ISSN 1883-7409 (print)
ISSN 1884-0183 (on-line)

Outside the Box: The Tsukuba Multi-Lingual Forum

Volume 2, Issue 2

Autumn, 2009

Foreign Language Center

Tsukuba University

Japan

Translation: Strategies for Japanese – Part 2
Revisiting Chesterman's Theory on Translation Strategies

Jeroen Bode

Abstract

In this issue I will continue the discussion regarding translation strategies as they are presented by Andrew Chesterman in his book titled *Memes of Translation* (2000). The main topic in the current issue of the *OTB Forum* will be the two remaining sets of strategies in his system: the semantic strategies and the pragmatic strategies. For Japanese, there are necessary language-specific strategies not included in his system of translation. These I will introduce at the end and will be regarding the use of reference works during the process of translation.

Introduction

In this installment I would like to explain the last two groups of strategies described by Chesterman (2007) in his book. Previously, I have introduced his syntactic/grammatical strategies which are related to the manipulation of textual form. The other two sets of strategies are named Semantic strategies (S) and Pragmatic strategies (Pr). I explain them in more detail below. However, I have taken the liberty of changing the language combinations and to regard his strategies from the point of view of a Japanese/English combination, though in my present work as a licensed translator I mostly translate from or into Japanese with Dutch (the official language in the Netherlands, not Germany) as the second component in the combination. For those languages I do official translations of documents ranging from birth, marriage, and death certificates to academic transcripts and diplomas just to name a few. Since the licence is also valid for the EU union, English translation falls as well under the licence. As stated in my previous submission ST (source text; SL = source language) and TT (target text; TL= target language) are not fixed units; they depend on the text-type and translator/interpreter concerned. Inverse translation (D/E⇒J) and regular translation (J⇒D/E) happen in the case of official translations and interpreting (for government) equally, while summary translations are for the most part of the first sort.

Bode, J. (2009). Translation strategies for Japanese, part 2: Revisiting Chesterman's theory on translation strategies. *OTB Forum, 2*(2), 17-23.

The following strategies are further discussed in an upcoming publication (Bode, 2010 in press). In the present paper I will summarise when this is possible. Some examples show similarities with the above-mentioned article since they represent well the strategies discussed.

Much more could be said about Chesterman's structural translation system, but for the present let me summarise the main idea through a quotation taken from his book appearing at the end:

> "The theoretical concepts that have so far been central to my discussion of translation theory have been meme, norm and strategy. I have been developing the view that translation is a form of action, describable in terms of strategies, which are themselves governed by norms. The norms themselves, I have suggested, become crystallised from particularly favoured memes." (Chesterman, 2000, p. 172)

Academically, it seems to be well grounded on a theoretical basis with an extensive treatment of translation theories developed over the centuries, and at the same time it gives professionals workable tools in praxis, and for future translators a way to acquire comprehension of both conceptual considerations (memes, norms) and practical knowledge (training of translators and assessment of translations) with strategies belonging in median position and covering both. Memes are conceptual tools (such as cultural ideas, catch phrases, symbols, or practices [p. 5]) that are transmitted from one generation to the next, in a similar way as genes do. In the succeeding pages I start first with describing the semantic strategies followed by the pragmatic strategies. The grammatical strategies I explained in the previous issue of the OTB (Bode, 2009); with the two major groups of strategies in the present article it has to be considered as a triad system of translation strategies in the discussion of Chesterman's book.

In this article I do not refer to other publications on translation studies, for the simple reason that the main theme here is considering translation strategies. This is a subject that is to some extend not fully considered or even completely overlooked as an important issue in other publications on translation studies. Chesterman's book considers this theme in a way that is applicable also for other language combinations. We leave the review of this book to others and look at the possibilities of his method for the Japanese language. The translators of this language are faced with sometimes peculiar translation predicaments.

Semantic Strategies (S)

These consist of 10 strategies which could be further subdivided in two sections. The first four (S1 – S4) are mostly concerned with single lexemes, while the remaining strategies (S5 – S10) are dealing with larger textual units.

