



Idiomatic equivalents in terms of metaphoric transfer

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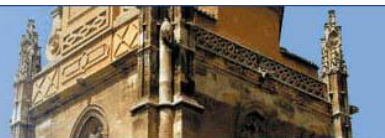
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ABSTRACT

The article presents a hermeneutic approach to idiomatic equivalents in terms of metaphoric transfer. Metaphor is viewed by the authors in its broad sense that can be applied to any use of words in an indirect meaning. Hence, an idiom is understood as a verbalized metaphor that reflects both the universal and specific features of a given language. Idiomatic equivalence that traditionally refers to the linguistic properties of the idiom is presented in the article as hermeneutic equivalence based on the thinking activity approach. Within the framework of such approach the idiomatic equivalence highlights the transfer from one culture to another way of thinking and thinking activity organization.

Keywords: idioms, metaphor, idiomatic equivalent, metaphoric transfer, hermeneutic approach, hermeneutic equivalence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays the interest of idioms researchers focuses on such topics as communicative and pragmatic features of idiomatic derivation, conceptualization of reality fragments in idiomatic nomination and national specificity of conceptualization and the issues of idiom formation as a cognitive process. Special attention is paid to the place and role of the idioms in different types of discourse (especially in media and politics). This article views idioms as verbalized metaphors reflecting both universal and specific features of a given language [Glucksberg, 2011; Goatly, 2011; Kovesces, 2002; Knowles, 2005, etc].

Metaphor is a trope or a speech mechanism consisting in the use of a word denoting a certain class of objects, phenomena, etc., to characterize or name an object belonging to another class, or to name another class of objects, similar to the given one in some respect. In an expansive sense the term metaphor is applied to any kind of application of words in an indirect meaning.

Metaphor in the broad sense includes such stylistic devices as comparison, epithet, personification, hyperbole, metonymy, synecdoche, periphrasis, allegory - which corresponds to the etymological meaning of the term (originating from the Greek word meaning transfer). In this case metaphor is defined as any transfer of words from one object to another on the basis of similarity, proximity, etc. [Kryukova 1999: 33-34].

Aristotle was the first Greek philosopher who attempted to give a scientific assessment of metaphor, thereby raising the question of a serious study of the mechanism of semantic changes in language. The Aristotelean understanding of metaphor consists in understanding it as an indispensable component of style, which was regarded as something though necessary, but external to thought. On the one hand, he exalts the cognitive value of metaphor in sense perception, while on the other hand, he relegates metaphor to a phenomenon that is not essential to metaphysical (speculative cognition).

2. Hypothesis

When considering the possibility of translating idioms, the methods are traditionally based on purely linguistic features of these phrases.

V. Komissarov's concept of equivalence types/levels is an example of such a linguistic tradition. The researcher distinguishes between potentially achievable equivalence, i.e. the maximum possible similarity of the content of the original and translation, allowed by the differences between the source and target languages, and translational equivalence – the real semantic (meaningful) proximity of the original and the translation, achieved in translation [Komissarov, 2000: 51-56].

Various factors, such as, for example, differences in language systems, as well as ways of functioning of these languages, can affect the possibility of full preservation of the content of the source text in translation. Therefore, it is inevitable that equivalence in translation is possible only when certain elements of the original meaning are preserved or lost. Types, or levels, of equivalence, according to V. Komissarov's, are distinguished on the basis of what part of the original content was lost or retained in translation. The concept of equivalence levels implies that at any level of equivalence, translation ensures the implementation of inter-lingual communication. That is, even in the case of loss of a certain part of the content, the equivalence of the text of the original and translation is acceptable.

The aim of any text is to perform a certain communicative function: establishing contact between people, reporting facts or information, expressing emotions, prompting to some action or reaction, etc. A text can perform several functions simultaneously.

In addition to V. Komissarov's theory of levels of equivalence, other influential concepts in this field can be listed. For example, E. Nida's approach of contrasting formal equivalence with dynamic equivalence. Dynamic equivalence is assessed by comparing not the texts of the original and the translation themselves, but by comparing the reactions of their recipients. If such reactions coincide, the translation is equivalent, if not - non-equivalent [Nida, 1964].

