Shifts of Involvement in Translation:

The case of European Parliament proceedings[1]

0.   Introduction

This paper aims to explore shifts of translation in relation to the strategies of involvement. The starting point for this research was the observation that Greek translations of European Parliament proceedings generally give a somewhat fainter impression, at pragmatic/ rhetorical level, than speeches originally produced in the Greek language. In other words, one of the main characteristics of these translations is that they are less direct and less forceful; they are, in a way, more "detached".

A close examination of both Source Texts and Target Texts revealed a number of shifts in those linguistic elements that reflect involvement strategies of the original speaker. The observations are based in a three-language corpus of original texts in English and French and in their translations into Greek. At this point, a fundamental question arises: Are the identified shifts imposed by the Target Language system or, do they result from the parameters governing the translation activity?

1. Definition

The concept of involvement derives from the traditional dichotomy between oral and written language. As explained by Tannen (1993:124-125), these strategies put more emphasis on the interpersonal connection between speaker and listener than on the information conveyed. Features used for this purpose are, among others, metaphors, direct speech, rhetorical questions, repetition of sounds and parallel syntactic constructions. Involvement strategies are usually described in contrast to detachment strategies, which "serve to distance language from specific concrete states and events" and are found primarily in official written texts (Chafe, 1982:45). Detachment devices are, for instance, the use of passive voice, impersonal syntax and nominalizations.

Although rather typical of face-to-face communication, involvement strategies can equally be found in political discourse (cf. Tannen, 1989:174).

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[1] This paper attempts to shed further light on issues raised in my PhD thesis "Differentiation between the original and its translation. The case of European Union Texts" defended in 2005 at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

Involvement Strategies in European Parliament proceedings

a) Presentation of the Source Text

The Source Text consists of the original speeches delivered at the Plenary Session of the European Parliament by members of the European Parliament representing the UK, the Republic of Ireland, France and Luxembourg. As far as the medium is concerned, the original speeches were delivered orally and then transcribed by the Service *Compte Rendu in Extenso*. The addressee of the Source Texts is double: speeches are first addressed to the other Members of the European Parliament present; whereas parliamentary speeches are equally – and sometimes chiefly – aimed at potential voters. Following the approach of Van Dijk (1997:14), these texts may be classified as political discourse because their context (participants, time, place, function) is political. The role of language in politics is surely a crucial one. In fact, specific syntactic structures, lexical or phonetic choices are used in political discourse in order to fulfill its different functions. In this framework, involvement strategies are also of great importance, as they focus on the element of human intimacy and provide in these highly elaborated texts with an oral and emotional weight. Political interventions examined here may comply with some conventions of other forms of official/ administrative discourse but as their main function is persuasion, different involvement strategies are equally used. Therefore, in contrast to European Union law texts usually analyzed by Translation Studies scholars (for instance Dollerup 1996, 1998, Schäffner and Adab 1995, Schütte 1993, Trosborg 1997), our corpus contains pragmatic devices – such as metaphorical representations, repetitions or rhetorical questions – to a much higher degree. As to how representative involvement strategies are and to what extent they are used in the texts examined, it should be noted that their use is related to three factors: a) the topic at hand: the more technical a topic is the less involvement strategies are observed, b) the political orientation of the speaker: speakers belonging to the non-majority groups tend to use involvement strategies to a greater extent and c) the speaker himself, as different speakers adopt different discourse strategies.

b) Presentation of the Target Text

Our Target Texts are the official translations of the proceedings into Greek as published in the site of European Parliament[2]. The translation is based on the written version of these speeches, which is usually published one or two days after the initial delivery. The commissioner of the translation, as Holz-Mänttäri used the term, [i.e. the person "who asks the translator to produce a target text for a particular purpose and addressee" (Nord, 1997:20)], is the European Parliament External Translation Service. Additionally, the translator is not one individual but rather a group of people working freelance in the agency to whom the translation has been assigned. Some further facts are the following:

I. Target Text review is limited: Target Texts are subject to evaluation, not to review. The difference between these two procedures lies in the amount of text checked. For instance, in review or proofreading, the entire text is checked, while in evaluation only a small percentage of it.

II. Great emphasis is placed on terminology and on the use of reference documents: The observation of the inter-institutional evaluation sheet (see Annex) shows that priority is given to terminology along with respect for reference material. The importance of previous renderings, known as "intertextuality", has already been underlined by scholars studying translation of law texts in the context of the European Union[3].

III. Target Texts do not have an immediate addressee: As translations are published after an interval of at least two months, issues discussed during the plenary session are often no longer relevant when their translation into Greek is published. As a result, it might be assumed that the principal function of the Target Texts is simply to be kept for the record.

