

DOI: 10.26565/2786-5312-2024-99-11
УДК 811.131.1:[811.111+811.161.2]'25

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Reproductive and Adaptive Strategies in Translating Comparative Units (on the Material of the Italian, English and Ukrainian Languages)

The article deals with the problem of rendering comparative units of the Italian language into English and Ukrainian through the lens of the translation strategies of domestication and foreignization. Considering translation as one of the means of intercultural communication, the main research question addresses the effectiveness of the chosen strategies in conveying all the meanings of the original text to the translated language. The study aims to analyze how the above-mentioned strategies influence the perception of comparison and comparative units in various cultural contexts, i.e., in English and Ukrainian translations. The twofold nature of the image underlying the comparative unit might represent certain difficulties due to its national and cultural component or intricate, elaborate associative connections, especially in the case of ad hoc comparisons which are characterized by their novelty and/or unpredictability of associations between the object and its referent. This determines the relevance of the present research. Both translation strategies have their advantages and disadvantages. The data received allow us to talk about the priority of a certain strategy within a certain cultural context / language. English translation tends to reproduce the image of comparative units as accurately and precisely as possible, compensating a certain lack of attention to possible linguistic and cultural patterns and readers' preferences with accuracy, consistency, and original style, which allow obtaining a holistic and coherent picture in the target language. Whereas the Ukrainian translation gives preference to greater dynamics, using adaptive strategies in rendering images and compensates for certain semantic losses at the expense of «proper», understandable images, which should potentially contribute to effective communication and meet reader's expectations.

Key words: *comparison, domestication, foreignization, image, translation strategy.*

Як цитувати: Скрипник, І. (2024). Репродуктивні та адаптивні стратегії у перекладі порівняльних одиниць (на матеріалі італійської, англійської та української мов). *Вісник ХНУ імені В. Н. Каразіна. Серія: Іноземна філологія. Методика викладання іноземних мов*, (99), 88-93.

DOI: 10.26565/2786-5312-2024-99-11

In cites: Skrypnik, I. (2024). Reproductive and adaptive strategies in translating comparative units (on the material of the Italian, English and Ukrainian languages). *The Journal of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University. Series: Foreign Philology. Methods of Foreign Language Teaching*, (99), 88-93.

DOI: 10.26565/2786-5312-2024-99-11



1. INTRODUCTION

Comparison is one of the basic mental operations, with the help of which people get to know the world around them. This operation helps “combine two objects, two situations, two phenomena, two features on the basis of their similarity” [9, p. 475]. When tackling a comparison in the process of translation, one has to keep in mind its dual nature: on the one hand, a comparison is a universal category in that it’s characteristic of any person and his/ her cognitive activity; on the other, the choice of a particular image that is fundamental for a comparison “depends on national psychology and the peculiarities of the associative mindset” [4, p. 37]. Thus, it is the correct and adequate rendering of *comparative phrases (units)* that comes to the fore in the translation process, as translation is “always about fusion of two cultures, two language traditions, two literature bases ...” [3, p. 41]. This determines the relevance of the present research. The present study is based on the material provided by Elena Ferrante’s novel “L’amica geniale” (“My brilliant friend”) that has gained huge popularity since the moment it was published. Comparative units (both set, phraseological and ad hoc author’s comparisons) in the novel are the object of the research. The strategies of the translation of the abovementioned units into the Ukrainian and English languages constitute the subject of the research, which is aimed at comparing and analyzing translational strategies and methods that were used in the process of translation. The main stages of the present paper include: 1) providing the theoretical background of the research; 2) examining the chosen comparative units in the three languages and highlighting the translational strategies and methods applied; 3) studying the comparative units in the target language in terms of preserving the author’s individual world view.

