TRANSLATING HAPPINESS. ENGLISH-ROMANIAN (IN)CONGRUITIES

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Abstract The concept of happiness has never stopped exerting a tremendous fascination on humankind and there is a considerable amount of psychological, religious, philosophical, economic or practical living literature on this generous topic. Inserting this broad concept into an intercultural context, this paper investigates it in light of the translation strategies that carry the happiness-centred message across from English into Romanian. It seeks to reveal the convergence as well as the dissimilarity in the conceptualisation of happiness in these two languages. The area of inquiry is both non-literary and literary language: from the idiomatic strand of everyday language we progress to an analysis of several Shakespearean excerpts and their translations. What is highlighted therefore is the degree of conventionality, the clichés, the metaphorical tendencies and their role in shaping up folk models of representing happiness which are deeply entrenched in two similar cultural frames.

Keywords: translation strategies, metaphor, happiness, conceptualisation, idioms

Introduction

Worldwide, throughout human history and across cultures, happiness is a social and political construct that pervades humankind's evolution as a driving force, a necessity, a value, a fleeting state, a destination, a goal, an ideal, an emotion, a source of experience, an antidote, and the enumeration may go on. This plethora of roles attributable to happiness has led many scholars to shift, in the face of crises, their analytical lens to this highly controversial and ever distant concept that can be the nexus point of the society's future choices. Remaining adamant that this is an essential topic at the crossroads of many disciplines, including psychology, anthropology, sociology or philosophy, it is our purpose herein to add a further interlinguistic, and therefore intercultural, insight into this complex notion as there is enough room to dig deeper into the intricacies of interlanguage correspondences centred on this topic.

'Although the notion and expression of happiness is conceived of differently in different social and cultural contexts, are there also commonalities?' This a question already voiced by Barbara Rose Johnston (2012) from an anthropological perspective, which however matches the objective of the present study, i.e. exploring some of the similitudes and the dissimilarities the conceptualization of happiness across two languages and two cultures (English and Romanian) that may be displayed in non-literary and literary discourses. This paper joins the debate about the way in which language and thought interact and shape up cultural patterns and also highlights the challenges a translator faces when required to render a message from one language into another. It is claimed that the context, linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge are invoked and activated in order to produce reliable translations.

The first part of the paper surveys some of the most prominent and frequently recurring idioms associated with happiness in English, assembled in a corpus of 50-odd entries and further divided into several subclasses according to the appropriate translation strategy. Their translations are retrieved from Nicolescu (1993), a phraseological resource book providing Romanian translations. The second part reports on an evaluation of

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translations of the concept of 'happiness' as extracted from Shakespeare works and rendered into several Romanian versions of his plays.

Theoretical Background

Of the many problematic areas in translation, idioms cover *par excellence* a notoriously challenging field both for beginners and for professional translators. It is a topic that has attracted the interest of many scholars who have provided insights into the difficulties and common errors besetting the process of decoding and encoding when various language pairs were analyzed, e.g. English-Hungarian (Kovács 2016), English-Russian (Sadeghpour 2012), English-Farsi (Adelnia and Vahid Dastjerdi 2011), to mention only a few. No matter the language, it has been then repeatedly emphasized that idiomatic language is characterized by semantic opacity, non-compositionality and an unalterable grammatical structure, which preclude smooth interlanguage transfer.

In the traditional view, idioms are defined as a phenomenon identifiable at the linguistic level alone and comprising miscellaneous phrases such as metaphors, metonymies, sayings, binomials, phrasal verbs, grammatical collocations, similes etc. Their lack of transparency and syntactic rigidity together with their culture specificity raises obvious barriers in translation. In the cognitive linguistic view, however, idioms have been shown to rely on cognitive mechanisms such as metaphor, metonymy or conventional knowledge and their interdependence in a coherent conceptual system has already been advocated (Kövecses 2002: 200). It is this cognitive perspective on idioms that will be singled out and embraced in the analytical sections that follow hereafter.

In doing so, the theoretical foundations of the inquiry draw on Cognitive Semantics as convincingly postulated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in *Metaphors We Live By*. Their fundamental claim is that metaphor is pervasive in thought and therefore in language, it is and essential instrument in cognition and its linguistic traces are trackable both in non-literary and literary discourse. This duality is going to be examined in the selection of happiness phrases from both ordinary and poetic discourse. Taking matters further, it will be of interest how each culture in the chosen pair (English-Romanian) organizes a portion of experience and the extent to which they involve parallel everyday conventionalized constructions that testify of similar frames of mind. As for poetic discourse, it is revealed to be the province of either entirely novel or only linguistically revitalized metaphorization, through extending, questioning, elaboration, composing (Lakoff and Turner 1989: 67-72).

