

# TRANSLATION OF BINOMINAL EXPRESSIONS FROM ENGLISH INTO ROMANIAN WITHIN OFFICIAL EUROPEAN DOCUMENTS

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*The present study aims at the analysis of the translation peculiarities of irreversible binominals from English into Romanian. The study will employ a corpus-based approach, drawing on a diverse range of binominal expressions extracted from a set of official European documents. We will emphasize the semantic, structural and translational peculiarities of binominals, acknowledging the importance of preserving semantic equivalence when applying a certain translation technique. The study will stress out the challenges inherent in translating binominal expression from English into Romanian in the framework of official translation.*

**Keywords :** *binominal expression, irreversible binominal, translation technique, translation peculiarities, adequate translation, inadequate translation.*

## **Introduction**

Every language offers their users a plethora of lexical means to express semantic subtleties. The process of selecting words that express adequately the meaning that is to be communicated lies at the interference of predictability and creativity. According to D. Crystal lexical choices depend broadly on situational constraints of language use, thus the pragmatics of communication impose a certain way of choosing and organizing the lexical units in utterances. On the other hand, the speaker has a wider degree of choice when it comes to stylistic features of our discourse as we may “frequently change our speaking or writing style to make a particular effect”. (Crystal, 2019 : 308) Aside from pragmatic factors that impose a certain degree of predictability of the discourse, the lexical level of a language imposes its own constraints. Thus, many strings of words are organized in chunks, manifesting a relation of mutual expectancy, hence the idiomacity of a language.

The English language is to be considered a highly idiomatic language (Horodeka, 1990 : 167) as the fixed lexical patterns are quite numerous (idioms, clichés, collocations) and they are being used both in formal and informal registers. The native speakers may use them effortlessly to convey nuanced meanings and cultural familiarity. The word clusters simply sound “right” to proficient users. Breaking these imposed patterns may impede the efficiency of the communication or add an unwanted effect, as they sound unnatural and wrong, even if they are grammatically correct (for example: speed down, quick food). (*Apud* Hinkel, 2017 : 46) Grasping this range of expressions may pose some challenges for non-native speakers since they require familiarity with the cultural context. Translators face a double challenge in this respect, as they should decode the intended meaning and find the most natural way of rendering it in the target language so that the target utterance has the same effect on the reader/listener as the source utterance. Bearing in mind the above-mentioned aspects, the present article aims at tackling the translation peculiarities and techniques used in the translation of a specific category of idiomatic phrases, namely irreversible binominals. The study will employ a corpus-based approach, analyzing the translation techniques of a range of binominal expressions extracted

from a set of parallel official European documents published in English and Romanian on two EU official websites i.e. *europarl.europa.eu* and *eur-lex.europa.eu*.

### **Translation peculiarities of irreversible binominals**

Irreversible binominals are defined as “the sequence of two words pertaining to the same form-class, placed on an identical level of syntactic hierarchy and ordinarily connected by some kind of lexical link (for example *heads or tails, in and out, peace and quiet*). (Malkiel, 1959 : 113) Some other terms used by linguists to refer to binominals are *phrasal conjuncts, fixed-order coordinates, binary pairs* and *freeses*. (Apud : Pordaný, 1986) This type of linguistic construct has sparked the attention of linguists in terms of the semantic and structural features, and particularly the irreversibility of the specific order of components. For example, breaking the idiomatic patterns of the above mentioned irreversible binominals and simply inverting the order of the binominal elements (*tails and heads, out and in, quiet and peace*) leads to the loss of idiomatic meaning, creating an unnatural, ambiguous linguistic unit which may affect the whole utterance. The semantic and formal complexity of binominals can create a series of constraints when it comes to their translation. Firstly, the translator has to grasp the singular meaning of the irreversible binominal, then he/she should find the most natural way of rendering the intended meaning. The adequate translation is to be accurate in terms of semantic, stylistic and structural peculiarities of the source and target lexical unit. Hence the necessity to observe and reflect on the specific techniques used to translate binominals and the degree of accuracy and naturalness achieved.

