

## **ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES FOR TRANSLATING CULTURE-SPECIFIC COMPONENTS OF FILM TEXTS INTO UKRAINIAN**

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Given a growing popularity of foreign films with Ukrainian people, the matter of film translation becomes urgent. The art of film translation is a complex phenomenon encompassing numerous aspects. Apart from making a foreign film reachable to the Ukrainian recipient, it is vital to preserve the addresser's idea and retain the pragmatic effect of the source text. Since the process of translation involves at least two languages and accordingly two cultural traditions, the collapse of cultural spaces is inevitable. In the light of such a divergence, this article explores the techniques of translating culture-specific information into the Ukrainian language. The subject of the article is culture-specific elements in film texts. The object of the article is English narrative films and animated cartoon films translated into Ukrainian. The article is aimed at discovering what translation methods are applicable to reproducing culture-specific information with language means of another cultural space. The tasks of this article are as follows: 1) to elucidate the difference between "domestication" and "foreignisation"; 2) to describe the stylistic features and pragmatic functions of culture-specific components; 3) to explore how the peculiarities of culture-specific information are delivered from the source language into the target one. The analysis in the article is based on such methods: 1) systematisation method; 2) descriptive method; 3) contrastive method etc. Culture-specific components are the most complicated in translation as they are absent in the addressee's pool of background knowledge. Today's two fundamental approaches to deal with such information are domestication and foreignisation, where the former serves to make the source text intelligible to the recipient, while the latter serves to preserve the original spirit of the source text despite any would-be hurdles for the recipient's understanding of the addresser's intentions. The choice of an adaptive approach depends majorly on the translator's role, target-language means, a number of extralinguistic factors, as well as technical restrictions. The relevance of either of strategies is defined in terms of the pragmatic intentions encoded in the source text. As a rule, the domestication approach is often applied through substitution, interlingual transposition, and contextual equivalent, while the foreignisation approach involves the use of transcoding, calque, substitution, and contextual translation. The obtained results provide grounds for the longer-term study connected with further analyses of communicative and pragmatic factors as well as culture-specific information translated in terms of adaptive approaches.

*Key words: film text, film translation, translation methods, adaptive approaches, domestication, foreignisation, sociocultural aspect*

## **АДАПТИВНІ СТРАТЕГІЇ ПЕРЕКЛАДУ НАЦІОНАЛЬНО-КУЛЬТУРНИХ КОМПОНЕНТІВ КІНОТЕКСТУ УКРАЇНСЬКОЮ МОВОЮ**

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У статті розглядаються методи перекладу національно-культурних компонентів англійськомовного кінотексту українською мовою. Аналізуються комунікативно-прагматичні фактори, що зумовлюють необхідність застосування адаптивних стратегій. Пояснюється різниця між поняттями "доместикація" та "форенізація".

*Ключові слова: кінотекст, кінопереклад, методи перекладу, адаптивні стратегії, доместикація, форенізація, соціокультурний аспект*

Today's Ukrainian film market is majorly represented with foreign products, in particular those produced in the USA. With such a growing popularity of foreign films, it becomes urgent to ensure adequate and intelligible translation so as to make imported films reachable to the Ukrainian recipient.

The field of film translation is deemed relatively new and to date has not been deeply researched. Its theoretical framework involves largely single studies examining separate aspects relating to film translation. Such recognized linguists as Gorshkova V.E. [1], Efremova M.A. [2], Lotman Y.M. [3], Slyshkin G.G. [6], Snetkova M.S. [7] have already placed their research focus on diverse aspects of film translation, including methods to translate film texts. However, the theoretical background of

film translation requires further expansion as the issue of translating culture-specific information into Ukrainian can be further elaborated, which substantiates **the relevance of the study**.

**The subject of the study** is culture-specific elements of film texts.

**The object of the study** is texts of English narrative films and animated cartoon films translated into Ukrainian.

**The material of the study** serves films that were shown in the Ukrainian cinema, namely, *Avatar* (2009), *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (2016), *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014), *Minority Report* (2002), *Spy* (2015), as their texts contain culture-specific lexical units adapted to the Ukrainian audience with regard to their background knowledge and language world picture as well as the addresser's intentions encoded in the film.

**The purpose of the study** is to explore which translation methods are employed to reproduce culture-specific components into Ukrainian.

