TRANSPOSITION: ACCOUNTING FOR SYNTACTIC SHIFTS IN TRANSLATION. A BILINGUAL EU CORPUS-BASED STUDY

Georgiana REISS
Junior Lecturer, University of Craiova
georgiana_reiss@hotmail.com

Abstract:

The present paper aims at tracking and analyzing the occurrences of *transposition*, also known as *shift*, in the official Romanian translations of EU legislation drafted in English. Since it involves a change at the syntactic level as regards the rendering of a translation unit from the source text (ST) into the target text (TT), *transposition* ranks among the most common procedures used in the translation process. By means of bilingual examples that we have selected from our corpus, we focus on discussing several relevant cases covering changes as to the number of the noun, the position of the adjective, the word class, the syntactic functions and the verb voice with a view to identifying their mandatory or optional nature. We also attempt to reveal the reasons that might have led to optional shifts, to suggest more functional alternatives where possible and provide a quantitative analysis establishing the frequency distributions of the *transposition* cases under discussion.

Keywords: transposition, syntactic changes, mandatory or optional shifts, translation.

Introduction

In this paper[1] we are going to discuss several significant cases of transposition, which comprise either mandatory or optional changes at the syntactic level, on the basis of bilingual English-Romanian examples.

Vinay and Dalbernet (1958/1995, 36) explain that transposition "involves replacing one word class with another without changing the meaning of the message" and they distinguish two types: *obligatory transposition* (e.g. "dès son lever – as soon as she got up", this English form being the only one possible) and *optional transposition* (e.g. "as soon as she

[1] **Acknowledgment**
This work was supported by the strategic grant POSDRU/CPP107/DMI1.5/S/78421, Project ID 78421 (2010), co-financed by the European Social Fund – Investing in People, within the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007 – 2013.

BDD-V3094 © 2017 Editura Universitaria
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:47:56 UTC)

got up" can be translated literally into French as "dès qu'elle s'est levée" or as a transposition "dès son lever").

Newmark (1988: 85) uses the term *transposition* alternatively with the term *shift* and defines this translation procedure as "involving a change in the grammar from SL to TL" which translators usually use intuitively. Gibová (2012, 36-37) considers it to be "an intentional and often unavoidable change that occurs in the translation from SL into TL", pointing out that *transpositions* are generally divided into *word-class* and *sentence-member transpositions*. *Word-class* (or *formal*) *transpositions* comprise the change of word-classes between SL and TL (e.g. the transposition of a verbal SL element into a nominal TL element), whereas *sentence-member* (or *functional*) *transpositions* trigger the change in the syntactic function of the target language (TL) element as compared to the source language (SL) element (e.g. the transposition between subject and object).

The bilingual examples provided in this paper have been selected from our larger bilingual corpus of EU legal documents[2] which has been used for our extended research study encompassing the analysis of several important translation procedures. In addition, the quantitative analysis presented at the end of the paper shows the frequency values of transposition among all translation procedures that we have dealt with in our larger research study.

a) the change in the number of the noun

The first type of *transposition* that we have come across is represented by the change in the number of the noun which includes not only the change from singular to plural, as pointed out by Newmark (1988, 85), but also the change from plural to singular.

sg. → pl.

1. (…) the Commission fell short of its obligation to examine objectively the ***evidence*** presented by that exporting producer (...). [1]	(…), nu a fost respectată de către Comisie obligația de a examina în mod obiectiv ***dovezile*** care au fost prezentate de către producătorul-exportator (…). [1]
2. Therefore, it is appropriate to require that the applicant submit further ***information*** confirming the results (...). [5]	Prin urmare, este necesar să se ceară solicitantului să prezinte ***informații*** suplimentare pentru a confirma rezultatele (…). [5]

[2] available online: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html

BDD-V3094 © 2017 Editura Universitaria
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:47:56 UTC)

Nouns like "*evidence*" ("facts or signs that show clearly that something exists or is true", LDCE 2003, 628) and "*information*" ("facts or details that tell you something about a situation, etc.", LDCE 2003, 976), as shown in the first two examples given above, are uncountable in English and can only be used in the singular, even if they have a plural meaning. Their Romanian corresponding words are rendered in the plural, namely "*dovezi*" and "*informații*", since it would be inappropriate to use them in the singular in such cases where their plural form is required. We can say that this is an obligatory *transposition* triggered by the TL syntactic rules.

sg. → pl.

3. ***Revenue and expenditure*** of the Agency shall be in balance. [3]	***Veniturile și cheltuielile*** agenției sunt în echilibru. [3]

The words "*revenue*" and "*expenditure*" are usually used as uncountable nouns in English, although they may take a plural form, too. In (3), the fixed phrase "*revenue and expenditure*" is made up of the noun "revenue" in the singular, as it refers to income, together with the noun "expenditure" which is also used in the singular, since it indicates the amount of money spent. The Romanian accustomed phrase is "*venituri și cheltuieli*" containing both nouns in the plural, which emphasizes the idea that there are more sources of income and more cases of expenses. We can also conclude that this is an obligatory *transposition* which occurs because of the TL rooted usage.

sg. → pl.

