

GRAMMAR INTERFERENCE IN TRANSLATING SOCIO-POLITICAL TEXTS FROM ENGLISH INTO ROMANIAN

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The article deals with linguistic interference in socio-political texts translated from Romanian into English. The type of interference discussed is the grammatical/syntactic interference encountered in the process of translation. Interference that usually results in a higher degree of difficulty is the greatest when the languages involved are distinct in structure and system. This is the case of Romanian and English that are rather different due to the fact that they belong to different linguistic systems, the former being a synthetic language while the latter is an analytical one. Syntactic interference is quite frequent in students' translations and it is probably most difficult to avoid particularly this type. Students have to disengage from the wording of the original, to a certain extent, and to learn to reformulate the sentences correctly in English. It requires a lot of training and experience. The given analysis is aimed at providing some guidance for future translations.

Keywords: *linguistic interference, grammatical/syntactic interference, source/target language, grammatical system, word order, literal translation.*

INTERFERENȚA GRAMATICALĂ ÎN TRADUCEREA TEXTELOR SOCIOPOLITICE DIN LIMBA ENGLEZĂ ÎN LIMBA ROMÂNĂ

În articol este studiat fenomenul interferenței lingvistice în textele sociopolitice traduse din limba română în limba engleză. Tipul de interferență abordat este interferența gramaticală/sintactică întâlnită în procesul de traducere. Interferența lingvistică devine mai pronunțată atunci când limbile implicate în traducere sunt diferite în ceea ce privește structura gramaticală și sistemul lingvistic. Acesta este cazul limbii române și al limbii engleze care sunt destul de diferite, datorită faptului că ele aparțin diferitelor sisteme lingvistice, prima fiind o limbă sintetică, în timp ce limba engleză este o limbă analitică. Interferența sintactică este destul de frecventă în traducerea studenților. Studenții trebuie să se concentreze asupra sensului limbii sursă, reformulând frazele corect în limba engleză. În scopul atingerii acestui obiectiv, este necesară o formare continuă și experiență. Analiza dată este menită să ajute pe cei care se confruntă cu probleme de interferență lingvistică în procesul de traducere.

Cuvinte-cheie: *interferență lingvistică, interferență gramaticală/sintactică, limbă sursă / limbă țintă, sistem gramatical, topică, traducere literală.*

As a teacher of the translation courses, I have found that the contact between a native language and a foreign language may result in many deviations in the latter, such as lexical/semantic interference, syntactic/grammatical interference and pragmatic interference. Such deviations or interference cases in translation are often caused by the transfer of the language units, grammar structures etc. from the mother tongue to the foreign language. These deviations resulting from the contact of the source language and the target language are commonly discussed in terms of linguistic interference or interference phenomena.

Gideon Toury presents the interference law and describes it in the following way: "According to the law of interference, phenomena pertaining to the make-up of the source text tend to be transferred to the target text. The extent to which interference is realized depends on the professional experience of the translator and the socio-cultural conditions in which a translation is produced and consumed, so that experienced translators tend to be less affected by the make-up of the source-text, and tolerance towards interference tends to increase when translation is carried out from a highly prestigious culture" [1, p.307].

The presence of interference is one of the factors which affects the quality of the final product, and which is subject to the level of experience. In other words, interference is, in a way, a universal phenomenon which very often occurs in students' translations and it therefore deserves more attention.

Christopher Hopkinson confirms this claim and states that "the issue of linguistic interference is a factor in any translation, and when the translator is working from L1 into L2, interference from the L1 source text becomes a key element in the production of the L2 target text" [4, p.13]. Logically, it is likely that there will be more interference in translations into someone's foreign language; translators seem to be largely influenced by the source text. Although grammatical interferences mostly do not cause misunderstanding of the original

meaning, they often immediately reveal that a text is a translation. Yet, it seems that it is not so difficult (compared to lexical and pragmatic interference) to get rid of this type of interference – the mistakes are often easily spotted so it sometimes would be sufficient to pay more attention to the final reading of a translation. The students themselves would certainly be able to avoid most of the interferences of this type.

