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Dieter Kastovsky

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WORD-FORMATION AND TRANSLATION

DIETER KASTOVSKY
Universität Wien, Vienna, Austria

Translation is a text-oriented operation, as is generally recognized both by practicing translators and linguists. A source text is analyzed as to its communicative intention or *sense* (Coseriu's *Sinn*, see Coseriu 1973: 102ff.) including its stylistic properties and is then converted into a target text that ideally conveys the same communicative intention and stylistic value as the source text. The basic requirement is thus sense equivalence, where *sense* includes denotative meaning, connotations, even extralinguistic knowledge presupposed by the author of the source text but not directly available to the readers of the target text, so that it will have to be supplied explicitly in the latter. Thus, translation does not primarily operate at the lexical or sentence levels, but at least at the level of larger text segments such as the paragraph, if not at the level of the source text as a whole, the intimate knowledge of which is a prerequisite for successful translation. Nevertheless, despite this overriding importance of the textual level, the lexical level also plays a crucial role, of course. After all, any text in the last resort consists of lexical items, i.e., words, so that the translator can by no means disregard the lexical level as one of the basic functional parameters of text organization. Questions of lexical equivalence have therefore always played an important role in translation theory, especially in view of the fact that we hardly ever meet with complete lexical equivalence both from the point of view of intension and of extension between seemingly equivalent lexical items of different languages. In fact, this observation was one of the cornerstones of the Humboldt-Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which claims that there is a more or less direct relationship between the structure of one's linguistic, especially lexical, system and one's view of the world, between *Sprache und Weltbild*. It is not surprising, therefore, that problems of lexical semantics, because of their practical and theoretical-philosophical implications, have always intrigued practical translators as much as theoretical linguists or philosophers. Another, though hardly less important and interesting aspect of the lexicon has, however, so far been neglected by translation theory, viz. its formal-semantic structure resulting from the existence of word-formation patterns. Not that problems of word-formation have not been discussed in connection with translation, *cf.*, e.g., Wilss (1986) or the work done in this respect in Leipzig by Ohneheiser on Russian (see her various articles in the series *Linguistische Arbeitsberichte*). But to my knowledge there so far do not exist any large-scale contrastive studies of the word-formation systems and their exploitation of two or even more than two languages. It might be of interest, therefore, to look at some aspects of word-formation that would have to be considered in such translation-oriented contrastive studies. The following remarks are rather tentative, however, all the more so because I may be looking at this area too much from the theoretical and descriptive linguist's point of view, and may therefore misjudge its relevance for practical translation or translation theory. Nevertheless — and here I simply draw on my personal experience during the past years in this area — it is high time to better correlate the efforts of the theoretical and descriptive linguist, of translation theory, and of the practical translator in this area for the mutual benefit of these complementary aspects.

Word-formation is usually defined as "that branch of the science of language which studies the patterns on which a language forms new lexical units, i.e., words" (Marchand 1969: 2). The need for the existence of such patterns should be obvious. Lexical items are designations of segments of extralinguistic reality that a speaker or a whole speech community considers nameworthy. The constantly changing extralinguistic reality requires a continuous addition to the stock of designations needed by a speech community to keep up communication among its members. The storing capacity of our brain is limited, however, so that in the long run it would probably be overtaxed if for every new concept that requires a designation we would introduce a new, arbitrary name, either by borrowing it from another language, or simply by artificially coining a new arbitrary sign. Consequently, it seems that all languages have developed processes by which existing morphemes are combined into complex lexical items, i.e., lexical syntagmas, whose meaning can be derived from their morphological form on the basis of the knowledge of the meanings of their parts and the underlying morphosemantic pattern. It is this principle of relative motivation, of morphosemantic transparency or analyzability, which characterizes the major categories of word-formation such as compounding, prefixation and suffixation and makes it such a powerful tool, e.g., in creating international terminologies. And, as Marchand has quite aptly put it in his handbook of English word-formation, it is also the reflection of a general tendency "to see a thing identical with another already existing and at the same time different from it" (Marchand 1969: 11). As a consequence, word-formation patterns tend to produce binary structures based on a head/modifier or determinatum/determinant relationship.