4. The Management Board *shall appoint the Executive Director on the basis of personal* ***merit***, experience in the field of large-scale IT systems (...). [3]	Consiliul de administrație *numește directorul executiv pe baza* ***meritelor*** *personale*, a experienței în domeniul sistemelor IT la scară largă (...). [3]

In (4), the phrase "on the basis of personal *merit*" includes the noun "merit" in the singular, while the Romanian corresponding phrase "pe baza *meritelor* personale" contains the noun "*merit*" in the plural ("merite"). Although the use of the noun "merit" in the singular had not sounded inappropriate in Romanian, the common usage of this well-known phrase indicates that this noun should be used in the plural, which makes it be rather an obligatory *transposition*. Moreover, the plural form also stresses the idea that the respective person possesses more merits, not just one, making him/her eligible to be appointed Executive Director.

BDD-V3094 © 2017 Editura Universitaria
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:47:56 UTC)

sg. → pl.

5. (...) *there is no* ***indication*** that consolidating Silkem's data into MAL's data would have made any difference. [6]	(…) *nu există* ***indicații*** care să confirme că includerea datelor provenite de la Silkem în cele prezentate de MAL ar fi făcut ca datele finale să fie diferite. [6]
6. (...), the Authority presented its ***conclusion*** on indolylbutyric acid to the Commission on 3 September 2010 [6]. [7]	(…), autoritatea a prezentat Comisiei, la data de 3 septembrie 2010 [6], ***concluziile*** la care a ajuns cu privire la acidul indolil butiric. [7]

In (5), the noun "*indication*" is in the singular, being part of the construction "there is no + noun (sg)" being translated into Romanian by a noun in the plural ("*indicații*"), which is part of the construction "nu există + noun (pl)". The translator could also have chosen another construction, similar to the English one "nu există nicio + noun (sg)", namely "nu există nicio indicație". However, the construction containing the noun in the plural is shorter and more formal in Romanian. Therefore, this is can be regarded as an optional *transposition*, determined by the translator's personal choice. In the next example, the noun "*conclusion*" in the singular is translated by its corresponding noun in the plural ("*concluzii*"). In this case, the singular form of the ST noun may have a comprehensive meaning, referring to a set of conclusions. The translator's preference for the plural form may have the aim to emphasize the fact that there were more conclusions that were reached, not just one. The rendering of the noun in the singular would have been rather inappropriate in this case, so we can deem this case of *transposition* to be an obligatory one.

The following examples show that we have also encountered cases when SL nouns used in the plural are rendered by TL corresponding nouns in the singular.

pl. → sg.

7. Where necessary, the costs of production and SG&A expenses were adjusted (...) in constructing *normal* ***values***. [6]	După caz, costurile de producție și cheltuielile administrative, de vânzare și alte cheltuieli generale au fost ajustate (…) pentru a determina ***valoarea*** *normală*. [6]
8. The ***statutes*** of SHARE-ERIC, as agreed between its members, are annexed to this Decision. [8]	***Statutul*** SHARE-ERIC, convenit între membrii acestuia, se anexează prezentei decizii. [8]

BDD-V3094 © 2017 Editura Universitaria
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:47:56 UTC)

In (7), the term "normal values" pertaining to the field of economics that contains the noun "*values*" in the plural is rendered by its Romanian corresponding term, "valoare normală", which comprises the noun "valoare" in the singular. In the ST, the noun "*values*" in the plural stresses the fact that there are more "normal values" to be determined, whereas the phrase "valoare normală" has a general meaning covering all the normal values in question. This is an optional *transposition,* since the Romanian translator could also have rendered the TT term in the plural without any change in the meaning.

In (8), the ST noun "*statutes*" in the plural is translated as "*statut*" in the singular. The noun "statutes" used in the plural refers to "a formal rule of an institution or organization" (LDCE 2003, 1893). In Romanian, the singular and plural forms of the noun "statut" are used alternatively, so this is an optional *transposition,* since the translator could have chosen to render the noun in the plural ("Statutele SHARE-ERIC"), too.

pl. → sg.