Grammatical interference occurs in cases in which the translator ignores the grammatical differences between the two languages or gets influenced by the English norms. This type of interference is often obvious at first sight because the elements translated literally from Romanian deviate from the English grammatical system. The use of definite articles seems to be an area of interference, as seen in the example below: *Guvernul a acordat o gama largă de premii*. ***Government** has bestowed a wide range of awards. The enclitic article *-ul* is added to the noun at the end in Romanian, while in English the definite article *the* must be used i.e. *the government*.

The English grammar requires the subject and the verb to agree in number: both must be singular, or both must be plural. Problems occur in the present tense because one must add an *-s* or *-es* at the end of the verb when the subjects or the entity performing the action is a singular third person: he, she, it, or words for which these pronouns could substitute. This type of interference manifests itself especially while dealing with *singularia tantum nouns* and *pluralia tantum nouns*.

Una dintre cele mai mari descoperiri ale studiului este că banii îi fac pe mulți oameni să se simtă rău. ***One of the biggest findings of the study is that money make many people feel bad; Acestea sunt știrile despre crimele comise de adolescenți din SUA care sunt în creștere**. ***Here are the news about the teenage crime in the USA that is on the increase**. These nouns are *singularia tantum nouns* in English i.e. they agree with the verb –predicate in the singular, while in Romanian they agree with the verb –predicate in the plural, the correct translation is *money makes* and *here is the news* respectively. The structural differences between two languages give rise to certain translation problems. There are two major problems in translating questions from Romanian into English. First, the word order in these two languages is different, including question sentences. The word order in English questions is rather fixed, it changes the order of constituents in questions, so that the subject comes between the auxiliary verb and main verb. The subject precedes the main verb in Romanian. Second, English uses the special verb 'do' in yes/no questions in the present tense and past tense, while Romanian does not, this means that this has to be added in translating from Romanian into English. *Când a confiscat poliția de frontieră marfa ilegală de la contrabandiști?* ***When confiscated the customs police the illegal goods from the smugglers?** The correct word order in translation is *when did the customs police confiscate the illegal goods?*

The use of tenses also leads to mistakes in translation, for example the Romanian *indicativul present* can be translated by three different present tenses into English depending on the adverbial modifier involved. *Moldova întreprinde un efort considerabil pentru a asigura un viitor european mai prosper....* *Moldova takes a major step toward securing a more prosperous, common European future*. *Moldova întreprinde un efort considerabil pentru a asigura un viitor european mai prosper... (la moment/ începând cu anul 2006)* ***Moldova takes a major step**, the correct translation being *Moldova is taking a major step/ Moldova has been taking a major step* respectively. Here students should pay attention to the adverbial modifiers used in the sentence that prompts the appropriate tense in English. *Perfectul compus* in Romanian may cause linguistic interference in translation as in the sentence: *Moldova a realizat multe de când și-a declarat independența în 1991...*

**Moldova came a long way since its independence in 1991...* The form *has come* is correct in English as the time is indefinite and it is connected to the present moment, while in Romanian this tense suggests a finished and completed action in the past.

Under the group of grammatical interferences, we understand direct translations of grammatical features typical of the source language but inexistent or untypical in the target language. Sometimes, it may happen that a sentence is translated word for word and simultaneously some part of the segment results to be ungrammatical due to literal translation. In such cases, the higher level is preferred and these examples have been marked as syntactic interferences.

