

TRANSLATING TEXTS ON BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS: SOME PITFALLS FOR PERSPECTIVE TRANSLATORS

TRADUZINDO TEXTOS SOBRE NEGÓCIOS E ECONOMIA: ALGUMAS ARMADILHAS PARA TRADUTORES DE PERSPECTIVA

TRADUCCIÓN DE TEXTOS SOBRE EMPRESA Y ECONOMÍA: ALGUNOS ERRORES PARA LOS TRADUCTORES PERSPECTIVOS

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ABSTRACT: The current study aimed at investigating the most common translation problems that students of the additional professional education program “Translator for specific purpose” of Kazan Federal University had while translating texts on business and economics from Russian into English. To fulfill the aim of the research 61 participants were given authentic materials from periodicals for translation. The texts contained lexical - phraseological features that belong to the most common difficulties in translation: economic terms, non-equivalent vocabulary, neologisms, idioms, euphemisms, abbreviations. The findings of the study showed that the students have good understanding of translating the main economic terms and know the techniques in translating. The biggest challenge they faced were connected with translating idioms and faux friends. Neologisms seemed to be not difficult but quite challenging. Interviews that followed the translation tasks helped to identify perspective translators’ subjective difficulties and techniques they tackled them. The data obtained from the participants’ answers could provide profound information for syllabus design.

KEYWORDS: Translation. Texts on business and economics. Phraseological units. Perspective translator. Lexical-phraseological features.

RESUMO: O presente estudo teve como objetivo investigar os problemas de tradução mais comuns que os alunos do programa de formação profissional adicional “Tradutor para fins específicos” da Universidade Federal de Kazan tiveram ao traduzir textos sobre negócios e economia do russo para o inglês. Para cumprir o objetivo da pesquisa, 61 participantes receberam materiais autênticos de periódicos para tradução. Os textos continham traços lexicais - fraseológicos com características correspondentes às dificuldades mais comuns da tradução: termos econômicos, vocabulário não equivalente, neologismos, expressões idiomáticas, eufemismos, abreviaturas. Os resultados do estudo mostraram que os alunos têm um bom conhecimento da tradução dos principais termos econômicos e conhecem as técnicas

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de tradução. O maior desafio que enfrentaram estava relacionado com a tradução de expressões idiomáticas e falsos cognatos. Neologismos pareciam não ser palavras difíceis, mas bastante desafiadoras. A entrevista que se seguiu às tarefas de tradução ajudou a identificar as dificuldades subjetivas dos tradutores de perspectiva e as técnicas com que as enfrentaram. Os dados obtidos a partir das respostas dos participantes podem fornecer informações profundas para a concepção do programa.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Tradução. Textos sobre negócios e economia. Unidades fraseológicas. Tradutor de perspectiva. Recursos léxico-fraseológicos.

RESUMEN: El presente estudio tuvo como objetivo investigar los problemas de traducción más comunes que tienen los estudiantes del programa de educación profesional adicional “Traductor para fines específicos” de la Universidad Federal de Kazan al traducir textos sobre negocios y economía del ruso al inglés. Para cumplir con el objetivo de la investigación, 61 participantes recibieron materiales auténticos de publicaciones periódicas para su traducción. Los textos contenían rasgos léxicos - fraseológicos que pertenecen a las dificultades más habituales en la traducción: términos económicos, vocabulario no equivalente, neologismos, modismos, eufemismos, abreviaturas. Los hallazgos del estudio mostraron que los estudiantes tienen un buen conocimiento de la traducción de los principales términos económicos y conocen las técnicas de traducción. El mayor desafío al que se enfrentaron estaba relacionado con la traducción de modismos y falsos amigos. Los neologismos no parecían ser palabras difíciles, pero sí desafiantes para la traducción. La entrevista que siguió a las tareas de traducción ayudó a identificar las dificultades subjetivas de los tradutores en perspectiva y las técnicas que las abordaron. Los datos obtenidos de las respuestas de los participantes podrían proporcionar información profunda para el diseño del programa de estudios.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Traducción. Textos sobre economía y empresa. Unidades fraseológicas. Traductor de perspectiva. Rasgos léxico-fraseológicos.

