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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE ROLE OF COGNITIVE MECHANISMS— CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR AND METONYMY IN THE TRANSLATION PROCESS¹

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1. Introduction

Translation studies have recently gone through a process of establishing itself as a recognized and autonomous research discipline within the humanities. The reasons why it had to face some twists and turns on its way lies in the fact that it has long been under the wing of literature studies, and only in the past few decades it has received more attention from linguistics proper. Being undeniably interdisciplinary in nature, it should both draw on and seek to inform linguistic research.

In this chapter we will explore the interface between translation studies and cognitive linguistics by examining selected case studies to determine the place and role of conceptual metaphor and metonymy in the process of translation, i.e. in particular translation strategies applied in performing different translation tasks. The specific translation tasks that we will target in this paper are translating culture-based items from English into Croatian, as well as translating phraseology. Further analysis focuses on whether the distribution of these cognitive mechanisms is the same for strategies targeting different language items and examines the reasons for possible unevenness, stipulating whether their established role in translation calls

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for and justifies their incorporation in translation theory, pedagogy, and practice.

The field of translation studies is an interdisciplinary undertaking, as it may and does draw on many related, and other not directly related disciplines, such as linguistics and its sub-branches (contrastive linguistics, semantics, pragmatics, cognitive linguistics, corpus linguistics, critical linguistics, discourse analysis, to name but a few), cultural studies, communication studies, philosophy, gender studies, and even politics. Focusing on only one aspect at a time may result in a relatively myopic view of a problem, as for example when in contrastive linguistics efforts are made to find structural and lexical equivalents, sometimes at the expense of equivalence which, in the absence of lexical and structural parallels, may be established on the conceptual level.

2. Research questions

Much has been written about translation models and strategies within translation theory, but even a quick glance across the proposed mechanisms is enough to identify the relative absence of the recent developments of cognitive linguistics from the proposed frameworks. This gap is almost unnatural as both of the disciplines involve mental operations as they deal inherently with language and thought. This chapter is an attempt at the cross-fertilization of the two approaches, having in mind the following set of questions:

1. What conceptual operations unfold in the mind of the translator—interpreter—aside from categorization and linguistic reasoning?
2. At which levels can translation equivalence be established?
3. Why can translations be easily identified as *translations* rather than *original* texts? What makes them so conspicuously different from originals, even in absence of apparent formal or structural translation mistakes?

3. Translation equivalence – the equivalence of what?

Catford (1965: 12) claims that “the central problem of translation practice is finding TL translation equivalents.” Nida (1964) distinguished between two traditional categories: formal and dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalence is the closest possible match of form and content between source text and target text, while dynamic equivalence is the equivalence of effect on the target reader. As an extension of the form vs. function di-

chotomy, we believe ‘functional equivalence’ to be a better term for Nida’s ‘dynamic equivalence.’ Looking at the elements that play a role in the translator’s decision making, we can see that they surpass the linguistic considerations and extend to include sociological, cultural, ethnographic, and individual traits.

We consider translation equivalence as a superordinate notion that is not the sum but a function of different types of sub-equivalences. The sub-equivalences leading to translation equivalence may traditionally include some or all of the following: lexical, structural, semantic and pragmatic equivalents. We wish to add the categories of ‘cultural equivalence’ and ‘conceptual equivalence’ to this model, as these involve the correspondence on the cultural or conceptual level. We do not take equivalence to mean ‘sameness’ or ‘full correspondence,’ but as ‘similarity,’ both functional and cognitive. This allows us to accept the inherent and unique elements of source culture and language, and the fact that they cannot be identically reproduced in the translation process. We propose that equivalence may be established on the conceptual level, explaining in this way the possibility of providing translation equivalents that have no direct lexical or structural links or similarities with the source language.

