

The role of the *translation brief* when teaching translation into a minor language: The case of Greek.

In most cases teaching LSP translation is focussing on source-language elements and their transfer into target-language elements, whether sentence by sentence, phrase by phrase or word by word. The conventional teaching is paying attention to achieving semantic, lexical, morphological, syntactical and pragmatic equivalence, an approach which is leading into draft translations, which, later, are stylistically polished until they become “acceptable” for the communicative situation they are intended for.

The functional approach has changed this bottom-up process by suggesting a top-down approach (Nord 2001:67 ff.) and introducing the importance of the ‘translation brief’ in translator training. According to Nord (2001:60) the translation brief should contain a) the (indented) text function(s), b) the target-text addressee(s), c) the (prospective) time and place of text reception, d) the medium over which the text will be transmitted, and e) the motive for the production or reception of the text.

Yet, when it comes to LSP translation into minor languages such as Greek, such a translation brief seems incomplete. Although the translation brief specifies the kind of the translation needed without telling the translator how to fulfil his/her job or what strategy to use, in the case of LSP translation into a minor language there is a number of problems that emerge, mostly in the field of terminology, which need particular attention on the translator’s as well as on the initiator’s and/or commissioner’s behalf.

The poor level of terminology standardisation in Greece, which is mainly due to the fact that Greek is importing LSP terms mostly from English, leads to phenomena such as synonymy, which occasionally mislead the translator, especially when target-language synonyms are not or must not be interchangeable (e.g. in corporate terminology). Thus, the translator may use a correct term in the target language which, however, is not acceptable by the receiver and/or the user of the target text.

In this paper we shall try to show that when it comes to translating into a minor language, a translation brief should also contain specific instructions about how to deal with specific terminological issues; this may facilitate the work of the translator and prove time-saving for both the commissioner and the translator. Thus, when teaching LSP translation into a minor language, issues relating to terminology (documentation, management, choice) must rank high in the top-down process since the decisions on the intended function of the translation inevitably determine the choice of one term at the expense of its synonym(s).

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