

Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis

Studia Anglica II (2012)

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LEXICALIZATION AND IDIOMATICITY OF ENGLISH FIXED EXPRESSIONS AND THEIR POLISH TRANSLATIONS

The focus of the article is semantic lexicalization that occurs as a follow-up to the formation of new phraseological expressions. In the course of some formal and semantic processes a word-formation syntagma loses its character of a complex word and becomes a single complete lexical unit. Conceptualization and the idiomatization of a phraseological expression are mental processes, embracing the acts of creating new concepts, context knowledge and extralinguistic experiences. The theoretical problem that the article tackles is whether English phraseological units and their foreign translations are lexicalized in the same way, taking into account the fact that the former appear in a language naturally due to onomasiological needs, whereas the latter are products of the borrowing process. The foreign translations in question are loan translations (Haugen 1950) and loan renditions (Weinreich 1953). The former are direct translations of foreign fixed expressions, e.g.

P. *strefa zero* or Sp. *zona cero* from E. *ground zero*;

P. *Pierwsza Dama* or G. *Erste Dame* or Sp. *Primera Dama* from E. *First Lady*

Sp. *rascacielos* or It. *grattaciello* or R. Rus. *небоскрѣб* from E. *skyscraper*

The latter are inexact translations of foreign fixed expressions, e.g.

P. *drapacz chmur* (lit. scraper of clouds) or G. *Wolkenkratzer* (lit. cloud scraper) from E. *skyscraper*;

P. *czarny koń* (lit. black horse) from E. *dark horse*;

Sp. *guardaespaldas* (lit. guard of sb's back) from E. *bodyguard*.¹

It is interesting to notice that various languages render the same concept in different ways; either English fixed expressions are translated and become loan translations (e.g. Sp. *comida rápida* from E. *fast food*) or they are imported and

¹ For more examples of English loan translations and renditions in Polish see Witalisz (2007), where over three hundred instances are listed.

become loanwords (e.g. P. or It. *fast food* from E. *fast food*). Occasionally, the two types of borrowings may co-exist in the receiving language (e.g. P. *szybkie jedzenie* and P. *fast food* from English *fast food*). If the foreign expressions are calqued, the translations are either exact or inexact, cf. the translated versions of E. *skyscraper*.

Lexicalization² is a process in the course of which a word that was once motivated begins to function as a non-motivated lexeme, i.e. it loses its structural and/or semantic transparency. This is due to either 1) phonetic changes or 2) the change of meaning of one of the elements or 3) the morphological process being no longer productive. A broad definition of lexicalization, which is both a formal and semantic process, sees it as “the phenomenon that lexical items acquire unpredictable properties” (Booij 2007: 316). The properties reflect various levels of language organization, phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic. Hence, in his discussion of the process, Bauer (1983) proposes five categories of the process including also mixed lexicalization. Some linguists, on the other hand, argue that lexicalization is chiefly a semantic process, in the course of which “the originally complex word loses its compositional meaning and gradually becomes an arbitrary sign” (Bakken 2006: 107; Bakken 1998: 61–124), and that the formal idiosyncrasies that occur are of secondary importance.

In our discussion of loan translations and renditions we are chiefly interested in semantic lexicalization, since the much different formal patterns of English and Polish seem to exclude any possibility of the identity of the formal types of lexicalization. This, however, is a guess and in need of further research. If we consider for example syntactic lexicalization, illustrated by English exocentric compounds such as *pickpocket* or *telltale*, composed of a verbal stem and a noun which may function as the direct object of that verb (Bauer 1983), we find no loan translations or renditions in Polish, so there is no ground for comparison. Phonological lexicalization, on the other hand, could be analysed in respect to English compound words which are differentiated from phrases by a different distribution of stress patterns. As for semantic lexicalization, there have been several interpretations of the phenomenon offered in the literature, which only proves its complex and non-unified nature. Bauer (1983) doubts whether any of these proposals is comprehensive and entirely satisfactory. Generally it could be said that the process of semantic lexicalization involves the loss of semantic transparency by complex words, which results in their non-compositionality.

