

TECHNICAL TRANSLATOR'S ROLES CONCEPT BASED UPON COMPETENCE EVALUATION

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Abstract. This article's purpose is to identify the key aspect of a technical translator's professional competence and, consequently, to formulate a technical translator's roles concept. It has been defined that the capability of producing an adequate translation of a technical text roots from one's level of science-pragmatic competency. Its scale allows to state that there would be three roles of a technical translator. These results are definitely novel and, thus, are subjects of both theoretical and practical interest.

Keywords: Technical translation; Translator's competence; Science-pragmatic competency; Technical translator's three roles; Competence evaluation

1. Introduction. Technical translation requires not only profound knowledge of the source and the target language, but also a high level of competence in the scientific field to which the translated text belongs. It is reasonable that one can barely translate something that he or she is not familiar with.

The basic requirements for translators have been studied by such linguists as V.N. Komissarov [1], S.S. Tolstoy [2], B.N. Klimzo [3], V.P. Smekaev [4] and R.K. Min'yar-Beloruhev [5] have introduced some notions towards main principles of a technical translator's practice. However, there are still many things to specify. For instance, although aforementioned competence predetermines the capability of producing an adequate translation and regulates the range of a translator's actions, the exact parameters of its evaluation have not been presented yet. Moreover, the question of a technical translator's place in the author-recipient chain is quite controversial, as it is still undetermined, whether one can be perceived as an equal specialist or not. It seems logical to suggest that there can be various roles of a technical translator, each related to a particular level of one's competence in some scientific field.

Thus, it is reasonable to examine a technical translator's professional competence key aspect and also to introduce a concept of a technical translator's roles along with their main principles and peculiarities.

2. Technical translator's professional competence. As pointed out by B.N. Klimzo [3], V.P. Smekaev [4] and R.K. Min'yar-Beloruhev [5], technical background (e.g. competence in some scientific field or fields) is an indispensable aspect of a technical translator's professional competence. Not only to understand the original text it helps, but also to translate it adequately. The absence of this background may lead to such consequence as misinterpretation and, as a result, faulty translation. Furthermore, it is necessary to take into account some original-based difficulties, such as inaccurate definitions, misprints, terminological lacunas, etc. From the point of adequacy, it is the translator's duty to find them out in order to eliminate any potential errors. Thus, for technical translator being scientifically competent is significant. However, it is certainly impracticable to cover all the scientific fields in order to become a specialist in each of them. Instead, for a technical translator it is reasonable to choose one or two fields of particular personal interest to focus on.

As mentioned above, neither precise definition, nor exact parameters of this competence evaluation have been presented previously. Hence, as this competence deals not only with background scientific knowledge, but also with the skill of its use, it seems rational to define it as *science-pragmatic competency*. Its level would vary depending on various factors, such as presence of specialized technical education and translational experience in particular scientific field.

Thus, science-pragmatic competency of a technical translator can be developed at three levels: the minimum (if no or only the basic concepts of some science are acquired), the medium (if the amount of a translator's scientific knowledge equals to one of a specialist) and the high (if a translator is more qualified than an average specialist).

The possibility of obtaining the medium and the maximum levels of this competency may seem disputable since translators, even technical, are generally considered to have no specialized education except for philological one. This stereotype requires eradication for two basic reasons. Firstly, the presence of philological education does not contradict getting technical one. Secondly, as mentioned by B.N. Klimzo [3], not only "philologists" can translate, but "engineers" as well. This means that translation being produced by specialists with technical education as the first one (and philological as an optional one) is a common case. Considering these two circumstances, the possibility of facing both the medium and the maximum levels of science-pragmatic competency among technical translators is evident.

3. The concept of a technical translator's roles. It has already been stated that a technical

translator's science-pragmatic competency in the context of a particular scientific field can be developed at some minimum, medium, or high level. However, this competency is only a characteristic that would determine a certain translator's position with respect to the author and the recipient of a particular text. Hence, it is also reasonable to assume the existence of three technical translator's roles, which correspond to three levels of science-pragmatic competency respectively.

The first role shall be based upon the minimum level of science-pragmatic competency and display the following features. First, the level of the translator's knowledge in some scientific field is far lower than that of his or her potential recipient (the latter is defined as a specialist in that particular scientific field). Second, the translator can barely understand even the general idea of the text without consulting some relevant sources on the subject. Third, the translator is not competent enough to estimate the adequacy of the original text and, consequently, to decide, whether some elements require adaptation or not. Finally, the client does not really trust the translator and, therefore, consider the latter to be rather an instrument than as a specialist.

Thus, in this case it would be reasonable to determine this technical translator's role as one of a 'slave'. This role would be typical for those translators who lack certain technical education as well as translation experience in that field. In order to overcome its barriers, it is recommended to focus on studying of some particular scientific fields alongside with gaining one's personal experience in translating texts on chosen subjects.

The second role would root from the medium level of science-pragmatic competency and display the following features. First, the level of the translator's knowledge in some scientific field equals to that of his or her potential recipient (a specialist). Second, the translator is able to understand the main idea and also some peculiarities of the original text without any substantial difficulties. Third, the translator is competent enough to estimate the adequacy of the original text. Thus, he or she is able to decide, whether it would be essential to adapt some lexis, grammar and semantic structures or even correct some author's mistakes while producing the target text or not. Finally, the client trusts the translator and, considering the competency of the latter, allow him or her to make some important form- and content-based adjustments in order to improve the target text.

Thus, it is recommended to determine this role as one of a 'peer'. It would be typical for technically educated and well-experienced translators. This stage is, however, not the final one. Although it allows one to produce a translation of good quality, the medium level of science-pragmatic competency can be even increased to a high one. This would display an amount of knowledge exceeding that of an average specialist, which, consequently, would allow the translator to find out some potential difficulties worth not eliminating, but commenting and explaining. In other words, this role corresponds to some pedagogical techniques. Indisputably, this high level of science-pragmatic competency is very hard to gain, as one needs not only to get some specialized technical education and practice translation regularly. He or she must also follow all the news concerning that particular science field in order to know, what terms, abbreviations or even phenomena mentioned in the original text would require some clarifications while being translated. Thus, considering all the aforementioned features of this role, it is reasonable to determine it as one of a 'mentor'.

4. Conclusion. It has been identified that the main aspect of a technical translator's professional competence evaluation is the level of his or her science-pragmatic competency (e.g. the presence of background scientific knowledge as well as the skill of its use). This competence determines the capability of producing an adequate technical translation and can be developed at three basic levels: the minimum, the medium and the high one. Also it has been stated that there would be three roles of a technical translator. These are the role of a 'slave' the role of a 'peer' and the role of a 'mentor', predetermined by the minimum, the medium or the high level of science-pragmatic competency respectively.

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