

TRANSLATION TECHNIQUES (IV): MODULATION

Modulation implies a change in point of view/perspective. It has also been defined as “transposition in the message level”, since it operates on figures of speech rather than on grammatical categories.

In some cases there is a metonymic transference:

To pull one’s leg → tomarle el pelo a alguien (part of the body)

In some other cases, the change involves a synecdoche, since the relationship between both members is one of inclusion:

To wash one’s hair → lavarse la cabeza (la parte por el todo o viceversa).

Modulation can also imply the transformation of one of its members in its opposite.

Health insurance → seguro de enfermedad

Another possibility is the transformation of a double negation in a positive statement:

It seems not unlikely → parece probable.

Another very common type of modulation is the change from passive to active voice, or viceversa

You are wanted on the phone → te llaman al teléfono.

On other occasions, modulation involves a change of symbols:

Iron curtain → telón de acero

I looked for her eyes – busqué su mirada

A. Taking into account what we have seen about modulation, translate the following sentences or common expressions.

1. Te lo dejo.
2. Entiendo.
3. Te veo bien.
4. God bless you!
5. De Londres a Edimburgo hay seis horas de tren.
6. I came to the wreck of a house.

7. Se lava la cabeza cada día.
8. The battle is set in Liverpool.
9. ¡Basta ya!
10. Court of Last Appeal.
11. I looked for her eyes.
12. Daban las horas en el reloj.
13. I wasn't talking for the sake of talking.
14. Goldfish.
15. Life imprisonment.
16. Los gatos tienen siete vidas.
17. Caso visto y resuelto.
18. Right away.
19. He shut the door in my face.
21. Ya está criando malvas.

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22. Estaba más limpia que una patena.
23. He thinks he's going to get blood out of stones.
24. Sufre ceguera nocturna.
25. Estaba empapado de los pies a la cabeza.
26. Teme que su hijo le pueda hacer sombra.

B. In translating the following sentences, you will have to resort to both transposition and modulation.

1. Loaded down with collecting boxes and nets, we wended our way through the olives, Roger gallping ahead of us, nose to the ground.
2. She was saved from the wrath of the man by the timely arrival of Spiro. He lumbeed in, sweating profusely, soothed Mother, calmed the Customs man, explained that we had not had any new clothes for years, and had the luggage shifted outside on the quay almost before anyone could draw breath.
3. I once read somewhere that one sure thing about the future is that it cannot be predicted – or something like that–. Thirty years ago, anyone predicting that my country, the former British Central Africal colony of Njoiland, would come into much wealth would have been laughed at.
4. But this pattern of thought deviating from the standard of Greek and Latin rationalism would be incomplete if we were to fail to consider another phenomenon taking shape during the same period of history.

KEY

A.

1. Te lo deajo.
You can have it.
2. Entiendo.
I see / I get it (habilidades sensoriales vs. cognitivas).
3. Te veo bien.
You look good.
4. God bless you!
Que Dios te bendiga // Ve/anda con Dios.
5. De Londres a Edimburgo hay seis horas de tren.
It takes 6 hours from London to Edimburgh by train / to go from London to Edimburgh by train.
6. I came to the wreck of a house.
Llegué a una casa en ruinas.
7. Se lava la cabeza cada día.
She washes her hair everyday day (parte por el todo).
8. The battle is set in Liverpool.
La batalla tuvo lugar/se desarrolló en Liverpool.
9. ¡Basta ya!
Enough! / That will do (it)! / I've had enough (of it)!
10. Court of Last Appeal.
El Tribunal Supremo.
11. I looked for her eyes.
Busqué su mirada (de lo concreto a lo abstracto).
12. Daban las horas en el reloj.
The clock struck the time / was striking the time.
13. I wasn't talking for the sake of talking.
No hablaba por hablar.
14. Goldfish.
Peces de colores.
15. Life imprisonment.
Cadena perpetua.
16. Los gatos tienen siete vidas.
Cats have nine lives.
17. Caso visto y resuelto.
A case heard and concluded.
18. Right away.
De inmediato/Inmediatamente/Derechito/En seguida/En el acto/

19. He shut the door in my face.
Me cerró la puerta en las narices/me dio con la puerta en las narices. (la parte por el todo).
20. Ya está criando malvas.
He's already pushing up daisies.
22. Estaba más limpia que una patena.
It was as clean as a new pin / It was spick and span / spotless¹.
23. He thinks he's going to get blood out of stones.
Cree que va a sacar agua de las piedras.
24. Sufre ceguera nocturna.
She suffers from moon blindness².
25. Estaba empapado de los pies a la cabeza.
He was soaked to the skin / to the bone / from head to toes / from top to toe.
26. Teme que su hijo le pueda hacer sombra.
He fears his son standing in his light.

B.

1. Loaded down with collecting boxes and nets, we wended our way through the olive trees, Roger gallping ahead of us, nose to the ground.
Cargados con cajas y redes, íbamos serpenteando entre olivos, precedidos por Roger que trotaba sin despegar el hocico del suelo.
2. She was saved from the wrath of the man by the timely arrival of Spiro. He lumbered in, sweating profusely, soothed Mother, calmed the Customs man, explained that we had not had any new clothes for years, and had the luggage shifted outside on the quay almost before anyone could draw breath.
Se salvó de la ira/cólera del hombre por la llegada oportuna de Spiro. Éste entró tambaleándose, sudando profusamente, tranquilizó a la madre, calmó al aduanero y explicó que no habíamos tenido ropa nueva desde hacía años/hacia años que no comprábamos ropa nueva e hizo sacar el equipaje en un abrir y cerrar de ojos.
3. I once read somewhere that one sure thing about the future is that it cannot be predicted – or something like that–. Thirty years ago, anyone predicting that my country, the former British Central Africal colony of Njoiland, would come into much wealth would have been laughed at.
Una vez leí en algún sitio que una cosa cierta acerca del futuro es que no se puede predecir – o algo así. Hace treinta años, alguien que predijera que mi país, la antigua colonia británica del África Central llamada Njoiland, se enriquecería, habría sido tomado a broma.
4. But this pattern of thought deviating from the standard of Greek and Latin rationalism would be incomplete if we were to fail to consider another phenomenon taking shape during the same period of history.

¹ An idiom would be more suitable, but if you did not know it, then the term *spotless* would be the most appropriate alternative.

² *Night blindness* also exists.



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Pero este modelo de pensamiento que se desvía del patrón del racionalismo griego y latino sería incompleto si no consideráramos otro fenómeno que tomó/cobró forma durante el mismo periodo histórico.