

The Challenges of Technical Translation: Case Study

Alina Buzarna-Tihenea (Galbeaza),
Lavinia Nadrag
Ovidius University of Constanta, Faculty of Letters
Alina_buzarna84@yahoo.com
lnadrag28@yahoo.com

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to provide an analysis of the textile industry vocabulary, in order to highlight the variety of the terms used to describe the respective field and to emphasize the difficulties that hinder the translation of a specialized text. Firstly, this paper briefly tackles several general elements related to the translation process, such as the definition of translation, the difference between general and specialized translation, translation methods and techniques. The second part of our study is focused on the difficulties triggered by the specialized translation from the field of textile manufacture and industry. For the purpose of our analysis, we tackled the issues raised by the application of several direct translation techniques, such as, borrowing, calque, and literal translation, described in the first part of the study.

Key words: specialized terminology, textile industry vocabulary, direct translation techniques, English-Romanian translation, meaning

J.E.L. classification: K00

1. Introduction

As English has become an increasingly global language, also known as *lingua franca*, more and more people are getting multilingual, with translation or code-switching as a major communicative activity. The concept of *translation* covers several meanings. Thus, it can make reference to the subject field (i.e. translation studies), to the product (i.e. the translated text) or to the translation process. Within the translation process, the translator represents the receiver of the message transmitted by the source text and s/he is also the transmitter of that message in the target text, by means of verbal communication components (Baker, 2001).

As far as Vermeer (2012) is concerned, he understands the process of translation as the application, i.e. the transfer of the knowledge and meaning of the text from the source language and of its context into the text from the target language. In other words, as far as the accuracy of the message is concerned, the translator is greatly responsible when translation is to be put into practice. Practically, we may argue that the translator is seen as the mediator, as an interface between the source text and the target text, in terms of culture and context delivery. In this respect, we take for granted the assumption delivered in the research paper of Daniel Gouadec, *Translation as a Profession* (2007: 5), according to whom translation must meet a number of requirements, both as regards the message from the target text and the ways, the methods used in order to convey it. Therefore, it must comply, besides the text beneficiary's aims and objectives, with the usage, standards and conventions applicable, namely: grammar, spelling, terminology, phraseology. While largely relying on this statement, we would add the fact that the cultural transfer of the core message from the source language to the target language must be achieved in terms of acceptance within the context.

2. General translation versus specialized translation

From the point of view of specialization, translation may be subcategorized as general translation and specialized translation. The former involves non-specific terminology, non-metalinguistic vocabulary and knowledge. The latter implies specialty knowledge in specific fields (such as law, finance, medicine, IT, science) and specialized terminology (Gouadec, 2007:28); moreover, these translations address a restricted group of readers, due to the specific terminology they entail. In order to cope with specialized texts, the translator should gain a profound understanding of the source text, as a first stage in the translation process (Austermühl, 2010:7).

For instance, this paper tackles several translation issues raised by several specialized texts focused on the presentation of how blue jeans and the Denim fabric are made, and the regulations regarding particularly the textile industry in the USA. The terminology implied by this text is, to a certain extent, specialized, but comprehensible to any word-user. Thus, the main aim of this text is that of providing the people operating in the textile industry with essential legal information, thus regulating or updating the performance in this branch of industry. At the same time, one should notice that the information although planned and produced by field specialists, may target readers who do not fall into the category of specialists.

3. Translation Difficulties

Specialized translation implies fields that make obvious the distinction between specialized translators and any other word-users. In this way, specialized translations meet accuracy and appropriateness only when translators with strong specialized knowledge are involved in the respective translation process. From this perspective, translation is different from other non-translational language uses in terms of its complexity degree (Nida, 1964). Moreover, another important issue that should be taken into consideration (as, in many cases, it hinders the translation process) is related to the cultural content of translation. In this respect, Mona Baker (2001:3) states that the primary purpose of translation process is to ease communication, to convey messages and meanings beyond cultural barriers, the translator acting as a mediator, as an interface between the languages involved in this process (i.e. the source and the target ones).

