

**HUE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

-----**-----

NGUYEN VAN TUAN

TRANSLATION 1&2



HUE - 2006

INTRODUCTION

An increasing number of universities in Vietnam have added courses in translation to their curricula; however, the textbooks available for such courses are few. This unit has been written with these courses in mind. The unit is designed to provide the learners with some basic principles of translation which will be generally useful to translation courses in universities and colleges, to help the learners avoid some errors they may encounter when they translate a text, to provide the learners with essential English sentence patterns that could be very useful for the learners in learning and practicing translating and to provide the learners 20 assignments related to the theory they have learned.

The desire of the author is to make available the principles of translation which have learned through personal experience in translation and teaching translation, and through interaction with colleagues involved in translation projects in many universities in Central Vietnam. Since it is assumed that the students will be speakers of Vietnamese language, many of these exercises involve translating from or into their mother tongue. The material is presented in a way that it can be used in a self-teaching situation or in a classroom. An attempt has been made to keep technical terms to a minimum. When technical vocabulary is used, every effort is made to clarify the meaning of such vocabulary or to provide its meaning in Vietnamese. This has been done so that the unit can be used by any student translator, even though his exposure to linguistic and translation theory has been minimal.

This is an introductory unit. The lessons give an overview presenting the fundamental principles of translation and the rest of the unit illustrates these principles. The overriding principle is that translation is meaning-based rather than form-based. Once the learner has identified the meaning of the source text, his goal is to express that same meaning in the receptor/target language. Many examples of cross-language equivalence are used to illustrate this principle.

Since the coursebook has been written for the students to learn either by themselves in their distant learning course or in class with a teacher, there will be a coursebook and 20 assignments.

By the end of the course, the students will be able to:

1. obtain general knowledge of the principles of translation .
2. get familiar with and effectively use the English sentence patterns in their translations.

On the completion of this coursebook, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Ton Nu Nhu Huong for her encouragement. I would also like to be grateful to Dr. Tran Van Phuoc and other colleagues of the College of Foreign Languages and the English Department for their kind help.

Errors are unavoidable in this coursebook. Therefore, I appreciate and welcome any criticism on the course book.

Hue, June 24th, 2001

Nguyen Van Tuan

CHAPTER 1: THEORY OF TRANSLATION

LESSON 1: FORM AND MEANING

1. What is translation?

1.1. Translation is the expression in another language (target language) of what has been expressed in one language (source language), preserving semantic and stylistic equivalencies. (By Roger T. Bell).

1.2. Translation is the replacement of a representation of a text in one language by a representation of an equivalent text in a second language. (By Roger T. Bell).

The author continues and makes the problems of equivalence very plain:

Texts in different languages can be equivalent in different degrees (fully or partially different), in respect of different levels of presentation (in respect of context, of semantics, of grammar, of lexis, etc.) and at different ranks (word-for-word, phrase-for-phrase, sentence-for-sentence).

However, languages are different from each other; they are different in form having different codes and rules regulating the construction of grammatical stretches of language and these forms have different meanings.

To shift from one language to another is, by definition, to change the forms. Also, the contrasting forms convey meanings which cannot but fail to coincide totally; there is no absolute synonym between words in the same language, why should anyone be surprised to discover a lack synonym between languages.

Something is always 'lost' (or might one suggest 'gain'?) in the process and translators can find themselves being accused of reproducing only part of the original and so 'betraying' the author's intentions. Hence the traitorous nature ascribed to the translator by the notorious Italian proverb: "Traduttore traditore".

Faced by a text in a language, we are able to work out not only the meaning of each word and sentence but also its communicative value, its place in time and space and information about the participants involved in its production and reception. We might take, as a light-hearted model of the questions we can ask of the text, the first verse of a short poem by Kipling.

I keep six honest serving men;

(They taught me all I knew);

Their names were What? And Why? And When?

And How? And Where? And Who?

What? is the *message contained in the text*; the content of the signal.

Why? orients us towards the *intention of the sender*, the purpose for which the text was is used. (Informing, persuading, flattering, etc.)

When? is concerned with the *time of communication* realized in the text and setting in its historical context; contemporary or set in the recent or remote past or future.

Where? is concerned with the *place of communication*, the physical location of the speech event realized in the text.

How? refers to whether the text is written in a formal or informal way.

Who? refers to the participants involved in the communication; the sender and receiver.

