CULTURAL EMBEDDING IN DESIGNATING MARITIME METAPHORS

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ABSTRACT

An interesting and fruitful area of research in maritime language is represented by metaphors and metaphorical expressions which abound in the language of seafarers. Recent interest in terminological metaphor stems from the idea that metaphor has two basic functions. On the one hand, it is a conceptual device whose essence is “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 5) while on the other hand, it has an important aesthetic role, which “produces metaphorical combined names whose motivation can be found in similarities of form, function, and position” (Sager 1997: 29). This paper sets to highlight that several maritime terms are the result of understanding and naming on the basis of metaphorical scenarios. In addition, the aesthetic value of several maritime terms increases motivation and helps maritime language users to deal with them. The idea should be pointed out that the cognitive theories of metaphor have put forward the thesis according to which metaphors are not only a cultural symbol or ornamentation within a given discourse, but also a phenomenon that takes place in order to categorize and understand experience. Thus, the cognitive process becomes a crucial factor in the translation process. This is because the maritime translator, by means of these mental processes, establishes appropriate linguistic relationships within the historical and cultural context of the text, and reformulates it in the target language (TL) and/or target culture (TC).

Keywords: maritime metaphors, maritime language, specialized translation, translation strategies, (non)equivalence.

1. INTRODUCTION

Several maritime terms are created by means of metaphorical extension referring to similarities in the function, form, or position of an object or device. But even if the concrete form of an object or device might lead to a similar cognitive concept in various cultures, this is not necessarily always the case, as Stolze (2009:129) rightfully points out. Problems in translation can arise when the metaphors are not identical between Maritime English and maritime Romanian and translators are not aware of this fact.

Maritime translation requires the formulation of communicatively adequate texts in the other language. This includes clarity, precision and linguistic economy, as the key function of LSP (Language for Specific Purposes) is the specification, condensation and anonymity of the propositions (Gläser 1989: 116). It is generally accepted that concepts are not necessarily bound to specific languages, but the cultural and social background of the human beings who generate the concepts and the environments in which they are used affect the way they manifest themselves in any given situation.

Variations in conceptual orientation can reflect cultural and social differences; these can be derived from regional differences within a maritime language community, or differences between communities where different languages are spoken and who live in close contact with one another, or even differences as a result of ethnic and class variant dialects of the same language. There are various manifestations of culture in maritime texts which range from the terminological level and morpho-syntactic structures, to the style of the text and its pragmatic social function.

2. THE THEORETICAL DEBATE ABOUT CULTURE IN SPECIALIZED TRANSLATION

The debate about culture has often been assumed to be of less relevance to specialised translation. This view is embedded in the suggestion made by Jumpeit (1961: 8-9) who pointed out that there are no real problems in scientific and technical translation since the vocabulary is international and the grammar straightforward. In addition, Wills (1990: 10 apud. Rogers 2015) motivates that “As a ‘higher-level’ discipline, building upon the insights of contrastive linguistics and sharing with it the notion of ‘tertium comparationis’, TS seeks optimally inclusive rules of ST/TT coordination”. The minimal importance of culture in specialised translation is also connected to the suggestion made by Lefevere and Bassnet (1990: 7) who consider that translators of literary texts “are likely to be given more leeway” than the translators of specialised texts. Margaret Rogers (2015: 31) considers that “[T]he story of a growing awareness of cultural factors in specialised translation is one which shows some synergies with that of the well-known 1980s ‘cultural turn’ in Translation Studies. This charted a turn away from a linguistic encoding/decoding approach embedded in the discipline of Applied Linguistics – not the obvious home for literary translation – and from what had been considered the key notion of equivalence, to ‘culture’ and the importance of ‘contextual knowledge of both source and target systems”. The cultural elements in LSP texts are often brought to light by the very act of translation because the translator identifies different source culture (SC) and target culture (TC) mappings and customs. The role of cultural factors, including the differences in genre conventions in specialised translation has since early times been demonstrated more widely.

