

LINGUISTIC CHALLENGES AND TRANSLATION STRATEGIES IN TRANSLATING «MONSTER HIGH» INTO UKRAINIAN

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The article examines the linguistic, stylistic, and cultural aspects of translating the animated series Monster High into Ukrainian, focusing on the complex interplay between accuracy, creativity, and cultural adaptation. Translating audiovisual content, particularly material intended for young audiences, requires more than linguistic substitution: it involves reconstructing humor, idiomatic expressions, and intertextual references in a form accessible to the target culture.

The research applies several theoretical models, including Eugene Nida's concepts of formal and dynamic equivalence, Gideon Toury's distinction between adequacy and acceptability, and Peter Newmark's differentiation between semantic and communicative translation. These frameworks provide a methodological basis for evaluating translators' decision-making processes and the balance achieved between fidelity to the source text and functional naturalness in the target language.

The analysis demonstrates that the Ukrainian localization of Monster High attains a high degree of pragmatic and stylistic adequacy through the use of compensation, contextual adaptation, and lexical innovation. The translators demonstrate creative strategies for preserving wordplay, stylistic nuances, and thematic coherence within the «monster» universe of the series. They effectively convey character individuality and speech patterns through

expressive and culturally resonant Ukrainian equivalents, ensuring both authenticity and accessibility for the target audience.

The findings confirm that successful translation of animated content depends on maintaining the emotional, aesthetic, and humorous dimensions of the original while adhering to target-language norms. The study contributes to the broader discussion of audiovisual translation as a complex intercultural practice, demonstrating how theoretical principles can be pragmatically integrated to achieve both communicative effectiveness and artistic authenticity.

ЛІНГВІСТИЧНІ ТРУДНОЩІ ТА СТРАТЕГІЇ ПЕРЕКЛАДУ МУЛЬТСЕРІАЛУ «MONSTER HIGH» УКРАЇНСЬКОЮ МОВОЮ

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Ключові слова: аудіовізуальна адаптація, динамічна еквівалентність, передача гумору, міжкультурна комунікація, мовна креативність, переклад каламбурів, ідіоматична трансформація, семантичний баланс, молодіжні медіа.

У статті розглядаються лінгвістичні, стилістичні та культурні аспекти перекладу мультиплікаційного серіалу «Monster High» («Школа Монстрів») українською мовою з акцентом на складній взаємодії між точністю, креативністю та культурною адаптацією. Переклад аудіовізуального контенту, особливо призначеного для юної аудиторії, вимагає не лише лінгвістичної відповідності: він передбачає реконструкцію гумору, ідіоматичних виразів та інтертекстуальних посилань у спосіб, доступний для цільової культури. У дослідженні застосовуються кілька теоретичних моделей, зокрема концепції формальної та динамічної еквівалентності Юджина Найди, розрізнення між адекватністю та прийнятністю Гідеона Турі та диференціація між семантичним та комунікативним перекладом Пітера Ньюмарка. Ці рамки забезпечують методологічну основу для оцінки процесів прийняття рішень перекладачами та досягнутого балансу між точністю до вихідного тексту та функціональною природністю в мові перекладу.

Аналіз показує, що українська локалізація мультиплікаційного серіалу «Школа Монстрів» досягає високого рівня прагматичної та стилістичної

адекватності завдяки використанню компенсації, контекстуальної адаптації та лексичних інновацій. Перекладачі застосували низку креативних стратегій, спрямованих на збереження гри слів, стилістичних особливостей і тематичної цілісності у межах «монстрового» всесвіту серіалу. Особливу увагу приділено відтворенню індивідуальних мовних характеристик персонажів шляхом добору виразних і культурно релевантних українських еквівалентів, що забезпечило автентичність перекладу та його адекватне сприйняття цільовою аудиторією.

Результати дослідження підтверджують, що успішний переклад анімаційного контенту залежить від збереження емоційних, естетичних та гумористичних аспектів оригіналу з дотриманням норм мови перекладу. Дослідження сприяє ширшій дискусії про аудіовізуальний переклад як складну міжкультурну практику, демонструючи, як теоретичні принципи можуть бути прагматично інтегровані для досягнення як комунікативної ефективності, так і художньої автентичності.

