

Autonomy and communicative adequacy of supranational terminology in EU translation: a parallel corpus study

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Supranational legal terms are a special category of legal terms thanks to their distinctive properties (autonomy, multilingualism and mediation through translators, continuity) and a much more complex profile due to the double legal environment they inhabit: the immediate supranational one and national ones, where they ‘travel’ through compulsory harmonisation. The typical life path of an EU supranational concept is a staged process covering drafting and translation at the supranational level; harmonisation, application and interpretation at the national level, and interpretation at the supranational level. When translating supranational legal texts, translators have to take into account this ‘travelling’ requirement of supranational concepts and consider how a terminological equivalent will ‘fit’ the national conceptual system while, at the same time, ensuring the uniform application and interpretation of an underlying supranational concept throughout the EU.

The objective of this paper is first to investigate the primary term-creation (Fischer 2010) in EU English versions of regulations and directives, focusing on defined terms (autonomous terms of EU law) and their neutralisation techniques, such as neologisms, generic terms and adaptations of existing national terms (Mattila 2013: 157-158; Bajčić 2017: 83). Our hypothesis is that such terms are formed with relatively simple and frequent words to achieve semantic transparency. The second objective is to analyse to what extent these characteristics are retained (‘mirrored’) in Polish translations and whether any differences can be identified between techniques applied to translate regulations (automatically integrated into national systems) compared to directives (which undergo transposition – ‘retranslation’ by national drafters).

The study will be conducted on a parallel corpus of EU English and Polish legislation and reference corpora in the Sketchengine platform. Our methodological objective is to explore to what extent parallel corpora can be used as an analytical tool which enhances our knowledge of multilingual supranational terminology.

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