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Horizontal and vertical terminology work in the context of EU translations

The aim of this paper is to analyse the decisions the translator has to take while translating terminology in EU texts. Starting with the theoretical aspects, the interrelation of terminology and translation will be explored – leading to the reinterpretation of some key terms in both disciplines: the notion of term in a translation-oriented perspective, and the notion of translation in a terminology-oriented perspective. Second, turning to the EU context, a short overview will be given of the peculiarities of the EU's language regime and its impact on the role of translators as terminologists. Third, it will be revealed how the interconnection of conceptual systems and languages at EU level makes terminology work a multi-layered activity, with a number of decisions to be taken by the translator. Two terms, horizontal and vertical terminology work, will be introduced to label these activities. Special attention will be paid to the notion of EU term. It will be argued that the emergence of a special EU-language and terminology and the limits of corpus planning at national level make the involvement of Member States especially relevant in this context.

Key terms: *EU terminology, EU translation, terminology in translation, horizontal and vertical terminology work, the notion of term*

Introduction

It is often established in the literature of both terminology theory and translation studies that translators are not only end-users of terminology products but also take over the role of terminologists – either during the translation process, while retaining their 'status' as translators or working as terminologists, thus formally occupying such positions. The European Union provides an excellent context for a deeper examination of this phenomenon. First, the creation and translation of EU terms offers a study field worthy of examination for both translation studies and terminology theory. Second, given the vital role translation plays in upholding the EU's institutional multilingualism, this context offers an opportunity for integrating the results of both disciplines. Finally, due to the lack of an underlying consistent theoretical framework for analysing terminology issues in EU translations, a systematic analysis can have great relevance for both theory and practice (including the training of EU translators). This is also justified by the fact that, after accession, Member States can only participate in language and terminology planning through their translators – as all translation activities are transferred to the EU institutions.

Terminology and translation – in theory and practice

Any research making an attempt to explore terminology in translation or vica versa is made difficult by the fact that the current state of both disciplines is characterised by the existence of multiple approaches and a rich, multilingual literature (see also Fischer, 2018; Fóris, 2020; Klaudy 2007, 2020). Furthermore, for a long time, terminology theory was not concerned with translation issues, and translation studies did not show any interest in terminology issues. The main reason for this phenomenon was that Eugen Wüster's *General Theory of Terminology*, which provided the theoretical framework for approaching translation issues within terminology, did not assign great significance to translation issues. However, the first translator training programmes in the 1970s and 1980s revealed that the principles of Wüster's General

Theory of Terminology needed updating. In other words, experience arising in the course of translation played an important role in shaping the theoretical approaches to terminology. The intersection of the two disciplines is, by now, evident (see also Thelen, 2015; Fischer, 2014).

In my previous works, I gave an extensive analysis of the key terms of terminology theory in a translation-oriented approach, and showed how terminology theory may contribute to translation studies (Fischer, 2014; 2018; 2019). In the following, I will focus on two aspects, the notion of term and the notion of translation.

The notion of 'term' in a translation-oriented perspective

The notion of term has a narrower and a broader approach. The narrower approach may be traced back to the beginnings of terminology theory. The second half of the 19th century, the time of industrial development, was characterised by an unusual amount of new concepts and terms that appeared mostly in engineering sciences. Synonymy and polysemy soon made communication in expert communities hard and rather chaotic, and the need for conscious language planning emerged so as to achieve optimal technical communication. This led to the launch of the first harmonisation attempts and the establishment of a new theory, a concept-oriented approach, developed by Eugen Wüster (1974). In this theory, the term was rather considered as the "final product" of a prescriptive, standardising process.

Later on, the critiques of Wüster's basic principles (like the priority of the system level and the prescriptive approach) called for the modification of his theory and also for changing the definition of 'term' (cf. Cabré, 2000; Gerzymisch-Arbogast, 1996; Heltai, 1981; Muráth, 2002; Pearson, 1998; Temmermann, 2000). It was shown that a number of factors, such as context, synonymy, regional differences, actual language use ought to be taken into consideration. This need was justified by the experiences of translator training institutions in the 1970s ans 1980s that showed that translators not only face terms that comply with the requirements of the narrow approach. In other words, a wider interpretation of the notion of term was necessitated. This broad approach led to the emergence of a number of new theories and schools within terminology (for an overview see l'Homme, 2005 and Temmerman, 2000).