Introduction

Translation plays an important role in the functioning of any state and society as a whole, and in the life of ordinary people in particular. The peoples throughout their existence have always had cultural, economic, commercial, military, scientific relations with each other. Thanks to the translation, interlanguage and intercultural communication was carried out, and the achievements of science and technology were disseminated. Because of the different languages spoken by different groups of people in many different areas of this modern world, translation gains more importance in the world day after day (TAAMNEH, 2018).

Currently, due to the growing processes of globalization, the development of international contacts, trade and cultural relations, technological progress, the quality of translation activities has been given more attention. The society requires highly qualified professionals capable to provide qualitative translation service (ISMAGILOVA;

SOLODKOVA; GRIGORIEVA, 2017). Translation theory is rightfully considered a scientific discipline that deserves a comprehensive, thorough study.

There are various interpretations of the concept “translation”. So, Barkhudarov L.S. thinks that translation refers to the process of converting a speech work in one language into a speech work in another language keeping an unchanged content plan, that is, the meaning (BARKHUDAROV, 1975).

Catford pointed out that “translation is an activity of enormous importance in the modern world and it is a subject of interest not only to linguists, professional and amateur translators and language-teachers, but also to electric engineers and mathematicians.” He defined translation as an “operation performed on languages: a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another” (CATFORD, 1965, p. 1).

Ghazal defines translation as “all the processes and methods used to render and/or transfer the meaning of the source language text into the target language as closely, completely, and accurately as possible” (GHAZAL, 2008).

In our work, we consider the translation of texts on business and economics. Economic translation - translation of various texts and articles on an economic topic. It certainly has its own specific features. When translating texts on business and economics, it is not enough for a translator to only know English language, you need to have certain knowledge in the field of economics, understand economic terminology, the basics of accounting, financial accounting, business ethics, etc.

In addition, translation of texts on business and economics must comply with the requirements for financial reporting of the country into language of which it is being translated. In this area, standards are often changed and updated, and therefore, the translator should always monitor their relevance.

So, the aim of any translator working in this sphere is to prepare credible translation in accordance with the terms and conditions presented to this kind of work.

At first glance it might be thought that to accomplish the translation of texts on business and economics is not difficult. Usually these are formal documents which lack difficult phraseological units and complex grammatical constructions. In reality the situation is different. It could be quite easy to translate balance sheet or annual financial report. In this case what is needed – just to know basic accounting terms. However, translators deal not only with financial data but with the speeches made by the shareholders at the annual meetings or the speech delivered by the head of the organization, minister of finance to name but a few. All these could be challenging for translators, especially for beginning ones. Texts on business and economics

are full of idiomatic expressions, neologisms, euphemisms and other phraseological units. The latter constitute the pitfalls perspective translator may come across.

The purpose of the current research – to define key lexical-phraseological difficulties in translating texts on business and economics and to check how far students taking the Additional professional education program “Translator for specific purpose” could identify those difficulties and overcome them.

Methods

The investigation of progressive linguistics experience, studies in lexicology, theory of translation, theoretical analysis, observation, interview and comparison were used in this research.

The aim of the research was to find out common difficulties perspective translators face while translating texts on business and economics. Data collection took place during 2018-2019 academic year. The participants of the research were third-year students taking the Additional professional education program “Translator for specific purpose” of Kazan Federal University, Institute of management, economics and finance. The research involved 61 students studying the course “Professional translation”. Each participant was provided with 7 authentic texts from periodicals like “Financial Times”, “The Economist” and from the websites. The text contained lexical - phraseological features, non-equivalent vocabulary, neologisms, idioms, euphemisms, abbreviations, i.e. aspects making difficulties for a translator. The translation tasks were followed by an interview to explore students’ viewpoints concerning pitfalls they have while working on the translation.

Results and discussion

When dealing with texts on business and economics, the translator is confronted with various lexical and phraseological features. The analysis of the students’ works revealed the difficulties we divided into 9 groups.

