

CONVENTIONAL EXPRESSIONS AND TRANSLATION

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0. Introduction

There are certain idiosyncracies of a language which, if literally translated into another language, have a different meaning or make no sense at all. By literal translation, I mean a morpheme-for-morpheme translation but with the necessary changes in conformity with the target language (TL) grammar. For example, the figurative expression

(1) *To let the cat out of the bag*

can be literally translated into Japanese as

(2)	<i>neko</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>fukuro</i>	<i>kara</i>	<i>dasaseru</i>
	cat	DO	bag	from	let out

or it can be freely translated as

(3)	<i>tane</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>akasu</i>
	seed, origin	DO	reveal

which is a figurative way of saying in Japanese 'to let a secret be known'. The difference between (2) and (3) is so great that one can hardly believe that both translate as (1) in English. This gap between the literal and the free translations is largely due to the conventions of language which ascribe to particular forms, meanings, usages or co-occurrence patterns which cannot be predicted merely from the meanings of the constituents or the structure in which the constituents are arranged. I use the term 'conventional expressions' to refer to such expressions. Conventional expressions create problems for translation because, by definition, they cannot be translated literally.¹

Not all types of conventional expressions are discussed in this paper, but only those which have a conventional

interpretation as well as a literal one. Grammatically irregular expressions such as *by and large*, *it rained cats and dogs*, or irreversible binomials such as *spic and span*, *tit for tat* which cannot be interpreted literally and have unique conventional interpretations are omitted from consideration. I restrict my data to conventional expressions which are shared by a great majority of the speakers of the language, excluding different types of jargon such as computer jargon and linguistic jargon (which may include expressions which are governed by conventions known to members of a certain group). The purpose of the paper lies not in a classification of conventional expressions but rather in characterizing them and in observing how they interfere with translation.

1. Conventional expressions

Example (1) has the following two meanings:

- (1a) 'to let the cat escape from the bag'
- (1b) 'to let a secret be known'

(1a) is the literal meaning. (1b), normally called the 'figurative' or 'idiomatic meaning', is labelled the 'conventional meaning'. If the speaker/hearer has a knowledge of the meanings of the constituents of the expression, and some knowledge of English grammar, he/she can determine meaning (1a) without any problem. However, given the same knowledge, the speaker/hearer would not necessarily be able to determine meaning (1b): it is an historical accident that expression (1) has acquired meaning (1b).

Conventional expressions have forms which are more or less frozen, in that they resist the application of certain syntactic operations. The degree to which a form is frozen varies among conventional expressions, but with all of them the link between the form and the interpretation associated therewith is so rigid that the modification of the form by means of applying certain syntactic operations or by substituting some of the constituents with their otherwise synonymous forms produces drastic change in meaning or in function or in acceptability which is not predictable from the semantic or syntactic rules of the language. For example, *to let the cat out of the bag* and *to allow the cat out of the sack* have similar literal meanings, but only the first expression has the conventional meaning.

These two characteristics of conventional expressions -

their conventional meanings and their more or less frozen forms - are discussed further in sections 4.1 and 4.2.

2. Free expressions vs. conventional expressions

Jespersen (1933:18) makes an important distinction between 'formulas' and 'free expressions'. The latter have a range of possible modifications which yield predictable semantic changes, whereas formulas do not have this degree of structural flexibility: a modification in the structure will yield radical or unexpected semantic change.

Jespersen's 'formulas' are a subgroup of my 'conventional expressions'. Although the freedom to alter their lexical or grammatical make-up is generally restricted, not all conventional expressions have a completely fixed form. Furthermore, their meanings are not always totally independent of the separate words into which the phrase can be analysed.

3. Conventional expressions vs. preferred expressions

There are many expressions in a language which we recognize as familiar. Such stereotypical or commonplace expressions which occur repeatedly in the language and which seem to be available ready-made when we want to express a commonplace idea may include conventional expressions, but not all such expressions are conventional expressions. I refer to them as 'preferred expressions'. A preferred expression is different from a conventional expression in that although it has a more or less fixed form which is selected arbitrarily out of all the other possible forms that can be used to express a particular idea, it does not have a conventionalized interpretation or function. In other words, preferred expressions have only their literal meanings. Some are clichés or catch phrases, such as *inevitable consequences*, *last but not least*, *to all intents and purposes* etc. Preferred expressions also include expressions which are used more extensively than some other synonymous expressions which are perfectly grammatical and appropriate in expressing a particular idea. Pawley and Syder (1983) point out that the degree of the native speaker's preference varies among sentences which the syntactic and semantic rules of the language would permit. They compare the following sentences:

- (4) (a) *I'm so glad you could bring Harry*
 (b) *That Harry could be brought by you makes me so glad*
 (c) *That you could bring Harry gladdens me so*
 (d) *Your having been able to bring Harry makes me so glad*
 (e) *The fact that Harry could be brought by you causes me to be so glad*

Although all of the sentences above are well-formed sentences of English expressing basically the same idea, it is (a) that is preferred by the native speakers of the language in most contexts (but see section 7). Similarly, English speakers prefer to say *brothers and sisters* rather than *sisters and brothers*. Compare this preferred expression with an irreversible binomial which is a conventional expression such as *oil and water*. The difference is that whereas the phrase *brothers and sisters* has only a literal meaning, the phrase *oil and water* has a conventional meaning, 'incompatible', in addition to its literal meaning.

The repeated usage of a preferred expression, however, can gradually lead to the development of a conventional meaning and thus turn it into a conventional expression. This makes the distinction between a preferred and a conventional expression a matter of degree. There is a continuum from free to preferred to conventional expressions. An expression may move along the continuum through its repeated usage gradually obscuring the relationship between its form and meaning.

4. Characteristics of conventional expressions

The form of a conventional expression is fixed to a certain degree. Whereas the form of a preferred expression can be modified in such a way that it is no longer preferred while still preserving its semantic content, conventional expressions do not allow the same degree of freedom in the modification of their internal structure to yield predictable semantic or functional change. If the modification of the form produces a change in meaning not predictable from the syntax or semantics of the language, the form has a conventional meaning. If an unpredictable change in function is produced, the form has a conventional function. These characteristics of conventional expressions are discussed below.

4.1 Formal characteristics

Conventional expressions can be characterized firstly by their form, which can be frozen to various degrees. The difference between a conventional and a free expression in terms of structural flexibility can be seen when comparing regular binomial phrases whose forms can be freely altered with irreversible binomials which are established units. Not only do the latter have conventional meanings but the two nouns and the conjunction form a structural unit fixed by convention. When a speaker purposely reverses the order of an irreversible binomial, it produces a special effect on the audience, in that it is no longer associated with the conventional meaning of the irreversible binomial and can be interpreted only literally.

On the other hand, free binomial phrases such as *cigarettes and ashtray* do not form a structural unit but are free expressions whose two nouns can be reversed in order. The modification of the internal structure of these phrases will yield predictable semantic change.

Although the freedom to alter the form of irreversible binomials is completely suppressed if they are to retain their conventional meanings, some conventional expressions do allow certain grammatical freedom. For example, the idiom *to kick the bucket* can appear in the infinitive, past tense, or future perfect, and also allow change in person. However, any alteration of the lexical items constituting the idiom drastically changes the meaning of the phrase.²

In a conventional expression, one part may be fully fixed while another part is variable as long as it fits a certain syntactic pattern. Take the following forms which are used conventionally in English as directives: *Can you X?* or *Why don't you X?* The variables can be replaced by such strings as *pass the salt* in the former, and by *leave the room* in the latter. However, if one says *Are you able to pass the salt?* or *Can you give me the reason why you are not leaving the room?*, the sentences will not have the same effect on the hearer.

Some conventional expressions allow more freedom in the modification of their internal structure. The proverb *Don't count your chickens before they're hatched* can appear in many different forms: *You're counting your chickens before they're hatched*, *I'm not going to count my chickens before they are hatched* etc. Part of the proverb can even be omitted:

Don't count your chickens. There are certain compulsory elements of the proverb for it to be recognized as such because if one deviates too far from the norm and says *Don't add up your apples before they're ripe*, it will be extremely difficult to recognize the proverb unless given the right context.

4.2 Semantic characteristics

A phrase or a sentence is composed of meaningful elements. Its meaning should therefore be a compositional function of the meanings of the constituents of which it is composed. If it is, the sentence or phrase is said to be semantically motivated. If it is not, the sentence or phrase is said to be semantically unmotivated. Phrases and sentences lie on a continuum from completely semantically motivated to completely semantically unmotivated.

Free expressions are semantically motivated. By contrast, conventional expressions are unmotivated, although to various degrees. Idioms lie on the opposite extreme from free expressions in that they are semantically unmotivated to the greatest degree: the meaning of an idiom is independent of the meanings of its constituents (e.g. *to kick the bucket* 'to die').

