

3. Blauer November. Ukrainische Erzähler unseres Jahrhunderts. Übertragen und herausgegeben von Anna-Halja Horbatsch. – Heidelberg: Rothe Verlag, 1959. – 375 S.

Summary

The article examines translation works of A.-H. Horbach aimed at popularizing Ukrainian literature in Germany. The article analyses *Blue November*, an anthology of Ukrainian literature of the 20th century published by Horbach as her first translation project. Her translation solutions and approaches are studied on a number of examples.

IDIOMS AND THEIR POTENTIAL LEXICAL EXTENSION

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0. The scope of analysis.

In order to narrow down the scope of idiomatic expressions to be examined we only focus on those that syntactically perform the structure $\{V+NP_{\text{ext}}\} \rightarrow \{V+\text{Attr}+N\}$, e.g. *cry stinking fish*. (Section 1.) Determiners, namely articles and kindred expressions are disclosed from the present description because they are endowed with grammatical rather than lexical meaning. However, we cannot ignore them in the next step of the examination, namely once we shall ask questions about the potential attributive extension of idioms structured $\{V+NP_{\text{bare}}\} \rightarrow \{V+N'\}$, e.g. *chew the cud*, *pull one's leg*. As a matter of fact, it is just these that we zero in on first of all. (Section 2.) As for a corpus, we have to admit that it is difficult to rely on authentic cases of lexical variability since these are scarce; therefore we gathered two lists of some sixty idiomatic expressions in either, quoted by G. Nunberg et al. (1994), T. Nicolas (1992, 1995), C. Fernando (1989, 1996), and others, and we tested their potential lexical variability against the intuition of twenty native speakers (both British and American, mostly undergraduates), asking them for so-called 'introspective judgments'.

1. $\{V+NP_{\text{ext}}\}$ potential lexical modification.

Idiomatic expressions of the $\{V+NP\}$ -syntactic structure are mostly simple constructions, which, by the way, under certain stylistic conditions makes it possible for speakers to prefer concise formulations to lengthy descriptions. It does

not mean, however, that the NP cannot contain an attribute; what may be interesting is the fact that we can only sporadically come across expressions which have more than one attribute in their NP's strings, e.g. *have two left feet*, *(live in) cloud cuckoo land*. And, frankly speaking, the other attribute is mostly a kind of expressive one, such as *little*, *good*, or *old*, e.g. [...] *my little black book*, [...] *good bedside manner*, [...] *good old days*. However, a closer inspect into the topic will reveal that modifications can be more complex.

For further considerations it seems convenient to describe characteristics of attributes which are integral parts of idioms. To our best knowledge, there are no statistics to bring about information on the semantic categories of modifying attributes in idioms. Neither can we say much, from any official sources, about the ratio between the categories that we define as 'limiting' and 'descriptive'.

Note: In our classification [Kavka 1980], attributes are (1) Limiting, in the sense of Quantification or Placing on Scale, e.g. *take forty winks*; *put one's best foot forward*, and (2) Descriptive, in the sense of being Referential, e.g. *take French leave*, or Qualifying, e.g. *roll out the red carpet*.

Having once examined [Kavka 2003] several hundreds of idiomatic expressions we came to the conclusion that the attributes which appeared as their integral components represented practically all the categories as defined here-above. In other words, it seems that there are no constraints imposed on semantic categories to which attributes belong. Nevertheless, viewed statistically, Qualifying attributes prevail in number over Limiting ones. Qualifying characteristics involve all references, ranging from Time, Size (and other physical properties) to positive-negative evaluation. One distinct type of these is that of reference to Colour, offering figurative, non-literal interpretation. This holds true for our sixty expressions, too.

As we have mentioned, idiomatic expressions of our {V+NP_{ext}}-type mostly have no more than one attribute. Hence we could believe in a hypothesis postulating that further lexical modification is generally found impossible. And indeed, native speakers, being presented with a fairly long list of sixty {V+NP_{ext}}-idiomatic expressions and asked to fill in any additional attribute spontaneously sprung to their mind, gave negative answers almost unanimously. However, some of the respondents admitted that they would not mind, in certain co-situations, to add an adjective or an adverb (grammatically speaking) which expressed more or less subjective evaluation. These act as a kind of 'intensifiers' (in semantic terms). A few randomly selected examples will illustrate:

- (1) You've made a RIGHT / REAL dog's dinner of painting that door!
- (2) When's the GREAT happy event?
- (3) All this jargon is ABSOLUTE double Dutch to me.
- (4) He is the GENUINE fountain head of all truth.
- (5) She hired a FAMOUS private eye to find out reasons of her husband's trips.

