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ON DIMINUTIVES IN TRANSLATION FROM ENGLISH INTO POLISH

Even though translation of diminutives may give rise to significant difficulties, it is usually omitted while analysing different aspects concerning the whole process of cross-cultural translating. The following paper discusses the issue of translating diminutives, as, in many cases, it requires not only a careful analysis of all the meanings of diminutive forms, but also the translator's inventiveness and sensitivity. Therefore, as far as translation of diminutives is concerned, the notions of untranslatability, compensation and explicitation, as well as domestication and foreignization should be introduced. The chapter also discusses the most common methods used to translate diminutives from English into Polish.

1. Introduction: diminutives and the notion of untranslatability

As Wierzbicka (1980: 54) states, the diminutive form is "one of the categories celebrated for an apparent untranslatability". Wojtasiewicz (2007: 30) defines the notion of untranslatability as the limits which a translator cannot pass due to some objective difficulties.

There are two kinds of objective difficulties that prevent full translatability. Firstly, the target language differs in structural characteristics (e.g. morphology or word-formation) from the source language (Wojtasiewicz 2007: 41-46, 102). Such differences may change the amount of information conveyed. Therefore, the translation can be poorer in information than the original, or it can convey concrete details where vagueness was intended in the original. Polish diminutives serve as a good example here as they allow to express various shades of emotional attitudes, which are not given in a precise way, and, consequently, are very difficult to be rendered in English. As a result, they may not be translated properly, and the translation may become impoverished and simplified. Furthermore, the style of the original text may be changed, and the reactions evoked in the readers of translated text may be different from the ones of the original text.

Secondly, the target language cannot express certain notions or ideas formulated in the source language (Wojtasiewicz 2007: 61). These are those cases when certain words do not evoke in the users of the target language such reactions as they do in the users of the source language due to differences in cultural traditions. In the case of diminutives, such differences coincide with differences in the structure of languages.

2. Problematic translation of diminutives into Polish

Lockyer (2012: 21) is of the opinion that the use of diminutives reflects the translator's individual conceptualization and his/her preferences. What is even more, "translation of diminutives is a complex issue that has layers upon layers of nuances and little twists in meaning that depend on context and other linguistic (and cultural) factors", such as the situation, speaker's emotional state and the language itself.

It is difficult to translate diminutives in a proper way, as English and Polish represent two different worlds when it comes to expressing emotions. As stated by Grabias (1988: 39), expressive linguistic forms give rise to immense difficulties in the process of translation. Wierzbicka (2007: 98) writes:

I just can't find English words suitable for talking about my tiny granddaughter. It is not that I am unfamiliar with the register of English used for talking about babies, but I feel that this register does not fit the emotional world to which this baby belongs for me. No doubt one reason is that Polish was my first language and that as such it is endowed with an emotional force that English doesn't have for me. But this is not the only reason. Another reason is that Polish words which I could use to talk about my baby granddaughter do not have exact semantic equivalents in English and therefore feel irreplaceable.

Diminutives belong to this group of words, since she writes afterwards (Wierzbicka 2007: 99):

In Polish I could say that she now has a lot of *loczki* (dear-little-curls), or that she has six *zqbki* (dear-little-teeth), or that for her age she is still *malutka* (dear-little-small). Since English doesn't have such diminutives, I would have to use descriptive 'loveless' words like 'curls', 'teeth' or 'small', and I feel I couldn't do that. (...) Speaking to or about a baby in English, one could use the word 'handies' (in the plural) but not 'handie'; and one would normally not use 'mouthie', 'nosie' or 'headie'. In Polish, however, such diminutives not only exist but are virtually obligatory in speaking to or about a baby, at least in a family setting. If plain, non-diminutive words were used for a baby's eyes, ears, hair, legs, back and so on they would all sound very cold, clinical.

To put it briefly, “in Polish, the language used for talking about babies relies on a wide range of emotionally coloured diminutives, and to talk about a baby in a purely descriptive language would seem strangely cold and loveless” (Wierzbicka 2007: 99).

According to Liseling Nilsson (2012: 145-146), diminutives constitute such a strong element of cultural code inscribed in Polish, that the departure from their usage would seriously infringe Polish cultural code and linguistic convention. This is why they are present in Polish translations. Children’s literature serves as a good example here, as, according to Polish conventions, young age of the prospective readers requires the use of diminutive forms (Berezowski 1997: 90), e.g. there are more diminutive name forms in Polish translations than in English original texts (Fornalczyk 2010: 161).

