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**METAPHORIZATION AND SELECTED TRANSLATION  
TECHNIQUES: THE CASE STUDY OF *NATIONAL  
GEOGRAPHIC***

**Introductory word**

The major purpose of the present paper is to discuss the usage of metaphors as well as some selected translation techniques used in the process of translating *National Geographic* articles. These articles came to be known as **popular science publications**, i.e. articles that come out in a popular magazine featuring academic, scientific, and/or technical data for the lay reader. On the one hand, articles in those periodicals are intended to inform the audience of recent developments in science, arts, or technology. On the other hand, their content should be presented in a way that ensures that the publication can be understood by a non-professional readership. The articles, thus, should not abound in specialist terminology, whereas those expert notions, which are indispensable, have to be specified to enable the author to provide semi-academic and/or semi-technical discussion.

The results presented below have been obtained in the course of analysis of a corpus comprising original articles previously published in the American magazine *National Geographic* and further translated into Polish for its corresponding local journal *National Geographic Polska*. It has become a truism in contemporary translation theory to state that a matter of primary importance in the process of translating is to determine the discourse type of the source text, which, in turn, implies the choice of appropriate target language units conforming to the linguistic and cultural conventions of the receptor culture.

What is more, the article in a magazine or a newspaper is usually specifically designed to fit a particular part of the periodical, a very significant parameter of the process of translating in this case is the necessity to fit the target text into the appropriate format, which unavoidably places certain restrictions on the final product of translation. This may be said to be a typographical requirement imposed on the translator.

## Metaphors and selected translation techniques

Our major purpose in this section is not to produce an exhaustive list of techniques used in the course of rendering press articles from English into Polish. Moreover, an exhaustive description of translation techniques yet has to be produced within the framework of translation theory, though a good deal of work has been done (see Vinay & Darbelnet 1965; Newmark 1981, 1988; Baker 1992). Instead, we shall try to exemplify major linguistic operations undertaken in the course of translating texts of this type. The considerations below will be mostly based on the interpretation of translation techniques as specified in Burkhanov (2003).

Translating by means of an **interlingual hyperonym** or an **interlingual hyponym** is one of the most often used translation techniques. The terminological pair **hyperonym** and **hyponym** used in reference to lexical items, and **hyperonymy** and **hyponymy** intended to designate appropriate semantic relationships, were introduced by Lyons (1963). Those descriptive concepts that may be said to have become indispensable categories of contemporary lexical semantics are intended to account for hierarchical subordination in the lexicon of a particular language. Here they are used to denote an interlingual relationship, which is totally in line with the translational tradition to implement terms like **paraphrase**, **synonym**, **antonym**, **related word**, etc. in the description of cross-linguistic correlations.

Baker (1992) maintains that substitution of a source-language lexical item by a target-language lexical item with a less general meaning, an **interlingual hyponymy**, is one of the commonest techniques of translating in the case of lexical-semantic discrepancies between the lexical systems of the source and the target language. It is an obvious case of what Newmark (1981, 1988) referred to as **overtranslation**. For example, in the article “Phoenix Islands” by Gregory Stone published in *National Geographic*, February 2004 the linguistic expression [...] *only eight inches away from me* has been substituted by [...] *tuż przy mojej twarzy*, literally ‘just by my face’ („Wyspy Feniks”, *National Geographic Polska*, Luty 2004), where the linguistic expression *moja twarz* (an **interlingual hyponym** – a word which has a less general meaning), literally ‘my face’, instead of the word *mnie* (‘me’, which has a more general meaning), has been used in the target text.

The opposite technique of using a target language lexical item with a more general meaning in comparison to the source language equivalent is referred to as an **interlingual hyperonym**. Similarly, *tuż przy* (‘just by’, an **interlingual hyperonym** – a word which has a more general meaning) has been implemented instead of the expression *osiem inczy* (‘eight inches’, which has a less general meaning). These alternations have been implemented for purely stylistic reasons since *tuż przy mojej twarzy* sounds better than *tylko osiem inczy ode mnie*, literally ‘only eight inches away from me’.

Our analysis has shown that sometimes the translator is doomed “to commit the sin” of **overtranslation**. It can be attributed to several factors. First and foremost, there is no lexical-semantic equivalent in the target language. Secondly, the existing target-language equivalent (or equivalents) do not correspond to the linguistic, situational or cultural context. Thirdly, the translator’s choice may be motivated by stylistic considerations. In the following we shall provide exemplification of those phenomena.

