A translator in the face of linguistic violence/aggression – challenges and translation methods

Artur ŚWIATEK
Uniwersytet Pedagogiczny w Krakowie/ Pedagogical University of Cracow
E-mail: artur.swiatek@up.krakow.pl

Abstract
The objective of the article shall be the definition of language of violence/aggression and the discourses, in which violence is explicitly depicted. Several definitions shall be provided to prove that the distinction between violence and aggression in linguistic terms is not so clear-cut. What challenges each translator faces when they are confronted with the need to translate a language of violence to relevantly reflect its intensity? What methods or means are applied by each translator in such situations? These are the questions which must be posed to explain any doubts which accompany each translator in their daily struggle with such linguistic material. The practical part of the article shall comprise the contexts reflecting the sources, which most frequently require the transposition from a source language (SL) into a target language (TL), e.g., psychological texts, films, etc. Thus, several words were selected for the corpus research. They shall be demonstrated and exemplified based on miscellaneous contexts in which they occur. The purpose of the research was to observe how the four selected words, exemplifying linguistic violence/aggression in Polish and English are translated into a target language (Polish or English correspondingly). As the results reveal, the transposition of such words into a target language may comply with the researcher’s expectations or not. It is dependent on various contexts and the register in which such transposition must be conducted.

Keywords: linguistic violence, aggression, challenges, methods, translation

Introduction
The article shall comprise various definitions of language of violence/aggression coined by scholars to enable the potential recipients of this paper a proper recognition of the terms in question. Such language is defined differently, hence several definitions are necessary to acquaint anyone with their content and enable its appropriate comprehension. Subsequently, the reader shall be acquainted with the examples of linguistic violence/aggression in Polish and how it is translated into English. The examples are based on the study by D. Zdunkiewicz-Jedynak (2016). Next, the author of the article shall familiarize their recipients with the corpora studies and demonstrate the way and methods of translation of the selected words deriving from the field of language of violence/aggression. The article shall end with the research results from the conducted study and the relevant conclusions.
1. Linguistic violence/agression – defined

This part of the article shall acquaint us, firstly, with the definition of aggression according to one, highly relevant dictionary in Poland, followed by the definition of aggression by various linguists.

The large dictionary of synonyms by PWN, the publishing company (edited by M. Bańko 2008: 12) defines violence as follows: „violence is a hyponym of aggression (in behaviour)“. This preliminary, basic, and rather general definition is enhanced by various definitions coined by linguistics. For our needs, several definitions were selected. They are the following ones: „Human behaviour (by M. Wojtak/ B. Prus 2005) intended to harm, hurt another person or to destroy anything”.

Aggressive behaviours: activity, destructive intention, tendency to dominate, lack of sensitivity towards the recipient’s feelings (M. Peisert 2004: 21).

Obviously, aggression, or more specifically, aggressive linguistic behaviours have their sources, which mostly comprise the reality of social life. Aggression is determined by communication conditions: a given situation and a given sender-receiver communication.

The relations of aggression with language are the subject of the research conducted by linguists. The current literature abounds in miscellaneous studies devoted to aggression, its various kinds, and relations. As Polish is a source language in our article, we shall focus on the demonstration of the selected areas of study devoted to aggression in Polish. They are as follows:
- aggression and vulgarisation of language (J. Mazur/ M. Rzeszutko 2000);
- aggression in language (S. Bąba/ B. Walczak 1992);
- aggression in language and culture (A. Dąbrowska/ A. Nowakowska 2005);
- linguistic aggression (S. Gajda 2002; M. Peisert 2004; I. Kamińska-Szmaj 2007);
- verbal aggression (A. Duszak 2003; M. Peisert 2004; A. Czesak 2005);
- language of aggression (J. Puzymina 1997);
- aggressive discourse (S. Gajda 2002).

2. Linguistic aggression

Linguistic aggression is defined by several scholars in the following way:
- „A set of linguistic behaviours intending to verbalise a protest of anger towards the persons or institutions, to demonstrate an extremely negative approach towards the specific phenomena, among others, by the application of words, phrases or expressions perceived at present by the users of a standard language in official contacts as inappropriate, common, indecent or offensive” (J. Mazur/ M. Rzeszutko 2000: 150–151; author’s translation).
- „Threats used towards the persons, who should be treated with moderation, until the emotional behaviours are subject to rationalization” (A. Grybosiowa 2003: 57; author’s translation).
- „Interpersonal linguistic and extralinguistic action, which predominantly comprises expressives, reflecting a sender’s negative emotional state towards a recipient, update at the moment of the realization of a linguistic act with the intention
to depreciate a recipient, degrade their dignity, etc.” (M. Peisert 2004: 39; author’s translation).

