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CHALLENGES OF BUSINESS TRANSLATION

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ABSTRACT:

The article provides a definition of a business translation in comparison to other types of translation. It includes the main problems which a business translator must cope with, in order to produce a coherent translation. The main problems analysed in the article refer to syntax, grammar, vocabulary, mistranslations, cultural differences, lack of context, machine translation and errors in the source text. The article also presents the examples of an inappropriate translation and explains the possible reasons. It includes the examples of translation of some terms used in the field of accounting, made by the author herself upon translating the texts in the Journal RRiF and the Journal PiP. It also includes the examples of translated terms in the Glossary of Accounting, prepared by the author and her students in the academic year of 2022/23.

Finally, it stresses the importance of a reliable and accurate translation made by a professional translator, who should be a linguistic expert but also master the specifics of the field to be translated.

Keywords: *business translation, problems, examples of mistranslation, accurate translation, accounting terms*

1. INTRODUCTION

Translation is a complex activity which is usually defined as a skill of transferring messages from one language into another language, whereby it is important that such messages have the same meaning in another language. Accordingly, it involves linguistic, cultural, and technical aspects.

Business translation is a type of translation which deals with texts related to commerce, finance, marketing, management, and other business fields. In the era of globalisation when the English language has become a *lingua franca* in the whole world, a professional and accurate business translation plays an important role. It requires accuracy, clarity, and cultural awareness. Business translators are faced with a large number of challenges and problems, such as lexical gaps, terminological inconsistencies, pragmatic differences, and ethical issues. The translational process is not a simple replacement of the words of one language equivalents into the other language. It should provide the idea of the original text in translation, paying attention to various pitfalls, such as the choice of inappropriate words and expressions, false friends, etc.

A good business translator should be familiar with the whole concept of the text and have the knowledge and mastery of translation process, which enables the translator to make the maximum use of the resources of the target language.

2. TYPES OF TRANSLATION PROBLEMS

2.1. GRAMMAR AND SENTENCE SYNTAX

Different languages have unique grammar and syntax rules. While translating, translators must remember differences in spelling, subject-object-verb agreement, and sentence construction.

Languages differ in grammar rules. In some cases they are similar, but not the same ones. One of the examples is a different use of tenses in the English language and the Croatian language.

Example:

Croatian – “Radim za ovu tvrtku već 15 godina.” – Present

English – “I have been working/have worked for this company for 15 years.” – Present Perfect Simple/Continuous

Croatian – “Jack mi je jučer rekao da dolazi sutra.” – Perfect and Future

English – “Jack told me yesterday that he was coming tomorrow.” – Past Simple and Past Continuous

Languages also have different syntax. For example, in the English language the word order of subject-verb-object should be respected in most cases, whereas in the Croatian language the word order is less strict.

Example:

English: "I have seen him several times."

Croatian: "Njega sam vidio više puta.", or "Vidio sam ga više puta.", or "Više puta sam ga vidio."

In certain cases, regional differences can change the way that syntax and grammar operate. For example, subject-verb agreement is sometimes different in American and British English.

Example:

British English: The company have been engaged in several activities.

American English: The company has been engaged in several activities.

2.2. VOCABULARY

There are many cases when the meaning of one word does not cover the meaning of the word in the target language. For example, the word **odgovornost** can be translated as **responsibility**, or **liability**. However, there is a difference in meaning between these two words. The word responsibility is defined as *to be in a position of authority; duty*, whereas the word liability is defined as *to be legally responsible for something*. (Cambridge Dictionary)

Another example are income and profit. Although, at first sight these two words have a clear distinction in meaning, especially the expression **profit tax** and **income tax**, in certain cases the word **income tax** can be translated into Croatian as **porez na dobit**, due to the fact that it is defined as *a tax on company's profit in a particular time*. (Cambridge Dictionary).

The word **plaća** can be translated as a **salary** or as a **wage**. However, the word **salary** is defined as *– payment made by an employer, often monthly, for professional or office work, as opposed to manual work*, and the word **wage** is defined as *– payment for work or services on a daily, hourly, weekly or piece-work basis*. (Collins English Dictionary).

Certain suffixes do not exist in the Croatian languages, so it is better not to insist on their use, but to explain the word. For example, the word **overuse** can be translated as **pretjerano koristiti**, or the word **outnumber** as **nadmašiti u broju**.