The group 1 includes words the meaning of which fully corresponds to the meaning of the words in Russian: economic terms (e.g., loan, lender, intangibles), numerals, weekdays, months; number of phrases (e.g., share index, exchange rate, financial statement, balance sheet). 8% of works showed incompetency in translating this group and during the interview only 2% of students defined this as a difficulty.

The group 2 includes unambiguous words corresponding to several words in the target language (e.g., the word accountability - ответственность; -подотчётность: учитываемость, возможность учёта; legal accountability – ответственность по закону, message accountability – учет обмена сообщениями; budgetary accountability – бюджетная отчетность). As for this group the mistakes were found in 5% of works.

The group 3 consists of polysemantic words: several different meanings are found at once (e.g., the word credit, in addition to the meaning of займ, ссуда also has such meanings as: заслуга, уважение, зачет, репутация). 15% of works presented the mistakes in identifying this group. According to the interview only 3 students suffered from this group. They admitted that they apply the following techniques: studied the context carefully; took into account the pragmatic relations in which units of a foreign language and a translating language enter the context; norms of compatibility of words.

Along with equivalents, perspective translators come across a wide range of non-equivalent vocabulary – group 4: the words with no direct equivalents in the target language. 3% of works contained the mistakes, although during the interview no one revealed this as pitfall. They said to exploit such techniques as: transliteration - the transfer of an English word in Russian letters (e.g., Ford Motors - Форд Моторс); transcription - the transmission of the sound of an English word using Russian letters (e.g., know-how - – ной-хау); calque - the exact reproduction of the meaning of a foreign word by means of the native language (e.g., skyscraper - небоскреб).

The following group of words (group 5) also caused difficulties in the translation of texts on business and economics- neologisms (words that arise in a language to denote new objects, concepts, based on existing methods of word formation: e.g., фьючерс - futures, аутсайдер – outsider, аутсорсинг – outsourcing). Neologisms include euphemisms: a word or phrase that is used instead of an expression that has a negative meaning (e.g., to put into a circular file instead of to put in a waste-paper basket; funds instead of money; creative accounting instead of dishonest accounting) (NIKOLAYEVA, 2010, p. 27).

Neologisms are very common terms in the texts on business and economics. A term is a linguistic unit that denotes a specific concept of a certain field of activity. Unlike other terminological systems, economic terminology has far gone beyond professional communication and it is widely used both by specialists and by broad segments of the population in speech (<https://dic.academic.ru/>).

When translating the terminology of texts on business and economics, the difficulties arise in choosing the exact translation match, which is a requirement of faithful translation,

whereas any slight mischance can lead to a distortion of the original translated content (KAZAKOVA, 2000). The majority (51%) of the students mentioned this group to be difficult due to need to track the advancements.

However, the works didn't prove their concern. Probably, that happened because of the techniques they used: transcription: option - опцион, dealer - дилер, broker - брокер, clearing - клиринг, factoring - факторинг; calque: blue chips – голубые фишки, open account – открытый счет, prepayment - предоплата, sliding price – скользящая цена; descriptive translation: skimming pricing - стратегия снятия сливок при продаже товара, пользующегося большим спросом; addendum: municipal waste management strategy - стратегия управления ликвидацией городских отходов.

Abbreviations and acronyms were collected in group 6 (e.g., ICSID – International Agency for Settlement of Investment Disputes; VAT – value added tax; SpaceX – Space Exploration Technologies Corporation). Though the students feel stressed when they face group 6 (as they shared at the interview), only 7% of works produced mistakes on them. Perspective translator that to translate lexical units appropriately, they needed to use reference books and dictionaries and to keep abreast of political and economic events.

International words – group 7- are lexical units that are similar in form and have the same meaning in different languages (e.g., bank, contract, chance, business, conflict). The genesis of international words is explained by the borrowing of the words of one language from another or by the penetration into these languages through a third one, usually Latin or Greek. As it was expected the students didn't identify that as a difficulty and only 1% of works had mistranslation of group 7.

Group 8 - faux friends of translator and group 9 - idiomatic expressions and phraseological combinations – brought the biggest complexity to the perspective translators.

