

# Site-ing the Translator

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**Résumé :** *En tant que partie du mécanisme de la société contemporaine, le traducteur est rarement 'visible' dans le sens de la théorie formulée par Lawrence Venuti. Les traductions spécialisées, à fonction utilitaire, telles que les traductions destinées à soutenir l'activité des institutions publiques, doivent faire preuve de 'fluence', 'transparence', 'invisibilité', 'appropriation de l'altérité culturelle'. Formes de réécriture minimale adaptées à la nouvelle ère digitale, les traductions spécialisées cherchent éminemment à susciter des réactions et à établir des relations, elles obligent donc leurs auteurs à respecter les règles de grammaire, de registre et de style, les normes d'édition et de formatage du texte, mais surtout à connaître la pratique sociale spécifique de la culture de l'autrui et du contexte mondial contemporain. L'article se propose de rendre visible la traduction comme processus et produit, ainsi que le traducteur qui se trouve au-delà du texte électronique; l'étude de cas est celui d'un texte informatif publié sur le site de l'Inspectorat de Police du Département de Galați.*

**Mots-clés :** *communication, traduction, communauté internationale, web site, institutions publiques.*

## *1. Introductory lines*

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Within the frame of contemporary global communication, translation plays an increasingly important role. Whether culturally propelled, socially oriented or economically determined, translation is an omnipresent element of everyday encounters between/ among nations, societies, institutions and individuals. In the age of the new media and of the urgency of action and reaction, translation has undergone modifications in theory, practice, method, agency, form and content, adapting itself to the requirements of the present day. This adaptation is on the way especially in minority language speaking communities, yet the speed with which it is implemented implies that, for the time being, linguistic support is far from being readily available. Illustrative in this respect is the particular case of local public bodies participating in international relations, which

address people mainly via the internet, their websites sometimes advertising translation services intended to facilitate situational communicative events and usually featuring informative translated texts.

In theory, the latter – with a primarily utilitarian function – are symptomatic for translations which ‘suffer’, as Lawrence Venuti might put it, from “fluency”, “transparency”, “domestication” and of rendering the translator “invisible”<sup>1</sup>. In practice, however, they fall under the influence of the series of factors which operate to the benefit of immediacy, practicality and economy – central to all communicative endeavours today – and which are detrimental to the prerequisites and conventions expected by a wider, more diverse and more demanding discourse community. Recurrent in this sense seem to be the following: collaboration with unqualified personnel, use of machine translation software, lack of cross-cultural awareness, inertia in preserving older formats/ forms regardless of the changes having emerged in society, language, culture. Under the circumstances, the end products serve their basic purpose, that of advancing the gist of the message to be carried across, but suffer from partial inappropriateness in both editing and language use.

## 2. Case study

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For commentary on and analysis of the viability of a translation and the negotiation of meaning, the focus here is on the website of the Galati Inspectorate of Police<sup>2</sup>, which displays most of the relevant information, including that of particular interest to foreign citizens, in Romanian.

A text in English accessible on and downloadable from the respective website may be found under *Informații publice* [Public Information], if one wishes to learn more about *Protecția datelor cu caracter personal* [Protection of Personal Data]. From the nine links made available, if one selects *Drepturi ale cetățenilor străini* [Rights of Foreign Citizens]<sup>3</sup>, one will find it inserted as a word document, *Protection of Personal Data – Right of Access*, preceded by an introductory text in Romanian, *Drepturi ale cetățenilor străini în ceea ce privește protecția datelor* [Rights of foreign citizens regarding data protection], which makes reference to and quotes from Articles 18 and 26 of the Romanian Constitution and Law no. 677/ 2001, on the

protection of citizens with regard to the processing of personal data and to the free circulation of this data.

In what follows, we are proposing another version to this translation, adding comments and suggesting possible solutions to improve the practice in the field.

