

RENDERING APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND FORENSIC LINGUISTICS TERMINOLOGY INTO GREEK

Pavlos PAVLOU, Georgios GEORGIU
University of Cyprus

Undeniably, English is today the world's main lingua franca and the language of many scientific and academic disciplines such as computer science and economics, and other activities such as commerce, aviation, etc. One of the consequences of the hegemony of English is the globalisation of knowledge and as a result most of knowledge is being produced and disseminated in this language. English is the major language in which research findings are reported. Not only that, but even knowledge that has been produced and originally reported in other languages it spreads and proliferates via translation in English. A few examples in the wider field of linguistics and cultural studies would be the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, Vygotsky, Bakhtin, Kristeva etc. This trend is reinforced by the need of international scholars to publish in English. The motto of "***publish or perish***" which has been an axiom in most academic settings and institutions has evolved to "***publish in English or perish***". Today, this is more evident than ever. As a general comment, it should be stressed that this trend has detrimental effects on both the national languages and the sciences themselves. Parianou and Kelandrias (2005) warn us that there is a danger of certain scientific domains being lost in the national languages. Currently, this loss concerns vocabulary and terminology but in the future it may lead to the loss of the national language itself. Undeniably, scientists are more likely to be more prolific and creative if they can operate intellectually and produce academic work in their own mother tongue. The conviction that both the Greek language and the individual sciences would benefit and develop further if the Greek language was used extensively in an academic environment was one of the decisive arguments for the adoption of Greek and Turkish as the languages of the University of Cyprus.

Some scientists working in non-English environments may compete and develop their academic career without being obligated to publish in English. Even in that case, English is important to them because they need to read scientific books and journal articles in English in order to be informed about the developments in their field, since, as mentioned earlier most of new knowledge is reported in or disseminated through English. Moreover, these scholars may need to translate some of the scientific terminology into their native language either for an academic paper or book they are writing or to use it in their lectures. Translating such terms is a really difficult task since such terms do not signify objects (whose translation is easier) but they constitute the distillation of often quite sophisticated scientific theories, and function, according to Damanaki and Skourtou, (2002: 84) "as tools for analysis of phenomena, situations and procedures". Moreover, we would like to add that the employment of such terms liberates authors from the need to explain the details of the notion or idea but at the same time confines them with regard to the phenomena they are discussing. In the process of translating there may be various difficulties depending on two factors: a) the familiarity of the local scientific circles with the field and b) the extent to which the locally produced scholarship relates to the terminology in a foreign language.

An example that relates to the first factor is the field of Forensic Linguistics, a field Greek academic circles have little experience with. On the other hand, the Greek academic community has dealt extensively with the issues of bilingualism and diglossia but still there

are disagreements with regard to the terminology. Damanakis and Skourtou (2002) present a number of terms employed to describe either diglossia or bilingualism and mention that in most cases the use of one or the other term is not a matter of taste or a matter of choosing between two ideologically neutral terms but it is often an ideological one. The choice of term in public discussions alludes to and unveils the intention of the bilingual programmes for immigrant or minority children, that is, either empowerment through two languages, Greek and the mother tongue or linguistic assimilation into Greek. Some of the terms they present are: διμορφία, διγλωσσία, ατομική διγλωσσία, κοινωνική διγλωσσία, διπλογλωσσία and they go on to show how these different terms are used differently by the various scholars.

The dominance of English in the academic discourse results in a situation where new ideas must be formulated in English and new descriptive terminology must be in English. Scientists proposing words for new ideas or re-formulation of existing ideas may use a word from their native language or resort to Greek, Latin or other languages for the coinage of new scientific vocabulary. We are all aware of the existence of false friends in many languages i.e. words that are cognates but have different meanings in the general vocabulary and in technical terminology as well.

The existence of false friends between Greek and many other languages is more prominent since many languages have borrowed Greek words to fill in gaps in their lexicon both general but mostly scientific or academic. Therefore, Greek academics often encounter and need to work with terminology which is of Greek origin. This often makes understanding of the notions and ideas encapsulated in these terms easier, but it sometimes, on may become problematic, as in the cases described in the following section.

Example of an English word that needs to be translated.