Problem Statement. The translation of audio-visual products, especially animated series aimed at younger audiences, poses a number of linguistic, stylistic, and cultural challenges that require special translation strategies. Translators must preserve not only the semantic meaning but also the emotional, humorous, and aesthetic impact of the source text, while adapting it to the norms and expectations of the target culture. The *Monster High* series, based on Mattel's popular franchise, offers an especially rich case for studying such issues, as it combines elements of teenage slang, pop culture references, and distinctive character idiolects within a fantasy setting.

A considerable body of research [Nida, 1964; Newmark, 1988; Toury, 1995; Venuti, 1995; Baker, 2018] has been devoted to issues of equivalence, adequacy, and the translator's role in intercultural mediation. Foundational theories have explored translation as both a communicative and a cultural act, emphasizing the dynamic relationship between source and target texts. Within the field of audiovisual translation, scholars such as Chaume [Chaume, 2012] and Díaz Cintas and Remael [Díaz Cintas, 2021] have significantly contributed to the understanding of dubbing and subtitling processes, highlighting the multimodal nature of meaning-making across languages and media.

Despite these advances, the translation of animated series for children and teenagers remains a relatively understudied area within Ukrainian translation studies. Previous research has primarily addressed dubbing practices or lexical adaptation, often overlooking the complex interplay of linguistic creativity, humor, and cultural coding that characterizes such texts. In this regard, Oittinen [Oittinen, 2000] underscores the importance of audience orientation and cultural sensitivity when translating for young viewers, while Zabalbeascoa [Zabalbeascoa, 1996] points to the specific challenges of rendering humor in audiovisual contexts. Furthermore, the Dictionary of Translation Studies by

Shuttleworth and Cowie [Shuttleworth, 2014] provides a valuable conceptual framework for situating these discussions within broader translation theory.

The present article aims to address this research gap by analyzing both the theoretical and practical aspects of translating the *Monster High* animated series into Ukrainian, focusing on how linguistic creativity and cultural identity are negotiated through translation choices.

The main purpose of this study is to analyze the linguistic difficulties that arise in the process of translating the *Monster High* animated series into Ukrainian and to identify effective strategies that ensure both accuracy and naturalness of the translation. The objectives of the research include:

1. Defining the main types of linguistic and cultural challenges characteristic of *Monster High*.
2. Describing the translation strategies used to render humor, wordplay, and character-specific language.
3. Evaluating the Ukrainian translation in terms of equivalence, adequacy, and communicative functionality.
4. Demonstrating how theoretical translation models can be effectively applied to audiovisual material aimed at young audiences.

The article introduces new insights into the practical application of translation theories, highlighting how creative adaptation and cultural localization contribute to maintaining the original's communicative and aesthetic effect.

The object of the research is the process of translating the *Monster High* animated series from English into Ukrainian.

The subject of the research is the set of linguistic, stylistic, and cultural difficulties encountered during this process, as well as the translation strategies employed to overcome them.

Theoretical Framework. The study is grounded in modern translation theory, drawing upon the prin-

ples of equivalence, functionality, and cultural adaptation. Eugene Nida's distinction between formal and dynamic equivalence provides the basis for analyzing how translators balance literal accuracy with the communicative effect on the target audience. Peter Newmark's concepts of semantic and communicative translation inform the assessment of naturalness and stylistic fluency in the Ukrainian version. Gideon Toury's model of adequacy and acceptability offers a descriptive framework for evaluating the translation's conformity to both the source and target norms.

In addition, the research adopts elements of Skopos theory [Vermeer, 1989], which emphasizes the purpose and function of translation in the target culture, and Venuti's theory of domestication and foreignization, which helps analyze cultural choices and localization strategies.

The theoretical framework thus integrates both linguistic and cultural approaches, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the translator's decisions and their impact on meaning, humor, and characterization.

This interdisciplinary approach ensures that the study not only evaluates linguistic transformation but also interprets translation as a creative and culturally situated act of mediation between English-speaking and Ukrainian audiences.

Translating cartoons: features and basic rules. Translating cartoons is a difficult task that requires maintaining a balance between accuracy and adaptation to the cultural context. We must adhere to the basic rules of cartoon translation:

1. Localization: adapting the text to the audience. For example, using cultural phenomena, names or slang familiar to the viewer.

2. Reproducing humor: many cartoons are full of puns, wordplay, and jokes. These need to be adapted to preserve the meaning and evoke similar emotions.

3. Matching the sound: the translation must match the characters' lip movements if it is a voice-over.

4. Preserving character personalities: each character's speech should emphasize their personality and communication style.