The achievement of this purpose involves the following **tasks**: 1) to elucidate the difference between "domestication" and "foreignisation"; 2) to describe the stylistic features and pragmatic functions of culture-specific components; 3) to explore how the peculiarities of culture-specific information are translated from the source language into the target one.

The study uses the following **methods**: 1) systematisation method to summarize existing groundwork on the given topic; 2) descriptive method to explain the stylistic and pragmatic functions of culture-specific components; 3) selective observation method to choose the material on which this study is based; 4) contrastive method to examine the divergence in pragmatic effect of culture-specific information in both English and Ukrainian film texts.

Translation of narrative films is a special form of interlinguistic and cross-cultural communication taking place through immersion of a film into another cultural and linguistic background. Given that lingua-cultural space undergoes changes in the course of film reproduction, the strategies aimed at achieving impressive equivalence should be reckoned in a relevant way. These changes are above all tied to a national and cultural part of the text reflecting universal, regional, and specific elements [5, c. 10]. The specific elements are of a significant value. Since they are not distinguished in another culture, they impact the translation process as well as intercultural communication. Cultural specific information often goes beyond the addressee's pool of knowledge and is viewed as 'alien' and incompatible with the addressee's experience. However, a source text cannot be separated from its cultural and historical background from which it originates. Besides, the scope of knowledge may vary between the addresser and the addressee, which is a hurdle for successful translation [4, c. 153].

There are various standpoints on how to transfer national specific components the leading one of which is to employ adoptive strategies. Back in the XIX c., the German philosopher and philologist Friedrich Schleiermacher articulated two basic methods to adopt in the translation practice: "Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him, or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him" [8, p. 74]. With this opposition in the core, modern researchers distinguish two fundamental approaches when it comes to reproducing cultural specific information in the translated text: a domesticating approach and a foreignising approach.

According to Venuti, the domesticating approach represents an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values [10, p. 242]. To put it differently, it is a way of presenting an alien and obscure text in terms of notions typical of the addressee's culture. As a rule, domestication brings a facile and intelligible style that mitigates the features making the source text foreign. The domesticating approach is considered a softening strategy as it allows a translator to stay invisible bypassing all the notions and phenomena that perhaps would require further explanation. The main advantage of domestication is simplicity and lucidity for the target reader. Nevertheless, as

Umberto Eco highlights, this approach may lead to a complete loss of the linguistic and cultural significance of the source text [9, p. 204].

The foreignising approach aims at preserving the ethnocentric specifics of the foreign text to illuminate its linguistic and cultural divergence [10, p. 242]. This method brings the reader close to the author instilling the feeling of otherness. Consequently, the recipient is imposed a set of rules and values of another culture. The ultimate goal of such an approach, though, may be to enrich a nation's culture through contacting other linguistic and cultural space. In particular, Schleiermacher attempted to free the German literary language from French sway [8, p. 88]. The scholar reckoned that it is crucial to alleviate ethnocentric coercion that the translation practice entails anyway. The foreignising strategy helps restrict the domestication of all global cultural values propagated by the English-speaking world. Thus, this method allows looking at the object of translation from a new perspective than ever. The undoubted benefits of foreignisation include an opportunity to enrich the recipient's language with new lexical units adopted from the source text.

By drawing on the definitions of the domesticating and foreignising methods, it is reasonable to emphasize the ideological character of these adaptive strategies (imposing either foreign or target-language values on the recipient). The choice of strategy depends on extralinguistic factors (cultural, economic, political, historical etc.), translator's personal beliefs, and language means. We are going to explore which translation methods are employed to deliver realia as culture-specific lexical units into the Ukrainian language.

**The assimilation method** consists in reproducing semantic and stylistic functions of source-language realia by employing target-language analogues. Such a translation method is frequently used to translate everyday realia involving household items, clothes, food, drinks, monetary items, etc. The translation adequacy is not violated if the substitution of another culture-specific element for a corresponding target-language analogue brings about no deviations in the encoded message but provokes the equivalent psycho-emotional state in the addressee. A number of spectacular examples of English realia can be provided from film texts translated into Ukrainian.

