

Some Thoughts on Translation Procedures as Employed in Acquis Communautaire Documents

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Abstract

This article gives an overview of major translation procedures employed in Acquis communautaire documents, i.e. institutional-legal EU documents on education and training, published in the Official Journal of the European Union, against a background of the English-Slovak language pair. On the basis of comprehensive textual analysis, the author aims to elaborate her own synthetising translation procedures model as applied in the translations under scrutiny, consisting of transposition, modulation, permutation, expansion, reduction, calque and borrowing, drawing on Vinay & Darbelnet's (1958/1995), Newmark's (1981, 1988) and Schreiber's (1993) earlier models. The paper also draws attention to broader implications of the manipulative power of EU language policy.

Keywords: translation, institutional-legal EU documents, translation procedures, text analysis

1 Introduction: Getting to grips with the terminological cul-de-sac

Acquis communautaire documents, i.e. institutional-legal EU documents as a textual genre originating in specific conditions within a supranational multilingual environment, offer a rich repository of both theoretical and practice-oriented translational problems.

When analysing translations in general there are certain linguistic categories that allow us to examine how the target text (TT) functions in relation to the source text (ST). These categories are widely known as “**translation procedures**” or “**translation techniques**”. However, it should be highlighted at this point that there is considerable terminological disagreement among translation scholars regarding the proper label to be used in this connection (cf. Molina & Hurtado Albir 2002, 498–499). For the sake of this

paper, however, the author holds to the former terminological designation. Let us now shed some light on translation procedures from a conceptual point of view, and let us try to draw a line of demarcation between them and other translational notions with which they are more often than not unjustly confused.

Translation procedures may be understood as a **tool of textual analysis** that represents a process of searching for notable semantic and formal relations arising between the original and the target text. Translation procedures can be traced by the textual comparison of the original and its translation, and ultimately they have a bearing on a text's microstylistics, i.e. they influence lower levels of a text's structure - its sentences and parts thereof. When opting for appropriate translation procedures, the translator should bear in mind the **translation method** initially chosen. Translation procedures depend on the choice of translation method, which is a global choice by a translator on the macro-scale. For instance, if the aim of a translator is to produce an exoticising translation which should respect all the particularities of a source culture, they will opt for a foreignizing translation method, and in line with this the translation procedure of borrowing should rightly be expected to be the most frequent one.

However, translation procedures and translation methods are not to be confused with **translation strategies**¹, which refer to procedures that translators themselves activate when dealing with translation problems: when they unscramble semantic relations among words, when they distinguish between core and less important ideas, or when they reformulate some information. All in all, translation strategies are a firm part of a translator's competence and they open up ways of finding an appropriate translation solution on the basis of a suitable translation procedure chosen.

2 Analysis of translation procedures in the EU text corpus

After a somewhat brief glimpse at the terminological difficulties that are inexorably bound up with translation procedures, I would now like to move on to present my own proposed model of translation procedures, which I elaborated exclusively for the genre of institutional-legal EU documents. Having a firm aim in mind, I drew on earlier models as propounded by Vinay & Darbelnet (1958/1995; cf. Table 1 below), Newmark (1981, 1988) and Schreiber (1993), which opened up new vistas for the application of the above-mentioned translation models to institutional-legal texts. The advantage of combining the above models lay in the possibility of developing a synthetising model based on the application to the studied text type that would best reflect its quintessential features (cf. Table 2). Statistically, this part of research drew on a database of 2663 excerpted language units taken for particular translation procedures in *MS Excel*, which should provide reasonably sufficient corpus material for a qualitative contrastive linguistic analysis.

