

Documentary research

Translation is a productive process of a special kind, the quality of its output is achieved if the translator makes an effort to raise the level of its inputs. If we talk about the inputs, we mean an approach that frames his work and the steps he takes; starting from the moment when his eye falls on the ST and continuing to the moment when the TT is delivered to the recipient in its final version. Between this and that, documentary research emerges as a stage that some consider a key driver for the profitability in translating scientific texts, or what Jean Delisle (1980) calls “pragmatic texts”. As they provide a set of data necessary to decipher all the conceptual codes in the original text, especially if the latter is far from the translator's field of expertise. Although the role of documentary research during the translation of literary texts is self-evident, many of its issues are still ambiguous, especially for students and beginners. Translators limit documentary research, if any, to a mere inventory of the various equivalents of the terms or vocabulary contained in the original text, without research on what it might contain cultural, scientific, religious, linguistic, or other concepts related to the author and his environment. This may be because what matters when translating this type of text is the stylistic and linguistic aspects. Literature is not just a distinctive style and a refined language, but a creative synthesis through which the writer describes intertwined personalities and life paintings with a set of scientific, cultural and religious details that may stop the translator, to find himself in front of real translation dilemmas.

1- Definition of Documentary Research:

Research is a scientific scrutiny and a revision to reveal a cognitive fact whose essence, or some of its aspects, is still ambiguous. Whereas documentation is a solidification, empowerment, strictness, and proof that enables the documenter to refer to the origin of the information. Documentary research can be defined, therefore, as a cognitive collection and investigation that allows the researcher to identify and treat certain data and to achieve a deep knowledge and an accurate understanding, if necessary, of a scientific issue or a piece of text, using reliable sources and methodological means that save time and effort and ensure quality and accuracy. As for its relationship to translation, we consider it an essential and indispensable step during the translation decision-making stage, especially when it comes to scientific texts. This is something that the French interpretative School has dealt with at length through the works of Daniel Giles, Christine Durieux and Daniel Gouadec. Durieux (2002), for example, has defined documentary research, in an article, as a necessary and sufficient condition in

technical translation, and its main objective is to understand the text. Understanding is not intended to decipher the terms contained therein, otherwise, the dictionary is sufficient, nor is the understanding of the scientific concepts presented by the text, but rather exceeds them by the need to comprehend the relationships that link them, which requires a search for the cognitive elements and then merging them with what makes the text a translatable material.

Indeed, documentary research is more general and comprehensive; it provides a link between the terms and their equivalents; it helps understand scientific phenomena, as well as the relationships that exist between them, to provide an accurate understanding of the scientific field under study. Documentary research also helps decipher the intertwined semantic threads, which make the original text difficult to translate, especially for translators with limited experience or far from specialization.

For his part, Daniel Gile defines documentary research as “what must be known from the non-linguistic reality, even if it comes to the simplest expressions such as cries of astonishment or pain, which cannot be interpreted correctly unless we have experienced them in our previous live moments of astonishment or pain” (2005, p.108). Thus, documentary research is the integration and interaction between linguistic units in the text and cognitive data residing outside it. The translator has a pre-existent linguistic and cognitive information base and enriches it with new information - acquired - as soon as he reads the text under translation. Both information; pre-existent and acquired, integrate to achieve a correct understanding of the ST. However, these information may not be sufficient, as in the case of texts whose content exceeds the knowledge of the translator, so the documentary research for what corresponds to this content (necessary information, terms, concepts) in dictionaries, glossaries, databases, internet sites and others becomes an irreplaceable procedure (Gile, 2005, p.112).

Human experience has proven that translation, especially the technical one, in which the translator does not carry out documentary research and is satisfied with bilingual dictionaries, or what Durieux calls the theme-version translation is less effective than that in which the translator seeks to illuminate the different units of meaning by using different sources for the inevitable information, if he wants to achieve the correct understanding and ensure proper reformulation.

In general, we can classify sources of documentary research as the following:

- **Human resources:** is any human who helps to obtain the information that can be used to achieve a better understanding and a more correct reformulation (Gile, 2005, p. 144). The

human resource can be a translator, a person whose mother tongue is the target language, or a specialist in a scientific field.

- **Textual resources:** Textual resources are all the texts, including graphics and figures, in both traditional (paper or audio-visual: tapes and films) and electronic (magnetic, such as CDs or virtual formats via websites) forms (Gile, 2005, p. 144). This type also includes lexical sources such as glossaries, dictionaries and databases and non-lexical sources such as scientific articles, scientific vulgarisation books, conventions, advertisements, novels, usage manuals, contracts, legal texts, and any text from which the translator can derive information that may help him in his work (Gile, 2005, p. 144). Overall, textual sources take the following forms:

- **Encyclopaedias and magazines:** Which carry extensive, organized and arranged according to the topic information. This type of sources saves effort and time, as for Encyclopaedia Universalis, Encyclopaedia Britannica, the journal *La recherche, Science et avenir, Science et vie,* and *Science et technique* and many others (Durieux, 2007).
- **Parallel texts and similar texts:** The first type is all the previous translations of the same author (or another), dealing with the same topic or similar topics. They may be translations of a sentence or a term provided by electronic contextual dictionaries such as *Reverso* and *Almaany* that depend on translation memories (TM) (Look, 2016). As for the second, we mean texts contained in specialized books, articles and studies published in scientific journals. They are texts written in the TL and deal with the same topic. It should be noted that parallel texts are not always representative, as they do not provide all the translation solutions found in the TL, but rather provide examples of translations produced in a specific context that serve specific communicative goals (Delpuch, 2013, p. 11). Alexandra Volanschi (2007) calls this type of texts “recycled texts” by adopting previous translations belonging to different contexts, so they come as approximations that may not fit the new context (p. 37).
- **Dictionaries, glossaries and indexes:** Especially specialized and edited according to criteria determined by specialized or governmental committees, such as the *Merriam-Webster dictionary, Oxford Dictionary, The Times Atlas of the World,* etc. (Newmark, 2006, p. 291). Here the translation is ought to use the ones approved by the author of the ST if any.

- **Documents and specialized data:** Issued by governments, private institutions or individuals.
- **International and national data bases:** As EuroDicAUTOM, CILF, Grand dictionnaire terminologique (Volanschi, 2007, p. 27).
- **Internet and general and specialized search engines.**
- **Textbooks or training lessons.**

The most important dilemmas that trouble the translator while working on a scientific text are not linguistic all the time. Given that, the language of this type of text is direct, simple, and devoid of embellishments and connotations, as it relates mainly to the scientific terms and concepts, the translator returns to their knowledge base that he acquired over the years of his life. However, if it comes to a literary text, this base may be unable to solve a problem; the solution is documentary research. He can search for:

- **Terminology:** Which represents the core of most documentary research, if the translator puts his hand on the equivalent in the target language, he can skip the comprehension stage.
- **Non-terminological information:** We mean regional or special vocabulary, proper nouns, abbreviations and acronyms that are not terms, grammar rules in the target language, etc.

Whether the information required is terminological or not, the translator must define an appropriate strategy to determine the scientific, cultural, and religious concepts and information he needs. He also needs to determine regional or special information and specify the nature of these information. He must know if they are accurate, specialized or general according to the target public taste standards and terms defined in the rulebook. In addition, he needs to comply with editorial standards such as how to transfer abbreviations, formulate sentences, and use punctuation marks.

Interestingly, choosing sources of information - terminological or non-terminological - requires extreme caution; especially if it comes to electronic sources that provide many data. As Daniel Gile (2009) stresses, electronic resources lack quality control, both for language and content. Wikipedia is a source where we do not find the name of the author or his biography. Therefore, it is not possible to ascertain whether he is a specialist or not (pp. 104-141). For these reasons, it is necessary to choose reliable and reputable sites that provide sufficient information about the author and his references. In general, the translator should:

- Know if the source already exists or not and at least determine the probability of its existence so that he does not waste time searching for a source that does not exist (Gile, 2009, p. 145).
- Know in advance the cost to access the source such as buying a book, paying the subscription fees to a journal or a database, or the cost of a phone call with an expert. The shorter the text is, the higher the cost is, the less the benefit is (Gile, 2009, p. 145).
- Know the time and effort required to obtain the desired information (Gile, 2009). The tidier the source is, the easier we find the information; that is why dictionaries are the easiest to use because of their alphabetical order.
- Choose the source that covers most of the information. We should remember that the large size of the source does not necessarily mean greater information coverage. Because this source may cover many fields and therefore a large volume without giving accurate or sufficient information about each field. It may also provide the reader with a lot of information, but not useful to the translator. In addition, the number of pages may be for commercial and marketing purposes (Gile, 2005, p. 145).
- Pay attention and be sure that the source is reliable in terms of language and content (Gile, 2009, p. 134). For human resources, an experienced and expert translator is the most accurate and reliable source, especially if the SL (to understand) or the TL (to reformulate) is his mother tongue (Gile, 2005, p. 148). The more non-authentic the source (providing information from another source through translation or paraphrasing) is, the more likely it is to be misrepresented (Gile, 2005, p. 150). Generally, the reliability of a source is often uncertain, especially when it comes to dictionaries, glossaries, and websites. We can verify the competence of a human source through his curriculum vitae, his qualifications and his achievements. We can also verify non-lexical paper-based sources through the publication date and the biography of the author. However, we cannot find information about the author or the publication date on many websites and dictionaries and, consequently, the newness of the information can't be checked (Gile, 2009, p. 159).

As for the stages that the documentary research goes through, Gouadec (1989) divides them as follows:

- **The first stage:** Is concerned with the development of the translator's personal dictionary, which includes all appropriate equivalents; by listing different phrases, sentences and textual categories, see appropriate sources that the author himself

might recommend if you can contact him. The main goal of this stage is to understand the text, know what kind of text it is or what kind of part it is, identify the types of sentences and the forms of expressions, and finally find the appropriate terminology.

