



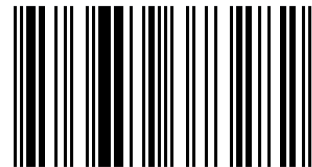
Specialized Languages

The volume *Specialized Languages and Conceptualization* includes in-depth studies on terminology and terminography in an interdisciplinary approach. Specialized communication and translation problems cover multiple languages, such as English, French, German, Romanian, Hungarian and Russian. Diachronic sources and term trajectories have been taken into consideration for a better explanation of synchronic behavior. The denotative mobility of terms correlated with contrastive studies (English–French, Russian–Romanian, Hungarian–Romanian, etc.) confers a unique flavor to this volume. The uniformity stems from the topic as well as from the level of approach: term analysis and specialized senses, conceptual-semantic dimension, as well as syntagmatic and paradigmatic levels. The studies in the volume go beyond the lexical semantic analysis, as the authors also pursue problems of contextual terminology, specialized translation and interculturality.



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1.3. Technical Terminology

Attila IMRE: Terms and Technology

Abstract

The introductory part of the article focuses on the task of the translator including translator's competence and responsibility. The second part offers definitions of terms in modern times, when the technological development must be considered, followed by a section describing modern possibilities to create and handle terminology (CAT-tools). The conclusion tries to explain why technology has not overcome translators.

Key-words: translator's competence, terminology, technology, CAT-tools.

Introduction

It is beyond doubt that the task and role of the translator has changed in the 21st century, but what strikes us most is the still prevailing 'mystery' about translators and their profession.

Laypeople still think that a bilingual person can translate without any problems (Simigné Fenyő 2006:9), although it has long been proven that this is not the case. The UNESCO General Conference in Nairobi (1976) stated that "a translator should as far as possible translate into his or her own mother tongue or into a language of which he or she has a mastery equal to that of his or her mother tongue", but this recommendation is hardly taken into consideration in many parts of the world even after more than three decades. Newmark (1969:85) – in a less polished style – offers a possible explanation for this: 'any old fool can

learn a language ... but it takes an intelligent person to become a translator’.

The type of intelligence a translator needs has been long the subject of debates, often under the heading ‘competence’. According to Bell (1991), the translator’s knowledge includes the source language, the target language, the type of text and the expertise of the particular area, which is completed by knowledge of contrastive linguistics (Simigné Fenyő 2006:166). She adds that cultural knowledge, coding and decoding abilities as well as creativity should also be part of the translators’ knowledge, and we think that the last decade proved that technical knowledge should be much more taken into consideration than before.

The translator’s competence as such is still not a guarantee for a successful translation, as there are extremely many opinions what may be considered a good translation, which is often subjective. Károly (2007:54–60) dedicates long pages to map what is included in the translator’s competence. The majority of authors enlist *language competence* in two languages, *communicative competence*, *acquired interlinguistic competence* (Bell 1991, Hewson and Martin 1991:52), *translational language competence* (Cao 1996:328), but in a wider context translators need *cultural* or *extralinguistic competence* as well (Klaudy 2003:121). We believe that *technical competence* is getting more and more important taking into consideration the amount of time and money invested in it.

Albert is convinced that the major task of the translator is primarily translation, and not additional information or comments given on the verge of translation (Albert 2011:140), even disregarding cultural adaptation.

When Benjamin describes the task of the translator, he focuses on the “intended effect (Intention) upon the language” in order produce “the echo of the original” (Benjamin 2000:19–20). Although this seems very difficult to produce (let us not say *impossible*), Levý has three major tips

for the success: first “fully comprehend the original”, then “interpret the original”, and finally “translate the original”, which is possible if the translator is “an efficient reader” (Weissbort and Eysteinsson 2006:341).

A further branch of the translator’s task is *meaning*. According to Gadamer, “the translator must translate the meaning to be understood into the context in which the other speaker lives” (Gadamer 2004:386), and preserving the so-called ‘original’ meaning is a rather demanding task. Newmark is also concerned about the meaning of the text, and in his work entitled *No Global Communication Without Translation* (Newmark 2003:55) he defines translation as “taking the meaning from one text and integrating it into another language for a new and sometimes different readership”. The possible (modern) roots of meaning may be found in Catford (1965:35): “it is generally agreed that *meaning* is important in translation”, although this statement is – correctly – considered today an understatement by Martin Weston. Jiří Levý (in Weissbort and Eysteinsson 2006:337) mentions that bringing everything across during translation is impossible, so the translator has to make choices “what elements of the work must be preserved in order for it to function as a whole in its new language”. Thus the major task is to ‘minimize the wrinkles between the foreign and the native’. The translator as an efficient reader “refashions the work for another reader” (see *Translation as a Decision-Making Process*, 1967) and translation is compared to the performing arts, especially dramatic performance. Kuhiwchak states:

Translators are responsible for the quality of the texts both as writers and as critics. If we listen to translators carefully – though they are not very often listened to – we shall find that the best of them tell us that in order to translate well one needs to be both knowledgeable and inspired, meticulous and sympathetic. One needs to possess the critical as well as the creative faculty. A truly professional translator needs to know languages, but also the social norms, reading habits, and stylistic preferences of the

culture from which he takes, as well as of the one to which he contributes” (Kuhiwchak 2003:116).

