THE EFFICIENCY OF TRANSFERRING ATTENTION-GETTING DEVICES FROM ENGLISH TO LATVIAN: A CASE STUDY IN TRANSLATING NEWSPAPER HEADLINES

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Abstract. *The present study aims to explore the effectiveness of translating newspaper headlines from English to Latvian. The present study examines the linguistic devices that are used in order to catch readers' attention to the headlines in newspapers. The research focuses on the analysis of the techniques that are employed to maintain the linguistic and stylistic equivalence of the utterances in the source and the target languages. The method of discourse analysis is applied in the research. The study concludes that the languages may have similar linguistic techniques to create attractive headlines. Moreover, the contrastive analysis demonstrates the feasibility of rendering the source text attractiveness into the target language. The most difficult decisions to make deal with cultural references that remain attractive only in their original linguistic environment.*
Keywords: *attention-getting, attractiveness, headlines, linguistic devices, translation.*

Introduction

The primary function of a language has always been communicating a message to the audience. We cautiously select words to express ourselves correctly and transfer the right meaning of the utterance. Since a language is an effective tool to inform, warn, persuade and influence the message receiver, writers and text producers employ various techniques how to draw the readers' attention to a particular piece of information. Moreover, the study outlines the feasibility of transferring the same linguistic and emotional content to the target language simultaneously maintaining its equal attractiveness.

Literature review

The background of the present study lies in the assumptions developed by Danuta Reah who claims that the vocabulary used in the headlines corresponds to the requirements of headlines. Modern newspaper industry is focused on the readership as customers and buyers of information (Reah, 2002, p. 15). The most

essential concern of modern national newspaper industries in Europe is circulation and readership (Albertazzi & Cobley, 2013). Nowadays, among the myriads of headlines, the readers choose what seems important, relevant and appealing to them. Therefore, headline writers create effective and attention-getting headlines, in other words, the language may be referred to as attractive, which 'has the power or quality of drawing interest', as defined by Merriam Webster Dictionary (MWD, 2020). The majority of headlines contain a range of linguistic devices that might trigger the readers' attention and interest. The headline writers are aware of the audience that they are going to communicate to, which enables them to think profoundly about what style and the choice of words are the most appropriate for the target readers (Bagnall, 1993).

The content of mass media discourse features several factors, such as pragmatic, sociocultural, and psychological factors (Dobrosklonskaya, 2013, p. 28). Likewise, this may be applicable to the headlinese, i.e. the style of writing newspaper headlines as well. The content of headlines acts as a purposeful link between the people and their cognitive processes. Tanaka agrees that our thoughts form mental representations and construct sets of assumptions that may be engaged in communication (Tanaka, 1994, p. 14). The press often suggest complex and impenetrable opinions and matters, which result in ambiguity and misrepresentation of the discourse content (Botton, 2014). Therefore, translating the source texts, translators should transfer both the denotational meaning of words and the atmosphere of the discourse into the target language.

Methodology and Research results

The present research, being a part of ongoing extensive research into the language of headlines launched in 2014, undertakes a contrastive analysis of a corpus of newspaper headlines selected by the author and translated from English into Latvian by student-translators. The study aims to observe the efficiency of young translators in rendering lexical, syntactical, stylistic and cultural aspects of the headlines preserving the attractiveness in the target language. The headlines may be called attractive and attention-getting provided that the headline writers are creative in their texts, neither being too straightforward nor using trite clichés, which can make the language sound boring and not attention-grabbing. Additionally, the present case study focuses on investigating what additional guidance and training are needed to enable the students to provide more effective and accurate translations.

The headlines have been selected due to their attractiveness in terms of the use of particular lexical and syntactical linguistic devices, as well as cultural references that increase the attractiveness of the headlines. The case study is based on the analysis of 50 headlines found in the British broadsheet *The Independent*

and translated into Latvian by 13 student-translators. The students' task was to keep the headlines attention-getting employing similar linguistic devices in the target language. Taking into account the fact that a few headlines have more than one attractive stylistic device, the total number of variables is 689. The total number of linguistic devices analysed in the case study is comprised of 20 lexical devices that make up 260 variables, 23 syntactical devices making up 299 variables, and 10 cultural references making up 130 variables. The analysis of the translations focuses on tracking the similarities and differences in linguistic tools to create attractive headlines in English and Latvian.

Certainly, the play on lexical devices prevails in the majority of headlines. The relationship between a word and its meaning gives rise to ambiguity, which might provoke misunderstanding and confusion. The polysemy of many words is a rich source for playing on meanings. Similarly, figurative meanings may add emotional load apart from their literal meanings.

The quantitative analysis outlined below clearly demonstrates the student-translators' skills in transferring the attractiveness of the source language headlines into the target language in terms of the use of lexical devices.

