

## Translating Turkish Foreign Policy from English into Turkish

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### Article abstract

When translating politics the translator considers the intention of the author, his style and discourse, and the information given, but s/he also considers that the sensitivity to *politics* and how the *political discourse* is built differ from culture to culture. The following paper is an attempt to identify some of the problems that may be encountered when translating politics in Turkey in the light of these considerations and through examples from a translation to suggest strategies to overcome these difficulties, considering the outcomes of alternative strategies that could be employed. It is a chronicle of the translator's attempt to exemplify how to *remain faithful* to many at the same time: the author, the meaning, the intention, the norms of the publishers, the TL readers and the two diverse political cultures.

## Translating Turkish Foreign Policy from English into Turkish

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### RÉSUMÉ

La traduction de textes relatifs au politique impose au traducteur de tenir compte des intentions de l'auteur, du style et du registre adoptés, ainsi que du contenu. Toutefois, il ne doit pas oublier que la sensibilité aux *affaires politiques* et la façon dont le *discours politique* est construit peuvent varier d'une culture à l'autre. Le présent travail a pour objectif de tenter de caractériser quelques-unes des difficultés propres à ce type de textes et, à la lumière de ces considérations, de proposer différentes stratégies pour les surmonter, tout en tenant compte des conséquences que chacune pourrait entraîner. Seront soulignés le souci de fidélité du traducteur à l'égard de l'auteur et du sens du texte de départ, de l'intention du texte, des normes de la maison d'édition, du lecteur cible et surtout à l'égard des différences culturelles en matière de politique.

### ABSTRACT

When translating politics the translator considers the intention of the author, his style and discourse, and the information given, but s/he also considers that the sensitivity to *politics* and how the *political discourse* is built differ from culture to culture. The following paper is an attempt to identify some of the problems that may be encountered when translating politics in Turkey in the light of these considerations and through examples from a translation to suggest strategies to overcome these difficulties, considering the outcomes of alternative strategies that could be employed. It is a chronicle of the translator's attempt to exemplify how to *remain faithful* to many at the same time: the author, the meaning, the intention, the norms of the publishers, the TL readers and the two diverse political cultures.

### MOTS-CLÉS / KEYWORDS

politique, discours politique, politique étrangère  
politics, political discourse, foreign policy

### 1. Introduction

With the collapse of bipolarity at the end of the Cold War it may be noted that the arena of international politics underwent a transitional period. With the occurrences in the last two decades and the developments in communication and information technologies and channels (i.e., the Internet, mass media, etc.) political issues, debates, concerns, ideologies have disseminated across cultures so much quicker than before. Countries have come to embrace notions such as solidarity, partnership and have founded platforms (i.e., the European Union [EU]) and ways (i.e., international

operations of The North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO]) to display this. Political concerns have come to mean much more than just politics in its strict sense (inner state and international affairs as undertaken by states and statesmen) and have come to include the work of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as well as multinational and multilateral institutions.

With all these changes including the definition of what is political, new *ways of looking at politics* and new works about its emerging dynamics are being written all around the world through the printed or other media.

### 1.1. *Translating politics*

Increase in the dissemination of information about politics has also led, inevitably, to the increase in the number of translations. The translation of most texts dealing with politics, as translators from the United Nations (UN), the EU or any governmental institution anywhere in the world can tell us, is a task fraught with difficulties. Even in today's world of integration and globalization the notion that *perceptions and reactions change* from one culture to another is something that must be kept in mind. As Aixela (1996: 52) states, "translating is above all a complex rewriting process," and it may be doubly so for translation of politics, which can at times be difficult.

The first risk lies in the volatile material to be translated and the second lies in the way it is expressed. So the translator has two primary concerns *what is said* and *how it is said*, the first being an integral part of politics, and the second being about how the political discourse is set up. Thus, in order to be able to dwell upon the translation of politics we need to primarily clarify what we mean by some notions such as political text, political discourse and political discourse analysis.

### 1.2. *Political texts and discourse*

Political texts may be taken to mean a variety of text types, for example, inner state and inter-state discourse, treaties, speeches, parliamentary debates, commentaries in newspapers, press conferences, or even a politician's memoirs. They may also be separated based on functional or thematic criteria: they are a part and/or result of politics; they fulfill different functions in reference to different political activities, their topics are primarily related to politics (Schäffner 1997: 119-120). Thus, it is clear that these types of texts are much more various than first springs to mind. Do these various texts have something in common besides content? Do they have a common way of expression and maybe even intent? Thus, we turn to the notion of political discourse.

Seidel states that "to what extent political discourse does in fact constitute a genre or domain or a field is highly questionable," and the author goes on to say that,

neither politics nor political discourse can be defined as a closed entity. Politics is ubiquitous, and therefore any narrow definition of the political or one concerned solely with particular events, rests on a mystifying closure (Seidel 1985: 45).

