

Relevance Theory as Applied to the Translation of Logistics Handbook USAID's Supply Chain Management of Health Commodities A Case Study

Asst.Prof. Dr. Mohammed Kadhim Ghafil Alaskari

¹Department of Translation, Mustansiriyah University, College of Arts,
32001, Diyala, Iraq.

*Corresponding author: mohamadalaskari@yahoo.com

Abstract:

The current paper tackles the application of Relevance Theory on translating a logistic handbook. Drawing on (Gutt, 2000), this paper shows how a translation can be achieved without adopting a certain theory in translation. It argues how the interpretive process of translators can define and give credence to the translation of a logistic handbook. The paper presents examples of irrelevant translations along with suggested rendering. It sheds light on the difference between what is termed as a novice translator and an expert translator. The paper provides an evidence about how novice translators resort to dictionary based-meaning, which is the denotative meaning of words while expert translators resort to contextual meaning and connotative meaning of words. The paper explains how possible it is to translate without resorting to a theory of translation depending on the interpretive process of translators. The suggested translations for 20 examples, from a logistic handbook, are used as a reference in translation.

Keywords: interpretive, relevance, logistic, process, cognitive,

د . محمد كاظم غافل العسكري

قسم الترجمة، جامعة المستنصرية، كلية الفنون، ديالى، العراق

الملخص:

تتناول الورقة البحثية الحالية تطبيق نظرية الربط (Relevance Theory) لترجمة كتاب لوجستي معتمدة على كوت (Gutt, 2000) وتبين أنه من الممكن أن تُنجز عملية الترجمة دون الإعتماد على نظرية معينة في الترجمة وتناقش الدراسة كيفية تعريف العملية التأويلية للمترجمين وتعطي أولوية ذلك لترجمة كتاب لوجستي، وتقدم الورقة البحثية أمثلة عن الترجمة التي لا صلة أو ربط لها في كل التراجم المقترحة، وتسلط الضوء على الاختلاف بين ما يسمى بالمترجم المبتدئ والمترجم الخبير وكذلك تقدم الدراسة دليلاً عن كيف المترجمون المبتدئون يلجؤون إلى المعنى المعجمي الذي يعد معناه دلاليًا بينما المترجمون المحترمون يلجؤون إلى المعنى السياقي والمعنى الإيحائي للكلمات، وتشرح الورقة البحثية كيف يمكن أن نترجم دون الإعتماد على نظرية معينة في الترجمة معتمدة على العملية التأويلية للمترجمين، وتستعمل الدراسة تراجم مقترحة من الكتاب اللوجستي كمصدر في الترجمة في مجال معين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تأويلية، ربط، لوجستي، عملية، إدراكية،

1. Introduction

According to (Gutt, 2000) any product of translation ought to be tackled from a communicative point of view rather from any specific theory of translation. In doing so, Gutt draws on the work of (8) relevance theory. He starts from the idea that what is center to human communication is the ability to make inferences from the behaviour of human beings, whether it is in a verbal or non-verbal form and shape. Thus, any text, whether it is written or spoken, provides, according to that theory, the stimulus from which the recipient can infer what the sender means. That is termed as the informative intention.

Gutt asserts that text is decoded at first and then according to its linguistic properties can be assigned to meanings that it represents all of that in the mind. That process resembles de Saussure's notion of signifier and signified. The representations, the text is assigned to, is semantic representations which are the product of the mind (Gutt, 2000, p. 25). Gutt maintains that these representations are not fully truth-conditional assumption schemas as they need to be processed in order to become as such. In other words, one should choose what is credible from the appropriate meanings that are associated with a text, within a certain context. In other words, context can help to explain the meaning.

