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Newly coined words in translation: challenges and ways of rendering

Abstract. *This research focuses on lexical errors made by the students majoring in translation and international relations in translation of non-equivalent words, namely neologisms. This study aims to gain a better understanding of the strategies that translators use when dealing with the problems and challenges that the linguistic phenomenon called lexical gaps present. Comprehension of such specific cultural units is conditioned by peculiarities of language and culture in which the units arose. When translating neologisms, in the absence of an equivalent in Ukrainian language, one can refer to four main translation techniques: transcription, transliteration, tracing, and descriptive translation.*

Keywords: *lexical error, lexical gap, neologism, translation strategies.*

Language of a particular nation reflects its culture, history, traditions, lifestyle. According to Newmark, culture is “the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression” [11]. Since language and culture are closely connected and since language is so important in communication then translation is an essential element in communication, exchanging cultures, and knowledge [2]. Machine translation, dictionaries, textbooks help overcome difficulties in some aspects of the translation. However, despite this, it can be difficult to find a suitable translation equivalent. In the era of informatization and globalization, new words appear very fast. Many dictionaries do not include them, so translators must find their own solutions for their translation.

Linguists consider the word as one of the most important units forming a language [3]. However, it is appropriate to consider those words that are not included in the dictionary, the so-called “non-existent” words [3]. In linguistics such units are called *lexical gaps*. Vocabulary of all languages, including English and Ukrainian, demonstrates the presence of language gaps. There is a unanimous agreement between linguists and translation specialists of what a lexical gap means. Trask [14] defines lexical gap as “the absence of a hypothetical word which would seem to fit naturally into the pattern exhibited by existing words”. The pioneer in field semantics, Lehrer [7, p. 95] states that the term “lexical gap” is multi ambiguous as it has been applied to all sorts of instances where a word, in one way or another, is missing. A lexical gap means the absence of lexicalization of a certain concept. A concept is lexicalized when a language has a lexical item to express the concept. The lexical item could be a single word, a complex word, an idiom or a collocation.

The existence of a lexical gap will be noted only when a concept lacks lexicalization and is expressed by a free word combination or any other transformation (e.g. omission, translation different parts of speech, etc.). Culture-specific lexical units have been the object of investigation of many scholars. Lyons [8, pp. 301-305] addresses lexical gaps from a structuralist perspective, as slots in a patterning. Lexical gaps are defined as empty linguistic symbols [16], as empty spaces in a lexeme cluster [5], as a vacuum in the vocabulary structure of a language [12].

In translation studies, culture gaps, i.e., items of language, text or culture, are partially or completely unintelligible in another culture [9]. They are subdivided into lexical, grammatical, functional, relative or absolute, and do not have equivalents in other languages or cultures [10; 6], reflecting such spheres of life as ecology, material and social culture, organizations, traditions, customs, activities, procedures, concepts, habits and gestures [11; 13].

In trying to replace a message in one language with a message in another language, the translator loses some meaning, usually associative, either because she/he belongs to a different culture or because the receptor's background knowledge does not coincide with that of the source text receptor (cultural overlap). Thus, the transfer can never be total [1].

There may be 'referential' loss and the translator's language can only be approximate when describing an ethnic situation characterized by specifically local features: Americans, accustomed to Chinese cuisine and traditions, associate fortune cookie, served as a dessert in Chinese restaurants, with a thin folded wafer containing a prediction or proverb printed on a slip of paper. There are no such realia in Ukrainian, so the translation can be only approximate, descriptive or analogous.

The existing studies on lexical gaps adopting a cross-cultural perspective concentrate too much on the exploration into the lack of equivalents in the process of translating from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL). It is a very common fact that a term expressing a particular idea or concept in the SL may not have a corresponding equivalent in the TL. Every translation practitioner is well aware of this fact. In this circumstance, the translator has to resort to free word combinations or translation to give full expression to the idea or concept, which is expressed by one word in the SL. For example, the words in Ukrainian: *бріль, борщ, вареники, кобза, трембіта* do not have equivalents in English. Therefore, when translating the words from Ukrainian into English, we have to use a phrase to do justice to their meaning. For example, укр. трембіта – an ancient trumpet of the Hutsuls, Eng. barber – укр. пара над водою в морозний день.

Future International Relations experts are expected to possess a well-developed translator's competence concerning professionally oriented texts. However, the ways to develop that competence seem to have been insufficiently studied which accounts for the need of further research into the problem.

Among the most pressing issues within the said problem is the question of strategies the students select while translating in the classroom and during their independent work, as well as the related problem of the factors affecting their choice.

The use of neologisms, borrowings, idioms, phrasal verbs, polysemantic words, proverbs and some culturally specific items is what makes translation across cultures more difficult. A translator's success depends on understanding those items through understanding the culture of the source text. The more translators acknowledge and recognize cultural differences, the better their translation will be. The translation procedures that are available in cases of lexical gaps, include the following: adaptation, borrowing, calque, compensation, paraphrase, translator's note, register, etc.

This study aims to gain a better understanding of the strategies that translators use when dealing with the problems and challenges that the linguistic phenomenon called lexical gaps present. Comprehension of such specific cultural units is conditioned by peculiarities of language and culture in which the units arose. These gaps can be noticed when two languages with two social and cultural differences are being compared.

