

# Translating cheese production terminology from French to Russian: Challenges and pitfalls

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*This article is concerned with cheese production terminology and the appropriate ways of its translation from French to Russian. The paper will analyse French texts related to cheesemaking, describe the corresponding terms registered in French and Russian, and look into the specifics of French-to-Russian rendering of the corresponding terms. Specific attention is paid to equivalent translation, transcription, transliteration, calquing and descriptive translation as methods of translation most appropriate in cases where cheese production terminology is concerned. The following methods used in translating cheese production terminology are reviewed: replacement of the French term by the Russian term bearing the same meaning; equivalent translation; transcription; transliteration; descriptive or explanatory translation; calque translation. The author encourages translators to create a system of priorities for each individual translation case and abide by the generally accepted rules that can be applied in translating terms related to cheese production in any given set of source and target languages.*

**KEYWORDS:** term, terminology, translation, calque, transliteration, transcription, cheese, French, Russian



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

A French proverb claims ‘*Un fromage par jour de l’année*’, meaning that there is a different cheese for each day of the year. France is the only country with such a wide range of cheese products exported all over the world for decades. The cheesemaking tradition is so overwhelming here that Charles De Gaulle once said: ‘*How can anyone govern a nation that has two hundred and forty-six different kinds of cheese?*’

This European country is well-suited for cheese production. The influence of microclimates has created an array of cheeses so magnificent that they required their own course at dinner. For the French cheese is more than just food: they don’t eat cheese with the other courses, but instead, the cheese plate comes at the end and is a sacred tradition of the national cuisine. Interestingly, the canonical trinity of most French tables consists of bread, cheese and wine (Pilcher, 2017, p. 32).

Today, European cheese producers want to see

Russian cheese in their shops and on their market, partly because Europe does not produce enough cheese yet to satisfy the demand. For years, Russian creameries have been expanding their production and taking an active part in international cheese exhibitions. The Altai Territory in Russia has become the platform for the International school of cheese making. It will be established following the agreement between the local administration and French regional council of Franch Comté. Together they plan to engage modern technology to organise research and produce innovative cheese varieties, which demonstrates the ties between the two nations as regards food- (and particularly cheese-related) cooperation.

This article intends to identify appropriate techniques in translating cheese production terminology from French into Russian and detail Russian and French equivalent terms in the sphere of cheese production. France is one of the leading countries in cheese production, which is why the

language is replete with cheese-related terms. It usually serves as a resource of supply to the Russian terminology system. As Russian food processing industry assimilates new methods of food production, the language is taking in the corresponding terminology, including the cheesemaking one. This article will analyse French texts related to cheesemaking, describe the corresponding terms registered in French and Russian, and look into the specifics of rendering the cheesemaking terms from French into Russian.

## 2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

Material for the study is represented by dictionary entries related to cheese production and open online resources covering the peculiarities of this topic. The extracted examples are analysed against the background of existing translation procedures and approaches to ultimately describe these procedures and approaches in the context of and as applied to French-to-Russian translation of cheese production terminology.

## 3. TRANSLATING CHEESE-RELATED TERMS: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 General observations

A term is a word or expression that has a precise meaning in some uses (Bowker, 2015, p. 304). It denotes a concept in a particular science, profession or activity (Wang & Lin, 2019, p. 282). Terms are often associated with professionalisms and are context-free, i.e. their meaning does not depend on the context (Kockaert & Steurs, 2015, p. 202). When common words become terms, they lose their connection with synonymous units registered in the general language, and the main feature of a term is its ability to define a notion of a certain field (science, technology, culture, etc.) precisely and quickly (Wei, 2018, p. 263). Emotional colouring or personal evaluation are out of the picture when terms are used within their proper field (Robinson, 2019, p. 98).

Translating terms might seem as an easy task considering all possible information resources at hand, such as dictionaries, glossaries, encyclopaedias, online sources, etc. However, abundance in

### *‘Translating a term is not about replacing a foreign word with a word of the target language’*

this case may lead to confusion.

