

Features of non-literary translation



Introduction

Text " Banker's bonuses: Caps on pay are no way to restore the financial system to health" (text 1) and text " Labour conference: Talking to itself" (text 2) are quite different and at the same time share some common features. The title of text 1 suggests that the text is about cutting top-bankers' salaries and its overall effect on the financial system of the country. Whereas, judging by the title, the subject matter of the second text is the results of the Labour party conference.

The texts are both specialised, but the specialist fields differ: text 1 belongs to the field of business and economics and text 2 is a national political text. The last part of this essay will look at this aspect in detail; the first two will aim at the comparative analysis in terms of text type and purpose, register and readership, lexis and syntax; the third part will deal with potential translation problems aroused by certain lexical items.

Abbreviations:

ST - source text

TT - target text

BT - back translation

Text type and purpose, genre, register and readership

As Hatim and Mason state, generally most texts are hybrid in their nature, but " text purposes may only be viewed in terms of 'dominances' of a given purpose or contextual focus" (1990: 146). Text 1 is purely argumentative,

while text 2 can be also called hybrid, as it comprises some features of narration (report on the Labour party conference held in September of 2009), but mainly argumentation. According to Hatim and Mason's text typology, text 2 belongs to the type of the "through-argument", which is "citing the thesis and arguing it through" (1990: 152). Indeed, the author at the very beginning states that the leading political party is separated from the British people and it is unlikely to be re-elected, because the public trust was lost, and then he proves that idea in each paragraph, making a conclusion at the end that Labour is not loved by public, therefore there is not too much hope for them to win the future elections. As for text 1, it can be classified as the counter-argumentative. At first, the author cites John Kenneth Galbraith, a very famous economist of the second half of the 20th century, who expressed his negative attitude to the bonuses' system. Then in each paragraph he opposes that thesis by various arguments, giving examples of how that problem is solved in other countries and in the UK. Finally, he expresses his own opinion that the problem is very acute but legislation to cut bankers' salaries is all wrong and another way out should be found by the British government in order to restore the financial system of the country. So the texts belong to the same text type (with the hint of hybridisation in text 2), meaning that their main function is persuasive. It is known, that "the intention of the text represents the SL writer's attitude to the subject matter" (Newmark P. 1988: 12). The notion of the text type is closely connected with the purpose of the text. Thus the authors of both texts aim at appealing to their addressees by promoting acceptance or evaluation of some ideas or concepts. Moreover, the choice of lexis in both texts is strongly determined by the authors' intentions, text type and

purpose: the texts are marked by the use of connotative words which immediately indicates the argumentative text type. Lexical features of the texts will be looked at in detail later.

As a "conventional text type that is associated with a specific communicative function" (Munday J. 2001: 91-92) genres of the texts are also linked with their argumentative nature; especially text 2 which is an editorial from the online version of the Guardian newspaper (editorials usually have highly evaluative content and, as can be assumed, appellative purpose). Text 2, as a comment from www.timesonline.co.uk, is characterised by the persuasive function of the whole text with the little difference that it also performs, although not predominantly, an informative function, which is typical of the genre of a newspaper article.

Register, as a "variety of language that a language user considers appropriate to a specific function" (Baker M. 1992: 15), always depends on intention, text type, genre and purpose of the text. Text 1 and 2 can be also compared in this sense meaning that the first text, as stated before, deals with problems in banking sector, so it belongs to the field of economics, whereas text 2 is clearly political. There is also a difference between two texts in terms of tenor: text 1 has a higher level of formality than text 2 as it is more specialised, while text 2 is less formal. Although in both texts the register is semi-formal. The texts are similar in the mode - written to be read reflectively, because the authors' aim at producing that kind of effect.

As it was stated before, text 1 and 2 are from the national English newspapers which are ranked as highly authoritative sources. That is why

their intended readership is, obviously, an educated public, presumably of middle or upper class, who reads that kind of newspapers. Although the distinction can be made here in terms of different fields of these texts: text 1 is addressed to the people who are able to understand and evaluate economical issues, whereas text 2 is mostly aimed at those who are interested in politics. Overall, the readership for both texts is quite the same: it entitles a great deal of cultural background knowledge and assumes a substantial, but not very specialised, knowledge of political, economical, historical and social life on its national and international levels.

