

Translation Quality Assessment as Viewed by Professor Yuriy O. Zhluktenko

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Abstract. The problem of translation quality assessment and approaches to it was described by Yuriy O. Zhluktenko mainly in his reviews. His views on translation quality are based on a number of criteria, which change from case to case. However, the demand of preserving equivalence remains. In some cases translation quality assessment is done by contradiction, i.e. through indication to certain pitfalls, their seriousness and number in translation. The researcher believes that it is necessary to promote translation criticism and determine a consistent approach to setting the criteria of translation quality assessment.

Keywords: Yuriy O. Zhluktenko, translation quality assessment, translation norms, translation criticism

Translation quality assessment is an eternal problem for translators and translation studies scholars. Despite a multitude of solutions offered by specialists all over the world, none of them can be seen as universally applicable. Therefore, the space for further elaboration of the problem remains.

Ukrainian translation studies is not an exception. Ivan Franko, Mykola Zerov, Oleksandr Finkel, Hryhoriy Kochur and many others addressed the issue of translation quality in their reviews and articles. The same can be said about Yuriy Zhluktenko. This article aims at analyzing his views on translation quality assessment in their correlation with ideas of other researchers.

The problem of translation quality assessment is closely connected with the issue of equivalence and adequacy in translation. Some researchers consider them to be the main criterion of translation quality [13]. For instance, Finkel regarded stylistic adequacy of a translated text to be the measure of its quality [14, p. 113]. Sometimes translation quality is even associated with the degree of its adequacy [1, p. 434].

Translation quality could be viewed in two ways: 1) as requirements and norms set by the theory and practice of translation into this or that language; and 2) as determination (assessment) of the quality of the translations done.

Requirements and norms can be derived from the existent translation practice at the given stage of its development and change with progress and evolution of theoretical ideas and elaborations, as well as practical achievements. They also have a direct impact on the other component, for translation quality cannot be assessed not having any previous reference points (preferably commonly accepted ones).

Translators and translation studies scholars have been offering their own recommendations as to what a translation should look like, and what criteria should be applied to assess its quality. For example, the well-known *desiderata* by Mykola Zerov include: 1) lexical choices that correspond to the lexical roles of the units in the original text; 2) attention to tropes and figures; 3) reproduction of metrical peculiarities; 4) attention to euphonia; 5) naturalness and ease of the target language [20, p. 132-135].

The following generalization is found in Fiodorov's works: 1) a translator has a conceptual responsibility for the quality of his/her work; 2) language of the translation has to be natural, devoid of literalisms; 3) the fullest reproduction of the unity of content and form possible, where special attention should be paid to their functions, should be achieved; 4) the fullest reproduction of peculi-

arities of the source text possible, which would correspond to its conceptual and artistic role, should be achieved; 5) consideration of conditions and aims of doing a translation [2, p. 124].

Something similar is described by Levý, who believes there are two main translation norms: the norm of reproduction (i. e. faithfulness) and the norm of artistic value. Ideally, both of them should be fulfilled. However, analyzing different translations critics often juxtapose these criteria as mutually exclusive instead of seeing them as components of a whole [11, p. 445-449]. Modern researchers offer to assess translation quality taking into account also the translator's competence [15, p. 19] or applying models based on error (and their number) analysis [12, p. 59].

However, despite the existence of a multitude of recommendations to translators, and different criteria to assess the quality of their work, there is also plenty of criticism of these approaches. The main problem here was and still is the subjectivity of assessment, which cannot be fully overcome, for no recommendations can include all the diversity of aspects that might be necessary to be taken into account while assessing the quality of translation [18, p. 7].

Yuriy Zhluktenko believed that requirements to translation quality depend on the type/genre of the text, its social and political importance, and authorship [11, p. 26]. The researcher shared the ideas of the authors of the polysystem theory Even-Zohar and (later) Toury (which Zhluktenko most probably did not know about at that time) in that the highest requirements to translation are faced by the translators of the texts that are located in the center of a literary polysystem or close to it, while the requirements to the periphery would be more flexible and more liberal. Levý, who believed that translation quality is determined by the relation of a work to the norm, but the norms change with times [11, p. 444], was also in a way close to some ideas of these Israeli researchers. These are the norms that determine the criteria of the so-called "acceptability" (according to Toury [17, p. 201]), which greatly depends on the traditions of the target culture and is one of the factors determining the quality of a text entering this culture. This is also proven by Finkel's disagreement with the fact that translation is often assessed as an independent fact of the target literature without comparing it with the source text [3, p. 327], despite the fact that Levik believes that quality of a poem (generally, and not in relation to its source text) is the main criterion determining the creative value of a translator's work [10, p. 275].

According to Toury, norms are socially and culturally-specific and relatively unstable [17, p. 204]. We believe

that the same is true for criteria of translation quality assessment. Thus, Juliane House, who dedicated a lot of time to elaborating a model of translation quality assessment, concludes that subjective and intuitive approaches to translation quality assessment have always existed and continue their existence even now, despite some progress made by translation studies in this respect [7, p. 244]. Such approaches were criticized by Finkel who complained that translations are often assessed through a very abstract notion of the spirit [3, p. 327].

