**Direct translation techniques**

these translation techniques are used when the concepts and structure of the source language can be used in the target language.

**1. Borrowing**

Borrowing is where words or expressions are taken directly from the source text and carried over into the target language. This technique is often used when there is no target language equivalent, such as food or clothing, and can help to preserve the cultural context of the source text.

English is filled with borrowed words that have become part of our everyday language. If the borrowed term has yet to enter common usage, it’s usually written in italics.

Example: Café (French), hamburger (German), kimono (Japanese) and kimchi (Korean).

**2. Calque**

This is the literal translation of a phrase from one language into another, coining a new term in the target language. In other words, this is the literal translation of a borrowed word.

Example: The English term ‘skyscraper’ is translated as ‘gratte-ciel’ in French.

**3. Literal Translation**

When using literal translation, each word is translated directly. The target text must be idiomatic and retain the same word order, meaning and style as the source text.

This technique can miss the nuances of the original text, and is only possible with languages and cultures that are extremely close.

Example: The English ‘I want a glass of water’ would be translated literally as ‘Je veux un verre d’eau’ in French.

**Indirect Translation Techniques**

Indirect or oblique translation techniques are used when the two languages and cultures are further apart. These techniques change structural and conceptual elements in order to preserve the meaning and nuance of the text.

**1. Transposition**

Transposition involves a shift from one grammatical category to another, while still preserving the meaning. This translation technique is often necessary between languages with different grammatical structures**.**

Example: The French sentence, ‘Je l’ai vu avant la rentrée’ can be rendered in English as ‘I saw her before school started.’ This changes the noun ‘la rentrée’ into a verb.

**2. Modulation**

This involves a change of perspective, adjusting what has been written in order to express the same idea and preserve the meaning. This translates the text in a way that conforms to the natural patterns of the target language.

Example: A French speaker will talk about the ‘dernier étage’ [literally; last stage] of a building, while an English speaker will refer to the ‘top floor’.

**3. Equivalence/Reformulation**

Similar to modulation, this allows you to preserve the meaning of an expression, name or proverb by finding a target language equivalent.

Example: The phrase ‘être sur son 31’ [literally; to be on one’s thirty-one] would be the French equivalent to the English phrase ‘to be dressed up to the nines’.

**4. Adaptation**

Also known as cultural substitution, cultural elements of the source language are replaced with an equivalent cultural element of the target language. This makes the text more familiar and easier to understand, especially with units of measurement.

Example: Cyclisme (French) = football (UK) = baseball (US).

**5. Compensation**

This technique compensates for being unable to translate a nuance or phrase in one specific place by expressing the information at another point in the document.

Example: While the English language only has one way of saying ‘you’, French has both ‘tu’ (informal) and ‘vous’ (formal). By making specific word choices elsewhere in the text, the translator can compensate for the loss of nuance.

**6. Reduction**

When using reduction, the translator chooses to remove any words forming the original text which are considered redundant in the target language.

Example: The French ‘sciences politiques’ [literally; political sciences] can be rendered in English as just ‘politics’.

**7. Expansion**

The opposite of reduction, this is when words are added in order to preserve meaning. This can be due to differences in sentence structure, grammar or terminology.

Example: The reverse of reduction, ‘politics’ in English would be rendered as ‘sciences politiques’ in French. Since French also uses gender articles, expansion is natural when translating from English into French.

**Choosing the right techniques for the best translation**

The right technique will vary on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the text type, target reader and end purpose of your translation. Our team of professional translators will use their experience and expertise in both languages to choose the right technique for your text, giving you the most accurate translation possible.