

ADEQUACY OF PROCEDURES IN TRANSLATING POLITICAL AND CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS FROM ENGLISH INTO ARABIC

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to investigate the level of adequacy of using some translation procedures in reflecting the ideas presented by the source writers. These procedures include literal, addition, transference, naturalization, omissions, cultural and functional equivalence, glossing and transposition found in the translation of political and cultural expressions. It also aims to explore the challenges that the translators encounter in the translation of political and cultural expressions. A purposive sample of 20 novice EFL medical students at AL- Nahrain University of Iraq is chosen for the purpose of answering the research question. The data are collected by employing a translation test. The test includes 10 sentences with a total of 22 political and cultural expressions. The findings of this study show that the translators succeeded in rendering adequate translations for proper nouns and names of organizations since these expressions can be translated in a variety of procedures. However, they failed to adequately translate stylistic features such as proverbs, idioms, metaphors, and collocations. The results also revealed that the major challenges that the translators encountered were related to (1) their knowledge of the context, (2) lack of experience and knowledge in translation procedures, and (3) lack of competence in their SL and/or TL linguistic knowledge.

Keywords: Procedures, Translation, Political, Cultural expressions, English/Arabic.

INTRODUCTION

Media and translation have become inseparable disciplines in this globalized world whereby they play an indispensable role in the international transmission of news. Not only they inform the reader, but they also facilitate the flow of information.

The relationship between culture and translation has developed in recent years driven largely by the need for developing human communication and the translation of texts' cross-cultural and linguistic boundaries. News translation can reveal the relationship among culture, ideology, and communication

Differences between cultures play a vital role in the process of conveying text news from one language into another, especially when these languages do not have much in common. Translators should be conscious of the most insignificant detail while conveying a text from its source culture context into the target culture context as well as of the procedures available to them in order to produce the target text.

Newmark (1988, p. 95) categorizes the foreign cultural words into five categories and offers some typical examples. These categories are: (1) Ecology (i.e. rivers, mountains...etc.), (2) Material culture i.e. food, clothes, houses and towns, transports (3) Social culture i.e. work and leisure, (4) Organizations, customs, activities, procedures, concepts i.e. political and administrative, religious and artistic (5) Gestures and habits. These categories of

cultural words could be used in the form of collocations, idioms, metaphors and phrasal words.

People all over the world need to communicate with each other to share their feelings, opinions, and ideas. To achieve this goal, they need language. Cultural diversity and the development of science and knowledge have led people to communicate in different languages. There are thousands of languages in the world that belong to different countries.

In order to create communication among people using those languages, a process of translation is needed. The translation is an activity of transferring the meaning or message of a text from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL). This activity may involve one or more languages. There are no two languages that have the same language system in this world. Moreover, not every word in one language has a pair of words in another language that has exactly the same meaning. Hence, translating a text needs the knowledge of both languages involved.

Media translation must carry the authentic quality and definite accuracy to avoid the potential misconceptions regarding the freedom of thought accomplished through the transmission of knowledge. Interest in the translation of news has increased in recent years motivated largely by the need to develop human communication. In order to achieve an adequate translation, translators need to use a set of certain techniques and procedures. Different procedures and techniques are used by translators in their attempts to translate from one language to another. These procedures and strategies would characterize their translation.

Statement of the problem

There is a need to consider the socio-cultural context of the source text, represented by the author and the target text, represented by the translator. Such a socio-cultural context can encompass determinants that affect translation such as lack of cultural equivalence and lack of knowledge in choosing appropriate procedures of translation. This study sheds light on the adequacy of the translation procedures adopted by translators when translating political and cultural expressions from English into Arabic. It also highlights the challenges encountered during the process of translation.

Objectives and questions of the study

This study aims to investigate the adequacy of the procedures that novice EFL translators employ when they transfer the political and cultural expressions as presented by the original writers from English into Arabic. It also intends to explore the challenges encountered during rendering the aforementioned expressions. This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What procedures do novice EFL translators use in translating political and cultural expressions from English into Arabic?
2. What are the challenges that novice EFL translators use in translating political and cultural expressions from English into Arabic?

Significance of the study

The significance of the study stems from the importance of media translation in bridging the gap between different languages and cultures and its role in understanding global issues. The study is of interest to novice translators, translation trainers and translation teachers especially in Arab colleges and universities.

