

FOR CACKLES AND GIGGLES: THE JOYS OF TRANSLATING COLLECTIVE NOUNS

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Abstract. Collective nouns for groups of animals are pseudo-partitives with considerable semantic variation in English, ranging from garden-variety items (*a pack of wolves, a herd of elephants, a flock of geese*, etc.) to exotic coinages (*a shiver of sharks, an exaltation of larks*, etc.). In contrast, the Romanian lexical inventory is by far poorer, including only standard collective nouns (*o cireadă de vaci* ‘a herd of cattle’) *o turmă de oi* ‘a flock of sheep’, *o haită de lupi* ‘a pack of wolves’, etc.). Building on these lexical gaps, the article explores the translation strategies rendering English collective nouns into Romanian and the syntactic patterns they generate. It is argued that the frequent lack of equivalent forms in Romanian forces translators to resort to various compensation mechanisms with both shortening and lengthening syntactic effects, though semantic implicitation appears to be the norm (Blum-Kulka 1986, Klaudy and Karoly 2005, Klaudy 2003, 2009).

Keywords: pseudo-partitives, collective nouns, translation strategies, compensation techniques, explicitation, implicitation.

1. INTRODUCTION

English and Romanian have different ways in which they refer to pluralities of animals. While the lexical inventory of English includes a rich class of collective nouns, both of the garden variety (*herd (of cattle), flock (of sheep), swarm (of bees), pack (of wolves)*, etc.), as well as more exotic items integrated in idiomatic pseudo-partitive constructions (*a cackle of hyenas, an exaltation of larks, a snuggle of sloths, a shiver/frenzy of sharks*, etc.), the lexicon of Romanian includes only common collective nouns describing types of species, though not specific animal groups (*o turmă de oi/capre* ‘a flock of sheep/goats’, *o cireadă de vite/cai* ‘a herd of cattle/horses’, *un roi de albine/fluturi* ‘a swarm of bees/butterflies’, *o haită de lupi/lei* ‘a pack of wolves/lions’, etc.). What is more, to this day, the derivation of exotic collective nouns in English continues to be a productive process, as easily accessible as the derivation of synthetic compounds or the conflation of adjectives and nouns into verbs.

Due to such lexical discrepancies between the two languages, the translation of exotic collective nouns represents a challenging task that tests the translators’ knowledge of the two languages and their creative skills. In addition, it raises a number of questions regarding what type of mechanisms are required to translate collective nouns and what kind of patterns emerge from their application. It is the aim of the present article to answer these questions,

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as well as to consider the translation of collective nouns of both types from the perspective of the two general concepts assumed in the literature to represent the foundation of the translation process – explicitation and implicitation (see Blum-Kulka 1986, Klaudy and Károly 2005, Klaudy 2003, 2009). In particular, the question is whether explicitation dominates the translation process because Romanian does not have equivalent forms for most of the English collective nouns and, since it is only natural for translators to want to transfer the source constructions as faithfully as possible, they will have to resort to strategies which would unavoidably lead to the addition of lexical material, hence, to explicitation.

Conducted within the theoretical framework developed by Hervey and Higgins (1992) and aided by a number of translation tools discussed in Klaudy and Karoly (2005), and Klaudy (2003, 2009), the present analysis relies on a relatively well-represented corpus consisting of 30 sentences selected from online sources, which include 38 tokens – both generic and specialized collective nouns for pluralities of animals in neutral and wordplay contexts. Specifically, the study investigates the translation of 13 tokens representing common collective nouns in neutral contexts (*a flock of sheep, a pack of wolves, a herd of deer, etc.*), 11 exotic nouns in neutral contexts (*a murder of crows, a parliament of owls, a muster of peacocks, a pride of lions, etc.*), and 14 exotic collective nouns in wordplay contexts (*a prickle of hedgehogs, a mischief of mice, a flamboyance of flamingos, a stubbornness of rhinos, etc.*). The sentences were translated by 11 volunteer participants, 10 university professors from the Department of English, University of Bucharest, who also have experience as professional translators and interpreters, and 1 amateur translator with C2 proficiency in English².

The analysis will show that the translation of collective nouns for groups of animals depends on two sets of factors: the nature of the collective noun to be translated (common (quantifying) vs. exotic (evaluating)) and the nature of the context of occurrence (neutral vs. wordplay). Following the two criteria, the analysis will conclude that common collective nouns in neutral contexts are mainly rendered by means of literal translation since they have corresponding lexicalized forms in Romanian, which are to be found in bilingual dictionaries. Exotic (evaluating) collective nouns in neutral contexts are usually translated via (mostly) compensation in kind, but (more seldom) via compensation by merging, as common collective nouns, due to the absence of exotic lexical items of this kind from Romanian. Last but not least, exotic collective nouns in wordplay contexts are generally rendered by a mixture of compensatory strategies (compensation in kind, compensation by merging, compensation by splitting (operating concomitantly with compensation in place), cultural translation and free translation). However, the investigation will show that, contrary to expectations, the need to capture the play upon words does not always, and not even often, push translators to lexical addition and grammatical upgrading (Klaudy and Károly 2005, Klaudy 2003, 2009) via compensation techniques that would lengthen the original pseudo-partitive constructions to more complex phrasal and clausal structures. Instead, the main option continues to be compensation in kind, which semantically downgrades the collective

² I would like to acknowledge and once again thank my colleagues and friends who graciously agreed to be part of this study: Maura Cotfas, Ilinca Ionescu, Petruța Năiduț, Anca Sevcenco, Irina and Andrei Stoica, Diana Ștefan-Dinescu, Alis Zaharia, Mihaela Zamfirescu, Cristian Vișea, and Nadina Vișan.

nominal from exotic to common. As a result, the analysis will conclude that the lack of corresponding equivalent forms for exotic collective nouns makes semantic implicitation (from the specific to the general) obligatory in Romanian, while syntactic explicitation remains a choice that translators do not appear willing to make even when the context invites them to it.