In order to reveal several difficulties encountered in the translation of a specialized text in the field of textile industry, and to create a broader picture of the terms used in this area, we chose to tackle several texts on the manufacture of blue jeans, addressed both to the large public and to specialists, extracted from the following sources: Tellason, "Denim Production Timeline: How Our Raw Denim Jeans Are Made" (2015), available at <http://www.tellason.com/the-journal/denim-production-timeline/>; Jack and Jones, "How We Make Our Jeans" (2015), available at <http://www.jackjonesblog.com/en/how-we-make-our-jeans-the-denim/>; and *How Products Are Made*, Volume 1, "Blue Jeans" (2016), available at <http://www.madehow.com/Volume-1/Blue-Jeans.html>. In order to understand these specialized texts, we also used several online dictionaries, such as *English Oxford Living Dictionaries*, *Cambridge Free English Dictionary and Thesaurus*, *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, *Merriam-Webster's Learner's Dictionary*, *Dicționarul Explicativ al Limbii Române - DEX (The Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language)* and *Thesaurus.com*.

In our case, the difficulties encountered during the translation process were triggered by the fact that the texts contain many specialized words specific to the textile field (in order to explain how blue-jeans are made, the authors used a specialized terminology related to the fabric of cotton, the yarn processing and terms describing the technological process of raw materials). The specialized terms from the field of textile industry, encountered in our texts, include: "bolt" ("cupon/ bucată de stofă"), "buttonhole" ("butonieră"), "carding" ("dărăcire"), "card" ("darac"), "coated with" ("căptușit cu"), "disentangle" ("a descâlci, a desface"), "embroider" ("a broda"), "fiber" ("fibră"), "hemmed" ("tăvit"), "interweave" ("întreșere"), "lint" ("fibră", "fir", "fir subțire", "scamă"), "loom" ("gherghel", "război de țesut"), "plait" ("cută dublă plată"), "preshrunk" ("preuscat"), "rivet" ("nit", "cui de nituit", "nituire", "a întări"), "rove" ("fir răsucit", "a răsuci"), "seam" ("cusătură", "tiv", "tighel"), "sanforized" ("șanforizat"), "serge" ("serj"), "shuttle" ("suveică"), "sizing" ("apretare", "încleiere", "scrobire"), "slash" ("șliț", "tăietură"), "snap" ("agrafă"),

“încuietoare de brătară”), “spinning” (“filare/răsucire”), “tag” (“agățătoare pentru haine”), “thread” (“ață”, “filet”, “fir”), “twill” (“țesătură diagonală”), “waistband” (“betelie”), “warp” (“urzeală”), “weft” (“bătătură”, “țesătură”), “yarn” (“fir textil”, “fir tors”), “zipper” (“fermoar”).

Furthermore, during the translation process, we used several direct translation techniques (i.e. the direct transfer of meaning from the source language text into the target language text, without applying any complex methods or without performing any transformations), such as, borrowing, calque and literal translation. As far as borrowing is concerned, in Vinay and Darbelnet’s (1995) opinion, this translation method is extremely simple and it aims at introducing several elements of the source language culture into the translated text. In its turn, calque is a direct translation technique that can be applied when the translator has to borrow a phrase or a word from the source language, using the so-called “root-for-root translation” (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995).

For example, in our case, we employed the borrowing method in the translation of the term “Western”. Originally, the term referred to something connected to or typical of the regions from the western parts of the world or to something lying toward or situated in the west. Originally, the Romanian meaning of this term is “occidental, apusean”. Nevertheless, taking into account its use in the context, as far as its Romanian translation is concerned, we decided to keep the term in English because it changed its original meaning, referring to a type of fashion (we can speak about western fashion when we think of blue jeans): “The new medium of television also adopted Western themes as mainstays of programming.”/ “Noul mijloc de televiziune a adoptat de asemenea teme Western ca realizare a unui program principal” (*How Products Are Made*, Volume 1, “Blue Jeans”, 2016).

The same happened with the term “cowboy”, which, in the text, lost its original meaning (“văcar”), making reference to a dressing style: “Movie star cowboys remained enormously popular from the 1930s through the 1960s.”/ “Cowboys, staruri de cinema, au avut un succes enorm din anii 1930 și până în anii 1960” (*How Products Are Made*, Volume 1, “Blue Jeans”, 2016).