*“Pilates has been working out for you. I guess you do not seem so awkward” – “Ти не дарма ходив на бойовий гопак. Раніше ти був вайлуватим”.* Pilates mentioned in the *Spy* film is particularly popular with German, British, and US population. In Ukraine, this physical fitness system is known but practiced to a smaller extent. The use of the culture-specific element is primarily tied to a joke encoded in the source film text. Accordingly, the Ukrainian translated text will be considered relevant if it features the same pragmatic effect on the recipient. Combat Норак (бойовий гопак), as a fitness martial art, is unique to the Ukrainian culture and hence is able to cause a reaction to be viewed as equal to the pragmatic power of the source message.

The next domesticating method employed is **interlingual transposition at the connotative level**. The point is to substitute a culture-specific element in the foreign text that functions rather in its connotative (associative) meaning than in the denotative (direct) one for another culture-specific element performing a similar function in the target language. For example, *“I can't even dress like a spy. Look at you and your tailored ... Everything is cut right. And I'm like a lumpy pumpkin sack dress” – “Я б навіть так одягнутися не змогла. От на тобі, все по фігурі, все до ладу. А на мені наче мішок з-під картоплі”.* The original message contains a lexical unit describing the heroine's appearance through comparison of her dress to a pumpkin. Though this vegetable is part of the Ukrainian cuisine, it is more typical of the American culture since it is used as the main attribute of Halloween. The tradition of colouring and decorating pumpkins in a frightening and scarring fashion to keep off evil spirits from home seems a bit nonsense, but indeed, it may be an implicit reference to some ugliness or plainness embodied in the collocation ‘pumpkin sack dress’ and emphasised with the epithet ‘lumpy’. As such, a lexical unit with an appropriate connotation in the Ukrainian cultural space ‘potato’ was chosen as a translation equivalent. The collocation ‘a potato sack’ (мішок з-під картоплі) delivers the addresser's idea clearly. Moreover, it should be noted that the Ukrainian sentence mentions no item of clothing. A sack dress is a loose unbelted dress taking no

particular shape on the figure. The connotative value of ‘bag’ equals to the value of ‘sack dress,’ which is emphasized in the given context.

The method of **contextual translation** is widely used in the reproduction of the English film text. Such a method involves finding the optimal equivalent in the target language, taking into account the context determined by the addresser. In order to ensure adequate translation of the encoded message, the semantic-stylistic functions of the culture-specific unit should be considered.

*“What do you think I’m gonna do? Run over there and be like “Hey, I’m a crazy lady! Where’s the buffet? I’m from the Midwest. Where’s Blue Man Group?” – “Чи по-твоєму я мала забігти: Я кінчена американка! Де можна пожертви? Я – дівка-ковбойша! Де мої шкварки в майонезі?”*. These lines demonstrate that the Ukrainian translation differs much from the source text, which is due to the difference in the author’s and the audience’s background knowledge to be taken into account when working on the film text.

So, the *Midwest* appeals to the stereotypes prevailing in American society that mistakenly associate this region with a farming and provincial lifestyle. For these reasons, the main character saying *“I’m from the Midwest”* shows herself as an uneducated and limited woman. On the contrary, the geographic location of the Midwest gives no information to the Ukrainian audience. Accordingly, the translator should find a contextual unit that would evoke the same stereotype in the addressee’s mind. An average Ukrainian possesses superficial knowledge of the American history and culture and hence sees a cowboy majorly as a shepherd living in rural areas of North America. Thus, the usage of ‘cowboy’ evokes the same conceptual image of a rural man encoded in the English film text.

Another culture-specific unit that cannot be literally translated in the target-language is the name of New York performers from *Blue Man Group* of which members are known for their non-standard scenic blue-newcomers. Since the glory of *Blue Man Group* did not go beyond the US boundaries, the translator decided to omit this name and instead introduced another culture-specific unit (mayonnaise), which in terms of context can be considered relevant and tied to the previous question: *“Де можна пожертви?”*

Thus, the domesticating approach encompasses three methods of translating realia: assimilation, contextual translation, and interlanguage transposition at the connotative level, all of which lead to finding a lexical unit that is specific to the target-language cultural background and corresponds to communicative intentions set by the author.

As mentioned above, the foreignising strategy aims at preserving foreign cultural elements of the source text in the target-language translation. Foreignisation requires the receiving audience to possess some background knowledge, as the addressee will be sent to diverse facts, concepts, or phenomena from other cultural spaces to interpret the encoded message correctly. We are going to explore what foreignising methods are employed to reproduce the English film text into Ukrainian.

