TRANSLATING SOMATIC VERBAL IDIOMS FROM *OLIVER TWIST*

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Abstract:

In examining two Romanian translations of *Oliver Twist*, one published in 1957 and another one in 2011, the article analyzes how several somatic verbal idioms from this novel were rendered in the source language, in this particular case, Romanian. It will focus on the translation strategies employed, the similarities and dissimilarities between the two translations, as well as compared to the equivalents suggested by lexicographic materials. Using deductive and descriptive methods of analysis we will try to offer pertinent reasons regarding the translators' choice of phrase, if they are dissimilar idioms in the two target language editions.

Thus, firstly, this article will briefly present the most important characteristics of somatic verbal idioms. Secondly, as already stated, the main part of this article will center on the equivalent somatic verbal idioms in context, discussing the possible variations (similarities and dissimilarities) in relation to the idiom dictionaries' equivalents.

Finally, we will demonstrate that most of the somatic verbal idioms from *Oliver Twist* have functional equivalents in the target language, even if in the source language they are distorted idioms. This aspect will prove that there are fewer cases when formal equivalence can be employed and thus, preserve the same effect in the target language as in the original.

Key words: somatic verbal idiom, multi-word unit, translation strategy, functional equivalence

Objectives and structure of the paper

The aim of this contrastive paper is firstly, to explain why we chose to analyze somatic verbal idioms from *Oliver Twist*, discussing briefly The Dickens Lexicon and the project started in the 1950s. Secondly, after we justify our choice of dwelling on somatic verbal idioms in one of Dickens' works, more precisely in *Oliver Twist*, we will present the most important characteristics of idioms and somatic verbal idioms, obviously, so as to know exactly which phrases were selected from the source language and then identified in the two translations under analysis, namely the first one that has even been published in Romanian, dated in 1957 (Dickens, C., „*Aventurile lui Oliver Twist*”, trad. în lb. rom.: Sadoveanu, T., Sadoveanu, P., 1957, București: Editura Tineretului) and the last one we could find, published in 2011 (Dickens, C., “*Oliver Twist*”, trad. în lb. rom.: Petrescu, M., Cocârță, L., Chiper S., 2011, București: Editura Adevărul Holding).

Therefore, the paper considers somatic verbal idioms from *Oliver Twist* in relation to two Romanian translations of this novel and the dictionary counterparts of exactly the same idioms so as to bridge the semantic gap between lexicographic equivalence and textual equivalence, understood as equivalence which is realized only in communicative events, in a coherent and cohesive stretch of language not only in single lexical units, as is the case with dictionaries where equivalence is at word or phrase level. This approach is needed because even if, generally, dictionaries offer brief explanations and the context they provide is seen as the decisive factor in the choice of an appropriate equivalent, lexicography and translation are not always perceived as interdependent and we strongly believe that they should, based mainly on the fact that the text as a unit of meaning with its norms, intertextuality and intentionality cannot be rendered into another language if the lexeme

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as a translation unit does not exist. The translation unit as defined by Vinay and Darbelnet (1985: 95) is "the smallest segment of utterance whose signs are linked in such a way that they should not be translated individually", therefore, a text is made up of translation units whose meaning is rendered in dictionaries which leads to the interdependence between lexicography and translation.

In this way, we will reveal that on the one hand, there are somatic verbal idioms which preserve both their structure and their meaning in the target language, as it will be exemplified, but, on the other hand, there are also idioms which do not preserve their structure, even if they have the same meaning as in the source language, in which case relevant examples will also be examined. In line with this, we will show that even if, according to most studies, an idiom has a fixed word order, this fact does not exclude its occasional use with a slightly different word order, either in the source text or in the target text, depending on the context in which it occurs.

As far as the structure of the paper is concerned, because we offer both theoretical aspects on idioms, somatic verbal idioms included, naturally, and applied examples from the source and target languages, we will dwell on idioms viewed as allowed irregularities explaining their main characteristics, on the translational analysis of several somatic verbal idioms from *Oliver Twist* and on the translation strategies employed in rendering somatic verbal idioms from the source language into the target language (in the two editions under analysis).

To begin with, in order to succeed in our attempt, after we briefy discuss the Dickens Lexicon, we will bring forth theoretical input on idioms and equivalence as a translation strategy applicable in rendering English somatic verbal idioms into Romanian.

