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MILOŠ D. ĐURIĆ
Faculty of Electrical Engineering
University of Belgrade

THE GLOBAL ERA: LANGUAGE AND CULTURE-BOUND TRANSLATION RE-VISITED

Aleksandra Nikčević-Batrićević and Marija Knežević (eds.),
Culture-Bound Translation and Language in the Global Era, Newcastle,
Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008, 170

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

This book comprises a selection of papers delivered at the Second International Conference on English language and literary studies at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Montenegro in September 2006. The authors of the papers are research scholars, linguists and academic teachers brought together by their interest in both translation and language studies. This book, pertaining to a wider interdisciplinary field of culture and language studies, explores various and heterogeneous aspects of translation and language that may be manifested in some plausible models for teaching translation and language through culture. The title of this collection, *Culture-Bound Translation and Language in the Global Era*, suggests the wide scope of linguistic investigation, and thus, it is hardly surprising that the papers touch upon a broad range of issues. Pointing out the attempts “to contribute a further element of rigour into the discussion of cultural and linguistic studies” and aiming at “examin[ing] in detail some of the problems implied by the interaction between translation, language and culture while providing breadth and depth to cultural dimension” (p. x), the authors set about exploring the relationship between translation and culture from one cross-cultural perspective, while also “intend[ing] to offer insights to anybody else working or living between cultures and wishing to understand more about their cross-cultural successes and frustrations” (p. x). The authors’ insights into the complex phenomenon of cross-cultural communication is as interesting as fascinating, and perhaps even more so, due to the reason that the scholars, who have contributed to this book, come from various countries, including Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy, Latvia, Russia, Serbia and Slovenia. It goes without saying that the book reaches out towards a wide audience of university lecturers, linguists and research scholars whose theoretical or practical ambitions, goals and aspirations are driven not only by gaining a linguistic insight into how culture and language interact through translation from a purely didactical point of view, but also in how culture and certain translation strategies may be introduced more effectively in their own situations while assuming one more active role as mediators between cultures.

SUMMARY

The book opens with the introduction by Nick Ceramella which sets the scene: he provides a succinct presentation of the content of the book and furthermore, successfully sketches out the papers contained within the book, thus providing a good starting-point for readers. The book contains the Acknowledgments (p. ix), a list of contributors (161-165) and an index (167-170). The rest of the book is organized into two parts.

PART I - "TRANSLATION STUDIES"

This section contains five chapters, each one being a paper of a contributor. The first section opens with Nick Ceramella's paper entitled "Linking Theory With Practice: The Way to Quality Translation" (p. 3-32), in which he defines the research perspective and then presents translation as some sort of essence and a key to cross-cultural communication in a global society. This research is a result of his extensive and vast teaching experience at various universities, and he relates them by way of illustration with examples. This paper tries to provide a systematic approach to training and teaching in the context of translation studies by drawing on some key cultural issues and linguistic theory and by relating the above said to a number of specific problems and strategies in connection with translation and language. This chapter closes with some considerations concerning grammatical and syntactical equivalence. In the second paper entitled, "Translation and Mediation in Postmodern Mass Media Space: Problem Aspects" (p. 33-53) Natalya Reinhold introduces the notions of both translation and mediation while dealing with translation in its own right as a form of intercultural communication. She wonders whether the current media-oriented order helps the mediation between the Other (in ST) and the I (in TC) while pointing out that "[t]heir relationship can vary, from identifying oneself with the other to the mirror-like doubling of one's own 'I'" (p. 36). In addition to this, Reinhold supports her opinion by making reference to some English writers who hinted at the possibility of developing a word culture, as opposed to the relationship between the rapid evolving of visual and verbal signs. Finally, Reinhold concludes that "[...] literary works, translations included, are intertwined with the jungle of clichés at all levels", and asks if it is "[r]eally worth translating into another language" (p. 52) for which she herself does not provide an answer. Tomaž Onič discusses some aspects of translating jokes in his paper entitled, "Translation of Untranslatable Jokes: Linguistic and Cultural Barriers in Joke Translation" (p. 55-65), while Olja Jojić explores some instances of componential analysis in her paper entitled, "Componential Analysis in Translation of Material Culture Terms from English into Serbian" (p. 67-75). The first part closes with the paper entitled, "Culture for Culturally Desensitized" (p. 77-83) in which Michelle Gadpaille thoroughly observes some plausible ways of challenging first-year translation students who perhaps overestimate themselves with respect to their knowledge of English-speaking countries.