Verbal aggression is defined as follows:

- „Linguistic behaviours violating politeness marked by norms within ethics, which cause harm to a person or even if they cause mental discomfort” (M. Wojtak/B. Prus 2005: 195–196; author’s translation).
- „Linguistic behaviour articulated in calling someone names or in making fun of someone/something” (J. Panasiuk 2001: 209).
- „Behaviour of high emotional charge, for which there is a sociocultural acceptance” (A. Duszak 2003: 18; author’s translation).

3. The examples of linguistic violence / verbal aggression in Polish and their translation into English

This part of my article juxtaposes the selected verbs and derived nouns constituting the exemplary register of linguistic violence/verbal aggression in Polish and their dictionary equivalents in English. The examples originate from the study conducted by D. Zdunkiewicz-Jedynak (2016: 39).

The exemplary verbs are: złorzeczyć (Eng. to execrate), urgać (Eng. to defy), ubliżyć (Eng. to affront), grozić (kомуś) (Eng. to threaten someone), podjudzać (Eng. to instigate), podburzać (Eng. to incite), buntować (Eng. to rebel), spotwarzać (Eng. to calumniate), przezywać (Eng. to nickname), przedrzeźniać (Eng. to mock), postponować (Eng. to disrespect), ranić (Eng. to hurt), (za)straszyć (Eng. to bully), deprecjonować (Eng. to depreciate), kompromitować (Eng. to compromise), poniżać (Eng. to degrade), poniewierać (Eng. to mistreat), szantażować (Eng. to blackmail), obrażać (Eng. to insult), poniżać (Eng. to humiliate), obrzucać obelgami (Eng. to shower abuse on somebody), obrzucać inwertywami (Eng. to hurl abuse at each other), obrzucać kalumniami (Eng. to use calumnry), szkalować (Eng. to slander somebody), molestować (kogoś) (Eng. molest somebody), szydzić (Eng. to mock), drwić (Eng. to ridicule), kpić (Eng. to sneer), naśmiewać się (Eng. to deride), naigrywać się (z kogoś) (Eng. to mock), krzyczeć (Eng. to shout), napadać (na kogoś) (Eng. to attack somebody), kłócić się (Eng. to argue), awanturować się (z kimś) (Eng. to make a fuss), przeklinać (Eng. to swear), colloquially (na)bluzgać (Eng. to spew), nawiązać (Eng. to shout insults), dogryzać (Eng. to sneeze), wymyślać (Eng. to rant at), dogadywać (Eng. to scoff), docinać (kомуś) (Eng. to taunt), rzucić mięsem (Eng. to eff and blind), szczekać (Eng. to yap), ujadać (Eng. to bay), wrzeszczeć (na kogoś) (Eng. to shriek at somebody), gnioić (Eng. to bust someone’s balls), obrzucać blotem (Eng. to mud-sling), (ze)szmacić (Eng. to rag), mieszkać z blotem (Eng. to sling mud at somebody).

The derived nouns are: bluźg (Eng. curse), syzyderstwo (Eng. mockery), drwina (Eng. derision), kpiña (Eng. joke), kłótnia (Eng. argument), awantura (Eng. row), potwarz (Eng. smear), oszczerstwo (Eng. slur), pogroźka (Eng. threat), groźba (Eng. menace), szantaż (Eng. extortion), napąść (Eng. aggression), kompromitacja (Eng. disgrace), deprecjacja (Eng. depreciation).

This juxtaposition is barely of a rudimentary nature and just intends to outline the profound problem any translator (novice or professional) faces while being obliged to
transpose linguistic violence/verbal aggression from a source language into a target one. The proposal (English equivalents in brackets) comprises only a dictionary source. English, being a highly polysemous language, abounds in many equivalents, which depending on the need (different registers), may be offered in more direct, straightforward, or more official way.

