

Translation Strategies and Techniques

Hervey and Higgins (1992), make a distinction between ‘strategic decisions’ and ‘decisions of detail’. According to them, the former have to take place before the translator begins a translation and need to address questions such as: what are the main linguistic features of this text? What is the desired effect? Which text genre does it belong to? What kind of public is it for? etc. The decisions of detail are often governed by strategic decisions, but their function is to resolve specific problems (grammar, lexicon, etc.) posed by the translation.

Hurtado Albir (1996 and 2001), in an attempt to clarify the evident terminological and conceptual confusion generated by studies on translation process operators, offers a different definition for the terms ‘method’, ‘techniques’ and ‘translation strategies’: In my view the translation method means developing a given translation process governed by certain principles that are consistent with the translator’s objective. Consequently, the method is of a supra-individual and conscious nature (although there are times when it can be unconscious) and responds to a global option that runs through the entire text. Translation technique is the specific application which can be observed in the product and affects the minor zones of the text. For example, in the translation of a cartoon, a translator may, on occasions, resort to the technique of adapting a cultural referent, but this will not be the reason why the translation will be marked as free, adapted etc. Strategy is of an individual and procedural nature and consists of mechanisms used by the translator to solve problems s/he encounters during the translation process, depending on specific needs (Hurtado Albir, 2001, pp. 249-250). So, for Hurtado Albir, the fundamental difference between technique and strategy is that the former is related to the result, while the latter is related to the process. While method affects the text as a whole, technique affects small text units.

In more specific terms, Hurtado Albir (2001) defines ‘translation technique’ as: . . . an analytical and classifying process of the translation equivalence with five basic characteristics: 1) they affect the outcome of the translation, 2) they are classified in comparison with the original, 3) they refer to text micro-units, 4) they are of a discourse and contextual nature, and 5) they are functional (Hurtado Albir, 2001, p. 268). As regards the term ‘strategy’, she makes the following statement: To avoid causing confusion, I believe that we should consider the term ‘strategy’ in the same way that it is conceived in other disciplines (cognitive psychology, pedagogy, language teaching, etc.): the procedures (verbal or non-verbal, conscious or unconscious) for solving problems. The notion of strategy, understood in this way, has received little analytical attention in our [translation] discipline (Hurtado Albir, 2001, pp. 271-272).

Piotrobska (1998), basing himself on the studies by Hervey and Higgins (1992), claims that strategies precede techniques in order of occurrence, are text-oriented and are less numerous. Techniques, in contrast, follow after strategies, are problem-oriented particular choices and are more numerous. Finally, Zabalbeascoa (2000) provides two different definitions for ‘strategy’ and ‘technique’. According to him, a strategy is a specific behaviour model aimed at resolving a problem or achieving a specific objective (Zabalbeascoa, 2000, p. 120). In translation, strategy is the term that he proposes for any conscious action focused on facilitating the translation task, particularly in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. For him, these kinds of strategies cannot be discovered through descriptive studies alone, since the underlying principle is that one can arrive at a particular product by different paths (Zabalbeascoa, 2000, p. 120). In contrast, he sees technique as a concept that has to be associated with the decision-taking process, and also as an acquired skill in accordance with a prescriptive method or procedure (Zabalbeascoa, 2000, p.

121). The former would include reading strategies, text analysis strategies, etc. The latter, which comes closer to the concept of Vinay and Darbelnet's and others' procedures, refers to 'acquired skills' as a whole, such as calques, modulation, transposition, etc. Then Zabalbeascoa proposes using the term 'techniques' to refer to these.

1. 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: Internet, software, computer, and electronic in the field of technology, telephone, cinema, internet, radio, virus, strategy, carbon etc.

- English also borrows numerous words from other languages; café and résumé from French; hamburger, and kindergarten from German; bandana, musk and sugar from Sanskrit; and Al-gebra, algorithm الخوارزمية, alcohol, cotton and lemon from Arabic.
- Borrowed words are often printed in italics when they are considered to be "foreign".

2. Calque

Calque is defined as a special kind of borrowing where SL expression or structure is translated in literal translation" (Vinay& Darbelnet, as cited in Munday 2001). According to (Ivir's, 1987), calque means to translate words literally word-for-word without any addition or modification to be part of the target language dictionary. Politically, "the corridors of power" (أروقة السلطة) is translated literally as it is without any change. Similarly, recycling (إعادة تدوير), is an example of calque translation. Ivir (1987) draws some examples like: "gone with the wind" (ذهب مع الريح), "the cold war" (الحرب الباردة), "the black market" (السوق السوداء) . Other examples can include "Good luck" (حظ سعيد), and "The straw that broke the camel's back" (القشة التي قصمت ظهر البعير).

