

## **SEMANTIC DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED IN THE PROCESS OF TRANSLATING LITERARY TEXTS TITLES**

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*Acest articol abordează problema dificultăților semantice care pot fi întâlnite în procesul de traducere a titlurilor textelor literare. Scopul prezentului articol este de a identifica dificultățile semantice de traducere a titlurilor textelor literare, de a le analiza și de a prezenta metode prin care traducătorul poate face față acestor dificultăți.*

Literary translation is probably one of the most challenging types of translation because there are no specialized words and terms for which dictionaries have exact equivalents. Literary text titles require a special attention as they do not only represent a name which stays on the first page of a book or at the top of the page. They represent a part of that work and this means that they might also contain some hidden messages or some hints that will help the reader to understand better that work. That is why the translator shall firstly decode what is enco-

ded in the original title and then in the same way to carefully encode the message into its translation.

Translation is a complex process which implies besides rendering the SL message into the TL one a wide general knowledge, creativity, a very good sense of language and grammar knowledge from translator. The goal of the translation is to establish a relationship of equivalence between the ST and the TT which means to ensure that both texts communicate the same message [1, p.9]. Every language has its own grammar rules and vocabulary, which is unique. Therefore in order to perform a good translation one shall know very well both languages he or she operates with, not only from the practical point of view, but as well from the theoretical one. Linguistic difficulties will always occur and this will help the translator to deal with them.

In this article we are going to analyse some semantic difficulties or difficulties related to the meaning which can be encountered in the process of translating literary texts titles. Meaning is probably the most important part of the word and it may cause many problems to translator. If the translator does not understand the meaning, the translation he or she performs will be mistaken. So when translating a title it is very important to understand what this title wants to communicate to the reader and what its functions are. That is why many linguists among whom Peter Newmark recommend to translate the title only after the entire literary work is rendered [2] because many times the meaning of the title is closely related to the work it entitles and it can be mistranslated if the translator does not know the content and the subject matter of the work.

Let us take for example Evelyn Waugh's title of the novel *Scoop* which was rendered into Romanian as *Bomba zilei* [4]. If we look up in the dictionary the word *scoop* we will learn that it has two meanings. One of them designates a tool used in digging out and moving a substance. The other meaning is related to news and states that it is a story or piece of news discovered and published by one newspaper before the others [6]. In order to know which of the two meanings is used in this title, the translator has to read firstly the entire novel. In this way, he or she will find out that this is a story about a writer of nature columns who is sent by mistake in the zone of war where he manages to do some very good news with the help of some other journalists and returns home as a world-renowned reporter [5]. It becomes obvious that the

author used the word *scoop* with reference to news. However, the Romanian dictionary does not give an equivalent to the word *scoop* with the same reference. So, the translator had probably to do some research in journalism in order to find what the Romanian equivalent for such kind of news is. The Romanian translation *Bomba zilei*, as we see, renders the idea very well, although not exactly. It supposes an unexpected and surprising piece of news, but which is not necessarily published by one newspaper before another. Its meaning is more related to the event of the day. On the other hand, we can suppose that if it is the event of the day there can be a competition between newspapers for the possibility of having a better and a quicker reportage on this. In this way, we can say that the translator found a very good equivalent to the original title.

The title of Clive Staples Lewis's novel *Surprised by Joy* contains as well a word that can be very confusing – the noun *Joy*. Been a part of the title and written with capital letter we cannot guess whether this is the noun expressing happiness or the name of a person. That is why, again, it is very important to know the plot of the work. In our case it is an autobiography – the events that happened in the author's spiritual and intellectual life when he was in his early thirties [7]. The word *Joy* is used here in its primary meaning *-happiness-* because all his life the main character, in our case the author, was looking for the *joy* and actually there happened something very interesting: in 1957 – two years after publishing the work – he married the love of his life whose name was Joy [7]. The translator rendered the title into Romanian as *Surprins de bucurie* [3]. As we see the Romanian equivalent does not cause any ambiguities. Actually it could not cause even if the translator wanted to, because there is not such a word in Romanian that would mean happiness and in the same time be a name. That is why the translator could only use the exact equivalent and for this he needed to know the plot of the story.

Prepositions also represent a category of words which can cause semantic difficulties. Many times an English preposition is translated differently into Romanian, especially if we speak about the preposition *of*. *Of* is usually used to show possession. However, besides possession it can express the origin, the content, the position, the characteristics of a thing or a person, or it can mean what something contains. Consequently, because of this it has many Romanian equivalents. Therefore

it can create some ambiguities and knowing the content of the work can help the translator to choose the appropriate rendering of the preposition.

For instance, without knowing the subject matter of Will Self's novel *The Book of Dave* we may suppose that the preposition *of* may express any of the following ideas: the book belongs to Dave; it is about Dave or it was written by Dave. In this way only reading the work we may find what the meaning of the preposition *of* is. If we look at the Romanian translation, which is *Cartea lui Dave*, we see that it also does not tell us for sure whether this is Dave's book or it is written by him. Consequently, we may suppose that the translator decided to let the reader himself or herself to discover the answer to this question.

After analysing a corpus of five hundred literary texts titles we have come to the conclusion that most difficulties were caused by polysemantic words, collocations and idioms, prepositions and false friends. Even if the translated title had a different meaning in comparison with the original one, in each case it still remained faithful to the work it entitled. Words were changed with others and together with them the meanings were modified, but the message the author wanted to communicate remained always encoded in the translated title as well. Many times the content of the book played a very important role in the process of its title translation.

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