

SOCIOLINGUISTIC APPROACH TO HOME APPLIANCES INSTRUCTIONS TRANSLATION

Lucia PROHNIȚCHI, Facultatea de Limbi și Literaturi Străine

Prezentarea și argumentarea din punct de vedere sociolingvistic a diverselor clasificări ale tehnicilor de traducere propuse de lingviști și clasificarea acestora în tehnici lexicale, gramaticale și semantice; stabilirea diferențelor dintre conceptele de: tehnică, metodă, strategie și procedeu de traducere prin prezentarea argumentelor aduse de lingviști; expunerea și analiza dificultăților de traducere a instrucțiunilor – iată doar câteva dintre obiectivele propuse în cercetarea de față.

Instructions have been used for many centuries and have passed a long way in their development, specialization and interference with other genres. The basic predestination of instructions is to communicate relevant objective information and to prescribe the actions required in a certain situation. Thus, the implied communicative goal is: communicative and prescriptive. There are several “actors” involved in this process: the author, the information and the recipient.

Instructions are specific forms of discourse, satisfying constraints of means of economy and accuracy. They are in general based on a specific discursive logic, made up of presuppositions, cause and consequences, goals, inductions, warnings, and psychological elements. The sole purpose of a psychological element is to stimulate the user and make him feel safe and confident with respect to the goals he wants to achieve, as well as to optimize a logical sequencing of instructions [1, p. 33]. For example:

To start or shut down the system, simply press the power button.

To set the required ironing temperature, turn the temperature dial to the appropriate position.

Instructions sometimes have a tutorial aspect [2, p.10]: it is not enough simply to get the user to perform an action; there is also an attempt to get the user to understand why the action should or should not be performed in the prescribed way, and why a specific action contributes to an overall goal:

Avoid touching the screen or holding your finger(s) against it for long periods of time. Doing so may produce some temporary distortion effects on the screen.

Never use the appliance without the motor protection filter. This could damage the motor and shorten the life of the appliance.

Instructions are also culturally significant. They are usually necessary to make the product work at all. Their existence is so closely linked to the product that they can be considered part of the product itself. Instructions also contribute to the efficient and safe operation of the device, without which either the product or the user may suffer damage. In addition to the

potential uselessness of a product without instructions, there are also legal reasons behind the existence of user manuals; manufacturers need to provide the instructions in order to avoid being sued for any hazard caused to the user as a result of lack of information about the product [3, p.45].

Literal, or word for word, translation is the direct transfer of a SL text into a grammatically and idiomatically appropriate TL text in which the translators' task is limited to observing the adherence to the linguistic servitudes of the TL. In principle, a literal translation is unique solution in which is reversible and complete in itself. The translation has not needed to make any changes other than the obvious one, like those concerning grammatical concord or inflectional endings.

✓ *Ensure that the filter is pressed properly down to the bottom of the grooves, and then close the lid.*

✓ *Verificați dacă filtrul a fost pus și fixat bine. Închideți capacul.*

We can observe in the above example that the instruction was translated literally, but there are also some differences. In English it is a single sentence, while in Romanian there are two sentences. Also there is a loose translation in Romanian: *pressed properly down to the bottom of grooves – a fost pus și fixat bine*; also here we can detect that in English is used the present tense, and in Romanian – the past tense. In this example there has been done an omission in order to simplify the Romanian variant. The English instruction is precise, while the Romanian one is more general.

✓ *Check if the voltage indicated on the bottom of the appliance corresponds to the local mains voltage before you connect the appliance.*

✓ *Verificați dacă tensiunea indicată sub aparat corespunde tensiunii locale, înainte de a conecta aparatul* [4, p.3].

This is literal translation. The structure of the sentence and the word order remained the same in Romanian. The only exception is that the personal pronoun was omitted, because *verificați* refers to *dumneavoastră* – you, and it is not necessary to use it once again at the end of the sentence, as in English variant. *Verificați i... înainte ca dumneavoastră să conectați aparatul* will sound strange and will imply too much politeness.

Also, in the the text of an instruction there are used declarative clauses with the modals *must* or *should*:

✓ *This instruction book must be kept handy for reference.*

✓ *Pentru referințe, păstrați acest manual la îndemână.*

The modal *must* is omitted in translation, as the action that is advised is not an absolutely necessary one. It is an advice to keep the instruction if there may appear some questions about the appliance.

We can analyze some instructions from the point of view of sociolinguistics:

✓ *Please read these operating instructions carefully before connecting your kettle to the power supply, in order to avoid damage due to incorrect use.*

✓ *Citiți cu atenție instrucțiunile pentru folosirea înainte de folosire, pentru a evita unele deteriorări.*

As we can see from this example, the English version is longer and it specifies the operation that the user will perform with the product: *connect the kettle to the power supply*, while in Romanian it was simply translated as: *înainte de folosire*. It seems like the English variant is more explicit, as it shows the possible risks *due to incorrect use*. Also we observe that the English sentence begins with the word *please*, which shows some degree of politeness and respect to the user. In the Romanian version the word *citiți* also can be considered a form of politeness, as it can refer to a single user as *dumneavoastră*. This can be observed in many other examples like:

Check – verificați, unplug – scoateți din priză; tensure – aveți grijă, etc. [4, p.4-6].

The activity of writing this paper is a starting point in our career as a translator, because here we have proved our abilities and knowledge. We hope that in our future activity we could make a wider research on this topic and identify more difficulties and features of translating home appliances instructions.

References:

1. HARTLEY, A., PARIS, C. *Two Sources of Control over the Generation of Software Instructions*. Brighton, 1996.
2. AOULADOMAR, F. *An Exploration of the Diversity of Natural Argumentation in Instructional Texts*. 2009.
3. YATES, A., ETZIONI, O., WELD, D. *A Reliable Natural Language Interface to Household Appliances*. Seattle, 2003.
4. CORDLESS, Jug Kettle. *User Manual*.

*Recomandat
Svetlana CORCODEL, lector superior*