Seidel states that "discourse is a point of intersection between ideological and linguistic processes" (Seidel 1985: 52).

Nevertheless, the translator has to undertake a type of analysis of this *political discourse*. In some studies undertaken by social theorists both discourse and the

contents of our social knowledge have been taken to be matters of shared cultural (ideological) background, but there are other perspectives, whilst accepting the notion of a common culture, that also emphasize the significance of a specific group membership to individual cognition and action including discursive acts (Condor and Antaki 1997: 332). So the translator has to analyze *something* that is the product of a common culture (the source culture) and individualistic (the author's views and the source text). Van Dijk (1994: 164) calls for discourse analysis to be a "genuine social, political or cultural analysis." According to Schäffner (1997: 119), "these aspects are of equal relevance when we look at political texts from the point of view of translations."

Thus, we (the translator as reader and analyst) may be able to view political discourse analysis as a "special case of problem solving – to find out what the 'occurrences' in the text signify, why they are selected, and how they may be integrated back into the continuity that is the basis of communication" (Beaugrande and Dressler 1986: 144). It should be recalled that this study is not primarily concerned with political discourse or its analysis, but with the translation of political texts after these initial steps.

## 2. Translating politics in Turkey

One of the most slippery slopes is to translate a book/work written in a foreign culture about the politics of the target culture. One such example is Phillip Robins's *Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy Since the Cold War* (2003),<sup>1</sup> and my translation into Turkish (2009).<sup>2</sup> This is a politically relevant text by a non-politician (Schäffner 1997: 132) – which is by definition those texts written about politics by writers, researchers. These texts may not be considered political texts in the narrow sense of the word, but they are nevertheless politically relevant and such texts tend to be written in the *language of politics*.

Kramsch (2001: 82) states that "empathy or from a political perspective 'recognition' of other cultures is a difficult and complex issue." This is what Robins – an outsider looking at another culture – attempts in his work, which in turn, the translator has to understand and has to further balance this with his/her own recognition of the authors 'recognition' of the target culture. The initial question would be *why translate this work?* The answer is that: the study chronicles in detail 20 years of Turkey's political history and there are not many works on this subject (Robins 2003: 1). Thus, the work in question is a very sound investment for the publishing house.

Publishing houses in Turkey follow publishing trends that prevail worldwide. Their choices about what to translate are conditioned to a large extent by the policies of large publishing companies abroad. It is important to note that, as everywhere else in the world where it is practised, in Turkey translation is also experiencing a process of unprecedented transition, "[...] it is closely linked with information retrieving and an important part of the knowledge industry" (Lin 2005: 181). Thus, in addition to works held in high esteem by foreign publishers, any work/study about their own country and culture is a big asset for publishing houses in Turkey, as this reflects *the foreigners view/knowledge* of Turkey. One such work is Robins's. When Arkadaş Publishing Co. asked for applications from translators willing to translate the work in question, the list was short: translators were not willing to deal with the problems

such a translation would entail. The problems of the work in question are twofold: the initial problem is that Robins is prolific in his writing and his style and discourse are very hard to coin and duplicate in the target language (Turkish), and secondly, because the translated text will address a new audience in the new target language community at a different time and place (Neubert 1985: 71), the subject material can at times be problematic.

Robins, an esteemed lecturer in politics at the University of Oxford, has spent many years compiling facts about Turkish politics of the last 20 years and has analyzed and presented these in the form of a book which he believes is essentially objective, but in which he naturally feels disposed to comment on the issues he refers to. A translator or publishing house can censor neither events that have occurred, nor a writer's perspective of these events – “as not to allow to disagree with some of the practices or to be intolerant of opinions different from our own would constitute censorship” (Albin 2005: 1), which contrary to common belief is not a common practice in Turkey. Robins (2003: 81) actually comments on this issue in his work.

That said, the translator faces many translation problems in the translation process that call for a very detailed analysis of the source text and has to consider many aspects and utterances when formulating the details of the re-writing and reconstruction process to be undertaken in the act of translation. To pinpoint the phrases, words, notions and to find the strategies to relay them correctly, considering the authors intention (as far as one can gauge as a reader and translator), the translator of politics has four axes of thought and analysis that may or may not be separable from one another:

- a) what is said by the author (information analysis);
- b) how it is said (discourse, stylistic analysis);
- c) what is intended (analysis of the function(s) of text);
- d) the issue we will be concentrating on in this study which is *how will the target text readers receive what is said, in the format of how it is said and will the intention change if it is said in the same way.*

In light of all these considerations, during the translation of Robins's work into Turkish the publishing house in question got in touch with the author and explained to him some of the problems encountered in the translation. Only after this did we proceed with the translation process. In order to better explain the translation process and the endeavor itself it would be necessary to pinpoint the instances referred to.