This paper aims at showing how novice translators resort to dictionary based-meaning, which is the denotative meaning of words while expert translators resort to contextual meaning and connotative meaning of words. It aims at showing also how possible it is to translate without resorting to a theory of translation depending on the interpretive process of translators. This paper will try to use Gutt's methodological approach in translating a logistic handbook. Section two below, will provide some background information on Gutt's approach in translation. Section three will show the examples of translation and the suggested transitions proposed for translation in such a domain. Finally, conclusions will be made in section four.

2. Background and Related Studies

Following the relevance theory, Gutt considers context as a psychological construct and concept which "does not refer to some part of the external environment of the communicative partners, be it the text preceding or following an utterance, situational circumstances, cultural factors etc., it rather refers to part of their 'assumptions about the world' or cognitive environment" (ibid, p. 27). Cognitive environment includes the various external factors in addition to the information that these factors can provide and the "mental availability for the interpretation process" (ibid).

In answering the question of how the brain or reader can select the correct meanings and assumption, intended by the author of the text, Gutt maintains that communication is guided by a desire to "optimise resources". Readers strive to take as much information as possible with little resources. That entails that readers use only

the contextual assumptions that are available to them.

According to Gutt “[a translation] should be expressed in such a manner that it yields the intended interpretation without putting the audience to unnecessary processing effort” (ibid, p. 107). Therefore, the assumptions and information that make the reader understand the communicative intention must be simply available to the reader. However, when applied to the text it can be inferred that this information is made up of two types: contextual information which is knowledge of the world and the information that is presented in the text.

Gutt states that information recognized through perception is for the most part given more significance than information based on deduction and so it gives translators more noteworthy adaptability to guarantee that the primary translation of the text which the reader arrives at is the proper one as produced by the sender. And maybe similarly as imperatively, especially within the case of communicative writings, guiding handbooks and manuals to guarantee that the exertion included in getting the meaning or contextual effects is justified (ibid, p. 31). Therefore, it is the responsibility and obligation of the translator to choose how best to realize that the contextual effects are “adequate to the occasion in a way the speaker could have foreseen” (ibid). The idea of the expectations of the target readers is somehow similar to (7) assertions who claims that components in writings give “triggers” for the readers that make them expect what is to take after another. Moreover, Gutt explains that explicitly by saying “introductory words would guide the hearer in searching his memory for the intended referent and hence considerably ease his processing load”(Gutt, 2000, p. 33) . (4)says that information must be presented in changing sums of given and unused information - relative to what the writer sees the readers know already - to realize the adequate register and information flow.

However, Hönig (1997) criticizes the Relevance Theory for failing to require into consideration absolutely what the readers respect as a great or bad translation, focusing on what it is relevant or not relevant. It is undoubtedly an important point to take into consideration what readers regard as a good or bad translation. It would be conceivable to decide that either from experimental studies that gauge responses of the readers.

The Relevance Theory gives compelling bolster for taking the cognitive capacities of readers under consideration to improve the translated text. Gutt’s differentiation between the interpretive and descriptive use of language constitutes the core of the Relevance Theory especially regarding translation in specialized domains. On one hand, Gutt refers to utterances meant to intend what someone says or thinks that is regarding the interpretive use of language. Applied on translation, it means a

translation which holds a link with the source text. On the other hand, the descriptive use of language is meant to be what the author believes to be true. In translation context, a descriptive translation is a translation that functions as an independent text that does not read as translation. In Gutt's view a descriptive translation is not a true translation and that an interpretive translation is a real one. The reason for this assumption according to Gutt is that a true translation is a translation that establishes relevance with the source text through an effective communication.

Whereas Gutt believes that a translation must share the slightest link with the original text, the idea that a text which can survive on its claim and which is imperceptible as a translation cannot be considered as a genuine translation is troublesome to accommodate with the reality of translation. It could be argued, that a descriptive translation mirrors the generation of a source text but it is still a translation though one that may have been accomplished utilizing exceptionally distinctive ways.

