V. G. Nikonova
Kyiv National Linguistic University, Ukraine
e-mail: vera1854@ua.fm
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0324-4217

CONCEPTUAL EQUIVALENCE OF COLLOQUIALISMS IN CROSS-CULTURAL CINEMATIC DISCOURSE AS A TRANSLATION CHALLENGE

Abstract

The article considers the specifics of colloquialisms functioning in English cinematic discourse that defines the choice of translation strategies for representing them in Ukrainian films in order to preserve the conceptual equivalence in cross-cultural cinematic discourse. The research methodology, which incorporates general scientific methods of analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction as well as linguistic methods of contextual, lexical, stylistic and pragmatic analyses, resulted in determining the theoretical background of the study, selecting illustrative research material and suggesting the country-specific meaning of colloquialisms used in English cinematic discourse. Colloquialisms, understood as informal words or expressions that are more suitable for use in speech than in writing, contain a lot of dialectal words, slang, jargon and obscene words, which are clearly distinct from each other. Colloquialisms, formed by compounding (44%), shortening (40%), rhyming (10%) and affixation (6%), perform two main functions: emotion-expressive and image-creating. The methods of translation analysis helped define the specifics of reproduction of colloquialisms in cross-cultural English-Ukrainian cinematic discourse. Depending upon semantic and communicative appropriateness of colloquialisms in cross-cultural cinematic discourse, there have been distinguished three levels of their conceptual equivalence graded as the upper degree (48%), the medium degree (48%) and the initial degree (14%).

Keywords: conceptual equivalence in translation, film translation, cross-cultural cinematic discourse, colloquialism, slang, jargon, obscene words, translation transformations.

Анотація

У статті розглянуто особливості розмовної лексики, що функціонує в англійському кінематографічному дискурсі і впливає на вибір стратегії їх відтворення в українських кіноперекладах із метою збереження їхньої концептуальної еквівалентності в крос-культурному кінематографічному дискурсі. Методологія дослідження, яка включає загальнонаукові методи аналізу та синтезу, індукції та дедукції, а також лінгвістичні методи контекстного, семантичного, стилістичного та прагматичного аналізів, сприяла визначенню теоретичного підґрунтя дослідження, відбору ілюстративного матеріалу для аналізу та визначенню національно специфічної семантики розмовної лексики, що використовується в англійському кінематографічному дискурсі. Розмовна лексика, що розуміється як неформальні слова або вислови, які більше доречні для використання в усному мовленні, ніж у писемному, містять багато діалектних і сленгових слів, жаргонізмів і вульгаризмів, які чітко відрізняються один від одного. Створена шляхом словоскладання (44%), скорочення (40%), римування (10%) та афіксації (6%), розмовна лексика виконує дві основні функції: емоційно-експресивну та образоутворювальну. Методи перекладацького аналізу допомогли визначити особливості відтворення розмовної лексики в крос-культурному англо-українському перекладі кінематографічного тексту. Залежно від семантичної та комунікативної доцільності розмовної лексики в крос-культурному кінематичному дискурсі виділено три рівні їхньої концептуальної еквівалентності: верхній рівень (48%), середній рівень (48%) та початковий рівень (14%).

Ключові слова: концептуальна еквівалентність у перекладі, кінопереклад, крос-культурний кінематографічний дискурс, розмовна лексика, сленг, жаргон, нецензурні слова, перекладацькі трансформації.

1. Introduction

The social processes which take place in Modern Ukrainian society require a new approach to solving the problem of appropriate cultural adaptation of country-specific issues in cross-cultural English-Ukrainian cinematic discourse. Cinema is a specific mechanism that participates in the formation of a new type of relations in society. Film as a special audio-visual art of mass media establishes a multi-code type of communication. The influence of cinema on social reality is by no means unambiguous: it is a means of manipulating public opinion and human behaviour. Cinema language and its practical implementation – cinematic discourse – are the most important categories of cinema art, the features of which should be well-known for a professional film translator. The research in the field of film translation and cinematic discourse rendering is an important and urgent task which aims at achieving adequate, culturally appropriate strategies of translation, which help to solve many practical problems and accelerate the exchange of information in the field of cinema.