### 3. Translation problems encountered and possible strategies employed

Translation strategy may be defined as “a potentially conscious procedure for the solution of a problem which an individual is faced with when translating a text segment from one language to another” (Chesterman 1993: 13). Thus, we refer to the use of strategies when there are translation problems. There were various translation problems pertaining to the said work that required a systematic application of carefully considered strategies.

In order to explain the difficulties encountered in the text and the solutions embraced in an objective and descriptive manner, it becomes necessary to base our discussion on the answers of two interrelated questions: Thus, we should not only

discuss *what has been done?*, but we should also consider *why a certain strategy has been used?* The following examples are attempts to explain the answers to both questions.

### 3.1. *The intended meaning cannot be relayed with a faithful translation strategy*

In some instances in political texts the author uses *idioms/sayings/colloquialisms* that have equivalents in the target culture, but when these are translated with these equivalents the message becomes *untactful* in the political discourse of the target culture. What is socially accepted in one language and culture may not seem to be so in another.

For example, since there is no black/African population in Turkey, a Turk would be at a loss to understand the difference between referring to, for example an *African American* as such and not as a *Negro*. Both terms would not be condescending in his/her culture as he would have no prior knowledge of why it is correct to refer to a group of people in a such a way. To translate *African-American* into Turkish as zenci (*person of black coloring, black*) would not be condescending. To translate it as Afrikalı (kökenli) Amerikalı (literally *African American*) would be to use a notion that does not exist in Turkish. The Turkish readers would be liable to interpret this as /a person who is a first generation American and who migrated to the USA from Africa/, /a person with two nationalities (one African and one American)/ or some other interpretations are also possible. In conclusion, which issue is politically sensitive differs from one culture to another.

In line with this thought, when Robins uses the phrase:

(1a) The dog of Turkish intervention has tended not to bark...

(Robins 2003: 8)

he is referring to those people and political groups in Turkey who favor military intervention. The isolated phrase (as given in the example) seems to imply that he does not favor the attitudes of these people (in using the word dogs). But, when one reads the whole passage it can be understood that the author uses this phrase, merely as a way of expression widely employed in the West (i.e., *a dogs bark is..., war dogs, dogs of war*).

Thus, the translator has to make sure that the author's words are not politically insensitive in the target language as that was not his intention. The question a foreigner could be asking when reading this example would be *why should the expression be politically insensitive?* The logic behind this being – war is not good, anyone who instantly and constantly favors this option should be judged accordingly. It is important to know the implications and the possible allusions of such a phrase. First of all, it is important to state that within the same paragraph the author refers to Cyprus and Turkey's intervention in Cyprus – stating that this was an exception and not a general rule in Turkish politics. Thus, the readers are naturally thinking of those groups that favored intervention in the Cyprus problem in 1974 – a majority of the Turkish people, but more specifically the right wing nationalists. Thus, the Turkish readers conception and cognition of those people who favor intervention are further narrowed down to a specific group.

*Social cognition* is a term used by social psychologists to refer to the mental processing of information about the social world, or it is used to imply the social

construction of our knowledge about the world (Forgas 1981). In this case the concern is with the way in which perception and description of the social world are done by people as members of particular cultures or groups, and the way in which the social world is thought about or described (Condor and Antaki 1997: 320). In the example given, taking into consideration the social cognition of the Turkish readers, this would not be an acceptable way to describe the political group of people seemingly referred to. In the source text this would not be a problem as such an inference would not spring to the mind of the readers who are *not in the know* in terms of the politics and political parties in Turkey.

As Leppihalme (1996: 199) states, source culture frames (or expressions in this instance) will have to be rewritten to produce a coherent target text and avoid *culture bumps*. Thus, at this point the authors' intention should be the translators primary concern. The question is whether to be solely concerned with the transmission of information or also the form in which it was transmitted. In this case, as the translator, I chose the former. Thus, the resulting translation is:

- (1b) bu bağlamda, Türkiye'deki müdahale tartarı kesimler, bu amaç için seslerini yükseltmediler...  
 (lit.: at this point those circles in Turkey who favor intervention did not raise their voices for this cause...)

As can be deduced from the above example, politics can be expressed (whether in the original or in translation) only through well-chosen words. Sometimes these words may not be *so well-chosen* when translated faithfully.

For example, when the author refers to former Turkish Prime Minister (and later Foreign Minister) Dr. Tansu Çiller as *Ms. Çiller* he is stressing the fact that she is a woman, a rare situation in Turkish politics as there are few female prime minister and ministers; giving people a basic fact about the former Turkish Prime Minister. In the translation, if the translator were to refer to Tansu Çiller as

- (2a) Bayan Çiller...  
 (lit.: Ms. Çiller...)

this would imply ridicule, making fun of her, making her seem snobbish and perhaps even incompetent, which does not seem to be the authors' intention.