Table 1: Vinay & Darbelnet's model of translation procedures

<i>direct translation procedures</i>	borrowing
	calque
<i>oblique translation procedures</i>	transposition
	modulation
	equivalence
	adaptation ²

Table 2: Model of translation procedures tailored to EU documents

<i>Procedure</i>	<i>Type</i>
transposition	word-class (formal) t.
	sentence-member (functional) t.
permutation	minimum median maximum
expansion	
reduction	
modulation	pure modulation
	modulation of expression
calque	semantic calque
	word-formation calque
borrowing	transcription
	transference

As can be seen in Table 1, Vinay & Darbelnet, who rank among the most prominent representatives of the French school of comparative stylistics, identified **direct and oblique translation procedures** within their model (1958/1995, 30–41). While the former (i.e. *borrowing, calque*) rest on a minimum modification of source structure, the latter (i.e. *transposition, modulation*) are used due to significant structural or conceptual asymmetries arising between the source and the target language. Moreover, oblique translation procedures are connected with overcoming metaphorical lacunae in the target language which have to be filled with corresponding elements in such a way that there is an impression that the message of the resulting text is the same. It is noteworthy that this dichotomy between the direct and oblique translation procedures is redolent of the well-known distinction literal vs. free translation.

Furthermore, when assessing Vinay & Darbelnet's model, one can hardly overlook two fundamental translation strategies that are reflected in it, namely **exotization and naturalization**. While the former is grounded in an undisturbed approach towards the TT and retains elements of the source language (culture) environment, the latter is based on the substitution principle and underscores the potential of the TT and its culture. Since in the EU setting it is first and foremost the source text and its structure which are the crucial factors having a bearing on the choice of the translation strategy on whose basis the EU translator approaches the translation process, an overall exoticizing approach to EU

document translation may be rightfully expected. The naturalizing approach should occur to a lesser extent.

In the following section of the paper the author gives an overview of the principal translation procedures as applied in the translations under study. Each translation procedure is described and presented, with supporting corpus examples, in the respective tables.

2.1 Transposition

This classic translation procedure involves replacing one part of speech for another without changing the meaning of the message. Actually, this is the only translation procedure that has something to do with grammar, even though a good many translators carry out transpositions intuitively (Newmark 1988, 88). That said, translators usually commence their search for desired translation equivalence by debating the possibility of formal correspondence between the languages entering the translation process. However, if no identical formal equivalent seems available, they readily have recourse to performing transpositions as a consequence of keeping the text information invariant.

As far as transposition is concerned, a distinction is usually made between **word-class** (i.e. formal) and **sentence-member transposition** (i.e. functional), and this was also observed in the corpus. While the former involves a change in the word-class of an element between the SL and TL, the latter rests on a change in the syntactic function of a TL element compared with the SL element. Tables 3 and 4 respectively give an overview of a sample of selected English-Slovak word-class and sentence-member transpositions taken from the EU text corpus, with the most frequent typological classification.

Table 3: Word-class transpositions

There is a need to promote active citizenship	Je potrebné podporovať aktívne občianstvo	N → Adj
The Lifelong Learning programme should be regularly monitored and evaluated [...] in order to allow for readjustments	Program celoživotného vzdelávania by sa mal pravidelne monitorovať a hodnotiť [...], aby sa mohol upravovať	N → V
The Member States shall endeavour to adopt all appropriate measures, to remove legal and administrative obstacles to the proper functioning of the Lifelong Learning Programme	Členské štáty sa usilujú prijať všetky vhodné opatrenia na odstránenie právnych a administratívnych prekážok riadneho fungovania programu celoživotného vzdelávania	V → N
budgetary availability	dostupnosť rozpočtu	Adj → N

Table 4: Sentence-member transpositions

The actions referred to in this Article may be implemented by means of calls of proposals	Akcie uvedené v tomto článku možno vykonávať prostredníctvom výziev na predloženie návrhov	Subj → Obj
The Göteborg European Council of 15 and 16 June 2001 agreed a strategy for sustainable development	Na zasadnutí Európskej rady v Göteborgu 15. a 16. júna 2001 bola schválená stratégia trvalo udržateľného rozvoja	Obj → Subj
The Community is to aim to eliminate inequalities and promote equality	Cieľom Spoločenstva musí byť odstránenie nerovnosti a presadzovania rovnosti	Obj → Att N

