

TEACHING MILITARY TERMINOLOGY BY MEANS OF TRANSLATIONS

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Abstract: *The present paper focuses on a pedagogical perspective and underscores the importance of idioms and phrasal verbs in teaching military English. Therefore, it embraces an approach that helps consolidate learners' language acquisition, with special emphasis on developing military vocabulary by means of thematic translation exercises. It is fundamental to note the positive correlation between developing fluency related to the usage of idioms and phrasal verbs and the students' language proficiency. As a result, enhancing the mastery of such lexical items may be a prerequisite of military language acquisition. The approach aims to highlight the importance of accommodating translation studies in the field of military English in order to facilitate appropriate language progress and advocates the introduction of relevant, authentic materials to the teaching of military terminology. The paper highlights translation as an approach and it further identifies the main objectives of selecting translation as a beneficial method for military students. The next part outlines the three-level process of teaching methodology of presentation, practice and production. Finally, it provides a brief overview of the main features of translation and their difficulties and offers suggestions regarding thematic organisation and follow-up activities. The repertoire of activities ranges from lead-in tasks to familiarise the students with the particular style of military language and with the requirements to master the vocabulary through controlled practice and finally enables students to reach the level of free practice in meaningful contexts. These findings would seem to suggest that the several aims of the translation method may significantly contribute to the military students' language progress. Translations involve the knowledge of functional language, followed by inferring meaning from the context, accompanied by correct usage of grammar structures and the achievement of stylistic effect.*

Keywords: translation studies, idioms, phrasal verbs, false friends, equivalence

1. Introduction

Translation is a complex endeavour which requires an array of abilities, the students should evince appropriate language level, the knowledge of verbal forms, tenses and their sequence, grammar rules or set phrases that demand the grasp of more advanced structures, such as the use of the subjunctive after the phrase "it's high time", or a variety of choices, for instance the use of the gerund or of the subjunctive after the verb "suggest", "recommend" in order to achieve specific communicative

purposes. The students face a real challenge to employ their previous knowledge of the English language and enrich it with new vocabulary that they have not tackled before. Moreover, identifying and maintaining register, shades of meaning in order to achieve functional equivalence proves to be both arduous and challenging tasks in the military field.

2. Criteria for translation

Adriana Vizental [1] highlights five factors that ought to be taken into consideration

when selecting the best practical approach to designing a course for vocabulary development.

When military terminology is introduced or reinforced by means of translation exercises, the teacher should integrate the following elements: key words that are necessary for the military professional field, the frequency of the words encountered in the specialised texts in which they are identified, the types of discourses they might be included, the usefulness they represent for military students in various contexts and purposes throughout their careers.

The following objectives are essential: acquiring equivalence of the overall message by resorting to a phrase which is peculiar to the target language and omitting word for word translation, and applying the change of the grammatical category by employing paraphrase.

The student should be able to grasp a rich repertoire of colloquial language that can be integrated into various types of both productive and receptive activities.

3. Teaching Methodology

The introduction of military vocabulary in general entails the presentation of the target language by means of authentic materials (Romanian newspapers such as "Observatorul Militar", (translating from Romanian to English), pieces of news from the Internet, recorded interviews, speeches of various topics concerning military life, formal and informal letters, diary entries, excerpts from war novels, memos, technical texts regarding weapons included in digital encyclopedias.

Firstly, when using war fiction, the best pedagogical approach would be to create handouts comprising excerpts from selected authentic materials comprising bilingual illustrations of certain topics (equipment, items of military uniforms). The teacher chooses original short worksheets and their respective translations published by Romanian publishing houses. Students are

thus engaged in a deductive contrastive search and analysis of the specific highlighted English military term and its Romanian equivalent. Stephen Crane's "The Red Badge of Courage", Winston Churchill's war correspondence "The River War", Ernest Hemingway's war novels, Kurt Vonnegut's "Slaughterhouse – Five", Margaret Atwood's "Epaulettes" are mere starting points to be included in an anthology of flash fiction aim which encompasses military-related topics.

Secondly, language functions should be practised both from a grammatical and lexical point of view. Topics should cover functional purposes, expressing possibility, permission (the translation of the modal verb "may") interdiction, ("it is forbidden"/ "mustn't" and other lexical techniques for rephrasing), or certainty ("it is bound to"/ "it is sure to"/ "it is due to"/ "must" and other suggestions). Other topics may refer to the following: the sequence of tenses means of referring to the future, describing routine, temporary actions, narrating past events or giving instructions.

Moreover, further practice should be provided to students by introducing exercises that comprise the replacement of formal words with their informal counterparts and vice versa: ("to join the army"/ "to enlist", "a se înrola"). According to Marius Misztal [2], the subtle shades of meaning can be consolidated by means of matching exercises, by translating semantically related lexical elements such as military activities in which students must differentiate between the verbs which do not belong to the same synonymic or contextual group, for example: "to inspect", "to review", "to parade", "to march", "to salute", "to greet". Furthermore, students may be required to distinguish between various types of attacks: "to ambush", "to assault", "to invade", "to siege", "to raid", "to skirmish". Groups of words, ranks, branches, types of weapons, types of uniforms and their items can be translated using cloze exercises.

