

---

*Language processing in discourse: a key to felicitous translation.* Monika Doherty. London and New York: Routledge, 2002, 190 pp.

---

Is there happiness to be found in translation? According to Monika Doherty, in her book, *Language processing in discourse: a key to felicitous translation*, it is possible to find such happiness. This book is a thorough and well written guide that focuses on what one needs to have, on several levels, in both the original text and translated text in order to translate 'happily.'

Doherty breaks the book into several sections based on several areas of language processing, which

include word order, complex sentences, and structure. Each section gives the reader an idea of the optimal conditions one would want to find within the two texts to achieve felicity within the translated work.

In her introduction, Doherty stresses that there is no guarantee that the translated text will portray exactly what the original text says. In fact, she argues that, because of differences in linguistic expressions, divergences may occur between the original and the translation. She believes that the translator must focus on expressing the opinions and mood of the original writer instead of literal translations that are nothing more than 'dictionary problems.'

Doherty then goes on to describe the optimal conditions that must exist in order to achieve felicitous translation in several areas of the

language process. Doherty describes her goal in this study in the following way: "What optimal conditions for language processing in discourse are and how their clarification can provide a deeper insight into translation relations will be demonstrated in this book."

In her chapter on word order, Doherty says that grammar "plays a decisive role because languages differ in their grammar, thus we must expect differences in the order of elements." The author stresses that, for precisely this reason, literal translations are not achievable. Using a number of German and English examples, Doherty explains how word order plays an important part in maintaining the original meaning and sentiment of the principle text. An order that is easy to follow and easily translated into another language is the beginning of what she considers optimal conditions.

As in the case of word order, Doherty believes that complex sentences are also an important factor in the achieving of a felicitous translation. Because of the complexity that sentences must retain in the new version, it is often very difficult to translate from one language to another. In certain languages, she states, the verbs are placed in front

of the nouns, adjectives and adverbs. In others, the verbs are placed after them. According to Doherty, when dealing with complex structures it is important to conserve the meaning of the sentence in the translation and not be completely literal, an approach that will never yield a felicitous translation.

In addition to word order and complex sentence structure there are many other areas of language processing that are keys to 'happy' translation. She also mentions structure and word relations, describing the problems that arise in each of these areas when translating from one language to another and what the optimal conditions would be in order to translate. In the case of structure, Doherty describes the level of explicitness that is preferred between languages. With regard to word relations, she explains reordering, reframing and recategorizing.

In her final chapter, Doherty discusses how optimality is obtained (within the sections of language processing) and how this becomes felicitous translation. To achieve this goal, according to the author, "linguistic means must be used in order to optimize processing." This means that changing complex sentences, word order and grammar is a better form of trans-

lation than literalism. She believes that it is essential that enough of the original text remain coherent to safeguard comprehension.

Monika Doherty teaches translation theory at Humboldt University in Berlin and wrote this book for translation scholars and for those interested in a career in the field of translation. Although *Language Processing in Discourse: a Key to Felicitous Translation* would most likely be of interest to those studying German and English inter-translations, Doherty's ideas are easily carried over to different languages because they are concerned with a

wide array of general translation problems.

To answer the question of rather or not happiness can be found in translation, Doherty would answer yes. If one pays attention to the specific problem areas of language processing and attempts to portray the original author's idea without attempting a literal translation, felicity can indeed be the result. It comes from creating a translation that relays the original author's ideas to the reader without creating a literal, word-for-word, translation.

Jamie Haynes

St. Lawrence University