

I. Source-text Analysis, Translation Briefs & Identifying Translation Problems

Three aspects of functionalism in translator training:

- 1. the importance of the translation brief,**
- 2. the role of source-text analysis, and**
- 3. the classification and hierarchization of translation problems**

1. The Importance of the Translation Brief in Translator Training

- we cannot pretend that a given source text contains **all the instructions** about how it should be translated
- the purpose of the target text can be inferred from the **translation situation** itself (translator's previous experience or routine)
- every translation task should thus be accompanied by a brief that defines the **conditions** under which the target text should carry out its particular function
- the **communicative situation** (including the communicators and their communicative aims) determines the verbal and nonverbal features of the text – situational factors:
 - the difference in place, time, motive and purpose of the communication,
 - difference with regard to the culture-bound knowledge,
 - experience or susceptibility of the respective audiences.

To find the aspects in which the source and the target texts will diverge, the translator has to *compare* the source text with the target-text profile defined in the translation brief.

The **translation brief** should contain (explicit or implicit) **information** about:

- the (intended) text function(s),
- the target-text addressee(s),
- the (prospective) time and place of text reception,
- the medium over which the text will be transmitted, and
- the motive for the production or reception of the text.

Example (celebration – tourist brochure)

This situation can be formalized as follows:

- Intended **text functions**: referential (information about anniversary events), appellative (image promotion, mainly by means of expressive elements);
- **Addressees**: visitors to Heidelberg and other people interested in the university and academic life;
- **Time and place of reception**: mainly Heidelberg, occasionally other places, for the whole year of the anniversary, but no longer;
- **Medium**: monolingual brochure with coloured photographs and short texts in a given layout;
- **Reason for text production and reception**: 600th anniversary of Heidelberg University.

This information allows us to *infer* the following **general requirements** for the translations:

- In order to achieve the intended functions, the text should conform to **text-type** and general **style** conventions and a rather formal register;
- The text producer should take account of the prospective audience's **culture-specific knowledge presuppositions**;
- **Spatial and temporal deixis** (reference point) will refer mainly to Heidelberg and the year of the anniversary;
- The text must fit into the space provided by the **layout**;
- The information on anniversary events will have **priority** over other data.

2. The Role of Source-Text Analysis

If the translation type is determined not by the source text but by the purpose of the translation process, what role does source-text analysis play in this context?

- The source text provides the **offer of information** - the starting point
- **Analysis of the source text** guides the translation process in that it provides the basis for decisions about:
 - (a) the feasibility of the translation assignment,
 - (b) which source-text units are relevant to a functional translation, and
 - (c) which translation strategy will lead to a target text meeting the requirements of the translation brief.

Various **text-linguistic models** can be used to analyze the source text:

- **pragmatic analysis** of the communicative situations involved
- the same model should be used for **both** the source text and the translation brief (e.g. appellative function in the SL text)
- differences between source-text and target-text addressees with respect to **sociocultural** background, **world knowledge** and **cultural expectations**

After comparing the **source text-in-situation** with the **target text-in-situation**

- decision on optimal 'transfer' procedures:

- Comparison of the **intended functions** – the brief can be carried out by means of a ***heterofunctional*** instrumental translation
- Comparison between SLT & TLT **addressees** leads to two conclusions:
 - (a) the difference in cultural knowledge may require an adjustment of the relationship between ***explicit and implicit*** information in the text;
 - (b) the difference in culture-specific genre expectations may require an ***adaptation*** of the text's form to target-culture textual and stylistic conventions.
- The **time of reception** – possible problems involving different temporal deixis.
- The occasional differences with regard to the **place of reception** for any receivers abroad - may be ignored
- The **medium** - the **same** or **different** for source and target texts
- The **reason for text production** and reception is the same for source and target texts - priority of the **informative** over the **appellative** function (further developing the hierarchy of functions).

3. A Systematic Approach to Translation Problems

One of the advantages of this approach - problems can be identified in advance:

- *translation problems*: objective or (at least inter)subjective;
- *translation difficulties*: the subjective difficulties that a particular translator or trainee encounters in a translation process because of
 - deficient linguistic, cultural or translational competence or
 - because they do not have appropriate documentation.

