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The work reported in this paper focuses on the quality and usability of translations of food package labels on foodstuffs into Finland. I have outlined some theoretical assumptions underlying food label translation according to the applied theories of technical communication by Corbin, Moell and Boyd and meaning-based translation by Mildred Larson. I believe these theories can be used in a meaningful way to improve food label translations in general.

A food label is a form of trans-cultural communication. Even though food package labels imported into Finland are universal, they need to be translated by native speakers and professional translators in their own cultural situation. Translated food labels should simultaneously meet a lot of different requirements: they should be simple, visible and include factual information. There are almost weekly reports on consumer and food related matters, but very little is said about the translation of food labels. Yet the type of information manufacturers print on the food labels and how they are translated is important.

Communication is getting easier, more international and intercultural as a result of globalisation. Multinational food companies constantly provide the markets with new goods and products. The main point of this paper is that companies importing foodstuffs to Finland do not sufficiently focus on the quality and usability of translated food package labels.

I found food label translations in Finland to be poor and inadequate, given the seriousness of the food related issues raised in this paper. Food label translators must ensure at all times that the content of the food label is accurate and clear, but also that the users can easily use the content of the food product. The number of inaccuracies, asymmetries, omissions, grammatical errors, inconsistencies in punctuation, ambiguities in information, cultural mismatches, incomprehensible food terminology and foreign terms and expressions simply show that there is an acute need to improve the overall standards of quality and usability in food label translation in Finland.

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Suomenkielinen lyhennelmä

Johdanto

Ruoka on keskeinen aihe mediassa, koska ruokaan liittyvät asiat kiinnostavat kuluttajia. Suomeen tuotujen elintarvikkeiden pakkausmerkinnät ja niiden käännökset eivät saa juuri huomiota. Pakkausmerkinnät ovat yksi tuotteen näkyvin ominaisuus, ja niiden ensisijainen tehtävä on kertoa, mitä tuote sisältää ja täyttää samalla Suomen ja Euroopan Unionin lait ja asetukset.

Maahantuojat tuovat markkinoille jatkuvasti uusia tuotteita. Monikansallisten yritysten pitäisi uhrata enemmän aikaa ja voimavaroja tuotteiden pakkausmerkintöjen laatuun ja käytettävyyteen. Pakkausmerkinnät ovat myös tärkeä osa tuotteen imagoa. Tutkimukseni hypoteesi on, että maahantuojat eivät keskity riittävästi pakkausmerkintöjen käännöksiin, laatuun ja käytettävyyteen. Tarkastelen tätä oletusta erityisesti kääntämisen näkökulmasta.

Tutkin työssäni 21 Suomeen maahantuodun elintarvikkeen pakkausmerkintöjen suomenkielisiä käännöksiä, niiden laatua ja käytettävyyttä. Tarkastelen sitä, miten kääntäjät käyttävät kulttuurisia diskursseja käännöksissään. Tarkasteluni pohjautuu Mildred Larsonin teoriaan tekstin merkitykseen ja kielelliseen vastaavuuteen perustuvasta kääntämisestä (1998b). Lisäksi pohdin, mikä on kääntäjien rooli pakkausmerkintöjen tapaisia teknisiä dokumentteja tuottaessaan – miten kääntäjät voivat parantaa niiden laatua ja käytettävyyttä. Tätä tarkastelen Michelle Corbinin, Pat Moellin ja Mike Boydin (2002) tekniseen viestintään soveltuvan teorian pohjalta.

Tutkimusmenetelmät ja -aineisto

Työni tarkastelee suomalaista pakkausmerkintäkulttuuria, rakennetta ja kielenkäyttöä teknisen viestinnän ja kääntämisen näkökulmasta. Maahantuotujen elintarvikkeiden vieraskieliset ja –peräiset pakkausmerkinnät tuodaan osaksi suomalaisten kuluttajien kulttuuria. Kääntäjien pitää pakata pakkausmerkintöjen sisältämä tieto pieneen tilaan niin, että teksti on ymmärrettävässä ja luettavassa muodossa.

Vaikka Corbin, Moell ja Boyd ovat esittäneet teoriansa teknisestä editoimisesta ohjelmistoyrityksissä, teoriaa voidaan hyvin soveltaa kuluttajien käyttöön suunnattujen pakkausmerkintöjen kääntämiseen ja editoimiseen. Pakkausmerkintöjen kääntäjiä voidaan pitää teknisinä viestijöinä, koska he tuottavat ja kääntävät pakkausmerkintöjen sisältämää teknistä tietoa.

Tekninen editointi ei tarkoita pelkkää oikolukua tai kirjoitus- tai kielioppivirheiden etsimistä. Kääntäjien pitäisi tehdä enemmän yhteistyötä pakkausmerkintöjen laatijoiden kanssa informaation laadun parantamiseksi. Teknisten dokumenttien tärkeimpiä ominaisuuksia kuluttajien kannalta on tekstin ymmärrettävä ja paikkansapitävä sisältö, jossa otetaan kohdeyleisö huomioon. Laadukas tekninen viestintä tarkoittaa sitä, että tieto täyttää kuluttajien vaatimukset – oikeaa tietoa oikea määrä oikeaan aikaan.

Maahantuotujen pitäisi hyödyntää kääntäjien ammattitaitoa eli kieli-, kirjoitus- ja suunnittelutaitoa nykyistä enemmän. Kääntäjät voivat myös testata tuotteen käytettävyyttä ja poistaa mahdolliset viestintää vaikeuttavat esteet. Kääntäjien pitäisi

voida vapaasti parantaa pakkausmerkintöjen tekstinasettelua tai lisätä tarvittaessa suomalaiselle kuluttajalle hyödyllistä ja tarpeellista tietoa, joka auttaisi kuluttajia löytämään ja ymmärtämään tarvitsemansa informaation vaivatta ja nopeasti.

Pakkausmerkintöjä on vaikea kääntää niiden sisältämän vaikeatajuisten kemiallisten yhdisteiden ja elintarviketeollisuudessa käytettävien termien vuoksi. Yksi tapa helpottaa kuluttajien pakkausmerkinnöistä saamaa informaatiokaaosta olisi kääntäjien yhteistyö maahantuojien, lainlaatijoiden ja kielenhuollon asiantuntijoiden kanssa jo pakkausmerkintöjen suunnitteluvaiheessa. Corbin, Moell ja Boyd kuvailevat yhteistyömenetelmää sanalla sisällön editointi (comprehensive editing). Siinä kääntäjien ammattitaitoa hyödynnetään miettimällä etukäteen, miten kuluttajien olisi helpoin ymmärtää tai käyttää tuotetta.

Tutkimukseni teoreettisen viitekehityksen lähteenä on ollut pääasiassa Mildred Larsonin teos *Meaning-based Translation: A Guide to Cross-language Equivalence (1998b)*. Käännösprosessiin kuuluu Larsonin mukaan lukeminen, kääntäminen, ymmärtäminen sekä kulttuureiden- ja kieltenvälisen viestinnän parantaminen. Larsonin kääntämisen oppaaksi soveltuva teos käsittelee kääntämistä käytännönläheisesti. Hänen ideansa sekä runsaat esimerkkinsä sopivat mielestäni hyvin pakkausmerkintöjen kääntämiseen, ja koin ne erityisen hyödylliseksi analysoidessani tutkimusmateriaaliani.

Pakkausmerkintöjen kääntäjät elintarviketeollisuudessa

Suomen liittyttyä Euroopan Unionin jäseneksi vuonna 1995 pakkausmerkintöjen kääntäjien toimenkuvaan vaikuttavat lait ja asetukset, jotka velvoittavat maahantuojia kääntämään pakkausmerkinnät asianmukaisesti. Näin ei usein kuitenkaan ole. Käännettyjen pakkausmerkintöjen tarkoitus on auttaa kuluttajaa muodostamaan käsitys tarjolla olevasta elintarvikkeesta ja vertailemaan tuotteita keskenään sekä tekemään päätöksiä tuotteen suhteen.

Tutkimusten mukaan elintarvikkeiden pakkausmerkinnät aiheuttavat sekaannuksia ja epäselvyyttä kuluttajien keskuudessa. Monet pitävät pakkausmerkintöjä vaikeatajuisena. Kuluttajilla on oikeus saada oikeaa tietoa ostamastaan tuotteesta. Siksi kääntäjien on oltava erityisen tarkkoja kääntäessään elintarvikkeiden tuoteselosteita. He ovat osa tuoteketjua: heidän pitää varmistaa pakkausmerkintöjen oikeellisuus ja luotettavuus. Ruoka-aineallergioista kärsivät kuluttajat joutuvat lukemaan pakkausmerkinnät erityisen huolellisesti. Asianmukaiset ja käyttökelpoiset pakkausmerkintöjen käännökset ovat tällöin avainasemassa.

Ennen elintarvikkeet ostettiin lähikaupasta irtotavarana. Pakkaukset muuttivat koko elintarviketeollisuuden. Vapaa kauppa ja Euroopan Unioni mahdollistavat tuotteiden siirtymisen vaivattomammin valtakunnan rajojen yli. Isot kansainväliset elintarvikeyritykset ja maahantuojat keskittyvät nyt tuotteisiin, joita voi myydä samoissa pakkauksissa monilla eri markkinoilla. Siksi tuotteisiin painetaan monet käännökset pienikokoisin tekstein, mikä vaikeuttaa pakkausmerkintöjen lukemista ja ymmärtämistä.

Asetusten mukaan pakkausmerkintöjen täytyy olla helppotajuisia, helposti luettavissa ja selkeästi esitettyjä. Pakkausmerkinnät ovat yksi kulttuurienvälisen viestinnän muoto. Hyvät pakkausmerkinnät täyttävät seuraavat kriteerit (Heiskanen, Niva ja Timonen, 1996):

- a) ulkoiset ominaisuudet: selkeä, yksinkertainen, havaittava, luettava, helppotajuinen, jäsenneily ja suomenkielinen.
- b) sisäiset ominaisuudet: uskottava, informatiivinen, asiallinen, neutraali ja faktatietoa.

Johtopäätökset

Tutkimukseni tarkasteli Suomeen maahantuotujen elintarvikkeiden pakkausmerkintöjen kääntämistä, niiden laatua ja käytettävyyttä. Tarkastelin laatua ja käytettävyyttä Corbinin, Moellin ja Boydin teorian pohjalta. Tutkin myös pakkausmerkintöjen käännösten vastaavuutta Larsonin merkityspäruusteinen kääntämisen teorian valossa.

Tutkimukset osoittivat, että suuressa osassa pakkausmerkintöjä on yksi tai useampi vakava puute tai virhe. Ammattitaitoiset kääntäjät voisivat vähentää virheiden esiintymistä. Pakkausmerkintöjen ymmärtäminen ja lukeminen vie nykyisellään liikaa aikaa, tietoa oli liikaa ja sitä ei ollut jäsenneily järkevällä tavalla. Kaikissa tuotteissa ei käännöksiä ollut lainkaan tai tiedot olivat puutteellisia. Terveydelle haitallisia tai allergisoivia aineita ei ollut mainittu selkeästi tai lainkaan, ja käännökset olivat

harhaanjohtavia ja sekavia. Pakkausmerkinnöissä käytettiin paljon vierasperäisiä sanoja ja terminologiaa, joka ei kuluttajille auennut.

Tutkimuksestani käy ilmi, ettei pakkausmerkintöjen huonoille käännöksille, jotka eivät täytä kuluttajien ja viranomaisten vaatimuksia, ole perusteita. Kääntäjien pitää pystyä sisällyttämään elintarvikepakkauksiin kaikki tarpeellinen tieto, vaikka tilaa on vähän.

Tutkimusaineistoni osoitti, että useimmat pakkausmerkintöjen käännökset eivät olisi läpäisseet käytettävyydestä. Tärkein tieto pitäisi sijoittaa ensin näkyvimmälle paikalle (päiväysmerkinnät ja allergisoivat ainesosat kuten muna tai pähkinä ym.) Mielestäni kääntäjillä pitää olla vapaus jättää pois, lisätä tai muotoilla käännettävää tekstiä, jotta lopputulos olisi mahdollisimman looginen ja johdonmukainen. Kääntäjien pitäisi valita pakkausmerkintöjen kannalta sopivin kielellinen ja visuaalinen tyyli. Kielen pitäisi olla sujuvaa suomea, ja mittayksiköihin pitäisi kiinnittää erityistä huomiota.

Merkitys on aina muotoa tärkeämpi. Kääntäjän tulisi pyrkiä idiomaattiseen käännökseen; merkitys ei saisi muuttua. Havaitsin työssäni, että pakkausmerkintöjen kääntäminen on Suomessa laadultaan alkeellista, parantamisen varaa on paljon. Pakkausmerkinnät sisälsivät suuren määrän virheitä, muun muassa luonnottomia käännöksiä, kääntämättä jättämiä, kielioppi- ja oikeinkirjoitusvirheitä, epätarkkoja tietoja ja vierasperäisiä termejä. Pakkausmerkintöjen kääntäjien tehtävänä on tuottaa ymmärrettävää tietoa kuluttajille. Siksi tuotteiden ostajat olisi otettava nykyistä paremmin huomioon.

Näin ollen hypoteesini siitä, että maahantuojat eivät kiinnitä riittävästi huomiota pakkausmerkintöjen käänköksiin, niiden laatuun ja käytettävyyteen, osoittautui tarkastelussa paikkansa pitäväksi. Monikansalliset yritykset haluavat myydä elintarvikkeita kaikkialla maailmassa, ja ruoka on tuottavaa bisnestä. Ammattitaitoiset kääntäjät voisivat tuoda elintarviketuotteille niiden kaipaamaa lisäarvoa laadullisilta ominaisuuksiltaan ja käytettävyydeltään parempien pakkausmerkintöjen muodossa. Tämä toisi tulevaisuudessa tyytyväisempiä kuluttajia, ja tuotteiden käyttäminen olisi entistä helpompaa ja käyttäjäystävällisempää.

1. Introduction

Translating food labels interests me since I am a heavy consumer of imported food. According to recent surveys, consumers' food trends and culture are changing, and the consumption of foreign foodstuffs is increasing. Food also seems to be a topical issue that has caught the attention of the media. There are almost weekly reports on consumer and food related matters, but very little is said about the translation of food labels. Yet the type of information manufacturers print on the food labels and how they are translated is important.

Throughout the industrialised world, multinational food companies are seeking effective methods for enhancing economic productivity through globalisation, international research, and by employing professionals to promote productivity and efficient marketing. The label must be one of the most visible media in marketing, and taking into account the number of people it reaches, one of the most influential (Opie 1987: 6).

Most food labels are printed for use in their country of origin only, but when a product is exported, its printed label may travel to the four corners of the world. Manufacturers have become increasingly aware of how important a part the food label plays in the sales of their products. Considerable attention is given to the visual impact of the label. But what are the functions of the label? First, the simple need to say what is inside the package. Second, to make the package more attractive. Manufacturers have noticed that their products sell better if they have an element of prestige attached to them. Today's supermarket label combines all these aspects, from

the purely functional message to the inducements, but it must also conform to many legal requirements, such as the product's ingredients, the sell-by date, and an illustration which cannot be misleading in any way (Opie 1987: 6-10).

