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TRANSLATION AS A DIMENSION OF INTELLECTUALIZATION--THE SIL EXPERIENCE

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1. INTRODUCTION

For many people their understanding of the world around them is limited to personal knowledge and the collective experience of their specific culture. Yet, beyond those borders there is a vast universe of knowledge--locked up in the strange tongues and unknown languages of other cultures. For those highly motivated to become 'educated' in this body of knowledge, two things have to happen. The learner must spend long years studying those languages himself or he must rely on a translation he can understand.

This paper is limited to that aspect of language intellectualization to which SIL can speak with experience--namely, translation principles and methods. It will attempt to discuss the following five topics: SIL's experience; What is translation? (Form versus Meaning); What is good translation? (Form-based versus Meaning-based translation); Translating Unknown Concepts; Testing the Translation; and Establishing a Translation Project.

2. SIL's EXPERIENCE

SIL works with cultural communities which are often islands within a larger host culture. These smaller groups are frequently cut off from the mainstream of the larger society by their language, which represents their identity. There is often a tension in these cultural communities between the desire to hold to traditional ways and a need to participate in the larger, national society. In today's ever-shrinking world, it is virtually impossible for minority societies to remain isolated from outside influences. If minority cultural groups are not adequately prepared through education to function successfully in the larger world around them, integration into the larger culture is often traumatic. Social demoralization and disintegration usually follow.

One of SIL's aims is to enhance the minority person's view of himself, his language, and his culture. SIL also desires to create greater understanding and communication between minorities and the world at large. This is usually through the medium of literature.

Applying the skills of descriptive linguistics, anthropology, community development, translation techniques, and cross-cultural communication, SIL members work among the local communities. Upon invitation, language personnel move into a local community and begin a project program. Choosing community members to assist them, they work to learn the language and understand the culture. They analyze and describe the language, develop an orthography (if needed), and help produce a body of literature for the people to read. This usually includes a translation of the Holy Scriptures.

SIL personnel often work with people who are at the lower levels of literacy and education. Materials most frequently translated are those intended to provide knowledge at a basic level--the fundamental skills of reading and arithmetic, primary health care, and usually basic concepts from social studies and the sciences.

Through literacy and translation work SIL has been involved in the intellectualization of languages, i.e. the process whereby the knowledge of the world is made available in a particular language. As part of the translation process the translator and those who assist him will have to talk about the language into which they are translating. This may be a new experience for mother-tongue speakers assisting the translator. The meta-language which is developed will stimulate some 'intellectualization' of the language. The translator will also have to describe and talk about things and events which are not common or known in the culture and which have never been expressed before. The introduction of new concepts as a result of translation will also contribute to 'intellectualization'.

The level of 'intellectualization' typically achieved in the languages with which SIL works, however, is limited. As minor languages, few if any, would be used as a medium of instruction beyond the elementary school level. In many cases, SIL's push for literacy and translation in these minor languages is to bridge people into the language of the majority culture. At the same time, SIL recognizes the need that exists in many of these groups to provide a body of literature appropriate to the domains in which their language is used. Therefore, SIL's experience regarding the intellectualization of a language has been on a small scale when compared to the issues and planning involved for Filipino, a national language encompassing a whole country.

The discussion in this paper regarding translation theory and practice are presented for your consideration based on the assumption that the continued intellectualization of Filipino will entail the further translation of educational materials.

3. WHAT IS TRANSLATION?

Translation is communication. In order to understand the nature of translation, it is important to recognize what is involved in communicating between languages. Nida and de Waard note that any communication involves eight principle elements: source, message, receptors, setting, code, sense channel, instrument channel, and noises (1986:11). Since we are limiting our discussion to written communication across languages, we will focus our discussion on the elements of source, message, and receptor recognizing that the others refer more to verbal rather than written communication.

Translation is necessary when a message in one language must be transferred into another language. It is the transferring of the meaning from one language to another. This is done by going from the 'form' of the first language to the 'form' of a second language. The meaning is transferred as it is expressed in the 'forms' of a second language.

