



## Theoretical Principles in the Translation of Pharmaceutical Texts

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**Abstract:** This study approaches the translation of the Patient Information Leaflet as a sub-genre of the Pharmaceutical genre. Its aim is to synthesise some of the most significant theoretical insights that will help us understand the function of the elements and the structure of the source text, and, on the basis of these findings we will choose our translation strategies according to the translation purpose. We will start from text - linguistic foundations, introducing De Beaugrande and Dressler as well as Neubert's "text-centered notions" of textuality, and we will investigate the way in which we could use these principles in the translation of pharmaceutical texts. Neubert's view is seminal in this respect: he is the one to introduce to translation studies the concept of textuality and its determining factors, as well as the crucial issues of text-types and genres in comparing source texts to target texts.

**Keywords:** pharmaceutical translation; standards of textuality; Patient Information Leaflet; specialized translation; medical discourse

### Text-linguistic foundations

One of the most significant directions in Translation Studies which is also most appropriate for the discussion of specialised text translation is the textual orientation.

According to Albrecht Neubert, one of the key translation scholars working in this field, texts in translation are open to interpretation with regard to two different aspects:

"1. Translation in the real world always has to do with *whole texts*, the solution of individual translation problems being determined by the global function of the target text in relation to the source text.

2. Translation is always tied up with how other 'similar' texts have been translated, the kind of problems encountered in a given text being, normally, characteristic of a particular *text type* or *genre*" (Neubert, 1996, p. 91).

Neubert terms *holistic translation* the former area of investigation, whereas the latter is referred to as *generic translation*, the two issues representing inseparable aspects of the *textual translation*.

The German translation scholar states that *holistic translation*

"is tied up with the aims of recapturing the message of a source text with the help of a target text. [...] No matter what source message is transported, what target message it is converted to, and how this transfer is deemed to work in the target version, there are always whole texts involved. Both the process

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of translation and its result, the concrete sign sequences in the target language, receive their final justification on the basis of an assessment of the *global text function*.” (Neubert, 1996, p. 92)

Neubert also notices that translations may differ with regard to the standards of textuality first brought into discussion in text-linguistics by de Beaugrande et Dressler (1981):

“On the surface, the translation exhibits various forms and degrees of *cohesion*. At deeper levels, indicative of the ordering or at least sequencing of ideas, translations are characterized by degrees of *coherence*. With respect to the source text and its author, a translation attempts to realize *intentionality*, and, with regard to the target version and its readers, the desired aim is *acceptability*. Considering the place of the source and target text in the communicative continuum, the criterion of *situationality* has to be considered. Last but not least, translations act upon the cognitive state of the recipients by virtue of their *informativity* just as the originals are a source of informativity for their audience” (Neubert, 1996, p. 92).

As far as **cohesion** is concerned, in their study, *Cohesion in English* (1976), Halliday and Hassan define five types of *cohesive devices* which are: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion. The cohesive devices in the texts submitted to research will be analyzed based on their classification. We have randomly selected a paragraph drawn from the package insert of *Fibrovein* medicine and its corresponding Romanian translation. (see In sentence 1), we can identify three types of cohesive devices: *conjunction* (*and* - additive conjunction offering an explanation ; the subordinative conjunction *so that* ) ; *anaphoric reference* ( the use of the definite article - *the* therapy, *the* medicine, *the* affected vein ,*the* needles, *the* blood content, referring back to the same items in the preceding paragraph ; the personal pronoun *it* , that replaces the noun needle) and *lexical cohesion* ( the reiteration of the word *vein*).

| ST   | TT   |
|--|--|
| <p><b>The</b> therapy involves injecting <b>the</b> medicine into <b>the</b> affected vein using the smallest of <b>the</b> needles, <b>and it is to be injected</b> slowly and with extreme care <b>so that the</b> blood content of these veins to be expelled. 2) <b>The</b> medicine may be normally mixed with air using two syringes and a connector to create a foam <b>to help</b> expel <b>the</b> blood in larger veins. 3) <b>In this case, it</b> must be administrated by a physician appropriately trained in the correct generation and administration of foam.<br/>(<a href="https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/files/pil.7533.pdf">https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/files/pil.7533.pdf</a>)</p> | <p>1) <b>Terapia</b> presupune injectarea <b>medicamentului</b> în <b>vena</b> afectată folosind un ac foarte fin, <b>acesta trebuind injectat</b> încet și cu mare atenție <b>pentru ca</b> sângele din aceste vene să fie expulzat. 2) <b>Medicamentul</b> poate fi amestecat manual folosind două seringi si un conector pentru a prepara o spumă <b>care să contribuie</b> la expulzarea sângelui din venele mai mari. 3) <b>În acest caz, el</b> trebuie administrat de un medic instruit în mod corespunzator în pregătirea și administrarea corectă a spumei.<br/>(<a href="http://www.anm.ro">http://www.anm.ro</a>)</p> |

The Romanian translation preserves the *anaphoric reference* achieved by the use of the definite article (*terapia, medicamentului, vena*), but instead of the additive clause that appears in the ST, (*and it is to be injected*), uses a gerund construction (*acesta trebuind injectat*). The last clause is introduced by the same subordinative conjunction (*pentru ca*).