Contrast this with the phrase *keep your head above water*. In this case, the interpretation of the phrase is not totally independent of its constituents. By knowing the meanings of its constituents, the speaker/hearer may be able to guess its conventional meaning. That is, the meanings of its constituents suggest in some way the conventional meaning of the expression. However, in order to consistently use and interpret the phrase correctly, the speaker/hearer must learn its conventional meaning in addition to the meanings of its constituents. It is therefore partially motivated (or partially unmotivated), lying between the two extremes of semantic motivatedness.

A conventional expression can be partially semantically motivated to a greater or lesser degree according to (a) how effectively the speakers think the conventional meaning is suggested by the meanings of the constituents, or (b) according to the number of speakers of the language able to recognize the allusion made in the conventional expression. To elaborate on (a), the judgement of the speakers will vary when asked whether the meanings of the constituents of the phrase *to be in hot water* more effectively suggest the conventional meaning compared to the way in which the meanings

of the constituents of the phrase *the foot of the mountain* suggest its conventional meaning. This is not, in itself, a crucial difference. A conventional expression can be partially semantically motivated in many ways. The meaning of the whole can be a semantic extension of the meaning of its parts - e.g. in the expression *the foot of the mountain* the meaning of *foot* has been extended to apply to the lower part of the mountain. The situation described by the meaning of the whole may be analogous to the situation described by the meanings of its constituents; e.g. *to be in deep water*, which has a nautical origin, is applied to analogous situations beyond the nautical context. There can also be extra-linguistic factors which relate the meanings of the constituents to the meaning of the whole; e.g. *she's a bit long in the tooth* means that she is old, probably because the gums of animals recede with age. What is important is that the general claim about the partial semantic motivatedness of the conventional expression holds true for each speaker although where the particular conventional expression falls on the continuum of motivatedness may differ among speakers.

The number of speakers to whom the allusion made in a conventional expression is known is the other factor which determines the degree of semantic motivatedness of the expression. If more people are aware of how the conventional meaning is suggested by the constituents, the conventional expression may be considered more semantically motivated than if only a small group of people recognise the allusion. For example, the idiom *to kick the bucket* is considered to be semantically unmotivated because present-day speakers of English do not generally know the connection between the meanings of its constituents and its conventional meaning. But as long as some people are aware of the semantic motivation of a conventional expression, the expression cannot be said to be completely unmotivated. Similarly, while expressions like *the foot of the mountain* are often called 'dead metaphors' on the basis of the fact that the meaning of *foot* referring to the lower part of an object which serves to support it can be found in the dictionary, one cannot say that the metaphor is completely dead when this extended meaning of *foot* is, for some people, clearly comparable to the literal meaning of *foot*. These factors make it difficult for one to determine when a conventional expression actually becomes completely unmotivated.

4.3 Functional characteristics

Some conventional expressions can be characterized by the specific function they perform as an utterance. In English, when a speaker utters the phrase *Good morning*, he/she is immediately understood to be performing the act of greeting. The function of the utterance, however, is not conveyed by its form: there is simply a convention in English which specifies that forms like *Good morning*, *How do you do?*, *How are you?* are used as greetings. There are many constructions which are seen as having a specific function, beyond what the meanings of their constituents convey. When an English speaker hears an utterance in the form of *Do you mind V-ing NP?*, or *Could you V NP?*, he/she normally thinks of it as a form of request. In fact, it takes some ingenuity for a native speaker to think of a situation where such utterances might be used without functioning as a request.

Because expressions such as *Good morning*, *How are you?*, *would you mind passing the salt?*, *Can you open the door?* are taken more for the function they perform, the literal meaning of the expressions becomes obscured. When asked *Can you pass the salt?*, one does not normally reply only in terms of his/her ability to pass the salt and not provide the service that the speaker requires. If the hearer does this, he/she has either misunderstood the speaker or is deliberately refusing to co-operate. Note that in the former case, what the hearer has misunderstood is the function of the speaker's utterance, not its meaning. This type of misunderstanding is different from interpreting *to kick the bucket* literally when it is meant as an idiom. If, on hearing the utterance *John kicked the bucket*, the hearer asks *Why? Was he angry?*, he/she has misinterpreted the meaning of the phrase *to kick the bucket*. If, on hearing the utterance *Can you pass the salt?*, the hearer replies *Of course I can. Do you think my arm is injured?*, he/she has misunderstood the function of the speaker's utterance.