Translating a term is not about replacing a foreign word with a word of the target language: choosing an erroneous word combination can cause difficulties in text apprehension. Terminology represented in dictionaries is usually arranged in alphabetical or keyword order, i.e. to find a required combination of words one will need to look up a keyword. For example, to translate the compound term *fromage non affine* one will have to look up *fromage* (*сыр / cheese*) first. The corresponding dictionary entry will offer an attributive group corresponding to *сыр, не требующий стадии созревания* (*unripened cheese*).

Another important step is to ‘recognise’ a term in the text, i.e. differentiate it from the elements of common-language lexis (Colina, 2018, p. 111). In most cases difficulties arise because of homonyms – words that sound alike but have a different semantic structure. This happens because terminological status ends up attributed to a common lexical unit or to a former term, and also because of the word’s ‘transparent’ inner form (Baker & Saldanha, 2019, p. 604).

Homonyms are defined more easily among terms taken from other languages but they, in turn, cause difficulties for translators. Such terms might be false cognates, i.e. false friends of a translator, and the issue gets more challenging when it comes to the native terms of a foreign language. Most of these terms, being elements of the corresponding terminological system, have a rather ‘transparent’ inner form, thereby giving the wrong idea to a translator. Difficulties in recognising a term also have to do with the fact that it can be used in its non-terminological meaning or a common word can prove to be a term (Yolkina, 2018, p. 59).

As a rule, translation of terms implies replacement of words with lexical units of the same category, meaning that a term is translated with a

*‘Homonyms are defined more easily among terms taken from other languages but they, in turn, cause difficulties for translators’*

term (Antia & Ianna, 2016). Obviously, this principle can only be implemented in practice if an equivalent term exists in the target language, and it is up to the translator to not only be aware of its existence, but to be familiar with its accurate form. The equivalent term will have to completely correspond to the term in the source language regarding its subject content and its use with the same meaning in the corresponding knowledge domain. A translator is not supposed to rephrase terms in the target language, but is expected to find the adequate equivalent terms in the target language and use them in their currently accepted form (Wæraas & Nielsen, 2016).

Contrary to common belief, terms might have more than one meaning, which means that they can be understood differently depending on the scope of application. In other words, some terms can simultaneously belong to multiple terminological systems (Boase-Beier, 2017, 199). For example, viewed as part of cheese terminology, *la croûte* means *сырная корочка* (*cheese rind*). But the same term has a variety of meanings in other terminological systems:

- Military – *завеса; прикрытие* (*screen; shelter*);
- Geology – *кора* (*crust*);
- Leather industry – *мездра* (*scrapings*);
- Cookery – *пирог* (*pie*);
- Medicine – *струп, короста* (*scab*);
- Chemistry – *нагар* (*carbon deposit*).

Again, as part of the terminology system related to cheese, the word *le talon* is translated as *сырная кромка* (*cheese brim*). In other terminology systems, it has the following meanings:

- Leather industry – *пятка; каблук* (*heel*);
- Automobile – *борт шины* (*tire bead*);
- Machinery – *буртик* (*integral collar*);

- Metallurgy – *реборда; фланец* (*flange*);
- Oil and gas – *наконечник* (*jet pipe; nose piece*);
- Paleontology – *каблук прирастания* (*cicatrix of attachment*);
- Welding – *притупление кромки* (*root face*);
- Architecture – *каблук* (*cyma reversa; talon*);
- Technics – *насадка* (*nozzle*);
- Finance – *корешок в чековой книжке* (*counterfoil of checkbook*).

One of the essential conditions for adequate term translation is the process of comparison between a translated word and the terminology system (Gentzler, 2016, p. 31). Thus, the French language does not distinguish between the notions of *горячий* (*hot*) and *тёплый* (*warm*), and so both are translated as *chaud*.

In cases where similar terms require differentiation, translators should resort to descriptive constructions or explanations:

*Ou dans le chaudron quand on fait le fromage à chaud.*

*Или в котёл пока сыр не нагреется* (*Or into the kettle until the cheese warms up*).