The article is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a typology of collective nouns in English and Romanian, and proposes a number of predictions for their translation into Romanian based on these classifications. Section 3 focuses on the analysis of the translation strategies selected to render collective nouns of various kinds and the syntactic structures they produce. Section 4 presents the statistical data and discusses the findings in relation to the concepts of *implicitation* and *explicitation* as defined in the literature (Blum-Kulka 1986, Klaudy and Károly 2005, Klaudy 2003, 2009). Section 5 summarizes the conclusions.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Collective nouns are a subset of pseudo-partitives – binominal quantitative structures of the type N_1 -of- N_2 – in which N_1 , a functional or semi-lexical head with classifier status, quantifies over the kind of entity denoted by N_2 , which is always lexical (Koptjevskaja-Tamm, 2001, Keizer 2007, Seržant 2021, Van Eynde and Kim 2022, Tănase-Dogaru 2022a, Tănase-Dogaru 2022b, a.o.).

While, generally speaking, collective nouns for animate and inanimate entities are constructions in which N_1 denotes a subset of the set denoted by N_2 , as far as collective nouns for groups of animals are concerned, Gardelle (2019) argues that “although they all denote pluralities of entities in the binominal construction, very few of them are collective” (Gardelle 2019: 75). She identifies as collective only a small subset of fairly common nouns which, though not species-specific, are specialized in referring to types of species (*herd, flock, pack, horde, swarm, school* and *shoal*). *Herd* is usually associated with cattle and, generally speaking, any mammals travelling together (antelopes, elephants, seals, whales, etc.); *flock* is used for sheep, goats, but also birds; *pack* is more versatile, though mainly associated with wild animals and hunting dogs; *swarm* is used for bees and all kinds of other insects; *horde* is related to the previous two items, since it denotes a ‘moving swarm or pack’, and entails high numbers of creatures moving in a pack (*a horde of locusts/mosquitoes/rats*); *shoal* is associated with fish, but also seals and whales, while *school* is likewise used for fish and sea mammals like dolphins and whales, but also for birds flying in flocks. Sometimes, the same group of animals can be described using several collective nouns (for instance, whales can be grouped in shoals, schools or herds, geese in flocks, gaggles, skeins or wedges, bees in swarms, hives and hordes, etc.)

As already stated, according to Gardelle (2019), it is *herd, flock, pack, horde, swarm, school* and *shoal* that are true collective nouns, as evidenced by their syntactic and semantic properties. Firstly, they occur in binominal constructions built on a meronymic relation, i.e., the units and the whole stand in a part/whole relation. Secondly, they denote a plurality of units construed as the result of a grouping operation, and, thirdly, the [+collective] semantic feature is conflated in the meaning of N_1 , in other words, it is instantiated at lexical level. Their status as true collectives is also confirmed

by the fact that they undergo the tests for human-denoting collective nouns: “An X is/may be composed of units Y.”, and, conversely, “A unit Y is/may be a part of an X.” (“A pack is composed of wolves.” / “A wolf is part of a pack.”). What is more, just like human collective nouns, they can be modified by adjectives denoting age and size (*a large pack, a young herd, a big flock*), and they allow hybrid agreement, i.e., the NPs they head may trigger plural override agreement (compare *A pack of wolves has denned in the hills above town for at least a decade.* (singular agreement) to *However, one night, a pack of wolves attempt to kill the turkey on the farm.* (plural agreement)). In the same vein, they can be referred to using anaphoric *they/their* (*A pack of wolves would scatter in fear once they were aware of being hunted by the Afghan Hound. / The pack of wolves moved in perfect synchronization, their coordination a testament to their inherent team spirit and unity.*).

On the other hand, the great majority of collective nouns denoting pluralities of animals are species-specific ‘unlikely nouns’ (Gardelle 2019: 78): *an exaltation of larks, a covey of partridges, a cowardice of curs, a murmuration of starlings, a murder of crows, a dule of doves, a skulk of foxes, an unkindness of ravens, a husk of hares, a charm of goldfinches*, and so many more. Many of these derivatives were coined in the 15th century in *Books of Courtesy* – handbooks on various aspects of noble living designed to educate the aristocracy, and especially in a very popular volume on venery titled *Book of Saint Albans: Containing Treatises of Hawking, Hunting and Cote Armour*, attributed to Dame Juliana Barnes, the prioress of an abbey near St. Albans, Hertfordshire, and written in verse (Barnes 1486). Although the 15th century was the heyday of their creation, the coining of improbable collective nouns continues to be productive to this day, as indicated in the online Merriam-Webster Dictionary³, which lists the following derivatives as modern creations: *a bask of crocodiles, a tuxedo of penguins, a cackle of hyenas, a destruction of cats, a wisdom of wombats, a tower of giraffes*, etc. These exotic collective nominals are in a variety of semantic relations with the animal-denoting nouns; they may involve onomatopoeia, as is the case of *a gaggle of geese, a cackle of hyenas, a grumble of pugs*, or *a murmuration of starlings*, they may refer to the habitat of the respective animal as in *a den/pit of snakes, a nest of mice, a bed of scorpions*, they may allude to typical behaviour, for instance, *a bask of crocodiles, a skulk of foxes, an ambush of tigers, a mischief of mice*, or they may denote positive and negative traits (consider *a flamboyance of flamingos, a dazzle of zebras, a loveliness of ladybugs* vs. *a pandemonium of parrots, a scourge of mosquitoes, an embarrassment of pandas, a cowardice of curs*). Going beyond the eccentricity of the associations, Gardelle (2019) points out that, in many cases, N₁ is actually a nominalization of a predicate that selects N₂ as its subject; for instance, *a leap/prowl of leopards* derives from ‘leopards leap/prowl’, *a shrewdness of apes* from ‘apes are shrewd’, *a pride of lions* from ‘lions are proud’, *a skulk of foxes* from ‘foxes skulk’, *a prickle of porcupines* from ‘porcupines prickle’, etc. Their underlying syntactic origins explain why these nouns do not classify as bona fide collectives, which, among other things, means that they cannot occur in isolation, without their *of*-NP complements. Gardelle (2019) contends that this is because they do not denote a plurality on their own, rather, it is the N₁-*of*-N₂ construction as a whole that has collective reference, as indicated by their inability to undergo the tests for collective nouns in the absence of their

³ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/wordplay/a-drudge-of-lexicographers-presents-collective-nouns>

complements (compare *A barrel of monkeys is composed of monkeys. / A monkey may be part of a barrel of monkeys.* vs. **A barrel is composed of monkeys. / *A monkey may be part of a barrel.*). On the other hand, there is a small number of exceptions to this rule, species-specific exotic nominals like *a pride of lions*, *a gaggle/skein of geese*, and *a team of oxen*, which, likely due to their frequency, do display the regular behaviour of collective nouns, in the sense that they undergo the tests for collectivity (*A pride is composed of lions. / A lion is part of a pride.*) and may be modified by size/age-denoting adjectives (*a large pride*).

Last but not least, the class of nominals denoting pluralities of animals that do classify as collective is enriched by the presence of a number of collective nouns originally used to refer to humans: *a family of porcupines*, *a gang of elk*, *a troop of gorillas*, *an army of frogs*, and even the metaphorical *a parliament/congress of owls*.

Tănase-Dogaru (2022b) proposes a different approach to the derivation of collective nouns for groups of animals, which independently formalizes the observations made in Gardelle (2019). The author takes as starting point her analysis of the evaluating uses of size nouns in both English and Romanian (Tănase-Dogaru 2022a). These pseudo-partitive constructions are a subset of collective nouns, for instance, *bunch* in *a bunch of ham-fisted idiots*, and *grămadă* ('heap'/'pile') in *o grămadă de idioți* (< lit. 'a heap/pile of idiots', i.e., 'a lot of idiots'), for which she claims the evaluating use is a contextual metaphorical extension of the quantifying use, with N₁ mirroring the negative connotations of N₂ while having a quantifying interpretation. Extending this line of reasoning to collective nouns for groups of animals in English, Tănase-Dogaru (2022b) classifies them into two subsets: garden-variety quantifying collective nouns like *herd* and *pack*, and evaluating collective nouns like *cackle* in *a cackle of hyenas* or *raft* in *a raft of otters*. She points out that, unlike size nouns, which acquire evaluating uses only contextually, evaluating collective nouns are always attributed this interpretation as N₁ simply mirrors a characteristic feature of N₂ and thus, loses its original quantifying "group" meaning. What is more, also unlike size nouns with evaluating meaning, which are always negative, evaluating collective nouns are classified into those with negative evaluation (*a murder of crows*, *an unkindness of ravens*, *a wake of vultures*, etc.), and those with neutral/positive evaluation (e.g., *a raft of otters*, *a muster of storks*, *a walk of snails* (neutral) compared to *a charm of hummingbirds*, *a flamboyance of flamingos*, *an exaltation of larks* (positive)). Overall, their derivation is made possible by the fact that N₁ in the combination [collective N₁+of+animals-N₂] has undergone semantic bleaching, i.e., it has lost any shade of lexical meaning and become a purely functional element roughly standing for "group". Since N₁ is now semantically transparent, it allows its "carcass" to be filled in by one of the lexical features of N₂ by means of a process she calls "mirroring" (Tănase-Dogaru 2022b: 82).

Turning to Romanian, a quick glance at the nouns used to refer to pluralities of animals reveals that they are only of the garden variety and they specialize in denoting types of species: *banc* ('school') for fish, *stol* ('flock') for birds, *cireadă/turmă* ('herd') for cattle, *turmă* ('herd') for goats, antelopes, elephants, *haită* ('pack') for dogs and predators, *roi* ('swarm') for insects, *colonie* ('colony') for insects (ants and bees) and birds (pelicans, cormorants), as well as for bats, *herghelie* ('herd') for horses, and a few other. Alternatively,

Romanian refers to groups of animals using human collective nouns: *grup* ('group'), *bandă/ceată* ('band'), *trupă* ('troop'), *mulțime* ('crowd'), *adunare* ('gathering'), *adunătură* ('gathering'/ 'gang'), etc.

However, Romanian lacks any exotic coinages, which means that rendering these unlikely collective nouns is bound to be quite challenging for translators. In fact, in light of the evidence presented in this section, there are a number of predictions that can be made concerning the translation of collective nouns for groups of animals from English into Romanian:

- (1) To render common (quantifying) collective nouns like *pack* and *flock* into Romanian, the respondents will resort to literal translation since these nouns have lexicalized equivalent forms readily retrievable from bilingual dictionaries.
- (2) Exotic (evaluating) collective nouns in neutral contexts will be frequently rendered into Romanian by means of compensation in kind as common collective nouns rather than as structures that preserve their metaphorical dimension, possibly because the context does not include elements that would trigger the need for a creative solution.
- (3) Motivated by a need to transfer the wordplay, translators will resort to compensation strategies like compensation in place and compensation by splitting in the case of exotic (evaluating) nouns in wordplay contexts, thus displaying a tendency towards explicitation. That is to say, evaluating collective nouns in wordplay contexts will force respondents to adopt creative solutions which will make exotic nouns explicit by adding lexical material.

