



## STRUCTURAL CALQUES IN NEOLOGISM TRANSLATION AND UNINTELLIGIBILITY: THE CASE OF GENERATION X\*

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### ABSTRACT

Much has been analyzed about the concept of neologism in literature. However, the issue of translation of structural calques as part of borrowing in the case of morphological neologisms, is yet to be explored. In this respect, this study analyzed in the language pair of English and Turkish the common mistakes made in the Turkish translation of *Generation X* by Douglas Coupland (1991) from a linguistic as well as translational perspective. The purposive sampling was used here as the book is rich in neologisms, besides, they are used repetitively and play a very important role. So, it provides rich material both quantitatively and qualitatively. Due to these features, their precise comprehension by the target audience is vital in order to follow the book. The analysis of the translation of these neologisms well exemplifies that syntax of a language has rules of its own which does not welcome changes readily and that the translator has to check for the intended meaning while maintaining the structure of the SL otherwise a third language will be faced due to erroneous connection between the elements of a phrase or sentence. The findings indicate that the negative interference has been evident in translating noun/adjective phrases in neologisms which renders some of their translation unintelligible and/or semantically shifted.

**Key Words:** neologism, structural calque, translation

### NEOLOJİZM ÇEVİRİSİNDE SÖZDİZİMSEL ÖYKÜNTÜ VE ANLAMA GÜÇLÜĞÜ X KUŞAĞI ÖRNEĞİ

### ÖZET

Neolojizm kavramı literatürde aynı dil içinde ve diller arası çalışmalarla geniş ölçüde incelenmiştir. Ancak, biçimbirimsel neolojizm söz konusu olduğunda ödünçlemenin bir bölümünü oluşturan sözdizimsel öyküntü şeklindeki çeviri ele alınmamıştır. Bu çalışmada bu amaç doğrultusunda, Douglas Coupland'ın (1991) X Kuşağı adlı romanının çevirisinde yapılan tekrar eden hatalar hem dilbilimsel hem de çeviri çalışmaları bakımından İngilizce-Türkçe dil çifti üzerinden analiz edilerek incelenmiştir. Çalışmada amaçlı örneklem kullanılmıştır.

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Zira kitap neolojizmler açısından zengin olup, kitapta tekraren kullanılmakta ve önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Bu nedenle, kitap hem nicel hem de nitel açıdan zengin materyal sunmaktadır. Ayrıca, bu özellikler nedeniyle, hedef kitle tarafından bu neolojizmlerin tam olarak anlaşılması kitabı takip edebilmek açısından büyük önem taşımaktadır. Bu neolojizm çevirilerinin analizi bir dilin sözdiziminin kendine ait kuralları olduğunu, bu yöndeki değişiklikleri kolayca kabul etmediğini ve çevirmenin kaynak dilin yapısını muhafaza ederken kastedilen anlamı aktarıp aktarmadığından emin olması gerektiğini, aksi takdirde, ortaya bu çalışma örneğinde olduğu gibi cümle veya tamlamalar arasında hatalı bağlantılar ortaya çıktığını örneklendirmektedir. Bulgular, neolojizmlerdeki ad/sıfat tamlamalarının çevirisinde negatif girişimin (interference) yaygın olduğunu, bunun ise bazı neolojizmlerin çevirisini anlaşılabilir hale getirdiğini ve/veya anlamsal kaymaya sebep olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** neolojizm, sözdizimsel öyküntü, çeviri

### 1.Overview

To start with, neologism can be defined as existing lexical units that acquire a new sense and newly created lexical items (Newmark 1988). To delimit the term, Cabré (1999 in Moghadam and Sedighi 2012) put forth some practical parameters. Accordingly, for a term/phrase to be considered as a neologism, it must have recently appeared, it must have been lacking in any dictionary, it must not be formally (e.g. morphological, graphic, phonetic) or semantically stable and it must be perceived as a new unit by the speakers of that language. The first categorization of neologisms by Newmark (1988) were mainly followed by Silvia (2001) and Delabastita (2004), to name but a few. Turning back to the defining elements of neologism in Newmark (1988) at the beginning of the paper, newly created forms comprise new coinages, derived words, abbreviations, eponyms, phrasal words, pseudo-neologisms, acronyms, transferred words, internationalisms, whereas existing lexical units comprise words as well as existing collocations with new meaning.

