Text analysis

131. Discourse analysis or cohesion

Language has various resources to ensure the cohesion of thought beyond the sentence, and the translator comes to rely on them as guide-lines.

(a) *Theme and rheme*. Theme states the subject of discourse, which is normally referred to in, or logically consequential upon, the previous utterance (sentence or paragraph). Rheme is the fresh element, the lexical predicate, which offers information about theme. (Within the structure of a sentence, these lexical terms are sometimes referred to as topic and comment.) 'Theme plus rheme' need not be a surface grammar sequence, and its identification will depend on a wider context. Thus the sentence: 'He discussed this subject' is a logical sequence which might be the basis for a periphrase such as, 'This subject offered him the opportunity he required for discussing it'. Lexically, 'this subject' is the theme and 'he discussed' the rheme, and therefore there is a conflict between the logical sequence ('He discussed this subject') and the more cohesive realization (possibly 'This was the subject he discussed') which the translator may have to resolve; he may have to make a compromise between the basic logical sequence, viz., animate subject/animate verb/inanimate direct object, which is clear and context-free, and a sequence determined by emphasis and cohesion factors, which may themselves be conflicting.

(b) *Anaphoric and cataphoric reference*. Anaphora, consisting of a deictic determiner (the, this, that) or pronoun, refers to something previously mentioned, whilst cataphora (deictics, pronouns or 'dummy' words such as 'here' in 'here is the news' or impersonal 'it' in 'it's interesting to note that, . . .' etc.) refers to what is to follow. Both features are sometimes overlooked in translation. In synthetic languages they are variously inflected, and often have to be replaced by 'full' nouns when translated into English.

(c) *Enumerations* (firstly, secondly, or next or then or afterwards, etc.).

(d) *Opposition*, or dialectic. Argument proceeds from thesis to antithesis, from positive to negative, from static to dynamic, from specific to genetic, and possibly back in each case, or it may start with the negative to go on to the positive. Occasionally, there is synthesis, or a neutral position is held. The oppositions may be extreme (contraries) or kept close to the middle (contradictories). This is how much narrative of all kinds is built up.

A translator has to be particularly sensitive to opposition; it often assists him in detecting the sense of rare words, neologisms and tropes; viz.: 'Il était le

généraliste qui peaufine les mesures économiques'. (*Peaufine*, 'works out in detail', is in opposition to généraliste.) 'Il maniait des unités fongibles et non des êtres humains' ('disposable components', contrasted with 'human beings').

'C'est par rapport à cette notion d'entité pathologique transitoire que se pose le pronostic classique: bouffée isolée ou entrée dans la schizophrénie et que se discute l'efficacité du traitement.' Here *transitoire* and *isolée* (synonyms) are in opposition to *entrée dans*, which latter is cataphorically explained several sentences later. Hence: 'We must decide whether the disease is likely to be short-lived before we make the usual prognosis (isolated outburst or incipient schizophrenia) and discuss whether treatment will be effective.'

When sentences begin 'on the one hand', *en revanche*, etc., the translator's task is easy. But he often has to detect implied contrasts realized by one word in italics or inverted commas, or words such as 'only', 'just', 'merely', 'equally', 'also' and other functional words that indicate contrasts, or comparatives of adverbs and adjectives which refer back to a previous statement, not necessarily the last sentence. The most delicate contrasts can sometimes be discovered only by seizing the thought of the whole passage.