4. Challenges during translation of linguistic violence/aggression

This concise part of the article comprises a brief list of exemplary expressions of informal register, collected by the Polish scholar, accompanied by the proposed English equivalents. They are exclamations, listed as follows:

1. *Zasrańcu!* (Eng. *You buttface!*);
2. *Bękarcie!* (Eng. *You bastard!*);
3. *Cholero jasna!* (Eng. *Damn you!*);
4. *Zamknij się, synku!* (Eng. *Shut up, sonny!*);

Although being all exclamations, these expressions are very demanding in their translation into English, thus a target language. Why is it so? Because, e.g., in examples 1 and 2, the translation is not particularly challenging, the same applies to examples 4 and 5. However, in example 3, the translated exclamation in English is particularly challenging, as it is highly demanding to transpose it relevantly.

Other examples of this kind, listed below, were selected by the author of the article to demonstrate how they are traditionally translated from Polish into English. Their demonstration is based on the corpus analysis, available via this website: Paralela Web (URL: clarin-pl.eu).

The exemplary derived nouns applied within language of violence/aggression and their translation into a target language are listed below:

- *drwina* (Pol/Eng) (pic. 1);
- *kpina* (Pol/Eng) (pic. 2);
- *bastard* (Eng/Pol) (pic. 3);
- *moron* (Eng/Pol) (pic. 4).

The selected words are applied in miscellaneous contexts. Below you may see the excerpts of their contextual use and their translations into a target language.
As it may be deduced from the available contexts, the Polish word ‘drwina’ is differently translated into English, mostly as ‘mock,’ ‘derision,’ ‘mockery,’ and surprisingly as ‘joke.’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lp</th>
<th>Polish</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kpina</td>
<td>I do n’t know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Uwazaj, ża to skandal i kpina z całej naszej pracy w dzisiejszym zmian klimatu</td>
<td>I think it is a scandal and it makes a mockery of all the work we are doing on climate change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gdy dochodzi wlasnoci malych i srednich gospodarstw ciągle spada i groz im skorzula z ich ziem i bezrobocie, ketdy gospodarka wychodzacych przyczyn kryzysa ze wglądu na WPR i opyty WTO, to re wro zasiocy przyczyni się do rozwoju obszarów wsiowych; to kpina z bieznym rolnictwem.</td>
<td>When the income of owners of small and medium-sized farms is constantly shriving and they face the threat of eviction from their land and unemployment, when the economy of entire areas is in crisis due to the CAP and the dictates of the WTO, it is not the development of networks that will contribute to rural development, it is a mockery at the expense of poor farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>To czysze kpina z prawda do wypowiedzi i prawda do wolnoci zgromadzicu</td>
<td>This makes a mockery of freedom of expression and the right of free assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Decyzje gospodarcze zawarte w pakiecie klimatyzacyjno–energetycznym podejmowano w oparciu o mało wiarygodna hipotezy przyszłym zmian klimatycznych to nie tylko cyniczne kpina ze zdrowego rozumu, ale też zapewni przyszcej katastrof gospodarczą i cywilizacyjną.</td>
<td>The economic decisions contained in the Climate and Energy Package, which were made on the grounds of a not-very-credible hypothesis of the cause of climate change, are not only a cynical joke at common sense, but are also a prelude to future economic catastrophe and the upheaval of civilisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>To sytuacja to kpina i równie kaz UNHCR je niewielu kwietr, gorsco realizujac projekt zapoznajacy z mniecia w arystokracji, gdy nie prowadzi trudnego czasu wypuszcza.</td>
<td>This situation is a joke, and the UNHCR is not putting up with it either, as it has warmly recommended to the Member States that they do not proceed with deportations of this kind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Twoja druga to kpina Kolker.</td>
<td>Whisky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ta druga to jakas kpina.</td>
<td>Big Pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>To jakas kpina.</td>
<td>The Shins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ale kpina!</td>
<td>Steam Inometers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>To jest kpina!</td>
<td>How I Wet Your Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>To kpina.</td>
<td>Love Is All You Need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Polek przeznacz na kpina, wieksza kpina.</td>
<td>The City of Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Polek przeznacz na kpina, wieksza kpina.</td>
<td>The City of Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>To czysta kpina.</td>
<td>Sucker Punch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Czy to kpina z polski?</td>
<td>Magnificent Light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Judson, wiesz, że pozwaliliśmy Ewcaiburu atakować mnie do woli, ale to już jest kpina.</td>
<td>The Librarian: Return to King Solomon’s Mines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>To kpina.</td>
<td>Head of State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Uwazaj, że to jest kpina.</td>
<td>Final Cut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Judson, wiesz, że pozwaliliśmy Ewcaiburu atakować mnie do woli, ale to już jest kpina.</td>
<td>The Librarian: Return to King Solomon’s Mines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Pic. 2. ‘Kpina’ (Pol/Eng).*
Here, the translation is even more demanding, compared to the first exemplary word above, ‘drwina’, namely the word ‘kpina’ is transposed into English as ‘joke’, ‘mockery’, thus the conclusion is that semantically the first two selected Polish words are more diverse in Polish than in English, as in English they tend to be more synonymous, which is additionally proved by the contexts above.

