

DEBATE AND EDUCATION

The “False friendship” of some medical terms in English-Slovak and Slovak-English translation

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Abstract

When translating medical texts from English into Slovak or vice versa some terms can cause problems because they proved to be “false friends” functioning in both languages. Most of these expressions are international words coming from classical languages and during the course of time they became different from the point of view of their meaning (Tab. 2, Ref. 3).

Key words: translation, “false friends”, morphological form, meaning, context.

Despite meaning unequivocalness of terminological expressions determining their meaning transparency some of these terms can cause problems when translating them. In translation of medical texts from English into Slovak or vice versa they prove to be “false friends” functioning in both languages.

The expression “false friends” is used in language methodology for the words which seemingly denote the same meaning in two different languages (because they have the same or nearly

the same morphological form) but actually they have different meaning in each of them.

These are mostly international words originating from classical languages and in these words meaning differentiation came into effect during the course of time (1).

In this contribution we focus on the terms which can turn to be an unexpected trap for the author of English-Slovak or Slovak-English medical translation.

“False friends”

English expression	Slovak translation	Slovak expression	English translation
actual	skutočný	aktuálny	topical
actuality	realita, skutočnosť	aktualita	recent event
ambulance	sanitný voz, sanitka	ambulancia	outpatient department
angina	angína pectoris	angína	tonsillitis, quinsy
control	ovládanie, dozor, riadenie	kontrola	examination, check up
dement	zbaviť rozumu	dementovať	deny officially
dress	obviazať ranu	dres	tracksuit

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dose	1. dávka, 2. záchvat	dóza	box, case
elaborate	zložitý, rozvádzať do detailov	elaborát	paper, report
eventual	konečný	eventuálny	contingent, possible
evidence	dôkaz, stopy	evidencia	file(s), record(s)
formulary	liekopis	formulár	form
genial	bodrý, mierny	geniálny	brilliant
gum	ďasno, žuvačka	guma	rubber
gymnasium	telocvičňa	gymnázium	grammar school
hazard	nebezpečenstvo, riziko	hazard	gambling, anything risky
invalid	neplatný	invalid	disabled person
concept	pojem	koncept	draft
concurrence	zhoda názorov, časová zhoda	konkurencia	competition
manifestation	prejav	manifestácia	demonstration, sign
ordination	vysvätenie (za kňaza)	ordinácia	surgery, consulting room
paragraph	odstavec, stručná správa v novinách	paragraf	section
prepare	pripraviť	preparovať	dissect, preserve
preservative	konzervačný prostriedok	prezervatív	condom, sheath

Special linguistic attention should be paid also to several English medical terms - nouns which form the adjective from other, mostly Latin or Greek root, e.g.:

specific language dictionary that should not be missing in any book-case of a medical specialist.

Different form of adjective

Noun	Adjective
Bone	(Lat.) osseous tissue
Eye	(Lat.) optic nerve
Liver	(Greek) hepatic carcinoma
Fat	(Lat.) adipose tissue
Neck	(Lat.) cervical vertebrae
Backbone	(Lat.) spinal canal
Kidney	(Lat.) renal artery
Stomach	(Greek) gastric juices
Forehead	(Lat.) frontal bone
Navel	(Lat.) umbilical cord
Mouth	(Lat.) oral cavity
Windpipe	(Lat.) tracheal intubations
Ear	(Lat.) auditory canal
Breast	(Lat.) mammary duct
Lungs	(Lat.) pulmonary embolism
Teeth	(Lat.) dental caries
Heart	(Greek) cardiac muscle
Brain	(Lat.) cerebral cortex

The examples show that the translation of medical text from English into Slovak or vice versa cannot be even for doctors of medicine only a routine activity.

In practice it means that in case of uncertainty of the exact meaning of a term in particular context it should be checked in a

References

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