

DEVELOPING LATVIAN TERMINOLOGY OF TRANSLATION STUDIES: THE FIRST STEPS

JĀNIS SĪLIS

*Department of English
Faculty of Translation Studies
Ventspils University College
Latvia
janis.silis@venta.lv*

The rapidly increasing number of translational publications in the Latvian language, as well as the necessity to read theoretical courses in Latvian, which is the common language for Master-level students majoring in translation with different working languages, makes a compilation of an Explanatory Dictionary of Latvian Terminology of Translation Studies a topical issue. The article gives a brief insight into the first step that has up to now been taken in this direction, characterising creators and users of terms in the contemporary world, providing an overview of Translation Studies research in Latvia, listing the general characteristics of the terminology of Translation Studies, explaining the procedure of term approval in Latvia, familiarising the readers with the existing core set of translational terms, providing the author's suggestions concerning the enlargement of the list of Latvian translational terms with the goal to select 'long-livers' and avoid 'ephemera'.

INTRODUCTION

Similarly to other countries of Eastern Europe, Translation Studies have gained ground in Latvia as an independent interdisciplinary subject only recently. Up to the present time a number of Latvian translationalists have published articles, covering various aspects of translation studies mainly in English, German, French and Russian. Papers on issues of Translation Studies written in Latvian are also growing in number. The recent unpublished research of the directions of translation studies in Latvia from the end of the 1980s to our days, conducted by the author of this article, contains evidence that contribution of more than 50 authors in the form of articles, textbooks and monographs relevant to this field can be measured in several hundreds of publications. In them, due to the absence of established terminology, each author has coined his/her individual terms, supplying this field of research with unavoidable mixture of terms that still need processing and approval.

A need for an Explanatory Dictionary of Latvian Terminology of Translation Studies is getting more pressing because of the growing number of Bachelor and Master-level university programmes of Translation Studies (see in detail Sīlis 2009b, 244–262), most of which are conducted in Latvian.

In January of 2005, one of such programmes a professional two-year Master's programme 'Translation and Terminology', was launched by the Faculty of Translation Studies of Ventspils University College (VUC), followed in 2006 by yet another MA programme, 'Translation of Legal Texts'. As MA students are professional translators with different working languages, Latvian had to become the 'lingua franca' of the theoretical courses, such as, e.g., *Translation Theory and Criticism, Language for Special Purposes and Terminology Management, Intercultural and Pragmatic Aspects of Translation, Text Components and Translation, Translation Technologies and Translation Methodology, Methods of Research in Translation Studies*. In 2009, the VUC and the University of Liepāja started a doctoral programme in Linguistics, in the framework of which 6 doctoral students are writing dissertations on theoretical issues of translation and interpreting. The programme's lecture course *Translation Theory and Practice in Latvia* is also read in Latvian. Thus, a purely academic interest has developed into an urgent practical need to quickly develop a core of basic Latvian terms of Translation Studies. There is a danger that in the absence of Latvian terminology covering the basic concepts of general translation theory and its more concrete manifestations (partial and descriptive translation theories), as well as concepts important for applied translation studies, the terminology of this field of research will remain in the stage of infancy instead of taking a place among the other established disciplines. The goal of the present article is to describe the current situation and propose a possible procedure to fill in this gap. To start with, the creators and the potential target audience of such an endeavour are discussed in the following section of this article.

CREATORS AND USERS OF TERMS IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

Who, then, are the creators and users of specialized sets of terms, including the terminology of Translation Studies? Looking for an answer at a very general level it must be admitted that even a cursory assessment of the quantity of terms used by the widest circles of people of the 21st century shows that terminology, a lexical domain accessed and used in the past mainly by researchers and experts of a definite field, has now become a possession of practically everyone. This is a result of a comparatively higher formal education level of people around the globe, making their speech more 'educated' and therefore increasing the percentage of terminology used even in the most trivial and down-to-earth conversations, and also due to the fact that modern technologies (especially information technologies) have entered the daily life of almost every individual enlarging the basic word-stock largely at the expense of terminology.

This drastic change has found its reflection in the modern theories of terminology. When Eugen Wüster created his theory of terminology in the first half of the

20th c., his main goal was to ensure unambiguous international communication among professionals, and the goal of his theory was standardisation of terms within a limited sector of technical languages (Wüster 1991). Today we observe terms in their natural environment—in written and spoken specialised, as well as unspecialised, language where they act as a means of communication and expression—they are less systematic and unambiguous due to different registers of specialised and unspecialised communication in which they occur (Cabré, 2003, 177–179).