The following types of equivalence will, in one way or the other, play a role in establishing translation equivalence:

- content – semantic equivalence
- form – structural equivalence
- lexis – lexical equivalence
- function – pragmatic or functional equivalence
- culture – cultural equivalence
- cognitive level – conceptual equivalence.

Looking at these types equivalence it appears that formal equivalence may but needn’t be in the function of semantic equivalence, i.e. that semantic equivalence and pragmatic equivalence may occur in the absence of formal equivalence. In other words, formal and lexical equivalence are secondary and need not occur at all to establish translation equivalence between language items, whereas the equivalence of content or meaning and the effect on the reader should be considered primary. What makes it possible then to establish equivalence in absence of any formal and lexical correspondence? It is particularly this last question that we think cognitive linguistics may answer by looking at what conceptual operations unfold in the mind of the translator or interpreter during the translation process. In

an attempt to shed more light to this question we will look at the transfer of metonymy in translation.

4. The rise and fall of metonymy in translating culture-bound items

Metonymy finds its application in fields like literary discourse and criticism, grammar, language acquisition, phraseology, fine arts, etc. Our aim here is to explore its application in translation. In a study by Omazić and Čačija (2006) focusing on strategies of translating culture-bound items in screen translation, we noticed they are saturated with conceptual metonymies, especially in certain fields of human experience (brand names, names of institutions, holidays, political references, etc.). Types of metonymic mappings that occurred in the corpus of examples collected for the purpose of that study include the following:

NAME FOR THE PRODUCT

Oreos, Haagen Daz, Sweet 'n Low, Kleenex, Greyhound, Advil, Tylenol

PART FOR WHOLE OR PART OF A SCENARIO FOR THE WHOLE SCENARIO

get a 96, get an A, 3rd degree, 5th amendment, Chapter 11, Boxing Day

'TOOL' FOR ACTION

to Google

INSTITUTION FOR ACTION

to FedEx

PLACE FOR INSTITUTION

The White House, the Downing Street

CITY FOR GOVERNMENT

Washington, London

Looking at how metonymy behaves in translation, we have noticed some interesting tendencies. Following Lakoff (1987: 79ff), a member of a category may stand for the whole category, which is a prototypical model found in our NAME FOR THE PRODUCT class. A paper tissue, whatever the brand, is often referred to as *Kleenex*, photocopies are *Xeroxes*, buses are *Greyhounds*, etc. For products that have not entered the Croatian market, or are still not that widespread and popular, the name of the product is in

translation often replaced with the type of product, thus creating a reverse cross-cultural, or a cross-linguistic metonymic model, in which the general Croatian name for the product stands for the English brand name (*deterdžent* for *Tide*).

(1) BRAND NAME FOR THE PRODUCT

Oreos – cookies (Cro. *keksi*)

Haagen Daz – ice-cream (Cro. *sladoled*)

Goobers – chocolate-coated peanuts (Cro. *čokoladirani kikiriki*)

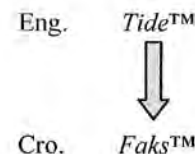
Kleenex – paper tissues (Cro. *papirnate maramice*)

Greyhound – bus (Cro. *autobus*)

Advil – painkillers (Cro. *tablete/nešto protiv bolova*)

Tide – detergent (Cro. *deterdžent*)

Get us some *Tide*.

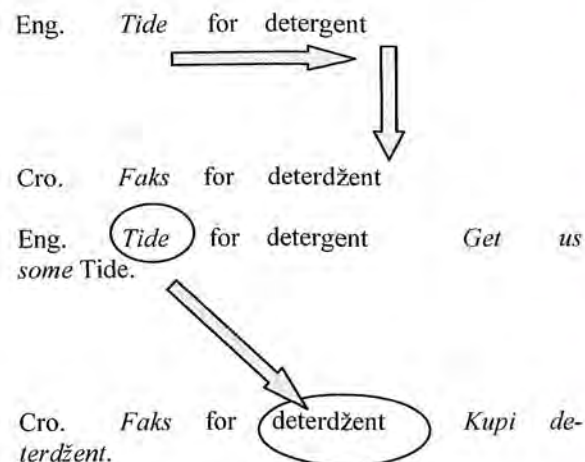


Let us look at the case of *Tide*, the leading brand of washing detergent on the American market. Similarly, the leading brand in Croatia is *Faks*. Both *Tide* and *Faks* are used generically by many people in their respective languages. *Tide* appeared in a number of examples we recorded, in none of which it was translated as *Faks*, but with the generic word 'detergent,' creating a relationship of interlingual contiguity.