- **The second stage:** A document indicator including the text field and subject is being drafted at this stage and his problem; Then review the parallel or encyclopaedic texts with the same indicator, to complete the first stage, then reduce the questions and achieve a deeper and more correct interpretation of the text; by linking the language and the technical and clarify all outstanding technical issues.
- **The third stage:** At this stage, the translator must have a full understanding and the text must be unambiguous. So, if something happens and some issues remain mysterious; Then it should go beyond the references that were used in the previous stages and resort to specialists, whether teachers or legal professionals.

2. The importance of documentary research:

Documentary research varies in accordance of text types and linguistic elements included in the communication process, especially with the development of information and communications technologies (Lenzen, 2005, p. 70). Translation has become a three-dimensional linguistic-cultural-textual dialog conducted by the translator to convey information. In order to achieve this tripartite equation, the translator must work diligently to make his decisions and define working strategies (Gambier, 2006, p. 76). He must master all the linguistic and cognitive codes in the SL, and how to re-express them in the TT. Thus, the importance of documentary research is tangible at the two stages, comprehension and reformulation (Lederer, 2012). The first stage is based on a mental activity encompassing linguistic and encyclopaedic components. Thus, knowledge elements are part of a general context in which the translated text is located. They are activated if they are already part of the translator's knowledge base, or acquired through search and excavation to complete the semantic image of the text.

This discussion underscores an important dichotomy in which the Interpretive School differentiates between a virtual signification and an updated Signification. The first corresponds to a set of lexical suggestions produced by linguistic units that are isolated from any contextual situation. The second represents the meaning assumptions made in a specific rhetorical situation (parole) (Israël & Lederer, 2005, p. 139). Rhetorical situation, in addition to linguistic elements, is all non-linguistic elements including the author's motives and intentions, the reasons behind

the text and its receptors and all the scientific and/or cultural concepts that the text may contain. All these elements make the translator in an unconscious motion, or not, from or out of the text (p. 140). They permit a deep understanding that combines linguistic phenomena with a scientific encyclopaedic, scientific and terminological reality. In the same vein, Gile (2005) argues that the meaning generated during the first reading of the text is considered to be merely a hypothetical meaning, or a comprehension unit. The plausibility of this unit needs to be tested using the co-text or the situational context, which links this potential meaning to the translator's prior information or to that obtained from documentary research. (Gile, 2005, pp. 114-115).

Translation is based on interpretation at the first stage. Interpretation is a linguistic or contextual understanding of all the meaning units contained in the ST. Once grasped, the translator is ready to move onto a second stage; in which he re-expresses these units in the TL. Jean Delisle (1980) defines this stage as a good restatement of what the (original) author wants to say by a practical knowledge of the forms written in the TL (p. 40). Written forms do not refer to grammatical or syntactic rules; rather, it refers to the ability to express oneself fluently in the TL. What makes this possible is the translator's cognitive repertoire: terms, expressions, linguistic uses and concepts he collects and employs spontaneously, unconsciously or intentionally. Accordingly, Lederer (2012) argues that the equivalence is a matching meaning in conformity with the TL, however, correspondence is limited to linguistic elements (pp. 67.68). To guarantee the equivalence, the translator uses his database that includes linguistic and encyclopaedic information to set what Gile (2005) calls a provisional utterance or a unit of reformulation. If his knowledge base is not enough or if he wants to make sure that his translation is clear and loyal; he searches for appropriate information through documentary research (Gile, 2005, p. 119).

The importance of documentary research varies according to the translator's experience, how encyclopaedic is his culture, the nature of the ST and the initial information it provides. The latter refers to the amount and nature of the original author's prediction of the culture and knowledge of his potential readers (Durieux, 2007). The need for documentary research is not only related to the text, but also to the nature of the subject matter of this text, which is determined by its objectives, field and nature of its target reader. It should be noted that specialized texts provide specific knowledge and a natural (but controlled) linguistic framework (Charmok, 2011, p. 2). It involves scientific terms that are related to specific concepts or scientific phenomena, or cultural terms that are closely related to historical events, social contexts, or even the emotional background of a linguistic community, depending on the subject

matter of the text. The translator's need for scientific information is essential in technical texts, important in journalistic texts and possible in literature, while his need for cultural information is vast when it comes to literary and advisements texts, necessary for political and journalistic texts and limited for scientific and technical texts (Gile, 2005, p. 13).

On the other hand, many factors determine the translator's need for documentary research. The fact of being specialized and encyclopaedic may play a major role for this need. The translator's lack of an encyclopaedic culture, even if masters the SL, may weaken his or her translation quality during the comprehension phase. In this regard, two types of encyclopaedic culture can be distinguished: general and specialized, the former representing the translator's general culture and superficial knowledge of various fields, the latter representing deep and specialized knowledge associated with a specific scientific area (Gile, 2005, p.14). Whether this information is general or specialized, the translator acquires it during his career, which enables him to deal with different texts belonging to different fields. The knowledge base is enriched every time he translates and/or searches.