2.1. Textual intervention

Available Version	Proposed Version
PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION REQUEST FOR EXERCISING THE ACCESS RIGHTS	<i>LETTER OF REQUEST REGARDING THE PROTECTION OF PERSONAL DATA</i>
To, THE GENERAL INSPECTORATE OF ROMANIAN POLICE Mihai-Voda Street, no. 4-6, district 5, Bucharest	To: <i>The General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police</i>  <i>Str. Mihai-Vodă nr. 4-6, Sector 5, Bucureşti</i>
I, the undersigned (name and surname) .....with domicile /residence in..... str. ..... no. .... bl. .... .....ap.....county/district..... identification number..... telephone no. ....e- mail address (optional), ....., pursuant to art. 13 from Law no. 677/2001 for individuals’ protection from processing personal data and the free circulation of these data and art. 62 from Law no. 141/2010 for establishment, organisation and function of the National Information System of Alerts and	I, the undersigned (name and surname) ....., ....., <i>resident in ..... (country), ..... (city/ town/ village), ..... (state/ county/ district), ..... Street no. ...., national identification number: ....., telephone number: ..... e-mail address (optional): ....., request that I should be informed if my personal data, including those in the Schengen Information System, have been processed by your institution, pursuant to Art. 13 of Law no. 677/ 2001 on the protection of citizens with regard to the processing of</i>

## Available Version

Romania's participation in the Schengen Information System, request to inform me if my personal data have been processed by your institution, including personal data from Schengen Information System.

Considering the above, I request to take the legal measures in order to receive the requested information, pursuant to Law no. 677/2001 and Law no. 141/2010.

(optional) I request that the measures taken for solving this petition shall not be made public.

(optional) The petition is submitted by a representative (its identification data are mentioned).....

.....  
(optional) I request that the information shall be communicated at the following address:.....  
.....

DATE

SIGNATURE

## Proposed Version

*personal data and to the free circulation of this data and to Art. 62 of Law no. 141/ 2010 on the establishment, organisation and functioning of the National Information System of Alerts and on Romania's participation in the Schengen Information System.*

*Please take the legal measures in order for me to receive the requested information, in keeping with Law no. 677/ 2001 and Law no. 141/ 2010.*

(optional) I request that the measures taken for solving this petition shall not be made public.

(optional) The petition is submitted by a *representative (identification data:*

.....  
.....)

(optional) I request that the information shall be communicated *to me* at the following address:

.....  
..

DATE

SIGNATURE

## 2.2. Comments on the intervention

- The title of the document is ambiguous, in the sense that it seems to be asking that access rights to personal data should be granted, instead of asking for information on whether someone else is accessing those data. To disambiguate, *for exercising the access rights* has been replaced with *the protection of personal data*. Moreover, the

preposition *for*, which implies purpose, was considered inadequate; *regarding* was the preferred alternative.

- *To*, was replaced by *To:*, with a colon, the comma not being necessary.
- In the denomination of the addressee, the definite article, *the*, was inserted so as to particularise and singularise the national public institution.
- The address, traditionally for the use of the postal services/ the postman, was translated back into Romanian, as is customary.
- The first section of paragraph one, to be filled in by the applicant, was changed to include explicitations between brackets, at the end of the dotted lines, in keeping with word order in English.
- *surename* was corrected as *surname*.
- Commas were added following each entry.
- Spaces were inserted only after punctuation marks: *city/ town/ village*.
- The address (outside the Romanian territory) was given in keeping with the English norms.
- *with domicile /residence* (an instance of calque) was replaced by *resident in*, thus also avoiding the formatting error.
- Explicitation was used for the various types of places of residence: *state/ county/ district*.
- Word order dictated the choice of ..... *Street no. ....*, instead of the initial *str. .... no. ....*
- *national* was added to *identification number*, to disambiguate it from *personal* identification number.
- The abbreviation in *telephone no.* was replaced by *number*, which also occurs in the previous syntagm.
- Colons were used after *national identification number*, *telephone number* and *e-mail address (optional)*, in keeping with logic and supporting word order.
- The second section of paragraph one presupposed a number of interventions also.
- Changes in sentence structure were operated, with the actual request brought forth, followed by the reference to the respective legislation.
- The request was reformulated as *that I should be informed if my personal data, including those in the Schengen Information System, have been processed by your institution*. The modifications envisaged

disambiguation of agent (the passive voice replaced the active voice), correct spacing and syntactic subordination.