Other expressions whose functions are conventionalized in the language include such sentences as:

- (5)(a) *That's a likely story*
- (b) *Some people are never satisfied*
- (c) *Who do you think you are?*

Each of the sentences above has specific functions which are not predictable from the syntactic and semantic rules of the language. According to these rules, (5a) should be similar to *That's a probable story*, but in fact it is

closer to *That's an improbable story.*

Conventional expressions such as *to keep one's head above water*, *to kick the bucket*, *to count one's chickens before they're hatched* can be modified to make statements, questions, reports, predictions, requests etc. Their use is not fixed by convention. On the other hand, conventional expressions such as *Good night* or *Why don't you pick on someone your own size?* have fixed functions.

5. Semantic motivatedness and semantic change

Conventional expressions have a diachronic aspect. It was mentioned in 4.2 that idioms are semantically unmotivated. The phrase *to kick the bucket* has an unanalysable conventional meaning. There are two explanations concerning the origin of this expression (Evans 1959): one is that *the bucket* refers to 'the beam on which a pig is suspended by the heel for slaughter', the other is that 'the bucket was kicked away by a suicide, who stood on it the better to hang himself'. It appears then that in the past the expression was partially semantically motivated, the relation between the meaning of the whole and the meanings of the parts being probably more generally known. But today this allusion is lost, and the phrase has changed from being partially semantically motivated to being completely unmotivated.

After an expression has gone through a partially semantically motivated stage to a semantically unmotivated stage, it seems plausible to postulate a third stage where a semantically unmotivated phrase is reanalysed, and some of the constituents acquire new meanings which are related to the conventional holistic meaning of the phrase. That is, the phrase becomes semantically motivated again, but the semantic motivation may not necessarily be the same as the semantic motivation of the first stage. However, unless the etymology of the word is well documented, one cannot be certain whether the word acquired a new meaning through its repeated usage in a conventional expression, or whether the conventional expression was formed after the word acquired the new meaning.

What must be kept in mind is that semantic motivation is liable to change through time, and if the phrase or sentence is in the transition phase of losing its semantic motivation, there will not be complete agreement among speakers of the language on its semantic motivatedness.

6. Conventional collocations

Conventional collocations are quite different from conventional expressions. In a conventional collocation, the presence of a lexical item requires a particular lexical item to co-occur with it to express a particular meaning. The particular meaning may have several possible formal representations, but not all are considered acceptable collocations in the language. Insofar as the acceptable form is chosen arbitrarily out of those possible, the form is said to be a conventional collocation. Conventional collocations are similar to preferred expressions in that although they have fixed forms, they do not have conventional meanings or conventional functions. The difference is that a preferred expression can be modified in such a way that it is no longer a preferred collocation while still retaining its meaning and acceptability, but a modification of a conventional collocation will often produce an unacceptable collocation.

In the previous sections, we have seen how the conventions of the language compel the hearer to decode particular forms in specified ways which are not predictable from the syntax and the semantics of the language. In conventional collocations, the conventions of the language compel the speaker to encode a particular meaning in a certain way despite the wide range of possibilities the syntax and the semantics of the language allows. Observe the following phrases:

- | | | | |
|-----|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| (6) | <i>severe drought</i> | (*) <i>severe rain</i> | <i>severe winter</i> |
| | * <i>heavy drought</i> | <i>heavy rain</i> | * <i>heavy winter</i> |
| | * <i>harsh drought</i> | * <i>harsh rain</i> | <i>harsh winter</i> |
| | * <i>hard drought</i> | <i>hard rain</i> | <i>hard winter</i> |
| (7) | <i>heavy drinker</i> | * <i>heavy eater</i> | |
| | <i>big drinker</i> | <i>big eater</i> | |

The collocations in the above phrases are constrained firstly by the syntactic rules of English which specify that the adjective precedes the noun it modifies. Secondly, they are constrained by selectional restrictions.

Selectional restrictions restrict the collocations of lexical items in terms of semantic features assigned to the constituent lexemes, but why are some of the collocations accepted and some not?

