

THE PHENOMENON OF LINGUISTIC UNTRANSLATABILITY IN THE SPHERE OF TRAVEL: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN NON-EQUIVALENT LEXIS

Author: Rakhimova Rovza Jakhongir kizi –

Student, Kokand State University

АННОТАЦИЯ: *Статья посвящена проблеме лингвистической непереводимости в контексте туристического дискурса. Актуальность исследования обусловлена возрастающей ролью межъязыковых контактов в сфере туризма и необходимостью формирования лингвокультурной компетенции у изучающих иностранные языки.*

Ключевые слова: *безэквивалентная лексика, лингвокультурология, межкультурная коммуникация, английский язык, русский язык, лакуна, перевод, туристический дискурс.*

ABSTRACT: *The article addresses the issue of linguistic untranslatability within the context of travel discourse. The relevance of the study is determined by the increasing role of cross-linguistic contacts in the sphere of tourism and the necessity of developing linguocultural competence among foreign language learners.*

Keywords: *non-equivalent lexis, cultural linguistics, intercultural communication, English language, Russian language, lacuna, translation, travel discourse.*

Introduction. The study of non-equivalent lexis constitutes one of the fundamental areas of modern linguoculturology and translation studies. As noted by S.G. Ter-Minasova, language does not exist in isolation from culture; it serves as a repository of national consciousness and reflects the specific worldview of a given linguistic community [5, p. 34]. In the context of international tourism and intercultural exchange, the issue of untranslatability acquires particular significance. Words and expressions that encapsulate culturally specific

phenomena, emotional states, or social practices often resist direct translation, thereby creating communicative barriers.

The **relevance** of this research lies in the growing intensity of cross-cultural contacts in the travel industry and the practical necessity for both language learners and tourists to navigate these lexical gaps effectively. The **aim** of this article is to identify and analyze a selection of English and Russian lexical units related to travel that lack precise equivalents in the counterpart language, and to explore the cultural conditioning of such lacunae. The **object** of the study is non-equivalent lexis in the English and Russian languages within the thematic domain of travel. The **subject** is the semantic and cultural specificity of the selected lexical items.

Main Body

1. English Travel-Related Lexis with No Direct Russian Equivalents. The English language possesses a number of terms that describe travel-related experiences and phenomena for which Russian requires descriptive translation rather than a single lexical item. Below, five such examples are examined.

1.1. Wanderlust. The lexeme *wanderlust* originates from the German verb *wandern* ("to hike" or "to roam") and the noun *Lust* ("desire" or "pleasure") [4, p. 2398]. The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as "a strong desire or impulse to wander or travel and explore the world" [3]. In Russian lexicographic sources, this concept is typically rendered as «*страсть к путешествиям*» (passion for travel) or «*охота к перемене мест*» (urge for a change of scenery). However, these translations are descriptive in nature and fail to capture the compact semantic density of the original term. The word *wanderlust* has undergone a process of romanticization in contemporary English-language media and now denotes not merely a desire to travel, but a specific lifestyle orientation centered on mobility and exploration [1, p. 87].

1.2. Serendipity. The term *serendipity* was coined by the English writer Horace Walpole in 1754, drawing upon the Persian fairy tale "The Three Princes of

Serendip," whose protagonists "were always making discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things they were not in quest of" [3]. The word refers to the faculty of making fortunate and unexpected discoveries unintentionally. In Russian, the closest equivalents are «счастливая случайность» (happy accident) or «интуитивная прозорливость» (intuitive perspicacity). Nevertheless, these phrases lack the connotation of active sagacity combined with chance that is inherent in the English term. The word has become particularly prevalent in travel writing to describe the unplanned encounters and discoveries that often constitute the most memorable aspects of a journey.

1.3. Jet Lag. *Jet lag* is a compound noun referring to a temporary sleep disorder and general physiological disorientation caused by rapid air travel across multiple time zones, which disrupts the body's circadian rhythms [6, p. 412]. While Russian has adopted the loanword «джетлаг» in colloquial usage, the standard explanatory translation «синдром смены часовых поясов» (time zone change syndrome) is notably longer and clinical in tone. The English term's brevity and metaphorical vividness — likening the traveler's state to being "lagging behind" their jet — contribute to its expressive economy.

1.4. Red-Eye (Flight). The attributive compound *red-eye* (or *red-eye flight*) denotes a commercial airline flight that departs late at night and arrives early the following morning. The designation derives from the visible redness in passengers' eyes caused by sleep deprivation and fatigue [7, p. 102]. In Russian, a descriptive phrase such as «ночной рейс» (night flight) or «рейс с ночным перелётом» (overnight flight) is employed; however, these translations omit the specific pragmatic nuance of economizing time and money at the expense of comfort, which is central to the English concept.

2. Russian Travel-Related Lexis with No Direct English Equivalents. The Russian language, in its turn, possesses lexical items rooted in specific cultural and historical contexts that present significant challenges for translation into English.

2.1. Попутчик (Poputchik). The noun *попутчик* is derived from the preposition *по* (along) and *путь* (path, way), literally meaning "one who travels the same way." While English offers the translation "*fellow traveler*," this equivalent fails to convey the depth of social and emotional significance that the Russian term carries. In the context of long-distance train travel across Russia, a *попутчик* is not merely a co-passenger but a temporary confidant with whom one may share meals, personal stories, and philosophical conversations within the confined space of a train compartment (*купе*). This phenomenon has been extensively documented in Russian cultural studies as a unique form of transient intimacy characteristic of the Russian railway experience [8, p. 156].

2.2. Вокзал (Vokzal). The etymology of the word *вокзал* is itself a case of cross-cultural semantic borrowing. The term derives from **Vauxhall Gardens**, a pleasure garden in 18th-century London. The Russian rendition of the name came to denote first a place of entertainment and subsequently, by the mid-19th century, the main building of a railway station [9, p. 210]. While English distinguishes between "*station*" (functional) and "*terminal*" (architectural), the Russian *вокзал* encapsulates both meanings and carries additional cultural connotations of arrival, departure, separation, and reunion that are heavily romanticized in Russian literature and cinema.

2.3. Простор (Prostor). The noun *простор* denotes wide, open, unbounded space. English translations such as "*expanse*," "*vastness*," or "*open space*" convey the spatial dimension but fail to capture the psychological and emotional resonance of the Russian term. *Простор* implies a subjective experience of spatial freedom, a liberation from confinement that is closely tied to the vast geography of the Russian landscape. As noted by linguist Anna Wierzbicka, this word belongs to a cluster of "untranslatable" Russian concepts related to emotional and existential states [10, p. 19].

Conclusion. The comparative analysis presented above demonstrates that non-equivalent lexis in the thematic domain of travel reflects deeper divergences in cultural experience and worldview between English-speaking and Russian-speaking communities. English lexical items such as *wanderlust*, *serendipity*, and *staycation* highlight values of individual exploration, serendipitous discovery, and adaptive leisure. Conversely, Russian words like *нонутчик*, *простор*, and *моска* underscore collective intimacy, spatial sensibility, and existential depth.

From a practical perspective, the translation of such terms necessitates descriptive strategies or cultural commentary rather than the search for exact one-word equivalents. For language learners and professionals in the tourism industry, awareness of these lexical lacunae constitutes an essential component of linguocultural competence. Further research in this area could extend the analysis to include phraseological units, proverbs, and travel-related metaphors in both languages.

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