**Transcoding** is a letter-for-letter or phoneme translation of the foreign lexical unit through the target-language alphabet, for example:

*“Hey, daddy! I made up a club. We are called **the Crescos**” – “Привіт, тату. Я створив клуб. Ми називаємося **‘Крескос’**”*

*“You are no longer an Auror” – “Ви більше не **аврор**”*

Both sentences have a lexical unit which denotes the concept unknown to the receiving audience. Since both cases do not envisage any equivalents in the target-language, it is reasonable to apply the transcoding method (transliteration), given that the context provides enough information to explain the encoded idea to the Ukrainian viewer.

**The assimilation method** is also an effective translation tool when it comes to the foreignising approach. This method is employed with the need to pick an equivalent that is not typical but familiar to the addressee. Thus, the original spirit of the source text is somewhat softened but not domesticated.

“*Burger King was booked up*” – “*МакДак був зачинений*”. Though both names refer to American chains of fast food restaurants, but McDonald's is more popular with Ukrainians (the opening of the first Burger King took place in 2017, while the film's release dates back to 2015). Accordingly, the decision to apply the assimilation method is well-grounded because the chosen lexical unit has the same semantic meaning and well understandable for the recipient. It should be highlighted, though, that the translation is partially incorrect, since the meaning of ‘booked up’ was conveyed as ‘closed’. In our opinion, a more relevant translation could have been as follows: “*У МакДак всі місця зайняті*”.

“*So this Orb has a real shine blue suitcase, Ark of the Covenant, Maltese Falcon sort of vibe*” – “*За цією сферою ганяються мільйони людей, немовби за якимось Священним Граалем*”. The source text mentions two names referring to different areas of knowledge. The Ark of the Covenant is a shrine of the Jewish people containing the stone tablets of the Testament with the Ten Commandments as a token of the agreement between God and Israel. *Maltese Falcon* is a 80-meter-long yacht, one of the largest private sailing yachts worldwide, built by Pleon Limited for the American investor, Tom Perkins. The translator decided to omit both names, since the Ukrainian audience is unlikely to have any idea about these things. Since both realia have the same connotation they can be considered synonymous, and hence, the omission is justified. However, the reference to religious issues was preserved and embodied in another religious lexical unit that is more familiar to the Ukrainian viewer.

“*I do a lot of reading. I read palms and maps...and I've read all of the Hunger Games*” – “*Я взагалі багато читаю, і по мапам читаю, і по долоням. Я перечитала всього Толкіна*”. The name of Suzanne Collins' trilogy *the Hunger Games* was substituted for the name of recognized English science fiction writer John R. Tolkien, who gained fame owing to its adventure cycles *Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *Silmarillion*. Such a drastic change results from the fact that *the Hunger Games* mostly target the youth audience and are barely recognized by the adult audience. Consequently, it is more sensible to appeal to Tolkien's personality in the translated text. Moreover, the speaker is viewed as an experienced reader with a great luggage of knowledge according to the source text, and unlike J. Tolkien, S. Collins has a less numerous bibliography at present, which proves the relevance of such a substitution.

As was demonstrated, the foreignising strategy involves the assimilation method, e.g. the substitution of a culture-specific element incomprehensible to the recipient for another lexical unit from the same addresser's background but known to the recipient. Such a method allows preserving the original spirit of the film but creates no cognitive barrier during intercultural communication.

**Contextual translation with a contextual equivalent** is actively used when foreignising the English film text provided that the source text contains a word or collocation the literal translation of which may result in distorting the author's idea. The following lines are from *The Guardians of the Galaxy*: “*I ain't waiting around for some humie with a death wish*” – “*Я не збираюсь чекати цього камікадзе*”. The original line contains a descriptive phrase, of which the literal translation would sound rather unnatural in the target language. For these reasons, the Japanese term ‘Kamikaze’, which in a broader sense refers to all voluntary pilots who take part in suicide attacks, was aptly introduced by the translator. The choice of this very unit foreignised the translation but helped save the pragmatic intentions.

