

Translation techniques in English and back-translation: Second language learners' mental processes

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Abstract: This paper examines sample translation of lines drawn from a short story which has 34 paragraphs written in Kapampangan and in Filipino. The qualitative design of the study used methods such as interview, survey questionnaire, and coding schemes. The participants are university students who were instructed to translate the short story from Filipino to English (and vice-versa). The study is premised on the theory of narrative in translation which posits that beyond translated texts is an embedded identity of the translator. Participants' translation reveal techniques such as negative shift, literal translation, addition, omission, resisting faithful translation, paraphrase and others. The first question raised in this paper addresses participants' translation techniques and the second question addresses the salient features of narrative present in the translational choices of the respondents. The third question investigates the nature and condition of the participants' techniques used to back-translate. The paper ends with insights underpinning the mental processes in the production of translation and more importantly it sheds light to the dynamics of a translated text embedded with participants' identity, social realities, and shared experiences.

Keywords: KW: translation techniques, narrative theory, back-translation, narrative text, Bb. Phathupats.

I. INTRODUCTION

Translation is a problem-solving activity which requires translator to consider factors such as linguistic elements, contextual situations and stylistic choice of devices. Debates as to a single technique and theoretical underpinnings to translate abound in extant literatures such as mental operations in translation (Sequinot, 1988; Yau, 2010); pragmatic-based approach in translation (Farwell & Helmrich, 1993;1995; Nagy, 2016); translation universal features (Ippolito, 2013); translation in classroom (Dobson, 2012); pedagogy of translation (Pennycook, 2008). However, there are other significant areas of studies that should also be put into question such as using evidences of translation to better teaching of writing and literature by examining ideologies and histories reflected most especially in prose-translated texts. Horner & Tetreault (2016) take a translingual approach or analytical framework to explore translation. They view this framework of translation from the point of globalization in writing, meaning, translation is not merely a distinct form of writing but also a feature and outcome of all writing. Translation brings to the fore the negotiation of language difference and its ideologies (p.20). Baker (2007) also posits the same argument and invokes narrative theory framework explaining "structures of events" that guide interpretations. Baker asserts that translation allows for an understanding of translational choices and that these choices shape our social and political reality. Translation is then viewed as representation of identities, trajectories, and values of those who translate. Baker further cites Fisher's (1997) model defining rationality of narrative framework. In his model, there are two principles to assess the narrative: coherence and fidelity. Fisher maintains that there are reasons for the translator's choice. In order to assess the choice and narrative, there are three types of coherence: structure, material, and character. These types of coherence are put into question in order to understand identity, belief and attitude of a translator. Another principle that is also put into a question is fidelity. According to Fisher, elements of a narrative may contain values that a narrative promote.

The current study is premised on the analytic framework of translation and to draw inspiration from this concept means to examine translated-prose texts of respondents. The motive of the current study is drawn from Baker's narrative framework and Fisher's model of assessing narratives. The analytical premise of Baker's framework challenges the usual familiar ground of translation, that is, identifying translation techniques, strategies and implications on L2 reading, comprehension and writing. The current study is conducted to present the choices of respondents in their translation of prose texts and to analyze their narratives considering the salient features of Baker's narrative theory and Fisher's principle in assessing the features of the narratives.

Translation, Process & Strategies:

Translation process has its own distinctive nature, communicative event shaped by its *own goals, pressures and context of production* (Baker, 2006). As a consequence of the mental operations of translation, several translation theorists posit practices, strategies, theories and techniques. Ippolito (2013) enumerates four (4) specific language features of translated texts (TTs): *simplification, explicitation, normalization and leveling-out*. All these four features have tendencies to appear in translated texts (i.e., local and global perspective) and possibly reveal the nature of translation process. Ippolito maintains that these translation features are evidenced from corpus-based studies and needs verification in all languages.

