

# English- Cebuano Translators Reference Glossary: A Review

Jessie Grace Rubrico, PhD

A Translators Reference Glossary is a compilation of accepted translation of terms from the source language (SL) into the target language (TL). These SL – TL term correspondences are deemed accurate and appropriate by the translation agency, which dispenses this glossary to their translators. The reference glossary is geared toward achieving and maintaining efficiency, reliability, and quality of translations.

Some time ago, I received this English - Cebuano Reference Glossary of medical terms from a client who emailed it along with a job order. It was obviously aimed at facilitating the translation job. Unfortunately, the reference fell short of expectation. Since this client has a global translation network, I am reviewing the glossary here for the benefit of translators, clients, principals and other English – Cebuano medical translation industry stakeholders.

The glossary has 145 entries. Twenty per cent (20%) of these retained the SL terms in the TL translation, included here are the six entries which retained the SL terms but were given alternate translations into the TL (Table 1). Translation of 24 entries (16.55%) combines SL – TL terms, while the remaining 92 entries (63.45%) were translated into the TL.

## 1. Retention of SL Terms in the TL translation

This list includes 23 terms - 17 medical jargons (e.g., *bone turnover, caregiver, CT scan, magnetic resonance imaging, MRI*), and the following: *barrier method, baseline, photosensitivity, Data Protection, Data Protection Agency, and ethics committee*.

Moving forward, six items on this list were translated two ways: (1) retention of the SL term with (2) an alternate translation in the TL as shown in Table 1. The reason given for this is quoted below:

*“It could be quite confusing to the Cebuano readers when reading a translated medical terminology if three or more words are in successive orders. That's why sometimes it's more efficient to have the 1st or 2nd word retained in their English form, and the last word is translated.”*

The foregoing rationale failed to give clearer translations of the SL in five of six attempts as discussed in Observations following Table 1.

Table 1. Two options: Original term from SL and corresponding translation into the TL

SL	(1) SL adopted in TL	(2) SL to TL	
institutional review board	institutional review board	<i>institusyonal nga rebyu board (IRB)</i>	24.
low bone mineral density	low bone mineral density	<i>mineral densidad sa mubo nga bukog</i>	25.
Power of attorney	Power of attorney	<i>Gahum sa abogado</i>	26.
selective estrogen receptor modulators	selective estrogen receptor modulators	<i>mapili-ong estrogen receptor modulators</i>	27.
self-adhesive electrodes	self-adhesive electrodes	<i>kaugalingong nagataput nga mga electrode</i>	28.
sub-study	sub-study	<i>ubos nga pagtuon</i>	29.

## Observations on Column (2) SL to TL entries

- (1) Item 24 simply respelled *institutional* and *review* and linked both with *nga* while *board* is retained. This is acceptable in the TL.
- (2) Item 25 talks about *mineral densidad sa mubo nga bukog*, yielding the BT *mineral density of a short bone*. The translation does not correspond to the SL *low mineral density of the bone*.
- (3) Item 26 is ambiguous as it can mean the power of a lawyer rather than the authority given to somebody to act on behalf of another person. *Power of attorney* is commonly used and is widely accepted in the TL.
- (4) Item 29, on the other hand renders sub-study as *ubos nga pagtuon* (lower study). A sub-study is a secondary study or a subsection of a study and should have been translated accordingly.
- (5) Items 28 and 29 are rather confusing and do not provide any help in understanding the SL phrase.

## 2. Combination of SL and TL terms

The second approach used in this translation is combining SL and TL terms. This lists 24 entries (16.55%). The following are observed:

- (1) Only markers are in the TL in this group of terms: *mga biomarker* (biomarkers), *Score sa Mayo Clinic* (Mayo Clinic score), *personal nga data* (personal data), *mga side effect* (side effects);
- (2) SL terms are respelled in the TL: *rekord sa baseline* (baseline record), *materyal sa human genetic* (human genetic material), *medikal nga kaagi* (medical history), *medikal nga mga rekord* (medical records);
- (3) SL terms are borrowed in their original spelling: [follow up] *nga mga pagtasal* (follow up assessments), [follow up] *nga pagbisita* (follow-up visit), [master file] *sa pagtuon* (study master file), *panahon sa [survival] nga [follow-up]* (survival follow-up period), *gawasnong komite sa [ethics]* (independent ethics committee), *partisipante sa [research trial]* (research trial participant).
- (4) Some terms and phrases need more appropriate translations:
  - a) *eletrikal nga mga disorder sa kasingkasing* - Although translation may be considered correct, (BT: *electrical disorder of the heart*), the term *eletrikal* may need explaining as in the TL this denotes things relative to electric power;
  - b) *gi-base sa hormonal nga mga contraceptive* (BT: *based on hormonal contraceptives*) is different from the SL *hormonal based contraceptives*;
  - c) *intrauterine device* is translated into *intrauterine nga galamiton* which is not used in the TL. This term is popularly known as IUD in the TL;
  - d) *pagbisita nga baseline* (*baseline visit*) refers to the entry visit for trial and could have been translated accordingly;
  - e) *Sinugdanang stage* (*Early stage*) sounds awkward; but then the client requires that *stage* should be retained in the TL;
  - f) *mga tapak sa transdermal hormonal* (*transdermal hormonal patches*) is problematic because the TL word chosen for *patch* denotes a piece of cloth put on to mend a hole or tear rather than that piece put over a wound or a score.

### 3. Translation of SL into the TL

The remaining 92 entries (63.45%) were translated into the TL. Forty items (43.48%) on the list are acceptable translations, while another 37 (40.22%) need better translation, and 15 (16.30%) are problematic translations.

The acceptable translations are not discussed any further here. The ensuing discussion deals with items needing better translations because of the failure of the translation to clearly convey the message of the SL. This is evident in Table 2. The first column shows the SL phrases which are translated into the TL (second column) and the BT of the TL (third column).

Table 2. Discrepancy between the SL and the BT of the TL

SL	TL	BT	
Act on Processing of Personal Data	Kalihokan sa Pagproseso sa Personal nga Data	<i>Activity of Processing of Personal Data</i>	1.
Anonymised information	Wala hiihi nga impormasyon	<i>Unrecognized information</i>	2.
diary card	kard nga diaryo	<i>newspaper card</i>	3.
Discomfort	Kakulian	<i>hardships, difficulties collectively</i>	4.
End of study assessment	Katapusan nga pagtasal sa pagtuon	<i>Final assessment of the study</i>	5.
Long-term impact	Hataas nga impak	<i>High impact</i>	6.
Study record	Talaan sa pagtuon	<i>Study list</i>	7.
study staff	sakop sa pagtuon	<i>study member</i>	8.
subject information leaflet	impormasyong leaflet sa hintun-an	<i>Information Leaflet of the Subject</i>	9.
Supervising doctor	Tigatiman nga duktur	<i>Attending physician</i>	10.
Reproductive Risks	Mga Risgo sa Pagpanganak	<i>Risks of Childbirth</i>	11.
Sedentary lifestyle	Kakulangan sa pisikal nga kalihokan nga panginabuhi/ lifestyle	<i>Lack of physical activity living</i>	12.
stroke(s)	(mga) istrok		13.
Study coordinator	Tigpatakdo sa pagtuon	<i>One who matches the study</i>	14.

#### Comments on Table 2 entries

- (1) *Act on Processing of Personal Data* is a piece of legislation not an activity;
- (2) *Anonymised information* is not *unrecognized information*, rather information where identifiers are taken out to protect the identity of individuals involved;
- (3) *diaryo* in TL refers to newspapers not to diaries;
- (4) TL *kakulian* denotes more than *discomfort*, it can denote barriers, challenges, hardships and difficulties;
- (5) Assessment at the end of the study differs slightly from *final assessment of the study*, *pagtasal sa katapusan sa pagtuon* (assessment at the end of the study ~ end of study assessment) would have been more appropriate;
- (6) Item 9 is rather vague. It is not clear whether the information leaflet is a guide for or about the subject

- (7) Item 14 (*mga istrok*) as translation of SL *stroke(s)* needs to be reconsidered for although *stroke* (respelled as *istrok*) is used in the TL, *mga istrok* is not used in medical sense.
- (8) Item 13 *kakulangan sa pisikal nga kalihokan nga panginabuhilifestyle* needs to be fixed as TL *panginabuhilifestyle* refers to livelihood or means of earning a living rather than to a lifestyle.
- (9) BTs of Items 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, and 14 need no further explanation.