An intriguing finding from the corpus analysis is that word-class and sentence-member transpositions cannot be separated too strictly from each other, as the change of word-class fairly frequently leads to a change in the syntactic function of a TL element, as is demonstrated by the following example: *Operating grants as referred to in Article 5(1) (g) to support certain operational and administrative costs may be awarded.* ~ *Ako sa uvádza v článku 5 ods. 1 písm. g) môžu sa prideliť operačné granty na podporu niektorých prevádzkových a administratívnych nákladov.*

Here, the V → N word-class transposition from English into Slovak is accompanied by a functional Obj → Att N transposition. Therefore, “transposition fusion” is a frequent phenomenon.

Based on the excerpted corpus examples it can be argued that transpositions make for **interlingual shifts in the grammatical structure or function of TL units**. When using transposition, SL and TL syntagmatic/syntactic structures possess identical meanings; however, they do not match in terms of their formal/functional facet. Given the significant linguistic-structural differences between the English and Slovak codes, transpositions, of whatever kind, are an abundant group in the corpus.

2.2 Modulation

This oblique translation procedure entails a “variation of the form of the message, obtained by a change in the point of view” (Venuti 2000, 89). This implies that modulation is grounded in a shift of cognitive categories between the two languages. This shift is deemed to be justified when a literal or even transposed translation results in a grammatically correct utterance but it is still considered somewhat unsuitable, unidiomatic or awkward in the TL (ibid). Of all translation procedures, modulation appears to be the most thoroughgoing: whereas transposition puts the translator’s grammatical abilities to the test, modulation is said to be a real touchstone of a competent translator. The cause of this is to be sought in the very nature of modulation. Whereas transposition affects only the grammatical function of TL units, modulation involves the **alteration of semantic categories** or processes by which thoughts are conveyed.

The in-depth analysis of the EU corpus has revealed that modulation can be encountered both in lexis as well as in syntactic structures. Modulation of the former type has been labelled here as “**modulation of expression**”, whereas modulation of the latter kind has been termed “**pure modulation**”, in compliance with Newmark’s terminology (1988, 88–89). On the one hand, modulation of expression, predominantly terminologically-oriented, can be exemplified by e.g. *exchange of good practice* ~ *výmena osvedčených postupov*, *legal challenge* ~ *opravný prostriedok*, *portability of credits* ~ *potreba uznávania kreditov* or even by a sentence such as *the Joint Committee shall meet every second year* ~ *Spoločný výbor zasadá raz za dva roky*, where the modulation is purely functional, ‘every second year’ appearing as ‘raz za dva roky’ in an attempt to attain greater naturalness of the TL expression. On the other hand, pure modulation, which is syntax-oriented, occurs e.g. in *Administration of these actions shall be implemented by the competent officials of each Party* ~ *Správu týchto činností vykonávajú príslušní úradníci z každej strany*, where the subject in the English passive corresponds to the object in the Slovak active sentence.

A crucial finding regarding the quantitative corpus analysis is that modulation, though extremely frequent in literary translation, is much less so in the genre of institutional-legal texts (cf. Table 6 and Alcaraz and Hughes, 185).

2.3 Permutation

When comparing English and Slovak EU documents, **positional divergences** of lexico-syntactic TL elements from their original positions in the source text were also noted. This interlingual phenomenon is referred to within my proposed model as permutation. In light of the above observation, permutation is connected with differences in linear sentence organisation. Depending on the extent of the resulting positional divergences³, we can speak of **minimum, median or maximum permutation**, as given in table 5.

