

Eureka Journal of Education & Learning Technologies (EJELT)

ISSN 2760-4918 (Online)

Volume 2, Issue 5, May 2026



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<https://eurekaoa.com/index.php/2>

PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS WITH NATIONAL- CULTURAL COMPONENTS: A CASE STUDY OF THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN AND ITS TRANSLATION ВСАДНИК БЕЗ ГОЛОВЫ

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Abstract

The article examines the impact of extralinguistic factors on the translation of phraseological units containing national and cultural components in Thomas Mayne Reid's novel "The Headless Horseman". The research focuses on historical, cultural, social and ethnographic aspects of nineteenth-century Texas and the American South that affect both the formation and translation of phraseological expressions. Particular attention is paid to the preservation of national-cultural coloring in the Russian translation of the novel. The study analyzes issues of equivalence, adequacy, and cultural transfer in the translation of phraseological units.

Keywords: Phraseological unit, extralinguistic factors, translation, linguoculturology, national-cultural component, stylistic function, historical content.

Introduction

Contemporary translation studies emphasize the importance of both linguistic and extralinguistic factors in intercultural communication. Phraseological units (PU) represent one of the most significant carriers of national culture, as they reflect a people's historical experience, worldview, traditions, and everyday life.

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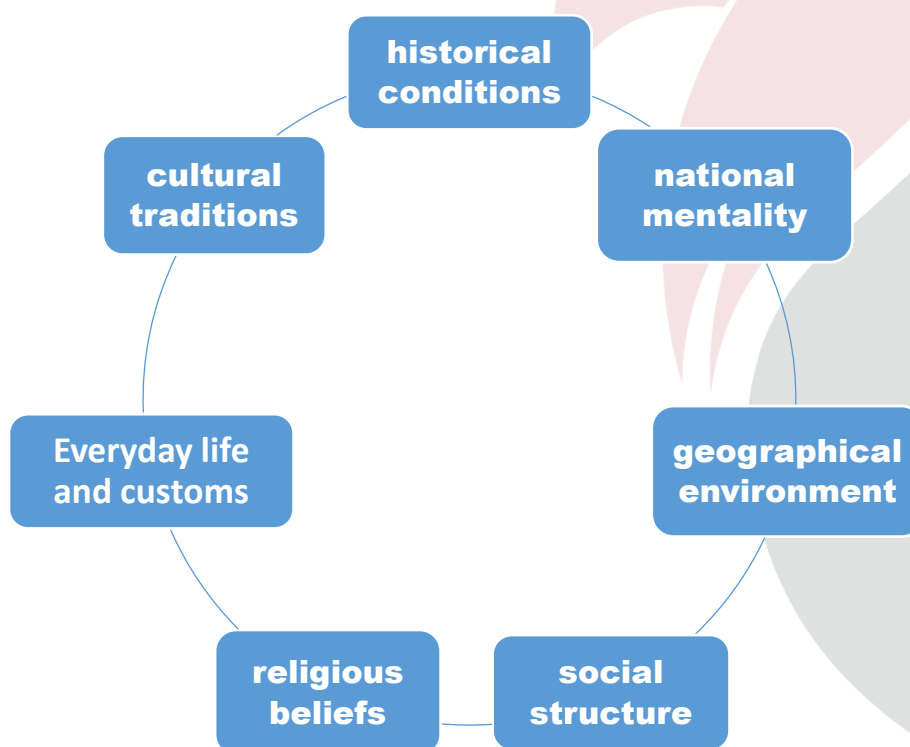
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When translating literary texts, translators face the challenge of conveying not only the semantic meaning of PU (phraseological units) but also their cultural and historical content. This issue is particularly relevant in the translation of *The Headless Horseman*; whose events unfold within the unique cultural environment of the nineteenth-century American frontier.

The purpose of study is to identify the impact of extralinguistic factors on the phraseological units' translation with national-cultural components in the Russian translation of novel.

Extralinguistic factors refer to non-linguistic circumstances that influence the functioning and interpretation of language units. These include



According to W. Humboldt, language reflects a nation's worldview. This idea was further developed by E. Sapir and B. Whorf, who emphasized the

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interrelationship between language and culture in shaping national perceptions of reality.

Phraseological units function as cultural codes that encapsulate collective experience of a speech community.

Materials and Methods

The research material contains phraseological units extracted from *The Headless Horseman* and its Russian translation “Всадник без головы” by A. Makarova. The methods of comparative analysis, continuous sampling method, contextual and linguacultural analysis and translation analysis were used.

