

This paper investigates metaphor in learner translations, to explore both the real and perceived translatability of metaphor. Metaphor has traditionally been considered difficult to translate, and much previous work has focused on the translatability of metaphor and top-down development of guidelines for metaphor translation (see e.g. Philip, 2019). By contrast, our study is situated in the field of Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS), investigating what translations actually *are* rather than what they “should” be (Toury, 2012). Our research goals are two-fold. First, we follow the DTS approach by producing an empirical description of the various strategies learners apply to L1-L2 translation (i.e. *what* student translators do with metaphor). Second, we explore learner perceptions concerning their perceived challenges and motivations for translation choices (i.e. *why* they do what they do).

Our informants consist of Norwegian L1 students enrolled in English courses at Norwegian universities: that is, L1 Norwegian to L2 English translation. We identify and categorize their individual translations of metaphors from a single Norwegian source text (ST) specifically designed for this study, thereby providing comparative descriptions of multiple translated texts (TTs) derived from the same ST. We crafted our ST text to mirror the genre of newspaper horoscopes, and in this way to ensure a natural context for metaphors with varying degrees of L1-L2 transparency, sometimes necessitating creative solutions.

Metaphors are identified using the Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universitet for English and its Scandinavian version for Norwegian (Nacey et al., 2019; Steen et al., 2010). Our first research aim is achieved through categorization of all identified TT metaphors following a taxonomy adapted from Toury (2012). To address our second research aim, we observe and analyze classroom discussion concerning translation challenges and solutions, subsequent to the students’ independent translation and submission of their TTs.

In general, we find a great variety of translation solutions for the ST metaphors, and that conventionality plays an important role. Translation of expressions that are more obviously metaphorical triggers a greater number of alternative metaphors, as the translators are less able to rely on codified correspondences and have to therefore search farther afield for the best translation equivalent. Other decisive factors include the perceived purpose, style, and target readership of the text, as well as the degree of consistency of the metaphorical imagery in the ST.

In this presentation, we approach both research questions by primarily focusing on student translations of one particular cultural-specific, non-conventional metaphor in our data: the phrase *BlåSwix-føre* in the sentence *I dag blir blir det rett og slett BlåSwix-føre for deg*, a metaphorical allusion where the outlook for perfect skiing conditions refers to the outlook for a perfect day. We first present the students’ various translations in light of Toury’s taxonomy and then discuss the reasons for their choices, based on their retrospective reflections concerning what they regard as the ‘best’ translations of the metaphor.

References

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