PARONYMS AND OTHER CONFUSABLES AND THE ESP TRANSLATION PRACTICE

Floriana POPESCU
"Dunărea de Jos" University of Galaţi

Abstract. *The translation of specialist texts is a complex and incentive task, particularly in the case of professional translators with a language-literature focused training and education. More than other professionals in the fields of translating and interpreting, they are prone to both erroneous reading in the stage of intralingual translation and erroneous translations in the target language. This paper was inspired by the detection of such a misreading whose consequence was noted in an exercise of translation quality assessment. The source of the error was a case of paronymy spotted in the Romanian language (source) text. The existence of such couples of paronyms characterizes both English and Romanian vocabularies, irrespective of their belonging to the word stock or to terminologies. An exploration of diverse lexicographic works, such as glossaries, lexicons and dictionaries facilitated the determination of a few types of confusing words which complement the set of paronyms. That paronyms are seen from different perspectives in English and Romanian is obvious from the brief references to specialist literature, and that they nevertheless share a few features in both languages is demonstrated in a comparative segment of this approach. What this article emphasizes in particular is the lexical and terminological facets whose complexities and intricacies may be the source of difficulty and error in the translation of specialized texts.*

Key words: *equivalence, lexical metaphor, binomial, shipbuilding terminology, specialized text*.

1. Introduction

This is a study which considers both theoretical and practical aspects related to confusing lexical categories such as capitonyms, backronyms and paronyms, which unlike metonyms, synonyms and antonyms, as well as other onyms have rarely drawn the attention of either English or Romanian linguists. The Romanian specialist literature has recorded a few contributions focused on the group of paronyms, which have been examined only within a restricted framework, without any comparative perspective. A comprehensive approach thus tailored as to compare the vocabularies of the English and Romanian languages is due to be published in January 2019 (Popescu)[1]. This thorough approach opens views of many other parallels drawn between a few of the macro-structural features of these two languages, such as the happy marriage of native and foreign elements, the consistent cluster of the equally shared word-building processes, as well as a number of typologies devised within their lexical and semantic relationships. At micro-structural level the instances of similarity cover adoptions and adaptations from languages spoken either in the very close vicinity or in distant places all over the world.

The current study was built on a few extracts from the broad view of comparative lexicology in the foregoing and on further research of confusable words. It opens a new vista on the relevance of paronyms and other confusables which may cause regrettable errors in professional translations. It will be interesting to notice that the parallelisms of paronyms are so close that both English and Romanian reveal similar translational situations, irrespective of their position as either source or target language.

Within the framework of the approach, paronyms were viewed as lexically-related

[1]My volume, *A Paradigm of Comparative Lexicology*, is in press and it has been advertized to appear in January 2019.

BDD-A29381 © 2019 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 17:00:00 UTC)

words, which may easily create confusions to the language- and literature-educated translator, who may be forced to embark upon the translation of professional texts. The syntagm "professional texts" is a blanket term which covers an impressive number of languages for specific purposes and hence, the necessity of restricting the whole collection of paronyms and other confusables to the two very closely related fields, namely shipbuilding and maritime terminology. The paronymous specificities and their erroneous translations will be referred to with examples from both English and Romanian. This preference is justified by my latest involvement in my husband's latest research project, an illustrated history of the Damen Shipyards published in August this year (Popescu 2018)[2]. The tiny errors in the first translated variant of the introduction to the volume provided a couple of Romanian paronyms which inspired the further research of similar–sounding words and concretized in what follows.

2. On defining paronyms in and other confusables English and Romanian linguistics

Although in both English and Romanian linguistics paronyms share the same Greek etymology (< *para* "near, next to" and *onoma* "name"), their definitions and subsequent interpretations are different. Linguists outside the Anglo-American world generally describe it as "the relationship between two or more words partly identical in form and/or meaning, which may cause confusion in reception or production. In the narrow sense the term paronymy refers to 'soundalikes' (cognate near-HOMOPHONES such as affect/effect or feminine/feminist), but in the wider sense it covers any 'lookalike' or 'mean-alike' CONFUSIBLE WORDS" (Al-Hussini Arab and Hasan 154). Sharing the same view, Romanian linguists describe both concepts very briefly. Those "words very similar in form but different in meaning" represent the category of *paronyms* and *paronymy* is "the relationship between two paronyms" (Bidu-Vrănceanu et al 374). Thus, those English sources which discuss *paronyms* admit a "word from the same root as another, especially a word taken from another language with slight modifications" (Cuddon 642).

