

# SOME PRINCIPLES FOR TRANSLATION OF CHINESE-VIETNAMESE ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL TERMS

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**Abstract:** *In the context of strong economic globalization in the world, Vietnam-China relations are also increasingly strengthened and developed. Cooperation and exchange activities between the two countries are taking place more and more extensively, especially in the economic and commercial field. How economic and commercial terms in Chinese and Vietnamese are expressed and translated is a matter that deserves to be studied. Stemming from that actual need, the research paper is based on a survey on the characteristics of the structure and identification methods of terms in order to propose some principles for translating economic and commercial terms from Chinese into Vietnamese.*

**Keywords:** *terminology; economic; commercial; language identification; contrastive linguistics; terminology standardization.*

## I. Introduction

With the birth of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, along with the world economic achievements in the current period, a huge number of terms in new fields such as electronics, computers, digital technology, artificial intelligence, internet of things, have appeared and spread strongly in the context of economic globalization taking place around the world. In that context, Vietnam-China relations are also increasingly strengthened and developed. Economic and cultural exchanges are taking place more and more extensively, especially in the economic and commercial field. Correct

understanding and translation of economic and commercial terms commonly used today make an important contribution to eliminating language barriers in the process of economic cooperation between Vietnam and China. In addition to a lot of similarities in terms of semantic structure and identification method, Chinese and Vietnamese also have many differences. The difference in approach in identifying Chinese-Vietnamese economic and commercial terms has caused a lot of difficulties for translators. These are phenomena in which the same concept in the economic and commercial field is identified in different ways in each language. Stemming from that actual

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need, we conducted a survey to find out the characteristics of the structure, and identification meaning of some economic and commercial terms that have equivalent concepts but their semantic structure and identification methods are not equivalent in Chinese and Vietnamese, thereby proposing some principles for translating economic and commercial terms from Chinese into Vietnamese.

## II. Literature review

The study is based on the theory of word formation, the theory of language identification and the theory of terminology standardization to conduct a survey, analyze, and make recommendations for translating economic and commercial terms from Chinese into Vietnamese.

Economic and commercial terms as defined by us are the words or terms used to identify a thing, phenomenon or activity in the economic and commercial field such as foreign trade, finance, accounting, business, insurance, tax, etc. Acquiring the views on terminology standardization of Le Quang Thiem (2018), Zheng Shupu (郑述谱, 2014), we propose four standards to standardize economic and commercial terms in general, and standardize economic and commercial terms translated from Chinese into Vietnamese in particular, including: (i) Monosemy; (ii) Conciseness; (iii) Systematicity; (iv) Internationality.

(i) Monosemy: Monosemy is defined that each term only reflects a single concept in the economic and commercial field. Monosemy can also be understood as context-independent, that is, a term used in any different context in a field

of expertise still has the same meaning. Monosemy can also be understood as the accuracy of terms, that is, each concept is only equivalent to a single term, which is also a difficulty in the standardization of terms. Because language always develops naturally in line with the flow of society, the phenomenon of synonymy still exists as an objective necessity, and unifying the existing parallel language variants into one is not an easy task.

(ii) Conciseness: Conciseness, or otherwise the economics of terms, is a prominent feature of terms. However, conciseness does not mean narrowing the meaning of terms, concise but must ensure to fully express the connotation and denotation of terms.

(iii) Systematicity: Systematicity is an indispensable requirement of terms in general, and economic and commercial terms in particular. A word is called a term only when it is used to denote a concept within a certain system of expertise. Therefore, each term should be clearly located and must have an organic relationship with other terms in the system. However, in fact, some terms are interdisciplinary. For these terms, it is possible to base on their frequency of use in the system to determine. Their frequency of use in any field is more, then it is classified into that field.

(iv) Internationality: The economic and commercial field is a highly globalized field, the number of terms being translated from foreign languages is very large; therefore, when translating the terms used in this field, it is necessary to focus on the internationality of terms, ensuring that the

terms both accurately convey the concept of the original terms and are asymptotic with equivalent terms commonly used in the field of international trade.

### **III. Research methods**

The research paper mainly uses the methods of desk research, sampling survey, and lexical and semantic comparison to conduct a survey on the structure and identification method of Chinese economic and commercial terms and their equivalent terms in Vietnamese. Based on absorbing the views on terminology standardization and translation equivalence of previous researchers, the principles of translating Chinese economic and commercial terms into Vietnamese have been proposed.

