



Social

THE LINGUISTIC STUDY OF LACUNAR PHENOMENA

Tetiana Anokhina ^{*1}

^{*1} Kyiv Linguistic University, Kyiv, Ukraine

Abstract

The article opens the current observation on lacunology studies where lacunae are regarded as results of change, innovation, substitution and transfer. Lacuna can be interpreted as empty place in contrasting languages, zero verbalization in the written and oral discourse, null transfer or the explicit substitute instead of the lacunar original. The paper has revealed how lacunae, rare words or hapaxes, can found in texts and corpus data. In terms of translation debates it relates to domestication and foreignization area of translation techniques. Lacunae are very closed off and inaccessible and only the "outside" parts of the lacunar artifacts or phenomena, often implicit, so translations must preserve lacunae to be lacunae or reveal the lacunae thus eliminating them. The "inside" and the "outside" of lacunar artifacts and phenomena depend upon a translator. The commentary can be added in the book, a footnote added in the article and the extensive commentary may be missed in speech. Thus, the techniques of elimination and adding work or fail.

Keywords: Lacunae; Lacunicon; Cultural Transfer; Hapaxes; Lacunology Studies.

Cite This Article: Tetiana Anokhina. (2018). "THE LINGUISTIC STUDY OF LACUNAR PHENOMENA." *International Journal of Research - Granthaalayah*, 6(2), 101-108. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1186579>.

1. Introduction

Lacuna is a signal of the specificity of a particular linguistic community compared to another. By gaps, or lacunae, linguists understand: the absence of a semantic structure of the word that would provide the designated object or phenomenon the completeness of the description (the term lacunema is also used); fragmentary presentation of the information in the sentence, which is reflected in the incompleteness of the composition of the subjective and the predicate (omission of minor members of the sentence) (the term gap is also used); the reduction of the syntactic structure (the term ellipses is also used); a virtual element that can be extrapolated only indirectly, intertextually; incomprehensible slot, virtual semantic, cognitive, the contextual lacunemma.

Lacuna is often seen as lacking unit, zero verbal nomination, absent meaning, nonexistent concept in one language, culture and society which with no corresponding equivalent [[12]].

Lacunae are systematized by linguists according to the following parameters: lacunae in language (the results of reduction, elision); lacunae in speech (caused by cognitive discord resulting in pauses); extralinguistic nature (aphasia).

In Translation Studies lacuna are units that have a single-word nomination in another language [[13]]. Lacunae are empty spaces in the system of language, vague concepts. Today, we believe that lacuna is a semiotic sign containing a zero plan of expression and a hidden or implicit plan of content. The modern linguistics, translation studies and nonverbal semiotics have birth to a new science that is becoming viral today – the lacunology, science with studies pauses in speech, cultural and linguistic gaps, lacunae of cognition, zero transfer. The expansion of many various methods and disciplines interfering resulted in the development of lacunology studies.

There are different layers of lacunarity. The grammatical lacunarity is traced as categories like the article category in English or Gender category in Ukrainian that emerge as zero in contrast. This phenomenon is considered to be a throwback to the synthetic background of the Ukrainian language and analytic background of the English language. The analytic design of English, its simplified wording stays lacunar for the Slavic speech model. Also, the word order syntax of the English language is standard in contrast to the Slavic languages.

The ethnographic elements are considered by linguists as gaps of transfer to another culture: they are not easily translated, so they are rendered "with the phrase, not by a word" [[11]].

Lacuna is a unique phenomenon which mirrors zero reflection of non-equivalent vocabulary. Lacunae are quasi-comparable units that can refer to various referents of ethnic cultures. The phenomenon of the lack of specific elements in the culture of one ethnic group against another in English termed as *gap*. The cultural or linguistic facts can cause gaps or broad interpretation. Ethnographic specifics must be fully rendered in the target culture [[11]]. The implicit gaps are results of loss of some background information.

The problem of limited or vague understanding as part of the source text can be solved by the quite different translation strategies and solutions. Referring to Anthony Pym's (1993) understanding of transcultural relations, there are three strategies for lacunae elimination: transpositions, substitutions or modulations to translate the textual lacunae [[9], p. 34].

