PROCEDURES USED IN TRANSLATING MARITIME TERMINOLOGY

Ioana Raluca Visan, Anca Sîrbu
PhD Student, "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galaţi, Senior Lecturer, PhD, Constanţa Maritime University

Abstract: In terms of translation, maritime language in general and Maritime English and/or maritime Romanian in particular can be considered an uncharted territory, since research in this area is almost non-existent. The idea should be pointed out that the unremitting technological advances in the global maritime sector have certainly transformed seafaring into one of the most in-demand professions in the world. This results in a vast commercial activity of a multicultural and multilingual nature, where most transactions are carried out in English. It is not surprising therefore, that maritime activity generates a large amount of translation work, especially from English into other languages. This paper focuses on the identification of three translation procedures used by Romanian translators in their translatorial enterprise. In what follows we shall adopt Vinay and Darlbernet's (1977/1998) translation procedures as well as Peter Newmark's interpretation while accounting for maritime terminology in translation. We shall also try to make our contribution with particular reference to the translation errors and mistakes translators usually make in getting maritime terminology right.

Keywords: translation procedures, maritime terminology, maritime texts, mistranslations, Maritime English, maritime Romanian, SL, TL

1. Introduction

In comparison with other fields of expertise, relevant studies regarding maritime terminology in translation are certainly scarce. Mention needs to be made that seafaring is a field of expertise which covers a wide range of disciplines from engineering to seaborne trade. As such, maritime activity generates a large amount of translation work especially from English into Romanian. Maritime translators have to deal with different types of texts whose context and level of specialization can vary greatly and the specific maritime field in question (i.e. commerce, engineering, nautical) can present a wide range of difficulties to be addressed by the translator. In today's society, seaborne trade continues to expand, bringing benefits for consumers across the world. Owing to the growing efficiency of shipping as a mode of transport and increased economic liberalization, the prospects for the industry's development are getting stronger. In this light, the demand for qualified translations in the maritime field is growing, since texts written by maritime experts contain numerous terms that need to be translated correctly and unambiguously. Based on a corpus of maritime texts (including institutional texts), the aim of this paper is to investigate what translation procedures may be used when translating maritime terminology from English to Romanian. It also addresses the possible problems faced by Romanian translators of maritime texts and the potential solutions to these problems.

2. Maritime Terminology and Translation

The idea should be pointed out that maritime terminology originates in various fields of expertise such as engineering, electronics, telecommunications, law etc. so that the word *maritime* may be considered an umbrella term encompassing a wide and overlapping range of topics and subjects: from shipbuilding to international maritime law including ship

BDD-V4828 © 2019 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:00:43 UTC)

stability, marine propulsion, machinery, maritime pollution, marine life, fishing, maritime safety, marine meteorology, shipping trade, medical care among many others (Bocanegra Valle 2007: 300). But it should be highlighted that "the language of seamen has traditionally been singled out for special treatment either to the point of being derided or, somehow, feared by those outside the seafaring profession" (Novi 1998: 110). In addition, the situation with Romanian maritime terminology seems to be even worse since "the press and specialty literature are continually being invaded by a multitude of awkward improvisations resulting mainly from translations made by translators who are completely unfamiliar with maritime terminology" (our translation – Bejan, et. al 2006: VII). It should be pointed out that, nowadays, maritime translation - especially maritime European documents, where the text in English may, in turn, be a translation from another language – presents professional maritime translators with a number of difficulties. For one thing, they have to deal with large amounts of texts, then they are often forced to work under pressure due to tight deadlines; for another, longer texts are sometimes dealt with by teams, which can result in a lack of maritime terminological consistency, of unified solutions to problems raised by the text. When analysing maritime texts for translation there are certain linguistic categories that allow us to examine how the target text (TT) functions in relation to the source text (ST). These categories are known as translation procedures, three of which we are going to tackle in the following by making recourse to maritime terminology in translation.