One of the most prominent example of English children’s literature is A.A. Milne’s *Winnie-the-Pooh*. Adamczyk-Garbowska (1988: 113-115) analyses its translation into Polish by Irena Tuwim. In her opinion, Milne treats the reader (in this case it is the child) with respect and seriousness. Therefore, his style of writing is not infantile or sentimental at all. In Polish children’s literature, the author wants to imitate child’s way of thinking and speaking by using many diminutives and hypocorisms. It produces the effect of “mawkish naivety”. This is also how Polish translators, such as Irena Tuwim, act. The infantilisation of Polish translation results from the excessive use of diminutives, as in the original text diminutive forms of proper names do not occur at all. The translation is, therefore, “sweetened” and made similar to Polish children’s books, the animal protagonists of which have to be “nice, cuddly and as close to the children as possible”. Nevertheless, Tuwim introduces diminutives even when there is no reason for using them. As a consequence, the original children’s style becomes childish and infantile in the translation (see also Stiller 1973: 340).

Rajewska (2002: 68-69) tries to defend Tuwim’s translation. She admits that stylistically Tuwim’s translation differs from the original text due to numerous diminutives and hypocorisms, but, in her opinion, their presence in the translation makes it “warm and imbued with a sense of security”. It was Tuwim’s translation strategy to “naturalize” Polish version out of concern for young readers.

Rajewska (2002: 69) analyses also another translation of *Winnie-the-Pooh*, *Fredzia Phi-Phi*, by Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska. According to her, this translation is incomprehensible to Polish readers, as it lacks diminutives. It is “artificial” and “augmentative”; too accurate, too faithful and too methodical. That is why it did not catch on and is remembered only by translato­logists (Rajewska 2002: 59). Tuwim’s translation is “rooted” in Polish, that is, it exists in the literature practically as an original text. It is the most important, even canonical element of a whole series of translations of the same literary work, as other translations are compared by the readers to this rooted version instead of being compared to the original (Rajewska 2002: 69). Adamczyk-Garbowska’s translation is only an attempt to correct Tuwim.

Jarniewicz (2012: 226-227) is of similar opinion. He notices that the lack of diminutives may be surprising and astounding to Polish readers, especially to those who know Tuwim's translation, as it sounds strange and ridiculous. Diminutives are typical of Polish and, therefore, their lack in *Fredzia Phi-Phi* is a violation of Polish cultural and linguistic norms. Jarniewicz (2012: 230-231) summarizes his discussion by stating that, while translating, Adamczyk-Garbowska was driven by the faithfulness towards the original text (therefore, her book is rather for adults than for children), whereas Tuwim wanted to obtain a translation which would sound as familiar as possible.

3. Compensation and explicitation in translating diminutives into Polish

Tataczuk (2005: 331) is of the opinion that the use of diminutives in Polish translations intended for children serves as an example of compensation. Hervey and Higgins (1999: 35) define the notion of compensation as "the technique of making up for the translation loss of important ST features by approximating their effects in the TT through means other than those used in the ST – that is, making up for ST effects achieved by one means through using other means in the TT". In other words, compensation is a technique which "involves making up for the loss of a source text effect by recreating a similar effect in the target text through means that are specific to the target language and/or text (Harvey 2004: 37). Harvey (2004: 38) adds that it "requires careful, strategic application. Given that the transfer of meanings from one language to another continually involves some degree of loss, the translator must decide if and when compensation is warranted".

This technique is used to compensate for the semantic loss determined by the fact that a given unit of the source language would remain untranslated or would be translated incompletely in the target language, that is, the whole spectrum of its meaning would not be translated. Hence, the translator conveys the same information through another means that are specific to the target language, e.g. the meaning of irony can be read from the context in English, whereas in Polish it is obtained with the use of diminutives.

Going even further, it may be stated that the use of diminutives in Polish translations of English original texts may also serve as an example of explicitation. It is defined by Klaudy (2004: 80) as "the technique of making explicit in the target text information that is implicit in the source text". The use of diminutives is an example of both obligatory and optional explicitation.