The acceptability or unacceptability of certain collocations is impossible to explain fully in terms of semantic features. Firstly, in order to explain the difference in

acceptability of certain collocations within the selectional restriction framework, one must adopt semantic features which will make fine distinctions between near synonyms. This means that a vast number of semantic features must be incorporated. Secondly, the semantic features of selectional restrictions are supposed to be universal, but the restricted collocations under discussion are language specific (see section 7 below, and also Appendix II for examples from English and Japanese). It is more appropriate to say that these collocations are learned simply as conventional ways of encoding certain meanings.

7. Conventional expressions and translation

We can now turn to the question of how conventional expressions interfere with translation. They pose a problem for the translator because they are not always listed in the dictionary, and the translator's knowledge of the syntax and semantics of the SL and the TL will not suffice to determine the meaning, usage, or co-occurrence pattern of the expression. A literal translation of a conventional expression is most likely to produce an impact very different from the impact the original produces on its audience. Some conventional expressions can, however, be translated literally and still have the same impact on the TL audience. This can be due to several reasons: (a) The SL and the TL have had extensive contact and share a great deal of cultural heritage including some of their conventional expressions; (b) The conventional expressions in the two languages may have originated from the same source (a proto-language) or have been introduced into one or even both languages by loan translation; (c) The expression may refer to something which is common to all mankind and the way in which to formulate the idea may also be part of a universal tendency; or (d) It could be purely accidental. When comparing two very different languages such as English and Japanese, however, it is rare that one can translate a conventional expression literally and produce the same impact on the TL audience. Given that every conventional expression has a specific form with a particular meaning or function arbitrarily attached to it, the various problems which the difference in conventions of the two languages create can be characterized as follows.

First of all, the SL and the TL may both have conventional expressions that are similar in literal meaning but have

different conventional meanings. For example, the literal translation of the English conventional expression *to set one's teeth on edge* happens to be partially similar to the following conventional expression in Japanese:

(8) *ha ga uku*
teeth SUBJ float

However, the two conventional expressions have totally different conventionalized meanings. In English, the expression means 'to give or receive the unpleasant sensation caused by certain acid tastes or high sounds', in Japanese it means 'to be annoyed by a thoughtless remark'.

Secondly, the same conventional meaning may be formulated differently in the SL and the TL. For example, the meaning of the proverb *Don't count your chickens before they're hatched* is formulated in Japanese as something like *Counting the skins of the badgers which have not been caught*.

Thirdly, it may also be the case that a particular meaning which is expressed by a conventional expression in one language is not expressed by a conventional expression in the other language. Fourthly, a form which has a conventional interpretation in one language may not have a conventional interpretation in the other.

Similar problems arise with conventional expressions with particular functions. The function associated with a particular form may vary from language to language, or a particular function may be performed by different forms in different languages. For example, the conventional expression in English which functions as a greeting in the morning is *Good morning*. In Japanese, the same function is performed by a conventional expression which can be literally translated as *It's early*. The problem of translating expressions with conventional functions occurs when the function which a particular conventional expression performs in the SL is not institutionalized in the TL. For example, Japanese, like some other languages, has a conventional expression used before starting a meal. This expression can be literally translated as 'I'm accepting (your offer)'. English, however, does not have such a convention.

When translating conventional expressions, the translator must, first of all, decode the SL correctly. Mistranslation occurs when a translator unfamiliar with the conventions of the SL does not recognize a conventional expression as such and interprets it literally (Appendix I).

Even after the translator has decoded the SL correctly, the conventions of language continue to interfere with translation at the stage where the translator has to encode the message in the TL. For example, if the translator is translating from Japanese to English, he/she may translate the SL literally in the following way:

(9) SL: *Kyoo wa kaze ga yowai*
today TOP wind SUBJ weak

(10) TL: **Today, the wind is weak*

Although *weak wind(s)* is an acceptable collocation in Japanese, it is not an acceptable collocation in English. This is not due to any grammatical rule or to any semantic rule in English. After all, *strong wind(s)* is an acceptable collocation.³ Problems in encoding the message of the SL into the TL occur when the collocation of lexical items is unpredictable from the syntax or the semantics of the TL.

This problem of encoding the message into an acceptable collocation in the TL differs from the problem of rendering a preferred collocation (or expression). Going back to sentences (b)-(e) of (4), we must note that although none of these sentences are natural in a setting where a hostess is talking to a guest who has just arrived at her party, in other contexts the sentences may be quite natural. For example, in reply to a question such as *What causes you to be so glad?* one might say:

(4e) *The fact that Harry could be brought by you causes me to be so glad*

In such a context, (4e) would be quite natural and it would be (4a) that is inappropriate. Thus, which expression is preferred by the native speaker depends largely on the context in which it is uttered. Conventional collocations, on the other hand, are not governed by the situation or context. In whatever context the phrase **heavy wind* is uttered, it will be recognized as a collocation which is not normal in the English language. This is not to say that the collocation never occurs. It may appear as a play on words or in a poem, but it will nevertheless be recognized as one deviating from the conventions of the language.