9. (...) organisers are subject to appropriate penalties for ***infringements*** of this Regulation. [9]	(...) organizatorii sunt supuși unor sancțiuni corespunzătoare în cazul ***încălcării*** prezentului regulament. [9]
10. (...), ***competences*** not conferred upon the Union in the Treaties remain with the Member States. [10]	(...), ***orice competență*** care nu este atribuită Uniunii prin tratate aparține statelor membre. [10]

In (9), the noun "*infringements*" in the plural is translated into Romanian as the noun "*încălcare*" in the singular which conveys a general meaning, namely covering all the possible situations in which the regulation is infringed. However, it could also have been used in the plural ("în cazul *încălcărilor* prezentului regulament") for emphasis. Therefore, this is also an optional *transposition,* even if the singular form sounds more natural in Romanian. In the next example, the noun "*competences*" in the plural is rendered as "orice *competență*" into the TT, namely as the noun "competență" in the singular preceded by the indefinite adjective "orice". This translation choice is more striking in pointing out that each and every competence "not conferred upon the Union in the Treaties remains with the Member States". Another possible translation solution would have been the use of this noun in the plural, which makes it another optional *transposition*.

b) the change in the position of the adjective

The second type of transposition that we have identified in our bilingual corpus is represented by the change in the position of the adjective.

BDD-V3094 © 2017 Editura Universitaria
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:47:56 UTC)

[adj. + noun] → [noun + adj.]	
11. (…) the tasks relating to ***technical*** *development* and the preparation for the ***operational*** *management* of SIS II and VIS (...). [3]	(…) atribuțiile legate de *dezvoltarea* ***tehnică*** și pregătirea pentru *gestionarea* ***operațională*** a SIS II și VIS (...). [3]
12. ***Specific*** *requirements* for accreditation should be developed and approved in line with the provisions of Regulation (…). [11]	Trebuie elaborate și aprobate *cerințe* ***specifice*** pentru acreditare, în conformitate cu dispozițiile Regulamentului (…). [11]
[adj. + noun] → [adj + noun]	
13. In this respect it is noted that the Commission revisited this point following ***new*** *developments*. [1]	În această privință, se precizează că, în urma ***noilor*** *evoluții*, Comisia a abordat din nou acest aspect. [1]
[adj. + noun] → [adj + noun] / [noun + adj.]	
14. In order to guarantee its ***full*** *autonomy* and independence, the Agency should be granted an ***autonomous*** *budget* with revenue from the ***general*** *budget* of the ***European*** *Union*. [3]	În scopul garantării ***deplinei*** *autonomii* și independențe a agenției, aceasta ar trebui să dispună de un *buget* ***autonom***, alimentat din *bugetul* ***general*** al *Uniunii* ***Europene***. [3]

As is well known, in English, the adjective is placed before the noun in most cases, whereas in Romanian it comes after the noun in most cases. Among the examples that we have analyzed, there are also exceptions in Romanian when the adjective is intentionally placed in front of the noun in order to be more prominent.

Therefore, as shown in the examples above, the predominant case is the one when the position of the adjective changes in translation according to the TL grammar rules, being *obligatory* transpositions ("***technical*** *development*" – "*dezvoltarea* ***tehnică***" and "***operational*** *management*" – "*gestionare* ***operațională***" in (11); "***specific*** *requirements*" – "*cerințe*

BDD-V3094 © 2017 Editura Universitaria
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:47:56 UTC)

specifice" in (12); "***autonomous*** *budget*" – "*buget* ***autonom***", "***general*** *budget*" – "*bugetul* ***general***" and "***European*** *Union*" – "*Uniunea* ***Europenă***" in (14)). However, we have also come across *optional* transpositions when the position of the adjective is preserved in front of the noun in Romanian ("***new*** *developments*" – "***noile*** *evoluții*" in (13); "***full*** *autonomy*" – "***deplina*** *autonomie*" in (14)) for stylistic reasons.

Further on, we take into account two main types of *transposition*, what Gibová (2012, 37) calls "*word-class*" (or *formal*) *transpositions* and "*sentence-member*" (or *functional*) *transpositions*. They correspond to "*class shifts*" and "*structural shifts*" according to Catford (1965/2000).

c) "word-class" transpositions

The predominant type of *transposition* identified in our bilingual corpus is represented by "word-class" *transpositions* (Gibová 2012), as words often change the class they belong to during translation. They are either obligatory or optional *transpositions*, whether they are imposed by the TL grammar rules or triggered by the translator's own preferences.

According to our analysis, the verb in the ST often changes into a noun and occasionally into an adjective in the TT.

V→ N

15. Having regard to Directive (…) ***establishing*** a scheme for greenhouse gas emission allowance trading within the Community and ***amending*** Council Directive 96/61/EC [1], and in particular Article 10a thereof. [12]	având în vedere Directiva (…) ***de stabilire*** a unui sistem de comercializare a cotelor de emisie de gaze cu efect de seră în cadrul Comunității și ***de modificare*** a Directivei 96/61/CE a Consiliului [1], în special articolul 10a. [12]
16. ***Improving*** road safety is a prime objective of the Union's transport policy. [13]	***Îmbunătățirea*** siguranței rutiere reprezintă un obiectiv central al politicii Uniunii în domeniul transporturilor. [13]

In examples (15) and (16), we notice that the *–ing* verbs in the ST are rendered into Romanian either by prepositional noun phrases or by a noun phrase made up of one noun. The present participles "*establishing*" and "*amending*", which act as post-modifiers of the noun "Directive" in (15), are each translated by prepositional noun phrases containing a noun preceded by the preposition "de" ("*de stabilire*" and "*de modificare*"). This translation choice has been preferred to a subordinate relative clause in Romanian ("care stabilește/modifică"), thus being an optional *transposition*. The gerund "*improving*" in (16) is rendered as the noun "*îmbunătățirea*", being an obligatory *transposition* as it is the only suitable translation solution in this case.