In Turkish, individuals are not marked for gender with titles such as *Mr./Mrs.*, the words *Bayan* (*Ms./Mrs.*) and *Bay* (*Mr.*) exist in Turkish and have been used mostly only in translations to cover this lack of expression. Thus, a person referred to by the title *Bayan* or *Bay* would be a foreigner, not a Turk. Generally a Turkish speaker could use *Bayan Thatcher*, *Bayan Gandhi*, but not *Bayan Yener* or *Bayan Çiller*. This would imply a distancing of the Turkish individuals from the society thus making her an outsider (for details of address forms in Turkish and a discussion of facts, see Dinçkan 2004). Thus, the translator must decide at this point whether the *Ms.* is a jibe in the source language, or is the author simply relaying a fact? In order to do this we turn to the information provided by the text or rather discourse analysis.

Discourse analysis takes as its topic the production and comprehension of language above the level of sentence (Condor and Antaki 1997: 322). A sense of discourse that embodies *activities* such as the ability to make inferences is important. If the expression *Ms.* in question is used to transmit a fact it can be deleted, because sometimes in certain contexts, "we feel we have enough information with the minimum

of information” and “deletion would help in rendering the idea more clearly” (Katan 1999: 100-101) without giving the readers ideas that are not present in the source text. The most plausible thought, in light of what is said about the former Prime Minister, and the authors’ intention of not putting down either Turkish politics or Turkish politicians, but simply reciting the events of the past twenty years of political history in Turkey through his own lenses, it would seem that he is simply stressing her gender. The translator does not have to do this as Turkish citizens are well aware that Tansu Çiller is a woman; thus the resulting translation reads:

(2b) Tansu Çiller...

The same principle (though not carrying the same concern as stated in this context) applies to translating:

(3a) Murat Karayalçın, the Mayor of the capital...

(Robins 2003: 222)

(3b) Belediye Başkanı, Murat Karayalç...

(lit.: *When Murat Karayalçın served as Mayor...*)

The phrase *of the capital* was deleted because the readers would already know this information as most Turkish citizens know who Karayalçın is and where and how he served. The subject knowledge of the target text addressees may be more or less the same as that of the source text addressees or this may not be so, as also the function of the target text may be the same or different from that of the source text. In this case the source text addressees are outsiders of the *politics and culture* of the work in question, whereas the target text addressees are the insiders, the two readerships do not have the same background knowledge. Any redundant information, or relaying of a widely known fact may lead the target readers to question whether there is some hidden implicature behind its use. For example, when a child says to his/her sibling *I will go and talk to my mother*, there is an intention in the repetition of the fact that they share the same mother and they both know this fact. The implication is that *the mother is mine and not yours, or she is more mine than yours*.

Taking into consideration the fact that the target text readers will know that the text is a translation, thus not search for hidden meaning where there are none to be found, the statements made so far should not mean that the translator may delete every shred of information s/he assumes the target readers already hold. It may be taken to mean that s/he should be sensitive when the faithful translation of such information renders implicatures, where none existed in the source text.

### *3.2. Certain expressions/linguistic alternatives would not be used in the political discourse in Turkey*

Beaugrande and Dressler (1986: 143) talk about linguistic alternatives, and the number of linguistic alternatives at a given point. The higher the number of alternatives, the higher the information value when one of them is chosen, and thus, these *preferences* (operations or selections favored over competing alternatives) are fraught with implications and *meanings*.

Also sometimes certain words in a language come to be used in a sense not implied in their primary meanings. Though an equivalent word may exist in the



target language and culture the translators' task is to prevent misunderstanding by stating the *intention* of the word in the translation.

For example, Robins uses the phrases:

(4) the Turkish Foreign Ministry [...] for fear that... (Robins 2003: 322)

(5) Turkey's worst fears looked as if they may soon be realized... (Robins 2003: 352)

(6) Turkey [...] feared that... (Robins 2003: 334)

The author uses the word *fear* in these contexts not to imply *fear* in the sense of being terrified or scared, (which would be condescending when used to refer to any nations attitude in Turkish), but to mean that *they believed the consequences would not be favorable, they abstained because they thought of the repercussions*.

As Malmkjaer states,

[r]eading translations and their source texts [...] it is surprising and delightful to discover the range of items that can serve as equivalents of certain other items and also to discover how often an item that we might have expected to function as an equivalent of certain other items do not, in fact, function thus (Malmkjaer 2004: 141).

It is important to note that in this context though the translator can use the equivalent for *fear* – *korku*, *korkmak* – and though this word is used to imply in many contexts the author's initial intention in the work, the translator must carefully consider the text. In light of what has been said, I have opted for replacing these expressions with one that is coherent with the discourse of the target language, *they believed the consequences would not be favorable, they abstained because they thought of the repercussions* – for example – *çekinmek-çekindiler*.

