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Translating Metadiscourse: An Explanatory Analysis of Problems in Students' Work*

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Abstract:

One aspect of discourse theory and analysis that has yet to be exploited to any significant extent is metadiscourse, which has been defined by Hyland as "the ways writers refer to the text, the writer and the reader" in order to organize the propositional content of the text, help readers understand the text, and persuade readers to accept their arguments. Metadiscourse is therefore an integral part of a writer's rhetorical arsenal. In this article the author outlines the main types of metadiscourse features and then analyzes the treatment of certain features in student translations. Based on cases analyses and drawing on translation theory, he then highlights some significant shortcomings in students' treatment of metadiscourse and proposes some tentative explanations with translator training in mind.
Key words: metadiscourse, text, writer, reader, translation, theory.

Resumen:

Entre los aspectos de la teoría y el análisis del discurso que todavía deben ser estudiados con mayor profundidad, se encuentra el del metadiscurso, que Hyland define como los medios que utiliza el autor para hacer referencia a sí mismo, al texto o al lector con el fin de organizar el contenido proposicional del texto, de ayudar al lector a comprender el texto, y de persuadir al lector de aceptar sus argumentos. El metadiscurso hace parte integral de las herramientas retóricas de las que dispone el autor de un texto. En este artículo, son presentados los diversos elementos metadiscursivos para seguidamente analizar la manera cómo ciertos estudiantes tradujeron (o no) muchos de estos elementos en el marco de trabajos de traducción. Inspirándose en ciertas teorías de la traducción, el autor hace visibles lagunas importantes en el nivel de la traducción del metadiscurso y propone para solucionarlas algunas explicaciones provisionales desde la perspectiva de la formación universitaria.
Palabras clave: metadiscurso, texto, autor, lector, traducción, teoría.

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1. Introduction

In recent decades, many theorists, including the proponents of a functional approach to translation criticism, have drawn on discourse analysis to propose new ways of looking at translation. Among others, Reiss (1971; 2000) and Delisle (1980) based innovative translation analysis and production methods on elements of discourse analysis; Larose (1993) highlighted the importance of analyzing multiple levels of text, from the microtext to the superstructure, when assessing translation quality; House (1997) exploited the functional text features identified by Crystal and Davy (1969) and Halliday (1978) to develop her descriptive-explanatory approach to translation quality assessment; Hatim and Mason (1997) use the same parameters as House to develop an analysis of text-level errors, discussing issues of cohesion, coherence, genre, intentionality, situationality and so on; and Williams (2004) applies aspects of discourse-based argumentation theory to translation quality assessment. The common thread in these theories and approaches is a commitment to go beyond a conventional microtextual, or primarily subsentence, analysis of a translation and to blend their approach with consideration of other textual and extratextual features and factors.

That being said, one aspect of discourse theory and analysis that has yet to be exploited to any significant extent is metadiscourse, which has been broadly defined by Ken Hyland (2005: 48) as "the ways writers refer to the text, the writer and the reader" in order to organize the propositional content of the text, help readers understand the text, and persuade readers to accept their arguments. Metadiscourse is therefore an integral part of a writer's rhetorical arsenal. Types of metadiscourse include transition markers (conjunctives), hedges ("possibly," "in general," etc.) and attitude markers ("preferably," "certainly," etc.), all of which are used by the writer to guide and influence the reader's understanding of the text. In this article I will outline the main types of metadiscourse features as identified and defined by Hyland and then analyze the treatment of certain features in student translations. Based on this analysis of an admittedly limited number of cases, and drawing on translation theory, I will highlight some significant shortcomings in students' treatment of metadiscourse and propose some tentative explanations with translator training in mind.

2. What is metadiscourse?

Joseph Williams (1990: 40) gives a different definition of metadiscourse from the one developed by Hyland. It is "the language we use when, in writing about some subject matter, we incidentally refer to the act and to the context of writing about it." He goes on give examples: verbs to announce what the writer will be doing; cohesion markers to indicate steps in presentation; words to express logical connections; and words to hedge how certain the writer is about a claim. Williams then states: "Though

metadiscourse does not refer to what we are primarily saying about our subject, we need some metadiscourse in everything we write." His wording ("incidentally," "not […] to what we are primarily saying," "we need some metadiscourse") reflects a fundamental distinction that a number of theorists have made between propositional content (considered more important) and metadiscourse (considered less important).