1.1 Literature review

The number of research papers related to film translation is extremely limited, even in Western European linguistics. Investigations carried out by Adrian (2014), Alvarez-Pereyre (2011), Androutsopoulos (2012), Cintas and Anderman (2009), Cordingley and Frigau Manning (2016), Cornu and O'Sullivan (2016), Danesi (2015), Higes-Andino (2014), Gambier and Gottlieb (2001), Jaeckle (2013), Kozloff (2000), Kuhn and Schmidt (2014), Pérez-González (2014), Zanotti and Ranzato (2019), and others are of great importance in the field of film translation research. A review of theoretical studies of film translation has proved that translators usually deal with such challenges as: difficulties in translating movie titles, film dialogue as a unit of translation, specifics of translation of movies with subtitles, psycholinguistic features of film and video translation, etc. In Ukraine, despite the existence and constant appearance of new dubbing studios and, respectively, successful translations of films, theoretical investigations of film translation are very scarce. Great attention is given to film translation courses at specialized universities (Isayenko, 2014; Matasov, 2009 and others.), to the problem of pragmatic adaptation of the text of feature films (Demetska, 2010), especially, to difficulties in choosing strategies to transfer realia, non-equivalent vocabulary, intertextual elements, means of creating a humorous effect, dialectal words, jargon, slang and other types of colloquial lexicon (Danylenko, 2013; Konkulyovsky, 2012; Zaretskaya, 2010 and others).

The use of colloquial vocabulary in the language of cinematic discourse is not a new phenomenon in both English and Ukrainian film texts. This is due to the fact that the lexical system of the language of cinema is the most dynamic system of modern languages because cinematic discourse is one of the means of disseminating socially significant information which contributes to the formation of the linguistic taste of society. Colloquialisms are widely used in cinematic discourse in order to add brightness, clarity and emotionally expressive colouring to characters' speech. At the same time, the problem of finding appropriate ways of adequate translation of colloquialisms in English cinematic discourse, not somewhat mechanical act of linguistic substitution, but rather a more complex negotiation between two cultures, remains unresolved. The evolvement of methods and approaches to the analysis of translating colloquialisms in English cinematic discourse.

1.2 Aim, objectives and material

The **aim** of the paper is to reveal how the specifics of colloquialisms functioning in English cinematic discourse influences the choice of the translation strategy for representing them in Ukrainian films in order to retain their conceptual equivalence in cross-cultural cinematic discourse. The following **objectives** have been specified: to define the concept of "colloquialism" in modern linguistics and consider the main types of colloquialisms; to systematize the theoretical views of linguists on the specifics of colloquialisms functioning in English cinematic discourse; to analyze the cues of their reproduction in cross-cultural English-Ukrainian cinematic discourse as a translation challenge. The **material** of the research has been selected by random sampling from the scripts of English films: "Breaking Bad", "Spy", "Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels", "Grey's Anatomy" and others.

2. Research methodology

Research methodology incorporates the methods of analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction in determining the theoretical background of the study; contextual analysis in selecting illustrative research material; lexical, stylistic and pragmatic analyses as tools for suggesting the country-specific meaning of colloquial words and phrases in English cinematic discourse, as well as methods of translation analysis.

3. Results and discussion

Language as a dynamic system constantly responds to changing conditions of its existence and functioning, adapts to the environment in which it operates. Being greatly influenced by social dialects at the beginning of the XXI century, literary English contains a lot of subcultural formations, each of which having its own specific vocabulary (slang, jargon, argot, etc.). The role of colloquialisms being widely used nowadays not only in speech of various segments of the population, but also in the language of media (newspapers, magazines, television, on stage and in advertising), is steadily growing. Correspondingly, theoretical studies of British (McEnery, 2006; Partridge, 2007 and others) and Ukrainian (Bondarenko, 2007; Kleputs, 2009; Masko, 2003 and others) linguists deal with various aspects of colloquialisms.

