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TO THE LEFT OR THE PORT?
(Technical Translation/ Interpretation Challenges)

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Abstract: *The present paper treats some of the challenges faced when interpreting very technical presentations, speeches and discussion panels on a very specific training on small boat operations organized by U.S Coast Guard and U.S Embassy in Vlora, Albania. It tries to investigate the interpretation problems which may arise during this kind of translation and the specific skills required by the interpreters to successfully accomplish this really demanding task. The case study method is based on the author's experience as a consecutive interpreter (English into Albanian and vice-versa) in this training and it will provide specific interpretation challenges along with skills and strategies employed in each case.*
Keywords*: challenge, skills, small boat, technical translation.*

1. Introduction. What is technical translation?

Technical translation is the type of translation, which requires a considerable amount of understanding and skills. A technical translator is not only a translator, but also a specialist and an expert in the related field (Robinson 2003). Technical translation consists of content related to scientific and technological data. A technical translator performs the duty of transferring the text from one language to another in an understandable and a logical way without changing the intended meaning. Somehow, a technical translator works as a technical writer (Byrne 2007, 2010, Herman 1993). A technical translator should have a high level of knowledge of the topic. Aside from the knowledge of the topic and the language, a technical translator should also have knowledge of psychology, technical communication and usability engineering (Byrne 2006). Technical translation covers the translation of many kinds of specialized texts and requires a high level of subject knowledge and mastery of the relevant terminology and writing conventions. The question which may logically arise is why technical translation is different from other types of translation and can any kind of translator/interpreter deal with it successfully.

Following Newmark (1998:151), the technical style is usually free from emotive language, connotations, sound effects and original metaphors if it is well written and the categories of style may vary from academic (where usually terms in Greek or Latin are used) or professional (which carries very specific words related to the subject) to popular which deals with the way these specific terms are used by the general population.

On this perspective, the translator or interpreter should be really aware of the terminology used in both languages, otherwise he/she will fail to perform and accomplish his/her task successfully. Experts with a good knowledge of languages are preferred when possible or at least translators who are well aware of the terminology used for these texts/speeches.

However, one of the problems is that certain specific technical texts which need to be translated or even interpreted are badly written, making the challenge even more difficult for the translator or interpreter who should definitely study the materials very carefully before translating them and check the unclear technical words with specialists to make sure whether they exist in the source language before translating them into the target language.

Newmark (1998: 158) suggests some steps to be considered before dealing with such kind of texts which may cause translation problem. These may include unfamiliar apparently of transparent words with Greek or Latin morphemes which may help the translator gasp the general meaning of the word or figures and symbols which need to be checked carefully for TL equivalence and order. Additionally, special attention should be given to semi-empty words which are likely to be reduced in both source and target language or to verbs and pun words which need to be considered carefully before translating them.

Considering translation techniques and procedures to deal with technical translations of texts or speeches to render either in target or source language, it can be said that *adaptation* is not recommended to be used as such. Although adaptation is a highly creative strategy which, while acceptable in certain circumstances (with much discussion) in literary texts, is unusual in technical genres and it is not something which is usually associated with technical translation. The primary reason for this is that technical texts convey facts, procedures and concrete information which, by virtue of their empirical, real-world orientation, as a rule, require faithful and direct translation. This information should be regarded as universal and, therefore, should not, in theory, require adaptation (Byrne 2009:20).

The nature of technical communication has changed in recent years and rather than being designed purely for expert audiences who require little in the way of clarification and explicitation, it is now produced for widely heterogeneous audiences. Coupled with new approaches to the communication of information, this has resulted in a much richer variety of texts with a greater range of features and strategies. Translating texts of this type requires high levels of creativity in language use while, at the same time, maintaining faithful references to both intratextual and extratextual material and concepts (Byrne 2009:21).

2. The situation in Albania

The globalization and opening of the country after the fall of communist regime increased sharply the need for technical translation in all the spheres of life. Thousands of pages are translated every day for different reasons and different technical areas such as legal, economic, political, business and several meetings, conferences, seminars, workshops etc. are organised every day in Albania which require translation or interpretation of different materials. The question which may logically arise is who should translate them.

Unfortunately, there are no specialized programs or degrees in Albanian universities which prepare technical translators/interpreters or translators for specific purposes and in order to be an official translator in Albania you need to take a special exam and to meet certain criteria which are required by the Ministry of Justice, which is the only authority in Albania that awards the titles of professional official translators/interpreters.

