Translation Procedures

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Abstract: A basic survey across a given language pair normally reveals units that are structurally incongruent with one another, which demonstrates that translation cannot be reduced to establishing a straightforward correspondence between individual words. To properly render the meaning of the source text, translators must introduce *translation shifts*, i.e. departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the source language to the target language. This chapter reviews a taxonomy of *translation procedures* used for dealing with the translation shifts proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958), which has been regarded a springboard for later taxonomies of translation techniques and strategies.

Keywords: translation procedures, translation shifts, translation strategies, unit of translation, direct translation, oblique translation

1. Introduction

A question of *translation procedures* is associated with *equivalence* (see Chapter 1; see also Baker 2011) and a division between *literal* and *free* translation strategies, where the *literal* generally refers to translation of the target text by following individual word of the source text as closely as possible, while the *free* translation focuses on capturing the sense of longer stretches of the source text. It is also closely related to a distinction of *translation units* (see Hatim & Munday 2004 for a review), in particular a *lexicological translation unit*, understood as a group of lexemes that form a single element of thought. A basic survey across a given language pair normally reveals units that are structurally incongruent with one another. It can be illustrated with the verb "fetch", whose meaning corresponds to two Polish verbs "iść + przynieść", or the compound "apple pie",

which is normally rendered in Polish with a single noun "szarlotka". Such examples demonstrate that translation cannot be reduced to establishing a straightforward correspondence between individual words.

In real life scenarios, translators often cope with more elaborate structures, which due to *entrenchment** require certain ways of translating, while not others, to produce a massage that is meaningful to the target language users.

*) In modern approaches to language there is a growing tendency to replace the idea of *grammaticality* with that of *entrenchment*, which is derived from the usage-based approach to meaning postulated by *cognitive linguistics*. As put by Langacker (2008a: 38): "Meanings (like other linguistic structures) are recognized as part of a language only to the extent that they are (i) entrenched in the minds of individual speakers and (ii) conventional for members of a speech community. Only a limited array of senses satisfy these criteria and qualify as established *linguistic units*. But since entrenchment and conventionalization are inherently matters of degree, there is no discrete boundary between senses which have and which lack the status of established units. We find instead a gradation leading from novel interpretations, through incipient senses, to established linguistic meanings". For example, Apple, Inc. is famous for notoriously using marketing slogans that break conventions of grammaticality. In 1997 the company introduced the attention-grabbing slogan "Think different", which was received as grammatically unconventional. Despite initial criticisms, the slogan has been widely accepted, which makes it grammatical (see Trenga 2010).

(author's note)

For example, the following notice spotted in a Polish self-service bar above garbage cans: "Prosimy nie wyrzucać pełnych kubków" with the accompanying translation "We ask to not throw away full cups" may sound unfortunately puzzling to native speakers of English, who would probably expect in this context a more conventional message, like "Please do not dispose of liquids". Such examples demonstrate that the structure of the SL often must be changed in the target language to properly render the meaning of the source text. Those small, yet meaningful, changes that occur in the process of translation are called *translation shifts*. Catford (1965/2000: 141) defines them as "departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL to the TL". Although Catford was the first to use the term *shift*, a comprehensive taxonomy of shifts that occur in translation was established by Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet (1958), who developed a taxonomy of *translation procedures*.

2. Translation procedures

Vinay and Darbelnet (1958) reject individual words as units of translation by emphasizing that translators deal with ideas and feelings in various semantic fields, rather than individual lexemes. They define the unit of translation as "the smallest segment of the utterance whose signs are linked in such a way that they should not be translated individually" (Vinay & Darbelnet 1958 quoted in Hatim & Munday 2004: 18). From this outlook, the translation unit is equivalent to the above-mentioned *lexicological unit* and corresponds largely to a *unit of thought*, since all these terms basically convey the same concept with emphasis put on different facets. Following this perspective Hatim and Munday (2004: 27) describe the unit of translation as "a TL piece of language which plays the same role in the TL system as an SL piece of language plays in the SL system". Such a denomination of the translation unit delimits borders between formal correspondence at the structural level, on the one hand, and semantic equivalence in the particular context, on the other. The translation shift occurs when rendering a translation for a particular segment of the text requires the translator to break the formal correspondence between surface structures functioning in SL and TL.