Apart from the usage of terms as components of everyday language, there is still a circle of those who, due to the nature of their occupation, are in a more frequent, or daily contact with terms. These are:

- (a) terminology theorists who propose metatheories about what characteristic features should ideal terms possess,
- (b) expert researchers in the field of terminology who are appointed to assess and confirm terms proposed by experts of the concrete domain (e.g., environment protection, computer technology, aviation, medicine, etc.),
- (c) professional terminologists who create new terms and who should follow the guidelines of theory of terminology,
- (d) translators and interpreters who are expected to use the terms proposed by terminologists,
- (e) specialists working in the concrete field.

As far as translators and interpreters are concerned, the latter are forced to cope with the quantitative and qualitative terminological explosion of the last decades, because they are the first users of the new terms, terminologists lagging far behind in the whole process, and therefore often are ‘forced’ to become terminologists.

Specialists try to deal with problems of terminology within their own field, and there is no precise knowledge of how many of them seek professional terminologists’ advice, but there is a strong suspicion that they either use the existing ‘professional slang’ or create their own terms, which they later may submit for approval (about the procedure of term approval see below).

The aim of terminology theorists is to formulate principles of qualitative term formation, therefore the use of terms by specialists or general public is in the periphery of their interests. Expert terminologists confirming the proposed terms more often are concerned about the correspondence of these terms with the ideal criteria and seldom think about the convenience of usage.

In such a situation a question may be raised what group the translation theorists creating terms of translation studies belong to? As they are neither terminology theorists (a), nor professional terminologists (c), they are closer to group (e)—specialists of a concrete field of research, i.e. Translation Studies, although, due

to the specific nature of their field, they have much in common with translators/ interpreters, at least they often have recourse to the same means of translation.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TERMINOLOGY OF TRANSLATION STUDIES

It is well known that Translation Studies is a scientific discipline of a pronouncedly interdisciplinary nature, having conceptual and categorical 'kinship' with a wide variety of diverse fields of research like linguistics, literary theory, philosophy, history (especially history of culture), sociology, psychology, communication science, computer science, anthropology, etc. On the one hand, interdisciplinarity stimulates development of any scientific discipline, and this is the strong point of Translation Studies in particular. On the other hand, from the point of view of terminology of Translation Studies, interdisciplinarity in certain cases does not provide a clear borderline between fundamental concepts and marginal phenomena of the discipline (expressed in the form of terms).

Terms of Translation Studies are of two rather distinct types (see also Shuttleworth, Cowie 1997), namely,

- (a) terms of general nature applicable to all kinds of research in theoretical and applied Translation Studies,
- (b) terms specific only to a concrete field of research within the discipline.

Terms borrowed from linguistics generally are the most controversial ones, because scholars from time to time have more or less mechanically 'transplanted' linguistic terms into a completely different environment of Translation Studies, optimistically but erroneously assuming that almost all linguistic terms and the notions which lie behind them, are equally valuable in the investigation of the phenomenon of translation.

A substantial part of terms in the field of Translation Studies are of English origin, although an almost equally impressive number of terms have originated in German and French, and also in Spanish (see Santoyo, Rabadan 1991, 318–322). Russian terminology in this field has developed more independently, having its own a relatively long-standing tradition. In Latvian, we already have many cases of successful borrowing and adaptation, but there are even more that do not fit into the system of Latvian terminology. The procedure of term approval in Latvia was established to ensure the development of national terminology and to prevent the invasion of foreign terms.

PROCEDURE OF TERM APPROVAL IN LATVIA

The state-regulated system of term approval in Latvia (see also Baltiņš, Druviete, Veisbergs 2008) was practiced by the Terminology Commission during two brief

periods between the two World Wars, and renewed in May 1945 in the form of the Commission of Terminology and Orthography. After the establishment of the Latvian Academy of Sciences (LAS) in 1946, the activities of the Commission were terminated to be replaced by the Terminological Commission of the LAS (further on—TC) which continues functioning. The main task of the TC (among four major goals formulated) was to work out Latvian terminology for the different branches of science and practical activities.

The TC can form sub-commissions and their sections involving experts of the LAS, higher educational establishments and practitioners from any area of activity. At present there are 27 sub-commissions, a sub-commission of Linguistics (with a section of Translation Studies) never being established.

Section 22 of the recent version of the Official Language Law, adopted by *Saeima* (the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia) (Official Language Law 1999, 7) stipulates that ‘(1) In specialised educational literature, and technical and record-keeping documentation, unified terminology shall be used. The development and use of terms shall be determined by the Terminology Commission of the Academy of Science of Latvia (hereinafter—the Terminology Commission). New terms and their defining standards shall be used in official communication only after their approval by the Terminology Commission and publication in the newspaper *Latvijas Vēstnesis* [the official Gazette of the Government of Latvia].’

