

The Godfather: A Translator's and Writer's Subconscious and Conscious Skills in the Process of Evoking Reader's Emotions

Dominika Dziurawiec

University of Rzeszow, Poland

e-mail: british.english.rzeszow@gmail.com

Abstract:

The article is an unyielding argument supporting the thesis that not only a writer, but also a translator is expected to use their creativity so that nothing is lost in translation. Amongst various factors that influence the process of translating a novel the article focuses on two of them: a translator should stick to the original text with taking the semantic fields differences into account while s/he should keep the atmosphere of the source language, making as little changes in the target language as possible. Marking a translator's existence in a text is strongly connected with a perlocutionary act. A great example of the translation that covers both principles is *The Godfather*, written by Mario Puzo and translated from English into Polish by Bronisław Zieliński. He translated only English words into Polish, leaving the target Italian words with no metamorphosis. The article presents the effect obtained by such an action.

Keywords: emotions, reader, the godfather, translation, translator.

1. Introduction

A translator ought to have some peculiar skills and is undoubtedly seen as a person whose responsibility of the usage of the language is one of the highest. Not only is s/he expected to be an absolute specialist about the language itself, but also a linguist with a great command of writer's abilities. That is why independent authors are perceived as the best translators. Susan Bassnett claims that: *I have never satisfactorily worked out exactly when there began to be an hegemonic distinction made between writing and translating* [9, p. 173]. She makes a point that both writers and translators use the same amount of creativity and share the same traits needed in their professional work [9]. The author states also that:

Yet it is absurd to see translation as anything other than in creative literary activity [...] What is often forgotten is that many writers also translate, [...] writers can recognize and learn to speak in different voices, it becomes more probable they will identify the distinctive voice of their own [9, p. 184].

All things considered, one may safely conclude that a successful writer would be also a successful translator. Also Susan Bernofsky, a translation teacher at the University of Columbia says that: *I consider all literary translators writers* [5]. Hence, a translator is anticipated to have the same skills

as an independent writer, it is granted mostly in the case if s/he represents both professions at the same time.

However, the number of qualified, foreign language knowing novelists is insufficient to make translation of all the world's masterpieces or simply books that are somehow worth the process. As a consequence, there are more and more schools for translators or translation faculties at universities opening all over the world. One can have an impression that undertaking such an action was unavoidable – the readers have started to detect the translator's skills, style and very often, in modern reviews that are rather of an amateur style, e.g. on the webpage 'lubimyczytac.pl', where an ordinary reader can share their opinion; people do pay attention to the translation itself, they even cite the translator's name.

Eser Oktay claims that: *Translation as a business is a service. The concept of translation competence is a term covering the various skills and knowledge that a translator needs to have in order to translate functionally* [12, p. 4].

Mildred Larson introduced seven types of translation: very literal, literal, modified literal, inconsistent mixture, near idiomatic, idiomatic and unduly free, claiming that idiomatic is a translator's goal. Sixth level of translation is six times more creative than the first one and the author believes it is the most desired one [14]. He claims that a translator who is idiomatic in his works becomes recognizable in the literature community and also amongst regular readers. Probably it is a far-fetched conclusion that they can become a literature celebrities, however, they might become as popular as novelists in the near future.

The aim of this article is to show that a translator evokes reader's emotions, the effect can be as strong as a writer's evoking or even stronger. As an example, *The Godfather*, Mario Puzo's novel, translated from English into Polish by Bronisław Zieliński was used.

2. A Proper Translation: the Classical Approach and the Modern Approach

A reliable translator is obliged to pay attention to many factors, however, an additional one that is rather controversial is to absorb reader and satisfy them. A classical school of translation suggests rather not to change anything in the style of a book, according to it, it is better to leave uninteresting passage uninteresting [16]. For a translator dealing with such it can have very crucial consequences – the reader who does not know the original language can state an opinion that the work is of a high value, just the translator is the one who is not. The publisher probably wants to make their editions as beneficial as they could be, so the responsibility is laid on a translator. Wanting to satisfy the publisher, the reader and still obey the classical rules of translation seems to be impossible. Surely, if one talks about the book that has not got any weaker parts, the problem does not exist. The book market is full of novels of rather moderate or even non-ambitious character and the translator is forced to cope with this situation [17], [18]. The obvious question arises: How far from the original text can a translator go with their translation? The answer is not a clear-cut.

