commission specifies that any instrument adopted by the Commission by any procedure will be attached in the authentic language, understood as one of the official languages of the Communities in the case of instruments of general application and the language or languages of those to whom they are addressed in other cases⁷. At the same time, the Code of Good Administrative Behaviour, also in force in the Commission, obliges the staff to reply in writing to correspondence addressed to the Commission in the official language of the Union in which it was originally written.

Finally, the Court of Justice of the EU, in Chapter 8 of „Rules of procedure of the Court of Justice” defines each of the official languages as the possible language of a case (Article 36), and then, in Article 37, determines a detailed procedure for determining the language of a case. The basic principle is that in direct actions, the language of the case is chosen by the applicant, but Article 37 lists several exceptions⁸:

- a) where the defendant is a Member State, the language of the case shall be the official language of that State; where that State has more than one official language, the applicant may choose between them;
- b) at the joint request of the parties, the use of another of the languages mentioned in Article 36 for all or part of the proceedings may be authorised;
- c) at the request of one of the parties, and after the opposite party and the Advocate General have been heard, the use of another of the languages mentioned in Article 36 may be authorised as the language of the case for all or part of the proceedings by way of derogation from subparagraphs (a) and (b); such a request may not be submitted by one of the institutions of the European Union

The regulations described above give some idea of the complexity of the language system of the EU, and imply the amount of documents that have

⁷ Rules of procedure of the European Commission, 2000, p. 220.

⁸ Rules of procedure of the Court of Justice of the European Union, 2012.

to be translated in order for the EU institutions to be able to function. For pragmatic reasons, in day-to-day operation of the institutions, whenever possible and whenever this does not violate organisational regulations, communication is limited to several working languages. Practice shows that these are most frequently English, French, and German⁹. However, the EU system of official circulation of documents to be translated is another matter. In this case, English is the source language in over 80% of the cases¹⁰. The principles characterised above, resulting from the officially declared multilingualism, are the reason why the amount of documents which require translation is enormous. Such great demand for translation cannot but have influence on the quality of produced texts, which is why in recent years it has been observed that some translated documents create a sense of alienness, as if they do not fit into the target culture. These are sometimes referred to as hybrid texts¹¹, since they are the product of a sort of compromise that the translator has to choose in order to, on the one hand, preserve in the translated text the communicative function of the original, and on the other, to adapt to the increasing standardisation of texts in the Union.

Analysis

To illustrate how the above assumptions influence the processes of translation, let us look closer at the translated texts. The source text will be *„The EU and the refugee crisis”*, from the *„The EU and”* series, which addresses issues related to the most current business of the EU. It will be compared with two translated versions: the Polish one (*„UE a... kryzys uchodźczy”*) and the Croatian one (*„EU i izbjeglička kriza”*). The *„The EU and”* series is published by The Directorate-General for Communication, operating in the EU¹².

Already in the first paragraph of the Polish translation we encounter a fragment whose language may be questioned (all underlinings in the sample texts are mine – PB):

⁹ Conf. I. Andrzejewska-Czemek, *Wykładnia prawa podatkowego Unii Europejskiej* [Interpretation of EU tax law], Warszawa 2013, p. 76.

¹⁰ Data provided at: Translation Centre for the Bodies of the EU, <https://cdt.europa.eu/> [access: 15.02.2021].

¹¹ Conf. A. Trosborg, *Text typology and translation*, Amsterdam–Philadelphia 2017.

¹² Conf. https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/communication_en [access: 15.02.2021].

Aby uporać się z kryzysem, UE przyjęła szereg środków. Środki te obejmują podjęcie próby zlikwidowania pierwotnych przyczyn kryzysu, jak również znaczne zwiększenie wsparcia dla osób potrzebujących pomocy humanitarnej zarówno w UE, jak i poza nią.

Here is the fragment in the original:

The EU has agreed on a range of measures to deal with the crisis. These include trying to resolve the root causes of the crisis as well as greatly increasing aid to people in need of humanitarian assistance both inside and outside the EU.