The new researcher has no choice but to adopt the existing terminology. It is only logical to attempt to translate. Translation as a phenomenon is unified, guided by the same general rules, either it is referred to the translation of scientific terms or to the translation of literature. The major characteristics of the translation of scientific terms is the importance of terminology and the special language, as far as style is concerned (Koutsivitis, V. 1994: p.192)

Words of Greek origin

The first case of rendering a term into Greek concerns words that are *not* of Greek origin and it will be exemplified through terms from applied linguistics. In the language teaching terminology there is a distinction between *error* and *mistake* (Corder, 1981). An error is an indication of inadequate mastery of the target system and can not be self-corrected by the speaker even if it is indicated to him/her. A mistake is a failure to apply an already acquired aspect of the target grammar usually due to fatigue, slip of the tongue, or other reasons. To our knowledge the distinction is not made in Greek. Both terms are rendered as «λάθος» even though there are various terms that could be used to make the distinction such as σφάλμα, απόκλιση, απροσεξία, etc. This problem could be easily solved if Greek academics open a discussion on the issue.

In other cases, however, the situation is more difficult. The Greek scholar will aim at staying close to the original translation believing that the person who coined it was successful in capturing the essence of the phenomenon s/he tried to describe. This is probably the case but only with reference to the language in which the term was originally coined. For example, the sociolinguistic term “levelling” is considered as an accurate descriptor of the phenomenon and process it describes, namely the convergence of speech varieties towards a common norm, extreme differences being left out. However, we personally do not find «ισοπέδωση», its translation into Greek, accurate. In Greek this word has a slight negative connotation especially in its metaphorical use. Isopedosi metaphorically means κατάργηση κάθε

διαφοράς, υποβαθμιστική εξίσωση: removal of any differences, downgrading equation. Maybe other terms such as εξομάλυνση, εναρμόνιση, εκχωριστική πρόσμειξη would convey the meaning of the process in Greek more accurately. The next case concerns the attempts to translate a term with Greek etymology. The word may exist already in the general vocabulary of the Greek native speaker or not. In both cases this may create problems. If the term exists in the general lexicon of the language it may be used in a different way. The term “diglossia” is a case in point. In general Greek the word is used to mean “the hypocritical, non-consistent, and often contradictory expression of views on the same issue from the same source depending on the circumstances”. A common example is the utterance “υπάρχει διγλωσσία σε θέματα εξωτερικής πολιτικής» (there is double speech on issues of foreign policy). The general and ordinary meaning of a word will certainly influence the way the Greek native speaker will understand the scientific term. The scientific word may not exist in the Greek general vocabulary and the native speaker may be tempted to analyse it using his native lexicon and morphological knowledge and arrive at different interpretations. For example the world heteroglossia doesn't exist in SMG even though the adjective ετερόγλωσσος does and means “someone speaking a language other than the one used in the speech community” i.e. it is a designation of a foreigner from a linguistic point of view. In *linguistics*, the term *heteroglossia* describes the coexistence of distinct varieties within a single linguistic code. These varieties could be regional, social, ethnic or individual. The Greek linguist will be tempted to adopt the term since s/he understands it to a certain extent and interpret with reference to the adjective i.e. heteroglossia is the state of being “ετερόγλωσσος”. However, this it does not give the full meaning of the concept especially in view of how the term is used in literary criticism. Bakhtin emphasised that there are no “neutral” words or tones in a language and viewed the modernist novel as a literary form best suited for the exploitation of heteroglossia because it incorporates heteroglossia in its structure. The linguistic energy of the novel was seen in its expression of the conflict between voices through their adscription to different elements in the novel's discourse.

Emerging fields and disciplines

We can now turn to cases in which new terminology for a relatively new field namely needs to be developed by taking Forensic Linguistics as a point of reference. Forensic linguistics is the scientific study of language as applied to forensic purposes and contexts. (McMenamin, 2002). The term “forensic linguistics” was coined by Jan Svartvik in 1968, when he analysed the statements of Timothy John Evans-hanged for the murder of his wife and baby, and posthumously pardoned (Olson, J. 2004: 3)

In attempting a definition of FL, we have to separate the field from what we call "Language and Law" in these terms: the FL have narrower interpretation and a more practical character, given that they are referring specifically to the ways of proof's presentation via language in the court (Gibbons, 2003). We could, thus, say that FL is sub-field of Applied Linguistics or Forensic Sciences, depending on the way we aim on the field.

