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WHAT EVERY WOULD-BE TRANSLATOR SHOULD KNOW ABOUT TRANSLATION

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The following texts are the work of a so-called translator, published by a client who believed that he got precisely what he was looking for to communicate his message.

"A las puentes naturales monumento nacional de cuentos piedras sólidas alcanza a traves cañones profundos formando las puestas más grandes naturales en ninguna parte. Y entonces hay el más grande: La puente Arco iris monumento Nacional. Su tamaño interior es tan alto (309 pies/94m) que el capital de la nación lo podría encajarse de alajo. En el lugar de los cuatro esquinas es el Nacional de Hoverweep Monumento, seis grupos de tores graneros y viviendos abandonados misteriosamente hace cien años por los ancestros de los indios pueblos."

"Ind every space we find synphathelic places in every color as Purhuay, Ahuaycha, Pamuri and others, were wits a little art we can fead a delicious popular alcoholic beverage of the style of mother Etelvina.

This Pampas whit his shinning sky annoys blue with love received airs with his wide higway to Huancayo, Ayacucho, Cobriza, with his big typie January foty of 576 hours dancing without stop with many dancers in moon's nights, in the best time with the best time teacher a guitar Direct "Chusco" Gamarra, well leave back the Pamp with his farh full of redish and enchantament of their streets, and soy good by of the many and nice fusids, who made durinshortstay remember the swahlows and music nigths in Snack Bar "103" where we receive a perfectly attention."

When viewing samples such as these, people tend to react in several ways: some are moved to laughter, others feel that they would never do such a poor job, and still others think that these samples are the exception rather than the norm. Unfortunately, this is not a laughing matter; most people who do not know what translation is all about, do

produce texts similar to these, and furthermore, this problem is quite prevalent in the nation.

Given these facts, let's take a look at some of the things every would-be translator should know about translation.

The life of a translator revolves around theory and practice. By theory we mean the set of rules and regulations that govern the process known as translation. By practice we mean the protocol that regulates the interaction between client and translator. For the purpose of this presentation, we will discuss the basic concepts relating to theory and practice that every would-be translator should know before he or she attempts to work as a translator.

First of all, let us define translation. Translation is a process by which a text originally produced in one language is rendered into another, and the finished product is in written form. This is an important point: every would-be translator should know that translation involves a written process, as opposed to interpretation, which is the oral transfer of a text from one language into another. Furthermore, a translation can only be called a translation when the target text reproduces the same reaction, the same information and the same impression that the original did on its intended audience. Anything short of this cannot be called a translation.

Second, every translation process presupposes an interaction between meaning and form. A translator must transfer the meaning - i.e., the information, the message - contained in the source text, and he must do it accurately. What most people don't understand is that in order to have a good translation, the information must be rendered in the form of the target language; that is to say, using the syntactic patterns typical of that language. The source text provides the information; the translator must provide the appropriate target language form to make that information available to his target audience. If he fails to do that, if he allows the form of the source text to show up in his target language, then he has created what Alan Duff calls "a third language"; that is to say, a text similar to the examples presented in this paper.

Third; if form is so important in a translation, then it stands to reason that a translator must translate into his native language. This is the form with which he or she is most familiar; this is the language he has grown up with. The examples used at the beginning of this presentation also illustrate what happens when a translator attempts to translate into a foreign language rather than into his own.

This brings us to our fourth point: what every would-be translator should know about his own limitations. Contrary to what many people believe, there is more to translation than the language skills developed in a foreign language program. To be a competent translator, one must be an expert in his own native language and have an almost equal command of the foreign language. Being able to function in a foreign language is not the same as being able to produce a translation that sounds as if it had been written in that language from the very

beginning. And yet, it is not a folly to state that every person who took a foreign language course at one time or another felt that he could translate, not only into his own native language but into the foreign tongue.

Fifth, every would-be translator should know the four basic steps of the translation process: 1. Text analysis, 2. Documentation, 3. Translation, and 4. Revision. By text analysis we mean reading the entire text before attempting to translate it. Such reading should provide the would-be translator with information regarding meaning, form, and problems to be solved, as well as the tone and purpose of the text, and should also bring out information concerning its intended target audience. To translate without doing a text analysis is foolish.

