LOST IN TRANSLATION
Beyond Words

ABSTRACT: *"Language is the source of misunderstandings"* –(A. de Saint-Exupery), and we must agree with this statement when it comes to the particular problems, such as cultural and linguistic differences in the translation process. In this presentation, I would like to focus on several aspects: (1) *Cloud 7-* A brief overview of translation methods: word-for-word translation, literal, faithful, semantic, adaptive, free translation, idiomatic and communicative. (2) *Humans or Machines?* A focus on the emergence of Machine Translation and its evolution vs. Human Translators with examples of texts translated by two types of translators and with a reference to both Academic and Literary Translations. Human's Translation's Effect. (3)*To Guess or Not to Guess* -The challenges of translations that we all face: problems of ambiguity, problems that originate from structural and lexical differences between languages and idioms or collocations; several constructions of grammar poorly understood. (4) *I think I can…I think I can!* The linguistic and cultural untranslatability – the impossibility to convey the meaning as it requires to be conveyed when the sense of a particular sentence or document cannot be expressed in the target language.
"Translation is not a matter of words only: it is a matter of making intelligible a whole culture." (Anthony Burgess). I will conclude the presentation with a few solutions and approaches to the problems faced by translators nowadays, pinpointing the necessity to look at and appreciate the whole forest -aka *culture*, and not to stumble on bushes or tree stumps.

•An interactive lecture-workshop, with several examples and hands-on activities.

- *Cloud 7* - Translation Methods: Brief Overview
- *Humans or Machines?* Human Translators vs. Machine Translators
- *To Guess or Not To Guess* -The Challenges of Translation
- *I Think I can…I Think I can!* Untranslatable Words
- *Solutions*

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INTRODUCTION

Translation typically has been used to transfer written or spoken SL texts to equivalent written or spoken TL texts. In general, the purpose of translation is to reproduce various kinds of texts—including religious, literary, scientific, and philosophical texts—in another language and thus making them available to wider readers.

If language were just a classification for a set of general or universal concepts, it would be easy to translate from an SL to a TL; furthermore, under the circumstances, the process of learning an L2 would be much easier than it actually is.

The difference between a Source Language and a Target Language and the variation in their cultures makes the process of translating a real challenge. Among the problematic factors involved in translation I would like to mention the form of the text, the meaning, style, proverbs, idioms, and such. The central problem of translating has always been whether to translate literally or freely. The argument has been going on since at least the first century BC up to the beginning of the nineteenth century when many writers favored some kind of Tree- translation: the spirit, not the letter; the sense not the words; the message rather than the form; the matter not the manner-This was the often revolutionary slogan of writers who wanted the truth to be read and understood. Then at the turn of the nineteenth century, when the study of cultural anthropology suggested that the linguistic barriers were insuperable and that language was entirely the product of culture, the view that translation was impossible, gained some currency, and with it that, if attempted at all, it must be as literal as possible.
 The argument was theoretical: the purpose of the translation, the nature of the readership, the type of text, was not discussed. Too often, writer, translator and reader were implicitly identified with each other. Now the context has changed, but the basic problem remains.

Direct Translation Techniques

Direct Translation Techniques are used when structural and conceptual elements of the source language can be transposed into the target language. Direct translation techniques include:

- Borrowing
- Calque
- Literal Translation

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 *software* in the field of technology and *funk* in culture. English also borrows numerous words from other languages; *abbatoire*, *café*, *passé* and *résumé* from French; *hamburger* and *kindergarten* from German; *bandana*, *musk* and *sugar* from Sanskrit.

Borrowed words are often printed in italics when they are considered to be "foreign".

Calque

A calque or loan translation is a phrase borrowed from another language and translated literally word-for-word. Examples that have been absorbed into English include *standpoint* and *beer garden* from German *Standpunkt* and *Biergarten*; breakfast from French *déjeuner* (which now means lunch in Europe, but maintains the same meaning of breakfast in Québec). Some calques can become widely accepted in the target language (such as *standpoint*, *beer garden* and *breakfast* and Spanish *peso mosca* and *Casa Blanca* from English *flyweight* and *White House*). An unsuccessful calque can be extremely unnatural, and can cause unwanted humor, often interpreted as indicating the lack of expertise of the translator in the target language.