Farwell & Helmrich (1993;1995) posit pragmatics-based approach in translation and they assert that in producing texts, *people intend meanings*. The translator recreates the original text insuring a coherent account of the intent behind the text. Farewell & Helmrich add such approach relies heavily on *representations of belief and other mental attitudes*. The language use to produce and reproduce is not simply a report of events but infused with rich mental models bearing cultures and individuals. To Nagy (2016) and Sorea (2017), meaning exceeds the limitations of reference, *it emerges and disambiguates* only in specific context of situation. Further, Nagy asserts that there are two factors translators have to remember in order to minimize discrepancies between the model of the world presented in the source text (p.212) and familiarity of the target reader : first is the ability to assess the knowledge and expectations of the target reader and the second factor is the translator's own view of his/her role. The second factor underscores the inherent and intertwining role between a translator and the source text. This idea is in consonance with Yau (2010) who assert that the act of translation is not only about linguistic information but with the translator's identity, ideology, and relationship (p.374).

In terms of pedagogical use, translation is often used as a strategy to comprehend, remember, and produce a foreign language (Liao, 2006). Translation according to Liao is a cognitive learning strategy while Seguinot (1988) argues that the *purpose of a translator* could be revealed in the process, hence, clues of mental processes, sources of error, and encoding of language are likely determined. In addition to considering cultural and aesthetic act, part of the role of a translator is be able to choose combination of words, grammatical structure, contextual meaning, and the communicative purpose of the source text (Nagy, 2016). Dobson (2012) describes supreme translation "of being similar" rather than "the same" as the original. In a similar thought, Steiner (1996) emphasizes supreme translation not only illuminating elements of connotation, greater clarity and impact but adds, "are there" in the original from the outset but may not have been fully declared (as cited in Dobson, p.276). Hague (2012) argues that translation helps people to communicate, it is a "movement of meaning" to decanonize (DeMan,1986) and moving it to fragmentation.

In sum, the idea of translation is central to the translator's ideology, beliefs, and values. Baker (1996) underscores translated texts as shaped by one's own personal pressure and this view is equivocal of Farwell & Helmrich (1993;1995); Nagy (2016); and Yau (2010). Liao (2006) maintains that translation is a cognitive learning strategy, Seguinot (1988) has contentions about clues and sources of errors in the translation process; operation of encoding and translating between languages underscore the possibility of determining true identity, values, attitudes embedded in the translated texts. DeMan's (1986) view about decanonizing translated texts reveals the reality that translators may resist (or be faithful) translation and that in effect may reveal social reality in some prose texts. From the synthesis of extant literatures about translation process and strategies, theories and concepts, there is a need to examine translated texts in terms of the strategy used in the process and to describe the features of translated texts; and discover ideological stances embedded in translated texts. The main objective of this study is to examine sample English translation of the participants by describing and analyzing their translational choices. Specifically, It seeks to answer the following questions: (a) What are the participants' translation techniques?; (b) What salient features of narrative are present in the participants' translational choices?; and (c)What do the the back-translation techniques of the participants say about their mental processes of a second language?

Methodology:

Participants. Thirty-eight (38) university students translated Filipino texts to English. The participants are all taking up the subject, *Translation and Editing of Text* with the researcher (of the current year)

Source Text. The source text read by the participants is a Kapampangan short story titled, *Bb. Phathupats* by Juan Crisostomo Soto. The copy of the source text is both available in Filipino and Kapampangan. The Kapampangan version is translated in Filipino by Vidal and Nelmidia (1996). The Filipino version contains 34 paragraphs. Paragraphs containing dialogue in Spanish were not included (i.e., Par. 10, 11, 16, 17, & 29). See Appendix

Instruction to Translate. Participants were given an hour and a half to translate. Each student translated a paragraph and then exchanged with a classmate. A total of 29 paragraphs were translated by the participants. So, each student was able to translate 2 paragraphs. Dictionary and mobile apps were discouraged. The source text was familiar to the participants as it was used as a reading material in another subject (Creative Writing).