Our study will highlight the translation techniques used for different categories of irreversible binominals identified in a set or parallel texts published on two official EU websites. For the analysis of the selected examples, we will focus primarily on the taxonomy of translation techniques proposed by Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet (1958). According to the authors, the translation techniques at the lexical level can be classified into two categories: direct translation, which includes borrowing, calque, literal translation and oblique translation i.e. transposition, modulation, equivalence and adaptation. We have also included in our analysis translation techniques proposed by L. Molina and A.H. Albir (2002), namely amplification, reduction, generalisation, particularisation. A relatively new translation technique we took into account is pseudo-calque, a technique proposed by the author S. Postolea (2017).

The most common classification of the irreversible binominals is based on the semantics and the structure of the coordinated words. We shall follow these criteria for the classification and translation analysis of the selected binominals.

A first category of binominals is that formed of antonyms (the coordinated words of the binominal phrase have opposed meanings). The binominal *black and white* is defined in Cambridge Dictionary as the determiner for “a subject or situation in which it is easy to understand what is right and wrong”. The translation we have excerpted for this phrase is *categoric* and *clar*:

*I am voting in favor of the report, which sets out black and white rules sets once and for all for both public and private operators.*

*The report sets all this out in black and white (...)*  
(*europarl.europa.eu*)

*Votez în favoarea raportului, care stabilește reglementări categorice, odată pentru totdeauna, atât pentru operatorii publici, cât și pentru societățile private.*

*Raportul prezintă în mod clar toate aceste chestiuni (...)*  
(*europarl.europa.eu*)

We observe that the meaning of the fixed phrase was decoded correctly and it was rendered adequately through modulation technique. The target linguistic unit sounds natural and is semantically correct, however the parallel structure couldn't have been kept.

Another antonymic binominal is *ups and downs* which is explained as “a mixture of good and bad things” (*Cambridge Dictionary*). In the analysed set of examples the binominal is translated by the noun *probleme*, as well as by the phrase *suișuri și coborâșuri*.

<i>Since then, this great island republic has experienced a lot of ups and downs, the ups and downs of a dictatorship and of attempts to move towards freedom. (europarl.europa.eu)</i>	<i>De atunci, această mare republică insulară s-a confruntat cu multe probleme, suișuri și coborâșuri ale unei dictaturi și ale tentativelor de a evolua către libertate. (europarl.europa.eu)</i>
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A less efficient translation of the above binominal is through pseudo-calque- *a face sau a desface*, as it is quite ambiguous and unnatural in the formal context.

<i>Once again, effective controls and sanctions to separate the wheat from the chaff will make or break this legislation. (europarl.europa.eu)</i>	<i>Din nou, controalele și sancțiunile eficiente pentru separarea grâului de neghină vor face sau desface această lege. (europarl.europa.eu)</i>
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A second category of irreversible binominals are those where the coordinate elements are synonymous. A widespread binominal used in formal contexts is *law and order*, which designates “a situation in which most people in a country respect and obey the law; public order” (the Free Dictionary). We came across two techniques used in translating this binominal - the calque *lege și ordine* and the equivalence *ordine publică*.

<i>EUJUST LEX will implement its mandate in the context of a situation posing a threat to law and order. The exchange of information on a professional footing in order to prevent disturbances to law and order to allow every Member State to make an efficient risk assessment. (eur-lex.europa.eu)</i>	<i>EUJUST LEX își va executa mandatul în contextul unei situații care constituie o amenințare la adresa legii și ordinii. Schimbul de informații în mod profesional, astfel încât să se prevină tulburările ordinii publice și să se permită fiecărui stat membru să procedeze la o analiză eficientă a riscurilor. (eur-lex.europa.eu)</i>
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We consider that the best out of two is translation by equivalence as it preserves the intended meaning and naturalness of the source binominal.

The synonymic binominal *null and void* is a specialized terminological unit from law domain and it designates the concept of having no legal force. Being a specialized lexical unit, it should be translated by its Romanian equivalent *nul și neavenit*, as it preserves both structure, meaning and degree of specialization.

