

FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND VIETNAMESE

ANALYZING TRANSLATION ERRORS IN “CẢM ƠN TẤT CẢ” TRANSLATED BY DUONG THANH HOAI FROM KIM JUNG-MI ‘S “모두 감언”

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ABSTRACT: This paper is focused on analyzing translation errors found out in the first five chapters of the translated version “Cảm ơn tất cả” translated by Duong Thanh Hoai from Kim Jung-mi’s “모두 감언”. There are 144 sentences with total 186 translation errors have been identified. The translation errors are classified mainly into two types; one of which is mistranslation (64.5%) and the other is translationese (17.2%). Besides, there are translation omission (14.5%) and pragmatic errors (3.8%). Mistranslation is the main translation errors, and most of them are mistranslation in vocabularies. This means the translator lacks knowledge of Korean vocabularies related to the context of the novel. Meanwhile, translationese also reaches to 17.1%, which means the translator tended to translate word-by-word, line-by-line. This made the translated version “Cảm ơn tất cả” seems rather literal and awkward.

KEY WORDS: translation errors; mistranslation; translationese; source text; translated text.

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1. Introduction

Translating back and forth between languages has always been an intrinsic part of foreign languages teaching and studying process (Susan Bassnett 2002: 12). However, evaluating a certain translated text in compared with the source text is considered as an effective method to reinforce the proficiency of the target language. While evaluating a translated text itself or in compared with the source text, one can find out translation errors. And by analyzing those translation errors, one can comprehend more about vocabularies, idioms, grammars, pragmatics of the target language, as well as enhance their advanced proficiency in mother tongue.

Vietnamese and Korean language are different types of linguistic typology. Basically, if Vietnamese is SVO type and isolating language, Korean is SOV type and agglutinative language. Therefore, mistakes or errors are easily happened during code switching between these two languages. To find out what are universal errors occurred while code switching between Korean and Vietnamese, this paper makes a study on translation errors found in a Vietnamese translated text of a Korean literacy text.

The text has been chosen for this study is the translated text “Cảm ơn tất cả” of Duong Thanh Hoai, and this is translated from “모두 감언” medium-length novel of Kim Jung-mi. The novel is an adolescent literature work written about stories happened around Su Jung, the girl who lives in a countryside of Kanghwa-do province together with her father side grandmother, uncle, and his Vietnamese wife.

After finding out translation errors laid down in the first five chapters of the translated text “Cảm ơn tất cả”, the paper then sorts those translation errors into certain types to clarify the causes behind. By analyzing those causes, we can find out more proper ways to overcome those difficulties, hence, can enhance the proficiency of both Vietnamese and Korean.

2. Translated text evaluation

Translation theories have been developed along with the historical length of translation. Many translation methods have been defined and suggested for many types of texts. And all translators’ ultimate aim is producing high quality translated texts by applying translation methods that are thought to be appropriate ones for certain translated texts. However, to evaluate one translated text is

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high quality or not, it is needed to criticize translationese and mistranslation, as well as translation strategy of the text (Lee Keun Hui, 2015, tr.90).

Translating from a given source language into a target language means one must take many shifts for his translated text since both involved languages generally do not share common backgrounds. Depending on the proficiency of translators in handling with the shifts, mainly the level of independency from the source language text, the products of translation can be assumed as more or less a 'translationese' (Moshe Koppel, Noam Ordan, 2011, tr.1318). Translationese is a technical term in translation study which means awkwardness or ungrammaticality of translation, such as due to overly literal translation of idioms or syntax¹. In many cases, translationese happened when a translator focuses on reproducing the meaning of the source language text and end up with something which maybe correct in grammar but sounds not like a native speaker.

For 'mistranslation', it is defined in Cambridge Dictionary as "a word, document, etc. that is translated (= changed into a different language) in a way that is not correct".

In many cases it is not always clearly distinguish between translationese and mistranslation. However, normally translationese in a given translated text can be recognized by general reader as these translation errors are awkward or inappropriate with the target language from the viewpoint of using of vocabularies, syntax, pragmatics, idioms. While mistranslation is translation errors caused by either the lack of knowledge of translator in a given source language itself or knowledge on non-linguistic background such as history, politics, economy, culture etc. laid down in source text. Since mistranslation appeared in the aspect of semantics of the source text, therefore, this type of translation errors would hardly be recognized by general readers who do not know the source language. It means, only professional readers who are proficient in the source language can point out the mistranslation when contrasting the source text and the translated text (Lee Keun Hui 2015: 94).

Besides, translation strategy is also an important requisite for evaluating a given translated text. Katharina Reiss, Hans J. Vermeer (2010) from the point of view of skopos theory state that each translation act has its own purpose. And the aim or the purpose of one translation act will give a certain influence on the translator in choosing appropriate translation strategies. Therefore, it is not a fair way to stand on the viewpoint of source-text-based or target-text-based to give one-sided evaluation whether a given translated text is high quality or not. Here, the purpose of the translation act should be considered to evaluate if the chosen translation strategies are appropriate or not.

