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(Sub)cultural specificity of fiction simile and the choice of translation strategy

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Abstract

In this paper, we combine methodological tools of cognitive linguistics and translation studies to establish correlations between translation procedures applied to render English fiction similes into Ukrainian, and the (sub)cultural specificity of the conceptual mappings that license linguistic expression of the similes and prompt translators' decisions in favour of foreignization or domestication. We revealed five translation procedures (retention, replacement, reduction, omission, and addition) that contribute to foreignization or domestication (complete compulsory or complete optional, and partial compulsory or partial optional). Foreignization presupposes retention of a source-text simile based on a (sub)culture-specific conceptual mapping. Complete compulsory domestication entails replacement, reduction or omission of such a simile. Partial compulsory domestication involves retention of a (sub)culture-specific simile with implicit or explicit explanation of its sense. Complete optional domestication realizes as replacement, reduction or omission of a source-text simile that does not bear any (sub)cultural specificity as well as addition of a simile in the target text to translate a source-text utterance containing no simile. Partial optional domestication implies combining retention of a simile bearing no (sub)cultural specificity with implicit or explicit explanation of its sense.

Key words

conceptual mapping, culture, domestication, fiction simile, foreignization, subculture, translation

1. Introduction

Translation of simile has mostly been studied from the traditional perspective, where it is addressed as *a figure of speech* instantiating a central mental process, that of comparing entities and making a judgment as to their likeness or difference (Zorivchak, 1983; Pierini, 2007; Hilman, Ardiyanti and Pelawi, 2013; Shamsaefard, Fumani and Nemati, 2013; Ramli, 2014; Mohammed, 2017; Kendenan, 2017; Oleniak, 2018; Nikonova and Lutsenko, 2019; Iskanova, et al., 2021).

A cognitive linguistic interpretation of simile, where it is conceived as *a phenomenon of thought* akin to conceptual metaphor, opens a new perspective of its translation analysis at the level of conceptual structures that license linguistic expressions and influence translators' decisions, which so far has been developed in very few papers (Pohlig, 2006; Akhmedova, 2020; Martynyuk and Akhmedova, 2021).

The aim of this paper is to combine methodological tools of cognitive linguistics and translation studies to establish correlations between the choice of strategy to translate English fiction similes into Ukrainian and the cultural/subcultural specificity of conceptual structures that underlie linguistic expressions of the similes and affect translators' decisions.

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The cognitive approach accounts for the innovative nature of this research since it provides instruments to differentiate between free and compulsory translators' decisions imposed by the cultural/subcultural specificity of conceptual structures instantiated in linguistic expressions.

2. Methodological designs

Within the traditional methodological framework, **simile** is described as a tripartite structure (Fromilhague, 1995, pp. 73–74; Pierini, 2007, p. 23). It comprises a *comparandum* or *topic* representing the entity that is compared, a *comparatum* or *vehicle* standing for the entity to which the topic is compared, and a *comparison marker*. In addition, simile may include *similarity features*, embodying the properties that are shared by the topic and the vehicle and expressed explicitly or implicitly.

Comparing simile and metaphor as two figures that establish connections between two entities, scholars (see, for instance, Miller, 1993; Bredin, 1998; Pierini, 2007; Riddell, 2016; Kendenan, 2017; Mohammed, 2017), emphasize a number of differences between them, which we sum up at different levels of analysis. At the level of linguistic expression, it is underlined that metaphor is not associated with any specific linguistic structure, while simile is distinguished by a variety of comparison markers. Stylistically, metaphor is seen as an exceptionally non-literal figure while simile is stated to instantiate as both a literal and non-literal phenomenon. Semantically, metaphor is addressed as assimilating two entities, while simile is characterized as comparing two entities. Pragmatically, metaphor is claimed to have more “power, suggestiveness and effectiveness” (Pierini, 2007, pp. 23–24).

Within the framework of cognitive linguistics, metaphor and simile are both conceived as products of cognitive operations, which provide “understanding one kind of thing in terms of another kind of thing” (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p. 123). The founders of conceptual metaphor theory define conceptual metaphor as systematic use of “inference patterns from one conceptual domain” (ibid. 171), that is a source domain, “to reason about another conceptual domain” (ibidem), that is a target domain, and state that “reasoning in abstract domains uses the logic of our sensory-motor experience” (ibid. 172). The systematic correspondences of inference patterns across domains are called “metaphorical mappings” or “metaphorical projections” (ibid. 171).

In line with this, **conceptual simile** “will project part of the structure of one domain onto another” (Fauconnier, 1997, p. 9; Fauconnier and Turner, 1998, p. 146). In the structure of conceptual simile, the source domain corresponds to the vehicle, and the target domain to the topic. Thus, conceptual simile shares its constitutive feature with conceptual metaphor, that of being “primarily a matter of thought and action and only derivatively a matter of language” (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p. 111). We distinguish between conceptual structures that are named “source” and “target”, and the verbal stimuli that trigger these structures. The term “vehicle” is used for a source verbal stimulus that activates a source/vehicle concept.