We may wonder which path the translation process actually follows, as shown in our illustration, but also why the Croatian brand name appears to be the weakest link in the model. Whatever the motivation and whatever the direction, it is undeniable that we arrived from *Tide* to *deterdžent* in Croatian via metonymy, which provided us with the mental access to the selected translation equivalent. Or to reverse the perspective, the Croatian word *deterdžent* actually now 'stands for' *Tide*. The metonymic relationship is thus reversed and spans the two languages. In practical terms it really means that the BRAND NAME FOR PRODUCT metonymy found in the source text is lost in the target text, i.e. lost in translation. The choice of generic detergent as translation equivalent may be in line with the criteria of perceptual selectivity (as proposed by Radden and Kövecses 1999: 47), where the occurrent is preferred to non-occurrent, and as *Tide* is not our factual experience, it is lost in translation. This still does not explain why

Faks, being the occurent in our culture, did not find its way into the translation. Intuitively, this has to do with the awareness of both the translator and their audience that the source text is culturally distinct, and attempts to make significant cultural adaptations seem unnatural. It would be funny to see a Texas police officer sent to buy *Faks* in his local *Safeway* store. To take it a step further, translation in cognitive terms may be a true practice in searching for the CONCEPT FOR FORM metonymies. In the source text we first identify the FORM in the source language, then identify what CONCEPT this form stands for, which should be a cognitive category independent of particular languages, and then look for the appropriate FORM in the target language.

FORMAL CORRESPONDENCE	*Kupi <i>Tide</i> .
FUNCTIONAL/CULTURAL CORRESPONDENCE	*Kupi <i>Faks</i> .
TRANSLATION EQUIVALENT OFFERED	Kupi deterdžent.



There were, however, few cases in our corpus where names of products were replaced by the names of brands of the same type of product that exist on the Croatian market, not spanning the languages but reapplying the same metonymy furnished with Croatian cultural substitutes, as in (2):

- (2) a. Do you have *Sweet 'n' Low*? - Would *Equal* be OK?
 b. *Imate li Natren*? - *Može li Nutrasweet*?

This mechanism of cultural substitution of non-occurrent with the occurrent, however, is not exploited as often as the reverse interlingual metonymic spanning in our corpus of examples. Moreover, cultural substitution is shown to cause audience-irritation if the substitute is too far-fetched, as is the case with the following example:

(3)

SOURCE TEXT	<i>Let's go to the pub tonight and order a pint of Guinness.</i>
TARGET TEXT	<i>Idemo večeras u kafić na jedno Karlovačko.</i>
SUGGESTED TRANSLATION	<i>Idemo večeras van na pivo.</i>

in which we find irritating and simply 'overdone' substitutes, as 'the pub' became 'a coffee-bar' and *Guinness* became a local Croatian beer that is nothing like *Guinness*. This example clearly shows that there are cultural constraints that need to be observed when trying to achieve cultural equivalence through cultural substitutes, such as the degree of similarity and salience of features. Another reason for the relative absence of Croatian brand names appearing in translation may have to do with the fact that our examples are instances of screen translation, where the original brand can in some cases be seen on screen, thus creating an unwanted discrepancy between what is shown and said, and the translation. The translation we suggest in this case overrides cultural equivalence, but it does it on purpose and with a definite purpose in mind.