### **IV. Results and Discussion**

The most important general principle in translating economic and commercial terms from Chinese into Vietnamese is to ensure the monosemy, conciseness, systematicity and internationality of terms, which is also a condition to determine the level of terminology standardization. Therefore, translation of terms requires standardization in terms of both content and form of terms.

The content of each economic and commercial term reflects a concept that denotes a specific thing and phenomenon in the economic and commercial field, so the literal meaning is just the linguistic shell of the concept. Translators need to have a clear visualization and association of things and phenomena reflected through the linguistic shell, thereby choosing the translation words so that the connotative and denotative meaning of terms, or in other words that concept, is conveyed

accurately and explicitly in the target language. Therefore, the translation needs to be compared with the concept in the target language and the source language, avoiding the use of words with ambiguous meaning, and multiple meaning words. Select and use words neatly, so that in terms of content, each term corresponds to only one concept, in terms of form, conciseness of terms is guaranteed. Terms should be as concise as possible, but must ensure that their exact meaning is conveyed. Due to the aforementioned specific requirements of terms, the usual translation methods such as direct translation, free translation, are not always suitable to apply to term translation. Based on the different characteristics of structure and identification methods of Chinese and Vietnamese economic and commercial terms, we propose some principles for translating economic and commercial terms from Chinese into Vietnamese as follows:

#### ***4.1. Principle of denotative equivalence translation***

Denotative equivalence translation can be said to be the most important criterion of term translation. As mentioned above, terms have their monosemy, each term reflects a unique concept in the economic and commercial field. Therefore, the denotative equivalence translation of economic and commercial terms is to ensure that the source term and the target term are completely conceptually equivalent. Both Chinese and Vietnamese are the isolating language in terms of form, and also have certain similarities in terms of word formation and identification methods;

however, these two languages also have huge differences. Some Chinese terms have literal meanings (rational meanings) that seem to be equivalent to Vietnamese ones, but in reality they are not. The reason for this difference is mainly due

to the different identification methods of economic and commercial terms between the two languages. Here are some terms in Chinese and Vietnamese that are conceptually equivalent but have different methods of identification:

*Table 1: Chinese and Vietnamese economic and commercial terms with non-equivalent identification methods*

No.	Chinese terms		Vietnamese terms	
	Terms (literal meaning)	Identification method	Terms	Identification method
1	资产负债表 (bảng tài sản trả nợ/ balance sheet)	Identified by characteristics	<i>bảng cân đối kế toán/ balance sheet</i>	Identified by functions
2	软贷款 (khoản vay mềm/ soft loan)	Identified by associated images	<i>khoản vay ưu đãi/ preferential loan</i>	Identified by nature
3	保险箱 (két bảo hiểm/ safe)	Identified by functions	<i>két sắt/ safe</i>	Identified by materials
4	拳头商品 (mặt hàng nắm đấm/ fist products)	Identified by associated images	<i>mặt hàng chủ lực/ main products</i>	Identified by nature

For the Chinese terms in Table 1, if translators only rely on the structure and literal meaning of terms to translate, it may cause the terms to become unfamiliar in the target language. Due to different identification methods, the equivalent terms in Vietnamese have a far different expression than the rational meaning of the source term. Therefore, translators need to understand the concept of the original term to compare and translate it into the equivalent term used by default in Vietnamese.

In addition to endogenous terms with different identification methods, some Chinese and Vietnamese economic and commercial terms translated with calque technique from English also have different translation methods. For example:

The term 增长黑客 (*hách tăng trưởng/ growth hacking*), is a Chinese

term translated from the English term *Growth Hacking*. If based on the structure and identification method through the literal meaning, it is possible to analyze the structural model of the term 增长黑客 which is a noun phrase with a main and secondary structure, in which the main element is the noun 黑客 (*hacker, tin tặc*), the secondary element is the verb 增长 (*grow, tăng trưởng*); therefore, based on the semantic structure, this term is translated as *hacker tăng trưởng* or *tin tặc tăng trưởng* (growth hacker). However, in Vietnamese, *hacker tăng trưởng* can be understood as a person, not an activity. It can be seen that when the term *Growth Hacking* in English is translated into Chinese by the borrowing technique, its word class can be changed: *Hacking* => 黑客, while in Vietnamese, using the borrowing technique can make

the form of word changed: *Hacking* => *hách*.