The comparison between SLT & TLT information:

- what elements can be kept **invariant** and
- what has to be **adjusted** to the requirements of the translation purpose.

For pedagogical purposes, translation problems may be categorized as:
pragmatic, cultural, linguistic or text-specific

1. Pragmatic translation problems

- arise from the differences between the extraling. situations and can be identified by checking on the extratextual factors (sender, receiver, medium, time, place, motive, text function).
- present in every translation task - can be generalized regardless of the languages and cultures involved or the direction of the translation process
- the most important problems to deal with in the initial phases of translator training

2. Cultural translation problems

- the result of the differences in the norms and conventions guiding verbal and non-verbal behaviour in the two cultures involved
- each culture has its own habits, norms and conventions
- they are present in almost every translation task - particularly in instrumental translations.

3. linguistic translation problems

- arise from structural differences in the vocabulary, syntax and suprasegmental features of the two languages.
- Some of these are restricted to language pairs, as might be the case of cognates or false friends (e.g. English *petrol* vs Croatian *petrolej*), one-to-many or one-to-zero equivalences (e.g. Croatian *vrijeme* and English Weather/time/tense)
- Contrastive grammar and comparative stylistics can provide valuable help in solving these problems

II. A Functional Hierarchy of Translation Problems

Traditional approach:

1. start from the source-language elements and
 2. transfer the text sentence by sentence or, more frequently, phrase by phrase or even, if possible, word by word (The result is a kind of draft translation whose quality may vary according to the translator's competence)
 3. this text is then polished stylistically until it seems acceptable (from the translator's personal point of view) for the communicative situation it is intended for.
- This '**bottom-up**' process works from the linguistic text-surface structures (stage 1) to conventions (stage 2) and finally to pragmatics (stage 3).
 - it is highly dependent on the translator's own stylistic preferences and the limitations of their linguistic and translational competence

Drawbacks:

- In the bottom-up approach, translating is seen as a **code-switching operation** where lexical or syntactic equivalences play the most important part.
- keeping as **close** to the **source-text structures** as possible, which leads to linguistic interferences and mistakes even when translating into one's native language.
- translators **lose sight of how the text as a whole functions** in its communicative situation.
- this leads to **intuitive decisions** that cannot be reasoned through inter-subjectively. that is, the translator cannot really explain their decisions to the customer or revisor,
- a decision taken at a lower level often has to be **revised** when reaching the next level.
- sometimes the translation process is even blocked because of apparent **untranslatability**

Functional translation

'top-down' approach:

- i.e. a functional translation process should **start on the pragmatic level** by deciding on the intended function of the translation (documentary vs instrumental).
- a **distinction** is then made between those functional elements of the source text
 - that will have to be **reproduced** 'as such' and the ones
 - that must be **adapted** to the addressee's background knowledge, expectations and communicative needs or to such factors as medium- restrictions and deixis requirements.
- The translation type then determines whether the translated text should conform to **source-culture or target -culture conventions** with regard to translation **style**.
- Only then will the differences in language system come into play

Translation Units Revisited

- The concept of 'translation units' - subject of debate ever since it was introduced by Vinay and Darbelnet in their *Stylistique comparee du franr;ais et de l'anglais* (1958),. Vinay and Darbelnet defined the translation unit as a *unite de pensee* I ("the smallest utterance-segment in which the cohesion of the signs is such that they do not have to be translated separately").
- linguistic approaches - translation units range between the rank of **morphemes** or **words** or vary between **phrases** and **sentences** and the **whole text** in accordance with equivalence requirements
- pragmatic approaches - include
 - larger units like 'the complex semantic-pragmatic values of the text-type' (Neubert 1973).
 - Bassnett and Lefevere (1990:8) even claim that the basic translation unit can be 'the culture'
- hermeneutic approaches 'the holistic effect of the text-composition' becomes a translation unit (Stolze 1982)
- psycholinguistic approaches - the translation unit is determined 'intuitively' by the translator's individual translation proficiency (Konigs 1981).