An in Croatian:

EU je postigao dogovor o nizu mjera za rješavanje te krize, među ostalim onima za uklanjanje temeljnih uzroka krize te znatno povećanje pomoći ljudima kojima je potrebna humanitarna pomoć unutar i izvan EU- a.

In the Polish text, one may object to the phrase *przyjęła szereg środków*, which is an unjustified language innovation, created through the replacing of the verbal element of the phrase *podjąć środki*. Directly afterwards, the noun *środki* is repeated unnecessarily, which is probably the result of the structure of the original text, in which the fragment is made up of two sentences. At the same time, the English phrase *as well as*, used here as a conjunction, was in the Polish text rendered as *jak również*, even though a better choice here might be the conjunction *oraz* or *i* (like in the Croatian text - *te*). Moreover, in the following sentence, the phrase *to relocate asylum seekers* was translated into Polish with the use of an unnecessary calque (*relokacja uchodźców*), instead of the more adequate *przemieszczanie*, which was the choice of the Croatian translator (*premještanje tražitelja azila*).

The fragment in question should therefore be:

Aby uporać się z kryzysem, UE podjęła szereg środków, obejmujących podjęcie próby zlikwidowania pierwotnych przyczyn kryzysu oraz znaczne zwiększenie wsparcia dla osób potrzebujących pomocy humanitarnej zarówno w UE, jak i poza nią.

On the second page of the English text (in the first paragraph) we find the following sentence:

Many vulnerable people are coming to the EU to seek asylum.

The Polish version reads:

Do UE przybywa wiele osób, które ubiegają się o azyl.

The word *vulnerable*, crucial for the meaning of the fragment, was omitted entirely. The word might be rendered as, for example, *zagrożone osoby*, which is what the Croatian version does:

Mnoge ugrožene osobe dolaze u EU da bi zatražile azil.

Another omission is found in paragraph five. The English text says:

In a large part of the EU – the Schengen area – people are able to move freely without internal border controls, but the flow of refugees has caused some Member States to reinstate checks at their borders with other EU countries.

and the Polish version leaves out the phrase *internal border controls*:

Po dużej części UE – w obrębie strefy Schengen – zasadniczo można przemieszczać się bez kontroli paszportowej, ale z powodu napływu uchodźców niektóre państwa członkowskie przywróciły kontrole na swoich granicach z innymi krajami UE.

The omission is especially significant since the second part of the sentence clearly distinguishes between internal and external controls. Again, the Croatian text includes the phrase:

U velikom dijelu EU-a, unutar schengenskog prostora, ljudi se mogu slobodno kretati bez unutarnjih graničnih kontrola, ali su zbog priljeva izbjeglica neke države članice ponovno uspostavile kontrole na svojim granicama s drugim zemljama EU-a.

An interesting example of a translatorial decision appears in the third paragraph on page two. In the source text the following fragment is found here:

Almost 90 % of the refugees and migrants have paid organised criminals and people smugglers to get them across borders. As a result, they are known

as ‘irregular’ migrants – that is, they have not entered the EU through legal means.

An unusual phrase is used in it: *irregular migrants*, referring to immigrants who did not enter the EU territory legally. In the Croatian text the phrase was left unaltered („*neregularni*” *migranti*), while the Polish text opts for a much more frequent phrase *nielegalni imigranci*, which seems to be the right decision:

Prawie 90 proc. uchodźców i imigrantów zapłaciło zorganizowanym grupom przestępczym i przemytnikom za pomoc w przekroczeniu granicy. Dlatego określa się ich mianem „nielegalnych” imigrantów – oznacza to, że nie wjechali oni do UE legalnie.

However, it is difficult to see why the translator decided to leave the adjective *nielegalni* in quotation marks, since it is not marked here semantically or stylistically. Also, in this context it seems entirely redundant to leave in the text the explanation after the dash – the term *nielegalni imigranci* is perfectly comprehensible to any Polish reader of the text on its own.

In the first paragraph of page three we find the following sentence in the English text:

Many people arrive in the EU needing basics such as clean water, food and shelter.

