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Tips and Techniques for better Journalistic Translations

1. Introduction

Many people believe that translation is an easy thing and all you have to do is to change words from the source text into the equivalent words of a target text. However, this is not true since some phrases, if translated literally, would make no sense. Translation is a very complicated process which has to consider many factors - the genre and the style of the original text, the translator's competence, the timeline allocated to the project and many more.

Written translation is completely different from any other type of translation. As a rule, there is no need to react instantly - you can take your time, think, choose a better variant, use a dictionary, consult a specialist, etc. Like any other translation it should convey the meaning and the music of the source language. Also, you need to be very accurate with the language and give proper weigh to stylistic features.

The authentic birth of journalism was in the XVIII century and its practice can be considered like one of more significant results of the Illustration. In that epoch, not only existed an enthusiasm of knowledge and of its diffusion , but also a great interest in the foreign countries that lead to the translation of many articles in all Europe.

However, in spite of the fact that journalism had been since his birth linked to translation, there are not enough signs of concern regarding this matter in journalistic investigation as well as in linguistics.

In fact, today's accomplished studies instead of treating the analysis of journalistic translation like a professional practice are rather focused in a didactic use of translated texts.

Not surprisingly, the enormous translating activity that the written press generates has not been accompanied of a parallel investigating movement on behalf of the Traductology. Approximations to journalistic translation are scarce (Tapia 1992, Gutiérrez de Terán 1997, Martínez 2001, Cortés Zaborras and Hernández Guerrero 2004), as also is on short supplied the interest that the journalism world renders to the enormous quantity of translated texts that exist in the written press (Hernando 1999).

But, one thing is the didactic use of journalistic texts, translated or not, and other the journalistic translation, which as I previously said, is a specific professional practice related to some well defined textual genders like are the journalistic ones that do of it a kind of translation with features and procedures of its own.

2. Journalistic Translation

Translation workers who work in media occupations spend a great deal of time talking about "doing the right thing." Why is it then that the readers or viewers of mass media often find so many faults with the "ethics" of the disseminators of news, information?

Translation for newspapers[1], weekly and monthly periodicals has some peculiarity that distinguishes it from generic non-fiction translation. At first sight, one could think that a newspaper text, since it expresses facts, communicates information, therefore is relatively easy to translate as far as construction and style are concerned, with a few difficulties of lexical order at the most. Actually, there are a lot of difficulties involved in translating news related text.

At the production of journalistic texts, the stylistic and rhetorical formulations organize themselves of a specific mood. Writing a journalistic article goes by some principles that direct, for example, the disposition of the textual structure, the arguments, the syntax, etc. When it is spoken of journalistic texts is referring to a group of textual types that are not uniform

The Sierra Maestra Newspaper of the province of Santiago de Cuba used to be a periodical publication but now is a weekly one. Translation works from L1 (Spanish) to L2 (English) are done in order to inform through a website about the status of the province. In this publication the news present a conventionalized structure that highlights a long title that informs the reader without him reading the rest of the information. Then, the entrance, which includes the most significant of the information, and from then on the body of the news, that explains, enlarges and supports what the entrance says.

Traditionally, the news structures obey the guidelines of *the inverted pyramid*, which suppose placing the more important informative material at the beginning and the least relevant at the end. This technique is still applied, although related with other ones, like the chronological structure or natural narration of facts. News has as a purpose to reflect as accurate as possible the reality of what the journalist has had access.

[1] A newspaper is a printed edition with fairly productions and on which are published the facts of the everyday life; news of all the human activities, from the politics to the artistic, from the financiers to the sports. But also interpret, explain facts, events. That means that he does not publish only newsworthy reports but articles, chronicles, comments. It also shows in its pages illustrations and photos. In spite of the stock of materials, the heart of the matter is the news; a newspaper without news is not visualized. This entire means that not everything has to be agitation and propaganda but information occupies preponderant place in a newspaper's confection.

Concerning the type of writing used by journalist in the Sierra Maestra Newspaper the journalistic translation that I carry out is mostly literal and sometimes oblique. When oblique I base myself on transposition, modulation, equivalence, adaptation or inversion techniques in order to have a natural reading in L2 (English).

Ex (Spanish): Los turistas germanos disfrutaron de la música tradicional cubana en la Casa de la Trova Pepe Sánchez, mientras en el Balcón de Velázquez se deleitaron con el cuartero femenino Las Adalias.

