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Phraseologie im interlingualen und interkulturellen Kontakt
Phraseology in Interlingual and Intercultural Contact

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**Phraseologie im interlingualen
und interkulturellen Kontakt**

**Phraseology in Interlingual
and Intercultural Contact**

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Bielsko-Biala, Budapest, Kansas, Maribor, Praha

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Phraseological Calques of Latin Origin in Croatian and English

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Abstract

Latin had a great impact on the lexis of other European languages. In both Croatian and English there is a large number of lexical units, among them phrasemes, which have been directly or indirectly borrowed from Latin, and have similar structure and meaning.

The present paper aimed to carry out a contrastive analysis of a selection of Croatian and English phrasemes of Latin origin and examine their structural compatibility, given that their meaning is the same. The contrastive analysis showed: a) a full compatibility of lexical components and phraseme background (e.g. Lat. *nihil novi sub sole* = Cr. *ništa novo pod suncom* = Engl. *nothing new under the sun*), b) a partial compatibility of lexical components and phraseme background (e.g. Lat. *a capite a calce* = Cr. *od glave do pete* ['from head to heel'] ≠ Engl. *from head to foot/toe*), and c) incompatibility (e.g. Lat. *clavi in oculis* ['nails in eyes'] ≠ Cr. *trn u oku* ['a thorn in the eye'] ≠ Engl. *a thorn in somebody's flesh/side*).

1 INTRODUCTION

Latin had a great impact on other European languages and their systems, especially their lexical systems. In different European languages there is a large number of lexical units which have been directly or indirectly borrowed from Latin, many of which are phrasemes, as set expressions. Numerous phrasemes of similar structure and meaning are common to different European languages. They largely originate from the Bible and other texts of church provenance, or their formation was motivated by a historical or mythological event or person, or a literary work.

The present paper deals with a selection of phrasemes, as well as sayings "which have the structure and the meaning typical of phrasemes" (Menac 2007: 19), of Latin origin in Croatian and English. The majority of them are translated, while a minority is kept in their original form. The aim of the present study is to carry out a contrastive analysis of Croatian and English phrasemes of Latin origin and examine their structural compatibility, given that their meaning is the same.

For Croatian phrasemes the following dictionaries were used: Menac et al. (2003), Anić (2006), and Bendow (2009). For English phrasemes Ammer (1997), Siefring (2004), and Hornby (2005) were consulted, as well as native speakers. For Latin expressions, in addition to the above mentioned dictionaries, Stone (2005) was consulted.

2 CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF CROATIAN AND ENGLISH PHRASEMES OF LATIN ORIGIN

2.1 Compatibility of lexical components and phraseme background

Phraseological calques and sayings of Latin origin that have compatible lexical components and phraseme background are the most numerous. Among selected examples prevail those that originate from the Bible. The fact that the Bible in Croatian and English respectively was translated from Latin accounts for a high level of compatibility in translation.

2.1.1 Full compatibility

An example – exhibiting a full correspondence of lexical units and phraseme background in all three languages – is *redde Caesari, quae sunt Caesaris, et quae sunt Dei Deo*, meaning ‘give to each his due’, which was translated into Croatian as *dati caru carevo, a Bogu Božje*, and into English as *render unto Caesar what is Caesar's <and to God what is God's>*. The expression derives from the Bible:

Isus će im nato: 'Čija je ovo slika i natpis?' 'Careva', odgovoriše mu. Tada im reče: 'Podajte caru carevo, a Bogu Božje!' (Mt 22, 15–21)

They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. (Matthew 22: 15–21)

Another well-known example is the Croatian phraseme *bacati/ne bacajte biserje pred svinje*, and its English counterpart *<do not> cast/throw pearls before swine*, which are both translations of the Latin expression *nolite jacere margaritas ante porcos*, meaning ‘(do not) give or offer valuable things to people who do not understand their value’. The phraseme originates from the New Testament:

Ne dajte svetinje psima! Ne bacajte svoga biserja pred svinje, da se, pošto ga pogaze, ne okrenu te vas rastrgaju! (Mt 7, 6)

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you. (Matthew 7: 6)

Another phraseme, deriving from the Old Testament, is *nihil novi sub sole* which is translated into English as *nothing new under the sun*, and into Croatian as *ništa novo pod suncem*:

Što je bilo, opet će biti, i što se činilo, opet će se činiti, i nema ništa novo pod suncem. Ima li išta o čemu bi se moglo reći: "Gle, ovo je novo!"? Sve je već davno prije nas postojalo. (Prop 1, 9–10)

The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. (Ecclesiastes 1: 9–10)

The meaning of this phraseme is ‘everything that is happening now has happened before’, and it expresses the depth of philosophical thought and the persistence of physical laws (Biblija, 2008: 1428).

