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A Comparative Review of the False Friends (Macedonian-French and Macedonian – German)

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the phenomenon of false friends in Macedonian and respectively in French and German language. The object of the analysis are non-ambiguous and polysemic terms that have false friend in the above mentioned languages. We analyze also an opposite linguistic phenomenon, that of true friends, so that the work finishes with two parallel tables presenting a macedonian term and its false friend, followed by the adequate equivalent in both French and German.

Key words: false friends; Macedonian; French; German; translation

1. Introduction

The macedonian term *лажни парови* (false pairs) is used as an equivalent for the English term *false friends*, the French term *faux amis* and the German term *falsche Freunde*. These words are named *false friends* because like the Trojan horse they have a seducing form and offer fast and easy solutions for the translator. But instead of benefit, they can make the translator commit some mistakes that will introduce confusion in the whole text. For first time this term was used by [6] in their work entitled “Les faux amis ou les trahisons du vocabulaire anglais – conseils aux traducteurs”.

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Trying to define this term precisely [8] says that false friends are “terms from different languages, and of same origin that are similar or close enough, taken into consideration the structure of these languages, so that they can be considered as equivalents even though they have different meaning”.

This definition considers only the non-ambiguous terms. The polysemy makes this phenomenon even more complex, because two different terms from one language can be equivalent to only one term of the other comparing language. So, if meant the one word, and taken the other, will appear mistake, due to the false friends. Those are named partial false friend. For example, the term *peçenm* is used in Macedonian to designate both the *recipe* and the *prescription*, whereas in French there are two terms: *recette* designating a *recipe (of cuisine)* and *ordonnance* designating a *prescription (medical)*. Or the Macedonian word *патент* can designate both the *patent* and the *zipper*, whereas in German there are two terms: *Patent* designating a *patent (invention, protected by patent law)* and *Reißverschluss* designating a *zipper (zip fastener)*.

2. Some relevant aspects on the false friends

Etymologically, the false friend's phenomenon is due to the term borrowing between the languages. Thus, one term used in one language, was borrowed in another language, but the meaning that the term acquired in the second language started developing in another direction. The most words in Macedonian, French and German don't have common etymology, thus the appearance of the false friends is due to some terms in the Macedonian language, which have Latin origin or which were borrowed from the English or some of the Roman languages. Such false friends are, for example the Macedonian term *мануфестација* and the French term *manifestation*. Besides the meaning of *presenting, showing*, this Macedonian terms is used also to designate a *celebration*, while the term *manifestation* in French is used to designate a *protest, a demonstration*. A similar Macedonian - French false pair make the terms *cmamyc* and *statut*. The French term is polysemic and designates a certain position, while the meant document is named *statute*.

For the Macedonian translator the term *radiation* represents also a trap, because in Macedonian the term *paдyjaциja* designates a radioactive radiation, while in French this term is used in the legal language to designate *annulment*. Another example is the French term *minute* designating a time measure and an official document, or *campagne* designating both *village* and *campaign*.

Such appearances are also present in the language pair Macedonian-German. For example the German term *Farbe* refers both to the *color* and the *painting*, while in Macedonian there are differences between *фapбa*, as a *coloring substance* and *бoja (color)*. Similar is the situation with the word *нaмyпa* in Macedonian, which can be used on one hand as part of the phrase *плaкa вo нaмyпa*, which means that somebody pays in kind, on the other hand the nature, i.e. everything that exists without human intervention. The German Term *Natur* designates the nature indeed, but does not refer to the way of paying, because there is another German word used in this context: *in Naturallien bezahlen (to pay in kind)*.

These phenomena are object of analysis both in terminology and translational studies. They are very often presented in monolingual or bilingual dictionaries. Unfortunately, there are no Macedonian works presenting systematically the Macedonian - French or the Macedonian - German false friends.

The contribution of the dictionaries in avoiding this kind of language traps could be huge, because the dictionaries present only the form similarity and explain and distinguish the different meanings. The biggest challenge for the translator is to recognize the false friends and then by consulting dictionary resources to get acquainted with their correct use. In order to recognize the false friends the translator has to know both languages very well, to possess long translating experience, and then to consult properly the vocabulary resources.

A true friend of the translator is the context. For example, in the sentence: "*Le tribunal de première instance de l'Union Européenne a donné raison au quotidien britannique "The Guardian" qui avait porté plainte contre le refus du Conseil des ministres des Quinze de lui communiquer les minutes de ses délibérations*" [9] there are two terms that establish false friends with the Macedonian term *комуницира*: *communiquer* and *minute*. The terms *комуницира* (*to speak*) and *минута* (*period of time*) exist also in Macedonian, but still, they cannot be used in each context because the whole sentence would not have any sense. In fact, one cannot say **да ги комуницира минутите од своите советувања*. In this case the narrow context indicates that the translator should consult a dictionary in order to translate the term properly: "*Првостепениот суд на Европската Унија му даде за право на британскиот дневен весник "The Guardian" кој поднесе тужба поради одбивањето на Советот на министри на петнаесетте земји-членки да му ги достави записниците од своите состаноци*".