S1 Synonomy
S2 Antonomy
S3 Hyponomy
S4 Converses
S5 Abstraction change
S6 Distribution change
S7 Emphasis change
S8 Paraphrase
S9 Trope change
S10 Other change

Synonomy (S1) is the strategy wherein the translator selects not the obvious equivalent but a synonym or near synonym for it in order to avoid repetition for example.

In Japanese official documents, the term *jūri shōmeisho* (受理証明書) appears a lot. To translate it in a bilingual dictionary fashion obscures actually what in the TL is acceptable and in general use. Instead of using the literal translation of certificate of acceptance, it will be more clear for the TT reader (in my case mostly city hall employees in the Netherlands) to use the near synonym of certificate of registration. To register can then be seen as accepting the reported information as an entry into the municipal administration. The acceptance as opted might be confused with being accepted as a member of a religious group.

Antonomy (S2) occurs when an antonym is selected in combination with a negation element. One example to consider is the Japanese word yukkuri, which the Kenkyūsha describes as *without haste (hurry)* among other possibilities. In the Japanese original this element of negation is not present and just doing something in a leisurely manner seems to be the general sentiment.

Hyponomy (S3) is commonly used in translation shifts when these particular relations are occurring. They are subdivided in the following way.

1) ST superordinate (red) ⇒TT hyponym (scarlet/vermillion/crimson/etc)
2) ST hyponym (arrows-of-war [soya 征矢])⇒TT superordinate (arrows
3) ST hyponym (honshoku [本職])⇒TT hyponym (I, as a policeman, …)

The example in (3) actually appears in police statements/reports in Japan as well as in the Netherlands.

Converses (S4) are pairs of (usually) verbal structures which express the same state of affairs from opposing viewpoints, such as buy and sell (p. 103). In Dutch the word for health insurance (E) or *kenkō hoken* (健康保険) is constructed by the word for illness and the word for insurance giving in Dutch the word: ziektekostenverzekering (illness-cost-insurance). Without a doubt, the insurance is especially needed when one has some sort of ailment.

Abstraction change (S5) has to do with a different selection of abstraction level. In translation it may either go from abstract to more concrete, or from concrete to more abstract. See for example the recurrent statement by Wei Liao Tzu (尉繚子) in his classic text: “Thus weapons are evil implements. Conflict is a contrary virtue” (Sawyer, 1993, p. 256 [and p. 273]「故兵者凶器也。争者逆徳也。」(Moriya, 2005, pp. 170, 235). The original text, however, makes it clear that virtue has a connection with an unavoidable state of affairs and to resort to these means as the only possible option to adopt. The abstract statement has been dealt with in the ST accordingly. Looking at another example, Tokugawa Narikatsu’s calligraphy of 「水聲無古今」(*suisei mukokon*) has to a certain degree the abstract content that the sound of water reverberates incessantly. His calligraphy praises the infiniteness of nature as a theme. In the TT this should be included to understand the deeper meaning of *the sound of water without a past or a present*. The message would not be clear for the TT reader if the translation is not made more concrete.

Distribution change (S6) is a change in the distribution of the same semantic components over more items (expansion) or fewer items (compression). Expansion “dilutes” the text somewhat (see p. 104).

The matter of soya (征矢) − meaning arrows-for-war − in the Japanese original of Akutagawa’s story “In the grove” [*Yabu no naka* 藪の中] versus the translation possibility of just *arrows* in the available translations shows this point regarding compression. (See Akutagawa, 1991, p. 148, and Akutagawa, 2006, p. 11.)

Emphasis change (S7) is a translation strategy that adds, reduces, or alters the emphasis or thematic focus.

In section G4 (Bode, 2009, p. 17) we came across an extra sentence added in the TT to facilitate readers’ understanding of the sequential order in the TT version.

Paraphrasing (S8) results in a TT version that can be described as loose, free, and in some contexts even untranslated. Semantic components at the lexeme level are secondary to pragmatic considerations with a higher unit like a whole clause. This paraphrase strategy is well represented by rewritten and/or simplified versions of world literature, for example published by Penguin/Longman-readers for language learners from a beginner level to an advanced level. Consider for instance the abbreviated version of Victor Hugo’s Les Miserables in this readers series, a version with 3000 headwords over 112 pages. This edition is clearly not an integral translation of the original work covering actually 1376 pages in its translation (Hugo, 2009). Another example in the same readers series is The Three Musketeers by Alexandre Dumas with 600 headwords covering 48 pages. The integral translation actually covers 835 pages (see Dumas, 1994).