Every message has both 'form' and 'meaning'. Form refers to the particular words, phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, etc. used and the order in which they are uttered or written. These forms make up what is called the surface structure of a language (Larson 1984:3). The 'form' from which the translation is made will be called the 'source language' and the 'form' into which the translation is made will be called the 'receptor language'. Translation, then, consists of studying the words, the grammatical structure, communication situation, and cultural context of the source language text, analyzing it in order to determine its meaning, and then expressing this same meaning using the words and grammatical structures which are appropriate in the receptor language and its cultural context (Larson 1984:3).

Let us look at an example of translation in which the form of the source language was imposed on the receptor language. This is taken from an instruction manual for a voltage regulator. The manual reads:

(a) Please be careful of connect never to exceed load.
(b) If, burned-out the fuse, since please change to rating fuse.
(c) The main switch-off when long time no operation.
(d) If you keep this attention, this machine will become your best partner.

The translator attempted to preserve the 'form' of the source language. The appropriate, natural forms in English were not used with the result that the 'meaning' has not been clearly communicated.

Properly translated into the natural structures of English, our example from the voltage regulator manual should read something like:

(a) Please be careful never to connect appliances which exceed the load limit.
(b) If the fuse burns out, please replace with a fuse of the same rating.
(c) Turn off the main switch if you will not be using the regulator for a long time.
(d) If you follow these instructions, this machine will become your best friend.

Translation is the re-telling, exactly as possible, of the meaning of the original message in a way that is natural in the language into which the translation is being made. If a translator is to successfully communicate a message, he must focus on translating the meaning, not the form.

Of course, related languages will use many similar forms. With two closely related languages, the adjustments needed in order to translate meaningfully will be minimal. On the other hand, two radically different languages will have a few, if any, structures in common. In this case, communicating meaningfully through word-for-word translation would be virtually impossible.

This is readily apparent when translating figures of speech--particularly idioms. An idiom is a string of words whose meaning is different than the meaning conveyed by the individual words (Larson 1984:20). They are 'those delightful, colorful, and unique expressions that add zest to speech and can express perceptions and values, the heart and soul of a people' (Kohlenberg 1987:70-71).

Idioms are present in all languages, but no two languages use idioms in exactly the same way. They exist as fixed forms. The identical form in another language would not convey the same meaning. In English, we say, 'he has a hard heart', meaning 'he is indifferent to the needs of others'. But the same expression, 'to have a hard heart', in Shipibo of Peru means 'he is brave'. Shipibo does, however, have an idiom equivalent to 'he has a hard heart', but their idiom is 'his ears have no holes' (Larson 1984:115). If

idioms are translated word-for-word or form-for-form, they will not make sense. Or even worse, they will sound utterly ludicrous to the receptor.

Translation, then, is a complex process. It requires that the translator determine what the surface forms of the source language mean. When the underlying meaning is analyzed and understood, then and only then can translation really begin. This is the only way to achieve the natural, idiomatic style and expression of the receptor language.

4. WHAT IS GOOD TRANSLATION?

Good translation is meaning-based (Larson 1984:15). Because there is form and meaning to every message, it is possible to translate that message two different ways. One way is form-based, the other is meaning-based. Meaning-based translations express the meaning of the source language text in the natural forms of the receptor language. This kind of translation is called idiomatic translation. Form-based translations attempt to follow the form of the source language and are known as word-for-word or literal translations.

Let us think for a moment about the concept of 'literal' when applied to meaning. What, for example, is the literal meaning of the word 'trunk'? Depending on whether the subject is an elephant or a car, the meaning will be different. The 'trunk' can be the front of an elephant, the back of a car, the bottom of a tree, the midsection of a person's body, or the entirety of a large suitcase! And 'trunks' can be what you wear when you go running or swimming (Kohlenberger 1987:63). Apart from context, no word can have a 'literal' meaning.

As a label used to distinguish one kind of translation from the other, the term 'literal' has tended to confuse rather than clarify. This is particularly true when 'literal' and 'idiomatic' are applied to the various English translations of Holy Scriptures. The problem with the label 'literal' in the context of Scriptures translation, is not its definition but its implications. To the untrained, 'literal' implies exactness and figurative or speculative. It is judged incorrectly that any translation other than 'literal' is 'bad', 'misleading', certainly 'inaccurate' and even 'deliberately deceptive'.

