

**HANDOUT 2. TRANSLATION METHODS**

**SL**

- Word for word translation
- Literal translation
- Faithful translation
- Semantic translation

**TL**

- Adaptation
- Free translation
- Idiomatic translation
- Communicative translation

**SL-oriented vs. TL-oriented?**

1. **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 singly by their most common out of context.*

   - □ SL word-order is preserved
   - □ Non-grammatical
   - □ Words are translated by their most common meanings, out of context

   **Used for**

   - □ General information about SL
   - □ Pre-translation process of difficult text in order to gain sense of meaning

   **Example** (fun alert): A Vietnamese woman called Police Station and said that her husband physically abused her. A police officer came to her apartment and wrote the report. She does not speak much English therefore, word by word, the policeman carefully wrote down every single thing...
the Vietnamese woman told him: “My husband threat hit die my mother so many times. And today he cut hand hit me true. He hit me hurt die mother.”

2. 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.

- SL grammatical structures are converted to their nearest equivalent in the TL
- BUT words are still translated singly, out of context.

**Used for**
- Pre-translation process to identify problems

**Examples:**
- He is a big liar.
- He looked up at the Milky Way.
- PetroVietnam, the state-owned oil and gas giant, has also found itself in hot water.
- She has a sweet tooth.
- Carry coals to Newcastle.

3. FAITHFUL TRANSLATION

A faithful translation attempts to reproduce the precise contextual meaning of the original 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.

- Words are translated in context
- Transfer cultural words
- Does not naturalize

**Used for**
- Literary translation
- Authoritative texts
- Drafts
4. SEMANTIC TRANSLATION

Semantic translation differs ‘faithful translation’ only in as far as it must take more account of the aesthetic value (that is, the beautiful and natural sound) of the SL text, compromising on ‘meaning’ where appropriate so that no assonance, word-play or repetition jars in the finished version. Further, it may translate less important cultural words by culturally neutral third or functional terms but not by cultural equivalents. The distinction between ‘faithful’ and ‘semantic’ translation is that the first is uncompromising and dogmatic, while the second is more flexible, admits the creative exception to 100% fidelity and allows for the translator’s intuitive empathy with the original.

- It is **more flexible** than faithful translation
- Naturalizes in order to achieve aesthetic effect
  - (may translate cultural words with neutral or functional terms)
- Great focus on aesthetic features of ST
  - (Close rendering of *metaphors, collocations, technical terms, slang, colloquialisms, unusual syntactic structures and collocations, peculiarly used words, neologism*).

Used for
- **Expressive texts: e.g., literature**

Examples:
- Right in the heart of Hanoi, Hoan Kiem Lake is an enchanting body of water, a peaceful oasis away from all the hustle and bustle of the city.
- She has a sunny smile on her face.
- All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness” (the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776)

5. 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.

- freer than semantic translation
- gives priority to the effectiveness of the message to be communicated.
focuses on factors such as readability and naturalness

**Used for**

- informative texts

**Examples:**

- Right in the heart of Hanoi, Hoan Kiem Lake is an enchanting body of water, a peaceful oasis away from all the hustle and bustle of the city.
- Nhà có chó dữ.
- Keep off the grass.
- Her face is all her fortune.

**Semantic Translation vs. Communicative Translation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEMANTIC TRANSLATION</th>
<th>COMMUNICATIVE TRANSLATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• written at author’s linguistic level</td>
<td>• written at readership’s linguistic level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• used for expressive texts</td>
<td>• used for informative texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• expressive components rendered closely/literally</td>
<td>• normalized or toned down, neutral terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• personal and individual</td>
<td>• social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• tends to over-translate</td>
<td>• tends to under-translate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• pursues nuances of meaning</td>
<td>• pursues message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• inferior to its original</td>
<td>• better than its original</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• has to interpret</td>
<td>• has to explain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• less freedom</td>
<td>• more freedom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** There is **no one communicative nor one semantic method of translating a text** - these are in fact widely overlapping bands of methods. A translation can be more, or less, semantic - more, or less, communicative - even a particular section or sentence can be treated more communicatively or less semantically. (Newmark)
6. IDIOMATIC TRANSLATION

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

- Reproduce the ‘message’ of the original
- Prefers colloquialisms and idioms which do not exist in the original
- Outcome: lively, ‘natural’ translation

Examples:
- Không ai nghe lời khuyên của cô ấy cả
- Nó rất bình thường
- Chớ cui về rừng
- Việc hôm nay chờ được ngày mai.

7. 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 ‘intralingual translation’.

- Reproduce the matter without the manner; the content without the form of the original
- Paraphrases much larger than the original

Used for
Informative translation
In-house publication

Examples:
- Business is business
- Heartease (pansy) is used again for healing the heart. It is for disappointment in love, and in separation.

8. 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 converted to the TL culture and the text rewritten by an established dramatist or poet.

- The freest form of translation
- Preserves the theme, plots, characters only
- The SL culture is converted to the TL culture
- A kind of rewriting the text in translation

**Used for**

Plays, poems, songs, advertising, tourism

**Examples:**

- **IT**
- Chicken run
- The thorn bird
- “On a wagon, bound for market,
  There’s a calf with a mournful eye.
  High above him, there’s a swallow,
  Winging swiftly through the sky.
  How the winds are laughing,
  They laugh with all their might.
  Love and laugh the whole day through
  And, half a summer’s night.”