

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL TRANSLATION EDITING

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Lecture 1

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Recognize the impossibility of what you want to do, and then do it anyway...
(Translation Editing: An Unedited Conversation by John O'Brien and Jeremy M. Davies)

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I. Technical translation. Scope and essence

Technical translation encompasses the translation of special language texts, i.e. texts written using Languages for Special Purposes (LSP). As such, technical translation includes not only the translation of texts in engineering, but also those in medicine, economics, psychology, law etc. These texts require not only a firm mastery of both the source and the target language, but also at least an informed layman's (неспеціаліст) understanding of the subject field treated by the text, coupled with the research skills needed to write like an expert on the leading edge (the leading edge of a particular area of research or development is the area of it that seems most advanced or sophisticated) of technical disciplines.

Technical translators are typically either trained linguists having profound expertise in selected technical areas or engineers, scientists and other subject-area specialists who have developed a high degree of linguistic knowledge which they apply in their fields of specialization. Thus, collaboration among linguists and subject specialists is quite common.

A translation of a technical text is different from that of a literary text in terms of preciseness. Though non-literal, it should convey the exact meaning of the original text as directly as possible. Purposeful ambiguities, ungrammatical constructions and sound combinations which call attention to themselves are the province of literary translation. In other words, technical translation requires CLARITY.

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Why do we have to edit translations?

The main reasons:

English is the most widely-spoken language in the world and is currently an official language in 88 sovereign states and territories. Therefore, it has many

different versions and standards (British, Irish, American, Australian, Canadian, Indian, Jamaican, Singapore etc.). For this reason, English terminology is often misused due to native language interference, language contact or language change.

Also, English is widely used in Europe, in particular by European Institutions.

Some words are used with more or less the correct meaning, but in contexts where they would not be used by native speakers. Finally, there is a group of words, many relating to modern technology, where users prefer a “local term” to the one normally used in English speaking countries, which they may not actually know:

“GPS” or “navigator” – for “**satnav**” (Satnav is a system that uses information from satellites to find the best way of getting to a place. It is often found in cars. Satnav is an abbreviation for “satellite navigation”).

“To send an SMS” – for “**to text**”

“To recharge your account” – for “**to top up your account**” (поповнитирахунок).

Let us consider the following examples:

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Examples

Remarks:

Slide 5: EESC - European Social and Economic Committee.

Unless you are talking about making something physically deeper (a well for example), you should avoid the word „deepen“ and reformulate the sentence.

Slide 7: The safest policy with this word is to avoid it. If you do wish to use it, bear in mind that it is one of the most frequently misused ones. Its basic meaning in English is „to see something in advance“ and therefore to predict or expect/ It is often used to describe the activities of soothsayers and fortune tellers (She foresaw that you would meet a tall dark-haired stranger“).

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If the syntactical and lexical features of the source and target languages differ, as the case with English and Ukrainian is, clarity often requires that the sentence in the target language be completely recast. Being highly inflected, Ukrainian, Russian, and to a lesser extent, German can string together long chains of

independent and dependent clauses and still keep the whole meaning clear. In English, the number of words in a sentence should not exceed 25 words (not taking into account articles and particles).

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Examples

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The English sentence, however, still requires work on the part of an editor beyond merely looking up the words in a dictionary.

To step away from literality, the editor has to recast the grammar and use the English terminology with a different degree of specificity than that of the original. English has a larger lexicon than Ukrainian. Many English words carry comparatively narrower lexical meanings. Yet, some Ukrainian words do contain a narrower lexical meaning than the English words. Further differences may arise from differences in the thought processes embodied in different languages.

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To sum up the above, let us look at the crucial points of translation:

- Literarity
- Poor use of terminology
- Lack of conciseness

Literarity: Высokосортнаяароматнаястелькапредотвратитгнильноги и простерилизуетплесень.

“Constant wars were a part of their [Romans'] make-up” –
“Войныбыличастьюмакияжаримлян”

Mental make-up(психічний склад), personal make-up(індивідуальні особливості),physiological make-up (фізіологічні особливості).

Poor use of terminology:

Технологическиесливы (flashings) – technological plums.

«клапан бабочка» (“butterflyvalve” – «дисковый поворотный затвор»)

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The possible solutions are as follows:

1. Step away from literality.
2. Recast the grammar and use the English terminology with a different degree of specificity than that of the original.
3. Make it concise.

Conclusion:

Facility (легкість у розумінні) with the source language is important, but facility with the target language is crucial. No one but a skilled technical writer is likely to make a good translation of a technical document. But knowledge of the source language and writing skills in the target language are still insufficient. An editor is required to know the subject matter of the original document and to be experienced in applying the editing methodology. Only then is a clear, concise (лаконічнийпереклад) and correct translation possible.

II. What do we actually edit? The object of editing is the author’s original translation. However, apart from text information, this original may also contain illustrations, audio or video parts, which should be regarded as equal objects of editing.

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Defining **the subject matter of editing** is the most controversial issue in the respective scientific studies. Most researchers believe that the subject matter of editing is bringing the object of editing into compliance with the applicable norms or regulations. The normative basis of editing is the whole set of both simple and complex norms established by all peripheral sciences related to editing.

To properly amend and adjust the translated text, an editor has to specify some things, delete the odd or modify the available ones.

Working out the optimum, editors apply general scientific methods, namely the following:

- **Analysis** is applied to identify deviations in messages conveyed by translations vs. originals. In other words, analysis means here “compliance control” or “looking for deviations”, etc. The editor proceeds from comparing a single text element with the appropriate norm. This method is the most used one.
- **Synthesis** is implemented as correction, or reconstruction of the identified deviations (errors). There is a range of reconstruction methods, some of which are creative methods partially restricted by IPR norms.
- **Algorithmic techniques** consist in the application of pre-assigned (напередзадані) procedure sequences, i.e. operations or instructions (such as a sequence of certain control techniques).
- **Exact mathematical calculations or logical search** are mostly applied to predict the perceptual efficiency of a message. In other words, they help to control those textual components that are dubious or unclear, including the linguistic and psycholinguistic ones.
- **Sociological methods** consist in making inquiries or opinion polls. They are mostly used to determine the proofreading effectiveness or when working with authors of translations.
- **Modeling or simulation techniques** consist in creating a copy of the studied object on a different medium (носіїв). The models can be theoretical, cybernetic or material.
- **Information search** is required at different stages of editing.

3. The purpose and tasks of editing

The purpose of editing is to **compile** a message so that the planned social effect can be achieved. That is, an editor is supposed to translate the message into the recipient’s language. The specified purpose shall be achieved via solving a range of tasks. The most important of them are

- **To verify** the message (its modality, such as reality, pseudo-reality or probable reality)
- **To adjust** the message to the language code and thesaurus of the recipient group

- **To adverbialize** the message (in terms of the location, time and situation, in which the recipients are supposed to perceive the information conveyed by the message)
- **To standardize** the message pursuant to the rules the recipient uses. These may be linguistic norms (such as spelling, grammar, and punctuation), design patterns or other standards
- **To interpret** the message by commenting on deviations or obscure passages, which is only required if the editor is not supposed to change or amend the contents in the translation itself
- **To unify vs. diversify** the message, i.e. to unify the single-type elements in order to make them more comprehensive and to diversify homogeneous elements to make a technical text less monotonous
- **To make the message more aesthetic** in terms of style, as sentences in the texts in question are likely to be lengthier, nominalizations more frequent, and the passive voice more popular