1.3. Translation is rendering a written text into another language in a way that the author intended the text. (By Bui Tien Bao- Hanoi National University)

“ Translators are concerned with written texts. They render written texts from one language into another language. Translators are required to translate texts which arrange from simple items including birth certificates or driving licences to more complex written materials such as articles in journals of various kinds, business contracts and legal documents.” (Bui Tien Bao- Hanoi National University).

1.4. Translation, by dictionary definition, consists of changing from one state or form to another, to turn into one’s own or another’s language. (The Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 1974). Translation is basically a change of form. When we speak of the form of a language, we are referring to the actual words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, etc. The forms are referred to as the surface structure of a language. It is the structural part of language which is actually seen in print or heard in speech. In translation the form of the source language is replaced by the form of the receptor/target language. But how is this change accomplished? What determines the choices of form in the translation?

The purpose of this lesson is to show that translation consists of transferring the meaning of the source language into the receptor language. This is done by going from the form of the first language to the form of the second language by a way of semantic structure. It is meaning that is being transferred and must be held constant. Only the form changes. The form from which the translation is made will be called the source language and the form into which it is to be changed will be called the receptor language. Translation, then, consists of studying the lexicon, grammatical structure, communication situation, and cultural context of the source language text, analyzing it in order to determine its meaning, and then reconstructing this same meaning using the lexicon, grammatical structure which are appropriate in the receptor language and its cultural context.

Let us look at an example. Assume that we are translating the Vietnamese sentence ‘ ‘ C, m -n b¹n ®· gióp ®ì t«i tËn t×nh.’ ’ into English. This Vietnamese sentence has the verb ‘gióp ®ì tËn t×nh’, but to convey the same meaning in English one would use a noun phrase: ‘ your kind help’. To do effective translation one must discover the meaning of the source language and use the receptor language forms which express the meaning in a natural way.

It is the purpose of this unit to familiarize the learners with the basic linguistic and sociolinguistic factors involved in translating a text from a source language into a receptor language, and to give them enough practice in the translation process for the development of skills in cross-language transfer.

2. Characteristics of language which affect translation

There are certain characteristics of languages which have a very direct bearing on principles of translation. First, let us look at the characteristics of meaning components. **Meaning components** are packaged into lexical items, but they are packaged differently in one language than in another. In most languages there is a meaning of plurality, for example the English -s. This often occurs in the grammar as a suffix on the nouns or verbs or both. In Vietnamese, however, plurality is expressed in an isolated word 'nh÷ng/c, c'. Many times a single word in the source language will need to be translated by several words. For example, a projector was called the thing that shows pictures on the wall by the Chipara Bolivia.

Second, it is characteristic of languages that the same meaning component will occur in several surface structure lexical items. In English, the word 'sheep' occurs. However, the words 'lamb', 'ram' and 'ewe' also include the meaning 'sheep'. They include the addition meaning components of young (in 'lamb', adult and male in 'ram' and adult and female in 'ewe'. In Peru, 'lamb' would need to be translated by 'sheep its child', 'ram' by 'sheep big' and 'ewe' by 'sheep its woman'.

Third, it is further characteristic of language that one form will be used to represent several alternative meanings. This again is obvious from looking in any good dictionary. For example, the Reader's Digest Great Encyclopedic Dictionary gives 54 meanings for the English word 'run'. Most words have more than one meaning. There will be a primary meaning-the one which usually comes to mind when the word is said in isolation-and the secondary meaning-the additional meanings, which a word has in context with other words. In English, we can say 'the boy runs', using 'run' in its primary meaning. We can also say 'the motor runs, the river runs, and his nose runs', using runs in its secondary meanings.

This principle is not limited to lexical items for it is also true that the same grammatical pattern may express several quite different meanings. For instance, the English possessive phrase 'my house' may mean 'the house I built', 'the house I rent', 'the house I live in', or the house for which I drew up in my plans.' Only the larger context determines the meaning. Notice the following possessive phrases and the variety of meanings:

my car	ownership
my brother	kinship
my foot	part-whole
my singing	action
my book	ownership or authorship (the book I own, or, the book I wrote)
my village	residence (the village where I live)
my train	use

(the train I ride on)

Whole sentences may also have several functions. A question form may be used for a non-question. For example, the question: “Mary, why don’t you wash the dishes?” has a form of a question, and may in some context be asking for information, but it is often used with the meaning of command rather than a real question. A simple English sentence like “He made the bed.” May mean either “He made (as a carpenter would make) the bed”, or “He put the sheets, blanket, and pillows in neat order on the bed.”

