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Mindfulness, Burnout, Well-being, Bullying, Engagement, Mobbing, etc. Should We Translate These Terms or Use Them as Such?

[Mindfulness, burnout, bunăstare, bullying, implicare, mobbing, etc. Ar trebui să traducem aceşti termeni sau să-i folosim ca atare?]

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Abstract: Translations have always been a challenge and the end result may depend on a whole series of factors, including linguistic, cultural and personal elements, ranging from the translator's experience and background to their social and psychological trends during the translation process and their strategy of choice. A systematic study is needed to identify the most efficient strategies to be used by translators and to eliminate any negative influences there might appear. This study aims at shedding some light on the optimum approach regarding the translation from English to Romanian of certain key terms in modern psychology, such as "mindfulness", "burnout", "engagement" or "mobbing".

Keywords: *translations; mindfulness; burnout; mobbing; bullying, well-being.*

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Introduction

Translating is one of the most complex forms of human activities and its goal should be producing analogous effects using different means, as Paul Valéry once put it. However, sometimes it is quite impossible to achieve such "analogous effects" by translation and there might be cases when certain words should probably be better left as such, as their translation would simply mislead the readers, differ from its universal connotation or miss some of its original significance. In Shakespearian terms, any translator's worse nightmare comes around this: "to translate or not to translate?"

One of the first things translators should take into account is faithfulness. Especially in scientific texts, the translator has no rights, but only duties. As Henry Wadsworth Longfellow[1] used to say, "The translator, like the witness called to trial, should be compelled to raise his hand and swear to tell the truth and nothing but the truth". It is similar to a sworn testimony or the evidence given by a witness who has made a commitment to tell the truth or otherwise be charged with the crime of perjury. Linguistic chaos, confusion and/or incomprehension cannot be allowed to contaminate the original message and the people of Babylonia, despite all odds, should be led out of confusion (as a side note, the Jewish term for Babylon, as the scholars have pointed out, was similar to the transliterated Hebrew verb, *balal*, which roughly translates as "to mix, mingle or confuse" (The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon).

Therefore, the question that should be on every translator's mind should be "Am I missing anything?". The to and fro movement between the attempt at preserving the "purity of language" and translating everything, everywhere and the deliberate decision to keep the English term should always revolve the lighthouse of the "reader's experience" and that of capturing as many nuances and meanings of the source text as possible. Scientific texts are, or should be international by definition. Especially jargon should be uniform. On the other hand, a translation could enhance the rate of adoption, because in a lot of countries most people are not proficient in English so that they can grasp exactly what is being said or written. So where to stop and where to start with translation?

[1] Famous American poet, credited for his renowned translation of Dante Alighieri's Divine Comedy, a professor of Italian at Harvard University.

Should we or shouldn't we translate all English terms?

For the last decades, we have been witnessing a massive penetration of English or English-derived words in the Romanian language. Admittedly, this is not a trend that is specific only to Romanian, but also to other languages and it is closely related to globalization. Sometimes, the reasons of adoption may vary from conciseness (for instance, "weekend" is shorter than "sfarsit de saptamana" while "catering" sums up a whole definition that may sound similar to "substantiv care desemnează distribuirea producţiei industriale sau centralizate a semipreparatelor şi a preparatelor culinare care, între perioada de producţie şi desfacere la consumator, sunt conservate prin frig") to show off (words like "brand/rebrand", "focus", "target", "call", "pitch" are already a customary part of corporatist language) or mere laziness (more specifically, translators who would rather take the words as such instead of going the extra mile to find a suitable translation ("biker" instead of "motociclist", "babysitter" instead of "bona" or "trend" instead of "tendinta" to give only a few examples). We can describe it as a process of hybridization, but it is not the purpose of this article to go into details about its pros and cons but rather to make the best choice when dealing with scientific texts.

