

## SPORTS VOCABULARY IN ENGLISH AND SERBIAN IN THE LIGHT OF TRANSLATION CHALLENGES

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**Abstract:** Due to the powerful influence of English on Serbian in the sports field, which has been present since the nineteenth century and which is nowadays particularly striking, numerous translation concerns in this field are emerging. In order to point out some possible translation difficulties which can appear as a consequence of the lack of sufficient terminology knowledge in this field in English and Serbian and due to the complex socio-linguistic and cross-cultural influences, the authors focus on several lexical issues which can cause these difficulties: false friends, collocations and lexical gaps. The sports terms analyzed in this paper are extracted from the detailed contrastive analysis of English and Serbian sports terminology, which included terms from over 100 sports which are popular all around the world. The results of the research can be useful for linguists who are interested in contrastive analysis and translation studies, as well as for ESP teachers.

**Keywords:** translation, sports terms, false friends, collocations, lexical gaps.

### 1. Introduction

Owing to the powerful influence of the English language on Serbian (earlier on Serbo-Croatian), the correlation between these two languages has been the subject of the linguistic research among Serbian (and Croatian) linguists for a long time. This influence has been analyzed in different fields, such as economy, medicine, information technology, sports, etc.

The position of sport as a global phenomenon in the society, the wide range of sports consumers and sports language users and the facts that sports register in Serbian has been created under the strong influence of English since the nineteenth century and that English influence on Serbian in this field is nowadays stronger than ever, make sports register the field which deserves a particular linguistic attention. However, there is a whole range of questions related to sports register in Serbian which are still open for the linguistic research.

One of the issues related to sports register, which with no doubt, deserves to be discussed in detail is the difficulty which may appear in the process of terminology translation in this field. In order to shed more light on this problem our analysis will be focused on several lexical issues which may cause these difficulties: false friends, collocations and lexical gaps.

## 2. The process of translation of sports terminology in Serbian

Foreign terms in any field may be adopted to Serbian in two ways – by means of translation or by means of transshaping. Due to the fact that the terminology of any field tend to be globally unified, which is the same in the domain of sports terminology, and the fact that nowadays English terms in different fields are becoming international (in the same way as Latin and Greek terms were long ago), sports terms are most frequently adopted to Serbian by transshaping. However, that is not always the case.

According to Bussmann (1998, 1186) terminology is “the collection of defined technical terms within a scientific system, which differs from everyday usage in that the terms are defined exactly within a specific system.” Main methods used for creation of terminology include: narrower definition of terms already present in everyday language, neologisms and terms borrowed from foreign languages (Bussmann 1998, 1186).

When sports terminology in Serbian is concerned, according to Milić (2013<sup>1</sup>, 67), there are three predominant sports terminology formation processes:

1. adding new meaning to existing words
2. combination which includes phraseology and word-formation processes (affixation and compounding) (Lipka 1992, 80)
3. borrowing from English.

Due to the characteristics such as preciseness, transparency, internationality, which terms, as the special part of the overall vocabulary, possess the process of their translation in any field can be very demanding. The main aim of any translator dealing with the terminology in any profession is to translate specialized terms accurately. In order to be able to do that, translators have to know how to treat terms in the translation process, due to their linguistic features, as well as to know which translation technique is suitable in each particular case.

According to Prčić (2005, 178-180) there are three main translation procedures: direct translation, loan translation (calques are created) and functional approximation (functional equivalents are created). The same question is elaborated by Hlebec (2008) in more detail. According to Hlebec, (2008, 114-115) new foreign words can be adapted to our language by applying one of the options below:

1. Original forms from source language
2. Transcription
3. Transliteration
4. Foreign word (borrowed word)
5. Use of a known foreign word instead of unknown one
6. Literal translation (calque)
7. Descriptive translation
8. Use of a neutral word
9. Word omission
10. Neologisms
11. Use of an analogous domestic term or expression

The previous list of options which may be used in any process of translation can be applied in the process of terminology translation, as well.

