

TRANSLATION OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS

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Rezumat: În articolul dat autorul analizează particularitățile traducerii unităților ilor frazeologice. Se oferă o clasificare a unităților ilor frazeologice din perspectiva traducerii. Pentru a efectua o traducere corectă a unei unități i frazeologice e necesar să se facă o diferențiere clară dintre unități i frazeologice fixe sau stabile și cele libere. Un deosebit interes prezintă unități ilor frazeologice modificate, care sunt adesea folosite ca un procedeu stilistic de către scriitori sau jurnaliști. Traducerea a astfel de unități i modificate necesită atenție deosebită, precum și cunoștințe vaste de cultura și literatura limbii sursă.

Cuvinte-cheie: unități i frazeologice, traducere, unități i frazeologice modificate, limba sursă, cultură.

Translation of phraseological units is a task that requires solid knowledge and skills on the part of the translator. While translating such units the translator has to take into account several factors: the nature of the structure, i.e. whether it is a free or bound word combination, the context, cultural coloring of the phraseological unit, its connotation, and the effect it will produce on the target reader.

To distinguish between a free collocation and a fixed phraseological unit we need to know the following things. The component parts of a free collocation preserve their meanings; therefore, the translation of the free collocation depends on the meanings of its elements and on the relationship between them.

to do smb. a favour – a face un serviciu cuiva;
to speak in a low voice – a vorbi în șoptă;
a bank robbery – jefuirea unei bănci;

A word group with a fixed lexical composition and grammatical structure is called a phraseological unit. Its meaning, which is familiar to native speakers of the given language, is generally figurative and cannot be derived from the meanings of the phraseological unit's component parts. The meanings of phraseological units are the result of the given language's historical development. Thus, the meaning of the word combination is different from the meanings of its elements. Compare:

a small house – o casă mica; but
a small talk – banalități.

to have a green hat – a avea o pălărie verde, but *to have green fingers – a se pricepe la grădinărit;* *to get a telegram – a primi o telegram,* but
to get the upper hand – a prelua controlul.

It is possible to make a mistake in the translation of word combinations if the translator is not able to determine the type of the word combination (free or bound). This possibility increases in cases when context does not help in determining the status of the word combination. For example:

He is a fair-haired, blue-eyed boy (describing the appearance).

Everyone thinks he'll be Director of the firm one day. He's the blue-eyed boy (elev favorizat).

Translation of free collocation does not present any problem, unless one has sufficient context and knowledge.

Translation of fixed phraseological units

We can distinguish between figurative and non-figurative phraseological units. Translation of non-figurative phraseological units does not present any difficulty. As well as in the case of translation of free collocations the translator has to focus on the ability of these words to collocate with other words in the TL.

to make an attempt – a încerca / a face o tentativă
to pay a visit – a-i face cuiva o vizită;

to break one's promise – a-și încălca promisiunea, a nu se ține de cuvânt; *to fall in love – a se îndrăgosti;*

as a matter of fact – de fapt; *at first sight – la prima vedere;*

in the prime of life – în floarea vârstei;

Figurative phraseological units present a more difficult task, since the translator does not just have to render their meanings, but also to convey image, stylistic coloring, as well as to take into account the cultural differences of the seemingly similar phraseological units of the two languages.

Taking into account the stylistic coloring involves the fact that the translator has to preserve the stylistic similarity when translating. The expression *as old as Methuselah*, which came from Bible, cannot be translated *boş orog* and *to pass away* is not the same as *a da ortul popii*. The expression *to get out of hand* has two equivalents different in their stylistic coloring: *a nu mai putea fi ținut în frâu* and *a scăpa de sub control*. Taking this into account, when translating the sentence *Both parties have got out of hand* we use the second meaning, which is more neutral in its coloring: *Ambele partide au ieșit de sub control*.