The appearance of the so-called "false friends" should also be considered in the translation process. The term "false friends" is a linguistic term used for words or expressions in one language, which are often wrongly taken to have the same meaning because their form is similar. For example, the English word **eventually** means *finally or ultimately*, not **eventualno**, or the Croatian word **publika** cannot be translated as **public**, which means *relating to people as a whole*. (Collins English Dictionary)

Idioms also represent a problem in translation since it is often hard to find the appropriate idiom in the target language and keep the same meaning and message. In accounting there is an idiom - to **cook the books**, which means to *change numbers dishonestly in the accounts* (Collins English Dictionary). Since there is no such an idiom in the Croatian language, it should have a descriptive translation, for example, **muljati/varati u financijskim izvješćima**.

Abbreviations are a great challenge, too. Certain abbreviations exist in both languages, for example **B2B, UN, OECD**, etc. However, the abbreviations used in a specific field in a specific country may lead to misunderstandings and confusion if they are not explained properly. For example, the abbreviation **ZOO** could hardly be understood by someone who is not involved in the Croatian legislation system. Such an abbreviation should be translated in full as **Act on Obligations**.

Frequently, there are various translations for the same term. For example, **račun dobiti i gubitka** can be translated as **Profit and Loss Account** or **Income Statement**, **bilanca** as **Balance Sheet** or **Statement of Financial Position**, **izvješće** can be referred to as **report** or **statement**. In some cases, these differences are due to different terminology in British English and American English, whereas in other cases it is a matter of preference.

2.3. MISTRANSLATIONS

Mistranslations may occur due to various reasons such as insufficient knowledge of the target language in general, lack of technical knowledge of the field to be translated, no information on the target readers, local differences, lack of time, lack of the appropriate resources, etc. Some inexperienced translators may have trouble keeping a consistent tone of voice, which can cause translation errors. The improper use of tone, the incorrect use of slang and idioms, and the wrong position of words in the sentence can lead to inconsistency in translated material. If the text to be translated is formal, the tone of the words in the translation should be professional and formal. Informal language is neither appropriate for technical texts nor for written communication in business.

For example, the expression in a business letter "**Yours sincerely,**" was translated by some students as "**Iskreno Vaš!**"

Another example of mistranslation was provided by Google translator. It translated **reverse charge** as **obrnuti naboј**.

2.4. CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Language cannot be accurately interpreted or translated without a cultural context. Every language has a unique interpretation according to the way

of thinking, historical background of a particular country, lifestyle and the geographical position of the particular country. Translators should be aware of the cultural differences, to avoid wrong translations or in the worst case to insult the people living in the particular country.

Certain words do not have an equivalent in another language. For example, **jamrati**, or **kafenisati**. Of course, such words can be translated as **to complain** or **to drink coffee**, but such a translation does not comprise the complete meaning of these words.

2.5. LACK OF CONTEXT

Another translation problem is a lack of context. Some translators and machine translation tools rely on literal, word-for-word translation. For example, the expression **imovina i obveze** used in Accounting was translated by certain students as **property and obligations**. The word **liabilities** in Accounting and the word **obligations** in Law have the same word in Croatian – **obveze**. Therefore, it is important to be familiar with the context, in order to apply the appropriate translation. The same problem is the word **potraživanja**, which is translated as **receivables** in Accounting and as **claims** in Law. The meaning of a word or phrase varies depending on the situation or the arrangement of words in a sentence. A lack of context (especially when a single word or term should be translated) represents one of the most demanding issues to the translator.

2.6. MACHINE TRANSLATION

Although machine translation speeds up the process of translating from one language into another, it is not completely accurate and errors are inevitable. Accordingly, it cannot entirely replace humans. It has a number of limitations affecting the accuracy, context, style and quality of the translated text. The machine-translated texts should always be revised and edited, to ensure their correctness, consistency and clarity.

2.7. ERRORS IN SOURCE TEXT

Another problem that translators are often faced with is the quality of the text to be translated. Some authors use too long sentences, some use too many technical words and terms, which are understood by a few professionals in the particular field, some use incorrect spelling, or sentence structure. All source material should be well-prepared and proofread thoroughly.

