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Rendering Imagery in the Semantic Structure of Stable Terminological Word Combinations

R. E. Shkilev¹, E. V. Samsonova², I. D. Kazanchuk³, M. M. Isupova⁴

^{1, 2}*Kazan Federal University, Russia. Email: schkilef@gmail.com*

³*Professor, Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs, Ukraine,*

⁴*Kutafin Moscow State Law University (MSAL), Russia.*

Corresponding email: Email: schkilef@gmail.com

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Abstract

The article focuses on the peculiarities of rendering the meaning of compound terms in the translation process with the help of word combinations without shift of meaning in the semantic structure. The research is based on the examples from English and Russian legal terminology. Taking into account the fact that legal terms form a part of literary language the classification is based on principles accepted and used in Phraseology. The examples analyzed in this paper reveal the difference between English and Russian compound terms in the lexical and grammatical structure. The author arrives at a conclusion that the semantic shift in legal terminology has an anthropocentric orientation. The dependence of the nature of the semantic shift on certain features of national cultures is shown. The results of the investigation provide for the material for the study of the features of the corresponding segment of linguistic worldview.

Keywords: compound term, stable terminological word combination, imagery, semantic shift, equivalence, legal terminology.

1. Introduction

Terminology as a branch of Linguistics has a rich history and many terminological systems have been already described in detail. However, the authors of this paper believe that the comparative study of terminology of languages with different structure preserves its actuality. The scholars speak about the importance of the study of motivation of terms, thus referring to "motivation terminology" as a special field of linguistic research. In Russian linguistics the problems of motivation of terms are studied by E. Steingart (Steingart 2006).

The other important area for investigation in terminology is Cognitive Terminology. Compound terms with an imaginative rethinking in the semantic structure resemble phraseological units in many ways. This resemblance enables the scholars to use for the description of compound terms the principles accepted in research in Phraseology. These

principles are outlined in the introduction to the Russian-English Phraseological Dictionary by Elena Arsenyeva (Arsenyeva 1999, 8).

We applied to the classification of stable terminological word combinations into full and partial equivalents, analogues (i.e. having a different imagery in the semantic structure) and word combinations having no equivalents in the other language in our previous works (Shkilev 2010). This approach has its disadvantages (for example, it is difficult to distinguish between the cases of descriptive translation and the translation by free word combinations), but it shows the “idiomatic character” of those terminological systems which are the most deeply integrated into literary language (Akar, 2016; Byker & Marquardt, 2016; Korableva and Kalimullina, 2016; Husnutdinov et al., 2016 a).

The present article deals with the practical and theoretical aspects of the translation of the terms, in which the imagery does not find any reflection in the target language (Korableva and Kalimullina, 2014; Gabidullina, 2014; Gabidullina and Sattarova, 2015). The cases of the translation from English into Russian and from Russian into English are under study. In this article ideas expressed in the previous publications are being developed.

2. Materials and methods

Table 1 represents the most interesting examples of comparing English and Russian compound legal terms:

Table 1. The most interesting examples of comparing English and Russian compound legal terms

English word combination	Russian translation and its word-for-word meaning	Commentary
Civilly dead	Lishennyi grazhdanskikh prav (deprived of civil rights)	In the Russian language the term is a three-component word combination. There is no reference to death in the to semantic structure
To cross the aisle	Golosovat protiv svoey partii (to vote against one’s own party)	Rendering imagery is impossible in Russian as there is no tradition for the representatives of the opposing parties to sit facing each other
To die seized	Umeret, ostaviv imushestvo pod arestom (to die with the property having been left under arrest)	The English term is compact because the norms of the language allow to use lexeme “seized” in figurative meaning
Slim evidence	Nesusheestvuyushee dokazatelstvo (non-existent evidence)	The grammatical structure in two languages is similar. The source of semantic shift is the human world.
Father of the Bar	Starshyi barrister (senior barrister)	The source of the imagery is the world of human relations

