Abstract

The paper provides semantic analysis of the English terms whistleblower and whistleblowing and their official translational equivalents in Macedonian. It addresses the notions lexicalized by the original English terms whistleblower and whistleblowing and the challenges of the transfer of their semantic content into Macedonian.

Furthermore, the paper provides a comparative analysis of the Macedonian translational equivalents and the official equivalents of whistleblower and whistleblowing in Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, Slovenian and Montenegrin, with reference to the original English terms.

It aims at detecting the translation strategies employed when choosing the translational equivalents in the given languages, as they are encountered in official legal documents regulating the area that the notions whistleblower and whistleblowing refer to.

Key words: whistleblower, whistleblowing, Macedonian, English, translation

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of new concepts in a specific culture imposes the need for their appropriate lexicalization in the language of the members of a given culture. Depending on the circumstances that have led to the development of the new concepts, speakers of the language in question may adopt different practices. When encountering the new concept that has not been lexicalized,
the most desired approach would be to rely on the lexical corpus of the target language. In this case, the speakers would most typically add a new meaning to already existing words, or coin a new word based on the word-building paradigm of the given language. However, in many cases the new concept is introduced from another culture in which it has already been lexicalized. This means that the new concept is usually introduced to the target language together with the word that lexicalizes it, as a loan translation (literal translation of the original word) or in its integral original form as a lexical borrowing, often adapted morphologically, orthographically and phonetically.

When it comes to lexicalizing new concepts in Macedonian, based on the lexicon in contemporary dictionaries of Macedonian, it can easily be inferred that its speakers usually resort to importing both the concept and the word in the form of a foreignism, either as a lexical borrowing or as a loan translation. In the last decades, a vast majority of imported words have predominately been borrowed from English, which has acquired the status of lingua franca at a global level. This practice of borrowing English words can be identified in both general and technical vocabulary, with anglicisms being used colloquially as well as officially in formal communication and official documents.

Whistleblowing is an example of a concept that has been imported into Macedonian through English. It is a relatively new concept which was introduced into the legal system with the Law on the Protection of Whistleblowers in 2015, following the practice of other European countries of legally protecting this category of persons. The obligation for drafting a law that would regulate this field imposed the need for choosing adequate terminology for lexicalizing whistleblowing, whistleblowers and other related concepts in Macedonian. In the sections that follow, we will address the scope of these two concepts and the extent to which they overlap in English and Macedonian, and we will also analyze the Macedonian lexical solutions compared to the ones of related Slavic languages, in contrast to the original English terms.
SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF THE ENGLISH TERMS
WHISTLEBLOWER AND WHISTLEBLOWING

Historically speaking, the term *whistleblower* originated as a word to refer to a person who blows the whistle, or who performs the act of whistleblowing, in its literal sense. According to Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, the word *whistleblower* was initially used in its hyphenated form *whistle-blower* and with that form it entered the English language in the 19th century, to denote “one who blows a whistle”\(^1\). It was used with this meaning until around the end of the 19th century, when it took on another, this time more specific meaning, referring to a “referee in a sporting contest, who blew the whistle in an administration of rules and judgment”\(^2\). The same source adds that soon after, the root expression *blow the whistle* acquired a metaphorical meaning, to denote “calling attention to something, such as criminal activity, kept secret”\(^3\). More specifically, some authors link this metaphor to the practice of British police officers of blowing a whistle upon noticing that a person has committed an illegal act, thus alarming their fellow colleagues and the public of danger (Armstrong & Francis, 2015:583). Harris, Prichard & Rabins (2009:179) draw our attention to another possible source of the metaphor that was mentioned by Michael Davis, which follows the analogy of a train that uses a whistle to warn the people to get off the track, besides the link with a referee or a police officer blowing a whistle.

