

MAGDALENA ADAMCZYK
Adam Mickiewicz University
Poznań

IDIOM TRANSLATION STRATEGIES: AN ANALYSIS BASED ON POLISH TRANSLATIONS OF LEWIS CARROLL'S *ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND*

Idiom (from Greek *idios* 'own, private'; late 16th c.) is most frequently referred to as a string of language whose meaning cannot be pieced together from the meanings of its component parts.¹ As such it relies heavily on the interdependencies between formal and semantic levels of language. This makes it a highly complex linguistic phenomenon, if only intra-lingually. What exacerbates the problem with idiom is the fact that the form/meaning relationship should not be expected to be identical across languages, unless these allow for historical, typological or cultural relatedness. That is why idiom is often described as a piece of language which does not translate literally. Although the definition of this type proves highly imprecise in a lot of instances, it properly points to difficulties involved in a largely unexplored domain of idiom translation. It is the key aim of the present study to suggest methods of obviating these difficulties, which is hoped to be achieved by cataloguing viable strategies of idiom translation, as employed in four English-to-Polish translations of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

1.1. Overview of approaches to idiomaticity

It seems an impossible task to provide a satisfactory definition of idiom and account for the specificity of its internal makeup without making reference to some of

¹ The sole aspect of idiom to be referred to in the present article will concern sense 3 of the following dictionary definition of the phenomenon: 1. the language peculiar to a people, country, class, community or, more rarely, an individual, 2. the structure of the usual patterns of expression of a language, 3. a construction, expression etc. having a meaning different from the literal one or not according to the usual patterns of the language, 4. a writer's characteristic use of words (...), 5. a characteristic style in music, art etc. (...) (*Webster's Dictionary* 1990).

the existing theories concerned with the phenomenon, each approaching it from a distinct academic perspective.²

Although first such theories date back to the beginnings of the previous century, in the late sixties idioms were still regarded a hugely neglected area, at least in the Western linguistic tradition (Weinreich 1969:23–25). By way of contrast, they received due attention in Soviet scholarship, whose phraseological approach is surveyed as first below and followed further by other major linguistic frameworks tackling idiom, i.e., structuralist, syntactic (transformational-generative), stratificational and pragmatic.

1.1.1. *Phraseological approach*

According to the Russian school of thought, represented, among others, by Vinogradov (1947) and Amosova (1963), idioms were assumed to be most thoroughly investigated within lexicology or, directly, phraseology, its subbranch.³ Vinogradov (1947) conceived of idiom as a phraseological unit of polylexemic nature with meaning inscribed in its structure. The concept underlying his study of phraseological units and the ultimate criterion for classifying them, viz. motivatedness, allowed him to distinguish the following three classes: totally unmotivated phraseological collocations, totally motivated, yet in metaphorical reading arbitrary, phraseological units and totally motivated phraseological combinations (Strässler 1982:22). Although shortcomings were indicated in Vinogradov's approach (see Amosova 1963), it became a solid point of reference for future studies of idiom in both Eastern and Western scholarships.

Amosova (1963) regarded true idiom to be a phraseological unit consisting of no fewer than two polysemous components, where the relation between the subsenses of each component was suppletive, and their selection both reciprocal and dependent on a contextual morpheme. If, as follows, ambiguity was the basic requirement for idiomaticity, barely ambiguous expressions such as those containing unique components, where the occurrence of one of them necessitates the other (e.g. *runcible spoon*, *kith and kin*, *luke warm*), could not be considered purely idiomatic.

1.1.2. *Structuralist approach*

An expanded structuralist account of idiom was advanced in Hockett (1958) who defined the phenomenon as any non-compositional grammatical form which was not a constituent of a larger such form. Definition of this type covering monomorphemic

² Since, for the present purposes, no need arises to submit a detailed analysis of the theories, each constituting a lengthy study on its own, the following is intended as a synoptic outline of the most central postulations pertaining to idiomaticity.

³ Other prominent scholars investigating idioms within such a framework include: Smirnickij (1956), Mel'čuk (1960), Arxangel'skij (1964).

lexemes, proverbial phrases, quotations, literary allusions, private codes and unfinished allusions was soon considered confusingly capacious, which constituted the most serious charge against Hockett's approach.

