

HANDLING DIFFICULTIES OF TRANSLATING IDIOMS AND METAPHORS

ТРУДНОЩІ ПЕРЕКЛАДУ ІДИОМ ТА МЕТАФОР

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The article outlines peculiarities and difficulties faced by translators when dealing with idioms and metaphors. Idioms and metaphors are of wide use in any language and a skillful translator should be accurate in translating them in order not to impair the effect of such phrases as their aim is to make language more vivid, more expressive and bright. A particular attention is paid to the skills and competences translators need to develop in order to provide the adequate translation of phraseological units. They should well know rules of the language, as well as the reality in the society of the language carriers, because these factors significantly influence the pragmatic aspect of translation and show the translator's proficiency. The work describes methods and techniques which can be used to provide an adequate translation, as well as commandments for professional translators. Among the most used methods, the following are worth consideration, namely descriptive translation, searching equivalent in the target language, equivalent idiom, absolute equivalents, relative equivalent. The authors provide several examples of using the different ways of translating idioms and metaphors from the English language into Ukrainian. A great focus is made on the cultural component which significantly influences the essence and idea of idioms and therefore, should be considered in translating. In that context, the work outlines two models of developing profession competence of translators. Comparison of the two models confirms their intention to practical aspects of translation by highlighting in particular the personal skills that a translator should develop. It is however also necessary to pay attention to the explicit ability to achieve equivalence at lexical, semantic, textual (discursive), pragmatic, cultural level that is required from a translator. It is concluded that translation of idioms is rather complicated as it needs developing translation competence and skills, alongside linguistic competence, which is taken to represent knowledge of and ability to use the formal resources from which well-formed, meaningful messages may be assembled and formulated.

Key words: idiom, metaphor, source language, target language, phraseological unit, translation.

У статті окреслено особливості та труднощі, з якими стикаються перекладачі при роботі з ідіомами та метафорами. Ідіоми та метафори широко вживаються у різних мовах, і перекладач повинен бути особливо уважним при їх перекладі, щоб не зруйнувати очікуваний ефект від вживання таких фраз, оскільки їхня мета – зробити мову яскравішою, виразнішою та живою. У роботі особливу увагу приділено навичкам і компетенціям, які необхідно розвивати перекладачам, щоб забезпечити адекватний переклад фразеологічних одиниць. Вони повинні добре знати правила мови, а також реалії суспільства носіїв мови, оскільки ці фактори суттєво впливають на прагматичний аспект перекладу та свідчать про майстерність перекладача. У роботі описуються методи та прийоми, які можуть бути використані для забезпечення належного перекладу та основні постулати професійних перекладачів. Серед найбільш використовуваних методів варто звернути увагу на такі як описовий переклад, пошук еквівалента в цільовій мові, використання фразеологічного аналога, абсолютний еквівалент, та відносний еквівалент. Автори статті пропонують кілька прикладів використання перелічених способів перекладу ідіом і метафор з англійської мови на українську. Велика увага приділяється культурному компоненту, який суттєво впливає на зміст та ідею ідіом, а отже, має бути врахований при їх перекладі. У цьому контексті в роботі окреслено дві моделі розвитку професійної компетентності перекладачів. Порівняння двох моделей підтверджує їхню спрямованість на практичні аспекти перекладу, висвітлюючи, зокрема, особисті навички, які має розвивати перекладач. Однак також необхідно звернути увагу на здатність досягти еквівалентності на лексичному, семантичному, текстовому (дискурсивному), прагматичному та культурному рівнях. Зроблено висновок, що переклад ідіом є досить складним завданням, оскільки воно потребує розвитку перекладацької компетенції та навичок, а також лінгвістичної компетенції, яка сприймається як знання та вміння використовувати формальні ресурси, з яких можна зібрати та сформулювати змістовні повідомлення.

Ключові слова: ідіома, метафора, мова оригіналу, цільова мова, фразеологічна одиниця, переклад.

Problem setting. The issues of translation have always been of great concern. Translation requires deep knowledge of grammar, phonetics, history and culture. The translation activity is dependent on a sound knowledge of both languages and cultures, people's traditions, rites, beliefs or behaviors. Translating a text, one should well know rules of the language, as well as the reality in the society of the language carriers, because these factors significantly influence the pragmatic aspect of translation and show the translator's proficiency. Among difficulties of translating a text, a challenging task is to deal with idiomatic expressions. Idioms are of great importance in each language as they make it brighter, more expressive and authentic. Using idioms enriches vocabulary and helps others get better comprehension of the idea.

Translation of idioms is rather complicated as it needs developing translation competence and skills, alongside linguistic competence, which is taken to represent "knowledge of and ability to use the formal resources from which well-formed, meaningful messages may be assembled and formulated" [3, p. 109].

Today, it is considered that translation between two languages is mostly a matter of cultural transfer and mediation. Developing translation competence is intrinsically connected with learning both the source language and the target language culture. The linguistic and cultural differences identifiable between the source language and the target language are equally important, and cultural conflicts between the representatives of the respective groups are more difficult to handle by a translator than the differing linguistic structures or inherent patterns. This is why the translator should master both linguistic and intercultural competences in the two languages, along with proactive attitudes, as well as sound knowledge of history, economy, and politics of the countries or ethnic groups involved.