For many, 'literal' translation implies accurate translation. On the contrary, a literal, word-for-word translation does not assure accuracy at all. Accuracy is achieved only when the meaning (not the source language forms) has been faithfully expressed in the receptor language. For that reason, translation theorists usually avoid 'literal' as a label.

The literal kind of translation is form-oriented translation. It is variously referred to as 'formal equivalence' (Nida 1964 and 1974), 'formal correspondence' (Nida and de Waard 1986), or 'form-based' (Larson 1984) translation. These terms describe more accurately the nature of what has been called literal translation and avoid erroneous implications concerning the accuracy of the translation. 'Dynamic equivalence' (Nida), 'functional equivalence' (Nida and de Waard), or 'meaning-based' (Larson) are used to describe idiomatic type translations. SIL is a proponent of meaning-based translation.

Good translation should be NATURAL. It should not sound like a translation but like someone speaking in the everyday way of idiomatic speech.

Good translation should be CLEAR. There is more than one way to say a thing in any language. The translator's responsibility is to choose the receptor language forms which communicate the message of the original text as clearly as possible. His choice of receptor language forms must be based on what his audience will understand, not on what the translator thinks they will understand.

Good translation must be ACCURATE. The translator must analyze the source message until it is thoroughly understood. Then, he must re-express the meaning of that

message as exactly as possible into the receptor language. His aim is not to add to, omit, or change any part of the message. The translator is constantly struggling to achieve the ideal in accuracy, clarity, and naturalness. It is no easy task.

5. TRANSLATING UNKNOWN CONCEPTS

Perhaps the most difficult task facing the translator is knowing how to translate a word or event when the receptor language has no equivalent word or the event is unknown. Cultures are different. People are different. Peoples of different languages and cultures live and experience things differently. It is inevitable that the task of translation will force the translator to deal with describing things or events which are new to the receptor culture and language.

Some common groups of unknowns across languages and cultures are names of animals, names of plants and trees, features of geography, weather differences, money and measurements, things that people wear, and housing and household objects. Not all of these items are unknown in all areas. This will depend on each individual area. For example, camels are well known in Northern Nigeria, but unknown in Papua New Guinea. The sea is well known in the islands of Vanuatu, but is unknown in Northern Nigeria. In cases such as these, the translator's task is made more difficult, because he needs to communicate a whole concept, not just find an appropriate way to refer to something already familiar in the receptor language.

One way to communicate items new to the speakers of the receptor language is to include supplementary material in and with the translation. Well-chosen, historically and/or culturally accurate pictures can illustrate for the reader something difficult to understand in the text. A glossary in the back of the book could explain in expanded form the unknown items.

Footnotes would be useful to fill in the reader's knowledge of background information. Footnotes can also be used to indicate places where the form of the receptor language text has radically departed from the form of the source language text in order to accurately convey the meaning of the source language text.

Another kind of useful supplement might be a brief factual introduction or summary. Summaries could be provided to give information necessary for the reader to understand the message of the text.

All of these supplementary aids can be helpful in communicating an unknown idea or concept. But none is a substitute for meaningful translation of the text itself. This is the best way of helping people understand something that is previously outside their experience.

In deciding how to translate a thing or event that is unknown in the receptor language, two aspects of its meaning need to be considered. One is its surface form or appearance. The other is its function or significance within its particular context and within the culture. Form has to do with the physical aspects of a particular thing or event. Function has to do with its significance or use.

For example, 'pencil' has the form of being long pointed at one end, made of wood with graphite in the middle, and usually having an eraser at the opposite end. But the function of a 'pencil' is writing. A 'quill' [pen] which is used for writing would have the same function but a very different form (Larson 1984:64). In a given context, the author may be concerned with the form of the thing or event, but sometimes the function is more important. The translator must discover what the important meaning components are (i.e. the components that are in focus in the context) and then, be certain that those components get expressed.

Understanding the relationship between the form and the function of a thing or event is crucial to finding good translation equivalents. The function of a thing or event is other specific to a culture (i.e. unknown or not understood outside that culture). If in translation the form of a thing or event is retained without clarifying the function, wrong meaning may result.

