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Research article

The formation of interlingual lacunarity in the translation process from English to Azerbaijani as a result of cross-cultural differences

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Abstract. The close interrelation between languages and cultures, and the category of lacunarity which is formed as a result of cross-cultural differences are presented in the given paper. Important factors such as customs and traditions, history, literature, religion, outlook, and the way of thinking of people are reflected in the language spoken by that people. Clear differences appeared in cross-cultural communication are explained to be the reason of the lack of compatibility between the working languages of translation. The interpretation of each subgroup is explained by the examples. Lacunar units and random lacunae are objects of the investigation. Lacunar units and lacunae together form the category of lacunarity. In the given article it is possible to get acquainted with the words and phraseological units which form lacuna in the translation process from English to Azerbaijani.

Keywords: cross-cultural communication, culture and language, lacuna, lacunar unity, lacunology, phraseological lacunar units, phraseological lacunae

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Introduction

Culture and language are always learned in relation. Language reflects the culture, history, lifestyle, geographical features, climate of the people or ethnic groups. Language is a category of culture; it helps people to understand the world around them. The culture, traditions, beliefs, values, and experience of previous generations of each nation are transmitted to the next generations through language. Language determines a person's behavior, lifestyle, outlook, mentality, national character, and ideology. The language of every nation is its historical memory. Vibrant cultural values of people are preserved in the form of oral and written speech, in the lexical and grammatical systems of the language, in proverbs and sayings, in folklore, in scientific and literary literature, precisely in the language of that nation. G.O. Vinokur noted that a linguist-scientist, by studying the language of any nation, parallelly, becomes a researcher of the culture and its characteristics of it (Maslova, 2001: 27).

Literature Review

Since the 19th century, the interaction between language and culture has been considered one of the most important research objects of linguistics. Linguists such as J. Grimm, R. Raek, W. von Humboldt, A.A. Potebnya have conducted interesting studies in this direction. The German philosopher W. von Humboldt was the first linguist to accept and confirm the existence of interaction between language and culture (Maslova, 2001: 45). Linguoculturology has its roots in the ideas and works of famous linguists such as W. von Humboldt, J. Baudouin de Courtenay, E. Sapir, B. Whorf, A.A. Potebnya (Maslova, 2001: 23). This independent scientific direction was formed in the 90s of the 20th century based on the research conducted by the phraseology school led by V.N. Telia, works and approaches of linguists such as Y.S. Stepanov, V.V. Vorobyov, V. Shaklein, V.G. Kostomarov, V.A. Maslova (Maksimovskih, 2009).

The outstanding Russian linguist V. Maslova investigated such important issues as the interaction of language and culture, the language map of the world, national mentality, myth, folklore, phraseology, the emergence and development of linguoculturology, its goals and tasks. The third chapter of V. Maslova's book "Linguoculturology" contains interesting ideas about language and culture (Maslova, 2001: 45–56). K. Kramsch, a professor at the University of California, notes: "Language reflects cultural reality through verbal and non-verbal aspects such as the speaker's tone of voice, accent, conversational style, gestures and facial expressions. Language is also a system of signs that has cultural values. That is, language expresses the social identity of a person. The prohibition of the language means a rejection of the social group that speaks that language and its culture" (Kramsch, 1998: 3). To explain the essence of culture, K. Kramsch compares it with nature. According to him, "nature itself arises and develops naturally ("nature" is derived from the Latin word "nascere", meaning "to be born"), and culture is created and developed by the people ("culture" is derived from the Latin word "colere", which means to plant, to cultivate)" (Kramsch, 1998: 4).

There are more than seven thousand languages in the modern world. The literature, the culture, customs and traditions, outlook, and beliefs of peoples with different languages are also different from each other. In recent times, interest in the comparative analysis of languages has increased significantly. In the 60s of the last century, studies conducted by linguists such as M.M. Pokrovsky, O. Dukhachek, R. Meyer, A.A. Ufimtseva, V.V. Vinogradov, A.I. Kuznetsova, L.M. Vasiliev, A.V. Bondarko, V.N. Admoni have created an opportunity for the development of contrastive linguistics (Sternin, 2006: 8). The object of contrastive linguistics is considered to be at least two languages. In the process of translation, we naturally come across words and phrases that cannot be translated from one language to another. In this article, we are specifically interested in words and phraseological

units that have no equivalent in the target language (lack of equivalence/compatibility) and as a result of which gaps (lacunae) are created in the translation process. It is an obvious fact that untranslatable words have always been a “puzzling” issue for translators, that is why they have been involved in extensive research, and a large number of books, articles, and dissertations have been devoted to this topic.

