Translating Trump: How should politicians be translated?

London, 31ˢᵗ January 2018, Louisa Van Aeken - The question as to how politicians should be translated is an extremely contentious issue among translators. There are some who believe that the entire purpose of being a translator is to replicate extracts and speeches as literally as possible in another language; it is a crime to stray from the original work and to try to create something entirely new in translation despite this, perhaps, sounding more fluent and authentic. Others, however, contest this thought, declaring that the translator's role is not solely to translate but it essentially entails creating a new piece of work which exhausts the same meaning but is adapted to suit the linguistic and grammatical divergences between languages, whilst most importantly, keeping the style intact. Donald Trump, 45ᵗʰ president of the United States is the epitome among translators of controversy regarding translation. As many are aware, Trump's language often contains grammatical errors, prejudiced vocabulary and crude humour and references. For these reasons, it is clearly recognisable that Trump is not only one of the most difficult politicians to understand, but he is also one of the hardest to translate. How to create an accurate and comprehensive translation of his, generally very distasteful, words is a key issue in the world of translation, and a matter which is regularly being reviewed.

In this essay, I will examine the concept of "verbatim" translations against translations that may have been 'adapted' as the translator attempts to aid the reader (I define these as "oblique" translations.) In the process and development of my investigation, I also encountered several instances in which cultural references in various languages have led to differing interpretations and / or softening of terminology which may have been particularly

needed due to Trump's style. Or, perhaps this is part of the natural process of translating, regardless of the writer of the source text.

Translating "verbatim"

The precise meaning of "verbatim", a word heavily used in the translation industry, is to translate something literally, using the same words wherever possible. It may be said that "verbatim" can therefore not be used to describe a translation, as the words are evidently different in another language. The meaning of the word "verbatim" can be kept intact, however, as it can also signify keeping the meaning of a translation as close to the original as possible. This restricts any possible lee-way or freedom for the translator. It is argued that this is one of the more justified means of translation as the passage should always intend on creating the same impression on the reader, despite the language barrier. It is crucial that, when translating, no matter how much freedom the translator has to incorporate their own sentiments regarding the matter in translation, the reader should feel the same emotions in the target language as in the original. This, in a certain sense, acts as the proof that the translator has done a good job, and they should therefore be credited for this. There are multiple reasons as to why many translators opt for translating "verbatim", or, "as literally as possible", and several of these are key to understanding why there is such debate surrounding this matter. It is, however, also crucial to note the fact that this "verbatim" approach to translation could potentially open the door to misinterpretation in some cultures, resulting in a misleading and confusing translation.

Firstly, and probably the most obvious reason for translating literally, is the restriction of the translator's power. Translators have more influence over us than we are aware. When we

listen to a translation, on the news, for instance, we often forget the fact that there is actually much room for the translator to include their own bias and opinion in the translation we receive. For this very reason, a literal translation can be a way of stripping the translator of their power, and ensuring what we are hearing is really the true meaning of the text or speech. An idealistic approach to translating, regarding politics, therefore highlights the fact that the translator's role is going to share the same message from the politician in all languages, ignoring any predisposition or opinion that translator may have of the matter or person being translated. An excellent example of this is demonstrated in Jason BeDuhn's book "Truth in Translation, Accuracy and Bias in English Translations of the New Testament (2003)." BeDuhn states in the introduction of his book that "unbiased translations are based on, firstly, linguistic content, secondly, literary context and, thirdly, historical and cultural environment."[1] His "bias", he claims, consists of favouring historical truth over own personal opinion, and he uses selected passages from nine different translations of the New Testament to act as examples of this view. In one of his early chapters, BeDuhn outlines the prominence of the Greek word "proskuneo" in the Gospels, declaring that it "is used fifty-eight times in the New Testament". The word "proskuneo" was translated as "worship" in King James English, which was an accurate and credible translation of the word at this time (the King James English bible was completed in 1611). However, in modern society and language, the word "worship" no longer covers all aspects of the Greek verb "proskuneo". For example, "proskuneo" can also signify the physical act of kneeling down or simply having respect for someone. Therefore, it does not convey precisely the meaning of this word and could mislead readers into thinking that every time the word appears in a passage, it signifies that that action is a type of worship, always being directed to a god, which is not permanently the case.