Sometimes, translation shifts are required to achieve a meaningful translation of relatively common lexemes. For example, the adverb "upstairs" conflates both the direction (up) and the medium (stairs) of movement. Consequently, translating "(She went) upstairs" into Polish, which does not have a parallel adverb, requires using at least three distinct lexemes "schodami na górę", but even four "po schodach na górę" would not be inappropriate. And vice-versa, translating instrumental forms of Polish nouns used to encode instruments of motion, such as "autobusem", often requires using prepositional phrases, such as "by bus". Moreover, the translation shifts are employed to achieve equivalence at the pragmatic level. For example, translating "Once upon a time…" as "Dawno, dawno temu …" creates a parallel dramatic effect on the reader; using forms "Pani/Pani" for translating "you" enables the translator to preserve the level of formality in correspondence; changing the adjective-noun order for the nominal "blue shark" into "żarłacz błękitny" effectuates in retaining naming conventions; and so on. Understanding such systematic shifts between linguistic structures is a basic aspect of daily practice in translation.

Vinay and Darbelnet's (1958/2000) taxonomy of *translation procedures* used to deal with incompatibilities between SL and TL structures distinguishes two major *methods of translation*. A *direct translation*, which generally resembles word by word quotation of the original message in the target language, includes *borrowing*, *calque* and *literal translation*. An *oblique translation*, in

which the translator interprets, e.g. elaborates or summarizes, the explicit contents of the original, embraces *transposition*, *modulation*, *equivalence*, and *adaptation* translation procedures. Moreover, these procedures can be employed at three levels of language: (a) the lexicon; (b) the grammatical structures; and (c) the *message*, which stands for higher elements of text, including, besides sentences and paragraphs, certain situational utterances that convey broader meanings. For instance, although the phrase "Polish jokes" refers in its origins to jokes made specifically of Poles, it can be used as an umbrella term for jokes made of other ethnic groups (Brzozowska 2010). It must be emphasized, however, that while the direct translation is more closely tied to the original text and the oblique translation relies to a greater extent on interpretive resemblance to function independently, this distinction is not always a clear-cut dichotomy. In real life scenarios, it marks two opposite ends of a wide spectrum of options available to translators. A particular choice is often dictated by the *relevance* of a given message to the intended audience (see Chapter 7; see also Bogucki 2004; Sperber & Wilson 1995).

3. *Direct* translation procedures

Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/2000) note that due to structural and metalinguistic parallelisms that occur between languages it is often possible to overcome gaps (or *lacunae*) between the source language and the target language by transposing the SL message piece by piece into the TL. In such cases, when the translator notices a gap in the target language, they can employ either a parallel category or a parallel concept to convey the meaning of the source text. This can be accomplished with one of the following *direct translation procedures*.

(1) **Borrowing**, which is relatively the simplest of all procedures used for translation, involves using foreign phrasing in the target text. The reason for the gap in the target language is usually metalinguistic. Nowadays, it is frequently caused by new technologies entering rapidly the surrounding reality. For example, while "laptop" can be translated into Polish as "komputer przenośny", its more recent variant, i.e. "tablet" appears to function in Polish exclusively in a lexical form borrowed directly from English. Another reason for using borrowings is that the concept discussed in the source text is relatively unknown to the target audience. This seems to be the case with the much discussed *gender* ideology, which was not translated into Polish, as "ideologia płci", but rather "ideologia gender". Although the concept of *gender* is obviously as universal to Polish speakers as it is to any other audience worldwide, the recent discussion

focuses on some specific aspects of European regulations, which is emphasized by using that particular foreign term in this otherwise familiar context.