(6) He's lived a THOROUGHLY clean life.

(7) I can't trace my SUPPOSEDLY noble family tree back further than my great-grandfathers.

(8) I had a REALLY close shave when I nearly collided with a big lorry.

The first question which flashes in one's mind is the choice between the forms of adjective and adverb. On the surface structure the answer seems to be simple: the adjective is used when it determines the whole NP_{ext}, as in

(9) Because of a FIERCE family feud they haven't spoken with each other for years.,

while the adverb is chosen if it is to relate to the NP's qualifying attribute, e.g.

(10) Missing the train is a REALLY lame excuse for your being late again.

Yet again, this simple answer does not always correspond to what native speakers consider as acceptable. We might wonder why only some respondents stopped to think about *keep a CLOSE eagle eye*, or why only some agreed with the adjectival *real* while others preferred the adverbial *really* in

(11) He took us on a REALLY / REAL wild goose chase.

Having examined thoroughly our idiomatic expressions, we came to a hopefully plausible conclusion, through certain inter-steps, of which one or two are worth mentioning. Namely, possibility of further modification is dependent largely on the overall construction of the given idiomatic expression: hence {V+NP_{ext}} has a lesser chance of being lexically further modified than {NP_{ext}}, i.e. one whose verb, if any at all, is not the expression's integral part. Thus respondents unanimously turned down any modification of [*I didn't expect him to*] cry [*0*] stinking fish, for instance, but they were inclined to accept [*He came out of the navy with an*] ABSOLUTELY clean sheet. Moreover, what we noticed and took for a significant feature, is the following: The more is the idiomatic expression sensed by the speaker as metonymical, the more possible it is for one to be modified by an additional attribute. Thus, for instance, in (4) the idiomatic *fountain head* can easily be accompanied with "intensifying" attributes such as *genuine*, or *absolute*, or perhaps *everlasting*, since *fountain head* is understood to mean 'source' or 'fount'. To a certain extent, *fountain head* behaves like *fountain pen*, defined as a compound, in which case lexical modifications are allowed yet insertion between the two components is banned. Similarly, *private eye*, as in (5), metonymically meaning 'detective', can go easily together with *famous* and even other attributes semantically compatible, e.g. *tough*, *new*, etc. On the other hand, no metonymic figure is sensed in [...with] *the naked eye*; therefore it would hardly be possible to say anything like **You won't see it with the BLUE naked eye*. Of course, not all idiomatic expressions are metonymical; yet what these and similar ones have in common is their non-compositionality. Briefly speaking, this characteristic means that the speaker understands the expression as a semantically indivisible unit. Expectedly, there must be idiomatic expressions which are compositional, namely, those in which one component is read in its literal meaning; some linguists will

refer to these as habitual collocations. What we can observe as a strong tendency is the following: The adjectival form of additional modification is generally preferred in case the respective original idiomatic expressions are sensed as non-compositional, i.e. if the speaker's conscious intention is to add to the phrase as a whole, as illustrated in (1) through (5) above. On the other hand, the adverbial form tends to be inserted if the speaker has in mind a deliberate modification of the attributive component of the idiomatic expression, which is compositional, as in examples (6) through (8) above. The criterion of compositionality is the primary, principle one, indeed, since it controls satisfactorily all the cases discussed here-above, supposing, of course, we concede speakers' subjectivity of view in terms of full, partial or loose semantic compositionality. In our conception, the feature of compositionality should be understood as a cline, the initial extreme point of which showing {V+NP_{ext}} as an indivisible unit represents the expression's non-compositionality and hence its zero possibility of lexical extension. With the horn gradually opening, speakers seem to react to the fact by accepting further modification, preferring adjectival or adverbial forms of that further attribute in dependence of growing measure of compositionality. The examples under (1) and (10) show the distinction. Accepting the idea of a cline we cannot be surprised at some speakers' hesitation about proper attributive forms, as in (11). In any case, in terms of semantics such further attributive means seem to belong to that modifier type which is labelled "viewpoint": as a matter of fact they mostly express the speaker's subjective view and can be ranked easily among 'intensifiers' endowed with a certain amount of expressivity. In a way, the modification of {V+NP_{ext}}-idiomatic expressions is external, namely, it does not change the expression's meaning.