In the article „Zielony raj obok Rio” in *National Geographic, Marzec 2004* the source-language linguistic expression *eye-popping array of unique plants and animals* (“The Rain Forest in Rio’s Backyard” by Virginia Morell published in *National Geographic, March 2004*) was translated as *gama unikalnych roślin i zwierząt*. In this example due to the lack of lexical-semantic equivalent in the target language the translator substituted the lexical item *eye-popping*, literally ‘uderzający w oczy’ with the Polish general vocabulary item *unikalny*. It sometimes happens that the translator has to sacrifice a metaphor or metonymy. Obviously enough, this is not an easy choice – particularly in the kind of discourse that implies the necessity of preserving in the target text the literary values contained within the source text, which is the case with *National Geographic* articles.

Very often this drastic decision is motivated by the simple fact that the metaphor in question may not be welcome in the target culture or even misunderstood within the latter. *Return to craning yoga pose* in the article “The Rain Forest in Rio’s Backyard” by Virginia Morell published in *National Geographic, March 2004* was translated as *zadzierać głowę* ‘to raise one’s head up’ in the article „Zielony raj obok Rio” in *National Geographic, Marzec 2004*. The author of the original text presupposes that the intended reader of her text is conversant with at least the basic yoga poses, whereas the translator, just to be on the safe side, has made the decision to substitute the metaphoric expression with the general vocabulary items.

Similarly, a metaphoric usage of the verb *fuel* in the sense of causing something, for example *natural riches fueling conquests, disease, and devastation* in the article “Into the Amazon” written by Scott Wallace published in *National Geographic, August 2003*, is substituted by the generally accepted target-language multiple-word lexical item *minąć pod znakiem* in the article „W głąb Amazonii” in *National Geographic, Sierpień 2003*, cf.:

*Snaking deep into remote territory, stretches of the Itaquai River have not yet been plundered, as have more accessible parts of the Amazon, where gold and oil, rubber and timber, slaves and souls have fueled 500 years of conquest, disease, and devastation.*

*Brzegi rzeki Itaquai nie zostały splądrowane w odróżnieniu od dostępniejszych rejonów Amazonii, gdzie złoto i ropa, kauczuk i drewno, niewolnicy i dusze do nawracania sprawiły, że 500 lat minęło pod znakiem podbojów, chorób i zniszczenia.*

It is only natural to assume that further in the text the translator will have to compensate for the loss of metaphor in this passage in order to preserve the overall literary style/ stylistic effect of the whole article. Conversely, the source-language general vocabulary items used in their primary or secondary senses are accounted for by means of **metaphorization** of the target-language lexical units, consider the extracts from the aforementioned articles:

*Deep in the jungles of Brazil, Indian rights advocate Sydney Possuelo races to save people he hopes never to meet: the uncontacted Flecheiros.*

*Spieszyć na ratunek ludziom, których ma nadzieję nigdy nie spotkać – żyjącym bez styczności z naszą cywilizacją Flecheiros. Oto idea, która przyświeca Sydneyowi Possuelo, rzecznikowi praw Indian.*

In the process of translating the original, English sentence was substituted by two sentences in the Polish target text. It is interesting to note that a part of the original sentence deep in the jungles of Brazil that specifies the location has been eliminated, which seems to be surprising, since the specification of geographical region is most appropriate in this magazine. Nevertheless, it resulted in almost no loss of information, since the title “Into the Amazon”, which was translated as “W głąb Amazonii”, sufficiently accounts for the geographical position. Additionally, in the process of translation the dead metaphor of the target-language idea, która przyświeca, literally, ‘the idea that sheds light’ was used.

In some cases the translation tasks are simplified by the fact that the same elements can be found in both the source and the target cultures. In those situations no foreignization, domestication or elimination operations have to be resorted to. For example, in the article entitled „Zielony raj obok Rio” in *National Geographic, Marzec 2004* the linguistic expression *the baby sloth, looking like a Teletubby* (“Rio’s Backyard Rain Forest” by Virginia Morell published in *National Geographic, March 2004*) was rendered as *młody leniwiec wyglądający jak Teletubiś*. Since the Teletubbies cartoons have been translated and Polish TV viewers are familiar with them, in both English and Polish cultures the words *Teletubby* and *Teletubiś* are familiar to the potential readers of the article at issue and may be said to be constituent elements of their cultural background.

There are also cases when the attempt to translate a metaphor is not very efficient. For instance, *snout-like protuberance* in the article entitled “Rio’s Backyard Rain Forest” by Virginia Morell published in *National Geographic, March 2004* was translated as *przypominająca nos wypukłość* literally ‘nose-like protuberance’ in the article „Zielony raj obok Rio” in *National Geographic, Marzec 2004*. If one checks the map, it becomes obvious that the region at issue does not look like a nose, but a muzzle of a strange animal, etc. More natural could be a solution in which the lexical items *ryj, ryjek, pysk, pyszczek* are used.

