

GRAMMATICAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN TRANSLATION OF AMERICAN ENGLISH PAREMIOLOGICAL UNITS

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Abstract. This article presents the findings of a research on the usage of grammatical transformations in translation of American English paremiological units (PUs) into the Russian and Spanish languages. Our purpose was to investigate the frequency of the application of particular transformations and compare and contrast the results depending on the target language. At the baseline we suggest a hypothesis that direct translation is going to be the most frequently used type of grammatical transformations in translation of American PUs to Spanish language, while the percentage of the use of this transformation in Russian translations is going to be considerably lower. The analysis results totally proved our hypothesis. Direct translation was encountered in 16% of Spanish translations of American English PUs, while only 5% of PUs were translated into Russian language using this transformation. The study also found that transposition is the most frequently used in translation to the Russian language (22%), which is explained by the fact that in English the word order in the sentences is fixed, while in the Russian language it is free. Such grammatical transformations as substitution of passive construction by active and substitution of the part of speech were found only in Russian translations and the percentage of their usage is quite low (3% and 2% respectively). The received data provide a means of identifying translation features that both languages have in common as well as determining the way the language difference affects the choice of translation transformations. A working model of translation of American English PUs to different languages can be developed on the basis of those results.

Keywords: paremiological unit, grammatical transformation, direct translation, transposition, sentence fragmentation.

1. Introduction

“In order to carry out the high-quality translation of foreign works, while maintaining and passing the whole sense, founded by the author, it is necessary not only to be fluent in the mother tongue and the language of the translated work, but also to have some knowledge about the culture of the people, to which this work belongs.” [1: 32]. Phraseology makes images connected with the mentality of a nation, with religion, rituals, mythology, lifestyle, folklore, world, nature and weather learning styles and stereotypes [2: 62]. Translating proverbs is a complex process in which lexical, structural and conceptual domains are involved simultaneously. The translator should be aware of various aspects of these dominant implicatures in rendering proverbial units. Idioms belong to the category of culturally-determined lexical units and are thus an obvious source of non-equivalence which causes difficulties in the translation process. According to J.C. Catford, equivalence can't be accomplished, if the target language doesn't provide the lexical substitutes. Taking into account J.C. Catford's remark, proverbs are idiomatic and this makes them “idiosyncratic elements which are culturally bound to a specific language” [3:38].

In such cases when the closest equivalents in both languages cannot be reached, the translator tries to arrive at particular circumstance and achieve an appropriate equivalent. B. Hatim and I. Mason, J.C. Catford believe that there is a need to arrive at the adequacy of given translation procedures especially in rendering metaphorical expressions. C. Nord held a functional approach to translation proverbs and cultural elements of SL which is pragmatically motivated by the "purpose of the intercultural communication" [4: 9]. A. Duff noted that if these expressions have no equivalents in TL, the translator may approach to TL equivalents as follows:

1. Literal translation;
2. Original word in inverted commas;
3. Close equivalents;
4. Non- idiomatic translation.

Finally, A. Duff emphasized that if there is not an appropriate equivalent in target language, the translator should not force it into the translation [5:38].

Spanish scholar Isabel Negro Alousque distinguishes three techniques used in the translation of the PUs:

1. Literal translation;
2. Substitution and adaptation;
3. Periphrasis or explication [6].

Russian scholar A.V. Fedorov distinguishes 3 ways of translating PUs:

- 1) Literal translation
- 2) Use of translation transformations
- 3) Use of the PUs existing in the target language, which convey the same meaning [7: 232].

The adequacy of the translation is always connected with the skills of a competent statement of the translation problem and the ability to make the necessary transformational translation [8: 448]. The aim of this research is to study the frequency of the usage of grammatical transformations in translation of American English PUs into the Russian and Spanish languages.

1. Materials And Methods

B. Franklin's "Poor Richard's Almanac" served as a source of the American English PUs. This piece of work is truly outstanding in connection with the fact that it contains more than 500 proverbs, and at least one fourth of them are still in the active vocabulary of native speakers of the USA.

