CURIOSITIES IN BUSINESS ENGLISH: A CHALLENGE TO THE TRANSLATORS

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0. INTRODUCTION

I have chosen this topic because I consider that it is a good way to become familiar with some of the terms used in Business English and different culture references. It is in fact a copilation of those terms related to animals that have a double meaning; most of them are nouns, although they can act in many cases as adjectives, when preceding the principal noun.

As you will see in my examples, the language used in the Economy is not restricted to an economic communication. They usually are ordinary terms used in common language, defined by Widdowson as «procedural» and their principal function is to articulate the development of an idea in the discourse, giving a deep knowledge of non specific words.

1. THE ECONOMIC SCENE

One of the language problems today stems from a total lack of a practical spoken idioms. Sometimes we are not able to understand, simply because we don't know the idiomatic expression.

These examples we will deal with in this paper is a copilation of those expressions related to animals which became a challenge for translators, because of their apparent easy meaning as they belong to familiar daily language, although they are of utmost importance on the economic language scene.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NOUNS RELATED TO ANIMALS

Names usually proclaim character. A name may announce something. It possess a reference, (characteristics) and contain very peculiar features to sustain them, that indicate possession, power, character.

Economics has an important part to play in everybody's life, so everybody can claim to be familiar with economic terminology. In this modern world there are also a lot of symbols and expressions that help us to go ahead and make business language a successful instrument of international communication.

The following examples we will deal with in this essay are some of the current examples we might find on newspapers or magazines. We now enter through them into

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the world of financing, transactions, negotiations, where the main goal is to draw attention upon the best conditions offered.

Not only content, but form and style are also crucial, in order to make the speech cause and effective result. They use to be short sentences, which contain crucial information, describing some vital points, using a concrete language.

In the examples below, we will see that short words are preferred in order to ease the communication. The names of animals are used as a device to call attention, giving the essential, just to communicate.

In this case, few explanations or details are given referring to these expressions which I have defined as «curiosities». I bear in mind that a very important thing in business language is to inform, stressing negotiations and experience, related in many cases to the animal's characteristics.

In the examples that follow supporting my essay, long words are avoided on the commented examples of terms related to animals used in Economy. Let us start with:

– «Bear»: a noun translated into Spanish as *oso*, it is also a term used in Stock Exchange. In this specific field is translated as *bajista en bolsa, especulador a la baja, jugador a la baja*. It is used to define a stock exchange speculator who sells stocks or shares that he may or may not possess, because he expects a fall in prices, and therefore, he will be able to buy them again later on at a profit.

A bear who sells securities that he does not possess, but which is borrowed temporarily, to effect delivery is described as having «sold short». Short selling is done in anticipation of a decline in the market price. If a decline occurs it may enable the trader to buy the security at a price lower than that for which he sold it, pay the cost of borrowing the security and make a profit. If he does possess the securities he sells, he is defineded as a «covered or protected bear».

– «A bear market» is in Spanish, *mercados cuyos precios y volúmenes de contratación están en situación de descenso a la baja*. So it is a market in which prices fall.

This term belongs to the era in which a lot of fights between bears and bulls were held , especially in the United States where they were very found of; this fact permits us to compare these financiers that plays to a bear market and those who buy shares in a bull market.

Another specification is to consider that is unusual for the bear to walk in an upright position, and has the tendency to walk on all fours; that is why it is said «a bear market» if the values fall. It also exists the expression «to buy back a bear seller» translated into Spanish as «rescate de un vendedor al descubierto».

With the same root we have the adjective «bearish» used in stock exchange to express *«tendencia a la baja»*.

– «Bear raiding» is translated as *«lanzamiento de valores para producir una baja súbita»*.

The antonym of «bear», is «bull». As a noun, it defines a very strong and powerful animal, with very positive and meaningful load. This term is used as an adjective in stock exchange to express the idea of a *«tendencia alcista»*, when there is an upward movement of prices or a rising tendency is produced. As a transitive verb, «to bull» means *«hacer subir el valor de»*, *«jugar al alza con»* (in stocks). Also we have the

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expression «to bull the market», in Spanish, *«jugar al alza»*. It also exists «great bull market» translated as *«mercado alcista»*, opposed to the above «bear market», defined in Spanish as *«mercado cuyos precios y volúmenes de contratación están en situación de subida o en alza»*. We may consider a campaign as a type of fight, which is a characteristic of the bull. So a «bull campaign» is defined as *«campaña alcista»*, en la que predomina el optimismo.

With the noun «buck» we call to the *«macho cabrio»*. It is supposed to be a very powerful animal and is always fighting with its horns. Colloquially it also means an american dollar. This animal fights seams to be similar to the difficulties sometimes the american dollar has to leader the world economy.

With this animal, «buck», we have the expression «to be a quick-buck artist», referring to the person who is not honest. It can be described in Spanish as *«persona que está metida en negocios poco éticos movidos por el afán de lucro»*. We may consider as synonyms the expression «scam artist», or the words «shark», that we will see later on, or «hustler». As a transitive verb we may see the expression «he was hustled into agreement», that can be translated as *«le obligaron a llegar a un acuerdo no deseado»*.