BDD-V3094 © 2017 Editura Universitaria
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:47:56 UTC)

V→ N

17. it was considered necessary ***to*** further ***refine*** the definition of rolls suitable for use in web-fed printing. [1]	s-a considerat necesară ***îmbunătățirea*** definiției rulourilor adecvate pentru utilizarea în procesul de tipărire cu hârtie în sul. [1]
18. this criterion ***to define*** rolls suitable for use in web-fed printing was abandoned. [1]	acest criteriu ***de definire*** a rulourilor adecvate pentru utilizarea în procesul de tipărire cu hârtie în sul a fost eliminat. [1]

Examples (17) and (18) show that the verbs in the infinitive, "*to refine*" and "*to define*", are also translated either by a noun or by a prepositional noun phrase, respectively. The infinitive "*to refine*", in (17), is rendered as the noun "*îmbunătățirea*", although the use of the verb in the Romanian conjunctive mood could also have been suitable ("s-a considerat necesar *să se îmbunătățească* definiția rulourilor"). The infinitive "*to define*" acting as post-modifier of the noun "criterion" in (18) is translated as the prepositional noun phrase "*de definire*" which is made up of the noun "definire" preceded by the preposition "de". It could also have been rendered by a relative clause ("acest criteriu *care definește* rulourilor adecvate"). Since the use of a relative clause would have been possible in both examples, we can conclude that these represent cases of optional *transpositions.* However, the use of nouns provides shorter and even more formal translation versions.

V→ N

19. The concept of "overriding reasons of general interest" (…) has been developed by the Court of Justice in its case-law in relation to Articles 49 and 56 TFEU and may ***continue*** to evolve. [14]	Conceptul de "motive imperative de interes general" (…) a fost elaborat de către Curtea de Justiție în jurisprudența sa în legătură cu articolele 49 și 56 din TFUE și ar putea evolua ***în continuare***. [14]

In (19), the verb "*continue*" is rendered by the prepositional noun phrase "*în continuare*" which contains the noun "continuare" preceded by the preposition "în". The translator could have chosen to preserve the verb in the TT and apply a literal translation ("și ar putea *continua* să evolueze"), which makes it an optional *transposition*. However, the official version is really felicitous, being a more elegant manner of expression in the TL.

V→ Adj

20. it shall be clarified whether the test material ***conforms*** to the proposed or existing specification. [15]	trebuie clarificat dacă materialul de testare ***este conform*** specificației propuse sau existente. [15]

Example (20) displays the ST verb "*conforms*" rendered as the verb phrase "este conform" into Romanian, being made up of the copula verb "to

BDD-V3094 © 2017 Editura Universitaria
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:47:56 UTC)

be" followed by the adjective "conform". This translation choice is better than the one in which the same verb is used in the TT ("materialul de testare *se conformează* specificației") which would sound rather forced as the verb "a se conforma" is usually used in Romanian when referring to people. Therefore, we can consider this to be an obligatory *transposition*.

According to our study, the noun in the ST sometimes changes into an adjective or a verb in the TT.

N→ Adj

21. Member States shall ensure that each operator also submits a ***methodology*** *report* containing, in particular, a description of the installation, (...). [12]	Statele membre se asigură că fiecare operator transmite, de asemenea, un *raport* ***metodologic***, care conține, în special, o descriere a instalației, (...).[12]

In (21), the noun "*methodology*", which is part of the nominal collocation "*methodology* report", is translated as the adjective "*metodologic*", being an obligatory *transposition* as the corresponding Romanian collocation is "raport *metodologic*". In the noun phrase "methodology report", which is represented by two nouns (N+N), the first noun "methodology" functions as a pre-modifier of the head noun "report". Such sequences are usually rendered into Romanian by means of a noun phrase made up of a noun and an adjective (N+Adj: "raport *metodologic*") or a noun followed by a prepositional noun phrase in other situations ("raport *de evaluare*" – "evaluation report").