As a result of the investigation of Russian translations of «Poor Richard's Almanac»'s PUs, 250 most popular proverbs were selected for the analysis. The full translation of the Almanac into the Russian language was unavailable, because it was only made once in the 19th century and never reprinted since then. Therefore, the Russian equivalents of the PUs were collected from various sources, including dictionaries, encyclopedias, academic online resources as well as aphorisms and proverbs collections.

The selection of the Spanish translations of the "Poor Richard's Almanac"'s PUs was facilitated due to the availability of the full translation of the work, made by Carl van Doren and published in Mexico in 1942. As a part of the study 300 most popular PUs were chosen from the Almanac for the analysis of their Spanish translations.

At the beginning of the investigation we put forward a hypothesis that direct translation is going to be the most frequently used type of grammatical transformations in translation of American PUs to Spanish language, while the percentage of the use of this transformation in Russian translations is going to be considerably lower. Our hypothesis is based on the fact that American English and Spanish language grammatical and lexical systems have a lot in common, and therefore in the majority of cases the translator would be able to find the full equivalent of the PUs in the Spanish language, or translate it word –by –word and be sure that the target language readers would be able to understand it as its aphoristic character stays preserved.

Besides hypothetical – deductive method described above, comparative-contrastive analysis of the PUs of the American English language and their translations, the statistical method, generalization, linguistic observation and description are among the other methods used in this research.

2. Results And Discussion

As an outcome of our study 7 types of grammatical transformations, used in the translation of American English PUs were found, 5 of which were detected in both Spanish and Russian translations, while 2 more were utilized only in Russian translations of the PUs. The more detailed description of each type is presented below.

1) Direct translation of PUs (happens when the syntactic structure of the source language is transformed into a similar structure of the target language)

Russian (14 examples – 5%)

English: One to – day is worth two to – morrows.

Russian: Odno segodnya stoit dvuh zavtra [9: 556].

Spanish (48 examples – 16%)

English: Tis easier to prevent bad habits than to break them.

Spanish: Es más fácil prevenir los malos hábitos que terminarlos.

In these examples the use of direct translation makes it possible to reproduce the aphoristic character, syntactic structure and even stylistic coloring of the PU of the source text in both Russian and Spanish languages.

2) Transposition

Russian (55 examples – 22%)

English: You may delay, but time will not.

Russian: Promedlit' mozhete vy, no ne vremya [9: 789].

By putting the subject 'vy' at the end of the phrase, the translator not only stresses the importance of this word, but also puts it closer to the word 'vremya' to which it is opposed in the PU. This allows translator to make the proverb sound more aphoristic and makes it meaning deeper.

The use of transposition was found to be the most frequently used type of grammatical transformations in translation of PUs from English into Russian language. This is possibly due to the different character of the word order systems of the two languages.

Spanish (36 examples – 12%)

English: At the working man's house hunger looks in but dares not enter.

Spanish: El hambre pasa por delante de la casa del hombre laborioso, pero no se atreve a entrar en ella.

In this example the use of the transposition in the first part of the PU in its translation to Spanish language is found. In the source language text Franklin puts the verb at the end of the phrase in order to make the opposition, expressed by the conjunction 'but' and the verb 'dares' following it, stronger. The translator changes the word order and moves the verb 'pasa' away from the second part of the proverb to which it is opposed to. In this situation the use of transposition seems to be quite inappropriate as it deteriorates the correct perception of the PU.

3) The substitution of the singular by the plural or vice versa

Russian (26 examples – 10%)

English: Plough deep, while Sluggards sleep; And you shall have Corn, to sell and to keep.

Russian: Pashi zemlyu gluboko, poka spit lezheboka, i u tebya budet dostatochno zerna i dlya prodazhi, i dlya sebya [9:733].

As we can see, the plural English noun is substituted in translation by its singular analogue.

Spanish (24 examples – 8%)

English: To whom thy secret thou dost tell, To him thy freedom thou dost sell.

Spanish: A quein no le cuenta sus secretos, a ese no le venda su libertad.