As the next section will demonstrate, the analysis of the corpus provides evidence that generally supports the above-mentioned predictions.

3. CORPUS ANALYSIS

The present section investigates the translation strategies adopted by the respondents to render collective nouns for groups of animals into Romanian and the syntactic structures these strategies generate. Overall, the analysis of the corpus clearly indicates that their translation depends on two factors: the type of collective noun to be translated (common/quantifying vs. exotic/evaluating), and the kind of context in which the respective nominal occurs (neutral vs. metaphorical/wordplay). These variables are shown to bear influence on both the strategies adopted by translators and the syntactic structures they produce.

Literal translation is the strategy of choice when the collective noun is (usually) of the garden variety or (exceptionally) species-specific, and occurs in a neutral context, as illustrated below:

- (1) a. ... as **a flock of sheep** went ambling past.
b. ... **o turmă de oi** a trecut agale pe lângă ei.

- (2) a. She turned around only to see **a whole pack of wolves** standing there, saliva dripping from their open mouths.
 b. Se întoarse și zări **o întreagă haită de lupi** pândind acolo, cu bale la bot.
- (3) a. **A muster of peacocks** sang out an alarm call and all the deer around the lake ran for cover.
 b. **O armată de păuni** dădu alarma și toate căprioarele din jurul lacului fugiră la adăpost.

As the examples above indicate, the English pseudo-partitives built on the common (quantifying) collective nouns *flock (of sheep)* (1a) and *pack (of wolves)* (2a) are straightforwardly rendered by means of literal translation as their perfectly equivalent forms in Romanian – *o turmă (de oi)* (1b) and *o haită (de lupi)* (1c). Literal translation is readily available since common (quantifying) collective nouns indicating types of species are the only means by which Romanian refers to groups of animals and they can be easily retrieved from bilingual dictionaries. The same strategy is applied in the case of the species-specific collective noun *muster (of peacocks)* (3a), for which Romanian has a corresponding form in *o armată (de păuni)* (3b), though this might simply be a fortuitous exceptional case of a metaphorically-used human-denoting collective noun (the basic meaning of *muster* is ‘a formal gathering of troops’) rendered as the equivalent human-denoting common collective noun *armată* (‘army’) in Romanian.

While literal translation is limited to rendering the few common (quantifying) collective nouns for groups of animals identified in Gardelle (2019) (*herd – turmă, flock – turmă* (for sheep) or *stol* (for birds), *pack – haită, horde – hoardă, swarm – roi, school* and *shoal*, both translated as *banc*, when referring to fish and some sea mammals), other (compensatory) strategies are required to render most of the English collective nouns, which are of the exotic (evaluating) type, and for which Romanian does not have corresponding forms. Although translators use them with the aim of avoiding translation loss, this is, more often than not, impossible.

Compensation in kind is one such strategy selected to render unlikely collective nouns that lack equivalent forms in Romanian. Generally speaking, the technique consists in compensating for one type of textual effect in the source text by means of another in the target text, specifically, by replacing denotative meanings with connotative ones and vice versa. In the present corpus, due to the lexical gaps discussed in the previous section, compensation in kind is regularly employed to replace the exotic collective nouns with metaphorical interpretations with common (quantifying) nouns. This means that the translator basically fails to stay faithful to the source text pseudo-partitive construction, since the metaphorical dimension is lost in translation. Consequently, such cases count as instances of lexical generalization, in other words, of semantic implicitation (Klaudy, 2003, Klaudy and Károly 2005, Klaudy 2009). Nevertheless, unlike compensation by merging, which will be discussed below, this strategy does manage to stay closer to the original at least in form if not in sense, by providing an equivalent pseudo-partitive construction built on the garden-variety collective noun, as illustrated below:

- (4) a. Up at dawn and with no one else in sight, whether we were tracking **a pride of lions** or examining **a column of ants**, every minute heralded a new experience for both of us.

- b. În crucea zorilor, fără țipenie de om în jur, aveam parte în fiecare clipă de noi experiențe, fie că eram în urmărirea **unei haite de lei** sau că examinam **un roi de furnici**.
- (5) a. The potential for all kinds of damage hovers in the air like **a murder of crows** waiting to strike.
 b. Tot soiul de pericole stau să se întâmple, ca **un stol de ciori** gata să atace.
- (6) a. The trees were left bare after **the swarm of locusts** devoured all the leaves.
 b. Copacii erau acum desfrunziți după ce **un nor de lăcuste** devoră toate frunzele.

Both evaluating collective nouns in (4a) (*a pride of lions* and a *column of ants*), as well as the exotic *a murder of crows* in (5a) have connotative (metaphorical) semantics which are lost in translation when compensation in kind renders the items as common collective nouns denoting types of species – *o haită de lei* ('a pack of lions'), *un roi de furnici* ('a swarm of ants'), and *un stol de ciori* ('a flock of crows'). In contrast, occasionally, compensation in kind may add a poetical (connotative) dimension to a prosaic element, as is the case in (6), in which the banal quantifying collective noun *swarm* in *the swarm of locusts* is 'improved upon' by being rendered as the metaphorical *un nor de lăcuste* ('a cloud of locusts') in a rare example of semantic explicitation.