2. {V+NP_{bare}} lexical modification.

In the preceding section we dealt with potential attributive extension of already extended idiomatic expressions, namely, we wondered whether {(V+) Attr+N' }, such as *turn a blind eye; donkey's breakfast*, etc., can be "enriched" with another Attr. It shows that in appropriate contexts the further lexical modification is possible, although the additional attributive means does not affect the meaning of the expression but rather says something about the speaker's attitude or evaluation. The question, however, is whether identical, or at least similar, conclusions can be made about the lexical modification of such idiomatic expressions whose NPs are bare, i.e. they do not contain any attribute, e.g. *gild the lily; pass the bug; lose one's marbles*, and similar. As we showed in Section 1, even with NP_{ext} no further extension is normally accepted by native speakers once the meaningful verb is the integral part of the whole idiomatic expression. The illustrative example to epitomize the area of our concern was *cry stinking fish*. Now, when going to discuss NP_{bare}, we wonder, too, whether it matters if the character of the V is truly meaningful, as in *call the tune, pull strings, beat about the bush, break the ice*, or a "support"-type, e.g. *have a go, take a chance, make amends*, etc.

Our respondents were presented with another list of some 60 {V+ NP_{bare}}-idiomatic expressions in two different sets and they were asked to offer their opinions on their lexical variability. The first set contained original {V+NP_{bare}}-expressions, mostly in short yet full sentences in order to be located in appropriate contexts. The respondents were expected to add attributive modifiers which flashed readily in their minds, or to note down explicitly if they were uncertain that such extension was ever possible. The answers were not unanimous, quite expectedly: hesitations will depend on many circumstances, besides others, how much creative linguistically the native speakers are, to what extent they tolerate unusual turns, even which variety of English they speak, and the like. Thus some respondents left the entries unchanged, others proposed lexical variability in about one-third of the cases, and still others tried to add attributes at any cost, offering expressions which were very expressive, indeed, namely, so-called four-letter words. Nevertheless, even if we ignore these, lexical variability of {V+ NP_{bare}}-idiomatic expressions seems to be far more widespread than is commonly believed. Statistically, only three expressions were sensed unanimously as absolutely fixed:

(12) The opening of the new hotel has HUNG FIRE. I wish I got a job I could really SINK MY TEETH into. As they met after long years, they CHEWED THE FAT all night.

It may be interesting to note that some respondents proposed more than one attribute as suitable for one and the same idiomatic expression, as in

(13) She took TOTAL / RECLESS ADVANTAGE of my confidential information. I was unable to cover MY OWN / PREVIOUS / EARLIER / DEVIOUS TRACKS.,

and a few more, e.g. *make few / ample amends; make first / big / biggest splash; raise many / some / large eyebrows*, etc., which we shall discuss later in this Section, together with the most frequent cases of but one attribute extension. To conclude, the findings based on introspective judgements of the first set of {V+ NP_{bare}}-idiomatic expressions make us believe that lexical variability of these is really fairly high.

The other set of idiomatic expressions, also in fairly relevant contexts, consisted of already extended, namely lexically modified original {V+NP_{bare}}-constructions. Some of them were authentic, yet most of them were modified versions of the entries tested in the first set. Therefore the respondents were asked not to return to the first set once they had completed its entries in order not to be tempted to correct their previous guesses under the influence of the suggestive wording in the other set.

The analysis of the respondents' reactions, in terms of comparison of their answers in the first and the other set, showed fairly interesting results. Again, the answers were not unanimous: very often the native speakers' opinions on the acceptability or non-acceptability of modified expressions were opposite or even contradictory, which concerned not only "invented" but also authentic expressions.

Thus some accepted spontaneously whereas others rejected absolutely these lexically extended idiomatic expressions:

(14) The critics ate their OLD words. The deputy leader raised LABOUR eyebrows. The French doctors were the first to break the SOVIET DIPLOMATIC ice.