At present let us have a closer look at how the first selected English word ‘bastard’ is translated into Polish (pic. 3):

Pic. 3. ‘Bastard’ (Eng/Pol).
Here the translation of the word ‘bastard’ is centred on the provision of the following equivalents: ‘gnojek,’ ‘łajdak,’ ‘drań,’ ‘paskuda.’ It complies with the prior expectations of the author of the article, as they fully reflect their negative connotation in Polish as well as their offensive nature. However, what is surprising is the occurrence of ‘bastard’ in pt. 1 above. ‘Bastard’ is translated word-for-word, which is completely contrary to the expectations.

The last exemplary word ‘moron’ is translated into Polish via the provision of the following counterparts: ‘kretyn,’ ‘palant,’ ‘głupek,’ ‘idiota,’ ‘dureń.’ As opposed to the third translated word ‘bastard,’ here the expectations of the author of the article were fully met, as we observe here the diversity and relevance in the transposition of the source word in question.
5. Translation of vocabulary deriving from prison environment (Eng. *argot*) marked with emotions/aggression

The last part of the article centres our attention on the demonstration of the selected vocabulary originating from *argot*, which is marked with emotions/aggression.

What is necessary to quote here is the word ‘*bluzgi,*’ whose equivalent in English is ‘curses.’ The word is depicted here as a reason to argue, being a particularly easy hot spot in prison environment.

As M. Szaszkiewicz states (1997) the use of curses in inappropriate situations or towards the person, who did not deserve them may be harmful for the person using them. The use of abusive words towards others is limited due to their symbolic value, and consequently, also due to irreversible consequences for the offended person.

The scholar provides us with some exemplary words, which are of special meaning in the peculiar prison environment. They are as follows:

- *daż* (Pol.) = *give me* (Eng.); 1. (standard meaning), 2. vulgar meaning (corporality, intimacy);
- *kopsnij* (Pol.) = *wazz* (Br Eng.; slang.).

Additionally, the scholar intrigues us with the provision of the most know vulgar Polish word globally (…), which may be polysemous depending on the context and the speaker. It may not mean anything but constitute only the ending of a sentence by an angry user (this word is uttered towards anyone, and it constitutes a way of limiting anger or stress, or it may provide a given accompanying expression with more ‘power/authority’).

M. Szaszkiewicz (1997) enumerates some of the meanings, which this word may refer to:

- *cwel* (Pol.) – *punk* (Eng.)
- *kapuś* (Pol.) – *snitch* (Eng.)
- *gad* (Pol.) – *pig* (Eng.)
- *police officer* (Pol.) – *cozzer* (Br Eng.; slang).

One, final example, which the author of the article cannot refrain from quoting here, also refers to prison environment and originates from film industry. It is a brief excerpt from one of the most famous humourous films by Stanisław Bareja, namely *Alternatywy 4* (1986), which is as follows: *O widzisz, tak wygląda kapuś* = ‘Oh, look, that’s what a squealer looks like’.

That is a perfect example of transferring the peculiar *argot* word into the Polish reality. It is believed that the potential recipients of the article shall utterly understand the meaning of the context provided.

6. Conclusions

There are various approaches to the definitions of language marked emotionally, that is, language of violence/aggression.

Linguistic/verbal aggression constitutes a profound challenge for each translator due to the need of translation accuracy of a given word, expression, or context as well as the need to preserve linguistic purity (particularly in case of vulgarisms and their marking degree).
Moreover, linguistic/verbal aggression constitutes a very intriguing research theme in linguistic and translatory terms in Polish as a native language and English as a target language, or vice versa.

Any translator must preserve a balance between their private approach and the comprehensive approach. It is particularly significant during interpreting, e.g., in criminal cases, in judiciary context, in which a sudden transfer from an informal register into a formal one or vice versa requires a profound flexibility and skills in the preservation of standard of the applied language (SL) or (TL).

References

**Online sources:**
URL: Paralela Web (clarin-pl.eu).