In sentence 2) there is only one type of cohesive tie, *the anaphoric reference* achieved by the use of the definite article (*the* medicine). This item appears in the preceding sentence and is used again. In the same way, the TT preserves the anaphoric reference (the use of the definite noun - *medicamentul*), but instead of the infinitive construction used in English (*to help*), prefers to use a relative clause, introduced by a subordinating conjunction (*care să contribuie*).

In sentence 3) we identify two types of cohesive items: conjunction (*in this case*), and anaphoric reference (the personal pronoun *it* that replaces the noun *medicine*, mentioned in the previous sentence). The Romanian translation uses the same cohesive items as the ST.

The pharmaceutical text aims at presenting facts and providing readers with a large amount of information. The anaphoric references and the lexical cohesion play a significant role in structuring this type of text which is required to be accurate and precise.

Mona Baker claims that “*cohesion* is the network of surface relations which link words and expressions to other words and expressions in a text, and *coherence* is the network of conceptual relations which underline the surface text” (Baker, 1998, p. 218, my emphasis). The *coherence* of a text is a result of the interaction between the knowledge presented in the text and the reader’s own knowledge and experience of the world, the latter being influenced by a variety of factors such as age, sex, race, nationality education occupation and political and religious affiliations (Baker, 1998, p. 219). De Beaugrande and Dressler see coherence as a property assigned to a text by its receiver. “Texts are not coherent because they ‘possess’ some features and answer certain formal requirements; texts become coherent when recipients interpret them as such” (Neubert & Shreve, 1992, p. 111).

If we analyse the same samples taken from the leaflet of Fibrovein medicine, we notice that the textual cohesion is also established through the following cohesion devices: in both texts, recurrence of the key words (e.g. the definite noun, *the medicine*\medicamentul is used in every sentence, excepting the third one where it is substituted for the personal pronoun *it*\(el) and the usage of terms from the semantic field of the word *injection* (e.g. *injecting*\injectarea, *needles*\ac, *injected*\injectat, *syringes*\siringi ) create a consistency which binds the text together and helps the reader understand the information. The transitional expression *in this case* /*în cazul acesta* is used in both texts in order to emphasize the relation between ideas and to help the reader follow the thread of information. If we analyse the whole text (see Fibrovein package leaflet), we can notice, in both languages, a consistency in the use of the *present simple* and of the personal pronoun (you\respectively *dumneavoastră* in Romanian, indicating a level of formality and politeness which are not covered in the ST). As for **coherence**, it is achieved through the cohesive devices and involves the whole textual organisation, its linear structure, the logical sequence of sentences, the links between the textual elements and their correspondents in the ‘real’ world, etc.

De Beaugrande and Dressler, introduce the notion of **intentionality** to refer to the intentions of text producers: “In the most immediate sense of the term, the producer intends the language configuration under production to be a cohesive and coherent text (in Neubert & Shreve, 1992, p. 113). Christiane Nord states that “the intention of the sender is of particular importance because it determines the structuring of a text with regard to content and form. At the same time, the specific organization of a text is a pre-signal which tells the receivers in which function they are expected to use the text” (Nord, 1991:54).

For instance, the intention of the Patient Information Leaflet is to inform the user and to instruct him/her how to use a medicine appropriately. In the TT the translator will use the same conventional forms of text organization (composition, sentence structures, cohesive devices) so as to preserve the source text sender’s intention.

**Acceptability** approaches the text from the receiver’s perspective. In De Beaugrande and Dressler’s opinion, “a language configuration must be intended to be a text and accepted as such in order to be utilized in communicative interaction” (ibid.). In this way, the receiver will recognize the particular forms of text organization and the linguistic content and will be able to understand the sender’s intention.

In the case of the Patient Information Leaflet, the receiver will recognize the conventional way in which the content is delivered: the specific text structure, the linguistic particularities (and patterns) and will be able to understand that the text is meant to inform and provide instructions regarding the use of a particular medicine.

De Beaugrande and Dressler define **situationality** as “the location of a text in a discrete sociocultural context in a real time and place” (Neubert & Shreve, 1992, p. 85). Situationality is a central issue in the process of translation. “The general strategy of the translator is to adjust the text to its new situation. Adjustments may involve a variety of translation procedures, including explicitation, compression, recasting, and textual re-arrangements...the modifications are motivated by the need to preserve the intentionality and functionality of the text in its new situation” (Neubert & Shreve, 1992, p. 87).

