

# DISCUSSION IN THE MOTHER TONGUE PRECEDING TRANSLATION OF FRENCH IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS USING NUMBERS

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**Abstract.** The purpose of the research is to describe and analyze the methodology of teaching the translation of phrases, the most important component of which is a preliminary discussion in the native language of both the topic and the situation reflected in the text, in order to avoid literalism. The types of activities in French for specific purposes have been considered in the framework of the organization of mental activity of students occurring within translation. Training in the effective translation of set expressions with numerals includes the selection of fragments of French texts on the subject of the future profession (agriculture; medicine), as well as a preliminary search for additional meanings and connotations of French expressions. The pragmatics of the whole text as well as the gap between the dictionary meaning in French and in Russian together with the nuance of the actualized sense of the forms and components of the source text and the situation of a given communicative act often lead to rejection of the literal transmission by the Russian expression with the same numeral. We propose the term "top – down procedure for building a system of exercises" for teaching translation (from the text to its components), which is understood as a sequence of steps opposite to the traditional one, namely: training begins with an understanding of the content of the text and a preliminary presentation and analysis of it in the native language, followed by the translation of its smaller components. Serious difficulties arise for students when they deal with translation of a dead metaphor expressed by phraseological units with numerals having a fairly well-defined vocabulary value.

**Keywords:** Methodology for teaching translation, building a system of exercises, FSP, set phrases, French numerals, journalistic discourse

## 1. Introduction

A good command of a foreign language and a deep knowledge of professional sphere are necessary but still insufficient components of a successful translation of a special text. Special texts on agriculture made in French reflect not only the technicalities but the subtleties of the socio-political situation in France and the diversity of opinions which determines the relevance of the study. This plan of a text cannot be translated through electronic programmes.

In this field, chosen for the present practical research, a training is required, aimed at teaching future translators the methods of correlation between the formal and substantive components of the texts of foreign language and mother tongue.

The purpose of the research is to describe and analyze the method of teaching the special text translation from a foreign language, the most important component of which is a preliminary discussion of both the topic and the situation in the native language.

The work is based on the theoretical positions of translation studies (Barkhudarov, L.S., 1975; Latysheva, S.I. and Romanov, S.V., 2009), and more specifically, on the understanding of the relationship of the situation and the information text (Glazkov, A.V. 2016); the differentiation of communicative and functional equivalence (Eger, G. 1978; Zhabo, N.I. 2015), as well as practical methodological proposals (Latyshev, L.K. and Semenov, A.L., 2003; Parshina, T.V., 2016); studies on social and communicative role of translation (Avdonina, M.Yu., Zhabo, N.I., Terekhova, S.I., 2015; Rey, D. 2016); pragmatics (Froeliger, N. 2008; Zhabo, N.I, Avdonina, M.Yu., Byakhova, V.M., Bykova, I.A, Grigorian, N.N., 2017), translation techniques in the aspect of intercultural communications (Avdonina, M.Yu., Byakhova, V.M., Zhabo, N.I., Likhacheva, I.F., 2016), on methodology of

learning translation of a special text revealing cultural component relevant for its deeper understanding (Meyer, E, 2014).

Prior to the presentation of the results of the study, we will determine how we understand the terms text, content, translation. We will understand the text, the subject of our activity, as a set of significant units, which creates an entity. The content is understood as a multicomponent system that includes purely semantic and stylistic, axiological, and pragmatic components.

The success of translation as a result is determined by how fully the translator was able to preserve and transfer all the components of the content of the source text. To teach it we propose a set of simultaneous or consecutive activities:

- an unmistakable correlation of forms and meanings of the components of the original text;
- the fullest possible perception of its multicomponent content;
- separation of this content from the formal part of the text;
- effective transcoding it into another language system with maximum preservation of the content components of the source text.

The advantage of the proposed method of a preceding discussion in the mother tongue is seen, on the one hand, in that the components of the content of the text in this case are interpreted and formally expressed without reference to a foreign language form, and on the other hand, that the pragmatic aspect of the content of a set phrase containing a number is transmitted to students in the preliminary discussion and in the comments of the teacher in Russian before the translation process.

## **2. Objectives/Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the research is to describe and analyze the method of teaching the special text translation from a foreign language, the most important component of which is a preliminary

discussion of both the topic and the situation in the native language.