The Dickens Lexicon Project and somatic verbal idioms in *Oliver Twist*

Before turning to a closer examination of the somatic verbal idioms from *Oliver Twist*, we believe it is necessary to note that as Alter (1996: 131) claims "Dickens is above all the great master of figurative language in English after Shakespeare" and as idioms are par excellence figurative units it comes as a natural consequence that they are widespread in Dickens' works. Yamamoto outlined the same characteristic in 1950 arguing that "Dickens' language is very idiomatic" (Nishio, 2010). Admittedly, it is due to this already generally accepted feature of Dickens' language and to the lack of a similar study that we chose to analyze a class of idioms from *Oliver Twist*.

Therefore, it was since 1950 when Professor Tadao Yamamoto published "Growth and System of the Language of Dickens: An Introduction to a Dickens Lexicon", when there were only a few studies made about idioms, most of which were dictionaries, that Dr. Yamamoto initiated his lifetime project of compiling a Dickens Lexicon and of studying Dickens' language, particularly idioms and various colloquial phrases in all his works.

Referring to this project in 2009, Imahayashi (2009: 169) argued that "the Lexicon is expected to be released as The Dickens Lexicon Online on the internet website with the multifunctional search engine and with Dickens Textbank and the 18th and 19th Century Textbank by 2012 in honour of the bicentennial of the birth of Charles Dickens if everything is in a concatenation accordingly". Unfortunately, it has not been finished yet which proves the importance of what, back in the 1950s, Yamamoto himself pleaded for "the desideratum is a perfect team-work with sufficient preparation and training that cost us an enormous amount of time and labour" arguing that regrettably, "with all our efforts, however, we must admit that we continually suffer from the considerable limitation of our knowledge" (Imahayashi, 2009: 162).

We strongly believe it was important to mention *The Dickens Lexicon Project* not only to emphasize that there has been a concern for Dickens idiomatic language since the 1950s, but also to highlight that "beyond individual words, Dickens was the master of the well-turned phrase, and some of his phrases have become accepted idioms" (Zimmer, 2012) otherwise, there would not have been an increased interest in studying Dickens' idiomatic language.

Furthermore, for Dickens language, of which idioms are an important part, is meant to emphasize certain characterial traits, to show the dreary colours of the society he so carefully portraits and to engage the reader revealing with each new line, new aspects about his characters. This viewpoint proves why "language isn't just something Dickens mobilized or remodelled.

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Language *per se* is a way of reading him, a way of staying with him through the farthest stretches of invention – and of confronting there his unique place in Victorian letters" (Stewart, 2001: 139).

As for "*the somatic verbal idioms*" which will be examined contrastively in the two languages they describe idioms (multi-word units with the characteristics hereinafter analyzed) which combines a high frequency verb (regularly, a common language transitive or ditransitive verb) and one up to three of its arguments of which at least one denotes a body part, that is, complex verb groups, VPs: V + 1 or 2 arguments. Therefore, given the fact that it was already proven that "idiomatic language is mostly anthropocentric" (Apostolatu, 2004: 435), we chose to focus only on "somatic or anthropomorphic idioms", defined as "simply idioms (phrasemes), or idiomatic (phraseological) combinations of various functions containing at least one obvious body-part name" (Čermák, 1999: 110) and centered around a verb head.

Thus, to avoid any possible misunderstandings when referring to these multi-word units in this paper, we will employ only the term "somatic verbal idiom" which besides the previously mentioned features, also displays the two main characteristics (presented in the next subsections) that Grant and Bauer (2004: 52) deem necessary and sufficient in labelling a lexical unit as idiom.

To clarify things and pave the way for the following translational analysis that forms the main part of this paper, we offer two relevant examples of somatic verbal idiom, that is "*to drag before the public eye*" in "There must be circumstances in Oliver's little history which it would be painful *to drag before the public eye*;" (Dickens, 2011: 545) and "*to take it into his head to*" in "One afternoon […] the first-named young gentleman *took it into his head to* evince some anxiety regarding the decoration of his person." (Dickens, 2011: 204).

Idioms as allowed irregularities

Hereinafter, to determine our line of analysis we will consider idioms as distinctive multiword phrases because they display a range of characteristics which are not shared by all idioms to the same extent, *i.e.* not all idioms are fully non-compositional or display the same semantic and/ or syntactic restrictions. This is why idioms as "a stable combination of words with a fully or partially figurative meaning are an extremely complex many-sided language unit" (Naciscione, 2010: 251).