Lexis, grammar and syntax

Lexical and syntactic features of both texts are determined by several important factors which are certainly interdependent. Firstly, because they are argumentative they are marked by the extensive use of connotative words, mainly negative in meaning:

(text1) 'heady rewards'(line 4), 'public fury'(line 10), 'full-blown financial panic'(line 18), 'shed his troubles'(line 18), 'ambitious plan'(line 19), 'expresses dismay'(line 24), 'introduce distortions'(line 33), 'reform'(line 39), 'hobble the City'(line 40), 'landgrab'(line 42), 'bloated'(line 45)

But in text 2 the connotative lexis is stronger than in the first one, again, because of its argumentative text type, editorial genre, author's appellative intention and persuasive function.

(text 2) 'dreary apparatus'(line 3), 'speaking mournfully'(line 6), 'retrospective regret'(line 8), 'dogmatic enthusiasm'(line 13), 'helium-voiced

theatricality'(line 22), 'cheeky self-referential game'(line 27), 'populist crackdown'(line 36), 'crusade'(line 39), 'inject passion'(line 35)

The selection of words in terms of style is also different in two texts: text 2 is marked by the use of colloquialisms, together with more formal lexis:

(text 2) 'smash down'(line 5), 'backward-looking'(line 10), 'what on earth...'(line 20), 'boils down'(line 15), 'keep leadership alive'(line 10), 'drive the party further'(line 15), 'awful idea'(line 41), 'fell flat'(line 29), 'messy'(line 37)

In this case such lexical choice depends a lot on highly persuasive effect the author aims at producing in the text.

There is no doubt that the field of specialisation has strong influence on the language of the texts. Text 1 is about banking and economics, that is why there are many terms from this field:

(text 1) 'boardroom'(line 4), 'chief executive'(line 5), 'corporation'(line 5), 'global economy'(line 11), 'banking sector'(line 8), 'recapitalise'(line 20), 'traders'(line 27), 'compensation schemes'(line 31), 'tax liabilities'(line 36), 'chairman'(line 43), 'economic case'(line 44), 'financial instability'(line 15)

The following example illustrates another feature of economical texts, - noun clusters, - which are " several nouns and adjectives to designate one single concept "(Guadalupe Acedo Dominguez and Patricia Edward Rokowski, Ph. D., available at <http://accuparid/Journal/21clusters.htm>, last updated on 05.03/2003):

(text 1) 'short-term trading profits'(line 29), 'risk-adjusted profits'(line 32)

As for text 2, it is similar to text 1 in terms of the use of terminology, but this time the terms belong to the field of politics:

(text 2) 'political conference'(line 3), 'ministers'(line 7), 'strategy'(line 10), 'electorate'(line 15), 'polling day'(line 19), 'speeches'(line 22), 'technocratic instrument'(line 42)

The terms from other disciplines are widely used in both texts, again, because the fields of politics and economics are characterised by this feature:

(text 1) 'policymakers'(line 11), 'capitalism'(line 25), 'code of conduct'(line 26), 'legislation'(line 33)

(text 2) 'apparatus'(line 4), 'security state'(line 4), 'economic crisis'(line 12), 'recovery'(line 13), 'secure zone'(line 17), 'financial crisis'(line 35), 'populist'(line 36)

" Political texts are a part and/or result of politics, they are historically and culturally determined" (Schäffner C." Strategies of Translating Political Texts", Text Typology and Translation, edited by Trosberg A., 1997: 119). This can also be said about economical texts. That is why both texts are abundant in culture-specific references (proper names, dates, personal, historical and geographical references):

(text 1) 'John Kenneth Galbraith' (line 4), 'the G20' (line 9), 'the City'(line 40), 'Mr Brown' line 18), 'Angela Merkel' (line 26), 'president Sarkozy' (line 24),

'the incomes policies of the 1970s' (line 34), 'Lord Turner Ecchinswell' (line 43), 'the Financial Services Authority' (line 43)

(text 2) 'Labour' (line 10), 'Gordon Brown' (line 11), 'the Conservatives' (line 16), 'Alistair Darling' (line 21), 'Peter Mandelson' (line 21), 'the City' (line 36), 'Progress rally' (line 43), '11 ministers' (line 43), 'chancellor' (line 24), 'business secretary' (line 28)

Texts 1 and 2 are both rich in figurative language, mainly metaphors and metonyms (influenced by their text type, purpose and field). For example, Newmark says that " game metaphors" are frequent in political texts (1991: 158), which can be shown by the example:

(text 2) 'Lord Mandelson played with the hall, a cheeky self-referential game...' (line 26)

Here Mandelson's speech is compared to a game, thus metaphorically establishing a comparison between one idea and another (Beard A. 2000: 19).