Categorizing. & Coding

A 2-column table was initially prepared to categorize and code translated English texts according to the technique used (e.g., negative shift, omission, paraphrase, literal translation, addition, resist faithful translation, and paraphrase). A code is assigned to each line translated by participants. For example, 25g means that the line is from paragraph 25 line g.

Narratives in Translational Choices

There are ten (10) sample translated texts (TTs) categorized by the researcher bearing language difference. After identifying and describing the translational choices, the researcher's analysis in relation to the salient features of narrative theory follows. See Appendix for sample translated texts.

Back translation & Interview

Participants were given a follow up activity the following semester. They were instructed to back translate from Filipino or Kapampangan text to English texts. Participants were also interviewed after back-translation.

II. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Research Question #1. What are the participants' translation techniques?

The following are the translational techniques observed in the translation of prose texts: negative shift, literal translation, paraphrase, addition, omission, and resisting faithful translation. Each technique is discussed below followed by a number of sample translated texts.

Negative shift:

According to Hague (2012) negative shift is of three (3) types - mistranslation of information, sub interpretation of the original text, and superficial interpretation of connectives between intentional correlatives. It is simply misinterpreting the source text by choosing an inaccurate and inappropriate target language. Negative shifts occur when translator confuses a category of a source language into another category or directly use a word for word translation resulting to a different meaning, a foreign structure, and consequently bears no meaning. Below are sample translated texts coded as negative shifts. Note, S stands for sample 1 and S2 for sample 2 (and so forth) Codes 1d, 7a, 18d, 18e stand for source text.

S1 Many (says) say her parents were born in the **corner** of Pampanga. 1d

S2 **Learned people** who knew her exchanged signs upon hearing this. 7a

S3 and Miss Phathupats' composure became hot. (18d)

S4 and because of that Miss Phathupats' temper became hot. (18e)

Literal Translation:

This is a technique often called, word for word translation. According to Molina & Albir (2002) literal translation occurs when there is an exact structural, lexical and even morphological equivalence between two languages.

S5 : Yes, don't you know?, said by the person he knows. (24a)

S6: Since then, they started to call her by that **pen name**, and forgot about her nickname, Yeyeng.

S7: First, she's been with (the) American soldiers for a long time. Second, she's no longer a Kapampangan. (20e)

S8: And that (is) was when the volcano erupted. (21e)

S9: Shouts, claps, and laughs were heard that time. (28b)

S10: An explosion so loud. (21e)

Next, this technique is in contrast with literal translation in that participants resist to translate source text in a literal or direct way. As observed from the translated texts, participants resist faithful translation. Below are samples of texts translated by participants who seem to go beyond the surface text and content in order to resist faithful translation.

Resist faithful translation:

S11: Right at that moment, she exploded.(21b)

S12: Miss Phatupat got all fiery. (21d)

S13: Miss Phatupat lost her self-control. (21e)

Paraphrase:

A simple description of paraphrase is expressing a statement, a phrase or a single word using some other words. Danielsson (2007) argue that paraphrasing as a translation technique (i.e., machine translation) is often an urge to find a better sounding way to express the idea (s). Paraphrasing embraces a wider category that is why in the current study, a number of techniques are subsumed under paraphrasing (i.e., reinvention, wordiness, project sensory image). Sample translations of paraphrasing are found below:

Reinventing:

S14: Farewell, Ms Do Not Know Kapampangan! (30f)

S15: They don't even know how to speak Kapampangan they are ashamed of being Kapampangan because they can speak in **English but not so good**.(34e)

S16: Either they do not know Kapampangan or they are ashamed of Kapampangan because they can already speak in "not so straight" English. (34f)

Project sensory image

S17: The people's waves of laughter got louder ..(18c)

Wordiness

S18: First, she had been staying with the American soldier **for a long period of time** and second she's not a Kapampangan anymore...(20f)

S19: **In the present time**, there are a lot of people who are like Miss Phatupat.(34i)

Addition:

This is a translation technique observed in a number of sample translated texts in the current study. Lexical items are added in the target text which are not explicitly expressed in the source text.