As this study limits itself with the translation of unit of neologisms and not of a specific text as a whole, it will focus on the translational procedures, particularly, through-translation as a way of borrowing included in those procedures (Newmark 1988), later also called as structural calque (Vinay and Darbelnet 1995 in Munday 2008).

Before scrutinizing structural calques, it would be appropriate now to mention borrowing. As Katamba (1994) remarked, borrowing words from other languages arise from the following reasons: need, identification and show-off, accompanied by the quest for prestige. It is always a gradual process (Hussey 1995), however, it does not mean that all neologisms arising from borrowing will be institutionalized and/or included in a dictionary. Sometimes, a word, phrase is only used for once for a specific occasion and need not be institutionalized, which is called nonce word. As Klingberg (1986 in Moats 2009) stated, such use is commonly seen in fiction, especially, children's literature.

Borrowing can be made through translations directly or indirectly, which means, it can be made right from the source language (SL) or another language. In this respect, loan translations/calques are those in which a vocabulary item or rather its meaning is translated into the receiving language and phonological/ orthographical changes are undergone, where necessary. In other words, they are words/ phrases that morphematically and semantically mimic a foreign

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word/phrase in target language (TL), as stated in Bednárová-Gibová (2012). They generally occur due to the lack of the culture-specific items in TL and/ or the tendency to translate each word in idiomatic combinations separately without taking into account its function in the context, which result in semantic deviation from the source text as well as the use of meaningless phrases in target text (Kayyal 2008: 43).

Garnier and Saint-Dizier (2009) analyzed calques in the following categories: lexical calques (e.g. incorrect preposition), lexical choice calques (e.g. similar forms with different meanings), structural calques (e.g. incorrect structure) and basic style calques (e.g. incorrect temporal use).

Linguists and translation scholars, as language planning stakeholders, have varying claims about the use of calques in translation (Karnedi 2012). According to Newmark (1988), this technique should be employed only when one translates an actual neologism, ensuring that it optimally matches the SL neologism. Some scholars advocate that calques enrich the language whereas some others believe that they give rise to corruption.

As far as structural calques are concerned, they are seen when the syntax is changed in line with the structure of the SL (Vinay and Darbelnet 1995 in Munday 2008). They may be attributable to oversight of the morpho-syntactic structure of SL and TL (Translation procedures <http://www.slideshare.net/apizzuto/translation-techniques-presentation>). For some examples of syntactic calques in Turkish-English language pair, see Vardar (2002).

The argument that calques are born out of necessity is baseless since syntax of a language has rules of its own which does not welcome a structural change readily. In this regard, some scholars find this development hazardous for a language's life (Karaca 2010). Here, rather than making remarks about protection of language for language's sake, it is preferred to highlight the importance of communicative equivalence in TL. It goes without saying that when a translator is faced with a simple syntactic structure, use of calques seems to be a default application (Hewson 2011). Yet, one has to check for the intended meaning while maintaining the structure of the SL otherwise a third language will be faced due to erroneous connection between the elements of a sentence or phrase as stated in Göpferich (in Hosseinmanesh and Dastjerdi 2013). In other words, due to negative interference being the negative influence of the mother language (L1) on the performance of the target language learner (L2), as put by Lado (in AbiSamra 2003), as a result of which the target audience will be confused or misled by the translation.

In what follows, the corpus and general features of neologisms in Generation X will be dealt with, and the linguistic event, that is, semantic confusion, loss or misinformation caused by semantic shift/ negative interference in translation, structural calques in neologisms in Coupland's Generation X will be analyzed.

