

Using pre-translation exercises and parallel texts in the translation of instruction manuals

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Resumen

Análisis de manuales de instrucciones a través de ejercicios de pre-traducción y textos paralelos. Los pasos seguidos en clase a la hora de analizar y traducir manuales de instrucciones se basan en estrategias funcionales y en el modelo de *eskopo*. Se consideran primero las estrategias pedagógicas que se han de seguir antes de trasladar el texto de una lengua a otra. A saber: primero, se analiza el texto origen (TO) para poder después relizar ejercicios específicos

0. Introduction

The suggested methodology of this technique is based on the *skopos* model and functionalist approach whereby texts are analysed for a given situation or context and for a specific purpose. *Skopostheorie* underlines the importance of the purpose of texts which is dependant on the expectations, knowledge, norms and values of target readers influenced by situations and culture.

This theory has sometimes been criticised because it puts too much emphasis on the TT. This is why I also consider that ST analysis and translation criticism are fundamental exercises in the training of translators because only by analysing a ST, can one produce a successful TT. These are part of what are called pre-translation stages whose main purpose is to compare both ST and TT in order to highlight both common and differing characteristics before the student attempts a translation. Normally, the use of parallel texts proves very practical in the search for target text conventions, that is, equivalents in each of the cultures under analysis.

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In this case study, I will focus on procedures to analyse and translate a given type of text, in this case consumer-oriented instruction manuals. They are the ones dealing with instructions for the use and care of products.

1. Why use instruction manuals in a translation class?

- It is a good starting point for the trainee translator because the texts are not highly specialised.
- Manuals are consumer-oriented texts that students come across in real life, such as household appliance manuals. Hence students are familiarised with this type of language.
- They share the same communicative function, that is, instructions addressed to the consumer on how to use a given product.
- Manuals are often multilingual, where normally a given ST is translated into different TTs, so they present the same reality to different contexts and cultures. Furthermore, some readerships might be more familiar with the product in the manual than others. For example, a kettle is a common appliance in every British household but not in Spanish ones.

However, one problem that manuals illustrate very well is that when texts are presented through inadequate translations the reader can definitely tell if the SL text is the 'real' ST or a generated one. In the latter case, the expectations, values and norms of the target reader are not 'respected', either because the translation was undertaken by a non-native speaker or, in the case of some STs, because they were not linguists or specialists themselves. It is also often the case that whilst all texts in a manual seem equal at first glance yet one can usually spot the ST because one or more of the TTs do not work idiomatically. This is what attracted me to this type of text in the first place and that is

why I thought it was worth exploring in the translation class.

As Trosborg (1994: 25) notes: "It can be said about the translation of technical brochures that it is far from being a mere transcoding process, but ... a cross-cultural event", and that "Industrial translators must produce texts that seem so natural (in fact), that translations are indistinguishable from originals." (67)

Hervey and Higgins(1995: 167) also advocate the same principles, they argue that: "The translator's prime responsibility to the manufacturer is to give a correct, unambiguous and comprehensible account of how the product is to be used. This places limits on possible departures from the ST. It does not, however, imply that the TT should be a carbon copy of the ST".

Unfortunately, relatively few translations of brochures and manuals meet either criteria. Let me illustrate these important issues with a couple of examples of unsuccessful instructions:

Instructions for care of bakeware (<i>molde para hornos</i>)	
English	Spanish
<p>Care & Usage for your bakeware</p> <p>Do Wash the pan in clean hot soapy water before and after use; then dry thoroughly. Grease the pan lightly before each use. Line the pan with pastry when using fruit fillings. Leave baking to cool for a few minutes before turning out. Leave pan to soak for a few minutes before washing if food is burnt onto the pan.</p> <p>Do not Use metal utensils. Bake at more than 220°C /425°F/Gas Mark 7. Place on the hob or over direct heat, electric radiant or gas flame. Use metal scourers or abrasives. Use in microwave oven.</p>	<p>Cuidado y Uso para sus Utensilios de cocción en el horno</p> <p>Sies Lave el molde en agua caliente limpia jabonosa antes y después de su uso; luego séquelo bien. Engrase el molde ligeramente con grasa antes de cada uso. Cubra el molde con hojaldre al usar rellenos de frutas. Deje la hornada enfriando durante algunos minutos antes de sacarla. Si la comida se le quema, déjelo en remojo durante algunos minutos antes de lavarla.</p> <p>Noes Utilice utensilios de metal. Cueza en el horno a más de 220°C /425°F/ 7 de gas. Coloque en una placa lateral para calentar comidas o directamente sobre calor, elementos eléctricos radiantes o una llama de gas. Utilice estropajos o abrasivos metálicos. Utilice en un horno mecroondas.</p>

Table 1. Extracted from *Classic Housewares* instructions.

