

## Lexical Linguistic Interference in Translations of Science-Fiction Literature from English into Czech

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Abstract

*The article describes interference phenomena in the Czech translations of science-fiction literature written in English. The corpus of errors in translation was assembled from thirteen sci-fi novels. The uncovered discrepancies that signalled signs of interference were divided into five categories. These five categories of interference dealt with are all subcategories of lexical interference. First, surface lexical interference occurs in those cases where the lexical unit of the source language visually, i.e. orthographically, resembles a certain lexical unit of the target language, which is not its equivalent (at least not in the given case). Second, semantic interference is caused by an overlap of meanings between the source lexical unit and the target lexical units, which are only partial equivalents. Third, idiomatic interference revealed itself in the translations of idiomatic expressions, including idioms proper, which the translator either did not recognize or misinterpreted as a collocation. Fourth, interference in collocation partially resembles semantic interference, but it affects collocations rather than individual words. Sometimes the typological difference between the languages plays a key role here. The English language uses many more multi-word expressions than Czech, which is a synthetic language and tends to incorporate the individual meanings into one lexical unit. Finally, cultural interference occurs in those cases where the translator is unable to deal with the cultural difference between the source language culture and the target language culture. In most cases there is no direct equivalent in the target language.*

*Keywords: interference, lexical unit*

### Introduction

By ‘linguistic interference’ I mean an unintentional transfer of some elements of the source language (SL) to the target language (TL). Two languages may interfere on various levels – phonological (in spoken language), lexical, grammatical, syntactic, stylistic etc. This paper explores interferential phenomena in translation from English into Czech in current science-fiction literature and its aim is to serve as a practical list of interference problems.

The corpus for the analysis has been assembled from 13 science-fiction books. These books were selected according to my personal interest, and with a few exceptions, they are currently available in larger bookstores. I examined the texts for the occurrence of inappropriate translations caused by interference. The major criterion for seeking and identifying these ‘mistakes’ was the following: the Czech text sounds unnatural, for instance it contains a syntactic structure that is unusual in Czech. This is one of the potential signs signalling the occurrence of interference in translation. In many cases, an experienced reader of English literature would be able to ‘see the original behind the lines of the translation’ because of the trace that interference leaves in the TL.

The next stage comprised a comparison of the potential cases of interference in Czech with their corresponding counterparts in the original. I finally gained a corpus of 432 excerpts. The last stage of the data processing was the division into categories of the selected examples that proved to be truly of interferential origin. From the very beginning of the data collection it became clear that there were certain types of inappropriate translations that were appearing repeatedly. The crucial issue was to identify and clearly define these types, i.e. the categories

of interference in translation. The main criterion for establishing the categories was the source of interference.

The classification resulted in the establishment of four general categories of linguistic interference:

1. interference at the word and collocation level (lexical interference)
2. grammatical interference
3. syntactic interference
4. interference in orthography

Cases of lexical interference were by far the most numerous. In the present paper, therefore, I have decided to focus solely on lexical interference.

Each example presented here consists of contextual support (if necessary), an excerpt or excerpts from the original, and an excerpt or excerpts from the translation containing the interference phenomenon; this is followed by a brief commentary upon the nature of the problem. The categories are as follows:

1. surface lexical interference (false friends)
2. semantic interference
3. idiomatic interference
4. interference in collocation
5. cultural interference

### Surface lexical interference

(1)

[A military commander who is in charge of a planet in outer space is criticizing the bureaucracy on Earth.]

*Damned civilian **authorities** on Earth had bollixed it up, just like they always did.* (Perry, 1993: 56 – 57)

*\*Zatracené **autority** na Zemi to pokazily, jako vždy.* (Perry, 1999: 60)

‘Authority’ is defined as *the people or an organization who have the power to make decisions or who have a particular area of responsibility in a country or region* (OALD, 2001: 64). In Czech it is usually expressed with the word *úřad* (Hais & Hodek, 1991: 131). Certainly, the word ‘authority’ could be indeed translated into Czech as *autorita*, but with a different meaning and in a different context. This means that a SL word may become a ‘false friend’ in one context, but it may serve as a ‘true’ friend in another.