Limitations and limits of the study

Results of the study cannot be generalized beyond the sample, the instrument and the time of conducting it. It is limited to the Iraqi medical students who were employed in this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Review of theoretical literature

Newmark (1988, p. 81) differentiates between translation procedures and translation methods. He clarifies that “translation procedures are often used while translating sentences and smaller units of language whereas translation methods are used to relate to whole texts.” Newmark (1988, pp 81-93) suggests the following various translation procedures;

Transference: is to transfer the SL word or lexical unit into the TL text.

Naturalization: is to adapt the SL word to the normal pronunciation and morphology of the Target Language (TL).

Cultural equivalent: is to replace SL cultural word with its equivalent in the TL, including metaphors.

Functional equivalent: where the translator uses expressions that have the same function in the SL but different forms such as ‘Good morning’ and ‘Bonjour’.

Through-translation: (aka loan-translation or calque) that is to literally translate common collocation, names of organizations, the components of compounds, and phrases.

Transposition: is to make a shift in grammar from the SL to TL.

Modulation: is convert SL double negative to TL positive or vice versa, qualifying a verb, adjective, or adverb.

Recognized translation: is to render institutional terms by using its official or accepted translation. The translator can gloss it if he/she wants to show his/her disagreement with the official rendering.

Translation Label: is a tentative translation, marked by inverted commas. It is often used with new institutional terms.

Paraphrasing is to add an explanation of the meaning when the SL text has important implications and omissions.

Couplets: is a translation procedure common for cultural expressions that combine two, three or four different procedures for dealing with a single expression.

Notes, additions, glosses: is to add extra information to clarify some cultural, technical and linguistic words or to express his/her opposition to the original text.

Venuti (1995) discusses the two strategies of domestication and foreignization. He indicates that using a certain strategy in a certain socio-cultural situation may reflect “ideological implications”. Domestication strategy is used by the translator to serve his/her target audience so he/she makes certain changes in the ST so as to cope with the values and conventions of the target-language culture. This strategy implies that- the ST has to submit to transformation to make the TT “transparent, fluent and natural”. Foreignization is the second strategy that Venuti (1995) presents. This strategy aims to maintain the foreign text without changes. The translator retains cultural and linguistic elements of the ST in order to create the same effect of the ST on its original readership. The TT will be somehow difficult to

understand since it is replete with foreign culture and it might also violate the values and beliefs of the target culture (Nazzal, 2012).

Bassnett (2005, p127) states that in the transfer of foreign news, different textual practices such as addition, omission, clarification, or paraphrasing take place and results in “reshaping in accordance with the target culture conventions and rewriting in a particular house style”. Bassnett discusses, in the field of news reporting, domestication or acculturation does not make the same meaning since in this case, “foreignisation is detrimental to understanding.” The aim of news translation is the dissemination of information, which is possible through complete comprehension by the target reader. Thus, retaining all foreign elements in target news stories will hinder the understanding of the reader, and news circulation will not achieve its main goal, which is to inform the reader in various parts of the world. During this dissemination process, it is inevitable that some foreign elements are retained since globalization of information allows societies to become familiar with terms and expressions that are internationally recognized. However, domestication in news translation contributes to smooth understanding of the target reader.

Gaber (2005) asserted that culturally-bound words can be translated by using five different techniques. The first one uses ‘cultural equivalent’ words or phrases such as translating ‘it rains cats and dogs’ by its Arabic equivalent ‘إنها تمطر كأفواه القرب’ (p. 65). The second technique is the “functional translation” where the translator uses words/phrases that have the same function in the source language, i.e. translating ‘hello’ as ‘السلام عليكم’. The third technique is “paraphrasing” in which the translator explains in the target language the meaning of the word/phrase in the source language such as translating the word ‘thesaurus’ by ‘معجم الألفاظ المترادفة والمتضادة’ (p. 66). The fourth technique is “glossing” where the translator gives additional information in a footnote or within the text to explain the cultural word or expression such as explaining the Arabic word ‘AL-Zakat’ by saying “it is one of the ‘Five Pillars of Islam,’ and is an important religious obligation for Muslims. It requires the giving of an individual's wealth. Historically, it was levied in Islamic countries as a tax upon adult Muslims”. The fifth technique is ‘borrowing’ where the translator borrows from the source language the word or phrase and arabizing it such as translating ‘internet’ by ‘إنترنت’. Cultural expressions used in social, religious, geographical, political, literary and media texts constitute a major problematic area in translation especially when the translator belongs to a completely different culture from the author's.