As pointed out by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/2000), perhaps the most interesting aspect of using borrowings relates to creating specific stylistic effects, e.g. introducing the flavor of the foreign culture into a translation. For instance, certain phrases from French are sometimes used to create an aura of nostalgia for the past when French was the *lingua franca*, which can be exemplified with the famous *Michelle* ballad by the Beatles. In such cases the translator may opt to leave the foreign elements intact. On the other hand, terms borrowed from English tend to be associated with the modern socio-economic development, which seems to explain why some companies in Poland decide to call their human resources departments "Dział Human Resources" instead of "Dział Kadr".

A remarkable example of employing borrowings for a stylistic effect in *literary translation* (Chapter 9) are Robert Stiller's subsequent translations of the novel "A Clockwork Orange" by Anthony Burgess (1991, 2001). In order to emphasize a violent, outright barbaric, nature of the protagonist and his gang, Burgess invented a special slang for the book, which was based on modified Slavic words borrowed mainly from Russian. For instance, "droog" means "friend", "korova" means "cow", and so on. To preserve the harshness of that slang for the Polish reader, who is naturally much more familiar with the sound of Slavic languages than the original English-speaking audience, in his second attempt Stiller back-translated, in a way, Slavic borrowings into English-sounding expressions to make them more outlandish (Kubińska & Kubiński 2004; Lukas 2008).

(2) **Calque** is a special kind of borrowing in which the TL borrows an expression form the SL by translating literally each of the original elements. The result creates either, a *lexical calque*, which preserves the syntactic structure of the TL, but at the same time introduces a new mode of expression; or a *structural calque*, which introduces a new construction into the language. Examples of lexical calques functioning in Polish include "lokowanie produktu" (product placement), "przeglądarka internetowa" (Internet browser), "drapacz chmur" (skyscraper), and "dział zasobów ludzkich", which is another common variant of labeling human resources departments in Polish companies. An example of an unfortunate calque that occurs when translating without proper background from Polish to English is the bar notice "asking to not throw away full cups" quoted in the introductory section.

Structural calques seem to be to less conspicuous, still they can be easily found in contemporary Polish. Examples include: "szybki kredyt" (fast loan), "zdrowa żywność" (healthy food), "tania odzież" (second-hand clothes), to name but a few. All these phrases break the conventional way of distinguishing cate-

gories by postpositioning the adjective, e.g. "kredyt długoterminowy", "żywność bezglutenowa", "odzież robocza". Other examples, such as "auto-myjnia" (car-wash) or "biznes plan" (business plan) employ nouns for the attributive function, which, unlike English, is not normally used in the Polish grammatical system (Sztencel, 2009).

Since *borrowing* and *calque* are strongly related, it is sometimes difficult to draw an absolute border between these two translation procedures. For example, the translation "aplikacje dla Androida" (applications for Android) borrows both the structure and lexis, which makes it an amalgamation of these categories. The problem of loan expressions in contemporary Polish is much more complex. Otwinowska-Kasztelanic (2000) distinguishes several types of loans at different language levels. She classifies *loan shifts* as incorporating both *calques*, i.e. loans where "foreign language elements are replaced by semantically equivalent native ones" (Otwinowska-Kasztelanic 2000: 15), and *semantic loans*, i.e. native language words used in accordance with the donor word semantics.

Polish has a long history of borrowing expressions from English in a wide variety of semantic areas, including business, sport, technology, as well as numerous other domains (Mańczak-Wohlfeld 2006). Although borrowings and calques are relatively straightforward solutions to various problematic situations encountered in the translation process, they should be used with caution. It seems that a lot of translators are biased to think that words and structures borrowed from English sound perfectly right to Polish speakers, which is not necessarily true. Expressions like "marketingowiec" (marketer) or "zjeść coś w fast-foodzie" (to eat something in a fast-food [restaurant]) sound awkward, despite the fact that both *marketing* and *fast-food* have become popular words used in common contexts. More natural equivalents for these expressions, at least in most common contexts, are "specjalista ds. marketingu" and "zjeść coś w barze", respectively.

