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**Special Issue:**

**Limits of translation and transposing of OER in other languages and cultures**

This paper has been edited by project partner Hochschule Osnabrueck

taking into account the contributions of all partners

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Table of Abbreviations

BNE Bildung für Nachhaltige Entwicklung (German translation of ESD)

ESD Education for sustainable development

EU European Union

IO Intellectual Output

OER Open Educational Resources

VET Vocal Education and Training

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Introduction

Translation of our learning units into the partner country languages has presented us with some difficult challenges. These essentially involve three problems: culture (also in connection with teaching/learning styles), communication and context. In the following we provide: 1. a general introduction to these three problems, 2. summary of the difficulties when translating the units and presentation of solutions for how to deal with these, 3. presentation of specific examples of elements which are untranslatable on the basis of individual learning units and how we dealed with it concretely. These preliminary considerations will then flow into the learning units translated into the national languages (German, French, Greek, Bulgarian) which are presented in our Learn box.

# 1 General translation problems

## 1.1 The culture problem

If a semiotic view of culture is adopted, such as that influenced by ethnologist Geertz (1973), it is argued that language and communication are shaped and constituted by culture.

Humans form their culture through communication, within a cultural space, by mostly unconsciously "agreeing" how they want to view the world and what constitutes reasonable interaction. Members of one culture differentiate themselves from other social communities by giving their symbols a specific meaning which is only understood by the members of that particular culture. In one culture, for example, winking with the eyes is understood as a secret symbol of agreement whereas in another culture it is regarded simply as a physiological twitch.

This means that linguistic utterances are interpreted and classified in accordance with an individual's specific cultural background. One example of this, which is extremely significant for our topic, is the role of leadership and of teaching staff as well as teaching/learning styles. In cultures with a high level of (power distance) (Hofstede 1984) individuals tend to wait to be instructed by an authority figure, manager or teacher before acting. In these cultures the dominant learning style takes the form of lectures, the content of which is to be reproduced. This contrasts with cultures with a low level of power distance in which the learning style tends to be interactive, featuring group work and independent acquisition of learning content, and where the ability to self-reflect is positively sanctioned. The following section addresses this issue in detail.

## 1.2 The culture problem in teaching/learning methods

Joy and Kolb (2009) discuss the influence of culture on learning styles. Luo and Kück (2011) investigated the differences in this regard by comparing German and Chinese students (at German universities). By using episodic interviews (Lamnek 2010, 33) they collected information on the attitude towards learning, learning motivation, learning information, learning habits as well as the mutual perception of learning behaviour between German and Chinese students. They found, for example, that Chinese students see the lecturer as a ‘Daoshi’ who leads as a moral role model, and boss who delegates tasks (Luo & Kück 2011, 52). In contrast, the German students perceive the lecturer role as one of a ‘mediator of knowledge’ who should support and motivate. Concerning mutual perception, the Chinese students prefer learning methods such as memorisation, discerning the main points, learning in blocks, doing exercises, etc. whereas German students place more value on understanding and the application of knowledge in a practical context (ibid. 55p.) Such differences have far-reaching consequences for the expectations placed on the education process (didactic proposal) and also determine the learning effect achieved. From an interculturally sensitive perspective, it therefore becomes necessary to make methods, learning content and didactics compatible in order to achieve the best possible learning outcomes.

We offer an example from a training course with Russian participants which was held in Russia. It was noticeable that these participants found it very difficult to reflect on their practical experience alongside the theoretical input on the course. Reflection was more successful afterwards in the form of role plays and simulations, visualisations and practical exercises. The participants did not perceive the usual frontal teaching as a style which was inviting them to connect the content being taught with their own practical experience. Creative methods are prevalent in everyday life in Russia, however, and their function as a means of expression is therefore trusted. Such methods are actually more effective than with German and Western European participants as the Russian participants empathise more strongly with the roles allocated and can therefore gain more intensive experiences. The role of the neutral observer often used in Germany for external reflection on role plays and cooperative tasks is also very difficult for Russian participants to adopt. They are very reserved about sharing their observations of role play participants. They do not see the point of this role. We interpret this difficulty as being connected to the collectivist tendencies in Russian culture. Individual participants do not want to be separated from the group (of role players) and do not want to contradict the group by perhaps correcting what the role players say over the course of the role play. In a subsequent training session, having learnt from this experience, our interpretation of this issue was confirmed - we no longer had one individual in the role of observer but rather an entire group These two groups also swapped roles after one role play: role play participants became observers; the observer group became the group of role players. This setting worked extremely well.