The form and the function of a thing or an event may correspond in four possible ways. First, a thing or event in one culture may have the SAME FORM and the SAME FUNCTION in another culture. For example, the concept 'ear' with the function of 'hearing' is the same in all cultures and languages.

Secondly, a thing or event in one culture may have the SAME FORM in another culture but a DIFFERENT FUNCTION. For example, 'bread' may be found in two cultures and both have a word for bread. However, in one culture it is the staple food, eaten at every meal. In the other culture, it may be a special treat and served only at parties and offered to guests. The form is the same but the function is different.

Thirdly, a thing or event in one culture may have no corresponding form in another culture, but there is a thing or event in the other culture with a DIFFERENT FORM but the SAME FUNCTION. For example, in one culture, 'bread' may be the staple food. In another, the staple food may be 'rice' (as it is in Asian cultures). 'Bread' and 'rice' are different forms, but they have the similar function of being the staple food in the two cultures.

Fourthly, a thing or event in one culture may have NO EQUIVALENT FORM and NO EQUIVALENT FUNCTION in another culture. The concept found in the source language culture may be something which does not exist in the receptor language culture and there is also no other item which has the same function. For example, 'sheep' are frequently mentioned in texts from the Middle East. In some instances, 'sheep' has the function of being a 'sacrifice for sin'. However, among the tropical rain forest groups of the Amazon, the animal 'sheep' does not occur nor is there anything which functions as an 'animal sacrifice for sin' (Larson 1984:165). There is no correspondence of either form or function.

There are several ways a translator may choose to go when translating an unknown thing or event. We will focus on the three most common ways.

1. Use a descriptive phrase in the receptor language.

   The descriptive phrase usually involves a more inclusive (generic) term modified by a description which focuses on whatever aspect of the form or the function which is most relevant in the context (Larson 1984:167).

   (In the following examples the source language (English) word is given first in the left hand column and is followed by an English rendering of the translation as it was done in the receptor language named in the parentheses. The generic word used in the translation is marked with single quote marks.)

   A Generic Term Modified by a Description of Form:

treasure	=	lots of valuable 'things' (Mazahua, Mexico)
sea	=	flat 'water' (Wantoat, Papua, New Guinea)
incense	=	'that' which smokes and is fragrant (Ifugao, Philippines)

   A Generic Term Modified by a Description of Function:

ship	=	'that' with which we can walk on water (Chichimeca Pame, Mexico)
anchors	=	'those things' that make the boat stay (Chol, Mexico)

A Generic Term Modified by a Description of Both Form and Function:

mainsail	=	'cloth' on the pole that was in the front of the boat in order that the wind might push the boat (Tetelcingo Aztec, Mexico)
anchors	=	'irons' to which they attached ropes in order that they would get stuck in the dirt so the boat would not move (Tetelcingo Aztec, Mexico)

2. Use a foreign word plus an explanatory phrase.

The terms 'foreign word' and 'loan word' are sometimes confused. All languages borrow words from other languages, usually from the major languages which are spoken in the area. After a long time, a word which has been borrowed from one language may be used so much in the other that it is no longer a foreign word. It has been adopted. Everybody uses it--even those people who do not know the language from which it originally came. It is pronounced just like other words in the receptor language. Words which have been adopted into the language in this way may be used freely in the translation. They are not foreign any longer.

A foreign word, on the other hand, is one which is not known to the speakers of the receptor language. The disadvantage of using foreign words in a translation, of course, is that most ordinary people do not know what they mean. Therefore, they do not really translate the meaning of the original foreign words. The translator should avoid foreign words wherever possible. However, there are some places, especially in historical references, where there seems to be no better solution. In these cases, the translator should try to introduce the foreign word in such a way as to give the reader some clue to its meaning. This can be done by modifying the word by a classifier or by a phrase describing its form, function, or both (from Larson 1984:169).

(In the following examples the source language (i.e. English) word is given first in the left hand column and is followed by an English rendering of the translation as it was done in the receptor language named in the parentheses. The foreign word used in the translation is marked by single quote marks.)