Most of the English language explanatory sources waive the definition of *paronyms* (McArthur), while other sources refer only to *paronymy*. Following the Anglo-American tradition, Bussmann also considers paronymy which he defines as the "phonic similarity between expressions from different languages" (Bussmann 862). The author mentions that the older meaning of the term, which was used in word formation theory, would refer to the derivations of the same stem, such as *work, worker*, *working*, etc. (Bussmann 863). Assigned to semantics, *paronymy* still remains a particular relationship which is established "between words derived from the same root", such as the French *pont* and the Latin *pons* (Crystal 377). Starting from the etymology proper of the word *paronym*, which makes no reference to the common source of similar words, this approach will take the Romanian definitions as its starting point.

Romanian definitions of paronyms are very different from the English ones; most often they are formulated in a generic manner and refer to the phonetic features of similar words within the same language rather than in different languages. At the same time, the majority of Romanian definitions describe paronyms to be: "very similar words in terms of their sonorous form (therefore almost homonymous), but more or less different from the viewpoint of their meaning" (Hristea 49). With his definition emphasizing that these somewhat similar words differ from each other "through accent, through a phoneme or through the inversion of two phonemes" Zugun (273) makes progress in defining paronyms.

The use of paronyms indicates whether speakers are aware of such lexical subtleties as

[2]This bilingual volume, *O istorie ilustrată a Șantierului Naval/ An Illustrated History of the Shipyard*, celebrates 125 years in the history of the shipyard in Galati, Romania.

BDD-A29381 © 2019 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 17:00:00 UTC)

the differences between, for example, *to assure* and *to insure* or *to emerge* and *to immerge* as well as *a defecta* and *a detecta* or a *infecta* and *a infesta*. Their accidental misuse or confusion may be a slip of the tongue, or they may as well be a reflection of a person's lack of lexical knowledge. There have also been numerous situations when purposeful confusion appears in a fictitious character's vocabulary, but this becomes a stylistic device through which the author subsumes such easily confusable words to the wider category of malapropisms. In other words, paronyms appear to be united in a complex web of words with a double standard, being interpretable both lexicologically and stylistically.

Lexicology analyses nearly "similar words" in terms of etymology, word building processes and structural relatedness, while semantics and linguistic stylistics focus on their contextual appropriateness. As specialist literature shows it, in dealing with paronyms, English linguists have been more concerned with the study of malapropisms; Romanian linguists, on the other hand, have been more interested in the analysis of paronym structures as well as in the formulation of criteria underlying their well-sustained classifications.

Other confusables, such as lexical metaphors, homophones, homonyms, capitonyms, acronyms and backronyms are equally operative in both General English and English for Specific Purposes, but they have rarely constituted a research topic within the framework of translation studies.

3. A classification of paronyms

Paronyms, these "nearly similar" words, whose etymological roots are disregarded in the Romanian definitions, have been presented to differ from one another both phonetically and formally. Such features may suggest their possible classification to lie on the basis of phonetic and formal criteria. In terms of already established classifications, things appear to suggest polarities, with sophisticated representations in some authors' view and rather simplistic in some others'. For example, while Moroianu (26–8) distinguishes eight comprehensive typologies of paronyms, with further attached ramifications, Constantinescu (4–11) illustrates nine categories also sustained by their subclasses of paronyms. Contrary to them, Melniciuc (148–9) and Felecan (344) are more restrictive. They admit only three smaller webs within this apparently wide web. These classifications hardly share a feature in common as each is constructed on its own criteria. For example, Melniciuc (idem) applies the etymological principle and separates them into:

(1) (proper) *paronyms*, which are word pairs sharing the same root or radix
(2) *quasi-paronyms*, i.e. word pairs with a different radix
(3) *paronomasia*, which is linguistically admitted as a figure of style

In turn, Felecan (337) applies the phonetic principle and groups paronyms into three large categories. Starting from his principle, our selected English examples complement the Romanian sets of paronyms and they are illustrative of the theoretical specifications accounting for the classification below which distinguishes:

(1) words which have the same number of phonemes distributed differently in word pairs, e.g.: *casual* versus *causal*, *cazual* versus *cauzal*, or *lair* versus *liar* and *bard* (bard) versus *brad* (fir-tree)
(2) words with correlative or non-correlative vocalic or consonant phonemes, of the type *adapt* versus *adopt*, *cat* versus *cap*, or *adaptare* versus *adoptare*, and *potecă* (path) versus *bodegă* (bodega)
(3) word pairs with an element showing phonemic additions, e.g.: *lot* versus *plot* or *sip*

BDD-A29381 © 2019 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 17:00:00 UTC)

versus *slip* or *rod* (fruit) versus *irod* (a culture specific element, i.e. a name for any child who dressed in special costume goes visiting relatives and friends to sing them Christmas carols) and *marotă* versus *marmotă*

The Russian school of lexicology also distinguishes only three sets of paronyms, i.e. the *literal*, the *sound*, and finally the *morphemic paronyms*, which are the "paronyms proper" (Bolshakov and Gelbukh).

Our mapping of paronyms has elements which have been selected from several models (Bolshakov and Gelbukh; Minuț; Constantinescu), and have been so arranged as to facilitate our comparative framework and the distinctions between:

(1) paronyms proper (or literal paronyms):

(a) these are the word pairs whose equal number of phonemes are distributed differently and which are hardly related etymologically, as it is the case with:

English, e.g.:

causal – casual
liar – lair
molar – moral

Romanian, e.g.:

cauzal – casual
gard – grad
bard – brad
a scurma – a scruma

(b) with (non-)correlative vocalic or consonant phonemes:

English, e.g.:

familiar – familial
corn – horn
plot – blot
log – leg
cell – bell
adapt – adopt
cap – cup
glass – grass
glass – gloss
gape – gate

Romanian, e.g.:

hangar – hanger
mocan – motan
hurtă – iurtă
haram – harem
haldă – holdă
familial – familiar
adapta – adopta
originar – original
izvor – izvod
focar – focal
fiară – fiere

BDD-A29381 © 2019 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 17:00:00 UTC)

a zări – a zori

(c) the proclitic addition of a vowel, a consonant, or a diphthong:
English, e.g.:
lot – plot
eel – reel
mall – small
nail – snail
tool – stool
lip – slip
gape – grape
crew – screw
Romanian, e.g.:
radiere – iradiere
arcă – barcă
restanţă – prestanţă
rudă – trudă
port – sport
urnă – gurnă
urmă – turmă
ochi – deochi

(d) the enclitic addition of a vowel, a consonant, or a diphthong:
English, e.g.:
fat – fate
cap – cape
mat – mate
hat - hate
gap – gape
complain – complaint
Romanian, e.g.:
cal – cală
banc – bancă
parc – parcă
fascicul – fasciculă
tur – tură
sold – soldă
fior – fiord
var - vară
(e) the insertion of a vowel, a diphthong or a consonant:
English, e.g.:
cause – clause
horse – hoarse
diner – dinner
sip – slip
fiction – friction
sand – stand
Romanian, e.g.:
cor – clor

BDD-A29381 © 2019 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 17:00:00 UTC)

stop – strop
pod – plod
vagă – vlagă
mere – miere

A few instances have been identified where Romanian paronymy is related not only to members of the same lexical class but also to words pertaining to different classes:

adjectiv/adverb - noun:
ha´ină – ´haină
penal – penar
galant – garant

(2)sound paronyms are functional in English only, and they distinguish the following different couple of paronyms:
(a) with different phonemes
human /humən/ – *humane* /hu´mein/
rational /ræʃnəl/ – *rationale* /ræʃ´neil/
moral /morəl/ – *morale* /mo´reil/
champaigne /ʃæm´pein / – *champaign* /ʃæm´pa:n/

(b) with different stress distributions

re´fer – ´reefer

(c) with different phonemes and different stress distributions
discrete /di´skri:t/ – *discreet* /dis´kri:t/
desert /´dezərt/ – *dessert* /di´zə:rt/
cască /´kaskə/ [helmet] – a *căsca* /a kəs´ka/ [to yawn]

(3) morphemic paronyms
(a) with different prefixes

English, e.g.:
precede – proceed
presume – resume
inhume – exhume
import – export
Romanian, e.g.:
a proceda – a precede
a precede – a purcede
a preleva – a releva
a prezuma – a rezuma

(b) with different suffixes

English, e.g.:
sensitive – sensible
extensive – extensible
responsive - responsible

BDD-A29381 © 2019 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 17:00:00 UTC)

rational - rationale

Romanian, e.g.:

obligație – obligațiune
atenție – atențiune
funcție – funcțiune
extensie – extensiune

It is obvious that both English and Romanian have a wealth of confusing words, and the paronyms in the foregoing do not exhaust the topic. The distribution of paronyms in the above-mentioned categories mainly considered those pairs of words which pertain to one and the same lexical class, matching nouns to nouns, adjectives to adjectives, and the like. This was purposefully done, for in the use of either English or Romanian as a foreign language, confusions occur in the case of words with the same grammatical regimen. Such confusions may as well be the result of other types of words not only of paronymy.