By making two sub-categories: direct and indirect translation, Gutt tries to clarify interpretive use. Almost as if he understood that the current descriptive and interpretive categories would effectively exclude translations which are meant to blend seamlessly into the fabric of the target language. Gutt says that indirect translation enables the translator to "elaborate or summarize" (ibid, p. 122) so the translator can achieve a clear communication rather than giving the audience of the target language an access to the original meaning (ibid, p. 177). The aforementioned characteristics given by Gutt, are true for the descriptive translation type, elucidated above. Gutt maintains that if a translator wants to generate a text that can stand alone then it is regarded as an "adaptation" and it is not a "real" translation. However, in direct translation, though, translators would "stick to the explicit contents of the original" and would not have the same freedom that they have in the indirect type of translation (ibid). Nevertheless, in spite of the confounding approach to what is regarded as "real" translation and what is not regarded as such, the Relevance Theory give a few useful insights into the translation of specialized domains.

Gutt's research largely repeats Lakobson's conclusion that translation is really another semiotic transposition, somewhat dissimilar to paraphrase. Gutt's attempt of using Relevance Theory in translation is not the only study in this regard. (1) have applied this theory to translation. They tried to find inferential patterns connected to a subject's performance by using many data elicitation processes at the same time, such as Translog and retrospective protocols.(1) dealt with inferential concerns connected to the conscious-unconscious manipulation of conceptual and procedural encodings and explores their function in the unfolding of translation processes by comparing the translation works of four non-expert translators from English to Portuguese. Their study demonstrates how a relevance-theoretic approach of translation processes may account for how implicatures and explicatures are manifested in various cognitive settings and, as a result, in various target texts.

2.1 Data

Drawing on the theoretical framework suggested by (Gutt, 2000), explained earlier, this paper will show how adopting such approach can show difference in translating a logistic handbook. Twenty examples will be taken from “The Logistics Handbook A Practical Guide for the Supply Chain Management of Health Commodities” published and translated by the “USAID DELIVER PROJECT”, along with their translated counterparts.

The handbook is a guidebook in overseeing the supply chain, with an accentuation on health commodities. This handbook is especially valuable for program supervisors who plan, oversee, and evaluate logistic frameworks for health programs. In expansion, policymakers, framework partners, and anybody working in logistics will moreover find it supportive as a framework diagram and by and large approach according to (9). The handbook contains ten chapters with 174 pages. Due to space constraints, only twenty examples will be studied. The examples will be taken from chapter four because it represents the typical instruction guide rather than introduction to the projects and other health facilities discussed.

3. Discussion and Analysis

Twenty examples are chosen for the discussion and analysis of this paper. The examples will be shown along with their translation and the suggested retranslation.

The table below show the examples. The examples will be discussed below:

#	Source Text	Target Text	Suggested Translation
1	“Like milk, health products are staple goods”	“كما في حالة الحليب الطازج، تعتبر المنتجات الصحية من الإحتياجات المستقرة التي تتجنب دائما نفاذها عند الإحتياج”	تعد الأغذية الصحية من المواد الرئيسة التي يتجنب المرء نفاذها مثل الحليب الطازج
2	“you can use milk at breakfast with coffee and throughout the day when you cook and bake”	“يستعمل الحليب عند الفطور مع القهوة وخلال اليوم أثناء الطباخة وصنع المخبوزات”	بإمكانك تناول الحليب عند الفطور مع القهوة وكذلك يمكنك إستعماله في الطبخ وفي عمل المعجنات.