N→V

22. *After* ***determination*** of the final annual amount for all incumbent installations in their territory, Member States shall submit (...). [12]	*După ce* ***determină*** cantitatea anuală finală pentru toate instalațiile autorizate de pe teritoriul lor, statele membre transmit (...). [12]

In (22), the noun "*determination*" becomes a verb in Romanian, as this necessary change is characterized by the TL naturalness of expression. Actually, the prepositional noun phrase in English (preposition "after" followed by the noun "determination") functioning as an adverbial modifier of time is expanded into an adverbial clause of time introduced by the subordinating conjunction "după ce" followed by the verb "determină" in Romanian. If the translator had preserved the noun "determinare", then the noun "cantitate" and the adjectives "anual" and "final" that come after it would have been in the genitive case, which would have sounded rather forced ("după *determinarea* cantității anuale finale").

BDD-V3094 © 2017 Editura Universitaria
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:47:56 UTC)

As regards the adjective in the ST, it sometimes changes into a noun or a verb in the TT.

Adj→ N

23. That application also complies with the remaining ***substantive*** and ***procedural*** *requirements* (…). [16]	Cererea este conformă, de asemenea, cu celelalte *cerințe* ***de fond*** și ***de procedură*** (…). [16]

Adj→V

24. The Executive Director *shall be* ***accountable*** to the Management Board. [3]	Directorul executiv ***răspunde*** în fața consiliului de administrație. [3]

In (23), the adjectives "*substantive*" and "*procedural*" functioning as pre-modifiers of the noun "requirements" are rendered as prepositional noun phrases into the TT, each containing a noun preceded by the preposition "de" ("*de fond*" and "*de procedură*"). These constructions are suitable for the legal style. The formal adjective "substantive" refers to "things that are important or real" (LDCE 2003, 1935), being translated as "substanţial, semnificativ, de fond" (Voiculescu 2007, 162) in legal contexts. The formal adjective "procedural" means "connected with a procedure, especially in a law court" (LDCE 2003, 1522), being rendered either as "procedural" or "de procedură" in Romanian. However, another translation solution would have been the use of the corresponding adjectives "cerințe *substanțiale* și *procedurale*". We can consider them to be obligatory *transpositions* due to language register constraints.

In (24), the adjective "*accountable*" is changed into the verb "*răspunde*" in the Romanian translation. This is an optional *transposition*, as the corresponding adjective "*răspunzător*" and the copula verb "a fi" ("este *răspunzător* în fața") could also have been preserved in the TT. Yet, in such sentence type, the verbal predicate expressed by the verb "răspunde" is more common than the nominal predicate "este răspunzător". The use of the verb "*răspunde*" in the present tense succeeds in conveying the same degree of obligation as the sequence "shall be accountable".

The adverb in the ST is often rendered as an adjective (part of a prepositional phrase) and occasionally as a verb in the TT.

Adv→V

25. (…), the companies whose web rolls were ***allegedly*** tested could not respond to the conclusions of the test. [1]	(…), societățile ale căror rulouri pentru tipărirea cu hârtie în sul ***se presupune că*** au fost testate nu au putut reacționa la constatările testului. [1]

In (25), we can see that the SL formal adverb "*allegedly*" is rendered as the TL verb "*se presupune*" in the reflexive-passive form in order to convey

BDD-V3094 © 2017 Editura Universitaria
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:47:56 UTC)

the idea of supposition. As the equivalent word/phrases of "*allegedly*" in Romanian belong to the informal and even colloquial vocabulary ("vorba vine", "pare-se", "chipurile"), it would have been totally inappropriate to use them here. Consequently, this is an obligatory *transposition* since the only solution is to render the ST adverb by the verb "a se presupune" so as to comply with the formal register requirements.

Adv→ Adj

26. Within the regional ceilings, the EIB shall ***progressively*** ensure a balanced country distribution (…). [2]	În cadrul plafoanelor regionale, BEI asigură ***în mod progresiv*** o distribuire echilibrată pe țări, (…). [2]

Adv→ Adj // V → N

27. Every citizen of the Union shall have the right to ***move*** and ***reside freely*** within the territory of the Member States, (...). [10]	Orice cetățean al Uniunii are dreptul de ***liberă circulație*** și de ***ședere*** pe teritoriul statelor membre, (...). [10]

In (26), the adverb "*progressively*" is translated into Romanian as the prepositional noun phrase "în mod progresiv" which emphasizes the manner in which the action is done. It is an *obligatory* transposition, as it is triggered by the TL naturalness and grammar constraints. In the last example, (27), the adverb "*freely*" is rendered as the adjective "*liberă*" into Romanian, since the verbs "*move*" and "*reside*" are also changed into the nouns "*circulație*" and "*ședere*" (V+Adv changes into Adj+N). This can be considered an optional *transposition* because another translation solution would have been the use of the prepositional phrase "în mod liber" after the verbs "a circula" and "a locui" ("Orice cetățean al Uniunii are dreptul de *a circula* și de *a locui în mod liber* pe teritoriul statelor membre").We also remark the stressed position of the adjective "liberă" before the nouns "circulație" and "ședere" in the TT.

d) "sentence-member" transpositions

Furthermore, we are going to discuss some cases of "sentence-member" (or functional) *transpositions* (Gibová 2012) that we have commonly encountered in our bilingual corpus under analysis. They involve the change in the syntactic function of the ST unit when rendered into the TT, being often triggered by various "*word-class*" *transpositions*. Most of them can be deemed as obligatory *transpositions*, being determined by the TL grammar and naturalness constraints.