Obligatory explicitation is "dictated by differences in the syntactic and semantic structure of languages" and is applicable mostly in the cases when translation between an analytic and a synthetic language is concerned (Klaudy 2004: 82-83). It may as well be defined as semantic explicitation, as it "consists of choosing more specific words in the target text" (Klaudy 2004: 83). Klaudy

(2004: 83) explains that “due to the different linguistic structuring of reality in different languages, certain concepts such as body-parts, colours and kinship terms may have more detailed vocabularies in some languages than in others”, e.g. English word *hand* used to describe child’s body part will most probably be translated into *rączka* (*hand-DIM.*), as in Polish a diminutive form would sound more natural in this particular context. Another example would be the translation of English word *mummy*, as in Polish it can be rendered with the use of different diminutive forms, according to the specific shade of emotional attitude (e.g. *mamusia*, *mamunia*, *mamuś*, *mamuśka*, etc.).

The use of diminutives may as well be an example of optional explicitation, as it is “dictated by differences in text-building strategies and stylistic preferences between languages” (Klaudy 2004: 83). Explicitation of this kind is optional because without its application in the target language, grammatically correct sentences can still be constructed. Nevertheless, as Klaudy (2004: 83) notices, the text as a whole will be “clumsy and unnatural”. The use of diminutives in Polish translations is an example of optional explicitation, as, according to Klaudy (2004: 83), the addition of emphasizeers is for “the clarification of sentence perspective”.

4. Domestication and foreignization in translating diminutives into Polish

Oittinen (2003: 129), following Venuti, makes a clear division between the two technical terms, that is ‘domestication’ and ‘foreignization’. She states that “domestication accommodates itself to target cultural and linguistic values: through domestication, we adapt the text according to its future readers, culture, society, norms, and power relations”, whereas foreignization “maintain traces of the original text, depict cultural differences and a foreign origin.” Mazi-Leskovar (2003: 254) also elaborates on these strategies of translation. For her, foreignization denotes “the conservation of significant amount of what is alien and unusual in the reading context of the new target audience but common, unique, distinctive or typical for the source culture.” She also underlines the fact that “the foreign, strange or even the exotic retained in the text is expected to be a stimulus to reading”. Domestication, on the other hand, “intervenes when the foreign and the odd is considered to represent a hindrance or barrier to the understanding of the text.” She adds (Mazi-Leskovar 2003: 254) that

even if there were no conscious decision for domestication, there is a certain degree of it in every translation because of the differences between the languages of the source and the target text. Domestication refers to all changes performed on various levels of the text in order to enable the target readers, the members of another nation, living in another geographical reality, with a specific socio-historical experience and a unique cultural background to fully grasp the text.

Oittinen aptly describes it as a very powerful means of “bringing the translation closer to the target-language readers by speaking a familiar language” (Oittinen 2000: 84). To put it briefly, domestication means substitution of an element characteristic for the target culture for an element characteristic for the source culture in order to make it sound more natural and comprehensible for the readers (Bednarczyk 2002: 63), whereas foreignization is about leaving this element of the source culture in its original form to make it sound exotic and, consequently, intriguing.

Diminutives create an atmosphere that reflects the values prevalent in a given culture. It is then obvious that when a particular book is translated into another language, the translator has to decide whether he/she wants to imply the same values for the target text readers, or whether he/she wants to make modifications to the text in order to fit it better into the target culture. Hejwowski (2009: 121) observes an increase in the occurrences of diminutive forms in literary translations from English into Polish. The addition of diminutives in Polish translations of English texts is an example of domestication (or polonization) (Liseling Nilsson 2012: 298-299).

Domestication as the translator’s approach aimed at adapting the original text to Polish reality is discussed by Biały while analyzing Polish versions of *Mary Poppins* by Pamela Travers. Biały (2010: 48, 51) underlines the fact that it is a common practice to use a diminutive form of proper names which in the original version were given in a full way, e.g. *Michael – Michaś, John – Jaś, Ellen – Helenka*.

5. Translation methods for rendering the meanings of diminutives

Translation of diminutives into Polish was not given as much attention as it deserves, although there appeared scholarly works on this issue reviewed in the previous chapters. Besides, analyses to date were based on a limited corpus (e.g. Jarniewicz 2012). Moreover, in most cases, they concerned children’s literature only (e.g. Adamczyk-Garbowska 1988; Rajewska 2002). As diminutives may be used in a number of contexts, all of them worth taking into account, a more comprehensive analysis should be carried out. Therefore, the corpus for the analysis presented below is based on diverse genres.