Finland has been a member of the European Union since 1995, and this has meant that food label translators have had to adapt to a number of changes on the food market, since the Finnish package labelling legislation became unified, in other words harmonised with the European Union regulations. Communication is getting easier, more international and intercultural as a result of globalisation. Multinational food companies constantly provide the markets with new goods and products. The food package labels on these products have to meet the standards and legislation set by national governments. I think that multinational food companies should spend more time and effort on introducing food products with user-friendly and high-quality food package labels.

The Finnish legislation on imported food requires each product to have a printed label with information in both Finnish and in Swedish attached to it for the consumer.

Food importers are facing a challenge in making sure that the translated food labels meet the needs of consumers and legislators. Food labels are not only a necessity but also a part of the product's image.

There are several Finnish studies on foodstuffs package labelling conducted by the National Food Administration in Finland (Elintarvikevirasto), for example. Quite a few of them have studied whether food package labels meet the requirements set by the Finnish legislation. Different market and consumer research institutes, like The

National Consumer Research Centre, the Consumer Association and The Finnish Women's Consumer and the Counselling Association (Kuluttajaliitto, Kuluttajatutkimuskeskus, Marttaliitto) as well as other instances, have examined foodstuffs package labels and markings with the help of extensive survey material (Finnfood 1999a; Finnfood 1999b; Järvelä 1998; Puttonen et al. 1992). The consumer surveys concerning package labels have included interviews with consumers about their choices in food shops and supermarkets¹ (Nykänen 1994).

The hypothesis of this thesis is that companies importing foodstuffs to Finland do not sufficiently focus on the translations, quality and usability of the translated food package labels. My aim is to ask these questions in the framework of translation:

1. How is the original food label translated? (General issues.)
2. Is the translator merely translating or is he technically rewriting or editing the label to help the consumer? (Quality and usability.)
3. Are there any signs of cultural differences or mismatches between the original text and the translation? (Meaning-based translation.)

The purpose of this thesis is to look at food labels from a cross-linguistic angle, from the point of view of translators:

- a) to describe the legislative and cultural dynamics propelling the translation of multinational food labels;
- b) to describe the role of the translator as a technical editor assuring quality in food label translations;
- c) to assess the overall quality and usability of food label translations into Finnish in the light of applied theories on technical

¹ Throughout this paper, all translations from Finnish-language sources are mine.

communication by Michelle Corbin, Pat Moell and Mike Boyd (2002) as well as the applied theory of meaning-based translation by Mildred Larson (1998b).

1.1. Aim of this thesis

The idea of this thesis is to analyse conventional ways of translating food labels on food products imported to Finland. I seek to examine the quality and usability of food labels translated into Finnish on imported foodstuffs. The focus is on the translators' ability to communicate the original message intelligibly to consumers. For this thesis I gathered 21 different samples of translated food labels on imported food products. The samples were chosen among packages of noodles, coconut milks, rice, snacks, cakes, et cetera, but they had to satisfy the following criteria: imported to the European Union and translated into Finnish (appendix 1). The reason why I collected the samples of imported food products was that I wanted to focus on meaning-based cross-cultural equivalence. Some of the food labels included pictures and drawings as well as nutritive tables or photos, but I concentrated mostly on printed text and their effect on product usability from consumers' point of view. At this stage I did not personally interview any of the importers of these food products or actual translators employed by these multinational companies.

I shall concentrate on the cultural conventions the translators of my research material may have used in their work and how it becomes apparent in food label translations. Cultural context in this case refers to those common social rules, customs, mechanisms and norms that translators follow in their work. In other words, I ask

whether the food label translators meet the cultural horizon (Suoninen 1997) that readers expect them to meet in their interpretations. Identifying the cultural contexts helps the organisation and categorisation of my research material – it illuminates how translators use cultural discourses in their interpretation of food labels. I intend to interpret the cultural dynamics propelling the work of translators translating food labels for Finnish consumers.

Analysing a small amount of research material does not, of course, allow me the right to make sweeping generalisations about cultural issues. The importance of food and related issues is generally acknowledged, but to my surprise, the way a translator in a multinational food company operates is not considered important. Thus the text samples are part of the research, not mere descriptions. All the linguistic evidence of the translators' interpretations is printed as in the original samples *in italics*. This enables the readers to follow my analysis and interpretation in full.

Translating food labels is not a new phenomenon, but their form and style are constantly changing due to new laws and regulations within the European Union. One of the issues in this thesis is how translators adapt to these changes. There are certain presuppositions set by authorities and consumers concerning food label quality and usability that have to be met. It is possible that translators settle for translating food labels as they have always been translated, according to templates, but I think it is the translator's obligation to make the necessary changes and improvements.

Food label translating is interesting but difficult. Foodstuffs are imported to Finland from practically every corner of the world. Some of them are truly exotic, and

modern consumers are interested in expanding into new ethnic novelties. Translators have to be familiar with many different types of food terms, chemical substances, cooking and food preparation terms, et cetera. Food label translators are trendsetters as far as new food terms and terminology are concerned; they decide whether to keep the original *curries* and *zucchinis* – or to opt for Finnish equivalents like *karri* and *kesäkurpitsa*.

There is an acute need to improve the quality of food label translation in Finland - the level of usability of food labels aimed at consumers must be raised. Producing quality is up to the people who work with translations. There are several theories proposed to producing quality, but I would like to focus on *quality and usability* in technical communication with some of Michelle Corbin's, Pat Moell's and Mike Boyd's ideas (Technical Communication 2002).

1.2. Methods of research

Translators constantly try to solve translation problems in the process of transferring meaning from one culture to another. They evaluate semantic, cultural, psychological or historical borders of words in the overall context of a text. Translation has an undeniable effect on the reading of a text, as reading is a form of dialogue and communication of a text.

Translators must always establish a certain perspective toward the text. One text can be translated in various ways. Each language per se is a larger perspective, a way of seeing things. This thesis focuses among other things on Finnish food label culture,

the structure and usage of the Finnish language in this specific field of technical communication and interpretation of food labels. As stated before, each translated word in Finnish culture has its semantic, cultural and historical meaning, and any underlying associations of meaning of foreign words and expressions have to be transferred in totality into the cultural context of the Finnish language.

1.2.1. Applied theory of Corbin, Moell and Boyd

Quality seems to be emphasised differently in various industries. Qualified technical writers and translators for example in software businesses are very much in demand. On the other hand, you do not often see food importers seeking qualified translators. Michelle Corbin, Pat Moell and Mike Boyd (2002) have recently introduced an idea of *technical editing* as quality assurance in the software development environment, but I think their theory could be successfully applied to translating and editing any texts targeted at consumers, like food labels for example. Food label translators can be seen as technical communicators since they provide technical information for consumers on food labels. I also consider food label translators as technical editors since they work with technical food label information written by technical writers. *Technical editing* is often thought to be mere grammar checking or proof-reading, but it is more than that. My research material shows later on that importers seem to spend little time on technical editing or translation.

According to the survey of David Nadziejka (1999), technical editors in software businesses are nowadays concentrating more on *content editing*, which means working together with technical writers and translators in order to produce high-

quality information for consumers. I believe this method of collaboration with technical communicators producing technical information in multinational food businesses, like translators, is essential for obtaining high-quality information on food labels. There are traditional ways of easing the workload of translators when editing the content of the target text: the levels-of-edit systems; proofreading edit, grammar edit and full edit. Nadziejka, however, changes the shift from grammar and style towards the *content*. He states that “for technical documents the primary focus must be to help ensure that the technical content is complete, accurate, and understandable to the intended audience” (1999: 5). Content editing is more than simply checking the grammar of food labels. This means that no product information (user-manuals, instructions for use or any kind of product labels) should leave the company without being subject to *technical editing* or *content editing* carried out by the translator. By providing guarantee of quality with the help of *content editing*, translators could add value to the information development process and give consumers the quality content they are entitled to.

What does *quality* in information mean? Gretchen Hargis et al (1998) defined the following characteristics for quality: “accuracy, clarity, completeness, organisation, retrievability, style, task orientation, and visual effectiveness”. Thus the concept of quality when applied to technical information in food label translation means that the information meets the consumers’ needs by providing the right information at the right time. According to Corbin, Moell and Boyd, quality in technical information is possible only if it is:

- “easily understood by the users
- easily retrieved by the users

- well-written, complete, and technically accurate”.

Since the translator is an advocate for language on the labels, he must have a solid knowledge of grammar and its usage. He should edit the food labels at the sentence level and check for completeness, appropriateness of the language for the target audience, logical structure and clarity. As an employee of a multinational food company, the translator should check the company style standards, legal correctness (European Union and Finnish legislation), safety and security, such as liability issues (warnings), and appropriate use of product names and trademarks (Corbin, Moell and Boyd 2002). I think it is essential that translators be part of the information development team by getting involved in the developing process at an early stage together with writers as their collaborators. This is because translators can use their language skills, writing skills and information design skills to obtain clarity and cohesion to the writers' work. I am convinced that food label translators would also be good usability testers; they could read the information on the label, perform the tasks and try to find errors or ambiguities on the labels. Translators should also check the appropriateness of graphics intended for consumers. Translators could make the information on food labels more concise for the users, paring the text to its essentials, eliminating technical foodstuffs jargon or unnecessary details, as well as eliminating any material which does not belong to the product intended for the Finnish users. I agree with Corbin, Moell and Boyd that translators in the role of technical communicators could also make suggestions that would improve the layout of the text, add any other important information which would help the users find the content easily and to understand it.

According to the article of Corbin, Moell and Boyd (2002), software businesses test their products thoroughly. One of the testing methods is *usability testing*, which I

think could be applied to multinational food companies as well. It means that “testers or human factors engineers identify how the typical users interact with the user interfaces of the product, including its documentation, for characteristics such as accessibility, efficiency, and comprehensibility” (Kit 1995). The usability test of a food label would fail if a consumer tried several different ways of locating information but still could not find the required item.

Corbin, Moell and Boyd define *comprehensive editing* as “reviewing the content, organisation, and design of the information to make sure that the reader is able to understand the text easily and that the information meets its objectives” (Rude 2002). This means that it would be necessary for the food label translator to work closely with the writer in the multinational food company to *develop the information* by adding, removing, and revising the information when imperative. *Comprehensive editing* is sometimes referred to as *developmental editing* or *substantive editing*.

Whatever term one uses, the activities done for the improvement of a translated text on a food label remain the same. In *usability editing* it means that the translator is the first user of the information on the food label, reading and responding in the way a typical consumer might react to the information (Tarutz 1992). It is up to the translator to verify that each piece of information on the food label is correct and that there are no misleading misrepresentations or possibilities for misunderstandings. *Usability editing* originates from the idea of usability testing. Therefore *usability editing* is any performance carried out by the food label translator to improve the quality and usability of the information under translation.

In *copy editing* the translator “reviews the paragraphs, the sentences, and the words for spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors”. This means that the translator

must have the appropriate style guides at hand to ensure that the label is “accurate, complete, and consistent”. To sum up, it is of utmost importance that the food label translator focuses on the content of the information to maintain its quality at every possible stage of his work.

In *comprehensive editing* the translator’s talent, time and attention are aimed at the content of the information. Thus it is necessary that the translator of the food label thinks about how the information will help the consumer to manage and handle the food product. Ideally, *comprehensive editing* should already be done at the development phase, where technical writers together with translators focus on the accuracy, clarity, and accessibility of the information on the label. “The objective is to make the most extensive changes at the earliest stage possible, because the later the change, the higher the costs and the greater the risk to the schedule” (Tarutz 1992: 71). As representatives for the final users and consumers of the food products, translators should carefully review the information requirements so that the information follows those expectations.

1.2.2. Larson’s meaning-based approach

The issue of how successfully situations in one language can be repeated in another is the primary concern of any food label translator. It is necessary to pay attention to the fact that not all cultures perceive the same situations in the same way. Humans might resemble each other intellectually and emotionally in most parts of the world, but the way we understand and interpret cultural situations can differ drastically from one culture or language to another.

My aim is to shed light on the translation process of the linguistic discourses used in exotic food labels based on the ideas of Dr Mildred Larson. Methodologies of translation like Larson's publication *Meaning-based Translation: A Guide to Cross-language Equivalence* (1998b), can give some perspective on the activities of reading, interpreting, understanding and improving cross-cultural and cross-language communication. Larson has published a wide selection of translation guidebooks and articles, and the material presented here borrows heavily from the writings of Eugene Nida, John Callow, Kathleen Callow, Katharine Barnwell, and Peter Newmark. I became familiar with Larson's ideas through the works of Peter Newmark, who also wrote the foreword for her book.

Newmark points out that some modern translation theories have been perhaps too philosophical and remote to relate at all firmly to the translator's mundane and basic problems. Some theorists have supported contrastive linguistics and others have tied translation vigorously to a linguistic theory. In addition to Newmark there are also other scholars who have viewed translation from a very practical angle, among them Eugene Nida. Larson can also be grouped in this category. She has made the principles of translation available to the readers through personal experience in translation and consultation, and through interaction with colleagues involved in translation projects in many parts of the world. I found Larson's ideas very practical and inspirational and therefore useful for my purposes in this thesis.

2. TRANSLATORS IN FOOD LABELLING INDUSTRY

The most vital information about foodstuffs on food package labels from a consumer's viewpoint is regulated by law. This enables consumers to obtain information about the safety and quality of the foodstuffs in question (Elintarvikevirasto, The National Food Administration Office 1998a). The legislation on package labels for foodstuffs was unified and ratified among the first regulations within the European Union countries. In order to carry out the package label reform in Finland, the National Food Administration drafted a guidebook on food package regulations, which was intended for the supervising authorities and the traders in the food business (Elintarvikevirasto, The National Food Administration Office 1993). However, there are still shops and manufacturers that do not take these regulations seriously. There are all sorts of foodstuffs for sale that do not have a single word in Finnish to make the product more user-friendly. For instance, in ethnic shops consumers are offered merely a picture of the product, a foreign name and a wild guess as to the ingredients in question (appendix 1, ALWADI FOUL MOUDAMMAS).

Food package labels are meant to help the consumer. The traders in the food business are responsible for printing the labels and making sure that the contents of the food packages and their labels are consistent with each other. With the help of food package labels the consumers can form an opinion on new food products, enabling them to make decisions and comparisons. The food package labels and their translations walk literally hand in hand with the food product all the way from the point of manufacture to the moment the food product is consumed.

2.1. Food labelling translation: A critical component

I shall now proceed to establishing a framework within which food labelling has become an increasingly important issue over the past few years. The various food crises of recent years have demonstrated the power of words and the importance of their contribution, either positive or negative, at the economic and social level. This is further emphasised by the rapid increase in multilingual communication and the need to respect local characteristics, mentalities and cultures. Food label translators have to tackle in a systematic and practical manner all the issues involved in the transference of food safety information.

