

Problematical Fields While Translating Proverbs

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ABSTRACT: Going through the world of translation opens new windows towards getting familiar with the literature, language, and culture of a specific country or countries. Proverbs express the wisdom of a nation and they are closely related to its culture. During the translation process, we might encounter a lot of difficulties with the non-linguistic features. The translation of proverbs includes feelings, history, religion, and the ways of living and thinking, all of which are part of a specific culture. Therefore, when we analyze proverbs, we are also analyzing the culture of a specific country, the period when these proverbs were first used, the manner how these proverbs were understood years ago, how people understand them now, etc.

Keywords: TT- target text, ST-source text, TL- target language, SL-source language, translation strategies, culture, culture gap, linguistic gap.

INTRODUCTION:

To properly translate a proverb requires several steps and it often requires a translator to “dive” deeper into the culture of the source and target languages, in order to determine the idiomatic translation.

Thus, we cannot understand proverbs correctly without the help of the cultural knowledge of the language. Generally speaking, proverbs have an equivalent in the target language. However, even if a linguistic equivalent exists, there may be cultural differences to consider.

Below we listed some simple methods that can be used in order to translate the proverbs in the most adequate manner possible:

1. Try to find an idiom in the target language [TL] which uses the same words, the same structure, and has the same exact meaning. Even though there are some proverbs that are almost the same in most of the languages, however, it will be very difficult to find these kinds of proverbs into your own language. This is the top notch solution, but you often will not find it. One example of this group is the proverb: “The fish stinks from its head”, which in the Uzbek version is: “Baliq boshidan chirydi/sasiydi”.
2. Try to find an idiom in your language which uses different words, but has the same structure and the same exact meaning. Considering the fact that the meaning is the same, it does not matter that the words are different. We should always keep in mind that in order to translate a proverb in the most appropriate manner, we should not make a word for word translation, because there are some cultural or linguistic elements that will not make sense in the target language, if we translate them word for word, just like a machine, without any specific meaning. One example of this group is the proverb: “The pen is mightier than the sword” which in the Uzbek version is: “Qalam qilichdan o'tkir/qudratli”.
3. Another thing that we can try is to find an idiom in our language that has different words, different structure but the same exact meaning. Another example of this group is the proverb: “When in Rome, do as Romans do”, while in the Uzbek version is translated as: “Kimning aravasiga minsang, o'shaning qo'shig'ini ayt”. Even though the structure and the words differ a lot, the meaning is still the same, so in this case, we have preserved the most adequate equivalence.
4. Try to find an idiom in your language that has different words, different structure, and a slightly different meaning, and complete it with a short explanation. For instance, the Uzbek proverb: “Og'zi kuygan qattiqni ham puflab ichar” would be translated in the English language as: “A burn child

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dreads the fire”.

Below we would like to list some of the different translation procedures that are proposed by Newmark (1988):

- Transference: It is the process of transferring an SL word to a TL text. It includes transliteration and is the same as what Harvey named “transcription”.
- Naturalization: It adapts the SL word first to the normal pronunciation, then to the normal morphology of the TL.
- Cultural equivalent: It means replacing a cultural word in the SL with a TL one. However, “they are not accurate”.
- Functional equivalent: It requires the use of a culture-neutral word.
- Descriptive equivalent: In this procedure, the meaning of the CBT is explained in several words.
- Componential analysis: It means “comparing an SL word with a TL word which has a similar meaning but is not an obvious one-to-one equivalent, by demonstrating first their common and then their differing sense components”.
- Synonymy: It is a “near TL equivalent”. Here economy trumps accuracy.
- Through-translation: It is the literal translation of common collocations, names of organizations, and components of compounds. It can also be called calque or loan translation.
- Shifts or transpositions: It involves a change in the grammar from SL to TL, for instance: (i) change from singular to plural; (ii) the change required when a specific SL structure does not exist in the TL; (iii) change of an SL verb to a TL word; and (iv) change of an SL noun group to a TL noun and so forth.
- Modulation: It occurs when the translator reproduces the message of the original text in the TL text in conformity with the current norms of the TL, since the SL and the TL may appear dissimilar in terms of perspective.
- Recognized translation: It occurs when the translator “normally uses the official or the generally accepted translation of any institutional term”.
- Compensation: It occurs when loss of meaning in one part of a sentence is compensated in another part.
- Paraphrase: In this procedure, the meaning of the CBT is explained. Here the explanation is much more detailed than that of descriptive equivalent.
- Couplets: It occurs when the translator combines two different procedures.
- Notes: Notes are additional information in a translation.