4. Miscellaneous confusables

Homophones or the words which share an identical pronunciation but have different significations are more frequently functional in everyday language. Nevertheless, very few of them have their match in English for Shipbuilding Purposes. They would not represent a source of difficulty in translation which is a written activity; they will only matter in interpretive activities when they could be mistaken for their pairs.

Homonyms, i.e. words with different etymologies and hardly related meanings will also be considered in the current approach. Unlike homophones which may be harmless to an inexperienced translator, homonyms may produce serious consequences once they are also mistaken for their pairs.

Capitonyms as well as backronyms are categories of words rarely mentioned in the lexicological and terminological descriptions of the English language and they have not been considered at all in studies exploring the Romanian vocabulary and its classes of words. Few lexicographic works describe capitonyms, a ramification of homonyms actually, which also sound identical and are related neither semantically nor etymologically. Capitonyms are those (couples of) words whose one member is always spelt with capital letter while the other is as a rule written with small letters. Backronyms are also a ramification of the more popular abbreviations, whose forms appear to be identical with those of ordinary lexemes but which are actually abbreviations. They are a common practice in everyday language, but few of them have been identified to envisage identical representations within the shipbuilding vocabulary. The members of these categories of words have a low frequency of occurrence, but it takes very little to misuse them and distort a text in the translation process. That explains why thorough knowledge of word typologies and their relationships stand as supreme musts in the practice of translation in general and the translation of specialized texts, in particular. When this is not the case, confusions become more obvious in the written text than in conversational habits.

5. English paronyms and other confusables in shipbuilding and maritime texts and contexts

5.1. Paronyms

This collection of paronyms and other confusables is a compilation of elements manually extracted from dictionaries, glossaries and lexicons. It was intended for illustrative purposes only, with the well-defined aim of demonstrating aspects of the hidden complexity of the professional language in general, and the shipbuilding and maritime terminologies, in

BDD-A29381 © 2019 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 17:00:00 UTC)

particular. The search for relevant data in lexicographic works also started from Halliday's conviction that

> the best source of information about lexicology is the dictionary or thesaurus itself. […] You can consult dictionaries, to find out the meanings and usage of a particular word or phrase; and you can read them, dipping in at random or wherever your fancy takes you. They can be unexpectedly entertaining (Halliday et al. 20-21).

The common nouns or the verbs in such couples of words as *oak* and *oakum*, *chalk* and *caulk*, *chalk* and *chock*, *hobbler* and *cobbler*, *basket* and *gasket*, *birth* and *girth*, *beacon* and *bacon*, *caulk* and *chock*, *galley* and *galliot*, *camber* and *chamber*, *limber* and *timber*, *Jack ladder* and *Jacob's ladder*, *wench* and *wrench*, *wrench* and *winch*, together with *brim* and *trim*, *stoop* and *sloop*, *coin* and *coil*, *peer* and *pier* are so slightly different in spelling and pronunciation that they can be very easily interchanged in the translation process. Nevertheless, to consider just one such pair as *wrench* and *winch* would suffice to suggest the awkwardness of an erroneous translation. While *wrench* is, among many other things, "a spanner, especially one with adjustable jaws" (C.E.D. 1740), a winch "is a wind-lass driven by a hand- or power-operated crank" (C.E.D. 1745).

Thus, although a hypothetical exercise for it has not been recorded anywhere, the translation below emphasizes the role of sound knowledge of paronyms in the mutation of a text from one language into another. The harmless *wrench* has been substituted in the target language text with *vinci*, also a device on board a ship, but whose destination is quite different from that of a wrench and so is its weight.

(1a) Never place *wrenches* or other tools where they may fall – think of the men below you.	(1b) Nu plasați *vinciurile* sau orice alte scule în locuri de unde ar putea cădea – gândiți-vă la oamenii care lucrează dedesubt.