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[1] BeDuhn, Jason. Truth in Translation, Accuracy and Bias in English Translations of the New Testament, University Press of America, 2003, (p. 42)

BeDuhn concludes this chapter by attempting to answer one of the most important questions regarding translation; "Why depart from a certain, accurate translation to a questionable, possibly inaccurate one?" This quotation plainly puts into perspective the question as to what extent should translators really have the freedom to incorporate their own bias or historical opinion into a translation, and should this somehow be prevented from becoming an anticipated part of their profession? Or, perhaps whether the translator applies their bias does not matter, as readers with their own culture, life experience and perspective will naturally 'filter' the material to suit them. This could, therefore, undermine the necessity of restricting a translator's power and freedom whilst undertaking their profession.

The idea of the translator's role inherently being to remain in the shadows as much as possible also relates to ego. Unsurprisingly, it is difficult for a translator to do their job, ignoring grammatical mistakes and racist or offensive language. It is not uncommon for the blame to be thrown at a translator when the public receives something containing mistakes, however, more often than not, this is just evidence of a translator who prefers to stick to a "verbatim" translation, viewing this as more moral than an improved version. Not only in politics, but in the court of law can this issue also be raised. A defendant, who struggles to speak in a grammatically correct and coherent way, can very easily be improved to sound better by a translator. This is one of the boundaries which many translators think should be enlisted to protect justice associated with the court of law. Although this should not be the case, judges' impression can vary greatly depending on whether the defendant is well educated or not, therefore, a translator has an inconspicuous amount of power over the result of the defendant's court case. The importance of an experienced and qualified interpreter in the court case cannot be underestimated. It is said that the interpreter should be the "speaking organ of the defendant", supporting the idea that a literal translation is often the most

appropriate and accurate path to follow. Unsurprisingly, however, it is also claimed that the presence of an interpreter in the courtroom can greatly alter perceptions of the defendant and even "contribute to their marginalisation." The fact that language plays such a large role in the British national identity is another factor which adds to the exclusion of these minorities and the inequality that immigrants and uneducated defendants often face in the court room. Although the possibility of having an interpreter in court proceedings is perceived as one of the individual rights that defendants are entitled to, many are forced to refuse this aid as it acts as a further reminder of their outsider and lower-class status, which can have a negative impact on the outcome of their sentence. Article 6(e) of the European Convention on Human Rights states that defendants are to have "the free assistance of an interpreter if he cannot understand or speak the language used in court." Despite this, however, there is still a huge amount of prejudice against defendants who lack the ability to speak fluent and comprehensive English, especially whilst the English language is gaining increasing prominence in political and legal affairs.

In my view, in court, even if the translation is not 'embellished' by the translator it will be developed and shaped by the defence and prosecution barristers, giving two very different interpretations. Therefore, perhaps the translator's job in the legal process is to be as verbatim as possible, to avoid creating room for alternative perceptions and potential misinterpretations of the translation.

It is often thought that a literal translation is more likely to result in mis-translations, especially when we think about the faults of google translate, for example. However, altering a translation too far from the original can greatly change the tone and impact on the target piece, hence, changing the impression created on the reader. It should therefore be questioned

as to what degree an altered translation is better than a literal translation regarding accuracy and morality. Many would concur that the translator is not in the position to take a speech or extract and influence this so greatly that the original sense or meaning of the piece is altered in translation. It can be argued, therefore, that it is safer to regulate the translator and ensure that the target work is always kept as literal and close to the original as possible. There are several examples of mistranslations caused by the impossible concept of trying to keep a translation 100% literal to the original piece. For example, looking specifically at Trump's speech after he nominated a new judge onto the Supreme Court, he joked to the Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell "If we end up with that gridlock, I would say, 'If you can, Mitch, go nuclear'." This was unfortunately translated literally in Russian newspapers as "Use the nuclear option," suggesting that Trump would actually be willing to drop a nuclear bomb on the Democrats if his Republican party faced any setbacks. The result of this too literal translation is clear and it also gives a further indication as to why it is so hard to translate certain politicians, such as Trumps', unique language and humour. In my opinion, translating a quotation such as this, said by a character like Donald Trump, is not an impossible problem. It does, however, unquestionably demand of the translator the ability to recognise that both a "verbatim" or an "oblique" translation can lead to misinterpretation. Deciding which form of translation to adopt is critical and will reflect hugely on the reputation of the translator.

The huge difference in the syntax of English and Russian makes it one of the hardest languages to tackle when translating Trump, often resulting either in the misinterpretation of his idioms and sarcasm or the improvement and enhancement of his language. I believe it is up to the translator to make the final decision as to whether Trump's original message is more accurately interpreted in an extremely literal translation, or, perhaps more likely, a

translation which has allowed the translator more scope, yet has still ensured that the new piece is an accurate reflection of the authentic creation.