Do the above textual and extratextual factors shape the translator's behavior, influencing his/ her approach to involvement strategies? This question is to be answered with reference to our corpus.

[2] The examples examined here constitute a selection from a 39.927-words corpus analyzed for the purpose of our PhD research.

[3] See for instance, Schäffner and Adab (1995), Trosborg (1997).

2.   Translating Involvement

Roughly speaking, features used to create involvement between the speaker and its audience can either be reproduced in the Target Text or not. In this second case we choose the term Shifts of Involvement. The concept of "shifts" is here used to describe changes that occur between the Source Text and the Target Text, as depicted after analysis on linguistic micro-level. Shifts are perceived as a means of describing and understanding actual translation choices and from this perspective their identification is just another step in the research process. Additionally, the repetition of a particular type of shift in the texts examined, might indeed indicate different norms governing the use of involvement strategies in the target culture[4]. It should be noted here that by target culture we mean mostly the European Union translation milieu rather than the Greek general readership.

Shifts of Involvement in Metaphorical expressions

The comparison between Source Text and Target Text revealed a number of shifts at the level of involvement strategies. Our focus here will be placed in three particular markers of involvement: metaphorical expressions, repetitions and direct questions.

The following examples illustrate shifts of involvement created by the non-reproduction of metaphorical expressions. Replacing a metaphor by a non-metaphor constitutes a totally legitimate translation solution. However, in the examples cited this procedure neutralizes the involvement strategies found at the original.

The first example comes from the speech of a politician representing the farmers in his constituency during the negotiation of Agenda 2000.

Example 1

"… nor has it arrested the continuing decline in farm incomes, which are

a vital factor in stemming **the hemorrhage of young people from rural**

areas." Gillis, MEP (PPE).[5]

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[4] For norms, see Toury 1995: 53-69 and 1999: 9-32.

[5] All examples are drawn from speeches delivered during the fourth parliamentary term (1994-1999).

"…ούτε έχει θέσει τέρμα στη συνεχή πτώση των γεωργικών εισοδημάτων, που αποτελούν βασικό παράγοντα προκειμένου να αντιμετωπισθεί **το πρόβλημα ερήμωσης της υπαίθρου από τους νέους**."

[Back translation: …the problem of desertification of the rural areas from young people]

The speaker uses the word "**hemorrhage**" to rephrase the "suicides of young farmers" previously mentioned in his discourse[6]. This choice, placed at the end of the speech, is by no means accidental: it helps the speaker to appeal directly to his audience's emotions. The Greek translator avoids the image of hemorrhage – possibly because of the violent connotations – and replaces it with the word "ερήμωση" (desertification), a more standard and neutralized expression usually found in technical or economics texts. The second example is drawn from a tribute to the victims of a terrorist attack.

Example 2

"**We stand shoulder to shoulder** with the people of Northern Ireland…" President of the European Parliament.

"**Υποστηρίζουμε** το λαό της Βορείου Ιρλανδίας…"

[We support the people of Northern Ireland…]

The expression "shoulder to shoulder" could be classified as an *ontological metaphor*, as developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980:25)[7]. This metaphorical expression, with its origins in the stance of soldiers fighting side by side (Webster's dictionary), is used to express the Institution's full support and to create an emotional intimacy with the victims' relatives. Translated non-metaphorically as "we support", the Greek version again uses a more general expression, neutralizing the Source Text's involvement.

The metaphoric expression in the next example, "a window of opportunity", was introduced during the Cold War period, along with its opposite "a window of

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[6]For the totality of the speeches, see http://www.europarl.europa.eu/omk/omnsapir.so/calendar?APP=CRE &LANGUE=FR

[7] "… our experiences with physical objects (especially our own bodies) provide the basis for an extraordinarily variety of ontological metaphors, that is, ways of viewing events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc., as entities and substances".

vulnerability", with special reference to nuclear power[8]. Here used by a representative of the then newly elected British Labour Party, this expression gives the idea of a short-term opportunity.

Example 3

"We now have **a window of opportunity**, thanks to two new developments." Corbett, MEP (PSE).

"Τώρα μας δίνεται **κάποια ευκαιρία** χάρη σε δύο νέες εξελίξεις."

[Now we are given some chance thanks to two new developments]

In this example, the translator's choices are restricted by differences between language systems. In other words, as these expressions belong mostly to the Anglo-American political life, there is no clear historical or cultural correspondence in the Greek language. However, it still would have been possible to conserve the metaphoric representation in the translation by translating the image of window literally.

