

# ASPECTS OF SPECIALIZED TRANSLATIONS IN THE FIELD OF ECONOMICS

**Ioana-Paula ARMĂŞAR<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract:** *Without presenting features different from those of the national language as regards grammar structures or the basic vocabulary, specialized languages raise terminology and contextualization problems, which, in the case of specialized translations, require certain competences from the part of translators, whether they are linguists or specialists in the field. They have to consider the synchronization of notions and conceptual equivalences, and to stay constantly tuned to the terminology dynamics. There are many circumstances in which the economic language demonstrates the quality of being a living language and, at the same time, a very technical language. The present article introduces certain issues related to specialized translations within the field of economics and the possible solutions to overcome them, taking into account only those translations which have Romanian, French or English as a source language, respectively as a target language.*

**Key words:** *translation, source language, target language, specialized language, terminology, economics.*

## 1. Introduction

As compared to translations considered generally (which still offer generous issues for debates), specialized translations suppose knowledge and command of the specialized notions and terms specific to the field to which they belong. Specialized languages give the name of specialized translations. The main issue connected to translating from and into a specialized language, irrespective of the field, regards the competences translators should have. Should such a translation be performed by specialists in the field, having good knowledge both of the source and of the target language, or is this the task of

linguists or professional translators? In this respect, translators have the triple advantage of mastering phrases, of being used to formulating sentences and familiar to the way language functions. It is their duty to keep a sharp look at the coherence of the terminology at the level of synchronizing notions, associating denominations and concepts in each language in order to check the possible direct equivalence or the existence of peculiarities coming from the language or scientific culture under consideration. A diachronic analysis will allow them to avoid losing contact with the evolution and dynamics of the terminology, as well as to reach a certain level of technical

---

<sup>1</sup> Department of Literature and Cultural Studies, Faculty of Letters, *Transilvania* University of Braşov.

knowledge, taking into account the fact that the two are closely related to the advancement of specialized languages [4].

In fact, the translators' art (whether they are economists, as the case is for our discussion, linguists or people of letters) consists in mastering terminology and writing techniques, knowing the conventions specific to each type of text (research study, popularisation document etc.) and having the capacity to meet the author's needs and the challenges of the text.

After all, the translation act resides in overcoming polysemy or ambiguities and in rephrasing information from one linguistic code to another, allowing the message to be conveyed from the source text into the target language, in terms of communication, mediation or message. As regards the precision of translations, considering their purposes and the distancing from the source text, the result may reside in translations as adaptation, scholarly translations or literary ones. If in the case of texts other than specialized ones, the translation in spirit is of primary importance, not necessarily a text translated literally, for the texts written in specialized languages emphasis is given to closeness in the sense of functionality. Thus, the notion of closeness towards the text (considering the language under discussion, Romanian, English, French, as either source or target) is perceived by the translator taking into account the circumstances in which the translation is performed, what anglophone translators call "the translation situation". To translate means, first of all, to understand.

## 2. Translation trends in the economic specialized languages

It is a well-known fact that the semantic derivation process, as a way to enrich vocabulary, allows words from the common

language to penetrate into the specialized one, as, via resemantisation (analogy or metaphoric use are essential), they acquire the status of specialized terms. Sometimes, such meaning "movements" take place under the influence of other languages Romanian was or still is in contact with. Thus, the terminological meaning of the word *acţiuni* (*shares*): securities which represent a certain part of a company's capital and which offer their owner the right to receive dividends, was transferred from French. The transfer of a word from general use into a specialized language by amplifying its semantic structure with a new meaning is a process which specialists call terminologization. Many words in the common language are terminologized due to the combination of words with a terminological character (for example, in Romanian *blocadă economică*, *bani gheaţă*, *preţ de piaţă*, *preţ de cost*, *vad comercial*, *pachet de acţiuni* etc.) or by means of transfers from other languages (for Romanian, the most frequent sources are French and English: *cont descoperit*, *vânzare en gros*, *plată cash*, *intrare free* etc.).