Justifying the choice of the term *comparison* and *comparative units* instead of *simile* in the present paper we’d like to address their definitions in the Cambridge English Dictionary, which states that *simile* is “an expression comparing one thing with another, always including the words “as” or “like” [10]. Since not all the examples considered in our research have this structure, we use a broader term of *comparison* – “the fact of considering something similar or of equal quality to something else” [10], considering “simile” as its subset.

2. REPRODUCTIVE AND ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES IN TRANSLATING COMPARATIVE UNITS (ON THE MATERIAL OF THE ITALIAN, ENGLISH AND UKRAINIAN LANGUAGES)

Domestication and foreignization – two key concepts introduced into the realm of translation studies by Lawrence Venuti in 1995 [18] – reflect the dilemma any translator is faced with when trying to choose between leaving the author alone and “sending the reader abroad” by preserving the linguistic and cultural difference of the original text in the translated one or leaving the

reader alone and making the author move towards him by reducing the original text to the cultural values of the target language [18, p. 20; 11, p. 10]. Jirí Levý expresses the similar vision distinguishing “translator-illusionist” who follows the original and creates the illusion of the original work from “translator-anti-illusionist” who does not imitate the original but destroys it, highlighting that he has to offer nothing more but a semblance of the original work [13]. The founder of Czech translation studies sees the process of translation as a three-stage operation that includes “understanding, interpretation and reformulation in the target language” [17, p. 308]. L. Zasiiekina and S. Zasiekin offer their definition in which translation is considered to be an integrated cognitive process that combines mental operations of perception, interpretation, comprehension and production [2, p. 101]. Taking this as a foundation for our research, we’d like to add to it the definition by O. Pakhliovska (2022) who sees translation of literary texts as “the main communicative code in the dialogue between cultures” [16].

Cultures and consequently readers as their representatives require special attention in the process of translation. An average or empirical (in terms of U. Eco) reader – is any person, who’s reading the text; “empirical readers can read in many ways, and there is no law that tells them how to read, because they often use the text as a container for their own passions, which may come from outside the text or which the text may arouse by chance” [11, p. 8]. Whereas a model reader – is an ideal reader, in whom the author sees his ally [ibid]. The concept of “dynamic equivalence” offered by Eugene Nida is focused entirely on the Response of Receptor or Reader. It’s not enough just to translate the text making the words and expressions understandable; it’s necessary to provide a complete, full substitution of the original text ensuring a holistic and coherent picture of the author’s message for a potential reader [14; 12]. Thus, the target language culture comes to the fore because “the receptors of a translation should comprehend the translated text to such an extent that they can understand how the original receptors must have understood the original text” [14, p. 36]. The dichotomy of domestication and foreignization leads to the two opposite translation strategies – receptive and adaptive. According to V. Demetska, in case of adaptive strategies a translator is expected to use language and cultural models of the receptor and to direct the pragmatic component of the translated texts at his/ her own language and his/ her own readers. With this approach the choice between reproductive and adaptive strategies depends on the cultural connotation of the original text [1].

When comparing two things or entities, the concept of an “image” plays a crucial role. The image associated with two entities that are being compared besides its denotative meaning has a wide range of additional elements, such as connotations, cultural

component, symbolic associations. This complex interplay underlines the essence of any comparative unit and can pose translation challenges. In case of simple images, we talk about certain universal concepts that coincide in different languages and evoke similar associations, which most likely will lead to the full or semi-full equivalents of language units thus simplifying the process of rendering the comparative unit from the source language (SL) to the target language. Let's consider the following example:

"Perciò su quella cosa dello studio era come parlare al muro, e sua madre tutto sommato era della stessa opinione" [20, p. 65]

The Italian comparative unit *"come parlare al muro"* which has its full equivalent in English *"like talking to the wall"* (*"like talking to a brick wall"*). In both languages this expression conveys the same idea – the person (people) you are talking to doesn't listen to you. Which means that English readers have the same sentence as the Italian ones because the original image has been preserved:

"So on the matter of school it was like talking to the wall, and her mother all in all had the same opinion" [21, p. 56].