## **2. Corpus and general features of neologisms in Generation X**

To throw a light to the translation of structural calques, Generation X written by D. Coupland (1991) and its Turkish version translated by Zeynep Akkuş (1998) were used. The choice of the book Generation X is attributable to the fact that it includes a wide variety of neologisms, amounting to 96, which enjoys a rich data interlingually. But, the reason why this book was chosen was not only quantitative. In qualitative terms, this book displays a distinct character. Neologisms are seen at the bottom of the pages as footnotes, often more than one on one page but not necessarily where one reads the neologism for the first time, unlike the common use of footnotes. They are used so casually and repetitively that the readers become acquainted with the concept and no longer perceive it like a neologism. Furthermore, Coupland introduces one neologism related to the fiction and directly beneath that neologism, another one with vague connection to the first one,

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if any, is seen, with no connection to the fiction. The aim is to make the readers question the postmodern world (Johansson 2010), by making use of postmodern methods as such. All because of these reasons, the structural calques in the neologisms are more puzzling to the readers than they might in any other book and create more challenges in comprehension in TL and target readership. For the purposes of this study, all other unintelligible neologisms stemming from polysemy, misperception, misunderstanding, spelling mistakes etc. were excluded.

### 3. Analysis and Discussion

Structural calques in neologisms were analyzed and those which displayed semantic deviations were detected and classified. The suffixes/ structures/ phrases which had been translated in the form of structural calques were explained in SL accompanied by the semantic deviation caused by such mistranslation. Other calques, which were unnatural in TL but intelligible in terms of communicative equivalence were excluded. Each group was scrutinized through all the examples found and possible alternatives reflecting the source meaning were presented. Translations, back translations or different interpretations due to ambiguity in the calques were given in order to show why it is inappropriate to translate them as such. At this point, it is worth mentioning that such alternatives are in no way meant to be exhaustive.

#### 3.1. The semantic deviation emerging from the mistranslation of the roots followed by the derivational suffix *-ism*

This suffix makes the word class noun and means action, result of an action, movement, state or condition (<http://www.sophia.org/tutorials/common-suffixes-and-their-meanings>).

1. Me-ism: *Bencecilik* (Back translation: according to me-ism).
2. Obscurism: *Muğlaklık* (Back translation: being obscure).
3. Japanese minimalism: *Japon Minimalizmi*
4. Cafe minimalism: *Kafe Minimalizmi*.
5. Spectacularism: *abartıcılık* (back translation: admiration for exaggeration).

In Example 1, the morpheme *-ce* gives the sense of relativity which lacks in the English suffix *-ism*. The morpheme *-ism* dictates one to act in a certain way. i.e. in this case, people who stick to me-ism would be having a frame according to which they would act as far as religious matters are concerned. The possible alternative would be the phrase of *Ben-izm*.

Example 2 is not a neologism at all, and it does not include the *tendency* to apply to obscure references, so, it might mislead the Turkish viewer's perception. A possible alternative would be the phrase of *muğlaklık hayranlığı*.

Examples 3 and 4 were handled here together as they showed parallelism in translation. Translating the phrases literally in Turkish as such would lead to two Turkish interpretations: first, the minimalism displayed by Japanese or in Cafe, second, the minimalism reminiscent of that of the Japanese and Cafe. To eliminate this ambiguity, the possible alternatives would be *Japon usulü Minimalizm* and *Kafe usulü Minimalizm*, respectively.

The semantic shift underlying Example 5 is the tendency to take interest in what is spectacular. Therefore, one does not need to exaggerate things, as they are already something that evokes extreme fascination but one is in the pursuit of following what is spectacular. A possible alternative would be the phrase of the phrase *abartı hayranlığı*.

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### 3.2 The semantic deviations emerging from the mistranslation of roots followed by the derivational suffix

–ing

The suffix –ing as used here means behaving in a certain way so it doesn't just make a verb noun but also signifies a specific conduct. The neologisms ending with –ing are given below. It is evident that the sense of –ing here seems to be misunderstood:

6. Recurring: *Çark Etme*,

7. Native Aping: *Yerli Taklidi* (Back translation: Imitation of Natives)

8. Tele-Parablizing: *Tele Kıssadan Hisse*. (Back-translation: Tele Parable)

9. Underdogging: *Zayıfın yanında yer alma* (Back translation: siding with the underdog in a given situation)

The translation in the example 6 would define a situational move rather than a repetitive or general tactic applied in such situations. A possible alternative would be the phrase of *çark etmecilik*.

Regarding Example 7, the pretension to be a native is in question here not the imitation itself and this is used as a tactic while visiting a foreign land. A possible alternative would be the phrase of *Yerli Taklitçiliği*.

In Example 8, the suffix –ing is used to denote a behavior, a strategy applied under certain circumstances. A possible alternative would be the phrase of *televizyondan kıssadan hisse çıkartmaca* or *çıkartmacılık*.