Accordingly, some didactic proposals cannot simply be replicated in other countries/cultures - they need to be adapted to the practices and customs in schools/educational facilities of the country. It is sometimes even necessary to modify the learning objectives.

## 1.3 The communication and language problem

Languages work explicitly and implicitly with different concepts/terms about the world (outside world, inner world of the psyche, etc.) which means that people conceive the world in varying ways. Some concepts cannot be translated as they do not exist in another culture/the depth of their meaning cannot be fully comprehended (e.g. the Swedish concept of Hygge) (Kumbruck & Derboven 2016). Even when concepts are translated into another language it does not automatically follow that the recipients understand them in the same way. An example here would be the translation of novels and the sorrow felt if the typical atmosphere of the country conveyed in the original language is lost in the translation. People construct their world and culture with language and mental images, and these can vary from individual to individual - but when people think in different languages, the worlds conceived are especially different (Lewis 2006).

The biggest differences are seen particularly concerning the use of categories, and the distinctions made between these. People from other cultures find other categories and therefore other differentiations to be important. Bateson (1972) has taught the world that for differentiations there is no "difference which makes a difference" but rather that the number of sensible categories of differentiation are fundamentally limitless.

As language shapes all our ideas about the world, and shapes us as individuals, it also gives rise to a considerable proportion of misunderstandings and confusion. For example, the demands and implications which we associate with a specific role, such as a leadership role, are influenced by language-based connotations.

Regarding communication Hall (1976) distinguishes between low context and high context cultures. The decisive criterion for classification of communication is the accuracy of the information. Low context communication is characterised by an explicit exchange of information with little room for interpretation of what is said. In such a case only relevant and pertinent information is exchanged. In high context communication the atmosphere, environment and non-verbal signals play a much more significant role. Whereas in low context communication it can be trusted that objective messages speak for themselves and are clear, high context communication encourages the message to be interpreted. The literal meaning of a message, so to speak, is not considered reliable.

## 1.4 Context problems

We know from psycholinguists such as Watzlawick et al. (1967) that, in addition to semantics (the allocation of meaning to information), pragmatics (the understanding of what action follows as a consequence of a message) are also crucial. Here the context of the message is especially important. (e.g. In what situation was something said? Are those involved in the communication in a hierarchical relationship? Is there a background to facilitate the correct classification of the message?). With regard to language-based contextualisation we also consider, for example, terms with a double meaning which can only be understood in context, or the fact that it is often difficult to recognise whether something said is intended to be humorous or serious.

In addition to the language-based context there are also contexts which are due to external societal conditions e.g. different legislation, different education systems and therefore different training and examination regulations for occupations, as well as the societal status of occupations. The relevance and need for action of the units developed by us depend on such conditions. The more definite and country-specific the units developed by our partners are, the greater the chance that the content and format of the unit is not appropriate or requires greater adaptation.

Summing up the challenges is not only to translate words and grammar from one language into another one, but like transposing music notes of a song from one key to another producing a „new melody“.

# 2. Challenges for the translation and approaches for dealing with them in the project

## 2.1 The challenges

The challenges we need to address are:

* Cultural differences (also concerning teaching/learning styles)
* The state of discussions and legal regulations in a particular country concerning the topic of sustainability
* Special features in a particular country concerning the handling of natural and social resources and recycling, for example the medicament administration in Greece due to the precarious financial situation.
* Framework conditions such as legislation (e.g. the German Occupational Safety and Health Act; since the end of 2013 the German 'Arbeitsschutzgesetz' has required explicit consideration of mental strain in corporate risk assessments).
* Differences in the delineations of training and occupations (e.g. nursing, care of the elderly, children and disabled, etc.), classification of occupations according to EQF (support staff, specialists, study programmes) as well as training/examination regulations, etc.