(2)

[The people are speculating on the abnormal behaviour of cilia in the ocean. They start to fear that extraterrestrials might be involved.]

*‘You’re suggesting that the cilia were actually searching?’  
‘I’d not go as far as that. But, anyway, I got a picture of it on the **hand-camera**, so we’ll be able to study it.’* (Wyndham, 1955: 147)

\*, *Chcete tím říct, že řasy vlastně něco hledaly?*“  
„*Tak daleko bych to nedomýšlel. Ale udělal jsem několik snímků ruční kamerou, takže si to budeme moci podrobně prohlédnout.*“ (Wyndham, 1994: 108)

(3)

[It takes place at the scene of the crime of mass murder.]

*There were three forensics men at work in the lobby with cameras and tweezers;* (Archer, 1995: 53)

*\*V místnosti se pohybovali tři muži z laboratoře s kamerami a pinzetami;* (Archer, 2003: 59)

In (2) and (3), it is again the context that helps to determine the meaning of ‘camera’. However, in this case the meaning of ‘camera’ as ‘a piece of equipment for taking photographs’ is primary. The translators were misled to select its secondary meaning of ‘a piece of equipment for making video recordings’ due to surface lexical interference, because the Czech word *kamera* refers only to the secondary (derivative) meaning of English ‘camera’. Czech distinguishes between a photographic camera and a movie camera, while in English such a distinction is not made so strictly. To specify that the piece of equipment is designed for making videos, English uses the terms ‘video camera’ or ‘camcorder’.

(4)

[‘Psi emitter’ is a device that transmits signals that are telepathically perceived by hostile extraterrestrial species in the Universe. These species are then strongly attracted to the source of the signal.]

*“Is the psi emitter all right?” she asked.* (Grubb, 2001: 169)

*„Je psí vysílač v pořádku?“ zeptala se.* (Grubb, 2005: 148)

(5)

**[Psi]** *stvoření, zerglingové, úplně zešileli. Pobíhali sem a tam, náhodně útočili na trubce a larvy a trhali je na kusy. Podivný signál neustále bombardoval hlavu Kerriganové. Sarah však zatula zuby, snažila se uklidnit a opět získat kontrolu sama nad sebou. Vynaložila všechny své psi síly k tomu, aby se pokusila znovu ovládnout instinkty zerglingů.* (Grubb, 2005: 74 – 75)

*\*The doglike Zerglings went wild, streaming about and attacking Drones and larvae, tearing them to shreds. The alien signal pounded in Kerrigan’s head, but she gritted her teeth and imposed order upon her mind. With all of her psi power, she reached out and attempted to control the instincts of her Zerglings.* (Grubb, 2001: 84)

‘Psi’ in the ST functions an adjective, whose meaning is very close to ‘psychic’, i.e. faculties or phenomena that are inexplicable by natural laws (mainly telepathy and telekinesis). Due to the absence of a direct equivalent in Czech, the translator left the term in its original form with a morphological modification in (4) corresponding to the Czech adjectival form (‘psi’ → *psí*). I would not object to the substitution of an English neologism for a Czech one.

Nevertheless, in this case there is a co-incident resemblance between the English ‘psi’ and the Czech adjective *psí*, which means ‘canine’, i.e. connected with dogs. As one may notice in (5), this confusion is likely to occur because of the context.

(6)

*Morning came early to the federal penitentiary at Goose Lake, New York. Almost two thirds of the great gray concrete structure was underground, buried under one of the Catskills. What showed above was a windowless dome...* (Sheckley, 1996: 71)

*\*Ráno přišlo do federální káznice v Goose Lake v New Yorku brzy. Téměř dvě třetiny obrovské šedivé struktury byly ponořeny pod zemí pod jednou z Catskills. Byl vidět jen dóm bez oken.* (Sheckley, 2004: 87)

(7)

[A group of Martian soldiers enters a luxurious mansion on Earth. They can see a great number of antiquities that are displayed there.]