English writers do not pay as much attention to the use of diminutives in their texts as Polish authors do. They rarely apply diminutive forms let alone the double or multiple ones. Instead, they rely on the context or introduce suitable vocabulary. Kozielski (2008: 103) provides an example of translation of diminutives in literature intended for adults. He analyses Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* and its Polish translation *Duma i uprzedzenie* by Anna Przedpełska-Trzeciakowska. The novel reflects a typical English humour, which is full of irony, sarcasm and the absurd. It may be claimed that in English original version

they are expressed with the use of situational context, whereas in the Polish translation – with the use of diminutives.

The following paper discusses the analysis of chosen literary texts:

- *Amy Wild, Animal Talker. The Mystery Cat* by Diana Kimpton – children's book first published in 2010; translated into Polish by Iwona Żółtowska in 2011 and entitled *Amy i przyjaciele. Psozna koteczka*; the original version of the text is marked in the analysis as DKEng, and the translation – as DKPl.
- *Parker Pyne Investigates* by Agatha Christie – crime short story collection first published in 1934; translated into Polish by Magda Białoń-Chalecka in 2003 and entitled *Parker Pyne na tropie*; the original version of the text is marked in the analysis as ACEng, and the translation – as ACPl.
- *Acting Up* by Melissa Nathan – a novel first published as *Pride, Prejudice and Jasmin Field* in 2000; translated into Polish by Hanna Szajowska in 2011 and entitled *Duma, uprzedzenie i gra pozorów*; the original version of the text is marked in the analysis as MNEng, and the translation – as MNPl.
- *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen – a classic novel of manners first published in 1813; translated into Polish by Anna Przedpełska-Trzeciakowska in 2002 and entitled *Duma i uprzedzenie*; the original version of the text is marked in the analysis as JAEng, and the translation – as JAPl.

It is worth emphasizing the fact that the methods used in translation into Polish are the result of different linguistic and cultural conventions of Polish literature. As far as translation of diminutives is concerned, the most characteristic feature of Polish translations of English literary texts is the employment of a diminutive form in places where in the original version there is no diminutive used. Four kinds of such additions can be listed:

- forming double/multiple diminutives both analytically and synthetically, whereas in the original version there is only analytic formation applied:
 - (1) *small rooms* (JAEng 167) – *małe pokoiki* (JAPl 224)
 - (2) *a little bag* (ACEng 185) – *mały woreczek* (ACPl 141)
 - (3) *a small box* (ACEng 49) – *małe pudełeczko* (ACPl 37)
- attaching diminutive suffixes to nouns which in the original version are not diminutivized in any way:
 - (4) *In Meryton they parted.* (JAEng 28) – *W Meryton grupka się rozdzieliła.* (JAPl 37)
 - (5) *a china angel* (DKEng 53) – *porcelanowy aniołek* (DKPl 61)
 - (6) *To avoid him, Elsie stepped back for a moment into the doorway of the adjoining compartment.* (ACEng 101) – *Ustępując mu z drogi, na chwilkę weszła w drzwi sąsiedniego przedziału.* (ACPl 77)
- adding new words (in this case – diminutives) to the translated version in places where in the original version there is no such noun or its diminutive form:
 - (7) *Amy grabbed Mystery before he could get into more trouble.* (DKEng 64) – (...) *żeby uniknąć kolejnej katastrofy, podniosła Skrytkę, chwyciwszy ją pod boczeki.* (DKPl 73)