1.1.3. *Transformational-generative approach*

While first modest theories representing a transformational interest in idiom appear in the fifties with Bar-Hillel's *Idioms* (1955) and Malkiel's *Studies in irreversible binomials* (1959), it is only Katz and Postal's 1963 proposal that marks the beginning of a purely transformational-generative approach. Idioms are here recognized to be either (1) lexical, dominated by the lowest syntactic category such as noun, verb, adjective, or (2) phrasal, not dominated this way and, therefore, showing transformational deficiencies (e.g., losing ambiguity/idiomaticity under passivization). It is further posited that these two types of idioms should constitute distinct entities in the dictionary so that the material disrupting the generative process could be accounted for separately (Makkai 1972:47-48).

Similar sentiments are voiced by Weinreich (1969) who refines Katz/Postal's concept of a double dictionary pointing to the operation of an Idiom Comparison Rule or Matching Rule which permits to compare the generative process for literal and idiomatic material. In terms of defining idiom Weinreich's approach essentially resembles Amosova's (see 1.1.1).

The most thorough coverage of transformational defects of idioms, however, can be found in Fraser (1970) who proposes to classify idiomatic expressions according to the level of frozenness (i.e., resistance to syntactic transformations) they are endowed with. Altogether six distinct levels of transformational frozenness are advanced in his study, ranging from completely frozen formations representing the genuine idiom shape up to wholly unrestricted ones of non-idiomatic character.⁴

1.1.4. *Stratificational approach*

Stratificational affinities in idiom study are forcefully represented in Makkai (1972) who, in the most voluminous work on idioms, sets out to argue that there exist at least two identifiable idiomaticity areas, i.e., lexemic, encompassing those instances of an idiom, where it can be identified with a form class, and sememic, where it represents an independent clause size. His further observation pertains to the possibility of distinguishing yet another stratum in which to study idioms, viz. hypersememic or pragmemic, the question which one precisely, however, remaining unresolved.

Throughout his study Makkai makes it explicit that failure to recognize stratificational structure of idiom is a serious negligence and any approach rejecting it can be, at best, incomplete.

⁴ For transformational-generative findings other than those mentioned above reader is referred to Chafe (1968) and Newmeyer (1972).

1.1.5. *Pragmatic approach*

Although pragmatics is regarded the most severely under-explored area in idiom research, some insightful implications for the study of the phenomenon issue from Grice's theory of conversational implicature and Searle's speech act theory, where it is covered indirectly in a general discussion of non-literal language.⁵ As Grice (1975) puts it, figuration necessarily involves flouting of the fundamental conversational maxims requiring, therefore, additional mental processing, which implicitly indicates that figurative meaning is parasitic on literal one (Sadock 1993:43).⁶ Derivative character of non-literal reading is further proposed in Searle (1979) who finds Gricean framework perfectly capable of interpreting speech acts including idioms. In his study, where idiom is not regarded a trope in its own right but a subcategory of metaphor (dead metaphor), Searle arrives at a set of principles governing the derivation of figurative meaning.

1.2. General properties of idioms

The above survey of approaches to idiomaticity, each tackling idiom from a distinct angle, permits to conclude that there exists no single universal definition of idiom and account of its structure. At the same time, however, it is not unfeasible to indicate a set of widely-acknowledged properties of idioms that seem impossible to refute irrespective of the adopted approach, and which, most importantly, include:

(1) Semantic opacity

This property of idiom follows from non-compositional meaning assignment which, by definition, upsets a barely controversial principle of compositionality. According to the principle, the meaning of a complex expression is a function of the meanings carried by its components and the way they are organized syntactically.⁷ In idioms, unlike regular expressions, component parts do not share fundamental properties of meaningful units and are, therefore, semantically non-existent.⁸ The func-

⁵ Ways of incorporating idiom into yet another pragmatic theory, as developed by Austin (1962), are offered in Strässler (1982:126–128).

⁶ Under Grice's assumption, language use, literal or otherwise, is universally governed by a principle stating that the information to be conveyed in a linguistic interaction is implied rather than declared, and cannot be retrieved unless a substantial degree of cooperation holds between participants of such an interaction (*cooperative principle*), where cooperation equals obeying four conversational maxims of quantity, quality, relevance and manner (Gibbs 1993: 254).