In Turkish a country's *fear* – *korku* insinuates that it is at peril from forces that it cannot hope to cope with – an incapacitated nation, without the ability to overcome and deal with the problem at hand. The shades of meaning in the initial equivalent do not seem to coincide with the authors intention as the author firmly believes in Turkey's potential as a powerful country in the region, and foretells of her growing importance on the international platform (Robins 2003: 379-387). Thus, the notion stated would be equated in the Turkish political discourse with expressions such as *çekindiler* (*were wary of...*). At this point any divergence from the political discourse of the target language would insinuate into the target text *unintended shades of meaning*.

### 3.3. *Unknowingly made references to incidents (probably) not meant to be implied*

Sometimes with a simple phrase or expression the author refers, unknowingly, to an incident or occurrence in the target culture/history that he is not intentionally reporting. For example, the expression *let them eat cake*, is associated in many peoples minds with Marie-Antoinette, and her attitude and miscomprehension of the plight of the poor. Used in any context this expression would imply an insensitive person, a person that is not *in the know* of the circumstances; but a person who does not know of the queen and her words would have no inkling of this association. This is

sometimes the case in translation. The author has no idea that he is supporting an idea or cause or seeming to be supporting something, simply because, he is not a native of the target culture in question, and does not write for the target culture and language.

For example, when using the phrase

(7a) In turn, acts of God, like the devastating earthquakes of 1999...

(*Robins 2003: 221*)

the author probably uses the phrase *acts of God* to stress the fact that this has nothing to do with the Turkish economy or experts (as this phrase appears in this section of the work) and it was an outside, unforeseen force. What he does not know (or maybe didn't feel inclined or necessary to consider) is that in the Turkish press, during the time of the earthquake in 1999, there were reports of individuals, rumors mostly, of people who believed that *God had brought on this earthquake to punish a group of individuals who were straying from his path*. This radical and absurd notion was heavily criticized in the press and given as an example to show the extremisms of the people/groups in question.

Hatim (2001: 209) refers to a process that involves the appropriation of the original, resulting from the translators' and publishers' untested assumptions (in this case the intention of the author). But, in this case having the whole of the corpus (the book) from which to conclude, it is clear that the author is not using the phrase as a reference to the said events. Thus, my solution was to rephrase this as:

(7b) 1999'daki doğal afet...

(*lit.: the natural disaster that occurred in 1999...*)

thus making sure that the author is not unintentionally supporting a view he is probably even unaware of in the translated version of his work. In a way this ties in with the concept of intertextuality – to subsume ways in which the production and reception of a given text depends on the participants knowledge of other *texts* (Beaugrande and Dressler 1986: 182). Whereas the author didn't need to consider the fact that a group of people had voiced such an opinion, because either his readers would not know of this *text*; or that his words would support such a notion since the *text* voicing it was not present in the source culture. But the translator knows of this text, as do the target readers, thus he/she has to consider texts belonging to the target culture and intertextuality with these texts as well.

### ***3.4. Reflecting an outdated view of certain circumstances, then viewed differently since the initial work was published***

Probably the hardest problem for a translator is when the author's choices do not agree with the national politics of the target country and culture. It is important at this point to differentiate and clearly comprehend several notions: If we take "the socially dominant model of the human situation and its environment" (Beaugrande and Dressler 1986: 146) to be the *real world*, propositions held to be true in that world would be *facts* (van Dijk and Kintsch 1978). Thus, the facts which a person or group consider to be generally applicable to some *real* situation constitute their beliefs (Beaugrande and Dressler 1986: 146). Thus, this real world underlies our textual communication and we receive and produce texts that tend to use our beliefs as our

point of orientation. Some *facts* are very firmly embedded in our thinking and are thus defaults (Beaugrande and Dressler 1986: 147) for anything that might be presented. Our political beliefs are also strong points of orientation that we use to judge texts by. Just as the USA would be offended by the Al Qaida being referred to as anything other than a terrorist organization, the Turkish Republic would feel strongly about the Parti Karkerani Kurdistan or better known as the PKK being referred to as anything other than a terrorist organization (as they have been internationally listed as such by all European nations since a couple of years ago).

In this context it is important to note that the book in question was published before the advent of PKK being recognized as a terrorist organization by some European countries and is presently accepted as such in the author's homeland too.

Thus, for example, any reference to:

(8) PKK fighters...

(Robins 2003: 326)

(9) Kurdish insurgents<sup>3</sup>...

(Robins 2003: 312)

(10) Turkey as the epicenter of a violent, secessionist insurgency<sup>4</sup>...