A final reason for translating "verbatim" involves a false impression that can be created on the reader of the person or matter being discussed. This is most prevalent in the case regarding politics. In some countries it is part of the nation's culture to adapt a translation in order to uphold the reputation and image of the person being spoken about. For example, in Russia, Trump is viewed by many as a wise and eloquent speaker. This is most likely due to altered translations which have improved Trump's language and included higher register vocabulary to create an entirely false impression of the president. This reminds us of the awareness needed of cultural differences as many Russians would be accustomed to this manner of translation, and would find it unjust or even offensive to not improve the words of someone held in such high esteem. It is claimed to be natural in Russian translations to improve Trump's language to make him sound more presidential and important. For example, Trump's rather childish sounding tweets and his use of basic phrases such as "that's sad" would instead be translated as "that is very unfortunate". It is also not unusual for translators to adjust Trumps' language and as a result make him sound more like Putin than the real Donald Trump, consequently, changing Russian people's perceptions of the American president. On the other hand, however, as with many other languages, a lot of words get lost in translation. For example, during the presidential campaign, Trump was described by Putin as "yarkii". This was translated in English as "brilliant", in reality, however, the word has a slightly different meaning. It is still a positive description, but instead of meaning Trump is insanely brilliant or a genius, it simply means he is bright and somewhat impressive.[2]

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[2] https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-05-21/ah-joys-and-challenges-translating-trump-russian

While positive political relationships may lead to positively 'biased' translations which cement relationships between nations, the opposite is also possible, which may lead to strongly negative views of a politician and unfavourable diplomatic outcomes, or even used as a tool in conflict. An example of this could apply to the current situation and fraught relations between the United States and North Korea, further heightened by the fact that North Korea's society and media is very much inaccessible to us.

Translating "obliquely"

On the other end of the spectrum, there is the concept of translating a piece "obliquely." This is a more indirect or slanted approach to translating, which is viewed by many translators as the more appropriate direction to take, in order to fulfil the criteria. As with "verbatim" translations, there are also contentious issues regarding this style, however, that is not to say that there aren't many advantages to an "oblique" translation. Not only does the translator have a greater sense of freedom, which often leads to much-needed creativity and flair, in particular, regarding the translation of literature and speech, but this manner of translating can also be justified as the only way of enabling two pieces of text, in two different languages, to evoke the same emotions on the reader. It is believed by this type of translator that every language has unique idioms and grammatical forms which cannot be translated literally and accurately under any circumstance. The translator's role, in this opinion, is not to remain in the shadow of the original writer, but to become, in a certain sense, their own writer in a different language. This allows the translator to flourish and provide a degree of fluency and emotion which a literal translation could never fully accomplish. This being said, contextual limits may need to be applied in this form of translation, to ensure a certain restriction on the influence of the translator (as mentioned above) and certainly to avoid

losing the original spirit of the piece, for example, if the translator has not entirely grasped the instinct or emotion needed to recreate it. As with a "verbatim" translation, there are again many reasons to be described as to why some translators are more inclined to adopt this form of translation. In my view an "oblique" translation could result in a more realistic depiction of the original piece, as the translator has been able to use their skill and professional knowledge to create something which has the sole intention of being understood and interpreted by the reader in the target language.

The principal reason for ensuring an "oblique" translation relates to the translator's understanding of the diversity and divergences between different languages. Translation is not solely about reproducing the same vocabulary in a different language, but it also includes the crucial aspects of language, which are often neglected in a literal translation. These comprise of idioms, sarcasm, emotion and tone. It is widely believed that a "verbatim" translation does not have the means of properly expressing a piece or speech because of the inevitable loss of these simple but vital aspects of language. Slang and colloquialisms play a further part in this concept. They are also wholly unique to each individual language, making it impossible to translate these literally, whilst keeping the original meaning and sentiment intact. For example, in French the expression "Les carottes sont cuites"[3] is used to describe a situation that can't be changed." A literal translation of this would be "the carrots are cooked", yet, obviously this does not share the same idiom as in French, and we only understand the literal concept of this: carrots being cooked. A translator who prefers an "oblique" way of translating, may instead, translate this expression into English as "it's no use crying over spilt milk" as this shares a similar meaning to the French phrase. Whilst it is

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[3] https://blog.ted.com/40-idioms-that-cant-be-translated-literally/

indubitably essential for translators to use the correct idiom in the culture in question, it is also their 'duty' to use cultural references to create a meaningful translation.