Faux friends of translator (group 8) are words of two languages that, due to the similarity of their form and content, can cause false associations and lead to an erroneous perception of information in a foreign language, and when translated, to distortions of the content, errors in lexical compatibility, and inaccuracies in transmission stylistic nuance, as well as in word usage (AKULENKO, 1969; KOESSLER DEROCQUIGNY, 1928). 40% of all mistakes made by students were associated with group 8. There are 3 types of discrepancies within this group: the Russian word coincides with the English in one or two meanings: record - рекорд, запись; the Russian word coincides with the English in meaning, but differs in connotation: idealism (positive connotation) - idealism (negative connotation); the third group consists of the words

that are similar only in form: actual - действительный, solid - твердый, furor - ярость (NIKOLAYEVA, 2010, p. 33). and all them caused difficulty.

The next indisputable difficulty is the widespread use of special idiomatic expressions and phraseological combinations in the texts on business and economics that are not used in the common - literary linguistic level (group 9). Phraseological unit should be understood as a semantically free combination of words, which is produced in speech as a whole from the point of view of semantic content and lexical and grammatical composition (OZHEGOV, 2009). The complexity of the phraseological units translation is due to the lack of a unified systematization of these structures used in the texts on business and economics (CRYSTAL, 1992).

Idiomatic expressions are understood as a stable speech pattern which meaning is not determined by the meaning of the words included in its composition (<http://interpret.ru/economic>). The components of idiomatic expressions are not perceived separately. Perspective translators denoted the following difficulties that sprang up when they translated idioms:

- some phraseological units are similar to free phrases, e.g.: to be left holding the bag (baby) - остаться в дураках; join the majority - отправиться к праотцам;

- many phraseological units are ambiguous, e.g., to have the hell of a time, depending on the context, can have directly opposite meanings: хорошо провести время и иметь неприятности;

- the figurative expression may be misinterpreted due to its associative similarity with the corresponding phraseological unit in- the target language: stretch one's legs - прогуляться, (а не протянуть ноги) (NIKOLAYEVA, 2010. p. 36).

As for group 9 it led to 38% of all mistakes. When translating idioms students had to find an alternative of the phraseological equivalent or analogue. Typically, these examples are often found in proverbs and figurative expressions (e.g.: to cross the Rubicon, by the book). If there are no analogues or equivalents of idiomatic expressions, the translator used the methods of calque or descriptive translation (e.g., up in the air – в подвешенном состоянии, to bring to the table- показать результативность).

Summary

Globalization, the development of international contacts, trade and cultural relations and technological development bridged people and cultures but leaves the gap of communicating

through languages. Thus, the significance of translation is gaining importance day after day, especially in the field of economy and business. Because to know English language only is not enough for translator of business and economics texts, it's essential to be competent in the field of economics, know terminology, have an insight into accounting, business ethics, etc.

The main purpose of any economic translation is the correct transfer of the sense of the original text, to prepare reliable translation complying with requirements as it mainly regards various financial documents and texts that contain specific conceptual apparatus and developed hierarchical structure of terms. The key conditions to attain this aim are to ensure the equivalence of the translation, to achieve the adequacy of the translation, to implement the pragmatic function of the translated text, to form the property of information reliability of the translated document.

Conclusions

The study dwelled on identifying the most common translation problems that students have while translating texts on business and economics from Russian into English. The authors of the research analyzed lexical-phraseological difficulties that could be found in these texts and selected the articles to check students' abilities to deal with the common translating challenges. The translation task was followed by an interview to explore students' viewpoints concerning pitfalls and solutions they have while working on the translation.

The findings of the study showed that though the students have quite good understanding of translating the main economic terms and know the techniques in translating the biggest challenge they faced were connected with translating idioms and faux friends and such aspects as economic terms, abbreviations and non-equivalent vocabulary didn't cause problems. However, neologisms didn't provide troubles with translation, but brought much stress. The analysis allowed to make the following conclusions: students have enough of practice in dealing with complicated lexical-phraseological units; perspective translators should have a good knowledge in the related sphere (business, economics, finance, accounting).

We would recommend to increase the amount of time given for gaining translation experience to provide the students with the good practice and knowledge to deal with different texts on business and economics and to systematically identify translation problems to prevent future difficulties during lectures and seminars.

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