Section 3. Philology

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REDEFINING MILITARY TRANSLATION

Abstract: The article focuses on the basic concept and term of the military translation theory. The author argues that there is a need to review the concept and redefine the term “*military translation*”, and offers his own definitions.

Keywords: translation studies, military translation, military translation theory, conceptual construct.

Introduction. The *theory of military translation* is a special branch of the translation studies. As such, it should meet the established methodological criteria set for all plausible and scholarly acceptable body of principles offered to explain the specificity of intercultural communications between the military. The results of the latest research of publications on military translation show that most conceptual units of the military translation theory remain terminologically undefined.

The purpose of the article is to review and redefine the concept/term “*military translation*”, which forms the core of the military translation theory’s conceptual construct.

Presentation. In the Former Soviet Union, L. L. Nelyubin pioneered the military translation studies in the early 1960 s [1]. Besides L. L. Nelyubin, the renowned researchers and scholars of military translation are R. K. Min’yar-Beloruichev, A. D. Shvejcer, G. M. Strelkovskij, M. Ya. Cvilling, G. A. Suzilovsky, V. N. Shevchuk, L. K. Latyshev, E. G. Knyazeva, N. K. Garbovskij and others. In Ukraine, the research on military translation started in the mid-1990s. V. V. Balabin, P. A. Matyusha,

M. B. Bilan, S. Ya. Yanchuk., B. A. Dzys, O. V. Yundina, and L. M. Goncharuk successfully defended their PhD dissertations in the field of military translation. The synopsis of the researched topics and problems of military translation is outlined in article [2]. However, the essential military translation concepts urgently need terminological definitions. Here are some facts.

The “*Explanatory translation studies’ dictionary*” by L. L. Nelyubin [3] – one of the most authoritative academic and reference guides that contains 2,028 entries extracted from 224 sources – has only six headwords on military translation. They are: *military translation* [3, 32], *lexical specificity of the translation of military materials* [3, 97], *specificity of the translation of military materials* [3, 132–134], *stylistic specificity of the translation of military materials* [3, 212–213], *theory of military translation* [3, 220–221], *demands on the military interpreter* [3, 230–231]. L. L. Nelyubin undoubtedly authors all these dictionary entries on military translation, since they are practically identical to the paragraphs of his theoretical introduction to different military translation textbooks [2, 8]. Unfortunately, only

one out of six headwords (*military translation*) has the terminological definition in the dictionary. Besides L. L. Nelyubin, R. K. Min'yar-Beloruchev coined a definition for military translation in his famous book "*General theory of translation and interpretation*" [6, 222]. Min'yar-Beloruchev's definition is also registered in the dictionary [3, 32].

L. L. Nelyubin emphasizes that "*the theory of military translation is comprehensively presented in the works of G. M. Strelkovskij*" [3, 220]. However, a thorough analysis of G. M. Strelkovskij's monograph "*Theory and practice of military translation*" [4] shows that the author, in fact, defines the concepts and units of the *general theory* of translation studies. Although G. M. Strelkovskij monograph's enumerates 101 terms in the Glossary [4, 259–263] and 142 concepts in the Index [4, 271–272], there are no definitions for specific concepts and terms of the *military translation theory* in the format of the meta-language algorithm: *concept – term – definition*.

In our opinion, the terminological definitions of military translation theory's concepts ought to explain the ontological essence of the military translation specificity, characteristic features and qualities, as well as ensure ample perception and unambiguous understanding of an appropriate concept or category. They should logically and comprehensively describe military translation's concepts by vocational terms from the translation studies' domain, be systematic, consistent, complete, and optimally concise. Furthermore, the lack of special definitions for military translation theory's basic concepts has been significantly hindering its development since 1960s.

The definition of military translation. The concept/term of *military translation* belongs to the headmost units of the military translation theory's conceptual construct that require proper clarification and definition. Currently, we have only two definitions of military translation, and both are registered in Nelyubin's dictionary [3, 32].

