

TELEVISION TERMINOLOGY: ASPECTS OF TRANSLATION FROM ENGLISH INTO ROMANIAN*

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Abstract: English television terminology is very widely spread. Given the technological power that Anglophile countries hold in the field of television, it has become an international point of reference. The present paper deals with a series of problems related to finding the closest Romanian equivalents of several English terms. These problems arose while compiling the *English-Romanian Dictionary of Television Terms* (2001, 2005), when one of the compiler's options was to choose between a normative or a descriptive type of dictionary.

Keywords: television, terminology, translation, English, Romanian

1. Introduction

The following paper deals with several conclusions drawn after compiling an *English-Romanian Dictionary of Television Terms*. The first edition of the dictionary was published in 2001, the second, in 2005. I believe that it is important to specify that I have worked in a Romanian television station many years and have taught broadcast journalism. So far, I have not had a similar experience in an English-speaking environment, to which I have had access only indirectly, via printed literature and conversations with insiders from the USA or the UK.

2. General context

Television terminology, either in English or in Romanian, is based on film and drama terminology with which it has much in common. Some terms were borrowed as such, others were adapted to the new context. Besides older terms that are widely spread and accepted by almost all speakers, there is also a large number of new terms that are very little used. This is true both in the Romanian and the English-speaking area. It involves different words or different meanings of the same words, sometimes even the separation of a different semantic field of reality.

3. Television terminology in Romania before 1989

In Romania, the French cultural influence was very strong in the 19th and 20th centuries. Adding this to the fact the first filmmakers were the Lumière brothers, it becomes obvious why Romanian borrowed many television terms from French: *ecleraj* (lighting), *cadru* (frame), *plonjeu* (high angle shot), *contra-plonjeu* (low angle shot), *racursi* (low angle shot) etc.

Before 1989, the Romanian film and television production was concentrated in the capital of the country. The faculty of cinematography, the *Buftea Studio* for fiction films,

the *Sahia Studio* for documentaries, the *Animafilm Studio* for animation and the single national television station called *TVR* were all located in the capital, as were the only cinematography magazines, *Cinema* for the large public and *Caiet de documentare cinematografică (Cinematography Documentation)* for specialists, and the publishers of books on film or television. This centralisation led to a relatively uniform Romanian film terminology of the time.

4. Television terminology in Romania after 1989

After 1989, the situation changed significantly. The English language gained ground and became the main foreign language studied by the Romanians. Television and film papers written in English entered the country in a large number as part of the process of constituting and consolidating the new press which was seen as a key democratisation pillar in the Romanian society.

Many national, regional and local television stations were set up after 1989 and today almost every city in the country has at least one TV station.

Faculties and courses in film and television started to be taught outside the capital, in cities like Cluj, Timișoara, Iași, Sibiu etc. Foreign journalists and professors, most of them English speakers, came to Romania especially in the 1990's to teach television courses. The *BBC School* functioned successfully in Bucharest for a while.

As many of the people working in the new television stations did not have specialised studies and trained on the job, the specific television terms were not understood and translated as rigorously as expected. Sometimes new terms were created on the spot to find a quick solution to a practical problem, even though older terms with the same meaning had already existed in Romanian. For instance, at a television station in Timisoara, the word *monteur* (editor) was replaced with *montajist*, a word against the spirit of the Romanian language. The replacement must have occurred under the influence of the Serbian TV programmes that were watched with great interest in the area.

The rapid and intense process, that characterised the period after 1989, took place at a time when books and handbooks on television journalism were almost non-existent. The first written courses in television in Romanian were published only in 1997: Ion Bucheru, *Fenomenul televiziune (The Television Phenomenon)* and Mihai Coman (ed.) *Manual de jurnalism (Journalism Handbook)*.

Very well known terms are used improperly even today. For example, *reportaj* (reportage) has come to mean almost any kind of material that is shot – documentaries, enquiries or even interviews. The proper, specific meaning of this word is thus ignored. This situation has several causes:

- the absence of a specialised publication for television employees that provides the language with consistency and defines notions accurately;
- sometimes works by foreign authors written for academic use are translated by people who are not familiar enough with the typical activities of a television station that combines various fields: journalism, cinematography, lighting, editing, sound capture and processing, use of technical equipment, production organisation etc. For instance, in one paper, *lens* was translated into Romanian as *lentile*, but the correct translation is *obiectiv*; another mistake was the term *lentile varifocale* ("varifocal lenses" in English), although the established equivalent in Romanian is *obiectiv cu distanță focală variabilă*; the

terms *long shot* or *full shot* where translated with *plan vertical*, a term that does not exist in cinematography. The correct solution is *plan întreg*.

Working in a paradoxical "isolation state", people involved in the television industry will continue to consolidate their own terminology, their own inside jargon, besides the common, widely circulated notions.

But why is it wrong that the television industry in Romania does not have a coherent terminology? Television employees will still be able to understand one another and perform their jobs inside their institutions, but in conversations outside institutions that may lead to minor misunderstandings, it is the context that will determine the correct meaning of the specialised terms. The only people that stand to lose something are those in the academic and publishing environments, as they either address a larger public, or draw up highly specialised papers in which terms and ideas should be as accurately used as possible.

5. Conclusions

To sum up, when compiling an English-Romanian television dictionary, one faces several categories of problems that one has to take into consideration and to which one must find distinct, specific solutions. Some of these problems are typical of the English language, others of the Romanian language, while others characterise the field of the television industry itself:

- differences between American and British terminology (this may also be true for other English-speaking countries);
- differences within the terminology of an English-speaking country, a situation first noticed as early as twenty years ago by R. Breyer and P. Moller, *Making Television Programs: A Professional Approach*, Waveland Press, Inc., Illinois, 1991, p 75.
- differences in spelling compound words which are spelt in three ways: as separate words, as one word or hyphenated; this was also noticed by a French author Vincent Pinel, *Dictionnaire technique du Cinéma*, Armand Colin, Paris, 2008, p.347
- the correct equivalence of terms; examples of wrong equivalence are mentioned in section 4;
- some terms go out of use or acquire new meanings and new terms come into use; all this is the result of the constant and rapid changes occurring in television technology;
- a good deal of the English television terms do not have a Romanian equivalent yet; this situation characterises about 40% of the entries in the dictionary that I am dealing with in this paper. In Romanian, these English terms are used as such or they are paraphrased.

Given the situation, the compiler of a specialised dictionary has to choose between two options:

- a) to try to create a normative instrument meant to impose a certain way of using notions and provide Romanian equivalents even for those terms that have not entered the specialised Romanian language yet. The risk is to suggest unfeasible, artificial solutions;
- b) to provide only a "radiographic" image of the current situation, through making an inventory of the existing Romanian equivalents, without suggesting any equivalents for the terms that have not been translated yet;

this means allowing the living language to find and adopt solutions that will prove viable in time. The risk is that, as reality keeps changing, the dictionary will become obsolete.

As far as I am concerned, I have chosen the second variant, as I consider it more realistic.

After almost 10 years, the English-Romanian dictionary of television terms deserves a third edition which should include the changes that have occurred in this very dynamic field in the past years. It could also provide the specialised language with consistency and coherence.

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