A Foreign Word Modified by a Classifier:

dove	=	a bird called a 'dove' (Wantoat, Papua New Guinea)
Amazon	=	river called 'Amazon' (Agaruna, Peru)
lion	=	animal called 'lion' (Agaruna, Peru)

Foreign Word Modified by a Description of Form, Function, or Both

priest	=	'priest', the person who deals with that given to God (Kalinga, Philippines)
anchors	=	irons called 'anchors' tied with ropes so the boat could not go any further (Teutila Cuicatec, Mexico)

It is important to focus on that aspect of the meaning which is relevant in each particular context. This may be different in different contexts. For example:

myrrh	=	'myrrh', a medicine that relieves pain
myrrh	=	costly gifts: gold, frankincense, and 'myrrh'
myrrh	=	sweet smelling oil called 'myrrh'

The first would be used when the property of myrrh as a medicine is most important; the second, when the fact that myrrh is a luxurious gift such as a king would give or receive is intended; and the third, when it is the sweet fragrance of myrrh that is relevant.

3. Substitute an item which is known in the receptor culture.

Sometimes the exact thing referred to in the text may be unknown to the people of the receptor language, but there may be something similar that is known which can be substituted.

When the form is not in focus in a particular context, cultural substitution works well if the function of the two terms is the same. For example, the substitution of 'coyotes' for 'wolves' works well, if one is translating stories from Canada into an Amerindian language of Mexico. 'Bury' might be translated with a word meaning 'place in a tomb', if the form is not in focus, since the function is the same--'to dispose of the dead body' (Larson 1984:170).

Some cultural substitutes which have been used in translation are (Larson 1984:172):

lamp	=	bamboo torch (Papua New Guinea)
corner stone	=	main pole (of house) (Papua New Guinea)
recline at table	=	sit down to eat (English)

A number of questions need to be asked before considering the use of a cultural substitute. How similar are the two things or events? If they are quite similar ('coyote' and 'wolf'), then there is less likely to be a problem. Could a descriptive equivalent be used without greatly distorting the text? If so, then the use of a descriptive equivalent to translate an unknown concept is preferred to the cultural substitute. How culturally isolated are the receptor language speakers? If they are very isolated and have seen few cultural items from other areas, it may be necessary to use more cultural substitutes in translation.

The receptor of a translated message will always interpret the message in the light of his own culture. Special care is needed, therefore, to ensure that the function of the item with in the original culture is communicated in translation, wherever this is necessary for the correct understanding of the message.

Although a cultural substitute may sometimes be the best alternative for a particular translation situation, there are some important cautions which must be kept in mind. The source message comes from the background of a particular culture, and describes events which happened or are happening in a specific, factual setting. If the story is about someone who was eating a banana, it would be inappropriate to say that he was eating an orange. Clearly it would be wrong to translate in a way which would 'change' the facts or which would make it appear as if the events happened in the receptor culture and not the source culture.

In summary, there are three possible ways to translate an unknown item in the receptor language: (1) Use a descriptive phrase, (2) use a foreign word, and (3) substitute a concept which is known in the receptor culture. Each of these has its advantages and disadvantages. Care must be taken to discover which way is most appropriate for each particular passage.

6. TESTING THE TRANSLATION

One extremely important lesson SIL has learned from its experience is the necessity for testing a translation. A translator cannot be certain that his translation is accurate, clear, and natural until it has been well tested with a variety of people.

First of all, a translation should be checked by an experienced consultant. An independent examination of the translation by another experienced translator would be valuable. He could point out potential ambiguities and inaccuracies that the translator himself could easily overlook. There are so many things that a translator must control that he is bound to overlook something. Because he is working intensely with two languages, he may not recognize at times when he has lapsed into form-based translation or used structures which do not communicate well. Even if the translator is a mother tongue speaker of the language into which he is translating, he is still prone to these kinds of errors. The help of a trained consultant is very important in achieving an accurate translation.

The translation must be tested by the user. If the translation is of textbooks and educational matter intended for the classroom, the material must be checked with the people who will ultimately use them. The schools, teachers, and students involved in the testing of these materials should be from a variety of geographical areas and representative of a cross section of the population in regards to social standing, intelligence, etc.

In the Philippine context, the materials must be tested both in areas where Filipino is the mother tongue of the community and in areas where Filipino is still a second language learned in school and used in commerce and government. Testing is important because materials that are poorly translated will be difficult to read. Reading is so basic to education that materials which do not read clearly will not be useful pedagogical tools.