Although everyday language and specialized languages use the same phonetics and grammar, the differences become manifest especially as regards the lexis (lexical systems are formed with meanings isolated from the common language), in which nouns prevail. They are followed by verbs, adjectives and adverbs. Thus, for exemplification, if in the Romanian common language nouns such as *scară*, *cameră*, *cutie*, *corp* are easy to understand without determiners, in the specialized language, a determinant is imperative in order to delimitate the terminological fields: (techn.) *scară rulantă*; (mus.) *scară muzicală*; (phys.) *scara duriătăţii*; (techn.) *camera de comandă*; *camera de sunet*; (mil.) *camera cartuşului*; (techn.) *cutie de viteze*; (mus.) *cutie de rezonanţă*; (med.) *cutie craniană*; (jur.) *corp delict*; (chem.) *corp simplu*;

(med.) *corp străin*; (techn.) *corp de literă*. Conversely, the penetration of words from specialized languages into everyday language is mostly due to the media and the Internet, as well as to the attempts to vulgarize the realities named. Taken out of the context, of their professional field, these words are typically considered neologisms and professionalisms in the system of literary language, being understood and only occasionally used by speakers who do not belong to the professional area under discussion (for example: *remanier*, *entamer*, *modique*, *honoraires*, *target*, *dealer*, *board*, *pool*, *deadline*, *brand*, *discount* and many others). Although the morphological adaptation of anglicisms arises many adaptation problems to Romanian, taking into account the differences between the two grammar systems, there is, still, an extension of the words' meaning according to the English model (to the detriment of French) under the form of the semantic transfer: *a aplica* also acquires the meaning *a solicita un post/funcție*, *a face o cerere*, from the English *to apply(for)*, *atașament* takes the recent meaning *anexă* of the English word *attachment*, *apreciere* becomes *creștere*, from the English *appreciation* etc. The specialized language, developed from the common one, is characterized especially by clarity and concision. It precisely defines or describes concepts, creating its own, purely denotative and monosemantic terminology. Specialized languages can only be introduced with the help of the current language, their basic concepts being defined by means of this language only and the terms subsequently deduced being obtained from these basic concepts with the help of logical thinking. Given that specialized languages do not have other peculiarities as regards grammar structures or the basic vocabulary than the national language, specialists in a particular field of

theoretical or practical activity use the standard literary language, in which they introduce the necessary terms to designate notions characteristic to the respective field of activity. By the technologization of daily life, the migration of lexical elements from the technical and scientific area towards the usual lexis is on the increase. Explanatory dictionaries register this phenomenon, including terms that belong to different specialized fields. According to the level of complexity and functionality, specialized translations reveal some types of texts: scientific texts (books, articles, monographs etc.), functional texts (official letters, contracts, regulations, reports etc.), utilitarian texts (technical or pharmaceutical instructions, recommendations etc.), technical texts (specifically denotative).

According to A. Guțu, the process of translating a text into a specialized language is characterized by the following:

1. the semasiological stage (which is connected to the text form in the source language), when translators have to: define their uncertainties, establish the comprehension level, delimitate the semantic and terminological units, conduct terminological research;
2. the onomasiological stage (which is connected to the meaning of the text, both in the source and in the target language), when translators have to: establish the necessary precision level for the target audience, to find the appropriate terminology to render meaning, to choose an appropriate form (univocal, clear and precise), to control meaning (internal and external coherence) and form (spelling, syntax, terminology) [3]. In order to translate a specialized text, one needs, first of all, to decode it. The decoding of the specialized text consists in comprehending the conceptual nucleus of the terminological notions used in the text. The concept makes reference to the

extra-linguistic reality. The importance of the extra-linguistic reality in the case of specialized texts is different from that of the common lexis.