Empirical studies related to culturally-bound and political news expressions

Alousque (2009) focused on cultural words which require a cultural background to be properly understood and therefore pose translation problems. The challenges in the translation of cultural items and the range of translation procedures used to explain their meaning through the analysis of the lexis from the French cultural domain of cooking were examined. Those problems resulted from a number of linguistic phenomena, including the different semantic range of the cultural words in the source and the target languages, the absence of the cultural concept in the target language, the loss of meaning and the metaphorical meaning conveyed by many cultural words. The study has revealed the constraints of the translation strategies used to transfer the meaning of cultural units into the target language (loan, functional equivalence, descriptive equivalence, approximate equivalence) and the differences in the conceptualization of reality as reflected by the translation of metaphorical words and expressions from the French domain of cooking. These differences point to a cultural gap which makes the translation of cultural lexis a hard task.

Al-Zu'bi (2012) investigated the difficulties that students encounter in translating political terms and expressions from 'Our Last best Chance'. She also highlighted the strategies used in translating political texts. The researcher designed a thirty-item translation test given to forty M.A. students, enrolled in two Jordanian universities (Yarmouk and Middle East University). The study showed that most students faced difficulties due to their unfamiliarity with political expressions/terms, producing improper equivalence in the T.L; and resorting to literal translation.

AShubbak (2013) investigated the impact of ideology on translating news items among Arab translators. The purpose of the study was to investigate how Arab translators render sensitive news items from English into Arabic. It also aimed to discover the influence of the translators' affiliation on the translation. The study aimed to show how inexperienced Arab translators translate controversial news items in comparison with translators of different news agencies. To achieve these purposes, the researcher examined news reports rendered from English into Arabic in five news agencies and daily newspapers that were the: BBC, AFP, Reuters, France 24, and Alrai Jordanian Daily Newspaper. The analysis focused on features that indicated the utilized strategies in translation, such as deletion, addition, semantic change, structure shift, and distortion. Moreover, a twenty-five item test was conducted to graduate students enrolled in translation the English language programs at two Jordanian universities to explore the impact of ideology on translating news items among novice translators. The study revealed that Arab translators used addition, omission, mediation (semantic change) and dynamic equivalence as manipulative strategies when they render controversial news items; using manipulative strategies varied between experienced and inexperienced translators due to the policy of the news agencies; and novice translators' translation decidedly affected by their political and cultural affiliations. Their ideological intervention was consciously used and not for lack of knowledge or incompetency.

Dweik (2013) explored the difficulties that university English language major students encountered while translating cultural and literary expressions from English into Arabic. The sample included 20 university English language major students. To collect the required data, a translation test was developed and validated, and semi-structured interviews were conducted. The participants were asked to translate an English political text that contained 20 culturally bound expressions into Arabic, and then the researcher conducted the interviews to find out the difficulties that the students faced in their translation. Results showed that respondents' performance in translating cultural and literary expressions is approximately poor as reflected by their scores and by the many kinds of errors they made, specially lexical, semantic, stylistic and cultural. Their weakness can be related to their lack of awareness and knowledge of the target language and culture. Also, misusing the dictionaries in the process of obtaining the suitable meaning of the word was one of those difficulties they faced in their translation.

Dweik & Khalil (2017) explored the strategies and procedures that translators use when translating ideological Islamic-related texts from English into Arabic. To achieve this purpose, the researchers designed a translation test consisting of 10 extracts with ideological content written by Muslim and non-Muslim writers. The researchers selected a purposive sample of 20 translators to perform the test. Only 16 of them responded. The results of the test were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The study revealed that two strategies have been used by the translators: foreignizing and domesticating. It also revealed that 12 procedures were employed by the translators: recognized translation, literal translation, naturalization and paraphrasing procedures underlying the foreignizing strategy and transposition,

equivalence, omission, addition, glossing, magnifying, moderating and the label procedures underlying the domesticating strategy.