With the development of its metaphorical meaning of a person who discloses wrongdoings, in the first half of the 20th century the term *whistleblower* was used synonymously with the terms *snitcher* or *informer*, which were considered pejorative. *Whistleblower* is now perceived as a positive word that has kept the semantic feature of disclosing a wrongdoing, and this non-pejorative meaning of *whistleblower* is attributed to Ralph Nader, who “pressed the new word into the popular discourse” (Safire, 1983) in a conference in 1971, and later in a book on that subject. He actually used it to refer to a person who revealed wrongdoings in automobile industry (Armstrong & Francis, 2015:583). In explaining its etymology, Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary also elaborates on the specific legal sense with

\(^1\) https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/whistle-blower-blow-the-whistle-word-origins (15.06.2020)
\(^2\) ibid
\(^3\) ibid
which it is used today, with the meaning of “an employee who brings wrongdoing by an employer or other employees to the attention of a government or law enforcement agency and who is commonly vested by statute with rights and remedies for retaliation”\textsuperscript{4}. The term \textit{whistleblower} can also be found in legal acts, such as the US \textit{Whistleblower Protection Act} of 1989.

\textit{Whistleblower} is now a commonly used term, particularly within the framework of the fight against corruption. According to Transparency International, \textit{whistleblowing} is “the disclosure or reporting of wrongdoing, which includes corruption, criminal offences, breaches of legal obligation, miscarriages of justice, specific dangers to public health, safety of the environment, abuse of authority, unauthorized use of public funds or property, gross waste or mismanagement, conflict of interest, and acts to cover up any of the aforementioned” (Worth, 2013:6). As for \textit{whistleblower}, it is defined as “any public or private sector employee or worker who discloses information about these types of wrongdoing and who is at risk of retribution. This includes individuals who are outside the traditional employee-employer relationship, such as consultants, contractors, trainees or interns, volunteers, student workers, temporary workers, and former employees” (ibid).

In Europe, this concept has particularly gained popularity with the adoption of laws all over the continent that regulate specifically the acts of whistleblowing and the legal protection of whistleblowers, which opened the way for finding corresponding lexical equivalents in various European languages. At EU level, United Kingdom was the first country to adopt such a legal act – Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) in 1998, but it must be noted that the UK Act used the term \textit{public interest disclosure} (Worth, 2013:19) instead of \textit{whistleblowing}. As for the other EU countries, one may observe various practices when translating the term \textit{whistleblower}, not necessarily used in the official laws. Thus, in some languages \textit{whistleblower} is literally translated, in other languages it is translated with a metaphor similar to the one of whistleblowers, some languages borrow the English

\footnote{\url{https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/whistle-blower-blow-the-whistle-word-origins} (15.06.2020)}
The need for coining Macedonian equivalents of the terms *whistleblower* and *whistleblowing* arose from the necessity for drawing up a law that would protect persons who report wrongdoings, within the wider context of the country’s fight against corruption. This obligation draws on several documents issued by international organizations our country has been a member of. One such document is the 2004 UN Convention against Corruption which was ratified by the Macedonian Assembly in 2007. It is important to mention that in most cases when the need has arisen for introducing new legal vocabulary into Macedonian since the country’s independence, Macedonian lawmakers have most typically used the English terminology as a model. This particularly results from the fact that English is the official or one of the official languages of the institutions whose legal acts are legally binding for their member states. Also, most of the new legal vocabulary is related to concepts derived from EU legal documents, which have to be translated into Macedonian within the process of harmonizing Macedonian legislation with the one of the European Union, where the legal acts are usually drafted in English and then translated into other languages. Having this in mind, it was expected that the Macedonian terms for *whistleblower* and *whistleblowing* would be coined based on the English lexical solutions, like in other European languages.

At national level, the leading organization that pushed forward this process was Transparency International – Macedonia (TI-M), which lobbied the state institutions to draw up and adopt this type of law. From a linguistic point of view, it is interesting to note that, apart from discussing the content of the legal provisions that would regulate the issue, this organization also pointed to the need for appropriately naming these persons. It even took a proactive approach of calling upon the public to participate in choosing the

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appropriate lexical solution through a public discussion on that matter. TI-M even suggested several options that the citizens were to comment on, namely: пријавуваč (prijavuvač), укажуваč (ukažuvač), свиркаč (svirkač), звоноаč (dzvonač) or other similar words (Тасева, 2016:15). It is extremely important to emphasize the fact that this organization insisted on choosing/defining the adequate term for these persons that would be based on Macedonian language (ibid). This clearly indicates that TI-M did not favour the use of an anglicism in the form of a direct lexical borrowing, which should also be the desired course in searching for lexical solution for other concepts that are new to the Macedonian lexical system.