Synecdoche, as a type of metonymy when the part stands for the whole, is used in the second text (face stands for the person):

(text 2) 'convincing face of a crusade against the City' (about Alistair Darling) (line 39)

There are many other metaphors and metonyms in text 2:

(text 2) 'age-old characteristic'(line 31), 'chase the prime minister'(line 19), 'left the country cold'(line 27), 'conference speaking mournfully to itself'(line 6), etc.

Text 1 is not that rich in figurative language as text 2, because it deals with economical problems, still a few examples can be given:

(text 1) 'bloated (financial sector)'(line 45), 'market award'(line 5), 'contaminating the wider economy'(line 16), 'hobble the City'(line 40)

As far as grammar is concerned, in both texts such parts of speech as adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions and particles, emotive verbs are used extensively which is related to the argumentative text type conventions:

(text 1) 'heady rewards'(line 4), 'widespread belief'(line 8), 'populist and fanciful schemes'(line 15), 'competitively'(line 17), 'likely'(line 10), 'ambitious plan'(line 19), 'commensurate penalty'(line 30), 'shed his troubles'(line 18), 'sought to rescue the global economy'(line 11), 'inveigh against'(line 11), 'expresses dismay'(line 24), 'insists'(line 27), 'are adept at inventing'(line 36), 'devoted themselves'(line 35), 'but'(line 21), 'however'(line 23)

(text 2) 'dreary apparatus'(line 3), 'valedictory dispatches'(line 7), 'wrong'(line 16), 'feelgood therapy'(line 22), 'mutual distrust'(line 45), 'awful idea'(line 41), 'speaking mournfully'(line 6), 'helium-voiced'(line 22), 'fighting for their future'(line 7), 'cutting the party off'(line 5), 'smash down'(line 5), 'turned on the public'(line 18), 'indulged in'(line 22), 'fell flat'(line 29), 'demean'(line 32), 'certainly'(line 36), 'but'(line 6), 'still'(line 28), 'if'(line 19), 'only'(line 33), 'at least'(line 10)

Both texts are marked by the use of active voice of verbs. It is linked to the authors' intentions and the text purpose, when it is important to point out agents of the action (individuals, parties, groups, economies or countries) in order to appeal to the reader:

(text 1) 'public fury... reflects'(line 8), 'governments are outdoing'(line 13), 'Mr brown shed his troubles and sought to rescue'(line 18), 'Mr Brown's notion never extended'(line 21), 'governments seen the opportunity'(line 23), 'search of profits generated large rewards'(line 29)

(text 2) 'ministers are writing'(line 7), 'party feels'(line 8), 'the Conservatives would threaten recovery'(line 13), 'party made no attempt'(line 18), 'both men found it easier'(line 30)

To achieve emphasis in meaning modal verbs are often used in both texts:

(text 1) 'Gordon Brown could perform....' (line 14), 'Mr Brown should not mistake...'(line 41)

(text 2) 'they should be fighting...'(line 7), 'no minister should talk...'(line 24), 'the debate should be had in public...'(line 42)

Transitivity of verbs also adds to their emphatic meaning:

(text 1) 'cap bankers' pay'(line 13), 'prevent financial instability'(line 15), 'recapitalise the banks'(line 20), 'seen the opportunity'(line 23)

(text 2) 'smash down barriers'(line 5), 'left the country cold'(line 27), 'writing dispatches'(line 7), 'demean your opponents'(line 32), 'won an argument'(line 40)

Mostly present and future tenses are used in both texts to show either the real state of things, the authors' statements expressing their negative attitude or not very promising predictions:

(text 1) And bankers are adept at inventing ways to minimize tax liabilities.

(line 36)

But legislation to cap bankers' pay is not the answer. (line 33)

(text 2) That is true, but only adds to the need to talk about the future. (line 33)

The disadvantage is that it will drive the party further from the electorate.

(line 14)

Syntactic features of the text are certainly determined by the argumentative text type. Thus both text 1 and 2 do not have a very complex syntax. The average length of the sentences is medium. Text 2, being explicitly appellative, comprises more short sentences than text1:

(text 2) He is right. (line 24)

At least Labour now has a strategy. (line 10)

He still knows what is needed. (line 28)

There is certainly much to do. (line 36)

The sentences are relatively simple. In those which are complex the main clauses and the subordinate clauses are connected with conjunctions or

temporal adverbs. Conditional clauses are typical of the argumentative text type: they are used to reflect the author's opinion:

(text 1) If employers wished to reward staff, they would do it in benefits rather than in cash. (line 34)

(text 2) '... if you win the next election, what on earth do you want to do with the next four years?' (line 19)

The types of the sentences are determined by the argumentative text type of the texts: there are statements, rhetorical question and even imperative used for emphasis:

(text 1) There is a problem in bankers' pay. (line 29)

It is not to hinder the banking sector from operating competitively. (line 16)

Recall the incomes policies of the 1970s. (line 34)

(text 2) At least Labour now has a strategy. (line 10)

He is right. (line 24)

'... if you win the next election, what on earth do you want to do with the next four years?' (line 19)

The word order in both texts is fixed, although there is a slight deviation from the English norm (subject + predicator + object + adjunct), when the time adjunct precedes the subject (in purposes of emphasising its meaning in the sentence):

(text 2) Too late, Labour is trying to inject passion into its response to the financial crisis... (line 35)

On the textual level, both texts have much in common in terms of cohesive devices used for emphasis, opposition, contrast or reasoning, as they are markers of the argumentative text type. For example, adversative, temporal and continuative conjunctions used as connectors between sentences relate sentences, clauses and paragraphs to each other (Baker M. 1992: 190):

(text 1) But it is easier for policymakers to inveigh against highly paid bankers... (line 11)

Other European governments have, however, seen the opportunity to propose tough new regulation. (line 23)

And bankers are adept at inventing ways to minimise tax liabilities. (line 36)

(text 2) At least Labour now has a strategy. (line 10)

He spoke much of the time in the past tense, while Lord Mandelson played with the hall... (line 26)

That is true, but only adds to the need to talk about the future. (line 33)

In text 2 parallelism is used emphatically as a perfect cohesive device to stress out Labour's separation from the public (the structure from the topic sentence of the first paragraph is repeated but filled with the new content in the last paragraph):

(text 2) '... still fences, scanners, identity badges and armed police.' (line 4)

Sitting inside its steel fence, Labour is asking why it is no longer loved. (line 46)

Potential translation problems in text 1

Translating this text from English into Russian, a translator might experience some translation problems, connected with specialist and culture-bound terms and collocations used in the source text. For example:

(ST) 'central bankers' (line 9)

(BT) heads of central banks.

In Russian the constituents of this economic term cannot collocate and translated literally would sound wrong, thus the strategy of supplementation plus translation using related words is used.

Another example of the problem connected with specialist terms:

(ST) 'capital reserves' (line 37)

(BT) reserved capital

In Russian this economical term is represented in a different form from the grammatical point of view: the word order and the parts of speech are changed. The translator should be careful in rendering this term accurately.

In the following example the term is translated literally, because it represents an exact notion, suggested by Gordon Brown:

(ST) " new international financial architecture" (line 21)

In this case the potential translation problem of non-equivalence is solved but in order to do it the translator has to do some research on parallel texts in the target language.

The translation problem can be aroused while translating the following jargon expression:

(ST) 'cap bankers' pay' (line 13)

(BT) limit bankers' bonuses

The English colloquial expression is translated by the more neutral Russian equivalent. This choice is determined by style and register conventions of the target language; in English the use of colloquial language in newspaper articles on serious political or economical issues is common, whereas in Russian a more formal expression is stylistically more appropriate.

As Schäffner points out, " texts with references to a wide range of cultural patterns of the society in question, including aspects of its economic, political and legal life, require a lot of background knowledge for a coherent interpretation"(1997: 133). Consequently, the translating cultural words and collocations may pose difficulties for the translator.

(ST) 'John Kenneth Galbraith' (line 4)

(BT) a famous economist, John Kenneth Galbraith

It is necessary to use the strategy of supplementation plus explanation, because not all the readers in the target culture would be familiar with this European name.

(ST) 'incomes policies of the 1970s' (line 34)

(BT) unsuccessful incomes policies of the 1970s in Britain

Translating from English into Russian it is better to specify the result of the particular economic measures in Britain, as the term is clearly culture-specific and needs to be explained to the target reader.

(ST) 'City bonuses' (line 8)

(BT) bonuses of the City of London

Again, when this cultural reference is first met in the text it is necessary to explain which " City" the author refers to.

(ST) 'Financial Services Authority' (line 43)

(BT) Financial Services Office

The name of organisation will possibly cause a translation problem, especially if the translator is not an expert in the field of economics in the target language.

There might be problems at the above word level:

(ST) 'financial sector that is bloated' (line 45)

(BT) bloated financial sector

According to Larson, " the metaphor may be kept if the receptor language permits (that is, if it sounds natural and is understood by the readers)" (1998: 279). In Russian it is possible to keep this metaphorical image. But

<https://assignbuster.com/features-of-non-literary-translation/>

the word should be put in the inverted commas not to make it sound colloquial in Russian.