This responsibility (even if it is an ever increasing burden) may be traced in the more and more varied tasks translators have to deal with thanks to the development of technology, not really willing to give up the hope that transmitting cultures is possible. To sum up, many arguments have been mentioned in this section.

Nevertheless, we would like to add our own, as a side-effect of the 21st century translation is about to take shape, namely the financial aspect. The majority of freelance translators struggle hard to survive and remain in ‘competition’, and this may lay some consequences on their work. Even if the task is completed from the classical point of view, translators must carry their task out in a way to ensure themselves further ones. If ‘betrayal’ of the text is still valid in the 21st century, this has to include ‘loyalty’ towards the customer, without affecting too much the quality of translation. As the quality of translation is often subjectively decided, it is not our aim to decide degrees of quality, but a fact regarding the task and role of translators in our days is undeniable: their task and role is more and more complicated, which is due to the ‘global village’ in which more and more contacts are established on various levels and through different channels of communication, taking into consideration the rapid development of technology as well. The next section offers a glimpse about approaching terminology today.

Definition of term(inus technicus)

Á. Kis (2005:105) starts his article with a rather interesting question: who does terminology belong to? Although terminology once belonged to lexicologists, even today it is a ‘side-product’ of lexicography, he is very

confident that today terminology belongs to translators. Sager states that “just as lexicology is the study of a type of lexical item generally referred to as words, so terminology is the study of terms.” (Baker 2001:259). More than thirty years ago Pusztaï placed terminology at the boundary of language studies, logics, ontology, informatics and special sciences (Pusztaï 1980:7). The next logical step would be to find a proper definition of technical terms.

A very brief definition of terms belongs to Á. Kis: *terminus technicus* is an expression belonging to a technical language (Ádám Kis 2005:106), but we think that this definition should be explicated. For instance, *expression* may refer to one word or a combination of words, and the definition of *technical language* may be problematic as well. The *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* offers a longer explanation:

Terms differ from words in that they are endowed with a special form of reference, namely that they refer to discrete conceptual entities, properties, activities or relations which constitute the knowledge space of a particular subject field. In order to differentiate between general and special reference in linguistic parlance, a distinction is established between **terms** which have special reference within a particular discipline, and **words** which function in general reference over a variety of subject fields. And, to increase the specificity of reference, agreements are concluded on the precise meaning and expression forms of lexical items by means of processes of regularization, harmonization and standardization (Baker 2001:261).

The various definitions of (technical) terms highlight different aspects; some of them take into account their ‘form’ (one word or expression), others focus on meaning (a term must be as clear as possible, thus only one meaning is attached to one term), synonymous terms are excluded, but what is most important, their meaning is well-established (without overlaps), so it cannot be extended or reduced. If so, they should

be context-free; their usage is rather restricted, being used only by a small group of experts.

As Sager explains, “translators often find that they need to establish identity among concepts, to deal with instances where concepts are similar rather than identical, and to create target language terms for new concepts” (Baker 2001:259), although Heltai warns us about the difficulty of separating technical terms from standard/vernacular/colloquial ones (Heltai 2004:30). Some terms (actually the majority of them) are compound word/expressions; the same terms may have different meanings in different sciences, or even terms may have synonyms (Heltai’s example is *speed* and *velocity*, 2004:28–29), and it is not necessarily true that they lack connotation and emotional meaning (Heltai 2004:32). Another interesting case is when the same concept may be referred to with a foreign word or a native one: this often happens when medical terms are involved, but our favourite example is the Hungarian *kerékpár* and *bicikli* (bicycle). Whereas the first word is the official technical term (used by experts and in the media), the second one is still widespread and can be considered the foreign origin variant of the same technical term, probably rejected by purists (emotional meaning involved?). Studies about medical terms show that even if native terms are recommended (patients have the right to understand their own health problem), when medically trained people communicate, they prefer Latin/English terms or their abbreviated form.

The traditional approach to technical terms included the existence of a proper definition for a new term. However, the rapid technological development leaves no time to proper definitions (Ádám Kis 2004:47). The necessity of creating new terms (especially due to the cutting-edge technology) always appears when so-called ‘outsiders’ are involved (e.g.

marketing a product), until which the technical jargon may use alphanumeric codes or joker words (*gadget*), as Á. Kis explains.

