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SOMETHING IS LOST: LACKING INFORMATION IN TRANSLATION

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This article explores the lacking or often lacunar information in translation. The co-authors point out that the problem of translation is urgent and actual. It concerns the ways to transfer specific elements from one language into another. The special issue is the register of the specific thesaurus of the English cultural elements – lacking ethos in translation. The difficulties of translation caused by cultural lacunarity, namely, the non-transferable elements of the translation, in other term – culturemes. In teaching EFL lacunae are vague elements of grammatical, lexical, semantic nature. Training future translators envisage both theory and practice of translation. The developed skills are very helpful here to eliminate or to compensate informative or thesaurus lacunae. In communication and translation, the information gaps are caused by lack of specific knowledge while their transfer. Both linguistic and cultural gaps are of idiosyncratic nature. They inherit some lacunar elements that may be missed in translation. A specific gap is an important phenomenon, called a “blank space”, or a “zero nomination”, something lost in translation.

Keywords: *gap, cultural features, translation, untranslatable elements, cultural gap*

In modern linguistic research has an important issue to study the status of the primary and secondary texts in terms of translation. In ethno psycholinguistics, translation studies, comparative linguistics and lacunology the process of the national-cultural adaptation in translation is defined as the process of gaps elimination in two ways: filling and compensation. Filling intercultural gaps are defined as the process of revealing of a concept or a word meaning belonging to the unknown recipient culture; and compensation is an introduction the meaning into the target text. The specific elements of culture can be viewed as barriers and obstacles in contacts between two cultures [5: 10].

To transfer every specific element from one text into another is important for students and future translators to form translator's linguistic and cultural outlook, derived from scientific and naive outlook of the world (for example, knowledge of industry terminology and names of everyday objects). The formed knowledge intertwines, creating a holistic view of the world.

The lacunae (gaps) are often associated with the problem of translation difficulties that can be attributed to a lack of equivalent in the target culture. The semantic lacunae of the source culture should not be missed in translation. There are some specific elements in the national picture of the world that cannot correspond to one-word notion, these lexical elements have zero equivalents in the recipients' language. The phenomenon has been called "*lacunarity*". The linguistic lacunicon embraces the "*cross-linguistic lacunarity*", "*cognitive lacunarity*" and the "*proper linguistic lacunarity*" (lacunae of the language and speech). The term "*lacuna*" corresponds to the term "*gap*" in the modern international linguistics.

The totality of all linguistic and cultural elements add up a mosaic picture of the world with fragmentary, incomplete and sometimes contradictory elements, "strongly decorated" in national colors. An important difference between the scientific world of the language is that if the scientific picture of the world claims to be complete without gaps reflecting reality, the linguistic picture of the world is always vague, lacunar and inconsistent. The linguistic picture of the world has the collection of parts that are difficult to translate from one language to another (e.g. sayings, phraseological units, proverbs and sayings, winged words) [5: 19]. These elements are called "gaps".

While transfer of information certain difficulties in translation (*horror hows*) arise causing lacunae (the subject of this article). The lacunarity is syncretically associated with the concept of "implicitness", it refers to the interpretation of the multi-vectored nature of semantic gaps in indirect and additional interpretations. The lacunarity is embodied in the uniqueness and idiomacy of the national culture, the mentality of people. In the "mirror" of a culture, we see only a partial reflection, clarity of which depends on the quality of the elimination or compensation processes.

Researching gaps in the system of language, text and picture of the world is a topical area of modern linguistics. Lacunarity phenomenon allows us to take another look at the interpretative potential of the language system, to evaluate ways to compensate missing forms, values, concepts in identifying interpretational features of multilingual systems. The issues of lacunarity have been

investigated actively by scientists for the past 30 years [5: 4]. Most often scientists have related gaps of language, culture and knowledge to various patterns of ethnic and cultural categories. Originally, lacunarity has been associated with elimination of gaps, pauses and hesitations – “the silent effect” (Belova 1997: 88). In communication, lacuna has been associated with fishing questions, probing questions and elliptical special questions limited to a question word that indicates the information gap: ‘*Are you in a hurry?*’ – ‘*Yes, sir,*’ came the answer, that sent a flash through the listener. – ‘*For what?*’ [3:177].