<i>The agreement to cooperate has been seriously breached and must therefore be considered null and void. (eur-lex.europa.eu)</i>	<i>Angajamentul de cooperare a fost grav încălcat și prin urmare trebuie considerat nul și neavenit. (eur-lex.europa.eu)</i>
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However, we can identify also the translation by amplification *nulă și lipsită de efecte*, which is quite unmotivated as *nul* in Romanian refers to the lack of legal force, so the explicitation is redundant.

*After withdrawal of support by all the petitioners the petition shall become null and void. (eur-lex.europa.eu)*

*După retragerea sprijinului de către toți petiționarii, petiția devine nulă și lipsită de efecte. (eur-lex.europa.eu)*

Another translation of this specialized binominal is by technique of specification. Thus, by using in the Romanian text the terminological unit *nul de drept*, the specialized reader may deduce the nuanced difference between the concepts *nulitate de drept* și *nulitate judiciară*.

A synonymic binominal that is frequently used in formal and informal contexts is *tried and tested*. The pair of participle adjectives denotes the sememes of “being used many times before and proved to be successful” (Cambridge Dictionary). A total equivalent in the Romanian language that would render the meaning, structure and idiomacity of this binominal doesn’t exist. The translation techniques used in the analysed examples are the calque *încercată și testată*, the pseudo-calque *utilizate și testate* and the modulation *eficiență dovedită*.

*The EU can offer authorities a toolbox with tried and tested solutions to address the risks caused by fragmentation of local, regional and national approaches.*

*(...)we must abide by the tried and tested social market economy.*

*While promoting the green restructuring of the economy, the European Union should not forget about the tried and tested community policies already in place.... (eur-lex.europa.eu)*

*UE poate oferi autorităților o serie de soluții testate și utilizate pentru a elimina riscurile determinate de abordarea fragmentată la nivel local, regional și national.*

*(...) trebuie să respectăm economia socială de piață, deja încercată și testată.*

*În promovarea restructurării verzi a economiei, Uniunea Europeană nu trebuie să uite politicile comunitare cu eficiență dovedită... (eur-lex.europa.eu)*

The translation through modulation in the target language is the technique which best preserves the meaning and fits naturally in the co-text. The calque and pseudo-calque, even if transpose the structure of the binominal, fail to render the exact intended meaning.

The next analysed synonymic binominal is *by leaps and bounds*, which means “very quickly” (Cambridge Dictionary). The identified translations imply the technique of equivalence - *cu repezeciune* and modulation - *în mod semnificativ*.

*In every country in Europe, unemployment has grown by leaps and bounds.*

*The situation is more serious than one would believe: the ratio of long-term unemployed has grown by leaps and bounds among the Roma (...) (europarl.europa.eu)*

*În fiecare țară a Europei, șomajul a crescut cu repezeciune.*

*Situația este mai serioasă decât am putea crede: rata șomajului de termen lung a crescut în mod semnificativ printre romi (...)(europarl.europa.eu)*

Both techniques prove to be adequate in the given contexts rendering the intended meaning and sounding natural within the utterances.

Another range of binominals are to be classified according to their fixed prosodic patterns. Thus, there are rhyming binominals which impose a certain rhythm and vividness to the source utterance, which may be difficult to preserve in the translation process. One rhyming irreversible binominal is *fairly and squarely*, and it means “in a direct way that is easy to understand” (Cambridge Dictionary). The binominal is translated by modulation - *fără ambiguitate*. The translation is an adequate one, but the rhyming effect was lost in the process of translation.

Whereas from this point of view the conditions for a revision of Decision 95/553/EC (with the aim of extending it) must be created without delay and diplomatic protection must be included fairly and squarely within its scope. (europarl.europa.eu)

Întrucât, din acest punct de vedere, este necesar să fie create fără întârziere condițiile revizuirii deciziei din 95/553/CE în sensul extinderii sale și includerii fără ambiguitate a protecției diplomatice în cadrul domeniului său de aplicare. (europarl.europa.eu)

Another rhyming binominal is *high and dry*, which means “in a very **difficult situation** without any **help**” (Cambridge Dictionary). The translation has been done by means of the equivalent adverbial phrase *de izbeliște*, which partly transfers the meaning, but stylistically belongs to the colloquial informal language style.