⁷ For a detailed study of compositionality principle reader is referred to Partee (1984:281–305). Complementary remarks about modes of combining meaning will be found in Cruse (2000:68–69).

⁸ In this respect idiom appears to challenge the status of word as the smallest semantic constituent. In doing so it is seconded by the existence of such phenomena as (1) phonaesthetic

tion of a true semantic constituent is reserved solely to idiom as a whole which can then be said to receive meaning at the expense of its constituents which cease to represent their otherwise forceful semantic identities.⁹

(2) Resistance to chosen grammatical/syntactic transformations

Whereas it is perfectly possible to find an idiom such as *to kick the bucket* in more than one tense form (e.g., 'He (has/had) kicked the bucket'), the phenomenon cannot be passivized without damage to idiomaticity (*'The bucket was kicked'). This indicates that tense, unlike voice, exists over and above this idiom and can be altered at will. Exactly which grammatical category is part of an idiomatic structure and which is not, however, varies from case to case. Hence, the same category of voice which appeared inherent in the above idiom proves (for some) extraneous to idiom such as *to spill the beans* (*'The beans have been spilled') (Palmer 1976:98).

(3) Resistance to the introduction of new material

This property is represented by such sample sentences as *'She pulled his *left* leg' or *'He kicked the *large* bucket', whose idiomatic (unlike literal) interpretation, is meaningless. In either case there is nothing for newly inserted elements, functioning as true semantic constituents, to attach to in a semantically empty environment (Cruse 1986:38). Conversely, new elements can be added to idiom when they modify it as a whole rather than its components individually. For illustration, the two just quoted sentences can be compared with the following ones: 'She spilled the beans *again*' and 'He *unfortunately* kicked the bucket', respectively, where idiomaticity can be preserved since both the elements added and idioms are semantic by nature.

(4) Resistance of its constituents to be replaced by (near-) synonymous elements

Such is the case, for instance, in *'to *rob* a march on sb', with *rob* replacing correct *steal* or *'kick the *pail*', with improper *pail* instead of *bucket* (Ball 1958:6; Cruse 2000:74). However, there exist instances of idiomatic usage which seem to prove otherwise such as 'in one's *bad/black* books' or '*flog/beat* a dead horse' (Ball 1958:6). It follows then that the process of substitution can operate depending on the type of idiom and, specifically, the degree of its frozenness understood as resistance to whatever syntactic alterations.

(5) Textuality

The central assumption here is that, while it is most frequently investigated in isolation or its immediate context up to a sentence level, idiom is also assigned

words, (2) semantically compact words and (3) morphemes (a thorough discussion of point 1 and 2 can be found in Palmer (1976: 37–42); point 3 is explored in Bolinger (1975: 105) and Cruse (2000: 72)).

⁹ Methods of testing semantic constituency through the application of a recurrent contrast test are offered in Cruse (2000: 70–72). Alternative approach assuming that meaning of idiom may not be wholly arbitrary but anchored in the meanings of its components is advanced in Lakoff (1987: 446–453).

a specific textual function. Therefore, it is not a lexical device to be employed whenever conventional modes of describing experiences prove too plain, but one which specifies precisely when, where and how to be used.

The frequency of its occurrence is not only strictly linked to a text-type or genre (whereas the phenomenon may be quantitatively abused in texts like popular horoscopes, it tends to be scarce in scientific and technical ones) but also the register of a text (broadly speaking, the higher the register, the rarer the idiom) (McCarthy and Carter 1994:113). Interestingly, idiom distribution is most frequently highly structured. Yet another textual property of the phenomenon allows to indicate interpersonal relations within a (written/oral) passage. Frequent as it may be when reference to objects or third parties is made, idiom is largely avoided when first- or second-person participants are concerned, where it may prove too straightforward or contribute to interpersonal tensions (Strässler 1982:103, 109).

(6) Lack of structural uniformity

The spectrum of expressions considered idiomatic is large enough to subsume extremes like *tourneur* or, according to common sense knowledge, genuine idioms (e.g., *to fly off the handle*) as well as phrasal verbs, plain grammatical usage (e.g., 'It's time we went') or deviations from strict grammar (e.g., 'It's ages since we met'), whose idiomatic status is fairly debatable. Clearly, idiom proves a puzzling phenomenon which escapes pedantic classifications, indicating thereby that any typological attempt at it need be flexible enough to permit a marked degree of overlap and fuzziness.