In case of Ukrainian translation, we come across the similar but not identical image – *"бути як горохом об стіну"* (literally "be like peas against the wall") which, despite its different constituents, still keeps the key element (wall) and has the same meaning and connotational value – there's no use speaking to the person/people as they are not listening:

"... Отож всі балачки про навчання були як горохом об стіну, і мати загалом дотримувалася такої самої думки" [19, p.63].

"Certain culturally specific meaning actualizes comparative units in the language and it's vital to reproduce this meaning in the process of intercultural communication" [5, p. 70] thus in the process of translation as a type of intercultural communication. In case of simple, universal images it's more likely that there are similar if not identical images in the target language. For example, for the following Italian sentence *"Ora se ne fuggiva come un uccellino"* [21, p. 56] we find the method of word-for-word translation, the choice of which is anything but complicated thanks to the simplicity of associative connection in both languages (*"fly like a bird"* = *"летіти як пташка"*) and the absence of the culturally/nationally specific component in the image of this comparative unit:

"Now he was fleeing like a bird" / "А тепер він летів геть, мов пташка" [19, p. 52]

The only difference the English readers might notice (which, nevertheless, has no influence whatsoever on the perception of the image) is the lexeme "bird" instead of the diminutive Italian "uccellino" (literally "birdie", "small bird") due to the absence in the English language diminutive suffixes and the abundance of the latter in Italian (*uccello + ino = uccellino*) and Ukrainian (*птах – пташка*).

The same method has been applied in the following example:

"... perciò non sarei mai corsa dietro a lui come una bestiola fedele" [20, p. 299].

Italian "bestiola" is a diminutive noun from "bestia", which means "animal, beast". The absence of the similar possibility of word derivation in English determines the choice of the reproductive strategy and the method of word-to-word translation for English readers:

"... and so I would not run after him like a faithful beast" [21, p. 274].

More flexible in this regard the Ukrainian language gives the possibility of modifying the noun "тварина" into "тваринка" (or «звір» – «звірок») and offer to the Ukrainian reader the identical comparative unit «бігати як тваринка». But a more appealing and perfectly justifiable in this case seems the adaptive strategy that has been used in the Ukrainian translation. Concretization method allows substituting the word with more general meaning, that's "bestiola" – "animal" for the noun with a more specific meaning – «цуценя» (literally "puppy"), which keeps all the pragmatic values of the original word, and whose image in the comparative unit seems more appropriate, natural and understandable for the Ukrainian reader.

"Так що я не мала ніякого наміру бігати за ним, як те цуценя" [19, p. 318]

Sometimes, though, the simplicity of the image might play a bad joke. The following example demonstrates the difference in rendering the comparative unit into English and Ukrainian:

"Fernando si affacciò continuando a strillare minacce orribili contro la figlia. L'aveva lanciata come una cosa" [20, p. 78].

During some heated argument with her family, Lila's father got so angry that he literally threw his daughter out of the window as if she was a thing. The English version of the translation shows its loyalty to the original text, rendering the above-mentioned phrase word-to-word:

"Fernando looked out, still screaming horrible threats at his daughter. He had thrown her like a thing" [21, p. 67].

The given comparison doesn't seem difficult, it does not have any complicated associative connections, but it is its simplicity that contains powerful stylistic and pragmatic effect – a person (a little girl) is compared to an object without a name, which can be taken and thrown out of the window. In the Ukrainian translation we can see completely different method – the substitution of the image of the comparative unit: the key lexeme "thing" turns into a far more stylistically and pragmatically loaded word combination *"лантух з картоплею"* (literally "a big sack of potatoes"):

"З вікна визирнув Фернандо, продовжуючи викрикувати страшні погрози дочці. Він просто викинув її у вікно, мов лантух з картоплею" [19, p. 77].