*Les fromages gras sont de nature chaude et de saveur salée.*

*Сыры с высоким содержанием жира мягкие и имеют солёный вкус»* (*High-fat cheeses are soft and have a salty taste*).

*L'égouttage se fait dans une salle plus chaude.*

*Выделение сырной сыворотки происходит в помещении с тёплой температурой воздуха* (*Milk whey draining is conducted in a warm room*).

### 3.2 Descriptive translation

Descriptive or explanatory translation is a method of rendering non-equivalent vocabulary, revealing meanings of foreign lexical units by means of enlarged phrases. These phrases should reveal the features of phenomena rendered by these lexical units (Hermans, 2019).

Thus, for example, the term *persillé* often causes difficulties for Russian translators, because

there is no appropriate word in the Russian language which can serve as an equivalent. In French, *persillé* means a process of blue mould appearing in the cheese pulp. The most suitable approach to be taken here is to resort to descriptive translation:

*Les fromages persillée sont fabriqués à partir de lait de vache, de brebis ou de chèvre.*

*Сыры с голубой плесенью производят из коровьего, овечьего или козьего молока (Cheeses with blue mould are made of cow's, sheep's or goat's milk).*

Hense, *persillé* is translated as *с голубой плесенью* (with blue mould). Sometimes this term can be translated as *с зелёными пятнышками* or *с зелёно-голубыми вкраплениями* because of the cheese pulp's unusual colour.

Translating the term *double crème* can also be a challenging endeavour, because some obvious options like *двойные сливки*, *двойной-крем* (*double cream*), *два крема* (*two creams*) will be incorrect. *Double-crème* is actually a kind of cheese containing more than 60% of fat in the dry matter, which is why an appropriate translation here is *сыр с высоким содержанием жира* (*high-fat cheese*). It follows that a descriptive method of translation makes the most sense:

*Caprice des Dieux est un fromage double crème très populaire de forme ovale.*

*Каприс де Дьё – это популярный сыр овальной формы с высоким содержанием жира (Caprice des Dieux is a kind of high-fat cheese of oval shape).*

When no accurate lexical correspondence with a term can be found, one can always render the meaning descriptively using several words. For example, for the French *la caillebotte* is a food product made of fermented milk with removed milk whey, which one might correlate with the Russian *творог* (*cottage cheese*). However, this specific Russian term is not the equivalent because this type of dairy product does not exist in the European countries. The majority of nations worldwide call this product of milk coagulation simply

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cheese, whereas in Russia cheese is a product of treatment and processing of cottage cheese. Thus, it might be more appropriate to replace the word *la caillebotte* with a terminological word collocation or a compound term *домашний сыр*.

Explication is a method of rendering words with no direct equivalents in other languages, a replacement of the foreign language units, which do not have regular correspondence, with phrases. The very term 'explication' means lexical-grammatical transformation, where one lexical unit is replaced with a word combination explicating its meaning, i.e. giving a more or less complete explanation of this term in the target language (Pym, 2017).

Descriptive translation has one serious disadvantage: it is cumbersome. As a general rule, such constructions abound in participle clauses, complex objects and extensive definitions. Consequently, it is a common method for rendering the meaning of culture-specific words having no equivalents in the bilingual dictionaries. However, it cannot always be used in translating literally texts, along with methods of transcription and calquing:

*Le décaillage – измельчение сырного зерна (cutting of coagulum).*

*L'attelle – деревянная накладка для стекания молочной сыворотки (a wooden moulding for draining of milk whey).*

*Demi-gras – с жирностью менее 25% (fat content of less than 25%).*

*Cendrage: Ce terme désigne l'opération qui consiste à saupoudrer certains fromages d'un mélange de sel et de charbon de bois très finement broyé.*

*Посыпка сыра смесью из соли или измельченного древесного угля (Strewing the surface of cheese with a mixture of salt and grinded coal).*

*Claie: C'est un treillage en bois ou en fer, où les fromages sont déposés pendant la période d'affinage.*