In his critique of metadiscourse theory, Hyland reacts against the above dichotomy: "[…] language is not simply used to convey information about the world. It also acts to present this information through the organization of the text itself […] and engage readers as to how they should understand it […]" (2005: 8). Hyland sees these two communicative acts — presenting through organization of the text and engaging readers — as the core purpose of metadiscourse. Taking a largely functional, pragmatic and sociocognitive perspective, he opines that "all discourse, no matter how explicitly 'informational,' is created between participants who bring to the encounter certain affiliations, experiences, expectations and background understandings. These interpersonal dimensions influence how they will interpret and respond to the message and how they will engage in the interaction." (2005: 9) This means, says Hyland, that writing involves managing social relationships "because a text communicates effectively only when the writer has correctly assessed both the reader's resources for interpreting it and their likely response to it. This is, in part, achieved through the use of metadiscourse" (2005: 11). Here, Hyland's views echo Grice's Cooperative Principle and mesh with Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory (1995), according to which the speaker or writer has a communicative and an informative intention. For the reader to interpret the writer's communicative and informative intentions correctly (i.e. in the way the writer wants them to), the writer must ensure, to the extent possible, that they share the same cognitive and contextual environment by using a variety of linguistic cues, including connectors (see Blackmore (2004) for a relevance-based approach to the pragmatics of connectors, which she calls discourse markers). In a sense, it is through metadiscourse, as defined by Hyland, that the writer activates his/her communicative intention, which is more often than not to convince the reader of the information being conveyed and/or to persuade the reader to act on that information.

Thus Hyland's own definition of metadiscourse revolves around the construction of text, meaning and the management of the writer–reader relationship:

> All speech and writing, whether professional, academic or personal, includes expressions which refer to the text producer, the imagined receiver and the evolving text itself…. These expressions provide information about the participants, the kind of discourse that is being constructed, and the context. These expressions are, collectively, referred to as metadiscourse: aspects of a text which explicitly organize a discourse or the writer's stance towards either its content or the reader. (2005: 14)

> Metadiscourse is the cover term for the self-reflective expressions used to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, assisting the writer (or speaker) to express a viewpoint and engage with readers as members of a particular community. (2005: 37)

Having shown that metadiscourse does indeed play such a critical role in both negotiating meaning and guiding the reader's interpretation, Hyland takes the next logical step and establishes a connection between metadiscourse and Aristotelian rhetoric with its logos–ethos–pathos triad, showing how the various metadiscourse features serve to bolster the force of the writer's claims. For example, transition markers would enhance the *logos* component of argumentation by signalling prepositional interrelationships and functions; evidentials (references to other sources), the *ethos* component, by providing authoritative support for the author's claims; and attitude markers, the *pathos* component, by prompting the reader to take the same attitude or make the same assessment as the writer.

By extension, Hyland also makes a connection between the functions of metadiscourse and dialogism, as presented in Bakhtin's writings, in the sense that the writer's discourse is not a monologue but an internalized dialogue. The language and logos of the writer constantly invite, are qualified by, and respond to the reader's counter-logos as the former strives to meet the challenge of persuading the latter to embrace his or her claims:

> Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated — overpopulated — with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process. (Bakhtin, 1981: 294)

For example, concessives rhetorically acknowledge voices other than the writer's, and they demonstrate a sensitivity to the expectations of the discourse community concerned as well as to the reader's understanding of the discourse and an attempt to respond to that understanding. In Hyland's opinion, the writer uses metadiscourse precisely to bring the implicit, internalized dialogue to a satisfactory conclusion through the reader's acceptance of the argument.

3. Metadiscourse typology

Hyland divides metadiscourse into two broad categories:

- *Interactive* — features used to organize propositional information in ways that the target reader should find coherent and convincing (2005: 50).

- *Interactional* — features that draw the reader into the discourse and give them an opportunity to contribute to it and respond to it by alerting them to the writer's perspective on propositional information and orientation and intention with respect to that reader (2005: 52).

3.1 Interactive metadiscourse

There are five interactive features, which are briefly defined and exemplified below.

