THE SATISFACTORY CYCLE OF TERMINOLOGY MANAGEMENT IN TRANSLATION-MEDIATED BUSINESS COMMUNICATION: PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

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ABSTRACT. This paper provides an overview of how national and international companies manage terminologies and specific languages in a multilingual communication environment, always mediated by translation. Based on several studies carried out by us between 2010 and 2014, but particularly in an experimental study, we describe how some companies, operating on an international scale, manage multilingual communication. Our research focuses on the practice of corporate non-professional translation and discusses the status quo of terminology management at business settings. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in this investigation, and a descriptive approach was chosen, with the aim to refuse the simple idea of corporate translation malpractice and avoid a biased analysis.

*Keywords: Terminology management, non-professional business translation.*

The non-professional translation process and terminology management in international companies: brief outline

Resende da Silva (2005: 28), argues that "to understand an organization, we should take into consideration three aspects: the reason why the organization exists, its external context and its processes".[1] Hammer & Champy (1995, *apud* Resende da Silva, 2005: 37) state that the concept of "process" was originated by the theory of "total quality management". According to the same authors, process refers to an "activity directly connected with valuable results" and can frequently be found in client-oriented companies.

In fact, process management depends on the organizational culture and structure and is included in "Porter's Value Chain" where processes can be linked to "primary activities" or "support activities". The primary activities are directly related to the market and have a larger economic impact.

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[1] Quote translated from Portuguese.
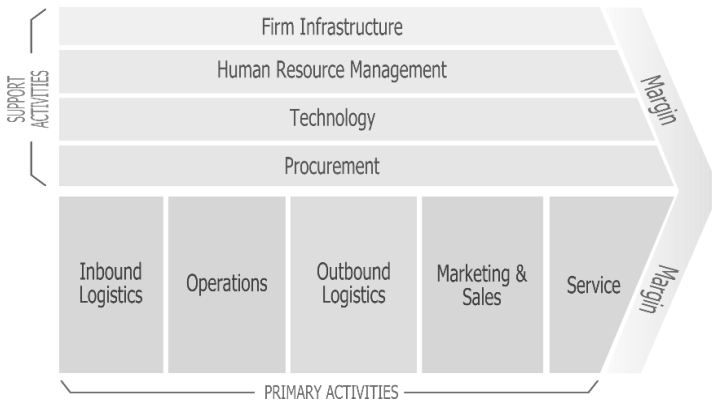
Figure 1. Michael Porter's Value Chain (Singh, 2009)

In companies operating internationally, but that mainly rely on non-professional translation, language management is not a planned and strategic practice, and as a result, translation and terminology management are not primary value activities. Commonly, language in business is a means to an end – a mediation resource to meet goals in a business transaction between client and supplier – and is dependent on the language skills of its personnel (Albuquerque & Neves, 2011). For this reason, instead of clearly being included in the departments of "Marketing and Sales" or "Services", it seems to be under "Human Resources Management", as a support or secondary activity, as we will show in below.

Correspondingly, companies manage investment taking into consideration the future return on it, on a cost-benefit basis. Therefore, costs should only increase if benefits are considered to justify them. For this reason, investment in quality or improvement measures is, usually, calculated taking into consideration the value that clients can give to it or are willing to pay for it. Thus, investment in language increases when customers demand more quality or when it is legally required (Albuquerque & Neves, 2011).

Moreover, recruitment of workforce with foreign language skills is a common strategy among companies, allowing them to communicate in multilingual environments where mediation competencies are required (Albuquerque & Neves, 2011). This practice increases the human capital of the company and, at the same time, decreases the need for external mediators and extra costs.

Nevertheless, as Peltonen (2009) has found, non-professional translation exclusively based on the employees' language skills raises several issues and problems, generally invisible to the company, and can also lead to internal and external costs. Internally, costs can be related to (i) processes (lack of efficiency), (ii) productivity (negative impact on workforce) and (iii) a decrease of profit. Externally, image and credibility of the company have to be considered (and the resulting loss of clients), but also the cost of not doing business, since inefficient communication makes it difficult to keep and attract customers.

Objective and Methodology

The specific aim of this study was to know how small-medium sized companies (SME) manage terminologies and specialized languages in a multilingual translation-mediated communication environment.