*For several seconds no one spoke, then Ghetta Aif asked, “What is this place?”*

*“I don’t know,” Slithree Di said.*

*“I don’t like it,” Tenzif Kair said.*

*Hadrak didn’t like it much, either, but he wasn’t about to say so.*

*“What did you expect?” he barked. “They’re Terrans! Of course their structures are alien!”* (Archer, 1996: 41)

*\*Několik vteřin žádný z nich nepromluvil. Pak Ghetta Aif vydechl: „Co to je za místo?“  
„Nevím,“ ozval se Slithree Di.  
„Nelíbí se mi to,“ řekl Tenzif Kair.  
Ani Hadrakovi se to nijak zvlášť nelíbilo, ale nechtěl to dávat najevo.  
„A co jste čekali?“ vyštěkl. „Jsou to Terrané! Je samozřejmé, že jejich struktury jsou cizí!“* (Archer, 1997: 42)

The last two examples, (6) and (7), demonstrate how the two translators were misled to translate ‘structure’ as *struktura* (which is a scientific term in Czech), although it simply means *stavba* in Czech.

The preceding excerpts, (1) – (7), contain examples of surface lexical interference. This phenomenon is caused by the visual similarity between a SL word and a TL word that appears to be its equivalent. In other words, a SL word is orthographically very similar to a word from the TL, which causes the translator to wrongly assume that they are equivalents. Well-known false friends (faux amis, false cognates) are in fact results of surface lexical interference. The assembled corpus has clearly shown that this type of interference affects almost exclusively words of Greek or Latin origin (international words). The problem usually lies in semantics, because the semantic field is distributed differently in the two languages. It became apparent from the corpus that in most cases each TL counterpart might be used appropriately if used in a different context. In other words, a SL word and its TL counterpart may become ‘false friends’ in one context, but in a different context may be equivalent.

Finally, I include the list of all the assembled pairs of ‘false friends’ in the corpus:

English word – Czech false friend (\*) – equivalent in Czech

**Words of Latin origin**

authority	*autorita	úřad	exclusive	*exkluzivní	výlučný
audience	*audience	obecenstvo	explosion	*exploze	mocné kýchnutí
cabin	*kabina	kajuta	matriarch	*matriarchyně	náčelnice
camera	*kamera	fotoaparát	obscene	*obscénní	monstrózní, nechutný, odporný
cohort	*kohorta	stoupenci	structure	*struktura	stavba
control	*kontrola	ovládání	Teutonic	*teutonský	skopčácký
creature	*příšera	tvor	universal	*univerzální	vesmírný

**Words of Greek origin**

economical	*ekonomický	úsporný	phalanx	*falanga	řada; zástup, dav
paralysed	*paralyzovaný	ochrnutý	plastic	*plastik	platební karta

**Incidental resemblance**

moonlit	*monolit	ozářený měsícem	psi	*psí	telepatický, telekinetický, parapsychický
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**Semantic interference**

(8)

[A leader of the army is talking about enemy forces, which are approaching.]

*"Impudent **pup**," said Mengsk, stalking to his console and scanning a dozen screens at once. "Of course I knew the Protoss would get here..." (Grubb, 2001: 228)*

*\*„Jsou to jen drzá **štěňata**," řekl Mengsk a kráčel ke své konzole a znovu si prohlížel tucty monitorů. „Samozřejmě jsem věděl, že sem Protossově dorazí..." (Grubb, 2005: 198)*

(9)

[The policeman Schaefer was captured by a terrorist gang.]

