Shed skin & Re skin: A Form and Meaning Study

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Abstract

In the preface of the book "Meaning Based Translation" (Larson, 1998), Peter Newmark expressed the need for practical work in the field of Translation Studies. Books notably written mostly by Germans, have been too philosophical and abstract to relate at all translator's mundane problems. Some have leaned towards contrastive linguistics. Others have tended to tie translation too closely to a linguistic theory. Nida's were the first to deal at all practically with the cultural as well as the manifold linguistic problems of translation. Dr. Mildred Larson has produced the first textbook designed to be used in the classroom.

Larson, (1998) in the above mentioned book stated that when a translator translates the meaning of the source language is transferred into the receptor language and this is done by going from the form of the first language to the form of a second language by way of semantic structure. It is meaning which is being transferred and must be held constant. Only the form changes. These forms are referred to as the surface structure of a language. It is the structural part of language which is actually seen in print or heard in speech. Baker (1992: 24) says

that the form of the source language in translation is replaced by the equivalent lexical item (form) of the receptor language.

There are also certain characteristics of languages which have a very direct bearing on principles of translation. By knowing the elements of meaning of the source language, translators can make the right decision related to these elements. The purpose of this text, basing Larson's view on meaning in translation, is to classify and explain those characteristics, principles and elements of translation step by step with examples from Kyrgyz and Turkish culture and languages.

Keywords: form, meaning, elements of meaning, source language, receptor language, surface structure, primary meaning, secondary meaning, figurative meaning

Introduction

Larson states that, the way of effective translation is to discover the meaning of the source language and to use the receptor language forms which express this meaning in a natural way. It is the purpose of this article to familiarize the reader with the basic linguistic and sociolinguistic factors involved in translating a text from a source language into a second language, i.e. the receptor language, and to give them enough practice in the translation process for the development of skills in cross-language transfer. The underlying premise upon which this article is based is that the best translation is the one which

a) uses the normal language forms of the receptor language,

b) communicates as much as possible, to the receptor language speakers the same meaning that was understood by the speakers of the source language, and

c) maintains the dynamics of the original source language text. Maintaining the "dynamics" of the original source text means that the translation is presented in such a way that it will, hopefully, evoke the same response as the source text attempted to evoke. (Larson, 1998)

1. What is Translation?

In translation in particular and in communication in general, language is considered as a communication code that consists of symbols or words organized into a system according to the rules of grammar, and organized into different kinds of combination.

Translation, by dictionary definition, consists of changing from one state or form to another, to turn into one's own or another's language (The Merriam-Webster dictionary, 1974).

According to Newmark (1988: 5) translation is "rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text".

Hatim and Munday (2004: 6) define translation as "the process of transferring a written text from source language (SL) to target language (TL)". In this definition they do not explicitly express that the object being transferred is meaning or message. They emphasis on translation as a process.

Nida and Taber (1982: 12) state that "translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message".

Larson states that (1998, 3) Translation, consists of studying the lexicon, grammatical structure, communication situation, and cultural context of the source language text, analyzing it in order to determine its meaning, and then reconstructing this same meaning using the lexicon and grammatical structure which are appropriate in the RECEPTOR LANGUAGE and its cultural context. The process may be diagrammed this way:

SL	RL
Turkish / English	English / Turkish
Source language (SL)	Receptor language (RL)

What do you do when you translate? What do you do first?

We follow three steps in translation;

- reading + analyzing for the basic meaning

- transfer meaning into the RL (receptor language)

- make adjustment to meet the stylistic requirements.

2. Form and Meaning

If translation is basically a change of form (Larson 1998, 3), we can formulate it this way:

a) When we speak of the form of a language, we are referring to the actual words, phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, etc. which are spoken or written.

b) These forms are referred to as the surface structure of a language.

c) It is the structural part of language which is actually seen in print or heard in speech. In translation the form of the source language is replaced by the form of the receptor (target language).

But how is this change accomplished? What determines the choices of form in the translation? In the following parts we will find ways to answer these questions.

2.1. Slight Changes in Meaning

Let us look at an example. Assume that we are translating the Turkish sentence "Uykum var," into the English language. This Turkish form consists of the noun form var- 'have,' no suffix and the word uyku 'sleep.' The combination means that "a person, the speaker, is in the state of being sleepy." English translation would be "I am sleepy."

Persons who know both the source language and the receptor language well can often make the transfer from one form to the other very rapidly, without thinking about the semantic structure covertly but, when the translators are not equally fluent in the two languages and texts are complicated, the study of the principles that will be presented below will enable them to make more adequate translation (Larson, 1998, 4).

