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Multi-word lexical units in Polish–Russian specialized translation

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Abstract

This article analyzes the significance of multi-word lexical units in translating specialized texts from Polish into Russian. These units, which are not classified as classical phraseological units, present a translation challenge as they are often not found in lexicographic sources. These multi-word units as specific elements of the structure of a specialized text in translation must be rendered as whole units using their functional equivalents. Furthermore, a comprehensive approach is essential, considering their semantic, grammatical, and stylistic features. The use of parallel texts is an important auxiliary tool for translators of specialized texts. This provides a rationale to the statement that clichéd phrases, not categorized as idioms or phraseological units, are to be recognized as linguistic units deserving attention within lexicography and translation studies.

Keywords

multi-word lexical units, specialized translation, Polish-Russian translation, translation lexicography

Wielowyrazowe jednostki językowe w polsko-rosyjskim przekładzie specjalistycznym

Abstrakt

Niniejszy artykuł poświęcony został roli wielowyrazowych jednostek językowych w przekładzie tekstów specjalistycznych w parze językowej polski – rosyjski. Jednostki te, nie zaliczane do frazeologizmów klasycznych, stanowią problem przekładu, gdyż z reguły nie są rejestrowane przez źródła leksykograficzne. Dane połączenia jako specyficzne elementy struktury tekstu specjalistycznego w tłumaczeniu należy odtworzać w całości, za pomocą funkcjonalnego odpowiednika. Po drugie, konieczne jest kompleksowe podejście i uwzględnienie zarówno cech semantycznych, jak i właściwości gramatycznych oraz stylistycznych badanych jednostek. Po trzecie, ważne jest korzystanie z tekstów paralelnych jako narzędzie pomocnicze w pracy tłumacza tekstów specjalistycznych. Autorka uzasadnia tezę, że utarte zwroty, nie zaliczane do idiomów, należy jednak uznać za jednostki językowe traktowane jako przedmiot przekładoznawstwa i leksykografii.

Słowa kluczowe

wielowyrazowe jednostki językowe, przekład specjalistyczny, przekład polsko-rosyjski, leksykografia przekładowa

1. Introduction

Linguists have long been captivated by the study of clichéd linguistic units, as evidenced by the plethora of scholarly works dedicated to exploring idioms, proverbs, sayings, and catchwords within scientific discourse (e.g. Chlebda 2005, Mokienko 2008, Stepanova 2008). However, this does not mean that the problems of phraseology have received an exhaustive explanation, as researchers continually discover new horizons and

witness the continual expansion of phraseology's boundaries. Nowadays, phraseological units include not only clichéd phrases, characterized by idiomaticity and semantic indivisibility – where the meaning transcends the sum of its parts – but also, in a broader sense, polylexemic formations (Mokienko 2008: 12). These formations, while more stable than free phrases, lack components with opaque semantics. The classification of such units as phraseological resources arises from their consistent composition, the capacity to signify a singular concept, and their high frequency of use in specific contexts, reflecting their reproducibility in a finished form. Examples of such formations retrieved from memory as ready-made linguistic units in typical communication situations include phrases like *food additive*, *nuclear reaction*, *subject index*, *personnel reduction*, *hand-to-hand combat*, *edged weapons*, *credit ability*, *cost of living*, *accounts receivable*, and *public opinion*.

It is worth emphasizing that clichéd phrases, as opposed to idioms in the narrow sense, constitute disproportionately more extensive resources than classical phraseological units. Almost every oral or written utterance consists of various reproducible verbal complexities, reflecting linguistic nuances and often, like classical idioms, not amenable to literal translation into another language. Therefore, we fully share Andrzej Bogusławski's opinion, who believes that reproducible polylexemic formations deserve special attention from lexicographers, and the search for analytical language units, which "count in the millions" is "practically the main task" of linguistics, "the central issue of linguistics" (Bogusławski 1989: 18–19).

2. Problems of Polish–Russian specialized translation

Multi-word lexical units are of particular importance in the context of specialized texts translation, being their characteristic feature. Due to the high degree of standardization of such texts, evident across all linguistic levels and the text's structure itself,

the translator's familiarity with these standard formulations becomes an indispensable element of professional competence.