The quality of a given translated text is inversely related to the quantity of translationese and mistranslation appeared in the text, as well as the appropriation of the translation strategy related to the translation purpose. However, before evaluating the translation strategy of a translated text, by analyzing translationese and mistranslation found in the text, it is enough to estimate the quality of the production of the translation. And if translators enrich knowledge and pay attention on translationese and mistranslation, they can surely enhance the quality of their translation works.

3. Types of translationese and mistranslation found in "Cảm ơn tất cả" translated text

After reading the first five chapters of the translated text "Cam on tat ca" and filtering out the cases found translation errors in translated text by using the translated text evaluation method given above, the paper classified the types of translation errors appearing in the corpus, specifically as follows:

Translationese:

+ *Translationese in vocabularies:* When the translator uses inappropriate vocabulary, the sentence or the expression becomes awkward and stiff. These translation errors will be considered as translationese in vocabularies.

¹ <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/translationese>

+ *Translationese in grammar*: There are some Korean syntax when translated verbatim to Vietnamese will make the reader feel inappropriate and affect the coherence of the sentence as well as the story development of the work. These cases will be identified as translationese in grammar.

+ *Translationese in expression*: Translationese in expression is determined when the translator uses expressions which are unsuitable for the target language system. The readers in the target culture will find them awkward, unreasonable or feel confused when reading the translated text.

Mistranslation:

+ *Mistranslation in vocabularies*: This is a translation error occurs when the translator misinterprets the meaning of the vocabulary used in the source text. Depending on the case, the effect of this translation error will be different. It can affect just the misinterpreted word, but it can also affect the meaning of entire phrases, sentences, or even paragraphs.

+ *Mistranslation in grammar*: This translation error occurs when the syntax are not translated correctly, which causing the meaning of the sentence in the translated text to deviate from the meaning of the sentence in the source text. This translation error is identified as a mistranslation in grammar.

Omission errors: The omission errors are identified from the perspective of evaluating the translator's translation strategy. Those are the cases when the content in the source text is omitted and then reduces the effectiveness of sending the source text's message content as well as makes the reader miss important information and difficulty grasp the development of the story's content, character's psychology, etc.

Pragmatic errors: Pragmatics can be meanings, artistic intentions, or deixis in sentences placed in a certain context of use. Pragmatic errors are identified when the translator fails to express the author's implications or merely translates verbatim into the target language and does not properly represent the deixis appearing in the source text.

From the cases of noticing translation errors, we have compiled a total of 144 sentences containing translation errors. However, there are sentences that contain more than 1 error, so the actual number of translation errors is 186 errors. Based on the classification of translation errors presented above, we made statistics of translation errors distributed according to the following proportions: Mistranslation (64.5%), translationese (17.2%), omission errors (14.5%) and pragmatic errors (3.8%).

Accordingly, most of detected translation errors are mistranslation which accounts for 64.2%. In which, the number of mistranslations in vocabularies is 101 errors and the number of mistranslations in grammar is 19 errors.

Translationese accounts for 17.1% of the total translation errors. The number of translationese in vocabularies, translationese in grammar and translationese in expression are 7 errors, 13 errors and 12 errors respectively.

Depending on the translator's translation strategy, the omission or addition will be applied to the translated text. However, whether it is accidental or intentional or a mistake in the translation process of the translator, the rate of 14.4% omission errors is also a significant rate. The translator needs to minimize these translation errors.

Pragmatic errors accounts for 8.6% of the total errors. Thus, it can be seen that the translator basically grasps the author's pragmatic intent placed in the context of the work. However, there are still cases that the translator uses vocabularies, grammars and semantics that are not appropriate and express the author's intentions.

4. Analyzing translationese and mistranslation found in “Cảm ơn tất cả” translated text

In this part, we will analyze typical examples of each type of translationese and mistranslation found in “Cảm ơn tất cả”. However, as translationese and mistranslation are the main translation errors found in the text, therefore, this paper will focus analyzing on these two types of errors only.

1. *Translationese in vocabulary*

ST² 여자는 무조건 근육이 발달한 남자를 좋아한다는 잘못된 환상에 사로잡혀 있다.

TT³ Tôi cố lôi cậu ta ra khỏi ảo tưởng sai lầm rằng con gái thích những người con trai có cơ bắp lớn.

AT⁴ Nó hoàn toàn chìm đắm trong mối hoang tưởng sai lầm cho rằng con gái nhất nhất chỉ thích con trai cuồn cuộn cơ bắp.