There is evidence that consumers are confused over food labels. According to a British survey, consumers fail to grasp even the most basic principles of nutrition. The “eat smart” survey is one of the largest studies conducted in Great Britain on consumer attitudes towards healthy eating, and it was commissioned by a retailer, which tells us something about the great interest towards food related issues among shoppers. The survey suggests that consumers find it easier to programme a videocassette recorder than to work out the nutritional content of the food they are eating. Many found information on packaging either baffling or too much to take in. The study confirmed that 93% of the 1,000 people who took part in the survey agreed that understanding the nutrition content of food labelling is difficult. The British Nutrition Foundation believes more research is needed to understand what shoppers would find most helpful on food labels (BBC News, 23rd January 2002). I believe food label translators could be of some help in the problem cases mentioned above.

Some food labels mislead consumers. According to an advisory committee to the Food Standards Agency report published in Northern Ireland in 2001, consumers are misled by meaningless descriptions on some food labels. The report suggested that regulations on misleading labels were not being strictly observed. Therefore it is important that food label translators hired by multinational food companies monitor the texts to be translated by food importers more carefully, keeping in mind ethical guidelines. According to Michael Walker of the Northern Ireland Advisory Committee of the Food Standards Agency, the public has a right to know what they are buying. "People have a basic right to clear and meaningful labels so that they know what they are really buying – this goes to the very heart of consumer choice," he says. The report recommended a tighter enforcement of rules. To quote the report, 'the labellers have a tendency to be economical with the truth' (BBC News, 25th July 2001). I hope food label translators will not.

The Terminology Centre in Brussels organised a symposium on food safety and terminology in Belgium in February 2002. The symposium was about communication intended for the general public, communication between experts and developing standards and legislation in food terminology. It was targeted especially at translators, terminologists and representatives of the food industry. At a time when the new European Food Authority (EFA) is being set up, the symposium was considered a starting point for a higher level and closer reflection on the subject (Food Safety and Terminology Colloquium brochure 2002).

Few issues have been more effective in unifying Europe than the endless food scares during the 1990's. Listeria, contaminated wine and olive oil, salmonella, dioxin, BSE

and the foot-and-mouth disease have shattered the confidence of European consumers (Weber 2001). To restore the public's faith in the food industry the European Commission (EC) announced the creation of EFA. According to European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection David Byrne, "a key element of the authority is to facilitate the early identification of emerging risks and to avoid sending confusing messages to consumers." The European Union is acting upon the White Paper on Food Safety, since the EU has acknowledged that existing national and regional systems have had several weaknesses. There has been a lack of scientific support for advice given, inadequacies in monitoring and surveillance of food, and a lack of scientific co-ordination and analytical support (Ashraf 2000). The White Paper has set out recommendations to improve and bring coherence to the Community's legislation covering all aspects of food products. This also means that responsibilities of food manufacturers, farmers and food operators must be clarified. Translators have a major role in participating in the discussion of food safety and monitoring the standards of information on food labels from "farm to fork". The task of implementing European Union food safety reforms is always a question of money and professional staff.

For some people with food allergies, food becomes the enemy (Formanek 2001). Some consumers have to read food labels as carefully as they would read a legal contract. Therefore it is of utmost importance that professional translators are hired to translate labels on imported food products. High-quality and usable translations of food labels should remain high on the Finnish food label translators' agenda.

2.2. A short history of the development of food package and labelling

Before World War II, food was shipped, sold and stored in bulk. Foodstuffs came in barrels, so that they would stay in one piece en route. They were sold straight from the barrel with the barrel lid off. Customers would scoop out peanut butter and put it in their jar or in the grocer's paper tubs. Meat was cut on order. Flour was in bins - the grocer would fill a paper sack for the customer. Peas and beans were dry in boxes; pickles in huge jars and sold one at a time (Goodrum and Dalrymple 1990: 22-23).

Trade marking and packaging changed this scene. Crackers disappeared into wax paper. According to Goodrum and Dalrymple, one of the roles that advertising played was in the introduction of new products, explaining what they were and how they were to be used. This was the beginning of food labels.

The development of package technology and increase in self-service rapidly changed the distribution of foodstuffs in Finland during the 1960's. Advertising and developing of brands became more common (Volk, Laaksonen and Mikkola 1996: 18).

Nowadays most foodstuffs are distributed to consumers in packages. Package is seen as part of the final product. It protects the product and distinguishes it from competitors' products. The production costs of a package vary between 3 – 15%. Special features are required of the foodstuff packages due to transportation and health issues, which is why the package industry is closely linked to food industry (Volk, Laaksonen and Mikkola 1996: 37).

Free trade within the European Union changes the former frontier guarding food policy: it is no longer so strict. Therefore consumers' own activity in controlling food quality is likely to increase. It is essential for the consumer to know where the product comes from, what it contains and how it has been processed (Volk, Laaksonen and Mikkola 1996: 142-145). Naturally, food labelling is the obvious answer these questions.

Finland's membership in the European Union and the expanded international co-operation is one of the changes affecting packaging and labelling today.

Collaboration between multinational companies in different countries has brought imported products onto the Finnish market. These products have multinational packages that are expected to meet the legislative requirements in each co-operating country (Korhonen 2000: 14).

According to Virpi Korhonen's study, big, multinational companies focus on global products that have to sell on a variety of different markets. Korhonen maintains that clarity should mark the general appearance of an ideal package - consumers should be able to tell at a glance what the package contains. Consumers expect package label information to be accurate, the font size large enough, and the print should be clear against the background colour (Korhonen 2000: 23).

2.3. Characteristics of a food label

Perhaps the most explicit definition of a food label is to be found in the European Union legislation on labelling (appendix 2). It defines a food label as marking on a package “which is easy to understand, clearly legible and indelible and when a food is sold to the ultimate consumer, the labels must be marked in a conspicuous place in such a way as to be easily visible”. The contents of a food package label may be characterised as a particular stereotypical informative and descriptive discourse. Thus the food label would in most cases be identical in content and layout. According to a study on Danish Food Policy and Legislation a food label states the facts in a set order. It is effective in the sense that the reader gets the most important information quickly and easily. Labelling must be clear and unambiguous for the consumer to read. The information may be contained in a separate label attached to the foodstuff, or put on the packaging of the food itself. The manufacturers use the set formula almost without exception; the readers have also learnt to expect it (Mulvad 1990: 10-11).

A food label is a form of trans-cultural communication. Even though food package labels of multinational companies are universal, they need to be translated by native speakers in their own cultural situation. Gillian Brown and George Yule argue that what the writer has primarily in mind is the efficient transference of information. Language used in such a situation is primarily ‘message orientated’. It is important that the recipient gets the informative detail correct (Brown and Yule 1983: 2).

Characteristics of good labellings according to the interviewees in the study by Mari Niva, Eva Heiskanen and Päivi Timonen (1996) were as follows:

<i>EXTERNAL CHARACTERISTICS</i>	<i>INTERNAL CHARACTERISTICS</i>
Clear	Credible
Simple	Informative
Visible	Matter-of-fact
Readable	Neutral
Comprehensible	Factual
Structured	In Finnish

Table 1 Characteristics of good labellings (Niva, Heiskanen, Timonen 1996)

The interviewees in their study shared the views of experts on what labellings should be like. However, consumers seem to emphasise the visibility and clarity of the labelling, whereas experts emphasise the content of the information. Customers normally pay attention to the content only after noticing and becoming interested on the labellings. Labellings should simultaneously meet a lot of different requirements: they should be simple, visible and include factual information (1996: 29-32).

2.4. General regulations on food labelling in Finland

Each food package sold in Finland is required to have an appropriate label both in Finnish and in Swedish. The chief legislative and administrative purposes are to make sure that the consumer does not risk his health in any way in connection with the food he buys, prepares and eats (Mulvad 1990: 1). A second aim pursued by food

legislation is to protect consumers against misleading or untrue information about the foodstuffs they buy. Thus the specifications and declarations with which the food and its packaging are provided must be accurate and correct, and the same requirement applies to advertising and advertisements in all forms. This goes for imported foodstuffs as well. This goes to show that food label translators are responsible for following a number of regulations and expectations. The regulations also require that imported foodstuffs fulfil the foodstuff standards on the world market or be adjusted to fit the standards of the particular country into which they are to be imported. The consumer must not be misled as to the origin, production date, quality, nature, amount, composition, treatment and effect of the food he is buying. This requirement of truth in food label information and advertising covers drawings, pictures and texts on the packaging of the product, Susanne Mulvad continues (1990: 1). This aspect of truth from the point of view of the food label translator will be examined later on in this thesis.

As a result of modern product development and free mobility of foodstuffs, consumers are constantly coming in touch with new food products. Familiarising oneself with a new foodstuff usually begins with its package labels, which a careful buyer checks before purchasing the product. A recent study conducted in Finland states that the food package label is becoming a more important source of information for consumers, since the supply of foodstuffs has increased and become more varied (Pihlaspuro 1998, Korpi 2000).

The need for information is not limited to new and exotic foodstuffs only. Food label translators should be aware of the most frequently checked pieces of information on

food labels. One of them is the “best before” date, and it is important to all consumers (Korpi 2000). Jukka-Pekka Korpi’s study also tells us that the amount of salt and fats in a product is also a matter of interest to the consumers, and such information is frequently checked together with the best before dates. Therefore translators should pay special attention to translating these pieces of information to provide consumers with accurate and unambiguous translations. As for the “best before” date on the canned coconut milk (appendix 1, CHAOKOH COCNUT MILK), for example, the translated label advises the consumer to check the lid of the tin. Instead of a date there are incomprehensible codes. Once again, the “best-before” date is not where it was supposed to be. Translators need some kind of standardisation on expressing best before dates in order to avoid confusion.

Food package labels are a motley lot. The supervision and spreading of information on new regulations concerning food package labels set a difficult task for both Elintarvikevirasto in Finland (The National Food Administration Office) and local authorities involved in supervising the Food Act. A study conducted in 1997 by Katri Pihlaspuro showed that food package regulations are followed only satisfactorily in Finland. In this study 794 food package labels were checked, and 13% of the packages were found to have one or more serious flaws on labelling. This could be avoided by using professional translators. The errors included the complete absence of labels in Finnish, failure to provide information required by law, failure to indicate the possibility of health risks or simply the use of misleading labels. It shows clearly that multinational food companies are not totally devoted to providing consumers with high-quality information. In “best before” dates the most common error was that the

month was abbreviated in English (Pihlaspuro 1998), in other words left untranslated altogether.

Professional food label translators are expected to be familiar with the Finnish Food Act (361/1995) and the European Union legislation on labelling of foodstuffs (appendix 2). According to the latest Eurobarometre, two thirds of Finns estimated that the European Union legislation affects their daily lives. At the same time over 50% of them confessed that they did not understand how the European Union operates. However, Finnish people expect that one of the European Union's priorities would be ensuring food quality (Astikainen 2002).

The need for food information by different consumer groups is being investigated in common projects between the National Food Administration and the National Consumer Research Centre. The aim is to determine, among other things, the significance of the different sources of food information and consumers' expectations especially regarding the labelling of foodstuffs. On the basis of the results, food label legislation will be developed, planning of food labelling and related symbols will be promoted, and informative material will be produced for consumers (Isoniemi 2000). It would be essential to have food label translators participate in this project. A lot remains to be done to unify the currently dispersed field of highly unprofessional food label translation in Finland.

The plan of action for the years 1999-2002 of the National Food Administration Office in Finland aims at ensuring that consumers have access to information about food. The understandability of information and the actual user instructions on food

products are to be emphasised more in future (The National Food Administration Office, Elintarvikevirasto 1998a). This means that future food label translators will have a major role in ensuring the outcome of these aims. The European Commission confirms that insufficient information is often the cause of consumer problems.

2.5. Quality and usability presuppositions set by authorities and consumers

The processing and absorption of package information is often a demanding and time-consuming task. Stephen Calcich and Edward Blair (1982: 221-225) have described the food package as a visual field which consumers have to divide into parts in order to handle the different sections. They stated that analysing package information and adopting it demand a great deal of effort. I believe technical writers and translators are partly responsible. According to the same survey, it takes a different length of time for each consumer to adopt the product information, and the length of time varies also for different types of technical information in question. In their experiment, it took around 40 seconds for the test subjects to find the prices on food packages, while they were the most visible characters. All in all, they came to the conclusion that it takes about three minutes to adopt and process the necessary product information on which to base one's choice of a product. It definitely takes too long, and something must be done about it.

According to a study conducted in 1997 by Satu Nordlund, most of the consumers interviewed about their thoughts and conceptions regarding food package labels shared the opinion that food package labels were both useful and contained a lot of information. Many of the interviewees, however, considered the amount of

information too excessive and therefore confusing. When they were asked what the food package labels should ideally be like, the opinions were very similar. The importance of legible text in a bigger font and placing the most vital information first on the package were emphasised in all the interviewees' answers. These observations are valuable information for food label translators who should implement these wishes to the best of their abilities. Packages with a lot of text and information were considered information jungles – it was difficult for the consumers to find the relevant and most interesting information. Translators need to focus on content editing and better translations. Strange terms like "sodium chloride" instead of "salt" were considered difficult to understand, which is not surprising. The consumers thought that these strange and foreign terms were merely confusing. To sum up, consumers regarded technical food declarations as an integral part of food packaging, but hoped that they would be as concise and easy to understand as possible (Nordlund 1997).

The printing of food packages and labels is often done overseas, which is perhaps cheaper than doing it in Finland. It is possible that food importers use foreign translators or mere dictionaries when trying to translate the food labels cost-efficiently. It goes without saying that this sort of business is bad news for professional translators and to the overall quality of the products. All this goes to show that it is not a minor matter how a product is wrapped and what it says on the packet.

A steady increase in allergies and special diets and a desire to try out new imported exotic foodstuffs are in a way controversial issues. The number of foreign ingredients in imported foods is bigger and causes surprises and problems for allergic consumers.

Around 5 % of adult population in Finland suffer from food allergies. Food allergies cause health problems especially for small children, and it is estimated that about 25 % of children under three years of age get food allergy symptoms. This is problematic, since quite a few can have symptoms from basic foodstuffs like milk, fish or eggs (Tainio 1997: 22). To take an example, the sample of a Danish kiwi cake: there is a small mention in the middle of the 18 informative lines indicating that *this product may contain traces of nuts*. Nuts, even in the tiniest amounts, can cause a serious health hazard for people allergic to them (appendix 1, RAINBOW MAITOSUKLAALEVITE, KÄSEKUCHEN). Foodstuff manufacturers will need to find good solutions with the help of technical writers and translators to provide consumers with solid information so that people will know what they are eating and where and how the food has been produced.

It is not surprising if a consumer has difficulties in handling the excess of product information and feels that there is already too much information available. As one of the experts in the food industry put it: “There will be even more products in future so that not even the experts will be able to tell what they consist of. An ordinary consumer will be totally lost.” If adequate translations of these new products are not provided, consumers will have to find different strategies to cope. They might rationalise the decisions of choice by avoiding all the products that have a long list of chemical ingredients and E-codes if they want to avoid some special ingredient or highly processed products (Timonen and Niva 2000 in Varjonen 2001: 62). However, multinational food companies should not get off the hook; it is their responsibility to make sure that professional translators are hired and the requirement of truth is met under all circumstances.