(3) **Literal translation,** or *word for word* translation, relies on the direct transfer of a text from SL into a grammatical and meaningful text in TL. Using this procedure, the translator focuses predominantly on adhering to the linguistic rules of the target language. In practice, literal translation occurs most commonly when translating between two languages of the same family, such as French and Italian, and works most efficiently when they also share the same culture. Despite seemingly limited scope of applications, this procedure is among preferred ways of translating in those functional contexts where more emphasis is laid on preserving the verbatim meaning of the original text than attaining stylistic elegance, which is often the case with *legal translation* (Chapter 10).

If, after applying the first three procedures, the resulting translation is still unacceptable, i.e. the target text has no meaning, gives another meaning, or

skews the original message in any other way, the procedures of *oblique translation* can be employed to achieve a better result.

4. *Oblique* translation procedures

Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/2000) note that due to structural and metalinguistic differences between languages certain stylistic effects are unattainable without upsetting the lexis or the syntactic order in the target language. In such cases more complex methods must be employed to convey the meaning of the source text. Although at a cursory glance they might look fairly sophisticated, or even unusual, the *oblique translation procedures* allow translators to exert a strict control over the reliability of their efforts.

(4) **Transposition** involves replacing one word class with another without changing the meaning of the text. It can be applied intralinguistically, i.e. within a particular language. For instance, "She announced she would resign" can be transposed to "She announced her resignation". Similarly in Polish, instead of saying "Ogłosiła, że rezygnuje" we can use "Ogłosiła [swoją] rezygnację". The original expression is referred to as the *base expression*, and the result as the *transposed expression*.

Transposition is a highly versatile translation procedure. For example, English adjectives "elven" or "elvish" (from the word *elf*, which descends from Germanic mythology) do not seem to have natural equivalents in Polish, despite the fact that due to contacts with Germanic cultures, and in particular the enormous popularity of Tolkien's books/film adaptations, *elves* are widely known to Polish audience. Although some translators attempt to use adjectives "elfowy" or "elficki", they may sound awkward to some Polish speakers, because Polish usually employs a genitive form in postposition in such contexts. For that reason, expressions "miecz elfów" and "księżniczka elfów" seem to sound more natural than "elficki miecz" and "elfowa księżniczka" as translations for "evlish sword" and "elven princess", respectively. Similarly, the phrase "okręty wikingów" seems to be a better choice than "wikińskie / wikingowe / wikingowskie okręty". Moreover, transposition can be employed for a better economy of the target text. For instance, the sentence "[The word 'Hispanic' can refer to] people whose origins range from Mexican and Puerto Rican to Cuban and Argentinean." can be translated literary as ". . . osób pochodzenia zarówno meksykańskiego i portorykańskiego, jak i kubańskiego i argentyńskiego". However, perhaps a more efficient choice is to use country names instead of nationalities: ". . . osób pochodzących zarówno z Meksyku i Portoryko, jak i z Kuby

i Argentyny". The transposed expression is both more manageable for the translator and more easily graspable for the reader.

As demonstrated above, the transposed expression sometimes has a substantially different stylistic value than the base expression. Since transposition enables rendering specific nuances of style, it is a basic means for fine-tuning stylistic elegance of the translated text. Moreover, if a translation obtained in this manner fits better the resulting utterance from the stylistic perspective, the transposed expression is, somewhat paradoxically, more literary in character.