Code glosses supply additional information by rephrasing, illustrating or explaining. They reflect the writer's assumptions about the reader's cognitive environment. Examples: *called, defined as, e.g., in other words, specifically*

Endophoric markers refer to other parts of the text in order to make additional information available, provide supporting arguments, and thus steer the reader toward a preferred interpretation.
Examples: *(in) (this) Chapter; see Section X, Figure X, page X; as noted earlier*

Evidentials are metalinguistic representations of an idea from another source and help to establish authorial command of the subject.
Examples: *(to) quote X, according to X*

Frame markers are used to sequence parts of the text or order arguments in the text. They serve four specific purposes:

(a) to sequence — *(in) Chapter X, first, next, lastly, I begin with, I end with*
(b) to label stages — *all in all, at this point, in conclusion, on the whole*
(c) to announce goals — *my focus, goal, objective is to, I seek to*
(d) to shift topic — *back to, in regard to, return to, turn to*

Transition markers are primarily conjunctions and conjunctives that help the readers determine the logical relationships between propositions. Authorities have proposed a number of categorizations, including Halliday and Hasan (1976):

(a) additive — *moreover, for example* (also an endophoric marker), *similarly*
(b) causal — *therefore, as a result, it follows that*
(c) adversative — *however, that being said, nevertheless*
(d) temporal — *first, second, next, then, finally*

3.2 Interactional metadiscourse

There are five interactional features too.

Attitude markers indicate the writer's opinion or assessment of a proposition. Examples: *I agree, I am amazed, appropriate, correctly, dramatic, hopefully, unfortunately*

Self-mention refers to explicit authorial presence in the text and gives information about his/her character and stance. Examples: *I, we, the author*

Engagement markers explicitly address readers to draw them into the discourse. Examples: *we, our (inclusive), imperative mood*

Hedges indicate the writer's decision to recognize other voices, viewpoints or possibilities and be (ostensibly) open to negotiation with the reader. Examples: *apparently, assume, doubt, estimate, from my perspective, in most cases, in my opinion, probably, suggests*

Boosters allow the writer to anticipate and preclude alternative, conflicting arguments by expressing certainty instead of doubt. Examples: *beyond doubt, clearly, definitely, we found, we proved, it is an established fact*

4. Application to students' translations

Now that I have outlined the theoretical underpinnings, functions and types of metadiscourse, I will move on to an assessment of how students handle it in their written assignments and tests. The corpus comprises translations produced between 2005 and 2008 by third- and fourth-year students in the University of Ottawa translation program. While students generally handled metadiscourse well, there were a number of instances where even the most talented trainees failed to render metadiscoursal features accurately, compromising the source text writer's communicative and informative intentions as a result.

4.1 Case Study I

In my experience, transition markers seem to be the interactive feature that causes students the greatest difficulty, as illustrated below. The first case study involves translations of the following passage, set as a final examination text for students taking a third-year specialized translation course:

> *Selon les résultats de l'enquête, on constate que, globalement, 60 p. 100 des propriétaires dont la résidence a fait l'objet d'une évaluation dans le cadre du programme ÉnerGuide pour les maisons, durant la période visée, estiment que les recommandations formulées dépassaient leurs attentes.*

> ***Par ailleurs,*** [my emphasis] *certains propriétaires mettent en cause la formation et le professionnalisme des enquêteurs, en s'interrogeant parfois sur la compétence de ceux-ci.*
>
> *Dans le cadre de cette même enquête, au nombre des propriétaires sondés, 18 p. 100 n'avaient pas entrepris de travaux d'amélioration de l'efficacité énergétique de leur maison mais comptaient le faire.* ***Or,*** [my emphasis] *si l'on suppose que la moitié de ces personnes aient réalisé des travaux au cours de l'année 2004, les réductions de gaz à effet de serre (GES) pourraient être intégrées aux estimations de 2004. Si l'on suppose que la moitié de ces propriétaires aient effectué des travaux d'amélioration au cours de l'année 2003, il s'ensuivrait vraisemblablement une réduction de 4 827 tonnes métriques de GES en 2003, ce qui est non négligeable.*

The authors, working for a Canadian government energy efficiency program, report on the extent to which homeowners act on recommendations for improving the energy efficiency of their homes and on their opinion of the home energy efficiency auditors whose reports contain the recommendations. In the third paragraph, they go on to make some estimates of greenhouse gas emissions reductions based on assumptions about homeowners who had not yet acted on recommendations but intended to do so.