When translating culturally bound phraseological units it is necessary to take into account cultural differences. Typical examples of such phrases are: *To carry coal to Newcastle, when Queen Ann was alive, to set The Thames on fire*. When translating such phraseological units it is necessary to change the specific national realia. For example:

a French window – *fereastră-ușă*; *a City man* – *financist*;
to meet one's Waterloo – *a suferi înfrângere*;

It is especially difficult to translate polysemantic phraseological units. Thus, the expression *over smb's head* has different meanings in the sentences:

He was promoted over my head. - *L-au promovat fără acordul meu.*
This is all completely over my head. - *E prea dificil pentru mine.*

Phraseological units that have false twins in the TL (which correspond in form but differ in meaning) also present problems in translation. For example, *to cut one's teeth on smth* means *a încerca ceva pentru prima dată*, based on the expression *to cut one's teeth*, which means *a-i ieși dinți*, not to be confused with *'сломать себе на чем-то зубы'*, that exists in Russian.

Another source of difficulty is the fact that in English there are phraseological expressions that are similar in form but different in meaning, for example, *a blue film* – *un film erotic*, while the word combination *a blue book* means *culegere de documente guvernamentale*, *to give a hand* means *a acorda ajutor*, while *to give a big hand* means *a aplauda* and not *a acorda un ajutor substanțial*.

It should be taken into account that often when dealing with phraseological units the translator may be influenced by false associations, for example when translating the word combination *to give smb a lie* – *a prinde pe cineva cu minciuna*, and not *a spune cuiva o minciună*, *to step into the breach* – *a înlocui pe cineva la locul de muncă*, not *a cădea într-o breșă*.

The problems mentioned above require constant attention and a creative approach on the part of the translator.

Basic methods used to translate phraseological units

1. With the help of a **phraseological equivalent**, it means the translator has to find an equivalent in the TL the meaning, figurative image and stylistic coloring of which would fully correspond to the original. The number of such correspondences is rather small. Phraseological units, which are translated with the help of equivalents, include phraseological units that exist in most of European languages, expressions that come from Bible, antic history, classical literature, and political life. Usually translation of phraseological units belonging to this group does not present any problems:

A Pyrrhic victory – *O victorie à la Pirus*

Pyrrhic victory [From Pyrrhus, king of Epirus] a victory in which the winning side sustains very heavy losses, or it may be translated by explanatory translation: *victorie cîștigată cu peirderi majore, care e mai mult o înfrângere*.

To cross the Rubicon – *a traversa Rubiconul*;

The idiom "Crossing the Rubicon" means to pass a point of no return, and refers to Julius Caesar's army's crossing of the river in 49 BC, which was considered an act of insurrection. Because the course of the river has changed much since then, it is impossible to confirm exactly where the Rubicon flowed when Caesar and his legions crossed it.

Promised Land – *Țara Promisă*;

Promised Land- is a term used to describe the land promised or given by God, according to the

Hebrew Bible, to the Israelites, the descendants of Jacob. The promise is firstly made to Abraham (Genesis 15:18-21) and then renewed to his son Isaac, and to Isaac's son Jacob (Genesis 28:13), Abraham's grandson. The Promised Land was described in terms of the territory from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates river (Exodus 23:31) and was given to their descendants after the Exodus.

To cast the first stone – să arunce primul piatra;

The English idiomatic phrase to "cast the first stone" is derived from Bible. The passage describes a confrontation between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees over whether a woman, caught in an act of adultery, ought to be stoned. Jesus shames the crowd into dispersing, and averts the execution.

To be or not to be – a fi sau nu a fi;

"To be, or not to be" is the opening line of a monologue from William Shakespeare's play Hamlet (written about 1600), act three, scene one.

Hot line – linie fierbinte

A direct telephone line set up for a specific purpose, especially for use in emergencies or for communication between heads of government.

2. With the help of a **phraseological analogue**, i.e. finding a phraseological unit in the TL, which has a similar meaning but is based on a different image.

to work one's fingers to the bone – a lucre din zori și i pînă-n seară;

to get out of the bed on the wrong side – a se scula cu piciorul stîng

to make a mountain out of a mole hill – a face din țî înțî ar

armasar; to save for a rainy day – a tine/ stringe pentru zile negre;

3. With the help of **calque (loan translation)**. In case if the phraseological unit has neither an equivalent nor an analogue and its imagery, obtained with the help of loan translation, can be easily assimilated by the language users.

to put all eggs in one basket – a pune toate ouăle într-un coș ;

to learn to walk before you run – a te învăț a să mergi înainte de a te învăț a să

fugi; No news is good news. – lipsa de noutăți i e deja o noutate bună;

You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs. – nu poți i pregăti omletă fără să strici ouăle;

In such cases it is advisable to give a short explanation, for example: as they say in Great Britain).