*Деревянная или металлическая решётка для вызревания сыра (Wooden or metal grid for cheese ripening).*

*Emprésurage: C'est une étape de la fabrication du fromage au cours de laquelle une présure est ajoutée au lait pour permettre la coagulation.*

*Этап производства сыра, в процессе которого сычужный фермент добавляется в молоко (One of the stages of cheese production when cheese rennet is added to milk to start the process of flocculation).*

*Ensemencement: C'est un procédé de fabrication pour certains fromages. Il consiste à incorporer des ferments lactiques ou des 'moisissures'.*

*This is a process of production applied for certain kinds of cheese. It consists of the placement of a milk enzyme or 'mould'.*

*Внесение грибковой закваски или молочных ферментов (Placement of fungal ripening cultures or a milk enzyme).*

*Faisselle: C'est un moule perforé qui est utilisé lors de l'égouttage du caillé.*

*It is a mould full of holes which is used for milk whey flowing-off.*

*Цедилка для сыворотки (a colander for milk whey).*

*Fleur: C'est une sorte de 'moisissure' blanche qui se forme à la surface de certains fromages après un ensemencement.*

*It is a kind of white mould which appears on the surface of cheese after the process of seeding. Белая плесень на поверхности сыра (White mould on the surface of the cheese).*

*Harpe: C'est un ustensile, ressemblant à un grand râteau, qui permet de brasser, et surtout de découper le caillé afin de faciliter l'égouttage et l'évacuation du petit-lait.*

*This is the tool in the shape of a big rake, which provides an opportunity to stir and cut a cheese curd. It facilitates draining and removal of milk whey.*

*Лира для резки сыра (Cheese harp for cutting).*

*Paillon (Tranche-caillé: C'est une sorte de tapis en paille qui reçoit les fromages pendant leur égouttage et leur affinage.*

*It is a kind of straw grid which is used for cheese during its draining and ageing.*

*Соломенный подстил (straw mat).*

*Petit-lait: C'est le liquide qui s'évacue du caillé pendant l'égouttage.*

*It is the liquid which come out of cheese coagulum during the process of draining.*

*Молочная сыворотка (milk whey).*

### 3.3 Special cases in translating French terms related to the cheesemaking process

Based on their structure, terms can be divided into three groups:

- 1) simple single-word lexical units;
- 2) two-word compound terms, sometimes presented graphically as one word with a hyphen;
- 3) term phrases composed of several components.

French terms, particularly cheese names, are most commonly word combinations. At that, terms which have toponyms (i.e. geographical names) as their part occur quite frequently, because the majority of cheeses received their names in honour of the locality or the geographic area they were produced in. The following kinds of cheese may serve as a vivid example:

*Côte du Provence* is translated as *Кот-дю-Прованс*. It cannot be translated as *Берег Прованса (Coast of Provence)*.

*Mont Maudit* is translated as *Мон Моду*. It cannot be translated as *Вершина в массиве Монблан (Mount in the Mont Blanc massif)*.

*Le Mayet de-Montagn* is translated as *Ле Майе де Монтань*. It cannot be translated as *Гора Майе (Mayet Mountain)*.

The significant elements constituting part of the name are usually translated, yet there are some exceptions when toponyms should be translated in any case. Only several geographical names in France perpetuated their traditional spelling in Russian, which does not correspond to the way they sound in French, as in *Paris – Париж, Ver-*



sailles – Версаль, Metz – Мец, Marseille – Марсель. Some words receive the inflexional ending ‘-a’, as in Nice – Ницца (Nice), Bayonne – Байонно (Bayonne).

There are several methods of compound terms translation. Firstly, word-based translation or calquing, i.e. modelling of words and constructions after foreign patterns. A calque or a loan translation can be defined as a word-for-word translation from one language into another (González & Knospe, 2019). When a translator takes a phrase in French and proceeds to literally translate it root-for-root or word-for-word into English, that’s a calque. In other words, calquing is the method of translating lexical units of the authentic text by replacing their morphemes with their lexical correspondences from the target language. The essence of calquing is that it creates a new word or a word combination in the target language, copying the structure of the original lexical unit.