In terms of the translation of the content into other languages

* Classic problems in translation such as contextualisation etc.
* Video translation as a particular problem: Automated translation is very difficult (especially for audio/video), as the "translectures" video translation project shows (<http://www.translectures.eu/project-summary/>). See for example <http://videolectures.net/mitworld_lewin_wem/>.
* Subtitling for videos requires own technical tools and/or technical support.

## 2.2 Possible solution approaches

We opted for the following solution: The translation into other languages only refers to the formal skeleton (structure) of the OER unit e.g. WebQuest, and universally applicable material. For example, the transactional stress model can be seen as universal and therefore can be translated, and this also applies to the accompanying worksheets. The cultural and local contextualisation and specificity can only occur in conjunction with local experts, however. This particularly relates to filling the structure with content (materials, especially links, and also films), for example for the HS-Osnabrück module on work conditions and sick leave figures for carers in Germany, published by German health insurance companies; or the legal background such as legal obligations of companies to include risk assessment of mental strain).

This formal skeleton (in which all texts which are regarded as unproblematic from a translation perspective are included) (on the basis of an English version) is enriched with links from sources which comprehensively deal with the topic in English e.g. European comparative studies.

The same applies to videos - as a large number of videos are used in our project (not all of which can be further processed from a legal perspective), we are making English language videos available in the English version but not translating the national languages (reason: they are country-specific) or English videos (reason: English is an EU language and often used in lessons) into other languages.

Local communities need to find supplementary materials which take into account equivalent local features and add these to the units, which are available as OER. Ideal would be:

Bottom-up processes in each country i.e. discourse on the topic including

* Experts from one particular subject area
* Professional associations / schools
* Persons/teachers who pass on the OER ideas

These local communities must also give thought to quality management i.e. not accept material which cannot be considered state-of-the-art in the subject area.

This additional task of expanding a network for contextualisation of the learning units must be regarded as a future-oriented project i.e. it cannot be realised within the scope of the current project.

# 3 Learning unit-specific limits of translation

## 3.1 Learning Units Logistics

### 3.1.1 BFI-OÖ, Austria: "Sustainable Logistics, Freight forwarding clerk" (introductory learning unit)

In the following BFI-OÖ mentions the parts, mainly videos, of their OER, which cannot be translated because the creator of the video does not allow this. You can watch the videos but not edit them. Therefore when translating into/adapting to the partner country languages, the videos should be replaced by videos or equivalent material in the partner country language.

**Our OER consists of 3 sessions:**

**Session 1 – Sustainability Concept** is very suitable, in BFI-OÖ opinion, for translation into all the partner country languages and adaptation to all the cultural contexts. Only the (YouTube) videos on sustainability and the sustainability concept of OER 3, which are in German, should not be translated. BFI-OÖ recommends that the partner countries look for suitable videos in their own language.

**The videos of OER 3 in the German language that will not be translated are:**

**A selection of short videos on sustainable development (YouTube)**

**Video: Sustainability explained simply/ Nachhaltigkeit einfach erklärt in D und EN** (4 min)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcNKHQb8QIc> (German Version)

**DE:**

**or use 2 videos which go together (DE)**

**Was ist Nachhaltigkeit**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3CivHKZDhK8>

**Das Dreieck der Nachhaltigkeit plus Politik und Bulletfragen …**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAlJS-qG66s>

**Session 2 – Sustainable logistics:** It makes sense to translate the text that serves as information for the trainer concerning the introductory lecture on sustainable logistics and the different areas. The main material for this session is from OER 6 “Learning material package - Traffic/Transportation and environment” <http://www.reecotrans.at/de/lehrmittel/pakete/>. This is excellent extensive learning material but is only available in German. In some cases the content primarily refers to the Austrian situation in logistics rather than to the rest of the partner countries, so when translated, it needs to be adapted also to the specific contexts of the partner countries.