Ex (English): The German tourists enjoyed Cuban traditional music at the Pepe Sánchez Trova House, while at the Velázquez balcony they listened to Las Adalias female quartet.

Although not impossible is necessary to adjust the content of the message to the characteristics of the structure of the target language for producing semantically equivalent structures, generate appropriate stylistic equivalences and produce an equivalent communicative effect.

It is supposed that I have to adapt my translations according to the specific situation of the target audience but my mere work is to translate and the rest is up to the audience to adapt the news to its specific situation. It is important to use naturalization while translating journalistic texts using the source language and culture understood as a whole and the cultural context of the message to get the information comprehensible for the target readers. When no equivalences exist in L2 I use adjustment techniques, essential distinction, explicative paraphrasing, redundancy and naturalization.

The Newspaper has a contract with ESTI[2] where every translation is reviewed by English native speakers. The language barrier often prevents material errors and discrepancies from being detected immediately and poorly written translations and material flaws end up being reviewed and corrected at extra cost, reason why is so important to review the translated articles with an employee or colleague who speaks the language of translation. Translation is a team work, as more people read the article the better it will end up. It is not recommendable to translate journalistic texts by your own but no less important is getting close to the journalists ideas about the news translated.

3. Tips and Techniques

Word by word translation is neither accurate nor desirable, and a good translator knows how to express the source text so that it sounds natural in the target language. The best translation is the one that you don't realize is a translation, because it sounds just like it would if it had been written in that language to begin with. Translators nearly always work into their native language, because it's too easy for a non-native speaker to write or speak in a way that just doesn't sound quite right to native speakers. Using unqualified translators will leave you with poor-quality translations with mistakes ranging from poor grammar and awkward phrasing to nonsensical or inaccurate information.

And finally, translators need to understand the cultures of both the source and target languages, in order to be able to adapt the language to the appropriate culture. In short, the simple fact of speaking two or more languages does not necessarily make a good translator, there’s a lot more to it.

Journals must have the best interest to find someone who is qualified and certified. A certified translator will cost more, but if your want to have good journalism articles translated into a good English for the world to read them, it is well worth the expense. As better the translations as more visitors the website will have.

My decisions when translating aims at preserving a balance between conveying the essential and ensuring that the organization, tone and style are acceptable to the target audience. I recommend focusing on the strategies of omission and addition frequently adopted in this type of translation, and relating the decisions made to the relative importance or relevance of certain elements in the source text. Key concepts have to be clearly conveyed even if this sometimes requires lengthy or even clumsy insertions, but other components of the article, despite contributing much to its appeal to the original readers, may be judged cumbersome, obscure, or quite simply superfluous in the translation.

One technique that really helps me when translating journalistic articles is pre- editing the material for the translation. Reducing the sentences cutting 11 words down to 6 makes the sentence clearer, easier to translate, and easier for the end reader to understand. Translators that deal with journalistic texts must have a wide knowledge in jargon, let’s talk about sports. Baseball is our national sport and there are some plays only recognized by the Cuban audience, when the sports journalist writes the article about the game it is normal for the translator to translate *el zurdo = the southpaw,* but when talking about la *lomita montañesa is* hard to tell that he is referring to the Santiago de Cuba’s Stadium pitching box. How to define a word that is not known in the target language country? Coining phrases based on their culture and histories, if not, the context of the phrases can get lost in translation

Americans in particular have a fondness for using terms and examples from sports. However to most of the rest of the world, superlatives like home run, pinch hit, touchdown, Hail Mary pass, or bottom of the ninth fall flat, are the reason why making use of sports-centric examples alienates the target audience. Is better to screen these terms out of our translated text entirely, we must avoid or better forget about those Cuban jargons and refer to the standard ones used in the L2 countries to whom is supposed the article to be addressed to.

Many articles include redundant information, which, if not eliminated, results in the same information twice. One of my recent works included translating an article about Santiago de Cuba’s aims at producing edible mushrooms. The article simply noted the word mushrooms in each paragraph, not realizing that the entire text of the article

[2] ESTI: Interpreters and Translators’ Service Team (according to its meaning in Spanish).

was almost repeated with the same information. So, when pointed this out, while every text contains some amount of necessary repetition, try to eliminate the unnecessary kind.

Journalistic articles often deal with the same kind of information, reason why most translations have specific terms that always need to be translated in the same way throughout their literature, for example the name of a certain machine, process, department, etc. A good journalistic translation depends on context, since words mean different things in different situations.