Thus, to prove that idioms are "hybrid constructions, parts of which are idiomatic (i.e. opaque and conventionalized) and parts of which allow relatively free substitution of lexical terms that retain their literal meaning" (Pinnavaia, 2010: 106) consider the somatic verbal idioms "*to cost an arm and a leg*" (Parkinson, Francis, 2010: 10) and "*to keep sb. at arm's length*" (Parkinson, Francis, 2010: 10). Even if both of them employ the same body part, syntactically, the former is completely frozen (we cannot reverse the lexemes) whereas the latter is less fixed due to its internal variation, namely, the object after the verb which can be replaced as the context requires it. As obvious, despite the common body-part lexeme, semantically, they have different meanings, that is, "*to cost an arm and a leg*" (Parkinson, Francis, 2010: 10) means "to cost a lot of money" (Parkinson, Francis, 2010: 10), while "*to keep sb. at arm's length*" (Parkinson, Francis, 2010: 10) means "to avoid becoming two friendly with somebody" (Parkinson, Francis, 2010: 10) and seems to be etymologically motivated by the literal meaning of "at arm's length", which means being away from you by a distance equal to the length of your arm.

As these examples show, idioms are a highly heterogeneous and idiosyncratic class of phrases, a category of allowed irregularities. Therefore, even if the meaning of a combination of words within an idiom may be related to those of its components in a variety of ways (origin, context of use, register, main characteristics), the significance of the whole idiom does not depend on the internal variation and their interpretation in terms of meaning remains obscure unless properly understood and when necessary, adequately translated.

Consequently, it comes as no surprise that idioms are very complex linguistic constructions and their meaning is unpredictable because they are language and culture dependent units as "no language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture; and no culture can exist which does not have at its centre, the structure of natural language" (Bassnett, 2002: 23).

Very often, their meaning cannot be guessed if the two speakers do not share a certain set of cultural knowledge and this aspect is a direct consequence of the fact that each language organizes

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the world differently and thus, it coins its own idiom strings which might not be syntactically and/or semantically well formed and which might as well, violate both selectional and sub-categorization restrictions that exist in grammatical theory. For example, the somatic verbal idiom "(has the) cat got your tongue?" (Parkinson, Francis, 2010: 53) used most frequently in the interrogative when someone after some mischief, refuses to speak or to answer questions does not accept lexical or syntactic variation because it is a construction embedded in the British culture and according to Partridge (1979: 81) registered for the first time in John Mortimer's "The Judge" (Act I, Scene 5) produced and published in 1967, shortened to "Cat got your tongue?". This explains why in Romanian, it has another cultural reference and thus, it is rendered as: "Ce, ți-a pierit graiul? Ți-a tăiat popa limba?" (Nicolescu, Pamfil-Teodoreanu, *et al.*, 1999: 91), in cognitive and cultural terms these two idioms are completely different.

Next to determine a precise diagnosis for their 'anomalous' state, for the purpose of this paper, we will present the typical features that define idioms based on two recent studies which provide a list of idioms' characteristics because as Langlotz (2006: 2) emphasized "it is impossible to capture the linguistic anatomy of idioms without relying on a set of different definitory dimensions", namely, a set of exact criteria, a peculiarity of phraseology which may sometimes limit the work of a translator.

Idioms: main characteristics

At this point, so as to determine an adequate working definition of idioms and thus, help us identify an appropriate translation into Romanian, it is imperative that we ensure that the decisive idioms' features are presented because regardless of their wide variety of interpretations due to different approaches, idioms share common linguistic aspects which directly influence their ability of being conveyed into another target language and obviously, the way they can be rendered, and by what linguistic means.

In other words, to shed some light on the peculiarities of these "hybrid constructions" (O'Grady, 1998: 290, in Pinnavaia, 2010: 106) and prove that they are "not arbitrary linguistic expressions" (Pinnavaia, 2010: 93) but "multi-lexemic expressions, the meaning of which is a property of the whole expression" (Van der Linden, Kraaij 1990: 245), we will briefly present the typical idioms' characteristics as illustrated in two recent research papers published by Nunberg, Sag and Wasow (1994) and the other one, by Grant and Bauer (2004).

Nunberg, Sag and Wasow (1994: 492-493) list six basic idiom properties: (1) conventionality (the non-compositional meaning of idiomatic expressions, which cannot be predicted, although one would know the meanings of constituent parts in isolation from one another), (2) inflexibility, (3) figuration, (4) proverbiality, (5) informality and (6) affect.

On the other hand, Grant and Bauer (2004: 52) whose view we adopt in this paper, argue that only two criteria, namely, (1) non-compositionality and (2) non-figurativeness are enough to define conventional multi-word units and distinguish "a core idiom", as they call it, from other multi-word phrases. For this reason, Grant and Bauer have designed a yes/ no questionnaire to determine whether a multi-word unit (MWU) is a core idiom; if the answer is negative to all the three questions then the MWU is an idiom. The test meant to determine whether a multi-word unit (MWU) is a core idiom consists of the following three questions:

(1) Is the meaning of the MWU retained if you replace each lexical word in the MWU with its own definition?