It is relatively easy to handle the transfer for simple sentences used in everyday conversation. For example, one easily learns such differences as the following:

- English: What is your name!

- Spanish: Como se llama"? (literally "how yourself you-call?")

- Aguaruna: Amesh yaitpal (literally "you-doubt who-are-you?")

- Turkish: Adın ne? (What is your name?)

- Kyrgyz: Атың ким: Atınğ kim: (Who is your name?)

- Russian: Как тибе завут: (How you are called?)

It is not simply a matter of different word choices, but of different grammatical structures as well. We expect greetings to have varying forms. But notice the following additional example of the forms used to express the meaning that "a person, who is the speaker smokes. English uses:
"I smoke." Turkish uses the form which says; "I drink a cigarette." English, Turkish use the form say: "I drink tea" Kurdish uses the form which literally says, "I eat tea."

2.2. Influence of sister languages

Translators do not have problems with these common expressions. They hardly think about the fact that the grammatical form and the lexical choices are so different. But as they move into unfamiliar material, or into higher levels of syntactic structure with complicated sentences and discourses, there is a tendency for choices of lexical items and grammatical forms in the receptor language to be unduly influenced by the lexical items and grammatical forms of the source language. The result will be forms which sound strange and "foreign" to speakers of the receptor language.

For example, a German speaker may say in English,

"The child has fever, it is ill," instead of "The child has a fever, he/she is ill," because of the influence of the German "Das kind hat fieber, es ist krank." In English there needs to be an

article, a, before fever; and child is referred to by a masculine or feminine pronoun rather than the neuter pronoun, it. (Larson, 1998; 7)

Some examples between Kyrgyz and Turkish languages.

1. Turkish people who have stayed long years in Kyrgyzstan have begun to use the word "gerek" instead of "lazım." Example: instead of "Size ne lazım?" They now use "Size ne gerek?"

2. Before they said: "Bu müzik benim çok hoşuma gitti." Now they say: "Bu müzik bana" or "beni yaktı."

3. In Turkish: Kitap okundu, In Kyrgyz Kitep okuldu.

2.3. Kinds of mistakes nonnative speakers of a language make:

We are familiar with the kinds of mistakes nonnative speakers of a language make. If analyzed, these errors almost always reflect the lexical and grammatical forms of the person's mother-tongue. He has translated literally the form from his own language (the source language) and, therefore, his speech in the receptor language is unnatural. (Larson, 1998, 5) For example:

1. Two kids are fighting in a movie. Holding from his neck, one got the other on the ground. In the subtitle writes; "say uncle!" It was translated into Turkish as "amca de!" Howewer it should have been translated as 'pes de!' which means; "say uncle," "give in."

2. In Topgun, starring Tom Cruse, the leading actress is giving a note to Tom Cruse On the note writes the address and an expression: '7:30' Sharp. It was translated as "at 7:30, at the Sharp Restaurant," Howewer it should have been translated as "Let's meet at exactly 7:30. No later!"

http://www.ekremuzbay.com/ek-gramer/ceviri-hatalari.html

3. Elements of Meaning

Larson (1998: 6) states that there are certain characteristics of languages which have a very direct bearing on principles of translation. By knowing the elements of meaning of the source language, translators can make the right decision related to these elements. The elements are described below.

First, let us look at the characteristics of meaning components. Meaning components are "packaged into lexical items, but they are "packaged" differently in one language than in another. In most languages there is a meaning component of plurality, for example the English -s. This often occurs in the grammar as a suffix on the nouns or verbs or both.

3.1. Plural system

English and Turkish languages are different in marking plural nouns. In written communication, English uses inflectional morpheme -s or -es, or adds phoneme /-s/, /-z/, or /-is/ in spoken. Some irregular forms are also exist. While in Turkey, markers of plural nouns are /lar/ and /ler/ suffixes at the end of a noun. For example:

Turkish	Kyrgyz	English
1. Kitap/ Kitaplar	Kitep/ Kitepter	Book/ Books
2. Çocuk/ Çocuklar	Bala/ Baldar	Child/ Children
3. Ev/ Evler	Üy/ Üydör	Home/ Homes

In Aguaruna, however, plurality is a component of the verb stem itself and cannot be separated out for many of the more common verbs. If the actor is singular, the first form will be used, if plural, the second. (Larson,

1. Tupikau: he runs   Pisaju: they run

3. Ekutu: he sits   Pekemsau they sit

5. Weu: he went   Shiaku: they went

3.2. Single word translated by many words

A study of any dictionary will indicate the amazing "packaging" of meaning components in lexical items. In Otomi (Mexico), one single word means *watch sheep by night*. All of those components are in a single lexical item.