² The term “lexicalization” has been used in linguistic studies in various senses. Lexicalization might be understood as pertaining to conceptualization in the sense that “concepts, which are expressed by a lexical form, may be described as «lexicalized»” (Bakken 2006: 106). On the other hand, lexicalization is discussed in relation to grammaticalization and the two processes are said to either contrast (Lehmann 1989) or complement each other (Moreno Cabrera 1998). Moreover, the way in which the term “lexicalization” is defined and used depends on the various theories of the lexicon proposed by generativists or cognitivists. In general, it can be said that studies in lexicalization focus on the principles (other than productive word-formation rules) according to which the newly-coined complex words develop (Bakken 2006: 107).

Non-compositional³ are expressions which “cannot be interpreted on a word-for-word basis, but [have] a specialized unitary meaning” (Moon 1997: 44). Lipka (1977 after Bauer 1983) offers a diachronic approach and differentiates between semantic lexicalization brought about by extra- and intralinguistic changes, i.e. changes either in the cultural background (e.g. G. *Schreibfeder* or P. *pióro* “pen”; lit. “feather”) or in the language system itself (e.g. E. *meat* in *one man’s meat is another man’s poison*, which used to mean “food”). One other proposal (Leech 1974: 226) assumes that semantic lexicalization, or to use Leech’s terminology: “petrification”,⁴ is a result of either the addition or loss of semantic information. The former is exemplified by E. *wheel-chair* and *push-chair*, both of which should theoretically denote the same class of objects since both have wheels and may be pushed. However, in the process of institutionalization the lexical meaning of each has been narrowed and so *wheel-chairs* are “for invalids” and *push-chairs* are “for infants.” Lexicalization due to the loss of semantic information is illustrated by E. *understand*, since the verb in its modern usage contains neither the meaning of *under* nor the meaning of *stand* (Lipka 1977: 160 after Bauer 1983: 56).⁵

The majority of loan translations and renditions are semantically non-compositional, i.e. their meaning is not predictable from the meanings of their components. However, the borderline between what we consider semantically lexicalized or idiomatized and non-lexicalized has not been clearly defined (Bauer 1983). It seems though that expressions such as P. *czarny koń* (E. *dark horse*); P. *mieć motylki w brzuchu* (E. *to have butterflies in one’s stomach*) or P. *białe kołnierzyki* or It. *colletti bianchi* (E. *white collars* in the figurative sense) are clear instances of semantic lexicalization. On the other hand, if we consider a whole series of expressions involving the word *bank* as in *blood bank*, *stem cell bank* or *sperm bank*, it is clear that idiomaticity is a matter of degree.

It has been suggested that lexicalized words need separate lexical entries. Frequently it is a problem, e.g. is the meaning of *telephone box* predictable from *telephone* and *box* and the rules of compounding (Bauer 1983: 199)? Bauer admits the solution in this particular case is not available. If a dictionary was to include all forms that are both lexicalized and institutionalized, the number of entries would significantly increase in comparison to the case of listing just lexicalized items (Bauer 1983). Non-idiomatic compound words would be the key factor here.

Once the complex words become lexicalized semantically, language users appear to treat them as monomorphemic lexical items. In practice this means that the existence of expressions such as *white collars* and *blue collars* in English does

³ In some studies on lexicalization, the notion of compositionality is questioned. Svanlund (2002 after Bakken 2006) wonders whether there exist new complex words whose meaning is entirely predictable.

⁴ Similar terminology is used by Lyons (1977: 547), who uses “petrification” to refer to the institutionalization of compound words and “fossilization” for their lexicalization.