The tendency in the process of translating that can be immediately noticed is to introduce alterations in style. Instead of the more literary, abounding in metaphors style of the original, the translator produces a more academic, more scientific-like text. We have every right to believe that those stylistic alterations may be attributed to the requirements of the target culture. In Poland the appropriate discourse type is referred to as *naukowo-popularny*, literally, ‘scientific–popular’. The basic requirement of this kind of discourse is at least seeming correspondence of the text to the stylistic peculiarities of the Polish academic style.

It should be noted that the use of lexical items in their secondary senses or metaphorical usages is subject to the laws of the worldview as represented in the meanings of the general vocabulary units. The telltale evidence of this can be observed if we compare the Polish translation of the sentence taken from the article by Virginia Morell “Animal Attraction” published in *National Geographic*, July 2003:

*The birds have arranged their treasures with an eye to the light – how does that bone pile look when the morning sun hits it? – and to their symmetry: silver metal hoops of unknown origin, for example, placed at equal distance from opposite ends of the bower.*

*Układając swe skarby, ptaki uwzględniły wpływ światła – jak też kopczyk będzie wyglądał rankiem, gdy musną go pierwsze promienie słońca – oraz ich symetrię: na przykład srebrzyste metalowe kółka nieznanego pochodzenia zostały umieszczone w równych odległościach od przeciwległych końców altanki.*

The use of the verb ‘hit’ in the linguistic expression *when the morning sun hits it*, is motivated by the tendency of ‘hit’ to be used metaphorically in the sense of suddenness, quickness, and/or forcible action or impact, cf.: *The shot hit her in the back ↔ She was wounded in the back. He hit the highway ↔ He reached the highway. The significance of that event hit me ↔ I realized the significance of that event.* In the Polish target text entitled „Zwierzęce żądze” published in *National Geographic*, Lipiec 2003 the translator used the linguistic expression *gdy musną go pierwsze promienie słońca*, where the verb *musnąć* ‘brush, stroke’ is used with the noun phrase *promienie słońca* ‘rays of sunshine’. This usage is justified by the specific worldview as encoded in the Polish language, which presupposes that it is not the sun but rays of sunshine that reach objects. Moreover, rays of the morning sun lightly and gently touch them.

In the extracts below taken from the foregoing article “Animal Attraction” *National Geographic*, July 2003 the comparative construction [...] *whether he’s a Volkswagen or a Jaguar* in the source text has been substituted by the sequence of everyday usage vocabulary items [...] *który jest najlepszy* ‘which one is better’ in the target text:

*In these fall matches, “their testosterone is low, so there’s no real aggression,” says biologist Andrew Derocher. “It’s like each is trying to find out whether he’s a Volkswagen or a Jaguar.”*

*Jesienią poziom testosteronu we krwi niedźwiedzi jest niski, więc u podłoża tych zapasów nie ma prawdziwej agresji – mówi biolog Andrew Derocher. – To tak, jakby chcieli się jedynie upewnić, który jest najlepszy.*

Similarly, in the article “Atlantic Salmon” by Fen Mointagne, *National Geographic*, July 2003 the metaphor *the chicken of the sea* in the English source text has been rendered by means of the sequence of everyday usage lexical items *towar dostępny dla przeciętnego człowieka*, literally ‘commodity available for an average man’ in the Polish version of the article („Kochamy łososie”, *National Geographic Polska*, Lipiec 2003). The technique employed in the process of translating in the example above is making use of **equivalent collocations** or **pragmatemes**. The term **collocation** introduced by Firth (1957) and then further elaborated on by a number of linguists (see Greenbaum 1970; Sinclair & Coulthard 1987) is often defined as a characteristic word combination whose lexical constituents have developed an idiomatic relation based on their frequent co-occurrence.

The elements of literary style, however, cannot be totally eliminated, since it would turn a National Geographic article into an imitation of an academic paper. The traces of literary style should be preserved to entertain readers, and simultaneously inform them that it is not a purely academic publication. For example, the linguistic expression *playful clan* from the article “Canada’s Great White Bears” by John Eliot, *National Geographic*, February 2004 considered above has been rendered into Polish as *wesoła rodzinka*, literally ‘happy family’ („Niedźwiedzie polarne Kanady”, *National Geographic Polska*, Luty 2004).

Translating by means of an **interlingual paraphrase** is another technique commonly employed by translators. Newmark (1981,1988) understands the notion of paraphrase as an amplification or free rendering of the meaning of a sentence. He also adds that it is the translator’s last resort. Thus, for Newmark translating by paraphrase implies recasting of a fairly large portion of the source text by a comparable portion of the target text, which is at least a sentence long. Baker (1992) would rather interpret this category as substitution of a one-word or a multiple-word lexical item of the source language with a descriptive phrase of the target language. Newmark uses the term **definition** to denote this concept, cf.: definition, usually recast as a descriptive noun-phrase or adjectival phrase (see Newmark 1981:31).