However, this new image seems to create a bit of confusion, because the first thing that comes to your mind when you “imagine” a big sack of potatoes is that it’s something heavy and / or bulky. But the author throughout the book repeatedly highlights Lila’s appearance – she’s a very delicate, small and thin girl. Thus, here a reader of a translated book does not have associations the author expects the reader to have. “While translating a massive adjustment of the author’s artistic worldview takes place – it’s replaced by the translator’s artistic worldview, thus it’s inevitable that some associations get lost, some – are changed / modified”. [6, p. 76].

Here is another example where we can trace two different approaches to the problem of rendering the image into target language, but this time the image substitution is right to the point:

“In quell’anno mi sembrò di dilatarmi come la pasta per le pizze” [20, p. 108]

Growing up, Lenù started to gain weight rapidly; this process, no matter how natural it might be, sometimes can be a real emotional rollercoaster especially for a teenager. In the original language it is portrayed with the help of the comparative unit with the component-image of purely Italian food – pizza. While preserving its distinctive national colour this dish has become so popular and known worldwide that the exact rendering of this image into English allows not only to keep all the cultural and national connotations of the original text, but also to assume that the English reader will have no problem understanding what was going on with the main character:

“That year it seemed to me that I expanded like pizza dough” [21, p. 94].

In the Ukrainian translation, though, we can see the substitution of this image – the Ukrainian set expression «рости як на дріжджах» (literally “grow with the help of yeast”) which means “to grow very fast” has been smoothly woven into the narration. On the one hand, the cultural trace of the original comparative unit has been erased because of the domestication of the image, but on the other hand – it’s been compensated by the clear and understandable “picture” of the Ukrainian idiom:

«Того року мені здавалося, що моє тіло росте, немов тісто на дріжджах» [19, p. 107].

In case of more complicated / sophisticated associative connections of the image it’s always necessary to remember that metaphor that constitutes the core of a comparative unit requires thoroughness and attentiveness, because complicated / sophisticated associations suggest complexity of the mental operations while processing some particular image. In the following example we can again observe two different methods of handling the translation of the comparative unit:

“La maestra strillò come sapeva lui, con una voce ad lago, lunga e puntata, che ci terrorizzava...” [20, p. 28]

In the source language the author used an ad hoc comparison “voice like a needle” with some additional descriptive adjectives (long, pointed) to emphasize it. The main difference of ad hoc comparisons from set, fixed ones is the novelty and freshness of the object of comparison, which has greater pragmatic and stylistic effect on the reader. From this perspective set expressions do not have this advantage because very often their images may seem stereotypical, thus ordinary if not boring. “Author’s ad hoc expression strikes as something innovative, unique because of its semantic novelty”, whereas set, phraseological one is perceived as something common” confirms R. Zorivchak [3, p. 36]. But a clear, evident non ambiguous image allows its clear understanding, which is one of the main parameters of sensual emotional sphere to which belong comparative units, because it reduces to a minimum the chances of not understanding the comparison by the reader. While the author’s ad hoc image might be challenging for translation and incomprehensible for the reader.

In the English translation a method of word-to-word translation was applied keeping the original image of the comparison:

“The teacher yelled, as she knew how to do, in a voice like a needle, long and pointed, which terrorized us...” [21, p. 19].

The Ukrainian translation avoided any comparison at all and used descriptive method, as a result of which the Ukrainian reader got the following sentence:

«Учителька гаркнула на неї так, як вмiла робити тільки вона, своїм різким і пронизливим голосом, що доводив нас до переляку...» [19, p. 20].