Numerous works by Polish researchers delve into the intricacies of translating specialized texts, with a predominant focus on the Polish English translation (e.g. Jopek-Bosiacka 2006, Kielar 2003, Kierzkowska 2008, Pieńkos 2003). In terms of the Polish-Russian specialized translation, the series *Teoria i praktyka przekładu*, published by the University of Warmia and Mazury under the editorship of Iwona Anna NDiaye and Beata Jeglińska serves as a key resource. In particular, certain study guides address the issues of legal terminology, provide sample documents, and offer a brief glossary of terms (Obłakowska-Gałąnciak and Jeglińska 2001, NDiaye and Jeglińska 2011, 2012). In the context of the Polish-Russian specialized translation the works of Zoja Nowożenowa (2010, 2012) are to be considered, particularly those addressing the translation of clichéd units. Considering linguistic clichés as a translation issue, Zoja Nowożenowa notes that it is precisely the sphere of official-business communication that proves to be the most conservative in relation to fixed collocations. As the official-business realities they denote do not imply dynamic changes, they preserve a whole layer of fixed expressions in speech practice. (Novożenova 2012: 15–16). The issues of Polish-Russian translation are in the area of scientific interests of Tatiana Siniawska-Sujkowska. Particular attention should be paid to the text-functional model of special texts translation (2011, 2015).

A comprehensive analysis of these works leads to conclusion that specialized translation is a special type of translation activity, one of its primary challenges revolves around the transfer of multi-word units into another language. The literature on this subject highlights a notable scarcity of observations on set phrases that are not classified as classical phraseological units, underscoring a need for further development of approaches to their lexicographic description.

The following part of the paper will address some issues related to the translation of multi-word lexical units from Polish

into Russian in specialized texts, as well as propose possible solutions to them.

3. Multi-word lexical units in Polish–Russian lexicography

It is noteworthy that the absence of a multi-word lexical unit in a translation dictionary does not always cause difficulties in its conveyance in another language. For example, the Russian phrase *пищевая добавка* ‘food additive’ is not recorded either in the large Russian Polish dictionary edited by Jan Wawrzyńczyk (2020), or in other sources of Russian-Polish bilingual lexicography. However, finding the Polish equivalent – *dodatek do żywności* – would hardly be a difficult task for a translator. Conversely, challenges may surface when selecting the most precise match for phrases like *дебиторская задолженность* ‘accounts receivables’, *состав преступления* ‘corpus delicti’, *прибавочная стоимость* ‘surplus exchange value’, for which Polish translation dictionaries either do not provide equivalents or offer several options.

For instance, in the case of the terminological phrase *дебиторская задолженность* ‘accounts receivables’ the Russian Polish dictionary of economic vocabulary suggests the financial and legal term *wierzytelności* ‘receivables’ (Jochym-Kuszlikowa and Kossakowska 2009: 98) while the Russian-Polish trade dictionary proposes *zadłużenie należności* ‘receivables’ (Jochym-Kuszlikowa and Kossakowska 2007: 91). These variations underscore the nuanced decision-making process a translator may encounter in navigating the intricacies of specialized terminology. It is important to highlight that in dictionaries this compound term typically denotes a type of debt often paired with the term *accounts payable*. In the Russian-Polish dictionary of legal terminology the following pairs are presented: *дебиторская задолженность* – *należność / należności (przedsiębiorstwa)* ‘receivables’, *кредиторская задолженность* – *wierzytelność / wierzytalności (przedsiębiorstwa)* ‘account payable’ (Kuraczyk 2019: 81).

In the Russian Polish accounting dictionary: *дебиторская задолженность* – *należności* ‘receivables’, *środki w rozrachunkach* ‘funds in settlement’, *wierzytelności do ściągnięcia* ‘receivables to be collected’, *zadłużenie debetowe* ‘debit debt’; *кредиторская задолженность* – *wierzytelności, zobowiązania* ‘accounts payable’ (Kapusta 2017: 58). Similarly, in the Russian Polish economic dictionary: *дебиторская задолженность* – *należności* ‘receivables’, *środki w rozrachunkach* ‘funds in settlement’, *zadłużenie debetowe* ‘debit debt’, *wierzytelności do ściągnięcia* ‘receivables to be collected’ (Kapusta 2015: 111).

To determine the most accurate equivalent, it is worth looking up the definitions of these terminological phrases. According to the Great Russian Encyclopedia,

дебиторская задолженность – сумма задолженности в пользу хозяйствующего субъекта, представленная финансовыми обязательствами юридических и физических лиц в результате хозяйственных отношений, а также счета, причитающиеся к получению в связи с поставками в кредит или с оплатой в рассрочку.