In Vietnamese, there is a word which means *someone leaves to go somewhere and something happens at home so that he has to go back home*. Many times a single word in the source language will need to be translated by several words. For example, a projector was called the thing that shows pictures on the wall by the Chipaya of Bolivia.

Some examples from Kyrgyz proverbs:

> Айдай келдиники алды менен өлөт, өрмөкчүнүкү өзү өлөт.

Ayday geldinin hayvanı (tembel adamın) hayvanı, eceli gelmeden ölür (kaybolup mındar olur); örgücünün (çalışkanın) hayvanı eceliyle ölür.

Ayday keldi's horse die early, hard worker's (knitter, darner) horse die late.

> Өзүнүн бегин бөктөй албаган, кимдин чигин чиктейт?

Kendi büyüğünü kaale almayan, kimin küçüğüne söz geçirebilir ki?

If you take your elder for granted, you cannot make juniors listen to you.

Чүкө: Çükö: Aşık kemiği oyunu: Dib

Бөктө: Böktö: Kemiğin yüksek tarafı, gelirse kazanırsın,

Чик: Çik: Kemiğin çukur tarafı, gelse kaybedersin.

Айкүр: Aykür: dik gelse en iyi.

Taa, gelse üçüncü seviye.

Айкүр түштү чүкөсү: İşi rast gidiyor.

> Жакшылыгын алса - үт (кут), жамандыгын алса - жут.

Yahşiliğin alsa baht; yamanlığın alsa kıt(lık).

If it takes the good side, it is fortune; if it takes the bad site, it is famine.

(Kırgız takviminde 28 ocaktan 11 şubata kadar olan sürede eğer kar çok yağsa "üt" geldi, az yağsa "jut geldi" derler). (https://sputnik.kg/society/20151213/1020845085.html)

3.3. The same meaning component will occur in several surface structure lexical items (forms).

It is characteristic of languages that the same meaning component will occur in several surface structure lexical items (forms). In English, the word sheep occurs. However, the words lamb, ram, and ewe also include the meaning sheep. They include the additional meaning components of young (in lamb), adult and male (in ram), and adult and female (in ewe). In Huambisa (Peru), lamb would need to be translated by "sheep its child," ram by "sheep big," and ewe by "sheep its woman."

Below are several horse names in Kazakh language.

Méstek: Mastek and Köben are two types of horses which are short and fat, not suitable to run.

Көбең мініс көтермейді, Мәстек жүріс көтермейді.

Köbeñ minis kötermeydi, méstek cüris kötermeydi (Semiz at binmeye gelmez, méstek yürümeye gelmez). (Köben is no good for a ride, mastek is no good for a trod).

Baytal: Mare between the ages of 2 and 3, which has not given birth.

Baytal şawıp béyge almas (Baytal, doludizgin koşup at yarışını kazanamaz. Young mare does not receive rewards running.).

Baytal minseñ úulın joú, sawmal işseñ úımız joú (Baytala binersen úulın olmaz, sawmal içersen kımız olmaz).

If you ride the Baytal, no Kulun (colt, filly); If you drink "sağmal" (a foal horse) no kımız (kumys).

Argımak: Asil, güzel görünüşlü at

Besti: Beş yaşındaki at

Bîe: Yavrulamış kısrak

Aygır: Sürüye katılan, iğdiş edilmemiş erkek at

Jabı: Asil olmayan at cinsi

Kazan at: Uzun yola dayanıklı, güçlü bir at cinsi olup, Kazakistan Menşelidir

Tulpar: Çok hızlı koşan at.

Tuwlak: Çok binilen zayıf at

Dönen: Dört yaşındaki aygır.

Kunan: Üç yaşına giren erkek at

Sayak: İğdiş edilmiş at

Jabağı: Taydan küçük, beş-altı aylık at yavrusu

Jegin: Arabaya koşulmaya alışkın at

Jortak: Tırıs yürüyüşlü at

Jorga: Rahvan yürüyüşlü at

Tay: İki yaşını henüz doldurmamış at

Kulun: Altı aya kadarki at yavrusu

3.4. One form will be used to represent several alternative meanings

a. One form with many alternative meaning

A word has a primary meaning, that is the meaning which at the first time is got by the receiver or reader. The second or alternative or connotative meaning is one which is affected by the context. The examples below may clarify this. (Andy Bayu Nugroho, S.S.)

This again is obvious from looking in any good dictionary. For example, the Reader's Digest Great Encyclopedic Dictionary gives 54 meanings for the English word run.