3. Procedures used in maritime translation

Translation procedures may be understood as a tool of textual analysis that represent a process of searching for semantic and formal relations arising between the original and the target text. Newmark (1988: 81) considers that "[w]hile translation methods relate to whole texts, translation procedures are used for sentences and the smaller units of language". However, translation procedures and translation methods are not to be confused with translation strategies which are regarded as problem-solving categories (e.g. finding an appropriate translation solution on the basis of a suitable translation procedure). While some translation procedures are general text-processing operations such as reading comprehension and writing, others are translation-oriented such as transposition, modulation or explicitation (Superceanu 2006: 257). The general text-processing operations are fixed in a progression and constitute stages: ST reading, ST comprehension, TT writing. The translation-oriented operations are however, different. Some are chosen from an array of possible actions, while others are typical courses of actions deliberately adopted and used by maritime translators so as to achieve certain textual results, still others are mere generalizations of recurrent acts observed in maritime translation practice which maritime translators do not always perform deliberately or consciously. During the translation process, the maritime translator resorts to several procedures according to the task or the problem s/he has to solve in a certain stage of the process and the situational factors which control that stage. The unit of translation and translation procedures are related notions since any translation starts with the analysis of some formal elements which will be interpreted semantically. In what follows we shall adopt Vinay and Darbelnet's (1977/1998) translation procedures as well as Peter Newmark's (1988) interpretation.

3.1. Literal translation

The first procedure used by translators in general and maritime translators in particular is literal translation. The primary meaning of the word gains overall importance alongside with the norms of the SL grammar. Therefore, the procedure is useful as a draft translation

BDD-V4828 © 2019 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:00:43 UTC)

since there is no 1:1 lexical or grammatical correspondence between Maritime English and maritime Romanian. Literal translation is further subdivided into *word for word translation* and *one to one translation*. Word for word translation is usually accounted for when dealing with simple sentences in maritime texts:

Maritime English: *The name of the vessel will be printed clearly in Latin characters on the bow and the stern of the vessel*.

Maritime Romanian*: Denumirea navei va fi imprimată în mod clar cu caractere latine pe prova și pupa navei.*

The idea should be pointed out that formally, English discriminates between the simple and the continuous aspect (with progressive value); there is no exact correspondence between the following sentences:

Maritime English: *The vessel isanchoring in the open roadstead now.*

Maritime Romanian: *Nava ancorează în rada deschisă acum.*

This is not a singular occurrence, some other examples concern the use of phrasal verbs in Maritime English (i.e. phrasal verbs used in commands for mooring, anchoring, etc.), which have no direct grammatical counterpart in Romanian:

Maritime English: *Cast off the breast line*.

Maritime Romanian: *Mola traversa.*

One-to-one translation cannot consider words in isolation, dealing with collocations and derived meanings (e.g.: *rig the ladder – a pregăti scara de pilot*).

Decontextualized, the lexemes *rig* and *a pregăti* cannot be fully equated anymore because *language is not mere nomenclature but a network in which words are linked either syntagmatically (lexical solidarities) or paradigmatically (mutual substitution in some contexts of occurrence)* (Vîlceanu 2008: 127).

3.2. Borrowing / Transfer / transference / loan / loan word / transcription / adoption

As its name suggests, this procedure implies the direct transfer of a word or term from Maritime English (SL) to maritime Romanian (TL). Loan words are generally motivated in the case of lexical and cultural gaps. For instance, there is no word for *tsunami* in English and Romanian marine meteorology, due to the difference in weather conditions. Nor is it a word for *snow* in tropical Africa or a word for *heat* in the polar region. In this respect, Lyons (1977) regards loans as a means of correcting lexical gaps stating that "[T]hroughout history and pre-history languages have made good their lexical deficiency in this respect, as one culture came under the influence of another and imported from its goods of various kinds, social institutions, religious or legal concepts, and so on, by borrowing words from other language, or less commonly, by associating a new meaning with an already existing lexeme" (Lyons 1977: 236). When the maritime translator resorts to transfer or borrowing s/he can complement it by another procedure, namely, cultural, functional or descriptive equivalent, giving rise to a doublet. For instance, the term *beaching* which stands for the action of running or hauling up a ship or a boat on a beach, is transferred into maritime Romanian, being often doubled by *eşuare*or *eşuarevoluntară*.