### **3. Methodology and sub headings**

The material of the research is journalistic articles on agricultural subjects, their social, ecological, political, technical aspects of French-language media. A set of texts on viral topics is made by the members of the team regularly from electronic dictionaries, glossaries, encyclopaedias, Euronews subsections about agricultural technologies and innovations: Futuris, Science, Terra viva, Innovation, Tomorrow's city, and their forums, [www.francetvinfo.fr/](http://www.francetvinfo.fr/), and mainstream newspapers: [Le Monde.fr](http://LeMonde.fr); [Libération.fr.](http://Libération.fr), etc.

One of the criteria is the presence of emotionally expressive connotations to persuade the readers and, eventually, decision-makers which are to be translated.

Set phrases with numbers play this role par excellence.

We also use exercises with a special selection of numerals of Russian, French, English, Greek and Latin languages, the work with which and the analysis of the results are presented in our monograph (Avdonina, M.Yu., Zhabo, N.I., Terekhova, S.I., Valeeva, N.G., 2016: 142-143).

### **4. Result/Findings**

The ways of overcoming difficulties in the case when the Russian dictionary equivalent is not adequate for semantic, stylistic or structural reasons are discussed in class.

Tasks are developed aiming to analyze the selected expressions in micro-context. Their translation is based on the general meaning and the logic of the text and is done immediately in the process of translation of the educational text.

First type of numerals to be translated includes the numbers making part of a notion of special terminology which, linguistically speaking, means that they are part of analytical terms. We find texts dwelling on an agricultural topic.

For the assimilation of the material we used the following types of exercises:

- exercises on translation of expressions from different languages;
- speech exercises, as exercises to create slogans (slogans) for advertising posters;
- cultural studies aimed at the development of background knowledge.

For instance, four texts about agriculture with the number “zero”:

1) *Le respect du produit, de l'environnement et des consommateurs. Une production locale pour les locaux d'où le titre **d'agriculture zéro kilomètre**. [...] 100% de la production kilomètre zéro. Aucune vente en dehors de la zone locale pour éviter les transports et le CO2. Que des gens du coin, deux restaurants étoilés au Michelin qui consomment la production (Rousseau, 2017);*

2) *Le "**Zéro déforestation importée**" de la France se traduit par une prime de FCFA 100/kg pour du cacao ivoirien. Ce projet dont les activités ont démarré en décembre 2016, a pour finalité ultime de réduire les émissions de gaz à effet de serre issues de la déforestation tout en améliorant les conditions de vie des populations riveraines des forêts concernées, souligne le ministère ivoirien. Ceci passe par l'accompagnement des producteurs dans la mise en place **d'une agriculture "zéro déforestation"** (Le "**Zéro déforestation...** 2018).*

3) *«**Zéro résidu de pesticides**»: un nouveau label pour les fruits et légumes frais. Le collectif «Nouveaux Champs» créé le 24 janvier par sept gros maraîchers et arboriculteurs français, a annoncé [...] en commun mercredi la création d'un nouveau label garantissant au consommateur «**zéro résidu de pesticides**» sur leurs fruits et légumes. Le concept «**zéro résidu de pesticides**» est différent du bio: les fruits et légumes ont le droit de pousser sur des substrats nutritifs qui sont interdits en agriculture bio,*

*laquelle n'admet que les cultures en pleine terre. (Zéro résidu... 2018)*

4) *Parmi les sujets proposés : Une agriculture zéro phyto (Laimé 2018).*

One of the milestones in the study of a foreign language is mastering set expressions, as language constructs, so that one can freely and fearlessly translate them without implementing an internal literal translation.

The comparison the four microtexts, made in Russian, is supported by translation of the unit *zero* into Russian. We would like to precise that students are free to use any kind of on-line bilingual dictionaries. We advise to compare the entries of all languages they speak in order to reveal the difference of the connotational sphere.

A good choice of a Russian equivalent is being made during the discussion, if even it is a numeral as prefixe: *bi/bis-* (*bi-polyarnyi*), *di-* (*divergenzia*), *dual-* (*dualism*), *dva/dvo/dvu-* (*dva-zhdy*, *dvoyakyi*, *dvuznachnyi*), *dvoe-/dvoyu-* (*dvoevlastie*, *dvoyurodnyi*), *dvukh-* (*dvukhyarusnyi*), *oboe-* (*oboepolye*), *parn-* (*parnaya avtopoilka*), *dabl-/dubl-/dupl* (*dabler*, *dubler*, *duplekc*), *tu-/tvin* (*tustep* ← *twostep*, *tvindek* ← *tweendeck*), and French by origin *de-* (*pa-de-de* ← *pas de deux*).