(5) **Modulation** involves changing the form of the message through a change in perspective. An alteration of this kind may be required in contexts where a literal or transposed translation still sounds unidiomatic or awkward in the TL, despite being a grammatically correct utterance. As with transposition, in some cases modulation may be optional, while in others it is obligatory. A good example of fixed modulation is the change that occurs between some Polish and English verbal constructions in grammatically prescribed contexts, which can be observed for certain expressions of state. For example, "He is 40 years old" must be translated as "On ma 40 lat" and "Are you on the phone?" as "Czy masz/posiadasz telefon?" (cf. Fisiak, et al. 1987). Yet, modulation typically operates at the phrase level. For instance, the set phrase "If it wasn't for . . ." must be translated, more or less, as "Jedynie dzięki . . .", because any attempts at word by word translation, e.g. "Jeśli to nie byłoby dla / z powodu", sound preposterous. Examples of optional modulations that are frequently encountered in Polish translations of English texts include rendering "unless" as "chyba, że", or "It is not uncommon . . ." as "Dość powszechnie . . .". However, the distinction between obligatory and optional modulation is not always clear-cut, as it is determined in each case by the wider linguistic context.

(6) **Equivalence**, also known as *reformulation*, produces an equivalent text in the target language by using completely different stylistic and structural methods. Classical examples of equivalence include translation of exclamations and expletives. For instance, English "Ouch!" corresponds to Polish "Au!", while "Damn it!" to "Niech to szlag [trafi]!". Another type of expressions that normally require reformulation to fit into the target text involves onomatopoeia of animal sounds. For instance, while horses in Polish stomp "patataj", English ones apparently generate "bumpety-bump" with their hooves, etc. Such examples demonstrate a specific feature of equivalence as the translation procedure: it practically always relates to the whole of a message. Moreover, since it embraces an opulent repertoire of idioms, sayings, proverbs, clichés, etc., it tends to be fixed in most cases.

Translating proverbs is a good example of employing equivalence for rendering more elaborate structures between SL and TL. For example, "Rome wasn't built in a day" equals to "Nie od razu Kraków zbudowano"; "Don't count your chickens before they're hatched" corresponds, at least for the most part, to "Nie dziel skóry na niedźwiedziu". In some cases, however, finding an equivalent may not be so easy. For instance, the old-fashioned, but still common English saying "A rolling stone gathers no moss", which according to CALD (2008) is used to mean that "a person who is always travelling and changing jobs has the advantage of having no responsibilities, but also has disadvantages such as having no permanent place to live" does not seem to have an equally widespread counterpart in Polish. It can probably be translated as "Toczący się kamień nie obrasta mchem" (PWN-Oxford 2004), yet it is not something frequently heard in everyday speech. For that reason, it resembles a calque rather than an equivalence, which demonstrates that within this procedure certain borderline cases exist, as well. The equivalence is also typically employed to translate idioms. For example, "like two peas in a pod" is probably best translated as "jak dwie krople wody", while "apples and oranges" can be rendered in a good number of contexts as "różne jak woda i ogień". Again, one must bear in mind that not all English idioms have direct counterparts in Polish, and vice-versa.

(7) **Adaptation** is used when the type of situation referred to by the SL message does not function in the TL culture. In such cases the translator must recreate a situation that can be regarded as more or less equivalent. From this outlook, adaptation is a specific kind of *situational* equivalence. Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/2000: 91) discuss an example of an Englishman who, without taking much notice, kisses his daughter on the mouth as a greeting of a loving father after a long journey. However, translating "He kissed his daughter on the mouth" literary would probably sound awkward to French audience, since in that culture it may have a different connotation. Consequently, a translation into French requires a special kind of over-rendering.[1]

Adaptations are particularly common in translations of book and movie titles (Jarniewicz: 2000). A good example of adaptation in this context is the translation of "Broken Arrow" (Segan & Woo: 1996). Although, at a first glance, it seems that the title could be translated literally as "Złamana strzała", a closer look reveals that it refers to US nuclear accident definition codes, where

[1] Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/2000: 91) also quote an anecdote about a simultaneous interpreter who, having adapted "cricket" into "Tour de France" in a context of a particularly popular sport, put himself in a difficult situation when the French delegate thanked the original speaker for reference to such a typically French sport. To avoid embarrassment the interpreter simply reversed the adaptation back into "cricket" when translating to his English client.

the phrase signifies "an actual accident involving a nuclear weapon, warhead, or component" (Hebert 2008: 26). Since Poland at the time when the movie was released had not officially admitted possession nor even storage of nuclear weapons on its territory (Łuczak 1996), such emergency codes were not available for use in translations. The film was distributed under the title "Tajna broń".