The specifics of the social lacunae in terms of Anthony Pym can be rendered or some part of the original can be transmitted but the other part should be left in the commentary in the original with the footnote, not just translated. Some element of the culture cannot be translated. These gaps, or empty spaces in translation, are called the cultural specifics that can be lost in translation [[2]]. At the current moment, the lacunae theory is often associated with translation studies where lacunae are interpreted as `translation gaps` caused by irrelevance in the target text of translation where the specific or vague information is often substituted by "zero equivalents". The ways to eliminate lacunae are associated with such terms as the non adequacy of translation, methods to hide lacunae are described by the terminological such synonymic notions as: (i) "naturalizing" ("domestication") and (ii) "estranging" ("foreignization") [[3], p. 39].

Lacunae usually have zero exteriorization [[11]]. The content of the lacunae filled by borrowing, transliteration, compare: Eng. *gastropub* – Ukr. "гастропаб". The gap can be compensated by an equivalent replacement, Cf.: Eng. *earworm*, Ukr. *набридлива мелодія (obsessive melody)*. Lacunar neologic elements at first are transmitted descriptively, and later – with the help of equivalents, e.g.: Eng. *man cave* (a room or space (as in a basement) designed according to the taste of the man of the house to be used as his personal area for hobbies and leisure activities) may be translated into Ukrainian as "барлога/барліг" or "святе місце" differently depending on the context and connotations meaning "Cave" or "Holy place". While transfer of information certain difficulties in translation (*horror hows*) arise causing lacunae.

The lacunarity is syncretically associated with the concept of "implicitness", it refers to the interpretation of the multi-vector nature of semantic gaps in indirect and additional interpretations. The lacunarity is embodied in the uniqueness and idiomacy of the national culture, the mentality of people. In the "mirror" of a culture, we see only a partial reflection, clarity of which depends on the quality of the elimination or compensation processes. To transfer every specific element from one text into another is important for students and future translators to form translator's linguistic and cultural outlook, derived from scientific and naive outlook of the world (for example, knowledge of industry terminology and names of everyday objects). The formed knowledge intertwines, creating a holistic view of the world. A different interpretation and consequently its translation or retranslation of the text arises from the thesaurus volume, thus resulting in gaps of "functional ambiguity" and the ambiguity of interpretation [[11]].

The example of the ambiguous interpretation can be fixed in prepared speech or in spontaneous communication with regard to some allusions or precedential facts (e.g. *the eleventh of September*) that can be unknown. What to do in case an interpreter? How to translate the missing piece? Theoretically, lacunar element cannot be transferred. On the other hand, the gap should be filled by an interpreter, which specifies said by broad interpretation. The choice of a tactic is formed according to the established conditions and by the planned decision of interpreter or on customer's demand of translation.

The problem of limited or vague understanding as part of the source text can be solved by the quite different translation strategies and solutions. Referring to Anthony Pym's understanding of transcultural relations, there are three strategies for lacunae elimination: transpositions, substitutions or modulations to translate the textual lacunae [[9], p. 34]. To render lacuna or liquidate lacuna means two methods of translation, cf.: the the vague element may be rendered by shift (i) (transposition, substitution or modulation) or (ii) by means of the omission technique (deletion). Vinay claimed that these principles actually founded the 'Canadian School of translation' [[14], p. 148].

Lacunae can be eliminated by either omission or shift (substitution, modulation or transposition). The omission is the '*deletion of lacuna*', '*absence of translation*' or putting the specific element in *italics* without translation. Translation Shift is the way of translation to work with [[4], p. 34]. The source texts obviously present problems for any translator who has to render a text from a particular language or culture. Indeed, the cultural phenomenon can be lacunar to another culture. So the question is whether to preserve specifics by giving *the italics of the lacunar artifact* (e.g. *tet-a-tet*) without translating (1), to cut the lacuna off (2) or to compensate the

lacuna by commentary or footnote. At least four different strategies to render lacunae Anthony Pym describes in his article "*Multilingual Intertextuality in Translation*". The theorist and a translator give a few examples on translation and nontranslation revealing that could be described as translational or peri-translational: (1) source-language phrases are rendered at word level; (2) source-language cultural items are replaced with functionally equivalent target-language items; (3) source-language phrases are explained; (4) new material is added. The important point is that all four strategies work in unison, producing a text that is restricted to neither one language nor the other. The result is a commentary on political correctness in at least two cultures [[9], p. 209].