These exercises are designed for students of different levels of language proficiency using ICT and pursue the goal to develop the skills of semantic analysis and a feeling of a good native form. In all the exercises below, the most frequently used expressions with numbers in French everyday speech on agricultural thematic areas were used. The peculiarity of the translation of such a type of texts is that knowledge of the real situation they relate is always required for their understanding and, therefore, the correct translation as in Russian there is no equivalent term. If the student does not know, he / she should either learn it during the preliminary independent reading of the text, or get it from the teacher when reading the text in class.

Second type of word combinations with numerals is also more or less easy to translate. We composed this group taking the expressions with the intensification function. For example:

5) *Champs-sur-Marne : le château se met sur son trente et un pour «Le Grand Réveillon» (Champs-sur-Marne 2018);*

6) *Est-ce que changer les modes d'élevage coûterait bien plus cher ? Pour les éleveurs, tous élevages confondus, on estime le coût à 250 millions d'euros. Forcément, cela devra se répercuter sur le consommateur. Là aussi, je dis qu'il ne faut pas se précipiter parce qu'on n'aura pas le temps de changer. Le consommateur ne sera pas prêt, l'agriculteur ne sera pas en capacité de faire évoluer son outil de production **en deux temps trois mouvements**. Cela nécessite de faire évoluer des choses dans les bâtiments, cela nécessite de la surface, cela nécessite des développements d'exploitation qui s'anticipent et se préparent (Decerle 2018).*

The example (6) had a stylistic discussion after its inner form being explained as “the pace of a waltz”. There is Russian calque expression “v tempe valsa”. The aim of the teacher was to let students perceive its stylistic inadequacy and to prefer a neutral form (“*mgnovenno*”).

All of these numbers are bursting in like intensifiers and are barely explainable, but are easy to interpret, for example, our students understood and translated immediately and correctly the following fragment where the set phrase is a tool for implicit senses and humorization of a journalistic text:

7) *Et si vous entendez votre fils tenir des propos sexistes (un jour, le mien a dit qu'il ne jouait pas au foot avec les filles parce qu'elles étaient moins douées et qu'elles pleuraient trop), il est préférable de ne pas le réprimander. [...] Rien ne sert de leur en parler en tête-à-tête **tous les trente-six du mois**: il vaut mieux en faire une composante habituelle de vos discussions familiales, sans pression aucune (Moyer 2018).*

This non-existing date (*every thirty six of a month*) normally means “never” (here: “rarely”). The teacher can go further

and present the other set phrases: *voir trente-six chandelles* (“being knocked out”); *Il n’y a pas trente-six solutions* (“There are not thirty six solutions”); *Faire trente-six choses à la fois* (“Do thirty-six things at once”); *être au (dans le) trente-sixième dessous* (“to fall” (of a play); b) “to be in distress; to reach the poverty”.

Armed with such knowledge, students understand and interpret such expressions as *la semaine de quatre jeudis?* par exemple:

*Les commentaires allaient bon train, ce jeudi, sous les arcades. Comme d'ailleurs tous les jours de marché qui pourraient s'apparenter, pour ceux qui les vivent, à la semaine des quatre jeudis. Mais là n'est pas l'essentiel (Pavillon noir 2018).*

The students translate them correctly removing imagery not typical of the Russian language.

It develops creative thinking and strengthen students’ knowledge in the field of intercultural studies.

At the same time it is an interesting topic because intensifiers are subject to desemantization and resemantization, for example:

8) *Le canton de Levroux aura au moins gagné, à l’échelle du département la palme du nombre de communes en atteignant le chiffre symbole indrien : 36. Dire qu’il a fait voir trente-six chandelles à ceux qui ont opéré son découpage, serait sans doute exagéré mais ce qui était compliqué pour le nouveau canton à réaliser, émanait avant tout de la logique arithmétique qui imposait 17.000 habitants, à plus ou moins 20 %.* (Levroux 2015).

Here we see the actualization of two meanings: it means the real number of communes and then, “difficulties”;

and of course, of demetaphorization, for example:

9) *Cela fait trente-six chandelles que Pascal et Françoise Magnien se sont installés à Gaillac (Les Magnien’s 2017)* Here we would expect *thirty-six* to mean “a lot” (of time), but it indeed means “36 years”.



A stable expression can be well known and well translated by bilingual dictionaries, it is the case of *ne pas aller par quatre chemins* (“speak openly; procede directly”):

*S’exprimant devant le Sénat, le jeune ministre de l’agriculture n’y va pas par quatre chemins: «le premier obstacle à la solution du problème agricole est le conservatisme de la profession elle-même qui offre à toute réforme, à toute entreprise de rénovation» (Kerorguen, 2018).*

The prior discussion on typical peasant mentality gave the right answer (*priamo skazal*) without dictionaries.