- One might imagine that a **top-down approach** to translator training would want to favour the **largest translation units** possible
- However, the larger the translation unit, the **less manageable** it becomes for the translator.
- How does one actually set about translating 'the text' (apart from mini-texts like titles or road signs) or even 'the culture'? - by working on **smaller units**.
- scholars interested in translator training have returned to **smaller** segments of text; for instance, Honig (1986:243) focuses on the function a particular segment has for the overall function of the text.

Functionalist approach

- All the approaches above see the translation unit, regardless of its size, as a 'horizontal ' segment in the chronological sequence of linguistic elements.
- a **functionalist approach** can also deal with 'vertical' units (Nord 1988, 1993, 1997b).
 - the text is seen as a hyper-unit comprising functional units that are not rank- bound, with each unit manifested in various linguistic or non-linguistic elements that can occur at any level anywhere in the text.

The **concept of a vertical translation unit** is based on the concept of communication:

- In order to give the receiver a **clue** as to the intended function of a particular text, senders provide their texts with:
 - **markers of function** or **intention** on various levels or ranks:
 - **textual** markers refer to the overall construction of the text,
 - **structural** markers refer to the order and form of paragraphs,
 - **syntactic** markers refer to sentence structures and grammar,
 - **lexical** markers refer to words and phrases,
 - **morphological** markers to word formation,
 - **phonological** markers to sound patterns, intonation, focus points, and so on.

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- One particular function can be marked at various levels or ranks, and all the markers pointing to a particular function or sub-function form a functional unit:
 - *«A functional unit is thus the sum of text elements or features that are intended (or interpreted as being intended) to serve the same communicative function or sub function. If we connect these elements, we get chains or networks which, from a bird's eye view, give the impression of vertical units.*
 - *Given the polyfunctionality of many markers, we may assume that text producers make use of marker redundancy in order to be sure the intended function is indicated clearly enough.» (Nord 1991)*

Functional approach to translation - **consequences** for the definition of the translation unit:

- Communicative functions can be assumed to be **universal**
 - even though the means by which they are marked are culture-specific (they may or may not be used in the same way in both the source and the target cultures).
 - possible cases of cognates, where a particular stylistic device is used to mark a particular function in the source culture but has quite different functional connotations in the target culture.
- the professional translator **analyzes** the functional units of the source text and **considers** whether they will serve the target-text purpose.
 - Functional units or unit-components that are used **in the same way** in both the source and the target cultures can be transferred to the target language as such.
 - Functional units or components that are **specific** to the source culture or are used for different purposes in the target culture have to be **adapted** in order to meet the requirements of the target situation, unless the translation brief calls for a documentary translation
 - But even then, the translator has to consider the possibility that **serious communicative problems** could result from markers that are analogous in form but indicate different functions.

III. Translation Errors and Translation Evaluation

- In foreign-language teaching a mistake or error: «a deviation from a system of norms or rules».
- Translation error: "an offence against a norm in a linguistic contact situation" (Wills [1977] 1982:201) – (translation from the point of view of foreign-language acquisition).

1. Translation Errors as Non-Functional Translations

- Functionalism - the notion of translation error must be defined in terms of the **purpose** of the translation process or product
- (Sigrid Kupsch-Losereit 1985:172) - a translation error is an offence against:

1. the function of the translation,

2. the coherence of the text,

3 .the text type or text form,

4. linguistic conventions,

5. culture- and situation-specific conventions and conditions,

6. the language system"

This means that:

- a particular expression or utterance is not inadequate in itself
- it only becomes inadequate with regard to the communicative function it was supposed to achieve.
- Inadequacy is not a quality inherent in any expression but a quality assigned to the expression from an evaluator's point of view.
- even deviation from a grammatical rule may be an adequate solution in a translation intended to irritate a person 's incorrect way of speaking, whereas the faithful reproduction of a factual error contained in the source text may be an inadequate translation if the target text is expected to be factually correct.
- If the purpose of a translation is to achieve a particular function for the target addressee, anything that obstructs the achievement of this purpose is a translation error.
- The basis for the evaluation of a translation is the adequacy or inadequacy of the solutions found for the translation problems
- Of course, solutions to translation problems are rarely a case of 'right' versus 'wrong' (Pym 1992b)

2. A Functional Classification of Translation Errors

«If a translation error is defined as a failure to carry out the instructions implied in the translation brief and as an inadequate solution to a translation problem, then translation errors can be classified into four categories»:

1. **Pragmatic translation errors**, caused by inadequate solutions to pragmatic translation problems such as a lack of receiver orientation (as in several translations of the Heidelberg brochure analyzed above);
2. **Cultural translation errors**, due to an inadequate decision with regard to reproduction or adaptation of culture-specific conventions (see Wilss's translation of the text on higher education, which would not be adequate as an instrumental translation);
3. **Linguistic translation errors**, caused by an inadequate translation when the focus is on language structures (as in foreign-language classes);
4. **Text-specific translation errors**, which are related to a text-specific translation problem and, like the corresponding translation problems, can usually be evaluated from a functional or pragmatic point of view.

3. A Hierarchy of Translation Errors

As in the case of translation problems, a top-down hierarchy can be drawn up for translation errors.

- Experience shows that *pragmatic translation problems*:
 - are usually **not very difficult to solve** (once they have been identified as problems !).
 - A bit of common sense often suffices.
 - However, the consequences of pragmatic errors are serious, since receivers tend not to realize they are getting wrong information
 - Pragmatic errors are thus among the most important a translator can make. This is because the first decision in the translation process refers to the translation type best suited to the translation purpose, and each following step will be guided by this decision.
 - Pragmatic errors cannot be detected by looking at the target text only (for instance, by a native-speaker revisor) unless they really produce incoherence in the text. Normally they can only be identified by a person with translational competence comparing the source and target texts in the light of the translation brief

- The grading of *cultural translation errors* and *linguistic translation errors* depends on
 - the influence they have on the function of the target text. If a missing comma or a spelling mistake leads to an inadequate interpretation of the referential function, the error is no longer a mere deviation from linguistic norms.
 - If the purpose of the translation task is to test language proficiency (as in foreign-language classes), linguistic errors will probably carry more weight than cultural errors. And if the purpose of the translation task is to test cultural proficiency, cultural translation problems could even be ranked higher than pragmatic errors.

Summary:

1. Translating without clear instructions is like swimming without water.

Language is always used within a specific situation; it is always framed by a specific sociocultural context that determines what forms of verbal and nonverbal behaviour will be regarded as appropriate by the participants. A functionally adequate translation can only be produced by someone who knows the target situation for which the text is intended and who is familiar with the communicative conventions valid in the target culture.

2. Before piloting a ship, you need some knowledge about tides and shoals and the use of life vests.

In order to keep up the motivation of the learners and to save them from unnecessary failures, a certain amount of general theoretical and methodological knowledge about the pragmatic and cultural aspects of translation should prepare them for their first practical translation exercises.

3. The most important tool for prospective translators is their own native language.

The linguistic and communicative competence of students who have just left secondary school is necessarily limited to the areas that have been present in their lives up to then (family, school, hobbies, daily politics, sports, etc.).

A professional translator nevertheless needs proficiency in other fields as well.

The development of general theoretical knowledge about translation and the development of text-production skills in the native language can be combined in 'intralingual' translation exercises, i.e. rewriting texts for different audiences and purposes.

5. In order to understand the specificity of another culture, you have to know your own culture first.

We are not normally aware of how specific our way of seeing and judging the world is, nor of the non-universal ways we express our feelings and attitudes, both verbal and nonverbally. If we want to behave in an adequate way in another culture community, we have to compare the behaviour conventions of the foreign culture with those of our own. To do this, we have to replace our intuitive behaviour patterns with conscious knowledge of our own cultural specificity .

5. To use a verb in a wrong tense is less risky than to use it in the right tense at the wrong time. People tend to have a certain natural tolerance of people who do not speak their language perfectly .They would not expect a foreigner to act according to unwritten conventions or social norms all the time; they are willing to explain their culture to foreigners or to overlook occasional mistakes. Someone who speaks the language perfectly, however, is often expected to be familiar with the conventional forms of nonverbal behaviour as well. In this case, a slight breaking of convention (perhaps arriving at eight o'clock although the invitation to 'come at eight' really meant 'come at half past eight') might have negative consequences for the social reputation of the person, who even may be considered impolite, arrogant or unreliable. Such a mistake could well be more serious than an error in language use.