According to Stolze (2009: 124) cultural elements appear in the text on all levels, i.e. from the concept and form of words, to the sentence and text structure, to pragmatics. In addition, Rogers (2015) and Faber et. al (2012), argue that cultural elements are present in specialized and technical texts as well. For instance, Margaret Rogers (2015) points
out that “[W]hilst it is generally accepted that languages map the world in different ways through the structure of their vocabularies, it is often wrongly assumed […] that specialist areas of knowledge are culture-free zones with a universal character, especially in Science and Technology. If that were the case, closing the lexical gaps in specialised translation would be largely reduced to a straightforward coining task to label concepts new to the target culture, with no troubling factors of connotation or nuance, not to mention issues of ideology, politics, or religion”. Even though cultural elements in specialized texts might be considered superfluous, they are always there, if only implicitly. Several instances of culture specific concepts such as maritime metaphors have been detected and some of these concepts may be totally unknown in the target culture (TC) because they reflect a reality specific to the source culture (SC) only.

3. MARITIME METAPHOR FROM A COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE

Seen as the main mechanism through which we comprehend abstract concept and perform abstract reasoning, metaphors justifiably play a crucial role in maritime language. According to traditionalistic views, it is somehow surprising that what used to be seen as a rhetorical device was so rapidly and unrestrictedly adopted by specialized languages. A possible explanation may be the one put forward by Peter Newmark (1985:297), who views metaphor as means of assisting the reader “[…] to gain a more accurate insight, both physical and emotional […] and may be added to the technical terminology of a semantic field and therefore contribute to greater accuracy in the use of language”. Similarly, Lakoff (1996: 210) regards metaphor not as a figure of speech, but as a mode of thought defined by a systematic mapping, from a source to a target domain, characterized by systematicity in the linguistic correspondences, the use of metaphor to govern reasoning and behaviour based on that reasoning and the possibility for understanding novel extensions in terms of the conventional correspondences. Apparently, such an extension of meaning in maritime terminology might cloud the accuracy of knowledge representation, thus leading to imprecision and ambiguity. Such a position was adopted by Bloomfield (1933) and Coșeriu (1981), who consider that the vocabulary of science is strictly monosemous, much like a mere nomenclature structured not on the basis of language, but rather on the basis of extralinguistic reality. Thus, according to Coșeriu (1981: 48), “[S]ince in technical usage the words are really the representatives of the ‘objects’, signification and designation coincide in this case whereas in the domain of the ‘natural’ language they must necessarily be separated” Current cognitive science, however, has opposed the view of linguistic precision by developing the theory of non-definitional reference. Thus, it has been argued that there is no such thing as linguistic precision, but only rational strategies for avoiding referential ambiguity, which are by no means a reflection of the rules of linguistic usage. As a result, knowledge would not be possible if our language and conceptual categories were not accommodated to the changing facts of the world. Therefore, the accommodation of maritime language to the constant evolution of the various connected domains of knowledge is beyond any doubt. The meanings of maritime terms constantly change as the amount of knowledge about them increases, discovering even deeper levels of cognition; likewise, there is a constant need to supply new terms for new concepts as they appear, triggered by the continuous development of human knowledge, as is the case of maritime language. Once that the empiricist theory of language precision is discarded, the same may happen to the empiricist view that metaphor might distort the maritime thought by conveying wrong ideas and lead to imprecision and vagueness due to its conceptual open-endedness. Quite to the contrary, contemporary research views metaphor not only as a figure of speech, a mere ornament, but also as a mode of thought and a valuable, even indispensable means of conceptualizing and conveying new knowledge. The use of metaphor is one of the many devices available to the maritime community to accomplish the task of accommodation of language to the casual structure of the world, introducing terminology and modifying the usage of existing terminology. Lakoff (1990) develops the ‘experientialist’ account of knowledge, pointing out that knowledge is relative to understanding. Thus, people structure their reality by their conceptual schemes. In this process, some kinds of experience are structured preconceptually. However, in domains lacking such preconceptual structures, we understand experience via metaphor. Lakoff (1990) considers that “much of rational thought involves the use of metaphoric models” and that “any adequate account of rationality must account for the use of imagination” (Lakoff 1990:303). Several maritime terms are coined by means of metaphorical terminology referring to similarities in the function, form, or position of an object. But even if the concrete form of an object might lead to a similar cognitive concept in various cultures, this is not necessarily always the case (Maftei 2013). Problems in translation can arise when the metaphors are not identical between languages and translators are not aware of this possibility (see Fig. 1 below).

