The significance of Ono Yoko’s translation is explicable

The project was conducted in the course of Japanese and English Translation Techniques in Massey University in 2015 and 2016. The procedure: Students in the course had to do the translation practice of a song called ‘Sukiyaki’ from Japanese to English and explain their Skopos and techniques to be used. Then they compared their own renditions with Yoko Oto’s translation in the final examination of the course. Students could prepare for their translations in advance. Over the two years, 19 students were involved.

Cognitive Linguistics and Translation Studies: a comparative analysis between two or more different languages in terms of what is retained and what is lost from a source text to a target text. Two main streams of key concepts in Translation Studies:

Word for Word   →   Foreignisation   →   Formal equivalence   →   Category shifts
Sense for Sense   →   Domestication   →   Functional equivalence   →   Cultural Norms

Student 1
Let’s walk looking up
So as not to spill tears
Spring day to remember
lonely night
Let us walk towards the top
Counting the blurred star
Happiness is in the clouds
Happiness lies beyond the sky
Happiness lies beyond the clouds

Student 2
I hold my head up as I walk
So as not to cry
Remembering those spring days
And the lonely nights
Let’s walk looking up
I count the stars with teary eyes
Happiness lies above the sky
Happiness lies above the clouds

Cognitive Linguistic Approach to Translation Studies


(I) Language is not an autonomous cognitive faculty
(II) Grammar is conceptualization
(III) Knowledge of language emerges from language use.

Source Text Domain
Target Text Domain

Shifts of Subjectivity

Armed
We walk
I walk
You walk

COP indicates ‘Conceptualiser’

Subjectivity and Construal Alternatives in a Cognitive Linguistic approach

The notion of ‘Subjectivity’ and ‘Objectivity’ proposed by Langacker:

(1) Vanessa is sitting across the table.
(2) Vanessa is sitting across the table from me.
(3) Vanessa is sitting across the table from Veronica.

When the involvement of an event is expressed in a language it is a ‘subjective construal’, if the speaker does not express a conceptual element of the event. The cline of the construals is: (1) to (3) = from subjective to objective.

The ‘subjective construal’ is a notion related to the speaker’s construal of referents, and it also how the speaker assigns the same referent with different construals (the speaker is a conceptualiser to construe the situation).

The speaker a ‘subjective construal’ one of which is related based on more or less the speaker’s subjective construal (subjective conceptualization).

The significance of Yoko Ota’s translation is explainable, not in the literature but in the cognitive linguistic analysis. Firstly, she expressed a unique perspective in her construal ‘inclusive You’ mode, which has never been taken before. Secondly, she characteristically shifted her objective construal into her subjective construal ‘inclusive You’ mode. That is, the aesthetic effects of her work are not motivated by regular construals.

Concluding Remarks:

This case study demonstrates that the zero-encoding of the grammatical subject in Japanese can be reanalysed in terms of ‘subjectivity’ and ‘construal alternatives’ in multiple translations, instead of finding various types of equivalences used in a standard model of Translation Studies.

Previous research of Translation Studies had used a linguistic approach to analyse a relationship between a source text and a target text. Therefore, the main field of translation analyses are often considered as applied linguistics or contrastive literature.

Despite being a potential for examining various linguistic hypotheses and concepts. As a future direction, this case study demonstrates that Translation Analysis is not just for teaching language but can also be used for teaching linguistics.

Bibliography:


Hasegawa, Yoko 2014. In Other Words: A Course Book on Translation Studies: A Contrastive Analysis between two Languages in Terms of ‘Subjectivity’ and ‘Construal Alternative’. Japanese is a SOV and topic-prominent language. The cline of the construals is: from (1) to (3) = from subjective to objective.

Acknowledgement: Funding support from the School of Humanities, Massey University and the students in the course 242307, Massey University.
The contrastive analysis of multiple translations: Sukiyaki song from Japanese to English

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2016-11-21