Compensation by merging is the other strategy involving semantic implicitation, but its application has more radical effects given that instead of lexical generalization, this strategy leads to lexical omission. Thus, the exotic collective nominal is completely left out in the target text version, while the focus now falls entirely on the N₂ complement of the original pseudo-partitive construction (see examples below):

- (7) a. From the darkness came the howls of **routs of wolves** and **bands of coyotes**, the rumbling growls of **a sleuth of bears** or the bugles of **a gang of elk**.
 b. Din întuneric se auzeau urlete de **lupi și coioți** și mormăituri adânci de **urs sau elan**.
- (8) a. After he ate all of his krill, the penguin waddled back to **the waddle of penguins** to try to score some more.
 b. După ce termină de mâncat, pinguinul se întoarse legănându-se la **semenii săi** cu gând să mai prindă ceva de mâncat.
- (9) a. Millions of shoppers are now completely owled out, confronted with **a parliament of owls** on every shelf in every shop.
 b. Milioane de cumpărători au acum prea multe bufnițe, după ce au ajuns să fie **bufnițe** pe toate rafturile din magazine.

As all the examples above indicate, compensation by merging converts the source text pseudo-partitives to single words or a shorter phrase in the target text. *The howls of routs of wolves and bands of coyotes* in (7a) is translated as *urlete de lupi și de coioți* (lit. 'howls of wolves and coyotes'), which is to say that the pseudo-partitives are reduced to two bare plural NPs ('wolves' and 'coyotes'). On the other hand, *the rumbling growls of a sleuth of bears or the bugles of a gang of elk* in the same sentence is shortened to *mormăituri adânci de urs sau elan* (lit. 'low grumbles of bear or elk'), which is even more interesting, as the nominals replacing the pseudo-partitives are countable nouns

recategorized into property-denoting uncountable expressions. Similarly, *a parliament of owls* in (9a) is shortened to the generic bare plural NP *bufnițe* ('owls'). In contrast, *the waddle of penguins* in (8a) is rendered by means of a semantically unrelated NP with connotative value, since it is the result of personification – the penguins are referred to as *semenii săi* ('his brethren'). Therefore, the example counts as an interesting case of compensation by merging leading to syntactic reduction, which operates simultaneously with compensation in kind, the latter resulting in lexical addition (Klaudy, 2003, Klaudy and Károly 2005, Klaudy 2009).

Alternating or operating concomitantly with the compensation mechanisms with reducing effects illustrated above, there are two other fairly frequent strategies selected to translate exotic (evaluating) collective nouns, this time in wordplay contexts – compensation in place and compensation by splitting. They are the logical choice when the punning nature of the context requires that the translator stay as faithful to the original structure as possible in order to capture the play on words. The syntactic structures that follow from their application are lengthened versions of the source text constructions, in other words, instances of lexical division and grammatical upgrading, which, according to Klaudy (2009), are two transfer operations that go under the umbrella of explicitation. What is more, the two types of compensation mechanisms often operate concurrently, as compensation in place entails the replication of a certain effect in the source text in a different place in the target text, while compensation by splitting consists in the use of several words in the target text to render the meaning of a specific word in the source text. In the present corpora, this means that the metaphorical dimension of the exotic collective noun is rendered in a different place in the Romanian version, generating syntactic structures of various lengths, as illustrated below:

- (10) a. **A mischief of mice** discussed how they might scam more cheese.
 b. **Un grup de șoricei năzdrăvani** discutau cum ar putea să mai șterpelească niște brânză.
 c. **O familie de șoareci se tot chitea** cum să șterpelească mai multă brânză.
- (11) a. Snoozing in the sun, I woke to a prickle on my cheek – it was **a prickle of hedgehogs** scampering all over my face.
 b. Picotind în lumina soarelui, m-a trezit o gherăneală ce am simțit-o pe obraz, de la **niște arici ce mă gherăneau** pe față.
- (12) a. Flamboyantly, **the flamboyance of flamingos** fluttered into the fairgrounds, flopping their feet and flipping their feathers.
 b. **Flamboiantă, flota de flamingo** se înfățișă fluturând **fălos** din aripi, fâlfâind din pene și foind din picioare.
- (13) a. **The stubborn stubbornness of rhinos** wouldn't move out of the way, so it crashed into **another crash of equally stubborn rhinos**.
 b. **De tauri ce sunt, încăpățânații rinoceri** ce stăteau de-a curmezișul în drum se izbiră de **alți tauri de rinoceri la fel de încăpățânați ca ei**.
 c. **Turma de rinoceri căpoși** nu voia să se dea la o parte **în ruptul capului**, așa că **dădură cap în cap** cu altă turmă de rinoceri la fel de căpoși.

The evaluating collective noun *a mischief of mice* in (10a) is rendered in Romanian by a different pseudo-partitive in which N₁ is the human-denoting quantifying collective noun *grup* ('group') and N₂ is the animal group nominal modified by the plural adjective *năzdrăvani* ('mischievous'), which captures the evaluating dimension of N₁ in the source text – *un grup de șoricei năzdrăvani* ('a group of mischievous mice'). Thus, compensation in place renders the metaphorical quality of N₁ elsewhere in the combination and compensation by splitting slightly lengthens the original pseudo-partitive by adding a modifier to N₂, all while compensation in kind transforms the evaluating collective nominal into a garden-variety quantifying nominal. An alternative solution is illustrated in (10c), in which the pseudo-partitive is rendered by the human collective noun *familie* ('family') in *o familie de șoareci* ('a family of mice'), while the evaluating dimension of *mischief* is transferred onto the predicate in the translated version – *se chitea* ('was scheming/concocting a plan') from *a se chiti* ('ponder', 'scheme'), which itself is a clever pun since it is also reminiscent of *a chițai* ('to squeak') – the onomatopoeic verb expressing the sound made by mice in Romanian.