3. The Perlocutionary Effect

Regardless to how far from the original text did a translator go with their translation, each change that is not a literary translation, and is one out of other 6 types rendered by Larson has got a perlocutionary effect. The perlocutionary effect, called also the perlocutionary act is a speech act that is greatly associated with psychology and even with a language manipulation, it can evoke a great effects on a reader [3]. Not only can the author cause some emotions or even force a recipient to take some actions, but also a translator can expose himself making some decisions connected with a lexicon choice. A demonstration of their existence is not necessarily a bad practice, unless the variations they make are changing the whole context or a tone. The perlocutionary act emphasizes some issues, the author of a novel obviously places their private emotions and feelings in their works, the translators should read them properly and ensure themselves that the reader of a translated novel would feel the same atmosphere as the reader of a novel in an original language.

The perlocutionary act has got more functions, it can convince, enlighten, motivate, persuade, warn, etc. [23]. The translator can cause such an effect by chance, that is why s/he should be utterly careful so not to change the original writer's attitude.

Mario Puzo wrote *The Godfather* in English with some Italian vocabulary, causing a perlocutionary effect with this action. A Polish translator, Bronisław Zieliński made a choice of not translating the Italian words in *The Godfather*, so he performed a perlocutionary act. Moreover, if he did not, he would still perform one. The conclusion is self-evident: Each action taken by a translator has got consequences, s/he must decide wisely to follow both rules: not allow any passage to be lost in translation and not change any passage's tone. The perlocutionary effect is unavoidable though.

4. Semantic Fields

Translating a book is a process consisting of many actions and decisions to be made, it is believed to be a complex one, in the meaning that it has got many steps. Contemporarily, it is becoming more compound, however, not only because there are many factors that must be taken into consideration, but rather because nowadays there are more and more factors, and some of them are exclusive towards each other. A translation should be as similar the original text as it can be. Literally, it should be simply identical. Larson makes a division between translating a form and a meaning. He claims that:

Form-based translations attempt to follow the form of the source language and are known as literal translations. Meaning-based translations make every effort to communicate the meaning of the source language in the natural forms of the receptor language. Such translations are called idiomatic translations. [...] Literal translations sound like nonsense and have little communication value. [...] A truly idiomatic translation does not sound like a translation. It sounds like it was written originally in the receptor language [14, pp. 17-18].

Therefore, the translation should be identical, but taking the meaning into the consideration, not the form.

On the other hand, the semantic fields are not always the same in two languages, even if the meaning would be understood, the translation should be done in the way that it sounds naturally, to make it an idiomatic translation. Each language has got its own connotations and associations, especially when it comes to nouns fundamental in every language, such as colours, food, animals, etc. That is why in England one can be as white as a day, in Poland one can be as white as a snow and in Vietnam, one can be as white as cotton. The tribulation occurs when one part of a semantic field is a matter of a context, e.g. when a main character works in a cotton field and she is compared to cotton. There are two ways to deal with such a situation: to give a note from a translator, that in Vietnam one can be compared to cotton and it corresponds to being as white as a snow, if the book is bound to be published in Poland or simply to compare the main character to a snow without giving any note. Both ways have rather huge disadvantages; the former one introduces too much chaos, especially when the novel is rather a simple one; the latter one can enervate the story, the translator might not know the deep layer of a book, surely they should, however, sometimes the deep surface of a novel is discovered few hundred years after the first translation, it can be connected with the author's life or their posterior books [16], [22].

5. Translation Tribulations: Words Carrying an Emotional Meaning

Modern translation trend allows and even dictates to make changes into translation, so that the reader feels the spirit of a book. A translation can be pushed even further from Larson's idiomatic translation, towards unduly free translation. In 1997 he wrote that: "Unduly free translations are not considered acceptable translations for most purposes. Unduly free translations add extraneous information not in the source text, they change meaning of the source language, they distort the fact of the historical and cultural setting" [14, p. 19]. It can be compared with Christopher Conti and James Gourley's statement, written in 2014:

The impossibility of translation in a sense of a copy or replica seemed to us not the condition of literature but of culture too. The densely cultured zones of meaning traversed by translation cannot be circumvented with the lexical ratios of the dictionary. The medium of translation is not abstract equivalence but the creative understanding of another culture that preserves the foreignness produced by temporal and cultural distances [10, p. 8].

These two statements do not exclude each other, nevertheless, they show the change in the attitude.