A "verbatim" translator's opinion on his/her role is exceedingly different to what an "oblique" translator would think of this. Remaining in the shadow and acting solely as a direct interpreter for the original writer is one school of thought, however, this varies greatly depending on the translator. It can be argued that having a reduced ego is not the translator's purpose, on the contrary, it is in the translator's best interest to adopt a confident, superior persona with the intention of standing on the same level as the original writer. An "oblique" translation offers more than just the recognition of suitable vocabulary and grammatical structures. It emphasises the translator's understanding of what message the target text is meant to create, and which emotions it is to evoke in the reader or listener. There are parallels here to be drawn with the advertising world. Multi-nationals may try to stretch the advertising budget by producing adverts for various nations, but this often results in bland or simply visual adverts overpowered by music and neglecting dialogue (e.g. car adverts). This demonstrates the importance of creating an accurate yet persuasive translation in other languages, and it is an example of the impact a translation can have on other sectors in our society. An understanding of this allows a translator to stand in the shoes of its master, and ensures that the original flair and aim of the piece is kept intact, no matter what the consequences or the manner in which this is completed. This may involve bypassing the "laws" of translation by adding a translator's own spin on the text, for example, including the feelings of the translator regarding the matter or even adapting the translation (or tone of voice when interpreting) to incorporate a bias perception. This is not only claimed to be in the best interest of the reader or listener who is receiving the translation, but it is also in the best interest of the translator. As covered earlier, it is part of a person's inherent nature to judge a

translator for a piece which is grammatically incorrect or involves broken syntax. Most frequently, however, it is the original writer who should be blamed for this. The translator is at risk of losing credibility and possessing a damaged reputation if no corrections whatsoever are made to the target text, in such cases. This causes an ethical dilemma for translators, therefore, as they are inclined to avoid sounding repetitive or stupid when translating a politician such as Trump, by correcting his grammar, ineloquent language and impoverished vocabulary. However, this runs the risk of making a politician such as Trump sound like an ordinary person who speaks properly and fluently, which would be an inaccurate and unjust portrayal of the President.

As with anything, this degree of liberty should obviously speak of boundaries. In many views, it is not morally correct for a translator to obtain a position where they are able to change a speaker's original text, and consequently influence a public in an entirely different way. It is dangerous, to say the least. Contextual limits of translation should be put in place. This is easier said than done, however, who and how does one decide to what extent these limitations should take place. Should they involve all translators or perhaps only those translators seen as holding elaborate and immense degrees of power over a nation? It may be that an "oblique" translator holds the capacity of eradicating offensive and immoral language, so as to please a public, but how can this be viewed as morally correct when a perception can be altered in such a huge way. Extreme views and hazardous language can be eradicated as quickly as an overall consensus and a result can be turned upside down. It should be questioned, therefore, as to how much power a translator should have when it concerns the three principalities of matters of state, politics and law.

Another beneficial result of an "oblique" translation surprisingly does involve the creation of a false impression on a jury or judge in the court of law. An improved translation made by a translator who specialises in "oblique" translation could very well come to the aid of those who struggle to speak fluently. In some cases, certain people are discriminated against due to a lack of ability to express their sentiments or views in a fluent way. In such instances, a translator's role is crucial in order to allow these people a fair trial and a fair opportunity of expressing themselves. Although this can easily be taken advantage of, it should be ensured that the translator does not solely turn up on the day of a trial and interpret directly, but he should play an active role in the procedure, allowing the defendant the ability to have a fair trial without having to worry about predispositions or prejudice due to his inability to express clear views.

A final question which must be taken into consideration when assessing the positive aspects of an "oblique" translation regards mistranslation and misinterpretation. It is clear that a completely literal translation can create an overwhelming number of mistakes and irrationalities, however, this does not mean that there are no faults associated with a translation which has been in a more adapted and indirect manner. It is not unlikely that some translators will struggle to comprehend what the person whom they are translating is meaning to say. This is especially prevalent in the case of politics, where we can find one of the most famous examples of a mistranslation. The phrase "My vas pokhoronim!" was used in 1956 by the Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev whilst he was addressing the Western ambassadors in Moscow. This phrase was translated into English by Khrushchev's personal interpreter Viktor Sukhodrev as "We will bury you!" The question as to how the original Russian statement should have been translated is still a scorching topic amongst translators, with the most popular alternative translations being "We shall be present at your funeral." and "We

will outlive you."[4] It is even claimed that the mistranslation of Khrushchev's statement further set back Western-Soviet relations as many Americans interpreted it as a potential nuclear threat by the Soviet leader. This is one prominent example which demonstrates the importance of avoiding mistranslations, and the fact that even a misinterpreted sentence can have a strong impact on political relations between nations. As mentioned earlier, this is perhaps another circumstance where 'tactful' translators are in reality de-facto peacekeepers.