BDD-V3094 © 2017 Editura Universitaria
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:47:56 UTC)

S → PO of agent	
28. ***Member States*** shall communicate to the Commission the text of the main provisions of national law (…). [17]	*Comisiei* îi sunt comunicate ***de către statele membre*** textele principalelor dispoziții de drept intern (…). [17]
S → DO	
29. ***The methods*** of making such reference shall be laid down by the Member States. [17]	*Statele membre* prevăd ***metodele*** de efectuare a unei astfel de trimiteri. [17]
S → Adv mod of manner	
30. ***A motion***, specifying the procedure and timeframe, if approved by the Council by a two thirds majority, can wind up the Organisation, (...). [8]	Organizația poate fi lichidată ***printr-o moțiune*** care să precizeze procedura și calendarul, dacă aceasta este aprobată de consiliu cu o majoritate de două treimi din voturi, (...). [8]

In example (28), the subject "*Member States*" becomes a prepositional object of agent in the Romanian translation ("*de către statele membre*"). The noun "comisiei" is placed at the beginning of the sentence in order to point out the recipient of the action. This choice enables the translator to avoid a possible cacophony caused by using the noun "statele membre" with subject function: "Statele membre comunică Comisiei (...)".

In (29), the noun phrase "*the methods*" functioning as subject is rendered as the noun phrase "metodele" functioning as direct object. In this way, the noun phrase "*statele membre*" becomes the subject in the TT having a prominent initial position. Actually, this *shift* is determined by the change from passive voice to active voice in the translation. In the next example, the ST subject "*a motion*" is rendered by the TT adverbial modifier of manner "*printr-o moțiune*" showing the manner in which the organization can be wound up. This translation solution is far better than the literal translation preserving the English structure ("O moţiune (…) poate lichida Organizaţia") which is rather unnatural in Romanian.

Adv mod of manner → Attribute	
30. A mechanism should be established to ensure that the list of travel documents is ***constantly*** *updated*. [13]	Ar trebui instituit un mecanism care să asigure *actualizarea* ***constantă*** a listei documentelor de călătorie. [13]

BDD-V3094 © 2017 Editura Universitaria
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:47:56 UTC)

Adv mod of manner → S	
31. According to the two parties, Article 12(5) TRLIS is exceptional ***in nature*** because the Spanish tax system, (…), does not allow any amortisation (...). [18]	Potrivit celor două părți, ***natura*** articolului 12 alineatul (5) din TRLIS este excepțională deoarece sistemul fiscal spaniol, (…), nu permite nicio amortizare (...). [18]

Example (30) shows the past participle "updated" undergoing a nominalization into "actualizare" in the TT, which brings about a change in the word-class of modifiers: from the adverb "constantly" to the adjective "constantă". Therefore, the adverbial modifier of manner "*constantly*" is rendered as the attribute "*constantă*" in terms of "*sentence-member*" *transposition*. The translator could have chosen to keep the same ST structure ("Ar trebui instituit un mecanism care să asigure că lista documentelor de călătorie este actualizată constant") by preserving the adverbial modifier of manner, but the official translation version is better as it sounds more natural and elegant in Romanian. In example (31), the prepositional noun phrase "in nature" functioning as adverbial modifier of manner is translated into Romanian as the noun phrase "natura" being the subject of the sentence. This is an optional *transposition* because the use of the noun "caracter", instead of "natura", performing the function of direct object ("articolul…are caracter excepţional") would have been another suitable translation choice.

e) the change in the verb voice

Newmark (1988, 89) considers "active for passive (and vice versa)" to be a common type of *transposition* that is mandatory when there are no passive forms in the TL and advisable when a reflexive form is preferred to a passive, a fact which happens in the Romance languages.

As regards this type of *transposition*, we have identified four cases in our bilingual corpus: the change from active voice into passive voice, from passive voice into active voice, from passive voice into reflexive-passive and from an impersonal construction into active voice. These represent both cases of obligatory *transpositions*, determined not only by the TL naturalness and grammar constraints but also by the formal register constraints, and cases of optional *transpositions*. This type of *transposition* represented by the change in the verb voice accounts for numerous examples in our bilingual corpus.