In the Polish text:

Wiele osób przybywających do UE potrzebuje podstawowej pomocy w postaci czystej wody, żywności i schronienia.

the meaning of the word *basics* was changed - the expression *podstawowa pomoc* is not an equivalent. We find one in the Croatian text:

Mnogim su osobama koje dođu u EU potrebni osnovni uvjeti za život poput čiste vode, hrane i skloništa.

In the Polish text we also encounter an example of unjustified addition of meanings not present in the other versions, one of them on page three:

W oparciu o wnioszek Komisji Europejskiej państwa członkowskie po raz pierwszy zgodziły się na przeniesienie do września 2017 r. 160 tys. osób ubiegających się o azyl z Grecji i Włoch do innych krajów UE w ramach kryzysowego programu relokacji.

We find no equivalent of the underlined fragment either in the English version:

Based on a European Commission proposal, Member States have agreed for the first time to relocate 160 000 asylum seekers from Greece and Italy to other EU countries by September 2017.

nor in the Croatian one:

Na temelju prijedloga Europske komisije države članice prvi put su se usuglasile o premještanju 160 000 tražitelja azila iz Grčke i Italije u druge zemlje EU-a do rujna 2017.

Likewise, on page four, the English expression *people arriving*:

the rules were never designed to cope with a massive number of people arriving in a short space of time.

is supplemented by the adjective *nowi*:

[...] przepisy nie przewidywały nigdy konieczności radzenia sobie z tak ogromną liczbą nowych przybyszy w tak krótkim czasie.

The Polish translator was also unable to avoid:

- a calque – the English phrase *reception centres* was translated as *ośrodki recepcyjne* (in the Croatian version *prihvatne centre*),
- unnecessary repetitions:

Dobrowolny program przesiedleń uzgodniony przez państwa członkowskie UE przewiduje przeniesienie 22,5 tys. osób spoza UE do państw członkowskich UE.

- minor inconsistencies in choosing semantic equivalents – the English expression *criminal network* is at times translated as *siatka przestępcza*, and at others as *sieć przestępcza* (in the Croatian text we find *kriminalna mreža* in both cases).

Conclusions

Let us therefore return to the question posed at the beginning of the text, concerning the translator's choice of a particular language and, consequently, the translatorial decisions taken after that. The examples listed above demonstrate that the Polish translation might be described as as imprecise at many points. Its perception involves a certain discomfort in a careful reader, characteristic for hybrid texts. Determining the reasons for the appearance of hybrid elements (and translation errors) of course requires a much more profound analysis, conducted with the use of a much broader textual corpus. It does seem, however, that based on the present analysis, as well as on earlier publications one may form an initial hypothesis, which postulates two sources of the phenomena discussed above¹³.

The appearance of unjustified phraseological innovations and calques in the analysed text may be the result of the fact that texts created in the EU institutions have been becoming increasingly standardised in recent years. This is a natural response of the institutions responsible for translation to the growing number of target languages, as this allows the translation process to be made more efficient. Standardisation first of all influences the visual/editing aspect of the text – in all language versions headings, paragraphs and other elements (such as diagrams and illustrations) are located in the same places of the document. However, standardisation also affects the language surface, which is manifested primarily in the choice of a particular type of language structures, characteristic for the EU texts. In internal, everyday communication within the Union, one uses a sort of Euro-jargon, a closed language of MPs and staff of Union institutions. This language enters into the texts of documents, which are then translated. This means that the narrator faces a choice: firstly, she or he may use in the target text a form characteristic for the source language Union document, frequently alien to the target text; secondly, the translator may stick closely to the rules of the target text. The latter choice means, however, that it is often necessary to use a structure significantly different from the language of the original – in the text analysed above, this would mean, for example, splitting a sentence into two shorter one, in order to avoid unnecessary

¹³ Conf. e.g.: U. Dąbbska-Prokop, *O tłumaczeniu źle i dobrze* [*Bad and good about translation*], Kraków 2012; P. Brom, *(Nie)typowe decyzje tłumacza – wybrane przykłady z tekstu hybrydowego Unii Europejskiej* [(A)typical translatorial decisions – selected examples from a hybrid EU text], „Studia Slavica” 2020, XXIV, 1, p. 87–94.

repetition. This, however, goes against the standardising tendencies, which the translator must also consider, and which in most cases they appear to be decisive. This would then mean that the translator chooses the hybrid construction consciously.