Maritime English (SL)	Maritime Romanian (TL)
[...] the large commercial seagoing vessels are still dismantled in substandard facilities located in Asia (India, Pakistan and Bangladesh), usually through **"beaching"** method and with significant	[…] majoritatea navelor maritime mari încă se dezmembrează în instalații necorespunzătoare din Asia (India, Pakistan și Bangladesh), de obicei prin metoda cunoscută sub numele de „**beaching**",

BDD-V4828 © 2019 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:00:43 UTC)

environmental and health impacts.	(metoda „**eșuării**”) cu importante efecte negative asupra mediului și sănătății umane.

The following categories are often transferred in maritime translation:

- Brand names or names of shipping companies and crewing agencies: Maersk, NYK, SHELL, etc.
- Maritime abbreviations and initialisms: AIS, ECDIS, EPIRB, DSC, SART, SOLAS, RO-RO, etc. Abbreviations in maritime language can also be rendered by combining two different translation procedures or what Newmark (1988:91) calls *couplet* (e.g. *convenţia SOLAS; sistemul AIS etc.*)
- Toponyms (apart from those which are already translated and enjoy wide circulation, i.e. endonyms and exonyms: *România →Romania; London → Londra; Thames → Tamisa* etc.):

Even though Peter Newmark (1988: 82) identifies *naturalisation* as a separate procedure, we prefer to refer to it as a follow up of transferred terms, which are adapted to the phonological and morphological specifications of the target language. For instance, in the Romanian explanatory dictionary (DEX 2012: 146), there is the noun *cargobot* (< Eng. *cargo boat*), adapted both phonologically and morphologically: *cargoboturi* (the Romanian plural paradigm), *cargobotul* (with the Romanian definite article *-ul*). Another example refers to the naturalisation of the Maritime English terms *afterpic, forpic, cargoplan, container, dock, docker, forpic etc*. At the morphological level, the terms can be determined by the definite article *-ul*.

Maritime English (SL)	Maritime Romanian (TL)
A **forepeak** or collision bulkhead shall be fitted which shall be watertight up to the bulkhead deck […].	Trebuie să se prevadă un perete etanș de **forpic** sau de coliziune care să fie etanș la apă până la puntea pereților etanși […].

The idea should be pointed out that most maritime borrowings have become well-established in Romanian (i.e. they are part of the Romanian lexicon) and have acquired the status of neologisms (for a detailed study of borrowings in maritime Romanian, cf. Vişan 2016). Examples such as: *afterpic <afterpeak>, brokeraj <brokerage>, cargoplan <cargoplan>, cargobot <cargoboat>, diptanc <deeptank>, forpic <forepeak>, pic <peak>, ulaj <ullage>, dunaj <dunnage>, container <container>, containerizare <containerization>, paletizare <palletization>, terminal <terminal>, offshore <offshore>, onshore <onshore>* etc. are already recorded in DEX (2012).

3.3. Through translation / calque

Through translation or *calque*, generally defined as discrete transfer or maximal approximation, is based upon imitation of source language phrase if there is transparency. Vinay and Darlbernet (1977/ 1998: 47-48) distinguish between lexical and structural calques (e.g. *calque d'expression* and *calque de structure*). The former involve adaptation to the syntactic specifications of the target language. Unlike direct transfer, the latter uses compound lexemes. In maritime texts for translation, this procedure applies to names of international organizations: *International Maritime Organisation (IMO) → Organizaţia Maritimă Internaţională (OMI).* The idea should be pointed out that the four most frequent and today completely lexicalized concepts or names in Maritime English, namely, *Vessel Traffic Service (VTS), Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS), Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC)* and *Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB*) still

BDD-V4828 © 2019 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:00:43 UTC)

have no satisfactory correspondents in Romanian. These initialisms (VTS, GMDSS, MRCC, EPIRB) appeared through translation as a consequence of globalization. Numerous structures of this type are identical for all languages - many of them (mostly English) do not even have equivalents in Romanian, but were borrowed as such.