These can be set resorting to the English equivalent of an item and integrated into a multiple choice exercise. These types of activities can be devised to check full grasp of pairs of adverbs or adverbial particles as well as prepositional phrases and at the same time to differentiate between formal and informal register. For instance, in the following sentence “El a fost recrutat pentru serviciul militar”, a possible translation would be “He was conscripted”. However, the students may be further asked to indicate another informal equivalent. “He was a) called for/ b) called in /c) called out/ d) called up”, where “called up” is the best version.

Certain Romanian terms may be translated in mid-sentence, for instance, “The proud, the few, (soldații din infanteria marină)”. In this example, the required equivalent would be: “marines”.

Phrasal verbs such as “to fall in” (Adunarea!), “to fall out” (rupeți rândurile!) can be further consolidated by providing sentences with deleted particles offering appropriate contexts. The translation activities serve as follow - up environments to assess the level of comprehension.

Consequently, we can replace other terms and increase the level of complexity and difficulty which entails devising higher degree of elaborate or in-depth answers. Some words achieve full equivalence and are used according to their denotation: “ammunition” equals “muniție”, “alliance” refers to “alianță”, “platoon” means “pluton”.

However, there could be instances when a word is translated using its civilian denotation, for instance the word “canteen” is mistranslated as “cantină”, instead of a water bottle known as „ploscă” in Romanian.

Finally, the third stage comprises the organisation of communicative tasks that have a functional purpose. The teacher offers set phrases in Romanian that the students have to translate and then fill in the blanks of a letter of complaint, a letter of

application, a letter offering suggestions etc.

4. False Friends

False friends represent words which are apparently similar to words in Romanian, but their meaning is different. For instance, “field cap” cannot be translated literally as it would indicate the incongruous term “șapcă de câmp”, the same rule may be applied to peaked cap with the Romanian equivalent “capelă”: instead of “șapcă cu vârf.”; The word “cuc” (a decoration on a soldier’s cap) is rendered in Romanian as “crest” and has no relevance to the name of a bird (cuckoo).

Foxhole cannot be literally translated “vizină de vulpe”, it denotes „a trench”, which stands for “tranșeu de pușcaș” in Romanian.

Throughout the entire professional experience in the military, the teacher faces these challenges and students realize that they must memorise such specialized vocabulary items in order to show active and proficient language mastery. Collocations such as “all present and correct” (“cu efectivul complet”), to be under orders “a primi ordine”, “to beat the tattoo” means “a suna deșteptarea” or the knowledge of lists of abbreviations is mandatory: “to fall POW” refers to “a cădea prizonier de război” Teaching idioms should be organized in a proper context and repetition and familiarization should be achieved by repetition, in order to endorse effective usage.

“Accommodation” (cazare) is another term which poses difficulties, although it does not belong to the field military terminology, in particular. Nevertheless, lower level students might achieve low scores when completing writing or speaking tasks during assessment tests, as they organise their achievement of the task having in mind the idea of becoming accustomed to certain circumstances (“acomodare”, the Romanian equivalent). Thus, letter writing or speaking tasks can result in low performance from

the point of view of content and task achievement due to the students' misunderstanding of a word.

Furthermore, one may find daunting the association of specific verbs with adverbial particles like in the following example:

"They groped their way out of the tunnel". / "Ei au iesit din tunel pe bâjbâite". Some verbs of movement are followed by prepositions which describe location. They are translated by "the procedure of mutual or simultaneous exchange" [3]. They describe the manner, the cause, the adjective or the phrasal verb that aims to show the respective result.

However, there are instances where a particular particle is required together with a change of the grammatical form, or an additional adverbial particle is included. Interestingly, the "activation of the corresponding English formulation cannot occur via lexical translation. In contrast, it can occur via "conceptual connections" [4], as in the following illustrative excerpt

where war language is metaphorically rendered in an economic context:

"Microsoft battled on with its antitrust problems. Its Tokyo office was raided by antitrust activists." may be translated as "Microsoft a continuat să se confrunte cu problemele sale legate de monopol (111). Sediul din Tokyo al firmei a fost luat cu asalt de militanți anti-monopol." (427 [5])

5. Conclusions

The introduction of translation strategies together with the respective language corpus comprising an organized thematic specialized vocabulary necessary for the military environment would be beneficial both as a comprehensive approach and an essential tool to enhance language fluency and overall proficiency. The activities which include translation tasks may be gleaned and included in teaching both grammar and vocabulary as support materials or they could be used separately, as part of an optional full-fledged course.

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