Metaphorical Economic Terms: Problems Of Their Translation From English Into Russian

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Abstract

This article proposes a framework of studying metaphorical terms in the sphere of economics, in the context of translation difficulties lying in the base of their different perception in English and in Russian. In order to make an accurate translation it is very important to identify the types of transformations used in translation of English metaphorical terms in the field of economics, into the Russian language. The following tasks should be fulfilled in the process of research: (1) to identify semantic and pragmatic characteristics of metaphorical economic terms; (2) to define types of transformations used in translation of metaphorical economic terms. Methods of research are presupposed by the tasks mentioned before. The predominant use of such methods as componential analysis, transformational analysis, and statistical method, is determined by multi-aspect character of the subject of investigation. As it was indicated in our research, literal translation, modulation, and explicatory translation should be considered as typical methods of metaphorical economic terms rendering, and the choice of translation technique depends on various intra- and extra-linguistic factors, such as historical and cultural background, and mental picture of the world represented in source and target languages.

Keywords: Metaphorical term, transformation, literal translation, modulation, explicatory translation;

1. Introduction

Nowadays due to the development of international business partnership, translators are faced to the necessity of translating economic texts from English into Russian. English is considered to be the language of world business relationships; that is why English-Russian translation of economic terms has become one of the most topical
problems. One of the most challenging issues lies in the fact that many terms related to the sphere of economics are based on metaphorical perception of this type of human activity.

It is also very important to represent adequately the metaphorical terms existing in the sphere of economics, because of a variety of transformations. Most of problems are contained in different perception of these terms in English and Russian. As it is stated by Al-Hasnawi, “since metaphors are related to different cultural domains, this implies that the translator has to do the job of conceptual mapping on behalf of the TL reader; he has to look for a TL similar cognitive equivalence in the target culture. The more the SL and TL cultures in question conceptualize experience in a similar way, the easier the task of translation will be. But since human real-world experiences are not always similar, and metaphors record these experiences, the task of the translator becomes more difficult when translating these metaphors across languages related to different cultures” (Al-Hasnawi, 2007).

The analysis of sources related to the field of our study shows that theoretical investigation, on one hand, focuses on rendering of metaphor conceptual meaning in accordance with main rules of formal English; on the other hand, approaches are not unified. The research in this sphere should classify the main linguistic peculiarities of metaphorical economic terms and clarify the methods of their translation from English into Russian.

1. Types of metaphor and problems of translation

2.1 Procedure

In the process of economic terms translation it is necessary to take into account such characteristics of many economic terms as their metaphorical colour. Strategies of metaphoric economic terms translation, and manifold types of transformations used in the process of their translation, should be considered as an object of scientific investigation.

In order to make an accurate translation it is very important to identify the types of transformations used in translation of English metaphorical terms in the field of economics, into the Russian language. First of all, the fulfilling of the following tasks seems to be the factor of paramount importance:

- to identify semantic and pragmatic characteristics of metaphorical economic terms;
- to compile semantic classification of terms as lexical units under research;
- to define the types of transformations used in translation of metaphorical economic terms.

Methods of research are presupposed by the tasks mentioned before, and in our opinion the predominant use of such methods as componential analysis, transformational analysis, and statistical method, is determined by the complicated character of the subject of investigation.

The value of such study is founded on the growing number of terms, where metaphoric component is used in the field of economics. These types of terms are usually represented in financial newspapers or in the official documents, which are often prepared by native speakers in the USA, in European Countries, and in rapidly developed Asian countries.

There are many works written by such theorists as Komissarov V.N. (1990), Kazakova O. (2001), Newmark (2008) and Lakoff (1980, 1993), which are related to translation, on the one hand, and to the theory of metaphor – on the other hand. But at the modern stage of translation theory development, to combine both fields is one of the most challenging problems.

As a material for my investigation, I used mostly the Internet resources (http://financial-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com) and electronic dictionary ABBYY Lingvo12. In my opinion, scientific investigation in this field standing now at its starting point, will make a contribution to understanding the semantic structure of the word, to rendering of its pragmatic meaning and formation of the term, and to methods of translation of the metaphorical English terms into Russian.