The «cow» is a very positive and profitable animal. From it we get a lot of things without expending a lot of money such as: milk, meat, cheese, butter etc., which are considered basic elements for human survival. With this idea, we call in Spanish a «cow firm», *«empresa vaca»*, to define *«a aquélla en la que se realiza una mínima inversión pero se obtienen grandes beneficios»*.

The «dog» which is a very positive animal in domestic familiar life, being a very good friend to his master, it has no positive meaning related to business. A person is defined as a dog when he is a loser, *«un perdedor»*. Colloquially, when a person is continually changing his work is defined with the expression «jack of all trades», equivalent to the Spanish *«perro de muchos amos»*. Sometimes we may found the same idea expressed with different animals, as it is the case of the English expression «big dogs», translated into Spanish as *«peces gordos»*. We call a «dog business» when referring to a firm that invests a lot of money having no profit on it or even losing money.

«A yellow dog contract» is called so due to the yellow colour of the paper. It is consider in Spanish as *«contrato laboral por el que el trabajador no se indica, no figura»*.

The noun «eagle» that defines a graceful bird with huge wings folded, was very much appreciated by kings. In Medieval Age the royal or golden eagle was an inseparable companion for hunting, due to its penetrating glance. «To be a crack or an ace in business» is in Spanish *«ser un águila para los negocios»*. This noun has a double connotation, because «gold» in old times was a synonym of money, (coins were of this metal), and secondly a royal eagle is engraved in a coin of ten dollars, that is the reason that a ten dollars coin is familiarly called an «eagle».

«Kangaroos» is the noun used to define an animal. It is considered an emblematic animal because it is the representation of Australia. He has a marsupial bag where he use to keep their babies, till they can walk and manage by their own. This gives a sense

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of protection against external danger. The Australian Companies take advantage of this protective appearance to call «kangaroos» to their bonds and listed shares on tobacco, mines and plots.

«Lambs», is also a noun to assign a very young and tender animal. In the Stock Exchange they appoint the same name to represent a young and inexperienced speculator. In this case, the sense of fragility and innocence that lambs put up with has been forgotten.

«Pork barrel» is a colloquial expression to design all public securities collected in order to carry out a local design with electoral intentions promoted or supported by voters.

«Raider» is a synonym of «shark». It is a well known animal in literature and films because its ferocity and aggressiveness. These characteristics are taken in the Stock Exchange to define an speculator in take-over bid carrying out unethical business, buying shares systematically in a very unfriendly way in order to conquer a new company. This word has been used since the War of Secession. We may define «shark» in Spanish as *«persona que intenta controlar una compañía en declive mediante la compra de acciones. Especulador con las OPAS (Oferta pública de adquisición)».*

There is the expression «first raiders» for new or first speculators.

«Shark» has the same meaning as «raider», *«tiburón financiero».* He has great expectation and ambitions, but not only refers to persons but to those companies that want to controle some others, taking new risks in expectation of a profit. Although traditionally shares were acquired by individuals, the small sharebuyer has largely been replaced by the corporate buyer. In many countries there are certain legal requirements which determine when and in what conditions a company can go public; that is issuing shares on the Stock Exchange. The company grows while its virtuous opponents dwindle into insignificant cipher. *«Usurero»* is called «loan shark».

«Sharking your way up» or «shark one's way up» is translated as *«abrirse paso a dentelladas».* That means to rise in the company hierarchy by being aggressive without caring ways or persons, only professional success, manipulating illegally the Stock Exchange.

«Snake» is a noun to define an animal. This term is also used to refer to the «monetary snake» or *«serpiente monetaria».* It is a type of graph in which the fluctuations of the money are represented, having the appearance of a snake.

3. CONCLUSION

I have shown in my essay some of the examples used in a specialised or technical field regarding the Business English language and professional jargon. As you may see, the «spoken» vocabulary command is of utmost importance in the economic scene today in which translators play an important role. These terms and sentences are confronted in the same situations in Spanish, in order to offer a deep study of these selected terms of animals which are part of the dynamic of English language.

As you know, the language serves to name objects or concepts from a diachronic and synchronic point of view. When new objects appear the human being has found new

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words to identify these new concepts. But not always are new words as in these examples, we have taken profit of those terms that already exist using them conscious or unconsciously to infer animals with a human activity. Some of them are also associated to historic events, as it is the case of the word «raider» used since the War of Succession.

I hope they have been a good example to obtain a better understanding of everyday colloquial language.

My approach has been the searching and study of these expressions which are very different to what you might expect from looking at the words in each expression. By them we are introduced in the turmoil of the Stock Exchange Market dealing and jargon, being relevant to the needs of any person who wished to master the English language through various aspects, such as: comprehension, syntax, arrangement of sentences and vocabulary, which demonstrate the importance that common noun of animal may have in a specific context.

Needless to say that I have selected a material that can be very fruitful, not only for the translators, but for everybody, bearing in mind both Economics and an integrated presentation of the language.

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