Even though consumers cannot or do not want to receive but a small fraction of information, it seems that when consumers' confidence is at stake, it is important that consumers or users of the product are the judges of quality. Kalle Laaksonen (1998) argues in his article that quality is what users appreciate. The reason why variety is sought after among consumers is the fact that they travel abroad and absorb new ideas. Food is of great interest, which emphasises the importance of its origin. Some consumers are very well informed and set specific requirements for foodstuffs, whereas others do not really care what they eat. Some demand absolute purity; others are satisfied with less. In order to take all consumers' demands into consideration, appropriate labellings are a necessity.

2.6. Request for usability among consumers

“Informative labels are difficult to understand

When you read food or drug labels, you often wonder what they really mean.

If you suffer from food or drug allergies, you have to own a dozen dictionaries.

You have to be a detective to find out what for example emulsifying agent E 322 or saccharose mean.

I suffer from lactose intolerance (disorder in milk sugar absorption) and I am also allergic to soy. I baked buns the other day. I used lactose-free margarine. I ate two buns with joy. But that joy soon turned to a stomach pain.

I gave some careful thought to what went wrong. I examined the product label and found that emulsifier E 322 is soy lecithin. That caused the abdominal pain.

Why can't we have product labels that everyone would understand?"

Annikki Taajaranta, Helsinki (HS, Letters to the Editor, 12/2001).

Product information may include different symbols or written descriptions about the product's price, quality, contents, environmental effects or hazards during its preparation or use, or user instructions (Kanerva 1996). To interpret written user instructions does not cause problems in principle, but when consumers are left with a mere symbol, they are expected to be familiar with the purpose and background of

each symbol (Nielsen 1993). W. Kip Viscusi and Wesley Magat examined how people alter their behaviour in response to hazard warnings in different situations. Their findings imply that information on labels can change consumers' levels of understanding about quality characteristics and alter their consumption behaviour. However, variation among consumers in their responses to the information can be expected (Viscusi and Magat 1987).

The interviewees in a study conducted by Mari Niva, Eva Heiskanen and Päivi Timonen (1996) were rather interested in product information and talked a lot about the actual product information as well as the packages, prices and images related to different products. Most of the interviewees stated that busy consumers do not have time to absorb product information, other than prices, quickly enough in the shops. It is difficult to find information in graphically poorly designed products (appendix 1 SCHMIDT CACAO, BELLAROM CHOCO DRINK, LATINO PASTA DI SEMOLA DI GRANO DURO, EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL).

3. TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION, QUALITY AND USABILITY IN FOOD LABEL TRANSLATIONS

Translation models can be useful in understanding how people think and how semantic connotations and interactions of words compose the textual context of a translation, food label for instance. I do not believe that there is only one successful translation method that works best when translating food labels in their cultural context. However, a complex task of academic defining and understanding of

semantic, cultural, aesthetic and historical factors of words is necessary. Translators have to answer the following questions:

- a) what specific acts of research have to be initiated to find keys and clues to the problems posed by the source text?
- b) how can a translator create an interpretive perspective to a given text meant to be translated successfully?

3.1. Content, style and function

Werner Koller points out that there exists an equivalence between a given source text and a given target text if the target text fulfils certain requirements. The relevant conditions are those having to do with such aspects of content, style and function.

Legal contracts, instructions for use, business letters, scientific texts and the like all follow lexical and syntactic norms and norms of style; to translate in accordance with these norms is to aim at text-normative equivalence (Koller in Chesterman 1989: 100-102). This should be borne in mind when translating food package labels.

“Content and language form a certain unity in the original, like fruit and its skin” (Benjamin in Chesterman 1989: 19), therefore it is essential that the translator should bear this in mind in his pursuit of an equivalent translation of food labels. The content of the manufactured food product and its label should form a unity, like fruit and its tin.

“The task of the translator consists in finding that intended effect (intention) upon the language into which he is translating which produces in it the echo of the original” (Benjamin in Chesterman 1989: 19). In other words, the translation is looking for the

echo of the original. This means that if the food label translator focuses on what he is communicating to readers, it is possible to avoid any misunderstandings and produce the optimal result.

According to Newmark, “in communicative translation, the translator is trying in his own language to write a little better than the original. The translator has the right to correct or improve the logic, to replace clumsy with elegant or at least functional syntactic structures, to modify and clarify jargon (i.e. reduce loose generic terms to rather more concrete components) and to normalise bizarreties of idiolect i.e. wayward uses of language” (Newmark in Chesterman 1989: 122). Newmark certainly has a point here. If the food product manufacturer has a poor original label, the translator has the right to improve the linguistic quality of the translation if possible.

The translator should rewrite an ambiguous sentence until it is understandable. Those who translate subtitles for television and those who translate lists of ingredients or instructions for use face a common obstacle: limited space. One has to be resourceful in how a translation can intelligibly be fitted into a small space. Newmark continues by saying that “when language is used to accompany action, it is treated communicatively, whilst definitions, explanations etc. are semantic” (Newmark in Chesterman: 126). Definitions of terms like “natrium chloride” should not be semantically translated as “natriumkloridi”, though. The communicative equivalent would be “salt”, and the word “salt” is much more familiar to an average consumer than its chemical term. Instructions of use on a food package should not be semantically translated either. I believe that the food label translator must be free to

omit, add or rephrase sentences in his pursuit for the most purposeful translation. Sometimes the instructions on food labels are almost over-simplified; witness the following label on Sainsbury's peanuts: "Warning: Contains nuts" or on an American Airline packet of nuts: "Instructions: Open packet, eat nuts" (Quoted in "The Bible Translator" issue 2001).

According to Albrecht Neubert, "a target text represents the reconstruction of a source text under the communicative conditions of another language community". He continues his reasoning by asking if it is fair to expect of the translator to capture everything the sender has put into a text. Does the receiver always grasp the totality of the sender's intentions? (Neubert in Chesterman: 153-154). Sometimes it is indeed impossible to read the author's mind, but a food label translator should try to be a mind reader. In the case of translating food labels, the translator should not leave anything out that was included in the original on the basis of a different cultural background. We share the same universe, and what is foreign to us should not be omitted just because it is new and exotic to us in translations of imported food labels. To do so is to underestimate the consumer. For example by leaving out the fact that coconut milk can be used for making "coconut jam (kaya)", the translator is depriving the consumer living on the other side of the planet of this piece of cultural information (appendix 1, CHAOKOH COCONUT MILK). These days the consumer might even get inspired to find a recipe for making "kaya" on the Internet, or he or she might just ask their chat friends in Thailand.

"A source text is usually composed originally for a situation in the source culture, hence its status as 'source text' and hence the role of the translator in the process of

intertextual communication. To transcode a source text into another language is not enough. The target text, the *translatum*, is oriented towards the target culture, and this ultimately defines its adequacy” (Hans J. Vermeer in Chesterman: 175). Culture and the access to culture on any continent has radically changed during the past few years. Should the target text, the *translatum*, then be merely *oriented* towards the target culture? We now have Thai and other Asian restaurants in urban areas, which we did not have twenty years ago. We can buy special ingredients more easily than before, since the number of small oriental shops with imported delicacies has increased in recent years. We have the necessary kitchen utensils to prepare oriental meals. What is stopping us from translating the source text with all its cultural features to one that fits the circumstances in Finland? However, the translator must know the target culture well enough not to recommend the following: *Liota nuudeleita kuumassa vedessä 7-10 minuuttia (kuuma vesijohtovesi sopii tähän mainiosti)*. (*Soak the noodles in hot water for 7-10 minutes - hot tap water will be ok*) (appendix 1, EGG NOODLE CANTONESE). Using hot tap water in cooking is generally not recommended for health reasons.

Most food is bought in packages. It is up to the consumers to find out about the quality of packaged food. Consumers cannot feel, smell or taste the foodstuffs before making a decision, since food packages are seldom transparent. Consumers are therefore forced to make decisions based on the information on food packages. The role of the translator of imported food product labels is therefore crucial. Good and reliable labellings are highly important, for instance to consumers suffering from food allergies (Tainio 1997: 20-21).

The so-called 25% rule in food products, for example, is an acute issue. People suffering from allergies feel that the most unfair regulation is the one about the 25% rule. A manufactured food product, a jam roll for example, is made of sponge cake and strawberry jam. If the content of strawberry jam is less than 25% of the weight of the jam roll, all the contents or ingredients of the strawberry jam do not have to be indicated at all – mere “strawberry jam” on the label is enough. *The Danish Luxury Kiwi Cake* (appendix 1) shows how difficult it is to translate food terms according to the 25% rule. The translations on the package are in Spanish, Italian, English, German, French, Finnish and Swedish. The original was written in Danish, but I will focus on the Danish, English and Finnish versions. The English version defines the Kiwi Cake as *Madeira Cake with A Kiwi Flavoured filling, Covered with a Chocolate Flavoured Coating*. The Finnish translation is linguistically clumsy *Kiwikakku Täytetty kiivihedelmätäytteellä ja suklaanmakuinen kuorrutus (Kiwicake Filled with a kiwifruit filling and coated with a chocolate flavoured coating)*. The Finnish version could perhaps be shortened to *Kiivihedelmäkakku, kaakaokuorrute (Kiwifruitcake with cocoa flavoured coating)*. The name of the product is tricky, since it has to be consistent with the above 25% rule. The chocolate flavoured coating is clearly problematic for each translator. The Finnish translator has chosen the word *suklaanmakuinen (chocolate flavour)*. This means that the chocolate is not real chocolate, but made of vegetable oil and fat reduced cocoa powder (9%). The original Danish version defines the product as *Kiwikage, Kage med kiwifrugtfyld, overtrukket med vekaovertraek*. No mention of chocolate. The Danish technical food declaration says that the icing is made of fat. So does the German version *Rührkuchen mit Kiwifruchtfüllung, Dekor: Fettglasur*. If the German version is translated into Finnish it would come out as *Munakakku, kiivihedelmätäyte, Päällys:*

Rasvakuorrute. But does *rasvakuorrute* sound tempting in Finnish? In my view the word *suklaanmakuinen* (*chocolate flavoured*) sounds nicer than any word beginning with *rasva* (*fat*) on food labels or advertisements.

Quite a few consumers are allergic to eggs, and cannot therefore have any sponge cake. The English and Spanish-speaking consumers will probably know that Madeira cake is made with eggs. The Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture defines Madeira cake as “a plain rather solid yellow sponge cake”. We have the Finnish equivalent *sokerikakku*, which in spite of the word *sokeri* (*sugar*) tells most consumers that it is made of whipped eggs and sugar. If the consumer starts to read through the list of ingredients in the shop, the list begins with sugar, wheat flower, vegetable oil etc. It takes ten out of 18 lines before the word *kananmuna* (*egg*) is mentioned. Possible solution: have a clear warning on the package to avoid the following:

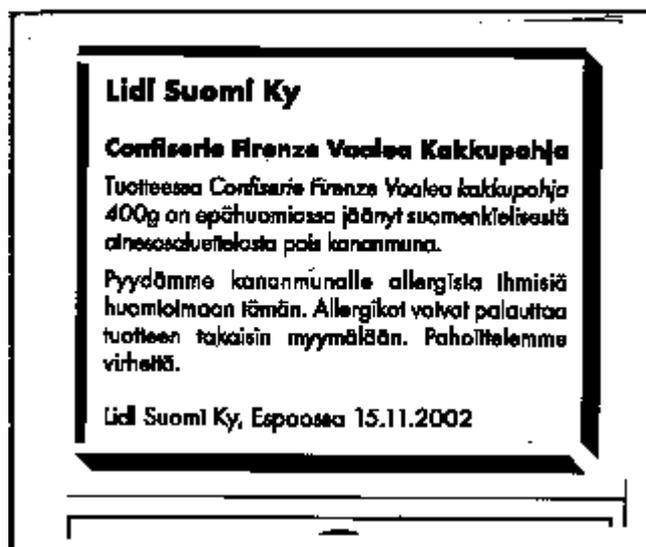


Table 2 Advertisement in Helsingin Sanomat 15th November 2002

The presence of imperfect information forces policy makers to look for correction tools. One of these tools is direct government involvement in production processes or regulation of product attributes, but such regulation is often criticised as economically irrational and costly. This has resulted in increased interest in techniques that provide consumers with adequate information to protect themselves against risky products or unfair seller behaviour (Caswell and Mojdzuska 1996). Economists have argued that if the government has the choice between banning an unsafe product and ensuring information about the risks involved, it should choose information provision (Magat and Viscusi 1992). Thus providing additional information is attractive because it gives consumers the means for making better decisions.

3.2. Translator's role as a technical editor

Translators could act as *information architects* and help plan the product's label sets (Tarutz 1992). Deborah Rosenquist (2001) reports in her studies that editors of text can catch structural errors early in the development phase, thus improving quality and reducing costs. The same would surely apply to translators' ability to catch flaws. The process of *comprehensive editing* is according to David Nadziejka (1995: 280), "an intellectual process, requiring in-depth reading of the information with all the technical knowledge". This type of evaluation work would be ideal for translators. Translators could focus in *comprehensive editing* by concentrating on the following activities (Corbin, Moell and Boyd, 2002):

- "Ensuring technical accuracy
- Reducing the amount of unnecessary information
- Customising information for different product solutions"

Why has ensuring technical accuracy of information become so important lately?

Corbin, Moell and Boyd suggest that

- “litigious societies encourage companies and clients to sue suppliers that provide inaccurate information
- sales are sometimes won or lost based on the quality of the information provided with the product
- if the product or its information is inaccurate, it is difficult for the user or consumer to even begin using the product”.

Technical accuracy can only be maintained by for example food product development teams that include product developers, testers, technical and consumer support personnel, marketing personnel, technical writers, translators and so on. Food label translators should check for consistency and appropriateness in terminology, user interfaces, product names etc. According to Judith Tarutz (1992), part of the technical editor’s job is to “do an accuracy edit, checking for contradictions and inconsistencies in the information”. Food label translators have the same job; any statements on the product must be factually correct and logically sound (Nadziejka 1999: 14). They must be therefore knowledgeable enough about food related matters in order to avoid inaccuracies in the food related information targeted for the consumer. Food label translators must be constantly aware of what the consumers know and do not know, so that the information meets the needs of the consumer and he is able to understand the information provided. The technical information on food labels must be organised into a coherent whole so that the consumers can find the answers quickly.

In my research material, food label translators often tend to include too many details and too much repetition. Hargis et al (1998) recommend finding a balance between enough information and the necessary information. “In today’s usability designs, less is more, and an editor may be the ideal person to make sure that everything stated is required and orientated to the users’ needs” (Bush 2001: 43). Translators or technical editors could go even further and remove all the unwanted languages from the food package. Consumers would benefit from packages with less information thus enabling them to access the required information more easily and quickly. For example, why mention vitamins *Vitamin A 0 grams, vitamin C 0 grams* on the Linea Verde Couscous packet (appendix 1) that the couscous does not have? Is it to help consumers who are looking for certain vitamins or would it better to leave it out altogether? John Carroll calls it a *minimalist writing approach*, which urges consumers to read less and thus experience fewer errors (Carroll 1990). Minimalism does not mean brief or incomplete translation but a way of supporting users with user-oriented and error-prevention information (Carroll and van der Meij 1996: 84). An additional benefit of reducing the amount of unnecessary information is a reduced cost in producing the information – meaning less printing on the food package.