Assessing the benefits and consequences of translation

It is clear that errors can occur in any type of translation, therefore, it is difficult to state which form of translation is better. Assessing the benefits and possible consequences of both forms of translation, as I have done in this essay, could be an effective way to avoid dismissing certain arguments regarding translation. More importantly, it can also be an effective way to aid the translator in reaching a final conclusion as to which method of translation they are more partial to. In my opinion, it is crucial for a translator or interpreter, in both aspects, to understand, to the greatest degree, what the intentions of the person or matter they are translating consist of. If this is not fulfilled, there is a great potential for misinterpretation and consequently the adoption of unintentional bias in a translation. This can also create serious diplomatic and cultural issues between the countries of the original language and the target language and quite possibly evoke or heighten fraught relations between nations. This seems somewhat self-explanatory, yet, a translator who has been granted too much liberty due to his ability to alter a translation, following "oblique" concepts, may be inclined to forget this. The avoidance of mistranslations evidently plays a major part in the work of translators. It is, after all, this reliance on their ability to, not only understand,

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[4] https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-05-21/ah-joys-and-challenges-translating-trump-russian

but communicate the views of another person in the target language that makes translation so important. In terms of contextual limits, I have already declared the fact that a translator who is working for a politician or person of high esteem, who inevitably holds a great deal of influence over a people, should be encouraged, if not required to stick to certain boundaries. There is a National Standard Guide for Community Interpreting Services (2007)[5] which tries to ensure that the contextual limits of translation are upheld. For example, under the subtitle "Interpreting Competence", it is clearly stated that this consists of the "ability to assess and comprehend the original message and render it in the target language without omissions, additions or distortions." Moreover, in section 8, "Role and Responsibilities of Interpreters," there are 6 clear rules to which the interpreter must adhere, involving the instruction of "conveying as faithfully as possible a message between two parties who do not share a common language." This provides some insight into possible guidelines translators and interpreters try to follow when completing a task. Unsurprisingly, however, there is a lot of lee-way surrounding these rules and various opportunities in which the translator or interpreter can manipulate them to work in his/her own distinct way.

Summary and judgement of the two principal means of translation

From my tri-lingual experience and by translating frequently in daily life, I have found more excitement and enthusiasm when translating in an "oblique" way. I think the greater extent of freedom and the ability to incorporate my own personal knowledge and perspective of the matter is essential when translating. Although, this opinion may come under fire for appearing too power-hungry and dictatorial, this is not the case as I believe the influence of a translator should certainly be curbed. Translating, in my view, is a skill that can under no

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[5] Healthcare, Interpretation Network. National Standard Guide for Community Interpreting Services, 2007

circumstance result in a black or white answer. The grey areas are paramount when translating. I am convinced that it is each translators' individual method of approaching controversy, and potential misinterpretation, that helps to define them both as a translator by profession and as a linguist in our rapidly modernising society.

Having analysed these two means of translation, I can conclude to having a greater knowledge of both the pros and the cons of "verbatim" and "oblique" translations. It is my own personal opinion that an "oblique" translation is usually the right path to choose, yet as I have demonstrated, this is highly debatable and there is no way in which this can be a conclusive statement. The way in which a piece is translated depends entirely upon the translator in question, the intention of the piece, the character of the original writer and the situation in which the original piece was created. Equally, significant cultural values and the respect for grammatical and linguistic divergences between languages may not be underestimated or devalued in any translation, regardless of the circumstance in which it was created.

The problem with Donald Trump

While Trump is undisputedly a journalist's dream, providing extensive daily material to feed the insatiable media machinery, is he a nightmare for translators?

