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# Cross-cultural lacunarity and translation techniques: a corpus-based study of English, Russian and Spanish

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# Abstract

Lexicalisation patterns varying across languages reveal lexical gaps or *lacunae* emerging due to structural misalignments between linguistic systems. Lacunae, manifesting themselves as the absence of one-to-one equivalents in one of the contrasting languages, represent a serious translation challenge since they often conceal conceptual discrepancies. Translation of lexemes with no direct equivalents nearly always results in the loss of a certain amount of culture-specific information. This research seeks to provide insight into how speakers' mental representations diverge in three typologically diverse languages – English, Russian and Spanish – and to investigate ways of overcoming such divergences in translation in a corpus-based study.

This research identifies English lexemes which have no equivalents in Russian and Spanish primarily with the help of the Oxford English Dictionary advanced search tools. Using the Historical Thesaurus of English, their semantic neighbourhood is then investigated to explore the mechanisms of formation and evolution of lacunae. The findings from lexicographic data are further corroborated by corpus evidence. Film subtitles, containing lacunar items, and their translations into Russian and Spanish, are retrieved from online contextual dictionaries and used as parallel corpora to identify how lacunae are handled in actual translation practice.

This study combines three interrelated research strands. The theoretical strand presents a data-driven model offering a nuanced interpretation of a lexical lacuna. The lexicographic strand overviews the lifecycle of lexical lacunae, outlining the mechanisms of their formation and pathways along which they become filled. Finally, the corpus strand discusses 26 identified techniques for tackling lacunae. These are systematically classified into three main translation strategies: formal, semantic and explicative transformations. The corpus-based strand also offers a breakdown of translation solutions appropriate for each type of lacuna. The presented evidence demonstrates that although translation of lacunar items typically entails deviation of varying degrees from the source text, lexical gaps can and should be bridged in translation to prevent them from turning into cultural gaps.

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# 1   Introduction

Numerous studies have empirically demonstrated that languages may differ in the way they encode meaning in words (e.g. Boroditsky, 2000; Slobin, 1996b; Talmy, 1985). Diverging conceptual systems give rise to discrepancies in lexicalisation, sometimes resulting in absences of direct equivalents across languages. Such cross-linguistic lexical gaps or *lacunae* may compromise mutual understanding between the participants of the intercultural dialogue, posing serious problems in translation practice.

Lexical lacunae have always attracted significant academic interest and in the second half of the twentieth century became an object of research in a number of fields. This study brings together distinct yet complementary perspectives on lexical lacunae which have progressed independently (each of these perspectives will be overviewed in Chapter 2). For example, lacuna-centred studies primarily within the framework of comparative linguistics have focused on the development of the theoretical basis of the phenomenon and its classifications. Cognition-centred studies following the tradition of American anthropological linguistics have investigated the influence of language via linguistic lacunae on cognitive faculties in an attempt to reveal how differently speakers of various languages construe reality. Equivalence-centred perspective, formed within translation studies, has examined practical ways of bridging lexical gaps in the cross-linguistic context. Finally, loanword-centred research has addressed lexical lacunae in the context of the borrowing process, albeit tangentially.

The surveyed endeavours differ not only in the approaches they take, but also in the terminology they use to refer to the object of research. Lexical gaps, linguistic variables, lexical inconsistencies, non-universals, lexical lacunae, non-equivalent lexis and untranslatable terms are various names for the same phenomenon, manifesting itself as a structural difference between lexical repertoires of the contrasting languages. Every new approach to linguistic lacunarity has revealed new aspects of its complexity, unravelling its multidimensional nature but was still not sufficient to account for all its various manifestations. Such pluri-disciplinary research has resulted in numerous reformulations of the concept, leading to the overall ambiguity in terminology and often one-sided interpretation of lacunae. Research studies investigating translation strategies tended to focus on specific manifestations of lacunarity (e.g. allusions, culture-specific references, realia), whereas the genuine versatile nature of the phenomenon has not been properly

acknowledged. There still remains a need for the refinement of the theoretical framework of lexical lacunarity and development of a more holistic approach to the translation solutions for tackling lacunae in all their complexity.

This research addresses this gap in knowledge by further developing a theoretical framework for understanding lexical lacunae and investigating how they are dealt with in actual translation practice in a corpus-based study. Therefore, the contribution of this project is twofold: it deepens the knowledge about cross-linguistic lexical lacunarity and generates an applied approach for bridging lexical gaps.

This study is interdisciplinary in nature approaching lexical lacunae from the perspective of both cognitive linguistics and translation studies. Borrowing analytical tools (e.g. categorisation levels, domains), theories (e.g. prototype theory, frame semantics) and investigative methods (e.g. onomasiological analysis) from cognitive linguistics, this research builds on cognitive insights forming a solid theoretical underpinning for the analysis of techniques for bridging lexical gaps in translation. Incorporating a cognitive approach to the investigation of translation strategies for tackling lexical lacunae, this thesis views meanings of the words with no direct equivalents against the backdrop of human encyclopaedic knowledge and attempts to gain insight into the underlying logic of translators' solutions, tracing the line of thought that prompted them to select specific techniques. This investigation is not limited to the linguistic collation of the original text with its translation. On the contrary, by analysing translators' choices, it examines the conceptual, cultural, historical and social constraints that prompted them to convey the original meaning of a lacunar item (i.e. a lexeme with no direct equivalent in the target language) in a certain way. It seeks to explore to what extent mental categories reflected in the meaning of the source text item and that of the target text item diverge across speech communities. Therefore, by integrating cognitive and translational approaches, this thesis views translation as a reconstrual of the original meaning in the target language by a translator, involving conceptual reorientation to a divergent extra-linguistic environment comprehensible to the target audience.

My professional background in translation and personal interest in cross-cultural inconsistencies conditioned by the experience of parenting trilingual children have prompted this project.

## 1.0   Research questions and objectives

Even though lexical lacunae have always been in the spotlight of academic attention, there is a lack of systematic empirical research into translation strategies for handling lacunae in all their complexity. As mentioned above, scholars have developed translation strategies for handling specific manifestations of lacunae such as cultural references (e.g. Božović, 2021; Needergard-Larsen, 1993; Pearson, 2003; Pedersen, 2011; Sentov, 2017), realia (e.g. Kniazkova, 2019), allusions (e.g. Leppihalme, 1997; Rahimkhani and Salmani, 2013), resulting in fragmented knowledge towards handling instances of untranslatability in translation.

The studies that explicitly addressed the issue of tackling lexical lacunae in translation (e.g. Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995[1958] and Barkhudarov, 1975) have become outdated nowadays, being largely data-informed. Such studies were based on the personal observations and insights of the authors, illustrated with miscellaneous data, often retrieved without sufficient consistency. Over the years, in translation studies, the priorities have changed: the focus has shifted from prescriptivism towards descriptivism as well as from the data-informed towards the data-driven approach. With the opportunities that parallel corpora have opened for research in translation, there seems to be a definite need for a study, well-anchored around empirical data, that would outline how lexical lacunae are dealt with in actual translation practice.

Drawing on the recent methodological trend in translation studies research using multilingual film subtitles as parallel corpora (e.g. in Chen and Wang, 2022; Pavesi and Zamore, 2022; Pedersen, 2011), this study aims to identify techniques for bridging lexical gaps by investigating Russian and Spanish translations of the English film subtitles. Therefore, the central research question that this study is going to answer is "how are lexical lacunae handled in translation of film subtitles?".

However, to answer this central question, the responses to the two complementary questions, outlined below, should first be found. As mentioned above, the interdisciplinary nature of research into lacunarity resulted in discrepancies in the adopted terminology and general ambiguity in understanding the essence of a lacuna. Paradoxically, instead of refining the concept and offering a more comprehensive interpretation of the notion of a lacuna, parallel approaches from different disciplines resulted in considerable uncertainty as to what can be considered a decisive criterion in the definition of a lacuna. This

indicates a need to delineate a theoretical framework for lacunae. Therefore, the first complementary research question that this study aims to answer is "what is a lexical lacuna?".

Much uncertainty still exists about how lexical lacunae emerge and evolve. While there were attempts to analyse the factors determining the occurrence of lexical gaps within one language (Fischer, 2000), the cognitive mechanisms of formation of lexical gaps across languages remain unclear. The evolutionary development of lexical lacunae has not received due attention either. Cross-linguistic lexical lacunae have been extensively investigated as synchronic phenomena, whereas the diachronic aspect seems to have been overlooked. The data from the loanword-centred research studies shows that when foreign terms are borrowed to fill lacunae, they may undergo significant changes in the process of assimilation to the receiving language. While nativisation has been one of the traditional areas of research into loanwords, it tends to focus exclusively on the processes occurring to the terms adopted from the donor language overlooking the metamorphoses that occur to lexical gaps. It would seem reasonable to analyse the transformations that the borrowed terms undergo in the process of borrowing in conjunction with lexical lacunae, exploring distinct paths along which they can be filled, examining the extent to which they become filled and evaluating potential implications of seemingly filled lacunae for the cross-linguistic communication. Therefore, the issues of formation and development of lexical lacunae need further investigation. Accordingly, the second complementary research question addressed in this study is "what is the lifecycle of a lexical lacuna?". This is a complex question encompassing two aspects, namely the emergence and paths of evolution of lacunae.

As previously outlined, before answering the central research question the complementary questions should be addressed first. The research questions are handled in this study in the following order:

- What is a lexical lacuna?
- What is the lifecycle of a lexical lacuna?
- How are lexical lacunae handled in translation of film subtitles?

Each of these questions is dealt with in a separate research strand: theoretical, lexicographic and corpus strands respectively.