The task of translation is to ensure cross-language communication in the text created in the language of Recipient (on "target language") which can act as a complete replacement of the original text (on "source language") in the functional, structural and content relationships. It can be challenging because the texts as part of the same message are based on different language systems with units that do not match, either in form or in content. The possibility of the translated patterns is determined by the ability of multilingual texts to be communicatively equivalent in the process of information exchange. The equivalence of the original and target text is achieved in case when the translation reproduces the original content transmitted by means of another language. Translator has to convey accurately the structure and the content in the original text without any deliberate structured transformations. A translation can be defined as a kind of linguistic mediation, in which the created text is communicatively equivalent to the original, and its equivalence is evident in functional, contextual and structural levels [[6], p. 122]. Some translators claim that the translator changes some details in the structure of the text, it can be done only in order to convey the original content better (*substitution*). Others claim that *clarification* works better for lacunae elimination (footnote, remark or translator's notes).

In the Romanian tradition, G. Lungu Badea (2004) states that facing cultural transfer, the translator usually chooses between three main options, namely (1) to borrow the foreign term, (2) to use an existing word or collocation with a new sense, or (3) to use an existing word complying as much as possible with the suggested pragmatic functions [[5], p. 108].

Vlahov and Florin [[15], p. 92] made a general differentiation between word transcription and any kind of translation, the latter being divided into several categories: (1) transcription of realia; (2) translation of realia; (3) Introducing a neologism (calques, semi-calques, assimilations, semantic neologisms); (4) approximate translation (the use of hyponyms/hypernyms; functional analogies; description, explication, interpretation); (5) contextual translation (zero translation (omission) with the transfer of the unit's meaning in the context). The ability to choose the correct translation technique is an indispensable skill [[8], p. 328].

Lacunae can be eliminated by either omission or shift (substitution, modulation or transposition). The omission is the "*deletion of lacuna*", "*absence of translation*" or putting the specific element in *italics* without translation. The culturally marked words are called lacunae and can be rendered differently. One of the first taxonomies was suggested back in 1953 by A.V. Fedorov who proposed to render lacunae by (1) full or partial transliteration or transcription; (2) creation of a new word or word combination on the basis of existing language elements and

morphological relations and (3) using a unit which fulfils a similar (even though not identical) function in the target language [[7], p. 139].

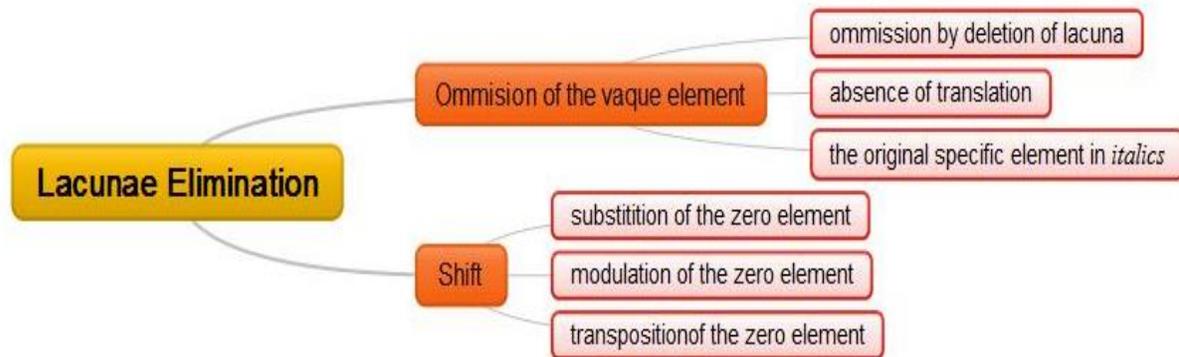


Figure 1: Lacuna: omission and shift

2. Materials and Methods

In order to detect gaps in translation (non-translated elements), *tertium comparationis* is used, which helps to decode the lacuna through the original and translate using another semiotic system, another language, or several copies of the translation. To detect the effectiveness of duplication one compares several duplicate versions that make specific parameters, ethno-cultural or other features that are differently accentuated in the translation versions. The analysis of the relayed versions of the translation allows for more precise identification and elimination of lacunar elements – verbal and non-verbal, subject or conceptual units.

