Translating Diplomatic Invitation Cards / Correspondence in Turkish-English Language Pair

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Diplomatic language

- Language used by diplomats,
- Terms specific to diplomacy, and
- Diplomatic style

Diplomatic language

This leads to, in linguistic terms,

- use of constructive, peacebuilding, tactful, tactical, human dignifying language rather than

- a potentially aggressive, insensitive, offensive, destructive one (Matos 2004: 283 in Hafriza 2005a: 36).
English and diplomatic language

- English has emerged as a dominant diplomatic language since the beginning of the 20th century, replacing French, which in turn replaced Latin, in the 18th century.
Turkish in history

- In the Middle Ages that Anatolia was influenced by Arabic and Persian as the languages of science and literature, respectively. In the 15th and 16th centuries, Ottoman Turkish emerged as a distinct language. Words continued to increase until the 1970s, when they accounted for 70%. Since then, the proportion of Turkish words in the language has been declining (Akçora 2004).
Both English and Turkish have been affected from Latin and French as a former lingua franca, which would affect the translation process.
Diplomatic texts

- English diplomatic texts are replete with established terms in Latin (e.g. casus belli) and French (e.g. charge d’affaires) and field-specific English collocations (e.g. good offices) (Akıncı 2005: 109), whereas diplomatic texts in Turkish, embrace archaic Turkish terms (e.g. Maslahat Güzar) and field-specific collocations (e.g. mütehassıs olmak), in addition to those Latin and French terms.

- The very seamless use of established terms / expressions / patterns, diplomatic language can be said to be universally timeless and multilingual, in nature.
On translational strategies

- As politics is an important issue in diplomacy, the translator has to consider and set strategies on the following three points:
  - 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 (Okyayuz-Yener 2010: 341).
Trainee translators

-some knowledge of translation processes,
-limited knowledge of the legal domain as opposed to the Professional diplomatic translator
-“more prone to the use and renovation of slang and unconventional language”,
-a special language of their own (Gonzalez 1994)
Foreseen difficulties

- Trainees not only would learn interlingual translation, but also intralingual translation, i.e. learn a language embedded in the working language. The languages, in our case, English and Turkish cannot be regarded as compatible in terms of lexis and syntax, creating further difficulties for the trainee translators.
The review of documents (an “unobtrusive” and “nonreactive” method, (Marshall & Rossman 1999: 117) through descriptive adequacy.
- 4 selected cards of invitation to various diplomatic gatherings between the years 1997-2006, and 20 correspondences/message excerpts from Tulun (1996).
- Pen and pencil exams for the course “Translation of Diplomatic Texts” taught at the İzmir University of Economics between the year 2007-2012 were used to identify the difficulties faced by the students.
The study’s framework

- This study is primarily based on descriptive and functionalist theories. The type of the text, examined here falls under Operative, in Reiss’s terms (1977/89) as it is intended to “induce behavioral responses” with its dialogic form of language and appellative focus.
Analysis

1. macrostructure analysis, involving the classification of subparts, and
2. microstructure analysis, exploring linguistic features at word up to sentence level (register)
Macrostructure

The macrostructure of diplomatic invitations was identified, adopting the understanding of genre as put by Alcaraz and Hugues (2002: 101-102 in Lambert-Tierrafia 2007: 218-219), as having a shared communicative function by the same performative verb, a similar macrostructure, a similar discursive mode of developing the macrostructure and similar discourse techniques for satisfying related expectations on the part of recipients/addressees, common lexical and syntactic arrangement of the material and a common set of functional units and formal features and common socio-pragmatic conventions.
“Register” was specified, according to a definition given by Hafriza (2005b), as general words and phrases, “used in a specific situation, addressing a specific audience and wanting specific goals to be attained and goals that can only be accomplished by the same specific audience.”
Macrostructure and register of invitation cards

- The special instruction line (optional) (to bid farewell...)
- Host line (e.g. The Ambassador of ...... and Mrs. Özden Sanberk)
- Request line. The pattern is ....request (s) the pleasure of the company of...
Macrostructure and register of invitation cards

- Event Line (e.g. at a reception (resepsiyonu, e.g. for a dinner (akşam yemeğini))
- Date Line (e.g. on Monday, August 28, 2006 from 1900 to 21.00 hours)

As opposed in Turkish as in e.g. 12 Temmuz 1999 Pazartesi günü, saat 20.00’de
Location, City and State Line

- on the left or right side under the invitation section
Correspondence for invitation

- Format: occasion, invitation, aim/ importance of the event/invitee, concluding remarks
An example...

