

TECHNICAL TRANSLATION CHALLENGES

Кугай К.Б.

Україна, м. Київ

Київський національний університет технологій та дизайну

The aim of the article is to emphasise the importance of technical translation as specialized translation, its role for successful business and its challenges.

At present one can find technology everywhere. It is difficult to imagine our lives without it. Thanks to new technologies, we can communicate around the world and spread the information throughout. However, one must take into account that most technical writing is in English, and in order to release this new knowledge we need technical translation services.

Since translation of any technical document is an important element of the successful business, a trustworthy translation service understands that your documents need to be completely accurate. That's why its main aim is to guarantee a fast turnaround of the technical translation with the best quality. Leading companies around the world already rely upon professional translation services for the international launch of their products and facilities.

Translation as a whole is a balance of art and science influenced by both theory and practice [1]. Knowledge of both the linguistic features as well as the aesthetic features of translation applies directly to the field of technical translation.

Technical translation is a type of specialized translation involving the translation of documents produced by technical writers (owner's manuals, user guides, etc.) or more specifically, texts which relate to technological subject areas or texts which deal with the practical application of scientific and technological information. While the presence of specialized terminology is a feature of technical texts, specialized terminology alone is not sufficient for classifying a text as "technical" since numerous disciplines and subjects which are not technical possess what can be regarded as specialized terminology [2: 3]. 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 [3: 12].

As the technical sector develops rapidly, and new terms are constantly emerging, one of the main problems in technical translation is to find the equivalent terms to those that have been recently created. In this sense, many translators will carry out a documentary process in

detail that guarantees the investigation of this particular technical field in the target culture, and to identify the appropriate terms according to the experts' points of view.

The important feature of the modern stage of scientific and technological advance is in the interpenetration of terms from different knowledge fields. As a result, to translate technical literature and documentation, for instance, in communications, translators need to use branch-wise dictionaries and glossaries in telecommunications, radio electronics, microelectronics, computer science, economics and finances, advertising and marketing, and often in mass media. Almost the same set of dictionaries is necessary today even during the translation of some modern magazine for car owners.

It is an important task for the professional technical lexicographers working at creation of branch-wise dictionaries to create or find sensible Ukrainian analogues (but not loan translations) in full compliance with the norms of the source language.

In recent years, however, technical translation has enjoyed some revival. The importance of technical translation, both in purely theoretical terms and also in terms of its relevance to professional translators, and the ways in which they are trained, is increasingly recognised and consequently more and more research is being carried out in this area. Such work includes research in areas such as style (4: 11), information flow and packaging, content and accuracy, and text typologies as well the usability and acceptability of technical information (2: 4).

In spite of this, there are still many challenges facing technical translation. Not all of these challenges are obvious. Some are what could be termed "internal" and, like the issues of recognition outlined above, they come from within the translation studies community itself. Such problems relate to the way in which translation study has evolved over the decades and the way in which this evolution has not always concerned itself with technical translation. Internal problems also arise from the ways in which researchers in this area and in translation study as a whole produce definitions and models as a way of going about their work.

A second category of challenges comes from outside both translation study and translation practice. Such external challenges relate to factors, circumstances and constraints which arise in the world in which technical translation takes place but which are not of technical translation itself. They might include various professional and technical challenges posed by changing work practices, technologies and legal issues which govern the environment in which technical translations are produced. There may even be input from other disciplines such as technical communication and psychology which further our understanding of technical translation while at the same time challenge our conceptions of what translators do. Now let us try to examine various challenges, both internal and external, and make an attempt to outline their implications for technical translation.

Internal Challenges. Within translation study itself one of the key challenges for technical translation stems from the basic problem of terminology. The concept of “technical translation” has proved to be somewhat problematic due to the fact that there appears to be different interpretations of what constitutes technical translation. This is not entirely surprising as there are difficulties in agreeing on a uniform definition of such a fundamental concept as “translation studies”: is it a discrete independent field of activity or is it an umbrella term for various activities with their origins in other disciplines but which are somehow aimed at understanding translation?

But in terms of technical translation the problems arise partly from its close association with language for specific purposes studies (LSP), which rather ironically appeared to be rather useful in reviving interest in technical translation. A basic definition of LSP translation is that it involves the translation of specialised texts which use specialised language to communicate specialised knowledge. Such texts can include anything from legal texts, business communication, technical texts, medical texts, etc. The problem is that various people somehow confuse “technical” with “specialised” and so technical translation becomes an interchangeable term for specialised translation in the sense of LSP translation. While in many ways this is actually quite beneficial because it incorporates technical translation into an active research field, it also results in quite fundamental problems. The reality of the matter is that technical translation is just one type of specialised or LSP translation, not a generic term for all forms of LSP translation. So, attempts to examine technical translation have proceeded on the basis that it includes certain types of texts which simply do not belong to this category, e.g. legal texts, economics texts etc. Consequently, when discussing technical translation it is always necessary to ascertain what the other person understands by the word “technical”.

Similar problems also arise with regard to the distinctions between scientific and technical translation. Both terms are invariably used together as if they were two aspects of the same phenomenon but neither this nor using the terms synonymously is helpful quite simply because, in the absence of a clear definition linking the two, it is impossible to assert that the two are the same. In fact, scientific translation has more to do with literary translation than it has with specialised or even technical translation. While both scientific and technical translation are concerned with the communication of knowledge which, at some point, originated in a scientific field, their aims and the ways in which they achieve these aims are very different (2: 9).

External Challenges. Beyond the boundaries of translation studies and the general academic community there are various external challenges that face translation, which are, perhaps, even more significant. Such challenges arise as a result of technological factors such

as the Internet and various publishing tools which have changed the nature of the texts we translate. They change the distinctions between text types while commercial and legal issues relating to documentation, liability and work practices have had serious implications for translators. In the current information age, translations are more likely to be judged like original language texts, not as translations and this means that in order to produce appropriate and acceptable translations technical translators have to be more like technical writers. There is, therefore, a pronounced convergence between technical translation and technical writing and this can be quite problematic for traditional translation study.

Thus the primary challenges for technical translation as a subject to be researched and taught stem from the lack of a clear definition of what is and what is not included in technical translation, and the failure of mainstream theories to address the needs of technical translation.

The external challenges posed by the various technological, legal and professional factors mean that there is a need to reassess the role of the technical translator and what it is reasonable to expect such a translator to do. If customers want translators to produce texts of a particular standard, i.e. capable of meeting the legal requirements demanded of single language texts, then it is essential that translators are given the authority to do this. This is where the challenges for technical translation become the challenges for educators and researchers because this affects not just what we teach students but also how we define the role of a translator, technical or otherwise.

Література

1. *Technical translation. From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. – Режим доступу: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technical_translation.*
2. *Byrne, Jody. Technical Translation: Usability Strategies for Translating Technical Documentation. Springer-Verlag New York, LLC, 2006. – 290 p.*
3. *Williams, J., Chesterman A. The Map: A Beginner's Guide to Doing Research in Translation Studies. Manchester: Saint Jerome Publishing, 2002. – 198 p.*
4. *Herman, M. Technical Translation Style: Clarity, Concision, Correctness. In Sue Ellen Wright and Leland D. Wright, Jr. Scientific and Technical Translation. American Translators Association Scholarly Monograph Series VI. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1993. – 298 p.*