

Terminology and Technical Translation

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ABSTRACT

While technology contributes to the global communication, the need of users from multiple cultures and nations to fully understand documentation accompanying a piece of the said technology also grows. Again, with the increasing circulation of people around the globe, it's quite easy to extend the reach of almost all domains and spheres of life with the help of qualified translators. Translation seems to be the in-thing to create promotional materials in different languages. We are talking about manuals, user guides, data sheets, patents and other technical documentation made available to users. In this study, we intend to look at the various types of translation, the great importance of translation, and then look at terminology as a great tool in the hands of a technical translator.

Keywords: global communication, technology, and translation.

INTRODUCTION

Translation is the process of changing the language that is written or spoken in to another language. In a loose sense, translation may also be defined as a word or phrase or text in another language that has a meaning equivalent to that of the original. The Oxford Companion to the English Language defines translation as the communication of the meaning of a source- language text by means of an equivalent target language text. Interpreting is the facilitating of the oral or sign- language communication between users of different languages. Translation is one of the various branches of learning and it has become an important discipline that encompasses separate body of knowledge being very much in use for various human activities, just to name a few are: language, business, education. Translation is therefore very important as it performs a wide range of useful functions. To start with, it cuts across cultural and linguistic barriers, thereby bringing about mutual understanding and international co-operation among peoples of the world.

Translation has become a significant instrument for the spreading of culture: material, linguistic, political, economic, religious as well as other forms of culture.

Translation serves as instrument for the cross-fertilization of languages. In the words of Malinowski [1], translation amounts to "the unification of cultural context between the source and target languages". The rate of scientific and technological advancement in the world today owes so much to the dissemination of scientific and technological information through translation. The aim of the translator is to convey the message of the source text (ST) into the target language in such a manner that this message is available to speakers of the target language as fully as the linguistic and cultural constraints on operation will allow.

The translation process involves several states which include:

- The analysis of the terminology contained in the source text
- The comparison of that source language terminology to the corresponding target language terminology
- The target text production including the selection of appropriate terms according to the prospective communicative purpose(s) target text

A translation must present an accurate account of the contents of the original, omitting nothing and adding nothing. This implies a complete understanding of the original in every way coupled with a corresponding knowledge of the target language. Again, the translator should understand the text fully in the source language. This involves understanding it to the same extent as would a native speaker of that source language who was suitably versed in the subject to which it refers. The translator must therefore have a full knowledge of the grammar of the source language of its basic, non-specialized vocabulary as well as the vocabulary pertinent to the subject of the text. He must also have sufficient understanding of the subject matter to enable him read between the lines of a poorly written original and sometimes to spot errors in the original text due to the author's ignorance or lack of proof-reading.

The translation practice involves two phases: decoding and encoding or analysis and synthesis, involving the understanding of the source text and verbal restructuring of the translation text. The success of a translation rests mainly on the translator's precise understanding of whatever it is the original wants to convey. Translation involves the understanding of the source text since it is here that specific problems specific to translation may arise: increased attention should therefore be paid to the study of the source text, which is the conscious effort to master the decoding phase of the translation process. According to [2], the validity of any translation can only be judged by the extent to which intended receptors widely understand the message.

Since translators are often confronted with innovative texts containing descriptions of novel technologies, new scientific findings, new intellectual insights, etc. that unavoidably contain new terms (or changed meaning of existing terms), they are expected to coin and propose corresponding new terms in the target language. This process of

language innovation is governed by a multitude of socio-cultural factors that determine the role of language in a particular society or language community, the cognitive factors of accepting new terms, etc. Technical translation is the medium through which language, discourse and communication can exist in a global world.

Texts vary in nature and we classify them under three headings:

Literary texts (translation): These are drawn from drama, prose, poetry and they are usually connotative in nature. Such texts are filled with a lot of ambiguities.

General /Pragmatic texts (translation): These are texts that give general information or report. These include political reports, reports on findings, requests, petitions etc. with such texts, you can nearly present a perfect translation because you are dealing with general notions and ideas.

Scientific/ technical texts (translation): These are texts that are derived from such science and technology domains as Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Agriculture, Law, Arts, Sculpture, Medicine, Architecture, Economy, etc.

Technical translation ensures that texts with technical jargon are readable for a wider ranging audience. It also involves linguistic features of translating technical texts from one language to another. Though technical translation is only a subset of the different types of professional translation, it is the largest subset as far as output is concerned. Currently, more than 90% of all professionally translated work is done by technical translators highlighting the importance and significance of the field.

The role of the technical translator is to convey the meaning of the highly specialized technical documentation providing enough information for people to understand. A technical translator must have a multifaceted background and a high level of knowledge of the subject and relevant terminology: 5-10% of the technical documents are specified terms: The technical translation of terminology

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must comply with recognized standards. This goes to say that terminology is a major part of technical translation.

“A technical translator’s task is to keep consistent terminology in technical translation, as well as the very formulaic and repetitive nature of technical writing. Additionally, most technical translators work within a specialized field such as medical or legal technical translation, which highlights the importance of an interdisciplinary background”

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technical_documentation.