Figure 1 Conceptual organization of maritime metaphor

Defined as the transference of some quality from one subject to another, or, in psycholinguistic terms, “from one conceptual sphere or cognitive domain to another” (Cornilescu 1994:126), metaphors seem to be in all cases departures from a norm, the result of the use of words with deviant typicality conditions. The accurate translation of maritime terminology is undoubtedly difficult, since in most cases the maritime translator has to abandon the word-for-word rendering of certain maritime terms and
structures. This is all the more valid in the case of maritime metaphors, which require due to their particular status, the translator’s utmost attention and skills in order to adequately decode and render them into the TT.

4. TYPES OF MARITIME METAPHORS IN TRANSLATION

It is the aim of this section to analyse the various types of metaphors in maritime terminology, in the light of Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) cognitive theories and try to establish strategies for their accurate translation into Romanian. Our research tries to highlight the fact that English, considered as the international language of maritime activities, comprises a multitude of specific metaphoric terms belonging to this particular field, which may well illustrate the various classifications that have been proposed for metaphors in general. Maritime language contains a large range of metaphoric terms, which can be classified according to different criteria. According to the classification of metaphors advanced by Ullmann (1962:214) maritime language is well-represented in all the categories put forward by the researcher. We have therefore, come across the following categories:

**Anthropomorphic metaphors**, which represent transfers of meaning from the human body and its parts to inanimate objects. These terms hold a very important position in both Maritime English and maritime Romanian owing to the relationship they establish between maritime entities and vehicles marked as [+HUMAN]. Therefore, it may be argued that a basic formation principle of maritime metaphors is the humanization of maritime entities, in order to facilitate the transposition from one sense to another. We shall divide human metaphors into those which include transfers of meaning from the animal field to the maritime field. Familiar animals like cats and dogs, constitute the target for various metaphors in maritime discourse as shown in Table 1 below:

**Zoomorphic metaphors**, which include transfers of meaning from the animal field to the maritime field. Familiar animals like cats and dogs, constitute the target for various metaphors in maritime discourse as shown in Table 1 below:

**Synesthetic metaphors**, i.e. metaphors based upon the transposition from one sense to another. In maritime language these metaphors are mostly part of verbal collocations: *anchor comes home* → *ancora la post; anchor bites* → *ancora mușcă; hug the coast / land / shore* → *a se menține aproape de coastă, a naviga în apropierea coastei; hug the wind* → *a se menține cu proba în vânt; etc.* It is to be remarked that the Romanian equivalent resorts to either a paraphrase of the initial metaphor, or the sense on which the target originally relied. For the purpose of this paper we have chosen to deal with some anthropomorphic metaphors and their equivalents in translation.