In two cases the speakers' reactions were hesitant, but not downright declining or negative; they found the attributes weird, though:

(15) Greenpeace is keeping ECOLOGICAL tabs on the starting of the new power station. I was unable to cover their DESIGN tracks.

In most cases, however, the answers were unanimous. None of the respondents doubted the acceptability of the following lexically modified idiomatic expressions:

(16) The Americans are making SLOWER headway penetrating the Japanese market. I wonder if this act passes CONSTITUTIONAL / DECENT muster. New members won their FIRST spurs by... The greenhouse effect made its FIRST / BIG splash in the mid-1950s. His presentation made PARTIAL / AMPLE / FEW amends for our disappointment. There was only one man who could fill that ACTUAL / REAL bill. Her salute raised MANY AN eyebrow // MANY / SOME / LARGE eyebrows. Those experiments will not carry much SCIENTIFIC / REAL weight. She took UNFAIR / COMPLETE / TOTAL / RECKLESS advantage of new legislation... . Mrs. Thatcher came a POLITICAL cropper over Europe.

Here also belong the examples frequently cited in Fernando 1996, namely *make rapid headway; leave no legal stone unturned; beat about the proverbial bush*.

The only unanimously rejected modified expression was

(17) *kick the RESIGNED bucket.

The partial conclusion based on respondents' opinions about the cases in the other set is in line with what we stated here-above; as a matter of fact, it confirms our conviction that the overwhelming majority of {V+NP_{bare}}-type idiomatic expressions are not entirely "frozen", petrified or fixed wholes which resist further lexical modification. As for the character of V, we are unable to say anything definite about the relation between modification acceptability and the V being meaningful, i.e. the integral component of the idiom, or just one of "support"-type. Both categories appeared in the set of discussed and unanimously accepted extended expressions. What matters here are rather semantic characteristics of the modifier and the head N' and the V, which should be compatible between themselves and with the context. At first sight, our respondents showed the least doubt of those cases where the given modifications were possibly interpreted as "manner" or "view", as we illustrate here further under (18). Then certain specific cases will be discussed in greater detail, namely those which were finally accepted as passable, or preferably turned down.

Interpretations in terms of “manner” or/and “view” can be made by means of adverbs or certain circumlocutions (periphrases), as in

(18) *make PARTIAL amends* > ‘make amends (only) partially’; *make RAPID / MUCH SLOWER headway* > ‘make headway rapidly / more slowly’; *make one’s FIRST splash* > ‘make one’s splash initially’; *take UNFAIR advantage* > ‘take advantage unfairly’; *call the POLITICAL tune* > call the tune, politically speaking’; *pass CONSTITUTIONAL muster* > ‘pass muster, from the constitutional viewpoint’; *keep ECOLOGICAL tabs* > ‘keep watch from the ecological viewpoint’; *come a POLITICAL cropper* > ‘come a cropper, viewed politically’.

While these represented no great problems in comprehension, with some others our respondents required yet larger contexts in order to be certain about their acceptability. Thus while only some native speakers agreed upon appropriateness of *break the DIPLOMATIC ice* (14) and none of them objected to *come a POLITICAL cropper* (16), they did not seem very well to understand the formally identical *break the MUSICAL ice* and *come an ITALIAN cropper*. As we mentioned above already, the explanation can be looked for in the fact of compatibility of semantics of the expression’s components and the plausibility of co-situation in which the expression can convey its reasonable sense. Let us try to offer some arguments now in order to explain the issue.

Although the number of some sixty entries presented to the respondents may not be found statistically relevant, we are convinced that they are significant enough to serve a valuable probe. Moreover, many attributive modifiers appeared recursively, which is also an important fact. Hence, at first sight, the modifiers we can refer to as ‘Limiting’ were used the most frequently, also because these must have been the first to flash in the respondents’ mind. However, allowing for smooth overlaps between the categories, the illustrations here in (19) can easily be treated together with those discussed further.

(19) Come on, it’s late, time we made [SOME] tracks. There’s no point in trying to curry [ANY] favour with the new boss. Let’s sit down a minute to catch our [SECOND] breath. The greenhouse effect made its [BIGGEST] splash in the mid-1950s.