The theoretical strand (Chapter 4) ties together different interpretations of a lexical lacuna highlighted in the previous scholarship and synthesises them in a triadic lacuna model which is taken in this study as a working hypothesis (presented in Chapter 1.1) verified in the course of research.

The lexicographic strand (Chapter 5) explores the lifecycle of lexical lacunae in an attempt to shed light on the mechanisms underlying their formation and potential trajectories of evolution. For this purpose, different forms of realisation of lacunae (diachronic data aka filled lacunae and synchronic data aka currently existing lacunae) are analysed to identify the shared patterns. The diachronic data is composed of the Russian and Spanish terms borrowed into English to fill once existing lexical gaps. In contrast, the synchronic data consists of the English lexemes having no direct equivalents in Russian and Spanish as of the date of writing. Both synchronic and diachronic data are retrieved primarily with the help of the Oxford English Dictionary Online (the procedures are outlined in Chapter 3.2.1 and Chapter 3.3.1 respectively). The lifecycle of lacunae is investigated, drawing on the Historical Thesaurus of English and the Oxford English Dictionary Online.

Finally, the corpus strand (Chapter 6 and Chapter 7) investigates translation strategies used to handle lacunae in Russian and Spanish translations of English film subtitles. Corpus evidence comes from the parallel concordances of the online contextual dictionaries, namely Sub-a-Sub (n.d.) and Reverso Context (2013-2022). Instances of translation are retrieved by performing searches on the sets of English lacunar items that were identified as lexical lacunae in Russian and Spanish. The retrieved data is analysed, and a translation solution for tackling a lexical lacuna is identified in each instance of translation. Thus, drawing upon the descriptive approach to translation, the corpus strand overviews the techniques that are currently used by translators of film subtitles and evaluates their strengths and limitations.

The three research strands overlap, with each laying the groundwork for a further stage of the project. The theoretical and lexicographic strands advance our understanding of lexical lacunae, whereas the corpus strand presents practical ways of dealing with them in translation practice (for further discussion on the relationship between the strands, see Chapter 3.1).

## 1.1   Working hypothesis and its illustration

Although the lack of unanimity among scholars about the definition of a lacuna has given rise to significant ambiguity surrounding the phenomenon, distinct interpretations of lacunarity are the key to its understanding.

Within the lacuna-centred research paradigm this study has identified different, sometimes even contradictory, interpretations of a lexical lacuna (these will be addressed in further detail in Chapter 2.2). The lacuna-centred studies identified a lexical lacuna, *inter alia*, as an inconsistency in connotative meaning across languages (Chapter 2.2.1.1), as a non-lexicalised concept (Chapter 2.2.1.2.1) and as a culture-specific referent (Chapter 2.2.1.3). Such interpretations reflect distinct perspectives, namely connotative, nominative and denotative respectively. These three perspectives reveal discrepancies associated with one of the components of the semiotic triangle, when a sign in the source language is contrasted with its hypothetical counterpart in the target language. Drawing on the previous scholarship (Chapter 2.2.1.5) that paved the way towards a more comprehensive conceptualisation of lexical lacunae, this thesis views a lexical lacuna as a triadic entity manifesting itself as connotative, nominative or denotative asymmetry of the sign. Such a triadic understanding of a lexical lacuna will henceforth be treated as a working hypothesis.

According to the semiotic triangle (Ogden and Richards, 1923:11), a sign is a triadic unity composed of three underlying components (concept, referent and form), each of which can be visualised as located at the vertex of an equilateral triangle. However, in a cross-linguistic situation, such as in translation, the signs of the source language are transposed into the signs of the target language. In the case of full equivalence, for instance when the English word *apple* is translated into Russian *яблоко* "apple" or Spanish *manzana* "apple", two linguistic structures overlap, and all three vertices coincide and correspond to each other like pieces of a puzzle that fit into place (Figure 1.1).

*Figure 1.1 A model of full equivalence*
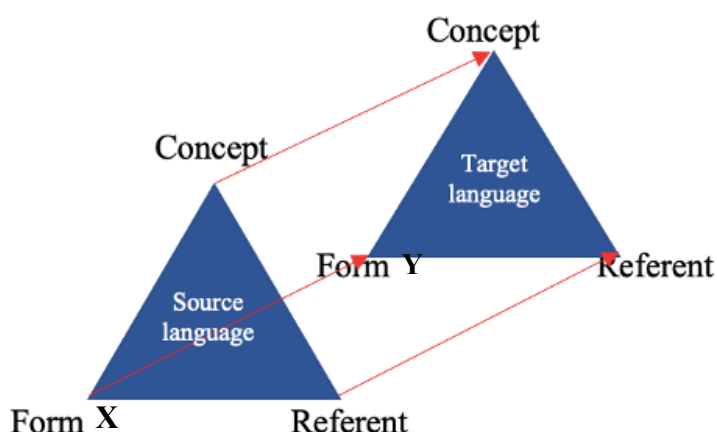


However, in the case of lacunarity, at least one of the vertices of the triangle will always be mismatched and will not coincide with its counterpart. If a lexical lacuna is understood as a connotative discrepancy, as in the studies overviewed in Chapter 2.2.1.1, the connotative link between the signs in the source and in the target languages appears disrupted. Such an interpretation can be represented as in Figure 1.2.

*Figure 1.2 A model of connotative lacunarity*
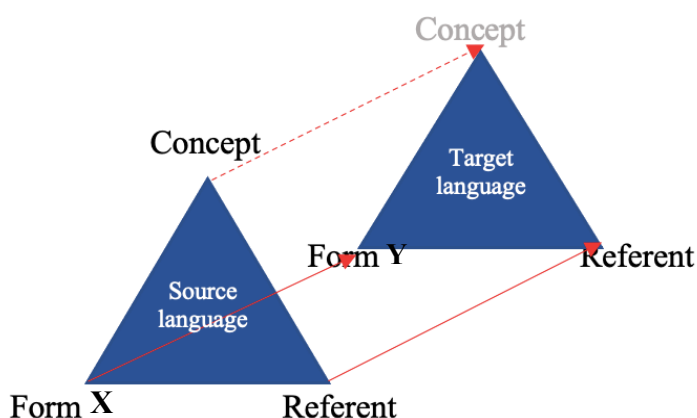


Alternatively, if a lexical lacuna is understood as a non-lexicalised concept (Chapter 2.2.1.2.1), the link between the forms in the source and the target languages is compromised and may also entail conceptual divergence. Therefore, the schematic representation of this type of a lacuna could be depicted as in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3 A model of nominative lacunarity
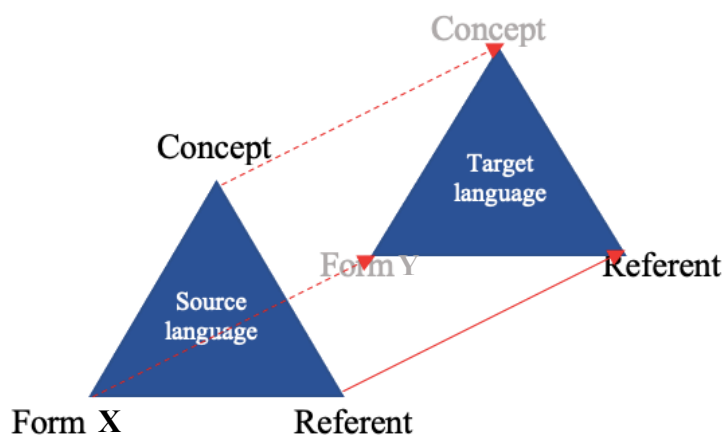


Finally, the understanding of a lexical lacuna as a culture-specific referent (Chapter 2.2.1.3) implies that the denotatum does not exist in the target speech community. As a result, the links between all three vertices appear disrupted as in Figure 1.4.

Figure 1.4 A model of denotative lacunarity
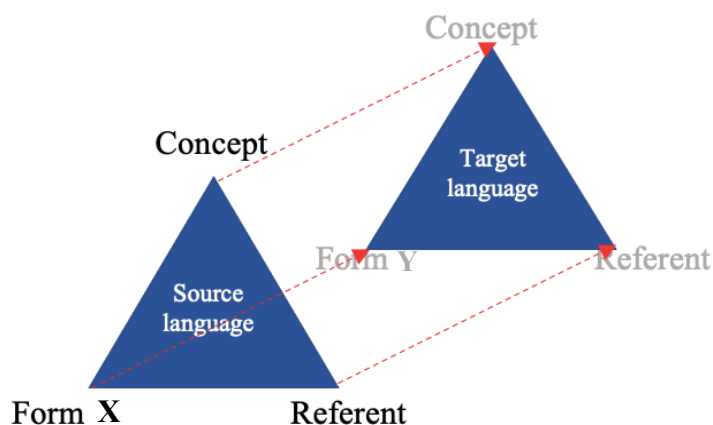


Drawing upon the insights generated by the previous scholarship and especially on the studies that attempted to view lacunarity in its complexity (Chapter 2.2.1.5), a lexical lacuna can be conceptualised as a triadic entity. It can be schematically represented with the help of a model in which one of the vertices of the triangle is always mismatched with its counterpart in the target language due to the connotative, nominative or denotative divergence.

The English adjectives *detached, terraced* and *semi-detached*, used to describe particular types of dwellings prevalent in Britain, illustrate well these three types of asymmetry

between signs. The conceptual difference between these kinds of houses consists in their construction design. A detached house is a stand-alone building usually occupied by a single family. However, if a building is divided by a shared wall into two identical parts, each of which has a separate entrance and is occupied by a single family, such a dwelling is called semi-detached. Finally, terraced houses are built in a row and have shared walls on either side. As can be seen, the fundamental distinction between the given types of accommodation lies in the principles of architectural construction. However, construction methodologies and, consequently, types of accommodation vary across countries. Therefore, under the influence of extralinguistic factors, the culture-bound lexemes are formed differently in different languages.