The transition markers of interest in ST are *Par ailleurs* and *Or*. In the case of *Par ailleurs*, the transition marker is reinforced by the paragraphing, which is another metadiscoursal organizational procedure. In both instances, the transition marker is not only a feature of the *logos* component of the rhetoric triad; it also reflects the *ethos* component. In the paragraph introduced by *Par ailleurs*, the authors report "negative" views of a government energy efficiency program, thereby projecting balance and objectivity as a means of enhancing their credibility with readers in the discourse communities concerned (stakeholders in the government, energy efficiency sector and construction industry and colleagues in the statistical research community). In the text introduced by *Or*, the authors use the survey findings to extrapolate and predict, thereby demonstrating their capacity for statistical innovation. Both the reporting of "other voices" and the authors' predictive propositions are, in a sense, discourse conventions expected by the communities of practice, and they therefore increase the chances of the authors' propositions and claims being accepted by readers.

The logical relationship between the two paragraphs linked by *Par ailleurs* is clearly contrastive, so the conjunctive must be interpreted as an adversative one. Of the 29 students who translated the text (in a sit-down examination with no limitations on the use of hardcopy finding aids), 18 interpreted it correctly, using *However*, *On the other hand* or *Conversely*. Two gave no translation for the conjunctive, leaving the reader to establish the logical connection between propositions. The other nine made no effort to interpret, opting for a dictionary-based translation: *Otherwise*, *In other respects*, *Moreover* or *Furthermore* (in fact, these are all the equivalents given for *par ailleurs* in the 2002 *Robert et Collins Senior* dictionary).

For *Or*, the same dictionary gives *now*, *and yet*, *but*, *thus* and *therefore*, along with the option to omit a direct translation of the word. Here too, the reader–translator must correctly interpret the logical relationship between propositions. There is no strong causal connection between the fact that 18% of respondents intended to undertake energy efficiency upgrades and the authors' proposed distribution of that percentage for greenhouse gas reduction estimates, and there is definitely not a contrastive one. The authors simply use the statistic to make a new argument or claim. Therefore, omission is the best tactic, and this is what 16 of the 29 students chose to do. Another 6 used an adversative (*however*, *yet* or *but*), 5 used *now* (additive), 1 used *furthermore* (additive), and 2 used a causal (*therefore* or *thus*), none of which signal an appropriate logical relationship between the propositions concerned.

Of course, we can put a positive or a negative spin on these results. A negative conclusion would be that in 22 out of 58, or almost 38%, of instances, students failed to render the transition marker appropriately as a means of organizing and enhancing the authors' arguments.

4.2 Case Study II

The second illustrative text is part of a report on a project designed to test the feasibility of estimating the energy efficiency of Canadian homes. The author discusses the biases that the researcher has to be taken into consideration in establishing a statistically acceptable sample of homes heated primarily by natural gas. The translation of the excerpt was made by a pair of graduating students in a fourth-year specialized translation course. The boldface items in the source text below are all instances of metadiscourse; the boldface items in the target text are the students' renderings of the metadiscourse.

> Source text
>
> *Sous-échantillon 'gaz naturel'*
>
> *Parmi les maisons chauffées principalement au gaz naturel, le profil de celles retenues pour les fins de calcul de la consommation totale se compare* ***très bien*** [attitude marker—evaluative] *à celui de son complément, c'est-à-dire, l'ensemble des maisons exclues sur les variables testées et* ***jugées pertinentes*** [attitude marker—evaluative] *: mis à part le fait que les maisons éliminées aient une superficie chauffée (excluant le sous-sol et le garage)* ***environ*** [hedge] *10 % supérieure à celles retenues, leur fréquence de présence ou d'utilisation de divers équipements demeure* ***généralement comparable*** *[hedge]. La seule exception* ***notable*** [attitude marker—evaluative] *concerne l'utilisation d'un foyer au bois que les* ***considérations méthodologiques décrites précédemment*** [frame marker] ***suggéraient*** [hedge] *d'éliminer systématiquement des calculs de consommation.*