In Example 9, the suffix –ing denotes a tendency to act in a certain way. So, a possible alternative would be *zayıfın yanında yer almıcılık*.

### 3.3. Semantic deviations emerging from the translation of constituents in compounds

#### 3.3.1. The translation of “adjectivals as modifier in a noun phrase” (as classified in Göksel and Kerlake 2005: 163):

Some adjectivals may make up a pair with two successive nouns. In such cases, the mind has to choose between two options while distinguishing between the phrases in the complex phrase above: Do the adjective and the first noun appearing in the phrase make up a phrase to be combined with the second noun? Or does the adjective combine with the phrase comprised of the first and second noun. Actually, this disturbance about such phrases is nothing new. The Turkish native speakers are familiar to it as they know that “in compounds which refer to official bodies, an adjective (but not determiners or numerals) may be placed before the head noun” (Göksel and Kerlake 2005: 108), as in the example of *Eski Milli Eğitim Bakanı*—former minister of national education. The fact that in the Turkish syntax former is next to National Education, some interpret it that National Education is former. So, to avoid this interpretation, some prefer to change the position of adjective *Eski* from the first to the second slot in the phrase which is *Milli Eğitim Eski Bakanı* to emphasize that it is the Minister not the Education which is former. The formula of a possible translation can be expressed as noun+adjective+noun phrase.

10. Emotional ketchup burst: *Duygusal Ketçap Patlaması*.

11. Bleeding Ponytail: *Kanamalı At Kuyruğu*

12. Sick Building Migration: *Hastalık Binası Göçü*

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13. Dumpster clocking: *Çözünme Tahminleri*

14. Mental Ground Zero: *Zihinsel Sıfır Mekan*

Example 10, the Turkish translation suggests that “ketchup is emotional” and explodes. However, here, explosion is at the emotional level and it is likened to ketchup in the sense it suddenly occurs like an explosion. Here, we cannot resolve the matter this way as in the case of the translation of the former Minister of National Education as “Ketçap duygusal patlaması” would be nonsensical and as well as ungrammatical. Because the word ketchup needs a suffix to show its function in the phrase. A suffix like –vari can be added to ketçap, meaning “like” and –sı at the end of patlaması must be omitted to avoid the misunderstanding that ketchup is the actor. Then, a possible alternative would be the phrase of *Ketçapvari Duygusal Patlama*. So, a possible formula to be applied in Turkish translation is adjective+adjective+noun phrase.

Example 11 allows for two interpretations: Horse is bleeding, and its tail is bleeding. To avoid this double interpretations, *At* and *Kuyruğu* must be written as a compound word, as in the original. In other words, a possible alternative would be *Kanamalı Atkuyruğu*. So, a possible formula to be applied in Turkish translation is adjective+ compound word (noun).

Example 12 leads one to think that there is an act committed by the first two words which make up a phrase, that is, the readers may think that *Hastalık Binası* is a building in which there is illness, which brings us to the conclusion that it is a hospital and second, this building is moved to somewhere else. It is interesting that Turkish allows for the interpretation that there is an implicit possessive suffix –nın at the end of *Binası* and deduce the meaning in this respect. However, it is not the building which moves somewhere else, it is the people who try to avoid working in buildings which are hazardous for health. So, the necessary case marker must be added to the word *binası* to avoid such misunderstanding, which would make a possible alternative, *Hasta Eden Bina(lar)dan Göç*. A possible formula to be applied in Turkish translation in such cases is adjective + noun with a case marker + noun phrase.

Example 13 creates an ambiguity as to what is being decomposed. In Turkish, this compound requires a noun. We need an extra information to make it intelligible without creating a redundancy. A possible alternative would be the phrase of *(nesnenin doğada) çözünme zamanına ilişkin tahminler*. A possible formula to be applied in Turkish translation is explicitation (if necessary) + noun + postposition + noun.