Donald Trump is seen by many translators as somewhat a problem case in the art of translation. There are several reasons as to why translating Trump requires not only a great deal of patience and energy, but also a knowledge of the man's background and his principles. His unique speaking style cannot be compared with any of his predecessors. Many

of Trumps' low register vocabulary and offensive phrases are hard to translate into a target language because of the level of comprehension needed, and of course, the translators' willingness to repeat such offensive words in another language. Again, there is the issue of loss of credibility that many translators face when tackling a Trump translation. If all of his speeches, tweets, interviews and broadcasts were translated in an entirely literal and direct way, the number of grammatical mistakes he makes and his low level of fluency when speaking, would inevitably be blamed on the translator in question. It is for these reasons that not only do many translators wholly refuse to translate Trump, but those that do attempt to, find themselves at risk of receiving public blame and contempt. For example, addressing the United Nations General Assembly for the first time, President Trump made it clear that America's needs were to come first and he would be dealing with North Korea and Iran, whom he classed as "Rogue States." The Iranian translator in question[6] admitted to having omitted parts of Trumps offensive speech in his translation, despite the result being an Iranian audience not fully aware of Trump's criticisms towards their country. Nima Chitsaz, the interpreter who came under fire for not literally translating every part of Trump's speech and taking advantage of the power of his role, defended himself fiercely, claiming that he only omitted the remarks which were "untrue" as they were against his country and "against Iran." He added "I do not think it would be good if I spoke against my own country on my own national broadcaster." This acts as proof that many translators do feel they run the risk of being judged for their words in translation, in spite of the fact that this is all part of the job. Many Iranians disapproved of Chitsaz' decision to downplay the strength of criticisms Trump was exhaling towards Iran, however, arguing that the interpreter was "not speaking against his country, but only translating." This acts as evidence for a large part of people who believe that translators encompass too much liberty and power when translating and this can too

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[6] http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-41347217

easily be misused. In my view, it may seem logical for a translator to minimise the negative impact a certain message can have on his/her country and, indeed, on his/her own reputation as a translator. Yet, this does unquestionably demonstrate a misuse of power which the translator is inevitably responsible for. I do not approve of Chitsaz' decision to exclude and paraphrase, to such an extent, a certain part of the original text, as this is not what the readers/listeners are asking for. As members of society, we are entitled to a true reflection and translation of the original material, instead of a watered down and greatly edited translation, which is likely to incorporate a huge deal of bias and unwanted influence by the translator.

The first, and most apparent reason as to why Trump is so difficult to translate relates to his limited vocabulary and repeated phrases.[7] When considering Trumps' language, it is clear that he has several words which he is more partial to, and he is not shy in repeating them. It is in this manner of repetition that Trump is able to get his point across and reach his supporters. Although Trump is possibly one of the worst orators to ever reach the oval office, it is his style of speaking, consisting of basic and illiterate phrases – many of which sound as if they were written by a child – that explains why Trump remains such a controversial figure in the world of politics. This inability of forming clear, concise sentences, is coupled with his unstructured and illogical style of speaking – the definition of any translators' worst nightmare. A language such as French requires a great understanding of grammatical structure and syntax before embarking on a translation. For example, the fact that French is a two-gender language, with nouns assigned to genders following no specific rules, creates a certain additional challenge when translating from English (a language where nouns are only one gender) into French. Continuously unfinished sentences and clear evidence of Trump

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[7] http://www.k-international.com/blog/president-trump-in-translation/

losing his train of thought whilst speaking, demonstrate the struggles a translator or interpreter has to face when trying to report the President in a target language. The question stands as to how a person should be translated when it is unclear whether, he himself, knows what is he is meaning to say. It is not usually the case that Donald Trump does not know what to say – opinions and rash conclusions are apparent in his, somewhat illogical, brain. However, it is his inability to express his feelings in a logical, mature and appropriate way that makes Trump such an issue when translating. For example, when Trump visited France to celebrate Bastille Day, he inappropriately commented that the French president Emmanuel Macron's wife, Brigitte Macron, was "in such good physical shape!" For fear of the French public's reaction, this was translated into French as "vous êtes en grande forme," clearly creating a more respectable and appropriate way of saying "you are in great health." This altered translation will undoubtedly have impacted many French people's perceptions of the American president, as it consequently made him appear well-mannered and more respectful towards women than he has otherwise displayed. I believe that a translator should always be trying to understand the purpose of Trumps comment, if he/she is to produce an effective "oblique" translation. Did he really mean to say she is physically attractive? In this case, it was a crude, chauvinistic comment, pure and simple. Perhaps in this instance it is wrong of the translator to try to 'soften' the meaning thereby acting more as a diplomat than a translator. I believe a politician should sink or swim based on his actions and, in this case, the democratically mature French public deserve to be served with the full meaning of his words, so they can assess and judge him accordingly.

