

GENERAL REMARKS ON THE COMMON FORMS OF THE FALSE FRIENDS IN SERBIAN AND ENGLISH

OSNOVNE NAPOMENE O POJAVNIM OBLICIMA LAŽNIH PAROVA U SRPSKOM I ENGLLESKOM JEZIKU

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Sažetak: U radu se ukazuje na osnovne oblike lažnih parova u srpskom i engleskom jeziku. Osnovni oblici lažnih parova prikazani su kao: (a) lažni parovi sa potpunom sličnošću u značenju; (b) lažni parovi sa delimičnom razlikom u značenju; (c) lažni parovi sa potpunom razlikom u značenju. Takođe, izdvajaju se i izmišljeni parovi.

Kod svih navedenih grupa lažnih parova dati su primeri koji se često navode u stručnoj literaturi i javljaju u praksi prevođenja, sa ukazivanjem na potrebu njihovog prepoznavanja i precizne upotrebe.

Ključne reči: lažni parovi, izmišljeni parovi, prevođenje, fonološko, grafološko, semantičko značenje.

Summary: In this paper I point out general forms of false friends in Serbian and English. The general forms of false friends are as follows: (a) the identify in meaning of false friends; (b) the partial difference in meaning of false friends and (c) the complete difference in meaning of false friends. Also, I single out invented pairs.

For all the mentioned groups of false friends I give examples that are frequently cited in technical literature and found in the practice of translating, with reference to the necessity of their recognition and use.

Key words: false friends, invented pairs, translating, phonological, graphological, semantic, meaning

1. Introduction

The issue of false friends in the linguistic field does not only draw attention to people who deal with it technically and theoretically, but also it draws attention to people who deal with it practically in connexion with translating. In this paper I will try to point out through a review and analysis of certain false friends in Serbian and English the significance of this issue and single out those sides that, in my view, can have a technically theoretical and a practical value. To that effect, I will first define the concept of false friends, followed by the common forms of false friends with suitable examples.

Namely, in the technical literature the concept of false friends is usually shown in this way: false friends (also deceptive cognates and faux amis) are two words in two languages which resemble formally, i.e., phonologically and graphologically, but whose meanings differ to a greater or less degree depending on a given context of use. They share some linguistic features and based on that an interpreter considers them to be real, completely interchangeable pairs, and so, he or she uses this 'false' linguistic unit in all the contexts of situations where the linguistic unit of a mother tongue is used. This can easily be noticed in the spheres of graphology, orthography, semantics and grammar. The most frequent of all are the semantical levels where lexical units of the two languages are completely different in terms of form. That is the type of phenomenon

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from which the term itself came. Usually, false friends are international words that the two languages in question took from a third language (most often, it was the case of a classic language – either Latin or Greek). Later, those words entered each of those languages with different meanings or they acquired different meanings.¹

Studying and describing of such false friends and compiling dictionaries on this topic is useful and necessary as doing so draws foreign language learners and interpreters' attention not to get deceived by the outer look of a word when choosing an adequate expression. Choosing a subtle adequate expression can sometimes be impeded by our poor quality bilingual dictionary market. Now, a psychological criterion is introduced where the interpreter 'plays by ear' and opts for the nearest target language equivalent that is similar to form of the expression of the source language.

There are three semantic relations usually mentioned in the technical literature: (1) the identity of meaning of false friends, (2) the partial difference in meaning of false friends, and (3) the complete difference in meaning of false friends.

The first possibility is that the lexical units of the first language and the lexical units of the second language overlap, so there is no difference between them (in which case we are not talking about false friends but 'true friends' which pose no difficulty in translating). The second possibility is that two lexical units similar in form share one part of meaning while the other part is different in such a way that a lexical unit of the first language has got a broader meaning and the unit of the second language a narrower meaning. The third possibility is that the meanings of lexical units of the first and second language are completely different and there is no overlapping (false friends are in question here).²

2. The identity in meaning of false friends

Meaning identity among false friends can be illustrated by science-technical terms in Serbian and English. The following pairs are usually found in practice and literature as frequent examples of false friends.

molecule <i>noun</i>	physiology <i>noun</i>	chemical <i>adjective</i>
molekul <i>imenica</i>	fiziologija <i>imenica</i>	hemijski <i>pridev</i>

Though these pairs do resemble on all linguistic levels, there is one usage difference among them and that is that of a different collocation pattern. For instance, Serbian adjective **hemijski** and English adjective **chemical** by their semantic content cannot be easily distinguished but this does not mean that **hemijski** can be translated as **chemical** in all of its usages and vice versa. Here are some expressions to illustrate this:

hemijsko čišćenje *imenica*

***chemical cleaning**³ *noun* → **dry cleaning** *noun*

hemijska olovka *imenica*

***chemical pencil** *noun* → **ball-point pen, BrE biro** *noun*

elastični sistem *imenica*

***elastic system** *noun* → **flexible system** *noun*

rezervni deo *imenica*

***reserve part** *noun* → **spare part** *noun*

¹ See Vladimir Ivin, *Teorija i tehnika prevodenja*, Centar „Karlovačka gimnazija“, Sremski Karlovci. Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva u Novom Sadu, 1985, pp. 107