Reader response is so important a gauge to the overall quality of a translation that we will refer to it again under the next topic, Establishing a Translation Project: The Target.

7. ESTABLISHING A TRANSLATION PROJECT

The assumption of this paper is that intellectualizing a language such as Filipino will necessitate a major emphasis in the translation of foreign literature, particularly English language textbooks. Materials will need to be produced in an orderly, planned manner. To do this, many questions need to be considered and answered before any translation project can begin: What materials are to be translated?; Who will do the translating?; Who are the intended receptors of the translation? etc. One of the greatest roadblocks to producing good translation is the lack of adequate planning and preparation before actual translation begins. Having good guidelines ahead of time may mean the difference between success and failure.

The following are some helpful guidelines for establishing a translation project (from Larson 1984:467-475).

There are four basic areas to be considered when starting a translation project. They are: Text, Target, Team, and Tools. We will focus on Text and Target; refer briefly to Team; and not touch on Tools at all, since logistics and materials are not altogether germane to the topic at hand.

7.1. Text

It needs to be asked: What material will be translated? and Why has it been chosen? In the context of intellectualizing Filipino, presumably educational materials

would be of primary importance. The kinds of educational material that would be selected for translation may be predetermined by those charged with making curriculum decisions. Likely, those English language texts already in use by the schools would be the first to be considered for translation.

Consideration, however, may need to be given to choosing different English textbooks on the basis that they are simpler to translate and cover the curriculum content desired equally well. Not all texts are equally easy to translate. The level of language varies from textbook to textbook. If the language level of the source text is basic, there will be fewer difficulties for the translator to handle when translating into Filipino. An English text that uses a language level that is difficult for an average native English speaker to understand is probably not a suitable text to be translated.

A textbook with a simple, direct style would be a good choice as the source text from which to translate. A well constructed textbook will present new material step by step in clear progression with all the necessary information spelled out explicitly. This kind of text will usually be less difficult to translate. A text that leaves important information implicit, or leaves things unexplained because the reader is assumed to know a great deal more than he actually does, may be very difficult to translate.

7.2. Target

Good translation is impossible without a thorough analysis of the target or receptor audience, i.e. those for whom the translation is intended. Traditional translation methods have focused primarily on the source text. The translator 'called the shots', deciding what words and expressions communicated best. Often the style of the source text was imposed onto the translation so that it read unnaturally--like a foreign language using familiar words. Generally, this kind of work has not been well received.

Modern communication theory has demonstrated that communication has not happened if the receptor has not understood the message communicated. If a reader cannot understand the text he is reading because it does not speak his language clearly or naturally, why translate in the first place? Communication must be audience oriented.

A translator must know his intended audience. In the analysis of the people for whom he is translating, he must ascertain several things. They are as follows:

1. Dialect(s) of the Target Audience

   Since our subject is the intellectualization of Filipino, it is Filipino speakers, of course, who are the target audience. Yet, it must be considered that not all speakers of Filipino have equal facility in the language. There are mother tongue speakers of varying abilities as well as those for whom Filipino is a second or third language. For which audience will the translation be done? Will it be done for the mother tongue Filipino speaker or will it be done with those in mind for whom Filipino is an acquired language? Some middle ground may have to be found. If highly idiomatic Filipino is used, it may make the textbook difficult for non-mother tongue speakers to use. If the style of Filipino is too simple (so as to communicate easily to non-mother tongue speakers), it may sound childish and bore the mother tongue speakers.

   For those of the receptor audience who have learned Filipino as a second language, the vocabulary level and degree of sentence complexity used in a translated text should not go beyond the level of proficiency in Filipino that has been taught to them in school by the time they are expected to use the textbook. This is a basic principle in education and is especially

applicable in the making of school texts. This is important since many who use the textbooks will be non-mother tongue speakers of Filipino.

2. Social Levels Represented in the Target Audience

Social levels within the receptor audience will vary considerably. The wealthy to the poor are all potential users of translated materials. Will the translation be acceptable to both extremes and all those in between? Should one level be targeted to the exclusion of others? Language forms and usage differ at differing social levels.

