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Specialised Language in Global Communication

Abstract for inclusion in EITHER The translation of specialized languages OR Terminology and Terminography	<i>Margaret Rogers</i> <i>Centre for Translation Studies</i> <i>University of Surrey</i> <i>Guildford</i> <i>Surrey GU2 7XH</i> <i>UK</i> m.rogers@surrey.ac.uk
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Determining determinacy in specialist translations:

Terms in terminologies and terms in use

According to accepted terminological wisdom, terms are said to be distinguished from words by their relative precision and semantic circumscription, even if no longer by their complete context-independence. However, somewhere between the attempt to force determinacy of object-concept-term relations through the application of a controlled natural language or standardised terminologies in informative/instructive text types and the relative freedom of more expressive text types, terms in texts still tend to exhibit in many cases different linguistic and semantic characteristics from those represented in codified terminology entries. In other words, many specialist texts, including translations, exhibit considerable terminological variation where none is indicated by terminological resources. Seen positively, the author or translator of such texts has exercised his or her judgement in finding more nuanced solutions, given particular textual constraints or affordances. Seen negatively, consistency—and hence clarity—has been rejected, perhaps in pursuance of less important criteria such as stylistic variation or simply as a result of carelessness. Terminological variation in specialist texts—defined here as the use of various sense relations such as synonymy, polysemy, hyponymy—is often reflected in the translations of such texts, but not necessarily in a way which closely mirrors that of the original. Hence we may speak here of (lexical) indeterminacy in at least two ways: in source texts where terminological variation blurs the referential relationships between terms and objects, and between source and target texts where different variational patterns emerge.

This paper will report on a case study of selected specialist texts and their translations, focusing on consistency/variation in lexical chains in order to highlight potential differences with the more stable representations of terms, their meanings and equivalents which are presented in codified resources. The aim is to understand more clearly the ‘otherness’ of texts when viewed from the perspective of codified resources, whether motivated by regulatory goals or not. Some implications for translator training

will be considered.