Accounts receivables – the amount of debt in favor of a business entity, represented by financial obligations of legal entities and individuals as a result of economic relations, as well as accounts receivable in connection with supplies on credit or with payment in installments. (“Debitorskaâ zadolżennost”)

кредиторская задолженность – вид обязательств, характеризующих сумму долгов, причитающихся к уплате в пользу других лиц; денежные средства, временно привлечённые компанией и подлежащие возврату соответствующим физическим или юридическим лицам, т.е. тем, кто выдал кредит.

Accounts payable – a type of obligation defining the amount of debts due for payment in favor of other persons; funds temporarily attracted by the company and subject to return to the relevant individuals or legal entities, i.e. to those who issued the loan”. (“Kreditorskaâ zadolżennost”)

Indeed, these two concepts are opposed to each other. In Polish financial terminology, the contrasting terms are *należność* 'receivable' and *zobowiązanie* 'accounts payable', the former refers to the debt owed to the economic entity, while the latter signifies the entity's own debt. In the linguistic aspect, we can characterize the relationship between these terms as antonymous. On the other hand, the term *wierzytelność* 'receivable' is a hypernym in relation to the term *należność* 'receivable', since it represents a broader concept, namely, debt obligations expressed in any form, including non-monetary obligations, while the narrower concept of *należność* pertains specifically to the monetary forms of debt. These insights emerge from an analysis of Polish texts covering these concepts (e.g. *Należność a zobowiązanie w świetle prawa, należność*).

Based on the above, we can recommend the following pairs of equivalents for inclusion in lexicographic sources: *дебиторская задолженность* – *należność* 'accounts receivables', *кредиторская задолженность* – *zobowiązania* 'accounts payable'.

4. Selection of equivalents: an extralinguistic analysis and an interdisciplinary approach

The phrase *состав преступления* 'corpus delicti' is used as an official term in Russian regulatory documents. However, both the Criminal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation lack a specific definition for this concept. In legal discourse, this expression is usually understood as a set of legally established characteristics that qualify any action dangerous to society as a crime. In Kuznecov's extensive explanatory dictionary, this phrase is classified as a legal term and defined as *совокупность признаков общественно опасного действия, при наличии которых закон предусматривает уголовную ответственность* 'a set of signs of a socially dangerous action, the presence of which the law provides for criminal liability' (Kuznecov 2000: 967).

In Polish general lexicographical sources, various equivalents are found: *cechy przestępstwa*, *znamiona przestępstwa*, *struktura przestępstwa* ‘features of the crime, signs of the crime, structure of the crime’. However, specialized Russian Polish dictionaries of legal terminology suggest the translation pair *состав преступления* ‘corpus delicti’ – *ustawowe znamiona przestępstwa* ‘statutory elements of a crime’ (see Kuratczyk 2019: 302, Zobek 2007). This is exactly the form we find in texts on legal theory:

- (1) Ustawowe znamiona przestępstwa – opisane w ustawie karnej cechy przestępstwa, które są konieczne (niezbędne) do uznania (zakwalifikowania) konkretnego czynu jako konkretne przestępstwo.

‘Statutory features of a crime – features of a crime described in a criminal statute that are necessary to recognize (qualify) a specific act as a specific crime’. (“Ustawowe znamiona przestępstwa”).

- (2) Ustawowe znamiona przestępstw

Są to cechy charakterystyczne czynu konieczne i wystarczające do uznania go za przestępstwo, pozwalające też odróżnić jedno przestępstwo od drugiego.

‘Statutory features of crimes – these are the characteristic features of an act that are necessary and sufficient to recognize it as a crime, which also allow to distinguish one crime from another.’

(Część ogólna kodeksu karnego)

- (3) Ustawowe znamiona wybranych przestępstw przeciwko życiu i zdrowiu

‘Statutory features of selected crimes against life and health’

(Przestępstwa i wykroczenia)

- (4) Ustawowe znamiona wybranych przestępstw wojskowych

‘Statutory features of selected military crimes’

Given the considerations mentioned above, we conclude that it is reasonable to recommend *состав преступления* ‘corpus delicti’ – *ustawowe znamiona przestępstwa* as a pair of equivalent units.