Had the word-to-word method been used in this case, the Ukrainian reader would have most likely understood in general terms that the teacher had a really unpleasant voice, considering the further context – the teacher’s voice scared her pupils. However, it’s the complexity of the association that would have created certain confusion. Yes, on the one hand, the object of translation is a universal domestic thing – a needle, whose “picture” is easily retrievable in the reader’s mind. But the comparison criteria / features with the help of which an object is compared to a subject are not evident at all – what is the most characteristic feature of a needle? – it’s sharp, pointed and only then appears its metaphorical meaning – it’s piercing, meaning high, loud, and unpleasant. Thus avoiding, no doubt, precise and emotional author’s ad hoc comparison and using the descriptive method in this case seems more than justifiable.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Considering translation as one of the means of cross-cultural communication, the present paper contributes to the understanding of how two opposite translation strategies impact the reproduction and transition of one system of values to another.

Adaptive strategies of the Ukrainian translation include elimination of the original image with its

subsequent substitution; explication and amplification. Substitution of the original image with another one, which is more familiar for the target language culture runs a risk of losing nationally and / or culturally oriented components of the original text or, sometimes due to the elaborate, complex associative connections between the object and its referent, creates a false image, different from the one the author meant to create. Explication and amplification seem to favour the overall understanding and perception of the text, not only rendering the initial message, but also keeping its expressive stylistic features. Reproductive strategies that prevail in the English translation have a number of advantages: loyalty to the original text brings accuracy and consistency, preserves the style, which

allow maintaining coherence and flow of the text in the translated work. Sometimes, though, they may fall short of introducing creative and innovative language solutions that could potentially have better resonance with target readers, aligning with their natural language patterns.

The research provides some insights and possible ways to deal effectively with the complexities of linguistic and cultural diversity in pursuit of translation equivalence and gives a foundation for further exploration in this area of translation. The prospect for future research consists in analyzing additional language material and contributing to the development of a balanced approach of staying loyal to the original text and meeting readers' expectations.

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The article was received by the editors 06.03.2024

The article is recommended for printing 02.05.2024

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РЕПРОДУКТИВНІ ТА АДАПТИВНІ СТРАТЕГІЇ У ПЕРЕКЛАДІ ПОРІВНЯЛЬНИХ ОДИНИЦЬ (НА МАТЕРІАЛІ ІТАЛІЙСЬКОЇ, АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ ТА УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ МОВ)

У статті досліджується питання відтворення порівняльних одиниць італійської мови у англійській та українській мовах крізь призму перекладацьких стратегій одомашнення та очуження. Розглядаючи переклад як один із засобів міжкультурної комунікації, основне дослідницьке питання стосується ефективності обраних стратегій для адекватної передачі всіх смислів оригінального тексту у мові перекладу. Дослідження має на меті проаналізувати, як означені стратегії перекладу впливають на сприйняття порівнянь та порівняльних конструкцій у різноманітних культурних контекстах, тобто в англійському та українському перекладах. Подвійний характер образу, який перебуває в основі порівняльної конструкції, може викликати певні труднощі через його національно та культурно обумовлену природу або через складні асоціативні зв'язки, якщо йдеться про індивідуально-авторські порівняння, які завжди характеризуються своєю новизною та /або певною непередбачуваністю асоціацій між об'єктом та його референтом. Це зумовлює актуальність дослідження. Обидві перекладацькі стратегії мають як свої переваги, так і свої недоліки. Отримані дані дозволяють говорити про пріоритет певної стратегії у межах певного культурного контексту / мови. Англійський переклад схиляється до найякіснішого відтворення образу порівняльних конструкцій, зрівноважуючи певну нестачу уваги до можливих мовних та культурних патернів та вподобань читачів точністю, послідовністю, оригінальним стилем, що дозволяє отримати зв'язну та цілісну картину у мові перекладу. Український переклад надає перевагу більшій динаміці, використовуючи адаптивні стратегії у передачі образів та компенсує певні смислові втрати за рахунок «своїх», зрозумілих образів, що має сприяти ефективній комунікації та задовольняти очікування читача.

Ключові слова: образ, одомашнення, очуження, перекладацька стратегія, порівняння.

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Стаття надійшла до редакції 06.03.2024

Стаття рекомендована до друку 02.05.2024