Just as words have primary and secondary meanings, so grammatical markers have their primary function and often have other secondary functions. The preposition ‘on’ is used in English to signal a variety of meanings. Compare the following uses of ‘on’ with the corresponding form used in Vietnamese.

John found the book *on* the floor. John t×m thÊy cuèn s, ch tr^an sụn nhự.

John found the book *on* mathematics. John t×m thÊy cuèn s, ch viÕt vò m«n to, n.

John found the book *on* Tuesday. John t×m thÊy cuèn s, ch vuo thø Ba.

John found the book *on* sale. John t×m thÊy cuèn s, ch ®ang bµy b, n.

Compare also the following uses of ‘by’

John was stopped *by* the policeman.

John was stopped *by* the bookstand.

In the first, *by* is used to signal the meaning that the policeman is the agent of the action. In the second, *by* is used to signal that the bookstand is the location.

We have seen that one form may express many meanings. On the other hand, another characteristic of languages is that a single meaning may be expressed in a variety of forms. For example, the meaning “*the cat is black*” may be expressed by the following: *the cat is black*, *the black cat*, and, *the cat, which is black*, depending on how that meaning relates to other meanings. In addition, the meanings of “*Is this place taken?*” “*Is there anyone sitting here?*” and “*May I sit here?*” are essentially the same. Also, the meaning is essentially the same in the following English sentences:

Others blamed John because of the difficulty.

Others blamed John for the difficulty.

Others blamed the difficulty on John.

Others said John was responsible for the difficulty.

Others accused John of being responsible for the difficulty.

We have seen that even within a single language there are a great variety of ways in which form expresses meaning. Only when a form being used in its primary meaning or function is there a one-to-one correlation between form and meaning. The other meanings are secondary meanings or figurative meanings. Words have these extended meanings and in the same way grammatical forms have extended usages (secondary and figurative function).

This characteristic of “skewing”; that is, the diversity or the lack of one-to-one correlation between **form** and meaning is the basic reason that translation is a complicated task. If there were no skewing, then all lexical items and all grammatical forms would have only one meaning and a literal word-for-word and grammatical structure-for- grammatical structure translation would be possible. But the fact is that a language is a complex set of skewed relationship between meaning (semantics) and form (lexicon and grammar). Each language has its own distinctive forms for representing the meaning. Therefore, in translation the same meaning may have to be expressed in another language by a very different form.

To translate the form of one language literally according to the corresponding form in another language would often change the meaning or at least result in a form which is unnatural in the second language. Meaning must, therefore, have priority over form in translation. It is meaning that is to be carried over from the source language to the receptor language, not the linguistic forms. For example, to translate the English sentence “*he is cold hearted*” i.e. His heart is cold (meaning ‘*he is unfeeling, has no emotional sympathy.*’) literally into Mambila in Nigeria would be understood to mean, “*he is peaceful, not quick-tempered.*” And if translated literally into Cinyanja in Zambia, it would mean, “*he is frightened.*”

The nature of language is that each language uses different forms and these forms have secondary and figurative meanings which add further complications. A word-for-word translation which follows closely the form of the source language is called a literal translation. A literal translation does not communicate the meaning of the source text. It is generally no more than a string of words intended to help someone read a text in its original language. It is unnatural and hard to understand, and may even be quite meaningless, or give a wrong meaning in the receptor language. It can hardly be called a translation. The goal of a translator should be to produce a receptor language text (a translation) which is idiomatic; that is one which has the same meaning as the source language but is expressed in the natural form of the receptor language. The meaning, not form is retained.

The following is a literal translation of a story first told in the Quiche language of Guatemala:

“It is said that being one man not from here, not known where the his or the he comes where. One day the things he walks in a plantation or in them the coastlands, he saw his appearance one little necklace, or he thought that a little necklace the very pretty thrown on the ground in the road. He took the necklace this he threw in his mouth for its cause that coming the one person another to his behind ness, for his that not he encounters the one the following this way in his behindness not he knows and that the necklace the he threw in his mouth this one

snake and the man this one died right now because not he knows his appearance the snake or that the he ate this not this a necklace only probably this snake.”