(Robins 2003: 312)

has to be carefully considered by the translator. At a time when the Turkish Prime Minister reminded his European allies and counterparts that the PKK was to be referred to as a *terrorist organization* and those involved with the PKK as *terrorists* (a news flash that appeared in the media in Turkey at the beginning of August 2005), this kind of language can be problematic for the translator. Does the fact that this book was written before Britain acknowledged the PKK as a terrorist organization risk justification for the expressions used? If not, how is the translator going to reflect the difference in opinion and perspective between the source and the target politics and culture, and the change of the perspective of the source culture since the book was written?

As Wallaert (2001: 172) states, translation scholars have come to consider translation on the broader plain of culture, ideology and politics, and choices in translation are actually based on criteria that are located on the level of culture, identity and ultimately ideology. Thus, when reflecting the authors' ideology and the political ideology of the target culture the translator may want to resort to footnotes and/or deletions. The translator could chose to

- a) explain that the book was written before the UK accepted the PKK as a terrorist organization in a footnote at the first instance the organization was mentioned;
- b) use the term *PKK'lilar* (*those individuals belonging to the PKK, those individuals who are members of the PKK*) instead of a literal translation of *PKK activists / PKK fighters* (Robins 2003: 326-327).

### 3.5. "Missing informations" known by the readers

There were also instances where the author who acquired his knowledge through various sources had been given 'missing information' that someone who had participated in the circumstances would know. It must be noted that the author is a researcher and his information is validated through written, oral, printed etc. sources. There may

be cases where the sources are misinformed or not fully informed. Although it is not the translators task to correct any work or question the findings of the author, it would seem wise to use certain research methods to better understand the text and to check up on certain pieces of information in order to clarify any *misapprehensions*. An example for this is as follows. In his text Robins states that:

- (11) On the ninth of the month Turkey's Energy Minister signed a memorandum with his Azerbaijani counterpart for the construction of an oil pipeline...  
(Robins 2003: 303)

whereas in fact the memorandum in question was signed by foreign minister Hikmet Çetin. This was explained in the Turkish translation in a footnote as follows:

- Section 8 – footnote 120: Foreign Minister Hikmet Çetin signed the memorandum in question [...] and after this initial process Prime Minister Demirel stated that in order to show Turkey's determination and support the other ministers present should also sign, as an act of goodwill. Thus the Prime Minister and the Minister for Energy also signed the agreement as a show of goodwill, though they were not official signatories.  
(Yener, in Robins 2009; literal back translation)

This marks a rare occurrence in Turkey's diplomatic history and may be the reason the author's sources of information have been misled. From a functional perspective a target text is produced to fulfill a communicative function for the target text addressee. Newmark (1994: 214) takes this to outweigh any loyalty to the source text. In light of these thoughts the translator has the option of adding information or clarifying the author's words in footnotes. The solution here is not to change the text itself, but to add information in a footnote, thus remaining faithful to the author while fulfilling the informative function of the text.

### *3.6. The source and target cultures hold a different view of the status/names/attributes of certain groups, formations, organization, countries etc.*

There are sometimes political ideas and ideals that the target culture will feel strongly about. Most readers in Turkey know the extent of what was endured by the people of Northern Cyprus (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus TRNC), and have either served in the armed forces during the Turkish operation in Cyprus in 1974, or have supported the governments' intervention. In any other work written originally in Turkish, the author would refer to the northern part of Cyprus as *The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus*. Any other form of expression would be taken to imply political insensitivity or an idea that is not the general notion of the Turkish public. This is also the case, for example, of showing the insensitivity of referring to the newly founded states in former USSR as the *Russian States*.

Whether the international arena agrees with the target culture notions is only of secondary importance in this context, what is important is the readers reaction to such a statement that was not coined for such a reaction, but merely as a reflection of the priorities and truths of the source culture and the author. For example, in referring to what is known in Turkey as *The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus* (as Turkey recognizes this Republic officially as such) the author rather uses

- (12a) Northern Cyprus...  
 The Turkish Cypriot Government...  
 Formally declared the «Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus»...  
 (Robins 2003: 121)

as the British (the author is British and writes for the British public) do not recognize this state under the name of *The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus*. The translator at this point must not dwell on the politics of the British and the way they express the name of a certain republic, but on the ideas, and the information supplied by the author. But then, is the translator going to use the phrase

- (12b) Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti...  
 (lit.: *The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus*...)

in a work that originally belongs to a British author who comes from a country that does not recognize this country under that name? This would also be confusing. So according to Condor and Antaki (1997: 328) the argument might run that in some ways of *talking about people*, what might seem like a *political choice* is expressed in a certain way; but does the translator make that *political choice* when the author has not?