New customer customised food products constantly enter the market and multinational food companies seek to create information for those products quickly and easily. As a result, sometimes information developers take the existing set of food topics and wrap re-used information around the new products. Sometimes food industries use different terms to refer to the same concepts. Translators must be aware of the product specifications and their knowledge of the consumers (baking a frozen pizza in an electric oven versus gas oven). Translators must ensure that

- the appropriate terminology is used for the target audience
- the food product is tested using the same information intended for the consumers
- the technical information is cohesive and clear if different food products are used together
- comprehension of each sentence or paragraph does not depend on such information which has been deleted earlier in the development of customisation process.

Food label translators must be able to work within set deadlines. They need excellent information management skills in order to keep track of the latest technical information and maintain a high level of quality. In extremely tight schedules, food label translators should focus on such issues as legal requirements and trademarks etc. Food label translators must ensure at all times that the content of the food label is accurate and clear, but also that the users can easily use the content of the food product. Whenever possible, food label translators should test the information on the food product and verify that consumers will succeed in using the product. Candace Soderston says that this gives us way of ensuring quality (Soderston 1985: 17). Food label translators are the “first users” of the technical information on the labels and could follow the user instructions on the food product and determine if the wording and formatting are easy to follow and understand.

Don Bush (2001: 39) argues that technical editing is closely connected to usability. “Usability implies worthwhile content, sensible organisation, readable style, and effective design, all which are also prime goals of editors.” This can also be seen as a

task of the translators, since they perform *usability editing* by engaging in many different quality assurance activities. The following *content editing* activities are part of *usability editing* (Corbin, Moell and Boyd 2002):

- “ensuring that the information can be retrieved easily
- making the information accessible to **all** users
- understanding the users well enough to make appropriate decisions about style and content”.

How can the information on food labels be easily retrieved? Food label translators can ensure that the information is easily found by reviewing the following suggestions:

- List of ingredients. Since a table of contents or a list of ingredients is stated obligatory by Finnish law on food products, translators must consider whether it is complete and accurate or if additional technical information is required.
- User instructions. The user instructions of food labels must be complete and must contain all appropriate headings, subheadings, pictures or metric symbols for the target audience. To check the user instructions, translators must review the instructions as a whole to ensure that is accurate, logical and appropriate. Thoughtful instructions for use help guarantee that the product will be used because its content is accessible.
- Topic titles. Topic titles of food labels are often forgotten and left untranslated, serving suggestions, for instance - but they provide valuable context for the product information. Topic titles must be specific enough to show the context. *Chow Mein (6 portions)* as a single title is not specific enough to reveal that it is a Chinese meal served with chicken and noodles.

- Metadata. Metadata is other data that describes other keywords about the food topic. Sometimes the consumers can use these keywords within a Web site or online help system to obtain for example consumer related information.

Translators must use these information categories as consumers would, to follow instructions on the label or to find topics easily – it is the whole idea of the usability testing.

3.3. Technical communication in food label translations

Product information should be made accessible to **all users**. Food labels are accessible if they provide access to all users regardless of abilities or disabilities.

Whilst the *content editing*, *usability editing*, and *copy editing* help make the information retrievable for most users, food label translators can become representatives for disabled users (for example those with impaired vision). This could mean collaborating with multinational food importing companies and providing alternative text for graphics, figures, and tables; making help available online in text format; new ways of documenting food labels.

In order to make appropriate decisions about the style and content of food labels, translators must understand the users of the product well enough. Consumers expect information to be accurate, clear and complete. Beyond that, users expect the technical content on food labels to be understandable, and they form perceptions about the technical information based on format, presentation, style and even choice of words (Corbin, Moell and Boyd 2002). For example, consumers respond to words

like *simple* and *easy*, as in “*Hetkessä syötävän hyvää*”. These types of statements contain value judgements that not all consumers may agree with.

Since technical information on food labels is not a two-way conversation between the translator and the reader, the written information communicates to the users through the choices of words and graphics that have an absolute importance and finality (Schriver 1997: 183). As graphics and illustrations help communicate highly technical information, translators must also review the graphics and tables for quality, correctness and effectiveness (Corbin, Moell and Boyd 2002).

As trained professionals, translators review the technical information on food labels section by section, topic by topic, paragraph by paragraph, and line by line.

Translators carefully review every word and every sentence. As well as to editing the content for accuracy, accessibility, usability, and clarity, food label translators edit the text according to the food company’s specific style recommendations. Carolyn Rude (2002: 13) suggests that “an editor, whose speciality is language and document design, can suggest ways to make the document easier for readers to understand and use. The editor knows how to use style, organisation, and visual design to achieve specific goals”. These could be the tasks of the translator just as well in food label translation. When translators *copy edit*, it means that they perform many types of quality assurance activities. Corbin, Moell and Boyd concentrate in the following content editing activities in their article that are part of *copy editing*:

- “Ensuring that the information can be easily understood (and can therefore be translated easily)
- Standardising the information written by multiple writers

- Verifying each piece of information”.

More and more international food companies are selling their products worldwide thus expanding their clientele. “Information provided with the food products is often translated into multiple languages. The type of editing that improves the translatability of the information happens to improve the readability for the native language, too.”

Food terminology must be used consistently and carefully in food label translations. According to David Batty, “Effective communication in any context is made easier by the use of a **common language** that both parties understand” (1998). This is clearly not the case in today’s food label translations (appendix 1, AL WADI AL AKHDAR FOUL MOUDAMMAS, KÄSEKUCHEN). Therefore standardisation of terminology is essential when translating food terms: it ensures that food terms and concepts are translated in the same way in each case. Using the same word when referring the same concept throughout the food label and not using synonyms is preferred in technical communication for obvious reasons. Controlling the vocabulary reduces the language load and translation costs, while increasing the readability and usability of the information (Thrush 2001).

Food label translators should provide shorter and clearer texts on food labels. Using fewer words makes it easier for consumers to find the needed piece of information. Food label translators can provide concise text by eliminating redundancies, avoiding ambiguities and paring the text to provide just enough information (and no more) for the consumers to get the meaning.

Food label translators have the power and ability to improve the wording on food labels. They can ensure that the information on food labels is fluent, ensuring one meaning per word, using appropriate suffixes, and avoiding the use of metaphorical or culture-specific language. For example stabilisers *guar gum*, *xanthan gum*, *carrageenan* and *carob bean gum* in BART COCONUT CREAM (appendix 1) have been translated as *E 412*, *E 415*, *E 407*, *E 410*.

Food label translators must work together with technical writers on product weights, metric amounts, types of measures (spoonfuls and cups), symbols, icons, and graphics. For example the typical composition of the ingredients (graphics) in the INDIAN TORTILLA CHIPS (appendix 1) and statements like ‘This pack contains 14 servings’ or ‘Suitable for vegetarians’ have been left untranslated altogether. Types of measures, symbols or icons can have varied implications for different cultures. With proofreading food label translators can ensure the quality of each piece of technical information on food labels. Therefore translators should be made responsible for the final checks as quality assurance of the information on food labels. However, developing quality content for information on food labels is obviously a team effort. The value of team specialisation is not always appreciated in the technical communication field.

To save money, technical communication managers often rely on self-editing and translating, instead of having professional and skilled technical editors or translators as part of the team. According to my research material, this is often the case in translated food labels as well. According to JoAnn Hackos, “Self-editing, a popular label for a lack of external editing, is both expensive and likely to fail. Failures result

because people run out of time to edit their own work and lack the perspective to do so effectively” (1994: 361). There are several examples of translated food labels that confirm Hackos’s statement. Geoffrey Hart states that “editing and writing require entirely different mindsets, and it is difficult to make the mental shift from creating and revising” (1998: 17). Writers of technical information for food labels are less likely to question the assumptions being made about the consumers of the food product because they themselves already understand what has been written. Thus translators of food labels would be on a different mindset when translating the writers’ original text – they are capable of revising. Hackos also points out that another failure of self-editing that is insufficient for ensuring product quality. “When you have been working on a text for hours, days, or weeks, you are rarely able to find evidence of inconsistencies, gaps, redundancies, or the other early warning signs of a decline in quality” (1994: 362). Professional translators bring clarity and objectivity to the information on food labels that the writers might lose by being too familiar and subjective with the subject.

Tarutz (1992: 25) points out that good editing goes unnoticed by the reader.

Technical editors and translators use their skills to add value to the technical content of the food product. When the technical information has been through extensive technical editing performed by food label translators, the consumers get quality information that supports quality product. To sum up, using professional food label translators in multinational food companies instead of do-it-yourself translators, would benefit the consumers in the following ways (adapted by the ideas of Corbin, Moell and Boyd on technical communication):

- Users gain access to information that is clearer, more concise, and more comprehensible. The technical information flows well, unnecessary information is removed, and the sentences are clear and direct. Less information increases the document's usability and also produces savings in production and translation costs.
- Graphics, including lists and tables, help to present the information in a more concise and visually organised manner. Users can retrieve the information easily from tables and lists that have been tested and revised.
- The product information has fewer errors or areas of confusion for the typical users. This means that staffing the help onlines is likely to be reduced.

Food label translators must produce better documentation of food labels in future and convince the multinational food companies that technical editing and translating is truly a quality assurance process. It all contributes to customer satisfaction; since food label translators add to the value by ensuring that the product with its documentation meets the consumers' expectations and helps them use the food product easily.

4. MEANING-BASED TRANSLATION OF FOOD LABELS: CROSS-LANGUAGE EQUIVALENCE

4.1. Larson's translation theory

As mentioned above, translation consists of transferring the meaning of the source language into the receptor language. Meaning is being transferred and must be held

constant. Meaning-based translations make every effort to communicate the meaning of the source language text in the natural forms of the receptor language. Such translations are called idiomatic translations (Larson 1998: 15).

Translation consists of studying the lexicon, grammatical structure, communication situation, and cultural context of the source language text, analysing it in order to determine its meaning, and then restructuring this same meaning using the lexicon and grammatical structure in the receptor language and its cultural context.

<i>SOURCE LANGUAGE</i>		<i>RECEPTOR LANGUAGE</i>
Text to be translated		Translation
Discover the meaning		Re-express the meaning
	<i>MEANING</i>	

Table 3 Larson: Translation and Meaning

Larson argues that persons who know both the source language and the receptor language well can often make the transfer from one form to the other very fast, without thinking about the semantic structure overtly. In order to do effective translation, one must discover the meaning of the text in the source language and use receptor language forms which express the same meaning in a natural way.

According to Larson the best translation is the one which

- a) uses the normal language forms of the receptor language
- b) communicates, as much as possible, to the receptor language speakers the same meaning that was understood by the speakers of the source language

- c) maintains the dynamics of the original source text, which means that the translation is presented in such a way that it will evoke the same response as the source text attempted to evoke.

In Larson's guide book, a single meaning may be expressed in a variety of forms. For example, the meaning "oriental noodles of chicken flavour" may be expressed by the following: *instant noodles of chicken flavour*; *instant, chicken-flavoured noodles* and *instant noodles which are chicken-flavoured*, depending on the limited space or stylistic features on food label translations (appendix 1, YEO INSTANT NOODLES). Larson continues by saying that there is seldom a one-to-one correlation between form and meaning, and that is the basic reason why translation is a complicated task. Meaning must have priority over form. Thus the goal of a translator should be to produce a receptor language text (a translation), which is idiomatic; that is, one that has the same meaning as the source language but is expressed in the natural form of the receptor language. Sadly, this is not the case with very many food labels. For example: *Ready in 5 min* on a couscous package has been translated as: *Keittoaika 5 min*. *Ready in five minutes* refers to the time the food is ready to be served (five minutes only). Besides, couscous is not boiled (*keittoaika*); therefore it should be translated as '*Valmista 5 minuutissa*' (*Ready in 5 minutes*) (appendix 1, LINEA VERDE COUSCOUS).

Consumers might respond negatively to writing that is not neutral or writing which holds false promises. This statement of '*hetkessä syötävän hyvää*' (orig. *Ready in 4 minutes*) was on a packet of Chinese Noodles, which indicated that the serving suggestion (a photo of Chow Main on a plate) of the cover would be ready and

delicious in four minutes (APPENDIX 1, EGG NOODLE CANTONESE). However, on the back, the consumers were advised to prepare *Chow Mein for 6: 500 g of egg noodles (one packet 250 g), 250 g of chicken files, some onions, champion mushrooms and red peppers, a tin of water cashews, some Soya-sauce, some sherry or white wine, and finally 100 g of prawns. In just four minutes?*

4.1.1. Literal versus idiomatic in food label translation

Form based translations attempt to follow the form of the source language and are known as literal translations. This would apply to lists of ingredients or nutrition tables, for instance. They would have to be word for word translations, so that the contents of a food product would be accurate. I will take Blue Dragon Instant Noodles as an example (appendix1, BLUE DRAGON INSTANT NOODLES). *Ingredients: Wheat flour (89%), palm oil, salt. Translation: Ainekset: Vehnäjauho, palmuöljy, suola.* Here the translator has omitted the percentage of wheat flower, which might have been of interest to consumers. *Nutrition information. Typical values per 100g. Energy 690kJ/165kcal, Protein 2.8g, Carbohydrate 25.7g, Fat 5.7g. Translation: Ravintoaineet per 100g: Energia 690kJ/165 kcal, Proteiini 2,8g, Hiilihydraatit 25,7g, Rasvaa 5,7g.* Word 'typical' has been omitted. There is an asymmetry in the use of the partitive in Finnish; the ingredients should have all been in the partitive (*energiaa, proteiinia, hiilihydraatteja*) like the word 'rasvaa', which is a more natural form in Finnish.

Let us look at another example, coconut milk from Thailand imported by Inex Partners, Helsinki (appendix 1, CHAOKOH COCONUT MILK). The name of the

product is in small font type on the back of the tin. If the consumer is not familiar with Thai, French or English, he will be forced to guess the ingredients of the tin from the picture of a coconut split in half. Is it milk or chunks? By picking up the tin from the shelf and rolling it in his hand, the consumer will spot a small, translated label in Finnish at the back. The title of the label is again in the Thai language, then *KOOKOSMAITO* in Finnish underneath it and finally in Swedish *COCOSMJÖLK* (with a spelling mistake, using *c* instead of *k* for *kokos*). According to the original label, the tin contains *coconut concentrate (kokosmjölk concentrat)* instead of plain coconut milk. Are the contents in Finnish *kookosmaito* or *kookosmaitotiiviste*? The nutrition information in Finnish is inconsistent with the English text of the original. The original label says: *Ingredients: Coconut Extract 53%, Water. Antioxidants: Citric Acid (E330)*. The percentage of the coconut concentrate has been left out in the translation. The translator has also chosen not to mention the word “*antioxidants*” or “*Citric Acid*”. Some consumers are extremely interested in and even worried about the different additives used in foodstuffs as mentioned earlier. Therefore the *E330 Citric Acid (sitruunahappo)* should have been mentioned on the food label. The mentioning of these different additives (some of them are believed to be carcinogenic) might affect the consumer’s behaviour. Consumers have the right to choose whether to buy a product or leave it on the shelf based on correct information on the food package labels. Where the Finnish translator got the *nutrition information* as to the amount of *energy, protein, carbohydrates, sugar and fat* listed in the product remains a mystery since no such information was to be found on the original. It might be that the translator got this information directly from the manufacturer or importer of the product according to the regulations on labelling of foodstuffs.