Trope change (S9) covers actually a set of strategies regarding the translation of rhetorical tropes (i.e., figurative expressions). The trope is using a word or expression in a figurative or metaphorical way. There are three main subclasses for this strategy. Chesterman shows these types by equations. They can be summarized as follows

a) ST trope X ⇒ TT trope X

- a-i) TT trope is the same in terms of its lexical semantics (in the case of methaphors).
- a-ii) TT trope is of the same type if it is related, though not necessarily being semantically identical.
- a-iii) TT trope is of the same type, but not so much lexically related: the source of the image is different.

b) ST trope X ⇒ TT trope Y

c) ST trope X ⇒ TT trope Ø (i.e., the figurative element is dropped completely.)

d) ST trope Ø ⇒ TT trope X

If the Japanese expression *isseki nichō* (一石二鳥) is under consideration then it can be translated as through an (a) ST trope X = TT trope X: to kill two birds with one stone. As an example for (b) *ganko ittetsu* (頑固一徹) could be translated as *stubborn as a mule*. The literal translation has been avoided in order to produce a TT appropriate translation.

Other change (S10) includes other modulations of various kinds, such as change of (physical) sense, or deictic direction. For instance, the verb wakaru (分かる understand) will in a physical sense cover verbs like understand, know, become clear, be sensible, be identified. Depending on the context, the use and meaning need to be considered in the TT translation. Some well chosen examples are given in the Kenkyūsha's dictionary. For instance, *giron no yōten ga wakaru* (議論の要点が分かる) can best be understood as to understand the main points of the argument; while the following example *jiko no giseisha no mimoto ha [pronoun = wa] mada wakatte inai* (事故の犠牲者の身元はまだ分かっていない) seems to mean the victims of the accident have not been identified yet.

The previous semantic strategies show the manipulation of meaning within a text (p. 101). The next 10 strategies (Pr) have to do with the selection of information in the TT and this depends on the translator's sensitivity to the prospective readers. These pragmatic strategies include bigger changes from the ST into the TT product. It also contains the two previous types of strategies as an incorporated system of translation methods.

Pragmatic strategies (Pr)

It appears there are two groups here as well. One is about the treatment of the text (P1 – Pr7) and one is about the translator's role in the translation process (Pr8 – Pr10)

Pr1 Cultural filtering
Pr2 Explicitness change
Pr3 Information change
Pr4 Interpersonal change
Pr5 Illocutionary change
Pr6 Coherence change
Pr7 Partial change
Pr8 Visibility change
Pr9 Transediting
Pr10 Other pragmatic changes

Cultural filtering (Pr1) refers to naturalisation, domestication or adaptation of SL linguistic elements that are culture-specific and subsequently should be translated into TL cultural or functional equivalents. Through this technique they are conforming to TL norms. The opposite procedure borrows these SL elements and can be referred to as exoticization, foreignization, or estrangement.

The earlier references to the source language element of soya (征矢) could be considered as undergoing an adaptation from *arrows-for-war* to a single unit term of just *arrows*. The term samurai could be considered as a for the latter procedure of borrowing the term into the target language.

Explicitness change (Pr2) is a method well used by translators and can either be towards more explicitness (explicitation) or more implicitness (implicitation). Explicitness takes the form of adding more components in the TT than are actually present in the ST. Implicitness is not just leaving out a ST language element, but refers to elements that can be expected to be inferred by readers in general.

In the case of four-character phrases in particular, the translation loses the succinctness of the original ST, and explicitness is unavoidable. When the expression *muga muchū* (無我夢中) is considered, there is the need to explain it as to *do something wholeheartedly*. Translating just the parts will not be effective as a TT product, for *forgetting oneself as in a dream* will not come across.

Information change (Pr3) is necessary if the new (non-inferrable) information has been understood as relevant to the TT reading public, however it is not present in the ST. The opposite is also possible if the information is not relevant in the TT. This happens for instance in the process of summarising. The omitted information cannot be inferred hereafter and is therefore different from implicitness.