When investigating situationality in the translation of PILs, we notice that some extra-textual factors, such as the profile and intention of the author, the means of communication are similar in the source and target text. Generally, there is a short period of time between the year in which the leaflets are written in the source language and translated into the target language, which means that the aspect of time is not relevant in the translation of PILs because it does not determine any change concerning the variety of language used, deictic elements or presuppositions. But, considering that some of these texts are produced in The United Kingdom or The United States and received in the Romanian culture, the target audience being bound to a diverse linguistic and cultural community, there are some cultural or pragmatic gaps that the translator needs to adjust to the new situation of the text. For instance, a medicine can be commercialized under different brand names in the origin country and in the country in which it is sold (e.g. *ST: Rosuvastatin /TT: Astrium*). The translator needs to be aware of this change and operate it in the translation of the source text. The systems of weights and measures are different in the American culture, the references to health systems are also different and need to be adapted in translation. (e.g. You can also report side effects directly via the Yellow Card Scheme at: [www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard](http://www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard) or search for MHRA Yellow Card in the Google Play or Apple App Store./De asemenea, puteți raporta reacțiile adverse direct prin intermediul sistemului național de raportare, ale cărui detalii sunt publicate pe web-site-ul Agenției Naționale a Medicamentului și a Dispozitivelor Medicale din România <http://www.anm.ro/>).

De Beaugrande and Dressler use the term **informativity** to designate “the extent to which a presentation is new or unexpected for the receivers” (Neubert & Shreve 1992, p. 139). According to Neubert and Shreve, “informativity is a function of what is delivered by the text; it is a function of its substantive knowledge content. The translator’s commission is to create a linguistic surface that will allow the L2 user to retrieve from the text the same knowledge content that was in the L1 original” (1992, p. 90). In the translation of PILs, in order to satisfy the standard of informativity the TT should reproduce faithfully, without omissions all the relevant information from the source text. For instance:

**ST:** “Nexium contains a medicine called esomeprazole. This belongs to a group of medicines called ‘proton pump inhibitors’. They work by reducing the amount of acid that your stomach produces” (see: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/files/pil.7533.pdf>).

**TT:** “Nexium conține o substanță care se numește esomeprazol. Acesta aparține unui grup de medicamente numite ‘inhibitori de pompă de protoni’. Aceste medicamente acționează prin reducerea cantității de acid pe care o produce stomacul dumneavoastră” (see: <http://www.anm.ro/>).

Even if the insights gained from the study of the whole source text are decisive for the *holistic translation*, this is not the only aspect of the textual approach. Neubert states that “in order to achieve a

functional translation it is necessary to put the two texts, the source and the target one into a wider context, the translation of a text being influenced by the previous translations of other, similar texts. Translating a text implies translating a number of a particular *text class* or genre which makes it necessary that the translator consider the distinctive features of that *text class*. The result is *generic translation*, which involves paying attention to grammatical, lexical, and stylistic markers characteristic of an entire class of texts forming a part of a text world” (1996, p. 95). Analyzing these features the translator can point out the intertextuality combining a group of related texts.

**Intertextuality**, the viewing of a text as entering and becoming a component of a *text genre* can be said to constitute the seventh textual standard of that text. “Studying one individual text after another by first singling out the distinctive features which are responsible for their cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, situationality, and informativity, leads to a graded characterization of the generic quality of the text class as a whole. And this generic quality is precisely what is meant by *intertextuality*” (Neubert & Shreve 1992, p. 95). In the translation of PIL, the translator needs to acknowledge that “the source text has intertextual relationships with other source - language texts. In the same way, the translation will establish relationships with other L2 texts. The translator cannot ignore the relationship between target text and original text. Confronted with this double intertextuality, the translator must act in favor of the target language text world” (Neubert & Shreve 1992, p. 121).

As has been seen, the seven standards of textuality represent the ‘constitutive principles’ (Searl, 1969, p. 33) of textual communication. According to the concept of textuality, if any of these standards is regarded as not to be satisfied, the text is not communicative and is considered a non -text. In the same way, these standards of textuality can be applied to any text in translation until the target text communicates the same meaning and intention as the source text.

Like any other type of specialized translation, the pharmaceutical translation shares in common with the translation of general texts as well. This is why, before starting the translation process, the medical translator may need to address theoretical issues that concern both categories of texts. Considering all these considerations, I have attempted to highlight the way in which a text-linguistic framework could well be used for the analysis of Patient Information Leaflets and the specificity of this analysis for this particular text-type which is tightly related to the Pharmaceutical genre.

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