3. Addition

It is translation strategy in which something is added to the TT which is not present in the ST. Notice how the following underlined words in the translation of Naguib Mahfouz's Trilogy are enriched in the TT.

- اعتزمت أن أكمل نصف ديني
- I've decided to perfect my religious observance by marrying.
- و لو سمعها سامع في الدكان وهي تشكونى فى هذه الظروف العسيرة لحسبنى رياً أو سكينه!

- Anyone hearing her complain about me in the store under such adverse conditions would have thought I was a cold-blooded killer like those dreadful women in Alexandria: Rayya and Sakina.

4. Omission

This strategy may sound rather drastic, but it does no harm to omit translating a word or expression in some contexts, if the meaning conveyed by a particular item or expression is not vital enough to the development of the text. Omission can occur for many legitimate reasons:

A- Background information is sometimes not translated: Arabic for example uses different patterns of cohesion. Arabic radio broadcasts usually use of the phrase “و هذا ...” or (وجدير بالذكر) as a signal in Arabic that what comes next is background information to the main argument (Cf. Hatim 1997: 67-74). Thus, such phrases are not expected to be translated in an English TT.

B- “Another occasion for omission is when the information conveyed is not particularly important” (Dickins et al 2002: 23).

وكان الرئيس الامريكى بيل كلينتون قد اكد مساء اول من امس

“Two days ago, the American President, Bill Clinton confirmed....”

Unlike Arabic, English does not afford the concept ‘two days ago in the evening’.

C- Cultural differences provide another area in which simple omission may be a reasonable strategy. The ST word ‘الفاتيكان’ in the following example is better omitted because Western readers would be unaware of any Popes other than the Catholic one.

بابا الفاتيكان يوحنا بولس الثانى

- Pope John-Paul II

• الأستاذ الدكتور علي المحترم ...

‘Professor’ or ‘Dr. Ali’

Arab students are used to saying ‘Professor’ or ‘Dr.’ before the name of their tutors as a mark of respect for their higher status. Therefore, it is quite usual to address a tutor by saying (الأستاذ الدكتور المحترم) “The respected Professor Dr. Ali” which sounds awkward in English. Thus, all these additional adjectives must be omitted from the English target text. Again, “detached house” is usually translated simply as ‘house’ as this kind of house is not found in Arab culture.

5. 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. Similarly, Pokasamrit (2013) states that “the translation of some known or unknown concepts in the source language by using the substitution from the culture of the receptor language rather than by other available means of meaning equivalence”. For example, the English use ‘pound’ رطل as a weight unit. Arabs, however, use kilos (كيلو). So, when we say ‘four pounds of meat’ in English, we substitute this in Arabic with ‘about two kilos of meat’.

6. Transposition (shift)

For Vinay and Darbelnet (1995: 36), transposition involves replacing one word class with another without changing the meaning of the message. They add that besides being a special translational procedure, transposition can also be applied within a language. They note that in translation there are two types of transposition: (a) obligatory transposition and (b) optional transposition. They also indicate that this method requires the translator to change the grammar of the source language (SL) text; and the translator needs to shift the grammatical make-up of the SL to fit that of the target language (TL) to achieve an equivalent effect or to produce the same effect on the readership of the translation as was obtained on the readership of the original.

From a stylistic point of view, the base and the transposed expression do not necessarily have the same value. Translators carry out a transposition if the translation obtained fits better into the text or allows a particular nuance of style to be retained. The transposed forms are generally more literary in character than the original (Vinay and Darbelnet 1995: 36).

Examples:

- He is feeling relaxed and happy. (ارتاح واطمأن)
Adj + Adj V + V
- وقد عرف بالاجتهاد والنشاط (N+ N)
- He had been known for his energetic diligence. (Adj +N)

7. Equivalence (approximate equivalence)

In a rather unusual sense, Vinay and Darbelnet use equivalence to refer to different ways of rendering the idioms, proverbs, advertising slogans and clichés (sentences or phrases that usually express popular or common thoughts or ideas but that have been lost. The idea behind (approximate) equivalence is that sometimes the same context is referred to in different ways depending on the language in use. The translator resorts to equivalence as a translation technique whenever literal translation fails and whenever transposition and modulation are of no use in conveying the meaning in the target language. In Arabic it is possible to respond to a thank you as " لا شكر على واجب " or " عفوا " .

8. 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 or affecting the 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 "it is easy to understand" (من السهل أن أفهم) are examples of modulation. It does not suit the Arabic language, and stylistically inappropriate to translate it as (من الصعب ألا أفهم).

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".