As Vermeer states (2004: 227), “the aim of any translational action [...] are negotiated with the client who commissions the action.” In this case the publishing house decided the use of footnotes was necessary to explain this *discrepancy*. Thus, I embraced the option to use footnotes, to explain to the readers the reasons behind the authors’ expression (the fact that the UK recognizes the country as only the south of the island and as Cyprus and the discrepancy they see with the expression they would have employed in this context (as Turkey recognizes the country as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus).

#### 4. Conclusion

The main aim of this descriptive study has been to develop awareness for some translation problems and strategies typically encountered in the translations of political texts in Turkey. The intention is certainly not to state *what should be done* (see Toury 1992 for *normative conditioning in translator training*), the concentration has been on *what is expected* and *what can be done*. In conclusion to *what can be done*, as Simon states (1996: 13), the “translator is increasingly aware of her role in determining meaning and her responsibility in rendering it” – this is especially relevant in the translation of politics, as this is an extremely sensitive and volatile field.

It is especially important to pinpoint the author’s intention, as stated:

[t]his study shows that [...] there is need not merely to look at decision making structures and processes, [...] but also to look at the experiences, ideas and values which help to condition perceptions and create the boundaries of the ‘bounded rationality’ (Robins 2003: 4).

As the translator of his work the quest I had to undertake in order to be able to do the translation was: *Finding the facts* that were spiced with subjectivity, locating the discrepancies between the two political cultures in question, keeping in mind that the author had a right to re-say what he had said in English in Turkish, also considering that the Turkish readers would perceive so much differently if I had

*faithfully rendered* every line of the work in question. In order to do this I had to arrive at certain conclusions, judgements (even if extremely well-founded, researched and supported) which were still subjective to a certain degree.

The author states in his introduction that the “responsibility for the final product, its strengths and weaknesses” remains his own (Robins 2003: 9) but, when he gets translated into Turkish we end up sharing this responsibility, because of the nature of the translation of politics and the politics of translation. One of the aims of translation is to produce a target text that conforms to target language conventions (Schäffner 1997: 138). To make a text conform to certain conventions we would have to *take it out of its initial convention*. Though as Pym (2004: 177-178) states, the parties (in this case the author, the publishing house and the target text readers) that intermediaries (such as the translator) work for are then responsible for the ends to which they use cooperation and thus the intermediary should not be held professionally responsible. But, he goes on to discuss that the strategies of professionalization create only illusion of neutrality, which he says is not natural. He further states that they have a professional interest in appearing to be neutral and do this through manipulating maxims of translation, using equivalence and such. This seems to sum up the position the translator finds him/herself in, in the cases explained.

This may also be true to a certain extent because, when translating the work in question so many factors come into play that didn't play a role when the author was writing the original: the Turkish language, the Turkish readers, the patronage (desires and requirements) of the publishing house, the perceptions of the editors of the Turkish version etc. Firstly, the source language author shares knowledge about socio-political and socio-cultural aspects of life with his/her source text addressee, these texts tend to contain a lot of implicit information which present problems for the translator who has to grasp this culture specific information, word meaning, allusions etc. and transfer it with those either understood by the target culture or those specific to the target culture. Secondly, there is of course the inevitable *in-visibility of the translator* as s/he is the one identifying the function and effect of the text which is the most important step towards deciding what translation strategy will be appropriate for the situation in question (Leppihalme 1997: 31). In order to be able to do this, to translate politics, I cannot stress enough the importance of being knowledgeable in political discourse analysis (in order to analyze the source text) and the appropriate political discourse in the target language culture (in order to produce a target language text – Schäffner 2004: 117).

For those translators and translation scholars who cannot associate the strategies or the problems stated in this paper (or the necessity to use them), with any act of translation they have undertaken, I would like to remind them of the fact that what pertains to *politics, how to act politically* (see definition of notion, Pym 2003: 8-13) and how to build the *political discourse* are fundamentally cultural notions embraced differently by societies and cultures. This does not imply the translator has the right to *completely re-write* a text that s/he is translating, or to continuously change information in the source text or to present his/her own views in a translation; the translator is an intermediary in this context – the work, the author and above all *the intention of the author* who has left his/her work in your hands is primary. As Venuti (1998: 31) states,

perhaps the most important factors in the current marginality of translation is its offense against the prevailing concept of authorship. Whereas authorship is generally defined as originality, self expression in a unique text, translation is derivative, neither self expression nor unique: it imitates another text.

He goes on to refer to translation which he states “aims to address a different audience by answering to the constraints of a different language and culture” (Venuti 1998: 31), and I would like to add in the case of the translation of politics a political culture. Thus, it is important to find the correct discourse and *voice* for the author in the target language to the best of one’s ability as a translator.

In order to fulfill this *transfer function*, in line with the findings in this paper, we may be able to pinpoint five major considerations that color the translators’ strategies:

- a) gauging the political *sensitivity scales* that may differ between the two cultures;
- b) gauging the degree of outrightness/bluntness that may be acceptable in the target political culture;
- c) gauging the difference between what may be *political* and *nationalist* issues in the target culture;
- d) gauging the effects of target culture/language intertextuality/discourse etc.;
- e) gauging *what may be political* and its implications.

