
Linguistic gaps in focus: comparative aspect of Ukrainian and German languages**Yanina Marianko**

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Abstract: The article is devoted to one of the most topical issues in translation studies, as evidenced by the increased interest of many linguists in it – the translation of non-equivalent vocabulary in German. The concepts of “lacuna” and “non-equivalent vocabulary” are defined with due regard to the works of many scholars. At the same time, it is noted that there is no unanimity in linguistics on this issue. Different scholars interpret the terms “non-equivalent vocabulary” and “lacuna” in different ways. A working definition has been generated according to which non-equivalent vocabulary is the concepts, objects and phenomena that exist in the source language and have neither partial nor full equivalents in the target language. The article is devoted to the peculiarities of lacunae translation in Ukrainian and German, translation issues are considered, and it is emphasised that translation theory is aimed at the fullest reproduction of the original in a foreign language environment.

Keywords: lacuna, linguistic gaps, Ukrainian-language translation, Ukrainian language, German language, translation studies, translation theory, non-equivalent vocabulary, intercultural communication.

1. Introduction

In today's world, everything is formed in such a way that information exchange is indispensable. We live in period of global change and mass information. Now in the global network Internet you can

find everything if you know how and want to search it – from Ukrainian-language trailer for a new foreign film to an amateur translation of a book. Books occupy a special place here, as an electronic resource is much more accessible than a printed version. However, users often face the problem of not knowing the original language of the book. In this case, Google translator will no longer help. Translation itself as a literary phenomenon has a long history, but modern translation studies as an independent science was formed mainly in the second half of the twentieth century, in the post-war period, when the need for translators arose [1].

The problem of translation plays an important role in modern linguistics. Translation is one of the most important types of linguistic activity, which is necessary for the full time job of people in all walks of life. Translation is a special type of human activity aimed at overcoming barriers in human communication that are associated with language diversity. It is an important form of verbal communication between people who speak different languages and belong to different cultures. Such communication can only be successful if it is mediated by an interpreter who perceives a message in one language and reproduces it in another. Today, translation is the most promising means of overcoming existing language barriers.

Translation is the reproduction of an original by means of another language while preserving the unity of content and form. This unity is achieved by the integral reproduction of the ideological content of the original in its characteristic stylistic uniqueness on a different linguistic basis. The way to achieve such unity is not through the use of formal equivalents. Comparison of the means of different languages, even the most distant ones, is possible only by comparing the functions performed by different linguistic means. Therefore, the accuracy of translation lies in functional, not formal, correspondence to the original. In translation, not only is the value picture not conveyed, but the evaluative sensory metaphors are completely altered as well [2]. In addition, the text as a reflection of the author's conceptual worldview cannot be fully adequate in contrast to the reader's conceptual worldview [3].

This means that the units of language are replaced during translation, but the content plan, i.e. the information conveyed by the text, remains unchanged. The issue of translation has always been of great interest to talented people. Translation studies as a coherent system that encompasses the history, theory, literature, methodology and criticism of translation developed into a separate comprehensive general philological discipline in the 20s and 30s of the twentieth century. V. Rossels, V. Koptilov, D. Duryshyn, A. Popovych and others dealt with the problems of translation studies of a work of fiction [4].

2. Object of research

Linguistic gaps as a phenomenon in the linguistic system that arise as a result of differences in the structure and use of the Ukrainian and German languages, as well as their impact on the processes of learning and intercultural communication.

3. Subject of research

A comparative analysis of linguistic gaps in Ukrainian and German, with an emphasis on phonetic, grammatical and semantic features, their typology, causes of occurrence and cultural and national peculiarities that influence their formation

4. Target of research

The purpose of this paper is the peculiarities of translation of lacunae in Ukrainian and German languages.

The purpose determined the solution of the following tasks:

- 1) to systematise and generalise the concept of lacunae in Ukrainian linguistics;

- 2) to find out the role of lacunae in translation from German;
- 3) to outline the scope for further research.

5. Literature analysis

In Ukrainian scholarship, considerable merit in this regard belongs to I. Franko, Lesya Ukrainka, M. Kotsiubynskyi, M. Bazhan, M. Rylskyi, and others. The theory, history and practice of translation were studied by O. Fedorov, I. Kashkin, L. Ginzburg, M. Rylsky, I. Franko, P. Tychyna, V. Koptilov, I. Zaslavsky, P. Toper, V. Ivanenko, O. Smirnov and many other scholars and writers.