The personalities of readers are so differentiated that one can make advantage of the only factor – nationality. Does Polish *zemsta* sound so emotionally as Italian *omerta*? Does English *revenge* cover Italian *omerta*? One can draw a conclusion that these matters are of cognitive nature. A regular reader is defined by many factors, not only by their nationality, there are many variables influencing the understanding and perceiving reality, such as age, sex, education, financial status, etc. Undoubtedly they are, but even more, they are a matter of semantics. One-to-one translation is forbidden if it comes to any official translating [14], nonetheless, the nouns that are not elements of idioms or idiomatic expressions are the most translatable parts of a book. There are some nouns that can cause some tribulations and doubts, e.g. Polish *zamek* that can be translated into *castle*, *zipper* or *lock* in English, but when a translator knows both the source and the target language well, this issue should not occur.

Words, especially nouns can be divided into three groups. The first group consists of nouns that carry an emotional meaning, they can be easily mistaken with evaluative morphemes; these are the nouns that are positive or negative in all of their contexts, excluding the irony and idioms or idiomatic expressions, e.g. *killer* is a person who is perceived pejoratively, the word itself evokes negative thoughts and associations, however, as an idiom and neologism it works differently, e.g. *time-killer* is something that helps people to spend their time when they cannot do what they wish to, but still have some spare time. This word could belong to the second or third group. It is worth noticing that the groups have got fuzzy edges. The second group covers the words that have got an emotional meaning only in particular contexts, e.g. *jednorazówka* in Polish normally does not carry any emotional or evaluative meaning, it simply means that something can be used only once, for example *razor*, the situation changes when one talks about socks, after one washing they are not suitable to wear anymore, then, the meaning is negative. The third group contains nouns that are neutral, they do not carry any emotional meaning, e.g. *book*.

All of these groups look different in different languages, they are unique. Even somebody who is fluent in a language, but it is not their mother tongue can have complications with noticing the emotional meaning. Another, more vital notion is that these words should be translated in a way that does not change the word and does not change the meaning. The problem is escalated due to the fact that some nouns carry emotional and evaluative meaning according to the history and culture of native speakers of that language. A great example of that is the Italian language and especially the mafia register.

6. The Godfather: Italian Words Left Without Translation

Bronisław Zieliński, a great English-Polish translator of American literature translated Mario Puzos's *The Godfather* from the English language and he kept all of the Italian words that are used in the novel. The question arises: Why did Mario Puzo put some Italian words in the book that was written in English? Probably because he knew that *omerta* mentioned before has got a deep emotional meaning, an Italian associates it with mafia and with all types of actions that are mentioned in the book. An English reader has got the impression that this word is important on account of occurring in a different language. Zieliński copied the idea of Puzo, he translated only English words, leaving Italian words with no changes. So did the other languages' translators, however, not all of them. The Polish and other translators who followed the idea trusted the writer, who was of Italian origin and he knew the power of some words very well. *Omerta* seems to be suitable only for some violent actions, not like *revenge* that can be used even in case of issues connected with love. Before the popularity of *The Godfather* these words had not been widely known, now, they are in use in many languages, other writers use Italian, especially when writing about mafia.

The most popular word that has been used extremely a lot of is *omerta*, it brings a huge emotional tone or even overtone, this word evokes death, blood, masculinity, mafia and is also connected with dishonor that led to *omerta*. The visual side of a word is very interesting, similar in sound to French *mort* meaning 'death', English *mortal* meaning 'deadly'.

The word *caporegime* cannot be found easily in a dictionary, however, *capo* means 'head' or 'boss' and *regime* means 'the system'. So, it was not enough to write that somebody, in this case, e.g. Clemenza (a character from the novel) is the boss, it was crucial to mention that he is the boss of the whole system. A reader feels the respect and perceives somebody who is a *caporegime* as a very powerful human. *Padrone* is not 'the father', in Italian it means 'an employer' or 'a host', so this is the Godfather (the main character of the book) indeed, he gives work and he meets people who want to speak with him in his own house, even if they do not have the same financial and social status. The word *padrone* brings a lot of associations with a father, Italian *padre* means 'father' and also in Spanish *padre* means 'father', *padrone* is just one step further from *padre*, so that everybody knows that the Godfather is a father of all the mafia, the word *father* is connected with God, as Almighty Father and this associations cannot be avoided. Mario Puzo made the main character a god, a father, a host and an employer; all of these words have got rather a positive emotional meaning, hence, the reader likes the Godfather, it is unbelievable for many critics and literature researchers, that people perceive the boss of the mafia as a good person.

The word *paisan* cannot be found in a regular dictionary, however it is possible to find it at English Urban Dictionary and it says that this is a word used by Italians or Italian Americans when they address one other. This word brings a huge emotional connotation, it emphasizes the Italian origin of the speaker, they are Italians in America, however, still Italians.

