

The Terms of Translation of Political Newspaper Articles’ Headlines from French to Georgian

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The following paper is dedicated to the translation of the headlines of political newspaper articles from French to Georgian. Headlines are important to attract public attention. The paper discusses various methods of interpreting the intended meaning of the statements implied in the headlines. The translation of titles and headlines requires the translator to possess the talent and know-how of a journalist. The translator of journalistic texts must respect the rules imposed on journalists. In addition, the translation of publications requires extralinguistic knowledge, as well as the cognitive baggage to properly interpret the message of the author and the pragmatic aspect of an original text. Particular attention is also paid to the translator as well as the grammatical and lexical transformations that are implemented during translation.

Keywords: traductology, transcoding, headlines, translator, transformations

Introduction

Translation studies appeared in the second half of the 20th century. Before becoming the “Traductology”, translation had been the subject of study of many disciplines and had to struggle to find its place among other disciplines. With the information society and the progress made in the sector of data processing and communication, the importance of translation increased considerably. It means that more and more documents are translated more expeditiously. Translation plays a crucial role in many areas of social life as well as of economic life while supporting linguistic and cultural diversity.

For centuries, translation has remained at the heart of intercultural communication, the role of translation in the development and promotion of various cultures, particularly in the context of globalization, is undeniable. The importance of media has largely increased in modern society. Media play an important role in everyday life. In addition to written press or print media, which date back to old times, television and the Internet were introduced. The greatest advantage of media represented by written press, television or the Internet is to inform the public expeditiously and in an exhaustive way of the events which occur at national and international level.

The development of information technology has profoundly influenced the work of translators. Information circulation requires the fast translation of informative texts. Vis-à-vis the challenges of the information age the role of a translator as an important actor of the translation process has been largely emphasized.

Headlines

Today, translators are required to perform translations within a rather limited period of time in order to inform the public on a consistent basis. Moreover, translation of press articles requires skills of a translator as well as a journalistic talent. A translator in charge of the translation of press articles is required to know and progressively apply the rules imposed on journalists, considering different journalistic traditions and characteristics of various types of print media in each culture.

The view expressed in this paper is devoted to one of the most important segments of the journalistic articles—the headlines of the political articles and the methods of their transposition in Georgian translation.

The choice of titles as an object of our study was conditioned by the fact that titles represent a special interest from the viewpoint of Translation Studies given their complex and multifunctional nature. We make a point of emphasizing the concept of translation studies which considers the translation of the headlines as of a particular type of short text. In the paper, we will try to advance in the traductology of the transposition of headlines of press articles and to draw the attention of translators to the methods of translation of titles. “Titles have been the subject of many analyses in different fields. They arouse the curiosity of the reader. They deploy specific linguistic strategies in different fields: rhetoric, linguistics, social speech, pragmatics etc.” (Penalver Vicea, 1965, p. 251).

Each newspaper has its own style and identity. For example: *Liberation*¹, uses the screaming headlines, whereas *Le Monde*² often applies long but relatively modest titles. The titles of the Georgian press are at the same time long and screaming. Moreover, the language of titles varies from country to country. In all the cases, it is essential to take account of the recipients of the text and the stylistic and linguistic standards of the target reader, not to forget linguistic and cultural differences between a source-language text and a target-language text.

Our study is focused on translating the titles of the French daily newspaper *Le Figaro* and the Georgian daily newspaper *24 სსსსს*³. Both periodicals enjoy a great popularity and contribute to the formation of public opinion in France and in Georgia respectively. We have decided to focus our study on the titles of the political articles in order to maintain certain homogeneity. By the analysis of the headlines we will try to highlight strategies and translation choices and solutions provided by the translators. In her Doctoral thesis, Valeva-Borissov (1992) identified situations in which the translation of the titles of press articles is practiced: (1) multilingual editions of a newspaper; (2) international press reviews; (3) newspaper articles or other texts that refer to one or more articles of a foreign-language press.

Headlines constitute a big factor in arousing interest in the public. A title should be short and explicit at the same time. It is expected to attract public attention; however an extremely screaming headline can seriously tarnish the image of the newspaper. The title should be justified by the message summarized in the article.

The titles are of a major importance; because not only they announce the news (“epiphanic” function), or lead to the article (“guiding” function), but they summarize, condense and even substantiate the news to the point of serving as the essence of information. The title thus acquires an autonomous status; it becomes a text by itself, a text which is delivered to the readers and the listeners like holding the main role on the information scene. (Charaudeau, 1983, p. 2)

¹ French daily newspaper.