4. With the help of **antonymous translation**, i.e. substituting the affirmative form in the original by the negative in the TL, or on the contrary, the negative by the affirmative.

to keep one's head – a nu-și pierde cumpătul;

to keep one's head above water – a nu-și i face

datorii; unvarnished truth – adevăr pur;

5. If there is no equivalent or analogue, and it is impossible to translate the expression using calque, we use **descriptive translation**, i.e. the meaning of the expression is explained.

to give smb. the cold shoulder – a primi/ întîmpina pe cineva cu răceală/ a ignora;

to be in the same boat – a fi în aceeași situație ie;

wild goose chase – goană după himere;

a tall order – sarcină greu de îndeplinit.

Modified phraseological units

Due to the frequent use, many phraseological units and proverbs become trite and commonplace. To make the text more expressive and original speakers very often change the phra-

seological units or proverbs. This method is often used in journalism. The phraseological unit becomes more expressive due to the substitution of one element of the expression or due to the introduction of additional words. For example:

He hated the idea of it, but he was sensible enough to realize, even then, that ex-officers cannot be choosers (the proverb: Beggars can't be choosers).

She showed her true musical colours in the 1989 production (introducing a word into the set expression: to show one's true colours).

Many phraseological units and proverbs become so predictable that in speech they are often omitted, and in writing they are abridged. Such shortenings are a way to refresh phraseological units. For example:

Germaine came into the room with huge armfuls of flowers and a note from Lord Merlin,

saying: 'Here are some coals from Newcastle.' (to carry coal to Newcastle)

"Well, if the right woman came along," said Lester. "I suppose I'd marry her. But she hasn't come along. What do you want me to do? Take anybody? I'll come round some time, no doubt. I've got to be thirsty when I'm led to the water." (You can take the horse to the water, but you can't make him drink.)

Such cases require special attention on the part of the translation, as simple translation by equivalent will not convey the stylistic colouring of the phraseological unit, it will not produce the same effect. To solve the problem, the translator needs to use all his/her talent and imagination and find a similar equivalent, or if impossible, create a similar phrase. It can be compared to the play of words, which is almost impossible to translate and in such cases, we speak of the loss of translation at the pragmatic level.

The following examples demonstrate the use of phraseological units to create some metaphorical effect in the newspaper text:

*A great power knows it is dangerous to be seen to flinch, because its assorted enemies around the world **take new heart** and its **friends' knees knock**.*

*Un stat puternic știe că este periculos să-ți i arăți i neîncrederea în sine, deoarece variați ii săi inamici din toată lumea pot iarăși i prinde la curaj și i **prietenii lor vor tremură de frică**.*

(Descriptive translation)

*The tiny British unit was there to **hold an American little finger**.*

Armata mica a Marii Britaniei nu-le era de folos americanilor. (Antonymous translation)

*It is sometimes necessary to **protect a man with one arm while removing his trousers with the other**, but it is not easy to explain to the people watching on television: or to the man himself.*

Uneori e necesar să-l protejezi pe om, iar în același timp și să-l pedepsești, însă acest lucru este greu de explicat celor ce urmăresc acest lucru în subiectele televizate, precum și omului însuși. (Descriptive translation) or

Uneori e necesar să-l protejezi pe om de un rău, în același timp dându-i pantalonii în jos pentru a-l pedepsi pentru altceva, însă acest lucru este greu de explicat celor ce urmăresc acest lucru în subiectele televizate, precum și omului însuși. (A combination of equivalent translation and descriptive translation).

Thus, we can conclude that the translation of phraseological units is a challenging task and the choice of translation technique used will often depend on the structure of the unit, on the context, translator's choice, and the author's intention. To convey the exact meaning of the phraseological unit, preserving all its shades and stylistic effects the translator has to apply all his/her skills and knowledge. However, no matter how skillful the translator can be, loss of translation is a frequent case, when it comes to the translation of phraseological units. This can be explained by differences in culture and the way speakers of the two languages perceive the extra linguistic world.

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