Our most relevant theoretical and methodological background was from Terminology, mainly from research groups in Canada (e.g. Rondeau, 1984; Celestín et al., 1990; L'Homme, 2004). These have a long tradition working with multilingual contexts, and their approach is also very translation-oriented, which met our needs. Nevertheless, due to the interdisciplinary character of our research, some theoretical and methodological guidelines from Management Studies (Chiavenato, 2013; Davenport, Prusak, 1998; Probst, Raub &. Romhardt, 2000) were also taken into consideration.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in this investigation. In 2010 and 2011, we carried out a survey, answered by over 100 companies worldwide (big, medium and small) which allowed us to collect data on corporate language management and revealed non-professional translation as a too common practice to be ignored or merely criticized (Albuquerque, 2015). Based on these results, we conducted two empirical studies, ITEI I (2012) and ITEI II (2014), described in the following section, which enabled us to collect more structured and detailed data to accomplish our objective.

Empirical Studies

Impact of Translation on International Companies (ITEI I)

As mentioned before, non-professional corporate translation is a common practice at international companies, where:

- employees translate without any training in translation, knowledge management tools (e.g., Terminology Databases) or translation tools (e.g., Translation Memories);
- it is an extra task, i.e., not included in the job description. For these reasons, it is often performed in a non-optimized way, taking too long and even having negative impacts on the employee's main tasks (Peltonen, 2009), not to mention in the target text itself.

These were just some of the findings of the survey we carried out in 2010,[2] also described in the literature, although this particular type of translation – non-professional business translation – has been quite neglected by translation and linguistic studies over the years.

There was, thus, a need for more research to enable us to assess:

- the type and level of difficulties in translation and terminology management felt by non-professional translators;
- the impact of the translated texts on the non-professional translators and the target public;
- the cost versus benefit of the non-professional translation process.

Bearing this in mind, we undertook a new study in partnership with AICEP – Agency for Foreign Investment and Commerce in Portugal in the framework of the 16th edition of INOV Contacto,[3] on the "Impacts of non-professional translation in international companies" (ITEI I). 22 graduate trainees, selected by AICEP, participated in this study, from various background studies (Management, Engineering, Law, Marketing and other). No participant was from the translation or language field though.

ITEI I took place from July to October 2012 and involved 20 companies and 11 countries.[4] The research was conducted remotely since the participants (companies and trainees) were abroad.
The objectives of ITEI I were:

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[2] In the framework of a partnership with the Portuguese Agency for Foreign Investment and Commerce (AICEP), with the help of graduate trainees, who distributed the survey in the host companies and among theirsuppliers and customers.

[3] Program managed by AICEP that provides training to young graduates in an international context.

[4] Angola, Algery, Brazil, Belgium, China, Spain, U.S.A, Mozambique, UK, Peru, Timor Lorosae.

- to describe the non-professional process of specialized and corporate translation, concerning its:
    o   methods;
    o   technological resources;
    o   terminology resources;
    o   results.
- To assess the impact of non-professional translation and inexistent terminology management on the target texts of the company, on the non-professional translators and the target public.

The following are only the major findings of ITEI I since this study was later replicated, with some adjustments and with another focus, as ITEI II, described in the next section.[5]

Key findings from ITEI I showed that, in general, in international companies:

- non-professional translators at companies react well to the fact that translation is an extra task;
- both non-professional translators at corporations and the corporations themselves see translation as a natural means of communication in an international environment;
- Non-professional translation is performed without a specific method, technological or terminological resources, except for the internet – namely Google Translator – or sometimes a printed glossary – in most of the cases created by the employees – but which is usually not broadly shared at the company.
- main translation difficulties are at the terminology and language proficiency levels. It was, thus, without surprise that we noticed that most participants indicated "more terminology knowledge" and "technological resources (linguistic, terminology)" as the most necessary resources to improve their translation activity.

It was somewhat surprising that non-professional translation is not considered a problem, either for non-professional translators or the company, even when that task is undertaken outside office hours and when the employee needs to ask other employees for help (mainly concerning terminology). This *modus operandi* has certainly a cost (of

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[5] The full report on ITEI I can be found in Albuquerque (2015).

time and human capital, at least), but it is not calculated and if it has an impact on the revenue generated by the company it is likewise unknown.

Impact of translation on international companies (ITEI II)

As stated before, during our comprehensive research, we have collected various evidence that non-professional translation is a common corporate process. Consequently, more than continuing describing this process as a problem or a "bad practice" example, we intended to contribute to improving this process, analyzing it in its context, based on a quality and process management methodology.