At the current stage of development of linguistic science, there is only a small amount of systematic theoretical material on the translation of socio-political literature from German into Ukrainian and vice versa. Therefore, many questions arise related to the problem of translation relevance. In this paper, we will focus only on the basic principles of translation theory. First, we should distinguish between translation and interpretation of a text.

Interpretation (from the Latin explanation, interpretation) literary - interpretation of a literary work in order to comprehend its content and ideological and artistic concept [5], research activity related to the interpretation of the content, semantic side of a literary work at its various structural levels through correlation with a higher order whole [6]. According to the Dictionary of Literary Terms, interpretation is the translation, disclosure of the content and form, explanation of a work of art, as well as a kind of performance based on deep insight into the essence of it [7].

When we talk about translating a text from one language into another, we mean presentation the essence of what is written or said in a clear and native language. In this case, translation is an accurate reproduction of the content, and interpretation is the free transfer of information, considering all the peculiarities of the foreign language, phraseological units and speech patterns.

The theory of linguistic gaps has been studied by foreign linguists: V. Hak, V. Doroshevskyi, A. Vezhbytska, J. Darbelne, J.-P. Vinet, K. Hale, J. Shershunovich, K. Hejvovsky, E. Grodzky, J. Jolovic, H. Sard, H. Schroeder, N. Turunen and domestic ones: T. Anokhina, G. Bykova, G. Gachev, M. Kochergan, Z. Popova, O. Selivanova, Y. Sorokin, I. Sternin, Y. Stepanov, I. Seriakova, S. Ter-Minasova, and others. Language lacunae are primarily considered in intercultural communication, as well as in the context of direct and indirect communication (translation of works from one language into another, acquaintance with the culture of the peoples of the world).

L. Goncharenko confirms the idea that there is no shared vision among scholars on what the essence of translation is [8]. Actually, the same can be said about the typology of translations, because even here the views of scholars diverge depending on their affiliation to a certain scientific school. Since there are some differences in the definition of these concepts, this topic will always be interesting for research. A translation should sound like the original poems, and this is one of the elements of accuracy or correctness. But the national spirit and national form of the original, as well as the individual style of the creator, must be felt through the prism of the recipient language.

6. Research methods

In modern linguistic science, the term “non-equivalent vocabulary” is relatively new, and there is no unanimity in its interpretation, which does not contribute to the definition of non-equivalent vocabulary as a category of linguistics. Linguists are trying to distinguish this term from others, or, comparing it with other concepts, to define it (M. Kochergan, L. Dyachenko, N. Zaichenko, O. Koval-Kostynska, O. Palamarchuk, T. Kosmeda, A. Voloshyna, L. Mashurovska, O. Kremliova, etc.) Non-equivalent vocabulary reflects the national and cultural peculiarity of the language at the lexical level, names such concepts and phenomena in the sphere of a particular culture that are not peculiar to others and are present in every language.

The criteria for distinguishing such vocabulary can be:

1. semantic;

2. grammatical;
3. functional and stylistic.

When comparing the vocabulary of several languages, one can identify gaps, white spots in the semantics of one of the languages. These gaps are called lexical lacunae and appear as a result of the absence of a word equivalent to a word in another language. Only through comparison or contrastive study can lacunae be identified. All lacunae can be filled with free and temporary word combinations.

The gaps are divided into the following categories:

- cultural
- textual;
- linguistic gaps of background knowledge;
- behavioural;
- kinetic;
- linguistic.

The problem of lacunae in interlingual equivalence is not limited to the lack of analogues between languages. The linguistic gaps that exist in both language and culture are revealed through the study of lexicographical sources and observations in non-verbal forms of expression, such as beliefs, customs, and art. For example, words that have no analogues in the real world may exist in fantasy, and this shows how gaps are reflected in the conceptual spaces of societies. For example, the Ukrainian language has the word “skating rink”, but there is no designation for a strip of ice on the asphalt where children skate in winter; there is the word “high school student”, but there is no unit to designate junior high school students; there is the word “newlyweds”, but there is no word to designate spouses who have been married for a long time. The Ukrainian lexical and phraseological system also does not include such concepts as “to speak at a slow pace”, “to say something in a proper way, in a timely manner”, “to provide true information”, “to say reasonable things”, “to convey information directly without hints or omissions”.

