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Translation Strategies in Praxis with Text Examples from Japanese

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Abstract: In this installment, we look at translation with some practical considerations in mind. Before starting a translation, reading the text as it is, uninterrupted, is the first step to identify for one the main topic of the text. We will also look at the context and the recurrence of certain domain-specific vocabulary to illustrate the necessity of continued development of knowledge and intelligence in translation competence and the acquisition of expertise in domain-specific fields.

Introduction

In the previous two issues (Bode, 2009a, 2009b) I have introduced the production strategies described by Andrew Chesterman in his book *Memes of Translation* (2007). Applying that as a basic method of consideration we can embark (the odyssey continues) here to further examine the translation strategies needed in particular with Japanese. By the following examples I would like to introduce some language specific comprehension and production strategies with respect to Japanese. With comprehension strategies as a basic starting point, the translator/interpreter can cope more easily later with temporary difficulties in the actual praxis of the work. Recognising them from preparatory readings of in-house/professional manuals (See for this, the extensive publications of Tachibana Shobō) the translator/interpreter develops his skills and abilities. This preparatory stage can locate recurrent terms and expressions which could then be established as the basic working vocabulary of the translator/interpreter. With that working vocabulary it reduces both stress and the chances of mistakes in the end product. With production strategies the translator/interpreter has reliable tools for deciding either to omit information, to expand, or to rephrase statements. Although sometimes a literal translation or interpretation is linguistically correct in all aspects for the target language, the person addressed sometimes does not seem to understand the given information. Think, for

instance, of complicated legal terminology, which the source emitter (police officer/prosecutor/judge) will most of time rephrase. As such, the interpreter will not rephrase the message on his/her own initiative, but will wait until after this simplified information has been stated by the judicial side. The interpreter, having initially noticed that the original was too difficult for the receiver (the suspect) to understand, reports this back to the source emitter.

This incident shows the importance of sufficient preparation and in the subsequent paragraphs I would like to give some examples of preparation techniques reinforced by actual experience translating/interpreting.

Reading Techniques of the Source Language (SL) Text Dealing with Judicial Matters

As a student at Leiden University one of the professors there advised us to read a Japanese text-fragment from beginning to end and try to understand the main topic of the segment before checking individual linguistic elements. This advice could be compared to what Miyamoto Musashi (1584? – 1645) advised his students to do in *The Book of Five Rings*, his book on Japanese swordsmanship. In its first chapter – Earth – there is the following observation of “Knowing the small by knowing the large” (see Wilson, 2001, p. 55) [大きな所よりちいさき所を知り] (see Watanabe, 2001, p. 22), which constitutes an essential phase in comprehending the smaller details. He continues this idea in another way on the same page: “making the small into the large (see *ibid*)” [ちいさきを大きくなること] (see Watanabe, 2001, p. 22).

Bode, J. (2010). Translation strategies in praxis with text examples from Japanese. *OTB Forum*, 3(1), 7-11.

1	<u>本職</u> 、本日午後○時○分ごろ、東京都○市本町○丁目○番地○号先路上を警
2	<u>ら</u> 中、年齢○歳くらい、身長○センチメートルくらい、黒色ズボン、灰色ジ
3	ャンパーの一見暴力団員風の男が <u>本職の姿を見て反転した</u> ので、不審と認め
4	て <u>呼び止めた</u> ところ、急にそわそわして落ち着きをなくしたことから○○駅
5	前交番に <u>任意同行</u> した。そこで、男の承諾を得て <u>所持品検査</u> をするとズボン
6	の右ポケットになにか細長い物が入っていたので、その提示を求めたところ、
7	男は渋々ポケットの中から木製のさやに入った果物ナイフ（刃体の長さは
8	5センチメートル）を取り出した。 <u>本職</u> が男に対して、ナイフ所持の理由
9	を尋ねると「何かあったときの護身用だ。」と <u>申し立て</u> 、業務その他正当な
10	理由が認められないことから、 <u>軽犯罪法</u> （第1条第2号） <u>違反の現行犯人</u>
11	と認めた。

Figure 1. A text fragment with three uses of *honshoku*. Text from the *Handbook of Criminal Case Document Compilation for Regional Police Officers* [地域警察官のための一件書類作成の手引き], by the Regional Practical Research Association, 2010, Tōkyō, Tachibana Shobō, p. 127. Copyright 2010 by Tachibana Shobō.

With the following quotation from a Tachibana publication I would like to explain further reading in a wider context instead of being blinded by the smaller details, or intending to solve the smaller difficulties first. In the text fragment the term *honshoku* [本職] is a recurrent linguistic element used in context with other text parts.