The word "colloquialism", which comes from the Latin *colloquium* meaning a 'conference' or 'conversation', is used to denote "an informal word or expression that is more suitable for the use in speech than in writing" (CALDT). As a literary device, a colloquialism refers to informal or everyday language spoken by people in a certain geographic area or by people of a certain dialect. When used in fiction, colloquialisms create a certain effect or flesh out a literary character. Colloquialisms are characterized by a wide usage of standard (literary colloquial) and non-standard (low colloquial) lexicon. Though containing a lot of dialectal words, slang, jargon, and obscene words, colloquialisms are clearly distinct from each of them. Opposite to slang, which is used only by specific social or socio-economic groups, or to jargon, which is associated with specific occupations, activities or area of interest, colloquialisms are well known to and understood by most native speakers of a language.

While scrutinizing colloquialisms used in English films under study according to their stylistic characteristics, we distinguished several groups of lexicon varying from literary colloquial and slang words to non-standard and obscene. For instance, in the sentence *WADE: Okay, let's pro-con this superhero thing. let's pro-con this superhero thing. Pro: They pull down a gaggle of ass, local dry-cleaning discounts, lucrative film deals both origin stories and larger ensemble team movies. Con: they're lame-ass teacher's pets!* (DP) a literary colloquial word is *pro-con*, which is the shortening of *pros and cons* meaning "advantages and disadvantages, which you consider carefully so that you can make a sensible decision" (CALDT); obscene words and phrases are *a gaggle of ass* and *lame-ass*. Obscene words are prevailing, e.g., *Not be a slutty, whore-y shit-brain!* (WC): *shit-brain* is a compound word with two roots *shit* and *brain* which means 'a stupid person' (CALDT). Other examples: *You're real tight fucker.* (S); *Oh, you bastard!* (S).

The tendency to rationalize language and economize language effort is directly reflected in the wide use of shortenings that become the most characteristic feature of colloquial language, e.g., *Yeah. Listen, I have to kinda sneak out for a while. Sheldon: All right, goodbye.* (BBT): *kinda* is the shortening of *kind of. We were not gonna last long on potato chips.* (DA): *gonna* is the shortening of *going to. I gotta go.* (DA): *gotta* is the shortening of *got to* and has the meaning of '*have to*'.

To make colloquial speech more expressive and colourful, rhyming slang is widely used in English films under study, especially in "Madagascar" (MDG), e.g., *Use your loaf and think next time* (*loaf of bread* is rhyming slang for *head*); *Did you half-inch that car?* (*half-inch* for *pinch*, meaning 'steal'); *Let's have a butchers at that magazine.* (*butcher's hook* for *look*); *I haven't heard a dicky bird about it.* (*dickie bird* for *word*).

The analysis of morphological structure of colloquialisms in English films under study has shown a great predominance of such word formation processes as compounding (44%) and shortening (40%) over rhyming (10%) and affixation (6%).

After systematizing the theoretical views of linguists on the specifics of colloquialisms functioning in English cinematic discourse, we could distinguish two main functions which colloquialisms perform in English films under analysis.

1. Emotion-expressive function, which is performed by colloquialisms (in 83% cases) that convey a subjective attitude to reality, add a humorous colouring and create a special style of communication. Performing this function, a lot of exclamations render emotional content in the communication process but they are often ambiguous. One and the same exclamation, e.g., *Oh my God!* may express a wide range of different, completely opposite emotions (great surprise, confusion, ridicule, anticipation, disgust, etc.). In this regard, context, intonation, gestures of the speaker, etc. help to recognize their semantics. Exclamations with non-standard obscene lexicon convey strong emotional state of the speaker, his/her anger, hatred or irritation, as, e.g., in the film "Spy" (SP): *How the fuck do I get to Italy? How the fuck did this twat find out our fucking names? Don't, you son of a bitch!* The use of such lexicon indicates a fairly low social status of the speaker.