Examples of calques occurring in maritime texts are also related to the names of EU and IMO institutions and bodies, the position held by an IMO and EU official and the name of an IMO and EU official document. These translations are labelled *recognized translations* and occur when the translator uses "the official or the generally accepted translation of any institutional term" (Newmark 1988: 89).

Source Language (SL)	Target Language (TL)
Maritime Safety Commmittee	Comitetul Securităţii Maritime
Marine Environment Protection Committee	Comitetul pentru Protecţia Mediului Marin
Technical Cooperation Committee	Comitetul de Cooperare Tehnică
Facilitation Committee	Comitetul de Facilitare
Sub-Committee on Implementation of IMO Instruments	Subcomitetul privind punerea în aplicare a instrumentelor OMI
Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue	Subcomitetul privind navigația, comunicațiile și căutarea și salvarea

In maritime language, a great number of calques in the area of navigation comes from radar navigation (e.g. *blind sector → sector orb; radar shadow → umbră radar*; *target ship → navă ţintă; own ship course → drumul navei proprii; target ship course → drumul navei ţintă; target ship speed → viteza navei ţintă; zero speed point → punct de viteză zero* etc).

We consider that in using calque as a translation device there are certain dangers that the translator has to cope with. For instance, it can happen that the meaning of the calqued phrases may not be clear in the TT or worst, calques cannot be recognized for what they represent and, in this way, are merely puzzling the maritime reader. This happens to be the case with the syntagm *Port State Control (PTS)* for which there is no satisfactory equivalent in maritime Romanian and most EU maritime texts render it ambiguously with *controlul statului de port* or *controlul statului portului.*

Maritime English (SL)	Maritime Romanian (TL)
[…] of international standards for ship safety, pollution prevention and shipboard living and working conditions (**Port State Control**) […]	[…] a standardelor internaționale privind securitatea navelor, prevenirea poluării și condițiile de viață și de muncă de la bordul navelor (**controlul statului de port**) […]
[…] of a Member State for **Port State Control** at the date of adoption of this Directive.	[…] a unui stat membru pentru **controlul statului portului** la data adoptării prezentei directive.

Instead, we consider that a translation by expansion or explicitation, namely, *Controlul efectuat de statul de care aparţine portul* would bring more clarity and leave out lexical ambiguity. Of course, it is not sufficient for the TT to make it clear that a particular phrase is an intentional calque. Our analysis of maritime texts confirms that calquing is a general procedure used by maritime translators even when it produces a distortion in relation to normal usage (see also section 4 below).

4. Mistranslated maritime terminology

BDD-V4828 © 2019 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:00:43 UTC)

The cases of mistranslation or translationese in maritime language are related to interference where literal translation either plainly falsifies or ambiguates meaning or violates natural usage for no apparent reason. Seen in this light, translationese is either an error (lack of knowledge) or mistake (faulty performance). Interference in maritime translation confuses or brings together two distinct meanings. For instance, the term *port facility* is very often mistranslated with *facilitate portuară,* which is an instance of paronymous calque (i.e. the result of an incorrect correspondence between two words with similar forms or etymologies but with a different evolution in their respective languages to the point of acquiring different meanings):

Maritime English (SL)	Maritime Romanian (TL)
In this context, following the construction of **port facilities** "Maasvlakte 2" in the Voordelta area, the Netherlands needs to take appropriate compensatory measures.	În acest context, în urma construirii **facilităților portuare** „Maasvlakte 2" din zona Voordelta, Țările de Jos trebuie să adopte măsurile compensatorii corespunzătoare.