Literal Translation

A word-for-word translation can be used in some languages and not others dependent on the sentence structure: *El equipo está trabajando para terminar el informe* would translate into English as *The team is working to finish the report*. Sometimes it works and sometimes it does not. For example, the Spanish sentence above could not be translated into French or German using this technique because the French and German sentence structures are different. And because one sentence can be translated literally across languages does not mean that all sentences can be translated literally. *El equipo experimentado está trabajando para terminar el informe* translates into English as *The experienced team is working to finish the report* ("experienced" and "team" are reversed).

TRANSLATION METHODS: OVERVIEW

Newmark (1988) mentions the difference between translation methods and translation procedures. He writes that, "while translation methods relate to whole texts, translation procedures are used for sentences and the smaller units of language" (p.81). He goes on to refer to the following methods of translation:

Word-for-word translation

This is often demonstrated as interlinear translation, with the TL immediately below the SL words. The SL word-order is preserved and the words translated.

Literal translation

The SL grammatical constructions are converted to their nearest TL equivalents but the lexical words are again translated singly, out of context. As a pre-translation process, this indicates the problems to be solved. Literal translation or form-based translation attempts to follow the form of the source language.

Faithful translation

A faithful translation attempts to reproduce the precise contextual meaning of the original text within the constraints of the TL grammatical structures. It transfers cultural words and preserves the degree of grammatical and lexical 'abnormality' (deviation from SL norms) in the translation. It attempts to be completely faithful to the intentions and the text-realization of the SL writer.

Semantic translation

Semantic translation differs from faithful translation only in as far as it must take more account of the aesthetic value, that is, the beautiful and natural sounds of the SL text, compromising on meaning where appropriate so that no assonance, word-play or repetition jars in the finished version.
Adaptation

This is the freest form of translation. It is used mainly for plays, comedies and poetry; the themes, characters, plots are usually preserved; the SL culture is converted to the TL culture and the text rewritten. The deplorable practice of having a play or poem literally translated and then rewritten by an established dramatist or poet has produced many poor adaptations.

Free translation

Free translation reproduces the matter without the manner, or the content without the form of the original. Usually it is a paraphrase much longer than the original, a so-called 'intra-lingual' translation, often prolix and pretentious.

Idiomatic translation

Idiomatic translation reproduces the message of the original text but tends to distort nuances of meaning by preferring colloquialisms and idioms where these do not exist in the original.

Communicative translation

Communicative translation attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original in such a way that both content and language are readily acceptable and comprehensible to the readership.

HUMANS OR MACHINES?
HUMAN TRANSLATORS VS. MACHINE TRANSLATORS

Machine translation, also known as automatic translation is any translation that is done without human intervention, using software, hand-held translators, online translators, and such. Machine Translation as a new emerging discipline in the field of translation studies has come to fill the void existing due to the small number of good and acknowledged translators. It was an advantageous way of translation in that it saves both time and money. A large quantity of articles and documents were easily translated in a short time with a low amount of money. The process done by machine translation can be summarized in the act of breaking the structural components of the source text and then synthesizing the same

components in the language target texts. The whole action of translation is done automatically. Machine translation is extremely limited in quality and usefulness.

Therefore, the fact that machine translation is carried out by machines does not mean that humans are totally absent from the process of translation; nevertheless, there is human intervention, as in the case of Computer-Assisted Translation and in other cases of some translating machine programs that are limited in terms of the vocabulary provided by their programmed dictionaries.

In this regard, the role of human translators is manifested in what is known as the process of pre-editing of the intended source text to be translated, and post-editing of the translated version provided by the machine translation.

The importance of Human Translation

Any attempt to replace Human Translation totally by machine translation would certainly face failure for, due to a simple reason, there is no machine translation that is capable of interpretation. For instance, it is only the human translator who is able of interpreting certain cultural components that may exist in the source text and that cannot be translated in terms of equivalent terms, just like what automatic translation does, into the language of the target text. In addition, it is widely agreed upon that one of the most difficult tasks in the act of translation is how to keep the same effect left by the source text in the target text. The automatic translation, in this regard, has proved its weakness, most of the time, when compared with a human translation. The human translator is the only subject in a position to understand the different cultural, linguistic and semantic factors contributing to leaving the same effect that is left in the source text, in the target text. It is an undeniable fact that automatic translation is regarded as a tool for producing quick and great number of translated texts; nevertheless, the quality of the translation is still much debatable.