The phrase *detached house* can be seen as a connotative lacuna in Russian since the structural equivalent *отдельный/отдельно стоящий дом* "a private/a free standing house" (as evidenced by Multitran dictionary (n.d.) and Reverso Context (2013-2022)) is devoid of the connotative meaning existing in English. With reference to the terraced and semi-detached houses, the detached house represents the highest rung in the property ladder which in itself is a culture-specific concept idiosyncratic to the British speech community.[1] From this angle, the English concept acquires culture-specific connotative meaning and a well-marked association with other types of dwellings. In the cross-linguistic situation, these additional covert layers of information associated with the expression *detached house* become lost in translation. This type of lacuna can be represented with the help of the diagram in Figure 1.2, with the upper vertex of the triangle causing non-equivalence.

Next, the phrase *terraced house* can be seen as a nominative lacuna in Russian since such a concept exists but has no nomination in common parlance. This type of lacuna can be diagrammatically represented as in Figure 1.3. Since there is a discrepancy on the level of form (i.e. nomination), the lower-left vertex of the triangle triggers cross-linguistic asymmetry of signs. Such a nominative lacuna reveals a non-lexicalised concept, which

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[1] According to the OED, *property ladder* is largely a British English metaphorical expression which represents consecutive stages of progression of property owners in the hierarchical system of the society (OED, 2022, property ladder n.). This is a useful concept in terms of conceptualisation of a path usually embarked upon by property-owners. When a first-time buyer acquires private housing, they are said to get on the *property ladder*, with the cheapest types of housing located at the bottom and the most expensive at the top. Therefore, a person's position on the property ladder (which together with other factors defines the individual's social status) is identified based on the type of housing they possess. Curiously, in the Russian speech community prosperity is also determined in terms of housing conditions, but in contrast to English, with reference to the number of rooms in an apartment. The higher number of rooms is believed to demonstrate financial well-being.

has crystallised in the Russian lingua-cultural community but has no monolexemic nomination. This kind of urban planning encompassing construction of adjoining buildings is a common practice in Russia. However, the concept has lexicalised only for a limited circle of people involved in the city planning architecture and civil engineering. The Russian equivalent *дома рядовой застройки* "houses of row construction" (listed as one of the counterparts in Multitran dictionary (n.d.)) has remained within the bounds of the specialist terminology and is highly likely to be unfamiliar to ordinary Russian speakers since the search for this phrase returned no results in the Russian National Corpus (2003-2022). The reason for that may be the communicative irrelevance of the concept. Unlike the British terraced houses, the Russian ones are multi-apartment buildings. Therefore, for the apartment dwellers there is no difference whether or not there are shared walls with the adjoining houses. This concept acquires relevance only from the standpoint of architectural planning. Conversely, for the house buyers in the English lingua-cultural community, it is of primary importance how many walls are shared with other dwellings since this determines the number of immediate neighbours and, consequently, the price of the property. Summing up the above, the notion of "terraced house" exists in both languages, but it is viewed from different perspectives. In English, it acquires greater relevance since it is viewed at a smaller scale, whereas in Russian, viewed at a larger scale, it becomes less salient and, therefore, has no monolexemic nomination.

Finally, the phrase *semi-detached house* is a denotative lacuna in Russian, revealing a non-existent concept. There is no such denotatum in the Russian speech community, therefore the lower-right vertex of the triangle causes non-equivalence, as in Figure 1.4. This type of dwelling is not common in Russia and, therefore, there is no communicative need to refer to it and, consequently, name it. As a result, there is no corresponding term in the Russian lexicon.

Implementing a number of translation strategies enables a lexical item to be "decoded" from the source language into the target language, but the mental constructs associated with the target text items appear only remotely similar to those of the source language. Such Russian calques as *полуразделённые дома* "semi-divided houses" or *полуизолированные дома* "semi-isolated houses" or expressions like *спаренные дома* "twinned houses", *дома на две семьи* "houses for two families" (these counterparts are retrieved from Reverso Context (2013-2022)) attempt to replicate the concept in the target language, but to varying degrees of equivalence. Due to the absence of the referent in the speech community, an abstract mental representation should be formed from scratch in

isolation from the denotatum, yielding a new concept, significantly divergent from the original one. Thus, the major difficulty associated with translating denotative lacunae consists in the deviation of the newly construed mental representations in the target language from the original concepts.

According to the Historical Thesaurus of English (2nd edn., version 5.0), hereinafter HTE, these three lexemes *terraced, semi-detached* and *detached* form part of a semantic category *house of specific shape/style* (03.02.07.02.06.01.01|05). Categorisation of houses according to the specific shape or style turns out to be of particular salience to British English speakers since, among other factors, it defines the position of the property owners on the housing ladder and, subsequently, their social status and the roles played in the community. Most of the members of this semantic category in English are lexical gaps in Russian. This semantic category is also present in Russian but structured differently, so that some of the lexemes within it overlap, whereas others can be seen as lexical lacunae. However, from a long-term perspective, these semantic categories in Russian and English might potentially align with each other, and lexical gaps could become filled. Thus, Russian has already adopted such English words as *бунгало* "bungalow", *коттедж* "cottage" and *таун-хаус* "town house".

Summing up the above, adopting a triadic model of a lexical lacuna as a working hypothesis implies that there are three main types of lexical lacunae: connotative, nominative and denotative. The working hypothesis is verified in the course of this research, with its functionality being discussed in Chapter 4.

## 1.2   Thesis structure

Following this introductory chapter, the literature review presented in Chapter 2 discusses the concept of a lacuna and surveys conceptually distinct research paradigms that addressed lexical lacunae. Chapter 3 outlines the study design and presents a detailed discussion of the methodology. Chapter 4 reports and discusses the findings emerging from the verification of the triadic model. Chapter 5 proceeds to present the results of the lexicographic data analysis and overview the lifecycle of a lacuna. Chapter 6 discusses the outcomes of the corpus-based research on the strategies employed in translation of lacunar lexemes from English into Spanish and Russian. Chapter 7 analyses the optimal translation strategies for tackling each type of lexical gap, offering a more fine-grained analysis of translation solutions for handling lexical lacunae. Finally, the concluding chapter collates

the objectives of the study and the outcomes, bringing together the key findings and analysing them in the context of the existing research paradigm. It discusses this thesis' contribution to the existing knowledge as well as outlines the direction for further research studies.

# 2   Literature review

## 2.0   Chapter overview

This literature review surveys conceptually different approaches to lexical lacunae and identifies persisting ambiguities and gaps in knowledge which will be addressed in this study. Section 2.1 introduces the concept of a lacuna. Section 2.2 presents a lacuna-centred perspective and overviews distinct interpretations of a lexical lacuna within this research paradigm. Section 2.3 is devoted to the cognition-centred perspective. Section 2.4 outlines an applied approach to lexical lacunae, which evolved within the framework of translation studies. Section 2.5 discusses the loanword-centred perspective on lexical lacunae. Section 2.6 establishes a niche for the present study.

## 2.1   The concept of a lacuna

Analysis of lexicalisation patterns varying across languages reveals gaps or lacunae emerging as a result of structural divergence between lexical systems. However, lexemes with no immediate counterparts in one of the languages investigated have not always been referred to as *lacunae*.

The word *lacuna* is of Latin origin and derives from the diminutive form of *lacus* (*lacuna*) meaning "a hole, pit" (OED, 2022, lacuna n.).[2] The term was borrowed into English in the second half of the seventeenth century to denote "a hiatus, blank, missing portion" of a text in a written document (ibid.)  The earliest recorded use of the word *lacuna* in the sense closest to the area of this research (in transferred use, a gap) dates back to 1892 when Israel Zangwill used it in his mystery novel *The Big Bow Mystery*: "There were various lacunæ and hypotheses in the case for the defence" (ibid).

However, as noted by Akai (2020:20), with reference to lexical gaps, the term *lacuna* was first used by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995[1958]) in the context of comparative stylistics. Since then, this term has been particularly prevalent in the Soviet and later Russian linguistic tradition. By the turn of the century, the word *lacuna* had become an umbrella term encompassing different types of linguistic discrepancies including grammatical, lexical and phonetic dissimilarities, whereas the phenomenon of inconsistencies across

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[2] At the time of writing, this OED entry was not yet fully updated for the OED Third Edition.

languages came to be known as *lacunarity*. Over the past years, however, this terminology has tended to occur more frequently beyond Russian scholarship, for example in Europe (e.g. Coste, 2012; Kazazi, 2014) and Asia (e.g. Sankaravelayuthan, 2020; Quan-zhi, 2017).

Although the term *lacuna* has gained currency in academic circles only relatively recently, linguistic discrepancies came to the attention of scholars long before the twentieth century. Numerous inconsistencies across languages were described even before the Common Era and were interpreted as the manifestation of cultural idiosyncrasy. In the time of the Roman Empire, Cicero argued that Greeks had no word for the Latin *ineptus* "tactless" because a sense of tact did not form part of the Greek national character (Cicero, 1942:211). Through the ages, scholars have drawn parallels between lexical discrepancies and differences in human behaviour and even worldview. By the end of the twentieth century lexical lacunae became the focus of various research paradigms which developed independently. These paradigms are referred to in this study as lacuna-centred (Section 2.2), cognition-centred (Section 2.3), equivalence-centred (Section 2.4) and loanword-centred (Section 2.5) perspectives.