4.1. Metaphors formed with the noun ‘head’

The main features of the *head* are that it is the part that comes first, it is vital, as it should coordinate all
activity and it is round. The mapping of head does not rely only on placement correspondences but on functional ones. Metaphors are grouped around these main features. Thus, the noun head has different distributions and significations in maritime discourse, depending on the register in which the word is used. For instance, head in nautical language means the ship’s foremost extremity and translates into Romanian with extremitate proba or just proba. When used as a verb it means to navigate and forms several colloquial strings such as to head into the sea → a naviga cu val din proba; to head into the wind → a naviga cu vânt din proba; to head up → a încep proba în val; to head up into the wind → a veni cu proba în vânt; to head the wind → a naviga contra vântului; head the stream → a naviga contra vântului. In addition, the noun head is also part of several devices used on board and outboard in mooring and unmooring a vessel: headline → parâmă proba. In naval engineering, specifically in shipbuilding the meaning of head is related to all the above-mentioned possibilities (i.e. head knee is guseu de etravă; headledge is ramă transversală a gurii de magazie). It may be also concerned with the upper position, often round (the head of the anchor → diamant al ancorii which is both round and, on the top) or with the most important part of a device (the head of a mast → vârf de catarg; head rudder → cap al axului cărniței) which is essential to marine devices, installations or machinery. In marine hydrology, head sea points to a mass of waves coming from directly in front of the ship while head swell means an undulation of the ocean or the sea moving toward the bow of a ship. The opposite end of the bay, that is, the portion that thrusts farthest into land is known as the bayhead. This compound term is curious, in that bays are never said to have feet or tails, only heads. Along the coastal plain of the Southeast America for instance, the term takes on a different meaning altogether and thus, bayhead refers to an area of swampy vegetation either at the inland edge of bay water or at the headwaters of a stream. In the latter case, it is named not for the body of water into which its moisture flows, but for the thick, evergreen vegetation to which it plays host (i.e. red bay, sweet bay, lobolly bay). The equivalent for head in Romanian is cap and in maritime Romanian, we have found the following patterns: cap al arborelui → mast head; cap al etravei → stem head; cap al navei → head of a ship; cap de dig → jetty head; cap de echo → tiller head; cap de grui → davit head; cap de macara → head of a block; cap de mol → mole head; cap al gurii de viziune → manhole; cap de aerisire → vent head; cap de nărușe de ancore → hawse buckler; cap de iublocu → port lid; cap de cioară → lacing eye; cap de gură → eye hawser; cap de bulgar → Matthew Walker knot, etc.

4.2. Metaphors formed with the nouns ‘face’ and ‘eye’

As far as the face is concerned, the features relevant for maritime metaphors are related to its front position and, more often than not, its flat surface. In marine engineering, there are a lot of “faces”. They generally refer to the working surface of any part: the face of a hammer, the face of the steam chest, the face of a valve, the face of a propeller blade → față active / posterioară a palei de elice etc. The features of an eye that make it a challenge for metaphors are not related to its function, but more likely to its form: the round shape and the cavity association: ochi al furtunii → eye of a storm; ochi aluneazător → crabbler’s eye knot; ochi cu rodanță → Elliot’s knot; ochi de ceață → fog eye; ochii navei → ship’s eyes/eyes of the ship (the part of a deck on a fore and aft line, near the stem of the ship, where the bow look-out station is positioned); ochi flamanți → Flemish eye. In naval architecture, an eye may be either the circular opening in the top of a dome or a circular/oval window. In both cases the emphasis is on the form: In the building domain, the eye is associated with the head of an axe: the former represents a hole in the latter where the handle is introduced. Again, the most important element is the configuration, but also the cavity factor is apparent. In marine engineering, the eye replaces the head: an eye bolt is a bolt that instead of a head has an eye.

4.3. Metaphors formed with the nouns ‘nose’ and ‘mouth’

The nose metaphors are based on the shape similarity between the smelling organ and some technical part. A vessel is regarded as nose-heavy when her forward draft is greater than her aft draft. In marine meteorology, nose ender is a very strong forward wind. In addition, nose is used in the metaphorical expression nose a vessel’s way out to sea, to refer to the action of a vessel getting into the sea. The Romanian counterpart cannot capture the expressive load of nose and is therefore, translated with the neutral expression a iesi în mare.