Examples of Machine Translators

SL /French (Le Figaro)

- La candidature de Mitt Romney est une chance pour les mormons français: celle de se faire un peu mieux connaître et d'en finir avec certaines idées reçues. Oui, les mormons sont chrétiens. Non, ils ne sont pas polygames. Mais quand on a dit ça, on ne sait toujours rien de cette minuscule communauté qui va bientôt bâtir son tout premier temple en France.

TL/English

- The candidacy of Mitt Romney is a chance for the Mormons french: the one to do a little better knowns and to finish with some ideas received. Yes, the Mormons is Christian. No, they are not polygamous. But having said that, we do not always knows nothing of this tiny community who will soon build his first temple in France.

SL/ Spanish (Ultima Hora)

- Demi Moore acalla rumores reapareciendo en un acto público.

  Es probable que por fin haya dado la cara para que paren de hablar sobre su estado de salud, su ánimo y su vida. La actriz ha permanecido en la sombra desde principios de año, pero decidida a demostrar que se encuentra perfectamente ha reaparecido en un acto en Nueva York.

TL/English

  Demi Moore quiet rumours reappearing at a public event . It is likely that it has finally given the face to stop talking about their state of health, their mood and life. The actress has remain in the shades since the beginning of the year, but it determined to prove that he is perfectly has recurred at an event in New York.

Comparing a machine and a human translated text

In an attempt to spot light on the major practical differences between machine translation and human translation, the following provides the text to be translated by the two types of translators: machine and human.

SL/Romanian

- A fost odată un împărat şi o împărăteasă; ei nu făceau copii; umblase pe la toţi vracii şi vrăjitorii, pe la toate babele şi cititori de stele, şi toţi rămaseră de ruşine, căci n-avură ce le face. În cele din urmă se puseră pe posturi, pe rugăciuni şi milostenii; când, într-o noapte, Dumnezeu văzând râvna lor, se arătă împărătesei în vis şi¬i zise:

  - Rugăciunea voastră am auzit-o şi vei face un copil cum nu se va mai afla pe faţa pământului. Mâine să se ducă împăratul, bărbatul tău, cu undiţa la gârlă, şi peştele ce va prinde să-l găteşti cu mâna ta şi să-l mâncaţi.

TL/ English/Electronic Translation

  Once upon a time there was an emperor and empress; they were not children; must have been walking on all vracii and Wizardry, all chatting and readers of stars, and all remained to be ashamed, since he was little.

   Finally it glided stations, on prayer and applause; when, one night, God seeing their râvna, looked into his dream, and, I said: "Your Grace and I heard it and you'll do a child as it was on the face of earth. Tomorrow to go the emperor, the man you, with rods at gârlă, and fish that will catch him cook with your hand and let it eat.

TL English/Human Translation

Once upon a time there was an emperor and an empress who were unable to bear children. They sought out all the wizards and witches, and all the old women and astrologers, but they all felt ashamed for their skill proved vain and they did not know how to help them.

At long last, they set about fasting, praying and alms-giving. Now it happened that one night, as the Lord saw their zeal, He appeared in the empress's dream and spoke thus:

"Your prayers I have heard, and you shall beget a child whose like will not be found on the face of the earth. Your husband, the emperor, shall take his rod and line to the brook tomorrow; and the fish he will catch, you should cook with your own hands and both eat."

Machine Translation vs. Human Translation, pros and cons:

Machine Translation

Pros

- Translation is fast/instantaneous
- Able to translate a great number of texts
- Excellent tool when travelling
- In class for students of ES L or EFL
- Useful in critical situations (e.g. hospital, shopping, asking for directions)

Cons

- Uncertain rules
- Meaning is ambiguous, distorted, difficult to comprehend
- Not capable of interpretation
- Errors and omissions that can be critical
- Inability to produce a well-structured text
- Give a literal word-for-word translation

Human Translation

Pros

- Understands the source text
- Able of interpreting cultural components
- Understands semantic and linguistic factors
- Recognizes idioms, slangs or words that do not appear in the machine's memory
- Manipulates and feels the language