2.1. Idiom under translation: the scope of the present study

As already stated, idiom is one of the phenomena posing special challenge to translation. Insofar as simultaneous occurrence of one-to-one correspondences on formal and semantic level of language should not be taken for granted across linguistic codes, it is a misconceived idea to expect phenomena depending heavily on the juxtaposition of the two levels, such as idioms, to always translate smoothly. Since, however, idiom is at the same time a language universal, it is assumed to be potentially translatable from one linguistic code into another (Veisbergs 1997:162).

Based on such an assumption, the analysis to follow seeks to present choices with which translator might be presented while rendering idioms, and assumes, in consequence, the form of an inventory of idiom translation strategies. Four of altogether seven such strategies (equivalent/non-equivalent idiom translation, paraphrase and omission) have been adopted from Baker's study (1992:71–78), where they proved successful in Arabic, Chinese, French and German translations from English. In the present analysis they are tested for viability with Polish as a target language (TL). It is further proposed that one of those strategies, paraphrase, be divided into two distinguishable types. The analysis then proceeds to yield the remaining three strategies, i.e., substitution, compensation and addition, found in my corpus of English-to-Polish translations of idioms. Each strategy is first briefly sketched out (which has the benefit of eliminating potential terminological confusion arising from inconsistent

nomenclature used in the description of translation strategies in general) and then illustrated with examples from my corpus. The order of strategies presented below is such that it opens with broadly licensed TL solutions (e.g., equivalent idiom translation) and proceeds through more questionable ones (e.g., paraphrase) to end up with barely acceptable translation options (e.g., omission).

The exclusive source of idioms subject to investigation is Lewis Carroll's linguistically intriguing *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and its four Polish translations as conducted by Jolanta Kozak, Antoni Marianowicz, Maciej Słomczyński and Robert Stiller.¹⁰ Importantly, the corpus of idioms is narrowed down to encompass only those instances which are not used in a frequent punning manner, where the preservation of wordplay rather than idiom proves to be prioritized in translation.

Finally, for the elucidation of the meanings of English idioms regular recourse was made to the following sources: *Longman dictionary of English idioms* (Long 1979), *The Penguin dictionary of English idioms* (Gulland and Hinds-Howell 1986), *English idioms* (Seidl and McMordie 1978) as well as *Słownik idiomów angielskich* (Fisiak 1993) and *Angielsko-polski tematyczny słownik idiomów, zwrotów i wyrażen z dodatkiem przysłów i sentencji* (Radziejewski 1997).

2.2. The strategies of idiom translation

2.2.1. Equivalent idiom translation

The strategy applies solely to instances where a source language (SL) idiom happens to be reflected in a TL and is, therefore, easily preserved in translation with no damage to either its formal or semantic structure. The adoption of the strategy depends hugely on the degree of diachronic relatedness between languages. Smooth translation based on it can then be guaranteed only in cases of a high degree of similarity within a language pair.

The only things in the kitchen that did not sneeze were the cook and a large cat which was sitting on the hearth and grinning *from ear to ear*. (Carroll 1988:62)

Tylko dwa stworzenia w tej kuchni nie kichały: Kucharka i wielki roześmiany *od ucha do ucha* kot, który leżał na zapiecku. (Słomczyński [Carroll] 1990:57)

2.2.2. Non-equivalent idiom translation

Here, unlike in the former case, the relationship between source and target language idioms is marked by lack of simultaneous formal/semantic symmetry, where only the latter is present. Formally then, a TL idiom appears to be wholly 'independ-

¹⁰ It is to be emphasized that the four translations are not subject to comparative analysis, which is beyond the scope of the present study.

dent' of and non-equivalent to a corresponding SL idiomatic expression, which is instantiated below:

- a. 'It's really dreadful,' she muttered to herself, 'the way all the creatures argue. It's enough to *drive one crazy!*' (Carroll 1988:61)
 "To jest doprawdy nie do wytrzymania – rzekła do siebie. – Te stworzenia są wprost nieprzyzwoicie kłótlive. Można *dostać bzika* od tego ustawicznego użerania się" (Marianowicz [Carroll] 1988:98)
- b. 'But if I'm not the same, the next question is, Who *in the world* am I?' (Carroll 1988:26)
 Ale jeśli nie jestem ta sama, to następne pytanie: kimże ja *u licha* jestem? (Stiller [Carroll] 1990:49)

The specificity of the following two examples is attributable to the fact that in c. non-equivalent idiom translation additionally results in a punning conjunction and in d. a TL idiom is, in fact, a counterpart of a SL phrasal verb, whose idiomatic status is not indisputable.