Along with the concept of equivalence of translation researchers operate with the concept of adequacy. There are different approaches to the distinction of these concepts. Usually, the concept of adequacy implies a broader range of requirements than the more flexible concept of equivalence.

The hermeneutic, activity-based approach to translation deserves particular attention because it highlights the essence of translation as a process of transfer from one culture to another way of thinking and thinking activity organization.

3. Methods

When considering the possibility of translating idioms, the methods are traditionally based on purely linguistic features of phrases.

Thus, the following ways of translating idioms can be distinguished:

- full equivalent;
- partial equivalent (lexical or grammatical);
- contextual substitution;
- descriptive translation;
- literal translation.

Undoubtedly, full equivalence is traditionally considered the maximum level of achieving equivalence, but this method of translation will take into account only the linguistic features of the original and the translation. On the contrary, hermeneutic equivalence, viewed in terms of metaphoric transfer that reflects the way of thinking of the speakers of the source language with reference to that of the target language speakers, can be an optimal method of evaluating idiomatic equivalence.

4. Main body

There are a number of concepts of metaphor: emotive theories, metaphor as substitution theory, comparative theory, interaction theory, conflict theory, and anomaly theory.

Emotive theories deny any cognitive content of metaphor, focusing only on its emotional character. Representatives of this view of metaphor see it as a deviation from the linguistic norm, devoid of any meaning. This view is based on a logical positivist attitude to meaning: the existence of meaning can only be confirmed by experience. On the same positions stands the concept of tension, according to which the emotional tension of a metaphor is generated by the anomalous combination of its referents. This theory explains the emergence of "dead" metaphors by a gradual decline in emotional intensity as the frequency of their use increases.

The theory of metaphor as substitution (paradigmatic displacement), or a substitutionary approach (a substitutionary view of metaphor), is considered in the works of M. Black. The essence of the approach is that any metaphorical expression is used instead of a literal expression and can be replaced by it. According to the substitutionary concept, the focus of the metaphor (that is, a metaphorical word or expression inserted within the frame of the direct meanings of words) serves to convey a meaning that in principle could have been expressed

literally. The author uses a metaphorical expression instead of a literal one; the task of the reader is to make the inverse substitution. Understanding metaphor, according to Black, is like deciphering a code or solving a riddle [Black, 1954].

In addition to serving a stylistic function, metaphor covers gaps in the vocabulary of literal names (or at least satisfies the need for a suitable acronym). For example, a cauliflower ear is a boxer's disfigured ear.

Comparative theory is, according to Black, a kind of substitutionary concept of metaphor. This theory is the most common and goes back to Aristotle's ideas that metaphor is a reduced comparison from which the reference to a common feature of the objects being compared is excluded (for example, when two people are compared, the contrast is often described by using the idiom as day and night, or as cheese and chalk).

Black divides metaphorical expression into two subjects: the principal, or literal principal subject, and the metaphorical subsidiary subject. Both subjects have their own conceptual systems, or the system of associated commonplaces. These systems of common associations represent a certain set of standard representations and associations, which may contain half-truths and even erroneous information (a whale as a fish, a tomato as a vegetable, etc.), since it is not the truth of these representations and associations that matters for metaphor, but their rapid activation in the mind. [Black, 1954].

The theory of conceptual metaphor was first outlined in Lakoff and Johnson's book *Metaphors we live by*. The theory emerged as one of the central areas of cognitive linguistics within the broader cognitive science studies of memory and intelligence, taking into account data from psychology, neuroscience, linguistics, artificial intelligence and philosophy. The theory is based on the idea of metaphor as a linguistic phenomenon reflecting the process of cognition of the world. Metaphor permeates all of our lives and manifests itself not only in language, but also in thought and action. As Lakoff and Johnson argue, "our thinking, everyday experience and behavior are largely conditioned by metaphor" [Lakoff, Johnson, 1980].

We encounter metaphor not only in literary and philosophical texts, but also in everyday life. Accordingly, every day we are faced with the need to understand and interpret metaphors. Despite the fact that metaphorical expressions may be unfamiliar to us, we usually manage the task of interpreting metaphors without much difficulty, even if these expressions are particularly figurative. Like any other expression, a metaphor carries much more information than its interpretation.