## 2.2   Lacuna-centred perspective

A lacuna-centred approach is mainly characteristic of the Soviet and Russian linguistic tradition (e.g. Gak, 1976; Muraviev, 1975; Sorokin, 1977; Bykova, 2003). However, adherents of this approach can also be distinguished in German scholarship (e.g. Ertelt-Vieth and Denisova-Schmidt, 2007). Lacuna-centred studies are largely focused on elaborating a theoretical framework for the phenomenon of a lacuna itself offering distinct and often mutually contradictory interpretations. Theoretical analyses of lacunarity along with numerous classifications of lacunae laid the groundwork for interdisciplinary research endeavour often referred to as lacunology.

As pointed out by Dashidorzhieva (2011:174), the origins of the Soviet lacunology can clearly be seen in the biblio-psychological theory laid out in the works of Rubakin (2007 [1927]). After the Soviet revolution, Rubakin along with his team of co-thinkers organised a committee working on literature studies and book study which later formed a scientific discipline known as biblio-psychology. Biblio-psychology branched out from sociology (Rubakin, 2007[1927]:189) as a specific research area with a primary focus on the study of books viewed through a prism of social studies and psychology. The scholars investigated

how various social and historical factors influenced authors and what impact such factors had on readers.

Although Rubakin's work is not directly related to the field of this study, one of the ideas that evolved in the course of biblio-psychological research is of particular interest since it played a crucial role in forming one of the fundamental principles of lacunarity. Rubakin drew the attention of scholars to a reasonable assumption that the information encoded by the author could be differently interpreted by the reader depending on their personal experience, educational and cultural background. The extent of interpretation and, hence, understanding of the material depend on the level of knowledge of the reader. Even from a diachronic perspective, the text is not an invariable value. Conversely, it is dynamic, and over time the same information can acquire additional meanings and can be interpreted in an essentially new way. As summarised by Rubakin (2007[1927]:196), "the book as well as the word are not transmitters of content encoded by the author but rather activators of mental activity".[3]

The idea of the ambiguity of interpretation is fundamental for the lacuna-centred approach. The same information can be understood differently by speakers of the same language, to say nothing about speakers of two different languages. In accordance with their cultural attitudes and values, a speaker can endow a certain concept with a particular meaning which can be misinterpreted by other speakers of the same language and speakers of other languages. Moreover, there are culture-specific concepts manifesting themselves as lexical lacunae, the meaning of which remains completely obscured without additional contextual explanation. The extent to which a speaker is able to decode the information, that is their level of knowledge of a certain concept or, rather, in case of lacunarity, their lack of knowledge, is fundamental in the detection of lexical gaps.

The principle of hermeneutic interpretation and in particular failure to interpret a concept forms a central notion of lacunarity. Soviet ethno-psycholinguistic studies offered a perfect breeding ground for further development of this idea. Having extrapolated this conception into the field of ethno-linguistics, in the 1970s Sorokin (1977), the founder of the lacuna-centred research paradigm, analysed the phenomenon of lacunarity in language and introduced the first lacuna theory. Thus, within the framework of the lacuna-centred approach, the groundwork for a theoretical explanation, classification and development of methodology for lacunae detection was laid by the end of the twentieth century.

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[3] Here and throughout my translation unless otherwise specified.

## 2.2.1  Interpretations of a lacuna

Lacunae became an interdisciplinary phenomenon and were approached from a number of perspectives: from the standpoint of comparative linguistics (Gak 1976, Muraviev 1975, Stepanov 2003[1965]), psycholinguistics (Sternin 1997), culturology and cross-cultural communication (Ertelt-Vieth and Denisova-Schmidt 2007; Markovina, 2010; Zhelvis 1977). Active research into the field, however, resulted in the introduction of numerous terms and definitions of a lacuna. Lacunae were referred to as *безэквиваленты* "non-equivalents" (Sternin, 1997:18), *белые пятна на семантической карте языка* "blank spots on the semantic map of language" (Stepanov, 2003[1965]:120), *антислова* "anti-words" (Stepanov, 2003[1965]:120), and *пустоты* "voids" (Bikova, 2003:19).

Various scholars laid down their own understanding of different aspects of lacunarity, giving generic definitions to conceptually different projections of the phenomenon. Some research provided an extremely narrow interpretation of a single aspect of lacunarity. Others, conversely, considered it from a rather broad perspective, erroneously equating it with linguistic diversity. [4] Such a complex approach resulted in inconsistency and sometimes even contradiction within terminology. The criteria for the definition of a lacuna were often established without due coherency. Therefore, the major limitation of the lacuna-centred approach tends to be the ambiguity in the definition of the phenomenon.

In this section of the literature review, the lacuna-centred studies are organised according to the criteria underlying different understandings of a lexical lacuna.

## 2.2.1.1 Lacunae as semantic phenomena

Within the lacuna-centred research paradigm, one can distinguish a line of researchers who interpreted lacunae as semantic phenomena. Stepanov (2003[1965]:120), approaching lacunarity theoretically, devoted to lacunae (alternatively named by him "anti-words") a section in his book on contrastive stylistics of Russian and French. Stepanov (ibid.) also referred to lacunae as "blank spots on the semantic map of language".

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[4] Linguistic diversity and lacunarity are two closely related, but conceptually different phenomena. Linguistic diversity reveals any difference between two contrasting languages whereas lacunarity reveals absence of a functionally relevant element in the linguistic structure which should be present but appears missing.

Konrad (1972:496), detecting lacunae in the course of analysis of the Russian translation of Du Fu's *Autumn Meditations*, defined them as components of text requiring intratextual as well as extratextual interpretations. Sorokin (1977:123), in turn, interpreted lacunarity as "a phenomenon of connotation" characteristic of a specific lingua-cultural community. One of the cases of untranslatability, indicated by Sorokin and Markovina (1988:13) as a vivid example of lacunarity, illustrates this approach: the first line of Shakespeare's 18th sonnet "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" seems to be untranslatable to Arabic since the concept of a hot sunny day is unlikely to trigger the same kind of associations in Arabic and English-speaking readers. The understanding of the concept does not appear to be equal among speakers of Arabic and English and results in the different interpretation of the whole point of the utterance.

The above-mentioned studies identified lacunae on the basis of the methodology of contrastive analysis of original literary texts and their translations. The detected lacunae were believed to provide an insight into the worldview, lifestyle, cultural values and experiences characteristic of a certain speech community.

## 2.2.1.2 Lacunae as conceptual phenomena

Researchers adopting a cognitive perspective towards the study of lacunarity establish a strong correlation between a lacuna and a concept. However, even among the adherents of the cognitive approach, there are controversies in the interpretation of the phenomenon.

### 2.2.1.2.1 Lacunae as non-lexicalised concepts

Although Section 2.4 is specifically devoted to the overview of translation studies which addressed lexical lacunae, Barkhudarov's work (1975) addressing the issue of non-equivalent lexis in the context of translation is discussed here since it offered a nuanced interpretation of the phenomenon. In his review of translation problems and strategies to overcome them, Barkhudarov highlighted a specific aspect of lacunarity.

According to Barkhudarov (1975:93-94), the notion of non-equivalent lexis was much broader than a lacuna itself and apart from lacunae also included proper names and realia. Barkhudarov (1975:94) interpreted realia as culture-specific terms, illustrating this with the English words *haggis*, *toffee*, and *butter-scotch*, which have no Russian equivalents, and

the Russian words *щи* "cabbage soup", *частушки* "folk verses", and *кокошник* "traditional women's headdress", which have no English equivalents.

Instead of using the term *lacuna*, Barkhudarov (1975:94) suggested a new term *случайная лакуна* "accidental lacuna" to refer to a lexical item of the source language for some reason having no equivalent (neither in the form of monolexemic word nor fixed collocation) in the target language. Barkhudarov (1975:94-95) argued that the dictionary of English language (without citing the source he referred to) contained no equivalents of the Russian terms *сутки* "period of twenty-four hours", *кипяток* "boiling or boiled water", *именинник* "a male person celebrating their name day", *пожарище* "site of conflagration" and *погорелец* "a person made homeless by a fire" and, therefore, these terms could be identified as accidental lacunae.

The Russian terms *сутки* "period of twenty-four hours", *именинник* "a male person celebrating their name day" and *кипяток* "boiling or boiled water" have become classic examples illustrating lacunarity and can be encountered in numerous works (e.g. all three examples are mentioned in Anokhina (2020), Barkhudarov (1975), Muraviev (1975), Popova, Sternin and Sternina (2002), and Savina and Vedenskaya (2017)). Scholars traditionally consider these terms lacunae in English (Barkhudarov, 1975; Popova, Sternin and Sternina, 2002), French (Anokhina, 2020; Muraviev, 1975) and German (Savina and Vedenskaya, 2017) due to the absence of monolexemic equivalents. Scholars tend to mention these terms without substantiating their lacunarity or acknowledging previous sources that mentioned them. In other words, these examples are typically taken for granted as lexical lacunae. However, the relevance of some of these examples appears to be debatable nowadays.

The Russian word *сутки* denotes the unit of time equal to twenty-four hours. In Russian, it is a more general term encompassing more specific ones such as *день* "day" and *ночь* "night", as reflected in the Russian saying *день и ночь – сутки прочь* "day and night – twenty-four hours fly by". The word *сутки* derived from the Old Russian *сътъкъ* literally meaning "encounter", i.e. the merging of day and night (Shansky and Bobrova, 2004). However, *сутки* "period of twenty-four hours" can hardly be considered a typical lexical lacuna as it can be translated as *day* and *día* in English and Spanish respectively, as evidenced by the web-based parallel concordance Reverso Context (2013-2022), the use of

which in this research is discussed in Chapter 3.4.[5] Its actual lacunarity manifests itself only in specific contexts:

> *Перед применением этой дисциплинарной меры обязательно проведение медицинского обследования, а во время ее применения – контроль со стороны врача по меньшей мере раз в **сутки** // Before the execution of the disciplinary measure, a medical examination is obligatory, and during the execution of the disciplinary measure of solitary confinement, the supervision of a doctor is mandatory at least once in each **twenty-four hour period*** (an example from the translated United Nations documents retrieved from Reverso Context (2013-2022)).