METHODOLOGY

Sample of the study

The researchers selected a sample of 20 EFL medical students on grounds of convenience. The first author collected the data from the participants who were enrolled in an EFL course at Al-Nahrain University of Iraq. The participants were requested to respond to a ten-item translation test. The sample included 7 males and 13 females whose ages ranged between 20 and 23. All of them were Iraqis. The students' self-evaluated knowledge of English was 'good'. The first author has offered them a practical lecture on the procedures of translation in light of Newmark (1988).

The translation test

The researchers developed a translation test to investigate the various procedures used in rendering political and cultural terms as well as to explore the challenges encountered during the translation of these terms. The test consisted of two parts. While the first comprised the participants' demographic data, the second was dedicated to translating 10 sentences with a total of 22 political and cultural expressions chosen from different sources. The sentences contained some political and cultural expressions based on Newmark's categorization of cultural terms. The sentences also included some proverbs, idioms, collocations and metaphors to figure out the contextual meaning as the original writer intended it. Twenty copies of the test were distributed along with a cover letter which explained the purpose of the study and the official approval of conducting the study.

After preparing the test, it was given to a panel of three professors of English who had experience in translation and linguistics to assure the validity of the test. They were asked to comment on the suitability of the test items and to suggest any modifications if needed to achieve the objectives of the study. The reliability of the test was also examined by means of test-retest. The translation pre-test was administered to a group of 5 students who were excluded from the sample. The test was repeated after one week and the results were stable.

Data analysis

The data were analyzed according to Newmark's (1988) procedures of translation i.e, modulation, transposition, transference, naturalization, cultural and functional equivalent, through translation, recognized translation, paraphrasing, addition, deletion, glossing and literal translation. Three alternatives were used in evaluating the translations:

Adequate translation: whereby the translation conveys the contextual meaning of the expression along with its proper form.

Inadequate translation: whereby the contextual meaning is rendered properly, but suffers from linguistic/stylistic errors.

Wrong translation: whereby the rendering distorts the contextual meaning due to misunderstanding the expression as occurred in its context or due to the deletion of the expression and also due to committing so many linguistic and stylistic errors that distort the form and content.

RESULTS

Analysis of the students' translations of the given test reveals that they have used a variety of translation procedures as shown in Figure 1.

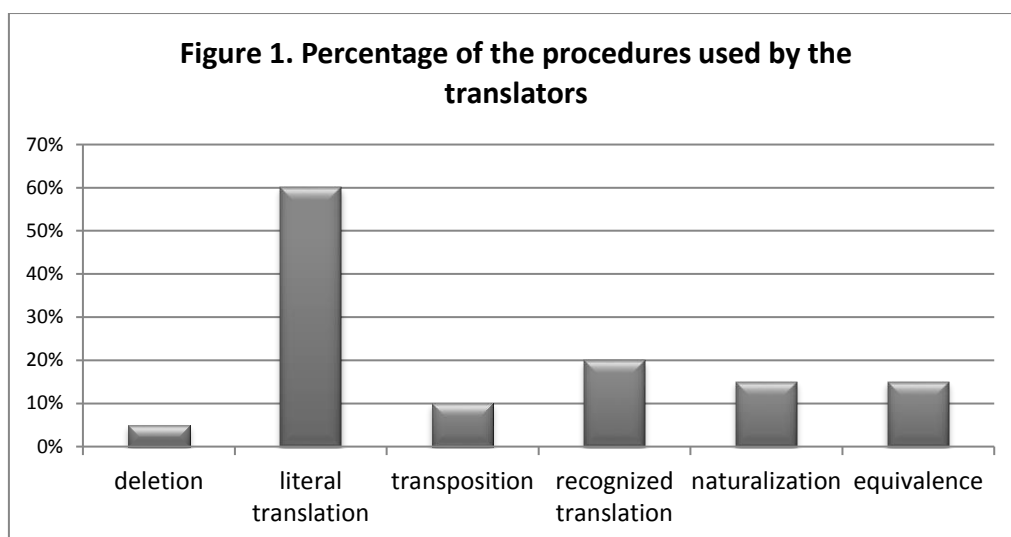


Figure 1 shows that the translators have relied heavily on literal translation when rendering political and cultural expressions from English into Arabic. A quantification of the procedures used by the translators shows that literal translation ranks first with a percentage of 60%, which is an expected result due to their unfamiliarity with translation practices and SL culture. The least used procedure is deletion (5%) which is used mainly when the dictionary translation gives them no explanation. Recognized translation, naturalization, equivalence, and transposition are mostly used in rendering proper nouns as presented below.