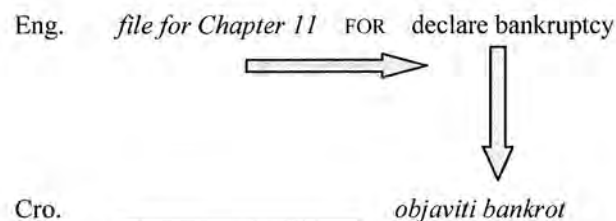
In the PART FOR WHOLE group of examples, the semantic subgroup of legal terms shows a specific behaviour, as the original concept does exist in the target language but is not metonymically coded. There is no metonymy in Croatian, but the Croatian translation equivalent is arrived at via metonymy.

(4)

PART OF A SCENARIO FOR THE WHOLE SCENARIO

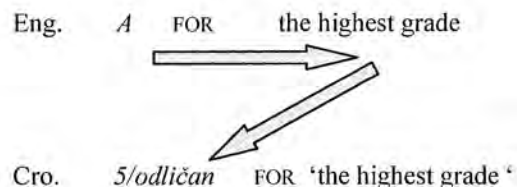
to give someone the 3rd degree 'to interrogate smn' – *ispitivati nekoga* (Cro.)
to plead 5th amendment 'to use the right to remain silent' – *braniti se šutnjom* (Cro.)

to file for Chapter 11 'to declare bankruptcy' – *objaviti bankrot* (Cro.)



The metonymic relationship thus spans the two languages, bridging the cultural gap, and also the conceptual gap between them. In the absence of lexical, and cultural equivalence, translation equivalence is established, and maintained, on the conceptual level. In other cases, cultural substitution does not sound unnatural, the same conceptual metonymy is present in both source and target texts:

- (5)
 get an A 'get the highest grade' – *dobiti 5/odličan* (Cro.)
 be an A student 'be an excellent student' – *biti odličan student* (Cro.)



5. Metaphor and metonymy in translating phraseological units: *skeletons*, *red herrings* and *green fingers* lost in translation?

During the past five years about 200 students of English who took the elective course in English Phraseology were asked to collect examples of the translation of phraseological units (Pus) from contemporary British and American novels and movies and their translations into Croatian (Omazić 2008). Students recorded the translation pairs they identified, with the extended context where necessary, the collected corpus was

stored electronically, and all examples coded for the strategy used in translation. Multiple occurrences of the same item were deleted if the different sources had identical translation solutions; if the translation was different, all suggested versions were kept. The corpus now has over 7,000 phraseological units with correspondent translations.

The identified PU translation strategies in the student corpus included the following:

- 1) translation by a direct idiomatic equivalent (identical form and meaning) 29%
- (6) SL *She thinks it'll break his heart if he finds out.*
 TL *Slomit će mu srce ako dozna.*
- 2) translation by a partial lexical or structural equivalent 16%
- (7) SL *I've sat back and taken it. But now, you've crossed the line, sir.*
 TL *Trpio sam to, no sad si prešao granicu. (...you've crossed the border)*
- 3) translation by a non-idiomatic paraphrase 28%
- (8) SL *Wanna hang out, shoot the breeze?*
 TL *Hoćeš se družiti?*
- (9) SL *That's just not the tip of the iceberg!*
 TL *No to nije sve!* (But that is not all.)
- 4) translation by a lexically and formally unrelated idiomatic substitution 19%
- (10) SL *red herring*
 TL - *navesti koga na krivi trag* (make smn. follow the wrong trace)
 TL - *zavarati trag* (cover one's trace)
 TL - *zamazati kome oči* (pull the wool over smn.'s eyes)
- 5) direct word for word translation that does not exist as an idiom in Croatian 4%

- (11) SL *Because I think your fiancé may have a few skeletons in his closet that he is not telling you about.*
 TL *Mislim da ti zaručnik ima par kostura u ormaru.*