2. Gaps in the language, speech and cognition

The term ‘*lacuna/gap*’ refers to the absence of lexical item in the language while there is a concept in the conceptual sphere with zero verbalization. It is evident that in contrasting languages lacunae of *culture* subsequently make up the taxonomy of lacunae of the *language, speech* and *cognition (the object of lacunology)*. The way how lacunae are named in terms of lacunology is the linguistic “*lacunicon*”.

Vladimir Gak explained that *lacunae/gaps* are “missing elements in the lexical system of the language, the lacunae are two and more words instead of one in translation”, which seemed to be lacking in the contrasting language (i.e. the Ukrainian *окрин* – Engl. *boiling water*) [2: 261]. The researcher stated that gaps were concepts that exist in the society but had different verbalization in languages.

In the terminology of Vladimir Zhelvis “*lacuna/gap*” is the ‘*isolated element*’ that has no “fixed equivalent expression” in contrasting languages and cultures [3: 136]. Also, *gaps/lacunae* are implied inconsistencies in the contrasted languages in the conceptual, linguistic and emotive categories of the local cultures” [3: 194]. Iosif Sternin used to stress upon the fact of the mirror effect: lacuna in the local culture is non-equivalent element in the other culture [7: 24, 36].

So what is the nature of a missing word? Gap is a manifestation of the incommensurability, incongruency, mismatch of cultures and languages. The differences arise in comparison, in contact with other cultures. *Tertium comparationis* works with elements of national-specific nature. The inherent features of lacunar concepts are incomprehensible, unusual, exotic, strange, unfamiliar, enigmatic, etc.

The obstacles that arise in transition of the national specific elements of one culture to another

can be qualified as cultural lacunae. Empty cells in the contrasted language indicate lacuna (for example, the category of Gerund and Article presenting in English, but absent in Ukrainian).

Lacunae usually have zero exteriorization [5: 88]. The content of the lacunae filled by borrowing, transliteration, compare: Eng. *gastropub* – Ukr. “заступонаб”. The gap can be compensated by an equivalent replacement, Cf.: Eng. *earworm*, Ukr. *набридлива мелодія* (*obsessive melody*). Lacunar neologic elements at first are transmitted descriptively, and later – with the help of equivalents, e.g.: Eng. *man cave* (a room or space (as in a basement) designed according to the taste of the man of the house to be used as his personal area for hobbies and leisure activities) may be translated into Ukrainian as “барлога / барліз” or “святе місце” differently depending on the context and connotations meaning “Cave” or “Holy place”.

The “communicative gap” is seen as zero externalization in speech, which is correlated with lack of knowledge of specific realities, ethnonyms or other specifics thus resulting in pauses, the result of cognitive discord. Gaps are opposed to *non-equivalent vocabulary*. A gap is a prototype of zero element. In translation, gaps emerge while the unknown information transfer through the thesaurus of the personality – the personal ABC (the associative-verbal network). Gaps are fixed at the time of comparison and reconstruction of the foreign language and unfamiliar culture. Comparing to other languages, we aim at finding lacunae in contrasting elements.

The lacunicon is the register of gaps in cross-language picture of the world, through which it is possible to understand cultures by keywords. Lacunae elimination promotes cultural understanding. For example, we shall never comprehend the words with the hidden semantic content identically. In American culture “Friends” are persons to whom you say “Hello” or smile occasionally. In our culture “friends” are more important persons, close and even intimate, not just acquaintances. When someone talks about someone: “*He is my best friend*” it implies that someone is a decent man known for a long time. That would be consistent with the friendship in our understanding, but it is simply not available in many other cultures. To our friends, we can ask for help, and they are required in turn to provide it.

The lexical and grammatical charge in certain combinations differ in perception with carriers of native languages. For example, not by chance that the German combination of “*zärtliches Schweigen*”, Ukr. “ласкава тишина” is translated as “*Gentle silence*”. “*Soft and mute*” is a rare combination, author epithets are unexpected with hidden comparisons that attract attention of the reader, so the translator

tends to artificially save the reproducibility of the collocation.

