

Chapter Six: The Evaluation of Translation

1. What is Translation?

The term translation refers to either the process of transforming a text (TD) in a source language into a text (TA) in a target language or the product of this transformation (the result).

It is the text as a product that is evaluated, not the cognitive processes of comprehension and reconceptualization that precede the achievement of the translation.

In general, we recognize three types of translation (Jakobson):

1. Intralingual: for example, paraphrasing a message in the same language;
2. Interlingual: for example, the transmission of a message from one language to another;
3. Intersemiotic: for example, the transfer from one code to another code. Here, we are talking about interlingual translation. Translating is establishing communication between an author and a recipient by translating reality or a concept into another language.

To establish communication in the best possible conditions, it is therefore necessary to

- Understand the reality or the concept expressed in the source language, including the point of view adopted by the author and his objectives;
- Express this reality or this notion in target language, from the same point of view of the author and for the same objective.

2. What can be assessed in a translated text?

First, translation is an act of communication; then, its efficiency is the dominant criterion; finally, the effectiveness of communication is the subject to the following dual allegiance:

- Fidelity (faithfulness) to the author (or to the TD): The degree of fidelity varies depending on the text. This criterion directly influences the mode of translation (ranging from the strictest literal to free adaptation) according to the principle that one does not

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translate in the same way a work of Shakespeare and an interview note (i.e. a scientific text).

- Fidelity to the addressee (or to the TA): the degree of fidelity also varies according to the destination of the text. This criterion plays a decisive role in the choice of the mode/type of translation, by following the principle that one does not address the same way to a generalist or a specialist, to a scholar or to an illiterate.

The evaluation of translation is based on two main parameters: the respect for the target language and the transfer of meaning from the original text. These two parameters refer to the aforementioned double fidelity. The transfer of the meaning of the original text and the respect for the form of expression of the target language are the two limits that have constantly been used to define and evaluate the texts translated throughout history.

3. Translation Errors

According to Delisle, J.1, any translation error appears in the target text and arises from misinterpretation, and inadequate application or failure to apply translation principles and rules.

3.1.Paraphrase

This is a translation error resulting from a default method of translating a segment of the source text by an unnecessarily long statement. Paraphrasing can consist of additions or overuse of circumlocutions and periphrases that make the target text heavy.

3.2.False Meaning (le faux sens)

It is a translation error which consists in attributing to a word or to an expression in the original text an erroneous meaning which alters the meaning of the text without leading to a misunderstanding. It consists of taking one word for another. It can stay in the same lexical domain or completely change the category.

Note 1: False meaning usually results from an incorrect assessment of the relevant meaning of a word. This shift in meaning is due to a misinterpretation. For example: '*A reasonable amount of stress is necessary to keep us productive.*' '*Il nous faut une quantité raisonnable de stress*

pour être productif.’ ‘Il nous faut une certaine dose de stress pour être productif.’

Note 2: The false meaning is a less serious error than a misinterpretation or nonsense, because it does not completely distort the meaning of the original text.

3.3.Misinterpretation / Negative shift (Le Contresens)

It is a translation error which consists in attributing to a segment of the original text a meaning contrary to that which the author intended to express; the misinterpretation leads to an opposite translation of what has been stated.

Le contresens est une faute de traduction qui consiste à attribuer à un segment du texte de départ un sens contraire à celui qu’a voulu exprimer l’auteur.

Note 1: The misinterpretation results from an error of interpretation or a lack of general knowledge. It betrays the thought of the original author.

Ex. ‘To avoid world wars, world starvation, and word epidemics, international bodies have been set up.’ ‘Pour éviter les guerres, la famines et les épidémies à l’échelle mondiale, des troupes internationales ont été rassemblées.’¹

‘Afin de prévenir les guerres, les famines et les épidémies à l’échelle mondiale, des organismes internationaux ont vu le jour.’

Note2 : du point de vue de l’information transmise, le contresens est une faute de traduction plus grave que le faux sens, mais moins grave que le non-sens.

Note3: From the point of view of the transmitted information, the misinterpretation is a more serious than the false meaning, but less serious than the nonsense.

3.4. Omission It is a translation error that consists of not translating an element of meaning from the original text without a valid reason.

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Ex. 'Two-thirds of the consumers (whose monthly consumption is less than 900 kWh) will receive a 0.5% increase per year.' 'Les deux tiers des abonnés (ceux dont la consommation est inférieure à 900 KWh) subiront une hausse de 0,5 % par an.'
'Les deux tiers des abonnés (ceux dont la consommation mensuelle est inférieure à 900 KWh)

subiront une hausse de 0,5 % par an.'

3.5.Nonsense

It is a mistranslation which consists in attributing to a segment of the source text an incorrect meaning which has the effect of introducing into the target text an absurd formulation (inappropriate).

Le non sens est une Faute de traduction» qui consiste à attribuer à un segment du texte de départ un sens erroné qui a pour effet d'introduire dans le TA une formulation absurde. ²

Note 1: nonsense results from an error of interpretation or a lack of reflection or judgment. It especially reveals that the translator did not proofread his text. Mossop analyses les causes:

The source text makes sense but the translator has introduced nonsense. Among student trainees, such nonsense often arises from lack of source language knowledge; among experienced translators, it arises from attention waning when rushed or tired.³ Obviously, the rest of the text is also taken into account, but linguistically speaking, a text that has no cohesion should normally lead the reader to reject it.

Ex. 'Elephants attend bodies of deceased family members, trying to nudge them back to life. 'Les éléphants veillent le cadavre de leur proche qu'ils essaient de ramener à la vie en

² Delisle *et al. Terminologie*, 58

³ Brian Mossop, *Revising and Editing for Translators* (Manchester: St Jerome Publishing, 2001), 105.

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*luidonnant de petits coups de coude.’ ‘Les éléphants veillent le cadavre de leur proche qu’ils
essaient de ramener à la vie en le poussant délicatement.’*

Note 2: Nonsense is considered the most serious mistake that can be made in translation.