

BINOMINALS IN *DER SANDMANN* BY E. T. A. HOFFMANN AND ITS TRANSLATIONS INTO LATVIAN, ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN

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Abstract

The famous work *Der Sandmann* by Hoffmann abounds with binominal phraseological combinations, which represent a special type of phraseological units, e.g. ‘in Saus und Braus’, ‘kurz und gut’, etc. The present article discusses the formal and semantic aspects of binominals, analyses the binominals in *Der Sandmann* and their role in Hoffmann’s literary framework, and provides an overview of various translation and compensation techniques employed in the translation of the story into Latvian, English and Russian. The research stresses the importance of preserving the paired structure of binominals and the role of the translator as a cross-cultural communicator.

Keywords: *translation, communication, phraseological units, binominals, Hoffmann, Der Sandmann.*

Language and translation theorists of the 20th century often indicated the connection between language, translation and communication. As translation and interpretation are both ways of working with language, whose major function is the communicative function, the connection may seem self-evident; however, profound discussions of the issue are necessary to revise translation theories of the past

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century, the time which saw the beginning of Translation Studies as an independent research discipline and brought the reader of the target text into general focus. One such recent discussion attempts to introduce extra clarity about translation as communication. In their editorial to *Translation and Interpreting as Communication: Issues and Perspectives*, Binhua Wang and Chonglong Gu refer to translation as a form of communication [Wang and Gu 2023: 4], while Yifeng Sun sees translation of literary texts as “a means of communication between different worldviews and cultural experiences” [Sun 2023: 41]. As a tool or means of communication, translation is employed to work with the recreation of meaning in the target language. In this task, it is also important not to ignore formal aspects of language, which may also contribute to meaning construal, especially in working with literary texts. In more basic terms, what is communicated in literary texts and their translation may be as important as how it is communicated. This article is devoted to an example of this, E.T.A. Hoffmann’s short story *Der Sandmann* [Hoffmann 1984].

Hoffmann’s world-famous story *Der Sandmann* was first published in 1816, then included in the collection of the so-called *Night Pieces (Die Nachtstücke)* in 1817. These stories explore the darker side of human nature, juxtaposing the good and evil forces that equally contribute to the formation of Hoffmann’s characters’ personalities, resulting in the outcome beyond human control or understanding and failing in the characters’ striving for the ideal, the latter being characteristic of late German Romanticism. *Der Sandmann* tells the reader about the life of a young man named Nathanael, who suffers from a childhood trauma caused by mysterious alchemist Coppélius. The traumatic experience continues to haunt Nathanael for the rest of his life. Nathanael is faced with the clash of two realities, the irrational inner traumatic reality manifested in Coppélius and the orderly external reality of his fiancée Clara and her brother Lothar. On multiple occasions, Clara and Lothar attempt to calm Nathanael and help him preserve sanity; nevertheless, the story ends with the protagonist’s death. The duality in Nathanael’s life and the dichotomy of good and evil are also expressed linguistically. Hoffmann intentionally employs numerous phraseological and non-phraseological pairs, i.e., binominals, to express the duality explicitly.

The present paper analyses the use of binominals in Hoffmann’s short story *Der Sandmann* and its translations into English by J. Oxenford [Hoffmann 2010], Latvian by A. Aumale [Hofmanis 1993], and Russian by A. Morozov [Гофман 1994]. The selected translations were common with the 20th century readership and illustrate the communication of Hoffmann’s literary intentions across different cultures. The translations also ensure an insight into the different techniques and strategies that translators employ in the translation of binominals.

Although binominals are in general no different in their function from any other phraseological units (PUs) and can be defined as “stable, cohesive combination[s] of words with a fully or partially figurative meaning” [Naciscione 2010: 254], some German phraseologists believe that these expressions should be viewed as a separate category of PUs [Burger 2010; Hofmeister 2010; Müller 2009]. Researchers of Russian discuss the matter of pairing or doubling (*парность, удвоение*) as an essential aspect of the language system in general, which can also be manifested in phraseological expressions [Артамонова 2009, Колесов 1999: 256]. In their typology of idioms, M. T. Espinal and J. Mateu refer to binominals as a kind of idiomatic expressions, “typically of the form X-Conjunction-Y [...] or of the form Noun-Preposition-Noun” [Espinal and Mateu 2019]. Binominals are formed by two equal constituents, which Burger metaphorically refers to as *Zwillingsformeln*, i.e., twin formulas, and serve to intensify the quantity or quality of something. As such, pairing is a natural characteristic of any language which exists at the conceptual level. The following are some examples of phraseological binominals in German, English, Latvian, and Russian with their meanings indicated in brackets: *gang und gäbe* (common, usual), *now and then* (occasionally), *roku rokā* (in mutual agreement), *без шума и пыли* (quietly).

The binominals in *Der Sandmann* can be categorised as follows: 1) binominals in core use, i.e., as recorded in phraseological dictionaries; 2) instantially used binominals, i.e., transformed by the author and thus different from their base form; 3) non-phraseological pairs, which the author uses with the aim to extend the pattern of pairing in his text. The present research has identified fourteen cases of core use of binominals, nine cases of instantially used binominals and thirteen cases of non-phraseological pairs in the original text. Examples of binominals from each category are provided below. For a full list of binominals in Hoffmann’s *Der Sandmann*, see Bormane 2014.