Table 5: Minimum, median and maximum permutation

The Host institutions shall not charge tuition fees <i>to such students</i>	Hostiteľské inštitúcie <i>týmto študentom</i> neúčtujú školné	minimum permutation <+1 >
The measures necessary for the implementation of the Lifelong Learning Programme relating to the following matters <i>shall be adopted by the Commission</i> [...] in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 10 (2)	<i>Komisia prijme</i> v súlade s postupom uvedeným v čl. 10 ods. 2 opatrenia potrebné na realizáciu programu celoživotného vzdelávania, ktoré sa týkajú týchto oblastí	median permutation <-1, +1>
There is a need to widen access for those from disadvantaged groups and to address actively the special learning needs of those with disabilities, <i>in the implementation of all parts of the programme</i> , including the use of higher grants to reflect the additional costs of disabled participants, and the provision of support for the learning and use of sign languages and Braille	<i>Pri realizácii všetkých častí programu</i> je potrebné rozšíriť dostupnosť na osoby zo znevýhodnených skupín a aktívne sa venovať osobitným vzdelávacím potrebám osôb so zdravotným postihnutím, vrátane poskytovania vyšších grantov, ktoré zohľadnia dodatočné náklady účastníkov so zdravotným postihnutím, a poskytovaním podpory pre učenie sa a používanie znakovkej reči a Braillovhovho písma	maximum permutation <-1>

The excerpted example of median permutation in Table 5 demonstrates an interesting finding: the translation procedure of permutation does not occur in isolation, but can fairly often be found in combination with sentence-member transposition, which implies that translation procedures hardly ever occur on their own. All in all, the unequivocally most frequent occurrence of minimum permutation in documents under study testifies to the institutional translators' efforts to retain the word-order as present in the English texts and consequently produces a similar ordering of sentence constituents in the Slovak translation versions, by which they *de facto* achieve an analogical conceptualization of an English document in its Slovak translation version.

2.4 Expansion and reduction

Moving onwards, expansion and reduction can be perceived as complementary antithetical translation procedures. Expansion involves **adding some extra information** into the

target text, i.e. words that are absent in the original but which have to be present so that the TT can be better understood and sounds more natural to the recipient's ear. Compare the following SL and TL units: *calls for proposals* ~ *výzvy na predloženie návrhov*; *teacher training* ~ *odborná príprava učiteľov*; *European Anti-Fraud Office* ~ *Európsky úrad pre boj proti podvodom*. Thus, expansion can be understood as a translation universal since it results from a translation situation rather than interlingual contact. In the case of EU translation, some expansions seem to be motivated by the influence of the legal context, e.g. in *Article 3 (3)(a)* ~ *v článku 3 ods. 3 písm. a*).

On the other hand, reduction consists in **omitting certain grammatical or lexical elements** from the source text. Therefore, this procedure is based on applying either lexical generalization or contraction to a SL element or on grammatical 'downgrading', as demonstrated by the following excerpted examples: *the European Community will provide support for the use of the European Community projects partners* ~ *Európske spoločenstvo bude spravidla poskytovať podporu partnerom projektov z Európskeho spoločenstva*; *residence permit issued to unremunerated trainees* ~ *povolenie na pobyt pre neplatených štážistov*.

Seen from a quantitative angle, expansions are a relatively abundant procedure in the corpus, which can be explained by the general nature of translationese. On the other hand, reductions represent a very small minority group in the corpus. This low occurrence of the said translation procedure reveals much about the nature of translation work in the EU institutions: the translator cannot take the liberty of taking away information from the source text and in this fashion 'underinterpreting' the text.

2.5 Calque

Calques are literal translations of names from the SL into the TL; **literal borrowings of transparent designations from the SL** which have their respective literal equivalents in the TL. Moreover, a calque is a word/phrase that morphematically and semantically mimics a foreign word/phrase in the TL. Thus it can be argued that a certain imitation of the SL form, its mimesis, is strived for on the part of the translator.

