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Book Review of:

ISTVAN KECSKES, *Pragmatica interculturală*, traducere de Mihaela Gheorghe, Răzvan Săftoiu și Andra Vasilescu, Brașov: Editura Universității Transilvania din Brașov, 2024, 316 p., ISBN 978-606-19-1756-3

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Istvan Kecskes' book, *Intercultural Pragmatics*, published in 2014 by Oxford University Press, constitutes a comprehensive framework for understanding how meaning is created and interpreted in communication between people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The book presents a critique of traditional, monolingual-centric models of pragmatics and proposes an alternative approach that integrates both a sociocultural and a cognitive perspective. Amongst its main objectives, we can mention the reframing of pragmatics so as to better explain and account for multilingual and intercultural communication and the development of the sociocognitive approach as a theoretical foundation for intercultural pragmatics. Its main strength resides in the fact that it is shaped both as a theoretical and practical guide for comprehending and analyzing the complexities of communication in a multicultural and multilingual world.

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Pragmatica Interculturală – the Romanian translation of this reference book, in 2024, ten years after its first publication in English, by the Publishing House of Transylvania University of Braşov, is carried out fluently and smartly by Mihaela Gheorghe, Răzvan Săftoiu and Andra Vasilescu. This translation is even more relevant in today's cultural, educational and professional environment as it brings a cutting-edge theoretical framework into Romanian academic discourse and social discourse at a moment when intercultural communication and competence have become more important and necessary than ever.

When comparing the English original (*Intercultural Pragmatics*) and the Romanian translation (*Pragmatica Interculturală*), we can make observations and commentaries on the translation with a peculiar focus in as far as accuracy, fidelity of translation, adaptation and style are regarded.

With respect to the translation type, we notice that 2024's Romanian edition of the book amounts to a faithful, academic translation that clearly preserves the scientific and technical rigour of the English edition from 2014.

As far as the translator's role is concerned, the Romanian translation of the book shows a meticulous, attentive terminological consistency throughout the entire ten chapters.

As for the adaptation to audience, the translation from English to Romanian succeeds in maintaining the original depth and tone, aiming to address several categories of target-public: linguists, pre-university and university-level readers and intercultural communication specialists.

Terminology consistency in the Romanian translation is emphasized through key noun syntagms like "common ground", "pragmatic competence" and nouns like "salience" and "interculturality" that are accurately and consistently translated throughout the whole ten chapters of the book.

The major strengths of the translation to Romanian are shown in the degree of terminological precision, in the quality of linguistic and cultural equivalence, in the faithfulness to the structure and style of the original, in the overcoming of issues and challenges of translation and, last, but not least, in the presence of smart and appropriate translation strategies.

The degree of terminological precision could be exemplified through the translations of key noun phrases from English to Romanian, such as: "pragmatic competence" → "competență pragmatică", "common ground" → "teren comun" or "fond comun", depending on the context,

“socio-cognitive approach” → “abordare socio-cognitivă” that respect Romanian academic norms in linguistics, pragmatics and intercultural communication.

The faithfulness to structure and style of the original is displayed in the manner in which the Romanian version of Istvan Kecskes’ book maintains and conserves the structure of each chapter, the argumentative flow, the examples, making sure the readers of the Romanian translation easily follow and understand Kecskes’ theory and argumentation.

Linguistic and cultural equivalence is revealed in the choices made by the translators so as to render English culturally embedded idiomatic expressions into Romanian either translating them literally or making use of functional equivalents, such as in the case of “bilingual is not two monolinguals in one body” (2014: 4) for which they chose a paraphrased Romanian equivalent – “un bilingv nu este doi monolingvi într-un singur corp” , as translated on page 223 – preserving the metaphor, the conceptual clarity and the idea.

The Romanian translators’ merit is also disclosed in the overcoming of translation challenges such as those raised by the density of the author’s style and writing which are both abstract and dense. In spite of the density and abstractness of the original style, the Romanian translation manages to mirror and reflect it accurately.

Amongst some of the notable translation strategies used by Gheorghe, Săftoiu and Vasilescu, we can mention the maintenance of conceptual integrity of translation where the Romanian translators avoid oversimplifying key theoretical points, while choosing more complex Romanian syntactic structures. We also observe numerous instances of adaptive equivalence where the Romanian version of Kecskes’ book succeeds in remaining true to the conceptual origins, saving and safeguarding the intent of the author (e.g.: the translation of “thinking for speaking” (2014: 5) → “procesul a gândi pentru a vorbi” (2024: 6)).