Section 23 of the same Law provides that the norms of Latvian literary language shall be codified by the Latvian Language Expert Commission of the State Language Centre (Official Language Law 1999, 7). In practice this means that the TC cannot officially approve any term if it has not been declared codified by the Latvian Language Expert Commission.

Decisions of the TC must be made public to allow organizations and individuals to express their opinion, only then the TC takes the final decision which is obligatory for all organizations, institutions and printing houses (Baltiņš et al 2008, 304). It must be noted that this system helps to avoid hasty decisions and was suitable for the slow processes of the Soviet period, but it is ineffective in the present situation of a dynamic term development.

Consequently, the development of Latvian terms of Translation Studies has been largely left in the hands of translato­logists themselves.

CORE SET OF TRANSLATOLOGICAL TERMS

At present around 40–50 Latvian terms of Translation Studies are in a relatively active use in research publications and courses of lectures, although two publications of Andrejs Veisbergs (2005, 102–104; 2007, 180–183) list more than 80 terms.

The Explanatory Dictionary of Core Linguistic Terms (*Valodniecības pamatterminu skaidrojošā vārdnīca*; see Skujiņa et al 2007) contains 45 Latvian terms of Translation Studies, among around 2,000 of other linguistic terms, the development whereof can be related to the following English terms:

active language, anticipation, applied translation studies, back-translation, computer-aided/assisted translation, chuchotage or whispered interpretation, compensation, correctability, covert translation, cultural borrowing, cultural substitution, descriptive translation, descriptive translation studies, distance or remote interpreting, equivalence, free translation, interpreter, interpreting, literal or word-for-word translation, loan translation, machine translation, minimax principle, parallel text, passive language, post-editing, per-editing, relay interpreting, retour interpretation, source language, source text, subtitling, target language, theoretical translation studies, transeme, translating dictionary, translatability, translation studies, translation unite, translative, translatology, translator, universal of translation, unitranslatability, verifiability.

These terms were approved by the TC of the LAS, following the standard procedure mentioned above. Thus these terms can now be considered to form the core set of Latvian terminology of Translation Studies.

A brief analysis of the core set shows that 65% of terms are used when discussing general or partially theoretical issues, 25% pertain to interpreting, and 10% belong to the field of machine translation. Comparing this set to the list of the fields of Translation Studies with the highest number of publications (namely, intercultural issues, theoretical and descriptive research, norms and standards of Latvian as the target language, translation of terminology, history of translation in Latvia, sociolinguistic issues of translation practice, typology of translations, translator and interpreter training, etc.) it is evident that terms used in the theory of Translation Studies are represented to some extent, but only 5% of the approved terms represent the intercultural aspect of translation and interpreting—the top theme of all translational publications. It can be assumed that domains like the literary standard of the Latvian language, the history of translation in Latvia and translation sociolinguistics do not need specific translational terms, but terms should be created for research in translator and interpreter training and other pronouncedly translational fields.

In order to create a more comprehensive list, a project involving the academic staff, Bachelor and Master students of Translation Studies Faculty of VUC was started in autumn of 2005. The initial stage of the project involves a comparative analysis of all the 530 entries of the *Dictionary of Translation Studies* (Shuttleworth, Covie 1997), later on adding information from other similar German, Russian, French, etc. sources to finally propose a set of corresponding Latvian terms.

The impact of the patterns of the ‘source terms’ upon the formation of Latvian terms of Translation Studies or ‘*tulkojumspiediēns*’ (an appropriate Latvian word, probably a

future term, introduced by Andrejs Veisbergs 2005, 187)—can appear to be positive, especially in cases when the term is stable and regularly used in the language of its creation.

Further enlargement of the translational term list can be done, carefully distinguishing between ‘long-livers’ and ‘ephemera’ (see more on this problem in the respective subchapter of the monograph of Jānis Silis (2009a, 130–138). Terms repeatedly used by almost all translationalists are stable and convenient in usage which undoubtedly is an asset, while there is also a number of colourful, mostly metaphorical terms that at the first glance seem elegant and witty, but are extremely rarely or almost never used after their creation and therefore cannot be regarded as useful.

In general, it can be said that with the birth and further working life of a term of any scientific discipline two aspects are important, i.e. the creation of the term conforming to ideal criteria of term-formation, and the convenience and acceptability of its regular usage.

In cases when the term was developed from a translated (‘proto-version’) it can become an organic part of the terminological system, conforming to the terminological and also general linguistic standards of the target language, or, if the translation was less successful, the term will always be perceived as an alien element on the background of the existing terminological tradition, and therefore cannot be included the future *Explanatory Dictionary of Latvian Terminology of Translation Studies*.

