Expert paper

**Garden phrases as an aid to better language and culture understanding**

Georgeta Rata¹, Anica Perković², Alka Turalija², Jukić Vlado²

¹Banat’s University of Agri. Sc. and Vet. Med., Calea Aradului 119,300645 Timisoara, Romania
²Poljoprivredni fakultet, Trg Sv. Trojstva 3, 31000 Osijek, Croatia E-mail: aperkovic@pfos.hr

Abstract

This paper aims to show semantic and cultural similarities and differences in translating garden idioms from English into Croatian.

Idioms are words gathered together which become fossilized and eventually change the meaning of the words that exist.

Collocation is a type of syntagmatic relationship between words. It’s a type of construction where particular nouns, adjectives, verbs or adverbs form predictable connections with each other for example: fatal accident, golden opportunity (Sylvia Chalker & Edmund Weiner – 1994).

Idioms or phrases are said to be colloquial metaphors. They can be explained as more universal for plants are met in all cultures as representations of special characteristics. In terms of these phrases we can find a conceptual metaphor – *Man is a plant* where plant is a source domain and vice versa – *Plant is a man* where man is a source domain (Melvia is one *smart apple*, she answered all the questions on the English test correctly). Personification is here a means of metaphor. Apple as an inanimate noun possesses human’s feature of smartness.

Key words: garden phrases, aid, English, understanding

Introduction

While translating for example idiom „*bite the dust*“ its elements are not related to their basic meaning. Bite does not mean „*zagriši*“, dust is not used with the meaning „*prašina*“. Thus, in such cases the context is the overriding factor in all translation and has primacy over any rule (Peter Newmark p. 113). Idiom is important in enriching the language by introducing figures of speech, ambiguity, humour or irony indirectly expressing what is not able to do with the common language. The connotation meaning of the idiom, association of some terms (*cool as a cucumber* – *mrtav hladan*) make translation more difficult.

Material and methods

Here we should point out some translation methods. The direct translation method consists of the exact transposition of an idiom or a word from the source language to cover some defects (when the equivalent cannot be found in the foreign language, idiom is transposed without changes in the target language for the understanding of the meaning glossaries will be used). Loan translation requires the literal translation of the idiom elements. This method is used to render the meaning of an idiom. Thus “*rotten to the core*” will be translated into Croatian as *pokvaren do srţi*; “*as you sow, so shall you reap*” – *kako siješ tako šanješ*; “*an apple of discard*”- *jabuka razdora*; “*cut sth at the roots*”- *sasjeći u korišnu (onemogućiti što u začetku)*; “*the apple will not fall far from the apple tree*” – *jabuka ne pada daleko od stable*;
Transposition as an indirect method of translation presumes altering of the grammatical category of a word (group of words) without changing the phrase meaning. In the phrase “cool as a cucumber” a cucumber will not be translated by krastavac but by špricer or mrtav hladan in Croatian. In the aforesaid example we applied modulation, an indirect method of translation where changes occur at the semantic level. It affected only one of the elements of the idiom (cucumber is not translated as krastavac-noun but as mrtav hladan – adjectival phrase; “apple of someone’s eye” where apple is not translated as jabuka in the Croatian phrase but zjenica; “being the boss is not exactly a bed of roses” where a noun bed will not be translated by krevet but by the verb cvjetati or collocation med i mlijeko). Another translation indirect method whereby the situation in both source and target language remains the same but is completely different written is called equivalence. Thus the expression “great oaks from little acorns grow” taken from the book “The Concise Thesaurus of Traditional English Metaphors” (first used as a metaphor in 1635) will have its equivalent in the Croatian language, by Ivana Bendow (2006) as zrno po zrno pogaĉa; “the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence”- tude je slade.

**Results and discussion**

Here are some plant idioms distinguished by their positive and negative connotations:

**Positive connotations:**

*Cool as a cucumber* – calm and not agitated
During the exam Giselle was *as cool as a cucumber* because she knew all the answers;  
*Apple of someone’s eye* – someone’s favourite person or thing
Cindy is the apple of her mother’s eye. She always receives the nicest gift.  
*Cream of the crop* – the best of all
The three students were the cream of the crop. Their grades were outstanding.  
*Easy as apple pie* - very easy
Learning to tie your shoes is as easy as apple pie. Children can do it quickly.  
*An apple pie order* -very well organized
The Opatija conference is in apple pie order. We know exactly where to find information.  
*Hold one’s ground* – to stand up for one’s rights.
People were yelling at us to leave the meeting, but we held our ground and argued our case.

**Negative connotations:**

*Rotten to the core* - completely not good, worthless, bad
Andy is rotten to the core. He never does his work and blames everyone for his mistakes.  
*Weed out someone or something* - to remove someone or something unwanted
I am going through my magazines to weed out those I do not need to keep.  
*Beat around the bush* – to avoid answering a question, to stall
Stop beating around the bush, Peter, and answer the question. Are you sick or not?  
*Go to seed* - become unkempt, or sloppy
Because John is not cleaning his office, the area has gone to seed. It is so messy.
Taking into account all above mentioned a translator faced with creative writing has to weigh the universal, cultural and personal elements against each other (Peter Newmark, 1988).

Long-term sustainable development requires an understanding of the interaction between human activities and natural processes. That’s why the understanding of human –induced material flows and the comparison of those to natural flows is a major step toward the design and evaluation of sustainable development. Applying metaphors transfers existing knowledge and concepts to the questions under consideration.

However, talking about plant metaphors, for example roses, ones we might encounter some problems. The aforementioned plant rose induces positive connotations. Rose is, a symbol of completion, of consummate achievement and perfections (everything is coming up roses = everything is OK). The fact that rose has thorns, its beautiful fragrance and aesthetic courage, or the possibility that it may shrivel and die; all the aspects of a rose hold a connection to love which can explain intricacies of that hormonal state we call love. Love is truly a red rose . Here is the problem aforementioned: Does the red rose metaphor describe the situation when you love someone but his/her whole family objects to it? So , metaphors fail when one tries to use them in situations that are individual-specific conflicts. In some researches on a metaphor Women are plants “social value” interpreted by men is focused. Namely, women are conceptualized as flowers not as big trees, leaves or branches (Takada M. et al.). Why? The answer to the question is: because the flower features mapped onto women are perceptually enjoyable for men (beauty, softness of touch etc.)

Conclusions

Being aware of the metaphor which compares not understandable with understandable we know that it helps us to connect new information with the one already exists in our mind. This in turn, leads us to create meaning. However, we should have on our mind that the metaphor is only a simulation of reality, it does not match reality completely (aforementioned rose, woman is a flower).

Metaphors are expected to reflect our social norms. Thus, in case of some social norms changes, metaphors use is also subjected to changes.

References

Takada M., Shinokara K., Morizumi F.,Michiko S.: A Study of Metaphorical Mapping Involving Socio-Cultural Values: How Woman is Conceptualized in Japanese
http://dspace.wul.waseda.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/2065
270 Madison Ave, New York