Yes = compositional No = non-compositional

(2) Is it possible to understand the meaning of the MWU by recognizing the untruth and pragmatically reinterpreting it in a way that correctly explains the MWU?

Yes = figurative No = non-figurative

(3) Is there only one word in the MWU which is either non-literal or non-compositional?

Yes = one non-compositional element No = more than one element is non-compositional

As these two approaches prove, there are no sharp boundaries between the varied features that characterize idioms. And even if it is true that the term "idiom" is defined from slightly different

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angles, there are similar views about its peculiarities and concepts such as compositeness or compositional meaning, figurativeness, analyzability, motivation and transparency which are often used or even misused to provide a clearer description of this linguistic notion. For this reason, we have to agree with the fact that “semantically, the idiom has to be viewed as a holistic, Gestalt phenomenon, a feature which is often acknowledged, and which, by definition, precludes any possibility of an objective and exhaustive semantic analysis” (Čermák, 2001: 6).

Additionally, it is important to reveal that the test proposed by Grant and Bauer (2004) which helped us choose the somatic verbal idioms from “Oliver Twist” and whose view we totally impart, emphasizes both the non-compositionality and the non-figurativeness of idioms, these distinctive fixed expressions which evade the normal rules of understanding because they have implications quite unconnected to the normal meanings of the words themselves, their meaning is often thought to be metaphorical and as already stated, their combined words have a meaning which is somehow different from the dictionary definitions of the individual words and from the literal definition of the fixed expression itself.

The same idea was stated long before by the essayist Logan Pearsall Smith in his 1923 book “English Idioms” (Rees, 1991: 1) where he argued that the idiom “may be regarded as the sister of poetry, for like poetry it retranslates our concepts into living experiences, and breathes that atmosphere of animal sensation which sustains the poet in his flights.”

And due to the fact that idioms mean something completely different from the meaning of the separate words, Binder (Rees, 1991: 1) suggested that “there is no bigger peril either to thinking or to education than the popular phrase” as he expressively called idioms. However, this capacity of a language to produce new semantic units by putting together groups of words with set meanings that cannot be calculated by adding up the separate meanings of the parts is evidently a useful capacity, for it brings new semantic material into the language at minimum expense by making use of units, arrangements and symbolizations already available.

Equivalence-oriented translation in relation to somatic verbal idioms

As far as translating somatic verbal idioms it should be mentioned that in our opinion an equivalence oriented approach is the most appropriate because we believe that “language is not primarily a means of communication but a means of communion” (West, 1975: 171) between two different languages and cultures. From this perspective, Vinay and Darbelnet (Munday 2001: 58) refer to equivalence as a procedure meant “to describe the same situation by using different stylistic or structural means”. In other words, they view equivalence-oriented translation as a procedure which “replicates the same situation as in the original, whilst using completely different wording” (Vinay and Darbelnet 1995: 342) and they argue that if this procedure is applied during the translation process, it can maintain the stylistic impact of the source language text in the target language text. Therefore, we believe that equivalence-oriented translation is best defined as the parallel manner in which the two idioms are brought together, to signify the same conceptual meaning, it is the method which does not aim to preserve the exact form, a certain correspondent linguistic structure, instead, it aims to move across time and space a certain message.

Consequently, the next example, “to get/ have/ gain the upper hand (over somebody)” (Parkinson, Francis, 2010: 429) with the Romanian counterparts “a fi într-o poziție avantajoasă” (Săileanu, Poenaru 2007: 206), “a obține avantaj/ superioritate/ victoria; a domina; a fi stăpân pe situație; a se situa în frunte; a lua conducerea; (of somebody) a strânge în chingi/ a pune șaua pe cineva (Nicolescu, Pamfil-Teodoreanu, *et al.*, 1999: 63) and “a lua conducerea; a avea avantaj / rolul conducător” (Trofin, 1996: 248) proves that idioms cannot be translated literally but meaningfully and the translation must first and foremost aim at reproducing the message, the content and not the form it takes in that particular language.