Item 1:

Taiwan taps on United Nations' door, 50 years after departure, but that does not mean the island is about to come in from the cold.

Item 1 consists of two proper nouns and an idiomatic expression. In this item, most of the translators have used the recognized translations of "Taiwan" and "United Nations", and rendered them as تايوان and "الأمم المتحدة" respectively, which is an adequate translation. Concerning the received translation of the idiomatic expression "come in from the cold", almost all students have resorted to literal translation and provided the wrong surface meaning "على وشك الخروج من البرد" which distorts the intended meaning in the ST. Such expressions can be translated by offering an explanation or by choosing a functional equivalent like "أن تستأنف عضويتها".

Many of them have rendered the word "departure" by its literal meaning "الفراق". Others have translated it as "الانفصال" or "الرحيل". None of them have tried to use the paraphrasing procedure to explain the Taiwan issue.

Item 2:

In the war of words over fishing rights in the Channel, much attention has been paid to a single line in a leaked letter.

Item 2 consists of a proper noun indicating a geographical name which is the English Channel. In this item, the translators have used literal translation and rendered the proper noun as a common noun "القناة". While this is considered as a wrong translation, they could have provided a footnote or an explanation that identifies the Channel "القتال".

Item 3:

Brexit Minister Lord Frost has said he considered resigning as a government advisor in 2017.

Item 3 comprises a neologism and a proper noun. In this item most of the translators have rendered the first part "Brexit Minister" literally as وزير بريكست without explaining what is meant by "Brexit" in the UK. However, few of them have translated the expression by adding a footnote that explains Brexit as خروج بريطانيا من الاتحاد الاوربي. Regarding the expression "Lord Frost, the received translations of it illustrate that the translators have resorted to transference or borrowing and recognized translations for they rendered it as "لورد فروست".

Item 4:

We don't want the immigration issue to become a political football.

Item 4 includes a political idiomatic expression "a political football". The translators have opted for literal translation whereby they distorted the original meaning of the expression. While this translation is considered wrong, this idiom can be translated by adding a footnote, addition, or paraphrasing to explain its original meaning, which is "موضوعا يتقاذفه الساسة خدمة" "لمصالحهم الخاصة".

Item 5:

The House of Senate will discuss in Washington during the next fortnight several bills prepared by the Democrats including the annual budget.

Item 5 includes two proper nouns (names of organizations). In this item most translators have used the recognized translation procedure when translating "the House of Senate". However, they have opted for the procedure of deletion when translating the second part of the sentence "several bills prepared by the Democrats including the annual budget". Therefore, the deletion of the second part has distorted the meaning expressed in the source text. While the translation of the first part is considered adequate, the second part is considered wrong translation.

Item 6:

David was stuck in heavy traffic.

Item 6 consists of a proper noun and a lexical collocation. It also includes a passive structure which is likely to be transposed during the translation process. In fact, all translators have changed the passive structure in the source text when translating it, which is considered transposition according to Newmark (1988).

In this item, the translators have mostly used the recognized translation of "David" when rendering it as ديفيد. Some of them have rendered "David" as داود which is considered as a naturalized and recognized translation. But when translating the idiom 'stuck in heavy traffic', the received translation was مزدحمة سير زحمة في عالفا which indicates repetition. It is better to have used ازدحام مروري شديد or حركة مرور كثيفة. The collocation heavy traffic is an adjective-noun collocation. The word 'heavy' translates differently into Arabic depending on its co-text. For example, the Arabic equivalent of heavy rainfall is مطر غزير while heavy meal translates as وجبة دسمة. Based on this, the received translation, which includes repetition, is considered inadequate as it presents the intended meaning in a wrong structure.

Item 7:

The hill country of ancient Judah casually rolls southward from the Sea of Galilee toward Egypt.