Hence, the basic function of word-formation is to create complex, motivated lexical items in order to expand the stock of designations and thus adapt the lexicon of a language to the changing communicative needs of a speech community. There is, however, a complementary, syntactic function that is at least as important as this lexical one. At least in the Indo-European language family, concepts are lexicalized at a primary level of categorization in terms of units that have a specific part-of-speech-affiliation, i.e., verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, etc. The requirements of sentence structure, but also of stylistic variation may, however, make it necessary that such lexical items should also be able to occur in different syntactic functions filled by different parts of speech. This results in the phenomenon called by Motsch (1977) "syntactic recategorization", which also serves the condensation of information and enhances text cohesion. It makes it possible to refer to the contents of whole sentences from different perspectives, modify them, and comment on them without too much syntactic complexity, as in the following examples:

(1) a. (...) do we assume that the *stone-chucker, wire-stretcher, composite letter-writer, dumper* of green lady and *telephonist* are one and the same person and that this person is also the *murderer* of Miss Cost? ... Miss Pride ... is convinced that the *ringer-up* was Miss Cost.

     b. (...) and whether our own conversation doesn't sound a little *potty*. It's the *pottiness*, you know, that's so awful.

     c. He made *fists*. (...) He *defisted* to gesture.

     d. If that's not *civil, civilize* it and tell me.

     e. It's *blood on* his hands. His hands get *covered with blood*, not visible to anybody else, and he goes and washes them. (...) He wouldn't give his name and didn't mention *bloody* hands.

    f. Once or twice he *chuckled*. (...) It was following one of those *chuckles* that Paul Drake drawled a question.

    g. Solarians did not bud, they *birthed*; and the female was always the *birther*. She remained female for life, no matter how many times she *birthed*.

    h. Don't you know a single person who *ought to be murdered?* He wondered why his host should appear to set so much store by his acquaintance with *potential murderees*, but hardly liked to ask.

    i. One of them was *faking*. (...) Could the *faker* keep up free association (...)? The *faker*, whichever he was, had practised or had natural talents.

    j. A few thought they had noticed someone *resembling* the man in the picture. I wasted two days tracking one of the supposed *resemblers*, and found no *resemblance* at all.

    k. (...) and I *patted* her shoulder. *Patting* a shoulder can be anything from an apology to a promise, and only the *patter* can say which.

    l. If we were to attempt *shadowing* anybody, the *shadowee* would find himself about as inconspicuous as though he were to walk down Piccadilly pursued by the Albert Memorial.

    m. I'm posted along this stretch to *maintain* law and order — Who's *dismaintaining* it right now?

(2) J.R. Ross, *The category squish: Endstation Hauptwort*. (*CLS*, 8, 1982, pp. 318-319): Another property of these five words (...) is their behaviour when *pied piping* to follow the preposed degree adverbial *how*. (...) It appears that the more adjectival the word is, the more it can *pied pipe*. *Proud* and *near* (...) are slightly superior, when *pied piping* (...) Since *opposite* and *in* are not degree predicates, the only way to check their *pied pipability* is by modifying them (...) *Pied piping* material to the left of the wh-word also seems to be roughly in line with the sub-squish (...) the less adjectival the *pied pipee*, the better the result (...)

The two functions of designation and syntactic recategorization are by no means mutually exclusive but represent the two end points of a scale on which each individual word-formation can be localized. This localization is usually context-dependent, i.e., a given word-formation may, depending on the respective context, have a more prominent recategorization function or may rather serve as a designation, *cf.*

(3) a. And he knew no one was going to take him off-stage and beat him; the *beating* of prisoners was not authorized.

b. (...) a larger male not only stole his peanut
but gave him a *beating*.

On account of the individualization by the indefinite article, the recategorization function of *beating* in (3b) is much less prominent than in (3a).