3. Target Audience's Purpose for Reading What Is to Be Translated

The style of the translation is determined by the intended use of the material. A text meant for personal reading enjoyment, would not be translated in the same manner as material intended for school or for business use. It is necessary for the translator to match an appropriate style with the intended use. It would not do to translate the opening line of a biography of Abraham Lincoln, for example, with the equivalent of 'Once upon a time...' an expression which, in English, signals that it is a fairy tale which follows.

4. Age(s) of the Target Audience

For other than educational materials, the ages of the potential reading audience would need to be determined. For textbooks, the grade level at which the book is to be used would determine the answer.

5. Degree of Bilingualism of the Target Audience

Bilingualism in the receptor audience is a significant factor. The ability level of the typical reader of the intended translation to understand the source language will in many ways shape the form of that translation. What level of instruction in the source language (i.e. English) will the students have received by the time they use the textbook being translated? What is the level of proficiency in English of the average teacher who will be using the textbook? The answers to these questions will affect the decisions to use or avoid source language words in the translation. As was discussed earlier in this paper, one can translate an unknown concept in a variety of ways. The decision to use a foreign word rather than a receptor language word will depend on how widely the foreign word will be understood.

6. Functions of the Receptor Language

In multi-lingual societies, certain languages tend to be used in specific situations. For example, in mixed communities, the local language is used primarily in the home. Its domain of use is reserved for talking about matters close to the heart (e.g. love and death), family affairs, everyday planning, thinking, and work. Other languages are used outside the home--at school, church, government offices, etc. The domain of a local language sometimes extends into the local school and government but often does not reach the provincial or national level. Beyond southern Luzon, Filipino is mostly spoken outside the home for many people. Its domain is education, commerce and, in some areas, religion. The intellectualization of Filipino will, of necessity, involve expanding the domains in which Filipino will be used. What will be those domains? These must be clearly defined before beginning a translation project. Those responsible for translating will need to

focus on materials which will stimulate interest in using Filipino in these domains. No one will buy and read material in which he has no interest or which has no use in everyday life.

7.3. Team

The Translator

Translation involves much more than handing someone a grammar and dictionary and telling him to go translate something into that language. Translation is a complex task demanding a knowledge of communication theory and linguistics, mastery of translation principles and methods, the ability to use words skillfully and creatively, and a detailed knowledge of both languages. Even an educated mother-tongue speaker cannot do a creditable job of translating something into his own language without adequate training and preparation.

Some translation projects are done completely by one person. More commonly, many people are involved in a translation project--each contributing at some particular stage. The help of many people enables the translator to produce better work. Nevertheless, the translator is the primary member of any translation team and must be specially qualified.

A translator must be thoroughly trained. Though it has been said by some that a translator is born and not made, it is equally true that good translation procedures and methods are not self-evident to the untaught. Once trained, a translator can improve his skills with continued practice. However, to do a first rate translation, he must have other characteristics as well.

Ideally a translator should have a good knowledge of both the source language and the receptor language. However, if he has only minimal knowledge of one or the other, he will need to depend heavily upon the help of those who have the necessary knowledge.

Verbal facility is probably more valuable than bilingualism. If a translator is unable to express ideas clearly and accurately in his own language, he will find it doubly difficult to do so in another language. A translator must have the intelligence which comes from mental alertness, the capacity to catch on quickly, and good memory.

A good translator must have knowledge of the subject matter, both general and specific, which he is translating. The source text must be analyzed in detail to determine the meaning. Some elements of meaning will only be implied. Familiarity with the subject will enable the translator to more easily make explicit in translation what is implied in the source text. No matter how skilled a translator may be, if he is not aware of the implied information of the subject matter, he is certainly going to make serious translation mistakes.

A good translator must possess intellectual honesty and integrity. He must translate an author's writing as the author wrote. Unless he is willing to allow the author of a text to 'speak for himself', the results are inevitably going to be other than the intention of the author. The translator who feels he has to do the author one better by embellishing the text will certainly distort the message. A distorted message is a worthless deception.

A good translator must be willing to receive help and criticism. If a translator cannot work with others in receiving and accepting criticism, his participation in a translation program will be a disaster. Any translation goes through many revisions before it is finished. Refining the translation is a critical process. The translator's work is put under painful scrutiny. But the creative input of many critics is necessary to ensure that the translation will be accepted as widely as possible.