Farmers in Northern Ireland at this time stand high and dry with no help and no support. (europarl.europa.eu)

În acest moment fermierii din Irlanda de Nord sunt lăsați de izbeliște, fără niciun ajutor sau sprijin. (europarl.europa.eu)

A different translation technique used for this binominal is that of condensation (*abandona*), thus the same meaning is rendered in Romanian through a more economical linguistic form.

However, it is also absolutely our duty not to leave our producers high and dry when it is through no fault of their own that they have found themselves in this situation that threatens their very survival. (europarl.europa.eu)

De asemenea însă, este absolut de datoria noastră să nu-i abandonăm pe producători, atunci când aceștia nu au nicio vină pentru situația în care se află și care amenință însăși supraviețuirea lor. (europarl.europa.eu)

Alliteration is another phonological principle for classifying binominals, as the coordinated words have identical initial consonant sounds. *Part and parcel*, for example, means “a **feature** of something, **especially a feature** that cannot be **avoided**” (Cambridge Dictionary). It is translated through modulation *a fi ancorat* and *a fi parte integrantă*. The translation is an effective one as it renders perfectly the meaning and fits the style of the co-text.

The Commission's political dialogue with national parliaments constitutes a process which is increasingly. Part and parcel of the EU's institutional practices.

The EESC therefore feels that, if the Community's negotiation initiatives are to be sufficiently substantial and credible, they must be part and parcel of an external relations policy which also includes negotiations on protection of intellectual property and on trade. (europarl.europa.eu)

Dialogul politic al Comisiei cu parlamentele naționale constituie un proces care devine din ce în ce mai ancorat în practicile instituționale ale Uniunii.

CESE consideră, prin urmare, că forța și credibilitatea inițiativelor de negociere ale Comunității Europene se pot dovedi eficiente în măsura în care sunt parte integrantă a unei politici de relații externe care include și negocierile din domeniul protecției proprietății intelectuale și cele privind comerțul. (europarl.europa.eu)

In the next example, the translation *parte esențială* is less loyal, as it highlights a different sememe - that of being important, which was not encapsulated in the source binominal:

*This is part and parcel of the Social OMC as a way to share knowledge, to stimulate «positive competition» among peers and to contribute to sustained mobilisation and commitment. (eur-lex.europa.eu)*

*Acest aspect este o parte esențială a MDC sociale ca mod de a comunica informațiile, de a stimula „concurența constructivă” între părți și de a contribui la o mobilizare și un angajament constant. (eur-lex.europa.eu)*

*Rough and ready* is another alliterative binominal and it means “simple and prepared quickly but good enough for a particular situation” (Cambridge Dictionary). The pinpointed translation is through literal translation - *dur și pregătit* and it fails to render the source meaning, so it is an inadequate one:

*These agreements, which are still very rough and ready, nonetheless deserve to be encouraged and, most especially, improved. (europarl.europa.eu)*

*Aceste acorduri, care sunt încă foarte dure și pregătite, merită totuși să fie încurajate și, în special, îmbunătățite. (europarl.europa.eu)*

### Conclusion

The translation techniques applied when translating irreversible binominals depend on the semantic subtleties and cultural nuances that should be rendered in the target language. Moreover, when it comes to these kinds of idiomatic phrases the translator has to face also the formal complexity of the linguistic units. The main challenge is to render the irreversible binominals accurately and most naturally, so that they have the same effect in the target language as they have in the source language. The easiest and most adequate translation technique to be used is the equivalence, when it is possible, as it preserves both meaning and formal aspect of the source linguistic unit (binominal). However, when an equivalent doesn't exist, the translator may apply a wide range of techniques such as modulation, pseudo-calque, reduction, amplification, condensation, depending on the context and the lexical-semantic and stylistic resources of the target language.

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**Corpus :**

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