The analysis of translation issues within terminology requires the broader approach of the notion of term. Here, the underlying question is whether the translator's freedom is restricted or not. As Thelen (2007) puts it, when translators come across terminology, they do not have as much freedom as in the case of translating general language. In this broad, translation-oriented approach, any lexical unit that describes a concept and restricts the freedom of translator may be considered as a term. This is the reason why phrases and whole sentences may find their way, as terms, into translation-oriented databases. As a consequence, if we interpret the notion of term too narrowly, we may end up excluding important terms from our database (Smith – Ceusters – Temmerman, 2005). Taking the translator's freedom as the basis for identifying terms, becomes especially relevant when general words only 'act' as terms in a specific context or even text (for examples see Fischer, 2019).

To conclude, the notion of term may be interpreted in different ways according to the actual project or translation assignment (L'Homme, 2005:1130). As translation provides the framework for terminology work in the EU context, the broader, translation-oriented approach needs to be followed also in the EU context.

The notion of translation in a terminology-oriented perspective

In this section, an attempt will be made to show how terminology theory may give a new dimension for analysing translation-related issues. By analysing the interconnection of languages and conceptual systems, it will be shown that translation may be defined not only in the dimension of languages but, equally importantly, in the dimension of conceptual systems.

Given the number of official languages and legal systems interacting at EU level, this double perspective will play a crucial role in understanding terminology work in the EU context.

Relying on Sandrini's model (Sandrini, 2004) on transnational interlingual communication, I will present in what combinations language(s) may relate to conceptual system(s). To make a clear delimitation possible, conceptual system is understood as legal system and language is considered as the official language within a state. Three categories may be differentiated.

The first category can be described as a one-to-one relationship, where one language enjoys official status in one state, and it only describes the conceptual system of that specific state (Hungarian – Hungary). The second category represents a more-to-one relationship, which is typical in states where more languages have official status and, hence, more languages belong to one and the same conceptual system (Maltese, English – Malta). Finally, a one-to-more relationship is, when one language belongs to more conceptual systems, that is, the language is officially recognised in several states (German – Austria, Germany, Luxemburg, Belgium). Due to its (partly) supranational nature, the EU also developed its own conceptual (autonomous legal) system, which may be compared to the second category: one conceptual system described, at present, by twenty-four official languages.

Taking into account both the language and conceptual level, it becomes quite clear that translation may be interpreted not only between two languages – as is usually the case. As it is shown in Graph 1, translation may be carried out between *two languages and two conceptual systems* (when translating a Hungarian contract into UK English), *between two languages and within one conceptual system* (when translating EU terms from English into Hungarian) and, quite rarely, *within one language and between two conceptual systems* (when translating an Austrian contract into German).

Graph 1. Translation in the dimension of languages and conceptual systems

(1) Translation between two languages and two conceptual systems

(2) Translation between two languages and within one conceptual systems

(3) Translation within one language and between two conceptual systems
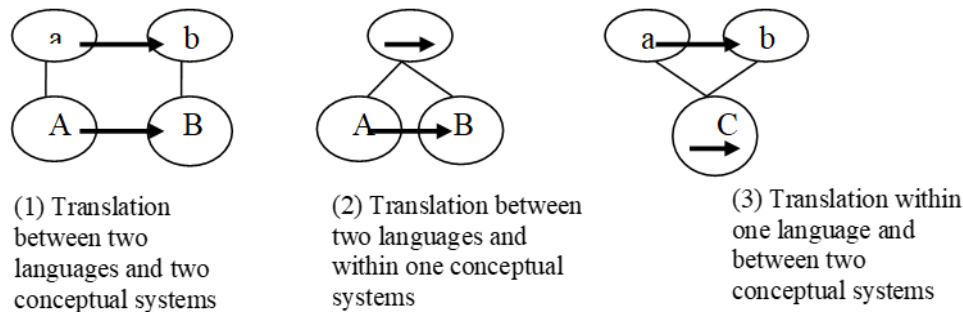
Integrating the conceptual dimension, i.e. the terminology-oriented perspective into translation plays an important role due to several reasons. If translation is carried out between two languages and within one conceptual system – case (2) – this challenges the notion of translation as *inter*cultural transfer. Speaking about translation, we automatically conclude that two languages also involve two different cultures, as well. This approach, especially since the cultural turn in translation studies, has been quite common in the literature of translation studies. However, the very fact that one conceptual system, and therefore one culture, may be described by more languages, questions this theory. As a number of researchers point out, international cooperation (and integration) also lead to the homogenisation of cultures and conceptual systems (cf. Koskinen, 2000; Sandrini, 2010a; Vermes, 2003). According to Kjaer (2015) even the interdependency of legal language and legal system becomes questionable. This is also true for the EU context, where 24 languages have to describe the same reality, i.e. the EU conceptual system. This means that the translation of EU is carried out *within one conceptual system*.