An effective method is to detect gaps in parallel enclosures of translated texts. Comments and extra-text links are very informative to create a registry of lacunar units. Any nomination given for the concordance analyzer has a different representation in different discourses. The degree of use of the term "lacuna" (as well as other nominations for the analyzer) is calculated by the frequency list tool in the COCA.

The use of casing data is a modern trend in linguistics, and gives preference to this way of obtaining data for analysis. The modern features of Internet resources are vast and need to be streamlined for comfortable use.

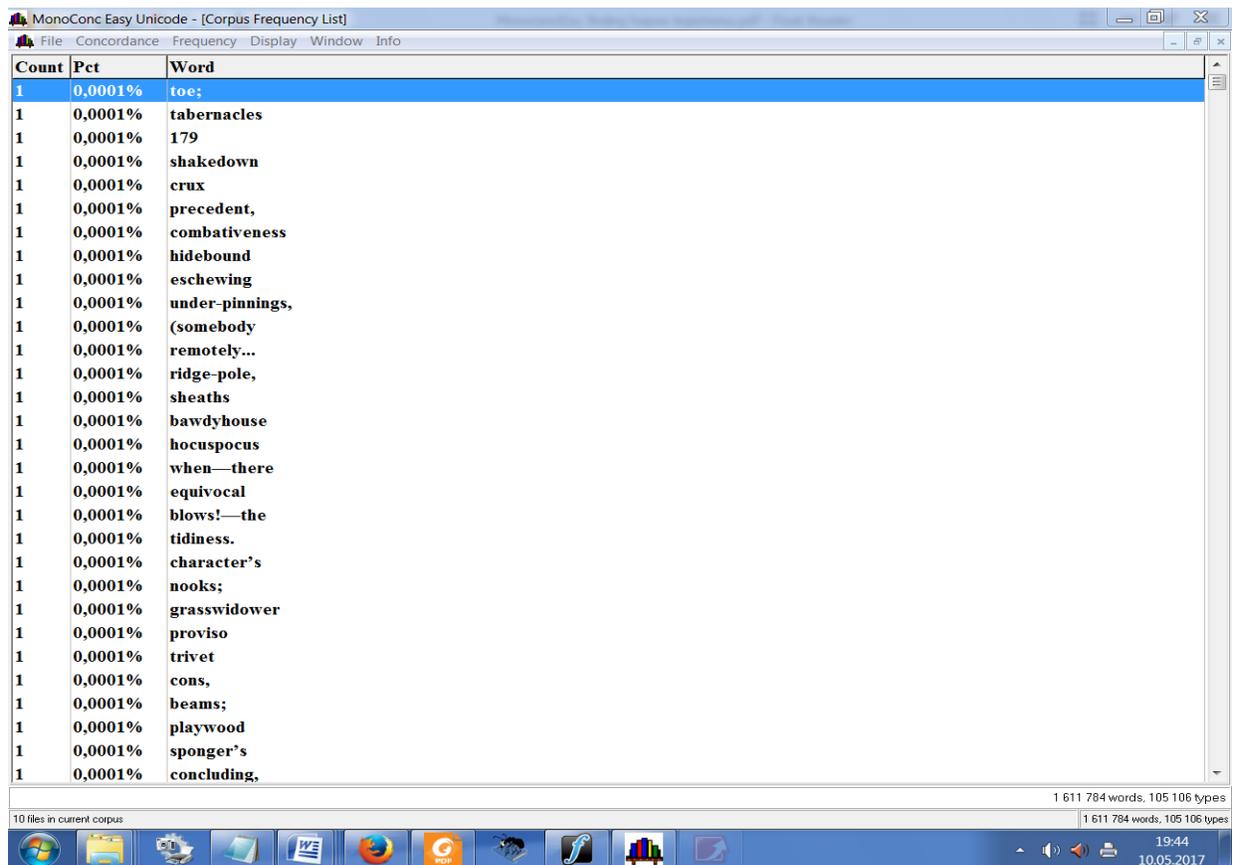
3. Results and Discussions

The COCAs contain different numbers of "lacuna" nominations in different discourses, for example: academic discourse / academic core (87), artistic discourse / fiction (41), press / magazine (12) show a high level of use of the term "lacuna" when the spoken discourse / spoken (0) and media discourse / news (10) record the least amount of use of the nomination. Translations of legal, medical, scientific and technical discourse / legal, medical, science (65%) show the largest repeated automatic translation due to the high degree of reuse of cliché expressions and typical unambiguous blocks of text. Art discourse / fiction and the translation of other contextually dependent texts (35%) are not effective because of the lack of case-based

material in the database. At the time, these types cannot be efficiently translated using automatic translation systems and require translation and editing to a greater extent than informative non-significant texts [[16]].

The *MonoConcEsy* text analyzer can be used to search and analyze lacunae. This program has broad functionality for analysis and is used by us to search for hapaxes and rare words within texts, concordances and enclosures (by Michael Barlow) [[16]]. In order to find the text in the text / concordance / body, you must specify the minimum and maximum frequency of the use of a word that is numerically equal to one.