Example 14 hardly means anything. It may mislead readers as they may think that there is no ground mentally visualized. However, when they read the explanation following the very neologism, they will see that there is one: frequently a shopping mall. This situation results from the misplacement of modifiers in the noun compound. The possible alternative would be the phrase of *zihinsel düzeydeki (or zihindeki) 0 nolu kat or giriş katı*. This unintelligible translation results from two usages. First, the suffix –sel requires a noun like *düzeyde*, *düzlemde* here and second, when talking about the compounds involving locations and their numbers we have two options either we can translate, say Floor 1, into Turkish as *kat no 1*, or *1 nolu kat* yet as the number is 0, the option of *kat no 0* is eliminated. A possible formula to be applied in Turkish translation is adjective+ explicitation, where needed, the second noun (if it is a number) + the addition of no.+ the first noun.

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### 3.3.2. the literal translation of the whole phrase, though the combination of words may in fact signify one denotation in the target language

15. Veal-Fattening Pen: *Et Yağlandırıcı Bölme*.

Example 15 is the only one in this group. Actually, *yağlandırıcı* or *kilo yapan* as one word covers the whole meaning and eliminates the semantic confusion due to unnatural collocation of *et-yağlandırıcı* in Turkish. So, a possible alternative would be the phrase of *yağlandırıcı bölme*.

### 3.4. The structural calque emerging from the translation of the noun roots followed by the derivational suffix -phobia

16. Successophobia: *Başarıfobi*.

Example 16 is the only one in this group. The word *phobia* can be combined with other words to denote certain fears which cannot be coped with alone.

In English, there is no need for a case marker to be attached to the second word, which causes fear. Yet, in Turkish, we need *-(s)I* compounds for such items which can function as the head of a noun phrase, as stated and exemplified in Göksel and Kerslake (2005: 162). A possible alternative would be *Başarı fobisi* or *Başarı korkusu*.

### 3.5. The semantic deviation by structural calque emerging from the translation of the noun roots followed by the derivational suffix -sAl

In English, adjective suffix *-al* means pertaining to (<http://grammar.about.com/od/words/a/comsuffixes.htm>). In Turkish, the suffix was introduced as part of the language reform to replace the Arabic suffix *-(v)i*. It is attached to nouns to form adjectives to denote the relationship with the concept of the noun root. (Göksel and Kerslake 2005: 65).

17. Historical slumming: *Tarihsel Ziyaret*

Example 17 is unnatural in collocational terms. *Tarihi ziyaret* would be a natural collocation yet it would mean historically important visit which would give rise to semantic shift. *Tarihsel ziyaret* is ambiguous as it would be hard to perceive the visit which is related to history. In fact, the other translations of the neologisms involving this suffix worked as the suffix *-sAl* meaning “related to” since historical in *historical overdose* or *historical underdose* or personal in *personal taboo* meant something having a particular purpose or use which corresponds to the third sense in Collins CoBuild Dictionary (1991). But where historical is used for people, situations etc existed in the past and considered to be part of history or for books, pictures to describe/represent real people, situations or things that existed in the past, as stated in the first and second senses of Collins CoBuild (1991), *tarihsel* would not mean much and therefore, it would be better to give up the idea of translating the word as root and suffix but explain what they serve as in *historical slumming*. So, a possible alternative in Turkish translation would be *geçmiş zamanda ziyaretler*.

## 4. Conclusion

This article dealt with structural calques as a way of translation of neologisms, using Coupland’s Generation X as corpus in Turkish-English language pair with its wide variety of neologisms. It was found out that the structural calques detected did not only seem unnatural but distort the source meaning, thus misleading the target audience. It is known that some of the structural calques occur as default. Yet, the translators need to check the target meaning and perception before they choose this method. Neologisms’ feature of being brandnew is taken for granted in the source language but semantic shifts due to mistranslation can in no way be

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welcomed in the target language. The neologisms in the book analyzed have to do with terminology of this fiction and serve as building blocks of the author's message about the postmodern world. The Turkish readership is possibly even more affected from such mistranslation as it would cause wrong conceptualisations/ lexicalisations and occupy the readers' mind more, simply because the neologisms, thus their translations are not seen only once in the text (in which case, the effect might only be perceived in one sentence). Besides, it became obvious through the analysis of structural calque as a way of translation that the purely structural imitation neglecting semantics would not result in an acceptable translation. This study was conducted in Turkish-English language pair but the general conclusion of the fact that the blind faith in syntax is of no use as seen in the case of structural calques in this study can be readily applied to any other language pair in the process of translating neologisms.

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