Verbal facility, intelligence, creativity of expression, knowledge of the subject matter, bilingual ability, and willingness to receive advice and criticism--these are all necessary in a translator. Likely, it will not be possible to find in one person all of these characteristics. Several translators, each with his own particular skill, working together, helping and checking one another could probably produce a better translation than a translator working alone, unless, of course, he was an exceptionally skilled and experienced translator.

The Tester

A translation must be tested with the target or receptor audience. Sometimes the translator will be the one who tests his own work with the community. But it may be desirable to have someone uninvolved with the translator and the translation do the testing. This kind of independent evaluation may be more objective.

A tester takes the draft translation to the target community to see if it can be clearly understood and if it communicates the intended message. The tester must, of course, be fluent in the receptor language. He must also understand translation principles. This is necessary so that he can communicate clearly to the translator the kinds of problems he encountered with the draft translation and suggest changes.

A tester ought to be a person who relates well with other people and knows how to listen carefully and record accurately what is said to him. He is responsible for making notes of the comments made by the readers with whom he is testing the translation. His goal is to make sure that the receptor audience is generally able to understand the translation well.

Reviewers

Translators and testers are indispensable parts of a translation team, but they are not the only parts. Other kinds of positions will need to be filled. Reviewers would be helpful. They would simply read over the translation and make comments or ask questions about how it was translated. These would not need extensive training in translation principles, though an understanding of meaning-based translation would be necessary. In the context of textbook translation into Filipino, a reviewers committee might, for example, consist of: a representative from the Center for the Development of the Philippine Languages, a scholar expert in the subject matter of the text, a teacher or teachers who would be using the text in the classroom, and a non-specialist of average intelligence and education.

Consultants

Previously in this paper, as part of the discussion about testing the translation, translation consultants were mentioned. An experienced translation consultant is another source of important objective input into the translation. There may also be consultants who are experts not in translation theory and practice, but in the subject matter of the text being translated.

Others

Of course, there would be the need for typists and/or computer keyboarders, proof readers, technical consultants, and probably a project coordinator. Often forgotten but very necessary are publishers and distributors. Without them the finished translation would not get to the target audience--the consumers of the translation.

Sometimes it is advantageous from a management point of view to organize the people involved in a translation project into committees or working groups. Typically, there may be a translation committee, a consultative committee, an editorial committee,

and a review committee. Each would have its own designated set of responsibilities. Some person or committee would then be designated to bear the authority to give the final approval for the translation to be printed and used.

8. SUMMARY

We have been discussing the intellectualization of language in the context of translation and the SIL experience. It has been the working assumption of this paper that the translation of foreign literature into the receptor language is necessary if the world's knowledge is to be made available to the receptor culture. However, getting that body of knowledge into Filipino or any other language is no easy task. Good translators are not trained quickly and good translations are not made easily. This is because language is complex. No two languages are exactly the same. It is impossible to translate word-for-word and do so meaningfully. Consequently, translation is a process whereby the meaning of the source language must be expressed naturally in the receptor language. The process is complex but, if done correctly and creatively, it results in good translation. A translator must have facility in both languages and be skilled in translation principles and methods. The translator's primary goal is to communicate the message of the source language to the receptor audience. Therefore, the translation must be thoroughly tested with the audience. They are the ones who will ultimately decide whether the translation is clear and natural.

Let us consider the experience of Israel's Hebrew Language Academy as they have been involved in the intellectualization of modern Hebrew. Forty-five members of the Academy are subdivided into committees representing fields of knowledge as diverse as sports, sewing, and computer technology. Each committee's recommendation for a new Hebrew word is first submitted to as many as 200 experts in the particular field of the item or event the proposed word is to describe. Finally, it is referred to the full academy. The process can take years. Even then, the academy's verdict can be overruled by popular usage. After all, who is going to twist his tongue to say 'Please cash my "hamkha'ha"'? when he has always gotten his money by cashing a simple 'chek'? Or who is likely to request the 'sakrahok' (meaning long-distance conversation) when he is already used to asking for the 'telefon'? And what person would order a 'karikh' when he has always asked for a 'sendvich'? (*Time*, 1982)

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