3	<p>“This is the level of stock used between the time new stock is ordered and when it is received and available for use”. “The lead time stock level is expressed in number of months of supply, or as a quantity” .</p>	<p>" هو المخزون المستهلك خلال الفترة الزمنية (الضائعة) ما بين لحظة تقديم طلب إعادة التمويل ولحظة الإستلام الفعلي للطلب وتجهيزه للإستعمال، ويقاس مستوى مخزون زمن المهلة بشهور المخزون أو بالكمية المطلقة".</p>	<p>وهو المخزون المستهلك خلال الفترة الزمنية ما بين فترة تقديم طلب التجهيز وإستلامه. ويقاس مستوى المخزون بعدد أشهر التجهيز أو بقياس كميته.</p>
4	<p>“emergency order point (EOP)”.</p>	<p>"نقطة الطلب الإسعافي"</p>	<p>نقطة الطلب الطارئ</p>
5	<p>“In this section, we will use the verb set when referring to the design of a max-min system, and calculate when referring to the routine implementation of the system”. “System designers set levels in a max-min system, and storekeepers calculate the quantities to order or issue” .</p>	<p>"في هذا القسم، سوف نستعمل الفعل (ضبط) حينما نتحدث عن تصميم نظام الحد الأدنى/الأعلى ، والفعل (إحسب) عند الحديث عن التطبيق الروتيني للنظام يقوم مصممو الأنظمة بـ (ضبط) المستويات ضمن النظام، ويقوم أمناء المخازن بـ (حساب) الكميات التي يجب طلبها/صرفها".</p>	<p>-----</p>
6	<p>“because some facilities are extremely difficult to reach (some require walking for 14 days)”</p>	<p>"ولأنه من الصعوبة بمكان الوصول إلى بعض المرافق (بعضها تتطلب ١٤ يوماً من السفر الراجل للوصول إليها)"</p>	<p>ولأنه من الصعوبة بمكان الوصول إلى بعض المرافق (بعضها تبعد مسافة ١٤ يوماً مشياً على الأقدام للوصول إليها)</p>
7	<p>“The MOH chose a forced-ordering system with a quarterly review period”</p>	<p>"وقع إختيار وزارة الصحة على نظام الطلب الإجباري، مع إعتداد فترة مراجعة ربعية بدلاً من شهرية"</p>	<p>وقع إختيار وزارة الصحة على نظام الطلب الإجباري، مع إعتداد فترة مراجعة فصلية بدلاً من شهرية</p>

8	“One variation of a forced-ordering max-min system is the delivery truck system, sometimes called a topping up or bread truck system”	“أحد أنواع نظام الحد الأدنى/ الأعلى ذو الطلب الإجباري هو نظام التوصيل بالشاحنات، ويطلق عليه أحياناً نظام الإضافة أو نظام شاحنة الخبز”	أحد أنواع نظام الحد الأدنى/ الأعلى ذو الطلب الإجباري هو نظام التوصيل بالشاحنات، ويطلق عليه أحياناً نظام الإضافة أو نظام شاحنة الخبز
9	“and HIV rapid test kits”	“ومجموعات الفحص السريع لمرض نقص المناعة المكتسبة”	أدوات الفحص السريع لمرض نقص المناعة المكتسبة
10	“The order is filled on the spot, so the facility does not have to hold quantities of stock while waiting for the next delivery”	“يتم إعداد الطلب في الموقع، فلا يحتاج المرفق إلى الإحتفاظ بكميات من المخزون بينما ينتظر للطبية القادمة”	يتم إعداد الطلب في الموقع، فلا يحتاج إلى الإحتفاظ بكميات من المخزون بينما تنتظر الطبية القادمة في هذه المرافق
11	“Delivery truck forced-ordering systems can relatively easily accommodate technology that can help improve the speed and accuracy of stock calculations”	“بسهولة نسبية، يمكن لنظام الطلب الإجباري الموصل بالشاحنات إستيعاب التقنيات الحديثة التي يمكنها تحسين سرعة ودقة حسابات المخزون”	بسهولة نسبية، يمكن تضمين نظام الطلب الإجباري الموصل بالشاحنات بالتقنيات الحديثة التي يمكن بواسطتها تحسين سرعة ودقة حسابات المخزون
12	“how small variations in design can change the way an entire system functions”	“يتضح لنا كيف أن التباينات البسيطة في التصميم يمكن أن تغير تماماً أسلوب عمل النظام”	يتضح لنا كيف يمكن أن تغير هذه الإختلافات الصغيرة في التصميم من أسلوب عمل النظام
13	“Small orders are eliminated because stock levels are at the min when an order is placed”	“يتم التخلص من أوامر الصرف الصغيرة، حيث أن مستوى المخزون يكون في حده الأدنى حينما يتم إصدار أمر الصرف”	تترك أوامر الصرف ذات الكميات الصغيرة.... الخ.
14	“It is possible, and actually likely, that the stock balance will, at times, go below the min”	“من الممكن، بل ربما يكون من المستحب، أن ينخفض مستوى المخزون تحت مستوى الحد الأدنى بين الحين والآخر”	من الممكن بل المحتمل بشكل كبير..... الخ.

