"MONSTRUOUS IDIOMS" - SCARY IDIOMS IN ROMANIAN TRANSLATION

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Abstract: An idiom is usually a group of words whose meaning will be peculiar and cannot be predicted from the meanings of the constituent words.From the translator's point of view, collocations and idioms belong to rather demanding text units, which often require a high level of linguistic, communicative, cultural and translational competence. In most cases when an idiom is translated, either its meaning is changed or it is meaningless.

Keywords: English- Romanian translation,metaphors in translation, phraseological value, collocations, idioms, formulas, traps, mot-a-mot, mother tongue, culture, local, teacher, student

There are estimated to be at least 25,000 idiomatic expressions in English, therefore the English- Romanian translator needs to be aware, and appreciative of their semantics (the difficulty with idioms being that their meaning is not deducible from that of the individual elements), their syntax (non-free and sometimes puzzling), their pragmatics (related to a variety of linguistic and textual circumstances, more specific of which can stem from conscious breach of the frozen syntax, the metaphorical quality of their meaning or culture-specific usage patterns) on both the source and the target languages of the English-to-Romanian translation process. In addition, a successful choice of an appropriate equivalent requires a well-founded translational decision as to the most relevant aspect(s) of the value of the phrase in question i.e. the aspect which should be matched in the translation, as well as an awareness of the various procedures that can be employed. The paper discusses translation equivalents of English collocations and idioms present in Romanian translations at the English class.

Examples would be:
Bookworm= şoarece de bibliotecă;
Copycat= imitator,
To have a sweet tooth= a se da în vânt după dulciuri;
A pain in the neck= o persoană agasantă;
To be on cloud nine- a fi în al noulea cer

These were translated by my students (from school) as:

Bookworm= vierme de carte
Copycat= pisică de copiat
To have a sweet tooth= a avea carii din cauza dulciurilor
A pain in the neck= o durere de gât
To be on cloud nine= Aladin pe norul numărul 9.
(Collocations taken from *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary)*

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I asked myself the question: Are there any patterns in the treatment of collocations and idioms in translation?

First of all, I found the following patterns :l students have the tendency of keeping **grammatical collocations** (noun/adjective/verb + preposition, or grammatical structure) the same in their translations (a *kiss on the cheek* will be translated as *pupic pe obrajii cuiva*), as well as l**exica**l **collocations** will be translated keepig the original structure as much as possible:

Adjective+noun, a *promising beginning= un început promiţător,* Noun+noun,*Slave labour= muncă pentru sclavi,* Noun+characteristic action, *Bees buzz= albinele bâzâie,* Verb +characteristic object of its action, *To change gears= a schimba vitezele*

However, students, as well as teachers, show a growing tendency of irresponsible translations in what the moment we introduce idioms into the classroom, based on their instincts more than on their well founded research. This fact might not surprise us, instead we could laugh at it, as it presents itself as source of ridiculous incidents.

Idiom	**Literal translation in Romanian**	**Meaning**
A bee in my bonnet	O albină in pălărie	A problem on my mind
Have a bone to pick with you	Am de ros un os cu tine	Have a discussion with you/ have a complaint against you
Open up a whole new can of worms	A deschide o întreagă nouă cutie cu viermi	Expose a lot of serious problems
An arm and a leg	O mână şi un picior	Very expensive
Baker's dozen	Duzina brutarului	Thirteen
Finding your feet	A-ţi găsi picioarele	To become more comfortable in whatever you are doing
Funny farm	Ferma de glumeţi	A mental institutional facility
Graveyard shift	Schimbul groparului	Working hours from about 12:00 am to 8:00 am
Lend me your ear	Împrumută-mi urechea ta	To politely ask for someone's full attention
No room to swing a cat	Nu e loc nici sa învârţi o pisică	An unsually small or confined space

Let us imagine what a so called"instinctive translator" would visualize when they meet the following idioms:

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Hand in glove
Hangover
To rub elbows
To have skeletons in the closet
To dig somebody
Eager beaver
Like something the cat dragged it
To chicken out of something
A dog's breakfast
An elephant in the room
To drink like a fish
Snail mail
Paper tiger
Cold turkey

My students gave me an approximate translation in pictures for these idioms. They transposed the literal translations into visuals, making them extremely alluring and funny. I must tell you, I laughed in tears.