Sometimes cheeses have abbreviations as part of their names, and these should at all times be transcribed. The terms which define Russian cheese names deserve particular attention. In French they often can be seen as phrases constructed following the ‘noun + preposition + noun’ pattern. These terms should be translated into Russian through calquing.

Transcription is a method of translation of a lexical unit from the authentic text that implies recreating its sound form by letters of the target language, when each phoneme of the source language has a correspondence in the phonemic content of another language (Belczyk-Kohl, 2016, p. 140).

Transliteration is a text rendering technique based on writing words using a different alphabet (Mossop, 2017, p. 621). The cases of internationalisms translation are excellent examples of transliteration: *Streptococcus Cremoris* (Стрептококкус Креморис); *Lactobacillus* (Лактобацилла, Лактобактерия); *Streptococcus Thermophilus* (Термофильный Стрептококк); *Penicillium Glaucum* (Пенициллиум Глаукум); *Penicillium Roqueforti*

*‘The essence of calquing is that it creates a new word or a word combination in the target language, copying the structure of the original lexical unit’*

(Пенициллиум Рокфорту); *Geotrichum Candidum* (Геотрихум Кандидум); *Penicillium Camemberti* (Пенициллиум Камемберту); *Penicillium Candidum* (Пенициллиум Кандидум).

### 3.4. Translating realia

Translators should be careful not to confuse terms with realia. The latter refer to words and expressions representing things, phenomena and objects peculiar to a given geographic location, social and cultural development of a particular nation, unfamiliar to another nation (Florin, 2018, p. 123). These words carry an ethnos-specific, local or historical colouring and do not always have exact matches in other languages and cultures. Thus, for example, measure-related realia are often translated as per their semantic content, while currency-related realia are generally transcribed:

*Il était à l’époque appelé ‘angelot’, qui était en fait le nom d’une pièce de monnaie puisque. L’angelot servait de moyen d’échange, de rémunération et d’impôt.*

*Это произошло в эпоху под названием ‘Анжелло’, которое в действительности являлось названием монеты. Сыр Анжело служил средством обмена, зарплатой и налогом (This happened in an era called ‘Angelot’, which was actually the name of the coin. Angelot cheese served as a medium of exchange, salary and tax).*

With regard to temporal changes in currency, translators cannot ignore the units bearing the same name with different referents of time and place.

As a general rule, a good translator knows everything about the epoch of the book he is translating: people’s life, their culture and, especially, their outdated currency measurement systems:

*Le beurre et le fromage consommés à Paris*

*‘As a rule, translators should be careful re-placing one measurement system with another, for mistakes can result in the corruption of historical facts’*

*équivaldraient à 17,000,000 livres pesant de viande.*

*Количество масла и сыра, потребляемое в Париже, равносильно 17000000 фунтам мяса (Butter and cheese consumed in Paris is equal to 17,000,000 pounds of meat).*

Translators should use a footnote with their authorial commentary when they mention this measurement system in their translation for the first time, thus making sure there is no misunderstanding. Additional information helps make the content more precise:

*Une livre de fromage exige au moins 12 livres de lait. 100 kilogrammes de lait donnent de 8 à 10 kilogrammes de fromage gras.*

*Для одного фунта сыра необходимо 12 фунтов молока. 100 килограмм молока позволяет изготовить от 8 до 10 килограмм жирного сыра (12 pounds of milk are required to make one pound of cheese. 100 kilogrammes of milk allow to produce from 8 to 10 kilogrammes of high-fat cheese).*

*Фунт – это мера веса 380-550 г. (в зависимости от провинции в старой Франции) (Pound is a measure of weight that equals to 380-550 grammes (depending on the provinces in old France)).*

As a rule, translators should be careful replacing one measurement system with another, for mistakes can result in the corruption of historical facts.