To a translator working in the isolation of his/her office, such a slight confusion would mean very little, if almost nothing at all, but professionals who work directly with such tools and instruments on board the vessel, would certainly question the quality of the whole translation. Things would be exactly as catastrophic if a Romanian text would include another confusion involving the same word, *wrench*. Imagine the meaning of the sentence under (1a) where an instruction would appear with only this following substitution:

(2) Never place *wenches* or other tools where they may fall – think of the men below you.

Using *wench* for *wrench* would be hilarious, if not embarrassing. And also hilarious if not embarrassing would be a metaphor like *hooker*, which is just the name of a special type of fishing boat.

A particular case of paronymy is represented by the word *cavitation* which is a translation fork, i.e. it has two Romanian equivalents: *cavitate* and *cavitație*, the latter translating the shipbuilding meaning; within this terminology it denotes "the formation of partial vaccums in a flowing liquid as a result of a separation of its parts". i.e. aeration of the liquid.

Only one pair of paronyms with different endings was recorded with *aquittance* vs *aquittal*. While *acquittance* is "a written receipt in full, in discharge from all claims" (C.E.D.

BDD-A29381 © 2019 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 17:00:00 UTC)

13), *acquittal* is "the deliverance and release of a person appearing before a court on a charge of crime, as by a finding of not guilty" (C.E.D. 13).

5.2. Lexical metaphors

Lexical metaphors are so rare in everyday vocabulary that for quite some time I was fully convinced that specialists had better avoid them in their lexicological approaches. Nonetheless, a closer examination of the terminology used in the field of shipbuilding has evidenced that it benefits from numerous such metaphors. For a first example, the common noun *fiddle* denotes in the shipbuilding terminology "a small rail on tables and counters used to keep objects from sliding off when the vessel rolls and pitches" (D.N.T. 36).

Most of the metaphors are hard to confuse for they have neither similar matching solutions nor do they fit their context as they are denotatively used as parts of the human body; this is the case with *backbone*, which denotes "the ridge rope of the awning in" (Bibicescu et al 52), *eye*, which is "a loop or hole which is spliced or tied on the end of a line" (D.N.T. 35), and *jaw*, which is "the distance a rope's adjacent strands, giving a measure of the tightness of the lay" (D.N.T. 47). *Skin* is also part of the human body which has migrated to the shipbuilding vocabulary name for the plating of a ship (D.N.T. 73).

Other parts of the human face which are used as shipbuilding metaphors include *eyebrow* or the *brow* (Bibicescu et al. 252), which is "the rigol or the rim above a port-hole or scuttle", the *eye of the wind* the metaphor which appears to express the direction from which the wind is blowing (D.N.T. 35), *eyes of the ship* or *eye tackle* (Bibicescu et al. 252). A different genitival construction is *crow's nest* translated into Romanian also with a genitival construction *cuibul corbului* and a one-word equivalent, *gabie* (Bibicescu et al. 168).

Other metaphors may be deceiving to a translator for they behave as idioms rather than lexical metaphors. Of the numerous examples, our selection include such as examples as *a fisherman's bend* which is "an anchor bend" (Bibicescu et al. 263), *monkey bridge* or *monkey island* which are other denominations for "the fore and aft bridge", while the *monkey forecastle* is another name for "the forecastle deck" (Bibicescu et al. 455). A *mud pilot* is not a pilot dirty with or full of mud but a hobbling pilot or a hobbler, i.e. a pilot who has not a licence and holds a job just occasionally (Bibicescu et al. 462). A *nucleus crew* is a *skeleton crew* (Bibicescu et al. 479) or a functional crew consisting of the minimal number of persons, officers and sailors especially trained to operate the ship during test trials. To come to a close, an interesting metaphor is a *pacific iron* which has another metaphor as a synonym, i.e. *gooseneck*; they are both names for a stopper intended to fasten the lower end of a derrick to a pad (Bibicescu et al. 299). Finally, an *ocean greyhound* is an ocean flyer or ships travelling at high speeds (Bibicescu et al. 480) and not a greyhound living in an underwater environment. These metaphors do represent sources of error in translation but, to make things even more complicated, there have been recorded a few metaphors which are easily confusable because of their phonetic features or because of their altered meanings.