Moreover, we would like to point out that this contrastive analysis is not a critical approach of the target language texts, it is simply an investigation of the translational strategies used to render the somatic verbal idioms found in the source texts as compared to the lexicographical equivalents of the same idioms. As previously outlined, the two target language equivalents are extracted from

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the oldest translation of "*Oliver Twist*" published in 1957 and from one the newest editions, printed in 2011. Given the time difference between these translations, we accept that "each new translation is a new performance of the text, each one brings out potential meaning and potential emotion. Translations, in other words, like stage or screen adaptations, fertilize, energize and sometimes even rejuvenate the old standard version which in the source-language is, of course, immutable" (Sadrin, 1998: 278).

English-Romanian translational analysis of several somatic verbal idioms from *Oliver Twist*

(1) To look down in the mouth

To put things into perspective, let us start the analysis of several somatic verbal idioms from "Oliver Twist". The first one is "*to look down in the mouth*" which describes Fagin's mood when Oliver is dragged back to the den of thieves after Nancy and Sikes catch him on his way to take Mr. Brownlow's books and payment to the bookseller. The precise statement is: "'Yes,' replied the voice, 'and precious *down in the mouth he has been*. Won't he be glad to see you?" (Dickens, 2011: 178) and is uttered by Mr. John Dawkins, otherwise the Artful Dodger in reference to Fagin's disposition, as we have already stated. This is a relevant example of the "deliberate distortion" (Stewart, 2001: 139) of the somatic verbal idiom "*to look down in the mouth*" (Parkinson, Francis, 2010: 252) meant to stylistically highlight Fagin's mood, his continuous ill nature and hostile attitude, even when Sikes and Nancy come to his place to bring Oliver back.

Actually, the so called distortion of the somatic verbal idiom is based on an inversion of the canonical order of the lexemes which make up the idiom "*to be/ look down in the mouth*", and we chose to label it as "deliberate distortion" due to its important stylistic effect. Dickens reversed the lexical units in the idiom and used the object before the verb to emphasize not only Fagin's quick temper, but also the fact that those surrounding him should have been well aware of his disposition if they really cared for their life. In the target language, in the 1957 edition, the idiom is translated as "*a fi cu coada între picioare*", more precisely, "Da – răspunse vocea – dar *e cam cu coada între picioare*. Tare o să se mai bucure că te vede!" (Dickens, 1957: 122) whereas in the later, 2011 edition it is rendered as "*a nu fi în toane bune*", as follows: "Da, se auzi vocea, și *nu [e] în toane prea bune*. Tare s-ar mai bucura să te vadă." (Dickens, 2011: 69).

These two translations of the idiom do not preserve the suggestions proposed by the bilingual idiom dictionary, that is, "a avea un aer plouat/ o mutră plouată/ de înmormântare/ o înfățișare abătută/ deprimată/ plouată/ tristă; a arăta abătut/ deprimat/ descurajat/ plouat/ trist" (Nicolescu, Pamfil-Teodoreanu *et. al.* 1999: 139), probably because they were not considered expressive enough and thus, not adequate for this particular situation. Moreover, as obvious, the dictionary offers a paraphrase of the English somatic verbal idiom, even if in Romanian there are similar idioms expressing the same idea as "being down in the mouth" despite the fact that some of them are not somatic ones, which actually, it is not important because in case of the translation of idioms meaning prevails over their form.

(2) To fall on deaf ears

Another intentional transformation or deliberate distortion as already mentioned, of a common somatic verbal idiom, namely, "*to fall on deaf ears*" (Parkinson, Francis, 2010: 84) is employed in the sentence "Of all the terrific yells that ever *fell on mortal ears*, none could exceed the cry of the infuriated throng." (Dickens, 2011: 600), used to describe the angry mob that is searching for Sikes who has previously killed Nancy. In this case, Dickens uses the construction "mortal ears" instead of "deaf ears" to give the idiom a more general value than the canonical idiom, *i.e.* the dictionary form, and thus, increase the tension and screams of the huge crowd that gathered outside Sikes' hiding place.

Examining these two idioms, one might object that they do not have anything in common and that they should not be analysed together. It is true that semantically they have a completely different meaning, on the one hand "to fall on deaf ears" in the sense of being completely ignored or

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not noticed and on the other, “to fall on mortal ears”, in the sense of being heard by humans with their mortal limits of perceiving and understanding; however, even if they do not share the same meaning, syntactically, they are structured in the same way, namely, verb + direct object, which demonstrates that Dickens coined this latter idiom based on the already widely used idiom “to fall on deaf ears” which entered English based on the Biblical images of deafness viewed as the refusal to hear and understand the divine law. For example, Psalm 58 describes the wicked, who, compared with the righteous, “are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely” (Scorpio Tales, 2014).