The text fragment used here as an example is from the *Handbook of Criminal Case Document Compilation for Regional Police Officers* [地域警察官のための一件書類作成の手引き] (2010). It deals with the topic of documentation after an arrest in a (fictitious) case of a *flagrante delicto* (= committing a crime in the presence of a police officer), and the example is from the column that describes the reasons and facts of the offense [現行犯人と認めた理由及び事実の要旨]. In the text fragment (shown in Figure 1), the mark ○ indicates places in which time, location, and the description of the suspect would be entered. The three occurrences of *honshoku* are shown underlined and in bold.

A summary translation is as follows:

Today, during the time that I, in my duty as a police officer, was on patrol on the road in front of [the premises located] in Tōkyō with the address [...address

details], around [...time] in the afternoon a man with the appearance of belonging to a gangster-outfit (with further physical details described), when he saw me in uniform he turned the other way and when I called him to stop to investigate this suspicious behavior he acted nervously and was not at ease. Because of this he voluntarily accompanied me to the police-outpost of [...station]. There with his consent, I inspected his personal belongings. Since there was a long, narrow object in the right pocket of his trousers, when I requested him to produce it he reluctantly took out from his pocket a fruit knife with a wooden scabbard (5 cm in length). When I asked the reasons for having it, he stated “it is for the use of protection”. Because it was not possible to establish a valid business use or other reason for having it, he was recognised as an *offender in flagrante delicto* (committing a crime in the presence of a police officer) violating the Minor Offense Law (Article 1, paragraph 2).

When both mono- and bilingual dictionaries are consulted three possible meanings are given. The *Kenkyūsha Japanese*

– *English Dictionary* [新和英大辞典] contains three entries for *honshoku*:

- 1) one's regular occupation/one's principal work (本業), e.g., *Kare no honshoku ha [pron:wa]bengoshi da* [彼の本職は弁護士だ¹]; *honshoku ha [pron.: wa] isha dearu sakka* [本職は医者である作家²])
- 2) professional/expert/specialist (専門家), e.g. *honshoku ni makaseru* [本職に任せる] (leave it up to the specialist – from *Kōjien* entry).
- 3) I/My (警察官などの自称)

The *Daijirin* [大辞林] gives additional information as a noun:

- 1) その人が生計を立てている主たる職業。本業
- 2) それを専門にしている人。くろうと。プロ。
- 3) 歌舞伎で、その俳優にもっとも適した役柄。

It also has one example of usage as a pronoun:

一人称。官職にあるものが自分をさしている語。本官。

The *Kōjien* [広辞苑] is similar in detail to the previous dictionary:

- 1) その人の主とする職業。本業
- 2) 歌舞伎で、その俳優にもっとも適した役柄。
- 3) それを専門とする人。くろうと。
- 4) 官職にある者の自称。本官。

The *Daijisen* [大辞泉] has also three entries like the *Kenkyūsha*'s:

- 1) その人が主とする職業。本業
- 2) それを専門とする人。くろうと。
- 3) 官吏がその仕事の上で使う自称。本官。

Translation needs to be considered in view of a context, not just by its singular linguistic

elements to solve the smaller difficulties (looking from a larger perspective makes the problem/difficulty less overwhelming). In this case, 1) and 2) are options that are out of place. By performing an active use of selection and scrolling down in the dictionary list of possibilities and with due consideration of the textual and concrete context a single possible decision can be made. Words hardly have only one meaning to consider. Perhaps it is useful to learn the language on the basis of one-to-one word relation of the languages concerned initially and then gradually widen one's vocabulary horizons.

With the text above it is possible to understand how the third meaning is actually used from this contextual reading method. Basic considerations when reading such a specific text are: who wrote this text? What purpose does it have? Are there parts in the text that look irregular? Is the text composed of many specialized terms? What is the overall style of the sentences? This all constitutes either the preparatory phase of the translator/interpreter's skills, or on the spot understanding of the textual/oral message. The ability to activate again the memory of what has been prepared then connects the comprehension strategies with the production strategies.

The entry or phrase part containing the entry *honshoku* appears in the sentences 1, 3, and 8 (Figure 1). The first sentence until the wavy underlined three characters (during patrolling) functions as a pronoun. In the third sentence there is a longer phrase *honshoku no sugata wo mite* [本職の姿を見て]; here the *honshoku* is used in connection with *sugata*. In a plain translation it could be stated as *when he saw my appearance/form*. From the whole context of the Japanese text itself the statement could not be anything except *when he saw me in police uniform*.

The wavy underlined entries or sentence phrases (see 1-2, 4, 5, 9, 10) are “indicators” of who produced the text and what general function it has. It is safe to say that even if there is only this textual part available, it would still be clear to the reader that there is a strong judicial connection. Actually, *keirachū* [警ら中] makes a clear indication possible. The other indicators are in sequential order:

¹ ‘He is a lawyer by profession.’

² ‘An author whose main occupation is a medical doctor.’

