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## Collocational Aspects of False Friends

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As far as English and Polish are concerned false interlingual equivalence has been discussed in connection with individual lexemes (Wełna 1977; Szpila 1997; 2000) as well as phraseology (Ostaszewska 1967: 277; Szpila 2000). What has not yet been analysed is the intermediate level in the lexicon, to wit collocations (cf. Koniuszaniec 1997). A collocation is understood here as a sequence of at least two lexical items which occur habitually and are natural to a language (Cruse 1986: 40–1; Béjoint 2000: 213). A collocation is a unit in which one element (a base) requires the presence of a specific lexical item (a collocator, a collocate) to form a unit of specific meaning, in other words the base selects its collocates primarily lexically not semantically. If such a presence is obligatory and unique, the collocation is bound, in other cases it is open. Semantically, all elements of a collocation may retain their separate lexical meanings or they can to some degree lose their semantics or specialize and restrict it to the one they acquire in the collocation. Generally speaking, collocations are lexically complex units (Cruse 1986: 41) which are at the most semi-literal and allow variance to a greater or lesser extent (Fernando 1996: 33). These generally semantically transparent word combinations are differentiated from idioms but, as Fernando says (1996: 37), the unambiguous divisions of multiword combinations is impossible and the two categories – idioms and collocations – overlap greatly. The only category of idioms that forms a separate group are pure idioms, which are characterised by invariance and non-literalness.

In this connection we should discriminate between phraseological false friends and phraseological units containing false friends. By no means are they the same. Phraseological false friends do not have to, and normally they do not, contain false friends (cf. *lay an egg* – *znieść jajko*; *stew in one's own juice* – *smażyć się we własnym sosie*; *on the level* – *na poziomie*). Idioms with false friends as their constituents are for example *steal the scene*; *throw caution to the wind* and *come out of the closet*.

False friends are no exception when it comes to habitual co-occurrence with other lexical items. Their meanings can be established, as usually is the case, in free syntagmatic combinations, or their semantics can be viewed from the perspective of their occurrence in multi-word combinations. My intention is to examine the semantics of English false friends in collocations and speak of the rendition of the latter in Polish.

Collocational aspects of false friends should be clearly distinguished from collocational false friends. The latter are collocations in at least two languages with identical or similar form but different semantics. Such collocational pairs exist between English and Polish, for example *sports section* – *sekcja sportowa*; *fatal accident* – *fatalny wypadek*, and in the relatively open *cotton fabric* – *fabryka bawełny*. The semantic incompatibility results naturally from the differences between the false cognates themselves. Such pairs are analysed in the same way as phraseological units, but they are excluded from the present analysis. What is understood in this paper by collocational aspects of false friends is the actualization of the meanings of false friends in collocations as well the issue of their equivalents in Polish. Only these two aspects of English-Polish false friends are examined here. At the same time, we must remember that otherwise true equivalents may manifest collocational incompatibility, viz., they will not occur in the same collocational environment, as shown, for instance, by *kaskada* and its equivalent *cascade*, the latter of which cannot be used in \**cascades of laughter* (correct: *peals/ripples/gales of laughter*). This phenomenon, however, lies outside the scope of the present paper as well.

The lexical material for this analysis is taken from the author's *An English-Polish Dictionary of False Friends* (Szpila 2003) and *Make Friends with False Friends. Practice Book* (Szpila 2005).

The false friends collocations under examination consist of two open class lexemes only. False friends can be either the base or the collocator in a collocation, for example:

- 1) base: *vagaries of the weather; cough mixture; refuse collector; reinforced concrete,*
- 2) collocator: *dress sense; exclusive hotel; atmospheric music; Catholic beliefs.*

Very seldom does it happen that a collocation is composed of two false friends: *sex object, fashion magazine, space platform* or *lunatic asylum*.

Semantically speaking, false friends may manifest in collocations the meaning or meanings they have in free syntagmatic combinations. A characteristic of their semantics is that the collocations disambiguate their polisemous nature, although ambiguity occurs even in collocations, for example *brunette hair*, which remains relatively ambiguous due to the fact that *brunette* can mean "brown," "dark brown," "dark" or "black," in the case of skin "olive" or "brown" and in the case of eyes "brown" or "dark." Similarly, *an exclusive hotel, an ear-piercing ejaculation* and *a secret rendezvous* are ambiguous – they can mean respectively "expensive hotel" or "hotel not open to everyone," "loud discharge of semen" or "loud scream" and "secret meeting place" or "secret date." I claim, however, that the ambiguity is ruled out in such cases mostly due to the specific meaning being conveyed just by the specific habitual co-occurrence of words.

Apart from these rare cases when false friends can co-occur with one lexical item to convey either of two possible meanings, semantically, false friends are particularized in each collocation, for example: *nasal passage – staccato passage; atmospheric gases – atmospheric music; barrage of grenades – barrage of complaints; collaborate with the enemy – collaborate on a project; achieve distinction – make a distinction; eloquent proof – eloquent speech; film script – Chinese script; receive a commission – establish a commission*. Not surprisingly, collocations show both basic meanings and extended meanings, such as in the following: *transparent instructions – transparent wrapping* and *thunder storm – political storm*.

