

# TRANSLATING UNTRANSLATABLE: GERMAN AND ENGLISH

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**Abstract.** Translation is the process of interpretation of the meaning of a text, and subsequent production of an equivalent text, also called a translation, that communicates the same message in another language. The text to be translated is called the source text, and the language it is to be translated into is called the target language; the final product is sometimes called the target text must take into account constraints that include context, the rules of grammar of the two languages, their writing conventions, and their idioms.

**Key words:** general challenges, miscellaneous, grammatical aspects and syntactic transformations, cross-cultural borrowing, untranslatable words, non-assimilated borrowings.

Translation, involving the transposition of thoughts expressed in one language by one social group into appropriate expression of another group, entails a process of cultural de-coding, re-coding, and en-coding. Intercultural communication relies heavily on translation and interpretation, which are two very important tools for creating a bridge of meaning-crossing, from one language to another, and from one culture to another. Translation is one of the most ancient linguistic phenomena.

There are three steps in the translation process of languages. First of all is the overview, which is to scope out the text to be translated. That is, the subject matter and content, how long it is, the writing style, if it is technical, the various sections. The second step is initial proofreading. The translator should look at the two texts side-by-side and proofread the translation. All spelling, meaning and grammatical errors should be corrected, with a final check to ensure the source meaning and nuance is well preserved in the target. The third step is termination. In this final step the translator re-reads the translation, this time without reference to the source document, looking solely at quality of expression.

Alphabet represents one of the general challenges. German alphabet contains the same 26 letters, as English alphabet, plus the unlauded letters **ä**, **ö**, **ü**, and the **ß**. German students may have interference problems in class when the teacher spells out words. For example, beginners commonly write **i** or **a**, when the teacher says **e** or **r**. Here are some examples of words: *Eingang, Eis, Eisenbahn, Eimer*.

Another difference between these two languages is from a syntactic point of view. German nouns have no genders, but English only uses gender in pronouns, not in the articles, and adjectives are not expected to agree with anything and can be left alone to do their thing. For example: *der Tisch, die Frau, das Kind*. The first letter in a noun is always capitalized. For example: *das Handy, das Schiff, das Buch*.

Grammar is a very important aspect, because German has three features of word order than do not exist in English: Firstly, the main verb must be the second element in the independent clause. This often requires an inversion of subject and verb, for example:

- *Manchmal komme ich mit dem Bus in die Schule. - Sometimes I come to school by bus.*

Secondly, the past participle must always be the last element in the independent clause, for example:

- *Ich habe ihn nicht gesehen. - I have not seen him.*

Thirdly, the main verb must be the last element in the dependent clause, for example:

- *Sie fragte mich, ob ich den Film schon gesehen hätte. - She asked me if I had already seen the film.*

German has 4 cases: Nominative, Accusative, Dative and Genitive. In English, there is only Nominative, Accusative, and Genitive for pronouns e. g.: *I, my, me/mine*.

Culture is also the important characteristic and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts. Here are some examples of untranslatable words:

- *Ohrwurm*: A melody or song that gets stuck in your head ("ear worm").
- *Weltschmerz*: (n.) lit. "world-pain"; the state of sadness and depressions felt when the world as it is does not reflect what you think it should be.
- *Mutterseelenallein*: (adj.) to be utterly and extremely alone and lonely, that no one could even find you or reach for you, physically and mentally; lit. "mother-soul-alone".
- *Kopfkino*: (lit. Head cinema) The rolling pictures in your head when you think about how a certain situation may unravel.

- *Schnapsidee*: is the German word for ridiculous idea that only sounds good when you are drink.
- *Waldeinsamkeit*: (n.) forest solitude; the feeling of being alone in the woods.

In the framework of the typical German Food one can distinguish such lexical units as:

- *Der Quark* (no plural): Quark is a type of fresh dairy product, somewhat similar to soft fresh cheese. It can be used for everything from cake recipes to dips and low fat spreads.
- *Das Schwarzbrot/die Schwarzbrote*: German bread, typically of dark brown color and made with whole meal rye flour. You will find a huge selection of Schwarzbrot in German bakeries and grocery stores.

Concept of cultural translation is based on a list of topics, or categories, such as social organization, religion and economy. In this point of view sometimes is difficult to translate from one cultural field to another one cultural field. Problems in Intercultural communication reflect the problems in message transmission, because the message that the receiver interprets may be very different from what the speaker intended.

Intercultural problems also include the stereotypes. A stereotype consists of attributes that an individual ascribes to a social group. Stereotypes are often based on incorrect or inadequate information. Consequently, many social and cultural stereotypes are formed on the basis of little or no empirical evidence, for example: German people are direct/abrupt, but British people are polite and take a long time to get to the point. Another stereotype is: Germans are perfectionists and want to get things right with everything they undertake, but the British are quick-witted etc.

It has been noted that because they associate characteristics with all members of a specific social group, stereotypes are necessarily over simplified representations. Because viewing others based on such a limited understanding causes us to overlook important individual characteristics, stereotypes often lead to misunderstanding. They prevent us from truly ‘seeing’ the other and thus hinder our achieving of true ‘interpersonal’ understanding. People are often unaware of the stereotypes they hold and which exist within their own society. As a result, stereotypes and any resulting prejudice are perpetuated within a given society.

In conclusion we can say that intercultural communication involves the exchange of information between two groups of people with significantly different cultures. The more similar systems and dimensions of the two languages, the more efficient the translation in cross-cultural communication.

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