The structural-semantic differences between simile and metaphor summed up above result in different propositional models of their representation for linguistic and translation analysis. While a metaphor mapping is usually modelled in the A IS B form and represented in small caps (for example, LOVE IS A JOURNEY), a simile mapping is modelled in the A IS LIKE B form (for example, LOVE IS LIKE A JOURNEY). In both models, “A” refers to the target domain/concept (the topic in the structure of a simile), while B to the source domain/concept (the vehicle). “Like” represents a marker of comparison.

Our sample consists of 107 fiction similes that were manually collected from Donna Tartt’s novels *The Goldfinch* (Tartt, 2013) and *The Secret History* (Tartt, 2015) and their Ukrainian translations performed, respectively, by Victor Shovkun (Tartt, 2016) and Boris Stasiuk (Tartt, 2017). In each of Tartt’s novels, we registered 50 similes and then we found their translation equivalents. To identify the source-text similes we used Pierini’s (2007, pp. 27–28) list of English comparison markers, rearranging it in accordance with the grammatical properties of the markers and adding the markers we came across in our sample:

- 1) prepositions: *like, as, as ... as*;
- 2) verbs: *seem, resemble, remind of*;
- 3) adjectival phrases: *similar to*;

- 4) compound adjective-attributes of the following structure: N-style (*family-style gatherings of drinkers in Louis XVI-style chairs*); N-type (*a Stonehenge-type monument*); N-like (*Holmes-like deduction*); N-shaped (*a kidney-shaped coffee table*), N-faced (*a ferret-faced teenager*);
- 5) conjunctions: *as if, though*.

In addition to 100 English similes, the sample includes 7 Ukrainian similes that were added in Ukrainian translations to render the source-text material that contains no comparison (these similes constitute the total number of similes added in Ukrainian translations of the two novels). To register the added Ukrainian similes, we read the translated versions of the novels applying the following list of Ukrainian markers of comparison:

- 1) prepositions: *як, ніби / як ніби, наче, мов / немов / мовби / немовби [like]*;
- 2) verbs: *нагадувати [resemble]*; *справляти враження [give [the] impression [of]]*; *скидатися на [look like]*;
- 3) adjectival phrases: *схожий на [similar to]*; *в подоби [in [the] likeness [of]]*; *у стилі [in [the] style [of]]*; *аналогічно до [similar to]*; *завбільшки з [[the] size of]*;
- 4) derivative adjectives with the prefix *по [like-]*: *по-медовому теплий [like-honey warm]*;
- 5) conjunctions: *як ніби [as if]*.

All the analysed similes and their translations, annotated for the translation procedures and strategies, are available in external [Appendix](#) stored in a personal repository.

The choice of Donna Tartt's novels is explained by her rich figurative language, abundant in all types of similes (Mintsys and Chik, 2016; Koliaguina and Rudzeevskaya, 2018). The similes “participate in text formation and creation of characters, contribute to the expressiveness and emotiveness of the text, convey the characters' psychological state of mind and produce a dramatic effect” (Mintsys and Chik, 2016, p. 98).

The Goldfinch won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction and Nonfiction in 2014. The main character of the novel, 13-year-old Theodore Decker, survives a terrorist attack at the art museum where his mother dies. During his escape, in a state of shock, Theo takes “The Goldfinch”, a painting by the Dutch Golden Age artist Carel Fabritius. Theo longs for his mother and there is only one thing that makes him live, the painting.

The Secret History is a detective story in which one of six student friends, Richard Papen, narrates events which reveal two murders. The first one is the ritual killing of a poultry farmer committed by four major characters (Henry Winter, Francis Abernathy, Charles Macaulay and Camilla Macaulay). The second one is the murder of Bunny Corcoran, who did not participate in the ritual killing and started suspecting his friends.

To handle the sample, we employ the following methodological procedures:

1. Classify the source-text similes.

Firstly, we distinguish between conventional and original similes to see how creativity influences translation strategies. To decide whether a simile is conventional or original we investigate whether the simile vehicle refers to an entity that is commonly associated with the similarity feature highlighted by the simile or it rather represents an individual conceptualization.

Conventional similes highlight similarity features that have an *inherent physical basis*; they are “intrinsic”, that is characterize the entity “making no essential reference to external entities” (Langacker, 1987, pp. 160–161) and “characteristic <...> in the sense of being unique to the class of entities designated by an expression” (ibid. 161). Consequently, such features are more likely to be commonly associated with the entities, which contributes to the conventionality of the corresponding linguistic expressions. Such information is usually part of “generic knowledge” (ibid. 160), devoid of cultural specificity. For example, a simile comparing the voice of a person that has a sore throat to a raven (example 1 in [Appendix](#)) or an overly talkative person to a parrot (example 7 in [Appendix](#)) is conventional, since ravens are universally associated with a specific croaking sound and parrots with the ability to produce sounds repeatedly and unintelligently.

Original similes rest on individual conceptualizations highlighting non-intrinsic and non-characteristic similarity features that represent “specific knowledge” (Langacker, 1987, p. 160).

Consequently, they are not likely to be universally associated with the entities verbalized by the simile vehicles. For example, a simile comparing a dumb person to a set of sofa cushions (example 3 in the paper) is original, since sofa cushions are not commonly associated with dumbness.