With this in mind, we can also refine the notion of term creation (Fischer, 2010). Sager (1990) makes a distinction between primary and secondary term creation – the former being a monolingual activity while the latter involving translation. Based on the conceptual dimension of translation above, Sager's secondary term creation my be divided into two cases, depending on whether translation is carried out within one conceptual system – case (3) – or between two conceptual systems – cases (1) and (2). To conclude, terminology can add a new dimension to the interpretation of translation (e.g. translation within one conceptual system and between two conceptual systems). This distinction is of utmost importance when analysing multilingual term creation and translation within the EU-conceptual system.

Terminology and translation – in the EU context

The European Union is not a classical international organisation, such as the Council of Europe or the United Nations, nor is it a federal state. It combines both intergovernmental and supranational elements. Due to the direct applicability of some legal acts (i.e. regulations) and the direct effect of EU legislation, the number of official languages is, compared to other international organisations, unprecedented.

The provisions for institutional multilingualism were laid down by the Council in its very first Regulation in 1958. Although a distinction is often drawn between official and working languages, it is important to emphasise that the Regulation does not differentiate between these two categories. Naturally though, communication in the EU institutions would become impossible if all the official languages had to be used as working languages, as well. The institutions can lay down in their rules of procedure, which languages – in practice mostly English or French – they will use in their internal procedures. Consequently, translation is inherent in EU institutional munltilingualism. Documents are drafted mainly in English (or in the European Court of Justice in French), and translated into the other official languages. Most official languages may thus well be considered as having a "target language" status (Fischer 2008: 384).

The official status also entails that every official language has to establish its „EU function", i.e. create its EU terminology. Sager's primary term creation process is in theory a simultaneous, multilingual activity but in practice, for most languages, this means a secondary (translation) activity. In other words, translation provides the framework for terminology, which shows the importance of translators in this context. This role is enhanced by the fact that, after the accession of Member States, translation activity and terminology work are transferred to the EU institutions. In terms of language planning, this means the following: in status planning, the involvement of Member States is secured by their veto right in laying down the number of EU official languages while in corpus planning (in creating EU terminology), the direct involvement of Member States is rather limited.

The notion of term in the EU context

Similarly to the definition of 'term', in general, there is no coherent definition for EU terms to be found in terminology literature. When analysing EU-rooted phenomena at lexical level within the framework of the *Eurolect Observatory* project, Mori and Szmrecsanyi (2020) analyse the occurrence of 'semantic Europeisms', i.e. semantic calques used with an additional, EU-specific meaning (such as *approximation* or *harmonise*), and 'EU words' (such as *comitology* and *subsidiarity*). Also, EU-related terminology is often referred to as *Eurospeak, Euish, Eurofog* or *Eurojargon*. However, these designations rather carry a negative connotation, and only express concerns that EU citizens may not understand EU texts – mainly because of the specific (EU) terms used in these texts.

The *euro-* prefix is also problematic as it may describe languages spoken, generally, in Europe, outside the EU context, and which are affected by other languages, mainly English (cf. Muhr – Kettermann 2004). Although *Euro-English* is often used in the context of EU institutions, it may also refer to continental English spoken by non-native speakers in Europe. Furthermore, in my doctoral dissertation, the interviews conducted with EU terminologists also revealed that translators do not have a single label when referring to EU terms, either. Labels such as *"EU coloured terms"* or *"European constructions"* were used when wanting to emphasise that the term in question relates to an EU concept. Furthermore, questions such as *"how to demonstrate that the designation is something different"* or *"why do we need a different designation"* reflect the difficulty of translating in an EU context. As a result, a significant part of terminological problems result from the difficulty of recognising EU terms (Fischer, 2010).

In the following, I will rely on the definition of Rádai-Kovács (2009), who considers legal (e.g. *regulation, directive, opinion*, etc.), administrative (e.g. *rapporteur, ordinary legislative procedure, preliminary ruling*) and other, domain-specific terms that describe EU concepts as *euroterminology*, regardless of the text type they appear in. In other words, contrary to common misbeliefs, EU terms also cover a number of domain-specific terms, such as *inclusive growth (*economy*), irregular migration* (social policy), *skills mismatch* (education plicy). These terms describe EU concepts, and have an EU-specific definition.

