**Fundamental Notions in Translation Studies. Theory and Practice of Translating Technical Texts/Terms.**

**Course Description**

**English for Specific Purposes**:

Academic/Professional Communication in the field of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science

**Generic Objective**:

Training for future academic/professional contexts and situations that imply the use of English.

* interview: applying for a job, Erasmus mobility programme;
* scientific communication: projects, conferences, presentations;
* data: documentation, manuals, tutorials, books, scientific articles;
* academic: studying abroad, Master’s programme, dissertation, research, dissemination
* professional: multinational companies, training, teleconferencing, technical support, international teams, devising testing and troubleshooting protocols, product description and instructions;

**Target group:**

* 1st and 2nd year students: Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (science-oriented);
* English level - heterogeneous groups;
* 4 semesters = 28 units;

**Progress objective:**

* English language (A2 to B2, B2 to C1, C1to C2);
* translating skills;
* domain specific technical terminology;

**Activities:**

* reading comprehension;
* writing;
* translating technical terms/texts;
* producing clear messages in English;
* using the formal/informal register adequately;

**Focus on: Language, Meaning, Translation, Technical Terminology.**

1. **LANGUAGE**:

Objective: Correct use of language – to avoid distortion of intended messages.

Communicating in a foreign language often implies translation (translating process), both *from* and *into* that *language*.

*e.g. translate “lucrez” – I work, I am working, I have been working*

*e.g. translate ”beam” – rază, fascicul, grindă, buiandrug*

Correct answer: Translation of words/terms depends on the **context**.

Finding suitable contexts for each translation option is further explanatory for the relationship word/meaning/context/translation/efficient communication. As seen in the examples above, in order to provide an accurate translation, the word/term/phrase needs to be decoded (interpreted) in **context**: *What does it* ***mean****?* is the right question to ask, before trying to find a corresponding word/term/phrase in another language.

1. **MEANING** of word/term/phrase is context bound.

MEANING (concept) – LANGUAGE(code) – WORD/TERM (linguistic unit)

Therefore, translating a word/term/text is rather about conveying the meaning of A by B (using the code of a different language), and not about providing a formal counterpart of A in B.

1. **TRANSLATION** = product of the *trans*lating process/process itself.

Translation deals withconveying messages by decoding (meaning) from **Source** Language and encoding in **Target** Language, aiming at **equivalence**.

Term A CONCEPT Term B

Source Language - MEANING - Target Language

decoding MESSAGE encoding

The ideal result of the translation process – complete/total equivalence. However, “absolute” equivalenceremainsapurelytheoretical and rather illusory concept.

*Formal* Equivalence vs. ***Semantic* Equivalence**

*e.g. Electronically-controlled pumps measure out drugs for the chronically ill. (drogurile/medicația)*

Poor translations result from the preference for formal equivalence over semantic equivalence. Quite often, the original meaning (message) is significantly altered or even annulled by preserving the exact sentence structure, word order, by poor choice of words or means of expression.

Translations that are severely biased by the source language text are usually an artificial sequence of words, difficult to follow and even more difficult to comprehend. In addition to that, they may include serious changes of meaning or may come into the proximity of non-language and non-sense. Examples of such translations are unfortunately quite common nowadays, being commonly referred to as word-for-word translations. Machine translation capabilities improve by the day, but translation software is still far from being sufficient or reliable for obtaining accurate translations.

*Literal* (word for word) Translation vs. ***Free* Translation**

e.g.

*Foremost among the avenues now being pursued are the design of Very Large Scale Integration (VLSI) and new computer architectures.*

*Înainte de toate (foremost) printre (among) bulevardele (avenues) acum (now) urmărite (pursued) sunt (are) designul (the design) de foarte mare scală integrată (very large scale integration) şi noi calculatoare de arhitectură (new computer architectures). – not acceptable*

or

*Cel mai important dintre căile acum fiind urmărite sunt proiectarea de integrare Very Large Scale (VLSI) și noi arhitecturi de calculatoare. (*[*https://translate.google.ro/#en/ro*](https://translate.google.ro/#en/ro)*) – implies major revising*

or

*Printre direcțiile abordate cu precădere în momentul de faţă se numără proiectarea Integrării la Scară Foarte Mare şi noi modele în arhitectura calculatoarelor. - acceptable*

Or

*Cele mai actuale (frecventate/vizate/noi) domenii (zone/arii/teme) de interes includ (vizează/se axează pe/circumscriu) proiectarea VLSI şi noua (modele noi/moderne/de ultimă generaţie în) arhitectură a calculatorului. - also acceptable.*

Notice the number and variety of **changes** that had to be made in order to preserve the meaning and to convey it by understandable, correct, coherent means of expression (of the Target Language).

Also notice that meaning can be expressed in **several ways**, so choose the most adequate for each context. (Translation – art/science)

Anticipated difficulties in translating:

* unknown words/terms;
* unfamiliar domain;
* no decodable meaning;

1. **TERMINOLOGY:**

**TERMS** specific for a certain **domain** - **technical terms** (obscure meaning both in native and in foreign language)

In some cases, seemingly difficult complex terms can be translated easily:

e.g.

*nestoichiometria coloizilor (Chemistry) - colloid non-stoichiometry*

*anticorpi antifosfolipidici (Medicine) - antiphospholipid antibodies*

*electromagnetism (Physics) - electromagnetism*

whereas

*pâslă – felt* might be actually more difficult to translate.

Technical terms in fundamental domains (Mathematics, Physics etc.) – derived from Latin, similar form:

e.g.

*Fourier analysis - analiza Fourier*

*linear systems theory - teoria sistemelor liniare*

*linear algebra - algebra liniară*

*complex variables - variabile complexe*

*differential equations- ecuații diferențiale*

*probability theory – teoria probabilității*

Technical terms in areas of recent development (Computer Science) - **transfer translation,** identical/similar form:

e.g.

*Microchip - microcip*

*Mouse – mouse*

In other cases, technical dictionaries/glossaries, translating skills and technical expertise are cumulatively required for understanding the **meaning** and **translating** terms/texts in a certain domain.

**Semantic equivalence**: Meaning-Concept-Definition

**Defining** **pattern**:[ TERM to be defined - *general class* + particular characteristics ]

ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONICS ENGINEERING is *the largest and most diverse field of engineering* that is concerned with the development and design, application, and manufacture of systems and devices that use electric power and signals.

Defining is useful for disambiguation when dealing with:

* **Synonymy** – several terms correspond to one concept;
* **Polysemy** – several concepts correspond to one term;
* **Partial/contextual semantic equivalence** – term and concept are associated only partially/in certain contexts;
* **No term –** no term coined in the target language;

Conclusion: Translation theory and practice are important instruments for developing the skills necessary for efficient academic and professional communication in a foreign language. The theoretical aspects above are meant to serve as a notional framework for translation practice, included in the teaching **materials** used for the seminars.