² French daily evening newspaper.

³ 24 Hours-Georgian daily newspaper.

The title could be a sentence, a syntagm, or a word; in all these cases they constitute statements. The functions can vary according to the kinds of the texts. The titles of the written press fulfill three functions: the identification function, the information function, and the function to incite the act of reading. The main function of the headline is to briefly inform the reader about the event described in the text. The function to encourage reading is one of the functions of the title which serves the purpose of selling the articles. One of the founders of Modern Titology, Hoek (1981) focused on the paradoxical situation of the title: “The title is in a paradoxical situation: It must inform and at the same time take care not to give too much information; it must show and hide at the same time” (p. 177).

The Role of the Translator

The translators of the journalistic texts deal with multiple choices of translation strategy. Important factors such as the discourse of the source-language text, its author, the place, and the moment of creation of the text, the recipient of the translation, and the function which the translation will ensure in the target culture should be actually taken into account. In addition, the translator should be aware of the standard of the title in the source language and the target language at all levels of linguistic structure. Having such knowledge, the translator makes an easy reformulation of the meaning intended by the author of the text.

Translation of headlines implies mastering the techniques used at the syntactic level in the source language and the target language. In the process of translation of titles, the translator can resort to transformations at the syntactic level while respecting the style of the intitulation in the target language, and use changes at the syntactic level, while respecting the style of the title in the target language. Normally, translators cannot translate the title if they do not know the meaning of the text that it precedes.

We believe that any intelligent translation requires knowledge of the subject of the text, because without the basic knowledge the translator may not exceed the stage of literal translation and will focus on the words without being able to convey the meaning of the text. The transposition of the meaning of headlines requires the knowledge of the context on behalf of the translator, because the reformulation and reconstruction of original meaning in the translation does not relate only to its linguistic significance, but also to “the effect” which it aims to produce. A single title can be subject to several interpretations. The function of the translator is to reproduce the same effect in the target language. The comprehension of the title is closely related to the text entitled and always presupposes the existence of the text. However, as Hoek (1981) pointed out:

If a title were perfect in anticipating the co-text, it would make the co-text superfluous; if a title did not have any relationship with the co-text, it would be superfluous itself”. And to add “a title raises a question, creates expectation; the co-text provides an answer and meets the expectation. (p. 177)

The role of the title is particularly important because the comprehension of a text may depend on its presentation by the title. However, as Hoek (1981) pointed out, in a self contained title—a headline, it is the title which entirely replaces the text from the pragmatic point of view; the title is “the anchor pointing to where the attention of the receiver of a text is directed primarily” (p. 248).

The headline constitutes an autonomous statement compared to the literary titles; consequently, the translator enjoys more freedom in reformulating the meaning intended by the author. In the process of translation of the headlines of written press articles, the translator faces processes such as complete transcribing, partial

transcribing, the concretization of translation, or a free reformulation of the source text. The object of the translation should indeed be the meaning intended by the author and not the linguistic expression.

Reformulation of the source text does not constitute a simple transcribing; reproduction of the same effect can be reached by a text which is not identical; transcribing constitutes only one of the elements of the translation. We believe that the translation should not be judged against the purely linguistic criteria.

Strategies of the Translation

Moreover, the observation of the analyzed corpus emphasizes dominant strategies of the translators. The current strategy of translation is complete transcribing, that is to say a literal or almost literal translation which prevails in the translations of the intitulations of written press. We will cite examples of the almost literal translations where an element of the French title undergoes a very small modification, but without any changes in total direction (see Examples 1-2).

Example (1) Le président géorgien tend la main à Moscou (Le Figaro, 08/12/2010)

პრეზიდენტი სააკაშვილი ხელს უწვდის მოსკოვს

(Traduction géorgienne: le président Saakashvili tend la main à Moscou)

(Georgian translation: President Saakashvili is reaching out to Moscow)

The example above constitutes almost literal translation owing to the fact that the word “President” which is given in the French headline was replaced by “სააკაშვილი—Saakashvili”

Example (2) Paris réchauffe ses relations avec la Géorgie (Le Figaro, 08/06/2010)

პარიზი თბილისთან ურთიერთობებს აგვარებს

(Traduction géorgienne: Paris normalise ses relations avec Tbilissi)

(Georgian translation: Paris normalizes its relations with Tbilisi)

The above mentioned example also constitutes an almost literal translation, however the word “Georgia” was replaced in the translation by the word “Tbilisi—capital of Georgia” and the verb “to heat” was translated into Georgian by the verb “to normalize” owing to the fact that the transposition of the verb in question would have violated the stylistics standards of the Georgian language.