The interaction of languages and conceptual systems in the EU context

As we could see in the previous section, the European integration process brings about a number of new concepts. They relate either to EU legislation covering various subject fields or to the everyday functioning of the European Union. As a result of this phenomenon, an autonomous EU conceptual (legal) system has been developed and is expanding constantly (Biel 2014, Somssich 2011). However, this system can not be considered separately or completely cut off from the national conceptual (legal) systems (Kjaer, 2007:79). The EU conceptual system is also in close interaction with the conceptual systems of Member States.

Since there is no common, neutral 'EU language' that could describe the EU conceptual system exclusively, this task has to be carried out by the 24 official EU languages. As Sosoni (2018:182) points out, EU (legal) concepts *"need linguistic clothing"*. As a result, the EU conceptual system with its 24 languages can be referred to as a *one conceptual system–more languages* relationship, e.g. case (2) of the terminology-oriented approach of translation. It is, however, important to point out that the EU official languages are also the official languages of the Member States. As a consequence, EU official languages have to fulfil a double role: they have to describe both the EU conceptual system and the conceptual systems of the Member States, making terminology work in the EU context a complex activity. This leads to the multiplication of relationships between conceptual systems and languages in the EU context: all three cases (language – conceptual system combinations) may be present while translating EU-texts.

Translating terminology in the EU context: horizontal and vertical terminology work

The difficulty of translating EU texts lies in the fact that texts may contain both EU terms (terms belonging to the EU conceptual system) and non-EU terms (terms belonging to Member State or universal conceptual systems). The translation of these different term types requires different types of terminology work. While the translation of (Member State specific) non-EU terms is carried out *between different conceptual systems*, the translation of EU terms is carried out *within one conceptual system*. Therefore, it is crucial for the translator to recognise whether the

term in question is an EU or non-EU term. In other words, it is highly revelant to distinguish between EU and non-EU terms.

Starting with EU terms, it is important to distinguish between already established EU terms and EU terms that still need to be created. If the EU term is already established and equivalents are available in all the official languages in the IATE terminology database (e.g. the names of the EU legal acts), the translator's only task is to find the official equivalent in the target language and match the source language EU term to the target language EU term (e.g. *regulation – rendelet, directive – irányelv*). At concept level, it is not a difficult task, rather a *'matching exercise'* as a single concept is described in 24 languages.

To the contrary, if a new EU term needs to be coined, the task is more difficult. In theory, the official status of EU languages would presuppose that EU terms are being created paralelly, in the 24 official language of the EU. In reality, the creation of terms is carried out in two steps: terms are first created in the dominating languages (mainly in English) and then translated into all the other official languages. This means that, in most languages, target terms (secondary terms) are created on the basis of a source term (primary term), through translation. Evidently, translators depart from a primary term which inevitably influences their choice for the TL equivalent – leading to a peculiar 'EU layer' in the official languages that often sounds foreign to speakers of that language.

Furthermore, in this case, the translator also needs to check whether the proposed term for the new EU concept is already 'taken' at national level. In other words, the translator needs to move between the EU and the MS conceptual system so as to see if the proposed term in the TL already designates another national concept. Without this move, it may occur that one and the same term describes both an EU and a national concept, which may lead to much confusion, i.e. the conceptual variability of one and the same term. As Sandrini (2010b:147) points out, linguistic tools are limited, it is inevitable that one term describes both an EU and a national concept. An example is *entrepreneurship* which originally relates to the act of setting up or running a business (UK concept) but now also relates to the ability of carrying out this activity, i.e. a key EU competence (EU concept). A similar example is *value added tax (VAT)*. In Hungarian, however, the deliberate choice was made to diffierentate between the EU (*hozzáadottérték-adó*) and the HU concept (*általános forgalmi adó*). Given the EU – MS relation of this exercise, I labelled this type of terminology work as *'vertical terminology work'*, which means comparative terminology work between two systems but within one language.

However, EU texts may also contain non-EU terms, i.e. terms relating to Member State conceptual systems. Here also, a comparison is needed: between Member State conceptual systems. Given the MS – MS relation of this exercise, I labelled this type of terminology work as *'horizontal terminology work'* in the EU context. This type of work is especially relevant when the conceptual (legal, economic, education, etc.) systems are different – when translating school or company types from English into Hungarian.