Masterly, Dickens basically adapts this idiom to the context he deems appropriate for usage, changes its meaning accordingly and thus, reflects the yells and fury of the huge, wrathful crowd but syntactically, he maintains the structure of the base form idiom (“to fall on deaf ears”) with which the readers were already familiar.

To harmonize the theoretical aspects which he have just outlined with the practical ones, namely, the examples from the novel, we believe it is necessary to highlight that the statement in which the idiom “*to fall on mortal ears*” appears, that is, “Of all the terrific yells that ever *fell on mortal ears*, none could exceed the cry of the infuriated throng.” (Dickens, 2011: 600) is rendered differently in the target language in the two editions under analysis, namely in the 1957 edition it is translated as: “Urlet mai sălbatic ca acel pe care-l slobozi atunci mulțimea înfuriată *nu s-a mai pomenit nicicând*.” (Dickens, 1957: 414) and later on, in the 2011 edition as: “Auzind această, mulțimea izbucni atât de puternic că *nu se mai auzise* așa un răcnet *pe fața pământului*.” (Dickens, 2011: 223). This fact proves that an idiom can still be well rendered into a target language even if that language does not have a similar idiomatic expression, let alone one which uses a body-part lexeme, and paraphrase remains a good resource when it comes to newly-coined idiomatic expressions. Regardless of the translation loss which derives from the lack of a similar phrase in the target language, the two translations manage to render the source meaning and reflect the idiom’s overall effect in line with the context in which it appears.

This example of the somatic verbal idiom “*to fall on mortal ears*” and the comment upon it, is meant to bring us closer to an understanding of Dickens’s use of idioms in “*Oliver Twist*” as well as of its overall style in most of his novels in which he chose to transform the canonical forms, to alter common idioms and to use the language as best as he could to reflect the needs and features of his character, even if that meant introducing new constructions, as is the case with the idiom that we have already discussed.

(3) To turn a deaf ear

Similarly, the somatic verbal idiom “*to turn a deaf ear*” which also appears in the novel has a cultural element attached to it, namely, it was made famous in the 18th century due to the lines “They never would hear,/ But *turn the deaf ear*,/ As a matter they had no concern in”, from the poem “Dingley and Brent” written in 1724 by Jonathan Swift and first published in 1765. The poem is subtitled “‘A song to the Tune of Ye Commons and Peers’ and it is a gentle satire of Mrs. Brent and Rebecca Dingley, portraying them as silly, carefree, and slow-witted” (DeGategno, Stubblefield, 2006: 63).

Interestingly, the same syntactic structure (verb + direct object/ noun idiomatic combination) was passed on to another somatic verbal idiom, that is “*to turn a blind eye (to/ on something)*” (Parkinson, Francis, 2010: 32) which resembles the aforesaid idiom “*to turn a deaf ear (to something)*” (Parkinson, Francis, 2010: 84) in the sense that if the latter means “refuse to listen to something” (Parkinson, Francis, 2010: 84) the former means to refuse to see and thus, to ignore something. However, the idiom “to turn a blind eye” is said to have been inspired by Vice Admiral Horatio Nelson who at the battle of Copenhagen in 1801, “sensed victory was at hand, raised his telescope to his blind eye, said he could see no signal, and told his flag captain to strike ‘signal 16’ (engage the enemy) ignoring Admiral Sir Hyde Parker’s ‘signal 43’ (to break off the action)” (Blackmore, 2009: 51).

Regardless of this origins which are not always widely accepted, there is no doubt that both idioms share the same structure and in a way the same meaning, making them easier to understand and therefore, to translate in different contexts.

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In "*Oliver Twist*", coming back to the somatic verbal idiom "to turn a deaf ear (to something)", we deem appropriate to note that it was used by Mrs. Rose Maylie, as follows: "Oh!' said the earnest girl, folding her hands as the tears coursed down her face, '*do not turn a deaf ear to* the entreaties of one of your own sex;" (Dickens, 2011: 474) when Nancy came to her to confess what she knew about Oliver and Rose tried to persuade her to stay and leave behind her life of crime, but Nancy refused.