Excellency,
I have the honor, on behalf of the .... and people of ..........., to invite Your Excellency/ Majesty etc. to attend the “........Conference” which will be hosted in .........., during the period ......., 19...We would be most grateful, if Your Excellency would be kind enough to visit.... Your personal presence at the Summit will symbolize ...

Please accept, Your Excellency the assurances of my highest consideration.

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another concluding remark

...I avail myself of this opportunity to Express (to renew) to Your Excellency my best wishes for ....
.... Ve ... halkı namına Ekselanslarını/ Majestelerini vs. ....tarihler arasında ..... evsahipliğinde gerçekleşecek .... Konferansına katılmaya davet etmekten onur duyarım. Zat-ı Alileri ... ziyaret edebilirlerse müteşekkiry oluruz) ...(Zat-ı Alilerinin Zirvedeki varlığı .... ’ı sembolize edecektir. Bu vesile ile, şahsi sağlık ve mutluluğu ile kardeş .... halkının refah ve ilerlemesi için en iyi dileklerimi sunarım.)

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Response letters/messages

Format for letter of acceptance:
-receipt of the invitation,
-gratitude for invitation,
-response statement (acceptance/decline)
An example...

- I received, through the ........of Your Embassy in Ankara, the kind letter of Your ....inviting me to pay a visit to.... I would like to thank Your ...for your kind invitation and will take great pleasure in attending this important event.

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Statement of Decline

- Or
- in case of decline, the concluding remarks would be...
- I very much regret that I will be unable to attend the ..... owing to my previous engagements. However, ..... will be represented by a high level delegation in this event.

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Davete İcabet Edememe (decline)

- Daha önce planlanmış işlerim dolayısıyla .....’a icabet edemeyeceğimi üzüntüyle bildirim. Bununla beraber, ..... bu organizasyonda üst düzey bir heyet ile temsil edilecektir.
Intra-and extralinguistic difficulties for trainee translators

- The students were seen to get confused initially by the abundance of abbreviations of titles/ranks/address forms in the world of diplomacy.

- Furthermore, most trainees were confused by the fact that the host line of diplomatic invitation cards contained the top level official’s name only, whereas the spouse’s was not mentioned at all.
The students tended to make mistakes about the collocation of some words they have just learned. e.g. the case for “teşrif” in the sentence.

Concluding remarks of invitation correspondences: the students were seen to have much difficulty especially in this section, as they had to memorize the full pattern which was unfamiliar to them.
Difficulties - Cont’d

On the whole, trainee translators, found the language too ornate and exotic, especially when they are compared to their own language, which, as the language of youth, tended to be much less formed. In particular, they found difficult the number of adjectives praising the addressee, long and complex sentences, the number of words/terms borrowed from the lingua franca of the past in both the source and targets.

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However...

- As the lessons progressed, they expressed a keen and growing interest in the language and noted change in their daily written communications with their peers as well as their instructors. They reached a clearer understanding on the specific language use in diplomacy, and stated that it provided an opportunity for them to express themselves in a polite and non-confrontational manner, in general.

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Lessons drawn from the observations/difficulties for future lessons

The students should be warned that
*titles and full names are of utmost importance and mistakes related to spelling and title/rank are found intolerable in this discourse community.

*students need clear understanding of i. the full title of the person for whom the event is held as these may vary across languages, ii. the shortened forms of honorifics, titles and ranks.

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Lessons drawn...

*The initial overreaction by the students seems to stem from the high proportion of females in language classes, who may be initially offended by the missing of any mention of females on invitation cards at first glance. These feeling may be allayed by explaining that such customs originate from times when diplomats were almost always male and that status, rather than gender is the focus of the cards.

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Lessons drawn...

*Unconventional collocations as well as loan words arising from language-specific features may be further highlighted through in-class activities.

*Students/trainees can be encouraged to compile examples of the very inflexible linguistic patterns for the reference.
Concluding Remarks

The evidence from the author’s own experience and observations of colleagues suggest that employers at the top administrative level of any institution, public or private, may request diplomatic translators to prepare such cards/correspondence, rather than simply translate them, giving just the required details like occasion, date and place. In order to give the required information, such as date, occasion and place, a high command on macrostructures and register by the translators is of utmost importance.

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Concluding Remarks

- It is expected that macrostructure and registers provided here will serve as a guideline for current and future diplomatic translators as well as translation instructors, and that it will provide a modest step forward for templating for translation of specific fields.
Last but not least,

- Thank you for your kind attention!