- c. 'Oh, please mind what you're doing!' cried Alice (...) 'Oh, there goes his precious nose!', as an unusually large saucepan flew close by it, and very nearly carried it off.
 'If everybody *mind ed their own business*,' the Duchess said, in a hoarse growl, 'the world would go round a deal faster than it does.' (Carroll 1988:63)
 "Ależ proszę uważać!" krzyknęła Alicja (...) "Och, już po jego bezcennym nosku!" kiedy wyjątkowo duża patelnia gwizdnęła obok, niemal go urywając. "Gdyby każdy pilnował własnego nosa – warknęła ochryple Księżna – ziemia kręciłaby się dużo szybciej." (Stiller [Carroll] 1990:123)
- d. This seemed to Alice a good opportunity for making her escape; so she *set off* at once, and ran till she was quite tired and out of breath ... (Carroll 1988:46–47)
 Alicja pomyślała sobie, że to jedyna okazja do ucieczki: od razu *wzięła nogi za pas* i biegła, aż tchu jej zabrakło ... (Stiller [Carroll] 1990:93)

2.2.3. *Substitution*¹¹

Substitution is applicable to cases, where either no TL equivalent can be found for a SL idiom or it is dismissed for stylistic or other reasons. The strategy assumes the replacement of an original idiom by alternative lexical devices like simile, word-play, collocation, metaphor, etc. provided these yield the response comparable to the one created by that idiom.

¹¹ Compare alternative nomenclature in Hervey and Higgins (1992: 34), where identical process is subsumed under a wholly different term, 'compensation in kind'.

a. *Simile*

'... I'm better now – but I'm a deal too flustered to tell you – all I know is, something comes at me *like a Jack-in-the-box*, and up I goes like a sky-rocket!' (Carroll 1988:45)

'... Dosyć, dzięki, już mi lepiej... Tak się zgrzałem, że nie mogę mówić... No więc, coś na mnie wyskoczyło, *jak na sprężynie*, i wystrzeliłem w górę jak rakietą!'¹² (Kozak [Carroll] 1999:50)

b. *Wordplay*

'Please would you tell me,' said Alice a little timidly (...) 'why your cat *grins like that?*'

'It's a *Cheshire cat*,' said the Duchess, 'and that's why. Pig!'¹³ (Carroll 1988:62)

– Przepraszam bardzo – powiedziała Alicja, nieco speszona (...) – Czy mogłaby mi pani powiedzieć, dlaczego pani kotek tak się *szczyrzy?*

– Bo to jest *Szczere Kocisko* – odparła Księżna. – Właśnie dlatego. Prosiaku! (Kozak [Carroll] 1999:72–73)

c. *Fixed collocation*

'Ah, my dear! Let this be a lesson to you never to *lose your temper!*' (Carroll 1988:38)

– Pamiętaj, moja droga, niech to będzie dla ciebie przestroga, żebyś nigdy *nie traciła równowagi*. (Marianowicz [Carroll] 1988:53)

d. *Free collocation*

'Whoever lives there, thought Alice, it'll never do to come upon them this size: why, I should *frighten them out of their wits!*' (Carroll 1988:58)

“Nie będę mogła wejść do tego domku – pomyślała Alicja. – Jestem na to obecnie za duża. Jego lokatorzy *zwariowaliby* chyba *ze strachu* na mój widok!” (Marianowicz [Carroll] 1988:92)

e. *Metaphor*

'*Keep your temper,*' said the Caterpillar.

'Is that all?' said Alice, swallowing down her anger as well as she could. (Carroll 1988:50)

– *Trzymaj nerwy na wodzy* – poradził jej Gąsienica.