In the story by Issai Chosan (1727/2006, p. 177) there are different references to the main human character Sōken. He is referred to also as *teishu* (亭主=head-of-the-house) in the introductory part of the story or is implied to by context in the ST as he or his indirectly. The English translation omitted this reference to his status for either he/his or the name of the main character itself. Definitely, this is an omission for the sake of clarity of the TT.

Interpersonal change (Pr4) is important when the overall style is under consideration. Formality level, degree of emotiveness and involvement, the degree of technical lexis are all important matters when the relationship between text/author and reader are concerned.

Actually the example regarding the speaking style between the woodcutter and the magistrate in Akutagawa's story could be regarded as representing this category as well.

The formal speaking style in ST is almost impossible to preserve as such in the translation, and can only slightly inferred by the phrase "your honour" in the TT to signify the social difference between the two.

Illocutionary change (Pr5) is a strategy linked with other strategies and concerns changes in the speech act (illocutionary action). For instance, changing the mood of the verb from indicative to imperative, a change from statement to request, or the use of rhetorical questions and exclamations, but also changing from direct to indirect speech with certain verbs (state, tell, report) are applications of this strategy.

In (a text-book on) criminal investigation involving foreign nationals (abbreviated title: *Gaihansō*「外犯捜」) the changing from direct to indirect and vice versa can have the effect of simplifying the legal language and the customary way of formulating the offense (p. 15). This is all with the prime purpose of facilitating communication between the different parties.

Coherence change (Pr6) can be seen in connection with G8 (the cohesion change), however, coherence change has much more to do with the logical arrangement of information in the text, and as Chesterman points out on an ideational level (the formation level of ideas). The example given in G4 could also be seen as having to do with the contextual coherence and the need of an added sentence. The TT reads: But as the cat entered the room, the rat* advanced, hurled itself to the cat's face, and sank its teeth into it. The cat let out a scream and ran away (Issai Chosan, 1727/2006, p. 177). [see for the quotation of the original text: OTB Spring 2009].

Partial change (Pr7) strategy contains partial translations, such as summary translation, transcription, and translation of sounds. One example of summary translation is the translation of multiple page letters into a single page for the judicial representatives of government. The translator is in this case highly visible in the product through his accompanying notes and annotations (actually this is also covered in the next strategy).

Visibility change (Pr8) refers to the visibility of the translator in the translation product. Chesterman refers to this point as an overt intrusion or foregrounding of the translatorial presence [of the translator] (p. 112). Examples are translations with footnotes, bracketed comments and added glosses. The reader becomes aware of the presence of the translator, who is no longer transparent. Official translators are required to make themselves visible, in testifying that the translation was made with the original document as source material, or as a translator/explicator in the case that the letter content and explanation should be kept visibly separate.

Transediting (Pr9) covers the radical re-editing by the translators of badly written original texts. It includes drastic reordering and rewriting of the whole text body in general. Technical manuals are testing the translator's ingenuity for making a readable product. With these manuals, both time and the allotted text space are taking a toll on the quality of ST and TT products.

Other pragmatic changes (Pr10) are changes and cover for instance layout, choice of dialect and other factors. With official documents from Japanese city halls, for example, the translator is required to follow the layout of the original, even if the TT format documents have their own prescribed layout. Keeping the ST format intact has the advantage that if there is any doubt, the column and the row can be referred to to single out the doubted entry. As for the dialect, register in fact, the language choice in official documents is formal written style. The only matter that will be intruded upon by the translator of Japanese documents is the transfer from the official year period system used in Japan with the name of the current emperor at the beginning, e.g., *heisei hachinen shichigatsu nanoka* (平成 8 年 7 月 7 日) into the occidental style of counting years: 7 July 1996. Personal names and place names are not translated, but transliterated (and they need to be checked in special name dictionaries among other means of sources (see O'Neill, 1989, and Nichigai, 1990). With the item for prefecture, city, ward, town appropriately inserted into the whole set in the case of area and place names, all the address elements become clear to the reader. These are the only matters that require altering the original for a readable product in the TT.