Materials and methods

We are going to confront and compare the lexical systems of the Azerbaijani and English languages. Linguistic lacunae are revealed when two or more language systems are compared from different aspects. Lexical, grammatical, and stylistic lacunae are included in linguistic lacunae. Lexical lacunae appear when a notion or concept exists in both languages, however we can come across the word to call it only in one of the compared languages. In this case, the lexical gap formed in the target language is compensated by free word combinations or descriptive translation method. We are planning to discuss these problems by giving examples. English words and fixed expressions which form lexical lacunae in Azerbaijani are going to be given in our research work.

Comparative and descriptive methods are used to conduct the given study. While comparing the lexical systems and phraseological funds of source and target languages the comparative method is being widely used. Furthermore, the descriptive method is used to describe the characteristics of lacunar units and lacunae, i.e. the category of lacunarity in the compared languages.

Books, articles and dissertations of Russian and European linguists, as well as explanatory and translation dictionaries act as basic material of the presented article.

Results

The prominent soviet linguist L.S. Barkhudarov included proper nouns, realia and random lacunae in the non-equivalent

vocabulary (Barkhudarov, 1975: 57–59). We can explain L.S. Barkhudarov's division as follows:

1. *Proper nouns*. This group includes personal names, geographical names, names of organizations, restaurants, ships, newspapers, magazines etc. We often come across proper nouns in media, newspapers, books and textbooks. Equivalents of such special names are fixed in encyclopedias, explanatory and translation dictionaries. For instance, in the English-Azerbaijani dictionary compiled under the leadership of O.I. Turksever (Musayev), stable equivalents of many English personal and geographical names are given in Azerbaijani: *Adaline* — *Ədələyn*, *Adalayn*; *Benjamin* — *Bencəmin*, *Calvin* — *Kəlvın*; *Caroline* — *Kərələyn*, *Kərəlin*; *Nicholas* — *Nikələs*, *Nikolas*; *Richard* — *Riçəd*, *Riçard*; *Barents Sea* — *Barens dənizi*; *Canterbury* — *Kəntərberi*; *Houston* — *Hyuston*; *Malaysia* — *Malayziya*; *New Jersey* — *Nyu Cersi*; *Scotland* — *Şotland*; *Shropshire* — *Şropşir*. Apparently, these names were transferred to the Azerbaijani language by means of transliteration or transcription. Unlike well-known and commonly used proper nouns, most of the personal and geographical names are not reflected in the English-Azerbaijani dictionary. Since most proper nouns do not have counterparts in bilingual dictionaries, L.S. Barkhudarov included them in the non-equivalent vocabulary.
2. *Realia*. This group includes names of objects, concepts and situations that are unknown to people who speak other languages and are considered exoticisms in the translated language, because realia reflect words such as names of national food and drinks, national clothes, national musical instruments and dances belonging to a special nation, they have no counterparts in other languages. For example, words such as *butterscotch*,

faggot, eggnog, muffin, haggis, toffee, sundae belong to English cuisine. *Butterscotch* is a light brown solid made by boiling together butter and powdered sugar. *Faggots* are meatballs made from a mixture of pig's heart, belly or liver with onions, different spices and breadcrumbs. It is generally served with mashed potatoes and green peas. It is considered the national dish of the United Kingdom, mainly South and Mid Wales. *Haggis* is a pudding made from a mixture of minced sheep's heart, lungs and liver with fat, onions, oats and spices. It is the national dish of Scottish cuisine. *Eggnog* is a drink made by mixing beaten egg whites, egg yolks, milk, cream, powdered sugar with one of the alcoholic beverages such as brandy, whiskey, bourbon or rum. Although it is considered to have originated in Great Britain, it is drunk during Christmas in Canada, America and many European countries. The mentioned English or Scottish realia have no equivalents in other languages. Such words are translated into the target language by means of transliteration or transcription. In order to make realia understandable, in most cases it is given a descriptive translation either at the bottom of the page as a footnote or at the end of the book.