**Session 3 – Cooperation:** OER 7 provides a list of websites/links concerning the research of different networks for cooperation in logistics which are all in German from Germany, Austria and Switzerland. In order to translate and adapt OER 7 to the country-specific situation, new and country-specific links/websites of networks and cooperation in logistics need to be found as we have no insight into national logistics cooperations of partner countries.

See below for the links in German of OER 7:

VLN Logistik: <https://www.vnl.at/de/smart-logistics/>

<https://www.svbl.ch/>: Logistik bewegt

<http://www.logcoop.de/>: Das Logistik-Netzwerk – Kooperation der Transport- und Logistikbranche

<http://www.orgaplan-logistik.de/strategie/logistik-kooperationen/>: Logistik Kooperationen

<http://www.bvl.at/Kooperationen.html>: Bundesvereinigung Logistik Österreich

### 3.1.2 University of Kassel, Germany: “Developing a new Strategy Logistics in 2050 – Delivering Tomorrow (GLOBALSUPPLYCHAIN GmbH & Co.KG)”

On account of the format and resource type of the learning unit there are only few limitations concerning translatability:

One obstacle is the legal form of the company (GmbH & Co. KG) which is very German-specific. The legal form should be transferred into country-specific legal forms which are appropriate to the structure of the leading partners of the company (see p. 11).

Another limitation is the cities of the partners of the company (p.12/13), which are cities located in Germany. They could be taken over or changed to cities in the other countries.

The given numbers about the CO2 emissions at the top of p. 6 can be used as an example of Germany or data of the specific country must be inserted.

The links on p. 7/8 are accessible in English, except the links written in red. These are German websites without an English translation. Some links therefore need to be inserted in the various languages.

The part that places the unit in the curricula (p.5) is about the German curriculum of freight forwarding agents (logistics), and cannot be translated without adjusting it to the circumstances of the partner countries.

### 3.1.3 CEREQ – “Feasibility of the implementation of a sustainable reverse logistics”

The CEREQ’s OER unit is called “Feasibility of the Implementation of a Sustainable Reverse Logistics”. It aims to develop technical competences and soft skills regarding the implementation of a reverse logistics by forwarding clerks in European Companies.

It is compounded by:

* A “WebQuest”
* A lesson
* An evaluation of the learning outcomes by Multiple Choice Questionnaire

As recommended by the Greenskills4VET project, CEREQ provided an English version (a formal skeleton for translation in other languages) and a French version (more detailed and adapted to local context). The French version of the OER is an example of this adaptation to local context.

In order to translate the English version to native languages, CEREQ recommend to:

**The Webquest:** Trainers are invited to invent their own WebQuest, adapted to national context following this generic example. The resources are Open Educational Resources: trainers are very welcomed to adapt it and even publish their new version. Nonetheless, it is important in so doing to stick the conditions of the Creative Commons licence used (CC BY SA).

In so doing, it will be important to find videos and links to articles in native language. Trainers can also choose to use the English version in order to develop linguistics skills (English), which are important for this occupation.

**The lesson:** The lesson presents the general organisation of Reverse Logistics in companies and the Legislation concerned at European Level. It can be easily used unaltered in national contexts, as the definition of Reverse Logistics and technical and soft skills needed to put it into practice are equivalent in different European Countries. It will be only necessary to find national legislation for Extended Producer Responsibility.

**The Multiple Choice Questionnaire:** The Multiple Choice Questionnaire is mainly linked to the lesson, it can also be used with almost no need to adapt it.

### **3.1.4** DGIHK, Greece: “Corporate Social Responsibility application in the Logistics Sector” (Webquest)

While undertaking the task to translate the webquest of the German Hellenic Chamber of Industry and Commerce, there are certain issues to be take into consideration:

This web quest is intented for a Greek class of Vocational Education and Training and the Specialty of Supply Chain Executive which is the closest available to the Freight Forwarding Clerk.

This web quest addresses the audience to Greek web links through the journey. When perfomed in another language, web links should apply to the language and needs of the specific country.