The following passage is an example of the binominal ‘kurz un gut’ [Duden 2020: 455] in core use:

Kurz und gut, das Entsetzliche, was mir geschah, dessen tödlichen Eindruck zu vermeiden ich mich vergebens bemühe, besteht in nichts anderem, als dass vor einigen Tagen, nämlich am 30. Oktober, mittags um 12 Uhr, ein Wetterglashändler in meine Stube trat und mir seine Ware anbot.

Hoffmann 1984

Instantial use of binominals in the original can be observed in the author’s changing of the order of PU constituents, e.g., ‘starr und stumm’ (base form) [Hofmeister 2010: 23] → ‘stumm und star’ [Hoffmann 1984], employment of base form derivatives, e.g., ‘mit Sang und Klang’ (base form) [Duden 2020: 644, Hofmeister 2010: 20] → ‘Gesänge und Klänge’ [Hoffmann 1984], and substitution

of one of the base form constituents with a different word, e.g., ‘Sinn und Verstand’ (base form) [Duden 2020: 703–704, Hofmeister 2010: 22] → ‘Sinn und Gedanken’ [Hoffmann 1984].

The following passage is an example of a non-phraseological pairing in Hoffmann’s text. The adjective pair ‘Entsetzliche und Schreckliche’ (Eng. cruel and terrifying) is a free collocation.

Geradeheraus will ich es Dir nur gestehen, daß, wie ich meine, alles Entsetzliche und Schreckliche, wovon Du sprichst, nur in Deinem Innern vorging, die wahre wirkliche Außenwelt aber daran wohl wenig teilhatte.

Hoffmann 1984

Phraseological pairs in the short story pose a major difficulty for the translator. There are several factors contributing to the complexity of the issue. First, the translator must identify phraseological pairs and recognise them as part of the author’s literary framework of both phraseological and non-phraseological binominals, rather than as a set of isolated expressions that can each be translated separately from the rest. Another factor is the translator’s inability to make a hard choice between linguistic form and meaning. In E. A. Nida’s terms, the translator cannot prioritise dynamic equivalence over formal one, hoping to produce the same effect on the reader of the target language (TL) as the original produces on the reader of the source [Nida 1982: 22–24]. Translators of *Der Sandmann* are faced with the challenge to preserve the duality in Hoffmann’s form of expression as much as to communicate the meaning that this form is endowed with. Third, phraseological pairs are metaphoric expressions, which P. Newmark describes as a triad of object, image and sense, with the latter resulting from the interaction of the first two [Newmark 1988: 104–105]. Phraseological binominals consist of two equally important objects and corresponding images. Translation of these, “using idiom[s] of similar meaning and form”, as proposed by Baker [Baker 2011: 76–78], may be possible in a rather limited number of cases, e.g., in the case of universal binominals, i.e., those formed by core vocabulary such as ‘hand in hand’. In many other cases, however, reproduction of the dual object of a binominal phraseological metaphor is rarely possible and requires techniques of compensation. The majority of translation researchers and theorists agree that if the translator cannot find a direct equivalent of a PU in the TL, a different PU with a similar meaning must be used [e.g., Albrecht 2005: 118]. Baker also proposes a strategy of “using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form” [Baker 2011: 78–79]. However, such approaches, which clearly prioritise meaning over form, result in the loss of the formal structure of the original PU, which is a critical loss in the translation of *Der Sandmann*.

The next section gives five examples of the diverse solutions to the problem of translating phraseological binominals in *Der Sandmann*, offered by the translators mentioned above. Their solutions are, as follows: 1) use of direct equivalents with a paired structure, 2) use of free collocations with a paired structure, 3) employment of meaning-intensifying paraphrase, 4) introduction of non-equivalent phraseological binominals in the broader context of the target text, 5) employment of other structural or stylistic characteristics of language in order to communicate pairing, e.g., parallel grammatical forms, alliteration etc.

The first example illustrates the rare case of using a direct equivalent with a paired structure. Aumale uses the Latvian binominal 'šad un tad' (Eng. (every) now and then, from time to time [The Free Dictionary's Idioms Dictionary 2003–2024]) as equivalent to the German 'dann und wann' [Duden 2020: 156–157], which is certainly present in the long-term memory of native Latvian speakers today, though not recorded in the Latvian phraseological dictionary, the most recent reference source devoted specifically to Latvian PUs [Laua, Ezeriņa un Veinberga 2000].