3. *Random lacunae*. One-word lexical units included in this group do not have their counterparts in the translated language for various reasons. For example, in English, the five fingers on one hand are called *thumb, index finger, middle finger, ring finger, pinky (pinkie)*. The Azerbaijani language equivalents of the mentioned finger names are *baş barmaq, şəhadət barmağı, orta barmaq, üzük barmağı (adsız barmaq), çeçələ barmağı*. Apparently, the concepts of *thumb* and

pinky (pinkie) exist in both languages, but only in English they are referred to as one word. The equivalent of the English words *botanic, botanical, botany* in Azerbaijani is *botanika*. For example, a free word combination *a beautiful botanical garden* is translated into our language as *gözəl botanika bağı*. The counterparts of the word *botanist* in the Azerbaijani language are *botanik* and *nəbatatçı*. Among the words with the same root listed in English, only the verb *to botanize* is considered a random lacuna in the Azerbaijani language. In the English-Azerbaijani dictionary, the verb *to botanize* is translated to Azerbaijani as *öyrənmək məqsədilə bitki toplamaq*¹.

The term *lacuna*, which arose during the comparison of two languages and two cultures, is derived from the Latin word “*lacuna*” and the French word “*lacune*” and means “gap, hole”. The field of science that studies lacunae and problems related with them is called *lacunology*. Russian Soviet linguists S.I. Ojegov and N.Y. Shvedova explained the word in the dictionary “*Explanatory Dictionary of the Russian Language*” in the following way: “*ЛАКУНА, -ы, ж. (книжн.). Пропуск, пробел, недостающее место в тексте; вообще пропуск, пробел в чем-н.*”². Since the 19th century, such gaps have been systematically studied, the science of *lacunology* was studied more widely after the development of *ethnopsycholinguistics* in the 1970s and 1980s. This term was first introduced to world linguistics in 1958 by J.P. Vinay and J. Darbelnet, representatives of the French-Canadian school of linguistics, and by Y.S. Stepanov to Russian linguistics (Azamova, 2022: 78).

The concepts of *lacunar unit* and *lacuna* are distinguished in linguistics. The *lacunar unit* and *lacuna* together form the category of *lacunarity*. Well-known linguist L.K. Bayramova explained the concepts

¹ Türksevər (Musayev), O.İ., Əliyev, T.İ., & Məmmədov, Q.Q. (və b.). (2004). İngiliscə-Azərbaycanca lüğət. Şərq-Qərb.

² Ozhegov, S.I., & Shvedova, N.Yu. (1988). *Explanatory dictionary of the Russian language*. Russian language.

of lacunar unit and lacuna in her research paper “Linguistic lacunar units and lacunae” (Bayramova, 2011: 22). The target of the given article is an investigation of English words and phraseological units which form lacuna in the Azerbaijani language.

In English, we come across the word *earworm* in some contexts. The explanation of this word is given in Cambridge Learner’s Dictionary as “a song that you keep hearing in your head”³. The word *earworm* can be literally translated into Azerbaijani as *qulaq qurdu*. The British call earworm any pleasant song or melody that is constantly heard in a person’s ears, and hummed in his language. Such a concept exists in our language as well. However, there is no concrete word in the Azerbaijani language that expresses this concept.

Fortnight, which is one of the words that creates a lacuna in the Azerbaijani language, is explained as “a period of two weeks” in Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary⁴. The word *fortnight* was formed as a result of the shortening of the phrase fourteen nights. In English-Azerbaijani dictionary, the translation of the word *fortnight* is given in our language as “iki həftə, on dörd gün”⁵. As you can see, unlike the English language, the Azerbaijani language does not have a specific word that expresses this concept.

The word *siblings* is explained in Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary as “a brother or sister”⁶. In English, the concept of “brother or sister” is expressed by one word *siblings*. The word *siblings* form a lacuna in Azerbaijani. Furthermore, it is interesting that some words expressing kinship form a lacuna in the translation from Azerbaijani to English. For example, in Azerbaijani, the words *əmi* and *dayı* are expressed in the same way by the word

uncle, and the words *bibi* and *xala* by the word *aunt*. In English, brother’s/sister’s or sister-in-law’s/brother-in-law’s daughter is not expressed by a word combination (*qardaş/bacı qızı yaxud baldız/ qayın qızı*) as in Azerbaijani, but by a specific word, *niece*. Similarly, the word *nephew* forms a lacuna in our language when translated into Azerbaijani. This word is translated in the “English-Azerbaijani Dictionary” as “qardaş/bacı oğlu, arvadın və ya ərin qardaşının /bacısının oğlu”⁷.