S20: Because of this Miss Yeyeng is a **real** Filipino from head to toe and even at the tip of her hair, she is a Kapampangan. (Addition: real)

S21: Because they are only poor, selling rice cakes is their source of living. (Addition: rice cakes) 2a

Omission:

In the current study, omission is included in one of the techniques observed and while this technique can be subsumed under paraphrasing, it is noteworthy to examine items that were omitted or removed from the target text. The reason for their omission could be lack of L2 or L1 knowledge or no known equivalent.

S22: Tagalog that she mixed together without a care. (Omitted: *Ingles, Kastila,*) 14c

S23: And from her mouth came out the filthy words in Kapampangan. (Omitted: *lagablab, Vesubyu, nag-aapoy*) (21g)

In sum, translation techniques of the respondents reveal common characteristics which include: simplifying and generalizing the source idea as evidenced by omission and paraphrase; contextualizing the source idea as evidenced by resisting faithful translation; and foreignizing the source idea by negative shift and literal translation.

Simplifying, contextualizing and foreignizing the source idea are the common features of the participants' translation techniques. Noteworthy of some translation techniques used by the participants are reinventing or using telegraphic, popular expressions; projecting sensory image; and using wordy details. In a nutshell, the participants have revealed unique ways to express the meaning of source texts by a unique pattern of language. Some of which are awkward in meaning, or foreign but the interesting part is that strengths and weaknesses in L1 and L2 vocabulary knowledge are revealed in the process.

Research Question #2. What salient features of the narrative theory can be cited in the translational choices of the participants? Central to the narrative theory of Baker (2007) is the theory of language *difference*. To discuss translational choices of the respondents, it is crucial to identify specifically in the sample translated texts (TTs) those that bear apparent *difference or contradictions* from the source text. **Difference** in the current study refers to translational choices of respondents which are reflective of beliefs and mental attitudes (Farmwell & Helmrich, 2016); embedding of dominance and resistance (Baker, 2007); and implicit of contradictions (Horner & Tetreault, 2006).

Below are 17 selected samples translation which bear language difference. Brief analysis of each translation is found below

- 34g People nowadays **seem** to be like Miss Phatupat.
- 34j People nowadays **are becoming** Ms Phatupat.
- 20a You don't have to **doubt** if Miss Phathupat doesn't know Kapampangan.
- 20b You don't have to doubt if Miss Phathupat doesn't already know Kapampangan
- 28a Miss Phathupat can't resist anymore.
- 9a She came near, but when she saw what was being read was Kapampangan, she pouted, **disappointed** and said,
- 13a **Honestly**, it's **true** that I'm having a hard time speaking now in Kapampangan especially if I'm reading it.
- 13b **Frankly speaking**, I have now this difficulty in pronouncing Kapampangan words when reading it.
- 25i Her natural complexion **was seen**, she is darker than a dark plum.
- 1e **Because of that**, Miss Yeyeng from head to toe and even at the tip of her hair, she is Kapampanga
- 26b "Oh, I did not know she has a dark complexion."
- 23a **Look**, she's a Kapampangan, said those who heard.
- 27d Indeed, she's a black American!
- 27a Yes, she's a black American!
- 27b Yeah, she is a black American.!
- 26b: "Oh, I did not know she has a dark complexion."
- 23a: **Look**, she's a Kapampangan, said those who heard.

Participants 34j and 34g use a mitigating verb "seem" and a future tense of a verb "are becoming". Participants 20a and 20b could be misjudging Miss Phathupats when they chose "doubt". They have already implicitly infused in their choice the attitude they felt towards the main character by choosing "doubt" over "surprised." The connotation of "doubt" embeds the participants' personal unbelief that Miss Phathupats does not know Kapampangan. The sample translation reveals the participants' personal narrative of objectivity and morality. Participant 28a believes that the main character has self-control. The choice "resist" is key to this contention, that Miss Phathupats has control over her anger. However, the "control" seem to mean *irresistible* to the respondent. The meaning of *resist* to the participants is that the character can no

longer contain or fight her feelings to be angry. This participant could have used “endured” (to mean bear the teasings, grinning, demeaning words of the crowd) but to the participant, the character could not take it anymore. Participant 28a is instead telling her reader how the character can no longer “resist” or take the jeering, degrading laughs of the crowd. As a consequence, Miss Yeyeng (Phathupats), the character as believed by the participant is finally retaliating in anger.