In many circumstances, the economic language demonstrates its quality of being a living language and, at the same time, a very technical one, which makes reading difficult for lay people. If economic journalists who address the large public have the obligation to popularize information, it is impossible for them not to resort to the latest specialized terms in economics, which appear as opaque to the uninitiated. Nowadays readers of economic texts are less disarmed than in the past, due to Internet sites, aimed specifically at vulgarizing information, whereas subtleties still remain the appanage of specialists. The economic language, permanently connected to the ever-changing reality, generates numerous registers, thus resorting to medicine, the automotive field, army, meteorology etc. (both French and Romanian use such expressions; we give only the French variant, out of reasons of text fluidity: *camper sur ses positions, retraite prudente des investisseurs, tomber en panne, mécanisme grippé, colmater les brèches, traitement de choc, marché en pleine convalescence, chute du baromètre, embellie/acalmie etc.*). Conversely, those who edit documents such as annual company reports, economic studies, communiqués of central banks etc. favour a more academic style, of a high technical level, not making use of personifications and metaphors, which would make the text difficult to understand and translate. As regards economic neologisms introduced in French and Romanian from English, there is the explanation of the terminological challenge, given by the dominance of the USA in the economic world over the last decades. Faced to the increasing number of neologisms come from English, the French state even

decided to establish inter-ministerial commissions of terminology, comprising both specialists in economics and academicians, commissioned to find translations for these terms, often felt as a threat to the integrity of the French language (1985 saw the establishment of *La commission de terminologie économique et financière*, attached to The Ministry of Economy and Finances in France). Despite the activity of these commissions and of the efforts generally made against the introduction of terms directly from English, neologisms do not await their equivalent. In Romanian, one can sometimes see an excessive use of anglicisms, not only in the economic and financial field, but even in everyday language, a fact which can be explained by the avidity with which Romanians have tried to skip some development stages, an attitude triggered by the complex of falling behind caused by the fifty years of communism. To a certain extent, Romania is still positioned under the sub empire of the forms without a meaning in certain fields.

Terminology represents not only an integral part of the lexis specific to the economic language, but also one of its defining features, which, together with other language means, gives its status of specialized language. The building of the economic terminology system is a complex and permanent process, which is accomplished with all the means to enrich vocabulary (external, internal and mixed). Knowing and explaining economic terms in light of their origin often represents an important stage for a more efficient assimilation.

The economic specialized language is divided into sub-fields, so that there is a commercial language, a language of transportation, one connected to finance, insurance, human resources, management, tourism etc. They are all constitutive parts

of the economic language, but they each represent one close linguistic sub-field comprised within economics, being used interdisciplinary (for example, elements of finance and accounting present in terms of tourism and insurance, elements of human resources in terms connected to budget and marketing etc.). In the economic specialized language, the stages of translating texts from English or French into Romanian differ from the general case only in point of the specific discourse, lexical or stylistic features of the text given. After a thorough reading of the text to be translated, in order to have a mental overview of what is to be transferred in another language, after recognizing the economic sub-field addressed, the register of the text, and after detecting the difficulties regarding syntax or the terminology itself, translators need to identify the context (for example, for *alternative*, a noun or adjective in English, *energy alternatives* is used in the field of energy economics for the French expression *énergies de substitution*, while in the context of project economics *project alternatives* is used for *variantes de projet*; in these situations, Romanian takes the variants from French). An important stage is that of the research, which supposes searching for terms and the choice of equivalences –by consulting specialists to explain terms or contexts, but especially with the help of a wide range of economic dictionaries and encyclopaedias in/ from English, French, Romanian, as well as by using data bases on web sites. For example:

[www.dictionar-economic.com](http://www.dictionar-economic.com),

[www.wordreference.com/enro/economic](http://www.wordreference.com/enro/economic),

<http://liensutiles.org/econom.htm>,

[www.banknews.ro/dictionar\\_financiar-](http://www.banknews.ro/dictionar_financiar-bancar)

[www.rdt-contabilitate.ro/dictionar-](http://www.rdt-contabilitate.ro/dictionar-economic-on-line.html)  
[economic-on-line.html](http://www.rdt-contabilitate.ro/dictionar-economic-on-line.html),

[www.webdex.ro/online/dictionar/economic](http://www.webdex.ro/online/dictionar/economic)  
e.