The Latin phraseme *cor unum et anima una* was literally translated into English as *one heart and one soul*, and has its Croatian counterpart *jedno srce i jedna duša*, meaning ‘to be very connected with another person’. In English, however, the expression *<to be> soul mates* is commonly used, that is, it is far more likely to hear that two people are *soul mates* than *one heart and one soul*. The heart and soul are thought of as the centre of human feelings, and their unity suggests a strong connection between two persons. The phraseme derives from the New Testament:

U mnoštva onih što prigriše vjeru bijaše jedno srce i jedna duša. I nijedan od njih nije svojim zvao ništa od onoga što je imao, nego im sve bijaše zajedničko. (Dj 4, 32)

And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. (Acts 4: 32)

The Latin expression *alpha et omega* and its counterparts *alfa i omega* in Croatian and *Alpha and Omega* in English are also fully compatible in the three languages. The phraseme carries two meanings: ‘1. the beginning and the end of everything, essence; 2. an extremely important/dominant person’. In English, when somebody is regarded as ‘an influential person in a certain field, a real expert’, s/he is sometimes referred to as either Omega or Alpha. Alpha and Omega are the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet, and are an appellation of Christ in the *Book of Revelation*.

Ja sam Alfa i Omega, govori Gospodin Bog – Onaj koji jest i koji bijaše i koji dolazi, Svevladar. (Otkr 1, 8)

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. (Revelation 1: 8)

Finally, the Latin phraseme *nomine et re*, meaning 'in all ways', has its fully compatible equivalents in English and Croatian: Engl. *by word and deed* and Cr. *riječju i djelom*. The expression derives from the *Book of Sirach*, and it occurs in the Catholic prayer during the holy mass.

In addition to examples originating from the Bible, there are numerous Latin phrasemes and sayings that do not have biblical origin, and have counterparts in various languages.

An example is the Latin expression *cornix cornici oculos non effodiet* translated into Croatian as *vrana vrani očiju ne vadi*, and into English as *crow/hawks will not pick out crow's/hawks' eyes*. In English, however, the expression *dog does not eat dog*¹ (and sometimes *<there is> honour among thieves*) is much more frequently used to express that 'people who are close will not harm one another', or, in a more negative sense, 'one disreputable person will not harm other disreputable people'.

Panem et circenses, meaning 'a superficial means of appeasement', is another well-known phraseme of Latin origin that found its way both into English (*bread and circuses/games*) and Croatian (*kruha i igara*). The phraseme was originally created by the Roman satirist and poet Juvenal, who used it in his poem *Satire X*, written in the late first and early second century AD (Klaić 1983: 999). The phrase connotes frivolity that characterised the new Roman populace, which cared for cheap food and entertainment more than for its historical birthright of political involvement. In politics it is often used to describe the method of the creation of public approval, not through exemplary public policy, but through distraction and the mere satisfaction of shallow requirements of the populace (Marević 2002: 428). The phrase is also used to criticise the mass media dealing with trivial topics such as show business and celebrities rather than being informative and dealing with serious social issues.

The phraseme *inter Scyllam et Charibdim*, meaning 'having to choose between two evils', derives from Greek mythology where Scylla and Charybdis denote mythical sea monsters (i. e. a six-headed sea monster and a whirlpool), located between Sicily and the Italian mainland. Avoiding one meant passing too close to the other. According to Homer, Odysseus had to choose between the two, and eventually opted for Scylla and lost only a few sailors, while passing by Charybdis would have meant losing the entire ship (Klaić 1983: 1239). The expression has its exact counterparts in both Croatian (*između Scile i Haribde*) and English (*between Scylla and Charybdis*), although in English the phrase

¹ In English the expression (*a case of*) *dog eat dog*, meaning 'a situation where there is a lot of competition and people are willing to harm each other in order to succeed', is also widely used.

between the devil and the deep blue sea as well as the expression *between a rock and a hard place* are more widespread. In Croatian the expression *naći se između dvaju zala* ('to find oneself between two evils') is also used. Although the phraseme derives from Greek mythology, the Latin phrase became proverbial. It was recorded by the Dutch humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam in his *Adagia*, a collection of Greek and Latin proverbs, which was compiled during the Renaissance; and even earlier by the twelfth-century French writer and theologian Walter of Châtillon in his medieval Latin epic poem *Alexandreis*: "incidit in Scyllam qui vult vitare Charybdis", 'wanting to avoid Charybdis, he runs into Scylla' (Marević 2002: 229).