*A pan of dirty water flung in his face brought Schaefer around; as the cool wetness shocked him back to consciousness, he heard a voice saying, "Time to wake up, **puppy dog**." (Archer, 1995: 210)*

*\*Schaefera probudila sprška špinavé vody v obličeji; když ho studená voda přivedla k vědomí, zaslechl hlas: „Čas vstávat, **štěně**." (Archer, 2003: 203)*

A typical example of semantic interference is represented in (8) and (9). According to CEED the word ‘puppy’ has two meanings. First, it means ‘a young dog’. Second, it means ‘a brash

or conceited young man’. The word ‘pup’ is very similar. It is apparent that the translators were unaware of the second meaning of ‘puppy’/‘pup’, so they wrongly translated it as if it was used in the first meaning. A more suitable translation of ‘pup’ or ‘puppy dog’ might be *fracek* or *smrad*.

(10)

*The duty officers had already retaken their seats, and Bromleigh was dismantling his camera and **tripod** and returning them to their cases. (Steele, 1996: 128)*

*\*Službu konající důstojníci už zase zaujali svá místa a Bromleigh skládal kameru a **trojnožku** do pouzder. (Steele, 2004: 149)*

Although the translation above is not entirely inappropriate, the current Czech language prefers to use a different lexical unit. The example above may partially belong to the preceding category of surface interference because of the prefix *tri-*, which often corresponds to the Czech prefixes *troj-* or *tří-*. Nevertheless, this resemblance applies to the prefix only. Moreover, the English and the two Czech prefixes are not identical; therefore the main source of confusion here lies in semantics. The more usual Czech equivalent of ‘tripod’ is *stativ* (Note that the English naming unit focuses on the formal aspect of the referent, while Czech sees the referent from the viewpoint of its function).

The polysemic character of ‘false friends’ means that they partially overlap with the second category of interferential mistakes: *semantic interference*. Semantic interference is a much more complex phenomenon than surface lexical interference, because there is no evident resemblance between the SL word and a TL word in such cases. Instead, there is a certain clash of meanings due to the existence of polysemic English lexical units and the different segmentation of reality in the two languages.

**Idiomatic interference**

(11)

[An astronaut is talking about his discovery of a secret launching silo in North Korea.]

*"At first we thought we had stumbled upon something, so we opened a secure line to McLean and **blew the whistle**." (Steele, 1996: 132)*

*\*„Nejdřív jsme mysleli, že jsme zakopli o něco významného, takže jsme nažhavili jištěnou linku do McLeanu a **zahvízdali na píšťalku**." (Steele, 2004: 154)*

OALD defines ‘Blow the whistle on sb/sth’ as follows: “(*informal*) to tell sb in authority about sth wrong or illegal that sb is doing (OALD 2001: 113)”. In Czech it may be expressed by some equally informal or slang expressions, e.g. *prásknout to na koho* or *bonzovat na koho*. However, in the context of exposing a global danger and informing the government, these phrases would not fit as they are negative and imply that the ‘whistle-blower’ is doing something dishonest, which does not correspond to the meaning of the English idiom. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to use a more neutral phrase that expresses a similar meaning. In this particular context it seems to be more appropriate to use, for instance, the Czech idiom *bít na poplach*.

- (12) [Alien species from outer space occupy the ocean; the people are speculating what will be their next move in the process of colonizing Earth.]

*'I suppose the Bocker view would be that the first phase of colonization has been completed : the pioneers have established themselves, and the settlement is now on its own to sink or swim.'* (Wyndham, 1955: 68)

*\*„Myslím, že by ted' Bocker prohlásil, že skončila první fáze kolonizace: pionýři si vybudovali své domovy, které poplavou na vodě nebo je skryjí pod vodou.“* (Wyndham, 1994: 50)

The unrecognized idiom 'sink or swim' was apparently misinterpreted according to the context, because both verbs are associated with water (the characters are talking about the ocean). The meaning of the verb 'sink' is interpreted as 'hide under the water', because in its first meaning 'descend beneath the surface of a liquid' it would not make sense. Thus the translator created a sentence expressing something that is absent in the ST and, at the same time, the intended meaning is lost. 'Sink or swim' means "to be in a situation where you will either succeed by your own efforts or fail completely (OALD 2001: 1107)". In Czech it might be expressed by a less figurative phrase *udržet se nebo padnout*.