Next, participant 9a represents the idea by translating it to “disappointed” and this is a case of resistance. In the words of Baker (2007) narrative theory recognizes social structures and that its system or structures is not devoid of dominance and resistance. In other words, translator’s narratives are intrinsically embedded with the translator’s beliefs, knowledge and dominant ideologies. Participant 13a chose words, “*honestly* and *true* to suggest a personal tone. It is a choice reflective of intimate, close confession from a very personal level. Honestly, as a choice of Participant 13a, translates it literally as if he/she is the main character, convincing the readers from a heartfelt level. Compared to participants 13b and 13c who seem to be losing a personal touch by choosing *Frankly speaking* (13b) and this is an attempt to be more direct than being honest. It could be that participant 13b would like to distance himself (or herself) and tells the readers how (s)he would want to be direct or explicit about the main character, Miss Yeyeng or Binibining Phathupats. The integration of translators’ reasons of rationality, objectivity, and conceptions about the main character’s value represented (or presented) in the text is revealed in sample extracts 13c and 13d. The absence of the translation could mean translators’ beliefs (unbeliefs) about the value presented or represented by the main character. On the other hand, Translator 1e chose a demonstrative adjective “*that*” over “*this*.” The distance of the translator seems to be detached from the retelling or narrating of a scene. Depersonalizing a source text could be an indication that respondent avoid being judgmental of the character.

Participant 26b has revealed his/her identity “I” with the pronoun I. It is personally confessing his/her realization. However, the affirmation and the revelation of the participant counters or opposes the intention of the source text which is seemingly a sarcastic expression. The translation of 26b mitigated or mellowed the intended meaning of the source text. Next, participant 23a persuades the reader that truly the character is a Kapampangan. “*Look*” sends the message of affirmation. The participant’s attitude towards persuading the reader to believe, to affirm the truth is possible with the use of exclamatory remark, a commanding verb, “look.” Participants 27a, 27b, and 27d resist to translate “*negra*” (or nigger) by omitting it. Perhaps participants have avoided it because it is a slang word and they would like to be less harsh or judgmental of the main character. In effect, the translation is mitigated and has downplayed or ignored the intended meaning of the source text.

Research question number 3: What do the the back-translation techniques of the participants say about their mental processes of a second language? The following sample texts in English translated by the participants were back-translated in Filipino and Kapampangan which reveal a number of problems not only in the second language but with the first language as well:

S1 Nothing change with her life as she grew up to her puberty.

S2 Shameless!Thief!Poisoner!Son-!

S3 Because they are only poor, selling rice cakes is their source of living.

S4 People who knew her have exchanged signs.

S5 Miss Phatupat can’t resist anymore.

Techniques used by the participants to translate and back-translate mitigate or modify the art or beauty of the words because the participant chose a technical language (i.e., puberty) rather than an artistic language (e.g., Her life was the same until she was a lady.). Some Filipino words are truly difficult to translate and the participant invented words in English (e.g., “Poisoner”). The participant could have simply chosen “killer” but then again the suitability of the English word will be put into question. In addition, when participant was asked to back-translate S2, the word “Son” was literally translated which renders the text meaningless. Though the participant knew that this was a vulgar word, the literal translation was preferred. Perhaps the participant was hesitant to translate the slanderous word in Filipino (i.e., Son-!). Next, S3 and S4 (i.e., source of living, exchanged signs) are literal translations of the participants which consequently lead to a lesser form or art of storytelling. English texts are readily available to the participants but unfortunately sounded highly technical and formal, consequently losing the very idea and heart of the words. Perhaps, the instruction of back-translating a line made the participants less artistic and caring less of the style of language. It could also be that some Filipino and Kapampangan