- Take time to translate and sometimes it is difficult to meet deadlines
- More costly
- The client does not like your translation
- The client can't pay your bill
- The client cancels the job midway

TO GUESS OR NOT TO GUESS – THE CHALLENGES OF TRANSLATION

Some of the challenges of translations that we all face are:

1. Problems of ambiguity
2. Structural and lexical differences between languages
3. Idioms
4. Constructions of grammar poorly understood
5. Neologisms
6. Unsolved acronyms and abbreviations
7. Proper name of people, organizations, and places
8. Slangs difficult to understand
9. Respect to punctuation conventions

    Problems with the source text
1. Text difficult to read or illegible text
2. Spelled incorrectly or printed incorrectly
3. Unfinished text
4. Badly written text Language

I THINK I CAN…I THINK I CAN! UNTRANSLATABLE WORDS

Untranslatability is a property of a text or of any utterance, in one language, for which no equivalent text or utterance can be found in another language when translated.

A text or utterance that is considered to be "untranslatable" is actually a *lacuna*, or lexical gap.

You can make use of the translation procedures that are available in cases of lacunae or lexical gaps: borrowing, calque, adaptation, paraphrasing or even creating a new word.

Here are some examples of untranslatable words.

- **Bling -** *English*
- Slang for expensive and flashy jewelry, clothing, or other possessions or the flaunting of such possessions or the flashy lifestyle associated with it.
- *Jayus - Indonesian: someone who tells a joke so unfunny you can't help laughing.*
- *Kamaki - Greek: the young local guys strolling up and down beaches hunting for female tourists, literally "harpoons".*
- *Hira Hira - Japanese: the feeling you get when you walk into a dark and decrepit old house in the middle of the night.*
  Layogenic - Tagalog, Philippines: a person who is only goodlooking from a distance.

- **Dépaysement -** *French* – The feeling that comes from not being in one's home country.
- **Tingo -***Pascuense* (Easter Island) **-** "the act of taking objects one desires from the house of a friend by gradually borrowing all of them." **–**
- **Duende -** "the mysterious power that a work of art has to deeply move a person."
- **Torschlusspanik - German** Translated literally, this word means "gate-closing panic
- **Scorpie – Romanian- a mean and ugly woman**

SOLUTIONS

"Translation is not a matter of words only: it is a matter of making intelligible a whole culture."
- Anthony Burgess
We perceive the necessity to look at and appreciate the whole forest -aka *culture*, and not to stumble on bushes or tree stumps.

The following are some solutions we should take into consideration when translating a text.
- Correct comprehension of the text using reading comprehension strategies: underlining words, translation difficulties, contextualizing lexical items, adapting, analyzing, and so on
- Being able to manage cultural "untranslatability" and lexical ambiguity
- Decoding and re-coding of nomenclatures, figures, tables and charts, standardize terms, acronyms, metonyms, homonyms, etc.
- Translating with the ear and heart
- Must constantly make choices in each paragraph , sentence or translation unit

I would like to conclude my presentation with a few funny translations done with machine translators.

FUNNY TRANSLATIONS

- In the office of a doctor in Rome:
  Specialist in women and other diseases.

- In a Bucharest hotel lobby:
  The lift is being fixed for the next day. During that time we regret that you will be unbearable.

- In a Leipzig elevator:
  Do not enter the lift backwards, and only when lit up.

- In a brochure of a car rental firm in Tokyo:
  When passenger of foot heave in sight, tootle the horn. Trumpet him melodiously at first, but if he still obstacles your passage then tootle him with vigor.

- In a Czechoslovakian tourist agency:
  Take one of our horse-driven city tours. We guarantee no miscarriages.

- In a Yugoslavian hotel:
  The flattening of underwear with pleasure is the job of the chambermaid.
- In a Japanese hotel:
  You are invited to take advantage of the chambermaid.

- In a Bangkok dry cleaner's:
  Drop your trousers here for best results.

- In a Tokyo bar:
  Special cocktails for the ladies with nuts.

- In a Budapest zoo:
  Please do not feed the animals. If you have any suitable food, give it to the guard on duty.

- Two signs from a Majorcan shop entrance:
  - English well talking.
  - Here speeching American.

- In a Norwegian cocktail lounge:
  Ladies are requested not to have children in the bar.