

## **The Pragmatics of Translation: Effectiveness and Efficiency in the Spanish Translation of *The Good Terrorist***

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At the time of defining the role of the translator we may highlight that of a text producer as his/her main function. His/her task as text producer is characterized by three functions:

- a) s/he is, first of all, a reader of the text upon which he is to work, but a special type of reader, since s/he is able to read and fully understand the SL (Source language) while belonging to a different cultural world. This special status differentiates him/her from the average target reader,
- b) secondly, s/he is an interpreter of both source language and culture,
- c) thirdly, s/he is also a creator. Translators do not transfer texts from one language into another: they interpret and rewrite, creating a new product.

As for the translator's aim when translating, and in accordance with Hatim and Mason's thesis {B. Hatim & I. Mason (1990), *Discourse and the translator*. London: Longman}, we may describe his/her goal as that of achieving functional or pragmatic equivalence, that is to say, that the piece of discourse s/he produces provokes in the target reader an equivalent reaction to that the ST (Source text) was intended to produce in the source reader. His/her task is mainly to reproduce the intended effects of the translated texts, that is, to allow scope for the widest range of responses in the reader.

Translation is a decision-making process. In order to achieve equivalence of intended effects, the translator has to make continuous assumptions about what the target readers may or may not share with the

source reader and, in view of this shared knowledge, the translator has to provide the target reader with the necessary tools for decoding the message: whenever the translator thinks that the target reader lacks the necessary knowledge of the world to decipher information and, therefore, to react in an appropriate way, the translator will have to compensate for it. It is at this point that the question of effectiveness and efficiency emerges. Hatim and Mason state {1990: 93}: "Any text seeks to achieve a balance between new, evoked and inferrable entities, such that the fusion of the three allows the reader/hearer to infer the producer's communicative intention".

The balance that Hatim and Mason speak of is regulated by the principles of effectiveness and efficiency, that is, "achieving maximum transmission of relevant content or fulfilment of a communicative goal (effectiveness), achieving it in the most economical way, involving minimum expenditure of processing effort (efficiency)" {1990:93}. In all, the translator's work should be characterized by an ability to transmit the maximum of relevant content in the most economical way, that is, the message should be communicated in such a way that the target reader makes the minimum effort in processing the information. Whenever the target reader is required to make an extra effort, this should be justified and compensated for by a gain in understanding.

This principle is, in fact, an elaboration of the notion of "given and new information" and of the mechanisms of communication on the whole: it is understood that all communication takes place on a basis of shared knowledge, of shared values and beliefs. This constitutes a corpus of "given" or old information, a necessary base without which communication would be impossible, and which constitutes a frame for new information to be conveyed.

Hatim and Mason's principle of effectiveness and efficiency is also closely related to Grice's maxims, which could be summed up as "how to be maximally effective and efficient in communication". It is in this light that Grice's maxims should be understood and, in this respect, we could highlight the maxim of quantity (make your contribution as informative, but no more informative than, is required) and the maxim of relation (be relevant) as the most influential for the matter with which we are dealing.

Linked to Grice's maxim of relation and, therefore, to the question of the balance between effectiveness and efficiency, E. A. Gutt states his theories in his book *Translation and Relevance* {(1991). Oxford: Basil Blackwell}. Although he dismisses the concept of "functional equivalence" because it seems to him vague and useless, he somehow partakes of the principle of equivalence of intended effects, based on the standpoint of the transmission of the most relevant content. Gutt's proposal is based on Sperber and Wilson's "relevance theory", which argues that "to communicate is to claim an individual's attention; hence, to communicate

is to imply that the information communicated is relevant." {Sperber and Wilson in Hatim and Mason 1990: 95}

However, as far as the translation process is concerned, what is relevant in one environment (Source Text) may be less so in another (Target Text), what is relevant for one reader (Source reader) may be irrelevant for another (Target reader). The translator, therefore, needs to work on the assessment of relevance for intended receivers and, for the completion of this task, the principle of effectiveness and efficiency may be helpful. This is specially so when dealing with cultural terms. Since the translator is involved in a different socio-cultural context, s/he may expect that the world knowledge possessed by the author and the target readers is likely to differ, although some overlapping may be expected. There will be entities inferrable in the ST which will have to be made explicit in the TT. In these cases the translator should carefully weigh the gain in information against the processing effort involved and, to be able to do so, the translator not only needs to be bilingual but also bicultural.

As an approach to the practice of translation, Hatim and Mason propose an analytical framework, developed on the grounds of a three-fold communicative dimension of context:

- a) register analysis
- b) pragmatic dimension
- c) semiotic dimension

A hierarchical link seems to relate the three dimensions, the semiotic being the highest in status and the register analysis the lowest. The semiotic dimension of context entails a step further in the analysis of discourse and helps to locate a message within a system of conventions, beliefs and assumptions of a given culture. Cross-cultural translation, therefore, cannot do without this dimension, which involves the study of intertextuality. Hatim and Mason's framework seems to be broad enough to include, not only stylistic considerations, as previous approaches have done, but also a pragmatic and semiotic perspective. The pragmatic and the semiotic approach seem to be linked by the notion of "intentionality", that is, the author's intention (pragmatic aspect) when using an item which acts as a sign (semiotic aspect).

Several examples may illustrate the way the pragmatic and semiotic dimensions of context provide helpful insights about the intentionality of the author and, therefore, help the translator to decide on what is and what is not relevant, what he should make explicit and what he has to leave out. The examples are extracts from *The Good terrorist* {Doris

Lessing, (1986). London: Collins} and its translation into Spanish *La Buena terrorista* {translation by Mireia Bofill (1987). Barcelona: Edhasa}<sup>1</sup>.

1. The Albert Memorial was favourite for a few minutes, and then Faye said no, she adored it; she wouldn't harm a hair of its head. Hotels. *No. 10. The Home Office. M.I.5's information computer. The War Office.*" (p. 320)

The last phrases are intertextual signs which point to an overall intertextual link throughout the novel: the political discourse. These signs have to be interpreted in the light of their relationship with other references inside and outside the text.

The author assumes a common area of knowledge to be shared by her readers, which is the field of British Government institutions. This "assumed familiarity" may not be so for a reader who is not the one intended by the author. Therefore, the translator has to make his own assumptions about what the target readers may or may not share with the ST author. In analysing the Spanish translation we will be able to infer what the translator's decisions on his reader's knowledge were in this particular instance:

El Albert Memorial fue el favorito durante unos instantes, y después Faye dijo que no, que le encantaba, que no querría dañar ni un pelo de su cabeza. Hoteles. *El número 10 de Downing Street. El Home Office. El ordenador de datos del M.I.5. El Ministerio de la Guerra.* (p. 425)

Different methods of translation have been used, not always successfully. In my opinion *Home Office* should have been translated by the equivalent organism in Spain ("El Ministerio del Interior"), as well as *War Office* ("El Ministerio de Defensa"). *M.I.5* should have been transferred as "El Servicio de Inteligencia británico", in the same way as *No.10* has been translated as *El número 10 de Downing Street*, presumably because the translator felt the need to make explicit some information for the target reader that constituted "given information" for the source reader. In doing so she was carefully considering the balance between effectiveness and efficiency, to which we were referring previously.

2. The salt of the earth! Alice was dutifully saying to herself watching the scene of workers fuelling

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<sup>1</sup> The examples commented on are extracted on are extracts from *The Good Terrorist* and its translation into Spanish *La Buena terrorista*. Words and phrases analysed are not underlined in the original.

