

Language and Translation in Intercultural Transfer - The Formation of Turkish Patent Specifications as a Text Type

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ABSTRACT

Translation has been a major means for transfer in fields like literature and culture as well as law and technology since the Tanzimat period during the Ottoman Empire and continues to be since the foundation of the Turkish Republic. The aim of the present thesis is to provide a holistic evaluation of the constructive role played by phenomena like translation and language in this transfer by showing that these phenomena can not be properly evaluated when the socio-cultural context and power relations/interests in the transfer are ignored. To this effect, the constructive role of translation in the formation of a text type transferred from a source culture to a target culture is discussed with reference to the notion of ‘cultural repertoire’ provided by the Polysystem Theory. The descriptive study conducted focuses on a corpus of patent specifications, since Patent Law has been transferred to the Ottoman Empire as well as to the Turkish Republic from the West. The thesis firstly introduces the development of the notion of patent protection in the history of Western Civilization and provides insight into modern Patent Law in order to illustrate the context in which patent specifications are operating. A discussion on the adoption of former and current patent laws in the Ottoman Empire as well as in the Turkish Republic is provided and this shows the role translation has played during this procedure. Following this, a descriptive study on a corpus of original Turkish patent specifications as well as translated Turkish patent specifications is presented. The descriptive study finds that patent specification as a text type has not been formed in the Turkish target culture. The reasons for this lack of formation are discussed with reference to the notion of ‘cultural repertoire’ of the Polysystem Theory and the shortcomings of the same are illustrated. Finally, the thesis shows that the discussion of intercultural transfer needs to go beyond the framework provided by the Polysystem Theory and should include issues like cultural domination and interests and the relation between Turkey as a target culture and western modernity in order to assess comprehensively the role of translation and language in this transfer.

KEYWORDS: creativity, cultural domination, intercultural transfer, oral-literal culture, polysystem theory, text types, Turkish patent law.

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