5. Working with names and terms: special terms, names, song titles or team names may require translation, transcription, or transliteration.

Monster High is a popular cartoon based on a series of dolls by Mattel. The action takes place in a school for the children of legendary monsters: vampires, werewolves, mummies and others. The series is aimed at a teenage audience and addresses themes of friendship, self-expression, and acceptance of oneself and others.

The cartoon is filled with slang, humor, and cultural references, all of which create particular difficulties for translators. The names of the episodes, comical situations, and the characters' speech styles are key challenges.

When translating *Monster High* into Ukrainian, it is necessary to take into account key aspects of translation quality assessment to ensure that it meets the cultural, linguistic, and stylistic expectations of the audience. Taking these criteria into account allows for the creation of a translation that is accurate, natural, and interesting for viewers.

Equivalence in translation. Equivalence is one of the most important criteria in translation. Eugene Nida proposed a concept of two types of equivalence:

- Formal equivalence involves preserving the structure, form, and content of the original text. This approach is often used to translate proper names, such as character names (Cleo de Nile, Lagoona Blue), or in cases where accuracy of terms is important.

- Dynamic equivalence focuses on creating a similar effect for the target audience by adapting the text to its cultural and linguistic characteristics. For *Monster High*, this is important when translating humor, slang, and emotional dialogue.

Adequacy and acceptability. Gideon Toury identified two main criteria for assessing translation quality:

- Adequacy, which means that the translation complies with the norms of the original language.

- Acceptability, which consists of adapting the text to the norms and traditions of the target language.

For the *Monster High* cartoon, this means that the translation must take into account the peculiarities of the Ukrainian language and culture. For example, slang expressions used in the English original can be adapted to the style and vocabulary that are understandable and natural for Ukrainian children and teenagers.

Functionality and genre appropriateness. Functionality: the translation must preserve the function of the original. For *Monster High*, this is primarily an entertainment function, which also includes elements of learning and socialization. Genre appropriateness: the translation must match the style, tone and genre of the original text. For example, the conversational style and vivid dialogue of the characters must sound natural in Ukrainian.

Naturalness and clarity. Peter Newmark emphasized that a high-quality translation should be both understandable and natural for the target audience. To achieve this, he distinguished between two approaches:

- Semantic translation, which focuses on accurately reproducing the content.

- Communicative translation, which prioritizes the ease of perception of the text by the audience.

Translation Quality Criteria and Linguistic Challenges in *Monster High*

Taking into account the key criteria of equivalence, functionality, adequacy, and naturalness remains crucial for achieving a high-quality translation of

the *Monster High* animated series. These principles ensure that the original content is effectively adapted for the Ukrainian audience while maintaining its core meaning, emotional resonance, and cultural identity.

Examples of Linguistic Difficulties and Strategies for Their Resolution

1. Translating Wordplay in Episode Titles

The titles of *Monster High* episodes frequently contain elements of wordplay, posing significant challenges for translators.

(1) «Jaundice Brothers» (S1E1). The title parodies the well-known band Jonas Brothers. The word jaundice refers to a liver disease associated with yellowish skin, fitting the grotesque aesthetic of the series. The Ukrainian version, «Жондіс Бразерс», reproduces the phonetic form but omits the semantic component. This indicates a translation strategy prioritizing recognizability and intertextual reference over semantic adaptation.

(2) «Talon Show» (S1E2). This title fuses talon (meaning «claw») and talent show. The Ukrainian translation, «Шоу талантів», renders the literal meaning while omitting the eerie nuance related to the monsters' claws. Alternative renderings such as «Кігтисте шоу» or «Шоу пазуристих талантів» could preserve both the thematic and stylistic features of the source.

(3) «Fear Squad» (S1E3). This title plays on the expression cheer squad, replacing cheer with fear to reflect the horror theme. The Ukrainian version «Уприлідерки» demonstrates successful creative adaptation: it forms a neologism that mirrors the stylistic playfulness of the original while maintaining cultural and contextual relevance.

These examples illustrate that translators alternate between literal translation and creative adaptation depending on their communicative aim—whether to preserve intertextual recognizability or to convey the intended atmosphere and humor.

2. Slang and Informal Language

The use of slang is another challenge in rendering the speech of teenage characters. In the first episode, Lagoona exclaims «Shaka!»—a gesture and exclamation rooted in surfing culture. The Ukrainian version, «Шака!», remains unchanged, relying on the global recognizability of the expression. This approach demonstrates a foreignization strategy, maintaining cultural authenticity without distorting meaning.