Syntactic interference occurs on the level above the word, i.e. on the level of syntax. It includes literal translation of a syntactic structure, either the whole sentence or a certain part of it. The sequence of words from the original text is preserved even in the target text in which the sentence is clumsy, sounds unnatural or weird. The student translates the segment word for word, focuses on the translation of individual units rather than on the sentence as a whole, and fails to consider the sense of the given segment. The meaning of a text does not consist only in the sense of its individual parts but in the sense of the structure as a whole; its composition

participates in the meaning and, thus – because of the differences between the Romanian and English syntax – it cannot always be translated literally. This is the case of conditionals either real or unreal ones. The present tense is characteristic of the real conditional clauses in English that are projected in the future as they do not contradict the present reality, while in Romanian the future tense is used. Thus, mistakes connected to the use of future tense in the English conditional may occur. *Dacă Moldova va implementa aceste reforme, atunci ele vor atrage investițiile străine.* *If Moldova **will implement** these reforms they will attract foreign investment; the correct form being **implements**.

The same situation occurs in the case of unreal conditionals referring to present or past actions respectively. *Daca migrații ar avea acces la asistență medicală în țara gazdă ei nu s-ar întoarce cu probleme de sănătate în țara lor de origine.* *If the migrants **will have** access to health care in the host country they would not come back with health problems in their origin country/The correct form being the form of the verb in the past **had**. *În cazul în care rata natalității ar fi crescut în anii 1990, populația ar fi crescut în Uniunea Europeană.* *If the birth rate **would have increased** in the country in the 1990s the population would have grown in the European Union. The correct form is the one of the verb in the past perfect **had increased**.

Another frequently met mistake made by the students in translating from Romanian into English is the word order. Whereas Romanian has a highly complex and largely unambiguous system of inflection, in English inflection is residual. One obvious consequence of the Romanian system of inflection is the language tendency to exhibit relatively free word order (carrying out a semantic function), in contrast to the fixed word order of English, which fulfils a grammatical function. The students tend to copy the Romanian word order and as a result the English sentence becomes incorrect. *Nu au fost plătite ajutoarele sociale pentru veterani.* **There were not paid** social benefits for veterans. Such translations are typical of the Romanian students that do not realise the fact that the word order is not good for English i. e. the verb-predicate is in pre-position. Such structures are not appropriate for the English word order. Translators should transform a sentence or an expression so that it sounded as if it were originally written in English rather than as a direct translation from Romanian. "A translation should be the same as the source text but should not sound as if it was the source text" [3, p.76]. Sentences literally transferred into English at first sight reveal that a text is a translation. Grammatical interferences definitely should not appear in professional translations because they (of course, just like the other types of interference) indicate the poor quality of a target text i.e. grammatical interferences mostly do not cause misunderstanding of the original meaning, they often immediately reveal that a text is a translation. Probably, one of the most frequent examples which occur in the corpus is literal translation of Romanian structures.

Translation is a powerful process that may corrupt or improve the understanding between nations or add new concepts and ideas, depending on how strong, negative or positive the interference phenomena are. Moreover, education seems to be an important factor that has changed the course of this powerful process in the past, present and future translations. In teaching translation the teachers should simplify the translation process for the students by introducing all translation difficulties and problems in details, attract the students' attention at conceptual and grammatical difficulties.

They would take account of these potential problems in advance and this would force them to seek a better solution in the actual process of translation. For example, syntactic structures untypical of English and grammatical differences are often also perceivable during attentive reading and typographical aspect is obvious at first sight. This could largely reduce the occurrence of interference in their translations because they would consciously reflect on these problems. Of course, probably not all of the problems of this kind will be settled but quite a considerable amount of the actual mistakes seem to be caused by inattentive reading and lack of reflection over the translation. At least, this method can help to eliminate the most serious errors. Encouraging and boosting the students to write essays and paragraphs and discussing the committed errors in the essays and paragraphs with students is imperative in overcoming the linguistic interference. The students must be acquainted with their errors immediately after the translation, classifying them according to grammar aspects.

Teaching the students the principles of translating from Romanian into English, the use of all kinds of techniques of translation: the grammatical transformations may help to avoid the interference of the mother tongue i.e. the Romanian language. Teaching how to deal with the context, especially the syntactic one in order to understand the sentence is important in carrying out the translation accurately.

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