Compte tenu de l'écart quant à la superficie, ***on peut s'attendre à ce que*** [self-mention + engagement marker] *les estimations de consommation déduite du sous-échantillon retenu pour les calculs de consommation énergétique totale se situent* ***légèrement en deçà de*** [hedge] *la réalité. D'après un modèle de régression simple mettant en relation la superficie chauffée des maisons et la consommation énergétique totale,* ***on estime*** [self-mention] ***grossièrement*** [hedge] *que le sous-échantillon* ***sous-évaluerait*** [hedge] *par un facteur de 3 % la consommation des maisons de ce segment.*

De plus [transition marker]***, on constate*** [self-mention] *que le nombre de degrés-jours des maisons retenues est* ***environ*** [hedge] *10 % supérieur à celui de celles rejetées. En supposant que l'énergie requise pour le chauffage des résidences représente* ***environ*** [hedge] *50 % de toute l'énergie consommée dans ce secteur,* ***on pourrait en déduire*** [self-mention + engagement marker + hedge] *que le sous-échantillon pour lequel la consommation énergétique a été analysée est surestimée par un facteur de 4 % par rapport à ce qu'elle devrait être pour l'ensemble des maisons chauffées au gaz naturel, uniquement en prenant en considération les degrés-jours.*

Compte tenu des deux biais documentés dans ***les deux paragraphes précédents*** [frame marker]*,* ***il semblerait que*** [hedge] *la consommation énergétique moyenne des maisons retenues* ***refléterait assez bien*** [hedge] *celle de toutes les maisons principalement chauffées au gaz naturel. Il s'agit d'une tendance moyenne qui n'est pas* ***nécessairement*** [hedge] *vérifiée à l'intérieur des divers segments pour lesquels* ***on souhaiterait analyser*** [self-mention + engagement marker] *les consommations énergétiques.*

Target text

Natural gas sub-sample

Among homes heated primarily by natural gas, the profile of those included in total consumption calculations compares **very well** to that of homes excluded on the basis of tested and **relevant** variables. Besides the fact that the heated area of excluded homes (not including basement and garage) was **approximately** 10% greater than that of included homes, the rate of use of various heating equipment remains **generally comparable**. The only **notable** exception concerns the use of a wood fireplace in some homes, which the **present methodology systematically excludes** from consumption calculations.

Since the calculation of total energy consumption was based on homes with a smaller heated area, *[omission of self-mention + engagement marker]* total energy consumption **was slightly understated**. A simple regression model relating heated area and total energy consumption **shows** that the total energy consumption for all homes heated by natural gas was underestimated by **roughly** *[hedge]* 3%.

> **However,** *[omission of self-mention + engagement marker]* the number of heating degree-days was **approximately** 10% higher for the included homes than it was for the excluded homes. This difference in the number of heating degree-days, combined with the assumption that home heating accounts for **roughly** 50% of energy consumption for included homes, **suggests** that the total energy consumption was overestimated by 4%.
>
> In view of the biases mentioned in **the two preceding paragraphs**, the average energy consumption of included homes **closely reflect**s that of all homes heated by natural gas. This counterbalancing effect has not **necessarily** been verified within the various segments for which energy consumption analysis **was desirable**.

In general, the students accurately convey what Hyland calls the "propositional content" of ST. However, their renderings of interactional metadiscoursal features — specifically, hedges, attitude markers, self-mention and engagement markers — are problematic. These features are often present within a single syntagmatic unit. Below is an analysis of their treatment:

- *jugées pertinentes (ST)/relevant (TT)*: Here, as elsewhere, the evaluative stance of the ST author is obscured or omitted. Note that the inclusion of the word *jugées* is part of a "hedge" strategy employed throughout this particular document. The author constantly tones down the force of propositions concerning methodology and statistical conclusions.

- *…considérations méthodologiques décrites précédemment suggéraient/present methodology excludes*: The cautiousness explicit in ST is replaced with a categorical statement on the exclusion of certain homes from the final sample. Note that the frame marker (*précédemment*), an interactive metadiscourse feature, is not rendered in ST, primarily as a consequence of the mistranslation of *considérations méthodologiques* — another instance of the students' decision to ignore the ST author's nuances.