Another attempt at translating Trump may be hindered by the distasteful and even baffling metaphors he regularly uses. Comments such as "we can't continue to allow China to rape

our country,"[8] are offensive enough as it is in the English language, but in translation this could be reproduced into something even worse. The metaphors and words Trump uses in such a carefree manner are usually unique to the English language, making an accurate translation unquestionably difficult. It is argued that a translator should always keep a target text on the same level as the original meaning, concerning insulting and offensive language. However, depending on the culture of the country, the type of audience induced to listening to this kind of language, and the possible consequences of such a reckless attitude, this is not always possible. Another question regarding the issues of morality could be raised here. Is it more important for a translator to stick to the original meaning, and risk offending a whole population with his words, or should a translation in such a case be slightly censored, but consequently altering the perception of the original speaker/writer. For example, if every translator replaced all of Trump's foul and offensive language with more rational and formal vocabulary, other countries would inevitably have a very different opinion of the President. This is a contentious issue, therefore, which cannot result in one right answer. In my opinion, it is the translators' responsibility to ensure that the original essence of a piece is not lost in translation, yet the vulgarity of words and the examples they could set on a younger audience for example should also be kept in mind when embarking on a significant translation.

Translating one of Trump's speeches or videos, with the prior knowledge that this would be displayed on an accessible and reputable news channel may be a big consideration to take into account, when acting as a translator. There are many examples of Trump using sexist and vulgar language to describe women, one of the most notorious being the clip in which Trump discusses "grabbing women by the p****" and stating that "when you're a star, they let you

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[8] Oborne, Peter & Roberts, Tom. How Trump Thinks – His Tweets and the Birth of a New Political Language, Head of Zeus, 2017

do it."[9] The translation of this sentence would spark a lengthy debate amongst translators as to whether this should be translated literally and as offensively as it was said in English, or, whether it should be toned down slightly for fear of offending the general public, and possibly children who could very easily stumble across it in the news.

It seems that Trump's statements arouse particularly strong feelings in the UK perhaps as a result of the fact that English usage in America is quite different to that in the UK.[10] George Bernard Shaw claims that The United States and Great Britain are "two countries separated by a common language"[11], a statement which I wholeheartedly regard as the underlying explanation as to why Trump's language can potentially affect these two English-speaking nations in a different way. Much of what Donald Trump says leaves little room for misinterpretation or 'softening' in our, perhaps unfortunately, shared mother tongue. Perhaps we ought to think of the benefits that could derive from the use of 'translators' from USA to UK English.[12]

Unique aspects of Trump's language do not stop here. Another key point to be made when translating a man like Trump is the fact that exaggeration cannot be fully expressed in some languages, as well as in the English language, (particularly when Trump has his hands on the reins.) For example, in the Chinese language there is only one word to describe "big" which is "da." This makes life difficult for Chinese interpreters and translators who are forced to try and invent new ways of expressing Trump's emotions, replacing his frequent use of hyperboles such as "enormous" and "tremendous." This is one of many examples in which

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[9] http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/politics/donald-trump-sexism-tracker-every-offensive-comment-in-one-place/
[10] https://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2010/nov/26/americanisms-english-mind-your-language
[11] http://www.oscarwildeinamerica.org/quotations/common-language.html
[12] Sopel, John. If Only They Didn't Speak English: Notes From Trumps' America, BBC Books, 2017

we see the consequences of language being lost in translation. It is extremely difficult to create the same level of exaggeration as Trump never fails to encompass in his speeches, because some languages just don't contain the same aspects and range of vocabulary as others. A specific word defining a great exaggeration of something in English may not have an equal counterpart in another language, resulting in the translator having no option but to repeat the same word several times instead. Evidently, this creates a whole different impression on the reader and could greatly alter the style and essence of the original piece. A word which is only said once in a primary speech or tweet may be repeated various times creating boredom and detachment amongst readers when listening to or reading this translation. Generally speaking, many languages don't contain the capacity of including such a great degree of exaggeration as Trump intends, making life very difficult for translators.

Finally, there is the issue of malapropisms and Trumps' famous 'made-up' words. One will never forget when "bigly" and "yuuuge" were the centre of attention on news articles and daily bulletins. This is another characteristic of Trump's language which has not been facsimiled by any other politician yet, but it is a further reason for the increasing difficulty concerning the translation of Donald Trump. How is it possible to translate a word which doesn't really exist? Can a translator properly express this particular word or phrase when he/she doesn't even know what it entails? It is said that the best way to translate a person like Trump is by stepping into his shoes and trying to think as he does (or doesn't!) The majority of translators today, however, would be unwilling or extremely reluctant to do this, due to either the fear of being bombarded by unjust criticism, or the feeling of inauthenticity when translating something they entirely fail to understand.