The common noun *collar* has been adopted as a lexical metaphor; *collar* is phonetically related to the word *collier* for only their final syllables slightly differ in pronunciation. The former is the denomination of "a flanged band or rig" while the latter denotes both "a vessel designer to carry cargoes of coal" (McBride 316) and a "member of the crew of such a vessel". In everyday language *collier* was another word for a coal miner (C.E.D. 316). *Old Man* is also a lexical metaphor denoting "a rig for holding a drill" (McBride 334) and not an elderly person. Scotchman is used in this professional language to denote: 1) Piece of wood or metal placed over those parts of Yard or Mast which show signs of cracking. 2) Similar pieces of wood or stiff leather which are attached to standing rigging to prevent chafing on metal parts.

BDD-A29381 © 2019 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 17:00:00 UTC)

Binomials or set phrases consisting of two elements may appear either as associations of words belonging to the same or to different lexical classes. For the first category of lexical associations, determiners in compound nouns which may sometimes be confusing will be illustrated. Thus, while General English works with the syntagm *Aladdin's lamp*, whose meaning needs no mention, in the shipbuilding terminology Aladdin is the determiner for the noun cleat in *Aladdin cleat*, and together they denote "a cleat that attaches to the backstay over the cockpit, usually used for hanging a lantern" (D.N.T. 11) and the common noun *lamp* collocates with *Aldis* to name a "handheld electric lamp with a finger operated shutter used for the sending of signals at sea" (D.N.T. 11). For the second category, an adjective determines a noun, such as bitter end (which is "the last part of a rope or final link of a chain" (D.N.T. 18). Other structurally identical binomials may join together personal names in the nominative with common words, wherein either element may be the noun head or the determiner. For example, in the binomial *Charley noble* the personal name is the determiner; this is another name for the galleys smokestack or chimney (D.N.T. 25). For the other case, a personal name/common word may be illustrated with the association of adjectives determining personal names. *Black Jack* may either be (1) the flag of pirates or (2) the name given by sailors to the bubonic plague; the structurally-similar binomial *blue Peter* is also the name of a flag "signaling that a ship is about to sail and that all should report on board" (D.N.T. 18).

Ethnonyms rarely appear in binomial patterns, but two of them were included in our corpus, i.e. Flemish in *Flemish horse* and this is "the short foot rope at the end of a yard at the outer corner of a square sail used when reefing or furling" (D.N.T. 37) and Irish in *Irish pennants* which is the denominative of "the loose ends of line left hanging over a ship's side" (D.N.T. 46)

5.3. Acronyms and other confusable onyms

Confusable acronyms include two sorts of couples, i.e. (a) those which consist of two abbreviated paronyms and (b) those which consist of an abbreviation and a common word. Within the former group, in addition to abbreviations without any punctuation, such as *NEC* (< Not Elsewhere Classified) and *NES* (< Not Elsewhere Specified), there have also been identified cases where the acronyms differ in punctuation. Thus, the alphabetisms *I.T.* (< Immediate Transport or "In Transit" Entry) is easily confusable with its punctuation-free equivalent *IT* (< information technology) and so are *A.I.D.* (< Agency for International Development) and *AID* (< acute infectious disease). The latter group of translation-error triggers joins together such words as NOR (< Notice of Readiness) and nor (the coordinating conjunction), *SPA* (< Subject to Particular Average) and *spa*, *LASH* (< Lighter Aboard Ship) and *lash* (to tie down cargo).

Of the group of capitonyms, our selection will bring to the foreground the examples of the well-known *Moor*, the ethnonym comparable with *moor*, the verb which means to secure (a ship, boat, etc.) with cables or ropes" (C.E.D. 1009), and of the less quoted pair associating *Louvre*, the name of the famous French museum, with the common noun *louvre*, which is "an opening in a door or bulkhead, with sloped shutter plates to prevent observation and also serving to ventilate the compartment inside" (McBride 332). Also peculiar to shipbuilding are the following capitonyms:

(a) the common noun *becket* denoting (1) a loop or eye made in the end of a rope or wire and (2) a rope handle and *Becket*, the English family name
(b) *jack* – another word for a sailor and *Jack*, a male name.

Backronyms are less familiar in the vocabulary of shipbuilding, and thus only the acronym *PASS* (< Personal Alert Safety System) which consists of the same letters like the

BDD-A29381 © 2019 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 17:00:00 UTC)

verb to pass, but is spelt in capitals and *POSH* (< Port Out Starboard Home) (D.N.T. 63), which coincides with the adjective *posh*.