For some word-formation patterns, however, only one function is relevant, which invariably is the function of designation, as in instances such as:

(4) flatlet, daddy, beefburger, landscape, gaseteria,
lemonade

Let me now, in the rest of this paper, look at some consequences that these aspects of word-formation have for translation, in particular from the point of view of the conservation of sense equivalence.

As has been pointed out, the most crucial aspect of word-formation patterns is the relatively motivated status of their output, which distinguishes them from simple, arbitrary signs. In what way does this affect the translation process? Obviously, this question becomes relevant when the translator substitutes a simple lexical item for a complex one or vice versa. Doing so will not necessarily change the denotational meaning, provided the two lexical items are really equivalent, as, e.g., in instances such as:

(5) *Handschuh* / glove, *Tierarzt* / vet,
Rückgrat / spine (vs. backbone),
kill / *töten*, enter / *eintreten*.

But it affects the connotational level, assuming that there is a difference between simple and complex lexical items. This will probably be irrelevant in context-oriented, e.g. technical texts, although even there the replacement of transparent lexical items by simple ones may reduce the comprehensibility of the text. Of course, the translator is usually not free in making such substitutions but has to follow the structural necessities of the languages in question, i.e., he has no choice. However, he must be aware that such substitutions may affect the sense level, which in other text types, especially those of a form-dominated character, can have serious consequences. Thus, specific effects may be caused by the use of a motivated lexical item, whether in poetry or in puns, and this effect is usually extremely difficult to recapture if the target language does not normally have a complex equivalent, *cf.* the German proverbial pun

(6) *Die Leidenschaft ist ein Gefühl das Leiden*
schafft. Passion is a feeling which causes pain.

This is the area where major transpositions may be required, as any literary translator knows only too well.

Another aspect mentioned earlier on is the functional dichotomy of naming / designating and syntactic recategorization. The latter is a grammatical process and will usually be relatively easy to recapture in the target language, or can even be replaced by a syntactic paraphrase if there is no direct target language equivalent. Productivity gaps can therefore be overcome relatively easily. But again, there may be subtle differences between languages, sometimes linked to specific text types. Thus, German scientific prose has a highly nominalized style, while English prefers verbal expressions, etc.

Or the basic conceptual categorization may be different in the languages concerned, e.g.

(7) Sp. *verdad* –> *verdadero* vs. It. *vero* –> *verità*
Fr. *vrai* –> *vérité*, E. true –> truth

This may lead to transpositions that again might affect the connotational level of the text and will therefore be of particular importance in poetic texts.

More problematic in this respect is the function of nomination/designation, especially if the lexical items in question are of a terminological nature. Here, direct lexical equivalents will have to be created, if they do not already exist, in order to preserve the naming function, i.e., replacement by a descriptive clause is not possible. This will therefore frequently result in direct borrowings or loan translations (especially in international terminologies). In this respect, the translator will therefore have to be familiar not only with the word-formational system of the languages involved, but also with its restrictions on the level of the norm and the stylistic value of the respective formations.

Another aspect that has so far not been looked at from a translational point of view is the question of formal-semantic equivalence. Thus, some languages might have derivations where other languages have compounds, e.g.

(8) a. F *poirier, cerisier, pommier*
b. G *Birnbaum, Kirschbaum, Apfelbaum*
c. E pear tree, cherry tree, apple tree

It is assumed, at least by some linguists, that compounds are semantically more specific than corresponding denominal derivatives, *cf.*

(9) tanker/*Tankschiff*, freighter/*Frachtschiff*
steamer/*Dampfschiff*, etc.

Does this mean that such lexical substitutions affect the overall sense of the text? Probably not, because the existing denotational difference is compensated by pragmatic and connotational factors, but we cannot exclude that there may be instances where this compensation does not work satisfactorily.

In view of the restricted time for this paper, I could only mention some aspects of a topic that has much wider ramifications. But even these sketchy remarks have indicated that the study of word-formation can profit very much from looking at the translational aspect of this area. Conversely, in view of the importance of word-formation for the structure of the lexicon, it would seem that the training of translators and interpreters should emphasize this aspect much more than has been done so far, but preferably from a contrastive point of view.

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