In this situation, translators need to compare the conceptual meaning in the source term, or trace the origin of the term to correctly understand the concept to be translated. Through the actual survey of economic and commercial terms in Chinese and Vietnamese, many terms have been translated with calque technique from English. However, when translating some terms, the identification method for these borrowing terms in Chinese and Vietnamese is different due to the different identification

approach of translators in the two languages. Therefore, when translating economic and commercial terms of foreign origin in Chinese into Vietnamese, translators should look up and use equivalent terms that have been translated and used by default in Vietnamese (if any), avoid creating new terms that are not commonly used in the Vietnamese economic and commercial terminology system.

Some examples of Chinese-Vietnamese economic and commercial terms translated from English with different identification methods:

*Table 2: Comparing identification methods of Chinese-Vietnamese economic and commercial terms borrowed from English*

No.	Chinese terms translated from English	Vietnamese terms translated from English	Comparing the translation method with calque technique
1	冷邮件 (cold email)	<i>Email ngẫu nhiên</i> (cold email)	Chinese: Directly translating the literal meaning, identified by nature (冷=> <i>lạnh</i> ) Vietnamese: Translating with calque technique, identified by functions (cold => <i>ngẫu nhiên</i> )
2	叉车 (folkliift)	<i>Xe nâng</i> (folkliift)	Chinese: Translating, with calque technique, the literal meaning of the preceding element in English: <i>folk</i> (叉=> <i>xiên</i> ) Vietnamese: Translating, with calque technique, the literal meaning of the following element in English: <i>lift</i> ( <i>nâng</i> )
3	病毒式营销 (Viral maketing)	<i>Tiếp thị lan truyền</i> (Viral maketing)	Chinese: Translating verbatim with the identification method by associated images (病毒式=> <i>kiểu virus/ virus type</i> ) Vietnamese: Translating with calque technique, identified by nature (Viral => <i>lan truyền</i> )
4	偿债基金 (sinking fund)	<i>Quỹ chìm</i> (sinking fund)	Chinese: Translating with calque technique, identified by functions (偿债基金=> <i>quỹ trả nợ</i> ) Vietnamese: Translating verbatim with the identification method by nature (sinking => <i>chìm</i> )

#### **4.2. Principle of explicit translation of the term's meaning**

One of the important principles when translating terms is conciseness; therefore, in Chinese many terms are identified in a generalized and concise way.

When translating them into Vietnamese, if translated verbatim, the term meaning may become ambiguous or multi-meaning. In this case, it is necessary to add necessary words to make the meaning of the term more explicit. For example:

The term 发票成本价 has a main - secondary semantic structure, the main element is “成本价” (*chi phí/ cost*), the secondary element is “发票” (*hoá đơn/ invoice*). This term, in a rational meaning, is completely equivalent to the term “*chi phí hoá đơn*” (*invoice cost*) in Vietnamese. But if translated as “*chi phí hoá đơn*” (*invoice cost*), this term has a vague meaning, which can be understood in two ways with completely different meanings: *chi phí được ghi trên hoá đơn* (*the cost stated on invoice*) or *chi phí dùng để mua hoá đơn* (*the cost used to purchase invoice*). In case the translation has such a vague meaning, translator must trace the

conceptual meaning of the term in Chinese to choose a correct and monosemous translation option. Contrasting concepts in Chinese, 发票成本价 means the cost of printing, services, etc., used for purchasing or issuing invoices; therefore, the correct translation should be *chi phí mua hoá đơn* (*the invoice purchasing cost*). Thus, in the translation, the word “*mua*” (*purchasing*) must be added (although the original does not have this word) to make the meaning of the target term more explicit.