In order to translate in the most professional and adequate manner, it is recommended to take into consideration three important things: analysis, interpreting, and the reformulation of a specific proverb, or saying. First of all, when we are first presented with an unknown proverb, we should analyze its meaning. By analyzing its meaning, it is implied that we should read some information about its origin and the meaning that it implies. We cannot opt to make an adequate translation, if we do not fully understand the meaning of the proverb in the source language. After that, we need to consult a dictionary or a professional person who will be able to give us a glimpse in solving the matter.

It is very important that during our analysis, we should verify all behaviors involved in translation, because they can provide us with the necessary information that we are looking for, in order to translate the proverb. After the analysis, we focus on interpreting that specific saying or proverb from the target language into the source language.

First of all, we should make a decision of what techniques or strategies are we going to use in order to translate it adequately. Later on, we pass onto reformulating, which is somehow a “recreation” of that proverb, but in another language.

This is why, sometimes, the translator is considered as the “second writer”, because somehow the translator recreates, but what is more important is the fact that in this “recreation” the translator

should not be noticed, it should sound like the original text from the original author.

Only in those cases, the translator has done a great job. As a matter of fact, the author has always wondered if we, as translators, can follow a specific strategy or procedure in order to translate the proverbs in the most adequate manner. Of course, if this would have been possible, it would have been easier for all the translators all over the world.

Therefore, translators need deep knowledge of the source and target languages and cultures. However, the author would also like to point out the fact that considering the fact that translation is a complicated process, it should be recommendable that in different situations, we should use all those strategies, because it depends on the language, culture, and the period in which that specific proverb was used.

Examples of Proverbs According to Translation Procedures

Generally speaking, translators can choose from two methods of translating direct or literal translation and oblique translation. In some translation tasks, it is possible to transpose the source language message element by element into the target language, due to the parallel structure or parallel concepts that it may contain.

However, there are also cases where certain stylistic effects cannot be transposed, therefore in this case, it is needed to use more complex methods, which at first may look unusual, but they definitely allow the translators to have a strict control over the reliability of their work. This method is called oblique translation methods.

Below the first three procedures are direct and the others are oblique.

1st Procedure: Calque

A calque is a special kind of borrowing whereby a language borrows an expression from of another, but then translates literally each of its elements. An example of this procedure is the proverb below: “Fish and guest stink after three days” → “Baliq va mehmon 3 kundun keyin hidlanadi”.

Therefore, it can be noted that, in this case, we have used a calque, which means we have borrowed the expression, but we have translated each of its elements. Here is another example:

Even in this example, we notice a lexical calque, which is a calque that respects the syntactic structure of the TL. Now, let us pass onto the third procedure.

2nd Procedure: Literal Translation

A literal translation, or a word for word translation, is the direct transfer of a SL text into a grammatically and idiomatically appropriate TL text, in which the translator’ task is limited to observing the adherence to the linguistic servitudes of the TL. Even though we are referring to a literal translation, the translator should keep in mind one thing:

The sense and content can be translated, while the form or the style cannot. And the point where form begins to contribute to sense is where we approach untranslatability. This is most like to happen in poetry, songs, advertising, punning, and so on.

