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Marjan Golobič. *A Glossary of Slovene-English False Friends. Glosar slovensko-angleških nepravnih prijateljev*. [= *Mostovi*, posebna številka]. Ljubljana: Društvo znanstvenih in tehniških prevajalcev Slovenije, 1988. iv + 26 pp.

The 'false friends' of the translator, according to the author's admirable (but perhaps not yet perfect?) definition on his first page, are words which may sound or look alike in the two languages concerned, but whose two semantic fields coincide partly or not at all.

One such, which has in my own experience caused at least fleeting headaches to colleagues in Slovenia, is the pair Slovene *frakcija* and English *fraction*. On the one hand, the Sln. word, in its most common political meaning: "organizirana skupina v stranki, ki ima o posameznih vprašanjih drugačno mnenje kot večina" (SSKJ = Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika), corresponds to the Eng. word *splinter-group*; on the other hand, an Eng. mathematical *fraction* is a Sln. *ulomek*; while, at the same time, in the strictly chemical context, Sln. *frakcija* is indeed identical to Eng. *fraction*; and, in addition, we have the Eng. word *faction* (without the 'r') which **does** mean an organized group within a political party, but may only be used "with opprobrious sense, conveying the imputation of selfish or mischievous ends or turbulent or unscrupulous methods" (Oxford English Dictionary, 1971). The only wonder is that the headaches caused to language-learners and translators by this 'false friendship' are only fleeting.

'False friends' are the source of so many language-learners' errors, many of which have become enshrined as classic 'howlers' or 'bloopers,' e.g., the notorious translation of Latin *bonae legiones Caesaris* as *the bony legs of Caesar*; Marjan Golobič's useful (but much too short) handbook sets out to explain what kinds of 'false friends' there are (in the theoretical first four pages) and then presents a list of about 400 Slovene-English examples.

In his theoretical section, Golobič makes some distinctions among various kinds of 'false friends' which I find extremely useful; in one instance, his classification appears faulty (see below), but this is—if true—of no great importance. However, these classifications are **not** explicitly used in the glossary, cf. below.

In the first place, he separates 'absolute' false friends (which serve as permanent traps for translators) from 'contextual' ones (which are sometimes translatable by their cognates, and sometimes not, i.e., where the relevant semantic fields overlap). An example of the former is the non-corresponding pair Sln. *ondulacija* (= Eng. *wave (in hair)*) and Eng. *undulation* (= Sln. *valovanje*). Examples of the latter are very numerous; apart from *frakcija/fraction* above, let us cite *kultura*, which is translated by *culture* in some contexts

(e.g., *rimška kultura*) but not in others (such as *družba in kultura* = . . . *the arts*; *oljka in druge kulture* = . . . *plants*; *Ne pljuvaj po tleh*; *kje pa je tvoja kultura?* = . . . *manners*).

Golobič goes on to distinguish “regional” false friends, viz., those which are problematic for Slovenes in one variety of Eng. but not in another. Here, usually, the difference between British and American Eng. is at fault—for example, *biljon* = *billion* in Britain but = *trillion* in North America; *pasjansa* = *patience* in Birmingham UK but *solitaire* in Birmingham AL. I suggest that it is misleading to treat these, as Golobič does, as a sub-group of the ‘contextual’ false friends, since the ‘context’ in this instance is a dialectal (geographical, external) and not a semantic (internal) one.

Finally, Golobič distinguishes what he calls ‘pseudo-false friends’, i.e., those which are only ‘false’ by virtue of derivational peculiarities in the languages. Thus, *avto* in *avtoportret* corresponds to Eng. *auto* in *autobiography*, *autonomy*, *autosuggestive* and many other words, but—as it happens—in this particular word it corresponds to Eng. *self* in *self-portrait*. Similarly, *boks* and *happy end* lack the derivational suffix *-ing* of their Eng. counterparts: in this case, the semantic fields are (virtually) identical, but the similarity in **appearance** is deficient.

At least one other category suggests itself to the reader of Golobič’s glossary: namely, ‘archaic false friends.’ For example, *hazardirati* and *to hazard* appear to fit the ‘false friend’ category, but the latter is so rarely used in Eng. nowadays that we may say that the acquaintanceship has, so to speak, lapsed; in other words, very few translators will ever be tempted to think of *to hazard* in this context.

In the glossary proper, the author does use a number of abbreviations (‘Am’ = American, ‘Br’ = British, ‘col’ = colloquial, ‘expl’ = expletive, ‘phot’ = photography’ and so on) and could well have extended this approach by adding notations with respect to the other classifications mentioned above; alternatively, a system with separate lists of different kinds of ‘false friend’ might be preferable. Perhaps a future edition of this kind of glossary can take up one of these suggestions. In particular, for the learner and translator whose first language is Sln., I would urge separate listings for British and American (and, eventually, Canadian and Australian?) usage.

This leads into an important comment: the booklet is obviously written from the viewpoint of, and is aimed at, native Slovene-speakers; this is exemplified by the first entry, where Sln. *administracija* is only briefly glossed into Eng. (as *management*) whereas the ‘false friend’ counterpart, *administration*, is explained at much greater length; and though the explanation is in Eng., it is clearly aimed at non-English-speakers. In very many particulars, however, this booklet will be useful for those who come to Sln. from Eng.. In a few instances, indeed, the explanations are (so to speak) bilingual: thus, the entry for *aparat* gives a number of collocations for the Sln. word (*brivski aparat*, *fotografski aparat*, *TV aparat*, *kuhinjski aparat*, *aparat za zobe*, *aparat Demokratske stranke*) with translations into Eng., as well as an explanation of the meaning of the Eng. *apparatus*.