When a new term is created, two major conditions must be met: accuracy (without the slightest overlap in meaning with any other term) and perspicuity (the term must clearly cover the concept), thus polysemy is excluded (Ádám Kis 2005:107). A good question of Heltai whether the chemist thinks of water as H₂O while having a bath (Heltai 2004:36), which may be a further evidence that however technical a term, they are not always context-free and the communicative aim should be taken into consideration, leading us to the next section.

Creating and handling terminology; technology

Freelance translators often face immense difficulties when translate technical texts, and the explanation is simple: dictionaries (either online or print versions) usually contain only those terms which are already accepted (based on the multiple occurrence of the same translated terminus technicus), hardly ever new ones, whereas newer and newer technical texts ‘come out’ containing new terms (Ádám Kis 2005:110).

This is the reason why Á. Kis highlights the importance of translators in creating and handling (new) terminology, as the technical translator is familiar with the subject matter, a keen user of the source language, having a proper linguistic competence in the target language (cf. translator’s competence).

Furthermore, another aspect worth considering (after creating terms) is *handling* terminology. It is our firm belief that consistency in terminology is one of the key factors in 21st century translation industry, which is only ensured by proper usage of specific software.

Although Newmark says that terminology being standardised is closely related to *machine translation* (Newmark 2003:64), we have in

mind *computer-assisted translation tools* (CAT-tools), more precisely *translation environments* (term-base management and translation memory). These *translation environments* (TE) offer the possibility of creating brand new terms, check consistency in a vast amount of text, but the same term may have different variants when used in different fields.

Creators of these environments know that terms are context-bound (Balázs Kis and Lengyel 2005:56–57), although researchers in the previous section argued for context-free terms. Furthermore, term base management of TE offers the possibility to use everyday words as specialised terms (in different contexts). Thus their definition relies heavily on consistency: if the inconsistent translation of any word or phrase destroys the intelligibility of translation, that word or phrase belongs to terminology.

The main parts of TE are the translation memory, the term base, the aligner and the translation editor (word processor). As MemoQ developers explain:

The translation memory stores pairs of sentences. As you proceed in the text, the translation workspace checks if the translation memory contains a sentence similar enough to the one you are translating. If there is such a sentence, it will appear as a translation hit, and the workspace will indicate the difference between the current sentence and the stored sentence. ... If you want to build a glossary from certain expressions and their translations, you can use the term base. Terms are expressions in multiple languages, optionally complemented with additional data. The word processor in the translation workspace automatically displays the translations of the terms occurring in the text, to be inserted using a single keystroke. (MemoQ Quick Start Guide 2010)

Although many recent (usually online) articles state that the days of human translation are to be ended (Zetzsche 2009, Boulton 2010), this is questionable. The best scenario is that machine translation comes to

support human translation with an immense database, but the translation memory will be much more limited, as the chance of fully repeating a sentence is very reduced, except for idiomatic expressions, clichés, specific situations: very similar technical texts, everyday conversations, (Imre 2010). Anyway, one of the most sobering opinions belongs to Gouadec: “The PRAT or Pencil and Rubber-Assisted Translator is clearly on the way out, though there are still a few specimens at large. The Computer-Assisted Translator has taken over” (Gouadec 2007:109). Translators have to be computer-literate in many ways, starting from computer hardware and software. The development of computer hardware led to the development of computer software as well, and nowadays we even talk about cross-platform software, which runs on Windows, Linux and/or Mac operating systems as well.

More and more translation environments appear (e.g. *MemoQ* from Kilgray), older ones are ‘refurbished’ (e.g. SDL® Trados™), new features are added, such as quality assurance, plug-ins (to online resources). We tend to think that the popularity of translation industry results from at least three main reasons: the unifying Europe with all its official languages, globalization overall, and the technological development with the immense potential of the internet (Imre 2011:359–360). As Biau Gil and Pym (2006:17) explain, “Technology is not an option in today’s professional world; it is a necessity. Years ago one talked about Computer-Aided Translation (CAT). That now seems a redundancy. Virtually all translating is aided by computers.”

Conclusions

Creating new terms and properly handling them – building them into previous databases, constantly checking consistency and spelling, excluding repetitive elements – falls back on human translators if quality

is needed. Even if certain conventions “such as translating exclusively into the mother tongue, or only translating in and for a particular country of residence, are no longer necessarily adhered to” (Díaz Cintas 2003:202).

The investment in new technology (financial, learning and time spent on it) should be less than the benefits, but investment may seem necessary if clients need it. If required, translators “have to learn very fast, but you are at least sure that you have the right tool for the available job” (Biau Gil and Pym 2006:18). No wonder that they draw the conclusion: “Only when translators are critically aware of the available tools can they hope to be in control of their work.” (2006:19). We can add to the above observations that technology is a more and more feared aspect of modern translation, basically because stereotypical translators had a non-technical educational background. However, in the last decades a new type of translator has made its appearance, with a firm technical knowledge. We believe this is the only reason why technology hasn’t overcome translators.

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