The example above is a typical translationese in vocabulary. In Korean “근육이 발달한 남자” means “chàng trai có cơ bắp phát triển (a man/boy who has well-muscles)” in Vietnamese. This is translated to “những người con trai có cơ bắp lớn (men who have big muscles)”. The meaning is not that wrong; however, Vietnamese people normally do not use “lớn” to talk about muscles in this case but use “cuồn cuộn” as an adjective collaborated with “cơ bắp (muscles)”.

2. *Translationese in grammar*

ST 서쪽으로는 화도면과 석보도도 보인다.

TT Phía Tây nhìn thấy xã Hwado và đảo Seokmo.

AT Nhìn về phía Tây là huyện Hwado và đảo Seokbo-do.

Passive voice structure is often observed in Korean language. In the example above, we can see “보다 (nhìn/thấy) (see/look)” active voice verb is inflexed as “보이다 ((được) nhìn thấy) (to be seen)” passive voice. While it is quite awkward to use passive voice in Vietnamese. However, the translator translated literally word-by-word for this structure, and the result “phía Tây nhìn thấy (to the West can be seen)” is such an translationese in grammar. Instead of that, a native speaker would use the structure “Nhìn về phía Tây là ...” in which, “nhìn (보다) (seeing/looking)” active voice verb followed by “về phía Tây là (to the West is)” becomes a noun phrase to play the role of subject of the sentence.

3. *Translationese in expression*

ST 만난 지 단 나흘 만에 식을 올리고 장모님한테 인사까지 드리고 왔다는 작은아빠는 그 뒤 석 달 동안 마치 녀이 나간 사람처럼 보였다.

TT Gặp chỉ có bốn ngày đã làm lễ cưới, chú còn gặp cả mẹ vợ trước khi quay về nhà và trong suốt ba tháng sau đó chú trông như người mất hồn.

AT Gặp nhau mới bốn ngày đã làm lễ cưới, lại còn ra mắt cả mẹ vợ rồi mới về, chú tôi suốt ba tháng trời sau đó trông cứ như người mất hồn.

In this example, for the phrase “장모님한테 인사까지 드리고 (even show up to mother-in-law)” the translator uses the expression “gặp cả mẹ vợ (even meet with mother-in-law)”. This sounds awkward in Vietnamese as native speaker in this case would say “ra mắt mẹ vợ” as a proper expression instead.

4. *Mistranslation in vocabulary*

Mistranslation in vocabulary may happened in one or two vocabularies in a given sentence but this translation error can give a huge affection to the translation quality of whole sentence or whole paragraph or even more.

ST 원래 종개리 뒷산과 건평리 어딘가에도 용마 발자국이 있다는데 나는 진강산 꼭대기에 있는 발자국만 보았다.

² Source text

³ Target text

⁴ Alternative translation

TT Người ta nói rằng kẻ cả sau núi ở xã Jongge hay xã Gunpyeong **ở đâu cũng có** dấu chân của long mã nhưng tôi chỉ nhìn thấy mỗi dấu chân của nó trên đỉnh núi Jingang.

AT Nghe nói ở ngọn núi sau thôn Jongge và **ở đâu đó** trong thôn Geonpyeong cũng có dấu chân long mã, nhưng tôi chỉ mới được thấy dấu chân long mã trên đỉnh ngọn Jingang này thôi.

The word “어딘가” in Korean means “ở một nơi nào đấy không xác định (at/in/on somewhere)”. However, the translator misunderstood this word as the meaning “ở đâu cũng có (at/in/on everywhere/anywhere)”. The source sentence means “It is said that the mountain behind Jongge-ri and somewhere in Geonpyeong-ri also have the footprints of swift horse, but I could have only seen the footprints on the peak of Jingang mountain”. But when translating “어딘가에도” into “ở đâu cũng có”, the sentence meaning has been changed to “It is said that the mountain behind Jongge-ri or Gunpyeong, everywhere has the footprints of swift horse...”. This mistranslation caused a distortion in delivering the precise meaning of the sentence.

5. *Mistranslation in grammar*

ST 할머니는 장에 가지고 나갈 나물을 **다듬다 말고** 한숨을 쉬었다.

TT Bà **chẳng buồn tỉa tót** đồng rau định mang ra chợ bán mà thở dài.

AT **Đang tỉa tót** mớ rau định mang ra chợ bán, bà **bỗng dừng tay** mà thở dài.

In the phrase “다듬다 말고” there is “V-다 말다” grammar which means “đang làm gì thì dừng lại (stop from doing something)”. However, the translator misunderstood this grammatical meaning and translated into “chẳng buồn tỉa tót (did not bother to prepare the vegetables)”. Therefore, while the meaning of the source text is “Grandma stopped trimming the vegetables which is about brought to market for selling and sighed”, the translated text became “Grandma did not bother to trim the vegetables...”. This means a mistranslation in the grammar “V-다 말다” ended with the false delivery of the meaning of the whole sentence.

