

IS THE LIST OF MAJOR LANGUAGE MISTAKES STILL RELEVANT? A CASE STUDY OF LOAN-TRANSLATIONS

Summary

The article analyses 37 improper loan-translations given in the List of Major Language Mistakes. The Corpus of the Contemporary Lithuanian Language was used for the study of the said loan-translations; 34 loan-translations were found in this source. The loan-translations were analysed in terms of four aspects: 1) how often loan-translations were used in the corpus; 2) the part of the corpus they were used in; 3) the time period of texts; 4) motivation (present or not).

The investigation of the material studied showed that more than a third of loan-translations were very frequent (used more than 100 times; e.g. *išsireikšti*, *išsireiškimas*, *vienok*, *gerbūvis*, *neužilgo*, *(kaž)oks tai*, *(kaž)kas tai*) and therefore unlikely to disappear in the nearest time. It was noticed that translated words rather than collocations were more common.

After calculating the distribution of the analysed loan-translations in different parts of the Corpus, it turned out that the greatest number of loan-translations occur in publicistic texts (58.2 per cent), much less – in non-fiction (18.4 per cent), spoken language (12 per cent), and fiction (8.8 per cent). Improper loan-translations were the most uncommon in the administrative texts (2.6 per cent).

It should be noted that the above given statistics show the number of loan-translations found in certain parts of the Corpus. As different parts of the Corpus vary in size, the normalised frequency (per 100 000 words) was calculated in order to find out the actual use of loan-translations. The data obtained were different: the greatest number of loan-translations used was found in the spoken language (65.3 instances per 100 000 words), non-fiction – 2.7, publicistic texts – 2, fiction – 1.5, administrative texts – 0.6.

The investigation of the use of loan-translations according to the time period approved the hypothesis assumed in the introduction: the number of loan-translations found was greater (59 per cent) in the texts published before 2000, while their use in the recent texts (published starting from 2001) was less frequent (41 per cent). This suggests a certain decrease in the use of improper loan-translations.

After counting the instances of motivated and unmotivated use, it turned out that 74 per cent of loan-translations were used without motivation, 26 per cent – with motivation. These data were obtained by counting the total number of instances throughout all the parts of the Corpus. Spoken language excluded (as all such instances of use were regarded as motivated), the results were quite different: unmotivated use was present in 84 per cent of the instances, motivated – 16 per cent. On the basis of such statistics, it can be concluded that language users do not recognise loan-translations as lexical errors. Thus, the discussion of improper loan-translations is still relevant, yet the List of Major Language Mistakes should be updated with recently widespread loan-translations that are more frequent in the current language as well as with improper figurative expressions.

KEYWORDS: language culture, the Lithuanian language, improper loan-translations, the List of Major Language Mistakes, the Corpus of the Contemporary Lithuanian Language, motivated and unmotivated use.

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