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

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.

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	în al nouălea cer
on top of the world	în paradis
over the moon	în culmea fericirii

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 rânji 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	(a se simți) în al nouălea cer
happy as a sand-boy	în culmea fericirii
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	
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 simți 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

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)	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. (Levițchi 1985)
'All happiness unto my lord the king!'	Urez noroc stâpânului meu rege/ Şi-i cer
((Henry VI, part II, III, 1, 1373)	iertare de întârziere (Solacolu 1958)
'Health to my sovereign, and new happiness/	Stăpâne, sănătate și sporire/ Și bucurii – ca
added to that that am to deliver!' ((Henry IV, part	vestea ce-o aduc! (Leviţchi 1985)
II, IV, 4, 2831)	

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

Especially he hath incurred the everlasting	Mai cu seamă s-a ales cu disgrația regelui,
displeasure of the king, who had even tuned his care	e-și și întrunase lira mărinimiei ca să-i cânte lui
bounty to sing happiness to him.' (All's Well That arid	ı fericirii. (Frunzetti 1987)
Ends Well', IV, 3, 2099)	
HAPPINESS IS UP	
'This throne, this Fortune, and this hill,	Fortuna, tronul, muntele și omul/ Chemat
methinks/ With one man beckon'd from the rest din	gloata celor dedesubt/ Ce-și pleacă fruntea
below/ Bowing his head against the sleepy mount/mur	ntelui râpos/ Suind spre fericire, cred că-mbie/ Şi
To climb his happiness, would be well express'd/In arta	ı mea. (Duțescu and Levițchi 1988)
our condition' (Timon of Athens, I, 1, 90)	
'Yes, like enough, high-battled Caesar will/	Desigur, /Pe culmea slavei lui, mărețul
Unstate his happiness' (Anthony and Cleopatra, III, Cez	ar/ N-o pregeta să-și lepede norocul/ Și-ntocmai
13, 2279) ca l	a 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	De-ar fi într-un ceas bun!/ Dar nu va fi. Mă
be/I fear our happiness is at the highest.' (Richard	tem că fericirea noastră-ncepe/ Să scapete.
III, I, 3, 500)	(Duțescu 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:

Romanian			
JECT			
De multă sănătate să te bucuri/ Şi fericire,			
'cât nu-ți poate-aduce,/ Măria-ta, răuvestitoarea-mi			
limbă. (Gheorghiu 1955)			
Dacă te face fericit lucrarea/ Ce-ai poruncit,			
fii fericit, milord,/ Căci s-a făcut. (Duțescu 1982)			
' Căderea îi aduse fericire! (Grigorescu 1963)			
'Fericire/ Şi pace, fiul meu, e drept, mi-			
aduci.' (Leviţchi 1985)			
N			
Părinții de ne-ar da consimțământul,/ Și			
, fericirea-mi negrăită, Iulia/ Dumnezeiască, s-c			
pecetluim! (Gheorghiu 1983)			
Spre-a smulge-această mare fericire.			
(Gheorghiu 1996)			
Înălțimii voastre, căreia îi doresc viață			
flungă, sporită încă de toate fericirile (Grigorescu			
1995)			

'They promised me eternal ha (Henry VIII, IV, 2, 2670)				făgăduit	de-a	pururi	расе
HAPPINESS IS A DRINK							
'To sour your happiness, I must rep	port/ The	Ump	plând d	e-amar / 2	4 voast	ră fericii	re, vă
queen is dead.' (Cymbeline V, 5, 3398)	ı	vestesc/ Că	a murit	regina (Ar	gintesci	u-Amza 1	963)

Through semantic modulation, happiness is a state of mind is rendered through a verb of cognition *stiu* (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	O, fericire, prea puțini te știu! (Grigorescu
of Lucrece, 73)	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'	Îți dă târcoale/ Norocu-mpodobit de
(Romeo and Juliet, III, 3, 1989)	sărbătoare. (Teodorescu 1967)
'but when you depart from me, sorrow	Însă după ce plecați dumneavoastră, rămâne
abides and happiness takes his leave' (Much Ado	părerea de rău și fericirea își ia rămas bun
About Nothing, I, 1, 88)	(Leviţchi 1985)
'Compare dead happiness with living woe'	Alătură ucisa fericire/ Durerii de acum
(Richard III, IV, 4, 2913)	(Duțescu 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	Dar, vai, ce chin e să privești fericirea cu
happiness through another man's eyes!' (As You	ochii altuia! (Popa 2010)
Like It, V, 2, 2285)	

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 înfățișare atrăgătoare' in Romanian:

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

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

Eng	glish			Romanian
'a	happiness that of	ten madness	hits on	Nebunia brodește adeseori cîte una pe care
which reas	son and sanity coul	d not so prosp	perously	judecata și mintea sănătoasă nu le pot naște cu
be delivere	ed of' (Hamlet II, 2,	1310)		atâta spor. (Leviţchi and Duţescu 1967)

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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