

INTRODUCTION

So many notions in our life come twofold and we tend to study them in their dictionary form and the source domain, an author and translator, a book and its reader... This research constitutes a relatively new area which has emerged from growing preoccupation in the issue of metaphor translatability, its topology, modes, generalizations possible regularities (Jida 1964, van den Broek 1981, Newmark 1988, Mandelblit 1995, Koveces 2005). One of the major topics to be presented in this paper is metaphor translatability in non-fiction. It is not our objective to dwell upon the methodology of literary or non-literary translation, but we will be happy to prove that there is more to the issue of translating non-fiction than just claiming that “the first comprises the world of the mind and the second, the world of facts and events”, or that “one is art, while the other is science”.

As far as we know, no previous research has been conducted on non-fiction metaphor translatability by the direct collaboration of a linguist and a practicing translator. Dr. Elena Isakova and Maxim Isakov have translated several books together and their ultimate goal now is to use that experience to add to the existing methods of metaphor translation as well as to give practical advice on how to help the translators who work in pair Russian-English.

METHODOLOGY

Different theories and approaches have been proposed regarding metaphor translation, each has tackled the problem from a different point of view (Jida 1964, Reiss, 1971, van den Broek 1981), and recently the 21st century has witnessed a considerable shift in worldwide research objectives. More and more papers are now appearing on cognico-cultural translation of metaphors (Mandelblit 1995, Koveces 2005, Al-Hassane 2007) which is much favored by the authors of this paper. Following the methodology proposed by Z. Koveces (2010) and personal translation experience we have made an attempt to single our several practical strategies that any translator working with Russian-English texts can use in their practice. To illustrate and justify the existence of these strategies we conducted several surveys at Tver State University, Russia. The participants of the surveys were students of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Cross-Cultural Communication.

RESEARCH AND RESULTS

In 2005, 2010 Zoltan Koveces examines the interrelations among metaphor, discourse, and metaphorical creativity. He proposes that metaphorical creativity in discourse can involve several distinct cases and conceptualizers rely on a number of contextual factors when they use novel metaphors in discourse.

In this paper we assert that the notion of creativity is also crucial in modern translation practices. Creativity in metaphor translation does not necessarily imply constant production of novel metaphors, but definitely involves different strategies the translator has to use to be able to save all the metaphorical potential.

In this paper we will portray four strategies of translating metaphors creatively. We can’t but agree that there can be more strategies, but in this paper we will outline four of them.

FOUR CS OF CREATIVITY IN METAPHOR TRANSLATION

Schaffner pointed out the difficulty of verifying whether differences in ST and TT metaphors are the result of conscious and strategic decisions or simply “ignorance” on the part of the translator (Schaffner 2004). That is why the fact that this research has been carried out by both linguists and translators can be a certain verification of the obtained results and produced conclusions.

It may be fairly impossible to speak about creativity in translation in “barren language” or in ordinary words. This can explain the choice of the methodology and the names for the strategies. So we have decided to call them “The Four Cs of Creativity”. Each strategy was brought out by the work on a particular book and the examples for each were taken from the imagination.

Thus, we will speak about the following non-fiction books that were translated by Dr. Elena Isakova and Maxim Isakov: 1) Fliuke by Zoltan Koveces, first published in 1986, by HHH Princess Michael of Kent 2) Fliuke. The Math and Myth of Coincidence 1st Edition, by Joseph Mahan 3) What to Think About Machines That Think: Today’s Leading Thinkers on the Age of Machine Intelligence by John Brockman, Bestseller and the imagination 4) How Language Began: The Story of Humanity’s Greatest Invention 1st Edition by Daniel L. Everett

The first C: Culture-Induced Creativity

It is common knowledge that translation is a dialogue between two cultures. But are both cultures even partners in translation? On the one hand we have authors, while on the other hand there is a translator, an editor, a publisher and several other people. So some of these people know only one language, represent one culture. The work on Crowned In A Far Country for the first time demonstrated that we should be persistent and creative to be able to save the original ideas of the text. What was perfectly normal in Source Culture, was a shock for the Target Culture. We even had a situation when we had to use a metaphor where there was none to save the sense.

One of the princesses had to live in a pretty cold castle which gave her chillblains. There is a perfect match in Russian (lawa). The editors were not happy with the term, though, so the whole team worked hard to come up with a concise descriptive translation. Another princess loved horses and was an accomplished rider. When her favourite mare died she kept its ears and forelock preserved in a box. We took over six hours. When it was safe to assume that no precedent existed, we employed metaphorical translation (bogota potom) which is closer to ‘kept’ - кохапат1111а].

The second C: Calligraphy-Stimulated Creativity

The work on Fluke had proved that translating a metaphorical text is pure art. Have you ever heard of poetry in non-fiction? Here they are. The process of translating them was extremely creative. Most of the poems in this book are translated to paper rather than a computer (though a good dictionary of homonyms came in handy), which proved to stimulate the creativity of the translators. Copywriting writers say that handwriting helps them to create. Assuming that there could be a link between creativity and fine motor skills, we decided to look for works on the subject but found very little in terms of translation studies.

For preliminary evaluation of the positive effect provided by handwriting in metaphor and poetry translation, we interviewed 20 students of Tver State University having asked them to translate a poem first using a pen and paper, then using only a computer. Nine out of 20 students agreed that writing poems down made their work in a more creative way. We are going to do more research on the subject.

The third C: Character-Induced Creativity

The work on Machines that think, where we had almost 200 authors representing various cultures, styles, and modes of life speculating about one general metaphor machine as a living being, has taught us to investigate, to learn everything possible about the author at hand.

With the context from the book itself (on average, articles were under 1,200 words) we had to find it in other works by the same authors. When we realised that the approach would require at least 20 months only to finish the translation (while the deadline for the whole project was way shorter) we rediscovered YouTube. A video of a lecture, seminar, or a Ted talk can give valuable insights about the person behind the text.

The particularly hard translation problem was wetware [as opposed to hardware and software] meaning human brain. Work on this word alone took over six hours. When it was safe to assume that no precedent Russian translation exists, we employed metaphorical translation (босно веечий есмутр). When we were halfway through the project, we wrote Dr. Everett an email asking for some clarifications. He kindly replied in under ten minutes, and we started a long conversation about the book. This dialogue between two cultures was the most valuable.

The fourth C: Communication-Stimulated Creativity

Translation texts written by contemporary authors has its benefits. There is no need to guess what they meant here and there. Get in touch with your author – that will enrich your translation. Besides saving valuable time spent in guessing games it can come in handy for both parties – we all human, there is no shame in asking for clarification, and even experts make typos sometimes. If in doubt, do not hesitate to ask – a quick google search can lead you to either your author’s or publisher’s email.

Take-Home Message

#1 Culture: reach out to your team: things that are obvious and intuitive for you may be enigmatic for someone else.

#2 Rhythm: reach for a pen, take it slow – if you are dealing with a dozen lines of poetry, when you finished, you can probably call it a day.

#3 Visualization: reach beyond the text – YouTube can show you stuff. Also, it will probably offer you more similar stuff (i.e. valuable context).

#4 Personality: write your author an email – most likely you will benefit from what happens next.

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