Just like the understanding of a text requires both linguistic and extra-linguistic knowledge, in the case of translators of economic texts (like in the case of professional translators) the linguistic knowledge is supposed to have been theoretically acquired, the extra-linguistic one taking into account the times they live. Translators can easily resort to an optimum documentation in order to have a clear view on a certain subject, either in the specialized literature or in magazines in the field of economics, web sites, TV programmes etc. The fact that they are updated with the latest events in the reality they live in allows translators to “fill in the gaps” (for example, in a text about the regionalization of Romania and the administrative decentralization for making expenditure more profitable, they can find out in the audio-visual media that the necessary term for a translation would not be *efficacité*, but *rentabilité*, not *frais*, but *dépenses*; in another context, in order to translate *oil-induced increases in Consumer Price Index rates*, they will find out that the price of the oil is to increase, which would be rendered in French by: *La flambée des cours du pétrole continue de pousser l'indice des prix à la consommation à la hausse*).

As regards the tendency towards a euphemistic style, one can notice its frequent use. For example, in French, instead of *chômeur*, the expression *chercheur d'emploi* is also used; the terms *Third World countries* and *under-developed countries*, with their French equivalents *pays du Tiers Monde* and *pays sous-développés*, have been replaced by the expressions *less developed countries* or *developing countries*, i.e. *les pays moins développés* or *pays en (voie de) développement*. Nevertheless, PMA (*pays les moins avancés*), with the English equivalent *least developed countries*, is

nowadays quoted, despite the depreciative denotation in both languages [6].

Understanding the text in order to simplify it is sometimes imperative in order to have a fluid translation. For example, the translation of the following sentence in French “*Markets appear confident that a sufficient level of future central bank interest rate rises has been reflected in current prices to ensure continued growth without inflationary pressures*” can be done in two ways, the former being less pertinent, the latter demonstrating the translator’s better ability and command of the language: “*Les marchés ont, semble-t-il, déjà suffisamment tenu compte des futurs relèvements de taux d'intérêt par les banques centrales dans les prix actuels pour que la pérennité de la croissance soit assurée sans risque de tensions inflationnistes*”; “*Les marchés ont, semble-t-il, déjà suffisamment anticipé les futurs relèvements de taux d'intérêt par les banques centrales pour que la pérennité de la croissance soit assurée...*”.

In the translation of economic documents, the main source of difficulty comes not necessarily from the technical character of the terms or phrases, but from their contextual acceptance, i.e. from what Pierre Lerat calls “la recherche de l’adéquation communicative” [4]. A tool which is often used in the arsenal of the translators of economic texts is metonymy, which allows them, as an alternative option, to wisely use a figure of speech to refer to a country, currency etc., if the context allows them to, instead of using their usual names, with a view to colouring the text or avoiding repetitions. Naming the American dollar *le billet vert* (Fr.), *verşiori* (Rom.) or the Euro *la monnaie unique* (Fr.), *moneda unică* (Rom.) emphasises a characteristic which everybody knows, being, at the same time, an elegant manner to avoid repetitions.

Europe can be rendered as *le Vieux Continent*, *La Maison Blanche* refers to the administration from Washington, while *the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street* makes reference to the Bank of England (these metonymies are used as such in Romanian as well). It goes without saying that a certain metonymy can be used taking into account its popularity among the target readers of the text and that it has to belong to the same context as the denomination it replaces.

Once translators have identified the terms or phrases with established equivalences in the text, they can vent their creativity to render more or less complex formulations.

Apart from the process of semantic derivation which we have addressed at the beginning, another problem to be overcome by translators of specialized texts in the field of economics is represented by the equivalence of terms, which they have to master, given that the fixed expressions in the source language have to be found, under one form or another, also in the target language. To support this action, Michel Ballard proposed an equivalence scheme, divided into two categories, direct and indirect equivalence, where there can be either a simple substitution of terms, or a morpho-syntactical change or adaptation [1]. Out of the examples of idioms in English and French that Jacqueline Percebois presents, we selected the following:

*tax basis* - l’assiette fiscale,  
*break-even point* - le seuil de rentabilité,  
*infant industries* - les industries naissantes,  
*government procurement* - les marchés publics  
*workable competition* - la concurrence effective etc. [5]

In France, national institutions insist on the precision of editing official documents, and, as a consequence, the brochure *Écrire*