The cognitive perspective on language is worth being conjugated with a scrutiny of translation challenges. In discussing the felicity of the translated text, I rely on Dimitriu's (2002) survey of the two poles of a methodological classification of translations according to the fidelity criterion: author-centred/ literal/semantic/ source language and source culture oriented translation as opposed to reader-centred/ communicative/ cognitive/ target language and target culture-oriented translation. The translation terminology adopted herein is indebted to Vinay and Darbelnet's (1958) work on comparative stylistics. They defined and exemplified a series of translingual operations, accounting for direct translating procedures (loan transfer, loan translation and literal translation proper) as well as for indirect translating procedures (transposition, modulation, equivalence, adaptation, explicitation, implicitation, compensation). Narrowing down the focus of the research, it is worth mentioning that the strategies in treating idioms as a challenge in translation have been discussed at large (Baker 1992).

Finally, the corollary of the synchronization of these theoretical stepping stones is that the present endeavor is interdisciplinary in its reach and multiculturality is brought to the fore through an analytic overview of a thought-provoking language matter.

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A Survey of Happiness Idioms in Non-literary Discourse

A preliminary examination of the etymology of the central concept happiness reveals that it meant 'good fortune' as early as 1520 and 'pleasant and contented mental state' in 1590. Its base, happy, dates back to the late 14th century and is interpreted as 'lucky, favoured by fortune, being in advantageous circumstances, prosperous' or 'turning out well' and is derived from 'hap' ('chance, fortune'). These meanings are therefore central to the literal understanding of the term and are expected to surface in translation as well.

If there is a 'science of happiness', its oldest traces that have been preserved are retrievable in the ideas of the major thinkers of Antiquity living in ancient China, India and Greece - Mencius, Buddha, Socrates, and Aristotle. The former uses the PLANT metaphor (the sprouts of virtue are rejoiced and thus they cannot stop growing) to explain the concept of happiness, counterbalancing it with the OBJECT metaphor (for want of inner satisfaction, the sprouts will shrivel up) in such terms as to lay unprecedented emphasis on the role of the mind and virtue as motivating factors in the pursuit of happiness. He applies the GROWTH metaphor to man's inner self-fulfillment and expresses it in a ground-breaking claim that people are endowed with the sprouts of humanity and righteousness and have to nourish their vital force, the qi. In his teachings, Buddha pictures happiness as a state of mental equanimity or peace of mind and suggests through a dual analogy – the PATIENT metaphor and the JOURNEY metaphor – a cure and a destination and that can be arrived at if and only if the 'patient' follows a treatment based on a series of eight precepts (the Eightfold Path), including right effort, mindfulness and meditation. Mencius's optimistic view and the essence of his thoughts have not remained unparalleled: Socrates (as revealed to us by Plato) argued, veering away from metaphysical questions and inaugurating a brand-new direction in Western philosophy, that happiness is a natural goal for all humans and it is attainable through the harmonization of love, virtue and human effort. Buddha's Middle Path re-emerges in Aristotle's doctrine of the Golden Mean, resulting from the equilibrium of excesses. Happiness (*eudaimonia* in Greek), distinct from instant gratification or temporary joy, is a final end that can only be attained as a lifelong exercise of reason and virtue.

Such being the philosophical foundations that express happiness in metaphorical thought and language, one can note that it is still worth investigating and that they tend to be preserved in later reflections on the same topic. More recent research has been devoted to conceptual metaphors for happiness in English (Kövecses 1991), in Chinese (Yu 1995, 1998), and in Hungarian (Kövecses 2002).

In an ideal situation, the translator is able to use an idiom of similar meaning and form, overcoming the divide between literal and communicative translation, as well as restrictions connected to contextual meaning, register and cultural content. This is possible, in the case of happiness-centred idiomatic language, due to the prominent correspondence between English and Romanian idiomatic phrases that assign happiness an upward orientation (HAPPINESS IS UP) and its counterpart, sadness, the opposite end of the vertical scale, i.e. downward orientation (*to be down in the dumps, to be down in the mouth, my heart sinks*, etc.). Th upward orientation of happiness, which one can make sense of if one considers the universal implication that a happy person is energetic and active in a typically upright position, is consistent with the related metaphor HAPPINESS IS A FORCE, encountered both in English and in Romanian equivalent idioms. Alternatively, the cultural references in *grin like a Cheshire cat* and grin like a street-door knocker are rendered at the same idiomatic level through domestication (Venuti 2008), for the sake of naturalness and fluency:

English	Romanian
on cloud nine *on top of the world* *over the moon*	*în al nouălea cer* *în paradis* *în culmea fericirii*

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in seventh heaven *be in raptures*	
leap for joy *weep for joy*	*a sări în sus de bucurie* *a plânge de bucurie*
grin like a Cheshire cat *grin like a street-door knocker*	*a se hlizi/ a râmji ca prostul*

In order of preference, using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form is the second choice a translator is given, for which two notable correspondences are illustrated below. This strategy preserves the meaning but sacrifices the form and the overall idiomatic effect is achieved in the target language. The same HAPPINESS IS UP metaphor surfaces in the Romanian translations equivalent to English phrases that rely on different conceptual patterns, including A HAPPY PERSON IS A BEING THAT LIVES WELL. This metaphor allows the source language user to understand and express happiness in terms of a feeling of satisfaction that either a person (a king/ a boy) or, more frequently, an animal experiences when the outside surrounding world provides propitious circumstances (which are sometimes made explicit in the idioms, e.g. *happy as a pig in muck*). Similarly, the idiom *tread/ walk on air*, underlain by the metaphor HAPPINESS IS UP, is translated as *a zburda de bucurie*, capturing the source language sense via another metaphor in the target language, i.e. HAPPINESS IS A FORCE.

English	Romanian
happy as a king *happy as a sand-boy* *happy as a bird* *happy as a box of birds* *happy as a clam* *happy as a flea in a doghouse* *happy as a lark* *happy as a pig in muck* *like a dog with two tails* *have a whale of a time* *buzzing*	*(a se simţi) în al nouălea cer* *în culmea fericirii*
tread/ walk on air	*a zburda de bucurie*

When idiomatic meanings cannot be aligned (and even when they are possible, as in feel on top of the world), the available strategy is translation by paraphrase, which enables the translator to spell out the content of source language idiom for the target language user. A few examples are listed below:

English	Romanian
feel like a million dollars	*a se simţi grozav, minunat*
feel one's oats	*a fi foarte bine dispus, vessel si vioi*
feel on top of the world	*a-i surâde viaţa*
it gives me joy	*mă bucură*

English has been noted to be rich in metaphorical expressions highlighting different aspects of happiness which jointly produce a complex and polyhedral understanding of the concept of happiness (Kövecses 2002: 84-91). However, the lexicographic resources in Romanian dictionaries to date fall short of recording other such idioms and their possible

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translations, be they metaphorical in nature (e.g. *feel a glow of happiness, be in a transport of delight/joy*) or not (e.g. *happy as Larry*).

A Survey of Happiness Quotes. Translations from Shakespeare

To complement the picture of the challenges in translating happiness phrases from English into Romanian, it is worth interrogating literary translations as well. This presents the advantage of contextualizing the keyword 'happiness' (for which there are 64 excerpts retrieved automatically) and exposing the resourcefulness of both languages as well as the translators' endeavours when faced with such a daunting task. The findings have been systematized following the same hierarchy of translation choices, starting from the most felicitous (matching both form and function) to the least satisfying ones (deciding to preserve either the meaning to the detriment of form or omitting the happiness element altogether).

Happiness is recurrently used by Shakespeare in benedictions and wishes that serve the interpersonal function of language, and it is the literal meaning of the term which is anchored in well-wishing utterances. Thus, direct translation renders happiness as *fericire, bucurie, bucurii, noroc, pace* and, for the sake of emphasis or enhanced rhythmic verse structure, explicitation via pre-modification is also encountered (*sfântă bucurie, fericire multă).*

English	Romanian
'Happiness!' (Cymbeline III, 5, 1965)	*Cu bine! (Argintescu-Amza 1963)*
'So he wishes you all happiness' (Cymbeline III, 2, 1535)	*Cel ce-ţi urează numai fericire (Argintescu-Amza 1963)*
'Great happiness!' (Macbeth, I, 2, 85)	*Sfântă bucurie! (Vinea 1961)*
'Health, peace, and happiness, to my royal father!' (Henry IV, part II, IV, 5, 3124)	*Rege, părinte, sănătate, pace/ Şi fericire multă. (Leviţchi 1985)*
'All happiness unto my lord the king!' ((Henry VI, part II, III, 1, 1373)	*Urez noroc stâpânului meu rege/ Şi-i cer iertare de întârziere (Solacolu 1958)*
'Health to my sovereign, and new happiness/ added to that that am to deliver!' ((Henry IV, part II, IV, 4, 2831)	*Stăpâne, sănătate şi sporire/ Şi bucurii – ca vestea ce-o aduc! (Leviţchi 1985)*

When dealing with metaphorical language, translators strive to preserve the metaphorical thought in equally balanced linguistic expressions, as it can be noted below in the case of the ontological metaphor HAPPINESS IS MUSIC and the orientational one HAPPINESS IS UP. One can note how semantic modulation and metonymical transfer transposes *rich music tongue* into *glas adânc*, and how transposition and explicitation recast *tuned his bounty to sing happiness to him* as *întrunase lira mărinimiei ca să-i cânte lui aria fericirii*.