Another example of calque is represented by the words “blue-jeans” (“blugi”). Traditionally, in Romanian blue-jeans are called “blugi”, but we can also call them *jeans* or *Levis*, although it is known that Levis is the name of the brand. The word “jeans” entered officially in the Romanian language, being synonymous with “blugi”. See the definition provided by *DEX (Dicționarul Explicativ al Limbii Române)*: “Jeans = s, m, pl., pantaloni strâmți, confecționați dintr-un material special foarte rezistent (purtați de tineri) – Din engleză blue-jeans”.

For the purpose of accuracy, we also employed the method of literal translation (also known as word for word translation of the source text into the target language). In Vinay and Darbelnet’s perspective (1995), this translation technique is especially used when dealing with languages that belong to the same family and culture. As far as our text is concerned, instances of literal translation are: “Denim cloth itself has an unusual history.”/ “Materialul Denim însuși are o istorie neobișnuită.”

In the example above, for every word from the source text we found an equivalent in the target text. It is also noteworthy that, as far as the word “denim” is concerned, we also used the borrowing technique. Denim is synonym with blue-jeans, but also it is the name of the specific material out of which the blue-jeans are made.

Another obstacle encountered in this type of English-Romanian specialized translation is that some words, either in English or in Romanian, are polysemantic or have more than one meaning in the other language. Thus, it will be confusing for the translator to decide which equivalent is the most appropriate in the respective context. Such instances are *vintage*, *dirty* and *frog*. Let us consider the following contexts: “Many different denim fabric treatments have been introduced, including prewashed, stone-washed, sandblasted, and vintage/dirty.”/ “Au fost introduse multe prelucrări diferite de țesătură denim, incluzând prespălarea, spălatul cu piatră, șablatul și vintage/vopsirea”.

Both “vintage” and “dirty” are polysemantic words. According to *Merriam Webster’s Learner’s Dictionary* (available at <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>) and to *Cambridge Free English Dictionary and Thesaurus* (available at <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>), “vintage” has the following meanings: “a season’s yield of grapes or wine from a vineyard; a collection of contemporaneous and similar persons or things; the act or time of harvesting grapes or making

wine; a period of origin or manufacture; length of existence". It is also synonymous with "best", "choice", "classic", "classical", "excellent", "mature", "old", "prime", "rare", "ripe", "select", "selected" and "venerable" (see *Thesaurus.com*). In its turn, "dirty" is defined by the online *English Oxford Living Dictionaries* as follows: "covered or marked with an unclean substance; dishonest; concerned with sex in an obscene way; (of weather) unpleasant; (of color) not bright or pure, dull. Some of its synonyms are "contaminated", "cruddy", "defiled", "dishabille", "dusty", "filthy", "greasy", "messy", "muddy", "nasty", "off-color", "polluted", "slimy", "sloppy", "spotted", "stained", "untidy" (see *Thesaurus.com*), "old, but high quality" (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, at <http://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/vintage>). In this case, in order to translate the word "dirty", we chose the Romanian equivalent "vopsire", as the source text focuses on denim fabric treatments. As far as the word "vintage" is concerned, we considered that none of the above-mentioned meanings is appropriate because, in our context, "vintage" refers to a denim fabric treatment that makes the material look old; however, at the same time, the material maintains its high quality level. Therefore, in our opinion, in this context, the best solution would be to use the borrowing method and to translate this word by "vintage" and, eventually, to add a translator's note explaining the meaning and the processes involved by this denim fabric treatment.

As far as the word "frog" is concerned, according to the online *English Oxford Living Dictionaries*, it may either refer to "a tailless amphibian", to "a thing used to hold or to fasten something in particular" (such as "an ornamental coat fastener or braid consisting of a spindle-shaped button and a loop through which it passes") or to "an elastic horny pad growing in the sole of a horse's hoof". Our context guided us towards the second meaning (i.e. "nasture"): "frog design"/ "model nasture".

Other polysemantic words encountered in our text are: ball (meaning *minge, bilă, balon, chiftea, ghem, sferă*); fabric (*cadru, carcasa, produs, material, pânză, stofă, țesătură*); gather (*încrețitură, pliseu, adunare, acumulare*), gin (*laț, ștreang, macara, tripod, mașină sau stație de egrenat bumbac*); loop (*buclă, balamală, belciug, cataramă*), mule (*catâr, șablon, tractor*), piping (*burlan, conductă, tubulatură, șnur, țipător*); top (*vârf, capac, creștet, culme, bordură elastică (la șosete), manșetă*). In each case, the context and the field (i.e. textile industry) helped us to decide upon the appropriate Romanian translation.