The next example in French comes from a speech by Jacques Santer, then President of the European Commission.

Example 4

"En 1995, la réflexion institutionnelle post-Maastricht en **était à ses balbutiements**. En juin 1997, le traité d'Amsterdam est né. Il s'agissait d'un nouveau pas significatif sur la voie de l'unification européenne." Santer, President of the European Commission.

"Το 1995 **άρχισε** ο προβληματισμός των θεσμικών μας οργάνων μετά τη Συνθήκη του Μάαστριχτ. Τον Ιούνιο του 1997 γεννήθηκε η Συνθήκη του Άμστερνταμ. Επρόκειτο για ένα νέο σημαντικό βήμα στην πορεία της ευρωπαϊκής ενοποίησης "

[In 1995 started the questioning of our Institutions after the Maastricht Treaty]

The French word "balbutiements" describes a baby's babbling. This metaphorical representation is used by the speaker for the defence of the European Commission, at that time accused of irregularities, as it underlines the progress made during his

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[8] For a text-linguistic approach of key concepts used during the Cold War, see Schäffner (1999:75-91).

presidency. This ontological metaphor is based on the concept that early childhood is synonymous with lack of knowledge and clumsiness[9] and by using it Mr. Santer tries to create involvement between himself and the audience. This lexical choice is translated into Greek by the verb "started", a definitely more neutral lexical choice.

Our fifth example illustrates once more a shift of involvement, as the metaphorical representation is neutralized.

Example 5

"S'ils ne sont pas lettre morte aujourd'hui, les accords de paix sont en tout cas mis à

mal et **le processus de paix semble à l'agonie**. " Pradier, MEP (ARE)

"Αν δεν αποτελούν νεκρό γράμμα σήμερα, ωστόσο οι ειρηνευτικές συμφωνίες

έχουν υπονομευθεί και **η διαδικασία ειρήνευσης δεν προχωρεί**

αποτελεσματικά."

[… the peace process doesn't move on effectively]

In this example the ontological metaphor "le processus de paix semble à l'agonie" (the peace process breathes its last) is rendered non metaphorically as "δεν προχωρεί αποτελεσματικά" [doesn't move on effectively].

Shifts of Involvement in Repetitions

Our next examples illustrates shifts of involvement in the feature of repetition. For Toury (1991:188), avoiding repetition, either by omitting the repeated unit or by replacing it with another one, is one of the most persistent trends in translation, irrespective of the languages involved.

In the following example, the speaker repeats the sound "-ly", creating a kind of rhyme.

Example 6

"Mr President, brief**ly** and sad**ly** I wish to inform this House that…"

Ewing, MEP (ARE).

"Κύριε Πρόεδρε, **εν συντομία** και **με μεγάλη μου λύπη** θα ήθελα να

ενημερώσω το Σώμα ότι…"

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[9] For the use of ontological metaphors presenting African countries as children, see also Chilton and Lakoff (1999:43).

[Mr. President, briefly and with all my sorrow I would like to inform the
House that…]

Apart from the omission of repetition here, there is another translational phenomenon
worth mentioning: that of *explicitation*, considered by a number of scholars as being a
universal of translation (Blum-Kulka, 1986/2000). The Greek translator, confronted
with the short phrase "briefly and sadly", tries to compensate for the loss of repetition
by adding new information. A back translation of the Greek text is "briefly and with all
my sorrow".

The following two examples come from the same speaker, in his defense of the leader
of the French *Front National*, Jean Marie Le Pen. The speaker repeats a lexical unit
placed at the beginning ("La démocratie") or at the end ("aux colonies") of his phrases,
like a refrain. This emphatic device, a legacy of classic rhetoric, creates involvement
between the speaker and his message.

Example 7

"La **démocratie**, maintenant. La **démocratie**, elle est très relative. "
Blot, MEP (NI).

"Ας έλθουμε τώρα στη **δημοκρατία** που είναι πολύ σχετική."

[Let us now come to democracy which is very relative]

Example 8

"Les systèmes coloniaux qui ont été mis en place au XIXe siècle
profitaient aux **colonies**. Ils profitaient aux pays métropoles, bien sûr,
mais aussi aux **colonies**." Blot, MEP (NI)

"Τα αποικιακά συστήματα του 19ου αιώνα ήταν επωφελή για τις
αποικίες, όπως και για τις μητροπόλεις, φυσικά."

[Colonial systems of 19th century were very beneficial for the colonies,
as for the mainland countries]

Here, the translator opts for a total omission of repetition. This choice also brings a shift
at syntax level: in both examples, the two sentences from the Source Text are rendered
as one. This has significant consequences in terms of involvement, as a main clause

becomes a subordinate one and consequently emphasized information becomes secondary.