PART II - "LANGUAGE STUDIES"

This section, consisting of five chapters, is fully dedicated to language studies, while simultaneously being a selection of topics that show diversified potential

of language studies in the context of culture and/or translation. Allan James explores instances of some varieties of English in his paper entitled, "Language and Culture: Lingua Franca – Cultura Franca? Sublingua Franca, Supralingua Franca? – International English and Issues of Form and Function" (p. 87-94). He briefly states his objectives and methodology and then goes on to analyse some examples from his research. To this purpose, he draws a distinction between English as an International Language (EIL) and English as Lingua Franca (EFL) and then examines them with regard to the "linguo-cultural functions they fulfill" as well as with regard to the "formal features they show [...]" (p. 87). In an attempt to answer the question whether it is possible to establish a unitary model of tripartite distinction between "languages", "sublanguages" and "supralanguages", and how these "languages" interact, James has observed from the previously exposed, albeit limited, data whereas the *sublingua franca* (ESP), *supralingua franca* (ELF) are predominantly manifested by means of a particular use of vocabulary, syntax and morphology. To sum up, James has successfully shown that "[a] suitably differentiated, layered and partialized view of language and culture and their relation to each other in the context of *lingua franca* might contribute to a fuller understanding of the various significances of English in international use" (p. 93). A similar view with regard to culture is expressed in a paper entitled, "Cultural Value Discrepancies in English Language Teaching: A Study of the British and Serbs" (p. 95-113), in which Ana Vlasisavljević analyses the fact that the growing global dominance of the English language "[h]as led ELT as a profession to try to identify cultural and social assumptions underlying various teaching practices appropriated by the West" (p. 95). The reader of this comprehensive paper is made aware of the previous studies and accounts dealing with value differences. Not surprisingly, some mentioned approaches to differences in cultural values between British and Serbs display opposing views as to the impact of imported modern practices applied to the Serbian educational system. However, the argumentation of Ana Vlasisavljević is both convincing and well-supported due to specific and genuine examples from her empirical research. She fervidly, and yet rightly, points out that "[t]he recognition of cultural value discrepancies when 'importing' certain methodological constructs should be made" (p. 112). Equally commendable and praiseworthy is Vlasisavljević's Appendix (p. 114-116) in which various statistical data are shown. On the other hand, Natalija Cigankova focuses her attention on particular linguistic and extralinguistic features characterizing academic hypertext in her paper, entitled "Academic Culture on the World Wide Web: Implications for Teaching Academic Writing" (p. 117-136). The collected data may enable a researcher to identify the most distinctive medium-specific means of expression, and thus make some recommendations for academic writings on the World Wide Web. Although, academic standards should be preserved, she points out that "[i]nnovation, in terms of computer-mediated academic discourse, should be a response to the technologically quickly changing academic world" (p. 128). Quite originally, Cigankova closes with the strikingly appropriate citation of Winston Churchill. Radmila Šević accounts for the (im)possibilities of creating a tenable theory of language change in her paper entitled, "New Tools in Historical Linguistics" (p. 137-151). The final chapter is an original, refreshing, inspiring and stimulating

paper written by Dr. Biljana Čubrović. True to its title “Cultural and Linguistic Overlaps in Crnjanski’s *Novel About London*” (p. 153-160) this paper argues for one interdisciplinary approach pertaining to both cultural and linguistic studies, which according to this linguist usually, though not always necessarily overlap. Dr. Čubrović focuses on the idiosyncratic nature of the English language and the peculiarities of English pronunciation in the context of Crnjanski’s novel, while simultaneously discussing the opposing accounts of cultural and linguistic contacts. In addition to this, Dr. Biljana Čubrović accurately and precisely points out that “[l]anguages and cultures seem to form an inseparable whole in a linguistic community” (p. 153). Taking into consideration the fact that “[l]anguage and culture are indeed two different sides of one medal [...]” she proposes “[c]ertain inescapable parallels” (p. 154) which may possibly bridge the gap between cultural and linguistic contacts. Drawing extensively on different theories from cultural studies, linguistics, and particularly morphology and phonology, and applying her original analysis to an imposing corpus the author touches on bilingualism (p. 155), then she explores assiduously the occurrence of mispronunciation in the novel (p. 156) and then thoroughly analyses lexical borrowings in the novel (p. 157). Also, she re-introduces Weinreich’s hypothesis that an individual is the ultimate locus of [language] contact (p. 157). Apart from noticing that “*A Novel about London* abounds in an inconsistent use of anglicisms belonging to various stages of adaptation [...]” Dr. Čubrović concludes, quite correctly, that “[b]oth graphological and phonological rules are violated in the Serbian text, which create an effect of alienation of Crnjanski’s characters” (p. 159). Evidently, this successful interdisciplinary ‘fusion’ of the assumed broad theoretical perspective and the choice and treatment of the particular linguistic phenomenon under investigation contributes to the theoretical and methodological coherence of her paper and results in conclusions which are both lucid and specific. It goes without saying that the research of Biljana Čubrović is methodologically functional, thus making the overall value of this collection of papers very high.

EVALUATION

The organization of this collection of papers is very clear, coherent, rational and consistent. Each paper offers an interesting analysis of some sort, and at the same time touches certain aspects of the interdisciplinarity. The argumentation of the authors is more than persuasive, impressive and convincing, and is further supported with various examples provided by the authors. Both traditions in the translation and language study areas are presented with their merits and flaws and, thus, come out as equally important. Broadly speaking, the authors of this collection met their primary aim “to give scholars, and students of translation and language alike the opportunity to share the results of a very successful, international event [...]” in order to “[s]timulate intellectual confrontation and circulation of ideas within the field of applied linguistic research” (p. xv). Finally, and by way of recapitulation, it may be concluded that the assumed interdisciplinary perspective of cultural and linguistic research has been illuminated by means of the results reached within these original papers, although this kind of research merits further broadening and further elaboration.