It is difficult for Romanian native speakers to master English idioms,because the figurative meanings of English idioms cannot be predicted through an analysis of their individual word meanings. It is not surprising, "The trouble (...) is that they take everything Americans say literally" (Buchwald, 2000, p. 104). However, idioms are common in American daily life and provide a rich source of American culture (Cooper, 1999). Nippold and Martin (1989) stressed, "Failure to grasp the meanings of idioms can impinge upon an individual's understanding of language in social, academic, and vocational settings" (p. 59). The same happens in cases when one doesn't understand idioms in their mother tongue, only this time, it might constitute a huge hurdle in grasping the sophistication of different social situations.

Consider for a second what one can visualize coming across Romanian idioms as the following:

Las-o baltă= forget about it
e fumată= it's worn out (about an expression, a reaction)
dă-i din bascheţi= step on it/ move faster
nu mă aburi= don't try to fool me
sunt cotoi bătrân= I'm a deep-rooted man(i.e. old and wise)
Valea=go away
eşti un pămpălău=you're a wimp (funny word)
a-i trage ţeapă= to trick/to cheat smb.
A se cafti=to fight (funny)
Eşti marfă! =you're hot! (old slang)
cară-te=get lost
a hali=to eat (funny)

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Students made a compilation of the best ones, and we realized why it is so difficult to learn and use these phrases- they simply don't make sense to us, struggling to grasp any meaning attached to them.

Strassman and O'Connell (2007) found that students are often able to discuss content, take notes, or create semantic maps for writing; however, they often do not use the new words or concepts taught in class. Thus, I use various effective activities for teaching English idioms to college, highschool or adult students in order that they can not only learn them effectively but also apply them practically.

Teaching Idioms in Contexts

Context in Learning Language

The role of context is central in language learning. It's common that students don't really understand the various meanings of new words in different contexts. That's why EFL students don't know how to apply the words they have learned practically in various contexts. It's fundamental for teachers to provide a rich context for students' language learning and practice. For instance, linguistic contextual information enhances adolescents' interpretation of idioms (Nippold & Martin, 1989). The contextual cues surrounding a particular word can help readers get that's meaning. In contrast, context-reduced language will be hard for readers to tolerate (Brown, 2001). Consequently, it's more effective for EFL students to learn language in meaningful contexts than learn isolated words through memorization and drilling.

Introducing English Idioms in Story Contexts

Stories have been popularly used to teach and entertain students in language learning. Interesting stories usually draw students' attention and easily make students absorbed in them. Since contextual information is significantly effective for aiding students' understanding English idioms, it is essential for EFL teachers to provide students with rich context. Thus, introducing English idioms within interesting stories can possibly help EFL students to understand and remember them better.

Teaching Idioms with Rich Illustrations

The Role of Illustrations in Reading

Although there is lingering debate regarding the effect of visuals on reading comprehension, some researchers claim that reading materials accompanied by visuals will be more comprehensible. For example, Scarcella and Oxford (1992) stressed that teachers need to illustrate key vocabulary effectively by showing pictures and diagrams so as to improve the ESL students' reading comprehension . Mayer (1999) found that words and pictures presented together helped students recall better than alone. It is efficient to provide interesting pictures to foster and reinforce vocabulary development. Consequently, visuals must be stimulating, interesting and motivating to students' comprehension and retention of reading.

Presenting English Idioms with Rich Illustrations

According to the effect of illustrations on reading, I collected English idioms in one sentence context. English idioms were presented with pictures to one class of 30 students while without pictures to the other class of 30 students. They were told that those phrases

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were English idioms first and then they were asked to translate them into Hungarian. I found that English idioms with illustrations could increase college students' idiom understanding better. Thus, it is effective to present English idioms accompanied by visual stimuli that clearly illustrates the idioms being taught.

Teaching Idioms with Group Discussion

Group Discussion in Reading Comprehension

Students' discussing what they read is a helpful strategy to increase their comprehension. Group talk can provide learners with rich opportunities to acquire social and linguistic knowledge necessary for understanding new texts they encounter (Freeman & Freeman, 1994). Klingner & Vaughn (2000) stressed that ESL students engaging in collaborative talk during content reading, they assisted one another in understanding the meaning of challenging words, getting the main ideas, and answering questions about what they read. As a result, group discussion appears to be an effective technique to enhance students' reading comprehension.