6) deletion 4%

- (12) SL *To say the least, I don't like what I'm seeing from these Fockers.*
 TL *Ne sviđa mi se što vidim.*

For the purpose of this paper we focused on only those PUs that are based on conceptual metaphor and metonymies, and one thing became strikingly apparent— whereas for metaphor-based phraseological units there is in most cases a correspondent phraseological unit (SL *the ball is in your court* as TL *ti si na potezu* 'it is your move,' or SL *chip off the old block* as TL *krv nije voda* 'blood is not water,' for example) that is also metaphorical but may be realized differently in lexical and structural terms, we found much evidence of the loss of metonymy in translating metonymic phraseological units:

- (13) SL *I'm gonna start you off on the right foot.*
 TL *Draga si mi i želim ti pomoći.* (I like you and I want to help you.)
- (14) SL *He invited me, completely out of the blue.*
 TL *Iznenada me pozvao k sebi.* (All of a sudden he invited me.)

We found this to be somewhat surprising as metonymy offers more room for selecting salient features of a phenomenon, so we expected that cross-language differences in using metonymy as a tool would perhaps result in a selection of a different type of metonymy in the target language, (as is the case with *red herring* translated as *zamazati kome oči* or *zavarati trag*, for example), or choosing a different access point to the same conceptual entity, but not in its complete deletion. As it turned out, many metonymy-based idioms are translated with a paraphrase (TL 1 versions) even where plausible idiomatic metonymy-based solutions existed in the target language (TL 2), as shown in the following examples:

- (15) SL *Whenever she would speak of it her eyes would light up.*
 TL 1 *Živnula bi kad god je govorila o njemu.* (She would become more energetic whenever she would speak about him.)
 TL 2 *Oči bi joj zasjale/zaiskrile kad bi pričala o tome.*
- (16) SL *My lips are sealed.*
 TL 1 *Neću nikome reći.* (I won't tell anybody.)
 TL 2 *Šutim kao zalivena.*
- (17) SL *Shake a leg, woman!*
 TL 1 *Hitro, ženo.* (Quickly, woman.)
 TL 2 *Put pod noge, ženo!*

Possibly the translator was not sure of the stylistic implications of a particular Croatian expression, or their focus was more on the transfer of meaning than on the transfer of effect on the audience, or he/she was not daring enough or knowledgeable enough to explore other translation strategies beyond that of a paraphrase. The loss of metonymy and idiomatity in translation certainly depletes the translated text of the connotational and stylistic effect inherent in the source text. The established set of mismatches in transposing and translating metonymy discussed above leads us to believe that they play a role in making the translated text sound unnatural.

Another aspect identified previously by Gläser (1998: 142), which may prove to be relevant here, are the individual preferences of authors and different stylistic choices he/she makes in the use of phraseology in the source language. Understandably, translators also have an individual set of preferred idiomatic phrases they tend to use, which may also affect the translation they opt for. Furthermore, some translators simply do not have the flair for phraseology and tend to avoid using phraseological units for fear of sounding overtly colloquial. Finally, different languages and different text types show different degrees of figurative language. This becomes apparent when we compare, for example, the discrepancy between the abundance of phraseology, both conventionalized and modified, in newspaper headlines or advertising in English and Croatian, where Croatian appears to have much lower saturation with PUs than English.

Evidently, many factors influence the degrees of figurativeness in a language, starting from the type of discourse and register, to individual preferences of authors. The transfer of figurativeness from one language to another must take into account so much more, as it passes through and hinges on the second filter—the translators. It is their awareness, compe-

tence, and their individual strategic preferences that will finally shape the resulting target language text.

6. Why do translations often sound unnatural?

We have all at one time or the other read a text and concluded that it must be a translation, not the original. Sometimes there are very apparent tell-tale signs—such as the pitfalls of making grave lexical, grammatical or stylistic mistakes in translation, but we felt that there must be more subtle signals that lead to identifying a text as a translation rather than an original, even in absence of very apparent mistakes. In search of an answer, we analyzed the mechanisms and principles established within cognitive linguistics, and tested their suitability and applicability.