The Macedonian Law on the Protection of Whistleblowers was passed in 2015 and amended in 2018, with the original name Закон за заштита на укажувачи (Zakon za zaštita na ukažuvači). The very name of the law shows that the Macedonian lawmakers opted for the word укажувач (ukažuvač) as the official Macedonian lexical equivalent of the term whistleblower. However, they did not follow the etymological analogy when lexicalizing the act of whistleblowing. Thus, instead of coining a word based on the same root, they chose the expression заштитено пријавување (zaštiteno prijavuvanje) which can be translated in English as protected reporting, very similar to the expression protected disclosure found in PIDA.

According to the definition in Article 2, Paragraph 1, it refers to “reporting or disclosure that, in accordance with this law, conveys a reasonable suspicion or knowledge that a punishable, unethical or illegal or unacceptable conduct that damages or threatens public interest was committed, is being committed or will probably be committed” (Закон за заштита на укажувачи, чл. 2, ст.1). Paragraph 2 defines the term укажувач (ukažuvač) as “a person from the categories regulated by Paragraph 3 of this law that in good faith carries out the act of protected reporting in accordance with this law” (ibid, pg. 2). Paragraph 3 lists all the categories of persons that are considered whistleblowers. A whistleblower may be:

- A person who is employed full-time or temporarily in the institution or the legal person that they report;
- A job candidate, volunteer candidate or intern in the institution or legal person that they report;
- A person who is a volunteer or intern in the institution or legal person that they report;
A person who was/is hired for carrying out some work by the institution or legal person that they report; 
A person who had/has a business relationship or other type of cooperation with the institution or legal person that they report; or 
A person who uses/used services in the institution or legal person in the public and private sector that they report. (ibid, pg. 3)

As we can see from the definition, the Macedonian term укажувач (ukažuvač) conveys the meaning covered by the English term whistleblower to a considerable extent. It is impossible to expect complete equivalence in meaning, taking into account the specific cultural settings in the countries where whistleblower laws have been adopted. However, they all share some semantic features: a person who is in some kind of a work relation with an institution or a legal person in general, and the element of reporting, disclosing or making public a wrongdoing or an illegal act/behavior.

With regard to the word choice, the Macedonian translational equivalent укажувач (ukažuvač) is not a direct translation of the original English metaphor of whistleblowing. The literal translation of whistleblower would be свиркач (svirkač), which was one of the options that were publicly discussed and that is still being used informally or by speakers who are not familiar with the official translation. A question remains as to the reason behind not choosing the literal translation, which has been applied to other new concepts imported into Macedonian. Etymologically speaking, свиркач (svirkač) is derived from the noun свирка (svirka) which primarily denotes a whistle, or the verb свирка (svirka) which is the equivalent of the English verb to whistle. However, the verb свирка (svirka) may also be used pejoratively, meaning “to whistle with one’s lips (at a player, performer, speaker etc.) as an expression of discontent, mocking etc. (Мургоски, 2005:1173), or “to whistle with one’s lips (at a girl, woman), especially as an expression of sexual attraction etc.” (ibid) which can even be perceived as a form of sexual harassment. This might be a possible explanation why the lawmakers chose not to use this root for the new word, especially if we take into consideration that in a legal sense a whistleblower is not a pejorative term. It should not leave room for reference of any kind that could lead to ambiguities regarding its use. On the other hand, the word укажувач (ukažuvač) is neutral, without the pejorative meaning attached to it. It is etymologically rooted in the verb укаже (ukaže), with the meaning “to show,
attract the attention to/about something” (Конески et al. 2014:172). Semantically, the verb укаже (ukaže) contains the element of pointing to something, raising the issue of something, directing the other people’s eyes towards something etc., which is what whistleblowers metaphorically do. They alert the public by pointing to the existence of some wrongdoing that has to be dealt with. Bearing this in mind, we may agree that the noun form укажувач (ukažuvač) can be considered an acceptable translational equivalent of whistleblower. However, it is interesting to note that the noun укажувач (ukažuvač) is a newly derived noun which was not included in the Interpretative Dictionary of Macedonian Language published in 2013 by the Institute for Macedonian Language. Hopefully, укажувач (ukažuvač) will find its place in the new editions and its use will be popularized among the Macedonian speakers, just as the practice of blowing the whistle in the legal sense will become a common practice among Macedonian citizens.