Despite the fact that in lexicographic materials the idiom "to turn a deaf ear (to something)" was rendered as "a fi surd/ a-şi astupa urechile la ceva; a refuza să asculţi (o rugăminte, un argument)" (Nicolescu, Pamfil-Teodoreanu *et. al.* 1999: 253) "a nu pleca urechea la; a se face că nu aude; a se face că plouă; a ignora, a nu da nicio atenţie la" (Săileanu, Poenaru, 2007: 516) in a given context, namely, in the novel, it was translated either by using only a verb which paraphrases the idiom, that is "*a asculta*" ["O, te rog – zise fata cu înflăcărare, împreunându-şi mâinile pe când lacrimile îi curgeau pe obraji – *ascultă rugămintea* unei fete ca şi dumneata;" (Dickens, 1957: 325)] or a target language somatic verbal idiom *i.e.* "*a nu-şi astupa urechile*" ["Ah! – spuse domnişoara cu convingere şi cuprinzându-şi mâinile ca pentru rugăciune în vreme ce pe obraji îi curgeau lacrimile – *nu-ţi astupa urechile la* implorarea unei femei ca mine;" (Dickens, 2011: 176)] which is also suggested by one of the bilingual idiom dictionaries we have already mentioned, probably this one because it is more widely used.

(4) To point the finger of suspicion

In light of this, we believe we should present another examples of a somatic verbal idiom which has been adapted, altered or "deliberately distorted" as Stewart (2001: 139) argues, namely, "*to point the finger of scorn*".

This idiom (which is not registered in any of the idioms dictionary which we looked into) could be considered an adapted version of the phrase "*to point the finger of suspicion*" (Parkinson, Francis, 2010: 126) which is used when somebody is suspected of having committed a crime and/or of being responsible for a certain action, usually a negative one. In the novel under analysis, the somatic verbal idiom "to point the finger of scorn" is employed to evince Noah Claypole's hostile and aggressive attitude towards Oliver while he was Mr. Sowerberry's loyal apprentice, as follows: "But, now that fortune had cast in his way a nameless orphan, at whom even the meanest *could point the finger of scorn*, he retorted on him with interest." (Dickens, 2011: 50).

As already stated, this idiom is adapted from the dictionary form "to point the finger of suspicion" (Parkinson, Francis, 2010: 126) and as obvious, because of the different lexemes, "scorn" and "suspicion", they have diverse meanings even if their structure (verb + argument) is identical. Thus, the idea of singling out somebody from a group of people, of pointing the finger at someone for something, identifying him/her as the guilty person remains valid in both idioms, that is, both "to point the finger of suspicion" and "to point the finger of scorn" refer to a moment of judgement and imply a certain fault; however, the fault or the cause of pointing the finger is different, in the idiom used in the novel it is a case of disdain and contempt towards somebody, of looking down on a person whom one hates (Noah's contemptuous attitude towards Oliver), whereas the dictionary idiom is a case of mistrust and doubt, of suspecting someone for a fault he may or may not be guilty of.

In the target language, the 1957 translation offers a formal equivalent of the source idiom, namely, "a arăta disprețuitor cu degetul", in context: "Acum, când norocul îi scosese în cale un copil de pripas, pe care cel din urmă netrebnic *îl putea arăta disprețuitor cu degetul*, se repezise asupra lui cu sete." (Dickens, 1957: 38); however, the 2011 translation provides a functional equivalent, more precisely, two verbs: "îl priveau şi-l disprețuiau", which paraphrases the source idiom, maybe because it maintains its natural fluidity and fluency in the target language, as the sentence clearly demonstrates: "Dar acum, că destinul îi scosese în cale un copil orfan, pe care toţi *îl priveau şi-l disprețuiau*, bineînteles că-i venise şi lui în sfârşit rândul să râdă de cineva." (Dickens, 2011: 20).

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(5) To carry something off with a bold face

Furthermore, to serve as an example, besides the previous ones, we would also like to mention the somatic verbal idiom “*to put on a bold face*” (Trofin, 1996: 187) rendered in Romanian as “a înfrunta ceva cu tărie, a-și ascunde mâhnirea” (Trofin, 1996: 187) and registered in various idiom dictionaries. However, we believe that this phrase is the base form, in other words, the canonical pattern, of the idiom “*to carry something off with a bold face*” employed in the novel, in a discourse situation which called for it, namely when Mr. Losberne, Rose and Mrs. Maylie discuss how to conceal Oliver’s part in the attempted robbery as the police officers will not believe Oliver’s entangled story. This is why Mr. Losberne concludes as follows: “‘All I know is,’ said Mr. Losberne, at last sitting down with a kind of desperate calmness, ‘that we must try and *carry it off with a bold face*.” (Dickens, 2011: 350) which was rendered in the target language, in both translations under analysis as “*a o scoate la capăt cu îndrăzneală*”, more precisely, as follows: “Tot ce putem face – zise domnul Losborne după un timp, așezându-se parcă c-un fel de liniște a desperării – e să încercăm *s-o scoatem la capăt cu îndrăzneală*.” (Dickens, 1957: 242) and “Tot ce știu, zise domnul Losberne, așezându-se cu un fel de liniște disperată, e că trebuie să încercăm *s-o scoatem la capăt cu îndrăzneală*.” (Dickens, 2011: 131).