3. Humor and Cultural Realities

(1) In Clawdeen's line «...my clothes aren't the only things that are fierce during the full moon», the adjective fierce carries a double meaning – «wild» and «stylish». The translation «...коли місяць у повні агресивне не тільки мое вбрання» renders the literal meaning but weakens the humorous undertone. A more expressive adaptation – «...на повний місяць скажене не лише мое вбрання» or «...з повним

місяцем дичавіє все, навіть мій гардероб» – would better capture the character's personality and the wordplay.

(2) Cleo's phrase «Good luck! You are so gonna need it». Is translated as «Удачі! Вона тобі знадобиться». The emotional emphasis conveyed by «so gonna need it» is lost. A more dynamic equivalent such as «Тобі це точно знадобиться!» would reproduce the original tone more effectively.

These cases demonstrate that humor and character expressiveness often require compensatory strategies and stylistic modulation to maintain pragmatic equivalence in translation.

4. Conveying Character Individuality

A distinctive feature of the *Monster High* series is the linguistic characterization of its heroines. For instance, Ghoulia communicates exclusively through «zombie moans», which other characters understand. This paradox generates humor and highlights her individuality.

In Frankie's response, «Wow, that was pretty deep, Ghoulia», the humor derives from ironic overinterpretation of unintelligible sounds. The Ukrainian version, «Овва, це було щиро, Гуліє», preserves the ironic tone by substituting «deep» with «щиро», thus creating a more natural and euphonious expression in Ukrainian. Nevertheless, an alternative such as «Отакої, Гуліє, це майже філософія!» might further enhance the comic effect by accentuating situational irony.

This example underscores the importance of stylistic adaptation and functional equivalence when transferring character-specific speech patterns across languages.

5. Wordplay and Cultural Contexts

In episode «Fear Squad» (S1E3), Cleo's line «There is no room on my squad for dead weight». Employs idiomatic wordplay: dead weight refers metaphorically to useless members while resonating literally with the «monster» setting. The Ukrainian version, «У моїй команді немає місця мертвій масі», successfully preserves both metaphorical and literal meanings, maintaining the irony and thematic coherence.

Alternatively, more emotionally charged options such as «У моїй команді немає місця для тих, хто просто валяється!» or «Ніяких ледарів у моїй команді!» could increase the naturalness and appeal for teenage viewers.

This case exemplifies how cultural adaptation and register adjustment can optimize the translation of idiomatic expressions while ensuring pragmatic adequacy.

Conclusion. The Ukrainian translation of the *Monster High* animated series provides a compelling case study of how linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic factors intersect in audiovisual translation. The analysis

demonstrates that translating youth-oriented animation entails far more than lexical substitution or formal equivalence; it requires the deliberate mediation of humor, identity, and cultural specificity to ensure both intelligibility and emotional resonance for the target audience. The Ukrainian adaptation illustrates the translator's dual role as a linguistic mediator and a cultural re-creator who must balance fidelity to the source text with the expectations, norms, and values of Ukrainian viewers.

One of the key findings of this research is that equivalence in animated content should be dynamic rather than formal. The successful reproduction of humor, puns, and slang demands creative adaptation that preserves the communicative function of the original, even at the cost of literal accuracy. In this respect, Nida's theory of dynamic equivalence and Newmark's concept of communicative translation provide effective theoretical frameworks. Likewise, Toury's principles of adequacy and acceptability clarify why certain deviations from the source text are not only justified but essential for achieving cultural and stylistic coherence.

Furthermore, the translation of *Monster High* underscores the significance of genre and audience awareness. Given that the series is targeted at adolescents, the Ukrainian version must align with their speech patterns, humor, and worldview. The translators' use of localized slang, idiomatic expressions, and rhythmically adapted dialogue contributes to the authenticity of the characters while retaining the playful tone of the original. Instances of successful adaptation – such as the inventive rendering of episode titles and monster-related wordplay – illustrate how linguistic creativity can effectively compensate for cultural untranslatability.

Prospects for Further Research. Future studies could compare the Ukrainian version of *Monster High* with translations into other languages to explore cross-cultural adaptation strategies. It would also be valuable to examine audience reception to assess how translation choices affect young viewers. The approach used in this paper can be applied to other animated or multimedia projects, contributing to a deeper understanding of linguistic creativity and cultural localization in audiovisual translation.

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