The findings of our survey (2010-2011) and ITEI I lend support to previous findings in the literature (e.g. Schmitz & Straub, 2010: 5) pointing out that managers seem not to perceive professional translation as an added value, mainly due to its cost and time, except in few specific situations. Non-professional translation is, also, for this reason, regarded as an alternative process to support primary value activities and is rarely or never the object of an activity value analysis. In fact, employees either consider themselves able to do the job, are found competent for it or cannot refuse to do it. As a consequence, this process often brings out some flaws, as far as quality, productivity or effectiveness are concerned.

Taking into consideration the experience with ITEI I, in 2014 we redesigned the study, with some new objectives, tools, and procedures. The primary drive of ITEI II was, essentially: to validate ITEI I in a more controlled setting, *in loco*, and to point out some solutions to the non-professional translation process, especially regarding terminology management.Thus, the purposes of ITEI II were:

- to identify problems/ difficulties in non-professional translation;
- to offer fundamental training in translation and terminology to non-professional translators in loco;
- to test translation tools and competencies, after the training;
- to assess results.

Again, we asked AICEP for support to find some Portuguese companies, in the Northern Region, operating at an international scale, where we could perform the study. AICEP was kind enough to give us a list of eight. Four of them never replied to our contact, three declined, and only one accepted, although all of them had non-professional translation practices.

ITEI II took place in a Portuguese international medium company, described as "one of the main companies of the economic sector in Portugal". In this company, several staff members regularly translate (engineers, secretaries, and others), but we were only allowed to conduct our study in one department, with two secretaries who perform as translators on a daily basis.

ITEI II was carried out in four phases, with the following planning, methods, techniques and steps:

MIASP6 – COMPANY					Deming Cycle
DATE	PHASE OF ITEI II	STEP 1 – PROBLEM		SUGGESTED TOOL	P
	The problem, in general, had already been identified during GLCIE and ITEI I studies.	What is the problem?	Long translation process, with terminological and stylistic variation.		
		How frequent is the problem?	Frequent		
		How does it happen?	Employees-translators do not have training in translation or terminology and translation is not considered priority at the company.		
		What is the loss (Quality cost)	Efficient translation, accurate and clear communication, efficiency, productivity, business opportunities.		
		What can be the gains?	Productivity, efficiency, long-life improvement, accuracy, terminology harmonization, business culture.		
DATE	PHASE OF ITEI II	STEP 2 – OBSERVATION		SUGGESTED TOOL	
31.1.14 (meeting 1) 3.2.14 3.2.14 (questionnaire) (meeting 2)	Phases 1 and 2	Who are non-professional translators at the company?	In the department where the study took place, both secretaries. Other employees do translation too.	Meetings 1 and 2, In loco observation	
		What do non-professional translators translate?	Various types of documents: CVs, standards, regulations, reports, user manuals, specification sheets, flyers, ads, websites, catalogs, contracts, presentations		
		How do non-professional translators translate?	Using Microsoft Office or Adobe, depending on the file.		
		When do they translate?	Whenever necessary (over 20h a month).		
		Which resources do they use?	No software. Using some terminological tools developed by them.		
		Which are their main difficulties?	Terminology management and knowledge of the domain.		

6 Identification, Analysis and Problem-Solving Method (MIASP or MASP, as it is more commonly known) is based on the quality cycles of the Quality Control Storyboard, created by Ishikawa. It is developed in eight steps, aiming at developing an improvement process at the corporate environment that can bring solutions and optimized results (Campos, 2004).

Feb-Mar 2014	Phase 2	1. Concept level 2. Process Level 3. Discourse level	Identify causes	Meeting 2,with employees only.	
				5-Why Method7	
DATE	PHASE OF ITEI II	STEP 4 -ACTION PLAN		SUGGESTED TOOL	D
Feb 2014	Phase 3	Step 1– Training and Tools	Step 2 -Corpora Analysis and Analysis of the terminological tools	5W+2H8	
DATE	PHASE OF ITEI II	STEP 5 – ACTION		SUGGESTED TOOLS	
Feb-Mar 2014	Phase 3	Step 1– Training and Tools	Step 2 -Corpora Analysis and Analysis of the terminological tools	Wordfast Anywhere SDLMultiter m Extract	
DATE	PHASE OF ITEI II	STEP 6 – VERIFICATION		SUGGESTED TOOL	S
October 2014	Phase 4	Performance Analysis (productivity)	Effectiveness Analysis (terminological resources)	Survey SDL Multiterm Extract	
DATE	PHASE OF ITEI II	STEP 7 -IMPLEMENTATION9			A
Depending on the company		Review 5w+2H; define improvement implementation; create standard procedures; communicate procedures; train employees;		Depending on the company	
DATE	PHASE OF ITEI II	STEP 8 – CONCLUSION			
Depending on the company		Identify non-solved problems, access method, adjust.		Depending on the company	

Table 1. MIASP/ PDSA Steps[10]

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[7] Problem-solving method similar to Ishikawa's cause and effect tool, but simpler. It was developed by Sakichi Toyoda, at Toyota (1930). It intends to find out the origin of a problem, by analyzing its causes. The process must be run systematically, enough times until the root cause of the problem has been identified, not always in cycles of 5 questions. This is a simple method that should be used, only, as a fundamental reflection.