Next I shall take an example of instant noodles' cooking instructions, advertising or serving suggestions (appendix 1, BLUE DRAGON INSTANT NOODLES):

Advertisement in English on the packet: *“Blue Dragon Instant noodles ideal for use in stir fry dishes, soups, a main meal or as an alternative to rice or potatoes. Easy and quick to prepare.”* The Finnish translator has left this out altogether. It would be impossible for customers who do not understand English to figure out what these exotic ‘pikauudelit’ really are. *“Hard, dry, crumbling if squeezed – better not try them, they look a bit strange...”*

Cooking Instructions: *“Break a Blue Dragon noodle block into a few pieces and add 500ml (3 cups) of boiling water. Cook for two minutes, stir occasionally, drain and add to your favourite recipe.”* Translation: *“Valmistus: Taita nuudelilevy pienemmiksi paloiksi ja lisää ne 5dl:aan kiehuvaa vettä. Keitä 2 min välillä sekoittaen. Valuta ja tarjoile haluamallasi tavalla.”* The original helps a busy cook by offering an alternative to 5 decilitres of water, equals around 3 cups. The translator has put the ingredients in the wrong order; the boiling water should be poured **on top of the noodles**, not the noodles added into boiling water. If prepared as the Finnish version suggests the noodles will not be ‘al dente’ as they should be. **Cooking** the noodles for two minutes does not mean **boiling** them in hot water into a mushy texture like overcooked pasta. *“Add to your favourite recipe”* was ignored in the translation. It gives the impression that a bowl of noodles is the actual dish, which it naturally is not.

“Serving suggestions:

- *Prepare noodles as directed and add diced cooked meat or fish and season with soy sauce or chilli sauce”.* No translation.

- “*With soup: Once the noodles are cooked and drained, they can be added to soups. Meat and vegetables also make a tasty addition*”. No translation.
- “*Fried: Fry the undrained cooked noodles in oil until brown and crisp. Add cooked meat, vegetables and seasonings*”. No translation.
- “*Simmer any combination of frozen vegetables, add the noodles and leave for a few minutes before draining*”. No translation.
- “*Substitute rice for noodles as an interesting and quick alternative*”. No translation.
- “*Additional information: Visit our web site for recipe ideas from the Blue Dragon kitchen: www.bluedragon.co.uk*” No translation.

The translated food label was a white sticker, glued directly on a detailed recipe idea, which was really a shame. The placing of the sticker was odd, since there was a lot of free space elsewhere with no print or pictures at all. All this information under the sticker was left out. A professional translator would have translated it all. It would make an interesting study to find out on what basis certain pieces of texts are chosen for translation and others are not. Additional information might attract new customers, like senior citizens, when looking for lighter options and new flavours – if only they were given the chance to try them out with appropriate translations.

Unduly free translations are not considered acceptable translations for most purposes (for example the Bible). Translations are unduly free if they add information not found in the source text, if they change the meaning of the source language, or if they distort the facts of the cultural setting of the source language text (Larson 1998: 17). For example, a Finnish translator chose the following cultural preferences in her

translation: *Kookosmaitoa voidaan käyttää mm. broitercurryyn, juomien, kakkujen ja pikkuleipien valmistukseen antamaan makua.* Original in English: *This coconut milk can be used for making cakes, candies, cookies, ice cream, coconut jam (kaya), curries and other preparations where coconut milk is required.* The English text offers much more information about the possible uses of coconut milk than the Finnish version. The Finnish translator has chosen to add to and omit text according to his own preferences. He has left out the *candies, coconut jam* and *ice cream*. He has added the words *broiler* and *juomien (drinks)*. The word *broiler* is not used when making a curry – the Finnish translator probably means the word *kana (chicken)*. Besides, there are dozens of other curries. As for the drinks, the Finnish translator could have been thinking of Piña Colada, who knows.

Another example: the Danish Kiwi Cake (appendix 1). The Danish resource text advises the *consumer to use the product within five days after the package has been opened.* This fact has not been mentioned in any of the translations. The Finnish translator has his own version, which is *Säilytettävä kuivassa, ei yli huoneenlämpötilan. Avaamisen jälkeen sisältö tulee säilyttää ilmatiiviisti.* Finnish translator has chosen the ambiguous word *sisältö (contents)* instead of *kakku (cake)*. What else is there in the package? The Danish original text lets the consumer know that *the cake was made 18 months before the best before date.* Either the importer of the cake, Inex Partners, or the Finnish translator obviously seem to think that it is not good publicity or worth mentioning that a cake can survive up to one and a half years.

The English version of the kiwi cake has an interesting addition in its translated text. The importer of this product in England, The Carrs Foods International Company,

advertises that this cake is *Suitable for vegetarians*. The other translators have not come to the same conclusion or have chosen not to recommend it to vegetarians.

Could this mean that the English food importers have a “greener” approach to food marketing?

4.1.2. Translating grammatical features

It is not uncommon that passive constructions will need to be translated with an active construction or vice versa, depending on the natural form of the receptor language.

For example: The instructions for use on the coconut milk have been translated using a passive verb form. I am convinced it would serve the consumer better to switch all passive verb forms into active forms whenever possible. The passive voice is too impersonal; the active voice is more direct. *Ravista hyvin ennen käyttöä* (*shake well before use*) has the same number of letters as in the Finnish translator’s own suggestion *ravistettava ennen käyttöä* (appendix 1, CHAOKOH COCONUT MILK and KANIA SALSA HOT CHILLI SAUCE). My suggestion uses an active instead of a passive form and contains the word *hyvin* (*well*). Unfortunately passive verb forms are widely used in instructions. Do texts in passive forms sound more official or more convincing? I believe it is only fair to say that any product with active verb forms on their labels or instructions would benefit the consumer and help him make better use of the product. The active voice is shorter, clearer and easier to read and understand, especially for immigrants whose Finnish may be a bit shaky. Passive forms take more space than active, shorter verb forms like imperatives. It seems that according to the samples in my study, Finnish translators might be unwilling to use informal imperatives. Passive verb form is more formal, distant and traditional in

translation. The Finnish imperative *lisää* (*add*) may be used between friends or people who would call each other by their first names and the form *lisätkää* is used formally and politely between strangers. This could be the reason why some translators avoid using the informal and direct form *lisää* (*add*).

4.1.3. Translating lexical items and communication situation

Each language has its own idiomatic way of expressing meaning through lexical items (words, phrases, etc.) Languages are rich in idioms, secondary meanings, metaphors and other figurative meanings. Let's look at a packet of cheese-flavoured Pringles – “Once you pop, you can't stop”. Puns are often left untranslated, and this tendency can be seen everywhere: on television, in advertisements and on product labels. A packet of Pringles is covered with what looks like most of the languages in Babel (appendix 1, PRINGLES CHEESE SNACK). Translations into Finnish and Swedish are printed on the waxed paper under the plastic lid. *Juuston Makuinen Snacks* (*Cheese Flavour Savoury Snack*). 'Snacks' is a lexical item that seems to have become a Finnish term in a plural form. There are several foreign terms on Finnish food products like *tortilla*, *salsa*, *taco*, *nachos* (appendix 1, INDIAN TORTILLA CHIPS, LA PREFERRED TACO SHELLS, TEX MEX TORTILLA WRAP).

Vakuumikuivattua (*dehydrated, orig.*) is a term that does not communicate at all. *Pakattu suojavaasuun* (*Packed in a protective atmosphere, orig.*) sounds just as confusing. The ingredients in the Danish kiwi cake is filled with long and foreign-sounding words and word combinations like the following (the spelling mistakes are in the original): *emulgointiaineet*, *soijalesitiini*, *tärkkelyssiirappi*, *pektiini*,

happamuudensäätoaine, säilömtäaine, kaliumsorbaatti, klorofylli, pastöroitu kananmuna, vehnätärkkelys, stabilointiaineet, ksantaanikumi, glyseroli, laktoosi, rasvahappojen mono- ja diglyseridit, polyglyserolirasvahppotesterit, tärkkelyssiirappi, riisitärkkelys, etanoli, disodiumdifosfaatit, sodiumkarbonaatti, luontaisenkaltaisen vanilliiniaromiaine. Or emulgointiaineet: ruokaöljyjen, rasvahappojen mono- ja diglyseridit ja ruokaöljyjen polyglyseriiniesteri, dextrose, kohotusaineet: dinatriumfosfaatti ja natriumkarbonaatti, väriaine: betakaroteeni (appendix 1, DANISH KIWI CAKE and KÄSEKUCHEN). Why do Finnish consumers tolerate these kinds of terms and translations on the labels of something they buy and eat – food? I am convinced that there must be some intelligible Finnish equivalents to these supposedly Finnish words. Do the Finnish consumers have such faith in terms invented by ‘authorities’ and ‘experts’?

“Tortilla” is another food term that is familiar to at least the younger generation. My next example is Santa Maria’s Tex Mex Wrap Tortilla (appendix 1), a product made in Sweden intended for the Scandinavian market. The cover of the vacuum package has a big green announcement in English: *6 wraps: G A R L I C*. Finnish consumers have to look harder for information about garlic. The texts are in Finnish, Swedish, Norwegian and Danish only, so these extra words in English on the cover might mean that they appeal to the Scandinavian market better than the Swedish word *VITLÖK*.

According to Larson, the meaning which is chosen will be influenced by the communication situation, for example, who the speaker is, who the audience are, the traditions of the culture et cetera. The translator bases his choices on many factors in the communication situation and then chooses what he wishes to communicate. Once

he has determined the meaning, he is limited to using the forms (grammatical, lexical, phonological) of the language in which he wishes to communicate that meaning.

For the translation to have the same dynamics as the original, it will need to be natural and easy to understand so that the readers will find it easy to grasp the message, including both the information and the emotional response intended by the source language writer, Larson continues. Unfortunately this is not often the case in Finnish food label translations. Take the Instant Noodles mentioned earlier: When I read the serving suggestions in English, I immediately felt hungry and my imagination flew ahead towards the dinner table where my family was sitting with an appreciative smile after a delicious meal. That was my emotional effect – the Finnish-speaking consumers without the knowledge of English have been deprived of that effect since no translation was offered. I also feel sorry for the French cook who tries to make couscous according to the translated instructions. The French translator advises the cook to use half a litre of water, forgetting to mention the amount of couscous it should be added to.

4.1.4. Implicit meaning

Translation, then, according to Larson, is communicating the same meaning in a second language as was communicated in the first. There are different sorts of meanings: explicit and implicit information (Grimes 1975). The word *pasta* refers to Italian food – people know the meaning of *pasta* because they have seen pasta, eaten pasta and learned to call it *pasta*. This sort of meaning is called **referential meaning**, because the word refers to a certain thing which a person can imagine or grasp.

According to Larson, **referential meaning** is what communication is about. It is the information content.

The **referential meaning** is organised into semantic structure. These pieces of information are packaged into larger units – thus there is **organisational meaning** in the discourse which must be taken into account when translating. For example, if *pasta* has been referred to in the text and then *pasta* is referred to again, the fact that it is the same *pasta* is part of the **organisational meaning** of the translation. Some information is old, some new; it may be the topic of the discourse in the translation. Larson maintains that **organisational meaning** puts the referential information together into a coherent text.

Besides the referential and organisational meaning, there is also **situational meaning** which is essential to the understanding of any text. The message is produced in a given communication situation. The relationship between the different parties, writer and the reader (sender and receiver) will affect the communication. Where the communication happens, when it happens, the age, sex, social status and presuppositions in the communication, cultural background of the sender and receiver all result in a situational meaning, Larson argues.

A food label may be utterly unintelligible to someone who is not familiar with the culture in which the text is written because there is so much situational meaning (kaya). When translated into another language, the original **situational meaning** may have to be included in a more overt form if the same total meaning is to be communicated to the readers in a different culture, Larson says. What would be a

better way to get to know exotic cultures than getting to know the food they eat and **how** they prepare the food and eat it? Personally, I would welcome bolder food label translations with new ideas or serving suggestions.

4.1.5. Steps on a food label translation project

Larson suggests that before starting the translating project there are a few things that have to be clearly understood by the translator and the commissioner. She specifies them as the text, the target, the team and the tools (Larson 1998: 46-47).

The **text** refers to the source language food labels which are to be translated. The translator must examine his reasons for choosing to translate the labels and their potential use by the receptor language audience.

The **target** refers to the audience. For whom are the food labels being translated? The target audience in supermarkets and shops will affect the form of the translation. The alphabet must be paid special attention to – it is not user-friendly to leave out all the dots of the Finnish alphabet.

The **team** refers to the people who will be involved in the translation project. If the translator is a competent speaker of both the source language as well as the target language, it may be that the whole project can be done completely by one person. I would recommend the translator to consult others in food label business for evaluation. I think importers should have proofreaders double-checking the

translation before printing the translated food labels because, judging by my material, there are far too many imperfections in the translations at the moment.

Tools refer to the written source materials that will be used by the translators as helps. Larson lists dictionaries, lexicons, grammars, and cultural descriptions et cetera, of both the source language and the target language. According to Larson, the team will want as much information available as possible while translating. It seems that food label translators are either too busy or negligent or not even professionals. How else can these numerous translations with imperfections be explained? Larson continues by saying that equipment and finances are also tools needed to carry out an effective translation project. Would it be possible that translators are poorly equipped and commissioners are interested in getting the fastest and cheapest possible translations at the expense of the quality of the translation?

Understanding the original text thoroughly is the first step of the translation process. The analysis of the source language food label includes resolving ambiguity, identifying implicit information and studying key words, among other things. The goal is to determine meaning which is to be communicated on the target language food label. The translator closely studies the source language food label and, using all the possible tools mentioned above, decides the content of the target language message, the related communication situation attributes, and all other factors which need to be understood in order to produce an equivalent translation.

According to Larson, the first transfer results in the initial draft. Before any extensive drafting can be done, the key food terms must be determined. These need to be

carefully considered and checked and consulted with other speakers of the target language. The translator has to make sure that there is no wrong or misleading information, no unnecessary omissions or additions. If these steps are followed, the target language food label is more apt to be in the natural style of the receptor language. It would be a good idea to rework the initial draft several times, to make sure that all the adjustments have been made, that the food label is clearly understood in the target language, and that the form chosen will communicate to the target audience. The audience must be kept in mind at all times. It would also be a good idea to take copies of the initial draft so that adequate evaluation can be done, Larson suggests.

According to Larson, the purpose of evaluation is to ensure accuracy, clarity and naturalness. The following questions must be considered: Does the translated food label communicate the same meaning as the original? Do the consumers for whom the translation is intended understand it clearly? Is the form of the translated food label easy to read – i.e. natural receptor language grammar and style? Those evaluating food label translations should be native speakers of the target language.