6. Identification of Romanian paronyms in specialized texts

The issue of identifying paronyms within a professional language is a skill as complex and difficult as time-consuming; to master it takes time and dedication, interest in individual study as well as counselling from a specialist in the field. As a professional translator myself, I had to comprehend and successfully use the shipbuilding terminology to be able to mediate between English and Romanian texts in this field. It was neither a simple and methodical work to do nor an individual or continual enterprise. Steady and continuous documentation, access to lexicons and terminology, visits in the yard workshops, departments and stores constituted to the outlining of what shipbuilding meant, not only from the linguistic viewpoint but from its actual matter-of-course.

In its way, the shipbuilding vocabulary is unique: its highly specialized terms have hardly ever migrated from the shipyard to other fields, as things have happened with words from mathematics, anatomy, physics, chemistry, architecture, engineering, etc. For a few examples, *theorem*, *lemma*, *fascia*, *sarcoma*, *inertia*, *centrifugal*, *oxidation*, *atlantes*, *o-ring*, *chassis* as well as their Romanian equivalents are familiar enough to the layman. But a Romanian word like *marangozie*, in the syntagm *atelier de marangozie* would hardly find any relationship with the job of wood worker. Another example of highly specialized term is *pituri*, the shipbuilding term for *paints*, which functions both as a verb and as a noun, is frequent in the syntagm *magazie de pituri*, the name of the compartment in any Romanian shipyard where paints are stored.

In addition to these highly specific terms, the shipbuilding vocabulary contains a large number of easily confusing words. Several sorts of such pairs have been identified within the shipbuilding terminology. Their confusing character results from their homonymic pairs, orthographic particularities, metaphoric use, from the formal identity of ordinary words and acronyms, etc.

As a first example, the couple of nouns *caic* and *caiac* associates two words which are related with boats. Despite their phonetic resemblance, the two boats are very different from each other in construction, destination, operation, equipment and exploitation. In addition, each of them holds a definite interval on the timeline of boats history and originates in opposite parts of the world, as compared to Romania. The Romanian *caic* is a word of Turkish origin and it was initially used to denominate any kind of small boat on board a galley, and it was borrowed in Romanian with a similar usage, namely that of any flat ships used for warfare or piracy purposes. When it was adopted and used in Romanian during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, its original sense underwent an amelioration of meaning, being a denominative of any battleship at work in the waters of the Black Sea and Levant. During the reign of Constantin Brâncoveanu, it was the generic name of the boat used for protective and guarding activities on the Danube (Bejan et al. 89). In opposition with *caic, caiac* or *kayak* is the name of a tiny boat first used by the Aleut and Eskimo for hunting and fishing practices (idem). It is also used to name a replica used for sportive contests, which has nothing to do with commercial boats. Now that the distinctive features of both types of boats is clear, it is not so very difficult to understand the source language typesetting error and its translational consequence, as evidenced in the excerpt below:

(3a) De-a lungul existenței sale șantierul a livrat atât nave militare (fregate, canoniere, galioane, ***șeici***,	(3b) Throughout its existence, the shipyard produced both military ships (frigates, gunboats, galleys, ***light vessels***,

BDD-A29381 © 2019 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 17:00:00 UTC)

tombazuri) cât și nave comerciale (caravele, ***caiace***).	pontoons) and commercial ships (caravels and ***kayaks***).

A word-for-word analysis of the source and target language texts will reveal several interesting aspects regarding the quality of both texts. The source language text is not very difficult in terms of syntactic or phraseological units, but it still requires knowledge of highly specialized vocabulary. The enumeration of several types of military ships may bring an element difficulty and confusion triggered by the presence of the plural noun *șeici* which is both orthographically and phonetically confusing. It is identical with the plural form *șeici* a word which denotes a certain rank in Arabian hierarchy, for example "the head of an Arabian tribe or ruler of an Arabian stately formation" (Oprea et al. 1450). That the term was confusing to the translator is more than obvious: its English equivalent is avoided in the target language text, being replaced by the syntagm *light vessels*. At a first glance, this is a regular case of homonymy as the word in point has two different origins and two different meanings. The etymology of the word *șeic* distinguishes between the Turkish *șeyh*, the rank in the Arabian world, and the Russian word *ceaika* meaning "seagull", and which is used in Romanian to denominate a special type of light vessel used between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the Black Sea area.