Once the text has been analyzed, the translator does not begin his translation but rather goes about collecting all the materials necessary to resolve the problems he has discovered in the text. By documentation we mean the gathering of all tools (glossaries, dictionaries, other similar texts already translated, colleagues, encyclopedias dealing with that particular subject matter, grammar books, illustrated dictionaries, etc.) from which the translator attempts to develop a terminology file to use with that text. Nowadays, these files are produced with the aid of the computer and by using a text data manager such as Lexiterm, among others.

The first two steps of every translation project -text analysis and documentation- require a great deal of time and effort, and many would-be translators are not aware of how important it is to spend that time in preparation for a translation.

The third step is the actual translation. In this day and age, no one handwrites a translation. Most translators use a word processor with a built in terminology file. This terminology file is produced during the documentation stage of the project, and it may undergo some modification as it interacts with the text being produced during the translation process, but at the same time it will grow with each translation project, providing, therefore, a wealth of information for future reference.

The translation thus produced, however, is rarely the finished product. It will go through many more drafts until meaning and form merge into one cohesive discourse that no longer resembles a text written in another language.

Then, it is ready for the final stage, which is called revision. Every would-be translator should know that this is a vital part of every translation, and that there is a system to it. First, no revision should be undertaken immediately after completing the translation. The ideal situation calls for a 2 week interval between the completion of the translation and the revision process, if the revisor is going to be the translator himself. By then, he can read his translation and spot "third language" problems more readily than if the source text were still fresh in his mind. Once he has checked the form, he can proceed

to check the meaning. The real revisor, however, should be someone who has not read the source text and whose native language is the language of the translation. This brings us to another point. Is there more than one good translation? The answer is Yes. If a translation is an interaction between meaning and form, different translator may chose different forms to convey the same meaning.

From all of this we may derive that what a would-be traslator should know about the theoretical aspect of translation is that there is more to it than language knowledge, and that a good dictionary alone does not make a good translator.

Let us say, however, that the would-be translator has learned the theory and is ready to go to work. What should he know about the practice of translation?

First of all, he must decide whether he wants to free-lance or work in-house. Free-lancers have the option to work for themselves, or for an agency on a part-time basis. In-house translators may work in the translation department of a company or at a translation agency. Regardless of where he works, however, he must be aware that translators need to specialize, and that no one should attempt to translate anything and everything.

Second, more and more clients are aware that there is more to translation than language skills, and therefore they may request proof that the would-be translator is competent. One such proof is a degree from a reputable institution specialized in the training of translators, and the other is national accreditation granted by a professional organization. At this time the only such organization is the American Translators Association. Third, a would-be translator should know something about what is known as translator/client relations. In most cases, the client knows practically nothing concerning the translation process. In his mind, if a person has studied a foreign language and has a dictionary, he ought to be able to translate. It is only in cases where the client has been "burned" by a poor job, that he is willing to abide by the rules of the profession. Therefore, it is up to the translator to educate his client as to why he had to hire a professional translator, and what he is paying for. In view of that, a would-be translator needs to be up to date on how much to charge his client and how to justify that charge. In the case of a free-lancer, he must also know how to protect himself against unscrupulous clients. Matters such as contracts, retainer fees, hidden costs, pre-payment, deadlines, and the likes, should be clearly understood and presented to the client in a professional bid. Furthermore, the translator should know how to make his translations available in camera ready form, or via modem or FAX. He should also make provisions to retain control over any changes made in his text.

If the translator is working in-house, whether for an agency or a company, his job may be determined by the rules of the house. In that case, a would-be translator would do well if he would ask for a set of the rules -in writing- that he must uphold while working for the firm. Some firms, for example, hire translators as free-lancers, but they do

not allow them to work for other clients. A would-be translator should also know that, in most cases, an agency will charge a client at least triple what he himself is being paid for his work. The rest of the cost goes for over-head expenses.

Lastly, a would-be translator should know that there is always somebody willing to work for less, and that sadly enough, a large percentage of clients will go for the cheaper bid. In such cases, it is not unusual to find that the would-be client does come back later with the finished product and asks you to correct it, because someone who speaks the target language has warned him that, in his opinion, the translation is not quite right. At times such as these, a translator often finds out that as long as there are so called "would-be translators" out there, there will be work for him to do.