BDD-V3094 © 2017 Editura Universitaria
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:47:56 UTC)

passive → reflexive-passive

32. Citizenship of the Union ***is*** hereby ***established***. [20]	***Se instituie*** cetățenia Uniunii. [20]
33. The list of travel documents ***shall be divided*** into three parts. [9]	Lista documentelor de călătorie ***se împarte*** în trei părți. [9]

As indicated by Wales (2001, 288-289), in an unmarked active sentence, the canonical distribution of information begins with *given information* and ends with *new*, which is highlighted by *end focus*. The subject represents the *theme* and the focus falls on the object. In the passive sentence, the affected object, which represents the grammatical subject, is thematized and the focus falls on the *agent*, which is expressed by a prepositional phrase. In Romanian, the "reflexive-passive" form is extremely used in order to indicate that "the action is fulfilled by someone else than the grammatical subject" (Coteanu 1982, 171).

In the first two examples, (32) and (33), in the passive sentences, the affected objects "citizenship of the Union" and "the list of travel documents", respectively, are thematized, but the agents of the actions are not expressed. Therefore, the passive voice in the ST ("*is established*" and "shall be divided") is rendered by the reflexive-passive ("*se instituie*" and "se împarte") into Romanian, which also triggers the omission of the agents. The use of the passive voice in the TT would not have been suitable in these cases, so the choice of the reflexive-passive forms, which are quite frequent in Romanian, gives naturalness of expression. In fact, the passive voice in the ST has a formulaic value which is best conveyed by the reflexive-passive form in the TT.

passive → active

34. Once a proposed citizens' initiative is registered, statements of support from citizens ***may be collected*** by the organisers. [19]	După înregistrarea propunerii de inițiativă cetățenească, organizatorii ***pot colecta*** declarațiile de susținere din partea cetățenilor. [19]

active → passive

35. It ***communicated*** that report to the European Food Safety Authority (hereinafter "the Authority") and to the Commission. [3]	Raportul respectiv ***a fost comunicat*** Autorității Europene pentru Siguranța Alimentară (denumită în continuare "autoritatea") și Comisiei. [3]

In example (34), in the passive sentence, the affected object "statements of support", which is the grammatical subject, is thematized and the focus falls on the agent, namely on the prepositional phrase "by the organizers". We can see that the passive voice ("*may be collected*") is changed into the active voice ("*pot colecta*") in Romanian, thus the focus

BDD-V3094 © 2017 Editura Universitaria
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:47:56 UTC)

falling on the object, which is represented by the noun phrase "declarațiile de susținere". Yet, even though this translation option is desirable, the passive voice could have been preserved in the translation ("declarațiile de susținere din partea cetățenilor *pot fi colectate* de către organizatori").

On the other hand, in (35), in the active sentence, the pronoun "it" is the theme and the focus falls on the object "that report". The active voice ("it *communicated*") in the ST is changed into the passive voice ("*a fost comunicat*") in the TT, the agent being omitted in the Romanian translation. The pronoun "it" refers back to "Sweden" in the larger context, so the Romanian translator could have preserved the active voice, ("*aceasta* a comunicat raportul respectiv..."), in which the pronoun "aceasta" has an anaphoric function and stands for the proper noun "Suedia" found in the previous sentence. However, the use of the passive voice and the omission of the agent is a more formal choice.

impers constr → active

36. ***It has appeared*** *from* the various examinations made that plant protection products containing indolylbutyric acid may be expected to satisfy, in general, the requirements laid down in Article 5(1) (...). [17]	*Diferitele examinări efectuate* ***au arătat*** că produsele de protecție a plantelor care conțin acid indolil butiric pot îndeplini, în general, cerințele prevăzute la articolul 5 alineatul (1) (...). [17]

In (36), we can notice the impersonal construction made up of the introductory pronoun "it" followed by the copula-like verb "appear" ("It has appeared…"). This pronoun has a cataphoric reference by anticipating the extraposed subject clause introduced by the conjunction "that". The translator has chosen to use the subject "*examinări*" together with the verb "*au arătat*" in the active voice, although the reflexive-passive form would have preserved the impersonal touch ("*S-a arătat*, din diferitele examinări efectuate, *că* produsele de protecție a plantelor...").

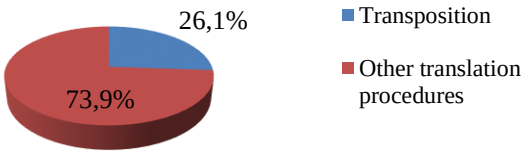
Conclusions

Our quantitative analysis has revealed that *transposition* is the most frequently used translation procedure in our bilingual corpus of EU legal documents, being identified with a frequency value of approx. 26.1% of all translation procedures investigated in our extended research study.