English	Romanian
HAPPINESS IS MUSIC	
'Ah, Juliet, if the measure of thy joy Be heap'd like mine and that thy skill be more To blazon it, then sweeten with thy breath This neighbour air, and let rich music's tongue/ Unfold the imagined happiness that both/ Receive in either by this dear encounter' (Romeo and Juliet, II, 6, 1483)	*Ah, Julieta! De-a ajuns in pisc,/ Şi dacă bucuria ştii mai bine/ S-o zugrăveşti, văzduhu-mbălsămează/ Cu răsuflarea ta, dă glas adânc/ Deplinei fericiri ce ne-mpresoară/ În ceasul legământului visat. (Teodorescu 1967)*

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'Especially he hath incurred the everlasting displeasure of the king, who had even tuned his bounty to sing happiness to him.' (All's Well That Ends Well', IV, 3, 2099)	*Mai cu seamă s-a ales cu disgraţia regelui, care-şi şi întrunase lira mărinimiei ca să-i cânte lui aria fericirii. (Frunzetti 1987)*
HAPPINESS IS UP	
'This throne, this Fortune, and this hill, methinks/ With one man beckon'd from the rest below/ Bowing his head against the sleepy mount/ To climb his happiness, would be well express'd/ In our condition' (Timon of Athens, I, 1, 90)	*Fortuna, tronul, muntele şi omul/ Chemat din gloata celor dedesubt/ Ce-şi pleacă fruntea muntelui râpos/ Suind spre fericire, cred că-mbie/ Şi arta mea. (Duţescu and Leviţchi 1988)*
'Yes, like enough, high-battled Caesar will/ Unstate his happiness' (Anthony and Cleopatra, III, 13, 2279)	*Desigur, /Pe culmea slavei lui, măreţul Cezar/ N-o pregeta să-şi lepede norocul/ Şi-ntocmai ca la bâlci să dueleze (Vianu 1961)*

Compensation due to creative modulation allows the metaphorical burden incumbent in *I fear our happiness is at the highest* (HAPPINESS IS UP) to be salvaged in *să scapete* (to go down):

English	Romanian
'Would all were well! But that will never be/I fear our happiness is at the highest.' (Richard III, I, 3, 500)	*De-ar fi într-un ceas bun!/ Dar nu va fi. Mă tem că fericirea noastră-ncepe/ Să scapete. (Duţescu 1982)*

Most frequently, though, happiness is reified and the epistemological implications that are preserved through translation are that (i) it is transferrable (*delivered, begotten, given, brought*); (ii) it is a precious and coveted item, possibly a nutrient; (iii) it is typically bounded in time or space, but its boundless counterpart is wished for:

English	Romanian
HAPPINESS IS A TRANSFERRABLE OBJECT	
'More health and happiness betide my liege/ Than can my care-tuned tongue deliver him!' (Richard II, III, 2, 1501)	*De multă sănătate să te bucuri/ Şi fericire, cât nu-ţi poate-aduce,/ Măria-ta, răuvestitoarea-mi limbă. (Gheorghiu 1955)*
'If to have done the thing you gave in charge/ Beget your happiness, be happy then, / For it is done, my lord.' (Richard III, IV, 3, 2753)	*Dacă te face fericit lucrarea/ Ce-ai poruncit, fii fericit, milord,/ Căci s-a făcut. (Duţescu 1982)*
'His overthrow heap'd happiness upon him' (Henry VIII, IV, 2, 2611)	*Căderea îi aduse fericire! (Grigorescu 1963)*
'Thou bring'st me happiness and peace, son John' ((Henry IV, part II, IV, 5, 3124)	*'Fericire/ Şi pace, fiul meu, e drept, mi-aduci.' (Leviţchi 1985)*
HAPPINESS IS A PRECIOUS POSSESSION	
'O, that our fathers would applaud our loves,/ To seal our happiness with their consents!' (Two Gentlemen of Verona, I, 3, 349)	*Părinţii de ne-ar da consimţământul,/ Şi fericirea-mi negrăită, Iulia/ Dumnezeiască, s-o pecetluim! (Gheorghiu 1983)*
HAPPINESS IS A BOUNDED ENTITY	
'To compass such a boundless happiness! (Pericles, I, 1, 58) *'your lordship, to whom I wish a long life, still lengthened with all happiness' (Rape of Lucrece, 4)*	*Spre-a smulge-această mare fericire! (Gheorghiu 1996)* *Înălţimii voastre, căreia îi doresc viaţă lungă, sporită încă de toate fericirile (Grigorescu 1995)*