TRANSLATIONAL EQUIVALENTS OF WHISTLEBLOWER AND WHISTLEBLOWING IN RELATED SLAVIC LANGUAGES

As we have seen in the previous section, Macedonian lawmakers opted for a non-direct translation of whistleblower, which can be viewed as a positive practice of adapting the new concept’s lexicalization to the linguistic and cultural setting in which the target language is used. Regarding the translation of whistleblowing, they chose an expression which does not share the same etymology. Bearing this in mind, it would be interesting to compare this practice with the ones of the lawmakers in some other languages from the same group of South Slavic languages.

In Serbia, the Law on the Protection of Whistleblowers was passed in 2014, one year before it happened in Macedonia. When reading the provisions in this Law, one can easily see that unlike in Macedonian, whistleblowing and whistleblower are translated with single words based on the same root. Thus, the act of whistleblowing is translated as узбуњивање (uzbunjivanje), while the person who “blows the whistle” is referred to as узбуњивач (uzbunjivač). According to the definitions, узбуњивање (uzbunjivanje) means “disclosing information on violating laws, violating human rights, exercising public authority contrary to the purpose it has been granted for, threats to life, public health, security, environment, as well as for preventing large scale damage” (Закон о заштити узбуњивача, 2014, чл.2,
The term узбуњивач (uzbunjivač) is defined as “a natural person that does the act of whistleblowing related to his/her work, the hiring procedure, the use of services from state and other authorities, holders of public powers or public services, business cooperation and the right to property of a business entity” (ibid, ст. 2). Although not identical, the Macedonian and Serbian definitions still overlap with the key semantic features of the original English concept. One can easily notice that the Serbian translational equivalent, just like the Macedonian one, is not rooted in the Serbian word for whistle. However, it is not even rooted in the Serbian equivalent указати (ukazati) of the Macedonian root term указува (ukažuva). The Serbian lawmakers actually chose the root verb узбунити (uzbuniti) and the corresponding noun узбуна (uzbuna). The Serbian noun узбуна (uzbuna) can be translated into English as alarm, which means that the verb узбунити (uzbuniti) actually means to raise the alarm, or to sound the alarm. Semantically, a simple analogy can be drawn between the metaphors of sounding the alarm and blowing the whistle, since in both cases the person alarms the public about something that is going on, or that is going to happen, and in English it usually refers to warning the other people of danger. Therefore, we can agree that the Serbian lawmakers chose an acceptable lexical solution for conveying the meaning behind the English whistleblowing and whistleblower.

In the Croatian Law on the Protection of Whistleblowers from 2019, the term whistleblower is translated as пријавителj неправилности, while the act of whistleblowing is translated as пријављивањe nepravilnosti. The translations show that instead of using single words, for both concepts the Croatian lawmakers chose two-word descriptive expressions. Namely, the literal English translation of пријавителj nepravilnosti is reporter of irregularities, while the act of пријављивањe nepravilnosti can be translated as reporting irregularities. According to the Law, пријавителj nepravilnosti is “a legal person who reports irregularities related to carrying out work for the employer” (Zakon o zaštiti пријавителja nepravilnosti, чл. 3, ст. 2). Here, again, the definition covers the main elements found in the previously discussed languages. The law also defines the irregularities as “violating the laws and other regulations or reckless management of public goods, public funds and EU funds which threaten the public interest, and which are related to carrying out work for the employer” (ibid, ст. 1). From a lexical point of view, it is surprising that the lawmakers and the linguists in Croatia did not coin a
single word of Croatian origin that would transpose the English metaphor into the Croatian lexical system, taking into consideration the positive practice of Croatian linguists of coining new words for concepts that are usually lexicalized by anglicisms or other foreignisms in other related languages of former Yugoslav republics. *Prijavitelj nepravilnosti* is actually a descriptive translation of the original English concept. It is a neutral term which is not used figuratively.