The reader will understand shortly afterwards in the same chapter of the novel where this idiom is used that Mr. Losberne’s way of “*carrying the story off with a bold face*” meant helping Oliver by hiding the obvious facts and claiming that he was accidentally shot by a hunting gun while trespassing on a neighbour’s property and that when he came to their house for help, precisely in that morning, Mr. Giles, the butler, mistook him for the guilty party in the attempted robbery.

This example proves that an idiom, be it even an altered version of a canonical form which is found in idiom dictionaries, as is the above example, can still be adequately rendered into the target language even if this means paraphrasing or using a similar counterpart, a functional equivalent naturally, because one should be aware that sometimes the translation loss cannot be avoided especially in case of idioms which are both language and culture specific constructions.

For this reason, we claim that the translator should be aware that even if according to several lexicographic materials, a certain idiom has a fixed word order, this does not exclude its occasional use in context, especially in literary works, with a different lexeme or even a diverse word order, as we have already exemplified, sometimes with the associated change of meaning, obviously. This fact distinguishes the author’s creative style and enhances the text’s stylistic effects but it is also a challenge for the translator who should keep a balance between the form and the function of the respective idiom bearing in mind that a certain amount of freedom is acceptable, and sometimes even desirable in literary translation, as is the case of “Oliver Twist”, because the aim is to make the translation faithful to the original both is style and meaning.

Concluding remarks

To conclude, taking everything into account, this paper, among others, clarifies what somatic verbal idioms stand for and what kind of features may explain their irregularities; it also presents the Dickens Lexicon Project in relation to the somatic verbal idioms from *Oliver Twist*, the concept of “equivalence-oriented translation” seen as a tool meant to bridge the gap between lexicographic and textual equivalence and thus, to pave the way for their translational analysis. However, as already shown, the largest part of this paper focuses on the contrastive examination of five somatic verbal idioms from *Oliver Twist*.

As previously emphasized, in a nutshell, this paper demonstrates that idioms cannot be rendered in the target language exactly as a dictionary suggests, mainly because of the context in which they are employed and which is subject to the dynamic, interactive dimensions of the language used by that particular character in that particular moment. If in the source language the use of an idiom depends on the context and on the message it is meant to convey, it comes as a natural consequence that the translation of the very same idiom depends both on the situation in which it was used, on the message it transmits but also on the resources of the target language and obviously, on the translator’s understanding of that particular situation because as Walter Benjamin

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argued "the task of the translator consists in finding that intended effect upon the language into which he is translating which produces in it the echo of the original." (Venuti, 2004: 19). For this reason, Benjamin carries on explaining that "translation does not find itself in the center of the language forest but on the outside facing the wooded ridge; it calls into it without entering, aiming at that single spot where the echo is able to give, in its own language, the reverberation of the work in the alien one." (Venuti, 2004: 20).

In line with this comment we can also add that idioms which are well known for their expressive and stylistic functions should be examined more attentively and their effect in the target language carefully looked into. The translator should be constantly aware of the fact that idioms cannot be properly rendered into a language if one particular strategy is preferred over another, for example, if formal equivalence is overused, instead of an evident functional equivalent or, vice versa. As Hatim and Munday (2004: 42) argue choosing one strategy or the other "must always be a conscious decision, taken for a good reason and not gratuitously", and we add that it should mainly be taken in accordance with the particularities of the source text in which the idiom is used.

For this reason, following Hatim and Munday (2004: 43) we believe that in case of idioms "an important point to underline is that opting for this or that form of equivalence is not an either/or choice. The distinction dynamic vs formal equivalence (or dynamic vs structural correspondence) is best seen in relative terms, as points on a cline. The two methods are not absolute techniques but rather general orientations. In fact, what experienced translators seem to do most of the time is to resort to a literal kind of equivalence initially, reconsider the decision in the light of a range of factors, and ultimately make a choice from literal, formal or dynamic equivalence in this order and as appropriate."

In this way, the idiom becomes an integral part of the target language culture and it is incorporated in the context to which it belongs without necessarily depending on a certain target language correspondent that the lexicographic materials may suggest, even if functionally, both this one and the equivalent proposed by the translator in context mean the same thing; as obvious, formally they may have a different structure, because we believe that regardless of their fixedness, idiom's form is almost always moulded by the context of use.

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