As for the compound economic term *прибавочная стоимость* ‘surplus exchange value’, bilingual general dictionaries offer two Polish equivalents: *wartość dodatkowa* ‘surplus value’ and *wartość dodana* ‘value added’. A closer examination of the definitions of these concepts in specialized dictionaries shows that Russian *добавленная стоимость* and Polish *wartość dodana* correspond to the English term *value added* denoting the difference between the market value of a product and the cost of its production. The phrase *прибавочная стоимость* correlates with the English term *surplus value*, as does the phrase *wartość dodatkowa*, emphasizing its significance as a key concept in Marxist theory. This concept specifically denotes the difference between the value of labor’s product and wages. Such comparison of definitions helps to establish translation pairs, considering the equivalence of the denoted concepts.

The search for the most accurate equivalents of multi-word lexical units requires checking explanatory terminological dictionaries, encyclopedias, reference materials, and educational literature related to specific subjects. Additionally, examining parallel texts with similar thematic focus aids in the translator’s endeavor. Jolanta Lubocha-Kruglik highlights the importance of extralinguistic analysis and an interdisciplinary approach, considering a translator’s dilemma of choosing an equivalent for a term with multiple correspondences in the target language, e.g. *akt oskarżenia* – *обвинительный акт* / *обвинительное заключение* ‘indictment’; *oskarżony* – *обвиняемый* / *подсудимый* ‘accused / defendant’, *подозреваемый* – *podejrzany* / *osoba podejrzana* ‘suspect’ (Lubocha-Kruglik 2013: 70–71).

5. Bilingual publications as a source of equivalents

Another fruitful method of searching for equivalents of multi-word lexical units in specialized texts involves exploring bilingual publications, an example of which is a series of translations of Polish laws into Russian, published by the publishing house C. H. Beck. In 2010, a bilingual Polish - Russian version of the Code of Business Partnerships and Societies (Polish: *Kodeks spółek handlowych*) appeared on the Polish publishing market. The translation by Denis Kędzierski was analyzed in the article by Teresa Zobek titled *Uwagi o przekładzie kodeksu spółek handlowych na język rosyjski. Aspekt terminologiczny* (*Comments on the translation of the Code of Business Partnerships and Societies into Russian. Terminological Aspect*). According to Zobek, the translator presented numerous successful translation solutions but did not always employ the appropriate translation strategy. Consequently, several terminological errors were identified (Zobek 2013: 62). This example underscores the significance of critically assessing the methods used in bilingual publications to ensure accurate translation.

Teresa Zobek noted that, unlike translators of European Union languages, who do have a common terminological base, translators of the Polish-Russian language pair do not have such a base at their disposal. According to the researcher, existing dictionaries are not complete or perfect; there is no systematic and consistent coordinating activity in the field of terminology at the state level. Therefore, translating legislative texts from Polish into Russian is particularly difficult, considering, both the differences in legal systems, and the relatedness of languages (Zobek 2013: 50).

In 2011, another bilingual volume in the series was published, featuring the original text of the Polish Goods and Services Tax Law (*Ustawa o podatku od towarów i usług*) and its translation into Russian by the same translator. The analysis of this work allows us to identify such shortcomings as the translation of a term using a unit that is not a term in the target language (*podróżni* 'travelers' – *перемещающиеся лица* 'people

on the move’, *usługodawca* – *услугода́тель* ‘service provider’), the transfer of several wordings through the same cliché, and the use of different translation options for the same term (*organ podatkowy* ‘tax authority’ / *urząd skarbowy* ‘tax office’ / *naczelnik urzędu skarbowego* ‘head of the tax office’ – *налоговый орган* ‘tax authority’, *siedziba* ‘headquarters’ – *юридический адрес* ‘registered address’ / *официальное местонахождение* ‘principal place of business’). Errors also include cases of word-for-word translation and calquing (*podmiot zagraniczny* – *заграничный субъект* ‘foreign entity’, *wartość handlowa* – *торговая стоимость* ‘trade value’, *zakres wyrobów* ‘product range’ – *объём изделий* ‘product volume’, *tytoń nieprzetworzony* – *табак непеработанный* ‘unprocessed tobacco’). Significant deviations from stylistic norms were observed, stemming from incorrect choices of translation options from two stylistically differentiated units, such as inappropriate word order, the use of inaccurate or unusual definitions and formulations for this type of text, as well as the free translation of scientific terms (*pozostałe napoje bezalkoholowe* ‘other non-alcoholic drinks’ – *остальные безалкогольные напитки* ‘other soft drinks’, *owoce oleiste* ‘oily fruits’ – *маслиновые плоды* ‘olive family fruits’, *cała krew ludzka* ‘whole human blood’ – *человеческая кровь в полном составе* ‘human blood in its entirety’).