People think in metaphors, that is, metaphor is a mechanism by which people comprehend the world around them. Metaphor is not simply a stylistic device aimed at embellishing a speech or a work of fiction. Metaphor is, above all, a way of thinking, cognition, and expression of cognition by appealing not to the literal means of language expression, as they do not provide the full range of meanings that one cognizes and comprehends in real reality.

Metaphor, and more often metaphor in idioms, allows us to express everything that cannot be expressed in words. Metaphor in general can remain understood, but in case of understanding idioms it is easier to understand it than a newly created one, due to its stability, repetitiveness in the language and speech. Idiomatic metaphor is used repeatedly by native speakers, it gets enriched with new meanings and shades of meaning.

Idiomatic expressions, like metaphors, do not mean what they say, but in the case of idioms we tend to perceive only the non-literal meaning and ignore the literal one. In fact, the original literal meaning is so lost that the expression looks completely meaningless when understood literally (e.g. hoisted by his own petard, the whole nine yards, kicked the bucket, by hook or by crook, not worth his salt, keep a stiff upper lip, bats in the belfry, behind the eight ball, etc).

Like metaphors, most idioms not only name something, but also express an attitude toward what they refer to, give it an evaluation, expressively characterize an object or phenomenon, cause a figurative representation of some fact, event or phenomenon.

Just as in the case of metaphor, the replacement of an idiom with a word or phrase combination cannot be equivalent, for such a replacement leads to the disappearance of the shades of meaning, image, emotion - everything that constitutes the semantic and stylistic uniqueness of idioms and makes them the smallest poetic units of language. Idioms are used to convey both the logical content of thought and the figurative representation of something, and through the latter - to express an emotional attitude towards the object of thought (for example, a mocking or ironic attitude). The degree of expressiveness of different idioms is not the same: there are exceptionally bright turns of phrase, there are ones that lack emotional coloring. The stylistic methods of play on the meanings of idiomatic components or the internal form (a deliberately literal understanding of the meaning of the idiom, taken as a whole) and the use of only some idiom components deserve special attention and make the metaphoric transfer in terms of inter-lingual communication even more complicated.

The world view of native speakers of different languages is based on a whole set of perceptions and views of reality, and on the accumulated individual and collective experience. The figurative vision of similar objects, concepts and phenomena differs greatly in the world view of speakers of different languages. From a means of creating an image, metaphor turns into a way of forming missing meanings for a language, but as a product of artistic creativity, metaphor survives in proverbs and idiomatic expressions. The nature of metaphor underlying

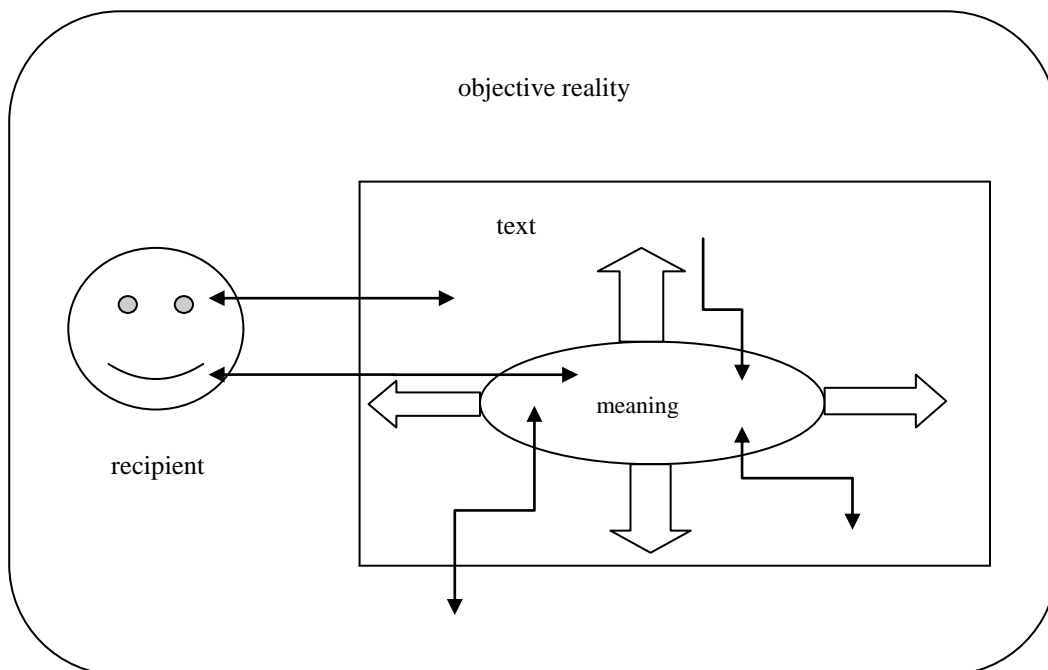
idioms differs from figurative, free, it becomes standard, loses its individuality, but still retains imagery and allegories.