Now compare the above with the following less literal translation of the same story:

“ It is said that there once was a man not from here, and I do not know his town or where he came from, who one day was walking in a plantation (or in the coastlands). He saw a little necklace, or rather, what he thought was a very pretty little necklace, lying on the road. He grabbed this necklace and threw this into his mouth because there was someone coming along behind him, and he did not want the other person to see it. He did not know that the necklace he threw into his mouth was really a snake. The man died in short order because he did not recognize from its appearance that it was a snake. He did not know that what he had put in his mouth was not a necklace, but rather a snake.”

In the first, each quiche word was replaced by the nearest English equivalent. The result was nonsense. In the second translation, the natural forms of English lexicon and grammar were used to express the meaning of the Quiche story. Below the story is again rewritten in a more idiomatic English style.

“I am told that there once was a stranger from some other town who was walking in a plantation along the coast. As he walked along he suddenly saw a very pretty little necklace lying on the road. He snatched up this necklace and threw this into his mouth because there was another person walking behind him and he did not want him to see the necklace. The stranger did not know that the necklace was really a snake. The man died immediately. He died because he did not realize that it was a snake. He did not know he put a snake into his mouth rather than a necklace.”

Anything which can be said in one language can be said in another. It is possible to translate. The goal of the translator is to keep the meaning constant. Wherever necessary, the receptor language form should be changed in order that the source language meaning should not be distorted. Since a meaning expressed by a particular form in one language may be expressed by quite a different form in another language, it is often necessary to change the form when translating.

3. Notes

Form-based translation: dĒch ðua vġo h×nh thøc hay cĒu tróc

Meaning-based translation: dĒch ðua vġo nghĒa, ðua vġo néi dung cĒn chuyón tĒi

Source language: ng<n ng÷ gèc

Receptor language: ng<n ng÷ dĒch

Context: vĒn cĒnh/ ng÷ cĒnh

Principle of translation: nguy^an t^¼c dĒch/kü thuĒt dĒch

Meaning component: tġnh tè nghĒa

Lexical:	(thuốc vò) tở vùng
Surface structure:	cÊu tróc bÒ mÆt
Deep structure:	cÊu tróc s@u/cÊu tróc ng÷ nghÛa
Meaning/ sense:	ngÛa
Primary meaning:	ngÛa chÝnh/ngÛa gèc
Secondary meaning:	ngÛa ph,i sinh
Literal translation:	dÐch tống tở mét
One-to-one correlation:	quan hõ mét @èi mét
Figurative meaning:	ngÛa bãng
Function:	chøc n`ng
Idiomatic translation:	dÐch @óng, dÐch s,t nghi.

4. Self-study

4.1 Questions for discussion

1. What is translation? What definition do you think is the most appropriate? Can you give your own definition of translation?
2. What is a literal translation? Can you give some examples of literal translations?
3. What is an idiomatic translation? Give some examples of idiomatic translations.
4. What characteristics of language affect translation?
5. What are the secondary meanings? Give ten sentences, each of which contains a word used in a secondary sense.
6. What is the primary meaning? Give ten sentences, each of which contains a word used in a primary sense.

4.2 Exercises

A. Identify change of meaning versus change of form. Some of the following pairs of sentences differ in their form. Some differ in meaning. Indicate if the primary change is in the form or in the meaning.

Example: They robbed the old man.
The old man was dropped by them.
Answer: Change of form

1. The students like to study translation.
The students like studying translation.
2. I bought a pair of horseshoes.
I bought a pair of leather shoes.
3. He saw the bird.
He heard the cat.

4. Phillip went walking.

Phillip took a walk.

5. Go to bed.

I want you to go to bed.

6. I came; I saw; I conquered.

I came, saw, and conquered.

7. Two weeks later he came.

After two weeks he came.

8. There is a table in the book.

There is a book on the table.

9. The young man had an English grammar book stolen.

An English grammar book was stolen from the young man.

10. He was awoken by a thunderclap.

A thunderclap awakened him.

B. List as many grammatical forms as you can which realize the same meaning as the one given below. Then put the same meaning into a language other than English in as many forms as you can.

Example: the cat is black
 the black cat
 the cat, which is black

1. the jug water

2. John bought a car

3. a hot day

4. mother's long blue dress

5. Peter's house

C. All of the following have the same grammatical form. With the change of lexical items, there is a change of meaning which is signaled by that lexical item, apart from the referential meaning of the word itself. What meaning is signaled in each of the following possessive phrases? Answer by restating. How can that meaning best be expressed in another language which you speak?

Example: The man's car - the man owns the car
 The man's eye - the eye is part of the man

1. the doctor's office

2. the doctor's patient

3. the doctor's book

4. the doctor's brother