### 3. Sports terminology standardization and the lexicography in the sports field in Serbian

On the basis of the principles of standardization composed by Bugarski (1996, 109), Dubuc (1997, 154-8) and Šipka (1998, 128-9), Milić (2013, 80-84) established the set of principles of standardization of sports terminology in Serbian. There are six of them:

1. preciseness
2. transparency
3. sistematicity
4. productivity
5. concision
6. frequency

Preciseness implies the terms ability to refer only to one concept within the certain field. Transparency refers to the terms ability to reflect its meaning by its own word form. Sistematicity refers to the terms ability to be completely adopted into the linguistic standards of Serbian. Productivity refers to the ability of those who are using sports terms to decode and encode as many terms as possible in a particular field. Concision is terms ability which refers to the terms form (Milić 2013, 80-84).

When it comes to bilingual Serbian – English sports dictionaries, there are only two available ones: *Englesko-srpski rečnik sportskih termina* (Milić 2006) and *Englesko-srpsko-engleski Football A-Z* (Stojković 2011). The dictionary *Englesko-srpski rečnik sportskih terminan* includes terms which belong to five sports which are popular in our region: football, basketball, handball, volleyball, water polo, while the other one *Englesko-srpsko-engleski Football A-Z* includes football terms exclusively.

Having in mind the fact that sports language is extremely widespread and that English influence in this field is very strong it can be concluded that sports lexicography in Serbian is the linguistic branch which has to be paid more attention to in the future. The existing bilingual English-Serbian dictionaries, which include the terminology of some mainstream sports, cannot be considered sufficient in such a complex context of the use of the sports terminology. Consequently, the translation in this field is inevitably hindered.

### 4. The analysis of sports terms in English and Serbian

The analysis on which this paper is based and the segments of which will be presented was carried out as the part of a more complex research which was aimed at defining different aspects of correlation between the English and Serbian sports terminology (Budinčić 2013). Among other things, the analysis revealed that there are many sports terms in English and Serbian that, in our opinion, can potentially cause translation difficulties. Being the subject of this paper such examples are singled out and will be analysed below.

The corpus consisted of sports encyclopedias in English and in Serbian. The analysis overall included the terminology of more than 100 sports that exist all around the world, some of them being globally more popular than the others. With the aim to identify and explain certain translation problems in sports register, we focused on false friends, collocations and lexical gaps. These segments of language are related to

general systemic differences between two languages (collocations and false friends) and problems arising when translators have to provide adequate equivalents for the terms which denote new imported concepts (lexical gaps). These linguistic issues may be identified as potential pitfalls in the process of translation in any field.

#### 4.1. False friends

False friends are lexemes which usually have the same origin, similar form and different meaning (Dragičević 2010, 315).

Loan words usually have the same meaning in both source and target language. However, that is not always the case and such kind of generalization may result in problems in the process of translation in any field.

The examples of sports false friends, which are discussed below, are extracted from the corpus which consisted of two sports encyclopedias: *The Sports Book* (2007) and *Sportovi – vizuelna enciklopedija* (2007) and the dictionary of false friends *Srpsko-engleski rečnik lažnih parova* (1997). Through the analysis of the terms we came up with the conclusion that all sports false friends may be divided into the following groups:

1. Terms which segment lexical fields differently in English and Serbian, which means that the same concept has a different number of referents in these two languages.
  - (1) The term *reket* (*engl. racquet*) in Serbian is used as a term for equipment in both tennis and table tennis, but in English there are two different terms which are used for the same concept in these two sports. They are *racquet* and *bat* respectively.
2. Terms which belong to some particular field in English are adapted and used in another field in Serbian.
  - (1) The term *bazen* has the similar appearance as English term *basen*. However, these two terms are used in different fields in English and Serbian. The term *bazen* is used in the sports register in Serbian, while the term *basen* does not belong to the sports register in English. Serbian term *bazen* refers to the same concept as English term *swimming pool*.
  - (2) English term *dress* is adapted to *dres* in Serbian, but these two terms do not refer to the same concept in these two languages. The term *dres* in Serbian is used in sports terminology and denotes sports clothing, while the term *dress* in English denotes “a piece of clothing for women or girls which covers the top half of the body and hangs down over the legs” (CALD 2012, 429). English terms which refer to the same concept as the term *dres* in Serbian are *(sports) outfit* and *(sports) suit*.
  - (3) The term  *revanš*, which is used in Serbian sports terminology, has the similar appearance as English *revenge*, but these two terms do not refer to the same concept. The equivalent of Serbian sports term  *revanš* is the English term *return match*. The term *revenge* refers to “harm done to someone as a punishment for harm that they have done to someone else” (CALD 2012, 1222).
  - (4) The term  *reprezentacija* which is used in Serbian sports terminology has a similar form as the English term *representation*. However, they do not refer to the same concept. English term *national team* corresponds to Serbian  *reprezentacija*, while the Serbian