In science, there are two main types of lacunae:

- a) intralingual lacunae – the absence of a word in a language, manifested against the background of the presence of words close in semantics within one or another paradigm;
- b) interlingual lacunae – the absence of a lexical unit in one language while it is present in another.

Cultural (cognitive) lacunae are identified in the study of differences in cultures that are manifested in language in the process of communication.

Intralingual lacunae and interlingual lacunae are identified on the basis of authentic lexicographic sources, the experience of research by domestic and foreign scholars, as well as the comprehension of empirical material. Lacunae as inherent features of communication are observed in verbal and non-verbal representations. Beliefs, customs, dances, songs, artefacts, and art are passed down from generation to generation. The existence of dictionaries of “non-existent words” in the realm of fantasy and unreality, in particular, objectifies the existence of gaps in the conceptual spheres of societies. Lacunae are explicated in speech with the help of polysemous constructions, compensating for the lack of one-word designations [18].

A special type of intralingual lacunae is the so-called semantic compressives, where a concept may exist for a long time (or always) expressed in more than one word, but in colloquial speech such a combination is transformed into a one-word form. A semantic compressive is a term used in linguistics to describe a word or expression that contains many meanings or concepts, often abstract ones. They can be used to summarise complex or multifunctional ideas into one compact concept.

7. Reserch results

The difference between the principles of grammatical structure of Ukrainian and German, which is expressed in the fact that these languages belong to different grammatical groups, is reflected in the essential differences between grammatical properties, for example, in the existence of dissimilar grammatical categories: articles in German, adverbial in Ukrainian, meaningful concord in

Ukrainian, fixed word order in German, etc. It should not be forgotten that both differences and similarities between grammatical forms, their functions and meanings can be complete and incomplete. Complete similarity is rare, as a rule, as well as complete difference that is not compensated for.

The Ukrainian and German languages differ in the system of word change, in particular in noun adjective agreement by gender and case. The Ukrainian language has a grammatical category of case (perfective and imperfective), which is expressed in morphology, which is absent in German. If an adjective comes after a noun, a noun clause or a compound noun clause is formed, where the adjective acts as a predicate. These structures are found in both languages.

Ukrainian and German mainly use a one-component subject, which usually consists of one word. The term “one-component subject” is used in linguistics to describe a constituent part of a sentence that contains only one main component (usually a noun or pronoun), which acts as the subject of the sentence [9]. The peculiarities of using such a subject are similar in both Ukrainian and German.

The diversity of languages is based on the diversity of their origins, as well as the history, environment, material and spiritual culture of peoples in the process of language communication. All these factors determine the peculiarity of each language, which sometimes causes serious problems for translators, and makes it impossible to translate certain expressions or the content of texts expressed by means of one language into another. In this regard, the problem of lacunarity and non-equivalent vocabulary occupies a prominent place in translation theory. Non-equivalent vocabulary is a word or phrase that has no translation equivalents at this stage of language development.

In modern linguistic science, the term “equivalent vocabulary” is relatively new, and there is no unanimity in its interpretation, and sometimes even specificity, which does not help to define equivalent vocabulary as a category of linguistics. Linguists are trying to distinguish this term from others, or, comparing it with other “nationally labelled” concepts, to define it (M. Kochergan, L. Dyachenko, N. Zaichenko, O. Koval-Kostynska, O. Palamarchuk, T. Kosmeda, A. Voloshyna, L. Mashurovska, O. Kremliova, etc.)

The languages of Europe can be seen as members of the large Indo-European language family, which includes the largest number of languages and speakers. For example, the Germanic language family has a northern branch with Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Icelandic, and Faroese, and a western branch with German, Dutch, Frisian, English, and Yiddish. The Romance language family includes Italian, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Catalan, and other languages rooted in Latin. The Slavic language family includes such languages as Ukrainian, Polish, Russian, Belarusian, Czech, Slovak, Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, Macedonian, and Bulgarian. In addition, there are other language families in Europe, such as Celtic (with Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Welsh and others), Baltic (with Latvian and Lithuanian) and some isolated languages that are not part of the Indo-European family, such as Basque.