Conclusion

The strategies described in the previous and present OTB articles are strategies basically on different levels. In his book Chesterman describes the distinctions in the following way:

> "If syntactic strategies [G: grammatical] manipulate form, and semantic strategies manipulate meaning, pragmatic strategies can be said to manipulate the message itself." (p. 107)

Strategies, especially translation strategies, can help to overcome a stalemate for the translator by looking at the problem in another way, or recognising that the problem falls under a certain strategy. Strategies can also help finding solutions with the time restrictions placed for production. However, the strategies described here are not language-pair specific and could be applied to language combinations as well. In translating from or into Japanese, the checking part in reference works (including the Internet) needs to be considered for Japanese as part of the production strategies, because it influences the final product. For Japanese, it is always necessary to know instantly if things need to be translated, transliterated (personal and place names) or converted (different types of measurements, emperor year-periods). Since Chesterman refers to the Popperian system in the following way: Problem 1 (P1) – Tentative Theory (TT) – Error Elimination (EE) – Problem 2 (P2), possibilities of language specific strategies can naturally be developed to solve translation difficulties. His system has a certain inbuilt adaptability answering to new problems, or should I say, to a temporary standstill in the translator's mind. The text itself might not be the problem at all in essence.

References Cited

Akutagawa, R. (1991). Yabu no naka. In *Chikuma Nihonbungaku Zenshū* [ちくま文学全集] (pp.145-164). Tōkyō: Chikuma Publishing Company.

Akutagawa, R. (2006). In the grove [*Yabu no naka*] . In J. Rubin (Trans.), Rashōmon and seventeen other stories, (pp. 10-19). New York: Penguin Books.

Bode, J, (2009). Translation strategies for Japanese – reconsidering Chesterman's theory on translation strategies. *OTB Forum, 2*(1), 15-21.

Bode, J, (2010). Translation strategies for the Japanese written language – reconsidering Chesterman's triad classifications of production strategies (syntactic/grammatical [G], semantic [S] , and pragmatic [Pr]). *Studies in foreign language education, 32*. Tsukaba: Tsukuba University, Foreign Language Centre.

Chesterman, A. (2000). *Memes of translation*. (2nd ed.) Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Dumas, A. (1994). *The three musketeers*. New York: Book-of-the-month-club.

Dumas, A. (2000). *The three musketeers.* Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited.

Hugo, V. (2002). *Les misérables.* Harlow (U.K.): Pearson Education Limited.

Hugo, V. (2009). *Les misérables.* New York: Random House Publishing Group.

Issai Chosan. (1988). Neko-no-myōjutsu (猫之妙術). In Y. Iikura (Rev.), *Sōsho Edo Bunko, 13: Issai Chosan-shū* (pp. 36-42). Tōkyō: Kokusho Kankōkai. (Original work published in 1727)

Issai Chosan. (2006). The mysterious art of the cat [Neko-no-myōjutsu 猫之妙術]. In W. S. Wilson (Trans.), *The demon's sermon on the martial arts and other tales* (pp. 177-191). Tōkyō: Kōdansha International. (Original work published in 1727)

Moriya, H. (1999). Shibahō, Utsuryō-shi, Rieikō montai (司馬法・尉繚子・李衛公問対). Tōkyō: President Company.

Sawyer, R.D. (1993). The seven military classics of ancient China. Boulder (USA)/Oxford (UK): Westview press.

Japanese Reference Works (Dictionaries)

Watanabe, T., Skrzypczak, E.R., Snowden, P. (eds.) (2003). *Kenkyūsha's new Japanese–English dictionary.* Tōkyō: Kenkyūsha.

Casio XD-GT9300 (2003/2005). *New Japanese–English dictionary.* [Electronic dictionary]. Tōkyō: Kenkyūsha.

Specialised Japanese reference works

Practical Research Association of Criminal Investigation (Ed.) (2003). *New edition Criminal investigations with foreign nationals involved –containing example texts of related documents* (新版　外国人犯罪捜査・捜査書類記載例付). Tōkyō: Tachibana Shobō.

About the author: *Jeroen Bode has been working since 2005 for Tsukuba University as a lecturer. From 2007 he started also as an independent official translator of Japanese. His translation work led him to redirect his attention to applied language skills during the process of translating. He received his M.A. in Japanese language and culture in 1996 from Leiden University in the Netherlands.*