⁵ It should be pointed out, though, that this classification was criticized (cf. Lipka 1977: 160; Bauer 1983: 56) for not accounting for those words which may simultaneously illustrate both the addition and loss of semantic information, e.g. *playboy*, in which both parts have undergone semantic change.

not give rise to **pink collars* or *collars* of any other colour, even though theoretically it is possible to think of a profession in which the colour of uniform is green or yellow. Although the form of such set expressions is analyzable, language users do not look at them as combinations of separate words but treat them as labels for some specific concepts (Bauer 1983: 44). This proves the idiomatic nature of such lexemes. It seems that language users when using an expression such as for example *rat race* do not think of it as a race of a particular species of animals, or of *headhunter* as a person who hunts for heads, or of *The First Lady* as a lady who always comes first.

This accepting of a set expression as a whole in the sense of not decomposing it into any smaller meaningful units becomes even more apparent in the case of very young speakers who acquire language which already includes such items. Bauer (1983: 44) uses a general term to illustrate this observation, namely “new learners of a language” but he does not differentiate between young speakers who acquire it as their native tongue and those who learn it as a foreign language. If such a distinction was to be made, Bauer’s observation might not hold true for the latter, since older students of a foreign language who already present some degree of language awareness might be tempted to analyze foreign fixed expressions both morphologically and semantically, and being aware of the metaphor or metonymy might facilitate remembering them. This literal translation for learning purposes might be one of the factors contributing to creating loan translations in the receiving language.

However, this lack of productivity that would involve one of the elements of a set expression (no figurative senses of **pink collars* or **mouse race*) does not necessarily apply to all fixed expressions in the same way. On occasion, one of the elements of what seems a lexicalized and so unanalyzable lexical unit may serve as a basis for the formation of other, semantically related expressions. This may be illustrated by using the word *first* in *The First Lady* to coin expressions such as *The First Gentleman* or *The First Child* (“the child of the First Couple”), even if it is not their first child in the literal understating of the word *first*. This leads us to a conclusion that the process of semantic lexicalization is a matter of degree which very much depends on language users’ language awareness and creativity.

Following the path of language users’ creativity, it is worth noting that some of the English set expressions develop semantically and gain a new sense for purely extralinguistic reasons. Users’ creativity manifests itself in using the already existing fixed expressions to denote or refer to (in the case of definite expressions) some other extralinguistic objects, phenomena, people or events. An example of this, quoted in Bauer (1983: 45) to illustrate a different semantic problem, is E. *redskin*, which has two institutionalized semantic heads: “a person” and “a potato,” though, as he claims, many English speakers would know only one of these. These two more or less idiomatic senses of this expression do not restrict users’ creativity and so the word *redskins* has been used to refer to Mackintosh apples and could be used, Bauer assumes, in reference to any other fruit that has a red skin. In the same vein, the expression *First Lady* comes to be used in apolitical

senses such as “a woman who has proven herself to be of exceptional talent” or “a woman who occupies the foremost social position in a given community.”

This fact is important in our discussion of loan translations and renditions for two reasons. Firstly, a loan translation that was borrowed by the receiving language while the English etymon was still monosemous also develops semantically under the foreign influence and adopts the new sense or senses that appeared in English. This may well be illustrated by P. *strefa zero* (E. *ground zero*), used, when first borrowed in 2001, in reference to a particular site in New York, later – in reference to New Orleans and Bay St. Louis after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Secondly, the same loan translation, well-established in Polish, becomes a common phrase to denote places of the most severe damage, destruction or danger, e.g. P. *strefa zero* is later used to refer to “the ruin of an exhibition hall in Chorzów, Poland, 2006” or “the site at which a dead swan infected with bird flu was found in Toruń, Poland, 2006.” It seems, then, that Polish users of that expression recognized its more general meaning, existing in English but never adopted by Polish (since the expression was borrowed with a very specific meaning referring to a place in New York), and freely applied it to other places or events. Such “reinterpretations” (Bauer 1983: 57) are possible as there is enough information in the context which clarifies the new sense and which makes it possible to both interpret nonce compounds and reinterpret institutionalized compounds by assigning new senses to them and using them in new contexts.⁶

The considerations so far lead us to an observation that in the discussion of semantic lexicalization we touch upon two semantic issues: the non-compositionality of fixed expressions on the one hand and their possible semantic development on the other. It seems that both of these semantic properties are found in fixed expressions, in both the English etymons and their foreign versions in the form of loan translations and renditions.