Radden and Kövecses (1999: 44f) proposed a set of cognitive and communicative principles that govern the selection of the preferred vehicle for metaphorical and metonymic construal. These cognitive principles include Human Experience – in other words choosing human over non-human, subjective over objective, concrete over abstract, bodily over mental, bodily over perceptual, visible over invisible, interactional over non-interactional, functional over non-functional; Perceptual selectivity—choosing immediate over non-immediate, occurrent over non-occurrent, more over less, dominant over less dominant, good gestalt over poor gestalt, bounded over unbounded, specific over generic; and Cultural preferences—choosing stereotypical over non-stereotypical, ideal over non-ideal, typical over non-typical, central over peripheral, initial or final over middle, basic over non-basic, important over less important, common over less common, rare over less rare. Their Communicative principles are the principle of clarity—choosing clear over obscure, and the principle of relevance—choosing relevant over irrelevant, or situationally more relevant over situationally less relevant.

We believe that the principles they proposed may be adapted as a set of relevant cognitive principles for selecting translation equivalents in the translation process. This refers first and foremost to their principles of perceptual selectivity, cultural preferences and communicative principles. In other words, the translators would choose an equivalent that is occurrent, dominant, typical, specific, important, clear, relevant, situationally relevant or common in the target language or culture, and reject those that are non-occurrent, non-stereotypical, non-typical, non-central, less important, less common, obscure or irrelevant. These cognitive principles guide the translator in choosing the relevant translation strategy and, as a result, providing the translation equivalent. The translators may follow these princi-

ples when they, for example, choose the occurrent equivalent over the non-occurrent equivalent (*odličan* or 5 over *A*), or breach them by, for example, choosing non-occurrent over occurrent or obscure over clear (*skeleton in the closet* translated literally into Croatian as *kostur u ormaru*). The violation of these principles will necessarily lead to unnaturalness of translation. In other cases there may be competing motivations, as is the case with *Faks* and *Tide*, between the occurrent over non-occurrent and specific over generic. We believe that when these conflicting motivations occur, they also reduce the degree of naturalness or truthfulness of translation.

Further factors that may have the same adversative effect on the target text are the disregard for different preferential choices of metaphor in source and target languages, as well as the disregard for preferred metonymic construal (Radden and Kövecses 1999) or precedence routes. Finally, the loss of figurativeness, i.e. the reduction of figurativeness by about 20% in translation definitely depletes the translation of the stylistic features found in the original text.

7. Conclusion

Our attempt here was to throw more light on the role, benefits and practical aspects of applying the insights of cognitive linguistics in translation studies, and hopefully, to provide translators with a keener awareness of the cognitive tools or translation process directions that are at work in giving rise to and translating metonymic cultural items and phraseological units.

As for translating metonymic culture-bound items, the translator's knowledge and understanding of the most productive types of metonymies, and an awareness of differences in conceptualization and metaphorical and metonymic construal across his or her working languages, would aid the translator in choosing the appropriate translation strategy. The observed tendency to render a metonymy-based idiomatic expression in a neutral way, i.e. with a paraphrase, may also point to the existence of gaps in translator training programmes. We would therefore recommend carefully tailoring the curricula of translation study programmes to target the identified shortcomings and to equip future translators with a better knowledge and understanding of relevant cognitive theories, such as meaning construal (Langacker 1987; Croft and Cruse 2004) and cognitive theory of metaphor and metonymy (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1987), and their ramifications and applications in different translation tasks.

Finally, we applied the cognitive apparatus in search of the answer to the question of truthfulness or naturalness of translation on the set of our

corpus examples, and we believe that the breeches of these principles, or their conflicting motivations have an adversative effect on translations, but further more extensive research in this direction is needed to corroborate our claim.

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