# LINGUISTIC APPROACH TO TEENAGERS' SLANG. UNTRANSLATABILITY

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Nowadays, it seems to be difficult to comprehend teenagers' vocabulary once they use newly coined words and phrases so as not to be understood by others. Translating teenagers' slang through using paper and online dictionaries, or books increase the efficiency of perceiving youngsters' world better and knowing how slang sounds in our mother tongue. There is a piece of truth regarding the proverb "Translator is a traitor". It does not matter how good the translation is because something always seems to be lost. This problem deals with that "untranslatable" part of meaning that cannot be translated in the Target Language, and which makes some linguists comprehend that in a theoretical sense translation is also not possible.

On the other hand, it will stimulate the translator or interpreter to remember that the concept of untranslatability has several inherent characteristics of languages, and it is not essentially due to the individual skills of the translator or the limitations of the art.

The dilemma about *"untranslatability"* arises due to the fact that dissimilar cultures divide up the world in various ways, and that their languages thus comprise ideas, words, and expressions to depict those different notions and culture-typical features.

Therefore, peculiar realities pointed out by the Source Language should not be approached as if they were desperately indistinguishable to speakers of the Target Language merely because speakers "don't have a word for it". In contrast, the interpreter should try to come up with several ways of getting the idea across so as the meaning of the slang is understandable through giving the explanation.

In certain cases, the dilemma about "untranslatability" is unresolvable, and the translator, after wandering through all the dictionaries is diminished to maintain the word in its original language through explaining the meaning or just paraphrase, while the interpreter is diminished to paraphrasing, describing, and also keeping the untranslatable world in the original, or just skipping the word.

*It is important not to confuse difficulty with untranslatability.*

There are several methods to translate teenagers' slang words and expressions that do not to have equivalent in the Target Language, and quite often "untranslatability" is a mistaking of a true name, because there is no need for a precise or complete translation, just a close or similar equivalent may be all that is necessary in a given context.

Regarding dilemma about "untranslatable" slang demands us to take account that the same idea may find explanation in different ways from one culture to another one. It implies asking questions, such as:

What are we translating? A word? A phrase? An expression? An idea? A newly coined word (e.g. slang)? Is there anything in our culture which occupies approximately a similar place or which plays approximately a similar role? Is there anything in our culture that is thought of or talked about in a similar way? Are people that deal with the Target Language expecting a full translation? Does the context or background make clear the untranslatable conclusions?

Additionally, linguists have revealed that the vocabulary of our native language just decides what we can say about the entire world, not if we can perceive it. Even if "Ouch!" does not exist, those who use it usually feel grief. This interjection emphasizes the concept of "untranslatability" of teenagers' slang. ***"Ouch!"*** *is translated in Romanian language as* ***„Buba!".*** *It is a part of speech that shows the emotion or feeling of a person and deals with phonetic characteristics of teenagers' slang. The interjection* ***"Gee!"*** *–* ***„Uau!"*** *is used when somebody wants to express wonder, and as well takes part from phonetic category. In both cases the translator used imperative method as in the Source Language in order to show how it sounds in the Target Language and as well to keep its original form.*

Usually, a possible case of "untranslatability" can be figured out by finding the same register, or level of language. Similarly, equivalents sometimes are found apparently untranslatable recent coinages that are used by teenagers if we pause to consider the social context in which they are used. For instance, if a Romanian speaker tries to translate the current Am. coinage "yuppie" by searching for a one-word equivalent in Romanian, the speaker perhaps would never find one. But if we ask, "What type of person is a "yuppie" in America, and how do we

call people like that in Romania or Moldova, somebody will probably think upon the *acronym and phrase* ***"BCBG – good style, good attitude" – „stilat şi elegant"*** *lexical language level.* This phrase is close enough to the meaning of teenagers' slang "yuppie" - a young, determined, and stylish social climber. *Thus,* ***"yuppie"*** *is translated into Romanian as* ***„tip tare".*** *As a recent coinage it deals with stylistic approach. When translating the acronym "BCBG" and "yuppie", the translator focused on the creativity, emphasizing language as a creative tool*. In order to help create the basic associations in our mind to empower us to find some solutions regarding the problem of "untranslatability", an exercise that we find helpful is to build the habit of imagining and understanding the context, some related words and ideas, rather than the slang itself. One proof of untranslatability can be found in the movie "The Kissing Booth" when two teenagers used the expression "Seven Minutes in Heaven" in their dialogue. This slang expression means a teenagers' party game, where people who are chosen to enter into a closet or other gloomy enclosed space, can do whatever they want for seven minutes. When dealing with such teenager slang phrase, the translator is likely not to translate it because it might alter the whole meaning and gist of the matter. ***"Seven Minutes in the Heaven"*** *in Romanian language is translated* ***„7 minute în rai"*** *and has to do with stylistic approach.*

Even if this teenagers' slang phrase has a figurative meaning, it was translated in Romanian language through using an exact phrase as in the Source Language. The following examples prove *lexical creativity* used by teenagers' slang and its untranslatability:

*Conversion*, as well called zero or null derivation involves the change of a part of speech (the creation of a new word from an existing one). For example: ***"Fool – to be fooled" – „idiot – a fi prostit".***

*The translator chose to apply the principle of obtaining the message in the Target Language by a change in the point of view*.

Neologisms stand for about one third of the contemporary Romanian vocabulary and are mostly used by adolescents. Teens use such terms, words or phrases freely, without any adaption effort. By neologisms, we understand a new word or expression that have recently showed up in a particular language.

Furthermore, they may be loaned from other languages or even may be created by certain internal means. Nonetheless, teenagers do not perceive and accept the idea of using neologisms. They rather state that their common language is slang. The explanation of this point is a mere one: these words reveal realities that belong to different domains from teenagers' everyday life (e.g. the sports field, the school life fields). Clearly, from the linguistic point of view, these words are neologisms, but these days teenagers have known these objects from the moment of their birth and they do not perceive them as new words, but as ordinary ones.

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