Larson recommends that after the evaluation has been carefully done, the translator needs to do a revised draft made on the basis of the feedback of evaluators. If any key words or terms are changed, the whole text of the food label must be checked for inconsistencies. Sometimes when there are difficult parts on food labels for consumers to read and understand, the translator can add more information for clarification.

Larson recommends that translators check their material with a trained consultant or advisor. This applies to translators of food labels as well. The consultant should be interested in the accuracy of the content of the food label, its naturalness of style and its effect on the target language consumers.

Some matters may need special testing before the final draft is ready. If the food label is to include pictures, they need to be evaluated. For example: The serving suggestion of the Danish Kiwi Cake is translated only into English and German, and is made clearer with the help of a picture of a sliced cake. Underneath the picture is the following text written only in English: *Best before: see base of product*. Other consumers will just have to rely on luck to find the date at the bottom of the cake without any instructions in their own language. As mentioned earlier, the best before date is the most sought piece of information on food packages.

If a special size of print or special type of font is used, they will also need to be tested. For example: The “best before” date is barely visible at the bottom of the Linea Verde couscous box. It is like a faint five-day-old footprint in snow (appendix 1, LAVAZZA ESPRESSO CAFFÉ, SCHMIDT CACAO, KANIA SALSAS, LA PREFERRIDA TACO SHELLS). In best before dates, ink has often been saved in the wrong place.

A final editing for spelling and punctuation will need to be made. For example: *Ainekset: Vehnsjauhoja, muna, suola. (Ingredients: wheat flours, an egg, salt)*. Or another example by HP Classic Spicy Sauce. Translation: *HP MANUSTEKASTIKE. Klassinen maustekastike. Korkealaatuinen sekoltus Itämaisia hedelmiä, maustelta ja*

etlkkaa. Sopll mainiostl ranskalaisten perunoiden, kalkkien grillattujen ja palstettujen ruokien kanssa. Larson states that “the time spent in careful checking and preparation of final draft will improve quality and will make the translation more acceptable to the audience for whom it is being prepared”.

4.2. Lexicon

A food label translator will often notice that there is no exact equivalent between the words of the source language and the words of the receptor language. There are words that will overlap in meaning, but there is seldom a complete match between languages. Therefore the translator has to translate one word of the source language with several words in the target language to obtain the same meaning. Sometimes the opposite is true, Larson admits.

4.2.1. Some relationships between lexical items

The same meaning may occur in several words of a language, *aubergine*, and *egg plant (munakoiso)*, for example. In defining generic vocabulary, we are referring to the manner in which certain words are grouped together – a more generic word includes all of a set of words like displayed by Larson.

Prepare

Cook

Roast

Boil

Broil

Fry

Prepare is the most generic and one way of *preparing* is to *cook*, and *cooking* can be done in several **specific** ways; that is, by *roasting*, *broiling*, *boiling* or *frying*. A food label translator needs to know about the **generic** and **specific** relationship (taxonomy) of words, because it will help him find a better lexical equivalent. The translation of more generic terms is often very complex, especially if the cultural contexts of the two languages are very different, says Larson.

In every language there are words which are very similar in meaning, but very few exact synonyms. According to Larson, “it is essential that the translator be aware of the very minute differences in meaning between words and near synonyms so as to choose the word that has the right connotation”. She continues by stating that “it is important that the translator be aware of the fact that the vocabulary of the source language will not match the vocabulary of the receptor language”.

Lexical items are related in various ways and occur in different kinds of semantic units. In English the terms *meat* and *flesh* represent distinctions which are not shared by many languages of the world, where only one word (*liha* in Finnish) is used to cover both areas of meaning. The word *meat* has an added component of meaning, i.e. *food*.

The lexical items of any language represent a network of interrelated meanings often referred to as a cognitive network. Words are related to one another in different ways. For example, each language has a vocabulary which will be used when talking about the topic *food*. There are subgroups when talking about specific kinds of food. No two languages will have exactly matching vocabularies which are used to talk about

food. According to Larson, the translator needs to match the source language system against the target language system. Almost any semantic unit compared between two languages will have some mismatch. Food terms will not only mismatch but they can cause additional problems in translation.

Different languages have different concentrations of vocabulary depending on the culture, geographical location, and the worldview of the people (Larson 1998: 95). The food label translator must be as accurate as possible and consider each word carefully until he finds the word or phrase which most accurately equals with the lexical item used in the source language food label. For example, a translator who wants to translate the concept which is represented by the Italian words *al dente*, may find that the Finnish equivalent is difficult to find. The translator will need to use his knowledge about cooking, Italian food and pasta etc. in order to discover components of meaning which are relevant.

4.2.2. Translating various senses

The word *dress* occurs in the following contexts, each signalling a different sense of the English word. I *dressed* myself (I *put my clothes on*). I *dressed* a chicken (I *defeathered a chicken and took its innards out*). In the examples we have a single word rather than two separate words (Beekman and Callow 1974: 97), but each sense will result in a different form for the translation depending on the context.

The use of words in a figurative sense involving association is called metonymy. For example, you can say in English that “*The kettle is boiling.*” However, a *kettle* cannot

boil. In the special collocation with *boil*, *kettle* does not mean the *kitchen utensil used for boiling water*, but rather refers to the *water* which is in the *kettle*. It is the *water* that is *boiling*. But the *water* is associated with the *kettle*, it is inside the *kettle*. *Kettle* is being used in figurative sense to mean *water*. A literal translation of *the kettle is boiling* would probably be nonsense in most languages. Figurative senses cannot usually be translated with a literal form of the word. The intended meaning is so obvious that there no longer is a figurative sense in the target language translation. *The kettle is boiling* would then be translated *the water is boiling*. The figurative sense is also based on collocation. It has the figurative sense only when used with certain other words. Synecdoches are also quite common in some languages like “*daily bread*” (jokapäiväinen leipä). *Bread* is substituted for *food*.

Idioms are very language specific. Idioms are expressions of “at least two words which cannot be understood literally and which function as a unit semantically” (Beekman and Callow 1974: 121). In English “*the icing on the cake*” can mean the actual *coating on a cake* (*kakun kuorrutus*) or *the final touch* (*piste i:n päällä*). Sometimes it will be necessary to translate the idiom non-figuratively, but sometimes a good target language idiom may be used. The translator needs to learn to recognise the idioms of the source text.

4.2.3. Lexical items and situational context

According to Larson, the situation in which words are used is crucial to the meaning of words. The particular word chosen in a translation will depend on various factors

of the situation in which the communication takes place. The translator must be aware of the meanings of words which are conditioned by the situation.

In addition to the age, sex, and educational level of the writer of the food label and the target consumers, there are also many factors in the communication situation which will affect the particular choice of vocabulary. The matter of formal versus informal in food label translation is interesting. The following example is from a Chinese noodle packet, imported by Ridderheims: “*Monet luulevat, että nuudelit on keitettävä. Ei missään tapauksessa! (Many people are under the impression that noodles must be boiled. This is not true / Många tror att äggnudlar skall kokas. Det är fel.)*” The use of an exclamation mark in the Finnish translation is unusual but very effective. The translation of user instructions continues: “*Egg Noodle Cantonese ovat perinteiseen tapaan valmistettuja kiinalaisia nuudeleita, joilla on Kiinassa jo tuhansien vuosien perinteet. Eikä niiden resepti ole muuttunut hiukkaakaan vuosien varrella: munia, jauhoja ja suolaa. Ei muuta. Käyttö: Luonnollisesti kaikentyypisissä wokkiruoissa. Ne ovat fantastisen hyviä paistettuina ja tekevät ihmeitä keiton lisukkeina. Kokeilepa tavallisen pastan vaihtoehtona.*” (*Egg Noodles Cantonese are traditionally prepared Chinese noodles that have traditions dating back thousands of years. And their recipe has not changed one bit: eggs, flour and salt. Nothing else. Serving suggestion: In all types of wok dishes, of course. Fried noodles taste fantastic and work wonders in soups. Try them instead of the usual pasta.*) Here the translator has chosen a new style to approach the consumers. I find it a fresh and appetising approach. However, I also prefer a certain level of politeness, not too familiar or pushy.

Words especially in food terms occur in sets which range from negative to positive connotations. For example the English words *fat*, *preservative* or *additives* probably have negative connotations among consumers. Words like *traditional*, *home-made* or *fresh* are likely to have positive connotations. Larson points out that a translator must be aware of the positive and negative connotation of words in the source language in order to translate with an appropriate connotation in the target language.

Larson claims that sometimes translators tend to use more technical or more formal vocabulary to impress the audience at their own level of education or status in the community. The use of technical terms can be a way to eliminate some readers from understanding the text because they are not familiar with technical terminology. Thus the translator has to keep in mind who the audience are for whom he is translating and not use vocabulary which is so technical that it will not be understood.

According to Larson, “one of the most difficult problems in translating is found in the differences between cultures”. The people of a certain culture have their own view and perspective of things. Many words which look like they are equivalent are not, take *porsaanelihaa*, *sianlihaa* or *possua* (*pork*), for example. They have special connotations. When the cultures are similar, there is less difficulty in translating. This is because both languages (source and target) will probably have food terms that are more or less equivalent for the various aspects of each culture. When the cultures are very different, it is often more difficult to find equivalent lexical food terms.

4.2.4. Collocation of lexical items

Collocation is about how words go together, i.e. which words occur in constructions with which other words. Knowing which words go together is an important part of understanding the meaning of a text and translating it well (Larson 1998: 141). Some words often occur in a fixed order. If the order is changed, the result will sound unnatural to the native speaker of the language. In English, some examples are *bread and butter*, *peas and carrots*, *bacon and eggs* or *fish and chips*. Idioms, as mentioned earlier, are special collocations. There may be a similar idiom but a totally different meaning; witness *a bun in the oven* (*pregnant*)(*pullat hyvin uunissa = menea hyvin*). A word can be translated in as many ways as the senses in which it is used. Each sense will need a different word for the translation. Larson defines ‘concordance’ as consistent matching of lexical items. Because of all the mismatches between source and target language structures, Larson argues, there will never be total concordance between a text and its translation.

4.2.5. Lexical concepts

According to Larson, a loan word refers to a word which is from another language and is not familiar to most of the readers of the target language. Sometimes these words will need an explanatory classifier added so that it is clear what the word is or means. The use of a loan word may sometimes be the best solution to finding a lexical equivalent; there are also some cautions that the translator needs to take into account. A loan word is a word from another language and languages are constantly borrowing words from other languages.

In each translation project, it is likely that there will be some special problems of lexical equivalence. Food label translators have to find adequate equivalents for the *key words* in the original text. Key words are words used over and over in the text and are essential to the topic at hand. They often represent a crucial or basic concept of the text. An adequate equivalent for a key word will be more important for communication than an adequate equivalent for other words in the text. The translator should standardise the form to be used when the same meaning is intended throughout the label to ensure cohesion, Larson continues.

On food labels there will be **token words** which are best kept as loan words. These would include characteristic words of a civilisation, such as the name of a new product or invention, or a current fad (Newmark 1974: 71). For example, in translating Spanish food terms into Finnish, words like *tapas*, *nachos* or *guacamole* are often retained to give a Spanish flavour to the translation.

Stringing together simple words creates word combinations, and there is almost no limit to the kinds of combinations which can be formed. Some examples in English are *ice-cream*, *sponge-cake*, *salad dressing* etc. The meaning of a combination as a whole cannot always be judged by the meaning of the individual constituent parts.

Throughout these chapters I have studied lexical equivalents, and it has become clear that the lexical items of the source language rarely have an exact match in the target language. How is it possible to translate food labels adequately at all? It is not the words that are being translated but the total meaning of the combined words. The

next part of my paper will focus on larger units – combinations of words; clauses, sentences, paragraphs and texts.

4.3. The semantic structure and communication relations

Larson points out that “the distinction between passive and active verbs is common to many languages. In the semantic structure, all event propositions are active and the agent expressed.” In a passive construction, the verb of the clause is in the passive voice, and instead of the agent as the subject, the affected is often the subject of the sentence.

Notice the following:

Active: *Shake the bottle.*

Passive: *The bottle must be shaken.*

The aim of the translator is to use the natural receptor language form.

In English, the words *till*, *until* and *except* often occur with a negative form in the sentence. These sentences may need to be translated by affirmative statements in other languages. For example, *do not add the vegetables until the noodles are fried brown and crisp* (*Lisää vihannekset vasta kunnes nuudelit ovat paistuneet ruskean rapeiksi*).

One of the classifying communication relations is the difference between chronological and non-chronological relations. Relations that are related to each other in terms of time are chronological (iconicity). Time element is essential when translating food labels and user-instructions. There is a chronological sequence:

For example: *Add the couscous and stir.*

The Finnish instructions for making couscous ask the cook to do the following: *Ota kasari pois levyltä. Sekoita ja lisää 2,5 dl Couscousta. Anna turvota 2 min. (Remove from heat. Stir and add 2.5 dl couscous. Leave to simmer 2 min.)* You might get the impression that you should **first stir the mixture of boiling water**, salt and oil and **then** add the couscous. A better translation in Finnish would have said *Ota kasari pois levyltä. Lisää 2,5 dl couscousta sekoittaen. (Remove the casserole from heat. Add 2.5 dl couscous and stir).* The English translator deals with the same part by advising the cook to *Add 2,5 dl couscous and stir. Remove from heat and cover. Leave to simmer 2 min.* The Swedish translator suggests that the simmering should last for 3 minutes *Tag av kastrullen från värmen. Rör i 2,5 dl couscous. Låt svälla 3 min tills allt vatten absorberats. (Remove from heat. Add 2.5 dl of couscous and stir. Leave to simmer 3 min till all water has been absorbed).* The Swedish translator is very helpful stating that the couscous is ready as soon as the water has been totally absorbed. His user-instructions are iconic, which means that the exact order in the text is same as in real life situation when following the instructions.

Causality is another relationship, the reason precedes the result – the relation is classified as non-chronological. There are sequential and simultaneous relations. In sequential relation one event follows the other event in time and there is no overlap in time between the events. For example, in the sentence *Shake well before use (ravista hyvin ennen käyttöä)* the first proposition *Shake well* refers to an event which occurs first and the second proposition *before use* is referring to an event which follows the first event. They are in sequential relation to one another and in chronological order. Sometimes the causality may be taken too far as in some Swanson frozen dinners:

“Serving suggestion: Defrost”. Or in Marks and Spencer Bread Pudding: “Product will be hot after heating.” (Quoted in “The Bible Translator” issue 2001).

If the events occur at the same time, the relation is simultaneous. The overlapping of time might be partial or complete. For example, *Leave to simmer 2-3 minutes and stir occasionally (Anna kiehua 2-3 min välillä hämmentäen)*. In the English grammatical structure, the sequential relation on food labels is indicated by such words as *first*, *after that*, *and then*, *next* or *and*. Simultaneous action in English is indicated by forms as *meanwhile*, *at the same time*, *while*, *and*, etc.

