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A STUDY OF TEENAGE READERS' PREFERENCES REGARDING THE RECEPTION OF CULTURAL REFERENCES IN TRANSLATION OF CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE FOR ADOLESCENTS INTO POLISH

Summary

Many attempts have been made to explain the goals of literary translation, pinpoint the task of a translator and describe their role. However, theoretical claims and practice are often incompatible. Disagreements in the field of translation studies, such as debates of the advocates of foreignization and the proponents of domestication, are difficult to resolve. In this dissertation, a hermeneutic perspective, which distances itself from the technically- or ideologically-focused discourse, has been presented.

From the hermeneutic perspective, a translator, as anybody who works with art and history, ought to strive to discover the truth. To that end, they should, apart from analysing a given piece, learn as many contexts relevant to the creation and position of the piece as possible, at the same time limiting the influence of their own opinions and biases. From this perspective, a translator moves towards silencing subjectivity, which influences the interpretation of the piece, and tries to reach its meaning and deliver it in the target language in a way as close to that in which this meaning manifested itself in the source text. This is accompanied by the awareness of the impossibility to fulfil any of these challenges completely – a result of the human condition and the limitations of human cognition. This is not a new approach, but a return to the hermeneutic motion described by George Steiner, who founded his thought on the work of Hans-George Gadamer, the father of philosophical hermeneutics.

The aim of this dissertation is to show the hermeneutic perspective not only as valuable from the standpoint of the theory of translation, but also as having practical applications. What is more, the presented empirical study serves as an example of a hermeneutic pursuit of truth in the context of the work of a literary translator. It concerns a matter which is often omitted or left in the realm of speculations in the source literature, namely the readers' expectations regarding translated literature. This is a wider issue, which is why the study presented is limited to the techniques of translating cultural references in literature for adolescents and to opinions

of the target audience – teenagers – regarding this matter. The research question has been formulated as follows: which techniques of translating cultural references in translation of contemporary literature for adolescents do teenagers prefer and why?

The dissertation consists of an introduction, a theoretical chapter, a methodological chapter, an analytical chapter, conclusions, bibliography and an appendix. For the clarity of the subsequent argument, the introduction presents an overview of definitions of terms such as *culture*, *nation*, and *national culture*. It also touches upon the relationship between a nation, culture, and literature, including translations. Moreover, it introduces the hermeneutic perspective, which is described in detail in Chapter 1.

The analysis of hermeneutics from the philosophical perspective is necessary to ensure a clear rationale for its applicability in translation studies and translation practice. Furthermore, due to the number of existing interpretations of hermeneutics and its variants, and in order to avoid ambiguity or formulating generic statements, detailed explanations of the adopted hermeneutic approach are provided. Chapter 1 presents the marginalised position of the reader on the publishing market and the resulting lack of data on expectations and needs of this group regarding books written for them. From the hermeneutic perspective, this gap should be filled, as such data provide important context for all parties involved in book production. Later in the chapter the origins of the hermeneutic thought are outlined, which gives context for the analysis of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, which forms the theoretical basis of this dissertation. Next, literary translation from the hermeneutic perspective is presented, followed by an overview of criticism of this approach. The role of hermeneutics in Polish translation studies is shown as well. That discussion indicates a number of general observations on approaching translation, the clearest of which is the need to move away from the methods typical of natural sciences in humanities and move towards qualitative research, which is not aimed at formulating generalisations. This leads to a presentation of a widely debated problem of translating cultural references in literature and to highlighting the role, which the readers' opinions should play in discussions regarding that matter.

Chapter 2 expounds the methodology of the presented study. It provides the justification of doing qualitative research – in accordance with the hermeneutic thought – and an explanation of the employed paradigm – also relevant to hermeneutics. Next, the chosen method – the focus group study – was described. Every group consisting of several participants was confronted with three sets of translated extracts of a single book. Every set was comprised of a number of translations of the same extract containing a cultural reference. Four novels were used in the study: *Wolf Hollow* by Lauren Wolk, *Bigfoot, Tobin & Me* by Melissa Savage,

Lighthouse by Emmy Carroll, and *The Goldfish Boy* by Lisa Thompson. The techniques used were, according to the typology by Roman Lewicki: equivalent, barbarism, translator's neologism, descriptive translation (periphrasis), translator's footnote, approximation, generalisation, contextual translation, omission. Before the session, the moderator explained the context of the book necessary to understand the extracts. Then, the participants read the translation and chose the one they considered the best and the one they considered the worst. Then, they justified their decisions and discussed them. Every session was audio-recorded. The chapter also contains the description of the sampling process, materials used during the sessions, the planned outline of a session, the method of transcribing and preparing a coding frame, which is an analytical template of organising the gathered data, and the method of formulating conclusions dictated by the hermeneutic approach and the paradigm described earlier.

Chapter 3 opens with a reflection on the research project, materials used and how the sessions were conducted. Next, four codes formulated on the basis of the analysis are described; they indicate general preferences of the readers regarding translation of cultural references. These are: Reading Fluency, Text Clarity, Cultural Consistency, and Adequate Information Input. The codes indicate that the readers expect the cultural references be translated in a way that ensures uninterrupted, easy, and pleasant reading; they do not want the text to include incomprehensible passages, wordings, descriptions or ideas; they demand the setting to be culturally homogenous; they would like that there are not too little of too much information. These instructions, demanding and imprecise, yet recurring in all groups, are analysed more deeply in the subsequent section. Both translation problems and translation solutions that sparked the strongest emotions and were the most hotly debated are extracted on the basis of a detailed analysis of the gathered data. It was revealed that proper names are charged with foreignness the most. This charge, in their opinion, should be maintained, although there is no agreement as to the most adequate method which would ensure achieving that goal. A number of techniques drew particular attention of the participants, even though it is not possible to formulate a universal opinion on the subject. These were: footnote, neologism, omission, and equivalent.

The data analysis made it possible to propose a number of observations, which lead to a general conclusion, which is an answer to the research question: teenagers do not prefer some techniques of translating cultural references in contemporary literature for adolescents over others. The techniques are not considered are appropriate or not as such. Young readers may have similar wishes and expectations regarding translated literature and yet they might prefer

different solutions. They do not judge particular techniques, but the adequacy of their application to a given translation problem in light of their general expectations towards translated literature which were uncovered in the coding frame.

In the conclusion section, the presented analysis was reviewed in the context of the discussion on hermeneutics from Chapter 1, a potential practical application of the results was indicated, and ideas for further research were suggested.

The bibliography is followed by the appendix which contains the materials used during the focus groups sessions.