[8] Problem-analysis and action-planning tool: *what, why, who, where, when, how, how much*, and due to its simplicity, objectivity and applicability it has been broadly used in Project Management, Business Analysis, Business Plans, Strategic Planning and in other management fields.

[9] This step is usually called "standardization". However, in order to avoid any potential ambiguity with the term terminology standardization, we chose to use implementation.

[10] Management method used in control and continuous improvement (Plan, Do, Check, Act) or Shewhart Cycle, which was later improved and known as the Deming Cycle (Plan, Do, Study, Act).

Some results of ITEI II

At this company, non-professional translation is used for various target languages, English being the most common language employed in external markets. However, apart from English, Spanish appears as the 2nd target language, followed by French. The non-professional translators at the company translate to and from these three languages, although it is more frequent to translate *to* than *from* them.

Whenever the language or the domain is completely unknown to the employees, the company hires professional language service providers (LSP). This happens, nevertheless, very rarely and only when very technical and complex documents are at stake. Moreover, the head of the department mentioned that this option has a high cost and always demands internal revision (in particular as far as terminology is concerned). However, and according to the non-professional translators, their translation is not, as a rule, revised by anyone, apart from themselves. Moreover, "some literal translations of terms" have been spotted in some translations of the non-professional translators, but are undervalued by the head of the department, who stated that "they were promptly corrected and had no significant consequences to the company".

According to both non-professional translators, non-professional translation is a very common activity for them, taking over 20 hours a month, both during office and extra office hours.

Moreover, if on the one hand, the translation activity as such does not seem to disturb the employees, these claim that the time it takes does, however. On the other hand, they state not to have the conditions to perform a good job, mainly because they do not have "enough terminology knowledge" and "enough resources or tools to support the translation activity".

Consequently, they both indicate some resources as necessary to perform better, such as "having terminology knowledge", having useful linguistic resources (dictionaries, terminology databases, translation memories, and so forth)" and "having time". One of the employees also indicated "to be an expert in the field" and "having better linguistic knowledge".

The more commonly used resources were glossaries (created by them, but not shared), dictionaries, the Internet, machine translation and experts' help (friends and colleagues with knowledge of the field) inside or outside the company (mainly on terminology issues). When terminology is a

problem, they also mention that beyond their social and professional circle, they search the Internet, which was also the case in ITEI I.

At a later stage of our research, upon the analysis of a *corpus* which was made available by the employees, we organized the most common problems in their translation activity in three levels:

Concept level

Even though they are aware of the general activity of the company, and albeit having translated technical documents for a long time, the non-professional translators are not experts and are not acquainted with all concepts of the several activity fields of the company. Additionally, in the source technical texts, there are various sub-domains with unknown terminology.

Process level

The translation process is long, mainly due to the problem mentioned in a), but also to the lack of (i) research skills and (ii) suitable software. The employees do translate using computers, but using a text editor and online machine translation only. There are no computer-assisted translation software (CAT tools) or terminology management systems (TMS).

Discourse level

Concerning the specialized discourse and language use, we could notice two problems which were apparently connected and interfere with the translation process: (i) terminology variation, both in the source language (SL) and target language (TL), and (ii) interlinguistic equivalence issues. These two problems resulted in some textual inconsistency, both in source texts (ST) and target texts (TT), which we understand as the evidence of ambiguity between designations or between designation and concept, a fact that clearly interferes with the text meaning.