² Ibid, pp107

³ Unacceptable or incorrect translation constructions are marked with (*)

Another usage difference is the register, i.e., if false friends share the same phonologically-graphological features, they do not share the same chronological, social or formal distributions. If the target language message is in contemporary language about current affairs, the interpreter may cause an archaic impression by using the same lexical equivalent.

aerodrom *imenica*

***aerodrome** *noun* (*British English old-fashioned*) a place that small planes fly from

→ **airport** *noun*

milijarda *imenica*

***milliard** *noun* (cardinal, UK, rare) 10^9 , a thousand millions.⁴

→ **billion** *noun*

funkcioner *imenica*

***functionary** *noun* someone who has a job doing unimportant or boring official

duties

→ **official** *noun*

rezime *imenica*

***résumé** *noun* (obscure, uncommon) A summary or synopsis.⁵

→ **summary** *noun*

3. The partial difference in meaning of false friends

Although this type of false friends is seldom mentioned, it is more dangerous than the other types. Here the pressures of the similar form and meaning act together. When a word from a target language has got a wider meaning than a word from a source language, an interpreter will transfer the wider meaning when it should be expressed by some other words in the target language. Here are example sentences with the Serbian word **administracija** and the English word **administration**. As in the previous part of the paper I will single out some examples of false friends that are mentioned in the technical literature⁶ and in the structure of the certain sentences.

- a) Naša **administracija** u preduzeću nije dovoljno efikasna.
- b) Naći ćete ga gore u **administraciji**.
- c) **Administracija** se buni protiv sadašnje raspodele dohotka u preduzeću.
- d) Čuju se prigovori da nam je **savezna administracija** prevelika.

The English translations of these sentence would be as follows:

- a) **The clerical office** in our firm is not efficient enough.
- b) You'll find him in upstairs in **the office**.

⁴ <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/milliard>

⁵ <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/résumé>

⁶ Ibid, pp112

- c) *The office (clerical) staff is protesting against the present distribution of incomes in the firm.*
d) *Objections are sometimes heard that our federal administration is too big.*

A native speaker of Serbian realises how broader meaning the word **administration** has got after contrasting it with **administracija**. Also, a partial difference of false friends can be noticed in certain lexemes that are given in the following parts of the text.

akcija imenica 1. radnja, delatnost, delanje → **action noun** the process of doing something, especially in order to achieve a particular thing

2. (*trgovina*) udeo, deonica ***action** → **share noun** (*in a company*) one of the equal parts into which the ownership of a company is divided.

ekonomija imenica 1. razumno korišćenje dobara i snage → **economy noun** the careful use of money, time, goods etc so that nothing is wasted

2. nauka o privredi, poljoprivredi ***economy** → **economics noun** the study of the way in which money and goods are produced and used

fuzija imenica 1. topljenje, mešanje, livenje → **fusion noun** a physical combination of separate things

2. stapanje, spajanje (banaka, preduzeća) ***fusion** → **merger noun** the joining together of two or more companies or organizations to form one larger one

kadar imenica 1. (*vojska*) skupina oficira i podoficira u jednoj vojnoj jedinici → **cadre noun**

(*British English*) a small group of specially trained people in a profession, political party, or military force).

2. *stručni kadrovi* – stručni ljudi za pojedine delatnosti u društvenom i državnom životu ***cadres** → **personnel noun** the people who work in a company, organization, or military force

partija imenica 1. stranka, grupa ljudi istog mišljenja naročito u političkom smislu → **party noun** a political organization with particular beliefs and aims, which you can vote for in elections

2. (sport) utakmica, sportski susret ***party** → **match noun** (*especially British English*) an organized sports event between two teams or people.

propaganda imenica 1. (politika) širenje informacija → **propaganda noun** information which is false or which emphasizes just one part of a situation, used by a government or political group to make people agree with them.

2. ekonomsko reklamiranje ***propaganda** → **advertising noun** the activity or business of advertising things on television, in newspapers etc.

4. The complete difference in meaning of false friends

Here belong false friends in the full sense of the meaning. The target language lexical unit and source language lexical unit do not overlap in meaning. For the sake of the example, I will take several pairs that are frequently encountered in the language communication in the field of social, economic and political issues.⁷

advokat *imenica* pravozastupnik, pravobranilac

→ **lawyer** *noun* someone whose job is to advise people about laws, write formal agreements, or represent people in court **advocate**
noun someone who publicly supports someone or something