(ST) 'hobble the City' (line 40)

(BT) cause troubles for the City

In English the meaning of this expression is idiomatic (to cause to limp). In Russian there is no idiomatic equivalent with the same meaning, that is why the translation strategy of paraphrase is used here. Moreover, in Russian it would be stylistically inappropriate to use an idiom in the text of semi-formal register published in the national newspaper. Although the translator should take into account the text type conventions. Thus the colloquial word in the inverted commas would be an option in the same type of argumentative text in the target language.

Field of specialisation

According to Desbalche's communication pyramid, texts 1 and 2 can be positioned on the level 5, as they are produced by generalists in number of sciences and addressed to educated, interested general public (2001: 21).

What makes these texts specialised is that they belong to certain specialist fields and that they are marked by the use of terminology specific to those fields.

As it was stated before, the fields of specialisation in text 1 and 2 are different. Text 1 belongs to the field of banking which is a sub-field of business and economics. The language of the text, as in any text of

economic discourse, is very specific: it relates to other fields such as politics and history, that is why not only specialist terms listed before are widely used but also many external terms can be found:

(text 1) 'populist'(line 15) (historical), 'policymakers'(line 11) (political), 'code of conduct'(line 26) (legal), 'statute'(line 38) (political and legal), etc.

An abundance of culture-bound references is an important feature of the language of economics. The cultural, personal, historical and geographical references occur frequently in the text:

(text 1) 'Gordon Brown' (line 14), 'the City' (line 40), 'the Financial Services Authority' (line 43), 'the incomes policies of the 1970s' (line 34)

Text 2 belongs to the field of politics. It is literary in style (as many other texts of the same field, especially those of the argumentative text type), that is why there are numerous examples of strong connotative and colloquial language:

(text 2) 'bombast'(line 21), 'smash down' (line 5), 'fell flat' (line 29), 'awful idea' (line 41), 'mutual distrust' (line 45), 'technocratic instrument' (line 42), 'messy' (line 37), 'ingratitude' (line 18), 'fighting for their future' (line 7), 'sly jibes' (line 31)

Also the extensive use of figurative language is essential for political texts. The language in text 2 is marked by the use of metaphors and metonyms adding to the effect of emotiveness and evaluation:

(text 2) 'two worlds in one town' (line 3), 'crusade against the City' (line 39); 'when it talks to people outside will it discover the answer' (line 47) (about Labour); 'Lord Mandelson played with the hall...' (line 26); 'sitting inside its steel fence' (line 46) (about Labour)

Irony as a figure of speech, often found in political texts, is also used here:

(text 2) It boils down to telling voters that they are wrong not to thank the government for the good things it has done. (line 15)

Mr Darling enhances the government with a quiet reliability and he was well-mannered enough yesterday came not to point out that the prime minister came within hours of sacking him last June. (line 37)

Both texts, as they belong to language-specific fields of politics and economics, comprise some concepts of abstraction:

(text 1) 'public fury' (line 8), 'individual' (line 6), 'widespread belief' (line 8), 'issue' (line 10), 'new regulation' (line 23), 'large rewards' (line 30)

(text 2) 'apparatus' (line 4), 'strategy' (line 10), 'separation' (line 6), 'enthusiasm' (line 13), 'decency' (line 21)

At last, text 2 can be addressed not only to the source language community, meaning that it has a wider political audience in mind (Schäffner C. 1997: 127).

Bibliography

- Baker, M. (1992) *In Other words, A Coursebook on translation*. London: Routledge

- Beard, A. (2000) *The Language of Politics*. London: Routledge
- Desblache L. (2001) *Aspects of Specialised Translation*. Paris: La Maison Dictionnaire
- Guadalupe Acedo Domingez and Patricia Edward Rokowski, Ph. D, University of Extramadura, Spain (2002) " Implications in Translating Economic Texts" *Translation Journal* 6 (3). Available at <http://accuparid/Journal/21clusters.htm>, last updated on 05. 03. 2002
- Hatim, B. and Mason, I. (1990) *Discourse and the Translator*. London: Longman
- Larson M. L. (1998) *Meaning-Based Translation: A Guide to Cross-Language Equivalence*. New York: University Press of America Inc.
- Munday, J. (2001) *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications*. London: Routledge
- Newmark, P. (1991) *About Translation*. New York/London: Clevedon: Prentice Hall
- Newmark, P. (1988) *A Textbook of Translation*. London: Prentice Hall Europe
- Schäffner C. (1997) " Strategies of Translating Political Texts", *Text Typology and Translation* [edited by Trousberg A.]. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, pp. 119-143