2. Image-creating function, which is performed by colloquialisms (in 17% cases) that create metaphoric or metonymic images. It is with the help of metaphors that the brightest and the most vivid images with a mocking, ironic or parodic connotations appear, e.g., *What is burger over there… [laughing]. – This peach felt asleep on the beach. Interesting … is she satisfied with tan?* (GA) The direct meaning of a *burger* is "a grilled round piece of meat" (CALDT). For medical staff in cinematic discourse, this word has a different meaning, – 'a patient who received a sunburn'. *Doc, is she feeling pain?! – No, we blessed her with antibiotics and now she is good.* (GA). The literal meaning of the verb *to bless* is 'a process of blessing' (to ask God to help or protect someone or something, or to make it holy). In the context of the film, the expression *to bless somebody with antibiotics* acquires a metaphorical meaning 'to pump the patient with antibiotics thus relieving the patient's pain'.

While analyzing the specifics of reproduction of colloquialisms in cross-cultural English-Ukrainian cinematic discourse, it is worth paying attention to the fact that besides discrepancies between English and Ukrainian language systems (synthetic Ukrainian and analytical English) and differences in speech traditions (the use of lexical units and grammatical forms), the two languages are different in reflecting culture specific national features (Yakymchuk, 2007). Therefore, a film translation cannot copy the original; it can only transmit the information contained in the original text with the great possible fullness, in strict compliance with the rules of the target language. However, very often, this task is rather difficult to perform because there may be a "conflict of form and content". For example, the title of the film "Dead in the Water" was translated into Ukrainian as 'Покійник у воді' and 'Смерть у воді'. However, it should be noted that in English there is a slang expression *dead in the water*, which means 'in a state of deep crisis'.

Taking into consideration a clear expressive and emotional character of colloquialisms as units of communication, it is necessary to pay a special attention to retaining their conceptual equivalence in cross-cultural cinematic discourse. "Conceptual equivalence" is understood as a kind of translation adequacy of different degrees depending upon semantic and communicative appropriateness of colloquialisms in cross-cultural cinematic discourse.

The **upper degree** of conceptual equivalence is the complete translation adequacy of colloquialisms, which presupposes not only a full denotative and connotative equivalence but also functional appropriateness, i.e. the compliance with national specifics, mental and cultural stereotypes of behaviour of the target language speakers in cross-cultural cinematic discourse. The highest degree of conceptual equivalence can be achieved by the following translation transformations.

– ***Modulation*** (22% of all cases), which is a lexical and semantic type of transformation that presupposes replacement of the Ukrainian dictionary equivalent for a contextual one that is logically related to the source word and is in compliance with the norms of the Ukrainian language, e.g., *Marry-fucking-Poppings London!* (S) – 'Мері Попінс, чорт забирай'. The literary meaning of *I'm slow* is *'я повільний'*: *Now I'm slow – I'll grant you that, but I'm probably a lot brighter than folks think.* (FG). To make the utterance clear and appropriate to the communicative situation it is translated as 'тугодум': 'Я – тугодум, навіть не сумнівайтесь, однак я розумніший, ніж інші вважають'. The literary meaning of *to hassle* 'турбувати, набридати, докучати, мучити' in the sentence *She's hassling me.* (BBT) was replaced with its colloquial equivalent 'Вона весь час діставала мене' to make the utterance sound in complete compliance with cultural stereotypes of behaviour of the target language speakers. In cases with modulation, to reproduce the atmosphere of hostility, obscene words are very often used in the translation of colloquialisms, e.g., *cut the crap* which means 'досить молоти дурниці' in *...you know, cut the crap and keep the methylamine coming.* (BB) is rendered by using swear words: '… ну знаєш, кінчай херню мутити і продовжуй поставляти метиламін'.

– ***Generalisation*** (15% of all cases), which is a lexical and semantic type of transformation that presupposes substitution of source language words (phrases) with a specific (narrow) meaning by target language words (phrases) with a more generic meaning, e.g., *Look mean now, hairy fucker.* (LSB) – 'Зроби таку люту пику, волохатий виродку'. Translating the vulgar abusive word *fucker* by way of generalizing the meaning as 'виродок' retains the stylistic and evaluative connotation of the original word and is in complete compliance with cultural stereotypes of behaviour of the target language speakers.