Another example that forms a lacuna in the Azerbaijani language is *facepalm*. In Azerbaijani, face means “üz”, palm means “ovuc”. This word is translated into Azerbaijani as “utancından, xəcalətindən əliylə üzünü örtmək”. The word *facepalm* can be interpreted as “the act of covering your face with your hand because you are embarrassed, annoyed, or disappointed about something”. When people are ashamed, disappointed, surprised and horrified by something, they lower their heads, close their eyes, put one hand over their face and cover their face with their fingers. Surprisingly, although the gesture expressing the word *facepalm* exists in many cultures, the mentioned concept is not expressed in a single word in all languages. For example, the famous “Cain” statue located in the Tuileries Garden in Paris depicts a man covering his face with one hand. The work made by the sculptor H. Vidal is the statue of Cain who killed his brother Abel. But in French, the concept expressed by this gesture is not expressed in a single word.

Unlike the Azerbaijani language, in English, along with the verb *to look*, there are verbs that indicate different ways of looking: *to stare* — gözünlü zilləyib baxmaq⁸; *to gaze* — diqqətlə, təəccüblə, gözünlü zilləyib baxmaq⁹; *to glance/to glimpse* — gözucu baxmaq, ötəri

³ O’Shea, S. (Ed). (2012). Cambridge Learner’s Dictionary. 4th edition. Cambridge University Press.

⁴ Hornby, A.S. (Ed). (2005). Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary. 7th edition. Oxford University Press.

⁵ Türksevär (Musayev), O.İ., Əliyev, T.İ., & Məmmədov, Q.Q. (və b.). (2004). İngiliscə-Azərbaycanca lüğət. Şərq-Qərb.

⁶ Ibid. P. 1414.

⁷ Ibid. P. 741.

⁸ Ibid. P. 1057.

⁹ Ibid. P. 521.

nəzər salmaq¹⁰, *to peer* — diqqətlə/dörd gözə baxmaq¹¹, *to peep* — oğrun baxmaq¹², *to peek* — ötəri/oğrun baxmaq¹³, *to glare* — gözünü zilləyib hirsə baxmaq, qəzəblə baxmaq¹⁴; *to gawk* — ağzını açaraq boş-boşuna baxmaq¹⁵; *to gape* — heyranlıqla baxmaq, ağzı açıq qalmaq¹⁶. Although the same concepts exist in Azerbaijani, there are no verbs that express them in one word. The verbs listed above form a lexical gap in our language. As it can be seen, such verbs are translated into Azerbaijani by descriptive method.

In terms of translation, phraseological units can be divided into two groups: 1) phraseological units which have counterparts in the translated language; 2) phraseological units that have no equivalent in the translated language (descriptive translation method is used in the translation of such idioms). D.O. Dobrovolskiy defines four types of interlinguistic equivalence in the translation of phraseological units: 1) complete equivalents (absolute equivalents); 2) partial equivalents; 3) phraseological analogues; 4) non-equivalent phraseological units (Dobrovolskiy, 2011: 221).

Plenty of English phraseological units have no counterpart in Azerbaijani. In the literature of linguistics, such expressions are called non-equivalent phraseological units or lacunar phraseological units. The phraseological fund of each language is rich in lacunar phraseological units. Phraseological gaps are formed in the process of comparing phraseological systems of different languages. According to R. Khayrullina, the extralinguistic reasons for the formation of phraseological lacunae are the geoclimatic characteristics of the compared regions, the way of life of the peoples, the differences between traditions, psychology, mental characteristics, and the intralinguistic reason is that languages have different grammatical structures (Khayrullina, 2023: 75). The following idioms have