Results and Discussion

As the events of novel take place in Texas during the westward expansion of United States, this period was characterized by frontier conflicts, cowboy culture, constant danger and uncertainty and life on the boarder of civilization. These realities are reflected in numerous phraseological units in the novel.

Example 1.

Keep your eyes skinned – смотрите в оба, будьте начеку

This phraseological unit defines **historical factor**. The events of the novel take place on the American frontier. Settlers, hunters, and Texas Rangers constantly faced attacks, fugitives, criminals, wild animals. Therefore, the expression is associated with the need for constant vigilance and alertness.

Additionally, the current idiom concerns **socio-cultural factor**. The phraseological unit reflects hunting culture, the lifestyle of cowboys and everyday life of nineteenth-century Texas residents.

Consequently, the expression contains a national-cultural component characteristic of American frontier life. It reflects the unique historical and social realities of Wild West and serves as a linguistic representation of the frontier experience.

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The following example shows religious and cultural factor.

curse delivered in the garden of Eden – исполнил бы библейское проклятие, раздавив змею каблуком

Had it been a rattlesnake, “copperhead,” or “moccasin,” he would have acted up to the curse delivered in the garden of Eden, and planted the heel of his heavy alligator-skin boot upon its head.

The phrase **curse delivered in the garden of Eden** is a direct biblical allusion to the story of Adam, Eve, and the serpent in the book of Genesis. The author assumes that readers are familiar with the biblical narrative and understand the symbolic association between snakes and evil. Thus, the phraseological meaning cannot be fully understood without knowledge of Christian culture and biblical tradition.

Since both English-speaking and Russian-speaking cultures share a long Christian tradition, the translator can employ a close phraseological equivalent without significant loss of cultural information.

The idiom **forlorn hope** means a hopeless undertaking; a desperate or nearly impossible attempt. **Forlorn hope – отчаянная попытка, безнадежное дело.**

The expression **forlorn hope** originated as a military term in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It derives from the Dutch phrase “verloren hoop” (“lost troop”) which referred to a detachment of soldiers sent to lead an assault on a fortified position. Because these soldiers faced an extremely high probability of death, the term gradually acquired the figurative meaning of a desperate or hopeless attempt. This idiom is related to historical and socio-cultural factors.

The idiom **“play possum”** means to pretend to be asleep, inactive (**притворяться**)

It originates from the defensive behavior of Virginia opossum, which feigns death when threatened. Since opossums are native to North America, the expression is deeply rooted in American culture and frontier life. It illustrates how the natural

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environment influenced the development of American English phraseology. This example defines geographic factor.

“Dog-gone my cats!” he muttered, but in a very low tone, and with eyes still fixed upon the point where the horse’s tail had been last seen.

In the given extract we can emphasize the phrase **“Dog-gone my cats”** (**черт побери**). This is an idiomatic exclamatory phrase and euphemistic expression typical of nineteenth-century American English. It functions as an emotional interjection expressing surprise, astonishment, or disbelief rather than conveying its literary meaning. The expression originated as a euphemistic substitute for the profanity God damn, reflecting the religious norm of American frontier society, where direct blasphemous expressions were socially unacceptable. Consequently, speakers replaced offensive words with milder forms such dog-gone, dadgum and gosh. The translation of this phrase requires consideration of extralinguistic factors, including the religious beliefs, social conventions, and regional speech of the area where the events take place. A literal translation would fail to reproduce both its expressive function and its natural-cultural coloring.

The analysis revealed several methods of translating phraseological units.

Translation strategies

Table 1

Phraseological equivalent	High
Phraseological analogue	High
Descriptive translation	Medium
Calque translation	Low
Compensation	Medium

The most successful translations are those that preserve:

Imagery;

Emotional coloring;

Cultural background;

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Stylistic function.

The study demonstrates the translators must consider several extralinguistic dimensions such as historical context, social environment, national worldview, intercultural adaptation.

Conclusion

The research conducted shows that the translation of culture-specific phraseological units is determined not only by linguistic factors but also by a wide range of extralinguistic factors. These comprise the historical background of American frontier society, religious beliefs, regional dialects, social conventions, folklore, and the everyday life of prairies. Such factors shape semantic, stylistic, and, pragmatic meanings of PU, making their translation a complex intercultural process rather than a simple lexical substitution.

The comparative analysis of the English original and the Russian translation indicates that translators frequently employ various translation strategies, including functional equivalence, descriptive translation, cultural adaptation, and pragmatic substitution. These strategies enable translator to reproduce the communicative function, emotional coloring, and stylistic effect of the original text while making it accessible to the target audience. Meanwhile, complete preservation of national-cultural nuances is not always possible, and some cultural meanings may inevitably be reduced or transformed during translation.

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