Concerning metric, whether used as a unit of measurement to give the dimensions of a product, or as a figure of speech such as "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," realize that America is the odd one out when it comes to metrics. Pre-convert all measurements, speeds, distances, etc. into metric before translating the document.

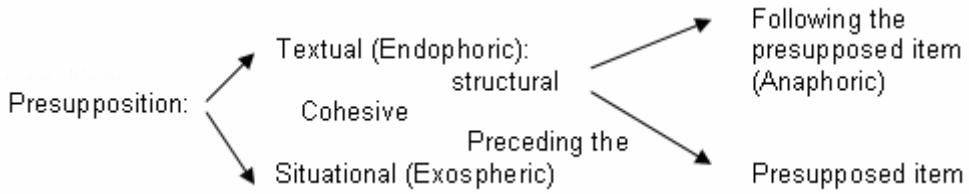
The task is that journalistic translators must struggle to put the terms into context for their audiences when some words often have no direct translation. When translating politics, the issue of how to translate the language of Cuban politics is more than translation accuracy. Politician's words reflect their ethnical guidelines about bias in translation.

Journalistic translations should find a balance between faithfulness and fluency, the two qualities that have been regarded as ideals to be striven for in translation but are often at odds. An article translation lacking of faithfulness would be inaccurate, and a translation lacking of fluency would sounds non-native and strange, and might be incomprehensible to native speakers.

In translating from the source text into the target text, the translators usually will face some problems, which some are related to the cultural differences, some other to the language differences. Furthermore, the source and the target texts have some grammatical differences as well as vocabulary differences. So in these cases, there will be a big gap between the source and the target, and we, as translators should try to fill up the gaps. One of these differences relates to the translation of the personal pronoun.

Linguistic differences include pronunciation, spelling conventions, lexicons, and grammatical patterns. It is important when translating for newspapers to take such differences into account, for example, when creating new sections in the website for specific information.

There are certain elements in every language which make reference to something else within the text or context of situation for their translation. Reference is a different form of presupposition; that is, they may relate to something else, a presupposed item, within the text (endophoric), or in the context of situation (exospheric). The presupposed item usually precedes them (anaphoric relation), and only in case of reference, it occasionally follows them (anaphoric relation) .These relation may be summarized as follow:



They are used to avoid repetitive expressions and in quantification. Pro-forms are divided into several categories according to which part of speech they substitute: A pronoun substitutes a noun or a noun phrase with or without a determiner: it, this.

A pro-form is a type of function word or expression that stands in for another (expresses the same content as) a word, phrase, clause, or sentence whose meaning is recoverable from the context.

A pro-adjective substitute an adjective or a phrase functioning as an adjective: like that. A pro-adverb substitute an adverb or a phrase functioning as an adverb: how or this way. A pro-verb substitute a verb or a verb phrase: do. A pro-sentence substitutes an entire sentence or sub sentence: Yes or (some have argued) that is true. In linguistics and grammar, a pronoun is a pro-form that substitutes for a noun or noun phrase with or without a determiner, such as you and they in English. The replaced phrase is the antecedent of the pronoun. A pronoun used for the item questioned in a question is called an interrogative pronoun, such as who.

Translators that deal with journalism after all will be the ones who have to draw conclusions as far as the answers they find most acceptable are concerned, anticipating that they will gain a greater understanding for the difficulties of making a moral decision. At the very least, I recommend constructing your own benchmark by which you can judge your decisions.

But always is important to take into account that translators have to rely on his wits and savvy, that prove to be helpful when translating a difficult text, the way documents are organized in one country may not be understood in another, that for having a good translation is worth taking time for and that skills and translation expertise come with time.

Conclusions

Journalism has always been a powerful instrument to propagate political and scientific knowledge in efficacious resource in order to be employed in political fight.

Journalistic translation is a type of translation that presents its own features; it is conditioned by the textual used genres and the requirements derived of the new communicative frame. On this work I described some of the present difficulties when translating journalistic articles. The application of these techniques in the journalistic translations is functional and will allow than the texts happened from the translation keep the new form and adapt themselves not only to the textual conventions of the journalistic texts in Spanish but also to the needs of the new readers. It is a need for the journalistic translator to know and control the different documentary sources of information correctly, in order to avoid misunderstandings while translating.

These tips reflect my short experience as a journalistic translator and my opinions about the subject.

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