Yet, a translator or interpreter in Albania is asked to translate several different materials, and it is the continuous practice with different terminology which has made most of these translators or interpreters really skilful and efficient in their everyday job.

3. Case study: Interpreting for the US Coast Guard

In November 2015 I was hired by the U.S Embassy to work as a consecutive interpreter in a military training which the U.S. Coast Guard were organizing in "*Delta Force Unit",* Radhima, Vlorë concerning small boat operation. The training would last two weeks and according to the schedule, for each day, there were planned three theoretical training sessions in the classroom and two hours practical training on small boats at sea for each group of participants. My task was to provide consecutive interpretation in the classroom for the theoretical presentations, while two other interpreters were asked to go underway, on separate small boats, sailing with the trainees and helping them with the interpretation of instructions for sailing and making different manoeuvres as asked by the U.S Coast Guards trainers.

During a training day the trainees who were navy officers, delta force officers, divers and representatives from some other coastal divisions had to attend three presentations and do some chart practice. The required translation was really technical in both languages. What was more challenging for me was the interpretation into Albanian with specific terminology used by these navy professionals who used a very specific word for an item or concept in Albanian and its synonym would be quite unacceptable in these circumstances. To illustrate, some examples of this very technical translation are provided and analysed below by shedding light on the interpretation problems they impose and the respective solutions given to these problems.

Example 1.

Below are listed some names of *types of waves* and the way they are translated into Albanian with the respective terminology used by marine officers and sailors in general in both languages. We will analyse the meaning of the words and equivalents found into Albanian in this case.

• **Breaker** - a breaking wave. • **Crest** - the top of a wave, breaker or swell. • **Period** - the time, in seconds, it takes for two successive crests to pass a fixed point. • **Series** - a group of waves that seem to travel together, at the same speed. • **Trough** - valley between swells.	**Thyese**- një dallgë që thyhet **Kreshtë**- maja e një dallge, thyese apo fryrëse **Perioda**- koha, në sekonda që i duhet dy kreshtave të njëpasnjëshme për të kaluar një pikë fikse. **Seri**- një grup dallgësh që duket se po udhëtojnë së bashku, me të njëjtën shpejtësi. **Lugu**- një pikë e ulët mes dy dallgëve.

Table 1 .Types of waves and respective terminology in SL&TL

If we refer to the Longman or the meaning of the word *breaker* it refers to *a large wave with a white top that rolls onto the shore.* The translation given into Albanian is a word for word translation- *thyese,* by giving in this case the descriptive and functional equivalent of the word. The denotative meanings are also provided for the translation of *crest* (kreshta), *period* (perioda), and *series* (seria) by describing them with their definitions.

It is also interesting to analyse the translation of the word *trough* with *lugu* into Albanian. If we look up the word in Longman dictionary we will see that only its third meaning refers to waves, which means *the hollow area between two waves.* In Albanian this specific term is translated as *lugu*, which in a normal Albanian dictionary has several meanings, but the one which comes nearer to our context is the one which refers to a *hollow area between two things in which something passes*. The translation seems correct with this word in this context.

Example 2.

It's very interesting to notice the way the expressions *on the left* and *on the right* are used in navy terminology. For these directions the navy uses the expressions *on the port* and *to the starboard.* Referring to Longman dictionary again for the meaning of the word *port* we would find:

[uncountable] the left side of a ship or aircraft when you are looking towards the front [≠ starboard] - in such a context, it is usually considered wrong to use the general expression *on the left* to refer to such a concept - and the opposite of it is *to the starboard*, to refer to the expression *on the right*.

The technical translator should be really aware of using the specific terminology according to the proper situation in order to be understood by the audience.

With object **on port side**, winds head on: Turn to port and engage engines ahead. Have object **off port bow**, **wind off starboard**	Me objektin **në të majtë** dhe bashin përballë erës. Kthehu **majtas** dhe jepu motorrave përpara. Objektin mbaje **në të majtë të bashit**, erën në të

bow at a 45 degree angle	djathtë të tij, me kënd 45 gradë

Table 2 . Specific expressions for direction

Example 3.

One of the most difficult parts to be dealt with were the very technical descriptions of the objects and parts of the vessels. The examples below describe parts of *the anchor* and the function they play in anchorage.