As far as the vocabulary of science goes, things are a little bit different. Scientists and technicians have both welcomed and resented this status quo and they have continuously scrutinized these newly coined terms to check for alternatives or to come to terms with their implementation and begin their popularization among the native population. The introduction of foreign words into the vocabulary of any science undergoing continuous development is a trivial phenomenon. It is only natural that, as science makes progress, new words should enrich its lexis. Unlike vernacular, however, where the indiscriminate import of foreign terms is merely a matter of commodity, laziness, show off or ignorance, when it comes to psychology, we are dealing with more elusive aspects, which make translations even more challenging. Not only should the translation be faithful, but it should also be consistent (for instance, if we choose to translate "mindfulness" by "constientizare", than this is what we need to use for the entire length of the text and not switch back and forth from "constientizare" to "constiinta", "constienta" or even "meditatie"), meaning that it should both mirror the original meaning and be a practical read.

One of the most debatable translations with regard to psychological terms is undoubtedly the concept of "Self". The treaty coordinated by S. Chelcea and P. Ilut, for instance (Chelcea, & Iluţ, 2003), uses the term "Eu"

for "Self", referring to is as to "entitate psihologica si fiziologica unica, reprezentand ceea ce este persoana cu adevarat - a unique psychological and physiological entity, representing what the person really is" (p. 143). The same dictionary, however, the same equivalent is given for the term "Sinele", which refers to "totalitatea credintelor (reprezentarilor si evaluarilor) despre aspecte particulare ale propriei personae si despre ea ca intreg – the totality of beliefs (representations and assessments) on particular aspects of the self and about it as a whole" (p. 327). Therefore, the English term "Self" is translated both as "Eu" and "Sinele", as it results from the definitions of the authors, although an equal sign shouldn't be placed between these two terms (more on this in the article "Cateva reflectii asupra problemelor de traducere in limba romana a conceptului SELF", published in *Stagiria – studii si cercetari umaniste*, nr. 2/iulie 2009, Editura Pro Blumb).

There is a certain degree of terminological confusion following the translation of key words from English and the problem of faulty translations has appeared mainly as a consequence of the absence of a critical discussion on the equivalent terms that have subsequently entered the jargon, maintaining or even increasing confusion amongst specialists. On the other hand, there is also another issue, that of the cross-specialization of translators. The best translations should ideally be done by the best translators who happen to be the best specialists in their fields.

When translating key concepts there are three main approaches: 1) to translate everything and find equivalents in the target language; 2) to describe the concepts/phenomena in the target language while using the source concept as an explanation and 3) to import the terms as such.

Case study

For a more hands-on approach, let us take the following text related to the term "mindfulness":

The research that created the MAAS (Mindful Attention Awareness Scale) investigated mindfulness as an attribute that varies between and within people. Humans vary in attention and awareness to present events and experiences. The inherent capability differs in individuals due to levels of discipline, self-regulation, and personality. The MAAS assesses individual differences in the frequency of ***mindful*** *states over time. The scale is a 15-item (1-6 Likert scale) questionnaire to assess dispositional (or trait)*

mindfulness. The measurements from the MAAS tap consciousness related to self-regulation and various areas of ***well-being*** (Positive Psychology, 2019) [2].

Using the first approach, a possible translation would be similar to this:

Cercetările care au stat la baza creării scalei de măsurare a conştiinţei şi atenţiei conştiente au analizat ***conştientizarea*** *ca pe o trăsătură care diferă de la persoană la persoană şi de la o stare la alta a aceleaşi persoane. Capacitatea inerentă variază în rândul oamenilor ca urmare a nivelurilor de disciplină, auto-control şi personalitate. Această scală evaluează diferenţele individuale în privinţa frecvenţei stărilor* ***conştiente*** *de-a lungul timpului. Scala are la bază un chestionar cu 15 puncte (scala Likert 1-6) care evaluează conştientizarea dispoziţională (sau de stare). Măsurătorile pe baza scalei respective sondează conştiinţa în termenii auto-controlului şi a diferitelor sfere ale* ***stării de bine***.

Without a shred of doubt, a national language is defining for the spirit and culture of a people. Constant efforts should be deployed in order to keep its authenticity, flavor, and specificity. While such a translation may well be the dream of every purist trying to preserve absolute adherence to traditional rules or structures, the main problem with translating key terms is simply that the translations fail to cover the entire scope and ensemble of connotations that come with the original term. Mindfulness, as Merriam-Webster states, is the "practice of maintaining a nonjudgmental state of heightened or complete awareness of one's thoughts, emotions, or experiences on a moment-to-moment basis". Rather hard to convey the term's entire set of meanings using just one word in Romanian. As a side note, "***conştientizare***" seems to be the most common translation for "mindfulness", if such a translation is indeed required.