The two types of terminology work are shown in Graph 2. As Sandrini (2005:155) points out, the graphical presentation of conceptual (legal) systems necessarily entails simplification – but it is also a useful tool to illustrate complexity.

Graph 2. Translation and terminology work in the EU context
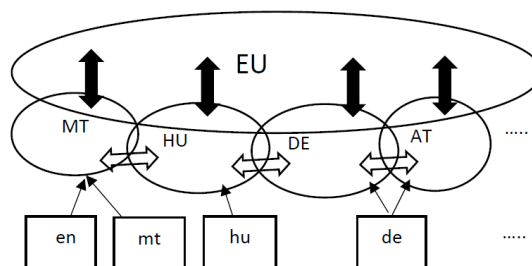
In both cases (vertical and horizontal terminology work), the comparison of the two conceptual systems (either EU – MS or MS – MS) may result in two translation choices: domesticating or foreignising. If translators want to emphasise similarity between the two conceptual systems, then they match the SL with the TL term (domesticating). In this case, the two concepts are not identical but similar enough to match the two terms. The TL term is then called a functional equivalent. In the EU – MS relation, the EU term *personal data breach* provides an example (Somssich 2021). In this case, an already available Hungarian national term (*adatvédelmi incidens*) was taken as the HU equivalent of the EU term – which, interestingly, has a history of foreignising, originally being a calque of the US term (*privacy incident*). In the MS – MS relation, a classic example is the company type *private company limited by shares* (*ltd*) translated as *korlátolt felelősségű társaság* (*kft*) or, as a better match, *zártkörű részvénytársaság* (*zrt*) into Hungarian.

If, however, translators want to highlight the difference between two conceptual systems, they need to use a translation equivalent – a TL term that only describes the SL concept and does not relate to any national concept (foreignising). The translation equivalent is created by calque/borrowing, paraphrasing or a new term. Following the previous example, the translation equivalent of *ltd* would be a simple takeover or paraphrase of the English term. Furthermore, the Hungarian term *hozzáadottérték-adó* (the equivalent of the EU terms *value added tax*) is also a translation equivalent as it only describes the EU concept and does not relate to any national concept.

This dilemma (foreignising vs. domesticating) also appears in translation studies. The skopos theory placed great emphasis on domesticating. According to this strategy, functional equivalents should be given priority. However, if the SL and TL conceptual systems are different, the use of functional equivalents may be misleading for the target audience. Therefore, both strategies, both decisions, may be justified. It is especially relevant in a field, like legal translations, where the emphasis of differences may play a significant role (Biel, 2008). From the point of view of the translator this may be also relevant since, quite often, dictionaries do not make any distinction between functional and translation equivalents.

Conclusion

The European Union developed its own conceptual (legal) system. As there is no neutral language that excusively describes the EU concepts, the official language(s) of Member States fulfil a double function: they describe both the EU and the Member State systems. Furthermore, while some languages function as drafting languages, other languages are rather confined to a "target language" status – i.e. EU texts are translated from *de facto* working languages, mainly English, into the other official EU languages. Consequently, the EU context is characterised by the interaction of a number of conceptual systems and languages – making the translator's (terminology) work multidirectional.

The translation of EU terms requires, in my understanding, *vertical terminology work,* a comparison between the EU and MS conceptual system so as to check whether the proposed term is free to be taken to describe the EU concept. Once EU terms are established in the official languages, translation turns into a 'matching exercise', i.e. the established official TL equivalent needs to be followed. The translation of non-EU terms takes an other direction: it requires *horizontal terminology work*, a comparison between MS conceptual systems. The more different the systems are, the more difficult the translator's task becomes. In both cases, the key decision is whether to follow a foreignising strategy (by using/creating a translation equivalent) or domesticating strategy (by using a functional equivalent). As EU texts are peppered with both EU and non-EU terms, both types of terminology work are relevant in the EU context – and it is crucial for the translator to distinguish between EU and non-EU terms.

A further consequence is that EU translators and terminologists have a catalyst role in forming the terminology of a number of domains. Their solutions can have wide ranging impact, through EU legislation, influential documents and the IATE database. Their key role is further enhanced by the fact that, after accession, EU institutions are in charge of translation, and Member States can only participate in this process (i.e. in corpus planning) through their translators.

According to Kinga Klaudy (2004:36), the immense translation activity required to maintain the multilingual institutions of the EU provides translation studies with a real opportunity to become the discipline of European integration. As it was shown, this is only conceivable, if translation studies incorporate the findings of terminology theory, and terminology theory incorporates the findings of translation studies.

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