Chapter 15

Code Glossing as a Strategy for Writing and Translation: Explorations Through English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Danish

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes how in pedagogical multilingual writing and translation projects, such as the Transatlantic and Pacific Project network (TAPP), a recurring problem in the creation of cognition has been how to explain cultural and system differences that appear in terms, acronyms, and other contexts of different languages, both in text writing and in the translation of texts. Based on empirical data, the authors analyze differences by taking recourse to concurrent text corpora. The application of English, Portuguese, Spanish and Danish corpora demonstrates solutions and tools such as code glossing for writers and translators.

INTRODUCTION

Using one word for another isn’t special, it’s what we do all the time. (Bellos, 2012, p. 89)

A thesaurus says on every page that to know a language is to know how to say the same thing in different words. (Bellos, 2012, p. 102)

New and unknown phenomena constantly emerge in different societies and bring along new terminology, which develops into patterns of usage in different languages. In a context of pedagogical multilingual writing and translation projects, such as the Transatlantic and Pacific Project network (TAPP), which is...
presented in the preface of this book, the challenge of adapting texts to specific audiences and in different languages becomes particularly relevant.

To investigate how new terminology is code-glossed for different audiences, the authors will analyze the different code-glossing systems and practices in a set of corpora in English, Spanish, Portuguese and Danish from the COP22 meetings in Marrakech, Morocco. By doing so, the authors aim at giving an overview of the unwritten conventions for code glosses used in practice in writing and translation.

BACKGROUND

The work in the TAPP network from 2000 till this day is a typical example of managing differences across cultures and languages. The asymmetry caused by cultural, language, terminological and knowledge differences creates a need for explanation or exemplification, which will be referred to as code glossing in the remainder of the text; code glossing is a phenomenon which can be observed in the communication between cultures and between professionals, semi-professionals and laypeople.

Below, different situations from TAPP will be illustrated. Notice that in the TAPP examples as well as in the rest of the article, back translations are shown in square brackets—these translations of examples will often appear calque-like, because the authors aim at showing what is being said directly, although they respect target-language grammatical conventions.

In the first example, a geographical code gloss comes into play. It is common for translation instructors to advise students to clarify a concept which is either geographically or culturally distant from the target text audience, for instance institutions, people, and places. The following source text (ST) passage about a university department and its translation into a target text (TT) shows an example of code glossing from TAPP in 2006.

Example 1:

Danish-English

- **ST:** Landbohøjskolens Institut for Plantebiologi, der arbejder med gensplejsede fødevarer. [Landbohøjskolen’s institute for plant biology, which works with genetically spliced foods.]
- **TT:** The Department of Plant Biology at the Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University of Denmark, which works with genetically modified foods.

Note here the underlined gloss added by the translator to denote geographical position of Denmark. In addition, the name itself in English includes references to both the royal origin, its veterinary and agricultural activities, which clarifies the semantics of the Danish word landbo (making a living in the countryside).

Another text from TAPP 2012 is about tunnel farming, written by an American student with a view to being translated into Danish.

Example 2: English-Danish

- **ST:** Tunnel farming stems from the primary concept during the 19th century that crops might be grown utilizing hydroponics rather than growing in soil.
- **TT:** Tunnellandbrug stammer fra konceptet i det 19. århundrede, om at afgrøder kan dyrkes ved at bruge hydroponik (dyrkning af planter i næringsvæske uden jord), frem for at dyrke dem i jord. [Tunnel farming stems from the primary concept during the 19th century that...]

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