

THESIS

Pseudo-synonyms, Translation and Aspects of the French Vocabulary (with respect to Four French Translations of a Novel by Jane Austen)

ABSTRACT

Key-words: traductology, translation strategies, synonymy, language evolution, contrastive analysis

The present thesis, *Pseudo-synonyms, Translation and Aspects of the French Vocabulary (with respect to Four French Translations of a Novel by Jane Austen)*, represents the result of our constant concern for the study of the French language evolution, evolution that we tried to illustrate by resorting to traductology, a discipline which has lately gained much ground and obtained the importance it deserves among the concerns of scientists whose studies focus on this area.

The issues regarding traductology aspects have been analyzed from the perspective of synonymy and, if we accept that the process of translation is mainly intended to establish a connection between two cultures, then we agree that this semantic relationship is used by translators in order to find the most relevant equivalents for a target text whose overall structure should correspond, to a large extent, to the source text.

As far as the present study is concerned, we focused on the issue of pseudo-synonyms, without paying much attention to the different opinions regarding the existence of absolute synonyms.

Thus, we resorted to the traductology field in order to understand how a particular language, French in our case, uses the resources available to provide the best versions for lexical units belonging to another linguistic system, namely English.

At the same time, we tried to offer a diachronic approach to the French vocabulary evolution during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and, for a high level of accuracy of our study, we used four distinct French translations of the same English novel, translations that belong to different periods of time.

The analysis we undertook was mainly a contrastive one, achieved through a continuous reporting of the French target texts proposed by the four translators for the English source text and we paid particular attention to the linguistic context of the linguistic units we studied.

First of all, it is necessary to emphasize that we resorted to four French translations of the English novel *Emma* by Jane Austen, translations achieved at large time intervals, in order to capture aspects of the French evolution from the beginning of the nineteenth century until the end of the twentieth century.

The source text is represented by the English novel *Emma* by Jane Austen, published in 1815, for which we used the source *Wikisource, the free library*. The four French translations of this novel are the following:

- *La Nouvelle Emma où les caractères anglais du siècle-Emma, Jane Austen-Trad:Anonyme-Trad:1816* – sursa *Wikisource, la bibliothèque libre*
- *Emma-Emma, Jane Austen-Trad: Pierre de Puliga-Trad:1910* – sursa *Wikisource, la bibliothèque libre*
- *Jane Austen, Emma- Roman- Traduit de l'anglais par Sébastien Dulac, Éditions de la Sixaine, 1946*
- *Jane Austen, Emma- Traduit de l'anglais par Josette Salesse-Lavergne, Christian Bourgois Éditeur, 1982*

We consider that relatively large intervals that stand between the four French translations are relevant to the issues pursued by our analysis, especially since the first version was proposed by an anonymous translator in 1816, only one year later after the English novel.

The thesis is divided into four chapters, as follows:

Chapter I - **Traductology - field situated at the junction between art and science**

Chapter II - **Synonyms and pseudo-synonyms - theoretical aspects**

Chapter III - **A diachronic perspective of the French vocabulary evolution**

Chapter IV – **A Model of a contrastive analysis of four French translations of the classic English novel *Emma* by Jane Austen**

In the first chapter, **Traductology - field situated at the junction between art and science**, we tried to capture the traductology status as a science along centuries, from the need of a history of this discipline that benefits of well-established principles. Each period was analyzed by trying to illustrate how, in different eras, translators resorted to different translation strategies in order to focus on its approaches in that particular period of time.

The second chapter, **Synonyms and pseudo-synonyms - theoretical aspects**, is dedicated to some theoretical issues concerning the meaning of words and the way they influence the establishment of a synonymy relationship between them.

At the same time, we took into consideration the role of the linguistic context in determining aspects of the synonymy relationship, given that our analysis was a contrastive one, achieved through constant reporting of the four French translations to the original text, represented by the English novel.

In the third chapter, **A diachronic perspective of the French vocabulary evolution**, we realized a brief overview of the French language evolution, primarily the French vocabulary, from the sixteenth century until now. We emphasized on the importance of the so-called **bel usage** during the seventeenth century and we insisted on the amendments introduced by the different editions of the **Dictionary of the Academy** which we identified during our analysis.

Chapter four, **A Model of a contrastive analysis of four French translations of the classic English novel *Emma* by Jane Austen**, represents the practical part of the present thesis, by which we tried to give a touch of originality to our approach. Our analysis took into account the original English word and its linguistic context, but most of all, we intended to capture the manner in which, at different periods of time, French uses its own resources to produce correspondent English equivalent units.

The analysis of the examples offered by the four French translations show that the first one is also the most faithful to the English text in terms of form, which, with very few exceptions, has been detrimental to its quality.

By resorting to an analysis of the pseudo-synonyms typology, we managed to build a gradual scale of the four translation in terms of their fidelity to the source text, a gradual scale consisting of four stages represented by the four translations.

The first stage is represented by the translation achieved by the anonymous translator in 1816.

The second stage is represented by translation number three, achieved in 1946.

The third stage is represented by the second version, chronologically speaking, i.e. the translation of 1910.

The final stage is represented by the most recent version in the light of an analysis of pseudo-synonyms typology, being the most faithful version of the source text.

Another aspect that should be mentioned is that of the translator's subjectivity with respect to the act of translation. The choice of a certain translation version is relevant to the identification and the characterization of the translation strategies and techniques chosen by the translator. The translation issues related to pseudo-synonyms represent an important aspect of the translation process evaluation. The translator belongs to a certain culture which is representative for a given period, and these elements will inevitably put their stamp on his work.

As already noted, the first translation is the most faithful, in terms of form, to the original text, but at the same time, the least faithful in terms of maintaining the semantic nuances that characterize lexemes in the source text.

At the opposite pole lies the most recent translation, characterized by a high expressivity of style.

Aware of the advantage offered by the target language, the author manipulates the source text, and the structures he utilizes are often more complex than those of the original text, both at the level of the word combinations, and at the level of the phrastic structures. We conclude that the cultural filter takes over when it comes to the equivalation of the two texts. However, because of the excessive willingness to adapt the English text to a sophisticated language like French, the author often exaggerates by using words and phrases characterized by an intensity which is too high for the linguistic context in which they are used. In this case, his attention is directed to the potential reader to whom he wishes to facilitate the access to the English novel, actually departing from its spirit and the style in which it was written.

The translations of 1910 and 1946 do not show large differences in terms of fidelity to the source text. It can be seen that in general, translators maintained the semantic nuances of the English words and the phrastic structure, in the spirit of brevity and accuracy of the text that has undergone the process of translation.

Without challenging the importance of each translation, the present study attempted to capture, on the one hand, the transformation that the translator applies to the source text, and, on the other hand, we tried to identify elements of the French evolution from the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the first translation was achieved, until the end of the twentieth century, represented in our case by the most recent version.

Our analysis only covered a few aspects with respect to traductology and the evolution of French along centuries, without being able to refer to all factors involved in these phenomena, objective and subjective, linguistic and socio-cultural factors.

Representative of a particular cultural system, the translator remains essentially a mediator between the reader and the source text and his duty is to become aware of the responsibility that must be paid by adopting a linguistic and cultural behavior that is consistent with the objectives of his approach.