Among phrasemes deriving from Roman law and Latin legal terminology probably the most prominent is *vis maior*, meaning 'chance occurrence, unavoidable accident'. As a legal term in the civil law, the expression *vis maior* represents a common clause in contracts that essentially frees temporarily both parties from liability or obligation when an unexpected circumstance, such as a war or a riot, or an event caused by natural forces beyond human control (in legal terminology known as *act of God*), such as a flood or an earthquake, takes place (Romac 1992: 632; Pravni leksikon, 2007: 1748). In Croatian the expression is literally translated as *viša sila*, while in English a French expression – *force majeure* – as well as the English expression *act of God* are used both in their terminological and phraseological meaning 'superior force'.

2.1.2 Partial compatibility: full compatibility between Latin and Croatian

In Latin 'to be harmed by one's own plan to harm someone else' can be also expressed through the proverb *qui fodit fovea, incidet in eam/incidit in foveam, quam fecit*, which has the fully compatible equivalent in Croatian *tko drugomu jamu kopa, sam u nju pada* ('to fall into one's own trap'). In English this phrase of biblical origin is usually replaced with an expression from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* – *be hoist with/by one's own petard* – which carries the same proverbial meaning. The English expression differs from the expressions in the other two languages in lexical components and phraseme background.

Another English example that differs from its counterparts in Latin and Croatian is *from head to foot/toe*, meaning '1. completely, wholly; 2. real(ly), true/truly'. In both Latin and Croatian instead of the unit *foot/toe*, *heel* is used: Lat. *a capite ad calce*; Cr. *od glave do pete*. The phraseme originates from the Old Testament, and its formation was motivated by the appearance of the human body where head represents the top/beginning and heel the bottom/end.

In both Latin and Croatian the phrase *one swallow doesn't make a spring* – Lat. *una hirundo non facit ver*; Cr. *jedna lasta ne čini proljeće* – is used to express that 'a small sign that something is happening or will happen in the future must not be taken seriously, because the situation could change; one instance of an event does not necessarily indicate a trend'. In English, however, *one swallow doesn't make a summer/a summer make*. The German saying also contains *summer*, *eine Schwalbe macht noch kein Sommer*, while Italian and French varieties comprise *spring*, It. *una rondina non fa la primavera*, Fr. *une hirondelle ne fait pas le printemps*. These differences probably have to do with the geographical position of a particular country, i. e. those located in southern Europe welcome migrating swallows at the beginning of the spring season, while those located in the northern part of Europe do not witness their return till the start of the summer season. The expression was created on the basis of a remark made by Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (Marević 2002: 644):

One swallow does not a summer make, nor one fine day; similarly one day or brief time of happiness does not make a person entirely happy.

2.1.3 Partial compatibility: full compatibility between Latin and English

The Latin expression *homo proponit, sed Deus disponit* and the English *one man proposes, God disposes* differ from the Croatian counterpart *čovjek snuje, Bog određuje* in one lexical unit: in the Croatian variant *man dreams, not proposes*. The notion implying that 'people may make plans, but they cannot control the outcome of their plans' originates from the Bible, and it motivated the late medieval Catholic monk Thomas à Kempis to create the expression and use it in his work on devotion *The Imitation of Christ* (Marević 2002: 213).

Srce čovječje smišlja svoj put, ali Jahve upravlja korake njegove. (Izr 16, 9)

A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps. (Proverbs 16: 9)

The Croatian phraseme *bolje ikad nego nikad*, meaning 'it's better to do something late, than to never do it at all' differs from the expressions in the other two languages – Lat. *potius sero quam nunquam*; Engl. *better late than never* – in the component *ikad* ('ever'), which was probably used to achieve rhyme. The phrase originates from the fourth book of *History of Rome* written by the Roman historian Livy (Marević 2002: 468):

Resistance to criminal rashness comes better late than never.