Understanding culture is one of the three pillars in technical translation. Cultural knowledge in communicating technical message is just as important as the linguistic knowledge. For example, messages containing safety information warnings of hazards or risks require special attention. Items to be considered also include measurement systems, types of graphics and symbols. In discussing technical translation to the dialect of the same languages, it is important to mention the significant differences across cultures such as paper layouts, spelling, meaning, and the use of humor.

Translating technical documents requires a consistent scientific experience, deep linguistic knowledge and a culturally specific background. Only professional technical translators can handle this challenging task with terminology as an important tool.

TERMINOLOGY AND TECHNICAL TRANSLATION

Technical translation is a specific form of cross-cultural and inter-lingual knowledge transfer. Technical texts contain subject-field-specific terminology (often from different domains). Technical translation is therefore a type of specialized translation involving the translation of documents produced by technical writers (owner’s manuals, user guides etc.) or more specifically, texts which relate to technological subject areas or texts which deal with the practical application of scientific and technological information. Technical translation covers the translation of many kinds of specialized

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texts and requires a high level of subject knowledge and mastery of relevant terminology and writing conventions.

THE TECHNICAL TRANSLATOR

In general competent translators show the following attributes as opined by [3]:

- A very good knowledge of the language, written and spoken, from which they are translating (the source language);
- An excellent command of the language into which they are translating (the target language);
- Familiarity with the subject matter of the text being translated;
- A profound understanding of the etymological and idiomatic correlates between the two languages; and
- A finely tuned sense of when to metaphrase (“translate literally”) and when to paraphrase, so as to assure true rather than spurious equivalents between the source- and target language texts.

It is clear that rather than merely supplanting one form of words for another, the translator has the capacity to enhance our understanding of development issues and indigenous cultures by mediating ideas across cultural and national boundaries.

The role of the technical translator as opines [4] is to not only be a transmitter of information, but also to be a constructor of procedural discourse and knowledge through meaning particularly because often, the technical translator may also take on the role of the technical writer. Research has demonstrated that technical communicators do, in fact create new meaning as opposed to simply repackaging old information. This according to [5], “emphasizes the important role that technical translators play in making meaning, whether they are doing technical translation in one language or in multiple languages”.

Much like professionals in the field of technical communication, the technical translator must have a cross-curricular and multifaceted background. [6] adds that in addition to grasping theoretical

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and linguistic orientations for the actual translation process, an understanding of other subjects, such as cognitive psychology, usability engineering, and technical communication, is necessary for a successful technical translation. Finally, the technical translator should also become familiar with the field of professional translation through training.

TERMINOLOGY:

Terminology, as defined by the Collins English Dictionary is

1. The body of specialized words relating to a particular subject
2. The study of terms

The German Terminologie, from Medieval Latin terminus sees it thus:

1. The vocabulary of technical terms used in a particular field, subject, science or art; nomenclature
2. The study of nomenclature

Terminology is the study of terms and their use. Terms are words and compound words or multi-word expressions that in specific contexts are given specific meanings- these may deviate from the meanings the same words have in other contexts and in everyday language. Terminology is a discipline that studies, among other things, the development of such terms and their interrelationships within a specialized domain. Terminology differs from lexicography, as it involves the study of concepts, conceptual systems and their labels (terms), whereas lexicography studies words and their meaning.

The American Heritage defines terminology as “specialized expressions indigenous to a particular field, subject, trade or subculture”. Terminology is a discipline that systematically studies the “labeling or designating of concepts” particular to one or more subject fields or domains of human activity. It does this through the research and analysis of terms in context for the purpose of

In this study, we have seen that as technology creates easier and faster means of communication and the world moves towards becoming a

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documenting and promoting consistent usage. Terminology can be limited to one or more languages (for example, “multilingual terminology” and “bilingual terminology”), or may have an interdisciplinary focus on the use of terms in different fields.

The discipline of terminology consists primarily of the following aspects:

- Analyzing the concepts and concept structures used in a field or domain of activity
- Identifying the terms assigned to the concepts
- In the case of bilingual or multi lingual terminology, establishing correspondences between terms in the various languages
- Compiling the terminology, on paper or in databases
- Managing terminology data bases
- Creating new terms, as required

TYPES OF TERMINOLOGY

A distinction is made between two types of terminology work:

- Ad hoc work on terminology, which deals with a single term or a limited number of terms. Ad hoc terminology is prevalent in the translation profession, where a translation for a specific term (or group of terms) is required quickly to solve a particular translation problem.
- Systematic collection of terminology, which deals with all the terms in a specific subject field or domain of activity, often by creating a structured ontology of the terms within that domain and their interrelationships.

Terminology is also the key in boundary-crossing problems, such as in language translation and social epistemology. Terminology helps to build bridges and to extend one area into another. Translators research the terminology of the languages they translate to make it better.

CONCLUSION

global community, the need to communicate with people from multiple language backgrounds, different domains and fields of study

also grows. In order to succeed in technical translation therefore, choosing the correct term is a key aspect.

Whatever the domain or the objective of our communications, it is important to optimize the sending across of information to users. The most important thing in order not to fail in bringing the message across is to make sure the

information is successfully received, using terminology that people are accustomed to and avoiding cultural and linguistic mistakes, and embarrassing misunderstandings. In this way, professional translators and terminologists can ensure to achieve linguistic and conceptual equivalence, thereby avoiding mistakes in contents.

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