2.2 Linguistic specificity of the metaphor

As it was stated by Lakoff, G. “...a metaphor, if it is not a cliché, is an act of establishing an individual world outlook, it is an act of subjective isolation... Therefore a word metaphor is narrow, subjectively enclosed, ...it imposes on the reader a subjective view of the object or phenomenon and its semantic ties” (Lakoff, 1993, p. 88).

Six types of metaphors: dead, cliché, stock, adapted, recent and original – were distinguished in many scientific papers dedicated to theoretical aspects of this phenomenon. These types were also discussed in relation to contextual factors and translation procedures. According to Newmark (2008), the purpose of metaphor is basically twofold: its
referential purpose is to describe a mental process or state, a concept, a person, an object, a quality or an action more comprehensively and concisely than is possible in literal or physical language; its pragmatic purpose, which is simultaneous, is to appeal to the senses, to interest, to clarify graphically, to please, to delight, to surprise. The first purpose is cognitive, the second one is aesthetic. Translator’s competence should provide the opportunity to hand down/perform all functions of the metaphors, even if it is the use of economic terms.

2.3. Literal translation, Modulation and Explicatory Translation as typical ways of rendering metaphorical economic terms

2.3.1. Literal translation of metaphorical economic terms

As it was indicated in our research, literal translation, modulation and explicatory translation are considered to be typical ways of metaphorical economic terms rendering

Thus, literal translation gives the possibility to maintain connotations, which are the same in English and Russian languages. See:

**White-shoe firm**

Even after she went back into the private sector to work as a lawyer at a white-shoe firm, the public sector was never far from her mind.

(http://financial-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/White-shoe+firm)

This metaphoric term denotes a company, especially a law firm, owned and run by members of the WASP elite, generally regarded as cautious and conservative. White-shoe firms typically have a blue-chip clientele, acquired over the several decades that they have been in existence. The term is believed to have been derived from the "white buck" suede Oxford shoes that were popular among certain sections of the student population at Yale and other Ivy League colleges during the 1950s. Therefore, literal translation seems to be one of possible ways (but not the most important one!) of metaphor.

2.3.2. Use of modulation in economic term translation

According to the results of our research, use of different types of modulation is the most productive and the most typical way of economic metaphors rendering. See:

**Bailout bond**

The bond swap offer is part of a €130 billion bailout package, which is expected to be taken up by around two thirds of Greek bond-holders and is likely to hit French, German and British banks.

http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/financialcrisis/9125614/Graphic-Greeces-bailout-bond-swap-explained.html

According to Financial Dictionary, bailout bond is defined as ‘debt security issued by the Resolution Funding Corporation to bail out the savings and loan associations during the financial crisis of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The bailout bonds had zero-coupon Treasury bonds backing the principal amounts, making the instruments a safe investment’. If to translate it directly there will be no clear meaning, and such term as “облигация спасения”, or “облигация финансовой помощи” is not considered to be a term, therefore according to different sentence structure of two languages this term is translated by transposition. On the other hand, it might be translated with the use of
specification, a kind of modulation, because “bailout” has two meanings, and in this case the term would accept another form, as “облигация для финансовой помощи”, but there is less meaning. However, “облигация спасения” exactly indicates that an obligation is dedicated for some kinds of financial support. “Bail out” means ‘to escape from a predicament’// “выпутываться”: this word has got some negative connotations (both stylistic and axiological) in Russian.

See also:

**Windfall profit**
In recent years, surging prices for crude oil have led to record profits for many energy companies, leading to demands from politicians to deem them as windfall profits and tax them accordingly.

**Внезапная прибыль.**
В последние годы цены на нефть повысились до рекордной ставки, после чего политики сумели получить внезапную прибыль и оплатить соответствующие налоги.

A type of transformation which is used in this case, is modulation. «Сбитый ветром» means ‘sudden money income without any effort and investment’. The term’s Russian analogue also comprises the same «внезапный», and in the process of translation it loses its metaphoric connotation. In target language it corresponds to the term which is the same semantically, but at the same time it loses its pragmatic meaning and expressiveness.

2.3.3. Explicatory translation in metaphorical economic terms rendering

There is no doubt that the mental picture of the world represented in Russian, and the same phenomenon in English language, are quite different. That is why, in order to overcome this obstacle, the use of explicatory translation is also one of the most productive ways. See:

**Cash poor**
At a time when American companies hold near record amounts of cash, many are surprisingly cash-poor at home. That doesn't mean they could suddenly run out of money to pay their bills.

