

LANGUAGE TRANSLATION — A KEY INGREDIENT IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

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Abstract:

The term “global economy” refers to the economic system of the world and the interdependency among the different nations of the world. The society that we live in is in fact a component of the global economy and its success is based on accurate and appropriate communication. Without translation services, international trade would not exist and no exchanges of services and goods could take place. Because international trade transcends borders, languages and cultures, it demands strong language translation skills.

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The focus of this paper is on the development of the global economy, often referred to as globalization, and the importance of high quality translation services. The importance of communication for the companies that conduct business on an international level should not be underestimated. Without accurate language translation services, most governments, manufacturers and non-profit organizations would find it nearly impossible to exist.

The world of today is gradually getting more unified from a socio-economical and political point of view. “Economic globalization” or “globalization” in every sense of the term is encompassing the whole world and there is an increasing integration of the world production, consumption and the financial markets with a concurrent homogenization of culture worldwide.

Technically, globalization from the economic point of view refers to the integration of product prices, labour wages, interest rates and rates of profit toward developed country standards. The rise in the volume of trade between the developed and the developing countries, increase in cross-border transactions, rise in immigration and transfer of technology can be mentioned as some of the key issues of globalization.

Globalization has led to increase in production capacity of different companies across the world which now caters to a world consumer base. Economic globalization has the concomitant effect of the gains of comparative advantage which leads countries to produce goods they are most efficient in terms of lowest production costs which leads, in turn, to increased volumes of world output. (*Globalization Economy*, 2010: online)

Although international activities and multinational trade have existed for a long time, they have attained a new quality. At present raw materials are not only produced and products are not only sold to the supranational level, but they are developed, produced, placed on the market and marketed to a global audience. Global competition and global cooperation both imply global communication. On the cultural level more and more people refer to the Global Village when it comes to the increase of social and cultural contacts.

At the same time, rapid technological developments and the emergence of new areas and industries has led to a decrease of the innovative circle, and the exponential growth of knowledge and the need for prompt and efficient communication. All this is due to the revolutions in telecommunications and computerization domains, which has enabled a rapid and inexpensive processing of documents. It has also allowed for processing huge data bases and their efficient and effortless transmission across national and geographic borders. Nowadays, information is considered to be the fourth factor of production, in addition to property, labour and capital. The number of non-material products in the market for goods and services is growing rapidly, unlike the material products, which increases the large volumes of documentation that is being created, processed, stored, archived, retrieved or re-established and evaluated.

The fact that multilingualism was granted the status of independent political activity is an obvious indicator of the acute awareness of the European Commission regarding the growing importance of languages in the broader context of the European project. As a result of enlargement, the single market, increased mobility in the European area, updating the status of regions, the emergence of knowledge society, the flow of immigrants into the EU and globalization, the challenge of multilingualism have all taken on a completely new dimension — in terms of scale, complexity and political relevance.

Translation has long played a role in the dissemination of scientific information. With increased contact between nations in the past few decades and with increased communications through satellites and other products of modern technology, it has become easier and faster to learn about what is happening in the rest of the world. The exchange of ideas and printed matter between different linguistic communities has necessitated an unprecedented amount of translation. In the last decade, the need for translation has continued to rise, reflecting the needs of businesses, the scientific community, and other areas.

The appearance of the internet has made a seemingly endless stream of information available to anyone who has access to a computer with a web connection. The internet is also vital for business. It creates a new ground where companies are able to display their particular products and services in original and innovative ways to new and diverse audiences.

The increased need for professional translation services has arisen as a result of the growth in world trade. Global trade is also promoted by the increased number of translation agencies, along with improvements in technology and communication. Developments such as these also improve the economic outlook of many countries. The language translation industry has a great influence on imports and exports of the countries. The global economy relates to the globalization of production, markets, finance, communications, and the labour force. The aim of any company or corporation is to offer the same high quality product or service to its expanding customer base. If that base consists largely of individuals from many different countries, then a solution needs to be found. If a company sees a gap in a potential market for a new or existing product; it is essential for it to convey the message that their company wishes to fill that particular, gap, and to express it in a culturally sensitive and appropriate manner. Companies need to express their cultural sensitivity by providing their diversifying customer base with products tailored to suit their own cultures and languages. (***, 2009: online)

Language translation skills represent a key ingredient in the success of the global economy because all multinational companies must have accurate information. Without translation services, international trade would not exist and no exchanges of services and goods could take place. With the availability of accurate, appropriate and affordable translation services, businesses can have trusting relationships with their trade partners

and trade can flourish. The advantages of translation on the broader global economy are perhaps not immediately apparent. But if a company, regardless of its magnitude, plans to get involved with its customers in a meaningful way it needs to approach them in a manner that is favourable to them. Companies express their cultural understanding by providing their diversifying customer base with materials tailored to suit their own languages. For a company not to offer this kind of information would be tactless and not make good business sense.