- (13) *"Ready, Stan," Julie said. "It's going to be a walk in the park."* (Sheckley, 1996: 128)

*\*„Připravená, Stane," řekla Julie. „Bude to jen procházka v parku.“* (Sheckley, 2004: 154)

In some cases the meaning of an English idiom is quite obvious, because there is a similar idiom in Czech, as in (13). Nevertheless, in the case above the Czech idiom *procházka růžovým sadem* is normally used in negative statements to express difficulties that one experiences. The English idiom expresses the opposite, i.e. an easy task to perform. Therefore it would be more appropriate to use another Czech idiom with the same meaning, e.g. *hračka, zvládnout levou zadní, brnkačka* (slang term) etc.

- (14) [An army officer reprimands a policeman for disclosing top-secret information.]

*"Schaefer!" the old man called. "Goddamn you, you son of a bitch, you had to do this the hard way! The shit's really hit the fan now!"* (Archer, 1995: 297)

*\*„Schaefer!" zakřičel starý muž. „K čertu s tebou, ty čubčí synu, muselo to být po tvém! Hovno narazilo na větrák!"* (Archer, 2003: 283)

This is a vulgar idiom, which is defined as follows: "(When) the shit hits the fan, sb in authority finds out about sth bad or wrong that sbd has done. (OID)" The incorrect literal translation of this English idiom sounds nonsensical and its meaning can only be inferred from the context. A more appropriate translation would be e.g. *provalilo se to or prasklo to* in (14).

Czech translations of English idioms in the corpus are often questionable. By 'idiom' I mean "a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words (NODE, 1998: 908)". The translators, being unable to decipher the meaning of a particular idiom, often translate it on a word-for-word basis. In some cases the translation does not sound natural in Czech, but it is still comprehensible, at least from the

context, e.g. in (13). Inappropriate word-for-word translations of English idioms are exemplified in (11) and (14). Readers of these texts must be quite puzzled, because the Czech sentence does not make any sense in the given context and one can only speculate on its possible meaning.

Nevertheless, there are a certain number of translations that do not convey the required meaning at all. In these cases the translation often sounds either nonsensical or, which is possibly more dangerous, expresses an idea or information that is not present in the SL text. An example of such a nonsensical text is in (14). The inappropriate word-for-word translation is apparently used here due to the translator's unawareness of the idiomatic phrase in SL. A Czech reader, being ignorant of this English idiom, must be confused, because the meaning of the translated sentence does not correspond to anything that was said before or after this exclamation.

As has already been stated, the translators have sometimes a tendency to 'modify' the translation of the English idiom so that it somehow does make sense. In such cases they do not use a word-for-word translation, but they translate less literally and thus more freely. Such a mistranslation is then difficult to identify if one does not use the SL text for comparison. Such an example is in (12).

#### Interference in collocation

- (15) *The platoon medic said he'd broken his neck and would need full rehab.* (Perry, 1993: 186)

*\*Lékař čtyř zjistil, že si zlomil krk a bude potřebovat plnou rehabilitaci.* (Perry, 1999: 176)

- (16) *Morning Doe wrestled her horse around so swiftly she almost broke its neck. Her eyes blazed. "You trifle with me?"* (Murill, 1996: 232)

*\*Ranní Srna strhla svého koně, aby se zatočil dokola, a to tak rychle, že mu skoro zlomila krk. Její oči plály. „Zahráváš si se mnou?"* (Murill, 1997: 217)

- (17) *So she wasn't paralyzed. Was her neck broken? She tried a small movement, turning ever so slightly to the left, then to the right. It was painful as hell, but it seemed okay.* (Crichton, 2000: 379)

*\*Nebyla tedy ochromená. Má zlomený krk? Zkusila jím trochu pohnout, malinko doprava, malinko doleva. Strašně to bolelo, ale snad to bylo dobré.* (Crichton, 2000: 356)

The root of the problem here lies in the different way of expressing meanings related to the human body. There is a well-established collocation in Czech that can be used literally to denote this kind of "serious injury causing death or paralysis of a human body": *zlomit (si) vaz*. These two idioms are often equivalents. Nevertheless, the phrase *\*zlomit si krk* is unidiomatic in Czech and might not be understood properly.