As to the word-formation process itself, it is clear that certain semantic restrictions come to play during the formation of English fixed expressions (Bauer 1983: 93ff). In the case of their translated versions, the lexical choice is likewise somewhat limited though in a different way. The idea is to find an equivalent expression in the receiving language to render the foreign concept. This is often done through translating the foreign expression word for word. This might lead us to a conclusion that there are no semantic restrictions on this type of borrowings in which we substitute the foreign lexemes with the native lexical material. However, not all loan translations are lexically identical with their English etymons, this is why the theory of borrowing was equipped with yet another term, namely loan renditions, which are inexact translations of the foreign model expressions. This inexactness is either lexical, e.g. P. *drapacz chmur*, G. *Wolkenkratzer* (E. *skyscraper*) instead of what would be lexically closer to the English version: P. **drapacz nieba*,

⁶ Although Bauer (1983: 57) talks about the possibility of the reinterpretation of institutionalized exocentric compounds, it seems that the same rule can well be applied to interpreting the figurative meanings of newly-formed loan translations and renditions (as well as to their reinterpreting if they are used in new senses). In both cases, we observe semantic transfer by either metonymy or metaphor.

G. **Himmelkratzer*, or morphological as illustrated by the Polish translation (the discrepancy between the Polish and Germanic morphological patterns is a separate issue). This may mean that indeed there is also some form of semantic restriction in the process of calque formation.

English fixed expressions are results of both the productivity of the language system and language users' creativity (Lyons 1977: 549). Productivity is a rule-governed feature and so products of word-formation processes are manifestations of this language feature. Creativity seen as the "language users' ability to extend the language system" (Lipka 2002: 108) is unpredictable and non-rule-governed. A complex word with a literal sense is a product of language productivity, whereas the same lexeme used in a figurative sense illustrates creativity (Bauer 1983). It seems reasonable to assume that the translated versions of English fixed expressions are also products of language productivity, since their formation involves the word-formation process of compounding. It is doubtful, however, that there is a great deal of creativity involved in their creation, though some is possible but limited to lexical choices, since their metaphorical senses are taken over from English. This fact might serve as an argument against their semantic lexicalization. Still, if we understand lexicalization as both a process and an effect of this process, it might be sensible to look for the semantic effect that the new combination of two lexemes brought about in the receiving language. The semantic effect covers two areas. First, with each new loan translation or rendition there also necessarily appears a new sense, not used previously in the receiving language. Secondly, the meaning of the elements that were used to coin the loan translation changes, since e.g. *P. bank* in *bank krwi* (E. *blood bank*) differs semantically from *bank* understood in its traditional sense. This semantic extension, clearly seen in the less idiomatic fixed expressions, is quite similar to the type of semantic change that occurred in English when the expression *blood bank* was first coined.

English loan translations in Polish or any other European language are close semantic and structural copies of their English etymons. It seems, though, that their appearance in a language did not involve the conceptualization of the extralinguistic reality by language users of the receiving language. In this case, the onomasiological need was satisfied by a mere adoption of a foreign word-formation pattern and the semantic content of a foreign expression. Two matters seem problematic though. First of all, a question that needs to be answered is whether the translated versions of foreign fixed expressions (i.e. loan translations and loan renditions), which are products of a borrowing process, are the same type of linguistic innovations as their English etymons used to be when they were first created. Secondly, is it justifiable to look for semantic lexicalization processes in translated fixed expressions whose idiomaticity has been, so to say, imposed on the newly-created forms? The figurative senses of the translated expressions have not developed in the course of metaphorical extension in the receiving language (which was the case with their English etymons) but were adopted as part of the borrowing process.

