Techniques and Method's of Translation

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Abstract: *Translation studies is an academic interdiscipline dealing with the systematic study of the theory, description and application of translation, interpreting, and localization. As an interdiscipline, Translation Studies borrows much from the various fields of study that support translation. These include comparative literature, computer science, history, linguistics, philology, philosophy, semiotics, and terminology. The term translation studies was coined by the Amsterdam-based American scholar James S. Holmes in his paper "The name and nature of translation studies",[1] which is considered a foundational statement for the discipline.[2] In English, writers occasionally use the term "translatology" (and less commonly "traductology") to refer to translation studies, and the corresponding French term for the discipline is usually traductologie (as in the Société Française de Traductologie). In the United States there is a preference for the term Translation and Interpreting Studies (as in the American Translation and Interpreting Studies Association), although European tradition includes interpreting within translation studies (as in the European Society for Translation Studies).*

I. Introduction

Way back in the 1950s, two French scholars named Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet explored the linguistic aspects of translation. The field of Translation Studies didn't really exist at the time, so most of what Vinay and Darbelnet did was considered comparative literature.

When looking at the work of Vinay and Darbelnet, the term contrastive linguistics seems much more appropriate, as what they did was look at the differences between two languages in order to inform their understanding of both of them. While other scholars sought to merely compare two languages in order to inform the relationship between them, Vinay and Darbelnet looked at the process of translation.

Their efforts culminated in what is considered their seminal work in the linguistic turn of translation studies, Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais : méthode de traduction, which around four decades later was translated into an English version, Comparative stylistics of French and English : a methodology for translation. The fact that it was still worth translating into English nearly half a century later shows you just how important it was. In the book, Vinay and Darbelnet posited that there were seven main processes, or procedures, at work during any given translation. Here's the seven they came up with:

II. Borrowing

Borrowing is the taking of words directly from one language into another without translation. Many English words are "borrowed" into other languages; for example software in the field of technology and funk in culture. English also borrows numerous words from other languages; abbatoire, café, passé and résumé from French; hamburger and kindergarten from German; bandana, musk and sugar from Sanskrit. Borrowed words are often printed in italics when they are considered to be "foreign".

Unless you are one of these people that confuses borrowing and lending, then this should cause you little trouble. Borrowing is the idea of taking the word from the source language (SL) and maintaining it in the target language (TL). It is considered the simplest of the procedures and tends to be employed in two situations: either when discussing a new technical process for which no term exists within the TL, or when maintaining a word from the SL for stylistic effect, in which the translator uses the foreign term to add flavour to the target text (TT).

III. Calque

A calque or loan translation (itself a calque of German Lehnübersetzung) is a phrase borrowed from another language and translated literally word-for-word. You often see them in specialized or internationalized fields such as quality assurance (aseguramiento de calidad, assurance qualité taken from English). Examples that have been absorbed into English include standpoint and beer garden from German Standpunkt and Biergarten; breakfast from French déjeuner (which now means lunch in Europe, but maintains the same meaning of breakfast in Québec). Some calques can become widely accepted in the target language (such as standpoint, beer garden and breakfast and Spanish peso mosca and Casa Blanca from English flyweight and White House). The meaning other calques can be rather obscure for most people, especially when they relate to specific vocations

or subjects such as science and law. Solución de compromiso is a Spanish legal term taken from the English compromise solution and although Spanish attorneys understand it, the meaning is not readily understood by the layman. An unsuccessful calque can be extremely unnatural, and can cause unwanted humor, often interpreted as indicating the lack of expertise of the translator in the target language.

A calque is when an expression from the source text (ST) is transferred literally into the TT. Calques either follow the syntax of the TL while translating each word literally or ignore the syntax of the TL and maintain the syntax of the SL, rendering the calque in an awkward syntactical structure in the TT.

IV. Literal Translation

A word-for-word translation can be used in some languages and not others dependent on the sentence structure: El equipo está trabajando para terminar el informe would translate into English as The team is working to finish the report. Sometimes it works and sometimes it does not. For example, the Spanish sentence above could not be translated into French or German using this technique because the French and German sentence structures are different. And because one sentence can be translated literally across languages does not mean that all sentences can be translated literally. El equipo experimentado está trabajando para terminar el informe translates into English as The experienced team is working to finish the report ("experienced" and "team" are reversed).