Secondly, we take into consideration that conventional similes may involve **allusion** (examples 4, 5, and 6 in the paper) if their vehicle concepts are expressed by names referring to an entity (real or fictitious person, place, event, artefact, piece of art, or mass-culture product, etc.), known throughout a certain speech community, by way of “an implied or indirect reference” (Dictionary by Merriam-Webster: America’s most-trusted online dictionary, n. d.). Allusive similes vary as to the degree of their conventionality. Their vehicles can represent concepts that are part of generic knowledge as in the case of a religious and mythological character such as Satan (example 71 in [Appendix](#); see also examples 72–74) or part of specific knowledge shared by some subcultural group as in the case of princess of Ur (example 4 in the paper).

Thirdly, we take account of **idiomatic** conventional similes that can rest on culturally similar (examples 68–70 in [Appendix](#)) or culturally specific (examples 66, 67, 83–87, 100 in [Appendix](#)) conceptual mappings that are problematic for translators. To identify idiomatic similes, we enquire whether the corresponding expressions are registered in dictionaries of idioms.

2. Construe the conceptual mappings of the source-text and target-text similes and reveal the translation procedures behind them. To fulfil the task, we use Pierini’s (2007, pp. 31–40) classification of translation procedures (in her terms, “strategies”) and adapt it to the purposes of the analysis drawing on the existing cognitive classifications of translation procedures (Shuttleworth, 2017; Kovalenko and Martynyuk, 2018; Kovalenko and Martynyuk, 2021; Martynyuk and Akhmedova, 2021).

Pierini (2007, p. 31) indicates six translation solutions: 1) “retention of the same vehicle” or “literal translation”; 2) “replacement of the vehicle with a different vehicle”; 3) “reduction of the simile, if idiomatic, to its sense”; 4) “retention of the same vehicle plus explication of similarity feature(s)”; 5) “replacement of the vehicle with a gloss”; 6) “omission of the simile”.

We distinguish five translation procedures: retention, replacement, reduction, omission and addition.

Retention takes place when a source-text simile is rendered with a target-text simile that rests on the same conceptual mapping as the source-text one, which means that the same vehicle concept is employed. Retention can involve (example 6 in the paper) or not involve (examples 1, 2, 5 in the paper) *explication* of similarity features. On top of that, retention includes cases of *inner-domain specification* (the vehicle concept of a target-text simile represents a subcategory of the source-text vehicle concept – example 3 in the paper) and *inner-domain generalization* (the vehicle concept of a target-text simile represents a super-category of the source-text vehicle concept – example 4 in the paper).

Replacement presupposes employing a target-text simile that rests on a different conceptual mapping, and, consequently, relies on a different vehicle concept (examples 7–10 in the paper). As to gloss, we have not come across any such cases in our sample.

Reduction takes place when the content of a source-text simile is *explained* without resorting to comparison and a simile mapping cannot be built (example 11 in the paper).

Omission involves removal of a source-text simile from the target text *without explaining* its content (examples 12, 13 in the paper).

On top of that, we analyse addition, which is not included in Pierini’s classification, and is ignored by most simile translation research. **Addition** takes place when a simile is used in the target text to translate a source-text sentence-utterance that contains no comparison (example 14 in the paper).

3. Conduct quantitative analysis and establish correlations between the translation procedures and translation strategies, taking into consideration linguacultural or subcultural similarity or difference of the source-text and target-text simile mappings.

Integrating the ideas of Chesterman (1997) and Lörscher (1991), we define a **translation strategy** as a potentially conscious course of action aimed at manipulating a source-text to make it understandable to representatives of a target-text culture. We believe that the choice of a strategic course of action is motivated by the translator’s desire to find the “golden mean” between foreignization (the strategy of form) and domestication (the strategy of content) to provide a communicatively relevant (appropriate in a given lingual, situational, social, and cultural context) translation (Rebrii, 2012).

Using the terms “domestication” and “foreignization” we rely on Venuti (2001) who states that “domestication involves an adherence to domestic literary canons both in choosing a foreign text and in developing a translation method” (Venuti, 2001, p. 241), and foreignization is “motivated by an impulse to preserve linguistic and cultural differences by deviating from prevailing domestic values” (ibid. 240).

We differentiate between a translation strategy as a general course of mental and linguistic action within the linguistic and cultural context of the whole text, motivated by the translator’s ultimate goals, and a **translation procedure** as a mental and linguistic action aimed at solving a particular translation problem in the context of a sentence-utterance as part of the text as a whole. The same translation procedure can serve different strategies. For example, retention can contribute to domestication (examples 1–4 in the paper) and foreignization (example 5 in the paper) or can be neutral as to both of these strategies (example 1–36 in [Appendix](#)). In addition, we distinguish a **translation technique** by which we mean a specific linguistic instantiation of a translation procedure.

3. Research outcomes

In this section, we present a typology of the translators’ choices correlating with a translation procedure (retention, replacement, reduction, omission, or addition) and difference or similarity of the conceptual mappings that license the linguistic expressions of the analysed conceptual similes and influence the translator’s decisions.

We distinguish between **retention** of content and retention of form.

Retention of content involves lexical translation techniques, primarily the use of direct dictionary equivalents of the source-text vehicles, and accompanying grammatical transformations dictated by the difference of the source and target language structures. Retention of content is mostly used to translate non-idiomatic / non-allusive conventional similes (hereafter we use the term “conventional” to name such similes), though original, allusive and idiomatic similes can also be retained.