2.2 Incompatibility of lexical components and phraseme background

The Latin expression *vulpes pilum mutata, non mores*, used to describe a person who is unlikely to change their (usually ill) temper, is translated into Croatian as *vuk dlaku mijenja, ćud nikada*, and into English as *a leopard cannot/doesn't change its spots*. In the Croatian phraseme *fox* (Lat. *vulpes*) is replaced with *wolf*, and *shape* (Lat. *mores*) with *temper*, resulting in 'a wolf changes its hair, but it never changes its temper'. The English counterpart differs from the expressions in the remaining two languages in lexical units (*fox* is replaced with *leopard*, and *shape* with *spots*) and the structure – in Latin and Croatian one thing can be/is changed, while the other cannot/is not. The English phrase comprises only the unchanging part. The author of the Latin saying is the Roman historian Suetonius (en.wikipedia.org), but there is a possibility that it was created on the basis of the following text from the Bible:

Može li Etiopljanin promijeniti kožu svoju? Ili leopard krzno svoje? A vi, možete li činiti dobro, navikli da zlo činite? (Jer 13, 23)

Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil. (Jeremiah 13: 23)

When something is a constant bother or annoyance to someone, in Latin it is referred to as *clavi in oculis* – a phraseme originating from the Old Testament:

Ako stanovnike zemlje ispred sebe ne potjerate, onda će oni koje od njih na životu ostavite biti trnje u vašim očima i bodljike u vašim bokovima; dosadivati će vam u zemlji u kojoj budete živjeli. (Br 33, 55)

But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell. (Numbers 33: 55)

In the Croatian translation of the Bible *nail* (Lat. *clavus*) is replaced with *thorn*, resulting in *<biti> trn u oku komu*, while in English also *eye* (Lat. *oculus*) is replaced with *flesh/side*, forming *a thorn in somebody's flesh/side*. Both nail and thorn are sharp objects, which results in associative similarity in phraseme background.

Another phraseme of biblical origin is *melior est canis vivus leone mortuo*, which implies that 'having something for certain is better than the possibility of getting something better'. Conversely to the Latin phraseme, the Croatian and English expressions employ the concept of bird, and do not compare *living* to *dead*. In the Croatian saying – *bolje vrabac u ruci nego golub na grani* – two different types of birds are compared: a *sparrow* in the hand is better/worth more than a *pigeon* on the branch. In English the number of birds is compared – *a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush*. Furthermore, the Latin and the

Croatian expressions say that something is *better* than the other thing, while the English one says that one thing is *worth* another.

3 PHRASEMES OF LATIN ORIGIN THAT ARE USED IN BOTH TRANSLATED AND UNTRANSLATED FORM IN CROATIAN (AND ENGLISH)

There is a number of phrasemes of Latin origin that are used in both the translated and untranslated, original forms in Croatian. Conversely, in English, phrasemes of Latin origin are predominantly used either in untranslated (e. g. *conditio sine qua non* or *persona non grata*) or, more frequently, in translated form. In other words, it is much more likely for calques and loanwords of Latin origin to be used in parallel in Croatian than in English.

An example is *kocka je bačena*, meaning 'events have passed a point of no return, something inevitably will happen', which is used in Croatian in both the translated and the original form *alea iacta est*. The phrase is attributed to Julius Caesar, who used it on January 10, 49 BC as he led his army across the river Rubicon in Northern Italy.² With this step he entered Italy and began his long civil war against Pompey and the Optimates (Marević 2002: 36). In English only the translated expression *the die is cast* is used.

Another phrase, which Julius Caesar used to comment on his short war with Pharnaces II of Pontus in the city of Zile, Turkey, in 47 BC (Marević, 2002: 662), is *veni vidi vici*. This phraseme is often used in Croatian in the same form, in addition to the Croatian translation *dođoh, vidjeh, pobjedih*. In English only *I came, I saw, I conquered* is used to refer to 'a fast and easy victory'.