Washing Machine Instructions	
English	Spanish
<p>WARNING! BEFORE USING THE MACHINE REMOVE THE BLOCKING DEVICES WHICH CLAMP THE INTERNAL PART OF THE MACHINE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Unscrew and remove the 3 bolts. 2) Insert a screwdriver in each of the 3 holes left by the above bolts and incline it so as to make the 3 plastic spacers placed inside the machine fall down. 3) Lean the machine on its back in order to remove the 2 internal angel bars by pulling the 2 bands: the left one (marked with letter E) must be pulled first and then the right one. If necessary, break the polystyrene angle bar to facilitate removal of the same. 	<p>ATTENCION! Antes de poner en funcionamiento la lavadora, retirar el dispositivo que bloque el interior de la misma.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Desatornillar y retirar los tres tornillos. 2) Introducir un destornillador en cada uno de los tres orificios dejados libres por los tornillos e inclinarlo adecuadamente de modo que haga caer los tres distanciadores de plastico al fondo de la lavadora. 3) Apoyar la lavadora sobre la parte posterior para extraer los dos angulares internos tirando de sus extremos teniendo cuidado de extraer primero el izquierdo marcado con la lettera E y después el derecho. Romper los angulares de poliestireno expanso para facilitar la extraccion.

Table 2. Passages extracted from a Washing machine instruction manual.

Please, note that figures (pictures) have not been included in this sample to highlight the unfortunate linguistic, stylistic and spelling choices included in the Spanish translation.

2. Pre-translation exercises

It is often difficult to present these issues to the translation student who has had no contact with specialised translation, or indeed, no practice of translation at all. Producing samples of Spanish and English texts on the same page and from the same manual enables the 'parallel' comparison of both ST and TT. Parallel because the texts have the same function and same graphic format but different cultural conventions.

Since the classes involved in this case study included both Spanish

and English students working into both languages, each contingent is asked to analyse their L1 text first before discussing what the main characteristics of both texts are. Successful and unsuccessful translations are also analysed.

Both top-down and bottom-up exercises can be used at this stage as with any other type of text. Examples of top-down exercises are intralingual and gist translation whereby students either paraphrase the content of the text in their own words, or summarise it in their mother tongue. These activities serve a purpose, that is to gain an overall understanding of the ST. Another top-down exercise that is used in class is the production of what is known in functionalist terms as *Translation Brief*, or macro-analysis, i.e. What is the communicative purpose of the text? What are the extratextual characteristics? Who is the target audience? What is the purpose/motive of the text? What will be the time and place of text reception and medium?

Bottom-up exercises include the analysis of the source text in specific areas, known as intratextual analysis or micro-analysis, such as: standard format, paragraphing, punctuation, register, syntax, lexis, style. The pedagogical aim here is for the student to infer the characteristics of a given source text. This is where the production of a corpus of parallel texts (or indeed different samples of TTs) is very useful since the student becomes familiarised with both genre and style.

After a linguistic and contextual analysis has taken place, criticisms of both SL texts and TL texts are carried out. The purpose of these activities is to make the student aware of all linguistic and extralinguistic factors to bear in mind when attempting a transfer from one culture to another.

Instruction manuals are excellent tools for this type of pre-translation analyses because one can readily see and compare the pitfalls of a bad translation. They also raise the following key questions for trainee translators:

1. Has the TT been translated from a given ST, and then into a third language?
2. Is it a genuine ST? Or indeed, a genuine TT? Does it sound correctly in Spanish/English?
3. Is it a successful/unsuccessful ST/TT? i.e. Do both texts share the same communicative purpose and conditions to be regarded as a good translation?

The use of such exercises is an effective way of training the future translator. Students develop instincts from texts and contexts. They do not feel daunted by the text because they are not asked to produce a translation straight away and their confidence increases as they exploit the features and purpose of the ST. Another advantage of these exercises is that by looking at poor translations, the student, as a future translator, is made aware of both good and bad translation practices.

Referencias

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