adjective *reprezentativan* corresponds to an English prepositional phrase - *of the national team*.

3. Terms which refer to the same concept in English and Serbian are formed by means of different formation processes in these two languages.
  - (1) The term *rekorder* which is used in Serbian is an equivalent of the English term *record holder*.
  - (2) The term *kros* which is used in Serbian is an equivalent of the English term *cross-country race*.
  - (3) The English term *athlete* refers to "a person who is very good at sports or physical exercise, especially one who competes in organized events" (CALD 2012, 80), but the meaning of its adopted form *atleta*, in Serbian does not refer to the same concept. English term *athletic person* corresponds to Serbian term *atleta*.
  - (4) Similar examples include: *boks* (in Serbian)/*boxing* (in English), *korner* (in Serbian)/*corner-kick* (in English).

These terms may be treated as the examples of an ellipse.

In this group of terms pseudo-anglicisms may be included, which are the word forms in Serbian which are composed of English elements, but they do not exist in the same form in English.

- (5) For instance, terms *golman* and *golgeter* which are coined in Serbian out of English elements do not appear in forms *goalman* and *goal getter* respectively in English to denote the same concepts

Due to the fact that people sometimes make incorrect generalisations in language, false friends may cause translation problems in any field. Namely, terms which have similar forms in English and Serbian are not always equivalents in the sense of meaning. It may sometimes be incorrectly assumed and consequently incorrect lexical forms may be chosen. The list of such examples in sports register given above is just a small part of the long list of similar examples which exist in the sports register, which are not presented in this paper due to the space available.

#### 4.2. Collocations

According to Bussmann (1998, 200) collocations are "word combinations which have developed an idiomatic semantic relation based on their frequent co-occurrence." According to the same source "collocations are, therefore, primarily semantically (not grammatically) based, e.g. *dog: bark, dark: night*." These word combinations may cause problems in the process of translation in any field, which, among other things, may be explained by the fact that different languages conceptualize reality in different ways.

The question of collocations in sports language will be analysed through the prism of the sports collocations related to verbs *play, go* and *do* which usually collocate with particular sports names and which are quite frequently used in language. The examples of such sports collocations are given below.

- (1) English sports terms which collocate with *play*: *badminton, billiards, hockey, golf, bowls, rugby, golf, cricket, baseball, chess, darts, cards, dominoes, ice hockey, horseshoes*.
- (2) English sports terms which collocate with *go*: *fishing, skiing, bowling, cycling, skateboarding, surfing, snowboarding, climbing, jogging, swimming, sailing, kayaking, camping, canoeing, ice skating, bobsledding*.
- (3) English sports terms which collocate with *do*: *aerobics, gymnastics, judo, weightlifting, yoga, wrestling, archery, athletics, high jump*.

It should be mentioned that gerund nouns which collocate with verbs *do* and *go* may be referred to by single verbs in English, as well.