To be able to do this the translator may follow a few steps/precautions:

- 1) Read the whole of the text and inform the publishing house (who in turn should inform the author or his/her agent) of the possible problems encountered in the translation; and always explain alternative strategies that may be used in the translation and the possible outcomes of these strategies. This sort of discussion with the publisher helps the translator pinpoint *what they want?* and more importantly *what they do not want!*
- 2) Ask to be assigned at least two different editors. The first editor should be the *linguistic-language* editor who will edit and revise the translation. The second editor(s) should be knowledgeable about the field in question. In translating something written about the target culture/history in another language this may be very important. During the translation of Philip Robins’s work the publishing house assigned several editors to edit and in many cases supply footnotes to Robins’s text in order to clarify issues that may be misunderstood. Whereas the core text remains pretty much the same in the source and target texts, the translation gives additional information in the footnotes. Though according to Iglesias (2005: 186), “overloading our translation with footnotes or any other explicative procedure would certainly work to the detriment of the quality and fluency of the target text,” when the informative aspect of the text is the focal point, as it is with the work in question, the translator may want to resort to the use of such devices;
- 3) When a work such as the one given as an example is in question, it is very hard to go back and edit and revise *core choices* the publishing house deems inappropriate. For example, whether to use the expression Türk hükümeti (*the Turkish government*) instead of *Ankara*; or to give the English names of international military operations which are not usually translated except by the media in Turkey; whether to spell out foreign dignitaries and experts’ names as they are pronounced (for example Vaşington vs. Washington). Thus, deliver the translation (as a first from last-draft) at regular intervals and ask the editors to read through and pinpoint any *problems* in the translation. This process allows the translator to get better acquainted with the editor. The compilation of a corrected terminology database

or even a terminology management system with simplistic tools like *Excel* and *Access* programs may also be useful in systematically using the same approved alternatives;

- 4) This type of a translation requires various types of background research: reading through subject matter written in the target language; and reading translations about the same subject. At this point it is also useful to point out that not all resources about politics are sound or trustworthy; for example in Turkey when translating politics translators prefer to use resources like internet sites of governmental offices or prestigious multinational organizations and sometimes sources from the media (but we have to be careful about these sources at times). It is also important to note that there will be several alternatives for some institutional names, international operations etc.; the translator has to be aware of the frequency of the use of certain expressions and words. Thus, it is important that the translator work with a long time limit as short deadlines cripple one's ability to conduct research.

Translating politics means at times voicing opinions one may not believe in, being the voice for issues someone else feels strongly about that may not hold the same importance for you, not being subjective in your research and translation – in short bringing all your abilities, faculties and efforts to the task in question, reeling in every which resource you can find – except yourself – the translators' views, beliefs, thoughts... This is professional, but is it possible...

In Turkey, especially in the last few years there has been a thirst for resources about Turkish politics. As Turkey embraces a new era in the international arena with the outdatedness of its status quo notions, the Turkish public has been willing to voice their Westward orientation (i.e., membership to the EU). This leads to politics being a common discussion ground among the public, in the media, at NGO's etc., but this does not mean that the Turkish public have overcome the impact of Turkish history (in respect to conspiracy theories, foreign forces which have a hand in Turkey and Turkish politics). Politics is widely and openly discussed, all opinions and views are considered; but this does not mean that the Turkish public does not have an Achilles heel – they are still at times oversensitive (and sometimes rightly so) about issues to do with their own politics. Sometimes careless translations lead to huge debates where none were initially necessary. In my translation I hoped not to do this – I wanted to allow Robins's facts, information and messages to reach the Turkish public and not misguided implicatures that the author had not intended.

It is important to note that translation of politics in Turkey is neither manipulation of texts, nor censoring, or any such activity, it is mainly formulating messages, intentions and meanings to the best of the translator's ability in a juggling act to re-compose a target text suited to norms of translation and target text conventions in the target language and culture. Thus, since politics is a platform for debate, clear understanding, partnership and integration; the translator's task is to aid this, not to cripple it.

#### NOTES

1. ROBINS, Philip (2003): *Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy Since the Cold War*. London: C. Hurst and Co.
2. ROBINS, Philip (2009): *Takım Elbiseliler ve Uniformalılar: Soğuk Savaştan İtibaren Türk Politik Tarihi*. (Translated by Şirin Okyayuz YENER). Ankara: Arkadaş Yayınevi.



3. It is important to note that Robins is referring only to the PKK terrorists here.
4. Again, Robins is referring to the internationally acknowledged unlawful activities of the PKK terrorist organization

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