In the quoted translations, the translator resorts to transcoding but this is the result of a reformulation of meaning and not a linguistic operation consisting of an automatic transfer of the words from French into Georgian.

The prevalence of the informative function of the title determines the greatest textual autonomy of a headline of written press. It is precisely the function in question which produces a model of the headline of written press where the sentences are more frequent. The titles of written press sometimes require a clarification in translation to have the same effects as the intitulations of the source text (see Example 3).

Example (3) Un faux reportage sème la panique en Géorgie (Le Figaro, 14/03/2010)

“იმედის” იმიტაციებს პანიკა მოჰყვას საქართველოში

(Traduction géorgienne: L'imitation de "l'Imedi" a semé la panique en Géorgie)

(Georgian translation: Imitation by "Imedi" has sparked panic in Georgia)

The headline in question requires an explanation on behalf of the translator in order to make it interesting for the French readers. The text is actually about the report broadcasted by the Georgian television channel "Imedi" imitating possible events that might unfold as a result of a hypothetical repeat of the 2008 Russian invasion of Georgia. The TV program caused panic among the Georgian public (see Example 4).

Example (4) Nouvelle manifestation contre les retraites (Le Figaro, 02/10/2010)

საფრანგეთში საპენსიო რეფორმას აპროტესტებენ

(Traduction géorgienne: La réforme des retraites contestée en France)

(Georgian translation: New protest against pensions)

The thorny issue of the French social life which caused a controversy in the country is relatively unknown to the Georgian public; consequently, the translation requires some explanation. The translator clearly shows that the protest was against the pension reform while indicating that the event occurred in France. The translator assumes an obligation to reproduce the text in the target language so that it could present the information consistent with that contained in the source text.

The translator assumes a double responsibility, a responsibility in relation to the source text and the target text. It is precisely the meaning of the statement which constitutes the subject of the translation that should be understood.

On the other hand, the professional translators try to keep certain neutrality. Unfortunately, the two jobs (the job of a journalist and that of a translator) are not differentiated in Georgia. Many Georgian journalists believe that the knowledge of the language is absolutely sufficient to produce a translation. However, the job of a translator is a full-time job which, in the first place, requires the knowledge of languages and cultures as well as the know-how which is normally achieved through special training not included in the process of training of journalists.

There are many cases when the translator resorts to an explanation in translation to make the effects intended by the author in the titles of the source text. The Georgians use long and complex sentences. The titles of the articles in the Georgian press are largely shocking. The journalists who normally do the translation of the articles without any special training often tend to dramatize the facts in order to shock the public or to fit into their media orientation. For the purpose of achieving these objectives, the remarks formulated in the texts are not often transposed with exactitude, precision, and accuracy.

In the process of translation of headlines, the translator has the right to resort to all kinds of syntactic and lexical transformations provided the model of the intitulation in the source language is maintained (see Example 5).

Example (5) Coupable du crime d'avoir raison (ტაბულა, 15/11/2010)

დამნაშავეა, რადგან მართალია

(Traduction géorgienne: il est coupable, car il a raison)

(Georgian translation: Guilty of the crime because of being right)

The article by the French essay writer and philosopher Andre Glucksmann about Mikhail Khodorkovsky which appeared in the Georgian journal “Tabula” refers to the situation in Russian justice. Georgian translation is actually a complete reformulation of the French headline in accordance with the standards of the Georgian style.

Note as well the cases where the lack of exactitude is conditioned by the negligence or the ignorance of foreign cultural realities by the journalists. The journalists undertaking the task of translation often do not know the context and do not perform subject studies as the translators do it (see Example 6).

Example (6) L'Élysée a fini par donner suite à la demande du président géorgien (Le Figaro, 08/06/2010)

ელისეს სასახლე როგორც იქნა დათანხმდა მიხეილ სააკაშვილის თხოვნას,

შეხვედეს საფრანგეთის პრეზიდენტს

(Georgian translation: The Élysée Palace ended up meeting the request by the Georgian president)

The subtitle of an article in the French daily newspaper is literally translated into Georgian; however, the transposition of “The Élysée Palace” without any explanation would leave not adequately informed Georgian reader unclear as to proper understanding of this French realia. We believe that the translation should include an indication that the realia stands for the French President, because the presidency of the French Republic is referred to by the metonymy “The Élysée Palace”.