Here is one more example of how the: „*Dieser Artikel soll als Überblick dienen und Antworten auf die häufigsten Fragen von Eltern und anderen Erziehungsberechtigten geben. Viele Bereiche sind auch für Lehrer und Lehrerinnen bzw. EDV-Verantwortliche an Schulen interessant*" [13]. The term *Artikel* can designate in German: *an essay, an article (in grammar), an article (in the law) and a store item*. The Macedonian word *артикл* corresponds only with the last meaning named. Thus, they are considered as false friends. The context is, what disambiguates the polysemy of the German word *Artikel*, and does not allow a false interpretation. So, the correct translation of this passage would be as following: *Оваа статија ќе служи како преглед и ќе одговара на најчесто поставуваните прашања од страна на родителите и останатите старатели. Многу области се интересни и за наставниците, односно за лицата одговорни за ЕДВ (електронска обработка на информациите) во училиштата*.

An opposite phenomenon is the true friend's phenomenon, i.e. words similar not only by form, but also by meaning in the different languages. Because of the tendency towards the terms standardization in the scientific and technical field, there are a lot of such words. They are called "internationalisms" and their origin is mostly from Greek or Latin language, like: *jurisdiction*, (mkd. *јурисдикција*, dt. *Jurisdiktion*, fr. *jurisdiction*), *decree* (mkd. *декрет*, dt. *Dekret*, fr. *Décret*), *phenomenon* (mk. *Феномен*, dt. *Phänomen*, fr. *Phénomène*) etc. but also from English language: *marketing* (mkd. *маркетинг*, dt. *Marketing*, fr. *Marketing*), *informatics* (mkd. *информатика*, dt. *Informatik*, fr. *informatique*) etc.

3. A comparative review of the false friends (Macedonian-Fench and Macedonian – German)

Hereinafter are given two tables (Table 1 and Table 2) presenting some false friends between Macedonian and French, as well as between Macedonian and German and in Macedonian followed by their adequate equivalents in German and French respectively in the third column.

Table 1: presenting some false friends between Macedonian and German

<i>Macedonian expression</i>	<i>the false friend in German</i>	<i>the correct equivalent in German</i>
академик	Akademiker	Akademienmitglied, Mitglied der Akademie
амбуланта	Ambulanz	Praxis
апсолвент	Absolvent	Student, nach Ablauf der Studienzeit, noch ohne Diplom
афирмира	affirmieren	berühmt, bekannt machen
биро	Büro	Schreibtisch
брод	Brot	Schiff
бунт	Bunt	Aufstand
винт	Wind	Schraube
град	Grad	Hagel / Stadt
гроб	grob	Grab
да	da	ja
дом	Dom	Heim / Zuhause
јака	Jacke	Kragen
јогурт	Joghurt	Joghurtgetränk, Ayran
кафе	Cafè	Kaffee
колоквиум	Kolloquium	Vorprüfung, Prüfung an Fakultäten, Hochschulen
конкурс	Konkurs	Ausschreibung
корзо	Korso	Treffpunkt zum abendlichen Spaziergang, Promenade
либе	Liebe	Geliebte/r
мал	Mal	Klein
паса	passen	Weiden
пат	Patt	mal / Weg
помада	Pomade	Hautcreme
регал	Regal	Schrank
ум	um	Verstand
цветче	Zwetsche	Blümchen
цигла	Ziegel	Klinker

<i>цимер</i>	<i>Zimmer</i>	<i>Kommilitone , Mitbewohner</i>
<i>цитрон</i>	<i>Zitrone</i>	<i>Grapefruit, Pampelmuse</i>
<i>шточ</i>	<i>Stoß</i>	<i>Witz</i>

Table 1: presenting some false friends between Macedonian and French

<i>Macedonian expression</i>	<i>the false friend in French</i>	<i>the correct equivalent in French</i>
<i>артист</i>	<i>artiste</i>	<i>acteur</i>
<i>афирмира</i>	<i>affirmer</i>	<i>promouvoir</i>
<i>батерија</i>	<i>batterie</i>	<i>pile</i>
<i>игнорира</i>	<i>ignorer</i>	<i>ne pas tenir compte de</i>
<i>конкурс</i>	<i>concours</i>	<i>offre d'emploi</i>
<i>локација</i>	<i>location</i>	<i>emplacement</i>
<i>мал</i>	<i>mal</i>	<i>petit</i>
<i>манифестација</i>	<i>manifestation</i>	<i>démonstration populaire</i>
<i>парола</i>	<i>parole</i>	<i>slogan</i>
<i>полтрон</i>	<i>poltron</i>	<i>flagorneur</i>
<i>скала</i>	<i>escale</i>	<i>échelle</i>
<i>функционер</i>	<i>fonctionnaire</i>	<i>officiel</i>
<i>фраза</i>	<i>phrase</i>	<i>expression</i>
<i>цитрон</i>	<i>citron</i>	<i>pamplemousse</i>

4. Conclusion

False friends are widely analyzed in contrast linguistics, in lexicology and, of course, in etymology. The research of false friends is particularly helpful for young and non-experienced translators. The false friend can easily cause false translation, which can perturb the communication between the author and the reader or can bring serious misunderstandings. On the other hand, the awareness about the existence of such word pairs has to be built during the educational process. Pointing out the false friends can be very useful and at the same time interesting for the students.

The general analysis that we undertook led us to the conclusion that there is a certain number of false friends established between both language pairs Macedonian-German and Macedonian, even though French and German are non-Slavic languages and false friends are usually frequent in languages of the same origin. The reasons for this are that lots of them have etymologically Latin or Greek roots.

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