The term *именинник* "a male person celebrating their name day" is also traditionally considered a lexical lacuna. However, when this example was first introduced in the lacuna-centred literature in the 1970s, such an illustration of lacunarity was more appropriate than it is nowadays. Today, the term tends to be used with reference to a male person celebrating their birthday (as an equivalent of the English *birthday boy*) rather than their name day, e.g. *именинник отмечал День рождения скромно* "the birthday boy celebrated his birthday in a modest way" (an example from the Russian National Corpus (2003-2022)). According to such a lexicographic resource as Karta Slov (n.d.), the fourth most frequent association triggered by the term *именинник* "a male person celebrating their name day" is *день рождения* "birthday", whereas *именины* "name day" is ranked only seventh in the list. This suggests that the word meaning has evolved, with the sense "a male person celebrating their birthday" becoming dominant. According to the *Dictionary of common mistakes in Russian* (Krylov, 2006), such a deviation in usage is a conversational error. However, this can be considered a mistake only from a prescriptivist perspective since it is a typical case of semantic change driven by socio-political change.

The name day is a religious holiday which began to be celebrated by the Slavs with the introduction of Christianity (Kononenko, 2013:969). However, almost throughout the twentieth century the communist regime was marginalising religion. As a result of systematic anti-religious persecution, such Christian festivities as name days started fading away and nowadays are not generally celebrated except in religious circles. Therefore, while illustration of lacunarity with the help of the term *именинник* in its original sense could indeed be a helpful example demonstrating absence of the structural counterpart,

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[5] This thesis focuses on cross-linguistic equivalence in three languages, namely English, Russian and Spanish. Due to my limited knowledge of German and very basic understanding of French, German and French are beyond the scope of this study. However, drawing upon the analysis of translation equivalents found in Reverso Context (2013-2022), it can be assumed that such counterparts as *Tag* and *jour* can also function as equivalents of the Russian *сутки* "period of twenty-four hours".

nowadays it does not appear to be appropriate due to the existence of the equivalents *birthday boy* and *cumpleañero* in English and Spanish respectively.[6]

Of this triad of classic examples, only *кипяток* "boiling or boiled water", the first mention of which can be found in Shcherba (1958:86), remains a relevant example of a lacuna. The communicative relevance of this concept in the Russian speech community can be due to various reasons. First, *кипяток* "boiling or boiled water" formed part of various Old Slavic rites, as described in Kononenko (2013:307). Second, it is associated with the Russian tea-drinking ceremony which involved so-called samovars, i.e. metal urns for boiling water. Samovars were brought to Russia from Western Europe in the eighteenth century and since then became an integral part of the Russian tea culture (Chernyavskaya et al., 2007, самовар). Samovars could be heated by burning pinecones, coal and kindling. A teapot with concentrated tea brewing was placed on top of the samovar so that it could also be heated. Tea was prepared by mixing concentrated tea brewing with *кипяток* "boiling water" contained in the samovar. Thus, the concept of boiling water could have acquired its psychological salience for Russian speakers as a separate component of the tea ceremony. Finally, the concept of boiling or boiled water could have become communicatively relevant due to the potential health risks of drinking tap water in Russia. Boiling has been traditionally used in Russia as a method for disinfecting water. All these reasons could have contributed to the importance of the concept and resulted in its monolexemic lexicalisation in Russian.

Returning to Barkhudarov's examples (1975:95), it is worth mentioning that for an accidental lacuna *погорелец* "a person made homeless by a fire", he provided a more detailed explanation as to why this term could be seen as an accidental lacuna in English. While in England wooden houses tended to be replaced with brick and stone constructions, in Russia the peasants' houses were still traditionally built of wood. Barkhudarov assumed that Russian lexicalised this concept as the fires in peasant communities were a more frequent phenomenon and there was a need to refer to the victims who had lost everything in a fire. Therefore, according to Barkhudarov, this term emerged due to historico-cultural reasons.

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[6] According to Reverso Context (2013-2022), *homme du jour* in French and *Geburtstagsjunge* in German can function as equivalent counterparts of *именинник* in its currently dominant sense.

Among English lacunae in Russian, Barkhudarov (1975:95) distinguished *glimpse, floorer* and *exposure*. While Barkhudarov indicated that he referred to *exposure* in the sense of susceptibility to weather conditions, he failed to specify which meaning of the term *floorer* he referred to: "one who or that which floors" or "something which floors in a figurative sense" (OED, 2022, floorer n.). The words *glimpse* and *exposure* are commonly used in English, whereas *floorer* is a less frequent word. Multitran dictionary (n.d.), which along with other lexicographic sources used in this study is discussed in Chapter 3.2.3.1, lists *сногсшибательный удар* "a blow sweeping one off one's feet" as one of the translation equivalents of the English *floorer*, with the adjective *сногсшибательный* explicitly expressing the idea of flooring someone. Therefore, it seems debatable whether *floorer* can actually be considered an accidental lacuna since there is a fixed collocation in Russian that can function as an equivalent. The dubiety of this example indicates either an inconsistency within the employed approach (illustrating accidental lacunae with a term which can be translated with the help of a fixed collocation expressing a clear concept in Russian) or the researcher's difficulty in providing genuine examples of the phenomenon (illustrating it with rarely used words).

Based on the suggested examples, it can be concluded that by the term *accidental lacuna* Barkhudarov understood non-lexicalised concepts that existed in a lingua-cultural community but had no specific name, i.e. concepts devoid of the signifier. In contrast to the category of realia which was illustrated with culture-specific referents, accidental lacunae were exemplified with existing concepts having no specific denomination. Such concepts as the period of twenty-four hours, boiling or boiled water, fire victims, etc. are common to both Russian and English speech communities but are of different communicative importance. Therefore, in Russian these have a monolexemic denomination, whereas in English they are expressed with the help of collocation or phrases. Therefore, the absence of the signifier appeared as the determining criterion in this approach.

Barkhudarov (ibid.) also suggested strategies for handling non-equivalent lexis. Thus, he distinguished five translation solutions, namely transliteration and transcription (seen as a single solution), calque, descriptive (alternatively referred to as explanatory) translation, approximative translation (i.e. translation with the help of an analogue) and transformational translation.

A similar understanding of a lacuna can be found in Gak (1976). However, unlike Barkhudarov, who undertook a contrastive analysis of English and Russian, Gak's study was devoted to a different pair of languages, namely Russian and French. With reference to the classic examples of the Russian words *сутки* "period of twenty-four hours" and *кипяток* "boiling or boiled water" having no French single-word equivalents, Gak (1976:261) argued that lacunae were only those lexical items that expressed an existing concept but for some reason were absent in one of the contrasting languages.

Likewise, Savitsky (2013:12), emphasised that a lexical lacuna could be considered only a non-lexicalised concept which, however, formed part of the linguistic consciousness of the speech community. Citing Fillmore's (1985:228) famous example of a lexical lacuna, namely the absence of an English equivalent of the German term *Kathete* "each of the two sides of the right-angled triangle forming the right angle", Savitsky (2013:13) argued that *Kathete* could be indeed seen as a lexical lacuna in English since the English speech community has the notion of the Pythagorean theorem, hence the concept of the sides of the right angled triangle other than a hypotenuse exists but has no specific name. Conversely, *Kathete* could not be considered a lexical lacuna in Pirahã (Section 2.3.1), according to Savitsky (ibid.) since this tribe was not familiar with Euclidean geometry. Savitsky (ibid.: 13) identified *Kathete* as an "extrasystemic" lexical item in Pirahã, i.e. a manifestation of non-equivalence. Therefore, Savitsky (ibid.) distinguished between non-equivalence and lacunarity.

## 2.2.1.2.2 Lacunae as non-existing concepts

A diametrically opposite interpretation of a lacuna can be found in Muraviev (1975). Muraviev addressed the issues of comparative stylistics of Russian and French and in the course of contrastive analysis detected untranslatable phenomena which he referred to as *lacunae*. Muraviev argued that it seemed inappropriate to use the term *lacuna* with reference to the Russian words *сутки* "period of twenty-four hours" and *кипяток* "boiling or boiled water" due to the existence of such notions in French.

Muraviev (1975:6) considered lacunae only those lexical items which expressed concepts non-entrenched in the lingua-cultural community. According to Muraviev (ibid.), *eau bouillante* "boiling water" and *vingt-quatre heures* "period of twenty-four hours" were fixed collocations which expressed relative notions existing in French and, therefore, could not be regarded as lacunae. Likewise, the French words *confrontation* "confrontation",

*secourisme* "first aid", *lacheur* "quitter", *choucroute* "sauerkraut" could not be considered lacunae due to the existence of such concepts in Russian, even though there were no single-word equivalents (Muraviev, ibid.). Contrastingly, the French words *éditorialiste* "columnist"*, échangiste* "swinger"*, chaperon* "a person who accompanies a young lady" were considered lacunae by Muraviev (ibid.) due to the fact that they expressed concepts which did not exist at the time in Russian and could only be translated by extensive description. What is noteworthy is that the modern Russian language has adopted the French concepts *confrontation* as well as *éditorialiste* (the latter entered the Russian vocabulary in the form of the English borrowing *колумнист*). As we can see, the absence of concept appeared crucial for Muraviev in the definition of lacunae.