## 3.2 Learning Units Health Care

### 3.2.1 WETCO, Bulgaria: “Structure and organization of the Health Care activities – Health care activities for sustainable development” (introductory learning unit)

From its experiences WETCO has noticed some limitations in providing nationally elaborated OER in different languages of the project partnership. Here are the most important ones:

Most of the learning materials used are specific to the country – for example a video about medical administration (Greece) might not be relevant to Bulgarian conditions;

The sources relating to country-specific legislation are not suitable for another language/country context;

The terminology for the sectors (Health Care, Logistics) might differ from language/country to language/country and lead to misunderstandings.

The Webquest tool has certain restrictions; often the names of the categories of a column are pre-determined in one language and cannot be changed into another one. In a separate list it has to be translated properly into the different languages.

The most important issues of one national OER might not be as important for the other countries and vice versa. Generally most videos are in English and their translation into the other project languages may harm their message or the learning objective they are assigned to.

### 3.2.2 Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences, Germany: “Challenges and Coping in Interaction Work – Social Sustainability in Health Care” (Webquest)

The working conditions, status and tasks of professionelle care givers in Europe are extremely heterogeneous. This leads to varying stress situations in the care sector in the individual partner countries which need to be considered in this unit. In particular the sick leave figures for care givers published on an annual basis by German health insurance companies examined in this unit are not transferable to the other countries even though the care situation - especially the high turnover of care givers leaving the profession - is a cause for concern in most European countries.

A presentation can be found in Webquest which refers to the specific situation of the care sector in Germany on pages 14 and 15 (e.g. care givers leaving the profession, days of incapacity to work). The situation described on these pages as well as the links (in German) to sick leave figures for individual work of the trainees in Webquest, and a video of the particular care situation in Germany (in German) will not be translated. Instead, reference will be made to cross-country comparisons. In other countries the use of country-specific statistics is recommended to the teachers.

In Germany, in contrast to many other European countries, all companies are obliged by law to take into account the mental strain of employees as part of a risk assessment, which means the topic also takes on legal relevance. This means the significance of the topic may not necessarily be the same in other European countries.

Differences in the delineations of training and occupations (e.g. nursing, care of the elderly, children and disabled, etc.), classification of occupations according to EQF (we find EQF 4 and 5 in the partner countries i.e. support staff, specialists, study programmes; in Germany examinated nurses as well as nursing assistants are on level 4 according to EQF) as well as training/examination regulations, etc. mean adaptation of content and methods for other countries is generally not necessary. We have focused our unit, in Germany, on trainees who are working towards the 'DQR' qualification "examinierte Gesundheits- und Krankenpflege” following a 3-year training period. In June 2018, however, after we had developed and tested the unit, a new training/examination regulation was adopted in Germany, according to which healthcare and nursing has been integrated with care for the elderly as one training programme. Due to the particular training situation concerning the care sector in Germany (not a classic dual system, not under the control of the Ministry of Education and the Arts) the individual federal states in Germany also have extremely different curricula. This means there is a strong need for adaptation even within Germany and even more so for the training in other countries.

### 3.2.3 Aspete, Greece: Medicament Administration (Webquest)

For the OER produced by the partner ASPETE some limitations arise concerning translation into the participating country languages. To achieve optimum learning outcomes the partners should take into account the following:

The chosen unit concerns the specialisation of Nursing Assistant of the Institute of Vocational Training (IEK) in Greece, which leads to the Certified Nursing Assistant level 5 according to EQF. If the Nursing Assistant role corresponds to EQF level 4 in a partner country, some changes need to be made to the expected learning outcomes (or at least the translation has to be accompanied by the appropriate notes and clarifications)

The term “Social Pharmacy” describes a social structure that is established in the context of the Greek financial crisis, which is aimed at managing and distributing medicaments that are in excess and at supplying them to people in need. This kind of structure is not unique to Greece but whether it exists in a country or not will perhaps provide different learning outcomes over the course of the educational process.

The awareness of medicines recycling practices in a country plays a significant role in the whole educational process. These practices need to be taken into account when adapting the learning unit to another language.

In the specific OER production some elements of the English version are not to be translated (the sources, the crossword puzzle of the evaluation section, and the evaluation of implementation in Greece). They serve as an indicative material, providing ideas on how to produce corresponding material for classroom activities or for evaluation in the partners’ languages.

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