Conclusion

Translating Trump is not like translating any other politician. It requires determination, the ability to disregard the opinions of others and, most importantly, the translator should be willing to adopt a different persona when translating. It is in a certain sense role-play. The legitimacy one feels as a translator, usually corresponds with the end result of the translation and the perception people will have when listening to or reading this work. Regardless of whether a translator chooses to adopt a "verbatim" or an "oblique" manner of translating, both have the essential aim of evoking the same emotions in people in every language. That is ultimately the goal of translation. Despite the fact that certain words may appear impossible to translate, the grammar may seem illogical and the overall syntax gives the impression of being irreparable in any language, a translation, must always remain faithful to the text and not lose its original meaning or sentiment. This loss, in my opinion, would be betraying the original speaker or writer and would result in severe damage to the credibility of the translator.

There are no set guidelines or rules to follow when translating; it is all about personal instinct and gut feeling. If the person you are translating or interpreting for could speak the target language, is this how he would express himself? It is not solely a case of standing in another person's shoes, it involves walking in them. Understanding the person you are translating, and evoking what they wish to express in the clearest, most accurate way results in a 'successful' translation. And in the case of Donald Trump, the crucial part is to avoid

worrying about what the public may think of your translation and your reputation as a translator. Yes, the words have been manipulated by you, as part of your profession, yet the context, and the emotions consequently evoked by these words, are not the responsibility of the translator, but the original speaker him/herself.

<u>Trumpslation</u>

This summer, working in The Language Industry (Ghent, Belgium) for two weeks, allowed me to research this project in great depth and gain a greater understanding of the contemporary issues of translation and the principal means of translation. During this work experience, I also created a quiz called "Trumpslation", which involved a collection of Donald Trump's ten most offensive tweets. Enlisting the help from professional translators around me, we managed to translate the ten tweets in Dutch, French, Russian and Italian, both in a "verbatim" and an "oblique" way. The quiz then allows the viewer to select the translation they regard as most accurate based on the content, syntax and grammar of the original tweet. This quiz became more controversial as the tweets became more offensive and difficult to translate, as it highlighted the fact that many translators would choose safeguarding their reputation over producing a translation which directly keeps intact the message of the original piece. Having published this quiz on the website of The Language Industry[13], it allowed a great number of, both language professionals, and people interested in the study of language, to attempt it. A conclusion of my findings displayed the fact that the majority of these people would select a "verbatim" translation, suggesting that they regard this as more ethically correct and accurate concerning translation. However, it is debatable as

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[13] https://www.thelanguageindustry.eu/en/vertalen/vertaalkunde/3540-intrigued-by-trump-s-language-come-try-the-trumpslation-quiz

to whether the results of this quiz would alter if it were not anonymous and if the translators faced the risk of coming under fire, and potentially damaging their reputation, for recreating a deeply offensive message. My quiz allowed me to put to question how the attitudes of translators and, indeed, language enthusiasts can vary when they are no longer capable of hiding behind a screen and disregarding the potential consequences of their actions in translation. The Trumpslation quiz has certainly provided me with useful results and data, which have hugely supported my findings and opinions regarding the question as to how politicians, such as Donald Trump, should be translated.

<u>Final thoughts</u>

Referring back to my initial question: "How should politicians be translated?", I now consider that, perhaps, other politicians can also prove to be difficult when translating. The manner in which a "Trumpslation" should be embarked upon contrasts greatly with how one would translate a great orator such as Winston Churchill or Martin Luther King. There is certainly potential for the coherent, yet guarded, use of language usually employed by seasoned politicians and public speakers to be manipulated in their favour. For example, there are various examples of politicians in the past, who may have experienced being "caught out" because of something promised in a speech or text that had ultimately not taken effect or been delivered. As a defence mechanism, many politicians may then revert to saying that they have been quoted out of context or that the full meaning of what they were saying had been misinterpreted. With Trump there can be no misunderstanding. His blunt and forthright language: "Build that wall" leaves no room for obliqueness or uncertainty. Therefore, perhaps the real question we should be asking ourselves is not "in what way should we translate Trump" but, rather, what chance does Donald Trump, as 45th President of the United

States, have in recovering from the inevitable possibility of a failed manifesto and the abandonment of his promised wall, regardless of how he has been translated.

Perhaps American society is fundamentally different to ours. Throughout Western democracies there are numerous examples of politicians who have been forced to resign over certain sexist, racist or merely indiscreet statements. In spite of Trump regularly coming under fire for his offensive tweets, broadcasts, rallies and comments, it is clear that he has by some means maintained a comfortable and charmed life in the oval office…thus far.

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