One of the main questions is to feel an approbation or disapprobative connotation in the use of a set phrase and to evaluate and to measure the need to express it. For example:

*Le discours prononcé par Emmanuel Faber lors de la remise des diplômes d’HEC en juin dernier a enflammé la toile et illuminé les cœurs. Evoquant de poignante manière la pathétique et édifiante histoire de son frère, égrainant en chapelet les valeurs auxquelles l’entreprise moderne et responsable doit prétendre, le juvénile et charismatique patron du groupe Danone a fait un tabac. Neuf minutes d’intervention filmées avec habileté à la six-quatre-deux et mêlant confidences familiales, réflexions inspirées sur l’engagement des dirigeants, considérations morales sur la marche du monde et le nouvel ordre planétaire qui doit prévaloir. Le tout bien enlevé, juste, émouvant, visionnaire (Brunat, 2016).*

At least twenty units bearing approbation, isn’t it too much? Indeed, the end (*Et mis en ligne, comme par hasard, sur le compte Youtube officiel de Danone*) was disappointing, the author showed that the brilliance was too much thought beforehand, it was a well-prepared impromptu. So, the students took the result of the analysis into consideration and were significantly more restrained in expressing emotions. Some even tried to convey the ironic nuances.

## Discussion

Many years of work in translation groups led us to the conclusion that the main difficulties in translating into Russian as mother tongue are the following:

- insufficient ability to soliloquize in mother tongue;
- inability to translate and analyze at the same time;
- the tendency to choose the word translating the first meaning of the French word / word combination or to put a known equivalent of some of the meanings the unit to be translated without correlating it with the entire content of the text;
- use of stylistically incorrect Russian units;
- lack of skill and willingness to use reference material to understand the true content of the text.

We propose to begin training with a general understanding of the content of the text and a preliminary presentation and an analysis of it in the native language, followed by the translation of its smaller components. We propose a term for such a system of building exercises to teach translation from components to text – building in “ascending order”.

We assume that the advantage of this method for adult learners is the obvious lack of direct attachment to the French form in order to express the content with units dictated by Russian norms (told during the prior discussion or heard from the teacher before the translation), using those necessary turns and expressions proper to Russian language in the given situation.

We propose the term “top-down procedure for building a system of exercises” to teach translation going from the whole text to its components.

It is a sequence of activities in teaching translation into the native language aimed at understanding not only the content of the text but also its presentation in Russian.

After a preliminary reading of the text students have to do the following:

- To retell and explain what they have understood and remembered in Russian. The implicit task is to “clear” the content

of the form of a foreign language and “pour” it in the form of mother tongue avoiding direct reference to foreign language forms;

– To answer the questions of the teacher on the content of the text in Russian. The task is to “slip” the necessary units of the Russian language to the students in the proposed questions and to identify the components of the content they do not understand;

– To speak to the group about events related to this text in Russian or foreign language. The task is to provide background knowledge necessary for a full understanding of the text);

– To suggest translation of phraseological units, idioms, set phrases (in this case, with numerals) based on the analysis of the text. The task is to make students remember the non-contextual translations of phrases, analyze their relevance in this text and find the most appropriate translations, some of which having already been used during the prior analysis in Russian;

– To translate the text orally (sight translation, classwork) or in written form (homework). The homework can include to select the units, which translation does not correspond to the dictionary meaning of the set phrase and requires the involvement of the entire text’s meaning;

–To make a brief written or oral presentation of the text in a foreign or Russian language. The task consists in teaching students to summarize the content of the text, highlight its main points and be able to use meaningful and stylistically correct language units.

It is necessary to consider not only the traditional semantic, stylistic, contextual criteria, but the criterion of the frequency of use of a language unit in the target language, the functional criterion, the criterion of the category of addressee, the criterion of the multi-paradigm character that will ensure a correct, adequate understanding of the author's implicit meaning, his humor if any. Thus, the translation of set phrases containing numerals in agricultural issues provides with the secondary, humorous overtones.

Typological and methodological bases of translation include such problems as the establishment of partial equivalence of units or its absence, as well as the issues of methods and techniques of translation, the category of the addressee, the situation of translation, the ratio of intentions of the author of the text, translator, recipient, overcoming the problem of "false friends" of the translator

As a result, there is a need to consider the components of the French and Russian texts in the aspect of translation linguistics, based on translation concepts, systematization of translation methodology, new data on translation transformations and other components of the competence of the translator of a special text.

Further research of this scientific problem is seen in the direction of translation linguistics, contrastive linguistics, text linguistics.

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