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'They promised me eternal happiness' (Henry VIII, IV, 2, 2670)	*Ei mi-au făgăduit de-a pururi pace (Grigorescu 1963)*
HAPPINESS IS A DRINK	
'To sour your happiness, I must report/ The queen is dead.' (Cymbeline V, 5, 3398)	*Umplând de-amar / A voastră fericire, vă vestesc/ Că a murit regina (Argintescu-Amza 1963)*

Through semantic modulation, happiness is a state of mind is rendered through a verb of cognition *ştiu* (to know) instead of the English verb *to enjoy*:

English	Romanian
HAPPINESS IS A STATE OF MIND	
'O, happiness enjoyed but of a few!' (Rape of Lucrece, 73)	*O, fericire, prea puţini te ştiu! (Grigorescu 1995)*

Personification of happiness reveals how gender – a feminine ('her best array') or masculine ('takes his leave') presence – is left unattended to in the Romanian version:

English	Romanian
HAPPINESS IS A HUMAN BEING	
'Happiness courts thee in her best array' (Romeo and Juliet, III, 3, 1989)	*Îţi dă târcoale/ Norocu-mpodobit de sărbătoare. (Teodorescu 1967)*
'but when you depart from me, sorrow abides and happiness takes his leave' (Much Ado About Nothing, I, 1, 88)	*Însă după ce plecaţi dumneavoastră, rămâne părerea de rău şi fericirea îşi ia rămas bun (Leviţchi 1985)*
'Compare dead happiness with living woe' (Richard III, IV, 4, 2913)	*Alătură ucisa fericire/ Durerii de acum (Duţescu 1982)*

Language constraints sometimes do not allow the translator to render a metaphorical expression as such in the target language, and a non-figurative phrase is adopted:

English	Romanian
HAPPINESS IS A CONTAINER *'O, how bitter a thing it is to look into happiness through another man's eyes!' (As You Like It, V, 2, 2285)*	*Dar, vai, ce chin e să priveşti fericirea cu ochii altuia! (Popa 2010)*

The inventory of happiness phrases records a secondary meanings of the term, recategorized as countable and pre-modified by the adjective 'outward', and therefore felicitously captured in 'o înfăţişare atrăgătoare' in Romanian:

English	Romanian
'He hath indeed a good outward happiness' (Much Ado About Nothing, II, 3, 994)	*E adevărat, se poate mândri cu o înfăţişare atrăgătoare (Leviţchi 1985)*

Omission is rarely applied, yet it is found opportune despite its metaphorical conceptualization in the excerpt below:

English	Romanian
'a happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of' (Hamlet II, 2, 1310)	*Nebunia brodeşte adeseori cîte una pe care judecata şi mintea sănătoasă nu le pot naşte cu atâta spor. (Leviţchi and Duţescu 1967)*

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Conclusions

The concept of HAPPINESS has a dual nature: part of it is shaped through non-figurative thought, while a large portion is shaped due to metaphorical contributions to its content. At the linguistic level, a mental and cultural model of happiness is connected to idiomatic language, and the lexicographic data show that HAPPINESS IS UP and HAPPINESS IS A FORCE yield compatible form-function matches in translation from English into Romanian.

In the strand of literary discourse exemplified above, the translators' art, knowledge and craftsmanship produce effective, reliable and refined translations. Felicity is judged not only by virtue of the adequacy of transplanting the metaphorical thought and expression across languages, but also by virtue of the degree of coherence instilled in the target language text and the compatibility with its cultural framework. There is, it has been shown, exquisite harmonization in translating Shakespeare's both novel and conventionalized metaphors for happiness as music, object, state of mind, human being, or as having an upward orientation. Disparities are few and they are compensated for in translation.

In conclusion, applying such a concerted cognitive and translation studies analytical lens to both literary and non-literary discourse provides rich and useful insights into the process and practice of translation, enables translation evaluation to be more thoroughly and objectively conducted and enhances the apprehension of multicultural aspects in the way people construe reality.

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