The third translation method is only to be used under certain circumstances according to Vinay and Darbelnet. The idea of translating word for word in a way that does not alter the meaning is considered an acceptable use of literal translation by the two scholars. Literal translation, put simply, expands the scope of a calque but in a much more acceptable way.

V. Transposition

This is the process where parts of speech change their sequence when they are translated (blue ball becomes boule bleue in French). It is in a sense a shift of word class. Grammatical structures are often different in different languages. He likes swimming translates as Er schwimmt gern in German. Transposition is often used between English and Spanish because of the preferred position of the verb in the sentence: English often has the verb near the beginning of a sentence; Spanish can have it closer to the end. This requires that the translator knows that it is possible to replace a word category in the target language without altering the meaning of the source text, for example: English Hand knitted (noun + participle) becomes Spanish Tejido a mano (participle + adverbial phrase).

Vinay and Darbelnet referred to transposition as changing word class without changing meaning. This refers to when translators (often without thinking) change the word type, such as from nouns to verbs. Vinay and Darbelnet considered transposition to be either obligatory or optional, and referred to the ST as the base expression and the TT as the transposed expression.

VI. Modulation

Modulation consists of using a phrase that is different in the source and target languages to convey the same idea: Te lo dejo means literally I leave it to you but translates better as You can have it. It changes the semantics and shifts the point of view of the source language. Through modulation, the translator generates a change in the point of view of the message without altering meaning and without generating a sense of awkwardness in the reader of the target text. It is often used within the same language. The expressions es fácil de entender (it is easy to understand) and no es complicado de entender (it is not complicated to understand) are examples of modulation. Although both convey the same meaning, it is easy to understand simply conveys "easiness" whereas it is not complicated to understand implies a previous assumption of difficulty that we are denying by asserting it is not complicated to understand. This type of change of point of view in a message is what makes a reader say: "Yes, this is exactly how we say it in our language".

The fifth of Vinay and Darbelnet's procedures is modulation. Modulation refers to rendering the TT from a different point of view to that of the ST. Vinay and Darbelnet consider this procedure to be necessary when the results of the former procedures would produce an awkward-sounding translation, despite it being grammatically, syntactically, and lexically correct. Modulation is a way for the translator to find a degree of naturalness in their TT without sacrificing any meaning or accuracy originating from the ST.

A great example given by Vinay and Darbelnet shows how the double negative construction used in English is uncommon in French, and how modulation would render this in French as a simple affirmative statement using a positive modifier.

VII. Equivalence

Here you have to express something in a completely different way, for example when translating idioms or advertising slogans. The process is creative, but not always easy. Would you have translated the movie The Sound of Music into Spanish as La novicia rebelde (The Rebellious Novice in Latin America) or Sonrisas y lágrimas (Smiles and Tears in Spain).

The idea of equivalence can be simultaneously simple and complex in Translation Studies. Vinay and Darbelnet explain equivalence as something almost inherently cultural, using the example of someone expressing pain. In English the term "ouch!"

VIII. Adaptation

Adaptation occurs when something specific to one language culture is expressed in a totally different way that is familiar or appropriate to another language culture. It is a shift in cultural environment. Should pincho (a Spanish restaurant menu dish) be translated as kebab in English? It involves changing the cultural reference when a situation in the source culture does not exist in the target culture (for example France has Belgian jokes and England has Irish jokes).

IX. Compensation

In general terms compensation can be used when something cannot be translated, and the meaning that is lost is expressed somewhere else in the translated text. Peter Fawcett defines it as: "...making good in one part of the text something that could not be translated in another". One example given by Fawcett is the problem of translating nuances of formality from languages that use forms such as Spanish informal tú and formal usted, French tu and vous, and German du and sie into English which only has 'you', and expresses degrees of formality in different ways.

As Louise M. Haywood from the University of Cambridge puts it, "we have to remember that translation is not just a movement between two languages but also between two cultures. Cultural transposition is present in all translation as degrees of free textual adaptation departing from maximally literal translation, and involves replacing items whose roots are in the source language culture with elements that are indigenous to the target language. The translator exercises a degree of choice in his or her use of indigenous features, and, as a consequence, successful translation may depend on the translator's command of cultural assumptions in each language in which he or she works".

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