More items on the list:

(10) Lexical snags in the translation

- a) SL *adverse events* (denoting untoward medical incident in a subject given a drug under study) is incorrectly rendered as *mabatukon* (challenging) *nga mga panghitabo*; *makadaot nga mga panghitabo* is rather too vague to imply the meaning of the source text.
- b) *Gi-protektang impormasyon sa kabaskog sa lawas* (BT: information used to protect good health) clearly differs from SL *protected health information*.
- c) *dili matangtang pinaagi sa surhiya* (Unresectable); *surhiya* is seldom used in the TL, *pag-opera* or *operasyon* is the more operational term.
- d) *Hintun-an* (Subject) is a not so common variation of the standard *gitun-an*.
- e) *pagpalungtad nga bahin* (SL maintenance phase), another term is needed here to imply medical maintenance phase.
- f) *medikal nga panghitabo* (SL medical event), needs a more specific translation to indicate medical episodes, e.g., heart attack.
- g) *pag-uswag sa sakit* (disease progression) - although this gives an acceptable BT, disease progression in the TL means a disease is getting worse; *pag-uswag* is used in a more positive sense, not in worsening case scenarios of diseases.
- h) *Paniksik nga trabaho* (SL: Exploratory work) could be improved with a better word choice; as an aside, *paniksik* has another denotation in the TL (e.g., getting lice eggs off the hair strands).
- i) *Mga Awtoridad sa Kabaskog sa Lawas* (BT: Authorities of Good Health versus SL Health Authorities), health may be good or poor.

(11) The following are not used in the TL:

- a) *Pormularyo sa Impormasyon ug Pagtugot* (Information and Consent Form), *pormularyo* is odd.
- b) *Dyeneral nga Praktisyoner, General Practitioner* is borrowed as is.
- c) *publikong panuki* (BT: public investigation, SL public auditing)
- d) *panubay sa elektrikal nga kalihokan sa imong kasingkasing* (tracing of the electrical activity of your heart)

(12) The following examples show syntactic anomalies which render the translation inaccurate:

- a) *balaodnong madawat nga representante* (legally acceptable representative)
- b) *balaodnong mga awtoridad* (regulatory authorities)
- c) *balaodnong mga awtoridad sa kabaskog sa lawas* (regulatory health authorities)

#### 4. Problematic translations

This list contains translations which failed to convey the message of the source text because of wrong correspondences or because of coinage which are not in currency and therefore not understandable by speakers of the TL. There are 15 items in this list accounting for 16.30% of the third group. Comments are given immediately after Table 3.

Table 3. SL – TL Correspondences Failure

SL	TL	
double-blind	<i>doble-buta</i>	1.
dummy treatment	<i>awat nga pagtambal</i>	2.
Flare-up	<i>Faputong</i>	3.
imaging vendor	<i>magbabaligya sa kahulagwayan</i>	4.
Infusion Puncture site	<i>Dapit sa pagbisbis nga pagbuslot</i>	5.
infusion site	<i>dapit sa pagbisbis</i>	6.
Intravenous infusion	<i>Sulod sa ugat nga pagbisbis</i>	7.
Irregular heart rate	<i>Dili regular nga ritmo sa kasingkasing</i>	8.
markers of disease activity	<i>mga marka sa kalihokan sa sakit</i>	9.
Open-label	<i>Abli-timaan</i>	10.
respiratory distress	<i>kasamok sa pagginhawa</i>	11.
Treatment-naïve	<i>Yanong pagtambal</i>	12.
well tolerated	<i>maayong gipasagad</i>	13.
Withdraw	<i>Pagbiya</i>	14.
Withdrawal	<i>Ang pagbiya</i>	15.