In most cases, retention of **conventional** similes does not cause any particular translation problems since they rest on vehicle concepts that represent generic knowledge. Consequently, they are translated literally and the strategy applied in such cases is *neutral* as to foreignization or domestication (see examples 1–35 in [Appendix](#)). Grammatical transformations can result in converting an explicit source-text simile into an implicit one. For instance, in example 36 in [Appendix](#) the conventional simile *velvet jacket that smelled like mothballs* is translated by a conventional description *оксамитовому костюмі, який тхнув нафталіном* (‘...velvet suit that smelt [of] naphthalene’) that is built on the same conceptual mapping (SOMETHING OLD SMELLS LIKE NAPHTHALENE) but instantiates it implicitly, without markers of comparison.

However, besides direct dictionary equivalents of the source-text vehicles, translators can also employ their contextual synonyms. We registered two possibilities:

1. The source-text and target-text vehicle concepts, expressed by contextual synonyms, refer to different entities:

- (1) Eng.: The gunshot had set off my tinnitus **like a swarm of locusts buzzing in my ears**. (from Tartt 2013, p. 349)
 Ukr.: *Від пострілів у мене дзвеніло у вухах, наче цілий рій цикад там стрекотів*. (from Tartt 2016, p. 715)
 ‘..., as if [a] whole swarm of cicadas there buzzed.’

Though in English *cicadas* are sometimes referred to as *locusts* (Dictionary.com, 2021), the term that actually occurs in the source text, its direct Ukrainian translation *саранча* names a species that, contrary to cicadas, is not associated with a distinct, buzzy, droning sound, which forces the translator to use its contextual synonym – *цикада*. The strategy applied is qualified as *complete compulsory domestication*. The domestication is compulsory because it is imposed by linguacultural specificity of conceptualization: in Ukrainian CICADAS and LOCUSTS are conceived of as different species and different terms are used to name them. Consequently, the domestication is *complete* since it leads to a change of the simile conceptual mapping.

2. The source-text and targets-text vehicle concepts, expressed by contextual synonyms, refer to different types of functionally the same entity:

- (2) Eng.: I felt light-headed with fever – **glowing red and radiant, like the bars in an electric heater...** (from Tartt 2013, p. 191)
 Ukr.: *У мене запаморочилось у голові від лихоманки – я здавався собі червоним і розжареним, наче спіраль в електрокаміні...* (from Tartt 2016, p. 390)
 ‘...I seemed [to] myself red and hot, like [a] spiral in [an] electric fireplace...’

Instead of the literal translation of the source-text vehicle *bars – секції* that refers to metal vertical tubes as heating elements of an electric heater, the translator employs its contextual synonym *спіраль* that refers to a different type of heater with a spiral-heating element. However, both vehicles activate the same metaphoric image of the fevered Theo as a glowing red and radiant heating element. This *domestication* is *partial* since it does not change the simile conceptual mapping, and *optional*, since the translator is not constrained by any linguistic factors.

As to **original** similes, they represent unique individual creations that cannot be discussed in terms of cultural or subcultural specificity. In most cases original similes are translated literally and such a strategy is qualified as *neutral* (examples 39–54 in [Appendix](#)). However, since original similes rest on rather unexpected associations, the translator can resort to *implicit explanation* through *specification* to facilitate comprehension of the target-text:

- (3) Eng.: No, but they’re **as dumb as a set of sofa cushions**. (from Tartt 2013, p. 87)
 Ukr.: *Ні, вони не бідні, але тупі, як диванні валики*. (from Tartt 2016, p. 167)
 ‘... dumb, as sofa bolsters.’

The translator omits the word “set”, gives a direct dictionary equivalent of the adjective “dumb” designating the similarity feature, and specifies the vehicle: “sofa cushions” turn into “sofa bolsters”. As a result, the source-text and the target-text similes activate vehicle concepts that belong to the same domain but represent somewhat different objects (a sofa bolster is a variety of sofa cushion, thus the translator resorts to *specification*). Probably, the translator uses the word *валики* (‘bolsters’) because it is patronymic with *валянки* (‘felt boots’), which in Ukrainian culture is associated with dumbness, and this association instantiates in the idiom *тупий як валянок* (‘dumb as [a] felt boot’).

In deciding which strategy is realized we have to underline that original similes, like the one analysed above, may seem conspicuous to representatives of both cultures. Yet, taking into consideration that the translator moves towards the target-text reader, taking steps to eliminate strangeness and make the text more transparent, we qualify such a strategy as *domestication – partial* since it does not lead to a change of the simile conceptual mapping, and *optional* since it is not dictated by a culture-specific conceptualization of reality.