Cosa Nostra is the Mob, however the words translated mean 'our thing', it shows that the mafia does not consist of individuals, it only functions properly as a group, a family, or even more than a family.

The book shows a huge importance of the family, all the characters support the members of their family and care of their honor. What is more, when one member of the family commits a crime that is not approved by another family, the *omerta* is done very often not on the person who committed the crime, but on the members of this person's family. The word *finocchio* means 'fennel' or 'finochio' that is an English version of this word naming a vegetable. It is used in the context of a weak man, a singer/actor that cries and does not know what to do with his life. Here, the semantics fields are different and that is why the comparison did not work. One does not compare a weak man to a fennel in English, or Polish. The translator left this word unchanged, so that the reader can hear the melodiousness of the word *finocchio*, that this word cannot mean any good if it is used to describe a male. It is very similar to the word *Pinochio* – a boy, who was just a wooden doll, changed into a man. Probably, he is not manly enough to be shown as a role model of a male. Fennel, the vegetable is very easy to cut, rather flexible in its structure, so the comparison is obvious.

Pezzonovante cannot be found in a regular dictionary, like many other Italian words that can be found in *The Godfather*. The meaning of a word from English Urban Dictionary is ‘big shot’, however, usually used pejoratively. Italian word *pezzante* means ‘beggar’, so the connection is obvious. The word is used to describe somebody who thinks that has got a huge power, but reality is different. The length of a word and its melodiousness suggests the reader that this word can be rather ironic. It is similar in sound to English *peasant* so rather somebody who has not got a huge power.

The word *infamita* is built from two other words, *infamia* meaning ‘dishonour’ and *intimita* meaning ‘intimacy’. English Urban Dictionary states that *infamita* is ‘an act of dishonor, usually against family’. The word brings a lot of emotions, the sound and the look of it suggest something bad, the word is similar to English ‘infamy’ and also ‘infection’, so something negative.

Consigliori is built of two words too: *consiglio* meaning ‘advice’ and *consigliere* meaning ‘adviser’, English Urban Dictionary gives a very narrow definition: a person who is a right hand of the Don in Italian Mafia-families.

The word that is Italian sounds more professional, undoubtedly *consigliore* sounds more sophisticated than ‘advisor’ or ‘doradca’ in Polish. The word creates the Italian atmosphere and dictates the reader to think of a *consigliore* as of somebody very important. In the book *Ojciec Chrzestny* published by Albatros in 2006 in Poland, on page 51 the word *consigliore* occurs 7 times, creating an impression that this must be somebody truly important. Also the word *signor* used before somebody’s surname means that the speaker respects the receiver. It gives the reader the feeling of Italian respect towards another Italian, using the word ‘mister’ the effect would be missed.

Importantly, Zieliński did not give any note or even a gloss, so the reader must check the unknown words by himself or guess their meaning from the context. Probably, it makes the story even more gripping and real.

It is worth mentioning that all of these Italian words have got a magical character. The way that they sound, the way that they look make them extraordinary. Obviously, they could lose their attributes when read by an Italian, but still, they remain outsized, when juxtaposed with words coming from other languages.

Over and above all those considerations, the Italian words used in the original English version of the novel, and Polish as well, were not created by Mario Puzo. They had been used much earlier, most of them come from the mafia register and were used in everyday language among the mafia members. There is a huge possibility that a regular Italian person, having nothing to do with the mafia would not understand these words as well which makes the atmosphere of the book even better [8], [11].

7. Conclusion

One can draw a conclusion that a translator should leave some words in their original version because they definitely carry a meaning that can change the reader’s view of a story. Zieliński did not have a dilemma, because he copied the Puzo’s idea to leave the chosen words Italian, however, translators from Italian into Polish could do the same, especially, if the book is on mafia or any other topic that Italian words are best to describe. A translator should be familiar not only with the source language but also with the culture, tradition and history of its native speakers so that s/he is able to choose the words to be left in original language. Furthermore, the translator should know the semantics fields of both languages well and decide whether to leave a *finocchio* as comparison to a weak man or to change it into some more accurate word in the target language.

There is always a possibility to change the reader’s view of a story too much, changing semantic fields when the change is not necessary or even harmful. Hence, the translator is the one who takes the responsibility of the translation, its quality, similarity to the original text and its literary values, so that they are not lost in the translation.

There is one action that a translator should never take. S/he ought not to try to evoke emotions in a reader in the passages where the author did not intend to. Nevertheless, they must remember about the reverse process, when the translated passage does not correspond to the original one emotionally and evaluation could be different, the translator is answerable for its final shape and should use their creativity to keep the context and the atmosphere.

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