I have minor reservations about some of the entries. In some cases, the Eng. style is imperfect or inexact: a quick check by a friendly native speaker of English would have helped. In others, entries are acceptable as preliminary sketches, but call for expansion. For example: the pair *simpatičen* / *sympathetic* is clearly a ‘false friend,’ but the Sln. *simpatetičen* is not mentioned. The entry for *totalka*, glossed as *write-off* (i.e., of a car after an accident), is quiet about the common North American verb *to total*. The semantic field of *selektor*, as well as *head coach*, does, according to the SSKJ, include the meaning of Eng. *selector*; and, similarly, apart from *vacation bonus*, *regres* has the subordinate meaning of *regresija*, and thus overlaps with Eng. *regress(ion)*. Very few of the entries

appear, however, to be really weak; the entry for *čips* is one such—not really incorrect as far as it goes, but insufficient; it may serve as an example here. It reads,

ČIPS - potato chips; Chips or French Fries (Am) are French “pommes frites.” A very popular British dish is called fish’n’chips (p. 5).

These two lines do not make the British vs. American usage explicit, and give readers pause: in which variety of Eng. is the gloss “potato chips”? Do the British eat their fish with *čips* or with *pomfrit*? They must re-read the two lines to be sure what is what. I would suggest the following (note the more usual spelling of the British culinary delight):

ČIPS - potato chips (Am), potato crisps (Br); cf. POMFRIT - french fries (Am), chips (Br); a very popular British dish is called “fish and chips.”

Instances of this kind, where the entry tends to be misleading, are rare; and my overall impression is extremely positive. I myself found many ‘false friends’ which I would not have recognized as such, and many more of whose precise nature I was very ignorant. The author is to be congratulated on the appearance of this booklet. At the same time, it may be suggested that it should form the kernel of a much more ambitious project.

In the first place, the theoretical basis of the work may require more scrutiny. It should be pointed out that only with respect to specific denotations is it strictly true that **any** pair of similar-sounding words, one Sln. and the other Eng., have identical semantic fields. As illustration, I take—at random—two dozen such words in the SSKJ beginning with *ha-*. Most of these are, clearly, either ‘false’ or ‘true friends’ (see below); but in between these two extremes are five words whose status is difficult to specify, at least in terms of semantic fields, viz.: *hall*, *halucinacija*, *harem*, *harlekin* and *harmonija*. I suspect that the Sln. and Eng. semantic fields in all five instances are not ‘identical’, especially if the questions of **style** and **common metaphorical usage** are taken into consideration; but how much this matters—how often the instances of semantic disparity will interfere in translation—is a difficult question.

Secondly, Golobič’s lists are far from exhaustive. The fractious ‘false friend’ *frakcija*, which he omits, is mentioned above; let us now return to our two dozen *ha-* words. Half of them have more or less ‘identical’ semantic fields in the two languages, and are thus ‘true friends’: *habanera*, *hacienda*, *hagiografija*, *halma*, *halogen*, *halva*, *hamit*, *hanoveranec*, *hanzeat*, *haplologija*, *harpuna*, *hašiš*. At the other extreme are seven which are, surely, ‘false’: *habit* (only a garment in Sln.), *habitualen* (only used medically in Sln.), *half*, *handicap* (both restricted to sports usage in Sln.), *halo* (only meteorological in Sln.), and *hangar* (in Sln., extended: used also for boats). Golobič has none of these, though he does have four other *ha-* ‘false friends’: *happy end*, *harmonika*, *hazarden*, *hazardirati*.

Apart from its practical usefulness, this glossary contains much that makes the reader pause for reflection. A comparison of differentially-listed ‘regional’ false friends would tell a lot about the modern sources of enrichment of the Sln. vocabulary, viz., whether the Eng. influences have come across the North Atlantic (as *čips*, *puding*, *soda*) or only across the English Channel (as *biljon*, *pasjansa*, *sprint*). Further, some of the entries in the glossary are known as ‘faux amis’ along the French/English threshold, and as ‘falsche Freunde’ along the German/English one—as the virtual equivalence of Sln. *simpatičen* with *sympathique* and *sympathisch* shows. One also wonders: how extensive in Europe is the morpheme *-tank-* “to fill up with gasoline/petrol,” and where did this innovation start? What about Sln. *normalno*, and similar adverbs used across vast stretches of Europe, with their meanings that are so far removed from that of Eng. *normally*?

Even as a preliminary listing of Slovene-English 'false friends,' this glossary is—all things considered—an excellent one. It will certainly be useful to all those who, like this reviewer, try to produce English translations of Slovene texts; it will presumably also be useful for the many more who translate in the other direction. It might well, as I have suggested, bear some theoretical revision, and could certainly be much enlarged; hopefully, an enlarged version will one day be available. After all, given the difficulties inherent in translation, translators deserve a guide to help them distinguish between their 'true friends' and their 'false' ones; for, with 'false friends' as numerous and as two-faced as these, who needs enemies?

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