Following Tournier's (1985: 21 after Lipka 2002) categorization of productive patterns, based on Saussure's conception of linguistic sign, English phraseological

units (when they were first created) could be classified as morpho-semantic neologisms since both *signifié* and *significant* were concerned. Even though Tournier (1985: 47) criticizes the more conservative approaches to language productivity, those of Marchand (1969) and Adams (1973) who deal solely with language innovations being products of rule-governed word-formation, he recognizes the dynamic nature of lexical processes and stresses that an exhaustive classification of productive patterns should also take into account semantic neologism and the external process of adopting loanwords. The last one, however, is classified as a separate category and falls outside of the three major categories of productive patterns. Such an approach theoretically excludes loan translations and loan renditions as morpho-semantic neologisms. But Tournier's taxonomy mentions adopted loanwords, which are certainly a much different type of borrowed elements than loan translations. In the case of loanwords there is no sign of language productivity as no word-formation processes are used or users' creativity as the foreign word is imported both semantically and formally, i.e. taken as it is from a foreign language. It seems, then, that loan translations and loan renditions which involve both word-formation and semantic processes may be cases of morpho-semantic neologisms. The word-formation process in this case is the one of compounding (just like in the English etymons) since the result is a new expression formed with the use of two or more separate lexemes. Semantic processes involve changes in the meaning of the lexemes that are employed in the word-formation process but these would be changes compelled by the known idiomatic sense of the whole expression. Again, we can claim that the two types of translation may be well looked at as examples of language productivity, less so as instances of users' creativity since their metaphorical senses were copied from their English etymons.

The American English set expressions discussed here are culture-specific, i.e. they have "particular sociocultural connotations and associations" (Moon 1997: 58) and their semantic content was shaped by certain naming needs of a particular community. The Old World communities wish to refer to those American concepts but lack the lexical material. A quick and easy way of rendering foreign cultural concepts is the literal translation of foreign expressions. Enriching the lexicon of the receiving language in this way is easy for two reasons. First of all, the expressions in question are multi-word compounds which would be difficult to adopt as loanwords. Secondly, linguistic history shows that the artificial forming of coinages to name foreign concepts is unsuccessful. In the case of culture-specific set expressions the coining of native equivalents seems a non-effective and futile task. Loan translations and renditions name foreign concepts with the use of native vocabulary of the receiving language. They undergo similar semantic processes as their foreign etymons, i.e. they undergo the process of semantic lexicalization, even if the figurative sense is very much shaped by the foreign sense of the corresponding expression. Also, they may develop semantically, either due to borrowing more foreign senses (if such appear in the donor language) or through semantic extension in the receiving language.

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Leksykalizacja i idiomatyczność stałych związków wyrazowych w języku angielskim i ich polskie tłumaczenia

Streszczenie

Artykuł omawia procesy leksykalizacji semantycznej, jakie zachodzą w nowopowstałych związkach frazeologicznych. W wyniku procesów formalnych i semantycznych syntagma słowotwórcza traci status słowa złożonego z dwóch lub więcej odrębnych jednostek lekсы-

kalnych i staje się pojedynczym leksemem, którego znaczenia nie da się wywieść z sumy znaczeń tworzących go leksemów. Celem artykułu jest zbadanie procesów leksykalizacji semantycznej, jakie zachodzą w angielskich kalkach strukturalnych we współczesnej polszczyźnie, które są znaczeniowymi i strukturalnymi kopiami etymonów angielskich. Konceptualizacja i idiomatyzacja frazeologizmów to procesy umysłowe, obejmujące akt tworzenia nowych konceptów, wiedzę kontekstową i doświadczenia pozajęzykowe. Problem teoretyczny, jaki pojawia się w badaniu zleksykalizowanych kalk frazeologicznych dotyczy tego, czy procesy leksykalizacji semantycznej jakie w nich zachodzą są takie same jak w ich angielskich pierwowzorach. Należy pamiętać, że angielskie związki frazeologiczne kopiowane przez współczesną polszczyznę są wynikiem naturalnego rozwoju języka i ich utworzenie zostało spowodowane potrzebą onomazjologiczną; kalki strukturalne są również powodowane potrzebą onomazjologiczną języka, lecz powielając wzorzec angielski są produktem procesu zapożyczenia, a ich znaczenia idiomatyczne są importowane z angielszczyzny.