Another example is the term created by science fictionist Philip K. Dick, whose novel served the basis for Stephen Spielberg's futuristic thriller *The Minority Report* – *pre-crime*. It denotes governmental interference aimed at preventing crimes that have not been committed yet. The plot revolves around a police institution that exists under ‘the Pre-Crime Program’ translated as ‘Програма профілактики злочинів’.

**Calque** as an adaptive translation method is the least frequently used. However, there are cases when the application of calque is the most appropriate approach. For example, the following line belongs to the American-British fantasy film *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*: “*Six shots of*

*Gigglewater and a Lobe-Blaster, please*” – “Шість шотів *Хохо-водички* та *Лобо-струс*, будь ласка”. Since the focus is put on beverages used in the fictional world, the target language cannot offer any equivalents. However, the morphological structure of these specific units shows that these neologisms were formed by merging two separate words. Accordingly, both terms are as a result of half-calque, since the first part is reproduced based on its semantics, and the other one, according to the association it generates.

As was shown above, the foreignising method explores part of the methods employed to translate realia. The choice of a particular method is determined by the context, extralinguistic parameters, the author's idea, as well as the characteristics of the potential recipient. However, the foreignising and domesticating approaches do not cover all possible interpretations of the culture-specific text because apart from these opposite methods, the complete eradication of cultural specifics is possible. Such a strategy is termed neutralization. In particular, it derives from the consistent use of hypernymic renaming and descriptive periphrasis, which both involve the use of a semantically neutral vocabulary for reproducing culture-specific words. The following examples are from the English film texts in which the colouring of culture-specific elements was erased through hypernymic translation:

“*There is no such thing as an ex-Marine*” – “*Солдат завжди буде солдатом*”. The translated lines have the name of troops generalised. *Marine* is a member of the US Marine Corps or the Royal Marines, who is specially trained for military duties at sea as well as on land. However, the Ukrainian translation provides general information about who the main character is. Such a translation decision is justified, since, firstly, the Ukrainian viewer is unlikely to be aware of the way the US military system is structured, and secondly, this makes the interpretation of the source text easier.

“*I was First Recon myself*” – “*Я сам починав у розвідці*”. This example contains *First Recon*, i.e. the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion, and marks the first division of the US Marine Corps. As in the above example, the Ukrainian addressee does not have a detailed image of the US armed forces, so it is reasonable to omit details when translating this lexical unit.

“*Think I felt like a shave tail Louie*” – “*Думаєш, я перелякався?*” This example demonstrates the justified application of neutralization when translating a cultural-specific unit. The descriptive phrase ‘a shave tail Louie’ consists of ‘shave tail’ (a so-called newly-formed junior lieutenant) and ‘Louie’ (a nicknamed lieutenant who is the lowest rated and the least experienced among the US Marine Corps officers). Both units refer to the US armed forces system but in somewhat implicit way. Provided that the Ukrainian recipient is ignorant about these facts, the most correct decision is to neutralize the specifics of the source text. However, with the idiomatic expression and the slangism in the core, it is crucial to look into the idea to be conveyed. Consequently, the use of verb ‘перелякався’ seems to be fully motivated.

Another conspicuous example of the hypernymic translation was made in *Guardians of the Galaxy*: “*No, not her, him! Learn genders, man!*” – “*Ні, не її, його! Вчи займенники, пеньок!*” The translator used the generalization method since it is vital to keep in mind that audio-visual restrictions also come into play during translation. This puts restrictions on scene timeframe above all. The original message emphasizes the significance of pronoun genders; however, the pronunciation of this line would have broken the timeframe; therefore, the generalization of this line can be viewed as well-grounded.

To sum up, the translation of English realia into Ukrainian in terms of adaptive strategies involves the application of a number of adaptive methods. The domestication is often applied through substitution, interlingual transposition, and contextual equivalent, as a result of which a culture-specific element is replaced with a translation analogue or an appropriate contextual equivalent. Foreignisation is used less actively than domestication and involves the use of such methods as transcoding, calcination, substitution and contextual translation. Moreover, a number of cases required employing the strategy of neutralization, which is an advance of hypernymic translation leading to the utter omission of realia, provided that the target recipient is unlikely to grasp the value of a culture-marked element due to its discrepancy in background knowledge.

The obtained results provide grounds for the longer-term study connected with further analyses of communicative and pragmatic factors as well as exploration of culture-specific information translated in terms of adaptive approaches.

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