Larson suggests in her book that “one of the first things a translator will want to do is to identify the discourse of the document to be translated”. The translator should choose the discourse type which best communicates his purpose in writing. If he wants to explain to consumers how to do something, he will use forms of procedural discourse. Where the information is placed on the package is also of consequence: how useful is the following advice on Tesco’s Tiramisu dessert (printed on the bottom): “Do not turn upside down”? (Quoted in “The Bible Translator” issue 2001).

One of the basics is understanding the discourse genre. The purpose of procedural discourse in food label translation is to give the steps in how to do something. It is often called a process action, where the agent is usually not specified. *How to cook pasta* – the structure of the procedure is a series of steps leading to a final goal.

Larson explains that “cohesion is linear, running through the discourse, weaving it together”. Lines of cohesion hold a text together in different ways by binding the units together. Span is an essential feature when analysing cohesive elements of a

text. By span, Larson means the continuation of a given participant, setting or event through a part of the text. Semantic domain is another feature adding cohesion to a text. The things being referred to on the food label are around the same topic, or have specific semantic components in common. Sameness of content is a crucial criterion. In procedural discourse, coherence is based on goal, spans and on the sequential orderings or related processes. Sometimes the time span may be important when certain processes are to be done at a certain interval.

5. CONCLUSION

Consumers regarded strange and foreign food terminology difficult to understand. They realised that technical food declarations, for example, were an integral part of the food package, but hoped that they would be as concise and easy to understand as possible (Nordlund 1997). Food label translators have to be resourceful in how the translations can intelligibly be fitted into a limited space of a label.

It takes about three minutes to adopt and process the necessary product information on which consumers can base their choices of a product (Calcich and Blair 1982). I found food label translations in Finland to be poor and inadequate, given the seriousness of the food related issues raised in this thesis. I believe that food label translators must be free to omit, add or rephrase their translations in their pursuit for the most purposeful translation. However, based on the numerous findings in my research material, it is important that food label translators do not omit anything that was included in the original on the basis of a different cultural background.

The presence of imperfect information and inaccuracies on food labels was annoying. I am convinced that food label translators must check that any statements on the food product label are factually correct and logically sound. Food label translators must ensure at all times that the content of the food label is accurate and clear, but also that the users can easily use the content of the food product.

Determining a final translation intended for the consumers is relatively difficult. Therefore it is necessary that food label translators be fully aware of the way consumers intend to follow the user instructions. Whenever possible, food label translators should test the information on the food product as first users of the technical information, to determine if the wording and formatting are easy to follow and understand.

According to my research material, most of the products would have failed their usability test as far as their documentation were concerned. It is surprising that multinational food companies do not pay more attention to the usability of their products by hiring professional translators to add value to their products and to ensure that the products meet the expectations of the users. I believe that food label translators are partly to blame for producing excessive amount of confusing information on food labels. The most vital information should be put first, but the current amount of information on food labels is enormous and printed in multiple languages, making it more difficult for consumers to find the relevant answers quickly. The technical information on food labels must therefore be organised into a coherent whole – less is more in today's usability designs.

One disadvantage of translating technical information on food labels is that it is not a two-way conversation between the translator and the consumer – the information communicates to users through the choices of words and graphics made by translator. The food label translator must therefore know how to use style, organisation and visual design in his documentation. However, in the light of my research material it became evident that translators do not use language that consumers would understand. Food label translators should pay more attention to ensuring that the language on food labels is fluent, using one meaning per word, using appropriate suffixes, and avoiding the use of metaphorical or culture-specific language. They must also check the use of weights, metric amounts, types of measures, symbols, icons, and graphics.

Larson maintains that meaning must have priority over form. The goal of the food label translator is to produce an idiomatic translation in the receptor language; one that has the same meaning as the source language but expressed in the natural form of the receptor language. Sadly, this was not the case with many translated food labels. The research material I examined for this thesis call for immediate correction tools. The number of inaccuracies, asymmetries, omissions, grammatical errors, inconsistencies in punctuation, ambiguities in information, cultural mismatches, incomprehensible food terminology and foreign terms and expressions simply show that there is an acute need to improve the overall standards of quality and usability in food label translation in Finland.

Food label translators handle technical information and make it understandable to consumers who need it - they package the required information in a more accessible and a more understandable form for the consumer. Therefore they should focus on

user-centred writing, and re-interpret technical information in cultural user contexts. Or would you know how to make sushi without proper user instructions attached to the package? How would your raspberry jelly bunny look without translated user documentation?

Multinational food companies are more than eager to sell their products worldwide, since food is a profitable business. The fact that I am bringing attention to the poor quality of translated food labels is a matter that might appeal to companies. Increased sales are one result of increased product quality. There is no justification for inferior food label translations that do not meet the quality or usability standards set by consumers and authorities. However, there are no simple solutions to the problems pointed out in this thesis. One possible approach would be to discontinue using unprofessional food label translators. Some 13% of food packages have serious errors on labelling (Pihlaspuro 1998), which included the complete absence of translated labels, failure to provide information provided by law, failure to indicate the possibility of health risks or simply the use of misleading and confusing labels. One of the discoveries in my research is the need for food label translators to standardise how they express the best before dates and the use of food terms.

Taking all the above considerations into account, it is safe to say that the hypothesis of my thesis that companies importing foodstuffs into Finland do not sufficiently focus on the translations, quality and usability of the translated food package labels was correct. Therefore I encourage food-importing companies to use professional translators instead of do-it-yourself translators, since it would benefit the consumers in a lot of ways and make the companies look smarter. This would contribute to

customer satisfaction, since professional food label translators add value by ensuring that food products and their labels meet the final users' expectations and help them use food products more easily in future.

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Appendix 1 / research material / translated labels of food products imported into Finland

ALWADI AL AKHDAR FOUL MOUDAMMAS. Produced by Dove Processing Sal, Lebanon.

BART COCONUT CREAM. Importer Fine Foods Ltd, Helsinki.

BELLAROM CHOCO DRINK. Produced by Lidl Stiftung, Germany.

BLUE DRAGON Instant Noodles. Importer RB Foods Oy, Finland.

CHAOKOH COCONUT MILK. Importer Inex Partners Oy, Finland.

DANISH LUXURY KIWI DAN CAKE. Produced by Dan Cake, Denmark.

EGG NOODLE CANTONESE. Manufacturer Ridderheims, China.

EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL. Produced in Italy by Lidl Stiftung, Germany.

HP SAUCE. Manufacturer HP Foods Ltd, England.

INDIAN TORTILLA CHIPS. Produced in the UK by Mission Foods.

KANIA SALSA HOT CHILLI SAUCE. Produced by Lidl Stiftung, Germany.

KÄSEKUCHEN Cheese Cake. Manufacturer Kuchenmeister GmbH, Germany.

LA PREFFERIDA TACO SHELLS. Imported by RB Foods, Helsinki.

LATINO Pasta di Semola di Grano Duro. Importer Lidl Stiftung, Germany. Produced by European Rice & Macaroni Company.

LAVAZZA ESPRESSO CAFFÉ. Manufactured by Luigi Lavazza S.P.A. Italy.

LINEA VERDE COUSCOUS. Produced by C.C.I.A.A. Italy, marketing by Cedar Foods Oy, Helsinki.

PRINGLES CHEESE SNACK. Manufactured by Pringles Ltd.

RAINBOW MAITOSUKLAALEVITE. Importer Inex Partners Ltd, Helsinki.

SCHMIDT CACAO. Manufactured by Georg Schmidt, Germany.

TEX MEX WRAP TORTILLA. Imported by Santa Maria Group, Sweden.

YEO'S INSTANT NOODLES. Manufacturer Inex Partners Ltd, Helsinki.

Appendix 2 / European Food Act Section 6 of the Decree on Labelling 794/1991

According to the European Union Food Act “subject to the following provisions of the Section 6 of the Decree on Labelling , (794/1991), all food shall be marked or labelled with

- (a) the name of the food;
- (b) a list of ingredients;
- (c) the appropriate durability indication;
- (d) any special storage conditions or conditions of use;
- (e) the name or business name and an address or registered office of either or both—
 - (i) the manufacturer or packer, or
 - (ii) a seller established within the European Community;
- (f) particulars of the place of origin or provenance of the food if failure to give such particulars might mislead a purchaser to a material degree as to the true origin or provenance of the food; and
- (g) instructions for use if it would be difficult to make appropriate use of the food in the absence of such instructions.

If there is a particular name required to be used by law for the food, that name shall be used as the name of the food. If there is no name prescribed by law for a food, a name, which is customary in the area where the food is sold, may be used for the food. The name used for the food must be sufficiently precise to inform a purchaser of the true nature of the food and to enable him to distinguish the food from products with which it could be confused and, if necessary, shall include a description of its use. A trade mark, brand name or fancy name must not be used as the name of a food. Where a purchaser could be misled by the omission of an indication that a food is powdered or that a food has been dried, freeze-dried, frozen, concentrated or smoked, or has been subjected to any other treatment, the name of the food must include such an indication.

It is important to constantly monitor the weight of contents, since packages must contain the exact amount of ingredients as mentioned on the label.

The list of ingredients must be headed by an appropriate heading, which includes the word "ingredients". The ingredients shall be listed in descending order of weight. Where a food consists of, or contains, mixed fruit, nuts, vegetables, spices or herbs and no particular fruit, nut, vegetable, spice or herb predominates significantly by weight, those ingredients may be listed otherwise than in descending order of weight (for example "in variable proportions".) Where an ingredient being a flavouring is added to or used in a food it shall be identified by either the word "flavouring" or a more specific name or description of the flavouring (or flavourings). An additive must be identified by the additive's specific name if it was added to or used in the food or an ingredient of the food to serve the function of an antioxidant, colour, flavouring, preservative or sweetener.

The minimum durability of a food shall be indicated by the words "best before" followed by

- (a) the date up to and including which the food can reasonably be expected to retain its specific properties if properly stored, and
- (b) any storage conditions which need to be observed if the food is to retain its specific properties until that date.

The date in the indication of minimum durability shall be expressed in terms of a day, month and year (in that order), except that—

- (a) in the case of a food which can reasonably be expected to retain its specific properties for three months or less, it may be expressed in terms of a day and month only;
- (b) in the case of a food which can reasonably be expected to retain its specific properties for more than three months but not more than 18 months it may be expressed in terms of a month and year only, if the words "best before" are replaced by the words "best before end" , and
- (c) in the case of a food which can reasonably be expected to retain its specific properties for more than 18 months it may be expressed either in terms of a month and year only or in terms of a year only, if (in either case) the words "best before" are replaced by the words "best before end" .

In addition to the labelling described above, packages of foods must be labelled in accordance with the Decision 795/1991 of the Ministry of Trade and Industry or any special regulations applicable to the food in question”.

Lausunto Julie Silkin pro gradu -tutkielmasta **Quality Assessment, Usability and Meaning-Based Translation of Labels on Foodstuffs Imported into Finland.** 77 sivua. Suomenkielinen lyhennelmä 7 sivua.

Julie Silk kasittelee tutkielmassaan elintarvikkeiden pakkausmerkintojen suomennoksia ja niiden laatua. Keskeisiä laatutekijöitä ovat mm. pakkausmerkintojen oikeellisuus, käytettävyys ja ymmärrettävyys. Tekijän lahtokohta on se, että maahantuojat eivät kiinnitä tarpeeksi huomiota pakkausmerkintoihin eivätkä käytä hyväkseen ammattikaantajien asiantuntemusta pakkausmerkintojen kaantamisessa tai lokalisoinnissa paikalliseen käyttöympäristöön. Silk pohjaa tutkimuksensa 21 Suomeen maahantuodun elintarvikkeen pakkausmerkintoihin. Teoreettisesti työ perustuu pääosin Mildred Larsonin käsityksiin tekstin merkityksestä ja kielellisestä vastavuudesta kaantamisessa. Lisäksi Silk hyödyntää teknisen viestinnän piirissä sovellettavia periaatteita kuluttajaystävällisistä editointiperusteista.

Julie Silkin aihe on hyvin valittu ja erittäin ajankohtainen. Elintarvikkeiden turvallisuus ja kuluttajien oikeudet ovat tärkeitä. EU:n kuudennen puiteohjelman keskeisiä tutkimuskohteita. Silkin tutkimuksesta käy ilmi, että hallitus on tiukasti sitoutunut puolustamaan kuluttajan oikeuksia ja hallitus esittääkin hyvin vakuuttavia todisteita siitä, kuinka ala-arvoisia ja vaikeaselkoisia Suomeen tuotujen elintarvikkeiden tuotemerkinnät usein ovat. Tekijä tuo myös painokkaasti esiin sellä, kuinka haitallista ja vaarallista yliolkainen suhtautuminen tuotemerkintoihin on ruoka-aine-allergioista karsiville. Silk esittääkin päätelmän, että ruokatarvikkeiden maahantuojia pitäisi valistaa pakkausmerkintojen merkityksestä. Maahantuojien tulisi ymmärtää, että hyvin lokalisoitu tuoteseloste on keskeinen osa tuotetta eikä vain lain edellyttämä ylimääräinen kustannuserä.

Julie Silk on tehnyt tutkielmansa hyvin itsenäisesti, ja työn ansiona voidaan ilman muuta pitää omaehtoista ja sitoutunutta tutkimusotetta. Itsenäisyyden haittapuolena ovat kuitenkin useat heikkoudet, joista olisi voitu paistaa eroon jos tekijä olisi käyttänyt hyväkseen ohjausta jo työn alkuvaiheissa. Työn teoreettinen kehys on hyvin abstrakti, ja Larsonin käsitykset kaantamisesta ovat pikemminkin käytännön sovellusehdotuksia kuin kaannosteoreettista pohdiskelua: hänen ohjeidensaustalla näytävät olevan lähinnä Peter Newmarkin kaantamiskäsitykset. Käytännön ohjeiden nostaminen kaannosteoreettiseksi tarkasteluksi johtaakin aika ajoin yksinkertaistettuihin ja suoraviivaisen naiiveihinkin kommentteihin, joita vastaan voi esittää teräväkin kritiikkiä. Kiire on aiheuttanut sellä, että työn loppueditointi on jäänyt kesken ja samoihin asioihin palataan useammassa kohdassa työtä. Tutkimuksen rakenne karsii myös ronsyista ja irrelevanteista taustahuomioista, jotka olisi voinut karsia pois. Niiden sijaan tekijä olisi voinut pohtia syvällisemmin varsinaista aihettaan, kaantamisen, teknisen viestinnän ja ruoka-aineiden pakkausmerkintojen suhdetta toisiinsa ja kaantajan asiantuntijaroolia kollaboratiivisessa toimintayhteisössä. Nyt mallet huomiot jäävät eraanlaisten sloganien tasolle.

Julie Silkin työn arviointi on vaikeaa. Työllä on kiistattomat ansionsa mutta siinä on myös runsaasti harmittavia puutteita. Harkinnan jälkeen olemme kuitenkin päättäneet painottamaan työn ansioita ja esitämme, että tutkielma hyväksyttäisiin arvokauseella **cum laude** approbatur. .

Tampereella

12.2004

L~ V_U

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