

LINGUOCULTURAL ASPECTS OF TRANSLATING ENGLISH INTERNET NEOLOGISMS

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Abstract. This paper explores the linguocultural aspects of translating English Internet neologisms into other languages. The rapid expansion of Internet communication has made English the principal donor language for new lexical units that cross linguistic and cultural borders at an unprecedented speed. Because many of these neologisms carry culture-specific connotations or denote entirely new digital realities, their translation poses difficulties that extend well beyond simple lexical correspondence. Drawing on scholarship in lexicology and linguoculturology, the study classifies Internet neologisms, examines the linguocultural challenges involved in their translation — non-equivalence, realia and connotative meaning — and surveys the principal translation strategies: transcription, transliteration, calque, borrowing, descriptive translation and functional analogues. It concludes that the adequate rendering of Internet neologisms requires both linguistic competence and cultural awareness on the part of the translator.

Keywords: neologism, Internet discourse, linguoculture, translation, equivalence, realia, borrowing, calque, occasionalism, abbreviation, linguoculturema.

Introduction

The rapid development of Internet technologies has produced new ways of transferring information between network users and, with them, a constant stream of new vocabulary. In the process of online communication every language inevitably changes: new features, forms and lexical units arise, and over time they penetrate everyday speech, affecting the structure of the language and its vocabulary. For this reason, linguists have devoted particular attention in recent years to network communication and to the neologisms it generates. The World Wide Web has opened up new opportunities for contact between representatives of different ethnic and cultural communities, and as a space of intercultural communication it demands the attention of the entire complex of the human sciences, including linguistics, linguoculturology and translation studies.

Because English is the dominant language of the Internet, it functions as the principal donor language from which other languages, including Uzbek and Russian, borrow new digital vocabulary. The translation of these units, however, is far from a mechanical operation. Many Internet neologisms are bound up with the cultural and technological context in which they arose, and they frequently lack ready equivalents in the receiving language. The present paper therefore aims to examine the linguocultural dimension of translating English Internet neologisms: it classifies the main types of such neologisms, identifies the cultural and linguistic difficulties their translation involves, and analyses the strategies translators use to overcome them.

Internet Discourse as a Source of Neologisms

Within computer-mediated communication, messages display structural, semantic and pragmatic features characteristic at once of mass communication, journalism, informal scholarly discussion and interpersonal conversation. The specificity of computer discourse lies precisely in this selective combination of features drawn from several other types and forms of communication. Computer communication therefore shares characteristics with all other kinds of live human interaction: it may be mass, group, personal or internal; short or long; oral or written. Discursively it embraces narration and reasoning, assertion and argument — the terminological attributes of scientific, business and other speech styles alike.

Internet discourse is thus a multi-aspect variety of monologic and dialogic speech, marked by a set of stylistically specific communicative means. These means reveal themselves not only in terminological and technical vocabulary but also in the saturation of the text with professional words and phrases. It is within this environment that Internet neologisms emerge and circulate, and it is the cross-cultural mobility of this environment that makes their translation a pressing concern.

The Concept and Classification of Neologisms

Neologisms may be defined as new units of the lexical system of a language that arise from the social need to name a new object or express a new concept, and that function in speech as ready-made, reproducible units. Researchers commonly divide them into three groups — lexical, semantic and occasional. Most recent Internet neologisms are lexical and frequently have a foreign, usually English, root: friend, game, gadget and spam are typical examples. The history of the word spam is illustrative: originally a 1936 trademark for canned spiced ham (SPiced hAM), it acquired, after the Second World War and a famous advertising campaign, the new meaning of intrusive advertising mailings, and has since become one of the most frequently used words on the Internet.

Morphological neologisms are created according to the patterns and morphemes already present in the language system and fall into several types: affixation, compounding, conversion and abbreviation. Affixal units are generally formed in full accordance with English word-formation traditions, so that their morphological structure and meaning correspond to the native speaker's idea of an ordinary word. A useful further distinction separates absolute neologisms, never previously used in the language, from relative ones, which are not entirely new. Borrowed words — adopted neologisms — continue to enrich English as well: although the rate of borrowing has slowed since the Renaissance, loanwords still account for roughly 7.5 per cent of new units, with a recent trend toward borrowings from African and Asian languages alongside the historically dominant French. Finally, the principle of belonging to language or speech distinguishes usual neologisms, which are the property of the literary language, from unusual ones — occasional and potential words created through individual authorship, which often serve an expressive rather than a nominative function.

Linguocultural Challenges in Translation

The translation of Internet neologisms is complicated above all by the phenomenon of non-equivalence. When a neologism names a digital reality that does not yet exist in the receiving culture, the target language simply offers no established correspondence, and the translator must create one. A second difficulty arises from realia — culturally bound elements whose meaning depends on the social and technological context of the source culture; rendering them often requires not only a word but an explanation. A third and subtler challenge is connotation: a neologism may carry evaluative or emotional overtones, as with playful expressive coinages, that a literal rendering would lose.

These difficulties are precisely those addressed by linguoculturology, which treats the lexical unit as a linguoculturema — a sign that fuses linguistic form with cultural content. From this perspective, the enrichment of a national lexicon through borrowing is not merely a lexical event but a cultural one: each adopted neologism imports, together with its form, a fragment of the culture in which it was coined. The translator of Internet neologisms therefore operates at the meeting point of two cultures and must decide how much of the source culture to preserve and how much to adapt for the target audience.

Strategies for Translating Internet Neologisms

Several established strategies are used to render English Internet neologisms in other languages. Transcription and transliteration reproduce the sound or the written form of the source word, as in spam → спам, blog → блог, troll → тролль and selfie → селфи / selfi; this is the most common route for terms that denote new and globally shared realities. Borrowing in its pure form admits the foreign word directly into the receiving language, often with minimal adaptation, as with gadget → гаджет. Calque, or loan translation, renders the internal structure of a compound element by element, as in social network → ижтимоий тармоқ / социальная сеть.

Where no equivalent exists and a single word cannot convey the concept, descriptive (explicatory) translation expands the neologism into a short explanatory phrase, while the use of a functional analogue substitutes an existing target-language unit that performs the same communicative function, even if its form differs. The choice among these strategies is rarely free: it depends on the type of neologism, the degree of its cultural specificity and the expectations of the target audience. As a rule, internationally shared technical terms favour transcription or borrowing, transparent compounds favour calque, and culturally loaded or expressive coinages call for descriptive translation or a functional analogue so that their connotative force is not lost.

Conclusion

The study of English Internet neologisms shows that their formation and their translation are equally bound up with culture. Many such neologisms are international words borrowed from English, a reflection of the globalization, computerization and technological advancement concentrated in English-speaking countries. Yet the analysis also recognises neologisms with pronounced national and cultural characteristics — lexical and semantic innovations that denote culture-specific realities or carry cultural-historical connotations, and that cannot be matched directly with the lexical meanings of other languages. Their adequate translation therefore cannot rest on lexical correspondence alone; it requires the translator to combine linguistic competence with cultural awareness, choosing among transcription, borrowing, calque, descriptive translation and functional analogues according to the nature of each unit. In this way the translation of Internet neologisms both enriches the receiving language and mediates between the cultures that the global network brings into contact.

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