Sometimes collocations only provide further specialization of meaning of false friends, indicating the range of their use with the specific

meaning, limiting thus the collocability, for example: *a coffee canister* and *a petrol canister*. In both cases, the meaning of “metal container” is retained, the collocations only indicate the possible uses of the word. By the same token, in the open collocation *hotel/restaurant/bus/regular* etc. *patron* the base retains the main meaning “customer,” and the collocates show the number of places or characteristics which can co-occur with it. Other examples include: *motor/electric/diesel/petrol/road*, etc. *vehicle*; *broadcasting/film/radio/sound/recording/television*, etc. *studio*. In *sea/ocean voyage* (although not in *transatlantic voyage*) the collocates carry to a large extent superfluous information, although with interplanetary voyages of the present era, they may become distinctive features.

In a few cases the difference in meaning is evidenced in the grammatical behaviour of false friends manifested in collocations as well as outside them. Let us take *sanctuary*, which collocates as a base with the meaning of “protection, shelter” with the verbs *seek*, *find* and *take* as an uncountable noun: *take/seek/find sanctuary*. With the meaning “wild reserve” it is countable, so we say *wildlife/bird sanctuary*. Similarly, with *combat fatigues* and *combat fatigue*, the plural form of *fatigue* suggests the meaning “uniform,” the singular – “tiredness.”

Yet another way of indicating the different meaning of false friends in collocation is their spelling. From my material I can quote two lexemes – *catholic/Catholic* and *communion/Communion* – and the collocations in which they actualize their distinct meanings: *catholic tastes* – *Catholic beliefs* and *personal communion* – *Holy Communion*.

All the false friends in the collocations mentioned so far have their Polish full or partial equivalents. Again I do not intend to focus on them as separate units now but rather on the Polish equivalents of the collocations in which they figure. Nevertheless, reference to equivalence on the lexical level will be made in this connection as well.

We could expect to have collocational equivalents of English collocations in Polish. Although this happens not infrequently, many equivalents of English collocations are not multiword expressions at all. Among the English collocations which are rendered as single items in Polish we can enumerate: *clerical collar* – *koloratka*; *body odour* – *pot*, *seclusion cell* – *izolatka*; *light globe* – *żarówka*; *reinforced concrete* – *żelbeton*, *refuse collector* – *śmieciarz*; *rubber boot* – *gumiak*; *packing crate* – *skrzynka*; *ticket*

*collector* – *konduktor*. It is worth mentioning that among these equivalents we can notice those which are false friends themselves, such as *hall of residence* – *akademik* and *dress sense* – *gust*.

It may also happen that an English collocation has as its equivalent either a collocation or a single word: cf. *common sense* – *zdrowy rozsądek* or *rozum*, *mądrość*; *heavy goods vehicle* – *samochód ciężarowy*, *ciężarówka*.

Among collocational equivalents we notice those which share with the original English combinations the meaning of the false friend. This is due to the existence of fickle friends (Lamb 1997), that is those which are partial semantic equivalents. These form collocations which would have collocational equivalents in Polish with the same lexeme. Let us compare lexemes in such pairs as: *petrol canister* – *kanister na paliwo*; *rhythm section* – *sekcja rytmiczna*; *eye contact* – *kontakt wzrokowy*; *hotel reservation* – *rezerwacja hotelowa*; *running commentary* – *komentarz na żywo*; *police academy* – *akademia policyjna* and many others.

However, we would be mistaken to think that this happens in all cases, as there are English collocations in which the English false friend is semantically identical to its Polish false friend, but collocationally has to be translated differently. For example *recreational center* is *centrum rekreacji*, but *recreation ground* is not \**plac rekreacyjny/rekreacji* but *plac gier i zabaw*. Similarly, *cabin boy* is not \**chłopiec kabinowy* but *chłopiec okrętowy* and *premature ejaculation* is rather *przedwczesny wytrysk* and not *przedwczesna ejakulacja*. It may happen that a collocation in English is translated in two ways in Polish: one equivalent contains a false cognate, the other does not: *running commentary* – *komentarz na żywo/relacja na żywo*.

Consequently, whenever there is some semantic incompatibility between an English and Polish lexeme, this difference will surface also in collocations, which means that the false friends in question will have different renditions in the equivalent Polish collocation. By way of example, let us look at the following: *wedding reception* – *przyjęcie weselne*; *act of God* – *dopust boży*; *lunatic asylum* – *dom wariatów*; *bleak prospects* – *marne perspektywy*; *police baton* – *pałka policyjna*; *feel terror* – *odczuwać strach*; *film location* – *plan zdjęciowy*; *the opposite sex* – *płeć przeciwna*; *telephone kiosk* – *budka telefoniczna*; *election campaign* – *kampania wyborcza*.

However, false friends with totally different meanings will always show the semantic contrast in collocations, as, for example, in *barrage of grenades* (*ostrzał granatni*) and *barrage of complaints/abuse/criticism/questions* (*fala skarg/fala krytyki/potok wyzwisk/grad pytań*). And here again these examples evince a wide range of Polish renditions of one word as used in collocations.