In addition to this, an error is noticeable in the source language text, when *caiace* is enumerated among the commercial ships. The computer operator may have simply misspelt the name of the boat, by the addition of just one more vowel. The inclusion of the name among the commercial ships is indicative of the terminological error as *kayaks* have no connection whatsoever with trading activities. This enumeration only could have sufficed to notice the misplacement of type of boat against the background of the whole text.

7. Conclusions

The article focused on lexical aspects of both a theoretical and practical nature which may account for errors in the translation process and its final product. The sources of translation errors which were discussed and illustrated had their origins tracked in terms, lexemes and binomial constructions words which sound confusable. In addition a few common words which migrated from the general stock to the specialized vocabulary after undergoing a specialization of meaning were arguably analyzed. Unlike other specialist fields whose terminology is thoroughly described and accurately defined in glossaries and dictionaries, such as the medical terminology, the fields of shipbuilding and maritime activities still request conscientious individual study and personally devised translation memories and glossaries as well as lexical cards and annotations to preserve each of the terminological observations, notes or discoveries in an orderly and thoughtful manner. The scanning of the available lexicographical instruments evinced the presence of an overwhelming sum total of (lexical) metaphors. They are so abundant that they outnumber the paronyms and other confusables. In addition, metaphors have a structural typology of their own, which requires clear and helpful classifications and envisages further in-depth study.

WORKS CITED

Al-Hussini Arab, Mohammad, Hasan Hesham. *Dictionary of Lexicography*. Banha University, Faculty of Arts, 2010-2011, http://olc.bu.edu.eg/olc/images/fart/225.pdf

Bibicescu, Gh. et al. *Lexicon maritim englez-român*. București: Editura Științifică, 1971.

Bidu-Vrănceanu, Angela et al. *Dicționar de științe ale limbii.* București: Nemira, 2001.

BDD-A29381 © 2019 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 17:00:00 UTC)

Bolshakov, Igor, Alexander Gelbukh. "Paronyms for Accelerated Correction of Semantic Errors." *International Journal "Information Theories & Applications"* 10 (2003): 198-204.

Bussmann, Hadumod. *The Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*, translated and edited by Gregory Trauth and Kerstin Kazzazi, London and New York: Routledge, 2006.

Constantinescu, Silviu. *Dicționar de paronime.* Pitești, Herra, 2017.

Crystal, David. *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, 6th edition. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008.

Cuddon, J. A. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. London: Penguin Books, 1998.

Felecan, Nicolae. *Dicționar de paronime*. București: Editura Vox Cart, 2004.

Halliday, M.A.K. et al. *Lexicology and Corpus Linguistics. An Introduction*. London and New York: Continuum, 2004.

Hristea, Teodor. "Paronimia și importanța ei în procesul de predare a limbii române" *Revista Pedagogică*, 2 (1972): 49.

McArthur, Thomas (ed.). *The Oxford Companion to the English Language*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

McBride, James Douglas. *A Handbook of Practical Shipbuilding* 2nd edition revised and enlarged, New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1921.

Melniciuc, Ion. "Probleme controversate al paronimiei." *Limbaje și comunicare*, Iași: Ed. Institutul European (1997): 145-150.

Minuț, Ana-Maria. "Aspecte controversate ale paronimiei." *Analele Universității Al. I. Cuza Iași, Secțiunea III, Lingvistică* (2006): 127-131.

Moroianu, Cristian. "Paronimia etimologică în limba română." *Limbă și literatură* 50 (2005): 26-35.

Oprea, Ioan et al. *Noul dicționar universal al limbii române.* București, Chișinău: Editura Litera Internațional, 2006.

Popescu, Floriana. *A Paradigm of Comparative Lexicology*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019.

Popescu, Valentin. *O Istorie ilustrată a Șantierului /An Illustrated History of Our Shipyard*, Galați: Galleria Creative Shop, 2018.

Zugun, Petru. *Lexicologia limbii române.* Iaşi: Editura Tehnopress, 2000.

***** 1999. *Collins English Dictionary*. Millennium edition. Glasgow: HarperCollins Publishers (= C.E.D.).

***** *A Dictionary of Nautical Terms*, http://www.crosstree.info/Documents/Nauticalterms.pdf (= D.N.T.)

BDD-A29381 © 2019 Ovidius University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 17:00:00 UTC)