

## **When in Rome do as the Romans do. A comparative study of register differences in texts translated by inexperienced and experienced translators**

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This paper reports on a small-scale comparative study of register-differences in translated language produced by advanced learners of English as a foreign language who have attended a one-year translation course (classified as inexperienced translators) and translations available on the internet, which are assumed to have been produced by professional translators. The subject matter of the translated texts is narrowed down to translations from Polish into English aimed at foreign tourists who might consider Poland as an interesting place to visit.

The underlying assumption behind this paper is that using language we constantly enter a particular kind of discourse. Entering a new discourse can therefore be compared to entering Rome and then our language behaviour follows the principle expressed in the common saying ‘When in Rome do as the Romans do’. Since in our first language the rules of language behaviour, what Paradis (2004) called ‘discourse grammar’, are acquired together with linguistic competence, in general we are more or less successful in keeping within the bounds of discourse (meaning respecting the socio-cultural rules of appropriateness and acceptability when choosing linguistic means). When, however we come to acquire a second language our non-nativity might be easily revealed by disrespecting the rules of the L2 discourse or transferring our native patterns of language behaviour onto our L2 performance, i.e. something which is frequently visible with reference to politeness and cohesion (Odlin 1990). This discrepancy between the discourse patterns of two languages has to be taken into account when translating texts from one language to another (Schaffner 2002). Pragmatic analysis as pointed out by Bell (1991) should be a vital part of the translation process. It has to decide about the communicative function (distribution of information) and register (stylistics of the text and its purpose) of the two texts involved, the SL (source language) text and the TL (target language) text. However, making register-sensitive choices (Biber 1988) is particularly difficult for inexperienced translators who seem to focus on accurate meaning transfer, frequently disregarding the information about the style and register (Whyatt 2007). In other words, they value what is being said over how it is said. Although professional translators are, or at least should be, well aware that the type of register decides about the choice between competing translation equivalents, many texts translated from the translator’s L1 into his/her L2 show problems with keeping within the bounds of discourse marked by register.

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