Испытывающий финансовый дефицит
Когда многие американские компании разбогатели, люди из нижних слоев социума продолжали нуждаться.

It is not adequate just to translate this metaphorical set expression as “бедные деньги” and then to give an explanation in TL, therefore explicatory translation delivers the message correctly to the TL experts and guaranties a full understanding of term without any extra explanation. The necessity of explicatory translation is also obvious in such metaphorical terms as Yellow Dog Contract:

**Yellow dog contract**
In Statutory Attempts to Eliminate the Yellow Dog Contracts, which also provides an excellent historical review of these contract.

Corporate договор "Желтое обязательство"; трусливый контракт, контракт дворняжки;
В Уставе предпринимаются попытки устранить «контракт дворняжек»,
что обеспечивает отличный результат при проверке финансовой истории о этого контракта.
Незаконный контракт, заключаемый при найме между работодателем и работником, по которому последний обязуется не вступать в профсоюз, не участвовать в стачках

http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/yellow-dog-contract.html

The perception of this metaphorical expression in English and Russian languages is quite different. In the Russian language the most important seem in the structure of this word meaning is ‘a dog living outside of the house’; ‘an ownerless dog’. As opposed to that, in English language the most important component is colour implying such connotative meaning as ‘a mongrel’. There are negative connotations in both languages; but they are based on different semantic components. Explicatory translation is the only way to overcome such difference, and to prevent misunderstanding as a result of it.
2.4. Types of metaphorical terms translation: quantitative analysis

Summarizing our results it is necessary to point out that in our research we explored 100 metaphorical terms related to the sphere of economics, in accordance with the theory of transformations. It is possible to state that the most frequent transformation in the process of metaphorical terms translation is modulation (37 examples are related to this type of transformations). Explicatory translation and literal translation are also considered to be very important (the amount of examples is 29 for explicatory translation, and 29 for literal (calque) translation). The last types of metaphorical terms rendering, such as transliteration (3) and transcription (2), are not related to transformational theory.

![Chart showing the distribution of different translation methods.](chart)

3. Conclusion

When we resort to metaphor, we contrive to talk about two things at once; two different and disparate subject matters are mingled to rich and unpredictable effect. One of these subject matters is already under discussion or at least already up for consideration when a speaker resorts to metaphor in the first place. In the sphere of economic terminology, as we have stated before, different types of metaphors play their own part, and because of that they required special way of investigation.

It is obvious that the ability to understand and interpret specific information entails some knowledge, as deep as possible, about the syntactic and morphological structure of the foreign text, apart from establishing the lexical relationships among the different words relations, which will differ depending on the specific situations in which specialized texts are embedded. That is to say, the main task of the translator is to eliminate from the original text all those textual elements, which do not belong to the cultural background of the potential reader, and to produce an easy-to-understand and politically correct document.

Thus, in our scientific paper we made an attempt of description and systematic analysis of economic terminology represented in English, in relation to similar terminology in Russian language. The main ways and characteristics of metaphorical economic terms translation were analyzed on the basis of this problem importance for translator’s activity. In the process of investigation of terms specificity in general, and studying economic terms in particular, it was revealed that translation of lexical units in the sphere of economics generates some difficulties in finding the adequate equivalent.

Analyzing the process of metaphoric economic terms rendering according to ways of translation, we came to a conclusion that English metaphorical economic terms are translated into Russian mostly on the base of three methods. Modulation, literal translation, and explicatory translation were examined here as the most typical ways of metaphoric meaning rendering. However, the choice of these methods of translation depends on various extra-linguistic factors, e.g. on translators’ knowledge in the sphere of ethnic stereotypes, historical and cultural background, and conceptual picture of the world represented in SL.

Having investigated a number of figurative economic terms, we came to a conclusion that in most of cases, figurativeness of metaphoric economic terms in source language is remained in translation. Difficulties in translation of metaphorical economic terms and complicated process of finding corresponding concepts in target language are the main obstacles for inter-lingual communication in the sphere of economics. We hope that our research will enable to
avoid problems and mistakes while translating metaphorical economic terms. However, further researches aimed at the choice of the best translation strategy in the sphere of metaphorical economic terminology are required.

References