Another translation strategy (this time an indirect one) that we made use of is equivalence. This technique implies the description of "the same situation by using completely different stylistic or structural methods for producing an equivalent text" (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995: 38). In this respect, we can consider the following context: "Last fall, our designers challenged themselves to think outside the box."/ "Toamna trecută, creatorii noștri s-au provocat pe ei înșiși să gândească neconvențional". In this case, although the English expression "to think outside the box" has the Romanian equivalent "a nu vedea precum calcul înainte", we decided that the latter is too informal and that it is not appropriate for our context. We also used equivalence in the following context: "Some jeans are prewashed and/or stone-washed."/ "Unii blugi sunt prespălați și/sau spălați cu pietriș". In this case, "stone-washed" is the name of the procedure used to keep the texture of blue jeans; its Romanian equivalence is "spălați cu pietriș".

In our Romanian translation, in order to accurately render the information from the source text, we also used another indirect translation technique, i.e. transposition, which involves "replacing one word class with another without modifying the meaning of the message" (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995: 36). Such an example is represented by the context: "We used the same materials and techniques, but found new ways to apply them to drive our objective."/ "Noi folosim aceleași materiale și tehnici, dar găsim noi metode să le aplicăm la determinarea obiectivelor noastre". In this case, the verb "to drive" (from the source text) is replaced in the Romanian target text by the noun "determinarea", in order to render an adequate meaning and style. Another context where transposition was employed is the following: "Sandblasting is one of a number of techniques used to create rich finishes on jeans."/ "Curățirea prin jet de nisip este una dintr-un număr de tehnici folosite să creeze finisări elegante pe blugi". The English word "sandblasting" can be translated into Romanian either by the specialized term "șablare" or by the more understandable expression "curățirea prin jet de nisip". In this case, taking into account that the text is also addressed to lay people, and not only to specialists, we chose the former translation, which is more explicit. The following context also needed transposition: "Zipper replaced button flies in 1920."/ "Fermoarul a

înlocuit nasturele în linie dreaptă în anul 1920.” In this context, the English phrase “button flies” refers to the way in which buttons are placed. Transposition was also used for the Romanian translation of the English phrase “dry goods” (meaning “clothes” or “clothing”), i.e. “imbrăcămintă”.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of textile industry vocabulary based on the structural classification of the Blue Jeans’ manufacturing revealed the fact that the textile vocabulary is complex, with many words which include a polysemantic meaning. Therefore, translators should employ different translation techniques, such as calque, borrowing, transposition, equivalence and reformulation, with a view to carry out an accurate translation from the source language into the target language. Transposition helped us to replace one word class with another without performing any modification as far as the meaning of the message is concerned. In both languages, i.e. English and Romanian, the two messages are semantically the same. Equivalence and reformulation describe the relationship which exists between the two languages involved in the translation process, i.e. the source and the target ones. It goes without saying that the target text should be equivalent to the source one, especially in terms of meaning, which is the most common basis for equivalence.

Translation, whether general or specialized, is regarded as an activity based on knowledge. Thus, a good translation depends in a large measure on translator’s skills and knowledge in the respective specialized field. Moreover, as already mentioned, we should also take into account the fact that culture and, more specifically, cultural knowledge also plays an important role in the translation process, as there may be cultural concepts, typical of a certain (source) culture, that do not exist in the target language and culture; in this case, direct translation techniques, such as borrowing and calque, are recommended. Therefore, from this perspective, we may state that translation is conceived primarily as a process of intercultural communication, whose end product is a text capable of functioning appropriately in specific situations and contexts of use. Moreover, due to the never-ending progress in the technological field, during the transfer of meaning from the source language to the target language, in order to formulate equivalence, new original terms are often born, translation being thus viewed as an act of invention.

The intellectual stimulation provided by what translators learn about their world and about themselves through the process of translation can give them a great deal of pleasure, and they can gain considerable satisfaction in knowing that they are making a significant contribution to the advancement of knowledge and understanding between different cultures.

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