- (18) [It takes place in a spaceship on its way to the Moon.]

A **sponge bath** for the VIP suites. Of course. Water wasn't something that was wasted up here; (Steele, 1996: 112)

\***Houbová koupel** pro významné hosty. No ovšem. Tady nemají vody na plýtvání; (Steele, 2004: 134)

'Sponge bath' (American English) or 'blanket bath' (British English) is defined as "an all-over wash given to a person confined to bed" (NODE 1998: 1798). The Czech dictionary includes the following definition: *důkladně umytí houbou místo sprchy* (Hais & Hodek) or just *důkladně umytí houbou* (Fronek, 2007: 528), which more corresponds to the definition: "a washing of the body with a wet sponge or cloth, but without immersion in water" (CEED).

(19)

*José looked, and saw a tall, thin **black woman** – little more than a girl, really–wearing only a red bikini, coming down the stairs.* (Archer, 1996: 252)

\**José vzhlédl a spatřil, jak se schodů schází vysoká, štíhlá **černá žena** – vlastně skoro ještě dívka – v červených bikinách.* (Archer, 1997: 221)

One of the frequent problems in translation from English into Czech is caused by the typological differences between the two languages. English, being an isolating analytic language, has more analytic expressions consisting of more words and is often more explicit than Czech, which is a synthetic language that uses inflections (cf. Knittlová, 2000: 36). Therefore 'Black man / woman' is better to be translated as *černoch / černoška*. English needs two lexical units to express a person's skin colour and sex. In Czech this is included in one lexical unit and no modifying adjective is needed.

(20)

*Hard exoskeletons grew up in tangled, twisted labyrinths following the genetic model of a Zerg Hive, a pattern that no human could comprehend. The fleshy biomass of Zerg Creep continued to spread, absorbing **raw materials** from the rough dirt and processing it into a nourishing substance.* (Mesta, 2002: 169)

\**Podivnou strukturu stavení tvořila tvrdá a spleťitá vnější kostra. Genetický model zergského úlu představovaly zvláštní zkroucené labyrinty, vzory, které člověk nemohl nikdy pochopit. Biomasa zergského plazzu se neustále rozrůstala dál. Současně přitom absorbovala **hrubé materiály** a přeměňovala tak prach a špínu ve výživnou substanci.* (Mesta, 2005: 144)

'Raw materials' does not mean *hrubé materiály*, which is an incorrect word-for-word translation. According to NODE 'raw material' means "the basic material from which a product is made (NODE 1998: 1541)". The most common Czech equivalent is *surovina* (Hais & Hodek, 1992: 356), (Fronek, 2007: 438).

(21)

[It takes place on board the battlecruiser Hyperion.]

*She strode down the halls of the Hyperion toward the lift to his **observation post**.* (Grubb, 2001: 215)

\**Pak propochodovala halou Hyperionu k výtahu, který ji odvezl na **observační palubu**.* (Grubb, 2005: 186)

'Observation post' or 'observation tower' is "a place from where sb, especially an enemy, can be watched" (OALD 2001: 805). In Czech it means *pozorovací stanoviště* (Hais & Hodek, 1992: 57) or *pozorovatelná* (Hais & Hodek), (Fronek).

If we accept non-compositionality as a decisive factor in distinguishing between idioms and collocations (though this division suffers from certain drawbacks, cf. Kavka 2003: 37), then we can establish a separate group of interferential mistakes entitled 'interference in collocation'. The examples above illustrate two major problems in the translation of English collocations.