In its turn, *a prickle of hedgehogs* in (11a) may be reduced by means of compensation by merging to the NP *niște arici* ('some hedgehogs'), but the evaluating feature of *prickle* is captured elsewhere in the structure, specifically, by the predicate *a gherăni* (a regional variant of *a ghera/a zgăria* ('to scratch')) in a modifying relative clause that takes *hedgehogs* as antecedent (≈ 'Dozing in the sunlight, I was awakened by a scratch I felt on my cheek, from some hedgehogs that were scratching my face.').

The most ingenious solution encountered in the corpus is the Romanian version of *the flamboyance of flamingos* in (12b), which succeeds not only in capturing the metaphorical quality of the evaluating collective noun in two places in the target text (as the predicative adjunct *flamboaiantă* ('flamboyant') and the manner adverbial *fălos* ('proudly'), but also in preserving the alliterative character of the entire sentence (with a bit of consonance thrown into play in the case of *înfățișă*), as demonstrated by the consonant sounds in bold (**F**lamboaiantă, **f**lota de **f**lamingo se **înfățișă** **f**lutarând **fă**los din aripi, **fă**lfăind din pene și **f**oind din picioare. (≈ 'Flamboyant, the fleet of flamingos turned up flapping their wings proudly, fluttering their feathers and fussing on their feet.').

Last, but not least, two equally creative solutions are provided for the *stubbornness/crash of rhinos* in wordplay context in (12a). The variant in (12b) is a complex mixture of compensation in place, compensation by splitting, compensation by merging, and communicative translation operating simultaneously. Specifically, *the stubbornness of rhinos* is reduced to the modified N₂ *încăpățânații rinoceri* ('the stubborn rhinos'), while being semantically reinforced by an additional Adverbial Clause of Reason playing upon the Romanian idiomatic collocation *a fi taur* (≈ 'to be like a bull', i.e., 'to be stubborn/bull-headed') (*De tauri ce sunt...* ('Bull-headed as they are')). In its turn, the second pseudo-partitive *another crash of (...) rhinos* is rendered as the single qualitative DP *alți tauri de rinoceri* (lit. 'other bulls of rhinos', i.e., 'other bull-headed rhinos') (cf. Tănase-Dogaru 2012). Although opposing strategies are at work in this case, those that expand the original construction dominate the picture, not only at the syntactic level, but also semantically, through lexical addition (Klaudy, 2003, Klaudy and Károly 2005, Klaudy 2009) via cultural translation, which makes this variant a

complex example of explicitation. The variant in (12c) is another masterly solution to the wordplay in the source text. While relying on compensation in place and compensation by splitting to render the evaluative quality of N₁ by means of a modifying adjective associated with N₂ (*the stubbornness of rhinos* is rendered as *turma de rinoceri căpoși* ('the herd of stubborn rhinos')), the translator also wittily applies communicative translation in other places in the sentence by making use of two idiomatic collocations (*în ruptul capului* (≈ 'for the life of them') and *a da cap în cap* ('to butt heads')) centered on the noun *cap* ('head'), which is also the root of the adjective that translates *stubborn* (*căpos* < *cap* ('head') + suff. *os*), and thus contributes to the syntactic lengthening of the original structure.

To conclude this section, the analysis of the corpus has revealed that, while literal translation is the go-to strategy for rendering common (quantifying) collective nouns denoting pluralities of animals in neutral contexts, the absence of exotic (evaluating) collective nouns from Romanian forces translators to resort to a variety of compensatory strategies with opposing effects. While compensation in kind and compensation by merging have reducing effects, both semantically and syntactically, compensation in place and compensation by splitting, as well as communicative translation, result in the expansion of the original constructions, again, at both syntactic and semantic levels.

4. A STATISTICAL BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

This section focuses on the statistical results of the analysis and assesses them against the three predictions put forth in Section 2, which took as their starting point the idea that the translation of English collective nouns for pluralities of animals into Romanian depends on the type of collective noun to be translated (common (quantifying) vs. exotic (evaluating)), and on their context of occurrence (neutral vs. wordplay). The three predictions are repeated below:

- (1) To render common (quantifying) collective nouns like *pack* and *flock* into Romanian, the respondents will resort to literal translation since these nouns have lexicalized equivalent forms readily retrievable from bilingual dictionaries.
- (2) Exotic (evaluating) collective nouns in neutral contexts will be frequently rendered into Romanian by means of compensation in kind as common collective nouns rather than as structures that preserve their metaphorical dimension, possibly because the context does not include elements that would trigger the need for a creative solution.
- (3) Motivated by a need to transfer the wordplay, translators will resort to compensation strategies like compensation in place and compensation by splitting in the case of exotic (evaluating) nouns in wordplay contexts, thus displaying a tendency towards explicitation. That is to say, evaluating collective nouns in wordplay contexts will force respondents to adopt creative solutions which will make exotic nouns explicit by adding lexical material.

Designed according to the two criteria selected as the starting point of the investigation (type of collective noun and type of context of occurrence), the three tables below shed light on the translation strategies chosen by the respondents and provide information which partially confirms the above-mentioned predictions.