It is obvious that the translator was aware of the fact that, in this context, *facility* in English and *facilitate* in Romanian are not one and the same thing. Even though the two words resemble in point of form, they differ in point of content, they are deceptive cognates. The word *facility* in English is polysemous while *facilitate* in Romanian is monesemous and means "însușirea a ceea ce este facil; însușirea de a face ceva fără eforturi, cu ușurință" (DEX 2012: 378), namely the ease of action or performance, freedom from difficulty. In the text above, the lexeme *facility* refers to "something that is built, installed, or established to serve a particular purpose". In addition, the compound structure *port facility security officer* is often mistranslated as *ofiţer pentru securitatea facilităţii portuare* or even worse, as *persoana desemnată însărcinată cu securitatea facilităţii portuare*. The structure *persoană desemnată însărcinată* sounds rather unnatural in Romanian, because there are two similar participles used one after the other, this being an instance of tautology (e.g. *desemnată* which translates into English as appointed, entitled, responsible for and *însărcinată* whose English equivalents are in charge of, responsible for, charged with, entrusted with, commissioned with).

The fact should be added that lexical interference in maritime translation is more dangerous than syntactical interference as it can distort meaning. The most obvious case is that of deceptive cognates, faux amis or false friends of Greco-Latin origin (e.g. *operational, facility, interest, function etc*). In this respect, see our article on false friends, *A friend in need is a friend in deed. Beware of false friends, though!* (cf. Sirbu 2018). Another pitfall is the fact that many usual terms have developed a technical meaning which the novice translators may not be familiar with, this situation being similar to the one put forward in *Features of EST, a subfield of ESP, with a focus on Maritime (Engineering) English* (Sirbu 2015:157) in relation to terminology in the Maritime English classroom: "[D]ue to their scarce knowledge or perhaps to mere ignorance of the special field they are going to work in, some present-day students tend to associate general English words like *list* with familiar translations like *listă* instead of the correct technical term *canarisire*". Thus, general language words with a specialized meaning may be "a hard nut to crack" for maritime students and translators alike.

Another translation error that we have come across is rendering the maritime term *grounding* by the syntagma *coliziune cu fundul apei*, in the example below:

Maritime English (SL)	Maritime Romanian (TL)

BDD-V4828 © 2019 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:00:43 UTC)

Any **grounding** or similar damage which pierces the outer bottom plating will flood one or more of these tanks […].	Orice **coliziune cu fundul apei** sau cu un obstacol asemănător care ar duce la perforarea bordajului exterior al carenei ar produce inundarea a unuia sau mai multora dintre aceste tancuri).

In Maritime English, the term *grounding* stands for running a vessel ashore, its direct equivalent in maritime Romanian being *eşuare* or *punere a navei pe uscat*. Thus, *grounding* cannot be translated with *coliziune cu fundul apei* (e.g. the literal translation in English being *collision with the water bottom*)since the noun *coliziune* (Eng. *collision*) in maritime language involves the coming together of two things (from opposite directions) with such force that both are damaged. As a result, the syntagma *coliziune cu fundul apei* is unnatural in maritime language andcannot be accepted in terms of collocability.

5. Conclusion

This paper is only an overview of three of the most commonly used procedures in maritime translation. The rest, namely transposition, modulation, equivalence, paraphrase, adaptation, expansion and reduction, componential analysis and permutation shall be tackled in a separate paper on this intricate topic of translatology. We consider that in order to get a more detailed perspective of maritime translation, each procedure deserves to be treated separately because the present paper has missed many important aspects. Maritime translators working as professionals have to learn how to translate in and out of their mother tongue. Even though this particular mode of translation is often thought to be the anathema par excellence of the profession, it is a situation in which many translators outside the native English environment find themselves. In the present case, the discussion has focused on the situation in Romania and exclusive reference has been made to English to Romanian translations. By making an overview of the procedures used in translating maritime terminology, out of space limit considerations, our approach of this topic has merely focused on three main types. We consider that maritime terminology is an integral part of every maritime translation process, necessary to achieve high-quality translation. In the case of IMO and EU law on maritime topics, maritime terminology is additionally a matter of safety, certainty and clarity. Terminological errors in maritime texts may lead to shipping companies and seafarers misunderstanding their rights and obligations, make the harmonization of maritime laws between Member States more difficult, and would often result in disputes at the national and international level. This is the reason why IMO and EU language services should pay special attention to maritime terminology work and integrate terminology in their translation process. We share the idea put forward by Peter Newmark (1993) who considers translation to be one of the most efficient strategies of mediation between cultures since it presents one culture in terms which are familiar to the other. Maritime translators should be aware that they create a space of in-betweenness, a space into which foreign elements are smoothly inserted. Maritime English and maritime Romanian may interfere on a smaller or larger scale, but we have to admit that nowadays we witness a new paradigm of international relations, a different geopolitical structure and that the phenomenon of globalization of maritime industry, of diversity in unity means the promotion of a higher pre-potent identity that maritime translators need to recognize and assume. The question of communicative competence, empathy towards the source language and culture and professionalism arises. We consider that efficiency and effectiveness are the key words in maritime translation.