*Table 1 **The efficiency of rendering lexical devices in the target language***

Criteria	*Lexical devices (260 variables in total)*
Direct translation	86
Target language equivalent	73
Lost attractiveness	101

Consequently, the analysis proves that transferring equal attractiveness into the target language is a difficult job. As Table 1 shows, only 86 variables have been translated using the direct translation technique and correspond to the requirements of an attractive headline in the target language. For instance,

*You've got to love a bit of Tory infighting. But who's going to land **the decisive punch**? (02.03.2014)*
*Bet kurš tiks pie **izšķirošā sitiena**?*
***For the love of God**, someone buy David Cameron a new shirt (27.08.2014)*
***Dieva dēļ**, lūdzu kāds nopērciet Deividam Kemeronam jaunu kreklu.*

The figurative meaning of the expression *the decisive punch* has been efficiently transferred into Latvian equivalent as *izšķirošais sitiens* or *trieciens,* which is equally used as a metaphor in a similar context. Another example of an emotionally marked phrase *for the love of God* has its Latvian equivalent *Dieva dēļ* which seems rather attractive to the readers and carries the same emotional load.

On the other hand, the phraseological unit *Sharpen the axe* is rendered into Latvian directly in most of the translations. It might seem attractive and

challenging to pay attention to the headline itself, but the denotational meaning is not sufficiently comprehensible for the target reader because of the absence of similar phraseological unit in Latvian. Therefore, the phrase loses its attractiveness, for the Latvian speaking readers may not pay attention to the headline that does not seem relevant to their linguistic culture.

> ***Sharpen the axe***, *minister: There should be more political appointments, not fewer (03.02. 2014)*
> *Laiks asināt cirvi, ministra kungs/ Ministra kungs, asiniet cirvi/ "Asiniet cirvi", ministra kungs*

There are only three students who tried to explore the meaning of this phraseological unit and find the equivalent for it. But what they suggest, *Pacentieties Ministra kungs../ Strādājiet cītīgāk, ministra kungs* only describes the meaning of the unit without offering any equal option. The most appropriate equivalent suggested by one of the young translators might be *Septiņreiz nomēri, vienreiz nogriez, ministra kungs...*(Eng. Measure it seven times, cut it once, dear minister.) This translation instantly transfers the meaning which is familiar to the target language readers.

Among commonly used newspaper and political vocabulary, there are numerous borrowings that are actively exploited in other languages. Nevertheless, they may be replaced with a target language equivalent.

> *Does **political rhetoric** win votes? (07.03.2014)*

Translating the collocation *political rhetoric*, most of the young translators have used the borrowed phrase *politiskā retorika,* whereas two of them suggest Latvian equivalent *politiskā daiļrunība,* and one translator offers an expression that clarifies the term, as *pārliecinoša runa* (Eng. persuasive speech). Interestingly, this descriptive translation might attract those readers who are not keen on politics and have no profound knowledge of political vocabulary.

As far as it concerns the variables that lost their attractiveness in the target language, there is a noticeable lack of semantic competence. Juggling with polysemous lexical units, headline writers attract readers' attention. The following headline reveals the issue of not knowing the meanings of a word.

> *Politicians' **fortunes** are now like football managers' – at the mercy of phone-in culture (25. 04. 2014)*

The word *fortune* has several meanings that are frequently used, such as *luck* and *a large sum of money* needless to say that young translators rely on their general knowledge of English and translate *fortunes* as *veiksme* (Eng. luck) and *liktenis* (Eng. destiny). Unfortunately, this meaning is not particularly attractive to be used in a headline.

Only two students might have deduced the interconnection between the *fortunes* and *football managers* in this context, which enabled them to decode the meaning of the word in relation to the financial issue.

> *Politiķu **labklājība** tagad ir kā futbola menedžeriem'*. (Eng. Politicians' well-being is now like the one of football managers)
> *Politiķu **nopelnītais** līdzinās futbola treneru **peļņai**…* (Eng. Politicians' earnings are similar to the football coaches' profit)

The same confusion occured due to the ambiguity of the word *row* in the following headline.

> *The **row** of men in suits that may come to define the Coalition (06. 02. 2014)*

The word *row* translated as *rinda, virkne* (Eng. a line) sounds bland and does not stir any interest as a getting attention device in the headline. Firstly, standing at the beginning of the headline, it should attract the readers' attention most of all. Secondly, the meaning used here is *quarrel,* which is a good deal more attractive for the readers. Consequently, all the student-translators failed to transfer the meaning accurately as well as maintain the attractiveness of the headline in Latvian.

Syntactical constructions also play a crucial role in producing attractive and intriguing headlines for the reader. Numerous tense forms, word order and complex constructions may serve as an effective tool to emphasize a particular word or phrase. The efficiency of transferring equal syntactical structures without losing their attractiveness is reflected in Table 2 below.

*Table 2 **Maintaining equal attractiveness via syntactical devices***

Criteria	Syntactical devices (299 variables in total)
Equal structure	163
Target language equivalent	67
Different structure	69

Overall, British newspaper headlines tend to be long with a range of complex and compound structures. The headlines are constructed in such a way that they assimilate both the informative and emotional content in one particular utterance. To make the headlines attractive, headline producers employ various structures, such as interrogative forms, rhetorical questions, reported questions, dialogue forms, infinitive constructions, first-person narration, and others. Similarly, Latvian syntactical constructions have a lot in common with the English ones. Interestingly, the English and Latvian languages belong to different language family groups; however, the present study proves that most of the constructions can be equally rendered from English into Latvian without losing the attractiveness of the headlines. Table 2 shows that the majority of the variables (163) have been translated effectively and accurately.