Firstly, there is often a different way of viewing the extralinguistic reality. This includes especially parts of the body, as in (15). The corpus revealed numerous examples of inappropriately translated words or collocations concerning body parts, namely 'break one's neck' as *\*zlomit si krk*, 'clear one's throat' as *\*pročistit si hrdlo*, 'at arm's length' as *\*na délku paže*, etc. The problem was that the words were translated singly, out of context, and their collocability was not taken into consideration.

The second problem is concerned with the typological differences between the two languages. English tends to be more analytical than Czech, which belongs to the group of synthetic languages. This is the reason why many English expressions consisting of two words have one-word equivalents in Czech. Examples (19), (20) and (21) illustrate how the translators were unaware of this fact and thus created non-idiomatic Czech expressions (see the table below).

black woman	*černá žena	černoška
raw materials	*hrubé materiály	suroviny
observation post	*observační paluba	pozorovatelná

## Cultural interference

(22)

*But Schaefer wasn't as calm and in control as he looked, because he missed with all three shots, and while Schaefer wasn't exactly **Annie Oakley**, he didn't generally miss three times at that range, and...* (Archer, 1995: 27)

\**A i když Schaefer nebyl zrovna **Annie Oakleyová**, z takové vzdálenosti třikrát nikdy neminul.* (Archer, 2003: 35)

This is an example of what I mean by an 'icon', i.e. "a person or thing regarded as a representative symbol of something" (NODE 1998: 906). Annie Oakley was a real historical figure. She was a rodeo star and was especially known for her extraordinarily accurate shooting.<sup>1</sup> That is why the author of the novel draws a comparison between the policeman Schaefer and Annie Oakley. He wants to say that Schaefer is not particularly successful at hitting a target when shooting.

(23)

*He turned and glimpsed three little spots of some kind of red light, like those laser beams in the checkout at the **7-Eleven**, crawling across the window frame and onto his back.* (Archer, 1995: 11)

*\*Otočil se a spatřil, jak se po okenním rámu pohybují tři body červeného světla podobné laserovým paprskům při výstupní kontrole v 7-Jedenáct. Tečky se přesunuly na jeho hrudník. (Archer, 2003: 19)*

'7-Eleven' is a chain of US stores that sell convenience items such as food, drinks, etc. They are open from 7 a.m. until 11 p.m., hence the name. The translator was ignorant of the meaning of '7-Eleven', which caused further misinterpretations of the text: 'checkout' does not mean *výstupní kontrola* as it is translated in the text<sup>2</sup>, but *pokladna*.

The translator basically has two options here. Due to the fact that '7-Eleven' is a term virtually unknown to the Czech readership, it has to be modified. The first option is to use a functional cultural equivalent, which means reducing the term '7-Eleven' to the more general meaning 'store', which should not be problematic in this case as the loss of meaning is unimportant in the context. Generally speaking, if the name of the store is not important for understanding the story or depicting local colour, then it is appropriate to replace it. The second option is preserving the word '7-Eleven' and adding the explanatory 'store', e.g. *obchodní dům 7-Eleven* or, more colloquial, *obchodák 7-Eleven*. The second option is more explicit, although it still does not preserve the information about the opening hours, which is explicitly stated in English.

#### Miscellaneous errors

(24)

*The army of drones moved toward them like a sheet of rain, closer and closer. Dozens ran past the APC, headed back to the queen. (Perry, 1993: 155)*

*\*Armáda vetřelců se k nim blížila. [...] Několik tuctů jich proběhlo kolem APC a spěchalo ke královně. (Perry, 1999: 137)*

Without any doubt this is the most frequent interferential mistake in the assembled corpus. It occurred in almost all of the thirteen books that have been examined. It is undeniable that the noun 'dozen' corresponds to its Czech counterpart *tucet*, which has the same denotative meaning, i.e. "a group or set of twelve" (NODE 1998: 557).