– To jest ta ważna rzecz? – Alicja z wielkim trudem przełknęła złość. (Kozak [Carroll] 1999:57)

¹² Here, an idiomatic simile turns into a non-idiomatic one.

¹³ The reference is made here to a well-known English idiom *to grin like a Cheshire cat* ('to smile with a broad, contented grin as if amused' (Seidl and McMordie 1978)) absent from Polish idiomatic repertoire.

2.2.4. *Compensation*¹⁴

Compensation allows for a source text (ST) idiom to be displaced from its corresponding target text (TT) location and put elsewhere in that text provided the operation produces the effect equivalent to that evoked in a ST. Importantly, compensatory material can be either carried along much distance (Baker 1992:78) or restricted to an adjacent sentence (Newmark 1988:90). Although compensation is often considered controversial, it seems legitimate from a discourse analysis point of view which recognizes substantial variation between source and target language acceptability norms regarding idioms (an idiom placed in one context in a ST may not be tolerated in identical context in a TT). Interestingly, such an approach also justifies the use of compensation involving plain language as compensatory material as in the following cases:

- a. ... Alice had got so much into the way of expecting nothing but out-of-the-way things to happen, that it seemed quite dull and *stupid for life* to go on in the common way. (Carroll 1988:23)

... Alicja przyzwyczaiła się tak bardzo do czarów i niezwykłości, że uważała rzeczy normalne i zwykłe – *po prostu za głupie i nudne*. (Marianowicz [Carroll] 1988:23)

- b. ... then the puppy began a series of short charges at the stick [...] barking hoarsely *all the while*, till at last it sat down ... (Carroll 1988:46)

Szczeniak rzucił się znowu na patyk [...] szczekając *bezustannie przez cały czas*. (Marianowicz [Carroll] 1988:71)

2.2.5. *Paraphrase*

The strategy represents a strictly descriptive approach to translation. It involves the type of transformation, where a TL fragment, clearly the product of translation, lacks idiomaticity typical for its original counterpart. The recasting of a SL idiom is then purely concerned with its formal structure.

As paraphrase applies to cases, where either no TL match can be found for a SL idiom or it is disregarded for cultural, stylistic or other reasons, two distinct types of the strategy can be distinguished, which is illustrated below:

1. *No TL match found for a SL idiom*

- a. ... she thought at first she would get up and leave the court; but *on second thoughts* she decided to remain where she was as long as there was room for her. (Carroll 1988:111)

¹⁴ For difficulties inherent in the interpretation of the strategy, concerned mainly with vaguely defined 'equivalent effect' as well as highly imprecise notion of 'unit of translation', reader is encouraged to turn to Harvey (1998:39–40).

Najpierw chciała wstać i wyjść z sądu, ale *po namyśle* postanowiła zostać, dopóki się mieści. (Kozak [Carroll] 1999:137)

- b. 'Ugh!' said the Lory, with a shiver.
'*I beg your pardon!*' said the Mouse, frowning, but very politely. 'Did you speak?' (Carroll 1988:32–33)

"Brr!" otrząsnęła się Lora.

"*Co proszę?*" rzekła Mysz ze zmarszczonym czołem, ale bardzo uprzejmie.

"Mówiłaś coś?" (Stiller [Carroll] 1990:63, 65)

Interestingly, in English-to-Polish translation paraphrase is frequently used, where phrasal verb idioms, absent from Polish, are concerned (cf. 2.2.2.d.):

- c. 'How surprised he'll be when he *finds out* who I am! (Carroll 1988:39)
– Będzie na pewno zdziwiony, kiedy *dowie się*, kim jestem! (Marianowicz [Carroll] 1988:57)

2. A TL match for a SL idiom dismissed

- a. 'That was *a narrow escape!*' said Alice, a good deal frightened at the sudden change, but very glad to find herself still in existence; (Carroll 1988:28)

– *Niewiele brakowało!* – powiedziała Alicja porządnie przestraszona tak nagłą zmianą, ale bardzo zadowolona, że istnieje nadal. (Słomczyński [Carroll] 1990:24)¹⁵

- b. 'It's really dreadful,' she muttered to herself, 'the way all the creatures argue. It's enough to *drive one crazy!*' (Carroll 1988:61)

"To naprawdę okropne – burknęła do siebie – jak te wszystkie stworzenia się wykłócają! toż to *oszaleć można.*" (Stiller [Carroll] 1990:119)¹⁶

2.2.6. Addition

The process operating here yields a TT with idiom in place, where it does not exist in a corresponding ST fragment. Transformation of this type is most frequently intended to make up for the omission of an idiom elsewhere so that, in the end, the quantitative balance can be redressed and no SL idiom left without its TL counterpart. Allowing for substantial modifications to a SL material (often considered synonymous to unwelcome interference in it) the strategy is sometimes considered illegitimate.