Hapaxes (rare words) in the investigated data are contextual gaps which are found in the analysis of texts using frequency programs. Few frequencies are rarely used by the author of the word (0.0006%) within this body, for example: *amiableness, amid, amidst, amiss, amity, housebreaking, mediocre, misery, recollecting, repentance, respect, robin, sacrifice* (MonoConcEasy) [[16]].



The screenshot shows the MonoConc Easy Unicode interface with a list of words and their frequencies. The table below represents the data shown in the application window.

Count	Pct	Word
1	0,0001%	toe;
1	0,0001%	tabernacles
1	0,0001%	179
1	0,0001%	shakedown
1	0,0001%	crux
1	0,0001%	precedent,
1	0,0001%	combativeness
1	0,0001%	hidebound
1	0,0001%	eschewing
1	0,0001%	under-pinnings,
1	0,0001%	(somebody
1	0,0001%	remotely...
1	0,0001%	ridge-pole,
1	0,0001%	sheaths
1	0,0001%	bawdyhouse
1	0,0001%	hocuspocus
1	0,0001%	when—there
1	0,0001%	equivocal
1	0,0001%	blows!—the
1	0,0001%	tidiness.
1	0,0001%	character's
1	0,0001%	nooks;
1	0,0001%	grasswidower
1	0,0001%	proviso
1	0,0001%	trivet
1	0,0001%	cons,
1	0,0001%	beams;
1	0,0001%	playwood
1	0,0001%	sponger's
1	0,0001%	concluding,

Figure 2: Hapaxes search by MonoConcEsy

4. Conclusions & Recommendations

Lacunae are a manifestation of the incommensurability, incongruency, mismatch of cultures and languages. The differences arise in comparison, in contact with other cultures. *Tertium*

comparationis works with elements of national-specific nature. The inherent features of lacunar concepts are incomprehensible, unusual, exotic, strange, unfamiliar, enigmatic.

The lacunae (gaps) are often associated with the problem of translation difficulties that can be attributed to a lack of room not in the target culture, but to lacunae in the source culture. There are some specific elements in the national picture of the world that can not correspond to one-word notion, the lexical equivalent or have some differences compared to the other language.

The phenomenon has been called "*lacunarity*". The linguistic lacunicon embrace the "*cross-linguistic lacunarity*", "*cognitive lacunarity*" and the "*proper linguistic lacunarity*" (lacunae of the language and speech). The term '*lacuna*' corresponds to the term "*gap*" in the modern linguistics. The further research will be directed towards hapaxes search, linguistic lacunicon verification by finding new terms and taxonomies.