*Er stellte sich und Klara dar, in treuer Liebe verbunden, aber **dann und wann** war es, als griffe eine schwarze Faust in ihr Leben und risse irgendeine Freude heraus, die ihnen aufgegangen.* Hoffmann 1984

*Šajā dzejojumā viņš attēloja sevi un Klāru, saistītus uzticīgas mīlestības saitēm, taču šķita, ka **šad un tad** viņu dzīvē iesniedzas melna dūre, lai nolaupītu ikvienu viņiem dāvāto prieka mirkli.* Hofmanis 1993: 103–104

The next example illustrates Aumale's use of the free, i.e., non-phraseological collocation 'no sava prāta un domām'. In doing so, the translator preserves the paired structure of the original phraseological binominal 'Sinn und Verstand' [Duden 2020: 703–704; Hofmeister 2010: 22], which Hoffmann uses instantially, 'aus Sinn und Gedanken'. Aumale's translation is essentially a calque; the phraseological value of the original is lost.

*...Coppelius ist ein böses, feindliches Prinzip, er kann Entsetzliches wirken wie eine teuflische Macht, die sichtbarlich in das Leben trat, aber nur dann, wenn du ihn nicht **aus Sinn und Gedanken** verbannst.* Hoffmann 1984

*...Kopēliuss ir ļauna, naidīga ideja – viņš var darboties kā velnišķīgs spēks, kas redzamā veidā ienācis pasaulē, bet vienīgi tad, ja tu viņu nepadzen **no sava prāta un domām**.* Hofmanis 1993: 103

Our third example is a paraphrase by Oxenford, which uses the adverb 'entirely' to preserve the meaning-intensifying function of the original PU 'ganz und gar' [Duden 2020: 257], which is in core use in the original text. The translator does

not offer a direct equivalent; however, manages to communicate the meaning of the binominal descriptively (Eng. absolutely, completely, entirely) to the reader. In the same opening passage from the story, Oxenford uses no direct equivalents of the other two phraseological pairs ‘in Saus und Braus’, core use [Duden 2020: 647–648] and ‘Herz und Sinn’, which is a case of instantially used ‘mit Herz und Hirn / Herz und Verstand’ [Hofmeister 2010]. The former is translated descriptively as ‘in dissipation’; the latter is translated figuratively, i.e., using the non-phraseological metaphor ‘deeply imprinted on my heart’. In his metaphor, Oxenford reproduces only one of the components of the original PU, ‘Herz’ → ‘heart’.

*Mutter zürnt wohl, und Clara mag glauben, ich lebe hier **in Saus und Braus** und vergesse mein holdes Engelsbild, so tief mir **in Herz und Sinn** eingepägt, ganz und gar.* Hoffmann 1984

*My mother, am sure, is angry, and Clara will believe that I am passing my time **in dissipation, entirely** forgetful of her fair, angelic image that is so **deeply imprinted on my heart.*** Hoffmann 2010

The fourth example is of interest due to the fact that to compensate for the loss of the phraseological pair ‘kurz und gut’ [Duden 2020: 455], which the translator reproduces as the PU ‘одним словом’ [Федоров 2008] (Eng. in a nutshell, in short, in brief) with no pairing in its structure, Morozov introduces another PU, ‘просто-напросто’ [Федоров 2008], which has a paired structure, yet expresses the meaning of the original phrase ‘nichts aderem, als’ (Eng. nothing else but...); these are underlined below.

***Kurz und gut**, das Entsetzliche, was mir geschah, dessen tödlichen Eindruck zu vermeiden ich mich vergebens bemühe, besteht in nichts anderem, als dass vor einigen Tagen, nämlich am 30. Oktober, mittags um 12 Uhr, ein Wetterglashändler in meine Stube trat und mir seine Ware anbot.* Hoffmann, 1984

***Одним словом**, то ужасное, что случилось со мною и произвело на меня смертоносное впечатление, от которого я тщетно силюсь избавиться, состояло просто-напросто в том, что несколько дней тому назад, именно 30 октября, в полдень, ко мне в комнату вошел продавец барометров и предложил мне свои товары* Гофман, 1994

The fifth and last example discussed in this paper illustrates the translator’s attempt to reproduce pairing in the target language using non-phraseological means. In the following passage, Oxenford uses the emphatic comparative structure ‘no sooner... than...’, which expresses immediacy of action in English, just as the binominal ‘gesagt, getan’ [Hofmeister 2010: 29] does in the original text. Although the phraseological

value of the original is lost, the paired form of the original PU is expressed by means of English grammar.

Gesagt, getan! Beide, Nathanael und Klara, stiegen herauf...

Hoffmann, 1984

No sooner said than done. Nathaniel and Clara both ascended the steps...

Hoffmann 2010

To conclude, translation of PUs and binominals in particular is a serious challenge for the translator, as such translation has to communicate both the figurative (metaphoric) meaning and the form that expresses it. The five examples selected for analysis in this paper illustrate the diversity of techniques that can be employed in the translation of binominals, though this is by no means intended as an exhaustive list. Although the translators demonstrate their ability to recognise binominals as an issue and employ various techniques of reproduction or compensation, the choice of translation strategy remains an open question. Prioritising meaning over form or vice versa will inevitably lead to the loss of a binominal. Omission or addition of binominals in the target text are a matter of academic debate and, most importantly, the translator's choice. The task of translating binominals is also complicated by the fact that the translator's own linguistic memory and awareness remain invaluable tools in communication with the target reader. This emphasises the importance of the translator as a communicator.

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