Analysis of recent scientific papers. The problem of translating idioms is considered in the works of both domestic and foreign scientists, particularly O.I. Bilodid, L.P. Bilozerska, A.S. Diakov, V.I. Karaban, I.V. Korunets, Z.B. Kudelko, Lakoff, Maasen, Avădanei, Chițoran, Toury, Campbell and others.

Many researchers stress on the significant impact of culture on metaphors and idioms. According to Lakoff and Johnson, "a culture may be thought of as providing, among other things, a pool of available metaphors for making sense of reality" and "to live by a metaphor is to have your reality structured by that metaphor and to base your perceptions and actions upon that structuring of reality." [7, p. 12]. The premise of these two forefathers of the "concept-

tual metaphor" theory is that metaphor is not only a stylistic feature of language but that thought itself is metaphorical in nature.

The aim of the paper. The work is devoted to studying the problems of translating English idioms and metaphors into Ukrainian and skills which are necessary to succeed in that activity.

The research aims to study the essence, to define the peculiarities and outline the methods of translating idiomatic expressions.

Presenting the main material. To get better comprehension of the notion of idiom, the definitions of the concept are worth analyzing. P. Simpson says that idioms come from metaphors which have become phrases [11, p. 53]. According to Palmer, idiom is like a group of words or phrase that cannot be understood by the combination of the word themselves [10, p. 71]. Some researchers consider that idioms are expressions or phrases, which meanings differ from the immediate meaning of each separate word making the phrase [14]. For instance, the English idiom "milk and water" has the direct meaning "молоко і вода", but the idiom is translated as "щось пусте, беззмістовне (життя, книга, розмова)"; "hammer and tongs" having the direct meaning "молоток та щипці", but the idiom is translated as "з усієї сили". To grasp the idea of idioms, one should know the context it is used in. Many idioms which are currently used in communication can be found in the works of one of the most famous playwrights William Shakespeare, e.g. "something is rotten in the state of Denmark" – "щось трапилося, щось не так"; "one fell swoop" – "одним махом"; "flesh and blood" – "плоть і кров"; "vanish into thin air" – "розчинитися в повітрі"; "brevity is the soul of wit" – "стислість, сестра таланту". One more example is found in the novel "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" by Robert Louis Balfour Stevenson, i.e. the idiom "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" is used to mean a person who changes his/her behavior from kind to evil ("людина-перевертень, в якій перемагає то добро, то зло").

Different researchers say that metaphors are essential for our perception of reality, helping us apprehend new concepts by using familiar domains. These are used to explain an unknown situation when other linguistic devices prove powerless or at least insufficient. According to Avădanei, metaphor is present in "absolutely all perceived dimensions of human existence" being not a matter of words but rather conceptual in nature [1, p. 16]. It serves as the primary mechanism helping people comprehend abstract concepts and perform abstract reasoning. Maasen and Weingart define metaphors as "messengers of

meaning”, a phrase which can be likewise assigned to idioms as they both describe complex entities in condensed form [8, p. 9]. Lakoff says that metaphors “allow us to understand a relatively abstract or inherently unstructured subject matter in terms of a more concrete or at least more highly structured subject matter.” [6, p. 245].

In Chițoran’s view, speakers of different communities are characterized by cultural differences which should be considered, especially when these speakers / language users come in contact. Communities differ in their environment, climate, cultural development, etc., but basically, human societies are linked by a common biological history. The objective reality in which they live is definitely not identical but it is by and large similar [4, pp. 69-70]. Nevertheless, our world is made up of things we deal with every day. Thus, we need to communicate about them, and to position ourselves in relation to these things, people or objects. It is a feature that is typical of all human societies, and therefore different language systems are translatable, as the perception of human reality is characteristic of all humans regardless of the culture they belong to.

As to translation of metaphors, an interesting theory is provided by Nili Madelblit, i.e. the ‘Cognitive Translation Hypothesis’, according to which two types of conditions in the translation process are identified, namely Similar Mapping Condition (SMC) and Different Mapping Condition (DMC). Madelblit states that “the difference in reaction time is due to a conceptual shift that the translator is required to make between the conceptual mapping systems of the source and target languages”, and this is the reason why metaphorical expressions are more complicated and time-consuming to translate if they refer to a different cognitive domain as compared to that of the equivalent expression in the target language [9, p. 493]. Thus, a translator’s task is getting more difficult when they have to look for a different conceptual mapping (a different cognitive domain) for a metaphorical expression. A different cognitive equivalent for metaphors in the source language that has to be identified in the target language makes the translator’s work much more intricate, and the result, in the second situation of different mapping condition, may very rarely be a metaphor. Most often, it is a paraphrase, a simile, a footnote (the translator’s explanation of the concept, or altogether omitted).

