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Тези

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CORPORATE TRANSLATION: CHALLENGES OF THE HIGHLY SPECIALIZED WORLD

Corporate translation has firmly established itself as an essential business process for companies dealing internationally and striving to reach as much wider audience as possible, business to business or business to public customer.

Still, often there is confusion as to what constitutes the translation suitable for a particular industry and what skills exactly translators should possess. The confusion goes deeper when the industry or part of the industry that requires translated texts is extremely specialized or is served by local jargon hardly recognizable outside the circle of users.

Such local jargon may be a corporate slang, not used beyond the premises of the company but still widely spoken at the meetings and put to writing in internal emails. Paradoxically, such slang finds its way outside the corporate chatroom into business activities with other parties involved only to be misunderstood by the native speakers in the first place. When a need for translation is added to the mix, the users are left seeking translation not only from one language to another, but a translator is compelled to find a common ground in the source language first and only then perform his or her immediate task of translation into the target language.

This challenge for translators is yet to be discussed widely in academic research. So far, only few notices of the above have been made and few studies considered the potential approach the translator has to take to deal with this double-leveled translation.

So the following will outline the possible options the translator might have at his and her disposal to negotiate the best possible result both for the business situation and their own satisfaction.

For the purpose of this paper, the research will be limited to translation of written documents. Interpreting in slang heavy situations deserves a separate discussion and different instruments.

The first option would be to go through a process of back-to-ground. The translator identifies the slang words and reduces them to terms accepted across the industry and after that translates into the target language.

The main challenges here are two: to identify all slang words and to avoid misconstruing them.

The first challenge is especially difficult if we are dealing not with a single word but with an expression which on a first glance can be harmless and acceptable enough. The flying example of such danger is the expression "to have lots of moving parts". While perfectly direct in technical setting, in

managerial lingua franca it would mean the complexity of corporate business, many processes that move business activities or even bureaucracy that such processes involve.

The second challenge would be mostly in conjunction of the stated above. The easy way to go for the most obvious and simplest is not always right and could deceive even the most experienced if not with previous knowledge of the exact word and its environment. The word “to break” could serve as an example here when used in petroleum industry in relation to particular practices. To break a bit would mean to disconnect it from the drilling pipe, but to break circulation would, on the contrary, mean to start the process of flowing the drilling fluid into the well, not to disconnect or stop – basically, break – the flow.

The second option would be the technique known as decrease-in-technicality. The key feature is to bring the slang down to one recognizable term and then to refer to it or describe it in commoner words – in short, to convert it into something understandable instead of leaving it rocket science.

This option mostly works when translator has to transfer the meaning across the industries or very specialized areas of a particular industry, but also can be useful to ensure communication between corporate businesses in the same industry – thus making it half-way between the back-to-ground option and this one.

To sum it up, the subject of slang translation in corporate environment is still largely left untackled. So far, just few ways were suggested to ease the translator’s job with such ephemera as slang which is extremely time, place and person dependent. Surely, translators find their means around it as they gain experience, and it is up to researches to trace and gather the data within the translators’ community to work out the best possible solutions.

Literature

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