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CALQUE TRANSLATION: AN INSIGHT INTO A UNIQUE TRANSLATION TECHNIQUE

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ABSTRACT

Calque translation, also known as loan translation, is a method of translating phrases or expressions literally from a source language to a target language. This technique preserves the structural elements of the original phrase, offering insight into linguistic borrowing and cultural exchange. Calque translation can be categorized into types such as lexical, syntactic, and phraseological calques. While it enhances cultural adaptation, preserves language identity, and expands vocabulary, it also presents challenges like literalness, misinterpretation, and limited suitability for idiomatic expressions. This article explores the benefits and challenges of calque translation, emphasizing its role in fostering cultural exchange while maintaining linguistic integrity.

KEYWORDS: Calque translation, loan translation, linguistic borrowing, cultural exchange, lexical calque, syntactic calque, phraseological calque, literal translation, language identity, vocabulary expansion, translation challenges.

Calque translation, also known as loan translation, is a translation method where a phrase or expression from a source language is translated literally into the target language. This technique involves breaking down the components of a word or phrase and translating them word-for-word or element-by-element, without altering their structure. Calques are particularly common when languages borrow terms or concepts from one another, but instead of adopting the foreign term directly, they create a translated equivalent that mirrors the original.

In this article, we will delve into the concept of calque translation, its types, and the benefits and challenges associated with its use.

What is Calque Translation?

A calque is essentially a linguistic borrowing that involves translating the individual components of a word or phrase. This method allows languages to adopt new concepts from other cultures while keeping their own linguistic identity intact. For instance, the English word "skyscraper" has

been calqued into French as "gratte-ciel," where "gratte" means "scrape" and "ciel" means "sky." Similarly, the English phrase "loan translation" itself is a calque from the German word "Lehnübersetzung."

Calques can occur at different levels of language, including vocabulary (lexical calques) and structure (syntactic calques), and they often reveal interesting insights about linguistic borrowing and cultural exchange.

Types of Calque Translation

Calques can be broadly classified into the following types:

1. Lexical Calque: Lexical calques occur when individual words or short phrases are translated word-for-word. One of the most famous examples is the term "flea market," which is a direct calque of the French "marché aux puces." Similarly, "beer garden" in English is a calque of the German "Biergarten."
2. Structural or Syntactic Calque: Structural calques involve the direct translation of the syntax or structure of a phrase from the source language into the target language. For instance, the French phrase "gratte-ciel" for "skyscraper" not only translates the individual words but also maintains the structural order of the components.
3. Phraseological Calque: Phraseological calques occur when idiomatic expressions or fixed phrases are translated literally into the target language. For example, the Spanish phrase "tener un gato encerrado" (literally, "to have a cat in a cage") is a calque of the English idiom "there's something fishy" (i.e., something suspicious).

Benefits of Calque Translation

Calque translation offers several advantages, especially in fostering cultural exchange between languages and preserving linguistic integrity:

- Cultural Adaptation: By borrowing and translating terms directly, languages can introduce foreign concepts without using the original word, making it more relatable and understandable for native speakers.
- Preserving Language Identity: Instead of using borrowed foreign words, calques allow the target language to adapt new ideas while retaining its own unique linguistic flavor.
- Enriching Vocabulary: Calques can expand the vocabulary of a language by introducing new ways of expressing ideas while keeping the language distinct and dynamic.

Challenges of Calque Translation

While calques can enrich language and offer cultural relevance, they also pose several challenges:

- Literalness: Because calque translation involves literal word-for-word translation, the end result can sometimes sound unnatural or awkward in the target language, especially if cultural differences are not taken into account.
- Misinterpretation: Calques can lead to confusion or misinterpretation if the target language lacks the cultural or conceptual context to fully understand the borrowed phrase. For instance, a calque may not carry the same connotations or cultural nuances in the target language, which can affect the meaning.
- Limited Usage: Not all words or expressions are suitable for calque translation. In some cases, calques may fail to convey the subtleties or idiomatic aspects of the original expression.

Conclusion. Calque translation is a fascinating technique that showcases how languages borrow and adapt words and phrases from one another. While this method has the potential to enrich a language's lexicon and foster cultural exchange, it also comes with certain challenges, especially when it comes to ensuring that the translated expression remains natural and meaningful in the

target language. Calques are an important part of the translation process, helping to build bridges between different linguistic and cultural worlds while preserving the integrity of both the source and target languages. By carefully applying calque translation, translators can introduce foreign concepts in a way that resonates with native speakers while maintaining the balance between literal accuracy and natural expression.

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