Mirela COSTELEANU, University of Piteşti

DIFFICULTIES IN TANSLATING SECIALIZED TEXTS

We shall start our approach with the question: Is the translation of literary texts different from the translation of specialized texts or may they be said to be the two ends of the same continuum? If we compare them to each other, we can conclude that literary texts are more open, giving the translator more freedom to play with words and phrases. Unlike these, specialized texts are more closed, more objective and concise. However, they sometimes abound in highly sophisticated and very rich linguistic choices. Besides linguistic/cultural competence both in the source language and in the target language, a good specialized translator needs competence in specialized domains. Having this in mind, a good question arises: Do we need a specialist who is also a translator or do we need a translator who is also a specialist?

It goes without saying that a good translation of a specialized text cannot be made by someone who lacks the basic knowledge in the specialized field to which the respective text belongs.

> "However, few domain experts want to translate and translator education is traditionally for linguists. Anyone involved in translator education recognizes the perennial problem of how to provide meaningful specialization in the curriculum, rather than introduction in the key areas. As academics, we are all aware that translation theory has tended to be for literary analysis, with an emphasis on intercultural and linguistic relativism. The advance of technology, in the form of machine assisted translation and machine translation, on the other hand, increasingly forces the language of both the original and the translation to be as standardized and as literal as possible, thus creating an even greater gulf between the theory and the practice of translation"[1].

It is the beneficiary's task to turn to a good language service professional. It is next to impossible to translate a text without understanding it. In other words, the task of translating a specialized text is rendered difficult, if not impossible, by the translator's scarce knowledge in the relevant field. Translating and understanding go hand in hand. The latter cannot rely on random knowledge. On the contrary, it must consist in solid and precise data. People expect translators to be specialists in all the possible fields, to be as good at translating a legal text, for instance, as they are at translating a medical text. Since this is a real utopia, we should confine ourselves to finding someone with a specialized training in a certain field, someone who is able to express himself/herself freely and who is not at all reluctant to develop his/her understanding of other fields. A good specialized translator will have to be able to cope with the following situations which, at times, can become very frustrating:

- the translator may come across sentences which he/she perfectly understands, but he/she finds it challenging or even impossible to translate them into their native language because the latter lacks the appropriate linguistic means;
- in spite of the various resources a specialized translator generally uses (e. g. general and specialized dictionaries and glossaries, encyclopaedias, terminological data banks, specialized monolingual and bilingual corpora), it is inevitable for them to find passages they simply don't understand.

The art of translating specialized texts is often seen as a kind of acrobatics. This comparison is justified by the constant need of migrating from a cultural universe to another. If someone believes that translating a text is synonymous with replacing words with their equivalents from another language, they are wrong. But they are also far from being right if they consider that solid knowledge in the respective field and in the target and the source

BDD-A3362 © 2009 Editura Europlus
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 01:56:07 UTC)

language is enough. A good translation takes more than this. It takes flexibility, the ability to adapt oneself to the specific needs of the text.

Sometimes people resort to computer translation programs, expecting them to offer huge advantages over the conventional methods. When dealing with simple, individual words, things are easy and clear. But when it comes to complex, intricate sentences, most programs cannot cope with the simplest grammatical structures. What people should bear in mind is that modern translation software cannot successfully replace the translator, the most it can do is to assist the translator in the task of giving the best translation.

On the contrary, to other people's mind, machine translation is almost as precious as human translation since its merits are far from substituting words in one language for another. It can also apply complex linguistic knowledge. Machine translation does offer a solution in those situations in which the amount of material needed in different language versions is too vast for people to handle.

The main purpose of translation is to function as a cross-cultural bilingual communication vehicle among various peoples from all over the world. Translation is attached more and more importance particularly thanks to globalization, rising international trade as well as to the development of technology.

It is generally agreed that the quality of a translation will greatly depend on the quality of the translator. In order to be able to make a good translation of a specialized text, a translator cannot do without sensitivity to mother tongue as well as to foreign language, thorough knowledge of the subject, competence to write the target language.

A lot of people have the tendency to consider that anybody can make a good translation of a text if they have an appropriate dictionary. In reality, we are speaking of a much more complex phenomenon and it must be added that its complexity increases when the text in question is a specialized one. A good translator should not lose anything from the original text, but he/she should not add anything to it. The translation should be faithful to the original version.

Accurate translation of technical texts cannot be made without basic knowledge of this field. Otherwise, inaccuracies may occur. Thus, *picture tube* will often be rendered by non-specialized translators as *tubul de imagine* when the rooted term in Romanian is *tubul cinescopic* or *tubul catodic.*

Translating texts dealing with engineering and computer science can be very difficult sometimes because terminology expands and changes every day. Even specialized translators have to take a lot of pains to keep up with the richer and richer terminology. Roughly speaking, it is recommendable that a text dealing with IBM computer parts should be translated by an IBM computer specialist. If this is not possible, then the translator should know the technical concepts dealt with in the respective text. Any related documents in the target language can be of great help to the translator since dictionaries may fail to offer solutions to technical terminology problems. Specialized translators should be as attentive to the style of the document as they are to the information given and the terminology used. The style should perfectly match the type of the document as well as the intended audience.