In this example the substitution of the singular noun of the source text by its plural equivalent in the target language text is supposed to be done in order to make the meaning of the PU more general and to underline this way its aphoristic character.

4) The substitution of the verb tense category

Russian (6 examples – 2%)

English: A Brother may not be a Friend, but a Friend will always be a Brother.

Russian: Brat mozhet ne byt' drugom, no drug – vseгда brat [10: 416].

Here we can observe the substitution of the verb tense category. In an American proverb the verb in the future tense is translated by the verb in the present tense. This can be explained by the translators' preference to eliminate the use of the auxiliary verb 'budet' in order to make the PU shorter and to underline this way its aphoristic character.

Spanish (15 examples – 5%)

English: What e'er's begun in anger, ends in shame.

Spanish: Lo que empieza en cólera acaba en vergüenza.

In this example the same tendency to use present simple is observed. The difference is that in the PU of the source language the verb is in Present Perfect tense, not future simple like it was in the previous example. Nevertheless, the verb tense category is not that important for the meaning of the whole expression, moreover, in the second part of the PU the verb is used in the present simple tense. Therefore, it seems to be absolutely appropriate to use present simple with both verbs in translation, again it is translator's preference to use this transformation the goal of which to make the proverb more aphoristic, make it sound more natural to the target language readers.

5) Sentence fragmentation:

Russian (7 examples – 2%)

English: A temperate Diet arms the Body against all external Accidents; so that they are not so easily hurt by Heat, Cold or Labour.

Russian: Surovaya dieta vooruzhaet organizm protiv vseh vneshnih nepriyatnostej. Pohtomu on ne tak legko poddaetsya zhare, holodu i ustalosti [11:613].

It can be observed that the American proverb expressed by the complex sentence in the original is conveyed by the structure consisting of two simple sentences in the target language. This type of transformation, although it makes the understanding of the proverb easier, is thought to be quite unnecessary in this situation because it makes the PU in some way lose its aphoristic character. Though the proverb is quite long, it still should be perceived as a whole, and should not be divided into parts. The same thing goes for the sentence fragmentation used in translation to the Spanish language.

Spanish (9 examples – 3%)

English: Up, Sluggard, and waste not life; in the grave will be sleeping enough.

Spanish: ¡Arriba, haragán! ¡No desperdicies la vida! Ya dormirás bastante en la sepultura.

6) The substitution of the passive construction by active (10 examples – 3%)

In the following example the passive construction in the source language text is constituted by active construction in the text of the target language. In this case it can possibly be explained by the peculiarity of Russian language. Passive constructions are used in Russian less frequently than in English language, and therefore the translator prefers to use active construction to make the PU sounds more natural in the target language and in order not to destroy their aphoristic character.

English: Serving God is doing good to man, but praying is thought an easier service, and therefore more generally chosen.

Russian: Sluzhit' Bogu – znachit delat' dobro, no mnogie schitayut, chto molitva – ehto bolee legkij vid sluzheniya, i predpochitayut imenno ee [10: 435].

7) The substitution of the part of speech (6 examples – 2%)

English: He's the best physician that knows the worthlessness of the most medicines.

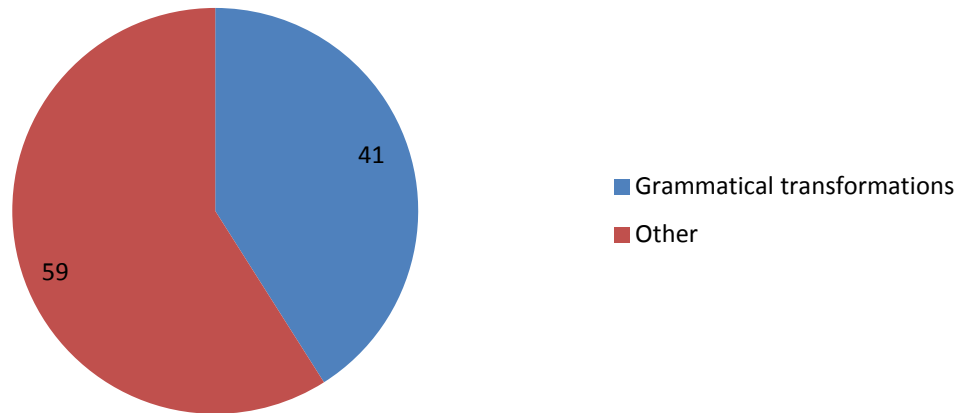
Russian: CHem luchshe vrach, tem bol'she on znaet bespoleznyh lekarstv [9: 950].