Nonverbal gaps are eliminated both verbally and non-verbally, over time, have a protracted temporal way that can be measured in years. Lacunae operate diachronically and synchronically.

Creating sequels of books and numerous screen versions provide lacunar prototypical copies, relic or artifact parodies, such as “Casino Royale” (1967). New versions are not worthy without comparison to older ones. Translation and a new film are always intertextual. The intertextuality is a “*right hand*” of semantic lacunarity. Artifact, where you can find the gaps, is incomplete with respect to its real or virtual prototype. Memory and Identity can be both lost in “Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind” (King 2013). When something is lost in translation, it must be the identity of the original.

3. Rendering lacunae in translation

There are different layers of lacunarity. The grammatical lacunarity is traced as categories like article category in English or gender category in Ukrainian that emerge as zero in contrast. This phenomenon is considered to be a throwback to the synthetic background of the Ukrainian language and analytic background of the English language. The analytic design of English, its simplified wording stay lacunar for the Slavic speech model. Also, the word order syntax of the English language is standard in contrast to the Slavic languages.

The ethnographic elements are considered by linguists as gaps of transfer to another culture: they are not easily translated, so they are rendered “with the phrase, not by a word” [5: 24]. Lacuna is a unique phenomenon which mirrors zero reflection of non-equivalent vocabulary. Lacunae are quasi-comparable units that can refer to various referents of ethnic cultures. The phenomenon of the lack of specific elements in the culture of one ethnic group against another in English termed as *gap*.

A different interpretation of the text arises from the thesaurus volume, thus resulting in gaps of “functional ambiguity” and the ambiguity of interpretation [5: 17]. The example of the ambiguous interpretation can be fixed in prepared speech or in spontaneous communication with regard to some allusions or precedential facts (e.g. *the eleventh of September*) that can be unknown. What to do in case an interpreter? How to translate the missing piece? Theoretically, lacunar element cannot be transferred. On the other hand, the gap should be filled by an interpreter, which specifies said by broad

interpretation. The choice of a tactic is formed according to the established conditions and by the planned decision of interpreter or on customer's demand of translation.

The cultural or linguistic facts can cause gaps or broad interpretation. Ethnographic specifics must be fully rendered in the target culture [5: 60]. The implicit gaps are results of loss of some background information [5: 63]. Within the framework of cultural studies, we identify gaps as subjective phenomena (e.g. *borsch*), cultural gaps (e.g. *kozack*), and textual gaps (e.g. *Who's here? No one...*).

Linguistics views lacunae as milestones of interpretation in the intratexts, as intercultural communication problem, as translation losses phenomenon, as intertextual issue and the fact of implicitness. These problems remain theoretically valid. Gaps are often seen as translation errors, which may be compensated by broad interpretation (commentary of translator). Empty spots in language can be explained by random variability of the language system, which tends to save characters, differentiation nominations due to the frequency of use. Some lacunar phenomena cannot be verbalized due to their uniqueness. The problem of limited or vague understanding as part of the source text can be solved by the quite different translation strategies and solutions. Referring to Anthony Pym's understanding of transcultural relations, there are three strategies for lacunae elimination: transpositions, substitutions or modulations to translate the textual lacunae [4: 34].

The specifics of the social lacunae in terms of Anthony Pym can be rendered or some part of the original can be transmitted but the other part should be left in the commentary in the original with the footnote, not just translated. Some element of the culture cannot be translated, but should be commented on. To render lacuna or liquidate lacuna means two methods of translation, cf.: the the vague element may be rendered by shift (i) (transposition, substitution or modulation) or (ii) by means of the omission technique (deletion). Vinay claimed that these principles actually founded the 'Canadian School of translation' [8: 148]. Lacunae can be eliminated by either omission or shift (substitution, modulation or transposition). The omission is the '*deletion of lacuna*', '*absence of translation*' or putting the specific element in *italics* without translation. Translation Shift is the way of translation to work with.

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