Metaphor in the idioms, unlike artistic metaphor, is not individual. On the contrary, only a trivial, standard metaphor, understood by the entire linguistic community can form the basis of figurative motivation. The mechanisms of this process are based on the ability of linguistic signs to form secondary meanings on the basis of the transfer of primary meanings and the production of motivated linguistic units. This process implies the ability of a word combination to carry the meaning of the primary context, which over time is completely lost, preserving only the figurative meaning.

Equivalence of metaphors in terms of translation poses a particular problem both in theory and practice, since metaphors, hence, idioms perform a certain resistance to translation: some figurative expressions appear in a language while others do not, some metaphors are easily understood in one language and pose difficulties in understanding in another language, that is, do not have metaphoric isomorphism.

Translation of idioms is a multilevel process, the goal of which is to find equivalent elements in the language of translation at the corresponding levels of artistic speech functioning, the content and emotional value of which would be in equivalent relations with the idioms of the original one. In linguistic terms such equivalence mostly refers to universally understood idioms based on the coinciding ideas about the objective reality elements (En. bang the drum, Germ. die Trommel für etwas rühren in the meaning of speaking enthusiastically about a belief or idea in order to persuade other people to support it too), world-renowned literature (pull chestnuts out of the fire, green-eyed monster, love is blind, to catch sb red-handed), biblical or mythological etymology (gird one's loins, apple of discord, a labour of Hercules). At the same time, some universal notions are reflected by different linguistic means in different languages: English walk on air and German auf Wolken schweben both mean to feel extremely excited or happy, though linguistically would not be considered equivalents due to the lack of German equivalent for the English word air. Still, a conceptual metaphor postulated for the idiom both in English and German can be as follows: BEING HAPPY IS BEING UP IN THE AIR (with source domain completely equivalent in both languages).

In this regard, the hermeneutic approach that is based on the similarity of thinking activity of the recipient when processing the idiomatic meaning seems the most optimal. It can be illustrated as below by placing the recipient and the text (oral or written) containing the idiom in the conditions of the objective reality. While processing the idiom in the text, the recipient constructs the connections of this idiom (metaphor underlying it) with the text itself, with the recipient and their individual experience and the objective reality (either universal or individual). The coincidence or similarity of such connections in different languages would mean hermeneutic equivalence. In terms of such an approach many idioms considered not to have equivalents in terms of the linguistic approach would gain their inter-lingual equivalents.



Picture 1: Connections and relationships between the recipient, reality, text (context), and the meaning of the idiom:

5. CONCLUSIONS

With many idiomatic expressions lacking equivalents in different languages in terms of the linguistic approach to this notion, the hermeneutic method, which can allow the translator to distribute the meaning of an idiom, makes it possible to achieve equivalence, which this paper refers to as hermeneutic equivalence.

The hermeneutic equivalence of the original and the translation in this paper refers to the coincidence of the mosaic of reflexive fixation, that is, the preservation of the connections between the extracted experience and the situation described by the idiom.

A prototype version of hermeneutic equivalence can be represented using the illustration, that has already been proposed in this paper to illustrate the meaning that the idiom constructs in the text. In this case, all the semantic connections and relations, which the recipient reconstructs when processing the idiom in one language, should coincide when processing it in another language.

Conflict of Interests

The authors confirm that the presented data does not contain any conflicts of interest.

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