1. **Shank** – Attachment for anchor line. 2. **Flukes** – Dig in the bottom, provides holding power. 3. **Crown** – Forces flukes into bottom. 4. **Stalk** – Prevents anchor from rolling	1. **Krahu**-pjesë ku lidhet litari i spirancës 2. **Gremçat**- ngulen në fundin e detit, sigurojnë mjetin në vend. 3. **Kurora**- i mban gremçat të ngulur. 4. **Bishti –** ndalon spirancën të rrotullohet.

Table 3. Parts of anchor

The word *shank* refers to *a straight narrow part of a tool or object that connects the two ends;* the way this device is called in technical translation for small boat operations was *krahu,* though the Albanian word does not refer exactly to something attached to something else, but to something by means of which one can be hold, or can pull something else. Still, a crown is translated word for word, *kurora.* It is interesting to see the usage of the noun *stalk* which refers to a thin upright object, and the way used to specify such a term in navy terminology was *bishti,* which in fact refers to an extended line, or horizontal line attached to something.

Still, the average people who work in these professions refer to such things in everyday work with this specific terminology, and the real challenge is that the translator should get used to these specific terms and use them appropriately, and not to judge whether they are right or wrong from the linguistic point of view.

Example 4.

The following examples refer to different kinds of *lines* used for towing in different positions. They pose a lot of difficulty for the translator or interpreter, probably the hardest part of terminological use (for me a least) not only because of specific English words, but especially due the very different and technical Albanian words which are used by marine professionals to refer to these types of lines. If we check the general meaning of the word *line* into Albanian it is *litar.* But for this word the Albanian navy officers used the term *cima,* and to refer to different types of lines, they used other more specific words rather than *litar.* This is a real challenge for someone who is not well acquainted with the terminology because they should know the specific Albanian words used in this context.

Towline	**Cima** e rimorkimit
Thimbles, Shackles and Skiff Hooks	**Gacat** metalike, **gametat** dhe **ganxhat.**
Bitts, Cleats and Chocks	**Kalunët pastekët dhe kluzët**
Bridles and Pendants	**Kavat dhe gacat**

Table 4. Different types of lines

Most of the Albanian words serving as equivalents for the English terms, are not included in Albanian Dictionary of standard language. The word *cima* (line, rope) is not included in the Contemporary Albanian Dictionary. If we look up the word *gaca* in the Albanian Dictionary it refers to *shkëndijë, xixë,* but it does not have any technical meaning. The word *gameta* as well is not included in the Contemporary Albanian Dictionary.

Whereas the word *kalunë*, can be in fact found in the dictionary as *kallum* and its definition in Albanian was: "*binarë që i vendoset për së gjati e përfundi varkës"*. The words

pastek and *kluzë* are not included in the Albanian dictionary I have checked. This is probably because they are really technical and unfortunately, we lack English Albanian technical dictionaries. More should be done in the future for such kinds of thing to facilitate the job of translators and interpreters.

So, the word *towline* refers to the line or rope used for towing, and as I mentioned before it is interesting to notice the Albanian translation for it, *cima* e *rimorkimit*.

The world *thimble* which refers to a small metal or plastic cap used to protect your finger when you are sewing, (in Albanian *gishtëz)* looks even stranger into Albanian, translated as *gacat metalike* and the same strange and unfamiliar words are *kalunë, pastekë, kluzë.*

However, these are the technical terms used in Albanian for these objects and of course the translators and interpreters should use them as such, without adapting or substituting them with synonyms, otherwise they will not be understood by the specific audience for whom the message is interpreted or translated.

Conclusions

The above analysed examples show that technical translation seems to be strenuous and challenging. This is because the translators or interpreters of such kinds of texts or speeches need to be fully aware of the challenge which they have to face and to use the proper terminology required for the task they have agreed to perform.

It is not just important to be proficient in the foreign language, but the translator should be proficient in the specific terminology in both languages. He/she should be well prepared and the most important thing is that he/she should check and verify terms with a specialist beforehand in order to accomplish the task successfully.

It can be said that technical translation is not inferior to any other type of translation; it is as challenging and as important as any other. Time and experience has shown that by performing tasks as technical translators and not refraining from the challenge which is imposed in these cases, the translators and interpreters have improved their skills and have become more self-confident and efficient in their job, qualities which have led them to success.

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