- a. Her listeners were perfectly quiet till she got to the part about her repeating 'You are old, Father William' (...). (Carroll 1988:103)

¹⁵ A potential Polish idiomatic counterpart here might be *o mały włos*.

¹⁶ An idiomatic counterpart for this example was quoted in point 2.2.2.a.

Słuchacze siedzieli w milczeniu, *jak makiem zasiał*, aż doszła do tego, jak recytowała Gąsienicy Jesteś stary, mój ojczu! (...). (Stiller [Carroll] 1990:213)

- b. They were indeed a queer-looking party that assembled on the bank – the birds with draggled feathers, the animals with their fur clinging close to them, and all dripping wet, cross, and uncomfortable. (Carroll 1988:32)

Osobliwą zaiste tworzyli gromadkę, kiedy wreszcie stanęli na brzegu: ptaki jak zmokłe kury, czworonogi jak zmyte, a wszyscy razem ociekający wodą, żli i *zbici z pantalyku*. (Kozak [Carroll] 1999:32).

2.2.7. Omission

The strategy is concerned with a serious interference in a ST by way of deleting a SL idiom in the translation process. As such for many translation scholars it is rarely regarded a genuine translation option. For its legitimacy, however, speaks partly the fact that it cannot apply automatically whenever idiom poses difficulties but only after it has been proved to carry a minor textual function, to appear all too frequently or to be compensated elsewhere in a TT.

- a. ‘Why, they seem to put everything upon Bill! I wouldn’t be in Bill’s place *for a good deal*; (...). (Carroll 1988:44)
 – Wygląda na to, że oni wszystko zwalają na tego Bisia. Nie chciałabym być na jego miejscu. (Marianowicz [Carroll] 1988:64)
- b. Still she went on growing, and, *as a last resource*, she put one arm out of the window, and one foot up the chimney (...) (Carroll 1988:40–41)
 Robiło się coraz ciasniej. Alicja musiała więc wyciągnąć jedną rękę przez okno, jedną zaś nogę wsunąć do komina. (Marianowicz [Carroll] 1988:59)

3. Final remarks

Given idiom’s puzzling character as a linguistic phenomenon alone demonstrated in some detail above, it seems impossible to expect no obstacles to the process of its translation. First, these are attributable to lack of formal/semantic correspondence between languages which may differ in the way they choose to describe experiences idiomatically as well as the type of experiences selected for such an operation. Second, translation difficulties concerning idioms relate also hugely to norms of mostly stylistic, emotive and pragmatic character which, differing substantially across languages, call for special attention on translator’s part. Clearly, problems of either type can be largely eliminated provided a marked degree of genetic, typological or cultural relatedness holds between the languages of translation. This not only provides for interlingual matches, such as formal and semantic, but also yields correspondences regarding idiom’s textual function, admissible frequency depending on text-type, register, etc.

The above translation strategies were suggested for cases, where similarities between the source and receptor language idioms were both straightforward (if dis-

missed) and completely absent. Yet, they were investigated solely in terms of form/meaning structure of those idioms. The reason for dismissing context from the analysis of translation strategies, intended as a purely theoretical framework, was that it turned idioms into individual entities and made it impossible to make generalizations about their translation process.¹⁷

Even though strategies may turn out helpful to translators in a lot of instances, the context of translated idiom should never go unnoticed in translation practice. The proper understanding of all the subtle relationships which idiom enters with other textual elements and its potential stylistic and cultural function helps select a suitable strategy of its translation and is further able to legitimize otherwise controversial translation solutions such as omission or addition, which show a high degree of interference in the original.

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¹⁷ In this respect translation strategies differ substantially from translation methods handling units as large as whole texts (Newmark 1988: 81).

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