- (1) Examples include the following verbs and verb phrases: *ride a horse* (= *go horse riding*), *hike* (= *go hiking*), *pole vault* (= *do pole vaulting*), *dive* (= *go diving for something*), *windsurf* (= *go windsurfing*), *fish* (= *go fishing*), *surf* (= *go surfing*), *speedskate / skate* (= *go speedskating*), *weightlift* (= *do weightlifting*), *ride a horse* (= *go horse riding*), *ski* (= *go cross country skiing*), *fence* (= *do fencing*), *wrestle* (= *do wrestling*), *rollerblade* (= *go rollerblading*), *bicycle* or *ride a bicycle* (= *go cycling*).

Some of the English sports names collocate with the verbs other than *play*, *go* and *do*.

- (1) Examples include: (frisbee) *catch/play frisbee*, (javelin) *throw the javelin*, (discus) *throw the discus*.

In reference to the terms given above, we can make several general conclusions:

- English sports names which collocate with *play* are mainly those which denote team competitive sports,
- English sports names which collocate with *go* are usually found in the form of gerund nouns and denote sports which can be done individually,
- English sports names which collocate with *do* are mainly martial arts and denote sports which can be done in groups.

What is important to be mentioned here and is related to correlation between these sports English collocations and their Serbian equivalents is the fact that the above given conclusions are not applicable to the same sports terms in Serbian. Because of that, these terms are to be paid particular attention to in a translation process. What can make problems in the process of translation of these sports terms is the fact that parts of collocations cannot be translated as single words, since the elements in English sports collocations do not match their counterparts in Serbian.

Apart from the collocations related to verbs *do*, *play* and *go* some other sports collocations may, as well, cause difficulties in the translation process, due to the fact that some English and Serbian sports terms have different semantic segmentation. It means that the number of terms which refer to a specific concept in English and Serbian is not always the same, which results in different 'noun + noun' sports collocations in these two languages. The examples singled out from the corpus include the terms which can be divided into several groups:

#### 1. Sports officials

- (1) "An official who is responsible for ensuring the rules to be adhered to" is termed *sudija* in the Serbian language. In Serbian, this term is used in a variety of sports, e.g. in

football, basketball, tennis. However, in English, the same concept is termed differently in different sports, e.g. tennis *umpire*, football/basketball *referee*.

## 2. Sports grounds

- (1) The place where sports competitions are taking place in Serbian is usually termed *teren* and it can be used in a variety of sports, but in English the same concept is termed differently in different sports: football (field)/rugby/hockey *pitch*; golf *course*, tennis/basketball/badminton/volleyball *court*.

## 3. Sports equipment

- (1) An item of sports equipment used in hockey and golf in Serbian is termed *štap*. In English the same objects in these two sports are termed *stick* and *club* respectively.

The number of given examples is not exhaustive.

In conclusion, when it comes to the question of how to treat collocations in a translation process, first of all, it is important to recognize these word combinations as collocations and bear in mind the fact that as such, these word combinations cannot usually be translated as single words.

### 4.3. Lexical gaps

Lexical gaps in any language appear usually along with the new concepts which have to be termed.

They quite often appear in the sports field. For example, as the consequence of constant increase in number of extreme sports in the world, terms denoting them are being created and numerous lexical gaps appear in sports terminology in Serbian.

When it comes to the translation of some English sports reference materials to Serbian, it may be particularly challenging for translators to adopt new terms, i.e. the ones which belong to sports which are not popular in our country. There are no sports bilingual dictionaries or internet databases where Serbian equivalents of these terms can be found.

Such situations are usually being resolved in different ways, which will be exemplified and elaborated below on the examples of sports terms which are singled out from Serbian sports encyclopedia: *Sportovi –vizuelna enciklopedija* (2007). Namely, the ways in which such terms are adopted (translated) to Serbian are the following ones:

1. English terms are literally translated into Serbian, while original English word forms are given beside in brackets.
- (1) For instance, the terms denoting slalom techniques in *snowboarding* are written in the following word forms: *zaokret s leđa* (*backside turn*) and *zaokret sprijeda* (*frontside turn*).
2. English terms are written in the original English word forms with long descriptive explanations in Serbian given in brackets.
- (1) For instance, terms used in snowboarding are written in the following forms: *goofy border* (*border koji ide desnom nogom naprijed*) and *regular border* (*border koji ide lijevom nogom naprijed*). Terms *goofy* and *regular* refer to boarding stance, which is explained in brackets in the Serbian language. Namely, the term *goofy* refers to

boarders having their right foot placed on the forward part of the board, while *regular* refers to boarders having their left foot placed on the forward part of the board.