Recently, scholars have been focusing on the study of the national specificity of a particular language, which is reflected in the typological features of the means of expressing similar objects of real life and the existence of grammatical forms and categories. One of the manifestations of such specificity at the lexical level is lacunae. The term “linguistic gaps” has an ancient origin and comes from the Latin word “lacuna”, which means “gap”, “cavity” or “absence”. This word comes from the root “lacus”, which translates as “lake” or “reservoir”, symbolising emptiness or space filled with something or, conversely, empty.

English-language linguistics prefers the phrase lexical gap (J. Cvilikaite [10, 11]), which can be translated as “lexical gap, lexical omission”; in Ukrainian linguistics, the problem of lacunarity is studied by such scholars as I. Holubovska [12], M. Kochergan [13], V. Manakin [14].

In a broad sense, a lacuna is a nationally specific aspect of a culture that is manifested in the language and speech of the native speakers of that culture and may be misunderstood or not understood at all by representatives of other linguistic cultures. In a narrow sense, as a linguistic lacuna, it is the absence of a certain word in the lexical system of a language to express a certain concept [15].

A lacuna is a basic element of the national specificity of a linguistic and cultural community, which complicates the translation of its texts and their perception by foreign cultural recipients due to the absence in one language compared to another of certain correspondences of linguistic units of different levels, designations of concepts, categories, associative reactions, as well as paraverbal means of speech [16: 275]. In simple terms, a lacuna is a certain cavity or gap that can exist in any system, such as laws, data or software code, where something is missing or not taken into account. A linguistic gap can create problems because it causes the system to not work as it should or to overlook important points that need to be added or clarified.

The term “lacuna” is identified with non-equivalent vocabulary, although they are in a relationship of inclusion of the latter in the former (not every lacuna is non-equivalent). Researchers propose to distinguish cognitive lacunae as equivalent words, and to identify the absence of words and semes with lacunae themselves. R. Brislin also refers to lacunae as “realities”, but realities are conceptual lacunae [17]. Lacunarity is established not only between two languages (interlanguage), but also within different forms of existence of one language according to the same principle (internal lacunas) [16: 275].

When comparing the vocabulary of German and Ukrainian, one can identify lacunae that arise as a result of the lack of a verbal equivalent of a word from another language. These problems are primarily related to the correlation between language and culture. Speaking of semantic lacunae, we mean the absence in the target language of a specific, definite concept denoted in the source language by a certain lexical unit (word or phrase), which is related to the peculiarities of the linguistic distribution of the objective world in each of a certain pair of languages [19: 12.] Examples of such words in German, which denote certain concepts either completely absent in Ukrainian or require a multi-word description to convey their meaning, while in German there is a special word for them, are:

der Kleine – a child starting to walk;
 den Besserungsverstoß – correctional facility;
 der Verletzer – offender; someone who evades appearing in court;
 die Oberstufe – senior classes; high school.

In Ukrainian, examples of lacunae in relation to German are the following words:

kipitnyi (boiled – very hot),
 keptar (vest – an embroidered festive cloak),

pazushnyk (sling – men's embroidery that temporarily decorated an everyday shirt for a day off or a holiday), which can be translated into German only using the descriptive method [23].

A special interest is presented by the issue of finding the means to help a foreign cultural recipient in reconstructing a foreign culture. Filling in the gaps is the process of revealing the meaning of a concept or a fragment of a text belonging to a culture unfamiliar to the recipient. Filling in gaps can be of different depths, depending on the nature of the gap to be filled, the type of text in which the gap exists, and the characteristics of the recipient to whom the text is addressed.

The existence of non-equivalent grammatical units in the source language does not cause any particular difficulties in translation. The choice of grammatical form in translation depends not so much on the grammatical form of the source language as on its lexical content. Differences in this form are usually not an obstacle to establishing equivalence relations between the source and target languages. The absence in the target language of a similar correspondence for a particular form of the source language means only that it is impossible to use a similar form or a literal translation in the translation. There are three main cases here:

1) *Zero translation*, i.e. refusal to transmit the meaning of a grammatical unit due to its redundancy. The grammatical meaning is often duplicated in a statement by other lexical or grammatical means. In such cases, the equivalent unit receives a “zero equivalence” in the translation, i.e., it is omitted:

“Gib mir das Buch, dass du gestern gekauft hast. – Give me the book you bought yesterday.”