15	“Determining the average can be tricky”	“إنَّ تحديد ذلك المتوسط قد يكون خادعاً”	قد يكون تحديد المعدل أمراً صعباً
16	“or where weather conditions (e.g., a rainy season) make selected roads impassable”	“أو حيث تكون حالة الطقس (موسم الأمطار، مثلاً) قد قطعت طرق المواصلات”	أو حيث تكون حالة الطقس (موسم الأمطار، مثلاً) قد تسببت بقطع طرق المواصلات
17	“insecticide-treated bed nets”	“شبكات الحماية السريرية المعالجة ضد الحشرات”	شبكة الحماية من الحشرات (الناموسية)
18	“buffer stock”	“مخزون تخفيف الصدمات”	المخزون الاحتياطي
19	“Improve reliability in the system to reduce safety stock levels”	“تحسين مستوى الثقة في النظام بهدف تخفيض مستوى مخزون الأمان”	تحسين مستوى الإ اعتماد على النظام بهدف تخفيض مستوى المخزون الاحتياطي
20	“but only where reliable transportation is available”	“لكن فقط حينما تتوفر وسائل التوصيل بكثرة”	لكن عند توفر وسائل النقل بكثرة فقط

Table no. 1: Examples of ST translation and their retranlations

The examples, in table no. 1 above, show how the translator of this text has translated the handbook without paying attention to the contextual meaning or to the convention in translating such a handbook. The translator has adhered to the source text in such a way that distorted the meaning and made it obscure and inoperable. In example one ” in this example it is not above the translator rendered “staple goods” as “the wrong rendering of the word “staple” that confuses the reader but it is the rendering of the phrase “health products” which complicates the sentence and turns it into an peculiar sentence. In example two the translator rendered “bake” into “ just to stick to the literal meaning of the word ‘bake’ without considering the what is baked usually and according to the context of the text is what is called ‘pastries’. The translation of example three is confusing the phrase “المعجنات” “ [E]mergency” was rendered “بعده اشهر” can be explained by rendering it as “المخزون” “اسعافي” the literal meaning of the word, that in example four.

In example five, the translator did not need to translate those sentences as they are related to English language that are not related to Arabic, therefore it was left out in the suggested translated column and the same strategy was used in the suggested

translation of example eight since designation of the systems mentioned in the source "in example seven ربيعي text is related to English. "[Q]uarterly" was translated as "which is an obvious adherence to the literal meaning of the word while the suggested "which is what is فصلي translation proposed " used in Arabic.

Moreover, examples six and nine are an awkward choice from the translator. The suggested translations for those two examples are shown above. In examples ten, eleven and sixteen, the translator has chosen to go with the grammar of the source text attributing the action of the verb to the "facility" in example ten, "systems" in example eleven and "weather conditions" which is something that does not hold any relevance to the context of that handbook nor to the Arabic grammar and style. The translator in " for the Arabic الصغيرة and البسيطة examples twelve and thirteen used adjectives " rendering them as they are in English, without paying any امر and التباينات nouns " attention to their applicability on the Arabic counterparts. The same can be said about "which is المستحب example fourteen, as the translator rendered "likely" to " something that contradicts the context of the whole passage. The same is true in example fifteen, the suggested translation for the word "tricky" is ' صعب.