Yobitometa [呼び止めた]: called to stop (sentence 4),

nin'in dōkō [任意同行]: accompany voluntarily (sentence 5),

shojihin kensa [所持品検査]: inspection of personal belongings (sentence 5),

mōshitate [申し立て]: state/testify (sentence 9),

keihanzaihō [軽犯罪法]: Minor Offense Law (sentence 10),

ihan [違反]: violation: (sentence 10),

genkōhannin [現行犯人]: offender in flagrant delict (sentence 10)

Concluding Remarks

The short vocabulary list has certain usefulness in and of itself. When seen in a wider context, however, the vocabulary here acquired will help recognition and thus efficiency in one's work as an interpreter; for example, vocabulary would be helpful on such other occasions as when reading back testimonies and statements to suspects. Translation is in a sense more controlled because the actual text is there, but with interpretation unexpected questions and statements are more likely to occur. Having acquired the necessary vocabulary, even these unexpected occurrences can be addressed more appropriately. This facilitates a direct and concise information check, which may result in a less irritated official on the other end. Preparatory reading of source material is, in my opinion, a way to develop a translator or interpreter's overall competence. A translator or interpreter becomes then a subject/area specialist.

Note to the Reader

In the next volume (Spring, 2011) I will discuss grouping close lemmata together instead of an alphabetical style employed in general dictionaries.

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About the author: Jeroen Bode has been working since 2005 for Tsukuba University as a lecturer. From 2007 he began working as an independent official translator of Japanese. His translation work led him to redirect his attention to applied language skills during the process of translating. He received his M.A. in Japanese language and culture in 1996 from Leiden University in the Netherlands.

Appendix

現行犯人逮捕及び(捜索)差押手続書	
下記の現行犯人を逮捕し、かつ、その際に逮捕の現場において(捜索)差押えをした手続は、次のとおりである。	
被疑者	住居不定 職業無職(元トラック運転手) 氏名横池 和彦 年齢昭和〇〇年 9月 5日生(30歳)
逮捕の日時	平成〇〇年 10月 13日 午後 8時 45分
逮捕の場所	警視庁田無警察署田無駅前交番
現行犯人と認められた理由及び事実の要旨	本職、本日午後8時30分ころ、東京都西東京市本町3丁目3番11号先路上を警ら中、年齢30歳くらい、身長175センチメートルくらい、黒色ズボン、灰色ジャンパーの一眼暴力団員風の男が本職の姿を見て反転したので、不審と認めて呼び止めたところ、急にそわそわして落ち着きをなくしたことから、田無駅前交番に任意同行した。そこで、男の承諾を得て所持品検査をすると、ズボンの右ポケットに何か細長い物が入っていたので、その提示を求めたところ、男は渋々ポケットの中から木製のさやに入った果物ナイフ(刃体の長さ5センチメートル)を取り出した。本職が男に対して、ナイフ所持の理由を尋ねると、「何かあったときの護身用だ。」と申し立て、業務その他正当な理由が認められないことから、軽犯罪法(第1条第2号)違反の現行犯人と認めた。
逮捕時の状況	被疑者は、住居不定で、かつ、質問中に逃走しようとしたので、軽犯罪法違反の罪で逮捕する旨を告げると、被疑者は「分かった。」と言って素直に逮捕に応じた。
捜索差押えの場所、又は身体物	警視庁田無警察署田無駅前交番
捜索差押えの目的たる物	本件犯行の証拠物
立会人(住居、職業、氏名、年齢)	警視庁田無警察署 司法巡查 古田 宏 23歳
捜索差押えの経過	逮捕の現場で被疑者の差し出した果物ナイフと木製さやを差し押さえた。
差押えをした物	別紙押収品目録のとおり
捜索証明書受交付者	押収品目録受交付者 被疑者 横池和彦
本職は、平成〇〇年 10月 13日 午後 8時 55分、被疑者を警視庁田無警察署司法警察員に引致した。 上記引致の日 警視庁 田無 警察署司法警察員 巡查部長 小島 修平 ㊟	
本職は、平成〇〇年 10月 15日 午前 8時 30分、被疑者を(釈放した)関係書類等とともに、武蔵野区 検察庁 検察官に送致する手続をした。 上記(釈放)の日 警視庁 田無 警察署司法警察員 警部補 高橋 良夫 ㊟	
年 月 日 午 時 分、関係書類等とともに、被疑者の送致を受けた。 検 察 庁 ㊟	
(注意) 釈放、送致の記載欄は、その区別によって不要の文字を削ること。	

Sample of a *flagrante delicto* arrest and seizure procedure form. From Regional Practical Research Association (Ed.). (2010). *Handbook of criminal case document compilation for regional police officers* [地域警察官のための一件書類作成の手引き]. Tōkyō: Tachibana Shobō.