> *Classless society? Don't make me laugh. (11.02.2014)*
> *Bezšķiru sabiedrība? Nesmīdiniet.*
> *To be anti-politics might be fun (03.01.2014)*

> *Būt pret politiku varbūt arī ir jautri*
> *A small triumph for democracy (12.01.2014)*
> *Mazā uzvara demokrātijai*
> *I'm an Attention-Seeking Politician...Get Me in There (17.11.2014)*
> *Esmu uzmanības kārs politiķis…Dabūjiet mani tur iekšā*
> *Oh Scotland, don't leave me! All I want is for us to stay friends (15.09.2014)*
> *Ak, Skotija, nepamet mani! Es tikai gribu, lai mēs paliktu draugi*

Without doubt, a number of constructions (67) have been replaced with specific target language structures aiming to preserve the attractiveness of the headlines. For instance,

> *Surprise, surprise, Brussels is weighing into the Scottish debate (18.02.2014)*
> *Pārsteigums! Brisele iesaistās skotu debates*

The repetition of the word *surprise* is replaced with an exclamatory one-word sentence (Eng. Surprise!), which is rather appealing to the readers as well as the emotional content of the phrase is largely emphasized. Another example of an effective translation is the following:

> *What a fairer Scotland would look like (05.02.2014)*
> *Taisnīgāka Skotijas valsts. Kāda tā būtu?* (Eng. A fairer Scotland's state. What would it be like?)

The student-translator moves the focal point of the headline *a fairer Scotland* to the beginning of the sentence making it reasonably attention-getting. Moreover, the question as an additional sentence maintains the effect of curiosity, for any question is supposed to be answered, which normally provokes interest.

In its turn, cultural references turn out to be the most difficult linguistic patterns in translation. Due to immense differences in literary, artistic and cultural heritage of the languages, a good deal of idiomatic phrases, allusions, personality references have no equivalents in the target language. Cultural references remain unique and may be recognizable only in their own linguistic environment. Table 3 below illustrates the categories that the translated patterns fall into. The analysis led to adding new categories unlike those in lexical and syntactical groups.

*Table 3 **The translation of cultural references***

Criteria	*Cultural references (130 variables in total)*
Direct translation	61
Target language equivalent	24
Non-translated/original	25
Descriptive translation	17
Lost in translation	3

The majority of the variables have been translated via direct translation technique preserving the source language uniqueness in the target language.

However, these patterns may not gain the desired effect that is bound to attract the readers to the article. For example,

> *Eurosceptic and male? Join* **the Peter Party***! (16.11.2014)*
> *Eiroskeptiķis un pietam vīrietis? Pievienojies* **Pītera partijai***!*

The translator translates *The Peter Party* directly as *Pītera partija,* however, the meaning of this name may not be familiar and relevant for the Latvian readership. Therefore, the translated pattern is definitely not going to appeal to the target readership. On the other hand, the headline

> *Why Scotland should say 'cheerio the nou' to the pound (13.02. 2014)* has

various translation techniques applied by young translators. The Latvian equivalent for the Gaelic phrase 'cheerio the nou' is 'goodbye'. The majority of the translations have preserved the denotational meaning of the phrase, while only a few of them have kept the source language attractiveness by using Latvian informal equivalents '*Visu labu!'* (Eng. All the best!) and *'uzredzi'* (Eng. Bye!). The other translators decide to keep the original, that is, the source language pattern '*cheerio the nou*' or apply a descriptive technique that presupposes a mere explanation of the phrase, e.g. *Kāpēc Skotijai vajadzētu atvadīties no sterliņu mārciņas*?

Conclusions

Consequently, almost a half of the variables must have lost their attractiveness in the target language due to major transformations; however, they preserved the logical meaning of the utterances.

Interestingly, even though the English and Latvian languages belong to different linguistic family groups, they possess a great deal of similar linguistic devices and structures that may be employed in the headline texts. The majority of the headlines have preserved their attractiveness after being rendered into Latvian, which means Latvian-speaking readers would be curious about the content of the articles under the headlines.

The present analysis highlights a wide spectrum of lexical devices that may communicate a variety of ideas and draw readers' attention to the respective articles in both English and Latvian. Likewise, it is possible to select proper lexical equivalents in the target language.

The case study proves that insufficient and superficial knowledge of the source language and its culture is not adequate to create effective and accurate translation. The most complicated part in the selected corpus of headlines appears to be the culture-specific discourse. The translators' cross-cultural incompetence resulted in inaccurate and unsuccessful transference of content and the emotional state of the discourse. Moreover, the goal of keeping the discourse attractive and appealing to the readership has been partly accomplished.

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