In not so infrequent cases do we encounter English collocations containing false friends which disclose complex relations when compared to their equivalents in Polish. By way of example we can analyse the false friend *vehicle* and its Polish false equivalent *wehikuł*. Semantically these two are rarely compatible, what is more the English lexeme is translated differently in the various English collocations in which it figures. For example, *motor vehicle* is *pojazd mechaniczny*, *road vehicle* is *pojazd drogowy*, *delivery vehicle* can be *samochód dostawczy*, *heavy goods vehicle* is *samochód ciężarowy/ciężarówka*, *four-wheel-drive vehicle* can be both *pojazd/samochód z napędem na cztery koła*. *Recreational vehicle* does not have a good collocational equivalent in Polish (*samochód turystyczny?*) and must be rendered descriptively as “*samochód z częścią mieszkalną*.”

We should not overlook the fact that equivalent collocations may differ not only semantically but also usagewise. For example *cultivate land* can be translated into Polish as *kultywować ziemię*. However, the latter is marked as obsolete as the lexeme *kultywować* is itself no longer used in the meaning of “till, farm, work” and another translation should be used: *uprawiać ziemię*.

Finally, it must be emphasized that in Polish there occur collocations which reflect the influence of English. These are either used in the original form as, for example, *native speaker*, which is sometimes translated as *rodzimy użytkownik języka*; or they are adapted to the Polish language in the shape of literal translations, for example: *black box* – *czarna skrzynka*; *the shadow cabinet* – *gabinet cieni*, *exclusive interview* – *ekskluzywny wywiad*, *language acquisition* – *akwizycja języka*. The latter examples show a new lexical tendency in Polish, when lexemes expand their semantics under the influence of their hitherto false friends in English. So *language acquisition* is either *akwizycja języka* as attested in *Wielki słownik angielsko-polski* (2002) or *przyswajanie języka* as found in *The New Kościuszko Foundation Dictionary English-Polish* (2003). The

lexeme *ekskluzywny* seems to be occurring only in the above mentioned collocation and has retained the meaning of the English word. Similarly, the words *pasta* and *studio* are undergoing a semantic change (see Szpila forthcoming b). Once *akwizycja*, *ekskluzywny*, *pasta* and *studio* have assimilated the meanings of the corresponding English lexemes (*acquisition*, *pasta*, *studio*), they will no longer be counted as false cognates and consequently the collocations they form will be translated differently. We may obviously wonder to what extent these changes are due to incompetent lexicographers, linguistic indolence or the real needs of Polish language speakers. These questions, however, go beyond the scope of the paper.

False friends have many a time been discussed as a source of lexical interference either in the classroom or in practical application in the work of interpreters and translators (cf. Grosbart 1984; Pawelec 1987: 442; Kaźmierczak 1987; Häusler 1990: 447; Szpila 1997; Hejwowski 2004: 128–9). At the same time it has been observed that they are not given due attention in the process of teaching a foreign language (cf. Lamb 1997: 29) and suggestions have been offered with a view to eliminating errors induced by false friends (Szpila 1997; 2005; forthcoming a).

It stands to reason that false friends of different types cause errors at different levels and different stages of language learning and language use, so consequently, collocations containing false cognates will be problematic as well for L2 speakers. The use of collocational false friends leads to misunderstandings insofar as their meanings are distinct. Collocations with false cognates as a whole are equally tricky as their false friend constituents will manifest their treacherous nature inside as well as outside collocations. In other words, a Polish learner of English may associate an English lexeme with its Polish false equivalent and consequently produce an incorrect collocation. So, for example, *clerical collar* (*koloratka*) will become \**klerykalny kołnierz*, *regular patron* (*częsty bywalec*, *stały klient*) will be \**regularny patron* and *permanent residence* (*stały pobyt*) will become \**permanenta rezydencja*. These Polish translations may strike us as unlikely to be produced, but they are as probable as \**a photo aparat*, \**a governmental agenda* and \**sport objects*, which are authentic Polish learners' renditions of *aparat fotograficzny*, *agenda rządowa* and *obiekty sportowe* respectively.

Less likely to occur are the collocations which do not appear awkward in Polish and which could happily be and are accepted as possible though slightly odd multiword formations in Polish. As examples we can quote: *ammunition magazine* – \*magazyn amunicji; *clerical tasks* – \*zajęcia klerykalne, \*zadania klerykalne; *exclusive possession* – \*ekskluzywna posesja; *anti-abortion sentiments* – \*sentymenty antyaborcyjne. The semantic deviation from the original is immediately noticeable.

It seems justified to claim that to a large degree the correct rendition of English collocations with false cognates depends on the understanding of the latter: their polisemy as well as collocability, and the ability to find for them appropriate equivalents in Polish. Furthermore it presupposes a good knowledge of the collocational potential of Polish words so that correct and suitable collocational equivalents can be produced. But most importantly of all, it presupposes constant lexical alertness on the part of a learner with reference to false interlingual equivalence which has to be instilled in him early enough, so that any form of interference induced by false cognates at any level of language learning and in any form of use can be avoided.

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