Although the problem of encoding the SL into an acceptable collocation in the TL is different from the problem of encoding the SL into a preferred collocation in the TL, they both interfere with translation at the stage of encoding the message in the TL. The translator must know what the

conventional collocations are and also in what way the message should be encoded so that it sounds like what a native speaker of the TL might say in that particular context.

8. Conclusion

It is well known that a truly competent translator is both bilingual and bicultural, but the question is, what does it mean to be both bilingual and bicultural? The fact that a translator who knows the syntax and the semantics of the SL and the TL still have difficulty in translating from one language to the other indicates that there is more to translation than merely substituting the lexical items and reorganizing the structure of the sentence. In addition to knowing the syntax and the semantics of the SL and the TL, the translator must know the conventional ways in which people in the TL and the SL communities decode particular forms and the conventional ways in which they encode particular meanings. Whether one considers this linguistic knowledge or cultural knowledge is not crucial. If the translator departs drastically from the habitual ways in which people in the community decode and encode, communication is endangered.

APPENDIX I : MISTRANSLATIONS OF CONVENTIONAL EXPRESSIONS (examples from Koga 1983; all the SL texts are by Agatha Christie)

I. Mistranslations of expressions with conventional meanings

1. Irreversible binomials

- (1) SL: They've done all they can to take the part of my
flesh and blood. (The body in the library)
TL: *marude watashi no te -ashi noyconi natte hataraitekure-*
as if my GEN arm-leg like be worked *mashita.*
(Takahashi, Yutaka)

'They worked as my right arm'

2. Figures of speech

- (1) SL: Don't mind my bark. It's a good deal worse than my bite.
(Dumb witness)
TL: *Atashi ga hoetatetemo kinishi-nai de okure.*
I SUBJ bark mind -NEG PART please
Anta, issonokoto kamitsuite moratta hoo ga ii to
you rather bite be way SUBJ better PART
omotterudaroo ne (Kashima, Yuzo)
think PART
'Don't mind my bark. I'm sure you think that you'd rather be bitten by me.'
- (2) SL: The medical evidence had been a bit above their heads.
(Towards zero)
TL: *Igakuteki shoomei mo baishinin no atama ni honno*
medical evidence too jury GEN head PART very
sukoshi wa nokotteita. (Tamura, Ryuuichi)
little TOP left
'The medical evidence was in the back of the jury's mind'
- (3) SL: We potted some of the beggars, and the rest took to their heels.
(The secret of chimneys)
TL: *Wareware wa suuin no kojiki ni me o tsukete*
we TOP few PART beggar PART eye DO put
sono ato o tsukete itta dake no koto desu.
those after DO follow go only PART that is
(Takahashi, Yutaka)
'All we did was that we spotted some beggars and followed the rest of them'
- (4) SL: She's a bit long in the tooth, but she has a certain attraction.
(Murder in Mesopotamia)
TL: *Kanojo wa chotto ha ga dekasugiru kedo tashika*
she TOP a bit teeth SUBJ too big but certain
ni issu no miryoku wa arune. (Takahashi,
PART a kind PART attraction TOP has
Yutaka)
'Her teeth are a bit big but it's true that she has a certain attraction'