Thus, translators are the link which establishes the connection between the producer and the customer within a global economy. They must be capable of expressing, in the target language, ideas that, in this case, the company/producer has formulated in the source language. Translators need to understand the language from which they are translating and be able to write well in the language into which they are translating. This requires understanding subject-specific terminology and having an awareness of style and grammar, regional language, and nuances as well as idiomatic expressions. Translators must understand the technical area in which they are working and are often expected to possess an in-depth knowledge of highly specialized subjects. They are required to stay up-to-date with respect to terminology and must be able to look at a text for meaning and not necessarily translate it literally. For learning technical vocabulary, translators should frequently consult subject-specific articles, have access to new glossaries, and have contacts in a given field.

There are a number of norms that have to be observed by translators working in the economic field. **Expectancy norms**, which represent the category of the product norms, are established by “the expectations of readers of a translation (of a given type) concerning what a translation (of this type) should be like” (Chesterman, 1997:64). These expectations are influenced by the translation tradition in the target culture, on the one hand, and by the formal features of the parallel texts in that particular language, on the other hand. They can also be determined by various types of economic or ideological factors, or by the power relations within and between cultures.

Chesterman also makes another distinction using House’s (1981) terms: “overt” and “covert” translations. Thus, as far as the “covert: translations (e.g. business letters, manuals, advertisements, etc.) are concerned, readers in a particular culture at a particular moment in time expect them to be identical with the texts of the same type originally produced in that language. If such translations are felt to be different from similar non-translated texts, they can be labelled as inappropriate in some way. For the “overt” translations (e.g. literary translations), which are closely bound in one way or another to the source culture, the target audience in a given culture at a given time expects some “local colour” (Cozma, 2006: 33).

It must be also mentioned that expectancy norms are basically validated by their very existence in the target-language culture. In other words, people have certain expectations about particular kinds of text, and consequently, the norms embodied by these expectations are valid.

Professional norms, on the other hand, represent the category of the process norms, because they govern the accepted methods and strategies of the translations process itself. From the translator’s perspective, the professional norms are subordinate to the expectancy norms, because “any process norm is determined by the nature of the end- product which it is designed to lead to”. (Chesterman, 1997: 67) The source of these process norms is represented by those members of the society who are considered to be competent professional translators, whom the society trusts as having this status, and who may further be recognised as competent professionals by other societies, too. Thus, Chesterman notes:

“Professionals are the people who are largely responsible for the original establishment of the expectancy norms, in fact, for the products of their work

naturally become the yardsticks by which subsequent translations are assessed by the receiving society. Their translation behaviour, in other words, is accepted to be norm-setting. Conversely, if a translation is accepted as confirming to the relevant expectancy norms, the translator of that text is ... accepted as being a competent professional". (Chesterman, 1997: 67-68)

There is also a **communication norm**, according to which the translator should act in such a way as to optimize communication, as required by the situation between the parties involved. This is a social norm specifying the translator's role as a communication expert, both as a mediator of the other's intentions, and as a communicator in his/her own right.

Certain types of texts (e.g. commercial or legal documents), as Chesterman (1997: 69) points out, might require a translation which prioritises a close formal similarity to the original, other might value stylistic similarity (e.g. poems), others might stress the importance of semantic closeness (e.g. scientific or technical texts), and, still, others might aim at similarity of effect above all these (e.g. a tourist brochure, an advertisement, or a web-site).

The translators have to take into account the range of knowledge available to their readers and of the expectations they are likely to have about such things as the organisation of the world, the organisation of the language in general, the organization and conventions of particular text-types, the structure of social relations, the appropriateness or inappropriateness of certain kinds of linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour, etc.

Cultures and the intercultural competence as well as the awareness that arise out of the experience of cultures, are far more complex phenomena and the more aware the translator can become of these complexities, including power differentials between cultures and genders, the better a translator he/she will be. Furthermore, when it comes to the translation of economic texts, the translator needs to take into consideration all the specific elements involved.

The texts cannot be analysed outside their socio-cultural contexts and translation implies both linguistic and cultural mediation. Neubert (1996) links cultural issues to the textual features of situationality and acceptability. According to him, culture refers, above all, to culture-specific textual norms and conventions, which the translators must take into account during their mediating process. The importance attached to the translators' context-sensitivity is tightly linked to the socio-cultural frame of reference that they must adopt in order to fill the previous desideratum.

The translators have to be biculturally competent, which means that besides cultural knowledge and adequate translation strategies, they must have "the capacity of anticipating the possible effects different translation alternatives may have upon the receptor." (Witte, 1994: 74). In terms of culturally significant translation strategies, Harvey and Higgins (1994: 28) see what they call *cultural transposition* as varying between the two poles of *exoticism* and *cultural transplantation*. *Exoticism* implies minimal adaptations of linguistic and cultural features. At the other extreme, *cultural transplantation* leads to a complete "naturalisation" of the foreign culture.