Table 1

Common collective nouns in neutral contexts

Token	Literal translation	Compensation strategies	Error
Flock of sheep	turmă ('flock') (9), cârd ('flock') (1), ciurdă ('flock') (1)		
Herd of deer	turmă ('herd') (10)	1	
Pack of wolves	haită ('pack') (11)		
Column of ants	șir ('row') (4), roi ('swarm') (1), coloană ('column') (1), colonie ('colony') (3), mușuroi ('anthill'/ 'nest') (1)	1	
Colony of beavers	familie ('family') (3), colonie ('colony') (4), grup ('group') (3), turma ('herd') (1)		
Bands of coyotes	ceată ('band') (2), haită ('pack') (8)	1	
Gang of elk	turmă ('herd') (6), cireadă ('herd') (1), grup ('group') (1), ceată ('band') (1)	2	
Troop of monkeys	grup ('group') (5), șleahță ('band') (1), bandă ('band') (1), hoardă ('horde') (1), armată ('army') (1), ceată ('band') (1)	1	
Host of sparrows	stol ('flock') (9), gașcă ('gang') (1)	1	
Swarm of locusts	roi ('swarm') (7), stol ('flock') (2)	2	
Herd of llamas	turmă ('herd') (10), grup ('group') (1)		
A pack of primates	adunătură ('gathering') (2), adunare (assembly') (1), clan ('clan') (1), grup ('group') (3), haită ('pack') (1), ceată ('band') (1)	1	1
A group of baboons	grup ('group') (9), adunare ('assembly') (1)	1	
Total 13 tokens x 11 respondents = 143 contexts	131/143 91.60%	11/143 7.69%	1/143 0.69%

As indicated in Table 1, the corpus includes 13 tokens which illustrate garden-variety collective nouns in neutral contexts, out of which *herd*, *flock*, *pack* and *swarm* are quantifying collectives specialized in denoting types of species of animals, and the rest (*column*, *colony*, *band*, *gang*, *troop*, *host*, and *group*) are all collective nouns belonging to the human realm whose meanings are extended to denote pluralities of

animals. The statistical data in Table 1 clearly confirms the prediction according to which translators typically select literal translation as their go-to strategy as far as quantifying collective nouns are concerned, since in overwhelming proportion (in 91.60% of the cases), these lexical items are translated by means of their corresponding lexicalized forms in Romanian, which are easily retrievable from bilingual dictionaries. Notice that, similarly to English, the Romanian collectives selected as solutions to the original pseudo-partitives are a mixture of animal-denoting and human-denoting collectives. For instance, *turmă* and the more dialectal *cârd* and *ciurdă* are animal-denoting synonymous terms that all translate *flock*, while the human-denoting *troop* (with army reference) in *a troop of monkeys* is likewise rendered by means of collectives with human (army) reference – *șleahtă*, *bandă*, *ceată* (‘troop’), *grup* (‘group’), *hoardă* (‘horde’), and *armată* (‘army’). In other cases, the respondents’ solutions vary between specialized nouns and nominals with human reference, as is the case of *herd* in *a herd of llamas*, translated both as the specialized *turmă* (‘flock’) and the more general, human-denoting *grup* (‘group’), or the case of *host* in *a host of sparrows*, which, likewise, is rendered as both *stol* (‘flock’) and *gașcă* (‘band’/‘gang’).

In its turn, Table 2 below confirms the prediction that translators will often opt for compensation in kind when rendering exotic (evaluating) collective nouns occurring in neutral contexts, and, as a result, fail to transfer the metaphorical quality of the original nominal. Compensation in kind is, indeed, the preferred strategy in such cases, with a considerably high rate of selection of 82.64%.

Table 2

Species-specific exotic collective nouns in neutral contexts

Token	Literal translation	Compensation in kind	Compensation by merging	Compensation in place	Compensation by splitting	Error
Pod of dolphins		11				
Parliament of owls		6	4			1
Murder of crows		11				
Gaggle of geese		11				
Pride of lions		10	1			
Rout of wolves		10	1			
Sleuth of bears		8	3			
Blessing of unicorns		10			1	
Plague of locusts	2	4	1	2	1	1
Leap of leopards		10	1			

Token	Literal translation	Compensation in kind	Compensation by merging	Compensation in place	Compensation by splitting	Error
Muster of peacocks	1	9			1	
Total 11 tokens x 11 respondents = 121 contexts	3/121 2.47%	100/121 82.64%	11/121 9.09%	2/121 1.65%	3/121 2.47%	2/121 1.65%

One observation is in order here: although compensation in kind generally entails a two-way transfer of meaning from denotative to connotative and vice versa, all the examples identified in Table 2 are limited to a shift strictly from connotative to denotative meanings in the sense that the Romanian terms are all quantifying collective nouns with animal or human reference. For instance, *gaggle* and *pride* in *a gaggle of geese* and *a pride of lions* are translated as both animal- and human-denoting common collective nominals (*gaggle* as *cârd/stol* ('flock') but also *grup* ('group'), and *pride* as *haită* ('pack'), *turmă* ('herd'), but also *clan* ('clan'), *grup* ('group'), *familie* ('family'), and *ceată* ('band'/'pack')). This means that they are all instances of lexical generalization, hence semantic implicitation (see Klaudy 2003, Klaudy and Károly 2005, Klaudy 2009). This is to be expected given that the Romanian lexicon does not include any exotic (evaluating) collective nouns, neither does it include the possibility of deriving them through conflation or "mirroring", as proposed by Tănase-Dogaru (2022b: 82). Even so, the reason why the translators tend to follow the easier path of selecting a common collective noun, instead of attempting to preserve the special semantics of these nominals by means of creative solutions might be related to the nature of the context of occurrence, which does not include elements that would trigger the need for creativity and innovation.