Newmark (1981, 76) stresses the importance of using this procedure⁴ when translating the names of international organisations, often consisting of 'universal words' with a fairly transparent structure. Consider these concrete examples taken from my EU corpus: *European Parliament* ~ *Európsky parlament*, *European Economic and Social Committee* ~ *Európsky hospodársky a sociálny výbor*, *EEA* ~ *EHP* etc. In addition, Newmark goes as far as using a specific designation for such generally accepted renderings of institutional terms, i.e. that of "**recognised translation**". In my view, a recognised translation may be taken as an already resolved issue, while a calque may still be a translation in its infancy, because terms that are being taken over as neologisms from the point of view of their usage are often haphazardly calqued, and only after a certain time do their established designations, i.e. recognised translations, come into existence. In the examples given above, it would no longer make sense to consider potential translation variants of the given expressions; any other translations would lead to an incorrect translation (see Gibová 2008, 59f for more).

On the basis of my textual analysis, a conclusion has been reached that either **semantic** (*public security* ~ *verejná bezpečnosť*, *operational objectives* ~ *operačné ciele*,

mutual enrichment ~ *vzájomné obohacovanie*) or **word-formation calques** can be formed (*biannual report* ~ *dvojiročná správa*, *pre-accession strategy* ~ *predvstupová stratégia*).

To sum up, I wish to accentuate that calquing as such represents a unique way of taking over lexical units, because it is not phrases or syntagmas that are being taken over but rather their motivation, either of word-formation or semantic nature. This forms the basis of the distinction between word-formation and semantic calques. In quantitative terms, in the analysed EU documents, the latter type is prevalent, with 92.25% of instances.

It is vital to realize that EU documents embody an independent supra-national textual unit. Therefore, it is not the translator's task to adapt these documents to comply with national legislation texts, but rather to keep them in the unchanged form, striving for the most faithful expressions of the source text. In this way, in each official language of the Union a new textual type comes into existence, which is being transformed into national legislation documents within the European legislation approximation process.

2.6 Borrowing

With borrowing, a SL word is transferred directly to the TL. It remains debatable if this is a translation procedure at all because no significant structural change is taking place in the TL, only the orthography of a word is adapted at best. On the other hand, no other translation procedure seems fitting to describe the phenomenon when a translator opts for using a SL word in a target text. When taking over foreign expressions, a term can be adopted either with its original wording (*eLearning*, *Joint Masters*), or with an adaptation of a denomination to fit the norms of the TT both on graphic and phonetic levels (*migration* ~ *migrácia*, *subsidiarity* ~ *subsidiarita*, *mobility* ~ *mobilita*). Employing Newmark's terminology (1988), the former would be called **transference** and the latter **transcription**.

It is also worthy of note that when taking over a word from the SL into the TL by borrowing, the transfer of both its formal and semantic facets takes place at the same time. This is how borrowing differs from calquing, where only the semantic facet of a word is transferred.

With borrowings, the ability of the Slovak language to absorb as much as it can in an era of globalisation becomes clear. Having the temporal dimension in mind, there are borrowings which still sound fairly novel or exoticising, but one can come across borrowings which have become domesticated over time, and are now fully-fledged members of the linguistic inventory.

3 Conclusion

By way of conclusion it is vital to accentuate that today's tendencies in translating EU documents are towards using the translation procedure of calquing. In my corpus, with a total of 955 occurrences, calques make up 35.86% of all identified procedures (see Table 6). This means that an exoticising approach to translation is prevalent in the Slovak translations of EU texts. Direct translation procedures are preferred to oblique ones; calques along with borrowings make up 43.07% while transpositions and modulations account for 31.24% of all materialized translation procedures. A relatively high degree of incidence of calques and borrowings can be explained by the EU's language policy and its institutional

guidelines which prompt EU translators to adhere to a source text and eventually induce them to copy its language structures.