Muraviev (ibid.:7) held that apparently there was a great number of French speakers who could be referred to by the Russian words *сластена* "sweet tooth", *размазня* "a weak person who cannot take decisions", *лежебока* "a lazy person who spends all the time lying in bed", *губошлеп* "a weak undecided person who can only mumble", whereas among Russians there were individuals who could be regarded as *tapeur* "a person who always borrows money" and *cordon bleu* "a person who cooks very well", but these terms had no concepts in French and Russian respectively. Muraviev (ibid.:3) called this type of lacuna "absolute lacunae".

Muraviev made a significant effort towards the development of a classification for various types of lacunae. Having divided lacunae into two general types, linguistic and ethnographic lacunae, he detected the following subtypes: linguistic lacunae included absolute, relative, vector and stylistic lacunae, whereas ethnographic lacunae comprised absolute, relative, vector and associative lacunae.

The above-mentioned examples refer to the absolute lacunae, the existence of which was not caused by extralinguistic factors, whereas, according to Muraviev's taxonomy, the relative lacunae could be detected based on the frequency of use of the lexical units expressing the same concept. Relative lacunae, in his view, were not limited to lexical items but also included grammatical categories less frequently used in one of the contrasting languages (e.g. a less frequent use of possessive pronouns in Russian compared to French (Muraviev, ibid.:11)).

The term *vector lacunae* was used by Muraviev (ibid.:14) to refer to hyponyms and hypernyms. This was exemplified by a Russian hypernym *часы* having three French equivalent hyponyms *horloge, montre,* and *pendule* (Muraviev, ibid.:15). Among stylistic

lacunae the following French words were mentioned: *dominical, domestique, maturité,* and *cécité* (Muraviev, ibid.:18). This kind of lacuna possessed specific stylistic nuances which could have impact on the overall meaning of the utterance.

By absolute ethnographic lacunae, Muraviev understood culture-specific terms existing in language due to extralinguistic factors which some researchers (e.g. Vlakhov and Florin, 1980; Revzin and Rosenzweig 1964) call *realia*. A typical example of Muraviev's absolute ethnographic lacunae was *chansonnier* (Muraviev, 1975:30)*.* According to Muraviev (ibid.:34), relative ethnographic lacunae included concepts existing in both languages but with different frequency of usage. For instance, the Russian word *семечки* "sunflower seeds" was more often used than its French equivalent since they were a traditional Russian snack. Muraviev (ibid.:35) also distinguished a vector ethnographic lacuna which he defined as an intermediate category between relative and absolute lacunae. He argued that it manifested itself when there was a categorisation discrepancy due to the fact that a different degree of importance was attributed to a referent/phenomenon existing in both speech communities. For instance, Muraviev considered the French *glaçon* a vector ethnographic lacuna in Russian since it had several hyponymic Russian equivalents *льдина* "ice floe"*, сосулька* "icicle"*, льдышка* "piece of ice" and *ледяшка* "piece of ice" (Muraviev, 1975:36). He associated this discrepancy with distinct climate conditions in the Russian and French speech communities, arguing that these winter phenomena were more frequent in Russia. Therefore, Russian speakers distinguished different types of ice crystals.

The last type of lacuna distinguished by Muraviev was an associative lacuna, i.e. the term that provoked different associations in the contrasting languages. Muraviev (1975:39) illustrated it with the following example: *vingt-et-un ans* "the age of twenty-one" was associated with the age of legal majority in French, whereas in Russian it did not induce any associations as the age of legal majority in Russia was eighteen.

Muraviev's classification became the first complex taxonomy of lacunae. Despite its undeniable value the classification had some limitations since the boundaries between the established categories were often unclear, in particular between absolute linguistic and absolute ethnographic lacunae. Nevertheless, Muraviev's work deserves special mention as it is one of the most systematic and complex approaches to lacunarity which included theoretical interpretation of the phenomenon and classification of various types of lacunae illustrated with numerous examples.

## 2.2.1.3 Lacunae as denotative phenomena

The term *lacuna* is often understood as a culture-specific referent. Therefore, the absence of the denotatum in the speech community frequently appears a fundamental criterion in the definition of a lacuna. For instance, Nikolaeva (2005:1) uses the terms *lacuna* and *realia* interchangeably to refer to the lexemes denoting objects of material and spiritual culture, national dishes, folk dances etc. In a contrastive analysis of Russian literary texts and their translations into French, Nikolaeva (ibid.) detected four hundred lexical lacunae and identified four main translation solutions for handling them: approximative translation (53%), paraphrase (29%), transliteration (12%) and a mixed method (6%) implying the combination of transliteration and explanatory translation, paraphrase and explanatory translation, paraphrase and transliteration, approximative translation and transliteration.

Bulgakova (2013) also uses the terms *lacuna* and *realia* interchangeably but suggesting a more nuanced interpretation. According to Bulgakova (2013:188), while realia can be identified in the source language, lacunae can be identified in the target language. In other words, Bulgakova views them as two opposite counterparts. Such understanding, however, is arguable since the term *realia* belongs to the extralinguistic dimension. Therefore, it would seem more appropriate to talk about realia in the speech community, not in language.

Such an understanding of a lexical lacuna as a referential phenomenon resonates with the notion of "realia" addressed in Vlakhov and Florin (1980) and Revzin and Rosenzweig (1964). These researchers used a distinct terminology: instead of the term *lacuna* they opted for the term *realia* identifying it as a culture-specific referent.

## 2.2.1.4 Lacunae as cultural phenomena

Sorokin and Markovina (1988) approached lacunarity from the standpoint of ethnolinguistics. However, Markovina's research into lacunae was not limited to the investigation of a connotative aspect of the phenomenon. Markovina's (2004:59) broader understanding of the phenomenon led to the distinction of culturological lacunae along with linguistic lacunae. Markovina (2010:36) came to the conclusion that the term *lacuna* could refer to elements present in one culture and absent in another culture and broadly

defined lacunarity as a phenomenon requiring additional explanation upon contact with a foreign culture.

Such a broader interpretation of lacunarity was in line with the view held by Zhelvis (1977:136-137), who defined lacunae as singularities in languages and cultures having no conventional lexicalisation in other languages and cultures. Further development of the lacuna theory from a culturological perspective followed in the works of Ertelt-Vieth and Denisova-Schmidt (2007), who detected cultural lacunae in intercultural communication between Russians and Germans.

## 2.2.1.5 Lacunae as complex phenomena

While the above-mentioned studies highlighted specific dimensions of lexical lacunae, there can be identified a line of scholars who attempted to view lacunarity in its complexity. For instance, Popova, Sternin and Sternina (2002) suggested a more comprehensive interpretation of lacunarity than their predecessors, distinguishing various types of lacunae on different levels. In terms of the level of abstraction, they identified substantive and abstract lacunae (Popova et al., 2002:75). According to Popova et al. (ibid.), the Russian term *квас* "fermented bread drink" could be seen as a substantive lacuna in other languages since it denoted a tangible object specific to the Russian speech community. Conversely, the Russian term *смекалка* "mental agility", denoting an abstract notion, could be seen as an abstract lacuna in other languages (ibid.).

In terms of categorisation levels, Popova et al. (ibid.) identified general and specific lacunae. General lacunae were illustrated with the English term *grandparents* and the German term *Grosseltern* "grandparents" having no same-level equivalents in Russian and being typically translated into Russian with the help of hyponyms (ibid.). Conversely, the Russian verbs *мыть* "wash solid objects" and *стирать* "wash something made of fabric" subject to collocational restrictions were identified by Popova et al. (ibid.) as specific lacunae in English, typically translated with the help of a hypernym *wash* (ibid.). Such a distinction is consistent with Muraviev's (1975:14) vector lacunae identified on the basis of semantic inconsistency between more general and more specific terms across languages (Section 2.2.1.2.2).

Popova et al. (2002:75) also differentiated between intralinguistic (i.e. detected within one language) and interlinguistic (i.e. detected across two languages) lacunae. Intralinguistic lacunae were further investigated by Bykova (2003), whose work is discussed below.

Next, Popova et al. (2002:75) distinguished motivated (i.e. emerging due to the absence of an object or a phenomenon in the speech community) and non-motivated (i.e. emerging due to the absence of the signifier) lacunae. Motivated lacunae were illustrated with the help of the following examples: *лапти* "Russian bast shoes"*, щи* "a variety of Russian cabbage soup" and *матрешка* "Russian doll" (Popova et al., 2002:75). These terms denote culture-specific referents which are not found beyond the Russian speech community. Conversely, non-motivated lacunae, according to Popova et al. (ibid.) comprised such words as *сутки* "period of twenty-four hours", *кипяток* "boiling or boiled water" and *именинник* "a male person celebrating their name day".

In terms of nomination, Popova et al. (ibid.) detected nominative and stylistic lacunae. They argued that nominative lacunae revealed the absence of the nomination, which could be absent either completely or partially (i.e. an emotionally loaded nomination of the concept can be absent). Stylistic lacunae, in contrast, implied the absence of a word with certain stylistic characteristics (ibid.). While nominative lacunae were not exemplified at all, stylistic lacunae were illustrated with dubious instances. Popova et al. (ibid.) argued that in Russian, there were no stylistically neutral terms for the following expressions: *половой акт* "sexual intercourse", *акт дефекации* "act of defecation" and *акт мочеиспускания* "act of urination". Such a statement, however, is questionable since these terms seem to belong to the tabooed lexicon in most Indo-European languages, not only in Russian. Gao (2013:2310), for example, argues that bodily excretions as well as sexual relations are among the major taboo areas in English. Not only are these words and expressions tabooed, but also the underlying concepts. Therefore, taboo language, by definition, cannot be stylistically neutral.