- *on pourrait s'attendre à ce que…se situent légèrement en-deçà de la réalité/was slightly understated*: The ST conveys multiple metadiscourse features. The impersonal pronoun and verb phrase operate both as a self-mention device and as an engagement marker, drawing the reader into the author's statistical argumentation. The purpose of the conditional mood of the verb is, once again, to qualify the statistical assertion being made by the author and project an image of the author as an objective, cautious researcher who wants to be sure of his facts and assumptions. The adverb *légèrement* performs a hedge function as a qualifier too. The translators rendered it accurately, but they ignored the rhetorical role of the pronoun and the conditional.

- *On estime grossièrement…sous-évaluerait/was underestimated by roughly…*: Again, the self-mention and engagement markers are ignored. The conditional mood hedge is rendered by the adverbial hedge in TT.

- *De plus/However*: Here, the students excelled, correctly analyzing the argument structure of ST and understanding that the underestimation caused by the smaller size of homes in the final sample was counterbalanced by an overestimation caused by the degree-day bias. The switch from additive to adversative transition marker is appropriate.

- *On constate que…est environ/…is approximately*: The self-mention/engagement marker is omitted; "we find" is commonplace in specialized documents and would have worked well here.

- *On pourrait en déduire/suggests*: The hedge conveyed morphosyntactically by the conditional mood is maintained lexically through the verb *suggests*, but the self-mention/engagement marker is omitted.

- *Il semblerait que…refléterait assez bien/closely reflects*: The students have ignored the cautiousness conveyed by the conditional mood and the adverb *assez*.

- *On souhaiterait/was desirable*: The ST proposition is not a clear-cut assertion of the value of a future calculations; the TT proposition is.

Overall, the students failed to render the elements of *interactional* metadiscourse in ST and thus to communicate a key aspect of the ST writer's informative intention. The use of the hedge (conditional mood and adverbs of approximation) represents a successful attempt on the writer's part to follow the conventions of the genre (statistical research report) and meet the discourse expectations of his community of practice (statisticians, researchers, energy efficiency experts) by expressing due caution in his findings and conclusions. As John Swales, a leading expert on academic writing, remarks with reference to genre discourse features, research articles are rarely simple narratives of investigations. Instead, they are complexly distanced reconstructions of research activities, at least part of this reconstructive process deriving from a need to anticipate and discountenance negative reactions to the knowledge claims being advanced. And this need in turn explains the long-standing and widespread use of "hedges" as rhetorical devices both for projecting honesty, modesty and proper caution in self-reports, and for diplomatically creating research space […] (1990: 175)

Restricting the force of attitude (evaluative) markers and thus of claims by means of the hedge contributes to the persuasive force of the text through an *ethos* of caution, honesty and objectivity. Similarly, the use of self-mention and engagement markers (with the third-person pronoun *on*) serves to dispel potential counterarguments by appealing to the reader, through *pathos*, as one who shares the writer's vision of the

discipline and of the statistical research process and findings of the project under consideration. In many respects, the students did not preserve the ethos and pathos of ST. It is fair to ask the question why they failed to do so.

4.3. Case Study III

The example below is taken from a report on the government policies in support of training and skills development in various countries. In one chapter, the author discusses the nature and role of sector councils, on which representatives of industry stakeholders sit and which work with governments on workforce training issues.

> Source text
> La nature volontaire de la participation aux conseils sectoriels et les différents degrés de liberté entourant leur création entraînent une grande variété dans leur composition, leur mission et leur fonctionnement. En fait, puisque les conseils sectoriels sont créés pour apporter une solution intégrée aux défis auxquels fait face le secteur, leur mission est appelée à changer selon les circonstances. Néanmoins, la compétence de la main-d'œuvre reste généralement une de leurs principales préoccupations.
>
> **Notons que** *[my emphasis]* certains conseils sectoriels sont le résultat d'une initiative entièrement privée. Généralement, ces conseils émergent en réponse à une crise imminente dans le secteur industriel en question. La crise menace les intérêts du patronat et des travailleurs, ce qui pousse les deux parties à former un conseil sectoriel.
>
> Target text (second paragraph)
> [1]Some sector councils result from entirely private initiatives. In general, sector councils are formed in response to an imminent crisis within the industrial sector in question; this crisis threatens the interests of employers and employees and drives the two parties to form a sector council.
>
> *(Explanatory footnote by students)*
> [1] "Notons que" was omitted because it is more concise just to say what should be taken into account rather than making a point of saying it is important.