3. English terms are adopted to Serbian by transshaping, while their original English word forms are given in brackets.
  - (1) Examples include: *metod er (method air)*, *korkskru (corkscrew)*, *mektvist (Mc Twist)*. The terms are used in snowboarding.
4. English terms are adopted to Serbian by transshaping, while corresponding Serbian terms are given in brackets.
  - (1) For instance, the terms referring to free style disciplines in *BMX* are given in the following forms: *fletlend (vožnja na ravnom)*, *strit (ulična vožnja)* and *half-pajp (vožnja u polucevi)*. English terms are *flatland*, *street* and *half-pipe* respectively. They refer to different kinds of BMX rides: a ride on a flat surface, a ride on a street and a ride on the surface resembling half-pipe.
5. Some English sports terms are partially adopted to Serbian: while one part is adopted to Serbian, the other is used in an original English word form.
  - (1) Examples include: *bungee skokovi*, *regular borderi*, *goofy borderi*.
6. Terms are referred to only in the original English word form, without any additional explanations.
  - (1) Examples include: *deep square leg*, *deep mid-wicket*. The terms are used in cricket.

In a nutshell, the preceding examples prove that the translation of sports terminology is quite a challenging task, particularly when it comes to the translation of the terms which belong to the sports which are not popular in our country.

The extremely wide range of social use of this register, the large diversity of word forms in sports register which are not in accordance to the standard of the Serbian language and the constant emergence of new sports which continually arise accompanied by new terms, reveal how challenging the process of translation may be, as well as how complex the process of sports terms' standardization in this field may be.

It can be concluded that apart from the linguistic research which is related to terminology of mainstream sports it is necessary more linguistic attention to be paid to the terms from less popular sports, due to the fact that there are a lot of sports which are not popular in our country, but still there is the need for the translation of their terminology. Neither in dictionaries and sports encyclopedias nor in internet databases can be found translation equivalents for these terms in Serbian.

#### **4.4. Proposals and implications for further research**

The data elaborated above bring us to the conclusion that main causes why native speakers of Serbian may be faced with translation problems in sports register are:

- Linguistic interference between English and Serbian due to the strong English influence on Serbian



- Recent worldwide emergence of a lot of new sports and appearance of corresponding new sports terms which are usually not standardized in Serbian owing to their quick emergence

- The lack of bilingual Serbian-English specialized sports dictionaries.

In our opinion, bilingual Serbian – English sports dictionaries which would include sports terms from less popular sports, as well as sports reference books, which would, on the basis of contrastive analysis, present structural differences between English and Serbian on the concrete sports corpus would be particularly helpful in the process of overcoming the translation challenges in the sports field.

## 5. Conclusion

As shown in the preceding analysis, translation pitfalls in sports language in English and Serbian are numerous and may appear due to many sociolinguistic reasons. Being aware that it is impossible to predict all the linguistic difficulties which may be encountered in the process of translation of the sports terminology, as well as the space available, our aim in this paper was to reveal and elaborate on some of them. In order to do that, the authors singled out and analyzed certain linguistic issues as potential translation difficulties: false friends, collocations, lexical gaps.

It can be concluded that it is very important to be alert to all the possible linguistic consequences which new global sports trends can leave on Serbian sports language in the future. Namely, new global sports trends bring a lot of new foreign (usually English) sports terms in Serbian, which means that non-standard use of the terms may be expected. With no doubt, the ball is in the court of linguists and sports experts.

Bearing in mind the fact that sports terminology is used by a huge number of people of different age, education, background and that, being very specific, terminology correctness in any field deserves a particular attention, we believe that the results presented in this paper can be useful for ESP teachers, linguists interested translation studies and contrastive analysis, as well as for anyone who may be interested in sports terminology in English and Serbian.

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