- (1) Translation of Items 1 and 10 are coined and unfamiliar to the TL speakers. These are awkward, and are not used nor understood in the TL.
- (2) Item 2 *awat nga pagtambal* (BT: imitation/copy treatment) is not equivalent to SL *dummy treatment* which is not a copy or imitation treatment but *placebos*.
- (3) Items 5, 6, and 7 are related terms. *Dapit sa infusion puncture* (BT: Infusion Puncture site) needs a clearer presentation as (a) infusion puncture is not understood in the TL and (b) the alternate translation *Dapit sa pagbisbis nga pagbuslot* is misleading. TL *bisbis* denotes *sprinkle with water*, e.g., *pagbisbis sa tanom* (sprinkling water on/watering the plant); TL *buslot*, on the other hand, may mean having a hole, patch or perforation. Thus, *pagbisbis nga pagbuslot* may yield the BT *sprinkling water/watering to perforate*. While *perforate* is synonymous to *puncture*, *pagbisbis* does not convey the meaning of SL *infusion* which is a procedure by which a substance, generally in its liquid form, is introduced “into a vein or the subcutaneous tissues of the body” (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/infusion>). SL *infusion Puncture site* refers to the skin area where a needle or other device is inserted. The first translation does not explain anything unless the reader is medically initiated, while the second is unacceptable (BT: place of watering to perforate).

- (4) Item 8 *Dili regular nga ritmo sa kasingkasing* (BT: irregular rhythm of the heart) incorrectly glossed *SL Irregular heart rate*; there is a difference between *heart rate* (the number of times the heart beats in a minute) and *heart rhythm* (the pattern of the heart beat).
- (5) Item 9 *mga marka sa kalihokan sa sakit*, (BT: marks of the activity of the disease) does not convey the message of *SL markers of disease activity* (sense: indicators, signs, indications of the activity of a disease).
- (6) Item 11 *kasamok sa pagginhawa* (BT: trouble breathing, *SL respiratory distress*) seems correct unless we consider that *kasamok sa pagginhawa* is not used in Cebuano; breathing difficulty has a different term in the TL.
- (7) Item 12 *yanong pagtambal* (BT: ordinary or plain treatment) is unacceptable translation of the source text *treatment naïve* which refers to a subject who has not undergone antiretroviral therapy before.
- (8) Items 14 and 15 are related words: *withdraw* is a verb while *withdrawal*, a noun; *pagbiya* is a noun, thus when a noun is asked for in *withdrawal*, the translator simply put the marker *ang*, which should not have been necessary had the verb been glossed correctly.
- (9) The remaining three terms: *Faputong* (Flare-up), *magbabaligya sa kahulagwayan* (imaging vendor), and *maayong gipasagad* (well tolerated) are nonsensical at all.

## Summary and Conclusion

Overall, the glossary has 145 entries. Twenty-three SL terms (15.86%) were retained in the TL translation while 122 terms (84.14%) were translated into the TL, including those with SL retention provided with TL alternate translation. Of the 122 terms, 63 (51.64%) have acceptable translations, 36 (29.51%) need improvement due to lexical snags and other translation issues, and 23 (18.85%) are problematic translations. If we round these percentages off, we get a ratio of 50:30:20 (50% acceptable, 30% unsatisfactory, 20% unacceptable) or, a 50-50 ratio. Much work is still needed to make this reference glossary good enough.

For a reference glossary to be recognized as one, compilers should strive for 100% accuracy and acceptability of SL – TL correspondences or equivalences. Only then can it become a vehicle toward achieving and maintaining efficiency, reliability, and quality of translations.

-----

Dr. Rubrico has been in the translation industry for over 15 years. She is the Cebuano Language Coordinator for a center on medical research and education. She also does linguistic validation, post cognitive debriefing consultations, BT and harmonization projects for selected clients in the industry.

e-mail address: [drrubrico@gmail.com](mailto:drrubrico@gmail.com)

Website: [www.languagelinks.org](http://www.languagelinks.org)