Content retention of **allusive** similes can become problematic depending on the degree of their conventionality. If the allusion refers to some entity (like, for instance, *zombie*) that is known to most people across cultures (activates concepts that are part of generic knowledge) its translation does not cause any difficulties, and the strategy applied in such a case is qualified as *neutral* (example 56 in [Appendix](#)). However, if the allusion is part of specific knowledge shared by some subcultural (and at the same time cross-cultural) group formed on the basis of common professional or amateur interests, the translator has to choose between foreignization and domestication. For example:

- (4) Eng.: ... **as if Kitsey were some lost princess of Ur** to be feasted and decked in finery and – attended by tambourine players and handmaidens – paraded down in splendor to the Underworld. (from Tartt 2013, p. 319)
 Ukr.: *... так ніби Кітсі була якоюсь втраченою шумерською царівною, яку вдягнуть у дорогий одяг і після бенкету – під музику тамбуринів і в супроводі служниць – урочисто проведуть у розкішні палати підземного світу*. (from Tartt 2016, p. 655)
 ‘...as if Kitsey were some lost Sumerian princess...’

Kitsey, a girl who is engaged to Theo, is compared to some lost princess of Ur by her godmother who thought that Theo was not the right man for Kitsey, and on marrying him she would be lost to her social world. Probably, realizing that most Ukrainian readers would not associate Ur with the Sumerian city-state in ancient Mesopotamia, the translator applies *implicit explanation* through *generalization*, that is, refers to a more widely known phenomenon of Sumerian culture to activate a more familiar vehicle concept. Nevertheless, the Ukrainian simile rests on the same conceptual mapping as the English one: KITSEY IS LIKE A SUMERIAN PRINCESS. The translation is oriented towards the target-text readers as the source text is adapted to be more transparent. We call such cases of domestication *compulsory* because the translator's choice is dictated by the subcultural specificity of the allusion. It can be interpreted by a high-culture group of people across cultures that are acquainted with Sumerian culture for professional or other reasons, but not by the average reader. The domestication is *partial* because it does not presuppose a change of the conceptual mapping.

Besides implicit explanation, *partial compulsory domestication* is observed in cases of *explicit explanation* of an allusive simile within the target-text sentence-utterance (example 58 in [Appendix](#)), or outside the target text, in an additional commentary (examples 59–61 in [Appendix](#)). Another option is to give a literal translation of a subculture-specific allusive simile without any comment or explanation (examples 62–65 in [Appendix](#)). In this case literal translation of an allusive simile results in *foreignization*.

Retention of culture-specific **idiomatic** similes is a clear case of *foreignization*. Thus, in examples 66, 67 in [Appendix](#) the translator renders the idiomatic similes *white as a lily* and *white as a fish* literally, though they rest on conceptual mappings that are foreign to Ukrainian linguaculture. Speakers of Ukrainian do not associate the colour white with LILY or FISH contrary to CANVAS, DEATH, WALL, CLAY, DAY, HOARFROST, CHALK, PAPER, SOUR CREAM, SNOW, SUN, GYPSY CALF, GYPSY CHEESE (Aphorism, n. d.).

However, if no linguacultural specificity is observed and the source-text and target-text idiomatic similes rest on the same conceptual mappings, as in the case of *strong as an ox*, *light as a feather*, *light like air* (examples 68–70 in [Appendix](#)), translation does not cause any problems and retention is qualified as part of a *neutral* strategy.

Retention of form takes place at the graphical/phonetical level when the source-text vehicle is converted from English into Ukrainian through transliteration/transcription. In many cases, part of the original word is transliterated, and the rest is transcribed, and, as a rule, such words are phonetically and grammatically adapted, acquire Ukrainian case, number and gender inflections.

Retention of form is employed to translate **allusive** similes. They do not pose any problem if the concept behind the vehicle is part of generic knowledge or at least is expected to be shared between the source and target cultures, as in the case of Satan, Mowgli, Dr Watson, or Teddy Roosevelt that are well known to Ukrainian readers (examples 71–74 in [Appendix](#)).

If allusive vehicles bear some subcultural specificity and there is a chance that the transliterated/transcribed word will not activate any concept in the minds of the readers, translators choose one of the following translation techniques:

1. Complement an adapted transliteration/transcription with a commentary in a footnote (see examples 75–78 in [Appendix](#)).
2. Leave the vehicle untranslated and supply a commentary in a footnote (example 79 in [Appendix](#)).
3. Transliterate/transcribe the vehicle leaving it up to the readers to make a connection between the name and the entity it refers to:

- (5) Eng.: Remember how for a long time you couldn't go downstairs because of Xandra, I had to bring you food, it was **like Anne Frank**? (from Tartt 2013, p. 284)
 Ukr.: Пам'ятаєш, як досить довго ти не міг спуститися вниз через Ксандру і я мусив приносити тобі поїсти, **як якій-небудь Анні Франк**? (from Tartt 2016, p. 575)
 '...like some Anne Frank?'

Theo compares his friend Boris who was hiding in his father's house from his father's girlfriend, Xandra, to Anne Frank, a Jewish girl, a native of Germany, who was hiding with her family from the Nazi terror in Amsterdam during the Second World War. This formal retention of the allusive simile

may be problematic since there is a possibility that the name of Anne Frank would be known to people interested in history or to those who have been to Amsterdam and seen the house where Anne was hiding as part of a city tour, but not to the average Ukrainian reader.

4. Combine the adapted transliteration/transcription of the vehicle with its *explanation* in the text, as in the example below:

(6) Eng.: They tended **to sound like Heckle and Jeckle**. (from Tartt 2015, p. 153)

Ukr.: У подібному настрої – збентежені, розчаровані – **вони завжди звучали, немов дві мультяшні сороки – Гекл і Джекл**. (from Tartt 2017, p. 274)
'...sounded like two cartoon magpies – Heckle and Jeckle.'