no equivalents or analogues in the Azerbaijani language and are translated with the help of descriptive translation method. For example: *Doubting Thomas* — *hər şeydən şübhələnən, sübut olmadan heç bir şeyə inanmayan insan*; *to meet one's Waterloo* — *məğlub olmaq*; *to grin like Cheshire cat* — *özündən razı şəkildə gülmək*; *to have gumleaves growing out of ears* — *axmaq, dayazdişüncəli insan haqqında*; *Pandora's box* — *müxtəlif çətinlik və bədbəxtliyin mənbəyi*; *Pyrrhic victory* — *zərərin qazancdan daha artıq olduğu qələbə*; *Peeping Tom* — *digərləri geyinib-soyunduğu zaman gizlicə onları izləyən insan*; *to be Greek to someone* — *anlaşılmayan, çətin bir şey haqqında*; *to send smb. to Coventry* — *cəzalandırmaq məqsədilə bir kəs ilə danışmamaq, ona məhəl qoymamaq*; *to have kissed the Blarney stone* — *inandırıcı olmaq, inandırıcı danışmaq*.

One of phraseological units which does not have an equivalent expressed by a single word or a fixed expression in Azerbaijani is *refrigerator rights*. It expresses an extremely close and friendly relationship between different people. In Azerbaijani, this combination is translated as “icazəsiz, soruşmadan başqasının soyuducusuna girə bilmə hüququ”. Of course, you have to be sincere enough as a member of the family with the host to enter the refrigerator in someone else's house without asking permission and take whatever you want. Expressing extreme closeness and sincerity in relationships, this combination forms a phraseological gap in Azerbaijani.

The proverb “Don't throw the baby out with the bath water” formed on the basis of traditions specific to the English people forms a phraseological lacuna in the Azerbaijani language. According to this tradition, in the Middle Ages, the British held a “big bath” ceremony in May. The British would fill a large tub with hot water and all members of family

¹⁰ Türksevr (Musayev), O.İ., Əliyev, T.İ., & Məmmədov, Q.Q. (və b.). (2004). İngiliscə-Azərbaycanca lüğət. Şərq-Qərb. P. 530.

¹¹ Ibid. P. 831.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid. P. 529.

¹⁵ Ibid. P. 521.

¹⁶ Ibid. P. 519.

would be forced to bathe in the same water. The man of the house would have the privilege of taking the first bath in clean water. Then the other men and sons of family, then the women and girls, and finally the children would bathe in the same water. Babies were the last to bathe in dirty water. The water was so dirty that it was almost impossible to see the baby in the water. On the basis of this tradition, the emphasized expression was appeared. According to this proverb, when we throw away something unnecessary and get rid of it, it is recommended to preserve the necessary and valuable things in it.

Discussion

It should be emphasized that the study of lacunology, various classifications of lacunae and their methods of elimination are of paramount importance, on the grounds that lacunology and its problems haven't been investigated thoroughly in world, as well as Azerbaijani linguistics. We are planning to involve several novels and short stories from American and British literature to further research. We are going to compare source and target texts parallelly. After that we shall find out lacunar units from

source language and discuss the formation of lacunae in target language. We shall attempt to classify lacunae and determine the methods of elimination of the selected lacunae.

Conclusion

It is clear that not only two languages but also two cultures are involved in the translation process. As a conclusion, we can note that translation is a very difficult and multifunctional type of activity. The identification of non-equivalent lexical units and the analysis of intra-linguistic and extra-linguistic factors as a result of which lacunae are formed in target language, are considered to be one of the crucial issues of translation studies. In recent years, we see that English and Azerbaijani languages, as well as cultures have been involved in extensive research. Although problems related to lacunae have been thoroughly studied in European and Russian linguistics, unfortunately, they have been poorly studied in Azerbaijani linguistics. Examples of words and non-equivalent lexical units that cause difficulty in translation from English to Azerbaijani are shown in the presented research work.

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Научная статья

Формирование межъязыковой лакунарности в процессе перевода с английского на азербайджанский язык как результат межкультурных различий

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Аннотация. Рассмотрена категория лакунарности, которая формируется в результате различий между культурами. Обычай, история, литература, религия, мировоззрение и образ мышления народа репрезентируются в его языке. Обнаружено, что различия в языковых кодах являются причиной отсутствия совместимости между рабочими языками перевода. Объект исследования — лакунарные единицы и случайные лакуны, образующие категорию лакунарности. Проведен анализ слов и фразеологических сочетаний, при переводе которых с английского языка на азербайджанский возникают семантические пробелы.

Ключевые слова: межкультурная коммуникация, культура и язык, лакуна, лакунарная единица, лакунология, фразеологические лакунарные единицы, фразеологические лакуны

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