References

- [1] Anokhina, T. (2015). LACUNAE IN TERMS OF SCHOLARS: THE BRIEF OVERVIEW. ФІЛОЛОГІЧНІ ТРАКТАТИ, 7(1), pp. 7-11.
- [2] Anokhina, T. O. (2013) (a). THE LINGUISTIC LACUNICON: COGNITIVE MAPPING IN SCHEMES AND TERMS. Journal of Education, Culture and Society I(1 (2013)), Wroclaw, P. 166-175. DOI: doi10.15503/jecs20131-166-174.
- [3] Anokhina, T. O. (2013) (b). (2013, April). THE DEVELOPMENT OF LACUNOLOGY THESAURUS IN PROTOTERMS OF LACUNICON. In THE 2nd International scientific conference "Development of Scientific Thought in the 21st Century: Problems and Perspectives". Riga: SCIENCE SUPPORT CENTER SIA. pp. 38-41.
- [4] Anokhina, T. O. Kobyakova, I. K. (2017). SOMETHING IS LOST: LACKING INFORMATION IN TRANSLATION. In Edges of scientific creativity: International collection of scientific papers (collective monograph) of the GISAP project participants, autumn 2017 (London, October 18 – October 24, 2017). London: IASHE. pp. 32-34. Available at: <https://gisap.eu/ru/node/138119>
- [5] Badea, G. (2004). TEORIA CULTUREMELOR, TEORIA TRADUCERII. Timisoara: Editura Universitatii de Vest.
- [6] Burbekova Saule, Nurzhanova Aisulu. PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATION THEORY AND PRACTICE: ORIGINAL AND TRANSLATED TEXT EQUIVALENCE. Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences, Volume 136, 9 July 2014, Pages 119-123.
- [7] Fedorov, A.V. (1953). VVEDENIJE V TEORIJU PEREVODOVEDENIJA. MOSKVA: IZDATELSTVO LITERATURY NA INOSTRANNYH JAZYKAH.
- [8] Intan Safinaz Zainudin, Norsimah Mat Awal. TRANSLATION TECHNIQUES: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS. Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences, Volume 59, 17 October 2012, pp. 328-334.
- [9] Pym, Anthony (1993). LACUNAE AND UNCERTAIN LIMITS IN LACUNAE AND UNCERTAIN LIMITS IN AUSTRALIAN CULTURE, WITH SUGGESTIONS ON THEIR TRANSLATION INTO SPANISH, AUSTRALIA IN BARCELONA, Ed. Kathleen Firth & Susan Ballyn, Barcelona, Universitat de Barcelona, 1993, pp. 27-37.
- [10] Pym, Anthony. (1996). Multilingual Intertextuality in Translation. Beatriz Penas Ibáñez, ed. The Intertextual Dimension of Discourse. Universidad de Zaragoza, 1996. 207-218. Discourse. Universidad de Zaragoza, 1996. 207-218. Available at: <http://usuarios.tinet.cat/apym/online/translation/multilingual.pdf>
- [11] Sorokin, Y.A., Markovina I. Y., Kryukov A.N. (1988). ETNOPSYCHOLINGUISTICS. Nauka, Moscow.

- [12] Szerszunowicz, J. (2015). LACUNARITY, LEXICOGRAPHY AND BEYOND: INTEGRATION OF THE INTRODUCTION OF A LINGUO-CULTURAL CONCEPT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF L2 LEARNERS' DICTIONARY SKILLS. *Lexicography*, 2(1), 101-118. DOI: doi.org/10.1007/s40607-015-0015-6
- [13] Venuti, Lawrence (1995). *THE TRANSLATOR'S INVISIBILITY. A History of Translation.* London and New York: Routledge.
- [14] Vinay, Jean-Paul and Jean Darbelnet (1958). *STYLISTIQUE COMPARÉE DU FRANÇAIS ET DE L'ANGLAIS: MÉTHODE DE TRADUCTION. NOUVELLE ÉDITION REVUE ET CORRIGÉE*, Didier, Paris.
- [15] Vlahov, S., Florin, S. (1980). *NEPEREVODIMOJE V PEREVODE.* Moskva: Meždunarodnyje otnošenija.
- [16] COCA: Corpus of Contemporary American English. URL: <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/> (last accessed: 21.02.2018)
- [17] MonoconcEsy: An Introduction to Concordancing. URL: <https://www.academia.edu/16716002/MonoconcEsy?auto=download> (last accessed: 21.02.2018)

*Corresponding author.

E-mail address: anokhina_mail@ yahoo.com