A lot of idioms and metaphors are used in everyday life and the speakers pay no attention that the word by word translation doesn’t express their intended original sense. To reach maximum adequacy of translating idioms and metaphors from English into Ukrainian, a translator should be skillful to apply different meth-

ods and techniques of translation. Among the most used methods, the following are worth consideration. *Descriptive translation* is the method which can be used if no equivalent is found in the target language (e.g. “a cat is out of the bag” – “ні для кого не секрет”; “keep one’s nose clean” – “триматися подалі від гріха”; “to cut off with a shilling” – “залишити без спадку”; “a white elephant” – “непотрібний подарунок, обуза”; “make two bites of the cherry” – “ділитися чимось дуже малим”). *Searching equivalent in the target language* is another method used in case the two languages have borrowed the idiom from the same source (“at any price” – «будь-якою ціною»; “an early bird” – “рання пташка”; “hang by a hair” – “висіти на волосині”; “the tip of the iceberg” – “вершина айсберга”; “a needle in a haystack” – “голка в стозі сіна”; “there is no smoke without fire” – “немає диму без вогню”; “strike while the iron is hot” – “куй залізо, поки гаряче”). One more method is to use the *equivalent idiom* in the target language with involves different images to carry the same meaning. Such method is mostly used to translate proverbs, e.g. “an early bird catches the worm” – “хто рано встає, тому Бог дає”; “as the tree so the fruit” – “яблуко від яблуні недалеко падає”; “better an egg today than a hen tomorrow”, “better one small fish than an empty dish” – “краще синиця в руках, ніж журавель в небі”, “better be born lucky than rich” – “не народись красивою, а народись щасливою”. *Absolute equivalents* are used in case of international idioms: “have a place in the sun” – “мати місце під сонцем”; “have a roof over your head” – “мати дах над головою”; “a gentleman’s agreement” – “джентльменська угода”; “a wolf in sheep’s clothing” – “вовк у овечій шкірі”; “all’s well that ends well” – “все добре, що добре закінчується”; “better late than never” – “краще пізно, ніж ніколи”. A *relative equivalent* is used when idiom is slightly changed when translating from English into Ukraine, e.g. “a driving force” – “рушійна сила”; “all is not gold that glitters” – “не все те золото, що блищить”; “one’s heart stands still” – “серце завмерло”; “be as busy as a bee” – “трудитися, як бджола”; “and so on and so forth” – “і так далі, і тому подібне”; “appearances are deceptive” – “зовнішність оманлива”.

Hence, as Toury noted, a translator is faced with at least two languages and two cultures / cultural traditions and patterns [13, pp. 83-100]. The inherent cultural aspects that are found in a source text must be treated with utmost care in order to find the most appropriate rendering into the target language, employing the right techniques. In that context, one should mention the Campbell’s research based on applied linguistics methodologies. He analysed translation com-

petence of non-native speakers' translation from their mother tongue into English. Following his data analysis and interpretation, Campbell designed a three-layered model of translation competence: 1) *textual competence* (the ability to produce target language texts with "structural features of formal, written English"); 2) *disposition* (translators' behaviors in choosing different words when contracting target language texts). The parameters he advances are: persistent vs capitulating; and prudent vs risk-taking. Combinations of the above categories will create four types of disposition: a) persistent and risk-taking; b) capitulating and risk-taking; c) persistent and prudent; d) capitulating and prudent; 3) *monitoring competence*, consisting of two sub-categories: self-awareness, and editing [2, p. 73]. Nevertheless, this model overlooks the essential issue of translation equivalence (grammatical, semantic, pragmatic, cultural, etc.). In particular, the cultural and pragmatic characteristics of different languages are extremely important, even for the very speakers of a certain language.

Another model was proposed by Sofer, who brought forward ten commandments for professional translators: 1. A thorough knowledge of both source language and target language; 2. A thorough "at-homeness" in both cultures; 3. Keeping up with changes in the language and being up-to-date in all of its nuances and neologisms; 4. Always translating from another language into one's native language; 5. Being able to translate in more than one area of knowledge; 6.

Possessing ease of writing or speaking and the ability to articulate quickly and accurately, either orally or in writing; 7. Developing a good speed of translation; 8. Developing research skills, being able to retrieve reference sources needed in producing high quality translation; 9. Being familiar with the latest technological advances; 10. Being able to understand the type of potential one's language specialty has in a certain geographic area [12, pp. 33–37].

When comparing the two models, their intention to practical aspects of translation is vividly observed by highlighting in particular the personal skills that a translator should develop. It is, however, also necessary to pay attention to the explicit ability to achieve equivalence at lexical, semantic, textual (discursive), pragmatic, cultural level [5, pp. 104–113] that is required from a translator.

Conclusions. To sum up, translating idioms and metaphors is apparently a complicated task. A choice of the appropriate kind of translation depends on peculiarities of the idiom which should be understood and which essence should be transferred in the target language. Idioms and metaphors are of wide use in any language and a skillful translator should be accurate in translating them in order not to impair the effect of such phrases as their aim is to make the language more vivid, more expressive and bright. To conclude, the principal aspect in translating such lexical units is to consider the equivalent of an idiom or a phraseological unit when passing it in another language.

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