Table 6: Overview of translation procedures in the EU text corpus⁵

Procedure Type	Text A	Text B	<i>Text C</i>	<i>Total</i>	%		
transposition	word-class	317	150	51	518	705	26.47
	sentence-member	122	39	26	187		
permutation	111	40	25	176	6.61		
expansion	356	56	53	465	17.46		
reduction	17	17	9	43	1.61		
modulation	pure	37	13	14	64	127	4.77
	m. of expression	21	32	10	63		
calque	semantic	468	207	206	881	955	35.86
	word-formation	62	6	6	74		
borrowing	transcription	140	17	28	185	192	7.21
	transference	6	0	1	7		

Although, as expected, the naturalizing approach occurs in the studied EU documents to a lesser extent (the frequency of occurrence of oblique translation procedures is approximately 1.38 times smaller in comparison with the direct translation procedures), transpositions represent an abundant group in the corpus. These account for 26.47% of all identified translation procedures, which makes them the second most frequent procedure after calques. By this finding a significant linguistic-structural distance between the English and Slovak codes has been established. Furthermore, the ascertained values of expansions and permutations could be expected to a considerable degree due to the intrinsic nature of translation and the tendency towards explicitation as a translation universal. The least frequent procedure was reduction, with a value of 1.61%; this is fully in compliance with the rigidity of the EU's language policy, which forces the translator to transfer a given text from the SL into the TL without any omission of SL inventory constituents. This is indeed determined by the function and position of institutional-legal texts. This article, which draws on the author's dissertation thesis, has demonstrated that the analysis of translation procedures employing a combination of the methodology of the translation models as worked out by Vinay & Darbelnet, Newmark and Schreiber has a sound applicability in the case of institutional-legal EU documents.

Last but far from least, I fully realise that not every partial area of the research conducted has been given as much space in this article as it would deserve, due to its limited scope. In spite of this, the author humbly believes that at least some of her findings and major problems have been outlined.

The above article is dedicated to the lasting memory of Prof. PhDr. Aleš Svoboda, DrSc., an exceptional personality in many respects after whom I was honoured to take over teaching the History of the English Language course at the Institute of British and American Studies, the University of Prešov.

Notes

¹ On the other hand, one should not strictly rule out the possibility of “translation strategy“ functioning as “translation procedure” at the same time. Consider e.g. the strategy of paraphrasing the source text information which *de facto* results in adding some extra information to the target text. This information addition makes up what is commonly referred to as the translation procedure of “expansion”.

² Equivalence and adaptation as translation procedures put forward by Vinay & Darbelnet (1958/1995) seem apt on the one hand for translating idioms, clichés, proverbs etc. or, on the other hand, when the type of situation being referred to by the SL message is unknown in the TL culture. (Venuti 2000, 90–91). For this reason, the incidence of the said procedures in the analysed EU text corpus is automatically ruled out due to the intrinsic nature of legalese. The incidence of adaptation and equivalence is much more expected in a figuratively-loaded text genre, i.e. a literary text. Therefore, in order to elaborate my own fully-fledged model, I had to draw on other inspiring translation models.

³ Examined word-order inversions between the SL and TL can also be roughly characterized by means of Kendall’s correlation coefficient τ , varying between $\langle -1, +1 \rangle$ wherein the value -1 stands for the very opposite word-order and that of +1 for the absolutely identical one (see Krupa 1980: 135 and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kendall's_tau). However, my minimum permutations have been marked with the value +1 to stand for relatively minor differences in the linear sentence organization when comparing the ST and TT. In the case of maximum permutations, on the other hand, Kendall’s concept of “oppositeness” of word-order implies to me rather considerable word-order differences, i.e. the shift of large stretches of sentences from the middle section to the initial sentence section, etc.

⁴ Terminologically speaking, Newmark is not particularly prone to use the term “calque”. Instead, he gives preference to, in his own words, “a more transparent term, that of ‘through-translation’” (1981, 76).

⁵ The EU documents under investigation comprise English and Slovak language versions of *Decision No. 1720/2006/EC of 15 November 2006 of the European Parliament and Council establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning (Text A)*; *Council Directive 2004/114/EC of 13 december [sic!] 2004 on the conditions of admission of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies, pupil exchange, unremunerated training or voluntary service (Text B)* and *Agreement between the European Community and the United States of America renewing a programme of cooperation in higher education and vocational education and training, done at Vienna this 21. day of June 2006 (Text C)*.

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