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FROM GREEK TO GUARANI

Robert L. Meader

F.F. Bruce has stated as a basic principle of translation that ". . . the translator's business is, as far as possible, to produce the same effect on readers of the translation as the original text . . . produced on those able to read it." ¹ In accomplishing this, most translators have worked from the basis of a sentence, holding that ". . . the best way to translate . . . was to make the sentence, rather than the word, the sense-unit." ²

Larger units of discourse (paragraph, etc.) have been used as the basis for translation, and would give a more relevant and connected translation. But the larger the unit, the more difficult the task for the translator and for the translation checker.

Little has been done on the analysis, beyond the level of the sentence, of semantic structure in contrast to grammatical structure. But considerable has been done up to sentence level. The possibility of using such an analysis of semantic structure in verifying the fidelity of translation was considered.

This would mean the comparison of the basic structure of the source language message with that of the corresponding message in the target language. By deriving the basic structure of the source language and then applying to it the transform rules of the target language, one should arrive at the surface structure which would be a faithful reflection of the message from the source language. If it is true

that transformations contribute nothing to the meaning of a sentence,³ a translation should present the same basic structure in the target language as that of the language from which the sentence was translated. The degree of equivalence between these two structures would indicate the degree of literalness.

Despite the desirability of comparing the basic structure of the target language with that of the source language, within the limits of this study such a comparison was not possible. It was thought that most, if not all, of the difference in semantic structure could be shown by a comparison of the semantic features of the surface structure of two passages.

To illustrate this process, a comparison was made of the components in a sentence translated from Greek into Guarani,⁴ and then some of the similarities and differences are pointed out.

Since the author is not a native speaker of either Greek nor of Guarani, the features were derived from his understanding of the two languages, and are no doubt colored by his American language bias. They may not be faithful in presenting what the meaning would be to native speakers of either the Greek or of the Guarani.

A cross-language comparison, similar to that illustrated here but more complete and detailed, should show to the translator ways in which information from one language may be given in the target language. It should also help in language learning, pointing out differences in the languages which would warn him of faults in his own speaking which would reflect the structure of his own native language.⁵

In making the comparison here, the two utterances are given with a break-down into meaningful units (which, in most

cases, may be equated with morphemes) and with the semantic categories listed below them. The notation follows that of Weinreich (1966) as the author understands that notation; membership in minor classes is indicated by double brackets, semantic features, plus and minus, are included in single brackets, transfer features are indicated by angled brackets (with the item to which they are transferred indicated by a slashed line or colon: 2/S, 0:lang.).⁶ Semantic features carried by syntactic structures are not indicated by the diagramming: (this could be done by drawing trees to indicate the relation between the elements of the basic structure.)⁷

From Mark 5:19.

house	of - thee	to	the - (ones)
oik - on	s - ou	pros t	- ous
[+Noun]	[pro]	[prep]	[deter-]
[+Count]	[+2]	[+goal]	miner]
[+Concrete]	[+poss]		[+defin]
[-Animate]	[<-pl/N >]		[-Quest]
[+dwelling]			[<+goal>]
			[<+pl>]
			[<+masc> /0]
.	.	.	.

of - thee	and	announce - to
s - ous	kai	ap - aggel - on
[pron]	[conj]	[prep]
[+2]	[+purp]	[+verb]
[-pl]	[<+IO>]	+speak
[+poss]		[tense]
		[+Imp]
		[<+IO:pers>]
		[<+2>]
		[<+0:lang>]
		[<-pl> /S]
.	.	.

Tell

e - mo - mbe'u
[tense]
[+Imp]
[<+2>]
[<-pl> /S]
[+caus]
[+verb]
[<+S:pers>]
[<+0:lang>]
[+hear]

to - them	that - (which)	the	Lord
aut - ois	hos - a	o	kuri - os
[[deter- miner]]	[[pro]]	[[deter- miner]]	[[+noun +Count +Concrete +Animate +Human +dominant]]
[[+def -Quest]]	[[+all +ref]]	[[+def -Quest]]	[[+masc -pl +S]]
[[+IO +pl -fem]]	[[+IO +pl -fem +pl +O]]	[[+IO +pl -fem +pl +O +pl +masc]]	

thy	- relatives	to	Our - Lord
n	- eretaran -	kwery pe	Nhanderu Ete
[+2 -pl +poss]	[+noun +Count +Concrete +Animate +Human +Male +Adult +kinship]	[+pl] [[prep] [+0]]	[+noun +Count +Concrete +Animate ?Human +kinship +superior]

for - thee has - done and

s - oi pe - poiē - k - en kai

[pron] [tense] [+verb] [tense] [conj]

[+2] [+IO] [+complete] [+act] [$\langle +3 \rangle$] [+coord]

[-pl] [-pl] (-pres) [$\langle S:pers \rangle$] " [$\langle -pl \rangle /S$]

→ +result
+pres)

things - he -did	good	for - thee
h - embi - apo	poran	nde - vy
[+act-]	[+adj]	[pro]
or	[+good]	[prep]
+3		[+2]
+per-		[-pl]
son		
#:		
[nomin-]		
alizer		
+result		
[+verb		
+action		
<+S:pers>		

he - 'mercied'				thee			
ē	-	leē	-	s	-	en	
[tense]		[+verb		[tense]		[<+3>	
[-pres]		+favor		[-pres]		<-pl>	/S
[-fut]		bestowed		[+punct]			
		<+S: supe-					
		rior per-					
		son>					
.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.

Obligatory categories of the target language which do not occur in the source language can be illustrated by a consideration of the word used to translate 'Lord', Nhande-**r**-u Ete. Derivationally, it can be broken down into 'our (inclusive) - # - father - highest'. The distinction between inclusive and exclusive first person plural is obligatory in Guarani, making the semantic feature of +incl or -incl obligatory whenever the first person plural is used.