*pour être compris*, aimed at the clerks of the Ministry of Economy and Finances, advises users to avoid the so called “*passer-partout*” verbs, such as *être* and *faire*, and recommends, instead of the expressions *être sur une liste*, *faire usage d'un droit*, *faire un certificat*, *faire une liste*, the use of: *figurer sur une liste*, *exercer un droit*, *délivrer un certificat*, *dresser une liste* [7]. It is self-understood that competent translators will notice these differences and, in addition, their readings will guide them from the use of the meanings the words have in everyday language, towards a pertinent interpretation from a contextual point of view (for example, *price* from the common language will be translated *prix* if it is about the market, or *cours*, if it is about the fluctuations of the stock exchanges, i.e. *les cours du pétrole* not *les prix du pétrole*).

Certain difficulties are caused by the existence of the terms which are very precise in English, but which need to be enriched in French in order to preserve their meaning. This enrichment consists in using more words in French than were used in English to express the same idea. Thus, the term *policy* can have different translations within different economic contexts. After the meaning has been identified and inserted into a sentence, *policy decision* will be translated into French both by *décision de politique économique / environnementale / financière* etc., and by *décision stratégique* (enterprises, management) or by *décision de principe* (public administration), whereas *policy instrument* will be rendered either by *instrument d'intervention*, or by *instrument stratégique*.

In actual fact, the concision of nominal and adjectival associations in English increases the difficulty of their conversion into Romanian and French. If the

translation of *decision maker* presents no difficulty, this does not happen with *policy maker*, which can mean *responsable*, but also *stratégique*, *théoricien*, *technocrate*, and *dirigeant* (from this enumeration of terms translated into French, most of them have the same meanings in Romanian, as they are of French origin). It is the translators' art to find the term with the perfectly appropriate meaning in the target language.

Another frequent problem of economic specialized translations comes from long sentences, typical for research articles in the field of economics, when closeness to the original is imperative. A way to solve this may be represented by their segmentation and use of discourse connectors (such as, in French, *en outre*, *par conséquent*, *ensuite*, *ainsi*, *mais*). J. Delisle highlights them, analysing them as words or groups of words which connect the parts of a discourse in a way that emphasises their logical rapports [2]. In this situation of sentence fragmentation, it is important to preserve the initial meaning, as there is a danger of simplification or, even worse, of changing meaning.

### 3. Conclusion

Instead of a conclusion, we have to underline the translators' challenge, skilfulness and effort to preserve the meaning of the original text, considering the specific linguistic and cultural features of the equivalent words in the target language. The major criteria for their choices will be: the lack of ambiguities (in order for the target audience to be able to easily identify the reference concept), the closeness towards the original, as information conveyed, the need to preserve the coherence in synchrony of the elements that represent the final text, and the compliance with the diachronic evolution

of the lexis as regards the choice of terms. The translators' qualities of being highly knowledgeable of both the source and the target language at everyday language level, but especially at scientific level (in terms of economic language in the case under consideration), are requirements for a good translation for the target audience. It is necessary for translators to stay tuned to everyday life, in a permanent connection with the realities in the field, which are in an endless movement. Some of the issues which have been analysed above have emphasized the work which translators perform while processing the text and which is close to both technicity and art. In fact, these trends are also possible solutions for the problems specialized translations raise: the euphemistic style, metonymy, term equivalences, enrichment of meanings etc.

## References

1. Ballard, M.: *Versus : la version réfléchie, repérages et paramètres*. Paris. Ophrys, 2003.
2. Delisle, J.: *La traduction raisonnée*. Ottawa. Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1993.
3. Guţu, A.: *Théorie et pratique de la traduction*. Chişinău, ULIM, 2007.
4. Lerat, P.: *Les langues spécialisées*. Paris. Presses Universitaires de France, 1995.
5. Percebois, J.: *L'anglais de la microéconomie*. Paris. Economica, 1982.
6. Percebois, J.: *Terminologie Anglais-Français du Commerce International, Théories, Politiques, Accords et Institutions*. Paris. Economica, 2002.
7. *Écrire pour être compris*, brochure du Ministère de l'Économie et des Finances de France, 3<sup>e</sup> édition, 1995, p.10.