- *Art. 13 of Law no. 677/ 2001* replaced *art. 13 from Law no. 677/2001*; a capital letter was used for the article in question; the preposition *from* (dynamic) was deleted and the preposition *of* (expressing belonging) was inserted; a space was used to separate the number from the year.
- The denomination of the law mentioned above was changed from *for individuals' protection from processing personal data and the free circulation of these data to on the protection of citizens with regard to the processing of personal data and to the free circulation of this data* for obvious reasons: the preposition *for* does not point to content, but to purpose, so *on* was used instead; the synthetic genitive is not customary in official, highly formal documents; the preposition *from* plus the -ing form was not enough to emphasise the agent; the preposition *to* was inserted after the conjunction *and* to clarify the coordination and the overall meaning.
- Similarly, the preposition *to* was inserted after the conjunction *and* preceding *Art. 62 of Law no. 141/ 2010*, where the same modifications were made as in the case of the reference to the previous law.
- *function* was replaced by *functioning*, since the reference is to a process, not to a quality.
- The preposition *on* was inserted after the conjunction *and* in the denomination of Law no. 141/ 2010, for reasons mentioned previously.
- The beginning of paragraph two was changed from *Considering the above, I request to take the legal measures in order to receive to Please take the legal measures in order for me to receive*, as an element of politeness is necessary, as 'the above' does not function as an adverbial of manner, and as the agent needs clarification (Who takes measures? The applicant or the addressee?).
- *pursuant to* was replaced by *in keeping with*, to avoid repetition.
- The interventions to the optional entries were: *representative* was corrected as *representative*; *its* and *are mentioned* were deleted from *its identification data are mentioned*, the former because it is incorrect, the latter because it is superfluous; *to me* was added in the last sentence to clarify the recipient.

### 3. Final remarks

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Resulting from the attempt at conferring visibility to the translation as process and product, as well as to the translator beneath the electronic translated text, was the fact that the human element is increasingly back-grounded. Machine-assisted productions of translations, as seems to be the case of the sampled text, may serve communicational and societal goals, but only if used to facilitate the initial stages of the whole process and the transmission of the end product. Indeed, “today’s translation competence includes the proficient use of technology” [O’Hagan and Ashworth, 2002: 155].

Nevertheless, computer literacy is not enough. As the study shows, there are still numerous issues to be addressed and problems to be solved in as far as specialised translations circulated via the internet are concerned. Forms of minimal rewriting, they need to be appropriately adapted to the demands of the new digital era. Primarily intended to generate reactions and establish relations, they should abide by the rules of grammar, register and style, observe editing and formatting norms, and, above everything else, be supported by knowledge of the social practice specific both to the culture of the other and to the contemporary global information society.

Possible solutions might be to resort to the services of professional translators with solid training in intercultural mediation and computer literacy, or to partnership schemes with higher education institutions which offer study programmes and carry out research in translation and interpretation.

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- <http://gl.politiaromana.ro/> [12 August 2014]

[http://gl.politiaromana.ro/index.php?act=info\\_pub&id=1280](http://gl.politiaromana.ro/index.php?act=info_pub&id=1280) [12 August 2014]

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Developed on by Lawrence Venuti, in *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, London, Routledge, 1995.

<sup>2</sup> See <http://gl.politiaromana.ro/>.

<sup>3</sup> See [http://gl.politiaromana.ro/index.php?act=info\\_pub&id=1280](http://gl.politiaromana.ro/index.php?act=info_pub&id=1280).