In addition, although compensation by merging, which, as already discussed, results in the omission of the exotic collective noun, ranks a distant second with a 9.09% frequency rate, it nevertheless contributes to the same overall tendency towards implicitation, this time of a syntactic nature, since compensation by merging eliminates the N₁ collective and preserves the N₂ nominal of the original pseudo-partitive. For instance, *the rumbling growls of a sleuth of bears* is translated as *mormăiturile urșilor* ('the growls of the bears') or *mormăituri de urs* (lit. 'growls of bear', i.e., 'bear growls').

Last but not least, Table 3 below includes a number of surprising findings that practically refute the prediction made with respect to the translation of evaluating collective nouns in wordplay situations. Remember that the assumption was that the punning nature of the context would force the translators to search for creative solutions in order to preserve the wordplay. Consequently, it was predicted that, in the absence of equivalent lexical items, they would resort to compensatory strategies like compensation by splitting and compensation in place, and these, in turn, would generate expanded syntactic structures that would count as evidence for an overall tendency towards explicitation (see Blum-Kulka 1986, Klaudy and Karoly 2005, Klaudy 2003, 2009). However, a brief glance at the results below indicates that this is not the case at all.

Table 3

Species-specific exotic nouns in wordplay contexts

Token	Literal translation	Compensation in kind	Compensation by merging	Compensation in place/by splitting	Cultural translation	Free translation	Error
Scurry of squirrels		11					
Mischief of mice		7		4			
Flamboyance of flamingos		7		4			
Whoop of gorillas	1	4		3			3
Journey of giraffes		2		6			3
Tower of giraffes	5	3		3			
Swarm of butterflies					9	2	
Flutter of butterflies					10	1	
Waddle of penguins		5	4	2			
Blessing of unicorns	1	8	1	1			
Congress of baboons	4	7					
Prickle of hedgehogs		8		3			
Stubbornness of rhinos				11			
Crash of rhinos		9		2			
Total 14 tokens x 11 respondents = 154 contexts	11/154 7.14%	71/154 46.10%	5/154 3.24%	39/154 25.32%	19/154 12.33%	3/154 1.94%	6/154 3.89%

In particular, while compensation by splitting and compensation in place operating concurrently display a rate of occurrence of 25.32%, the most frequently selected strategy when translating exotic collective nouns in wordplay contexts continues to be compensation in kind, with a rate of occurrence of 46.10%, which covers only pure

instances of its application and disregards those cases in which compensation in kind overlaps with the other compensatory mechanisms. What this seems to suggest is that the translators either find themselves in the impossibility of providing adequate solutions to wordplay situations for whatever reasons or they do not deem the jocular quality of the various contexts sufficiently relevant to warrant the effort. In this respect, the findings in Table 3 actually seem to point to the existence of variation in the attitude translators have regarding different wordplay contexts. For instance, all of them provide innovative and significantly diverse solutions by means of compensation by splitting and compensation in place for the *stubbornness of rhinos* example (*The stubborn stubbornness of rhinos wouldn't move out of the way, so it crashed into another crash of equally stubborn rhinos.*), most likely because 'stubbornness' clearly plays an important role in the economy of the sentence. In contrast, none of them appear to find crucially relevant the alliterative quality of the *scurry of squirrels* example and are content to use compensation in kind to render the pseudo-partitive as one of several common (quantifying) collective nouns (*hoardă* ('horde'), *grup* ('group') *alai* ('procession'), *ceată* ('pack'), *colonie* ('colony'), *armată* ('army'), *cuib* ('nest'), *populație* ('population')) (*First, just the one squirrel scurried onto our blanket. But then an entire scurry of squirrels scurried up to us. We never got to finish our picnic because we ran away.*). What is more, even if one were to add the frequency rates for cultural translation and free translation, the other two mechanisms that generate expanded syntactic structures, the overall percentage would still amount only to 39.59%, hence, still lower than that of compensation in kind.

Therefore, in the absence of more evidence in the form of a more generous corpus, it can be concluded at this point that the evidence resulting from the analysis of the present corpus does not support the status of explicitation as a universal translation tool (cf. Blum-Kulka 1986, Klaudy and Karoly 2005, Klaudy 2003, 2009). Instead, it appears that the translation of exotic (evaluating) collective nouns is rather a matter of obligatory semantic implicitation (whether it takes the form of lexical generalization or lexical omission), even in those cases when compensation in kind or compensation by merging overlap with compensation by splitting and compensation in place, as illustrated in the previous section.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The present article has explored the translation strategies selected to render common (quantifying) and exotic (evaluating) collective nouns from English into Romanian. It has shown that their translation is influenced by their typological classification and the kind of context in which they are used. Accordingly, three situations have been identified and discussed. In particular, it has been argued that, due to the presence of equivalent forms in Romanian, common collective nouns are mainly rendered by means of literal translation, using the corresponding lexical items retrievable from bilingual dictionaries. Exotic collective nouns in neutral contexts are, more often than not, translated via compensation in kind as common collective nouns, which means that the semantics of the nominal are downgraded from the specific to the general. In their turn, exotic collective nouns in wordplay contexts are translated via a combination of compensatory techniques with opposing effects.

Compensation by splitting, compensation in place, cultural translation, and free translation lead to the lengthening of the source text constructions, whereas compensation in kind and compensation by merging cause their semantic/syntactic reduction. Of the two sets of operations, it appears that compensation in kind dominates the picture, whether it is selected exclusively or in combination with other compensatory techniques. Consequently, the general conclusion is that in the translation of collective nouns for groups of animals from English into Romanian semantic implication is the norm, while syntactic explicitation remains a choice translators appear less inclined to make.

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