Finally, Popova et al. (2002:75) identified part-of-speech lacunae. This category was illustrated with the English verb *acclaim* which has no counterpart in Russian and is typically translated with the help of a noun *овация* "ovation".

Unlike most previous studies, Popova et al. (ibid.) also explicitly addressed the issue of identifying lacunae and mentioned two main methods: dictionary-based detection and contrastive analysis in the cross-linguistic situation. According to Popova et al. (ibid.), lacunae could be detected using bilingual dictionaries. They considered lengthy descriptive

definitions (often containing explanatory notes) and translations with the help of numerous synonyms and near-synonyms as markers of lacunarity. Contrastive analysis in the cross-linguistic situation is, however, a serendipitous methodology implying that lacunae are identified based on the researcher's individual linguistic experience.

The overview of lacunae carried out by Popova et al. (2002) could be considered a further step forward in research into lacunarity since they deepened understanding of the phenomenon. Although their taxonomy was not fully systematic, and there was a significant overlap between certain categories (e.g. non-motivated and nominative lacunae; substantive and motivated lacunae; nominative and general/specific lacunae), their classification appeared more comprehensive compared to the previous studies. Three distinct perspectives on lacunae that in this study are taken as the key approaches (Chapter 1.1) were foreshadowed in the taxonomy suggested by Popova et al. (2002). The substantive and motivated lacunae identified by Popova et al. (ibid.) resonate with referential understanding of non-equivalent lexis (Section 2.2.1.3) adopted by Vlakhov and Florin (1980), and Revzin and Rosenzweig (1964). The nominative lacunae, distinguished by Popova et al. echo the interpretation of lacunae as non-lexicalised concepts (Section 2.2.1.2.1) advocated by Barkhudarov (1975) and Gak (1976). Finally, a parallel can be drawn between stylistic lacunae highlighted by Popova et al. and the understanding of lacunae as connotative phenomena (Section 2.2.1.1) shared by Konrad (1972), Sorokin (1977) and Sorokin and Markovina (1988). Therefore, in a certain sense, the work of Popova et al. can be seen as uniting previously articulated interpretations of lacunarity.

These three perspectives, namely connotative, nominative and denotative, can further be discerned in Yakovleva (2007) who attributed the formation of lexical lacunae to differences in denomination across languages, referential discrepancies and idiosyncrasies of stylistic systems and associative links. Like many other scholars (Section 2.2.1.2.1), Yakovleva illustrated lexical lacunae in Spanish with the following Russian words: *именинник* "a person celebrating their name day" and *сутки* "period of twenty-four hours", whereas lexical lacunae in Russian were exemplified with the terms *alcalde* "Spanish equivalent of mayor" and *dueña* "mistress/landlady" (ibid.). In contrast to Popova et al. (2002), Yakovleva used a slightly different terminology for the identified types of lacunae.

Yakovleva (2007:127) distinguished lacunae of designation which she illustrated with cross-linguistic divergence in categorisation. This type is analogous to the general/specific

lacunae identified by Popova et al. (2002), revealing absence of the same-level equivalents across languages. Yakovleva (2007:132) also identified referential lacunae which were interchangeably referred to in her work as ethnographic lacunae. This category, consistent with the motivated lacunae of Popova et al. (2002), was exemplified with culture-specific historical and climate phenomena (e.g. *самозванец* "impostor"*, поземка* "snowstorm", and *пурга* "blizzard"). However, it is not clear why such words as *поземка* "snowstorm" and *пурга* "blizzard" can be considered referential/ethnographic lacunae in Spanish. Without doubt snowstorms are significantly less frequent in Spain than in Russia, but they do exist and are named *tormenta de nieve* and *ventisca*.

In line with Popova et al. (2002), Yakovleva also highlighted stylistic lacunae arguing that such a Russian word as *брег*, a poetic term for "shore", for example, could not be adequately translated into Spanish. Another category discussed in Yakovleva (2007) is represented by associative lacunae which she illustrated with zoonyms having divergent associative meanings across cultures. Yakovleva (2007:129) argued that both stylistic and associative lacunae emerged due to connotative differences across languages.

In addition to the above-mentioned types, Yakovleva (2007:128) also identified significative lacunae emerging due to inconsistencies between lexico-semantic systems. This category was exemplified with the Russian words *шелест* "rustle", *шорох* "murmur", *шарканье* "shuffling" and *шуршанье* "crinkling", which she maintained had no counterparts in Spanish. Similarly, Yakovleva argued that Spanish had no corresponding notions. However, such a statement seems somewhat dubious. Representing a cluster of onomatopoeic words, these share a common phoneme /ʃ/ traditionally seen in the Russian speech community as imitating various rustling sounds (Tishina, 2001:14). Although in translation, sound symbolism is refracted through the prism of the target language, it does not mean that these terms have no equivalents.

As evidenced by Reverso Context (2013-2022), Spanish also has specific terms to refer to *шелест листьев* "the rustling of leaves" – *el crujido de las hojas/ el crujir de las hojas; шорох ветра* "murmur of the wind" – *murmullo del viento*. Using Google Books as parallel corpora, it is possible to establish the following equivalents: *шарканье шлепанцев* "slippers shuffling" - *el arrastrar de las pantuflas* (as found in the Russian translation of Castaneda's *Una realidad aparte)*. As evidenced by the Russian National Corpus (2003-2022), to describe the sound of the rain, Russian speakers use such expressions as *шуршание дождя* "sough of the rain" and *шелест дождя* "crepitation of the rain", which

can be translated in Spanish as *el crepitar de la lluvia* (as found in the Spanish translation of Nabokov's *Solus Rex).* Therefore, it does not seem appropriate to say that Spanish has no corresponding concepts. What could be argued, however, is that while Russian speakers express these concepts with the help of nouns, Spanish speakers tend to use verbal and deverbal nouns (e.g. *el crujido, el crujir, el arrastrar, el crepitar*), possibly seeing these concepts as events to a greater extent than Russian speakers. Thus, it would be more accurate to refer to such differences as conceptual discrepancies rather than lexical lacunae.

The repercussions of connotative, nominative and denotative perspectives can also be distinguished in different varieties of classifications and under distinct terminology in Ermolovich (2009), Gabdreeva and Marsheva (2016), Kopteva (2009) and Tomakhin (1988).

Another significant contribution to the field is Bykova's (2003) theoretical elaboration on lacunarity. Bykova (ibid.) suggested her own typological classification of lacunae and provided a first comprehensive overview of lacuna detection methods (some of the methods distinguished by Bykova are discussed in Sections 2.2.2.1.3 and 2.2.2.2.3). Despite the unquestionable significance of such an overview, it is not sufficiently systematic as it comprises techniques for the detection of both intra- and interlinguistic lacunae without clear distinction. Moreover, certain techniques are established as autonomous, whereas they could have been identified as subvarieties.

Bykova (ibid.:110) also acknowledged that a lacuna could be addressed from different perspectives: she defined it as a vacant spot in the lexical system from the standpoint of structural linguistics; as a signified without a signifier from the standpoint of semiotics; as a set of semes without phonetic or graphical realisation from the standpoint of semiology; as a concept preceding its objectivisation from the standpoint of onomasiology; as communicatively irrelevant information from the standpoint of communication theory; and finally as a non-verbalised mental representation from the standpoint of cognitive linguistics.  Such an approach is fundamental since it explicitly acknowledges the real multifaceted nature of a lacuna and the need for its further investigation as a complex phenomenon.

Thus far, this literature review has demonstrated distinct approaches and hence distinct understandings of a lexical lacuna. Most studies adopted more specific perspectives on

lacunarity, whereas the ones mentioned in this section attempted to view it in its complexity. Interdisciplinary research has given rise to numerous sometimes even contradictive reformulations of a lacuna. This view is also supported by Akai (2020:26) and Savitsky (2013:2) who point out existing controversies around the definition of lacunarity. There would, therefore, seem to be a definite need for a summary of theoretical understanding of lacunarity and a framing of the term *lacuna*.

Another significant limitation of the lacuna-centred research is that these studies are largely theoretical speculations on the topic, with the suggested classifications (often poorly illustrated) being insufficiently grounded in empirical evidence. Moreover, certain examples are simply borrowed from one work into another without due acknowledgement (Section 2.2.1.2.1). It is, therefore, necessary to carry out a data-driven investigation of lexical lacunae.

## 2.2.2  Methodology in the detection of lacunae

A serious drawback of the previous lacuna-centred research studies is that little attention was paid to the methodology for the detection of lexical lacunae (except for Bykova (2003) and Popova, Sternin and Sternina (2002) discussed in Section 2.2.1.5). Detection of lexical lacunae is a cornerstone of research into lacunarity and one of the main methodological hurdles. There is a general lack of consistency in the detection of lacunae, with the same examples frequently appearing in different works (Section 2.2.1.2.1). A significant majority of the lacuna-centred studies, discussed above, were theoretical in nature, and discussion of the detection methods was beyond their scope, with some techniques being mentioned tangentially without particular focus on methodology. This section, therefore, attempts to systematise the most effective techniques for the detection of cross-linguistic lexical lacunae setting out a range of methods used in previous lacuna-centred research (see Table 2.1).