– ***Loan translation*** (11% of all cases), which is the transcoding of the English colloquialism by using a full Ukrainian dictionary equivalent, e.g., *The other people that play on the ping-pong team are real nice fellers what come from ever walk of life, an they is specially nice to me.* (FG) – 'У нашій команді з пінг-понгу зібралися найрізноманітніші хлопці, і до мене вони ставилися дуже добре'.

The **medium degree** of conceptual equivalence is the second degree of translation adequacy of colloquialisms which presupposes the obligatory transfer not only of a denotative component of meaning, but also some of the components of connotation – emotive, evaluative, expressive and stylistic (or at least one of them) – in the semantic structure of colloquialisms, especially, non-standard and obscene lexicon. There may be the following ways to preserve original connotations in Ukrainian translation.

– ***Concretization + grammatical replacement*** (16% of all cases), which is a lexical, semantic and grammatical type of transformation, e.g., *Coach an the goons done take me back to the bathroom an rip open my pants an I done peed a bucket!* (FG) – 'Тренер та головорізи відвели мене до туалету, розірвали блискавку на штанях та я, нарешті, відлив від душі!' The grammatical replacement of colloquial constructions *done take me back* and *I done peed*, which demonstrate the illiteracy of the speaker, by correct literary phrases 'відвели мене' and 'я відлив' results in losing the stylistic (low colloquial) connotation of the original utterance. At the same time, the concretization of literary meanings of *the goons* 'негідники' and *peed a bucket* 'попісяв у відро' displayed in the translation as highly negative 'головорізи' and an expressive metaphor 'я, нарешті, відлив від душі!' trigger the emergence of emotional and evaluative colouring of the utterance in Ukrainian, which is in complete compliance with the situation described.

– ***Addition*** (12% of all cases), which is a lexical and grammatical type of transformation, i.e. introduction into translation of such lexical units that are absent in the original in order to properly convey the meaning of the original utterance in compliance with speech and language norms that exist in the culture of the language of translation, e.g., *Because what the fuck?* (SP) – 'Бо що в біса сталося?' The translation transformation of addition not only preserves the emotion of surprise but also strengthens it in the target audience.

– **Compensation** (10% of all cases), which is a lexical and grammatical type of transformation that presupposes the replacement of the original (usually literary) element by such (usually colloquial) lexical unit in translation that compensates for the loss of information and is appropriate to the colloquial communicative situation, e.g., *What the fuck are you <u>looking for</u>?* (S) – 'А ви, двоє, на що <u>вилупились</u>?' The translator refuses from loan translation of *looking for* 'шукати' and uses the colloquial 'вилупились' to preserve at least the stylistic connotation, whereas the non-standard abusiveness expressed by *what the fuck* is lost in translation.

The **initial degree** of conceptual equivalence is the lowest degree of translation adequacy which presupposes the obligatory transfer of only denotative component of the meaning of colloquialisms. In this case, the following translation transformations can be used.

– **Compensation** (5% of all cases), which is a lexical and grammatical type of transformation when the original colloquialism is replaced with a literary element to compensate for the loss of information, e.g., *You <u>fuck me</u>, remember?* (BB) – 'Ти <u>завалив мене</u> на екзамені, пам'ятаєш?' Non-standard *fuck me* may refer to different situations. To make the utterance clear, the translator rendered it as 'завалив мене' and used addition 'на екзамені'. The content was clarified but the expressive abusiveness of the phrase was lost.

– **Concretization** (4% of all cases), which is a lexical and semantic type of transformation, e.g., *Barry the Baptist. <u>The monster of a man.</u>* (LSB) – 'Баррі Баптист – просто <u>звір</u>.' A highly expressive metaphor with the negative connotation *the monster of a man* 'чудовисько в образі людини' is translated as 'звір' conveying only the denotative component of meaning and losing evaluative and expressive components of connotation.