Another approach which could be used when tackling such specialized vocabulary is to describe/explain the original terms as faithfully as possible while indicating the English version at the same time:

*Cercetările care au stat la baza creării scalei de măsurare a conştiinţei şi atenţiei conştiente (****MAAS****) au analizat* ***conştientizarea*** *(****mindfulness****) ca pe o trăsătură*

[2] An excerpt from an article found on: https://positivepsychology.com/mindful-attention-awareness-scale-maas/.

care diferă de la persoană la persoană şi de la o stare la alta a aceleaşi persoane. Capacitatea inerentă variază în rândul oamenilor ca urmare a nivelurilor de disciplină, auto-control şi personalitate. MAAS evaluează diferenţele individuale în privinţa frecvenţei stărilor ***conştiente*** *(**mindful**) de-a lungul timpului. Scala are la bază un chestionar cu 15 puncte (scala Likert 1-6) care evaluează conştientizarea dispoziţională (sau de stare). Măsurătorile pe baza MAAS sondează conştiinţa în termenii auto-controlului şi a diferitelor sfere ale* ***stării de bine (well-being)****.*

The inclusion of the original terms within brackets helps eliminate confusion and ensures a certain degree of universality of the translated terms. That way, they can be easily identified and used for future reference or for finding more details in other specialized books. Whereas in the first translation one could easily misinterpret ***conştientizare*** as ***awareness*** or **increase in awareness**, in the second one there is no such danger. On the plus side, the readers get accustomed to the new terms and thus there begins a popularization of the new concept within the target language.

The outcome of the final approach – that of using only the original terms, without explaining or hinting at a possible Romanian counterpart - would be very similar to the following translation:

Cercetările care au stat la baza creării scalei ***MAAS*** *au analizat* ***mindfulness*** *ca pe o trăsătură care diferă de la persoană la persoană şi de la o stare la alta a aceleaşi persoane. Capacitatea inerentă variază în rândul oamenilor ca urmare a nivelurilor de disciplină, auto-control şi personalitate.* ***MAAS*** *evaluează diferenţele individuale în privinţa frecvenţei stărilor* ***mindful*** *de-a lungul timpului. Scala are la bază un chestionar cu 15 puncte (scala Likert 1-6) care evaluează conştientizarea dispoziţională (sau de stare). Măsurătorile pe baza* ***MAAS*** *sondează conştiinţa în termenii auto-controlului şi a diferitelor sfere ale* ***well-being****.*

There are upsides and downsides to this approach as well. The most obvious disadvantage is that it targets only a niche of educated people who happen to be specialized in the field while leaving the rest of the target audience clueless with regard to the meaning of these concepts. On the other hand, that is the purpose of specialized language in the first place and it would seem futile to explain key words every psychologist should know. It all comes down to the novelty of the term, to the history it has in the target language and to the "unfindability" of an exact counterpart. If a translator had used mindfulness in their translation twenty years ago, it would have forced Romanian readers to go the extra mile and check for an explanation

of the term themselves, while these days the number of those who have heard about it before has increased dramatically.

Conclusion

The best approach differs from context to context and depends on the purpose/type of translation. Translations use a variety of purposes and target a diverse audience. At first sight, one could easily argue that the best way to tackle specialized vocabulary is to use the original word while trying to explain the new concepts in Romanian. On the other hand, the common reader doesn't care about these terms and is only interested in understanding the meaning of the original text from a practical, hands-on perspective, in terms they could easily understand and follow. A specialist could even feel offended by an attempt to describe something that is well-known in the field. Imagine reading a text about stress, with a side note to it! It is therefore advisable to serve the needs of the audience. If you need to translate a book/article addressed to the common masses that happens to include the term "mobbing", probably the best approach is to try and find a Romanian translation for it, however difficult that might be ("intimidarea la locul de munca", "violenta fizica si verbala la serviciu", etc.). If, on the other hand, a translation of a scientific article is needed and the target audience is familiar with the concept, then the best approach is to leave the term as such. What should be understood is that a translation is a constant dialogue with the reader. It should, therefore, adapt to the reader's ability, skills, desire, and purpose.

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