According to L. L. Nelyubin, "**Military translation** 1. a type of special translation with a clearly

manifested military communication function. A distinctive feature of the military translation is the heavy terminological saturation and extremely precise, clear presentation of the materials with the relative absence of figurative and emotional expressive means" [3, 32]. R. K. Min'yar-Beloruchev defines military translation as "*a type of special translation for operational purpose, the object of which are military materials*" [5, 222].

Min'yar-Beloruchev's definition looks better; it is more precise and concise. Nelyubin's definition is longer; it consists of two separate sentences, which is normally undesirable for terminological definitions. Likewise, both definitions lead to a "vicious circle" – they define the term by the same definition: "*military translation is a type of special translation...*". Even though both definitions do not exactly explicate the nature and specificity of military translation, many researchers and scholars accept them beyond reasonable doubt, judgement or critique. Interestingly enough, most of them refer to Nelyubin's definition in their papers.

With due respect to both distinguished authors, we would like to offer our definition for the term/concept of military translation, bearing in mind that for scientific, educational, methodological and practical purposes it is preferably desirable to have two types of definitions – a short (concise) definition and a long (expanded) one.

The *concise definition* demonstrates only predominant features of military translation, and simultaneously makes it possible to differentiate military translation from other translation types and translology concepts; it also meets the requirements of rational and operational brevity, which is an essential prerequisite for terminology definitions:

Military translation – a special type of mediated intercultural communication, carried out for the linguistic support of the armed forces.

The *expanded definition* explicates additional indispensable features of military translation; it presents the term/concept of military translation as a complex

system having integral structural elements; it also reveals military interpreter's role and functions:

Military translation – a special type of mediated intercultural and bilateral communication in the armed forces, which has military-political, military-technical and military-special texts as its object, and is carried out under normal and extreme conditions of military service through a professional military interpreter.

The object of military translation. There is no separate headword, entry or definition for the concept/term "object of military translation" in the aforementioned academic and reference sources. However, we can derive its meaning from R. K. Min'yar-Belorushev's definition of military translation: "Military translation. A type of special translation for operational purpose, **the object of which are military materials.**" [5, 222]. Therefore, according to R. K. Min'yar-Belorushev, military materials comprise the object of military translation.

Another definition can be found in the fundamental article on military translation by N. K. Garbovskij and E. N. Mishkurov [6]. The authors quote L. L. Nelyubin and use his definition to define military translation [6, 16–17]. They define the object of military translation as the "so-called "military parlance" – all those speech products that are generated by the military or for the military under specific communication conditions. Thus, military parlance can be regarded as a specific form of language communication, inherent in a particular professional community, united by the common object of its activities." [6, 17]. Accordingly, N. K. Garbovskij and E. N. Mishkurov identify

professional military speech and/or discourse ("military parlance") as the object of military translation.

In our opinion, *military-political, military-technical and military-special texts constitute the **object of military translation***, which is included in our expanded definition of military translation as one of its key characteristics.

Military translation theory. Even though, according to L. L. Nelyubin "the theory of military translation is comprehensively presented in the works of G. M. Strelkovskij" [3, 220], there is no definition for this concept/term in G. M. Strelkovskij's monograph [4], Nelyubin's dictionary [3] or other research papers on military translation. To summarize the analysis, we would like to offer a definition for the theory of military translation, which fills the existing gap of its conceptual construct:

Military translation theory – a group of well-structured and summarized facts, theoretical judgments, hypotheses and methodological provisions, coherently integrated into a system by carefully selected and terminologically refined units of its conceptual construct, which reveal the essence and specificity of the military interpreter's professional duties.

Conclusion. Most categorical units of the military translation theory, which form its conceptual construct, remain unidentified and/or undescribed. The lack of special definitions for military translation theory's basic concepts has been significantly hindering its development since 1960s. Thus, the term and concept of *military translation* was reviewed and redefined.

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