

Abstract:

I translated a Dutch short story by Jos Thomasse, a Dutch Comedian, into English. I made a literal/direct translation, and a revised/research-based translation. This text includes Dutch idioms, metaphors, humor, and cultural references. The translation of these directly have no significant meaning in English, which is why translation of these should be done carefully.

Translation Project:

The Interlingual Translation of Expressions, Cultural References, and Humor from Dutch to English

Example 1:

A Dutch expression used in the short story is used as an ironic joke: “de honden schrokken zich lam van de schapen.” This literally translates (auto-bot translation) into English as “the dogs were lamb scared of the sheep”. To be scared lamb, je lam schrikken, is an expression used to indicate an exaggeration of being scared. The irony lies in the fact that the story is about sheep and the expression involves the word lamb To save the irony of the joke in the translation to the target language, I used an English expression using the word lamb: “the dogs were scared of the black sheep and would run away in two shakes of a lamb’s tail, which means very quickly.

Example 2:

In the Dutch text, a homonym was used to provide wordplay in the text. The Dutch word schrikken means being scared, and schrikken also means the process of putting hard-boiled eggs in ice water so you can easily separate the shell from the protein. This process, in the English language, is called shocking an egg, which is not the same thing as being scared, at all. I looked for the synonyms for being scared; one of them was to be jumped. This allowed me to use the word jump as a homonym, which allowed the text to include the wordplay which the Dutch author intended.

Example 3:

The term rainbow sheep does not mean anything to a non-Dutch speaker; hence, I chose to transform the text into a concept that an English speaker, who is also unfamiliar with Dutch culture, could relate to and understand. This is a cultural translation error. The term refers to a protest about a children’s holiday with racist implications. Therefore, I decided to use a term, popular in the United States, which refers to a racially insensitive topic. Rainbow sheep -> Master Bedroom

Problem:

Communication is the key to a thriving society. There is incredible technology available to us to communicate as effortlessly as possible from one part of the world to another; with the click of one button. The one limitation in communication is translation. There are auto-bots like Google Translate who can translate into most languages; however, these auto-bots are incapable of translating idioms, metaphors, cultural references and humor. The translator has the job of translating a text into a target language whilst keeping the authenticity, as well as the humor, culture, and flow of the text alive.