- (8) *the cobweb stockings* (ACEng 41) – *pończochy cieniutkie niczym pajęczyna* (ACPI 31)
- (9) *He'll be perfect.* (DKEng 50) – *Będzie wzorową koteczka.* (DKPI 57)
- modifying translated version in order to make it possible to apply a diminutive form, even though it could change the original meaning of a particular sentence:
 - (10) *luvvies* (MNEng 70) – *aktorski świątek* (MNPI 82)
 - (11) *I was only thinking about it.* (DKEng 21) – *Marzyło mi się tylko malutkie co nieco.* (DKPI 21)
 - (12) *I am going to Gretna Greek, and if you cannot guess with who, I shall think you a simpleton, for there is but one man in the world I love, and he is an angel.* (JAEng 223) – *Jadę do Gretna Green, a jeśli nie zgadniesz z kim, to jesteś gąska, bo na świecie jest tylko jeden mężczyzna, którego kocham, anioł prawdziwy.* (JAPI 296)
- In order to avoid any possible difficulties while translating into Polish, the translator can apply as well one of the following strategies:
- using synthetic diminutive:
 - (13) *Daddy's here.* (DKEng 20) – (...) *tatusz już wrócił.* (DKPI 20)
 - (14) *little bell* (ACEng 101) – *dzwoneczek* (ACPI 77)
 - (15) *the tiny supermarket* (DKEng 77) – *sklepik* (DKPI 89)
 - using analytic diminutive:
 - (16) *a little object* (ACEng 150) – *mały przedmiot* (ACPI 114)
 - (17) *a small cellar* (ACEng 35) – *mała piwnica* (ACPI 26)
 - (18) *a little object* (ACEng 150) – *mały przedmiot* (ACPI 114)
 - using functional equivalents (in this case – diminutives):
 - (19) *That's right, pet.* (ACEng 176) – *No właśnie, kotku.* (ACPI 134)
 - (20) *as light as a feather* (JAEng 174) – *lekki jak piórko* (JAPI 234)
 - (21) (...) *there's a good girl.* (MNEng 167) – (...) *байдз grzeczną dziewczynką.* (MNPI 184)
 - exchanging particular elements of the original text for elements (in this case – diminutives) which are more suitable in particular contexts in translated version:
 - (22) *He'd only been walking for few months and it still gave Jazz jolt of excitement to see him upright on his two fat legs.* (MNEng 61) – *Chodził zaledwie od paru miesięcy i Jasmin wciąż nie mogła opanować podniecenia, widząc go stojącego na tustych nóżkach.* (MNPI 72) – when referring to a child;
 - (23) *She goes through clothes like they're going out of fashion.* (MNEng 211) – *Kiedy się jej ubranko nie podoba, to przesikuje je na wylot.* (MNPI 228) – when referring to a child;
 - (24) *If I didn't work for that wonderful woman, I'd have sold this for a fortune, my dear. A fortune.* (MNEng 16) – *Gdybym nie pracował dla tej cudownej kobiety, sprzedałbym to za niezłą sumkę, moja droga. Niezłą sumkę.* (MNPI 24) – when intensifying the meaning.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, it needs to be underlined that Polish translators applied the above-mentioned strategies in order to make the translated versions read naturally. Therefore, the use of diminutives in Polish translations serves as an example of domestication. What is more, adding diminutives while translating into Polish is also an example of explicitation, as in Polish a diminutive form sounds more natural in particular contexts:

- (25) *Lydia was exceedingly fond of him. He was her dear Wickham on every occasion.* (JAEng 244) – *Lidia była dla niego niezmiernie czuła. Ciągłe, przy każdej sposobności, nazywała go drogim mężulkiem.* (JAPI 323) – when referring to a beloved person;
- (26) *Still, she had complained of the cold. That tweed coat of hers was a cheap affair; it didn't keep the cold out.* (ACEng 11) – *Ale przecież narzekala na chłód, a ten jej tweedowy paltocik był wiatrem podszyty.* (ACPI 8) – when expressing criticism;
- (27) *And it is such a good joke, too, that you should have gone this morning and never said a word about it till now.* (JAEng 8) – *Co za pyszny figiel, żeby pojechać rano i do tej chwili ani słówkiem o niczym nie pisać!* (JAPI 10) – when intensifying the meaning.

Finally, adding diminutives while translating into Polish is as well an example of compensation, due to the fact that the translator can convey the same information through another means which are specific to the target language, e.g. the meaning of irony can be read from the context in English, whereas in Polish it is obtained with the use of diminutive forms:

- (28) *But it is a comfort to think that whatever of that kind may befall you, you have an affectionate mother who will always make the most of it.* (JAEng 109) – *Możesz się jednak pocieszyć, że jeśli ci się zdarzy cokolwiek w tym guście, masz kochającą mamusię, która to z pewnością odpowiednio rozgłosi.* (JAPI 147)
- (29) *Upon my word, Caroline, I should think it more possible to get Pemberley by purchase than by imitation.* (JAEng 32) – *Słowo daję, siostrzyczko, wydaje mi się, że bardziej prawdopodobne jest zyskanie Pemberley za pomocą pieniędzy niż naśladownictwa.* (JAPI 43)
- (30) *They were ignorant, idle, and vain.* (JAEng 166) – *Były to osóbbki puste, leniwe i głupie.* (JAPI 222).

All these strategies mentioned above illustrate the emotional nature of Poles, as for them the presence of diminutives seems obvious and, therefore, the translated texts read more naturally than if they were faithfully translated

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