Applying Group Discussion in Understanding English Idioms

Students are likely to be passive learners when they receive lectures only in classrooms. On the contrary, small group discussion could stimulate students to be involved in the active process of constructing knowledge. Furthermore, during group discussions, students will learn from each other, whether consciously or unconsciously. Accordingly, I applied group discussion in students' active learning of English idioms before explaining the meaning of idioms to them. Students in group discussion could understand English idioms better than when they were introduced to English idioms within a story only. This demonstrated the significant effect of group talk on students' understanding of English idioms.

Teaching Idioms with Readers Theater

Readers' Theater in Reading

Readers Theater has been viewed as an interesting and motivating strategy that can provide readers with a legitimate reason to reread text and further improve their word recognition, reading fluency and reading comprehension. Researchers claim that Readers Theater offers a way to improve fluency and enhance comprehension (Bafile, 2003) as well as to create interest in and enthusiasm for learning (Ruddell, 1999). Even slow learners can benefit from Readers Theater because there is no memorization required and there is no risk for them at all. Apparently, Readers Theater provides enough opportunity for practice--repeated reading in language learning. This activity also enhances interaction opportunities with peers and makes the reading task more appealing than learning alone.

Applying Readers' Theater to Practice English Idioms

I used Readers Theater to help students practice English idioms in order to enhance students' retaining them. Class observation and students' interviews further revealed their positive attitudes, such as excitement toward the implementation of Readers Theater in reading classes. Moreover, students retained English idioms better by applying Readers

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Theater because it provided students with opportunities for idiom oral practice because of rereading scripts. Consequently, it is obvious to see that Readers' Theater has a significant effect on students' learning and retaining English idioms.

Teach Idioms with Retelling and Rewriting

Retelling in Reading

Retelling has been a good strategy to know how much students have learned and to increase their comprehension. Retelling activities can facilitate students' reading retrieval because the activities can encourage students to try to recall. Their recalling help teachers understand how much information their students have obtained. Older students can benefit from retelling stories because it allows students to learn to organize and describe events, which enhances reading comprehension.

Applying Retelling and Rewriting to Practice English Idioms

Since retelling activities are good techniques to facilitate students' reading retrieval, this motivates me to apply the activities in teaching English idioms. After I introduced the meanings of English idioms to my students, I asked my students in pairs to retell the content in their own words instead of the English idioms and to rewrite sentences provided in class by using English idioms. The retelling and rewriting activities provided students with more chances to be aware of the meanings of English idioms and be familiar with the English idioms they have just learned.

Teach English Idioms with Dialogue Writing and Role-Play

Dialogue Writing and Role-play in Reading

Dialogues can provide situations for students to practice ordinary conversation and offer students ample practice with basic speaking skills in context. Firstly, dialogues can be viewed as short plays and used for students to act out rather than simply read aloud. Moreover, the dialogues the students write function as basic communication at all levels (Scott & Ytreberg, 2000). In addition, putting pupils into pairs for the role-play in the daily dialogues is an effective way of oral practice for various ages and levels (Scott & Ytreberg, 2000). Nunan (2003) stressed that role-plays are also excellent activities for learners' speaking in the relatively safe environment of the classroom before they must do so in a real environment. Therefore, dialogues offer students opportunities to act out and practice oral skill before encountering the real world.

Applying English Idioms through Dialogue Writing and Role-play

Dialogues and role-play are useful written and oral activities so that I assigned my students in pairs to write one dialogue by using the English idioms introduced in class and then act out the dialogue out in the following class. Dialogue writing could motivate students to write without burden because of pair collaboration and role-play activity could help them remember the dialogue they wrote through repetitive practices. It was easier and more fun for them to remember English idioms because they shared and enjoyed learning English idioms with friends. Thus, dialogue writing and role-play are useful and interesting activities for students' meaningful and efficient drills.

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Conclusion

All in all, the use of idioms is an essential feature of a high level of proficiency in the English language, enabling non-native English speakers to convey a great deal of meaning while using very few words, adding colour to the language and increasing chances of academic success.

Since it is vital for EFL learners to learn English idioms in order to master English, it is important for EFL teachers to design various activities for students to use with English idioms and subsequently acquire them efficiently. Moreover, students learn better when they are provided with collaborative activities because they can interact with peers and share fun in learning. Finally, when teachers integrate listening, speaking, reading and writing activities together in teaching English idioms, students can be involved in the application of English idioms in four skills. Thus, it is effective to teach EFL learners English idiom when they are provided with various activities to practice and use English idioms in different contexts.

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