3. Metaphors

- (1) SL: Many *dark women* dye their hair blond; he had never before come across a fair woman who dyed her hair black. (*The mysterious Mr. Quin*)
- TL: *Asa -guroi hada no onna -tachi ga minna kinpatsu*
 light-black skin GEN woman-pl. SUBJ every blond
ni kami o someru noni iro ga shiro no
 PART hair DO dye but colour SUBJ white POSS
onna wa kesshite kuroi kami ni some-nai mono
 woman TOP never black hair PART dye -NEG fact
da. (Ichinose, Naoji)
 PART
 'Women with a dark complexion all dye their hair blond, but women with pale complexion never dye their hair black'
- (2) SL: "Alibi, eh?" said the inspector *darkly*. (*Death in the clouds*)
- a) TL: "*Aribai desume*" to *keibu wa fukigen ni*
 alibi is it PART inspector TOP bad mood PART
itta. (Kashima, Yuuzoo)
 said
 "'Alibi, is it?" said the inspector in a bad mood'
- b) TL: "*Aribari desutte*" to *keibu wa inken*
 alibi say you PART inspector TOP grim, treacherous
na koe de itta. (Matsumoto, Kan)
 PART voice PART said
 "'What? An alibi?" said the inspector in a grim voice'
- c) TL: "*Aribai ne*" to *keibu wa futokuyooryoo*
 alibi PART PART inspector TOP obscure, evasive
na chooshi de itta. (Koga, Masayoshi)
 PART mode PART said
 "'Alibi, eh?" said the inspector in an obscure way'
- (3) SL: "I'd rather not know who did it. I'd rather not even think about it."
 "*Ostrich*," said her husband. (*Ordeal by innocence*)
- TL: "*Sore wa gooman da*" to *otto ga itta.*
 that TOP arrogant PART PART husband SUBJ said
 (Ogasawara, Toyoki)
 "'You're being arrogant," said her husband'
- (4) SL: The other man could be better described as *wiry and lean*. (*The Seven Dails mystery*)
- TL: *Moo hitori wa harigane noyooni yaseta to keiyoo*
 other person TOP wire like thin PART describe

shite yokatta. (Nakamura, Noozoo)

do good

'The other person could be described as being thin like wire'

II. Mistranslations of expressions with conventional functions

- (1) SL: "Here's to you, Egg," said Sir Charles.
"Cheerio," said Freddie Dacres. (*Three Act Tragedy*)
TL: "Koko ni anta no ga aru Eggu" to Chcaruzu
here PART you GEN SUBJ exist Egg PART Charles
ga itta. (Nishiwaki, Junzaburoo)
SUBJ said
'"Here is yours, Egg," said Charles'

APPENDIX II : COMPARISON OF CONVENTIONAL COLLOCATIONS

<i>heavy smoker</i>	* <i>omoi kitsuensha</i> heavy smoker
<i>heavy drinker</i>	* <i>omoi sake-nomi</i> heavy sake drinker
<i>big drinker</i>	<i>oo -zake-nomi</i> big-sake drinker
<i>big eater</i>	<i>tai-shoku-ka</i> big food person
<i>heavy rain</i>	* <i>omoi ame</i> heavy rain
* <i>big rain</i>	<i>oo -ame</i> big-rain
* <i>heavy illness</i>	<i>omoi byooki</i> heavy illness
<i>heavy opposition</i>	* <i>omoi hantai</i> heavy opposition

<i>strong opposition</i>	<i>tsuyoi hantai</i> strong opposition
<i>*heavy crime</i>	<i>omoi tsumi</i> heavy crime

NOTES

¹A topic which is not discussed here is why we are able to say that example (3) above is an adequate translation equivalent to (1) despite its radical difference in form and semantic make-up. To answer this question, a careful observation of different types of translation equivalence is needed, followed by an analysis of how we are able to judge for each case which type of equivalence is required.

Another topic which is not discussed here, but which goes back a long way in the history of translation theory is whether a literal translation such as (2) is a more accurate and faithful rendition of (1) and (3). Should the TL edge towards the source language (SL) to deliberately create an aura of foreignness, or should it be naturalized to the extent that the translation reads as if the text was originally written in the TL and was set in the TL culture? These questions are particularly relevant to literary translation where the artistic creativity of the source text is greatly valued. None of the examples used in this paper are, however, creative in that they are not original or novel expressions of which the translator must interpret the artistic value. They are commonplace expressions which are known to the native speakers of the language. I assume here that the translator is trying to create an impact on his addressees which is as close as possible to the impact the original has on its addressees (cf. Nida and Taber 1969).

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²If synonyms are substituted (*to kick the pail*) or if articles, singularity/plurality are changed (*He kicked a bucket/the buckets*), the phrase is changed to a free expression.

³Note the asymmetry in the use of antonyms in English. One can say *light wind(s)* and *strong wind(s)*, but not **heavy wind(s)* or **weak wind(s)*, although *light rain* and *heavy rain* are acceptable. (*Strong rain*, to some people, is alright but not **weak rain*.) This illustrates that the acceptability or the unacceptability of certain collocations is a matter of convention and the fact that neither **karui kaze* ('light wind') nor **omoi kaze* ('heavy wind') is acceptable in Japanese illustrates that the conventions are language specific.

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