(e) *Redundancy*. In information theory, the function of redundancy is to counteract noise. In a text, redundancy may be bad writing, woolliness, etc. (avoiding 'monologophobia') which can be discreetly eliminated by the translator. However, repetition, paraphrase, tautology and pleonasm (extended redundancy) can also be used to amplify, to clarify, to avoid false emphasis, to summarize, to assist comprehension in the face of the 'noise' of obscurity, irrelevance or complex thought. The translator has to detect the tautology before deciding whether to transfer it to the TL; in the following sentence, the opening and closing noun-phrases refer to the ending and the beginning of the same process: 'La saturation des villes oblige les principales entreprises à reconsidérer leur implantation dans les centres commerciaux traditionnels', and the translator surely has to clarify: 'As many towns are saturated, the main firms are re-examining their policy of setting up in these traditional commercial centres.' Again, any translator unacquainted with the reference would be confused by 'Palestine's Arabs swore . . . to drench the soil of that tiny country with the last drop of their blood in opposing any Big Power scheme to partition the Holy Land'.[24] Again, three consecutive sentences beginning: 'Mrs. Barbara Castle . . . The red-headed non-driver . . . The Minister who sits for Blackburn travelled . . .'[24] are bad enough for an English reader, as Harold Evans has explained, and worse for a foreigner.

(f) *Conjunctions*. These include all linking words, interpolated clauses and phrases, disjuncts,[25] enclitics. They are often excessively used by writers to establish a colloquial style, the written equivalent of 'you know', 'sort of', 'let me think', and are more frequently in normal use in French and German than in English. Often they carry so little cognitive information (e.g. *quoi qu'il en soit*) that a translator may omit them.

(g) *Substitution.* Ruquaiya Hasan (1968) has pointed out that grammatical and lexical words are used for cohesive purposes to refer to an object or person mentioned in a sentence or the previous sentence. (This may be simply to avoid repetition.) Typical, grammatical words are 'the one', 'same', 'similar', 'equal', 'identical', 'other', which may have slightly concealed anaphoric references. R. Hasan lists lexical words (general nouns) such as 'thing', 'object', 'business', 'affair', etc. To these must be added common words such as *interlocuteur, der Motionär,* 'the speaker', *intervention,* which may have no equivalent in the TL. Frequently the translator will substitute the proper noun for the animate noun (e.g. *Herr Gauslin* for *der Motionär*) and the name of the object for the general noun. General nouns are usually marked by determiners such as *ce, un tel, solche,* etc.

(h) *Comparatives.* A comparison is always used cohesively. Thus a sentence beginning 'Der mehr elliptische ischämische Bereich liegt mit dem Zentrum, das immer am stärksten in Mitleidenschaft gezogen ist, im mittleren Vorderarmdrittel' ('The ischaemic section, which however is elliptic, is in the centre which is always most strongly affected, in the middle third of the forearm') refers the reader back to the previous sentence to find an adjective denoting geometrical shape contrasted with elliptic.

(i) *Initial negatives.* These are customarily a signal that their corresponding positives will follow, not only in contrasts such as 'not . . . but . . .', 'neither . . . nor', but in many passages beginning with a negative statement, sometimes ironically.

A translator has to look for cohesive terms if he cannot account for the sense of an item within its immediate (micro-)context. If he notes a cohesive term or its puzzling absence, he has to look beyond the sentence or paragraph he does not understand at the macrocontext, the whole passage. The following is an instance of cataphoric reference which can be detected because of the lack of logical sequence between *sculpture* and *environnement*: 'Malaval passe avec aisance de la peinture ou de la lithographie à la sculpture, à l'environnement ou à l'animation d'un lieu public.' Three columns later, this *Nouvel Observateur* article goes on: 'Malaval avait délaissé la peinture pour projeter un aménagement et pour des recherches sur l'environnement et l'animation par le son.'

Therefore, the first sentence could perhaps be translated: 'Malaval moves easily from painting or lithographs to sculpture, and then to the designs for the setting and sound-installation of a place of public entertainment.'

(j) *Punctuation.* A powerful cohesive factor (see Propositions, nos. 124–130).

(k) Most SL *rhetorical questions* become statements in English. English needs fewer connectives than other languages. French and Italian use hyphens to indicate enumerations.

132. Translation terms

It is characteristic of the still amateurish state of our art that we are burdened with such inaccurate and inadequate terms as 'loan-word' (e.g. *détente, rapprochement*)

and 'loan-translation' (e.g. 'reason of state', 'National Assembly'). Is it too late to propose that they be replaced by 'transcribed word' (or 'adopted word' or 'adoption') and 'through-translation' respectively?

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