Most words have more than one meaning. There will be a primary meaning, the one which usually comes up in mind when the word is said in isolation—and secondary meanings— the additional meanings which a word has in context with other words. In English, we can say the boy runs, using run in its primary meaning. We can also say the motor runs, the river runs, and his nose runs, using run in secondary senses, i.e. with different meanings. But notice the following comparison with Spanish. Motors and noses do not run in all languages.

English	Turkish	Back Translation
The man runs.	Adam koşar	(runs).
The motor runs	Motor çalışıyor	(functions).
The water runs	Su akıyor	(flows)
The clock runs.	Saat işliyor	(works).
His nose runs.	Burnu akıyor	(drips).

The bus runs between Tunguch and Jal: Otobüs sefer yapıyor (The bus plies between…)

Turkish	English
Cam kırdı	Broke the window
Ayağını kırdı	Broke his leg
Cesaretimi kırdı	Discouraged me
Kalbini kırdı	Broke heart
Fiyat kırdı	Made discount
Tavlada pul kırdı	Hit a checker

Kyrgyz (Koturuu)	English

1. Translate: Китепти котор,
Translate the book

2. Transfer: Кызымды XU дан Alatoo га котордум. I *transferred* my daughter from XU to IAU.

3. Move: Хан ордосун түндүк тарабына которот. Khan *moved* his headquarters to the north.

4. Change place: Жер которуу: Бүгүнкү жаңырган дүйнөдө ар ким өзүнү ыңгайлуу жашоосу үчүн жер которушууда.

5. Replace: Нарынга жумушка которулдук. We have *changed* our job to Narın

6. Change Clothes: Кийим которуп кийүү

7. To Switch: Латын жазмасына улуттук жазманы которуу. To *switch* the National script to the Latin alphabet.

8. Deposit money (with dative) Мечитке 1000 сом которушкан: He *donated* 1000 som to a mosque.

9. Withdraw (with ablative) Банктан акча которгон: He *withdrawn* money from bank.

10. To send many via bank. Туркиядагы досумга Вестерн Унион менен10.000 сом котордум. I *sent* my friend in Turkey 10.000 som.

b. This principle is not limited to lexical items for it is also true that the *same grammatical pattern may express several quite different meanings*.

For example, the English possessive phrase my house may mean "the house I own," "the house I rent," "the house I live in," "the house I built," or "the house for which I drew up the plans." Only the larger context determines the meaning. Notice the following possessive phrases and the variety of meanings:

Benim arabam	my car	ownership
Benim kardeşim	my brother	kinship
Benim ayağım	my foot	part-whole (part of my body)
Benim şarkım	my singing	actor-activity (I sing)
Benim kitabım	my book	ownership or authorship (the book I own, or, the book I wrote)
Benim köyüm	my village	residence (the village where I live)
Benim trenim	my train	use (the train I travel)

c. Whole sentences may also have several functions.

- Rhetorical Questions:

- A question form may be used for a nonquestion. For example, the question "Mary, why don't you wash the dishes'?" has the form of a question, and may in some context be asking for information, but it is often used with the meaning of

command (or suggestion), rather than a real question. It is then a rhetorical question. (The matter of translating questions will be discussed in chapter 22.)

1. What's the good of a fair apple if it has a worm in its heart? (Алманын ичинде курт болгон соң, анын жакшылыгы не)?

2. All are good girls but where do the bad wives come from? (Кыз кезинде баары жакшы, жаман аял кайдан чыгат?) [C. Bhuvaneswar, 2009, 42].

3. Айтмайынча ким билет, ачмайынча ким көрөт?

4. Ай он бешинде кайда барат дейсиң? – Толот.

5. Башкы балаа кайдан? –Кызыл тилден.

6. Дүйнөдө эмне кор? –Оору кор.

7. Эрден эрдин неси артык? –Эптеп айткан сөзү артык.

- A simple English sentence may also have a function like:

"He made the bed," may mean either

"He made (as a carpenter would make) the bed," or

"He put the sheets, blanket, and pillow in neat order on the bed."

       a.   Grammatical markers

Just as words have primary and secondary meanings, so grammatical markers have their primary meaning and often have other secondary functions. The "preposition on is used in English to signal a variety of meanings. Compare the following uses of on with the corresponding form used in Turkish.

John found a book *on* the floor.   John *yerde* bir kitap buldu.

John found a book *on* mathematics.   John bir matematik kitabı buldu

John found a book *on* Tuesday.   John Salı *günü* bir kitap buldu

John found a book *on* sale.   John *indirimde* olan bir kitap buldu.

The word 'on' in the examples above indicates 'position' or 'location', 'about' and relation of time which in Turkish are translated as 'üstünde, 'hakkında, or 'günü. (Andy Bayu Nugroho, S.S.)