The obligatory occurrence of morphemes with Zero semantic content (#) is illustrated by the class-marker, -r-, which occurs in Nhanderu Ete. It indicates a class of nouns, but carries no meaning. Cf. ce-r-u 'my-#-father' with ce-cy 'my-mother'.

Obligatory semantic features of the source language which are not reflected in the target language can be illustrated by the features of gender (+masc, -masc, +masc/-fem) which obli-

gatorially occur with the determiner, with adjectives, and with nouns in Greek, but which occur only incidentally as inherent features of some nouns in Guarani (especially of kinship terms). Cf. -a'y 'son', -jaryi 'daughter' with

$\left[\begin{array}{c} +\text{noun} \\ +\text{kin} \\ +\text{generation} \\ \vdots \\ +\text{masc} \end{array} \right]$	$\left[\begin{array}{c} +\text{noun} \\ \vdots \\ -\text{masc} \end{array} \right]$
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waka 'cow, bull' (from Portuguese vaca 'cow', which

$\left[\begin{array}{c} +\text{noun} \\ \vdots \end{array} \right]$
--

carries no features of gender.

Features of number (+pl, -pl) also are only occasionally distinguished in Guarani, except in the pronominal system. Even there, the third person indicates no distinction between +pl and -pl.

Some of the different ways in which the same semantic feature is represented in Greek and in Guarani are illustrated in the sentence given:

1) Nouns in Greek are indicated as either +pl or -pl by suffixes with +pl semantic features which obligatorially occur on the noun, and by transfer features which occur on the determiner, on an adjective which modifies the noun, on a pronoun or noun that possesses it, and on suffixes to the verb that serves as the predicate for the noun of which it is the subject. Cf.: pepoiēken 'has done'; tous sous 'the thine' Nouns are thus often redundantly marked as +pl or -pl.

In Guarani, a distinction between +pl / -pl is indicated on Nouns only by the presence or absence of an optional 'col-

lectivizer' suffix, -kwery: nerentarankwery 'thy relatives'.

2) +purpose, indicated in the Greek by the use of the conjunction kai 'and', is left implicit in the Guarani and indicated only by the sequence of the two verbs: tereo . . . emombe'u 'Go . . . Tell'.

3) +separation, indicated in the Greek by the verbal prefix, [[preposition]] hup-, is indicated in Guarani only implicitly by the relation between the verb and the locational phrase: tereo 'Go!', ndero py 'to thy house'.

4) +IO (indirect object), a transfer feature (?), is indicated in the Greek by the derivational prefix on the verb, [[prep]] ap- 'to'. In Guarani, this semantic feature is carried by the post-posed [[prep]] pe 'to'.

Other ways in which meaning is transmitted from Greek to Guarani may be observed by tracing similar semantic components in the two languages. The above were given as illustrative of some of these ways.

For discovering the fidelity of the translation,⁸ a pairing of the semantic components of the languages will indicate the degree of literalness and can indicate where adjustments might need to be made. This process could be used to determine the suitability of lexical items used to represent the Greek concepts in Guarani. A comparison of the semantic components of kurios 'lord' with those of Nhanderu Ete 'our Lord' indicate the features of [+kinship] and a question of [humanity] which would need to be weighed carefully to see if the term would be adequate to indicate Christ of whom the passage speaks.

The final clause of the Greek, kai ēlēēsen se 'and he mercied thee' is indicated in the Guarani only by the adjective,

poran 'good'. At the time the translation was made, the inadequacy of the rendition was evident, but no nearer equivalent was found, and further revision will no doubt mean a difference in the translation.

Footnotes:

¹ Bruce, F.F., The English Bible, A History of Translations; Lutterworth Press, London; 1961. Pp. i-xiv, 1-234. Page xii.

² op. cit., Page xii.

³ Weinreich, 1966. Page 444. ". . . singular grammatical TRANSFORMATIONS which, by definition, are without semantic effect."

Weinreich, Uriel, Explorations in Semantic Theory, Current Trends in Linguistics, Volume III; Thomas A. Sebeok, Editor; Mouton & Co., The Hague, Paris; 1966. Pp. 395-478.

⁴ The Greek letters are indicated by corresponding English letters, with epsilon indicated by 'e', eta by 'ē', and the rough breathing by 'h'.

The Guarani is that of the Rio-das-Cobras dialect, spoken by the Indians of southern Parana, Brazil. The sentence analyzed is taken from Marcos Gware Omombe'ua Porã, Seleções do Evangelho segundo Marcos, published by the Summer Institute of Linguistics, Rio de Janeiro, 1966.

Waldo and Edna Aaron, of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, are doing the analysis and translation in this dialect of the Guarani language.

⁵ Such a fault would be the excessive use of pronouns reflecting English usage, a common fault of Americans in speaking Portuguese; Example: 'Eu estou contente' for 'I am happy', while a native speaker would ordinarily say 'Estou contente'.

These differences would be apparent only from a comparison of the surface structures of the languages, and would not be different in basic structure.

⁶ This notation is not included in Weinreich's treatment. It would indicate that the semantic feature is transferred to the item indicated (2/S = subject would be in the second person), or that an item with the semantic components would obligatorily occur or be inferred (O:lang = the object of the verb, if present, is a speech form).

Some of the semantic features listed are taken from Weinreich; for instance those for the definite article.

⁷ Some semantic features which are carried by syntactic structure are indicated; for instance {poss} under nde- of the Guarani; possession is indicated only by the position of the pronominal prefix with the noun it possesses. In other positions, it serves as Actor or as Topic.

⁸ Fidelity would also have to include approximation to naturalness, which is not considered in this paper.