Equivalent-lacking words include *neologisms*, i.e. newly coined forms. *Neologisms* are described as "a newly coined lexical units or existing lexical units that acquire new sense" [11, p. 140]. They can be subdivided into different lexical groups, which are connected with the political sphere, people's sexual orientations and sexual discrimination, the spheres of the Internet, technology, language and linguistics, racism and discrimination against different nations, psychology, human feelings and behaviour, ecology and biology, work and work-places, music, news broadcasting and newspapers. From a translation perspective, neologisms can be divided into 'primary neologism' formed when a new term is created for a new concept in a certain language and 'translated neologisms' formed when a new expression in another language is created for an existing term. In language learning and translation, neologisms pose several problems for learners and translators. A new use of an old word or expression is particularly difficult. Other problem arises from shifts in parts of speech, which create new grammatical usages and require attention to structure. Euphemisms created to suit new social and political preferences can be misleading.

Training translation students to identify, comprehend and translate neologisms is of ultimate importance due to their widespread use. Neologisms occur very often in mass media for their ability and power of information condensation and their expressive effect. Translators have to render them in the target language by using quite complicated reasoning, that involves many factors, such as text type, creative traditions, literary norms etc.

The students tend to translate words literally rather than conceptually and give a single-word equivalent rather than a borrowing, periphrasis or explanatory equivalent. Students have difficulties with translating English neologism due to unfamiliarity with neologisms, lack of background knowledge, inability to understand the meaning of neologisms from the context. That's why the objective of this research is to provide students with practical solutions how to render neologisms in translation.

When translating neologisms, in the absence of an equivalent in Ukrainian language, one can refer to four main translation techniques: transcription, transliteration, tracing and descriptive translation.

Each of them should be considered separately.

Transcription is recording oral speech using a special system of signs. That is, when transcribed, the pronunciation is recorded by textual means of speech (e.g. “зумбі” from engl. “zombie”, “Рашизм” – “Ruscism”: ‘Ruscism’ sounds like “fascism,” but with an “r” sound instead of an “f” at the beginning; it means, roughly, “Russian fascism”).

Transliteration is the transfer of words or whole text written in letters of one alphabet, letters of another graphic system (e.g. “ковідіот” from engl. “covidiot”, “короніал” from engl. “coronial”, “Путлернет” – “Putlernet”: A portmanteau word joining three words: Putin+Hitler+internet to describe the sovereign internet Russia is attempting to implement as an alternative to the global internet, and in general the Russian segment of the internet).

There are also examples of borrowing words by transliteration with transcription elements and vice versa.

Translating by practical transcribing when international morphemes and lexemes are adopted in all languages according to the historically established traditions of their own is also common, (these are neo-nouns, neo-verbs, neo-adjectives formed by analogy with those already existing in the Ukrainian language or English language: e.g. “карантинка”, “зумити”, “ковідний”, “кадирити” – “to Kadyrovize”: to engage in wishful thinking; “забайрактарити” – “to bayraktar something”: to destroy the military equipment of the enemy through drones; “затридни” – “inthreedays” (in one word): In reference to Moscow’s statements that it “would take Kyiv in three days” at the very beginning of its invasion in February 2022. Now it is used to describe unrealistic plans, or ideas that might some people might strongly believe in, while others believe those plans will come to nothing; “кімити” – “to Kimize”: to maintain a high level of optimism, regardless of the situation. It refers to the optimism displayed by Mykolayiv region governor Vitalii Kim, who is of mixed Korean-Ukrainian heritage; “Шойгувати” – “to Shoigunize”: or pretend everything is fine, in reference to Russia’s Defense Minister Shoigu who repeatedly made claims about Russian victories in the war; “Макронити” — “to Macronize”: to pretend to be very preoccupied about a particular situation and publicly display signs of concern, and yet do nothing about said situation. This is in reference to French President Emmanuel Macron and his statements about the situation in Ukraine.).

Another method – descriptive translation – is the most commonly used method of translating non-equivalent vocabulary. The advantage of descriptive translation is the ability to translate any non-equivalent lexical items using a detailed description.

“Body mullet” – ‘комплект одягу, який використовуються виключно для Zoom-конференції. Зазвичай це щось гарне зверху, а нижче поясу – білизна або навіть її відсутність’.

“бавовна” – ‘massive explosions’.

One more way of rendering neologisms is translation proper (e.g. “на відстані доміно” from engl. “domino distancing”, “якийсьіз-днів, жоденізднів, чийдень, колидень, розмитийдень, чомудень, немаєріз-ниціякийдень” from engl. “Someday, Noneday, Whoseday?, Whensday?, Blursday, Whyday?, Doesn’tmatterday”; “валяти Шольца” – “to play Scholz”: This refers to the German chancellor Olaf Scholz, and is used to describe a person who constantly promises to deliver but fails to do so, given that Scholz promised to provide Ukraine with German weapons but has dragged his feet in delivering them; “війна владіміра проти Володимира” – “Vladimir-versus-Volodymyr war”: This is widely used in English-speaking twitter community to underline the deep difference between the respective countries. The phrase has become viral since it’s similar to #Kyiv_not_Kiev campaign, where contrast between russian and Ukrainian ways of spelling the same toponym is obvious.).

The main problem of neologisms’ translation is that neologisms are terms, words or phrases that are only in the process of entering the common language, they are usually not codified, so the translation can be complicated. For the correct translation of neologisms, the translator must understand the context and understanding of the realities of the language environment from which the neologism is translated. However, the most important thing is to understand the meaning of neologism. In addition to the accuracy of the content of the translation, it is important to convey the emotional colour of the neologism and the text as a whole. It is obvious that translation of neologisms poses a number of difficulties for the translator due to its metaphorical nature and connotational shades.

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