CONCLUSIONS

All the exemplified problems show that there is still enormous work to accomplish in order to create a satisfactory list of basic terms of Translation Studies in Latvian—a job where the expertise of linguists/lexicographers, translationalists, practicing translators and interpreters and terminologists, including experts from the TC of the LAS and the State Language Centre is of great importance.

The next step should be creation of a data base of translational terms used by the representatives of different theoretical schools. For this purpose terminological dictionaries of Translation Studies and fundamental theoretical publications, characteristic of a concrete theory should be examined. Stable and widely recognized concepts and terms naming them should be selected, and finally the Latvian term should be coined adding an explanatory entry.

Then the terms should undergo the official procedure of approval in the Terminology Commission of the Latvian Academy of Sciences and the last phase of dictionary compilation would be lexicographical work.

All the mentioned activities are rather time-consuming, therefore the result—a published explanatory dictionary of core Latvian terms of Translation Studies, could be available both to professionals and general public in several years from now.

REFERENCES

- Baltiņš M., Druvieta I., Veisbergs A. (eds.). 2008. *Break-out of Latvian. A Sociolinguistic Study*. Rīga: Zinātne.
- Cabre Castellvi M. T. 2003. Theories of Terminology: Their Description, Prescription and Explanation. *Terminology* 9:2, 163–199.
- Official Language Law*. 1999. Adopted by Saeima (the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia) on December 9.
- Santoyo J. C., Rabadan R. 1991. Basic Spanish Terminology for Translation Studies: A Proposal. *Meta* XXXVI, 1, 318–322.
- Shuttleworth M., Cowie M. 1997. *Dictionary of Translation Studies*. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing.
- Silis J. 2005. Tulkojumzinātne vai translatoģija? (Tulkošanas teorijas un prakses latviskās terminoloģijas veidošanas problēmas). *Latviešu valoda – robežu paplašināšana*. Rīga: Valsts valodas komisijas raksti. 1. sēj., 120–127.
- Silis J. 2006. Terminology of Translation Studies: Impact of English Terminological Patterns upon the Formation of Latvian Terms. *Valoda – 2006. Valoda dažādu kultūru kontekstā*. Daugavpils Universitāte, 154–163.
- Silis J. 2009a. *Tulkojumzinātnes jautājumi. Teorija un prakse*. Ventspils Augstskola.
- Silis J. 2009b. Training of Translators and Interpreters in Latvia. *Mutatis Mutandis, Latin American Translation Journal*, University of Antioquia, vol. 2, No. 2 (2009), 244–262.
- Skujiņa V. et al. 2007. *Valodniecības pamatterminu skaidrojošā vārdnīca*. Rīga.
- Veisbergs A. 2005. Tulkojumspiediens – guvums vai apdraudējums? *Latviešu valoda – robežu paplašināšana*. Rīga: Valsts valodas komisijas raksti. 1. Sēj., 187–201.
- Veisbergs A. 2005. *Mutvārdu tulkošanas pamati*. Rīga.
- Veisbergs A. 2007. *Konferenču tulkošana*. Rīga: Zvaigzne.
- Wüster E. 1991. *Einführung in die allgemeine Terminologielehre und terminologische Lexikographie*. 3. Auflage. Romanistischer Verlag, Bonn.

VERTIMO STUDIJŪ TERMINIĀS KŪRIMAS LATVIŪ KALBA: PIRMIEJI ŽINGSNIAI

JĀNIS SĪLIS

Santrauka

Pastaraisiais metais Latvijoje daug dėmesio skiriama vertimo studijoms latvių kalba: skelbiami straipsniai, skaitomi teoriniai kursai studentams, vyksta mokslinės konferencijos. Todėl pastebima, kad terminų skaičius nuolat didėja, atsiranda latvių kalbos taisyklių neatitinkančių terminų, daug netaisyklingų vertinių ir neapbruotų naujadarų. Per dvidešimt nepriklausomybės metų tik nedidelė dalis vertimo studijų terminų buvo įtraukta į kalbotyros terminų žodyną, kiti yra „pabirę“ įvairių autorių straipsniuose ir knygoje. Straipsnyje aptariamas augantis poreikis parengti aiškinamąjį latvių kalbos vertimo studijų terminų žodyną ir su tuo susijusios problemos, trumpai apžvelgiama terminologinio darbo situacija Latvijoje, aiškinama terminų kūrimo ir jų aprobavimo tvarka. Be to, autorius pateikia preliminarų svarbiausių vertimo studijų terminų sąrašą, kuris galėtų būti naujojo žodyno pagrindas.