Shifts of Involvement in Direct Questions

Finally, examples 9 and 10 illustrate shifts of involvement by the omission of direct questions.

Example 9

«There are two questions. Firstly, **is Mr Le Pen** guilty under German law of the

crime of which he is accused**?**» Donnelly, Brendan, MPE (PPE)

«Δύο είναι τα ερωτήματα που τίθενται: πρώτον, **αν** ο κ. Le Pen είναι, δυνάμει της

γερμανικής νομοθεσίας, ένοχος για το έγκλημα για το οποίο κατηγορείται και, ...»

[Two are the questions that raise: firstly whether Mr Le Pen is guilty under German law of the crime of which he is accused.]

Example 10

«Secondly, **should his** immunity be lifted in such a way that he can face a German

court**?**» Donnelly, Brendan, MPE (PPE)

«...δεύτερον, **εάν** πρέπει να αρθεί η ασυλία του, ούτως ώστε να αντιμετωπίσει τη

γερμανική δικαιοσύνη.»

[Secondly, whether his immunity should be lifted in such a way that he can face a German court]

In all the examples examined, conserving the original involvement strategies would have made the Target Text more oratorical, and closer to what political texts are expected to be in Greek. On the other hand, as already suggested, it can be argued that the examined corpus doesn't comply with the norms and conventions of the Greek texts but rather with those dominating translation in the European Union environment. Furthermore, the lack of immediate addressee observed before should also be of some relevance to translator's choices.

3.   Final Remarks

As stated at the beginning, this paper aimed to explore shifts of translation in relation to the strategies of involvement, using as a case study European Parliament proceedings.

Comparative analysis of the Source Text and the Target Text revealed a number of shifts in metaphorical uses, repetitions and direct questions, all features contributing to the involvement of the Source Text. To the question initially rose as to whether the identified shifts are imposed by the Target Language system or, they result from the parameters governing the translation activity, the answer is that the shifts identified are not imposed by the grammatical rules of the Target Language. On the contrary, in most cases, a translational solution recreating the original involvement was available and easy to find in the Target Language.

As already demonstrated, there are a number of parameters that can explain this choice:

1)	*The commissioner does not consider the linguistic features under examination as being particularly important in the evaluation of the Target Text*. This approach may also influence the translator's decisions and the effort invested in translating these particular items.

2)	*Priority is given to terminology and the technical characteristics of translated texts*. This over-technical approach may lead translators to lose sight of more expressive elements of the source text.

3)	*There is a change in medium*. As already explained, original speeches are delivered orally during the plenary sessions of the European Parliament, whereas their translations are published in the Official Journal of European Communities. This change in medium similarly converts oral language register into written language register.

4)	*The translation function is mainly for the record*. As best exemplified by functional approaches in Translation Studies (Nord, 1997), the function or *skopos* of the Target Text greatly affects the translational strategies to be followed. It may be argued that, as the translator knows that the function of the Target Text is limited and its publication remote from the original situation, this knowledge influences the choices made. Additionally, the physical distance between the original production and the translation make the translator's choices more detached.

The above indications can support the hypothesis according to which shifts identified in the corpus are highly regulated by the factors governing the translation activity. In this

way, shifts could be seen as complying to some translational norms in force insode this particular environment.

4. Selected Bibliography

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Annex

Source of the document: "Contract for the provision of services relating to translation"

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

EXTERNAL TRANSLATION UNIT
External translation evaluation procedure

EXTERNAL TRANSLATION EVALUATION

INTERINSTITUTIONAL PROCEDURE

Part 1: Interinstitutional evaluation sheet

Document No:		Source / Target Languages: →	
Contractor Id No.	**Product:**	**Order No:**	**Sub-lot:**
Date sent:	**Date due:**	**Date delivered:**	**Pages:**

Compliance with technical requirements (Y/N)		Right language?	
Apparently complete?	Specific instructions complied with?	In format?	Formatting OK?

Intrinsic quality of the product									
		Relevance					**Relevance**		
Error type	**Code**	**Low**	**High***		**Error type**	**Code**	**Low**	**High***	
Mistranslation	SENS				Clarity and/or register	CL			
Omission	OM				Grammar	GR			

Wrong or inconsistent EU usage or terminology	TERM				Punctuation	PT		
Reference documents/material not used	RD				Spelling	SP		

* **A "high relevance" error is one which seriously compromises the translation's usability**

OVERALL EVALUATION: **Acceptable**   ☐

Unacceptable   ☐