According to Zhluktenko and Dvukhzhlyov, "the problem of translation quality assessment cannot do without a certain criterion. Since translation, as any other activity has multifaceted character, it is often assessed from different viewpoints" [21, p. 85]. For example, Gak describes the differences in approaches to translation quality assessment from the point of view of a translation studies scholar and a contrastive linguistics researcher. A translation studies scholar assesses the text or a part of it comprehensively, from all sides, points out both successful findings and drawbacks of a translation and explains his/her decisions. Meanwhile, a contrastive linguistics scholar aims at analyzing a certain phenomenon and, therefore, concentrates primarily on it and has a right to ignore all other aspects of translation; thus, he/she would assess the quality of translation not in general, but only on the basis of the phenomena analyzed [6, p. 13].

Translation quality assessment may be qualitative or quantitative. For example, quantitative indicators were used by Ivan Franko while analyzing his *Kameniar* in Polish translation, which is described in detail in his article *Kameniar. Ukrayinskiy tekst i polskyi pereklad. Deshcho pro shuku perekladannia* [5]. Finkel is also believed to be a proponent of quantitative assessment [9, p. 291]. A qualitative approach, on the contrary, stipulates among other things studying the reaction of the readers and surveying [19, p. 4]. We deem both approaches imperfect. The application of the quantitative approach may make the researcher forget about something called by the term *spirit* of a work while surveying of target text recipients would foreground subjective perception of translation as an autonomous work without comparing it with the source text.

Williams advocates that translation quality assessment cannot (and should not) be deprived of evaluative statements. On the contrary, it should be based on the criterion of "goodness". Otherwise, it will be just a list of all strong and weak sides of the translation [19, p. 5]. Contrary to this, House believes that translation quality assessment should be based on a detailed linguistic analysis, and all other factors (social, political, psychological, etc) are secondary [7, p. 254-255]. An important observation is made by O'Brien: despite the fact that the influence of the quality of source text language on the quality of the target language is undeniable, the majority of translation quality assessment models do not take this criterion into account [12, p. 59].

Zhluktenko is of the opinion that over the last decades (the article was written in 1981) the quality of literary translations in Ukraine improved significantly [21, p. 87]. Of importance here was the systematic work of the Soviet translation studies scholars and translation critics, who had been analyzing the existing translations to improve the level of the future ones. However, there is an opposite opinion, according to which after the repressions of 1930's-1940's

and WWII, the quality of translation dropped, and the situation was saved by separate personalities, such as Pavlo Tychyna, Mykola Bazhan, Maksym Rylskyi, Hryhoriy Kochur, Mykola Lukash et al. An important role in the development of literary translation was also played by *Vsesvit* journal (restored in 1958) and *Dnipro* Publishing House, which starting from 1965 published whole series of works from foreign literature [16, p. 211-302].

Requirements to translations formulated in the Soviet times were characterized by relative uniformity and strictness. This, on the one hand, set high standards for translations, but, on the other hand, could lessen the translators' intellectual curiosity, which in Kochur's opinion could have a negative impact on translation quality, especially in cases where it is necessary to be inventive to adapt to an author's individual manner of writing and cultural specificity of a work [8, p. 126].

Contrary to this, there existed (and still exists) another problem described in his book *Muki perevodcheskiye* by Florin. According to him, the majority of practicing translators and editors know nothing about translation theory. As a result, translation studies scholars have been working for many years to describe and solve main problems of translation, including the criteria for assessment of their quality, and guidelines and warnings concerning certain aspects of translation, while the translators do not deem it necessary to use these elaborations and prefer reinventing the bicycle every time they face a certain problem [4, p. 7].

This idea is also supported by Bylinkina, who writes that criteria for translation quality assessment are necessary first and foremost for a practicing translator, who needs to be guided in the right direction, as well as for an editor who should know his/her duties. The final goal is an adequate presentation of the source text to the reader in the form of the target text [1, p. 434].

Despite the existing counter arguments, Yuriy Zhluktenko was of the opinion that translation quality (particularly the quality of a literary translation) can be improved by purposeful work of translation studies scholars on studying the "technology" of translation. It is necessary to analyze and discuss different translations, particularly from the languages that are less known in Ukraine, which would allow for a comprehensive approach to the problems encountered by translators in their practical work, as well as for the development of certain guidelines or recommendations to solve them [21, p. 91]. This approach should be consistent and comprehensive. Such views of the scholar fit the framework of the Soviet translation studies of that time, which had an expressly didactic (sometimes even prescriptive) character and was inclined to a relative conformity of scholarly views and approaches.

The analysis of Yuriy Zhluktenko's views on translation quality assessment shows that he was the proponent of a qualitative approach to it. However, the main responsibility for improvement of the quality he places on the so-called "competent reader", i.e. the person who has studied the source and target texts well enough to be able to draw some conclusions concerning the correlation between them and, respectively, the quality of translation. Mostly, these would be translation critics writing reviews of the newly published translations. It is this role of translation critic that Zhluktenko referred to the most important ones.

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