– **Grammatical replacement** (2% of all cases), which is a lexical and grammatical type of transformation, e.g., *Hey, I'm <u>not gonna</u> <u>blow a good thing over</u> some girl who's never <u>gonna</u> take you back.* (FB) – 'Я <u>не збираюся</u> <u>відмовлятися від гарної пропозиції</u> через якусь дівицю, яка все одно <u>не прийме</u> тебе назад'. Low colloquial constructions *I'm not gonna blow* and *never gonna take...*, which are not grammatically correct, are replaced by correct literary phrases, while conveying only the denotative content and losing the expressiveness and stylistic connotation.

– **Descriptive translation** (2% of all cases), which is a lexical and grammatical type of transformation when colloquialisms usually have their stylistic colouring and, consequently, expressiveness neutralized, as in the above given example in which *blow a good thing over* is descriptively translated as 'відмовлятися від гарної пропозиції'.

– **Omission** (1% of all cases), which is a lexical and grammatical type of transformation when the original colloquialism, especially, non-standard or obscene, is not rendered in translation at all, but this does not influence the general content of the utterance, e.g., *Exactly. Stupid <u>fucking</u> idea.* (SP) – 'Правильно. <u>Дурнувата ідея</u>'.

4. Conclusions

The main difficulty in translating English movies into Ukrainian is the problem of adapting film text to a specific cultural space, which requires the background knowledge of the film translator, namely, his/her acquaintance with the original as a frame and understanding of typical situations embedded in the original film, in order to identify the ways of overcoming the linguistic and cultural barriers of bilingual communication. Due to its specificity, the text of cinematic discourse is not translated literally because in this case it loses its colloquial colouring and the pragmatic effect on the target audience. Therefore, the translation of such texts requires from the film translator a large amount of linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge, the awareness of socio-cultural and cognitive aspects of stereotyped behaviour of the target language speakers, and a certain sense of style.

The problem of adequate translation of colloquialisms, ranging from slang and jargon to obscene lexicon, is determined by their very "short life expectancy" (time of existence) because of which they cannot always be recorded in dictionaries. Therefore, the choice of adequate means of their translation

directly depends on decoding the meaning of the colloquialism in the context. The final version of translation should convey not only the semantic nuances of the lexical unit, but also its expressive and stylistic colouring as well as its functional appropriateness. The specifics of colloquialisms functioning in English cinematic discourse influences the choice of the strategy while representing them in Ukrainian film translations in order to preserve their conceptual equivalence in cross-cultural cinematic discourse.

In the material under study, the upper (highest) degree of conceptual equivalence in translation of colloquialisms is achieved in most cases (48%) by using such methods and techniques of translation as modulation (22%), generalization (15%) and loan translation (11%). Film translators successfully preserve not only denotative and connotative components of meaning of colloquialisms but also their functional appropriateness in specific situations depicted in cinematic discourse. The medium degree of conceptual equivalence of colloquialisms is the second in frequency rating (38%). The obligatory transfer of not only denotative component of the meaning of colloquialisms, but also some (or at least one) of the components of connotation – emotive, evaluative, expressive and stylistic – is achieved by concretization and grammatical replacement (16%), addition (12%) and compensation (10%). The initial degree of conceptual equivalence is the lowest degree of translation adequacy and the least represented (14%). By using compensation (5%), concretization (4%), grammatical replacement (2%) and descriptive translation (2%) film translators manage to transfer only denotative component of meaning of colloquialisms while losing their connotative colouring and functional appropriateness. Omission (1%) of colloquialisms in translation, though not influencing the general content of the utterance, deprives the text in the target language of expressiveness which is proper to the original text.

Thus, in order to achieve the fullest possible mutual understanding in the process of cross-cultural communication, it is necessary to make some "corrections" to the national specifics of another culture, i.e. to use a kind of coefficient that would facilitate contacts between different cultures. In particular, there is a need to study the relationship of psychological, socio-cultural components of the film text, understanding the national originality of the linguistic picture of the world, directly reflected in the film discourse, which is considered to be the perspective of a further investigation in the field of film translation.

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