Divide et impera is also an expression that is far more frequently used in its original form as well as in translation, *razdvoji pa (za)vladaj*, in Croatian than in English. In English the native equivalent, *divide and rule/conquer*, is almost exclusively used. In politics and sociology this maxim represents a combination of political, military and economic strategies of gaining and maintaining power by breaking up larger concentrations of power into chunks that individually have less power than the one implementing the strategy. The maxim was utilised by Caesar, Napoleon, and Catherine de' Medici (en. wikipedia.org). According to Marević (2002: 133), the phrase was first used by French king Louis XI.

² The event also gave rise to another expression with the same proverbial meaning: *cross the Rubicon*.

4 CONCLUSION

In terms of the correspondence of lexical components and phraseme background the contrastive analysis of Croatian and English phrasemes of Latin origin showed three different compatibility levels: first, a full compatibility of lexical components and phraseme background; second, a partial compatibility of lexical components and phraseme background; and third, a lack of compatibility of lexical components and phraseme background. Compatible phrases largely outnumber phrases lacking compatibility, probably due to the fact that they largely derive from the Bible, which was translated both into English and Croatian from Latin. Nevertheless, even free translations of Latin phrasemes in Croatian and English were largely modelled on Latin expressions. Smaller structural differences result from different syntactic and word-formational systems, while lexical/semantic dissimilarities derive from socio-cultural particularities.

The aim of the study was not to enquire into the frequency of the use of phrasemes, although it is worth mentioning that the frequency of their use sometimes differs to a large extent. Some phrases are commonly used in one language, while in the other they occur rarely, are confined to specific contexts, or their varieties, differing in lexical units and phraseme background, are used instead (e. g. *dog does not eat dog* versus *crows/hawks will not pick crow's/hawks' eyes*).

The findings of the present study also suggest that the parallel use of Latin phrasemes and their native equivalents is more frequent in Croatian than in English, where some phrasemes of Latin origin are used only in untranslated form, while the majority is used in translated form. As for phrasemes of biblical origin, this is probably due to the fact that the Bible was translated into English already at the beginning of the seventeenth century (cf. *King James Bible*, 1611), while into Croatian the Bible in whole was not translated until 1831. Furthermore, in Croatia Latin was the official language and used in high-status domains until the second half of the nineteenth century.

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Kontrastivno o slovenskih in italijanskih primerjalnih frazemih

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Abstract

The study focuses on the comparison of Slovenian and Italian phrasal similes within the frameworks of conceptual analysis (Fink-Arsovski 2002) and qualitative interlinguistic equivalence (Korhonen 2007); the similes were extracted from the Slovenian-Italian phraseological dictionary by D. Fabjan Bajc. The *conceptual* analysis has shown that the selected phraseological material does not cover all the concepts and that within concepts qualitative and quantitative improvements of the material can be made (e. g. by selecting more appropriate equivalents). The *qualitative interlinguistic equivalence* analysis has confirmed that the revised (more idoneous) material shows a greater correspondence between Slovenian and Italian phrasal similes: approx. 48% of all the revised phrasal similes preserve the same "image" in both languages (in the case of the unrevised D. Fabjan Bajc's phrasemes this group is smaller by approx. 10%).

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Primerjalni frazemi so eni najbolj raziskanih tipov frazemov – zaradi svoje zgradbe, pomena (njihovo funkcijo predstaviti dejavnost itn. z nekim *tertium comparationis* zaznamuje še ekspresivnost), trdnosti njihovega položaja in tudi precejšnje produktivnosti v frazeološkem sistemu mnogih jezikov (Brehmer 2009: 141–143). Primerjava namreč sodi med temeljne kognitivne poteke v dojetanju in razlaganju sveta – primerjalni frazemi kot modelne podobe kažejo na odnos ljudi oz. skupnosti ljudi do njihove življenjske realnosti, in sicer preko povezav z različno pojavnostjo, predmetno in pojmovno. Primerjalni frazemi tako do neke mere odražajo razlike med predstavami različnih, tudi bližnjih skupnosti (Kržišnik 2008: 39–40; Brehmer 2009: 143).

V pričujočem članku se posvečam prav primerjalnim frazemom v dveh sosednjih jezikovnih skupnostih, slovenski in italijanski, saj ta zgradbeni tip frazemov – kljub izjemno zanimivim lastnostim (tudi primerjalno lingvokulturološko; prim. zgoraj) in dokaj obsežni slovarski frazeološki literaturi – v tem okviru še ni bil kontrastivno obravnavan.