The problem with the orientation of the field had its impact to the terminology. So, very early it became clear the term forensic, which in Greek is translated as «δικαστηριακός» (adjective that refers to the court) or «δικανικός» (it refers to the trial or to the court), is very narrow to declare the purposes of the new field, which includes areas like auditory phonetics, acoustic phonetics, semantics, discourse and pragmatics, stylistics and questioned authorship, language of the law, interpretation and translation. Even the “Forensic Linguistics: The International Journal of Speech, Language and the Law” Journal (the journal of International Association of Forensic Linguists and the International Association for Forensic Phonetics and Acoustics) changed its name in the volume 10 (2003) erasing the term “Forensic Linguistics” from its

title, as a consequence of the discussion of the Associations about the narrow interpretation of the term forensic.

In most of the languages that “Forensic Linguists” was translated scholars preferred the term “Law Linguistics”, which in Greek would be «Νομική Γλωσσολογία» or «Νομογλωσσολογία», terms that we shall adopt. In the Forensic Linguistics text environment there are many technical terms which are problematic when it comes to translation, and this is because apart from the usual problems arise during the translation procedure, when we try to translate from one language with one legal system (for example civil law, as in Greece) to another (for example common law, as in England and in Cyprus) words have enormous power and a wrong, direct rendering may have an impact on the fate of the parties involved. Stafanos Vlachopoulos in his unpublished PhD thesis showed that the source legal texts are not translated adequately as a whole. However, indications were found within nearly every translation that skopos-oriented (that is aim-oriented) rendering of legal texts is possible. For example the common law term landlord was rendered into Greek by the term εκμισθωτής (lessor), which is the one used in Greek leases (functional equivalent), and not by the term ιδιοκτήτης (owner, landlord) thus depriving the comparative lawyer of the denotation of the source term. However, the translation of the term landlord as εκμισθωτής was considered acceptable in the case of the layman recipient.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was not to offer solutions to issues raised but to initiate a dialogue among linguists and other specialists in order to achieve a more precise understanding of certain translated terms used in Greek. Despite the hegemony of English in the scientific field we believe that there is room for the development of scientific thought and, consequently, terminology in all languages which in turn may be rendered in English. If we view terminology as a pillar of scholarship then we can understand the importance of precise and accurate description of phenomena and consequently of scientific terminology. Finally, we would like to conclude by stating that the borrowing of English loanwords (both general and technical) is not a threat to the Greek Language because as Parianou and Kelandrias (2005) state “history has shown that the Greek language has been able to assimilate foreign words and enrich its vocabulary without exposing itself to danger”.

References

- CORDER, S.P. 1981, *Error Analysis and Interlanguage*. Oxford University Press.
- DAMANAKIS, M. and SKOURTOU, E. (2001). Terminological issues relating to diglossia and Bilingual Education. In Vamvukas and Hadjidaki (eds) *Learning and Teaching Greek as a first and second Language*. Atrapos. p. 83-98 (in Greek)
- GIBBONS, J. 2003, *Forensic Linguistics: An Introduction to Language in the justice system*, Blackwell Publishing.
- KOUTSOVITIS, V. 1994, *Theory of Translation*, Ellinikes Panepistimiakes Ekdosis. (in Greek)
- McMENAMIN, G.R. 2002, *Forensic Linguistics: Advances in Forensic Stylistics*, CRC Press.
- OLSSON, J. 2004, *Forensic Linguistics: An Introduction to Language, Crime and the Law*, Continuum International Publishing Group.
- PARIANOU, A. and KELANDRIAS, P. 2005, Special languages in a modern world. The influence of English on Greek. In the “Proceedings of the 5th Conference of the Greek Terminological Society. Technical Chamber of Greece. p. 291-300 (in Greek)
- VLACHOPOULOS, S. 1999, *The translation of legal texts on the basis of Skopostheorie* (in Greek), Ionian University, Corfu, Greece.