Some examples of Chinese-Vietnamese economic and commercial terms that need additional meaning when translating:

Table 3: Chinese-Vietnamese economic and trade terms with non-equivalent forms

No.	Chinese terms	Terms translated verbatim	Terms translated with additional meaning in Vietnamese
1	金融家	nhà tài chính/ financier	nhà <b>đầu tư</b> tài chính/ financial investor
2	负债率	tỷ lệ nợ/ debt ratio	tỷ lệ <b>nợ trên tổng tài sản</b> / debt-to-total-assets ratio
3	抵押债券	trái phiếu thế chấp/ mortgage bond	trái phiếu <b>có thế chấp</b> / mortgage bond
4	抵押债务	nợ thế chấp/ mortgage debt	nghĩa vụ nợ <b>được thế chấp</b> / collateralized debt obligation
5	船舶碰撞条款	Điều khoản đâm va tàu biển/ collision clause	Điều khoản <b>trách nhiệm</b> đâm va tàu biển/ collision liability clause

In Table 3, the Chinese terms, 金融家, 负债率, 抵押债券, 抵押债务, 船舶碰撞条款, all have a concise form because some words have been shortened to ensure the principle of conciseness when translating terms, so when translating into Vietnamese, necessary words must be added to clarify the meaning of terms, and avoid ambiguous and multi-meaningful meanings. Therefore, in the terms translated into Vietnamese, the words

“*đầu tư, trách nhiệm, trên tổng tài sản, được, có*” have been added in order to accurately and fully interpret the meaning of terms, and at the same time ensure the monosemy of terms.

#### 4.3. Principles of correct use of professional words

In Chinese, some terms are structured as words, but when translated into Vietnamese, they correspond to many synonyms, such as 流动 (*lưu động/*

lưu thông/thanh khoản), 业务 (chuyên môn, nghiệp vụ), 贸易 (thương mại/mậu dịch/buôn bán), 数字 (số/điện tử), 成本 (chi phí/giá thành), 浮动 (dao động/linh hoạt/thả nổi), 担保 (đảm bảo/bảo lãnh), etc. When these terms are combined with other elements to create new terms that are a derivative identifier such as 数字身

份, 数字生态圈, 成本效率, 浮动担保, 浮动幅度, translators, when translating these terms into Vietnamese, need to base on the meanings of other elements in the combination to have an option to choose appropriate professional words according to the common or default usage in Vietnamese. For example:

Table 4: Standardization of economic and commercial synonyms in Vietnamese

No.	Chinese terms	Vietnamese terms (Not suitable for professional words)	Vietnamese terms (Standardized)
1	数字身份	<i>định danh số*/ digital identity</i>	<i>Định danh điện tử/ Electronic identification</i>
2	数字生态圈	<i>hệ sinh thái điện tử*/ Electronic ecosystem</i>	<i>Hệ sinh thái số/ Digital ecosystem</i>
3	成本效率	<i>hiệu quả giá thành*/ price efficiency</i>	<i>Hiệu quả chi phí/ cost efficiency</i>
4	浮动担保	<i>bảo lãnh thả nổi*/ floating guarantee</i>	<i>Bảo lãnh linh hoạt/ Flexible guarantee</i>
5	浮动幅度	<i>biên độ linh hoạt*/ flexible range</i>	<i>Biên độ dao động/ Fluctuation range</i>
6	浮动物价	<i>Vật giá linh hoạt*/ flexible price</i>	<i>Vật giá thả nổi/ Floating price</i>

In Table 4, the identifiers 数字, 成本, 浮动 in Chinese terms, when translated into Vietnamese, all have synonyms. If translators do not know the appropriateness of the professional words in each term, they may translate it into non-standard, strange and difficult-to-understand terms in Vietnamese (terms marked with \*). Therefore, translators need to know how to express equivalent terms in Vietnamese in order to choose the right professional words for translation, and ensure the accuracy and systematicity of Vietnamese economic and commercial terms.

## V. Conclusion

Economic and commercial terms, like other specialized terms, are a special linguistic unit. Different from common vocabulary, economic and commercial terms are specific lexical units with strict standards in terms of content and form, including monosemy, conciseness, systematicity, and internationality. Therefore, when translating economic and commercial terms from Chinese into Vietnamese, translators need to choose and comply with translation equivalence standards in accordance with the principles of terminology standardization to standardize the translation, contributing

to creating new terms or standardizing the existing terms, enriching economic and commercial terminology in Vietnamese in general, and standardizing the terms translated from Chinese into Vietnamese in particular.

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