Translators are often reluctant to make use of adaptation, as it invariably affects not only the syntactic structure, but also the development and representation of ideas within the paragraph, chapter, or the text as a whole. In extreme scenarios, a particular adaptation can affect extra-textual contexts, which can be illustrated with the following movie title sequence, in which the initial translation influenced subsequent releases: *Die Hard* (Margolin & McTiernan 1988) [original movie] – "Szklana pułapka"; *Spy Hard* (Nielsen & Friedberg 1996) [a parody comedy with numerous references to the original movie] – "Szklanką po łapkach"; A *Good Day to Die Hard* (Karnowski & Moore 2013) [the latest film in the series] – "Szklana pułapka 5".

The absence of adaptation may be noticeable by the overall tone of the text that does not sound right in an indefinable way. It is the unfortunate impression given by some international organization publications, where, for the sake of an exaggerated insistence on parallelism, the people in charge demand translations based on calques. The result often sounds unnatural, which is referred to as *translationese*.[2]

5. Conclusion

From a general perspective, translation shifts can be viewed either as unwelcome deviations from the source text in the course of the translation act or as something indispensable and desired to overcome specific differences between the SL and TL (Bakker, Koster & van Leuven-Zwart 1998). Although the taxonomy introduced by Vinay and Darbelnet has been criticized for being nothing more than a comparison between English and French at the level of words, phrases, and sentences taken out of the context, it can be regarded as the proposal that formed a springboard for later taxonomies of translation *techniques* and *strategies*. Scholars exploring the translation shifts labeled and re-labeled them in

[2] The term *translationese* is a pejorative term used to refer to the language of translation that derives from calquing ST lexical or syntactic patterning (see Duff 1981). Newmark (2003: 96) uses a similar term *translatorese* to refer to the automatic choice of the most common dictionary translation of a word where a less common alternative would be more appropriate.

various ways to achieve a more comprehensive and clear-cut categorizations (see Marco 2009 for a review of inconsistencies between the terms *procedure*, *strategy*, *method*, and *technique* within translation studies). For example, Nida (1964) uses the term *techniques of adjustment* to discuss processes targeted at producing semantically equivalent structures from a communicative perspective. Newmark (1988) discusses *procedures* applied to sentences and smaller units of language, which he distinguishes from *methods* referring to the whole text. Van Leuven-Zwart (1989, 1990) presents an extensive analysis of translation procedures based on extracts from translations of Latin American fiction. Chesterman (1997) makes a distinction between *global* and *local strategies*, as well as between *comprehension* and *production strategies*. Diaz-Cintaz & Remael (2007) review strategies applied specifically in the practice of *subtitling*. Despite such efforts, all existing classifications still demonstrate certain deficiencies (Gambier 2010), which can be attributed to the fact that all categorizations demonstrate a natural tendency to overlap to some extent (cf. Rosch 1978).

A closer look at Vinay and Darbelnet's taxonomy of translation procedures encourages one to look beyond simple structural alterations between SL and TL to see the role of the translator as a creative intermediary between the original author and the target audience in the process of translation-mediated communication. The last few decades have seen a considerable change in the focus of translation studies from the formalist approaches concentrating predominantly on linguistic transcoding to more functionally (e.g. Vermeer 1978/2000), and socio-culturally (e.g. Sperber & Wilson 1995) oriented approaches taking into consideration a vast array of extra-textual factors involved in the process of translation. More recently, an increasingly important role is attributed to *cognitive linguistics* as the frame of reference for the discipline of translation studies (see Tabakowska 1993; Hejwowski 2004; Deckert 2013).

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