5. **The causes behind phenomena of translation errors**

Through statistics and analysis of translation errors in the first five chapters of the translated text “Cảm ơn tất cả”, most of the translation errors are mistranslation in vocabularies accounting for 54.3%. Most of them occur because the translator has misunderstood the meaning of the Korean words. On the other hand, in some cases for multi-meaning words, because the translator has not understood all the meaning of the words used in the source language so she interpreted incorrectly the meanings that the author wants to talk about. In some other cases, because of lacking of knowledge in the target language, the translator could not find the words that fully express the meaning in the source language and then had to use different vocabularies but the meaning of those words are different from the source text.

Mistranslation in grammar most often occurs because the translator misunderstood the grammatical meaning of the suffixes, or did not pay attention and then ignore the syntax, suffixes, etc. Thus, the product of translation not only does not express the grammatical meaning but also distorts the meaning of the whole sentence. The main cause of this translation error is that the translator’s knowledge of the source language is uncertain and she does not know all the meanings of a given syntax.

Besides mistranslation, translationese also appears quite a lot in the first five chapters of the translated text “Cam on tat ca” with a rate of 17.2%. The biggest cause of translationese is because of the translator's lack of knowledge in the target language such as the inability to find the equivalent words or expressions in the target language, the lack of ability to use onomatopoeia, etc. These causes lead to the inability to express sentences and paragraphs coherently, clearly and vividly. Most of the translationese in vocabularies and expression stems from the translator's failure to consider the responsive relation between words and context (Lee Keun Hui, 2015). A word can have many meanings and only if we consider that word in responsive relation with context and surrounding words, we can find an appropriate expression. In addition, the translator cannot distinguish between

expressions used in spoken language and expressions used in written language to apply in the right context and purpose of use, which is also a major cause of translationese. Translationese in grammar is mostly due to the difference in using grammatical structures between Vietnamese and Korean. For example, translating a sentence that uses a passive or indirect structure in Korean to Vietnamese can cause a feeling of awkwardness for Vietnamese readers.

Omission errors and pragmatic errors are largely related to the evaluation of the translator's translation strategy. As for pragmatic errors, the main reason is that the translator has not understood the author's implications and deixis in sentences, or has understood these elements but cannot fully interpret in the translated text because the ability to express the target language is not good.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, we had compiled statistics on translation errors found in the first five chapter of the translated text “Cam on tat ca”. There are 187 translation errors found in 144 sentences of the text. Based on the theory about evaluation for translated text, we sorted the errors mainly into four types: (1) translationese, (2) mistranslation, (3) translation omission, and (4) pragmatics errors. With the rate up to 64.5% and 17.2%, mistranslation and translationese are the most translation errors founded in the translated text. By analyzing all cases of found mistranslation and translationese, it can be observed that the translator in this translation work lacks the knowledge of Korean language, especially of Korean vocabulary and grammar. This is also a general phenomenon to Vietnamese people studying Korean language. Therefore, it is required to strengthen the pedagogy for teaching and learning Korean vocabularies as well as grammars in the education program. Also, the number of 17.2% for translationese means that the translator is hardly to be seen as a professional translator as she is still stuck on the source text while taking translating action. Thus, the translator should pay more attention to improving her Vietnamese language in order to create more naturally and smoothly translated sentences in Vietnamese.

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Nghiên cứu những lỗi dịch thuật trong bản dịch “Cảm ơn tất cả” của dịch giả Dương Thanh Hoài dịch từ tác phẩm “모두 감언” của tác giả Kim Jung-mi

Tóm tắt: Công trình tập trung phân tích các lỗi dịch thuật có trong năm chương đầu của bản dịch “Cảm ơn tất cả” của Dương Thanh Hoài dịch từ tác phẩm “모두 감언” của nhà văn Kim Jung-mi. Có tổng cộng 186 lỗi dịch thuật phát hiện ở 144 câu trong văn bản. Lỗi dịch chủ yếu được chia thành hai loại lỗi lớn là lỗi dịch sai (64.5%) và lỗi dịch gượng (17.2%). Nhiều nhất là lỗi dịch sai, và đa phần là sai về từ vựng. Điều này cho thấy dịch giả còn thiếu kiến thức về từ vựng tiếng Hàn liên quan đến bối cảnh của tác phẩm. Đồng thời, lỗi dịch gượng cũng chiếm tỉ lệ khá cao với 17.2%, điều này chứng tỏ dịch giả còn thiếu kiến thức về ngôn ngữ mẹ đẻ và còn phụ thuộc vào hình thức dịch từ đối từ.

Từ khoá: lỗi dịch thuật; dịch sai; dịch gượng; văn bản nguồn; văn bản đích.