→ **zagovornik** *noun*

afirmisati se *glagol* održati se, samopotvrditi se

→ **establish oneself, win recognition** *verb* to make people accept that you can do something, or that you have a particular quality

affirm *verb (formal)* to state publicly that something is true

→ **potvrditi** (nešto) *glagol*

aktuelan *pridev* sadašnji, današnji

→ **current** *adjective* happening or existing now

actual *adjective* used to emphasize that something is real or exact

→ **stvaran** *pridev*

deviza *imenica* strana menica

→ **foreign currency** *noun* the system or type of money that a country uses

device *noun* a machine or tool that does a special job

→ **sprava** *imenica*

direkcija *imenica* uprava, nadzorno telo u nekom preduzeću → **board of directors** *noun (British English)* a group of people in a company or other organization who make the rules and important decisions

direction *noun* the way something or someone moves, faces, or is aimed

→ **smer** *imenica*

honorarni *pridev* (o poslu) dopunski

→ **part time** *adjective* for only part of the day or week during which people normally work

honorary *pridev* an honorary title, rank, or university degree is given to someone as an honour

→ **počasni** *imenica*

konkurencija *imenica* suparništvo, takmičenje, nadmetanje

→ **competition** *noun* a situation in which people or organizations compete with each other for sth that not everyone can have

concurrency *noun* agreement

→ **slaganje** (s nečim) *imenica*

⁷ Taken from the various issues of the daily *Politika*

kurentan *pridev* koji se traži; u protažnji

→ **saleable** *pridev* something that is saleable can be sold, or is easy to sell

current *pridev*⁸

miting *imenica* skupina, zbor ljudi

→ **rally** *noun* a large public meeting, especially one that is held outdoors to support a political idea, protest etc

meeting *noun* an event at which people meet to discuss and decide things

→ **sastanak** *imenica*

provizija *imenica* (finansije) procenat obavljenog posla koji se daje posredniku

→ **commission** *noun* an amount of money that is charged by a bank, for example, for providing a particular service

provision *noun* a condition in an agreement or law

→ (pravo) **propis** *imenica*

sindikato *imenica* udruženje radnika jedne struke

→ **trade union** *noun* (*British English*) an organization, usually in a particular trade or profession, that represents workers, especially in meetings with employers

syndicate *noun* a group of people or companies who work together and help each other in order to achieve a particular aim

→ **udruženje** banaka preduzeća itd. (radi nekog zajedničkog cilja) *imenica*

Sometimes the words from one language acquire the meaning from the other even though the graphologically-phonological features are left intact.

koncept *imenica* plan, nacrt ,skica⁹

rough copy *noun draft version*: a preliminary draft of a piece of writing, usually raw and unedited¹⁰

concept *noun* an idea of how something is, or how something should be done¹¹

pojam *noun*

5. Invented pairs

This phenomenon occurs when an interpreter has not mastered well a particular foreign language. As a result when he or she comes across an expression, e.g. in Serbian for which he or she does not know a suitable equivalent in English, a target language, he or she makes up, coins, a lexical pair based on a formal similarity with a word from Serbian. Invented pairs are not a type of 'false friendship' since the word coined has got no

⁸ See 'aktuelan'

⁹ The definitions of the concepts in Serbian taken from Vujaklija, M. 1966, *Leksikon stranih reči i izraza*, Beograd, Prosveta

¹⁰ http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary/_/rough%2520copy.html

¹¹ The example by their meaning taken from Pearson Education Limited, 2006 *Longman Exams Dictionary*, Harlow, Edinburgh Gate Essex CM20 2JE England and Pearson Education Limited, 2007 *Longman Business English Dictionary*, Harlow, Edinburgh Gate Essex CM20 2JE England

phonologically-graphological semantic features. It is a case of an interpreter's ineptitude and recklessness in translating. The following are the instances of invented pairs

agrotehnika <i>imenica</i> modern farming methods <i>noun</i>	bruto <i>imenica</i> gross <i>noun</i>
*agrotechnics	*bruto
daktilograf <i>imenica</i> typist <i>noun</i>	dotacija <i>imenica</i> grant-in-aid <i>noun</i>
*dactylographer	*dotation
grafoskop <i>imenica</i> overhead projector <i>noun</i>	kartoteka <i>imenica</i> card index
*graphoscope	*cartotheque
licitacija <i>imenica</i> bidding	mehanografija <i>imenica</i> data processing machines <i>noun</i>
*licitation	*mechanography
parafirati <i>glagol</i> initial <i>verb</i>	referat <i>imenica</i> report <i>noun</i>
*paraph	*referate
renomiran <i>pridev</i> reputable <i>adjective</i>	rentabilan <i>pridev</i> profitable <i>adjective</i>
*renomated	*rentable
hiperprodukcija <i>imenica</i> overproduction <i>noun</i>	grafikon <i>noun</i> graph <i>noun</i>
*hyperproduction	*graphicon

6. Conclusion

As it can be seen from the said, the issues of false friends and invented pairs can have a significant technical and practical value. That value is particularly noticeable in the pairs with the overlap in meaning, then in pairs with a partial difference in meaning and finally in pairs with a complete difference in meaning.

Little attention is paid, not least in the practice of translating, to the place false friends have got in Serbian and English. In spite of the aforementioned significance of this issue, it has not been covered thoroughly enough in the technical literature.

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