BDD-V3094 © 2017 Editura Universitaria
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:47:56 UTC)

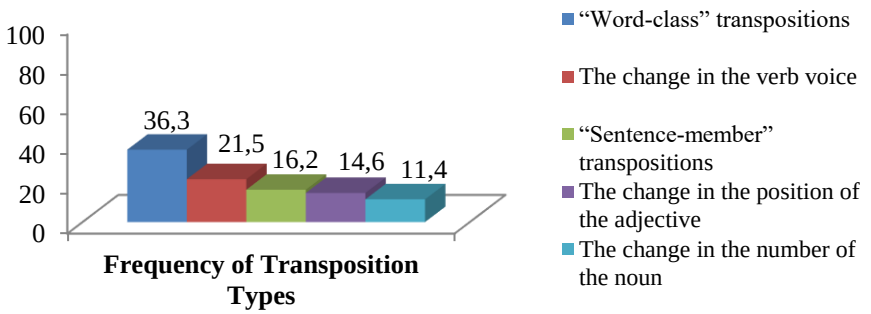
Translation procedure	Number of occurrences	Frequency (%)
Transposition	1324	26.1

Frequency of Translation Procedures in the Bilingual Corpus under Analysis



***Transposition* Types**	**Number of occurences**	**Frequency (%)**
"Word-class" transpositions	480	36.3
The change in the verb voice	284	21.5
"Sentence-member" transpositions	214	16.2
The change in the position of the adjective	193	14.6
The change in the number of the noun	150	11.4

The predominant type is represented by "word-class" transpositions, as words often change their class from the ST into the TT during the process of translation, having a frequency of approx. 36.3% of all identified types of *transpositions*, whereas the last position is occupied by "the change in the number of the noun", reaching a frequency value of approx. 11.4% of all identified *transpositions*.



Frequency of Transposition Types

Being a highly important translation procedure, transposition is concerned with syntactic shifts that occur during the translation process. Our analysis has revealed that the types of transposition under discussion can be interpreted either as mandatory or optional. Mandatory transpositions come into play whenever the translator has no choice but to comply with the target language (TL) grammar rules, common usage or naturalness requirements, as well as with formal or legal register norms. On the other hand, optional

BDD-V3094 © 2017 Editura Universitaria
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:47:56 UTC)

transpositions have proved to encompass the translator's preferences out of a series of possible suitable translation solutions that he/she considers to be the most appropriate.

References

Catford, John Cunnison. 1965. *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Catford, John Cunnison. 2000. 'Translation shifts'. In Venuti, L. *The Translation Studies Reader*. London & New York: Routledge, 141-147.

Coteanu, Ion. 1982. *Gramatica de bază a limbii române*. București: Editura Albatros.

Gibová, Klaudia. 2012. 'Translation Procedures in the Non-literary and Literary Text Compared (based on an analysis of an EU institutional-legal text and novel excerpt "The Shack" by William P. Young)'. http://www.pulib.sk/elpub2/FF/Gibova1/index.html (last accessed April, 2017).

Newmark, Peter. 1988. *A Textbook of Translation*. Pearson Education: Longman.

Vinay, Jean-Paul and Darbelnet Jean, eds. 1958. *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais: Méthode de Traduction*. Paris: Didier.

Vinay, Jean-Paul and Darbelnet Jean, eds. 1995. *Comparative Stylistics of French and English: A Methodology for Translation*, trans. of Vinay and Darbelnet (1958) by Juan C. Sager and Marie-Josée Hamel. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Wales, Katie 2001. *A Dictionary of Stylistics*. Second Edition. Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited.

Dictionaries

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDCE). 2003. Pearson Education Limited.

Voiculescu, Cecilia. 2007. *Dicţionar juridic englez-român. Terminologie UE/SUA*. Bucureşti: Editura Niculescu.

Bilingual Corpus

[1]. Council Implementing Regulation (EU) No 451/2011 of 6 May 2011.

[2]. Decision No 1080/2011/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2011.

BDD-V3094 © 2017 Editura Universitaria
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:47:56 UTC)

[3]. Regulation (EU) No 1077/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2011.
[4]. Decision No 1105/2011/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2011.
[5]. Commission Implementing Directive 2011/45/EU of 13 April 2011.
[6]. Council Implementing Regulation (EU) No 464/2011 of 11 May 2011.
[7]. Commission Directive 2011/28/EU of 4 March 2011.
[8]. 2011/166/EU: Commission Decision of 17 March 2011.
[9]. Regulation (EU) No 211/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 February 2011
[10]. Selected parts of the consolidated versions of the Treaty on EU and the TFEU.
[11]. Commission Regulation (EU) No 445/2011 of 10 May 2011.
[12]. 2011/278/EU: Commission Decision of 27 April 2011.
[13]. Directive 2011/82/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2011.
[14]. Directive 2011/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2011.
[15]. Commission Regulation (EU) No 234/2011 of 10 March 2011.
[16]. Commission Implementing Directive 2011/48/EU of 15 April 2011.
[17]. Council Directive 2011/16/EU of 15 February 2011.
[18]. 2011/282/EU: Commission Decision of 12 January 2011.

BDD-V3094 © 2017 Editura Universitaria
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.64 (2026-11-19 22:47:56 UTC)