Another important thing to keep in mind is the fact that we should use a literal translation, only in those cases where we render not just word for word but sense for sense.

Let us take some examples:

“Silence is gold” → “Sukut oltindir”.

“Not all that glitters is gold” → “Valtirragan narsalarning hammasi ham oltin emas/ Zarhal ko’rinar soxta, Avval bilib so’ng maqta”.

“The greater the truth, the greater the libel” → “– Qanchalik ko’p haqiqat bo’lsa, shuncha tuhmat”.

“Honesty is the best policy” → “Halollik eng yaxshi siyosatdir/Halol mehnat-yaxshi odat, Berur senga saodat”.

In this group, we can find a lot of examples and as long as they preserve the same function and meaning in both languages, then their translation is done perfectly well. If after trying these first three procedures, translators regard a literal translation unacceptable, they must turn to the methods of oblique translation.

By unacceptable the author means that the message may not be clear enough, when translated literally because:

- Gives another meaning;
- Has no meaning at all;
- Is structurally impossible;
- Does not have a corresponding expression within the metalinguistic experience of the TL;
- Has a corresponding expression, but not within the same register.

In these cases it is recommended to use one of the following procedures:

3rd Procedure: Transposition

The method called transposition involves replacing one word class with other without changing the meaning of the message. Besides being a special translation procedure, transposition can also be applied within a language, for instance, “I give him a kiss” is semantically no difference from “I kiss him” though the word “kiss” is changed from a noun into a verb.

According to Vinay and Darbelnet (2004), the first expression can be called the base expression, while the converted form of “kiss” as a verb is called the transposed expression. As a result of the divergence of language systems between SL and TT, this strategy to altering words without semantic change is undertaken probably most common and even sometime necessarily by translators.

From a stylistic point of view, these words are of different value in TL, and translators will face the possibility of changing the genre of the translation text.

Baker (1992, p. 167) compared nominalization and verbal forms in his “thematic and information structures”.

An inherent problem is that thematic structures meet different genre conventions in different language. For example:

“It’s worthy of the mark” → “Yodda tutish yaxshi”.

“Great minds think alike” → “Olim aytgani-olam aytgani”.

“Like father, like son” → “O’g’il otasiga o’xshar/Olma daraxtidan olma”.

4th Procedure: Modulation

Modulation (Vinay & Darbelnet, 2004, p. 133) refers to “a variation of the form of the message, obtained by a change in the point of view”. Modulation can be adopted when, though literal or transposition translation results grammatically correct utterance, the patterns of TL in the TT are considered as abnormal or awkward.

The application of this skill demands very much the translator’s capacity to mastering bilingual languages. We also have the type of modulation which turns a negative SL expression into a positive TL expression for example:

“God knows” → “Ma'lum emas”.

“A Leopard cannot change its spots” → “Ilon po’stini tashlagani bilan qilig’ini tashlamaydi”.

“So many men, so many opinions” → “Qanchalik ko’p odam bo’lsa, shuncha ko’p fikrlar”.

“Money is poker” → “Pul-bu kuch”.

5th Procedure: Equivalence

Equivalence is that procedure where the same situation can be rendered by two texts using completely different stylistic and structural methods. In such cases, we are dealing with the method which produced equivalent texts.

Most equivalence is fixed and belongs to a phraseological repertoire of idioms, clichés, proverbs, and nominal or adjectival phrases. Generally speaking, proverbs are perfect examples of equivalences and this method is also frequently applied to idioms. Equivalence is not only useful but also necessary in translating idioms and proverbs.

This strategy is viewed as a type of modulation and ‘a linguistic sub-discipline of pragmatics’ (Armstrong, 2005, p. 152), which is concerned with the use of language in different cultures.

Here are some examples of equivalence:

“No news is a good news” → “Ko’ngilsiz gapning kechikkani yaxshi”.
“No rose without a thorn” → “Tikansiz atirgul bo’lmas”, etc.

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