### 3.5 Translating proper names

A proper name is an object of onomastics, the science that studies all types of names in all their aspects (e.g. their use, origin and history). One of the most important features of personal pronouns is that they are attached to things on an individual basis. Thus, in principle, they have to be viewed

as definitions of the same things not only in one linguistic environment, but in other linguistic and cultural environments. In other words, a personal pronoun does not have to be replaced by another denotation, when people talk or write about its owner in another language. Consequently, a proper name is an object of interlingual and cross-cultural borrowing. Rendering of foreign-language proper names is a difficult and multidimensional problem fraught with misunderstandings, incidents and mistakes (Sato, 2016).

There are generally two ways to translate proper names into the target language: (1) to focus on the written form to simply render the name's graphical representation without introducing any changes in the outcome text; or (2) to resort to transliteration, especially in cases where the source text and the target text use different graphic systems (Majcher, 2017).

To date, Russian linguistic usage does not implement transliteration in its pure form, mainly because many letters of the Latin alphabet in different languages (e.g. German, French, English) have changed their phonic meaning and can be pronounced unconventionally in certain letter combinations or words. Therefore, a consecutive transliteration of personal pronouns by means of Russian letters will create variants which will bear little resemblance to original proper names for the reader. Considering that the sound system of a language is primary and the writing system is secondary, it is logical to strive for phonetic proximity with the source text. Thus, in rendering personal pronouns it is imperative to render as precisely as possible the sounding of the original name by means of the receptive language. This approach – transliteration – remains the main method used in rendering personal pronouns in Russian: *Bourbeau – Бурбо; Leroux – Леру.*

Dealing with a personal name, translators should not forget about its national-linguistic affiliation and make translational decisions with due consideration of all possible linguistic and semantic implications for the benefit of the intended reader. As a general rule, a proper name is transcribed or borrowed, but in some cases it can be

translated.

Regarding personal names of people (anthroponyms), the fundamental rupture is when two languages use different alphabets. With the same alphabets, the names preserve their graphic representation, with only a few exceptions made for (1) names of historic figures and classical authors, (2) names of royal families and nobility, (3) names of saints.

French names and surnames should be translated into Russian under rules of practical transcription. The general imperative is to be guided by phonetical rules of the French language, as, for example, is the case with the silent 't' at the end of a word, as in:

*Jacquet* – Жакет;

*Charlot* – Шарло;

*Constant* – Констан.

Another principle of etymological correspondence in the practice of proper names borrowing is transcription. This principle implies that the word differs in form in various languages but some of them have the common linguistic origin:

*Jean I Posthume* – Иоанн I Посмертный (*John the Posthumous*);

*Louis X le Hutin* – Людовик Сварливый (*Louis X of France, or Louis the Stubborn*);

*Robert II le Pieux* – Роберт II Благочестивый (*Robert II of France, or Robert the Pious*);

*Pépin le Bref* – Пипин Короткий (*Pepin the Short*);

*Louis VI Le Gros* – Людовик VI Толстый (*Louis VI of France, or Louis the Fat*);

*Geneviève* – Женевьева (*Genevieve*);

*Françoise* – Франсуаза (*Françoise*);

*François* – Франциск (*François*);

*Charlemagne* – Карл Великий (*Charles the Great*).

To sum up, translators should create a system of priorities for each individual case and abide by some generally accepted rules: make sure that you deal with a proper name, i.e. an individual object's name; identify which class of objects the word is referred to; identify the word's national-linguistic background; check the availability of traditional correspondence.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The problem of terminology translation remains one of the most topical issues of modern translation studies. The following methods can be used in translating terms: replacement of the French term by the Russian term bearing the same meaning; equivalent translation; transcription; transliteration; descriptive or explanatory translation; calque translation.

Generally, translators working with narrow-field texts are required to address several problems. For example, overcoming difficulties having to do with the divergence in terminology between the language of the original text and the language of translation. It is also essential to achieve equivalent and adequate translation.

In the translation process translators should be mindful of descriptive translation. This kind of translation is very ponderous and lengthy, which is why it should not be abused.

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