Furthermore, the translation of example seventeen is perhaps the most obvious example of the failure of translator of making any relevance to the target text and making the instructions of the handbook meaningful. The reason for that is the translator rendered the English phrase "insecticide-treated bed nets" almost word by word without paying attention to making the phrase understandable to the readers of the handbook. The suggested translation used a non-standard Arabic word between two brackets to make the sentence clearer. The same can be said to a certain extent regarding "buffer stock" in example eighteen. The translator used the denotative meaning of the word 'buffer' without relating it to the context. Example nineteen 'safety' holds resemblance to awkward usage of 'buffer' in example eighteen. Finally, example twenty, especially the word 'transportation' was rendered into ' التوصيل ' , while the suggested translation, according to the context is ' وسائل النقل '.

The examples above show how the translator of the handbook has resorted to automatic process and dictionary based-meaning in the translation which is something that corroborates the findings of (2) which discusses the difference between novice and expert translators and translation competence where the novice translator resorts to denotative meanings while the expert translator resorts to connotative meanings.

4. Conclusions

This paper has explored the application of Relevance Theory on translating "The Logistics Handbook A Practical Guide for the Supply Chain Management of Health Commodities". It has chosen twenty examples of translations where the translator of

that handbook has deviated from the context and resorted to irrelevant translation. The paper has also suggested translations for the twenty examples and showed how the reader of that handbook can benefit from it. The paper has corroborated the findings made by (2) and the comparison between novice translators and expert translators and the relation of that to Relevance Theory. The paper has showed how novice translators resort to dictionary based-meaning, which is the denotative meaning of words while expert translators resort to contextual meaning and connotative meaning of words. The paper has shown how possible it is to translate without resorting to a theory of translation depending on the interpretive process of translators. The suggested translations for the twenty examples, from the logistic handbook, can be used as a reference in translation in such a domain.

References

- 1-Alves, F., & Gonçalves, J. L. V. R. (2003). A Relevance Theory approach to the investigation of inferential patterns in translation. In *Triangulating Translation: Perspectives in process oriented research*, ed. F. Alves, 3-24. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- 2-Alves, F., & Gonçalves, J. L. V. R. (2007). Modelling translator's competence. In Y. Gambier, M. Shlesinger, & R. Stolze (Eds.), *Doubts and Directions in Translation Studies* (pp. 41–55). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- 3-Broadbent, D. (1958) *Perception and Communication*. London, UK: Pergamon press.
- 4-Gerzymisch-Arbogast, H. (1993) *Contrastive Scientific and Technical Register as a Translation Problem in Scientific & Technical Translation*. In: S.E. Wright (ed) *Scientific and Technical Translation: American Translators' Association Scholarly Monograph Series, Vol. VI 1993*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands and Philadelphia, USA: John Benjamins.
- 5-1993) *Text typology and translation-oriented text analysis*. In: S.E. Wright (ed) *Scientific and Technical Translation: American Translators' Association Scholarly Monograph Series, Vol. VI 1993*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands and Philadelphia, USA: John Benjamins. Alves, F., & Gonçalves, J. L. V. R. (2007). Modelling translator's competence. In Y. Gambier, M. Shlesinger, & R. Stolze (Eds.), *Doubts and Directions in Translation Studies* (pp. 41–55). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- 6-Gutt, E.-A. (2000). *Translation and relevance: cognition and context*. St. Jerome Pub.
- 7-Pinchuck, I. (1977). *Scientific and technical translation*. A. Deutsch.
- 8-Sperber, D. (1986). *Relevance: communication and cognition*. (D. Wilson, Ed.). book, Oxford: Blackwell.
- 9-USAID. (2010). *The Logistics Handbook A Practical Guide for the Supply Chain Management of Health Commodities*.