On the other hand, the mouth metaphors in both Maritime English and maritime Romanian are built on the idea of an opening (e.g. of a river/sea). For instance, in maritime navigation, the mouth of a canal refers to its part that opens into larger water or into a harbour. The most commonly used expression in maritime navigation is to enter the mouth of a channel → a intra/ a se angaja în gura unui canal. Mention needs to be made that only in maritime Romanian is the noun gură used to refer to a cavity out of which something may be projected. For instance, in marine engineering the noun gură refers to cavities of marine boilers, engines or tanks and is present in the following syntagmas: gură a compartimentului căldare → stokehold hatch; gură de acces în căldare → boiler hatch; gură de apă → angle hose valve; gură de tanc → oil hatch; gură de viziune a tancului → tank manhole; gură de ulaj → uillage hole, etc. On board ship, the noun gură refers to a cavity of the hatch (e.g. gură de magazie → hatchway; gură de magazie a punții de adâpost → awning-deck hatch; gură de magazine cu autorușie → self-trimming hatch; gură de magazine pupa → after hatchway; gură de rujăre → trimming hatch; gură de pic → peak hatch, etc. In rope handling, the noun gură refers to two types of knots, that is, gură de știucă → cat’s paw and gură de zmeu → towing bridle which is defined as “a bridle with a hook in the center to which a towline is fastened when two boats are towed abreast” (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary).
Metaphors formed with *lip* are not present in Maritime English, but metaphors formed with the Romanian *buză* relate to the edge of an opening, especially in the language of sailing. For example, *buză a nării de punte* → deck collar; *buză de nără* → flange; *buză exterioară de nără* → shell flange. Metaphors with *tooth* are also absent in Maritime English, but in maritime Romanian, its equivalent *dinte* or its derived adjective *dintă*, concern projecting structures, such as the teeth of a *notched wheel* → *roată dintată* (i.e. a barbotine).

The next head part to be explored is the *cheek* which in maritime language is used to designate different elements in a vessel. The metaphors associated with this element apply to several parts of a vessel. For instance, a *cheek knee* which is “one of the knees worked horizontally above and below the hawseholes in the angle of the bow and cutwater of a ship” (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary).

The last instance to be analysed is that of the *ear*. Even if it is not very productive in maritime English, it is noteworthy in maritime Romanian. The mapping is concerned, obviously, with devices shaped in the form of a human ear, consisting of a round structure with a hole in the centre: *ureche* → fairleader; *ureche cu două turnicițe* → double roller chock; *ureche de ghidare* → warping chock; *ureche de parâmdă* → mooring chock; *ureche de remorcaj* → towing fairlead / chock; *ureche pentru garline* → hawser chock. In shipbuilding, for example, *the ear* refers to the foraged projection attached to an object with the purpose of supporting it: *ureche prova* → bow chock; *ureche pupa* → stern chock.

4.5. Metaphors formed with the noun ‘body’

Other metaphors that are worth our consideration are the ones related to the body parts. The first one is that concerning the *body*. These metaphors refer to parts that are the central piece for the functioning of a device or part: *body frame* → coastă dreapță (of a ship); *body post* → etambou al elici; *body skin* → hordaj exterior; *body of a ship* → corp al navei. In the field of astronomical navigation, a *body* refers to any mass of matter, be it a planet or a satellite, a comet or a meteor, or simply a star. Metaphors with *shoulder* in maritime language are related to a flat, joining structure, similar in function and shape to the human referent (e.g. *shoulder block* → macara cu umăr; *shoulder pipe* → nără de parâmdă).

4.6. Metaphors formed with the upper and lower limbs

The body parts to be further analysed are those related to the human limbs. Firstly, the upper limbs and their components are discussed, and secondly, the lower ones. The first example of the series is the *arm* metaphor. This accounts for any element formed by an extension, such as the *arm of a crane* or the *arm of a river*.

Another metaphor to be employed is that of *the elbow*, however few instances have been found: *elbow in the hawse* → lanțuri de ancoră în voltă. In marine engineering, the short right-angle pipe connection is called an *elbow*, as distinct from a bend that is curved or angular. The *leg* metaphor usually applies to structures that are projected, but unlike the *hand* metaphors, they are in pairs. One of the most productive body parts as far as maritime metaphors are concerned, is the *foot* and its Romanian equivalent *picior; picior de păianjen* → crow foot; (legătură cu mai multe brate); *picior al etravei* → stem foot; *picior de arbore/ catarg* → mast heel; *picior de capră* → leg of sheers; *picior de câine* → sheepshank; *picior de etravă cu bulb* → bulbous foremost; *picior de etravă întărîit* → deep foremost; *picior de ulaj* → ullage foot. The mapping is usually based on the existence of some low or ground parts of the tools that serve at supporting them. Therefore, they have a purpose similar to the human feet. In marine engineering, the *foot valve* represents the suction valve fitted at the bottom of a pump barrel. It is its inferior position that contributes to the metaphor construction. Thus, in conclusion, the meaning of such an open-ended, ambiguous and often culturally-determined entity like metaphor is extremely difficult to properly assess and therefore it proves a challenge to maritime translators.