This simile is used to accentuate the similarity between two central characters who are twins by comparing them to identical magpies from the American cartoon "The Talking Magpies". The translator uses adapted transcription of the names *Heckle* and *Jeckle*, and since he cannot but realize that some Ukrainian readers may not be familiar with these characters, he adds an explanatory apposition, which makes it easier for the readers to activate the image created in the original.

Thus, depending on the degree of generality/specificity of the concept denoted by the vehicle, retention of form can be *neutral* (examples 71–74 in [Appendix](#)) or can tend to one of the opposite poles of the translators' choices continuum. The choices include *partial compulsory domestication* (if the translator provides some explanation of a specific concept in the text (examples 81, 82) or in a footnote (examples 75–79 in [Appendix](#)) or *foreignization* (if the translator refrains from doing it (example 5 in the paper).

Replacement involves content transformations of idiomatic, conventional and allusive source-text similes.

The source-text **idiomatic** similes that bear linguacultural specificity are replaced with culturally specific target-text idiomatic similes, built on different conceptual mappings:

(7) Eng.: Before I had time to register this, **a gigantic cop swooped down on me like a thunderclap**. (from Tartt 2013, p. 30)

Ukr.: *Перш ніж я встиг відповісти на це, велетенський коп налетів на мене, як шуліка*. (from Tartt 2016, p. 54)
'... [a] gigantic cop came at me, like [a] hawk.'

The source-text idiomatic simile is used to describe the actions of a police officer who wanted to warn the crowd gathered near the Metropolitan Museum of Art after the terrorist explosion to move away from the building since the police suspected there was another bomb. Theo who had just got out of the museum in the aftermath of the attack did not react and was just standing there. This provoked the sudden and violent actions of the police officer, which are associated with THUNDERCLAP in the source-text idiomatic simile. In Ukrainian linguaculture violent and sudden actions are conceptualized in terms of HAWK ATTACK, and this mapping instantiates in the idiomatic simile used by the translator.

We qualify such adaptation as *complete compulsory domestication* because it presupposes a change of the simile conceptual mapping and it is caused by the linguacultural specificity of the source-text material that can obscure understanding if translated literally (examples 83–87 in [Appendix](#)).

Although in most cases replacement is employed to render culture-specific idiomatic similes, idiomatic similes that bear no linguacultural specificity can also be replaced:

(8) Eng.: I felt a fierce kick in my anklebone. It was Francis. **His face was as white as chalk** (from Tartt 2015, p. 220)

Ukr.: *Раптом мене хтось чимдуж копнув у щиколотку. Це був Френсіс. Він геть сплотнів*. (from Tartt 2017, p. 391)
'He [Francis] totally became the colour of canvas'.

The source-text contains an explicit idiomatic simile resting on the SOMEONE WHITE IS LIKE CHALK conceptual mapping, which is translated by a Ukrainian verb *сполотнів* ('became the colour of canvas') The translation is an implicit simile underpinned by the SOMEONE WHITE IS LIKE CANVAS conceptual mapping, which is characterized by linguacultural specificity. The strategy employed is *complete optional domestication* since this change of the conceptual mapping is not dictated by linguacultural specificity of the source-text simile.

As to **conventional** non-idiomatic similes, the translators tend to replace them with idiomatic target-text similes rendering the same idea:

- (9) Eng.: **He was drunk as a log.** (from Tarrt 2013, p. 136)
Ukr.: **Він ударив мене тому, що сам був п'яний як чіп** (from Tarrt 2016, p. 270)
'He ... was drunk like [a] cone-shaped wooden stopper.'

The direct translation equivalent of the source-text vehicle *п'яний як колода* ('drunk as a log') is quite transparent: representatives of any linguaculture can easily associate a very drunk person with a log as he/she does not react to anything, or it is difficult to move him/her, etc. However, the translator makes his choice in favour of the culture-specific idiom, which results in *complete optional domestication*; see also example 90 in [Appendix](#).

Source-text **original** similes can also be replaced by Ukrainian idiomatic similes:

- (10) Eng.: They'd been drunk the night before, they told me, **drunk as bandicoots.** (from Tarrt 2015, p. 105)
Ukr.: **Казали, що минулого вечора налигалися як свині.** (from Tarrt 2017, p. 189)
'...got blasted like pigs.'

Since there is a good chance that readers would not be able to interpret the simile the translator substitutes it with a Ukrainian idiomatic simile resting on a different conceptual mapping (DRUNK PEOPLE ARE LIKE PIGS) but rendering the same idea of someone being very drunk. This adaptation is qualified as *complete optional domestication* because it involves substituting the source-text simile with a target-text simile that is built on a different conceptual mapping but it is not dictated by culture-specific conceptualization of reality.

Reduction is observed in cases of idiomatic and conventional source-text similes, and includes two techniques:

1. Reducing a nonculture-specific simile (idiomatic or conventional), to explanation of its sense with the help of another expression (conventional or idiomatic) that does not involve comparison. For example, the idiomatic description of weather *hot as flames* is translated as *нестерпна спека* ('unbearable heat') which does not involve comparison but renders the idea (example 92 in [Appendix](#); see also examples 95, 96 for conventional similes). Such cases are qualified as *complete* (the comparison is lost and the conceptual mapping cannot be built) but *optional domestication* (the translator is not constrained by linguacultural specificity).