The overall translation of the book gets noticed by the fidelity to the original version, by its conceptual accuracy, by the degree of cultural adaptation, as well as by easiness of readability in Romanian and its terminological precision.

In the translation of Kecskes’ book, readers observe the quality and strength of translation in its refinement where the “human beings’ double

nature" (2014: 6) is elegantly rendered through "natura duală a ființei umane" (2024: 7).

The translation of chapter 7, 8 and 9 is particularly good. Even though more challenging from a conceptual perspective, the Romanian translation efficiently and effectively manages to convey: the different types of common ground (core, emergent), the co-construction of meaning, using notable equivalence (e.g. "shared beliefs" (2014: 152) → "convingeri comune" (2024: 175) and excellent adaptation (e.g. "cognitive salience" → "saliență cognitivă", "perceptual salience" → "saliență perceptuală", "emergent salience" → "saliență emergentă", "CULPEPER: Example 3: Creative deviation from the *default context*" (2014: 215) → "CULPEPER: Exemplul 3: "Abatere creativă de la *contextul implicit*" (2024: 246)).

The consistency of terms in the Romanian translation is relatively high as the translators observe the continuity across the ten chapters. The general tone and register is formal, hence adequate for the target audience of the book. Adaptation of particular examples is faithful and smooth, while the use of footnotes with further explanations on translation proves beneficial for Romanian readers (e.g. Note 1, page 30, Note 2, page 246 of the Romanian translation).

If we chose a line-by-line comparison of excerpts from the two versions, the English version (the original one) and the Romanian version (the translation), we would notice that the terminology is consistent with formal and academic Romanian (for example in subchapter 6.2., "context", "comunicarea interculturală" and "cercetări pragmatice" are standard, whereas "crucial factor" becomes "factor esențial" which is a strong, but appropriate equivalent). The translation is grammatically and semantically faithful and accurate. The general tone is maintained formal, respecting the academic register of the original book. Fluency is smooth in Romanian, without losing the meaning, while citations are preserved as exactly as possible.

Amongst the most current translation techniques used by Gheorghe, Săftoiu and Vasilescu in the translation of Istvan Kecskes' book, we can mention: literal translation, transposition, equivalence and modulation.

Literal translation maintains form and meaning in a precise manner (e.g. "pragmatic competence" → "competență pragmatică" (2024: 68, 69, 71

and so on), or “salience” → “saliență” which represents a calque, naturalized in Romanian language usage).

Transposition is revealed in examples such as “What standard pragmatics assumes about how things work in communication depends on there being commonalities and conventions between speakers and hearers that can hardly be counted on cross-culturally in the same way as in intracultural communication” (2014: 2) translated into “Premisele pragmaticii standard, potrivit cărora mecanismele comunicării se bazează pe elementele și convențiile partajate de vorbitori și ascultători, nu pot fi avute în vedere în același mod în comunicarea intraculturală și în cea interculturală” (2024: 2), where we notice the switching of word class (for example, of adverb) so as to better fit Romanian syntax.

Modulation, which is the altering of an expression to better suit the target language, is exemplified by the translation of “In Rome, do as the Romans do” (2014: 17) to “Când ești la Roma, fă cum fac locuitorii Romei” (2024: 20). This example of cultural modulation manages to maintain meaning, while adjusting the English idiom to Romanian language.

Transposition and modulation can be used together and at the same time for the translation of a complex sentence (e.g. “not only can the speakers’ private contexts differ significantly, but also their collective salience (public contexts) tied to the same lexical item” (2014: 57) → “nu doar contextele private ale vorbitorilor pot fi diferite în mod semnificativ, ci și saliența colectivă a unui lexem (contextele publice)” (2024: 65).

For equivalence, that is substituting a culturally or functionally equivalent expression we have already given examples (see the example above “*default context*” (2014: 215) → translated into “*contextul implicit*” (2024: 246)). This translation technique preserves the implied meaning, while adapting the term or phrase.

Unlike automated machine translation, where the adjective “cross-cultural” is mistakenly and randomly translated in noun phrases like “cross-cultural pragmatics” or cross-cultural communication” as “intercultural” or “multicultural”, the Romanian translators use the accurate noun syntagms to convey approaches such as “pragmatica culturală comparată” or “pragmatica interculturală” in the appropriate context. For the syntagm “cross-cultural pragmatics”, the Romanian translators favor the translation “pragmatica culturală comparată” (2024: 19).

In conclusion, the Romanian translation of *Intercultural Pragmatics* (2014) represents an accurate, faithful and terminologically precise and rigorous rendering of Istvan Kecskes' work. It proves itself valuable for Romanian specialists in linguistics, pragmatics and intercultural communication.

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