As for the Descriptive attributes, concrete modifiers were so varied that it was difficult to sort them out, mainly in terms of prevalence of one category over the others. Yet it seems that our respondents were generally inclined to accept Qualifying attributes more readily, and they were reluctant to react positively to Referential ones. Thus we can witness, for example, *take UNFAIR / SWIFT / COMPLETE / TOTAL / RECKLESS advantage* and, of course, many more, as illustrated here-above in (16). On the other hand, we mentioned already the turned-down extended expression **cover one’s DESIGN tracks*: in the given context, the meaning of ‘design tracks’ was found queer. In the following we will test another three {V+NP_{bare}}-expressions, which contain a bit tricky deliberate modifications:

(20) raise LABOUR eyebrows,

as in *The deputy leader raised Labour eyebrows*, compared to versions under (16) containing both Limiting and Qualifying attributive modifiers ‘many (a) / some / large’. The respondents’ reactions were fairly spontaneous: in line with what we mentioned here-above, most of them understood the attribute as Limiting / Deictic rather than Referential, changing its form to *Labour’s* and only then did they agree with the extended expression. As a matter of fact, this is the only sensible reading of the idiomatic expression *raise eyebrows* in the given context, namely, ‘what the deputy said evidently caused disapproval on the part of Labour members’.

(21) come an ITALIAN cropper,

as in *Jean came an Italian cropper when her business failed*, compared to the generally accepted *Mrs. Thatcher came a POLITICAL cropper over Europe*, this being the extension by a Qualifying attribute, as shown in (16). Here it is not clear whether ‘Italian’ refers to place, in the sense ‘Jean experienced the mishaps in Italy’, or to nationality, saying something like ‘Jean was Italian’. Therefore the referential function is hardly imaginable. Neither can ‘Italian’ be a qualifying attribute; then it would have to suggest that ‘Jean came a cropper in an Italian way’, which, to our best knowledge, has no figurative reading. We learnt from other examples, which are not involved in this article, that Place-type attributive modifiers are generally the least acceptable. Thus the interpretation ‘in Italy’ is normally ignored and respondents try to look for a more proper meaning. If none is found, then the idiomatic expression is turned down as weird or even senseless - which is just this case.

(22) break the MUSICAL ice,

as in *I asked her to play the piano in order to break the musical ice*, as compared to finally accepted, hesitatingly though, *The French doctors were the first to break the Soviet DIPLOMATIC ice*, shown in (14). The potential *break the musical ice* is judged introspectively as anything from ‘Viewpoint’ to ‘Place’, while the first guess might well be ‘by means of music’, too. This ‘Instrumental type’, however, does not seem to be a proper candidate for modification [see also Nicolas 1995:239]. Hence some respondents admitted the acceptance of the extended expression, yet provided that it was understood in a much more complex way, namely, in terms of ‘Manner-type’ within the broadly Qualifying function of ‘musical’ in the sense ‘caused by music performed by someone else’. No wonder then, in everyday speech the concise expression *break the musical ice* will not be worth the effort of comprehending it in the sense we (and some of our respondents) proposed; any periphrases by means of even extended sentences will probably be preferred.

3. Conclusion.

Generally, our findings are in keeping with the opinion that idiomatic expressions, including those that are syntactically of {V+NP}-type, are mostly fixed, “frozen” entities, and therefore they can only hardly be further modified by another attribute. Nevertheless, as proved by introspective judgements offered by

native speakers, in certain situations such modification, or extension is possible, namely, it is acceptable at least. What we have in mind is not only external modification, expressing the speaker's subjective evaluation, but also, and surprisingly enough, internal modification, which brings about an additional piece of information. In practice, however, such lexical extension may very often come to be so concise a way of total meaning of the expression that, even in a broadly given context, it is normally avoided and a more comprehensible periphrasis is preferred.

Literature

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Summary

It is commonly taken for granted that idioms as fixed chunks of words cannot be further modified lexically. The goal of the present modest study was meant to shed some light upon their occasional lexical variability by means of attributive insertion, thus offering, from the Prague School functional approach, certain objective linguistic reasons in order to verify some unexpected introspective judgements made by native speakers.