2. Reducing a culture-specific idiomatic simile to explanation of its sense with the help of an idiomatic expression that does not involve comparison:

- (11) Eng.: She looks **like a tough customer.** (from Tarrt 2015, p. 197)
Ukr.: **Мені здається, з нею каші не зваруш.** (from Tarrt 2017, p. 350)
'...with her [you] porridge cannot cook.'

The American idiom *tough customer*, which is used to describe Mrs. Corcoran, the mother of one of the key characters, means someone "who is difficult to deal with" (Free Dictionary, 2015) and rests on the COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY source domain (A TOUGH PERSON IS LIKE A TOUGH CLIENT). The translator domesticates the source-text reducing the simile to the Ukrainian idiom with a synonymous figurative meaning (it characterizes the referent as a person with whom one cannot reach any agreement or mutual understanding [Uzhchenko and Uzhchenko, 1998, p. 65]), but a different literary meaning that is

interpreted against the COOKING FOOD domain. This choice is dictated by linguacultural specificity: Americans conceptualize difficult-to-deal-with people in terms of tough customers, while Ukrainians do so in terms of those unable/unwilling to coordinate actions in such a simple and natural everyday activity as cooking basic food. The case is qualified as *complete compulsory domestication* because it involves a loss of comparison that is caused by linguacultural specificity of conceptualization (see also example 94 in [Appendix](#)).

Omission involves original and idiomatic source-text similes. The example below illustrates omission of an **original** simile:

- (12) Eng.: The face one shows him he invariably reflects back at one, creating the illusion of warmth and depth when in fact he is **brittle and shallow as a mirror**. (from Tarrt 2015, p. 291)
Ukr.: Він звертає до тебе обличчя, в якому обов'язково відображується твоє власне, чим створює ілюзію теплоти та глибини, а насправді цей відбиток **крихкий і поверхневий**. (from Tarrt 2017, p. 513)
'... brittle and superficial.'

The source-text contains an original simile (SOMEONE SUPERFICIAL IS BRITTLE AND SHALLOW LIKE A MIRROR), which is employed to describe Julian Morrow, a university professor who was rather selective about his students and was interested in them only if they did not fall short of his expectations. The simile helps to disclose his superficial egoistic nature hidden behind the false depth, warmth and sophistication. The translator chooses to omit the vehicle favouring *complete optional domestication* probably because it would be difficult for the readers to associate a mirror with superficiality (see also examples 98, 99 in [Appendix](#)).

The next example illustrates omission of an **idiomatic** simile:

- (13) Eng.: The twins were asleep, on that fold-out bed in the back room, and I shoved Charles over and **was out like a light**. (from Tarrt 2015, p. 105)
Ukr.: Двійнята заснули на розкладному ліжку в задній кімнаті, я посунув Чарльза й **відключився**. (from Tarrt 2017, p. 187)
'...passed out.'

The translator domesticates the source text omitting the idiomatic simile since it is foreign to Ukrainian culture. It is a case of *complete compulsory domestication* since the translator is constrained by the cultural specificity of conceptualization: Ukrainians do not associate passing out with disappearance of light (the corresponding conceptual mapping is not built in the minds of representatives of Ukrainian culture). Even though the translation renders basic information, contained in the source-text, choosing to omit the simile, the translator transforms the idiomatic text into stylistically neutral.

As for **adding** similes, the translators adapt the source text to Ukrainian culture by using both **idiomatic** (examples 101–105 in [Appendix](#)) and non-idiomatic **conventional** (106, 107) similes that pointedly render the sense of the source-text expression containing no comparison, which results in *complete optional domestication*. In both cases the translator's choice is not determined by (sub)cultural specificity of conceptualization, but, at the same time, it offers an alternative conceptualization of the situation, denoted by the corresponding sentence-utterance, based on comparison.

The next example instantiates addition of an idiomatic simile:

- (14) Eng.: **He was flushed** and trembling. (from Tarrt 2015, p. 231)
Ukr.: **Френсіс був червоний, мов буряк, і тремтів**. (from Tarrt 2017, p. 409)
'Francis was red like [a] beetroot...'

Though the source-text author describes a display of rage without resorting to comparison, the translator compares the character's flushed face with a beetroot, using the corresponding idiom. It is interesting to mention that its direct equivalent *red as a beet* (Macmillan Dictionary, n. d.) exists in US English. Probably, by adding similes the translators try to compensate for their omission, realizing that

omitting Tartt’s “unique and striking” (Mintsys and Chik, 2016, p. 95) similes they fail to reproduce her powerful writing style.

In order to see how (sub)cultural specificity of a simile tells on the choice of a translation procedure we calculated percentages of translation procedures used to translate non(sub)culture-specific and (sub)culture specific similes and presented the results in Figure 1 and Figure 2 below.