The two students, who were asked to present their translation in class and explain their translation decision making, opted not to translate the metadiscoursal feature *Notons que*, a self-mention and engagement marker, directly. Their decision, based on the received value of concision, is worth evaluating from a pedagogical standpoint.

5. The etiology of error

The above findings invite a few tentative explanations of the source of the students` mistranslations, and they all have implications on a theoretical and pedagogical level.

The first explanation relates to the misinterpretation of transition markers in Case Study I. In many instances, students took the "easy" route, relying on ready-made equivalents in the bilingual dictionary instead of considering the co-text. It would be tempting simply to ascribe the defects in the Case Study I translations to shortcomings traditionally highlighted in TAPs and other research projects and summarized by Shreve as follows:

> The translation studies literature has long noted the fact that novice translators appear to translate the microcontext. Given their focus on small translation units, novices rarely cross sentence boundaries, and they do not use stylistic cues and cues related to global textual cohesion and coherence. (1997: 135)

As Carl James has pointed out, "Coherence is related primarily to content, to the conceptual relatedness of propositions" (1998: 1). Coherence lies at the heart of effective instrumental translation, and yet many students are found wanting in this regard. However, the students in the first case study had been alerted to the need to cross the boundaries of the sentence and to establish logical connections. Many did not or could not do so. Thus the underlying causes may extend beyond reliance on a code-based and dictionary-based approach to the translation process. The failure to activate the full cognitive environment suggests an inadequate reasoning or cognitive competency.

It also suggests that many students, instead of exploiting all sources to solve a translation problem, make the least effort-consuming interpretation of an ST unit. A key premise in Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory (1995: 153) is that a new piece of information (a new set of "assumptions") communicated by the sender in a given context is "relevant" to the extent that the contextual effects, or new understanding and knowledge, achieved by the recipient of the communication are optimally large and that the effort required to process is optimally small. In Case Study II, the effort expended by the students was too small, in that they failed to exploit the context or cognitive environment that the authors were endeavouring to share with them through a logical development of propositions, organized through metadiscourse features, and thus failed to convey optimally the authors' communicative intention (to convince readers) and informative intention.

The second explanation, related to Case Study II, is that the students have fallen into the excesses of "natural translation", as defined by Chevalier and Delport (1995: 69) in a study focused on literary translation. The fear of "literal" translation prompts translators to change or distort the referential reality intended by the ST writer

(*orthonymie*), to "correct" morphosyntactic features present in ST (*orthosyntaxie*), and to clarify logical relationships that were not explicit in ST (*orthologie*). They do so in order to create what they think the world should look like instead of recreating in TL the world imagined by the ST writer. The result is a referential reality that is more "normal" or "vraisemblable" than the "vrai" of ST. Various "figures de traduction" are used to generate natural, non-literal translation, the most common of which are amplification, compensation and explicitation (for definitions, see Delisle et al., 1999: 116, 125, 139). This means that there is more information in TT than in ST and that implicit meanings and ellipses are rendered explicit, so much less is left to the reader's imagination. Chevalier and Delport sum up the whole natural translation process as one of moving away from the specific discourse (*parole*) of the ST writer toward a normal, standard language (*langue*) from which the unique literariness of ST has been excised.

The distinction between "literal" and "natural" translation is comparable to the texteme/repertoreme dichotomy established by Toury and others in the same literary translation context: using a "figure of translation" (explicitation, amplification, etc.), the translator replaces the texteme, or literary figure, in ST, with a repertoreme, or translation unit stripped of the literary uniqueness of the original text. The thesis adumbrated by Even-Zohar (1986: 631-32) on the texteme is that a unit of text, such as a figure of speech, may be considered redundant in an instrumental translation context and therefore eminently dispensable in TT but that it may be a "major textual juncture" in literary translation because of the importance of the self-referential function in literature and thus of each signifier.

I would contend that, far from being dispensable in instrumental translation, the texteme can be of critical importance to it and that metadiscourse, as a means of negotiation of meaning, textual coherence and persuasion, is both rhetorical and to some degree textemic. In Case Study II, the ST metadiscoursal elements are not irrelevant to the propositional content. On the contrary, they represent the writer's intent to respect the conventions and expectations of the target discourse community, to establish a relationship with the reader and engage that reader in the discourse, to provide an acceptable response to the negatability of his propositions, and thus to create knowledge that will be embraced by the community. As Hyland points out, "metadiscourse does not simply support propositional content: it is the means by which propositional content is made coherent, intelligible and persuasive to a particular audience" (2005: 39).