In this example the substitution of the source language noun by the adjective in the target text is observed. In order to make this transformation sound appropriate the translator also has to change the syntactic structure of the English proverb. The direct translation would have been "On luchshij vrach, kto znaet bespoleznost' bol'shinstva lekarstv". There is no significant difference in the aphoristic character of the PUs in both languages, it is just the choice of the translator, who sees it more appropriate in the following context. The encounter of a relatively small number of the proverbs translated by this method can partly be explained by the fact that the majority of proverbs were translated into Russian using meaning development method, which in fact does in some cases include the substitution of the part of speech with the only difference of using lexically non - equivalent words, having only some meaning similarity with the source text word.

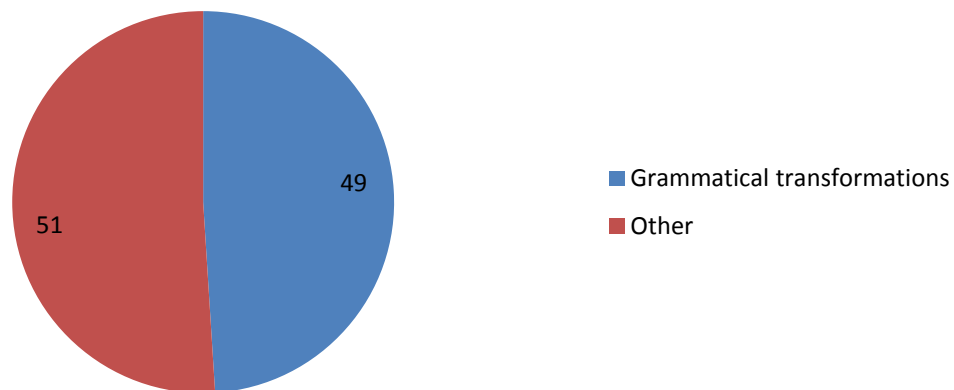
3. Summary

For the better apprehension of the results obtained in the course of this investigation, they are presented in the form of charts:

Translation of paremiological units into the Russian language

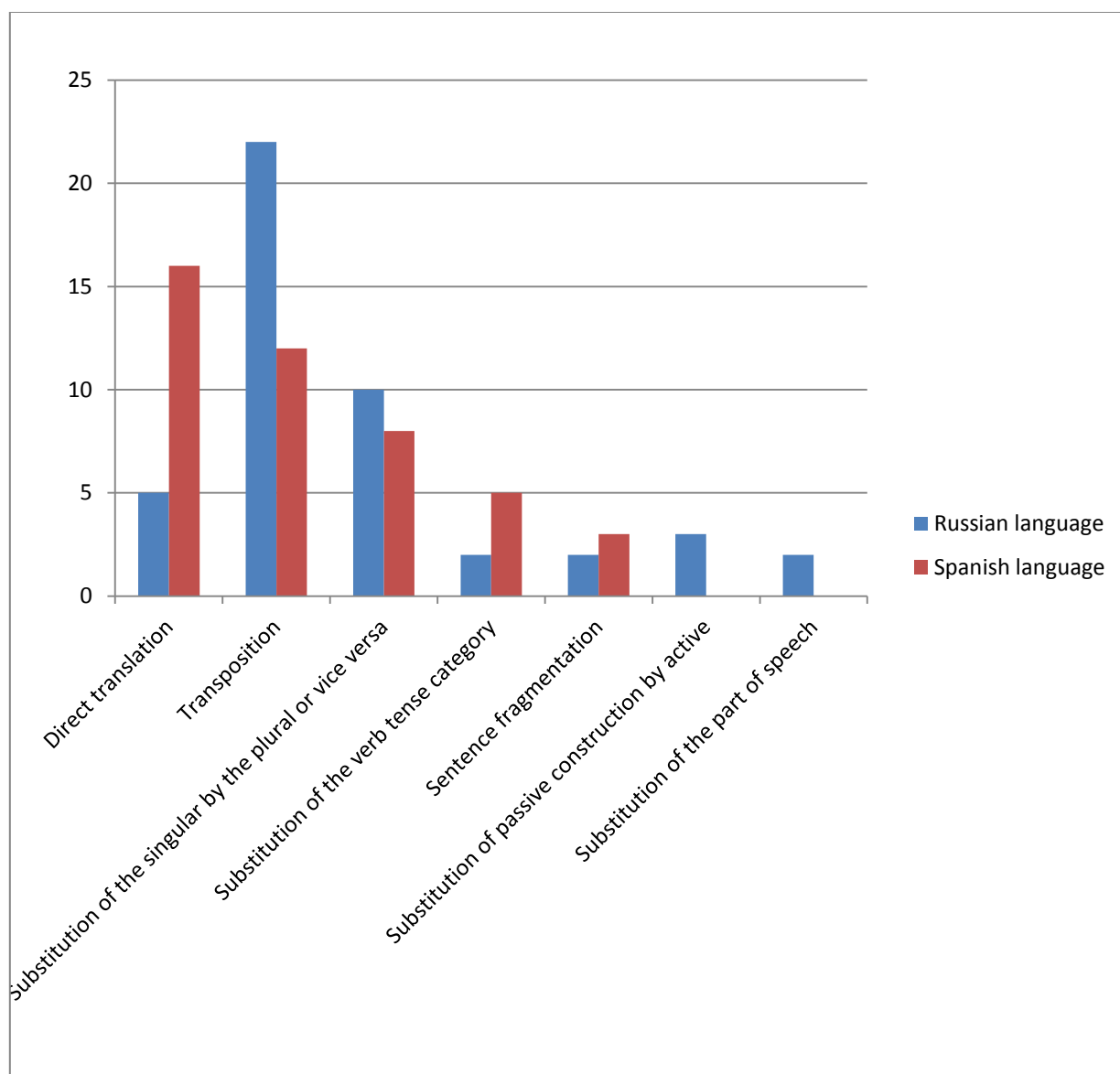


Translation of paremiological units into the Spanish language



As we can see from the charts above, grammatical transformations are more frequently used in Spanish translations of the PUs in comparison to the Russian ones. This can be attributed to the fact that American English and Spanish languages and cultures have much more in common than with Russian language and culture. As a result, in order to make the PU understandable to the Spanish language reader it is enough for the translator to make only grammatical changes, without affecting the semantics of the PU.

4. Grammatical transformations



The data presented in the chart above shows that the most commonly used type of the grammatical transformation in translation to the Spanish language is direct translation (16%), while in the Russian language it is used only in 5% of translations. This information totally proves the hypothesis developed at the beginning of the research. The study also found that transposition is the most frequently used in translation to the Russian language, which is explained by the fact that in English the word order in the sentence is fixed, while in the Russian language it is free.

Such grammatical transformations as substitution of passive construction by active and substitution of the part of speech were encountered only in Russian translations and the percentage of their usage is quite low (3% and 2% respectively).

5. Conclusion

The data obtained by means of the comparative-contrastive analysis of the usage of grammatical transformations in translation of American English PUs into the Russian and Spanish languages provide a means of identifying translation features that both languages have in common as well as determining the way the language difference affects the choice of translation transformations. A working model of translation of American English PUs to different languages can be developed on the basis of those results. Meanwhile, the familiarization with the American English paremiological and phraseological units as well as their translations can be very useful at the ESL lessons as the researches show that “the use of foreign literature at the lessons of foreign language while teaching phraseological units shows a high result of pupils’ knowledge” [12,13].

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