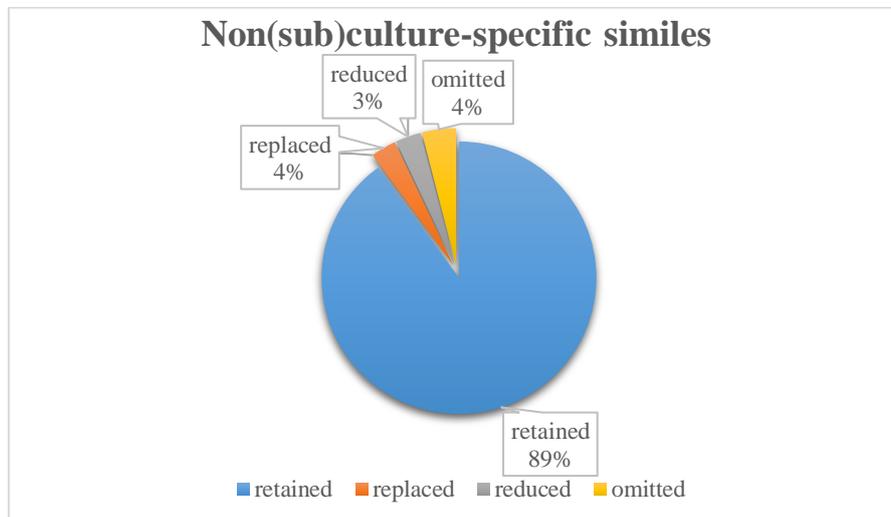


Figure 1. Percentages of translation procedures employed to render non-(sub)culture-specific similes

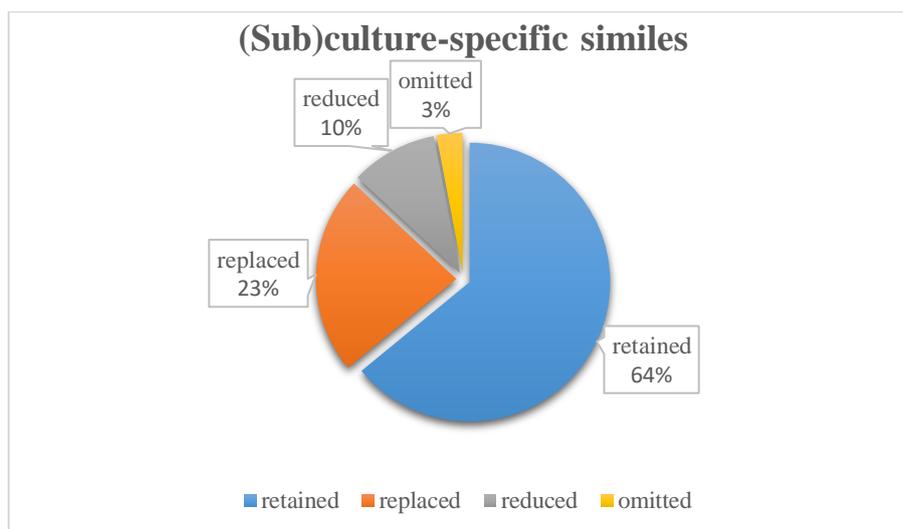


Figure 2. Percentages of translation procedures employed to render (sub)culture-specific similes

4. Conclusions

English-Ukrainian translations of the fiction similes (conventional, idiomatic, allusive and original), found in the novels *The Goldfinch* and *The Secret History* by Donna Tartt, involve five translation procedures: retention, replacement, reduction, omission and addition.

Retention, which presupposes using a target-text simile that rests on the same conceptual mapping as the source-text one, proves to be the prevailing translation procedure for both (sub)culture-specific and non(sub)culture-specific similes, although significantly more non(sub)culture-specific similes are retained. In the case of non(sub)culture-specific similes, retention is neutral as to domestication or foreignization since the source-text simile has a target-text equivalent that rests on the same conceptual mapping. If a source-text simile is based on a (sub)culture-specific conceptual mapping, retention contributes to foreignization that can be neutralized by explicit (a commentary in a footnote or an explanatory apposition in a text) or implicit (inner-domain specification/generalisation of the vehicle

concept) explanation of the vehicle. Such explanation contributes to partial compulsory domestication of allusive similes or partial optional domestication of original similes.

The choice of replacement is influenced by the (sub)cultural specificity of a simile since significantly more allusive and idiomatic source-text similes based on (sub)culture-specific vehicle concepts are substituted, which serves complete compulsory domestication. However, replacement also includes substituting conventional source-text similes that are not marked by (sub)cultural specificity, and then it represents complete optional domestication.

Reduction is mostly caused by the necessity to render the sense of culture-specific idiomatic source-text similes, which results in compulsory domestication. However, it also involves explaining non-idiomatic nonculture-specific similes, which serves complete optional domestication.

The choice of omission is not influenced by cultural specificity of a simile since both culture-specific idiomatic and nonculture-specific conventional/original similes are omitted equally often, which contributes, correspondingly, to complete compulsory and complete optional domestication.

Addition mostly involves inserting an idiomatic culture-specific simile into the target text to render a source-text utterance containing no comparison and represents complete optional domestication.

The significance of the research is accounted for by its cognitive methodology providing instruments to differentiate between constrained and free translators' choices, imposed or not imposed by linguacultural specificity of conceptual structures licensing linguistic instantiations of conceptual simile.

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