“Zu dieser Zeit ist er aus England schon abgefahren. – By this time, he had already left England.”

In the first of these sentences, the meaning of the definite article is duplicated by the meaning of the complementary sentence, while in the second, the meaning of precedence expressed by the Perfekt form is redundant due to the presence of the lexical precedence indicators “by now” and “already” in the sentence.

2) *Loose translation* is the use of a grammatical unit of the target language in translation, which in a certain context partially corresponds to a non-equivalent grammatical unit of the source language. For example, the absolute construction in modern German has no Ukrainian equivalents if it is considered as a unit of grammatical structure. It has a complex, indivisible meaning that unites the circumstances of the relationship. However, in a particular expression, one or two types of such relations (temporal, causal, conditional, permissive, etc.) may come to the fore, which allows us to equate the corresponding Ukrainian structure to the absolute construction in the original. In the following example, the absolute construction has a clearly temporal function:

“Wenn mit dieser Sache Schluß gemacht war, hat der Organismus Misterns Svivellera daran erinnert, dass die Mittagsstunde schon nah ist. – When the job was done, Mr. Sweller's body reminded him that it was time for lunch.”

3) *Transformational translation* is the transfer of the meaning of a non-equivalent unit by means of one of the grammatical transformations that, together with lexical transformations, are used in describing the translation process, for example:

“Die alten Wirte und die administrative Führung wurden die Direktoren und die Verwalter der neuen nationalisierten Unternehmen. Außerdem es waren zum Schein etwas rechte Gewerkschaftsbeamten beigefügt. – The old owners and administrative management became directors and managers of the new nationalized enterprises. In addition, a few right-wing trade union officials were added for show.”

Let's analyze Goethe's poem “Das Göttliche” and its translation “The Divine.”

<i>Original:</i>	<i>Translation:</i>
Edel sei der Mensch, Hülfreich und gut! Denn das allein Unterscheidet ihn Von allen Wesen, Die wir kennen. Heil den unbekanntem Höherm Wesen, Die wir ahnen! Ihnen gleiche der Mensch; Sein Beispiel lehr uns Jene glauben... [20: 15]	Blahorodnoiu bud, Dobrotvornoiu bud, liudyno! Z-pomezhy sushchoho Na vsii zemli Tse yedyne tebe U zhytti vyrizniaie. Slava neznanyam Vyshchym istotam, Shcho my prochuvaem! Khai zhe y liudyna Na nykh bude skhozha: Pryklad yii Navchyt nas viry... [21; 22]

Figure 1. Example of Comparative Analysis of the Original and the Translation: Linguistic, Stylistic, and Semantic Correspondences.

As you can see, in the original work there are many articles that do not exist in Ukrainian. The German conjunction “den” is translated into Ukrainian as “because” and in Goethe's poem as “among”. In this case, we can observe correspondences - lexical substitutions. In the original, there is a line “...Die wir kennen”, which the author translates as “...In life, it stands out”, not as “...which we know”. Here, the subordinate clause is translated with a completely different syntactic construction and a transformational translation is observed.

8. Prospects for further research development

In our further work, we think it is necessary to consider non-equivalent vocabulary in translation separately from the problems of lacunarity, since not all scholars refer to non-equivalent vocabulary as lacunas.

9. Conclusions

Thus, we have come to the following conclusions:

1) translation plays a significant role in the cultural development of mankind. Through translation, people of one country get to know the life of other nations. Therefore, the translator's task is to convey the meaning of the original in a holistic and accurate way by means of another language, while preserving its national identity. Since translation serves as a means of intercultural communication, cultural competence comes to the fore, along with linguistic competence. Knowledge of only the verbal means of communication peculiar to a particular language group is insufficient in terms of preserving the cultural specificity of the original, and thus the question arises of the role of “background knowledge” for the translator;

2) lacunae play a significant role in translation, since a specific subject itself, any component or even a separate sense of lexical meaning, and more broadly, the information that accompanies this phenomenon in the minds of native speakers can be lacunar;

3) a lacuna is any fragment of a text that is perceived as somewhat obscure, difficult to explain, incomprehensible, especially to a reader or listener with different cultural concepts.

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