Compare also the following uses of by:

John was stopped *by* the policeman.   John polis *tarafından* durduruldu.

John stopped *by* the bookstand.   John kitap standının *yanında* durdu.

In the first, by is used to signal the meaning that the policeman is the agent of the action. In the second, by signals that the bookstand is the location.

In the Acholi language of Sudan, the word oto has various meanings depending on the words with which it occurs. Notice the following:

Latin oto.   The child is dead.

Agulu oto.   The pot is broken.

Mac oto.   The fire is gone out.

We have seen that one form may express a variety of meanings. On the other hand, another characteristic of languages is that

e: a single meaning may be expressed in a variety of forms.

For example, the meaning of 'the cat is black" may be expressed by the following:

the cat is black,

the black cat,

and the cat, which is black, depending on how that meaning relates to other meanings. In addition, the meanings of "Is this place taken?"

"Is there anyone sitting here!" and

"May / sit here!," are essentially the same. The speaker is indicating a desire to sit in a certain seat. In Pidgin, the meaning "He gave me a book" stays essentially the same whether one says "em i givim wanpela buk long mi" or "em i givim mi wanpela buk." Also, the meaning is essentially the same in the following English sentences (example from K. L. Pike):

Others blamed John because of the difficulty: Sıkıntıdan dolayı John'u suçladılar.

Others blamed John for the difficulty.   Sıkıntı için John'u suçladılar.

Others blamed the difficulty on John.   Sıkıntı yüzünden John'u suçladılar.

Others said John was responsible for the difficulty. Sıkıntının sebebi John dediler.

Others accused John of being responsible for the difficulty. Sıkıntının sorumlusu olarak John'u suçladılar.

We have seen that even within a single language there are a great variety of ways in which form expresses meaning. Only when a form is being used in its primary meaning or function is there a one-to-one correlation between form and meaning.

The other meanings are secondary meanings or figurative meanings. Words have these extended meanings and in the same way grammatical forms have extended usages (secondary and figurative functions).

This characteristic of "skewing," that is, the diversity or the lack of one-to-one correlation between form and meaning, is the basic reason that translator has a complicated task! If there were no skewing, then all lexical items and all grammatical forms would have only one meaning; and a literal word-for-word and grammatical structure-for-grammatical structure translation would be possible. But the fact is that a language is a complex set of skewed relationships between meaning (semantics) and form (lexicon and grammar). Each language has its own distinctive forms for representing the meaning. Therefore, in translation the same meaning may have to be expressed in another language by a very different form.

To translate the form of one language literally according to the corresponding form in another language would often change the meaning, or at least result in a form which is unnatural in the second language. Meaning must, therefore, have priority over form in translation. It is meaning which is to be carried over from the source language to the receptor language, not the linguistic forms. For example, to translate the English phrase he is cold hearted, i.e. his heart is cold (meaning "he is unfeeling, has no emotional sympathy") literally into Mambila (Nigeria) would be understood to mean he is peaceful, not quick-tempered and if translated literally into Cinyanja (Zambia), it would mean he is afraid (Barnwell 1980:12). In this case, it is not a secondary meaning but the figurative meaning which is causing the difference.

Unless the source language and the receptor language are closely related languages, from the same language family, it is not likely that there will be much correspondence of form between the source text and the translation. The nature of

language is that each language uses different forms and these forms have secondary and figurative meanings which add further complications! The "word-for-word" translation which follows closely the form of the source language is called a literal translation. A literal translation is useful if one is studying the structure of the source text as in an interlinear translation, but a literal translation does not communicate the meaning of the source text. It is generally no more than a string of words intended to help someone read a text in its original language. It is unnatural and hard to understand, and may even be quite meaningless, or give a wrong meaning in the receptor language. It can hardly be called a translation. The goal of a translator should be to produce a receptor language text (a translation) which is idiomatic; that is, one which has the same meaning as the source language but is expressed in the natural form of the receptor language. The meaning, not the form, is retained.

Conclusion

Translation is basically a process of conveying meaning or meaning of a given-linguistic discourse of a language into other language, more than just transferring words or grammatical structure of the SL. The meaning of a word or set of words can be well understood because of its role in the whole linguistic expression in where they occur. For this reason, the meaning of a word is not only determined by the referred object or idea, but it is also governed by the use of the words or phrases in a certain way, context, and effects.

When we try to find the equivalence, we are faced with text as unit of meaning, even in the form of sets of words or sentences. It is important to note that language is used as a communication means, so in translating a text we should remember the principle of "A text is a whole entity, to be translated as a whole".

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