The Bosnian term for *whistleblower* can be found in the Law on the Protection of Persons Reporting Corruption in the Institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina from 2013. The officially established term for *whistleblower* is *uzbunjivač*, which is defined as “a person employed in the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina and legal persons established by the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who, due to reasonable doubt or circumstances of the existence of corruption in any institution of Bosnia and Herzegovina in good faith reports to the persons in charge or the institutions in compliance with this law” (*Zakon o zaštiti lica koja prijavljuju korupciju u institucijama Bosne i Hercegovine, čl.2, b*). As for *whistleblowing* they use the expression *zaštićeno prijavljivanje* (ibid, c). As we can see, the Bosnian term for *whistleblower* is the same as the Serbian one, while the term for *whistleblowing* corresponds to the Macedonian one, so the explanation of these two equivalents applies to the Bosnian terms as well.

The official Slovenian equivalent of *whistleblower* is *prijavitelj*. This term can be found in the Integrity and Prevention of Corruption Act, from 2011. The literal English translation of *prijavitelj* would be *the one who reports* or *reporting person / reporter*. This is the same term that is used in the Croatian law, but this time in the form of a single noun. *Prijavitelj* is a neutral term, just like its English equivalents, and can actually refer to any person reporting something. It lacks the word *irregularities* as the object from the Croatian expression, which implies narrowing of the concept when used in collocation with *report*, thus clearly defining the type of action that is reported. According to Article 23 of the above mentioned law, *prijavitelj* or *reporting person* “may report instances of corruption in a State body, local community, by a holder of public authority or other legal persons governed by public or private law, or a practice by a natural person for which he
believes that it contains elements of corruption, to the Commission or any other competent body”\(^6\).

Finally, the Montenegrin lexical equivalent of \textit{whistleblower} can be found in the Montenegrin Anti-Corruption Law. Article 4 of this Law stipulates that “a whistleblower, in the sense of this law, is a natural and a legal person that reports a threat to the public interest that indicates the existence of corruption” (Zakon o sprječavanju korupcije, čl. 4). The original text of the law in Montenegrin language uses the word \textit{zviždač}, which is the direct translation of the English term \textit{whistleblowing}. The notion and the metaphor of the original English term is transferred into its Montenegrin lexical counterpart, in the form of a loan translation. From all the languages that were analyzed in this section, it was only Montenegrin that imported the new word into its lexical repertoire by means of literal translation, which is probably the simplest and the most practical way of dealing with this issue, but not necessarily the best one from a linguistic point of view.

\section*{CONCLUSION}

From the semantic analysis presented in the paper a conclusion can be drawn that \textit{whistleblower} and \textit{whistleblowing} are complex concepts that are differently translated in Macedonian and other related languages, depending on the approach of the lawmakers and translators in the corresponding countries where these languages are official.

In terms of its form and the meaning it conveys, the official Macedonian translation of \textit{whistleblower} is an example of an adequately chosen equivalent which covers the key semantic elements found in the original English term, based on the existing lexical items from the Macedonian lexical corpus. It is the author’s opinion that this practice could be used as a model for coining new words in future, whenever it is possible to avoid direct lexical borrowings from the source language. Such practice will contribute to the enlargement of the Macedonian lexical corpus, either by inventing new words or by adding new meanings to existing ones. It should also serve as a good example that can be followed by lawmakers in the other

\footnote{The English translation of the Slovenian Integrity and Prevention of Corruption Act is quoted from the following source: http://www.europam.org/data/mechanisms/\textit{FD/FD\%20Laws/Slovenia/Slovenia\_Integrity\%20and\%20Prevention\%20of\%20Corruption\%20Act\_2010\_amended\%202011.pdf} (15.06.2020).}
related languages that were elaborated in the paper when introducing new concepts into their lexical systems.

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