Nevertheless, the noun 'dozen' when used in the plural has another meaning that is very frequent in current informal English: 'a lot'. In such cases it loses its original meaning of "twelve" and acquires the meaning of an indefinitely high number of something. Its Czech counterpart *tucet* is much more restricted in its use. Firstly, it is not as frequently used, as there are other, commoner equivalents, e.g. *desítky*, *spousty*, *mraky*, etc.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, in the current Czech language the word *tucet* is often used in the form of the derived adjective *tuctový*, which means "no longer interesting, as a lot of people already use it". If it is used in its nominal form *tucet*, it usually has a slightly negative connotation.

(25)

*His long, sandy hair and sparse beard covered innumerable small scratches, and only one part of his uniform was untattered—a neatly repaired emblem... (Brin, 1986: 187)*

*\*Dlouhé pískově žluté vlasy a řídký vous zakrývaly bezpočet drobných oděrek a z celé uniformy mu zůstala nepošramocená jediná součást – úhledně vyspravený znak... (Brin, 1998: 166)*

Viewing colours is another example of the different segmentation of semantic fields in different languages (cf. Levý, 1998: 70). In the assembled corpus there are several examples

of different shades of colours that were translated literally. Colours have to be translated according to the context in which they occur. The adjective 'sandy' is defined in OALD as follows: '(of hair) having a light colour, between yellow and red'. Hais & Hodek offer the following expressions: *nazrzlý* or *zrzavý* (Hais & Hodek, 1992: 498).

To summarize, the corpus has revealed numerous examples of a certain type of mistranslations that were caused by differences between the English cultural environment and the Czech one. These could be subdivided into several categories.

The first category could be called 'cultural icons', i.e. real historical persons whose deeds are well known in the particular cultural environment and thus they are referred to in the language. The name 'Annie Oakley' is hardly familiar to any Czech reader who is not specifically interested in the American rodeo. Therefore the translation does not serve its function of a metaphor, as it does in American English. Readers may only deduce from the context that 'Annie Oakley' was someone who was extraordinarily good at shooting. One of the possible solutions might be to use a Czech idiomatic expression such as *nebýt bůhvíjaký střelec*.

The second group includes translations of names of British or American institutions, brand names etc. The third group includes differences in measuring and counting. Finally, the last group comprises difficulties in the translation of colours. There are differences in colour description in the two languages. In some cases this is a matter of collocation, for instance 'sky blue' is better to translate as *blankytně modrá* than *\*nebesky modrá* (Mesta, 2005: 99).

#### Conclusion

The tension between clarity and natural usage on the one hand, and preserving the meaning on the other hand, is a recurrent problem in translation. The examples listed here have shown that the inappropriate literal translations to a great extent confuse the meaning rather than preserve it. Therefore one may find lexical units that are very unusual in the TL and in some cases unrecognizable for a TL readership. It is often not difficult to trace the original SL lexical unit.

Linguistic interference affects translation in various degrees. It may produce a text that is comprehensible, but sounds unnatural in the TL (contains unidiomatic language). On the other hand, it often produces a text that does sound natural in the TL, but fails to preserve the ST meaning. The third case is a combination of both – it sounds unnatural and the meaning is lost.

It also has to be mentioned that the quality of the translation in most of the examined books is relatively low, which is also reflected in the abundance of errors in the corpus. Nevertheless, my aim was to ascertain certain tendencies that occur repeatedly, i.e. cases in which more than one translator made the same mistake.

The translators tend to use basically three faulty procedures as a result of interference. The first is the misinterpretation of the ST, which results in deviation from the intended meaning and adding untrue facts that are not expressed in the ST. The second procedure is omission of the difficult part, and the third is an inappropriate word-for-word translation, which confuses the meaning or uses unidiomatic language in translation.

It is also worth mentioning that the distribution and frequency of the individual types of translational interference identified in the corpus are almost exclusively of general validity and they are not typical only of the genre of science-fiction literature.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pocanticohills.org/womenenc/oakley.html>

<sup>2</sup> This is the third meaning of the word listed in Hais & Hodek.

<sup>3</sup> The Czech National Corpus SYN 2000 includes 151 occurrences of “tucty” and 5550 occurrences of “desítky”.

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