Item 7 includes two proper nouns, namely "Judah" and "the Sea of Galilee", and one lexical collocation, "rolls southward". The received translation of the first biblical name "Judah" is mostly يهوذا which is naturalized transference translation. However, this kind of translation shows transference of the original noun into the Arabic known noun "يهودا". This received translation of the expression is inadequate as it does not explain the biblical name by using a gloss or paraphrasing.

The second proper noun in this sentence is “the Sea of Galilee” which is the biblical name of “the Lake of Tiberius”. The received translation of this proper noun is mostly بحيرة طبريا which is the proper equivalent translation to “the Sea of Galilee”. Other translations include بحر الجليل and بحيرة جليل which are considered literal translations.

The third expression in this item is the lexical collocation “roll southward”. The translators have opted for the literal translation تتدرج جنوبا as represented in the denotative meaning of the verb ‘roll’ rather than the connotative meaning which means ‘extends’, namely تمتد جنوبا.

Item 8:

Great Britain knows it is dangerous to be seen to flinch, because its assorted enemies take new heart and its friends’ knees knock.

Item 8 includes one proper noun and three metaphors. When rendering the proper noun “Great Britain”, the translators seem to opt for Google equivalent translation بريطانيا العظمى which also opts for the naturalization procedure whereby it includes some sounds change. In translating metaphors, all the translators opt for the denotative surface meaning of “to flinch”, “take new heart”, and knees knock”. The received translation of “to flinch” does not render the intended meaning of the metaphor which is “to hesitate”. The other two metaphors, “take new heart” and “knees knock” are translated literally out of context as وقرع وبأخذون قلبا جديدا and يتجرأ عليها الأعداء respectively. Such translations have missed the connotative meaning as intended by the original writer namely “يتجرأ عليها الأعداء” and “يخاف عليها الأصدقاء” respectively.

Item 9:

The packed courtroom was hushed as the jury delivered their verdict.

Item 9 includes two parts. The first part “the packed courtroom was hushed” is rendered as ساد الصمت قاعة المحكمة المكتظة بالناس. It is clear that the some translators have opted for the adequate transposition procedure whereby the passive voice sentence is rendered in the active voice. Yet, many of them have opted for Google literal translation and rendered it as تم السكوت resulting in an inadequate translation.

However, the second expression “the jury delivered their verdict” includes a lexical collocation (verb-noun collocation). Similar to the first part, Google literal translation is used inadequately which gives أصدرت هيئة المحلفين حكمهم instead of using the correct Arabic collocation عندما نطقت هيئة المحلفين بالحكم.

Item 10:

He will not change. You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.

Item 10 includes the proverb “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks”. The received translation of this proverb is “لا يمكنك تعليم كلب عجوز حيل جديدة”. The translators have opted for Google literal translation which does not take into consideration the contextual meaning of the proverb. It can be rendered by a similar functional equivalent in Arabic such as the proverb لا يُصلح العطار ما أفسده الدهر or من شب على شيء شاب عليه.

CONCLUSION

Results which are based on the analysis of the procedures used by the translators in translating political and cultural expressions indicate that they have succeeded in rendering adequate translations for proper nouns such as personal names, names of institutions and organizations since these expressions can be translated in a variety of procedures. However, they have failed to adequately translate stylistic features such as proverbs, idioms, metaphors, and collocations for they have resorted to literal translation rather than using equivalence. This in turn is a result of their lack of knowledge in both the source language and the target language.

With regard to the challenges encountered by the novice translators, these challenges can be categorized into the following:

1. Context-related challenges

The translators' lack of contextual knowledge has prevented them from understanding the intended meaning of the given expressions. Moreover, the lack of understanding the contextual meaning of the political and cultural expressions has made them resort to conveying the surface meaning of the expressions rather than the deep intended one.

2. Technical knowledge challenges

One of the major problems that novice translators have encountered is related to their insufficient experience in practical translation and in utilizing suitable sources that experienced translators use. This has made them use the inappropriate translation procedure, mainly (Google) literal translation which does not reflect the intended meaning of the expressions. Another challenge is related to the procedures and methods of translating stylistic features which need advanced knowledge in translation.

3. Language-related challenges

Novice translators have encountered language-related challenges including but not limited to their inability to differentiate between the denotative meaning and the connotative meaning of the expression at hand. They have also found it difficult sometimes to find the proper collocations in the target language, leading them to opt for literal or word-for-word translation.

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