But what about the examples that may be qualified as translation errors? The causes for these should perhaps rather be sought in the very way the translation process is organised. According to the data provided by Directorate-General for Translation (DGT), in 2019 1 976 964 pages of documents were translated¹⁴. Out of this, 49% was documentation concerning the legal system of the EU. Because of the enormous amount of documents to be translated, the institutions of the European Union commission large part of these translations to external language service providers. Only in 2019, translation of over 657 323 pages was commissioned to external translators. The process of outsourcing, however, places the duty to ensure that the translation is done by adequately qualified professionals on the contractor. It must be stressed that the procedure of selecting translators working for the EU institutions is extremely rigorous¹⁵. Candidates pass through a multistage selection process, which verifies not only their language skills, but also their encyclopaedic knowledge and intellectual predispositions¹⁶. The situation is, however, different in the case of translation services tenders. It is the entities that wins the tender that are obliged to ensure they employ translation staff with appropriate qualifications. Since one of the criteria is the price, this may create suspicion that the qualifications are not always on the same level as in the case of translators employed directly by the European Union institutions. It should nevertheless be noted at this point that with regard to insufficient data on which texts are translated by outsourced service providers, this hypothesis is purely speculative.

The present analysis, together with already published studies, shows that in texts created as part of the translation processes in the European

¹⁴ 2019 *Annual activity report*. European Commission. DG Translation. [https://cdt.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documentation/pdf/tfac20001enn_en.pdf - access: 15.02.2021].

¹⁵ Conf. M. Buchowska, *Tłumacz w instytucjach Unii Europejskiej: wyzwania współczesnej Wieży Babel* [*The translator in institutions of the European Union: challenges of the contemporary Tower of Babel*], „Rocznik Przekładoznawczy” 2017, 12, p. 78.

¹⁶ Conf. J. Kaduczak, M. Kaduczak, *Tłumacz dla Unii. Przewodnik dla uczestników konkursu tłumaczy w instytucjach Unii Europejskiej* [*Translating for the EU. A guide for participants of competitions for translators in the EU institutions*], Warszawa 2005, p. 9–12.

Union, one may encounter both numerous elements that may be qualified as hybrid, and translation errors. Discovering the causes of these occurrences requires more indepth study, based on the broadest possible textual corpus. It appears that such studies would constitute a valuable contribution into developing our knowledge of translation processes. This is testified by both the wealth of the textual corpus of the European Union, and by the fact that these texts are the basis of intense communication taking place within the multilingual environment of the EU.

Przemysław Brom

Wielojęzyczność i decyzje translatorskie - wybrane przykłady z przekładów tekstu źródłowego Unii Europejskiej

Zadeklarowana w Karcie Praw Podstawowych Unii Europejskiej zasada wielojęzyczności jest zjawiskiem, które nie ma odpowiednika w żadnym innym systemie gospodarczym/prawnym na świecie. Uczynienie Wspólnoty najbardziej wielokulturowym i wielojęzycznym środowiskiem w historii oznacza, że kwestie komunikacji w środowisku dwu- i wielojęzycznym nabierają szczególnego znaczenia dla jej funkcjonowania. Skoro komunikacja ta odbywa się za pomocą procesów tłumaczeniowych, istotne staje się pytanie o ich jakość, która to jest wypadkową decyzji podejmowanych przez tłumaczy. W niniejszej publikacji pytanie o wybór konkretnego języka postawione jest w odniesieniu do przekładu angielskiego tekstu źródłowego na język polski i chorwacki. W tekstach tych wskazuje się na struktury, które mogą utrudniać komunikację (elementy hybrydowe i błędy w tłumaczeniu), oraz stawia się wstępną hipotezę dotyczącą przyczyn tych zjawisk.

Słowa kluczowe: *tłumaczenie, teksty hybrydowe, Unia Europejska, decyzje tłumaczeniowe*

Keywords: *translation, hybrid texts, European Union, translatorial decisions*