BDD-V4828 © 2019 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:00:43 UTC)

NB: The authors have chosen to capitalize the term *Maritime* in *Maritime English* because nowadays Maritime English is an international study subject in itself, while the use of *maritime Romanian* is only restricted to a national level and its discourse usage is reflected in specialized fields such *[coastal] navigation, meteorology, naval architecture*, etc.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Bejan, A. (coord.), Stănescu, R., Pădurariu, N., Atanasiu, C., Ionescu, V., Ionescu, P. (2006). *Dicţionar Enciclopedic de Marină.* Bucureşti: Editura Societăţii Scriitorilor Militari.
2. Bocanegra Valle, A. (2007). *Development of a Specialized Glossary of Maritime English Terms for Spanish Users,* in *Teaching and Learning Boundaries.* Proceedings of the 6th International AELFE Conference, Lisbon: ISCAL, pp. 300-306.
3. *** DEX: *Dicţionarul Explicativ al Limbii Române* (2012), Academia Română, Institutul de Lingvistică "Iorgu Iordan-Al. Rosetti", Bucureşti: Univers Enciclopedic Gold.
4. Dimitriu, R. (2002). *Theories and Practice of Translation*. Iaşi: Institutul European.
5. *** IMO SMCP: *IMO Standard Marine Communication Phrases (with pronunciation guide on CD-ROM),* 2002, London: The International Maritime Organisation.
6. Leech, G. (1974). *Semantics*, London: Penguin.
7. Lyons, J. (1977). *Semantics (Vol. 1*). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
8. Newmark, P. (1988). *A Textbook of Translation*. London: Prentice Hall International Ltd.
9. Newmark, P. (1993). *Paragraphs on Translation*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
10. Novi, C. (1998). *Multilingual harmonization and standardization of technical terminology at the International Maritime Organization*, in D.L. Newman & M. Van Campenhout (eds.), pp. 110-125.
11. Sinclair, J. (2004). *Trust the Text,* London: Routledge.
12. Sîrbu, A. (2015). *Features of EST, a subfield of ESP, with a focus on Maritime (Engineering) English,* in Constanta Maritime University Annals, Vol. 24, Year XVII, pp. 157-160.
13. Sîrbu, A, Alibec, C. (2018). *A friend in need is a friend indeed. Beware of false friends, though!*, in the Scientific Bulletin of "Mircea cel Batran" Naval Academy, publication in progress.
14. Superceanu, R. (2006). *Evaluation and Revision Procedures used in Translation*, in Frenţiu, L. (ed.), *Romanian Journal of English Studies*, Timişoara: Editura Universităţii de Vest, pp. 257-263.
15. Vinay, J., Darbelnet, P. (1977/ 1998*). Stylistique compare du français et de l'anglais*, Paris: Les Éditions Didier.
16. Vişan, I. (2016). *Peculiarities of Maritime Romanian Terminology and Some Implications for the Current Translation Practice* in Constanta Maritime University Annals, Vol. 25, Year XVII, pp. 183-188.
17. Vîlceanu, T. (2008). *Intercultural communication prerequisites for effectiveness and efficiency.* Craiova: Universitaria.
18. Vîlceanu, T. (2003). *Translation: The Land of the Bilingual*. Craiova: Universitaria.
19. https://iate.europa.eu
20. https://eur-lex.europa.eu
21. https://www.merriam-webster.com

BDD-V4828 © 2019 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:00:43 UTC)