Even specialized translators have difficulties in finding proper equivalents for some English terms. Thus, the following terms are used as such in Romanian:

> ***roll-on*** – copiere a fişierului dintr-o memorie de fişiere de nivel inferior într-un tip de volum; ***roll-off*** **–** copiere a fişierului □lichés□z dintr-o memorie de fişiere de nivel inferior cu ştergerea fişierului existent; ***smalltalk*** **–** primul limbaj de programare orientat pe obiectiv; ***checkpointing*** **–** vidare automată frecventă a informaţiei în periferic; ***blast*** – scriere de date în memoria scrisă; ***lacing*** **–** încheiere/perforaţie suplimentară pe cartelă indicând sfârşitul şirului de cartele specifice; ***spreadsheet*** **–** software pentru analizarea informaţiilor cuprinse în tabele.

Due attention should also be paid to those words which, in technical language, have a completely different meaning from the one in general English.

BDD-A3362 © 2009 Editura Europlus
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 01:56:07 UTC)

Bias in general English means *a tendency to be in favour of or against something or someone without knowing enough to be able to judge fairly, a tendency of mind*. In technical English, the term has different meanings: *deviation, error, systematic distortion of a sign*. *Bus* in general English refers to *a large passenger-carrying motor vehicle, especially one which carries the public for payment*.
When used in connection with computers, the term has different Romanian equivalents: *magistrală, tronson, cale principală.*

The translation of legal and economic texts, for instance, is more difficult than the translation of literary texts. The full context in which financial transactions usually take place are completely obscure to laypeople. Financial documents lack those details which we need to interpret them correctly. No wonder different translators offer different translations of the same document.

> "While lawyers cannot expect translators to produce parallel texts that are identical in meaning, they do expect them to produce parallel texts that are identical in their legal effect."[2]

The difficulties of translating legal texts are caused mainly by the striking differences between the Romanian legal system and the English one. Thus, the translation of legal texts from English into Romanian and vice versa poses a lot of problems which occur because of the nature of legal language and the specific features of the English and the Romanian legal systems and languages. Legal texts are often difficult to translate mainly because of the occurrence of words which find no equivalent in the target language. A lot of people have difficulty in finding corresponding words for the English *barrister* and *solicitor*. Since there is no equivalent for the English and the Welsh concepts, the easiest way for the Romanian translator will be to paraphrase them. Things become even more confusing for laypeople if they take into account three other terms which apparently designate the same concept. According to Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture, a *barrister* is *a lawyer who has the right of speaking in the higher courts of law* whereas a *solicitor* is *a lawyer who gives advice, does the necessary work when property is bought and sold, and speaks especially in the lower courts of law*. An *advocate*, used especially in Scottish English, refers to *a lawyer who speaks in defence of or in favour of another person in court*, a *lawyer* is *a person whose business is to advise people about laws, write formal agreements, or to represent people in court*, *an attorney*, used especially in American English, designates *a lawyer*.

The final idea of this paper is that we should give translation the importance it deserves instead of reducing it to a mechanical process that can be carried out with the help of a dictionary alone. It should be seen as a much more complex activity going beyond simply linking words in order to produce a translation that is correctly understood by the target audience unfamiliar with the source language.

NOTE

[1] Maia, Belinda, *Terminology and Translation – bringing research and professional training through technology*, 2005 :112.
[2] Ayfer, Altay, *Legal Translation*, 2002: 23.

REFERINTE BIBLIOGRAFICE

Peter, Newmark (1995**), *A textbook of translation,*** Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data.
Martin, Weston (1991), *Problems and Principles in Legal Translation*, The Incorporated Linguist.
Adriana, Vizental (2008), *Metodica Predării Limbii Engleze, Strategies of Teaching and Testing English as a Foreign Language*, Iași: Editura Polirom.
Andrew, Chesterman (1994), *Quantitative Aspects of Translation Quality*, Lebende Sprachen 4/1994.
Ayfer, Altay, (2002), *Legal Translation*, Translation Journal, Vol. 6, No. 4.
Maia, Belinda, (2005), *Terminology and Translation – bringing research and professional training through technology*, Translators' Journal, No. 4.

BDD-A3362 © 2009 Editura Europlus
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 01:56:07 UTC)

ABSTRACT
*The present paper deals with the main **difficulties** encountered during their English course by those students training to become **electronics engineers**. It is intended as an **analysis** of the English **technical terms** which have no equivalents in the Romanian vocabulary. The very notion expressed by some words is so closely connected with the English variants that the students will end up by using the English terms without the slightest effort to think of the proper Romanian corresponding terms. Moreover, they will often have the tendency to adapt them phonetically and even graphically to the Romanian language. The reverse phenomenon is also obvious among students when having to translate such sentences as When the number of electrons reaching the screen is large, we see a bright spot. Most of the students will strive to find the Romanian **equivalent** for the English word spot, which has been adopted by the Romanian language, as well. (spot = spot, pata de lumina, punct/element de imagine).*

BDD-A3362 © 2009 Editura Europlus
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 01:56:07 UTC)