To drop a right	Otkazatsya ot prava (to refuse from a right)	The source of imagery is the world of physical states. In Russian the verb “to drop” is not used in legal meaning.
To find bail	Ukazat poruchitelya (to indicate a guarantor)	The English variant nominates the action directly while the Russian language shows a tendency for a more bookish variant.
Slap-on-the-wrist fine	Shtraf na meste soversheniy pavonarshenya (fine at the scene of breaking the law)	Metonymy is the basis for the English term, the Russian variant is represented by the definition.
Fidelity insurance	Strahovaniye na sluchai narusheniya obyazatelstva (insurance in case of breaking the engagement)	The source of the shift is the world of human relations. The image does not exist in the linguistic worldview of the speakers of Russian
Employment (job) freeze	Vremennoye uvolneniye (leaving the job for some time/the stop of the job contract)	The norms of the Russian language do not allow the use of metonymy “freeze” in this case.
Left-handed oath	Lozhnaya prisyyaga (false oath)	There was no tradition to put the right hand on the Bible in Soviet Russia
Binding law	Imperativnaya norma (imperative norm)	The word combination vividly shows a much looser connection of judicial terminology in Russian with the common literary language
To meet a claim	Osparivat isk (to argue/debate a claim)/podgotovit vozrazheniya protiv iska (to prepare objections against a claim)	The English compound terms contains in its semantic structure a reference to a competitive nature of a trial procedure

The above-mentioned examples show that the largest group of the compound terms in this research is represented by word combinations translated into Russian by terminological collocations without a shift of meaning in their semantic structure (Molchanov et al., 2017). The shift of meaning influences the grammatical structure of compound terms. If there is no equivalent/analogous word combination the compound term is rendered by a phrase while the English variant is much more compact and occupies less space in a sentence (Magsumov, 2017; Magmusov, 2013; Husnutdinov et al., 2016 b; Akhmetshin et al., 2017; Korableva and Guseva, 2015).

Legal English has a certain number of compound terms for understanding of which background knowledge is not necessary. For example, one can easily grasp the meaning of such word combinations as slim evidence, star witness, standing rule without applying to a special dictionary. However, motivated those word combinations might seem to us the norms of the literary Russian make the use of loan translation utterly impossible.

Legal Terminology of the Russian language also has compound terms which contain a semantic shift, but their English translations have no imagery in their semantic structure

(Çalışkan, 2015; Günel, & Pehlivan, 2015; Kenna & Russell, 2015; Korableva et al., 2017a; Aydarova et al., 2017).

The compound term *zaverit kopiya* – to certify a copy the Russian verb the primary meaning of which is “to assure somebody of something by promising something or trying to persuade” is used metonymically. In English the meaning of the verb in the compound term is the main one (Ozhegov, 100; Longman, 181). Let us look at the compound term “*provodit zakony v zhizn* – to apply/enforce/to execute laws”). The primary meaning of the Russian verb is “lead” and in this word combination it has the meaning of “to achieve something”. In the English language the semantic transfer on the same basis is impossible as the verb “to lead” has a different meaning and combinability (one can lead a life, but one can not lead into life).

The word combination *snimat s sebya otvetstvenost* – to deny one’s liability/responsibility is also interesting for consideration. First of all, the Russian language does not have a special lexeme for “liability” denoting legal responsibility. The word for word meaning of the verb in the Russian compound term is “to take off” so it sounds as if you “took off your responsibility (Ozhegov, 7). In the word combination *tyazhest obvineniya* (“seriousness of an accusation”) the accusation is described as heavy (“heaviness of an accusation”) which is more expressive than serious. So here the expressive component in the semantic structure of the Russian word combination can be identified.

Discussion

The classification of set expressions into nominative and expressive has been used in research on Phraseology (Kunin 1996). We believe that one can speak about expressive functions of compound terms, at least in those terminological systems which are the closest to the common literary language (Shkilev 2013). The function of imaginative rethinking in the semantic structure of compound terms is to express additional connotations.

The problem to be discussed here is whether such language units should be treated only as part of the field of Terminology or they should be studied by Phraseology as well (Korableva et al., 2017b; Akhmetshin and Osadchy, 2015; Tarman & Chigisheva, 2017). It seems that if a compound term containing imagery in its semantic structure is able not only to nominate an object or phenomenon but to communicate expressive meaning it is of interest to both terminologists and phraseologists and should be studied by both branches of linguistics.

Conclusion

The bulk of judicial terminology of the English language has been formed many centuries ago which may be explained by the stability of the political system in Britain. Stability being the reason for the lack of serious changes accounts for a great number of compound terms with a transfer in the semantic structure. Our investigation has revealed that the transfer of images from the world of nature as well as from the human world is not typical of the legal terminology of the Russian language.

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