3. SOME SOLUTIONS TO TRANSLATION PROBLEMS

Grammar and Syntax usually do not represent a problem, since business texts are mostly written in a simple way, with no complicated sentence structure. Some authors tend to use long sentences, which are not understandable. In such a case it is better to split such sentences in parts. Of course, translators are usually linguistic experts and are well-acquainted with grammar rules and syntax, which means that such a difficulty can be easily solved.

Vocabulary problems represent the largest problem. There are several reasons to this. Firstly, although there is a large number of dictionaries offered, when it comes to the specific register in a certain field (e.g. – Accounting), a translator is faced with difficulties, especially due to the fact that translators are usually not professionals in the field they provide translations. In such a case it is best to ask the professional in a particular field. Another problem is how to deal with slang and idioms since they do not exist in the target language. In such a case it is better to express such expressions using simple terms or explanations.

The awareness of cultural differences is very important when providing a business translation. The translator should be familiar with the cultural background of the target reader in order to avoid cultural faux pas, which can be insulting to the text recipient and may lead to bad business relationships.

Mistranslations may occur if a translator is not aware or does not recognize the tone of the text to be translated. Usually, this is a rare situation since most translators are well-educated philologists who do not have such problems.

Generally, Machine Translation represents a considerable help when an instant translation is required, usually when one wishes to see “what the text is about”. However, a well-translated text requires proof-reading of a professional translator, since there are many cases when a machine translator makes wrong translations, such as problems with a context, choice of inappropriate terminology, copying the sentence structure of one language into the target language, etc. Even though machine translation has been developing fast and has becoming better all the time, it still requires a human activity.

4. CONCLUSION

Translation is the process of providing the meaning of a text from one language to another. It is a complex activity which involves linguistic, cultural, and technical aspects. Today, when the whole world has become a “global village” business translation plays a significant role in connecting people in the field of business. It is a challenging task which requires linguistic and cultural competence, as well as knowledge of the specifics in the field to be translated.

The main translation problems presented in the article comprise the linguistic differences between the language of the source text and the language of the target text. Accordingly, a large number of linguistic issues should be taken into account by a good translator, such as grammar, sentence structure, slang, idioms, jargon, etc. Problems may arise with a lack of context and errors in the source text.

Another major problem in the translation process are cultural differences. Languages are not just systems of words and grammar, but also expressions of worldviews, values, and beliefs. Therefore, translating a text requires not only linguistic competence, but also cultural sensitivity and awareness.

Machine translation should not be taken for granted. It is a useful tool if one needs to know the essence of a certain text, but it should always be revised by a professional translator. A machine translator does not recognize the whole context and mistranslations may happen, especially in professional fields, in which a specific register is used.

In order to transfer information from the source language into the target language, translators have to know how to deal with the problems encountered during the translation process, which does not represent just the translation of one language into another, but also includes the cultural aspect and different perceptions, which should be included in the quality material.

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IZAZOVI POSLOVNOG PREVOĐENJA

SAŽETAK RADA:

U članku se daje definicija poslovnog prijevoda u usporedbi s drugim vrstama prijevoda, uključujući i glavne probleme s kojima se poslovni prevoditelj mora nositi kako bi napravio koherentan prijevod. Glavni problemi analizirani u članku odnose se na sintaksu rečenice, gramatiku, vokabular, pogrešne prijevode, kulturne razlike, nedostatak konteksta, strojno prevođenje i pogreške u izvornom tekstu. U članku su također navedeni primjeri neprikladnog prijevoda i navedeni mogući razlozi, uključujući primjere prijevoda pojedinih pojmova koji se koriste u području računovodstva, a koje je izradila autorica nakon prijevoda tekstova u časopisu RRiF i PiP. Članak također prikazuje primjere prevedenih pojmova u Pojmovniku računovodstva, koji je autorica sa svojim studentima pripremila u akademskoj godini 2022/23. Na kraju ističe se važnost pouzdanog i točnog prijevoda od strane profesionalnog prevoditelja, koji treba biti lingvistički stručnjak, ali i dobro vladati specifičnostima područja koje prevodi.

***Ključne riječi:** poslovni prijevod, problem, primjeri pogrešnog prijevoda, točan prijevod, pojmovi u računovodstvu*