Examining subject literature and reference sources helps to establish more accurate equivalents: *podróżni* – *иностранные туристы* ‘international travellers’, *usługodawca* – *поставщик услуги* ‘service provider’, *organ podatkowy* – *налоговый орган* ‘tax authority’, *urząd skarbowy* – *налоговое управление* ‘Inland Revenue’, *siedziba* – *место нахождения* ‘place of business’, *podmiot zagraniczny* – *иностранный субъект* ‘foreign entity’, *wartość handlowa* – *коммерческая стоимость* ‘commercial value’, *zakres wyrobów* – *ассортимент изделий* ‘product line’, *tytoń nieprzetworzony* – *табак необработанный* ‘unprocessed tobacco’, *pozostałe napoje bezalkoholowe* – *напитки безалкогольные прочие* ‘other non-alcoholic drinks’, *owoce oleiste* – *плоды масличных культур* ‘oilseeds fruits’, *cała krew ludzka* – *цельная кровь человека* ‘whole human blood’.

Among the shortcomings of this translation approach are further inaccuracies in the transfer of terminological nominations with the focus on objectivity. Errors in translating units of this group often lead to the creation of phonetic calques. For instance, the Polish unit *chleb świętojański* 'carob' listed among the goods was rendered as *свентоянский хлеб* 'svientoyansky (St.-John's-) bread', while the element of reality designated in Polish by the lexeme *chleb* 'bread' has nothing to do with bakery products. This phrase refers to the fruits of an evergreen plant of the legume family, known by its Latin name *Ceratonia siliqua*, which should have been used as *tertium comparationis*. In Russian, it corresponds to the following names: *рожковое дерево*, *цератония стручковая* "carob tree" и *цареградские стручки* 'carob beans', the first being the most common applied to the fruits, and therefore the equivalent of the Polish *chleb świętojański* is *плоды рожкового дерева*.

Despite the identified mistakes, the analyzed text undoubtedly represents valuable material for translation research. The translator made a significant contribution to the development of the terminological base in the field of Polish-Russian translation, having proposed several translation solutions that could be widely used in practice. Among the pairs of equivalents not found in dictionaries, the following can be identified: *rolnik* 'farmer' – *сельскохозяйственный товаропроизводитель* 'agricultural goods producer', *usługobiorca* 'service recipient' – *получатель услуги* 'service consumer', *państwo członkowskie* 'member state' – *государство-член ЕС* 'EU member state', *wewnątrzwspólnotowa dostawa towarów* – *поставка товаров внутри ЕС* 'intra-community delivery of goods', *wewnątrzwspólnotowe nabycie towarów* 'intra-community acquisition of goods' – *приобретение товаров внутри ЕС*, *numer PESEL* 'PESEL number' – *номер во Всеобщей электронной системе учёта населения* 'number in the Universal Electronic Population Registration System', etc.

6. The equivalence of multi-word lexical units

Thus, establishing equivalents of multi-word lexical units found in specialized texts requires the translator to have knowledge in the subject area and presents them with a challenging task of selecting appropriate lexical and grammatical means determined by the genre of the text as well as adherence to extralinguistic norms.

The analyzed translation correspondences confirm the thesis statement about the equivalence of units conveying the same information, irrespective of their status in the language system. The ability to designate the same element of reality forms the basis for establishing equivalence relations between units of different levels, i.e. words and phrases, e.g. *дебиторская задолженность* 'accounts receivables' – *należność*, *поставщик услуги* 'service provider' – *usługodawca*, *потребитель услуги* 'service consumer' – *usługobiorca*.

Moreover, when examining multi-word lexical units in two Slavic languages, the ability of these units to enter antonymic relations (*кредиторская задолженность* / *дебиторская задолженность* 'accounts payable / accounts receivables') brings them closer to words. Possessing other properties inherent in lexical units, such as reproducibility in finished form and constancy in structural and semantic terms, the multi-word lexical units discussed in this article should be objects of lexicographic description alongside individual words. Acting as translation units, these phrases hold particular significance for bilingual lexicography.

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