texts have no exact equivalent and the participants have chosen a synonym or an associated word. For instance, the idea of S5 is about the character who can no longer endure people's jeering and sarcasm. The participant translated the idea using the verb *resist* which is close to *endure* but not exactly the idea. The choice of English words for the participant should be chosen with accuracy. There are also Filipino texts written inaccurately even as this is their first language. Filipino is a language learned in elementary school and could be a problem of writing the form (orthography). Back-translation of some participants show their **resistance** to translate the Filipino text as it is in the English language. In the interview, Christian in 34g translated the text as he understood it (not to the order of text). He points out in the interview, "I translated the text based on how I understand the content." Similarly, in another interview, the participant back-translates the head gesture of disappointment in Filipino (i.e., *umiling* is a Tagalog word which means moving the head side to side, to signal disagreement, disappointment, or a head gesture to signal a negative response.). Lance did not translate "umiling" as the head gesture but back-translates the Filipino word (i.e., *umiling*) to English, "disappointed". The back-translation is a description that Lance thought was suited for the head gesture.

*She came near, but when she saw what was being read was Kapampangan, she pouted, **disappointed** and said,*

Back-translation of the participants also revealed their flavory taste of words in English, Filipino and Kapampangan to the following samples:

S1 The people's waves of laughters got louder and that made Miss Phathupats angry.

S2 The audience laughed so hard.

S3 She came near, but when she saw what was being read was Kapampangan, she pouted, disappointed and said,

During the interview, the participants point out that the idea of the text can be translated better from their own point of view. "I translated the text based on how I understand the content (Christian)." "I translated the word "umiling" (source language) to disappointed (target language) because "umiling to me is one of the acts to say you're disappointed at something (Lance)." The translation should always be exact as how it was written in the second language. However, if we are going to translate it as how it was written in the second language, it would be different (Marjorie)."

III. CONCLUSION

Participants retell the story in another language and the difficulty seem to lie on source ideas without exact language equivalent. As a result, they convey source idea in a unique pattern of language often using English in a Filipino way. Meaning, there are cases of telegraphic expressions, wordiness, project sensory images or literary effect, shortened L2 and addition of lexical item. Furthermore, translation of participants also revealed paraphrasing or explaining the source idea both in literal and figurative sense. The translation techniques observed in the sample target texts (TTs) explain the struggle or tension in the production of translations and this is inevitable because the language of prose texts is really a challenge both in the local and global perspective.

The analysis of the translational choices requires that the researcher understands the form and meaning of participants' choices of language equivalents. In the analysis, there are two points that can inform translation studies and Philippine English. First, the items participant have omitted, substituted, and generalized revealed respondents' communicative practices. As teachers of translation and English as a second language, it is important to understand how a source language can be interpreted by students in several ways and emphasize how the interpretations could be source of misunderstanding, success or failure in communication. Second, the items students chose to downplay or ignore revealed their attitudes, beliefs and identity. As teachers of translation and English, it is important to instill in the minds of the students that the result of downplaying in translation could mean a different version, hence, confusion. However, this study is limited to translation of a prose fiction and could reveal otherwise in another genre. The point in this case is downplaying or ignoring the source idea of a prose fiction by insisting personal conviction of a translator. As teachers of translation and English, the consequence or implication of translated utterance to interlocutor should also be discussed in the class. Third, insights about narratives bearing language difference can also inform the teaching of literature. Translation of prose fiction by students revealed their personal beliefs about the *Bb. Phathupats*, the main character. With the translation of prose fiction by students, surely, their personal convictions or beliefs could surface and may result to resistance over the intended meaning of the author. Teaching of literature becomes more interesting to students and albeit teachers when oppositions or contradictions arise in their literary analysis.

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