Unlike professional translators who are more reticent with regard to the use of the copy-words and the loanwords to preserve the Georgian language, the journalists often use them in the process of translation. Obviously, the evolution of the language goes hand in hand with the introduction of new words and terms serving the purpose of overcoming language gaps and sometimes translators themselves are confronted with the need to transpose the realities and the terms non-existent in the target language.

Particular attention should be paid to the use of acronyms in the translation. The abbreviations should be only used after the presentation of the full expression. However the internationally known organizations such as UN (United Nations) or NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) do not require a complete presentation and can be expressed by the initials. Moreover, the acronyms of regional or local organizations should be completely transposed (at least in the text) followed by the acronym in parentheses to avoid confusing the reader (see Example 7).

Example (7) Sommet du GUAM⁴ à Batumi

სუამის სამიტი ბათუმში გაიმართება

(Traduction géorgienne: Le sommet de GUAM se tiendra à Batumi)

(Georgian translation: The summit of GUAM will be held in Batumi)

The GUAM is the organization for Democracy and Economic Development comprised of four post-Soviet states: Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova. This information is essential to a proper understanding of the information transposed in the text, so it would be desirable to indicate the full definition in parentheses.

⁴ Organization for Democracy and Economic Development is a regional organization of four post-Soviet states: Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova.

It should be noted also that the names of the persons must be followed by their job titles (see Example 8):

Example (8) Le Premier Ministre géorgien a quitté Dubaï pour Koweït

ნიკოლოზ გილაური დუბაიდან კუვეიტში გაემგზავრება (24 საათი, 11/02/2011)

(Traduction géorgienne: Nikoloz Guilaouri a quitté Dubaï pour Koweït)

(Georgian Translation: Nikoloz Guilaouri left Dubai to Kuwait)

The sentence includes the name of the Prime Minister of Georgia and not his job title owing to the fact that the comprehension of the title of the article does not pose any problem for the Georgian readers. However, the French version should obligatorily carry the job title of the person in question in order to provide the French readers with an appropriate reference. In the similar cases, it seems to us relevant to add to the translation a determinant absent from the source text.

The title of the article published in the Georgian daily newspaper *24 საათი* on February 17, 2011 is as follows (see Example 9):

Example (9) Alliot-Marie appelée à démissionner

საფრანგეთის საგარეო საქმეთა მინისტრს გადადგომისკენ მოუწოდებენ

(Traduction géorgienne: La ministre française des affaires étrangères appelée à démissionner)

(Georgian translation: Calls for French Foreign Minister Resignation)

The Georgian headline contains “French Foreign Minister” whereas the French title gives only the name of the minister.

While using adapted terminology, the translator of the journalistic texts should take account of the recipient of the text. Normally, the news reports are written for a wide audience; consequently, the translator is expected to use the required terminology (see Example 10).

Example (10) Nombre des personnes infectées par H5N1 ne cesse de décroître

ფრინველის ვირუსით დაავადებულთა რიცხვი მცირდება

(Traduction géorgienne: Le nombre des personnes infectées par la grippe aviaire ne cesse de décroître)

(Georgian translation: Number of people infected with avian flu continues to decrease)

It is appropriate, for example, to substitute a medical term H5N1 by the term “avian flu”—a term commonly used by the population of the country.

Conclusions

In the modern world where the boundaries between the countries have been erased and the distances have been made shorter thanks to the progress made in the field of communication, there has been an appreciable progress in the number of pragmatic texts. Exchange of information among nations and peoples belonging to different cultures has become common. In this paper, we do not intend to set as our objective the formulation of the rules of “translation” from French to Georgian; rather, we intend to develop a general consideration on the

titles of articles, the role of the translator, and some strategies of the journalistic translation. The titles of journalistic articles are multifunctional segments containing different elements (informative, ideological, and social).

The aim of any translation should be not the observation of the differences which exist between two languages but the search for the ways to overcome them by a reformulation of translation. The multitude of the strategies of translation is the reflection of translation conceived as a means of merging or diverging the differences between two different cultures as well as the differences between two journalistic traditions. Consequently, proper application of the rules of the translation of titles requires special training of translators. Translators are expected not only to understand the text but to pass the message implied in the text of the source language to the target reader through performing the translation in full conformity with the grammatical and stylistics standards of the language and at the same time to produce the effect intended by the author of the original text.

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