Specialists in translation studies have come up with several techniques of dealing with a culture-bound terms and texts. Some linguistic and textual taxonomies of culture-bound terms, texts and strategies are given below for translators to resort to when dealing with them. One such relatively comprehensive taxonomy — which has been adapted here — is suggested by J. Aixelá (1996), who groups under some general strategies various techniques of coping with cultural terms in translation. He defines culture-specific items as "those textually actualized items whose function and connotations in a source text involve a translation problem in their transference to a target text, whenever this problem is a product of nonexistence of the referred item or if

its different intertextual status in the cultural system of the readers of the target text.” (1996: 58) Besides proper nouns Aixelá includes among culture-specific items “objects, institutions, habits and opinions restricted to each culture”. (1996:59)

One main strategy suggested by Aixelá is that of **conservation**, which may be achieved in several ways:

a) through *repetition* (also known as *loan transfer* or *cultural borrowing*), a characteristic

example being that of toponyms:

e.g. *Seattle, Milano, leasing, clearing, management, e-commerce, e-banking, online banking, know-how*, etc. are rendered as such in Romanian

b) through *slight orthographic adaptations*, particularly when it comes to widely used toponyms, first names, etc.

e.g. *Marseilles – Marsilia, Edinburgh – Edinburg, Charles – Carol, Venezia – Veneția, franșiză*, etc.

c) through *linguistic (non-cultural) translation*; in this case translators have the support of previous texts in which the same devise was used (intertextuality) or they rely on the linguistic transparency of the culture-specific terms:

e.g. *dolari, picioare (unit of measure), bancrută, brokeraj, cambie*, etc.

d) through *extratextual gloss*, i.e. the use of footnotes, endnotes, glossary, etc., whenever

translators feel it is necessary to supplement the readers’ cultural knowledge without, however, mixing the explanation with the text.

e) through *intratextual gloss*, i.e. a case in which the cultural information becomes part of the text so as not to disturb the reader’s attention:

e.g. *existența resurselor necesare (affordability)*, *adecvare (“appropriateness”)*, (Bari, 2005: 110) *reingineria organizării (“re-engineering”)*, *redimensionarea întreprinderilor (“downsizing”)* (Bari, 2005: 225)

A second general strategy is that of **substitution**, which can also take various forms:

a) *(Partial) Synonymy* is used in order to avoid the repetition of culture-specific item:

e.g. *insurance broker – agent de asigurare*

b) *Limited universalisation* is used when the cultural meaning is too obscure and there is another to replace it in the source culture:

e.g. *five grand* (five thousand dollars) – *cinci mii de dolari*

c) *Absolute universalisation* occurs whenever translators prefer to delete any foreign connotation and choose a neutral reference:

e.g. *țuică – (plum) brandy, opincă – peasant shoe / sandal*

d) *Naturalisation* at word level implies the replacement of a source text culture specific item by a target text culture specific item:

e.g. *dollar – leu, Dacia – Renault*

e) *Deletion* is used whenever the source cultural term/aspect is unacceptable from stylistic or ideological point of view, or when meaning is too obscure and the translator does not know it. However, it is advisable that the translator finds a way to translate it and avoid deletion.

Dimitriu (2002: 74) mentions also the *autonomous creation* when non-existent cultural reference in the source text is added to the translation. Another technique may be added in this taxonomy, namely, *compensation* which may have a part with culture-bound texts whenever the “loss” of a cultural meaning may be compensated for by another one. *Attenuation*, may also work for (too “strong” taboo) source culture specific items that may be found unacceptable by the target culture.

Translating can never be discussed apart from cultures of the respective languages, since languages are themselves a crucial part of the culture. Words only have

meanings in terms of the culture in which they are used, and although languages do not determine culture, they certainly tend to reflect a society's beliefs and practices. Any failure to consider the cultural context of meaning is bound to result in error.

Carlson (2010: online) writes that eight out of ten international businesses lose revenue, delay product launches or pay fines for non-compliance because of translation errors. A recent survey has revealed that 80% of international businesses suffer because of errors in document and website translation. 40% of respondents to the survey, carried out by Global Information Management provider SDL, claimed that translation mistakes have led to delayed product launches. 7% of the surveyed companies even reported being fined for non-compliance because they failed to translate material accurately.

Today the power of the Internet can allow exporters to reach previously unattainable customers in far-flung parts of the globe, and businesses that have had the foresight to have their website translated into the languages spoken in their target marketplaces or better still "localized" (translated and culturally adapted), are reaping large benefits. The presence of translation service providers on the internet is yet another advantage to the global economy; giving voice to ideas, plans and proposals, providing a much needed platform for far-reaching and meaningful communications with the rest of the planet. They are aiming to create a bridge upon which ideas and communications can cross without hindrance, to pave the way for free, open and creative communications without boundaries or obstacles. As Hyde points out (2010: online), translating and localizing fulfil a fundamental role by breaking down language barriers in a world that is increasingly interlinked, at a time when globalized communication is fundamental for both international business and social relations.

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