These problems, which we listed above, are evident in the translation process results. Moreover, we believe that they are mainly dependent on the context of situation and cultural context, to which the non-professional translators belong, where language is not a primary product, but a resource to an end: do business. Their performance is satisfactory and allows the company to do business, and it is not improved.
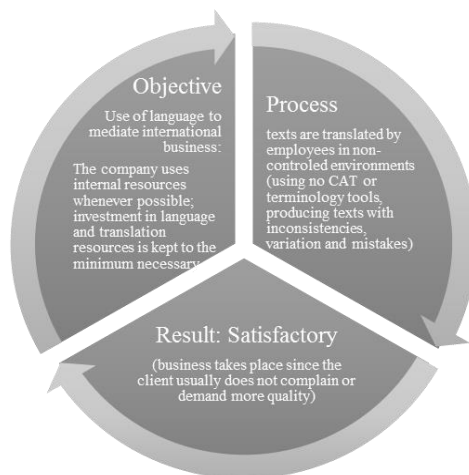
Figure 2. Vicious Cycle of the non-optimized translation process at companies (Source: authors)

Actions and analysis carried out in the scope of ITEI II (Phases 3 and 4) have proved, however, that the introduction of a controlled translation environment contributes to the reduction of terminology variation and improves the translation process. This improvement was evident at productivity and quality (terminology) levels (Albuquerque, 2015). The *satisfactory* cycle could, therefore, change to the *good* cycle. More, the implemented improvement measures (Phases 2, 3 and 4) could be replicated in other departments, and, together with the improvement of source texts, the company could manage multilingual communication and non-professional translation in a more sustainable and efficient way. However, as we mentioned before, language is not a priority, and satisfactory seems to be enough.

Corporate Culture and Terminology management

Companies are organizational units and complex entities, where several stakeholders, both internal and external, interact. During our research, we identified a *status quo* of language use in corporate environments - which we understand as being all company stakeholders (*see* Fig.4) - where employees are expected to be linguistically and interculturally skilled, also in communication mediation contexts.
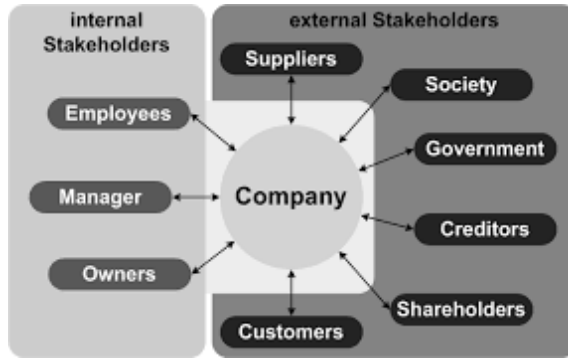
Figure 4. Corporate Environment (company and its stakeholders) (Grochim, 2008)

For this reason, corporate environments rarely point language as an intervention area. Besides, this is a professional context, with experts and a highly competitive and pro-active environment. This scenario does not cope easily with knowledge sharing and dependence on deadlines, especially on external entities like LSP, and as Peltonen (2009) stated, in many cases, even having in-house professional translators, companies cannot cover all language mediation needs, thus being translation a transversal activity in multilingual environments.

The need to get acquainted with the functional areas of the business, e.g. the products, strategies, terminology, and the need to react and to decide on the spot, demand from most employees to have linguistic and translation competencies. All that knowledge is naturally part of the company's know-how and culture. Thus, whenever possible, the company avoids its transfer to external entities, like LSP, for instance, and saves money by avoiding hiring professional translators.

Language, and more specifically, terminology management is, therefore, mostly inexistent. "In most cases, terminology policies are developed as a crisis management measure after some severe problem has occurred as a result of terminological inadequacies" (Drame, 2015: 7).

Terminology policy at companies, is mainly reactive, very rarely pro-active, and "the willingness of companies to introduce terminology management depends on how severe the consequences of not engaging in terminology work might be" (Schmitz e Straub, 2010: 21).

Conclusions

There is clearly a need to change the organizational culture concerning the approach to and mainly use of language, translation, and terminology. As ITEI II results have shown, terminology is a critical factor in the corporate translation process, be it either non-professional or professional.

This procedural change is slow, not always promoted (Chiavenato, 2013) and cannot be triggered by the company alone since it is not an island. Its culture is influenced both by internal and external factors, in the corporate context, where the language industry is also a stakeholder. Moreover, change is a difficult process, especially when managers are not aware of the problems and change in non-priority areas only take place when problems occur and have significant financial consequences, we would add.

For these reasons, we believe that when some knowledge on terminology management gets to the company, as a proposal or "solution" (Schmitz & Schraub, 2010), it may even have some results at the first level of change and apparently solve some of the managers' problems with language management. It may indeed change some attitudes, processes and individual behaviors (e.g. ITEI II), but it will be quite difficult and time-consuming to change the *modus operandi,* in a broader sense.

As we tried to describe, the satisfactory cycle allows achieving the goal: the business. Therefore, there is rarely the perception in the management of a "performance gap" (Chiavenato, 2013) that triggers a need for change, especially to the optimal cycle, as Terminology agents have been trying for long.

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Acknowledgements