Baker (1992) distinguishes two types of translating by **paraphrase**: a) paraphrase using a **related word** and b) paraphrase using **unrelated words**. It should be emphasized that a **related word** in this context stands for an **interlingual equivalent** whose semantic and pragmatic content overlap with the

source-language lexical item, though they belong to different parts of speech in corresponding languages. Very often the choice or rejection of an **interlingual equivalent** of this kind is caused by stylistic considerations. For example, the linguistic expression *serenely* in the article “Phoenix Islands” taken from *National Geographic, February 2004* was rendered into Polish as *z niezmqconym spokojem*, literally ‘with undisturbed calmness or serenity’ (see „Wyspy Feniks” in *National Geographic Polska, Luty 2004*).

In a number of articles translators have implemented **interlingual synonyms**. The translation operation at issue presupposes the use of the target-language lexical item whose scope of meaning and usage does not seem to be exactly the same as the scope of meaning and usage of the source-language unit. Very often there is a better candidate for the status of equivalent characterized by a greater cross-linguistic correspondence with the original target-language unit. In such cases the choice of an **interlingual synonym** is usually motivated by stylistic considerations, possible unfavourable homophonous effects, the phenomenon of phonetic symbolism, etc. (see Burkhanov 2003:176–177). For instance, in the article “Into the Amazon” by Scott Wallace in *National Geographic, August 2003* the linguistic expression *cantankerous* was rendered into Polish as *swarliwy* (see „W głąb Amazonii” in *National Geographic Polska, Sierpień 2003*). The Polish equivalent implemented in the target text appears to be different in meaning from the translation equivalents suggested in the bilingual dictionary, cf.: *gderliwy* ‘grumbling’, *zrzędlivy* ‘grouchy’ (Stanisławski 1964).

A very interesting example of interlingual lexical substitution implemented in the process of translating can be found in the article “Animal Attraction” by Virginia Morell published in *National Geographic, July 2003*, where the author used the following linguistic expression: *That’s pathetic* [...]. In the edition of *National Geographic Polska, Lipiec 2003* (see the article „Zwierzęce żądze”) this sequence of linguistic signs was rendered as follows: *To rozrzewniające* [...]. Thus, the adjective *pathetic* was accounted for by means of the adjective *rozrzewniający*. The Polish equivalent implemented in the target text appears to be different in meaning from the translation equivalents of the word *pathetic* suggested in the bilingual dictionary, cf.: *żałosny* ‘pitiful’, *nędzny* ‘poor’, *budzący litość* ‘evoking pity’ (see Stanisławski 1964). The translation technique used here may be referred to as the change of **axiological polarity**. Both the lexical elements of the source language *pathetic* and that of the target language *rozrzewniający* are characterized by expressive meaning. Nevertheless, in the former the evaluation is negative ‘evoking pity’, whereas in the latter it is positive ‘evoking sympathy or sentimental’.

The exemplification above amply demonstrates that multifarious translation techniques are used in the process of translating press articles from English into Polish. Corpus analysis has shown that the predominance of translating by means of **interlingual synonyms**, if compared to other discourse types, is noticeable.

## Conclusions

The major claim of this article has been based on the assumption that mass media publications appear within the framework of a specific kind of discourse in the written mode of communication characterized by its semantic, pragmatic and stylistic peculiarities. Hence, translating popular-science articles unavoidably differs from other acts of mediated bilingual communication. The most general requirement imposed on the translator of popular-science articles is the necessity to fit the target text into the appropriate format. This typographical requirement places certain restrictions on the length of the target text. From this viewpoint, the final product of translation is the function of at least four variables, namely: a) typographical constraints; b) necessity to account for the subject matter of the source text; c) requirements of cultural and/or stylistic adaptation; and d) linguistic peculiarities of the original article, with a particular emphasis on its pragmatic and stylistic characteristics.

It is common knowledge in contemporary translation studies that the process of translation is not only a linguistic operation of **interlingual substitution**, but also and no less importantly, the process of **cultural and/or stylistic adaptation**. It should be noted in this connection that ample evidence demonstrates what can be designated as **excessive cultural and/or stylistic adaptation** in the translation for mass media, i.e. introducing too many elements of the receptor culture or its stylistic peculiarities into the target text. In those cases it is sometimes difficult to tell apart translation proper, on the one hand, from what came to be known as **adaptation, rendering, alteration**, etc.

There is a discrepancy in style between original *National Geographic* articles and their translations in the Polish version of this magazine. The English versions abound in figures of speech, particularly metaphoric extensions; and in general, can be said to be more literary, whereas their Polish counterparts make the impression of being more academic. So, the translators' efforts are very often directed at eliminating undue literariness, thus, making the target text more academic-like, i.e. conforming to the requirements of the academic style to a greater extent.

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