

‘ELT for a Global World’

Language and Translation

Seminar 12

Style and translation: Humor

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Words beyond meaning

- Words can have connotations
 - Connotation is a word's underlying meaning
 - Denotation is a word's literal meaning
 - What do you think might be the semantic difference between these words? Can you come up with your own?

thin – skinny
dummy – stupid
big – oversized
lady – woman

thrifty – penny-pinching
chef – cook
cop – policeman
snob – cultured

Consider the following sentences

- All refer to the same situation, but have different connotations or meanings carried. (Do you agree?)
 - **negative**
 - There are over 2,000 **vagrants** in the city.
 - **neutral**
 - There are over 2,000 **people with no fixed address** in the city.
 - **positive**
 - There are over 2,000 **homeless** in the city.
- (source: Bahsforth, n.d.)

Some words are inappropriate

- When translating, you have to not only pay attention to the connotation of words, keeping the style and tone of the text, but also remember that some words are not appropriate
 - handicapped vs crippled vs disability vs physically/mentally challenged
 - African-American vs black vs Colored vs “N-word”
 - Your examples?

Style of translation

- “A translator cannot have, indeed should not have, a style of his or her own, the translator’s task being simply to reproduce as closely as possible the style of the original” (Baker 2000: 244, quoted in Saldanha 2005)
- There is "a tendency...to distort the text to fit in with the translator's own individual interpretation" (Parks 1998, quoted in Saldanha 2005)
 - Which one do you agree with? Why?
 - Is translation reproduction or production?

- This discussion leads us to the following question: is the text objective, universally meaningful?
 - Essentialist view
 - Non-Essentialist view
- Is there only one or several meanings to a text?
- Should the translator be invisible?
 - What is the argument proposed by Saldanha?
 - What are your thoughts?

Humor and jokes

- Translating humor, “translators are often faced with the seemingly impossible task...keeping as much as possible of its informational and pragmatic content and...producing a similar effect as it would provoke in the source language culture” (Gáll 2007, p.1)
 - Consider: Linguistic jokes are punny as hell!
 - Share the puns/joke you’ve collected as your homework!

Puns

- The translation strategies for (Delabastita in Gall)
 - (a) translating the source text wordplay with wordplay in the target text, which may be more or less different;
 - (b) translating it in a way that loses some aspect of the wordplay;
 - (c) replacing it with some other device aimed at creating similar effect (e.g. rhyme, irony);
 - (d) source text pun copied as target text pun, without being translated;
 - (e) or omitting it.

Class Discussion

- The Gall article gives several excellent examples of translating puns from English to Hungarian from the animated movie *Chicken Run*
- Let's discuss together

The art of translating jokes

- Let's read the [article](#) together about the difficulties of translating humor—what is funny in one language may not be funny in another
- The [video](#) corresponding to this article was translated to many languages, including Hungarian
 - Translating the title was one challenge in particular—what do you think?

Homework

- Read: Lynn Visson. (2005). “Simultaneous Interpretation: Language and Cultural Difference” in *Nation, Language and Ethics of Translation* (Princeton University Press), pp. 51-64.

Selected References

- Jo Anna Bashforth. (n.d.). “Connotation and Denotation.” Available at: https://www.csun.edu/~bashforth/098_PDF/06Sep15Connotation_Denotation.pdf
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