5. Translation Strategies

Maritime metaphors may be translated according to four prototypical strategies:

*Translating the expressive vehicle* (the strategy of literal/ non-metaphoric translation). This strategy is used with cases of metaphor where the expressive content resides in interculturally shared knowledge, with metaphors explainable as originated due to our embodied experience.

*Translating the paraphrase of the initial metaphor* is applied when there are culturally determined connotations associated with the vehicle in the ST, but not in the TT. Definitely, paraphrasing involves a loss of some of the content of the metaphor, and most importantly, its metaphoricity: *anchor comes home* → ancora la post; *gură de zmeu* → towing bridle; *labă de găscă* → towing bridle; *guler al nării de ancoră* → crown flange piece.

*Translating the expressive content*. In this case, the translation of the expressive content of the metaphor in the ST results in a metaphor in the TT, but the expressive vehicle is not preserved. It involves a significant loss of the syntactic and semantic properties of the vehicle, and thus may indirectly lead to an equal loss and transformation of the content, but the greatest advantage of this strategy is that it preserves metaphoricity: *gură de știucă* → cat’s paw; *măr al catargului* → fore-mast head; *măr călăuză* → bull’s eye/ leading truck; *pară de bandulă* → monkey’s fist; *pară de legătură* → fish eye; etc. Besides, when choosing this strategy, the translator may face either the phenomenon of overdetermination (conveying additional connotations non-existent in the original metaphor), or the opposite, viz. underdetermination. Peter Newmark (1985:304-311) sets up a much more comprehensive list of procedures for translating metaphors, adapted to the type of the metaphor to be translated. Useful examples from the maritime domain are presented below.

Reproducing the same image in the TL, seen as convenient for one-word metaphors/ metonyms, its success depending on the cultural overlap between the SL and the TT, or on a universal experience: the more universal the sense, the more likely the transfer. Such examples include metaphors like: *câlcăi al arborelui* →
heel of mast; călcai al axului de cărmă → heel of rudder; călcai al bigii → derrick heel/foot, heel of boom; călcai al chilei → heel of keel; călcai de arbore → heel of upper mast; latitudinile calior/de calm → calm/horse latitudes; gât al coloanei de arbore → masthead; gât al ancorei → anchor throat; gât de lebădă → goose neck (piesă din articulația ghiului); guler de catarg → mast collar; picior de ualaj → upillage foot; ochi navei → ship’s eyes; cap al navei → head of a ship; ochi al furtunii → eye of a storm; ochi de ceață → fog eye; body of a ship → corp al navei; devil’s claw → gheareă de drac; ochi de ceață → fog eye; etc. Of course, in many situations it can be said that the metaphors have been borrowed and literally translated as the image appears to be suggestive enough and therefore suitable for the transfer into maritime Romanian.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusion can be drawn that metaphor is a common device used in maritime language, especially for the purpose of catachresis. Maritime language abounds in instances of metaphors that map both human physical characteristics and animal characteristics. Unlike literary metaphors that prefer transferring the features of the concrete objects to the less definable states or feelings, or making the physical seem less precise and clear, in the maritime field the role of metaphor is different. In maritime discourse, the metaphor is not only a figure of speech but also an accurate device of referring to and expressing maritime related facts or denominating. Nevertheless, in the case of human metaphors, the transfer is from concrete to concrete i.e. the form and the function of the parts of the head and body are associated with the shape and design of various ship’s elements, knots, tools, instruments, meteorological phenomena, etc. The comparison of English and Romanian maritime metaphors in translation has shown both differences and similarities between the two languages. The idea should be pointed out that maritime English and maritime Romanian use different metaphors to conceptualise the same experience, however, our analysis has also revealed examples of metaphorical models with parallel mappings in Maritime English and maritime Romanian.

7. REFERENCES