

7.5 De-terminologizing the text

Homer, I'm afraid you'll have to undergo a coronary bypass operation.
Say it in English, Doc. You're going to need open-heart surgery.
Spare me your medical mumbo-jumbo. Could you dumb it down a shade?
 We're going to cut you open and tinker with your ticker.
 (Matt Groening, *The Simpsons*)

Traditionally scientific and technical translation training has focused on terms in the source text and their equivalents in the target language. And indeed translators often invest a considerable amount of their time searching for terminological equivalents in the target language. Substituting the terms of one language for those of another language, however, is not the only task medical translators have to deal with as far as terminology is concerned. Sometimes more complex operations are required.

As we saw at the beginning of the chapter, terminologizing is the process whereby concepts are established and specific words are attached to them in order to represent and communicate them. The result is medical terms, units of specialized knowledge meant to facilitate the organization and transmission of medical knowledge mainly in specialized contexts, such as research, clinical practice, and higher education. When the context of communication of medical knowledge moves from the specialists in the source language to the general public in the target language, then new communication needs arise.

Imagine the following assignment. You are given a research article in English and are asked to produce a press release in the target language to be distributed to the general public through the mass media, or an abridged version for patients. As well as selecting the most important information for your summary, you will have to deal with terms so that a non-specialist reader can understand them. In some cases you may give a definition of the concept and then introduce the term. In some other cases you may choose to use a popular version of the same term. This we call “de-terminologization”. This is quite a mouthful, but you may never need to use it. What is important is that you recognize the concept underlying it.

For the specialist, terms and other units of specialized knowledge (USK) are a quick, clear, precise, way of transmitting information. For the man in the street, the same terms hinder communication. Agencies specializing in medical translation often focus on this aspect. Here is a typical advertisement for such services:

Patient information

Medical translation written for your patients. Our specialists translate for your audience's culture and education level, for accuracy and ease of comprehension.

De-terminologizing the text may be a requirement of the assignment, especially in translations that need to be adapted extensively. This can be done in four ways. Depending on the assignment, one or more of the following procedures will be used:

- Scientific terms are kept and followed by explanations.

Example of source text: Most **dyskinesias** are due to basal ganglia disorders, although precise neuroanatomic correlates are usually lacking. The various dyskinesias form a continuum from the lightning-like flickers of myoclonus to the slow, writhing patterns of **dystonia**.

Example of gloss in the target language: Most **dyskinesias** (impairment of voluntary movements resulting in fragmented or jerky motions) are due to basal ganglia disorders, although precise neuroanatomic correlates are usually lacking. The various dyskinesias form a continuum from the lightning-like flickers of myoclonus to the slow, writhing patterns of **dystonia** (abnormal tonicity of muscle, characterized by prolonged, repetitive muscle contractions that may cause twisting or jerking movements of the body or a body part.)

- Scientific terms are kept in brackets after the explanations.

Example of source text: Usually, the hands, arms, and legs are most affected, in that order. Jaw, tongue, forehead, and eyelids may also be affected, but the voice escapes the tremor. In many patients, only rigidity occurs; tremor is absent. Rigidity progresses, and **bradykinesia**, **hypokinesia**, and **akinesia** appear.

Example of gloss in the target language: Usually, the hands, arms, and legs are most affected, in that order. Jaw, tongue, forehead, and eyelids may also be affected, but the voice escapes the tremor. In many patients, only rigidity occurs; tremor is absent. Rigidity progresses, and movement becomes slow (**bradykinesia**), decreased (**hypokinesia**), and difficult to initiate (**akinesia**).

- Scientific terms are replaced by popular terms.

Example: Symptoms typically begin abruptly with headache, followed by steadily increasing neurologic deficits. Large **haemorrhages**, when located in the hemispheres, produces **hemiparesis**.

Example of gloss in the target language: Symptoms typically begin abruptly with headache, followed by steadily increasing neurologic deficits. Intense

bleeding, when located in the hemispheres, produces paralysis on one side of the body.

- Scientific terms are completely avoided and replaced by explanations.

Example of source text: Most **dyskinesias** are due to basal ganglia disorders, although precise neuroanatomic correlates are usually lacking. The various dyskinesias form a continuum from the lightning-like flickers of myoclonus to the slow, writhing patterns of **dystonia**.

Example of gloss in the target language: Most impairment of voluntary movements is due to basal ganglia disorders, although precise neuroanatomic correlates are usually lacking. The various dyskinesias form a continuum from the lightning-like flickers of myoclonus to the slow, writhing patterns of abnormal tonicity of muscle.

According to the assignment and the language combination, you will use one of the above procedures or a combination of them.

De-terminologizing the terms in the sense of paraphrasing them *viva voce* in the reading and understanding process may also help to improve comprehension of the source text before producing the target text.

Task 5. De-terminologizing a text addressed to the general public.

The following sentences have been taken from a manual for physicians. Translate them into your target language taking into account that your target readership is the general public. Pay special attention to the way you present the technical terms in bold type. Do your best to make your reader understand them adequately.

Colonic inertia occurs in elderly or invalid patients, especially if bedridden. The colon does not respond to the usual stimuli that promote evacuation, or accessory stimuli normally provided by eating and physical activity are lacking.

Arrhythmias that cause **hemodynamic upset** are usually sustained **bradycardias** or **tachycardias** and may be life threatening.

A comprehensive **ophthalmic** examination is essential for diagnosis and prompt treatment. Examination includes visualization of the angle by **gonioscopy**, **IOP (normal intraocular pressure)** measurement, visual field examination and, most importantly, examination of the **optic disks**.