Those metadiscoursal elements are lost in TT, and this can be explained if we apply Chevalier and Delport's "naturalizing" process, *mutatis mutandis*, to the translation process in which the students were engaged. Note, however, the process is different — even reversed — because we are dealing with a different discourse community from that of the literary text and different communicative and informative intentions. In scientific/technical writing, and specifically in the energy/statistics text in Case Study

II, convention requires that the researcher express findings and inclusions with due caution, primarily through the use of hedges. Convention also requires that the researcher make the reader "participate" in the generation of findings and conclusions through engagement markers, thereby offsetting the qualifications inherent in the hedge. Rather than explicitating or amplifying the intentions of the ST writer, as theorized by Chevalier and Delport, the student translators in fact eliminated, through a process of reduction that distorted the meaning and rhetorical effect of ST, the argumentative nuances conveyed by means of the metadiscoursal features of the French. They did not "explicitate"; instead, they tended to state as a certainty a finding expressed as probability or an approximation in ST. They eliminated "fuzziness." In some instances, the metadiscourse as "texteme" is not replaced with a repertoreme; it is simply eliminated. In eliminating self-mention, attitude markers and particularly hedges, the students reduce the text to a statement of statistical facts and findings. Yet the ST was written not only in an expository but also in an argumentative mode of discourse.

There may well be a pedagogical explanation for their reductionist approach to translation of metadiscourse. The source of the problem is encapsulated in the students' explanatory footnote in Case Study III:

> "Notons que" was omitted because it is more concise just to say what should be taken into account **rather than making a point of saying it is important**. *[My emphasis]*

One of the hallmarks of target language quality in the context of instrumental translation is concise writing: elimination of repetition and redundancy, simplification of run-on sentences containing cascades of subordinate clauses, creation of multiple noun clusters in English translations, and so on. Translation teachers spend a great deal of time training students to identify instances of wordiness in ST and to use a variety of structures to produce a shorter, clearer TT. Indeed, Delisle considers concise writing to be the translator's duty:

> *Un des devoirs du traducteur pragmatique est d'éviter de diluer la pensée d'un rédacteur sous un fatras de périphrases, de redondances et de circonlocutions, même si ces défauts de rédaction entachent l'original. Tendre vers la brièveté ne signifie pas résumer le texte de départ. L'effort de renfermer une idée dans le moins de mots possible se confond avec la recherche d'une pensée plus serrée et plus structurée. (2003: 440-41)*

In working toward the same goal, teachers may encourage students to aim for a more direct style that renders propositional content alone and eliminates verbiage, based on the assumption that metadiscourse clouds meaning and interferes with the reader's cognitive processing of the writer's informative intention. In case studies II and III, the student presenters had clearly understood the value placed on concision, but at the same time they sacrificed a device employed by the ST authors to ensure that the ST

reader "buys into" their arguments. The result was the distortion of the nuances of ST and loss of the ST writer's communicative, or rhetorical, intention.

6. Conclusion

The above analysis prompts a few tentative conclusions for translator training. The misinterpretations highlighted in the case studies may illustrate what error analysis researchers refer to as a teacher-induced error, or error of transfer of training (James, 1998: 189; Selinker, 1974: 37). In the case of the transition markers used in Case Study I, the logical relationships signalled by them may not have been adequately communicated and reinforced. Failing this, students fall into the trap of overgeneralization of rules, procedures and solutions learned (Jain, 1974: 207–208), such as automatically translating *par ailleurs* as an additive conjunctive, because they have faulty comprehension of distinctions in the use of the markers. Couched in starker terms, the ultimate cause may be ignorance, or a lack of declarative knowledge (James, 1998: 175), which hinders students from launching processes or strategies to make sense of a coherent text. New approaches to developing that knowledge and reasoning competency could prove productive.

With respect to case studies II and III, making students aware of the substantive role of interactional metadiscourse features such as hedges, attitude markers and self-mention in negotiating and constructing meaning within the target discourse community may prompt them to lend greater importance to the nuances created by such features and to avoid compromising textual accuracy on the altar of concision as a requirement for target language quality.

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