*Table 2.1 Two major principles underlying lacunae detection methodology*

| Inductive methods<br>(the specific-to-general principle) |
| --- |
| Statistical method |
| Experimental method |
| Paradigm method:<br><br>• word-forming paradigm<br><br>• antonymic paradigm<br><br>• semantic paradigm |
| Deductive methods<br>(the general-to-specific principle) |
| Text-based method |
| Dictionary-based method |
| Thesaurus-based method |
| Corpus-based method |

Research into lexical lacunarity can be classified according to two fundamental principles: investigation from the specific to the general (i.e. inductive) and investigation from the general to the specific (deductive). The specific-to-general principle entails, in Wierzbicka's terms (1997:16), "atomistic" research proceeding from the investigation of specific lexemes and concepts. Conversely, the general-to-specific approach takes a starting point in an extensive source of data out of which lexical lacunae are filtered.

## 2.2.2.1 Inductive methods

The following methods can be distinguished within the specific-to-general paradigm: statistical method, experimental method and paradigm method.

## 2.2.2.1.1 Statistical method

The statistical method is a useful technique, introduced by Muraviev (1975:11) for the detection of relative lacunae. Relative lacunae, according to Muraviev (ibid.:10), are the words in the contrasting languages with a common meaning but different frequencies of

usage. When Muraviev was writing, corpus-based approaches were not used in Russia and frequency dictionaries providing some statistical data on word usage were the only research sources. Nevertheless, Muraviev (1975:11-12) suggested indirect parameters for the establishment of relative lacunae such as a low capacity for forming phraseological units, an absence of figurative senses and a limited derivative potential of the term in the source language, in contrast to the target term which is widely used in phraseological expressions and possesses a rich array of meanings and derivatives.

This method was also employed by Wierzbicka (1997:16) for the establishment of the culture-specific "key words". Wierzbicka investigated concepts of particular importance to various speech communities based on the frequency of usage and derivational potential of these words.

Nowadays this methodology can be integrated into corpus-based studies and can be used in the investigation and comparative analysis of specific concepts where the frequency of usage can be compared statistically across languages.

## 2.2.2.1.2 Experimental method

The experimental methods of lacunae detection within the inductive paradigm comprise surveys, interviews, and direct and indirect association experiments. Experimental methods are most appropriate for the investigation of culture-specific concepts or, using Wierzbicka's terminology (1997:16), "key words" discussed above. For example, associative experiments consist in presenting the participants with a stimulus word which is supposed to trigger certain associations. The association analysis allows the researcher to represent graphically the structural organisation of a particular concept, pinpointing the semantic nucleus and marginal senses forming the peripheral conceptual structure. With the help of linguistic interviews and surveys, it is possible to detect divergences between the lexicographic and psycholinguistic meanings. For instance, the participants can be asked to give definitions of certain concepts which are then contrasted with the vocabulary definitions or to select the meanings they are familiar with and the ones they are not aware of (Popova and Sternin, 2001: 118). The methods of reconstructing a conceptual structure are particularly useful as they provide an insight into the mental organisation of the linguistic knowledge within our cognition and enable us to detect patterns of formation of conceptual links.

A detailed algorithm for applying an experimental methodology in the investigation of culturally important concepts is described in Popova and Sternin (2001), who were among the scholars who laid the methodological groundwork for the investigation of culture-specific concepts within the lacuna-centred approach.

### 2.2.2.1.3 Paradigm method

Another inductive method for the detection of lacunae is forming paradigms. Paradigms can be built according to different principles. Firstly, a paradigm can be formed on the basis of word-formation. This technique was first introduced by Gak (1976:261-262). This method consists in forming etymologically related sequences of words usually belonging to different parts of speech or differing according to some grammatical feature as, for example, the degree of comparison of adjectives or the voice of the verb. Thus, Gak (1976:262) formed the following sequence to detect lacunae in Russian and French (Table 2.2).

*Table 2.2 Gak's paradigm (1976:262) of colour-related words for the establishment of lexical lacunae in Russian and French*

| черный "black" | noir | розовый "pink" | rose | коричневый "brown" | brun |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| черноватый "blackish" | noirâtre | розоватый "pinkish" | rosâtre | коричневатый "brownish" | brunâtre |
| чернущий "very black" | - | - | - | - | - |
| чернеть "become black" | noircir | розоветь "become pink" | rosir | - | brunir |
| чернить "paint black" | noircir | - | rosir | - | brunir |
| чернота "blackness" | noirceur | - | roseur | - | - |

The word-forming method is also mentioned in Bykova (2003:239) as an efficient way of detecting lexical gaps. This method can certainly be used for the detection of lacunae in the contrasting word forms. However, the major limitation of this approach is that it has a restricted applicability and appears to be suitable for some specific purposes rather than for the investigation of the conceptual worldview of a certain speech community through lacunarity.

Secondly, a paradigm can be built on the basis of antonymic relationships between words. This antonymic method, first mentioned by Gak (1976:262) and also discussed in Bykova (2003:265) and Sternin et al. (2003:210), implies formation of a set of adjectives and their antonyms in the source language and their subsequent comparison with the corresponding counterparts in the target language (Table 2.3). There are no monolexemic equivalents in French for the terms *мелкий* "shallow" and *дешевый* "cheap", but it should be borne in mind, that it is possible to express these concepts French alternatively (e.g. *peu profonde, pas cher*).

*Table 2.3 Gak's (1976:262) antonymic paradigm*

| Глубокий "deep" | profond |
|---|---|
| Мелкий "shallow" | - |
| Дорогой "expensive" | cher |
| Дешевый "cheap" | - |

Thirdly, a paradigm can comprise semantically-related terms. This method is discussed in Bykova (2003:250) and implies forming a word sequence based on a certain semantic feature (e,g, animal gender, animal age and even the flesh of an animal). Bykova (ibid.) argues that in the paradigm of young female animals including such terms as *heifer, filly* and *gilt*, English has a lexical lacuna: there is no term for a young female sheep. Apart from intralinguistic lacuna in English, interlinguistic lacunae can be identified in comparing English and Russian. Thus, *filly* can be seen as a lexical lacuna in Russian as it is translated descriptively *молодая кобыла* "young mare" (Bykova:ibid.).

This method of detection of lexical gaps is also discussed in Fischer (2000) and illustrated with numerous examples including those from the domain of animals and kinship terms. Similarly to the two previous methods, this technique has a restricted applicability.

## 2.2.2.2 Deductive methods

The deductive methods for detection of lacunae comprise text-based, dictionary-based, thesaurus-based and corpus-based approaches.

## 2.2.2.2.1 Text-based method

A text-based method of contrastive analysis of original literary texts and their translations was introduced for the detection of lacunae by Sorokin (1977) and is widely used. Comparison of the source and the target languages allows the detection of culture-specific terms most resisting translation. The fragments containing lexical lacunae are usually translated in a variety of ways employing a number of translation strategies. As was highlighted in Vinay and Darbelnet (1995[1958]:31), translation of lexical lacunae can be a difficult task. The translator often tends to convey the meaning in the target language trying to preserve the syntactic structure used in the source language without upsetting it by restructuring the sentence. However, it does not appear feasible in every instance (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995[1958]:31). Ambiguities and inconsistencies in different translation versions can be considered a signal of lacunarity.

This methodology was employed by Nikolaeva (2005), discussed in Section 2.2.1.3. Kontsesvitnaya (2003) also opted for this method in her study of the difficulties of translation into Russian of the proper names used in J.R.R. Tolkien's novel *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Kontsesvitnaya considered proper names as a specific type of lexical lacunae having no equivalent in the target language.

Sorokin (1977:121-122) deemed literary works as rich sources of culture-specific lexis. He argued that a literary text could be seen as a sum total of similarities and variations (Sorokin, 1977:123) between the contrasting cultures. However, a drawback of this methodology is that it is based on non-systematic or serendipitous identification of lacunae and unless it is used for a well-defined purpose as in Kontsesvitnaya's work (2003), it cannot be consistently applied for the targeted detection of lexical gaps. Moreover, it requires manual processing of large volumes of material.

## 2.2.2.2.2 Dictionary-based method

The dictionary-based method is another popular technique for the detection of lexical lacunae within the deductive paradigm, deemed as one of the main strategies in the detection of lacunae in Popova and Sternin (2001:39). This methodology was widely employed by the Voronezh Psycholinguistic Research Group and became the guiding principle behind the compilation of a series of English-Russian dictionaries of culture-

specific terms (Makhonina and Sternina, 2005; Petrosyan and Sternina, 2011; Soukhanova and Sternina, 2012).

The dictionary-based method involves a manual search in bilingual dictionaries and selection of entries having no monolexemic translation equivalents. Lexical lacunae are sampled on the basis of the following criteria: extended dictionary definitions; translations with the help of loanwords; and translations with the help of near-synonyms. The detected lacunae are subsequently organised and grouped semantically forming culture-specific glossaries.

### 2.2.2.2.3 Thesaurus-based method

Lacunae can be detected through the analysis of semantic domains. This is a widely applied methodology within the lacuna-centred approach which implies the establishment and contrastive analysis of semantically-related lexis across languages such as kinship terms, colour terms, names of animals, fruit, etc. The elements of the semantic domains are contrasted in order to reveal the divergences in the conceptual organisation of the semantic fields as well as the differences in the extent of their lexicalisation. Bykova (2003:261) discussed this methodology with further reference to Khaustova (1997), who investigated the lexico-semantic field of fruit in English and Russian and established the inconsistencies in categorisation and conceptualisation of fruit in these speech communities. This methodology was also employed in Belov (1988), who compared the domain of colour in Russian and Finnish and distinguished gaps in the connotative meaning of the colour terms.

### 2.2.2.2.4 Corpus-based method

The corpus-based approach is another method used for the detection of lexical lacunae. It has a number of attractive features since it enables both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the phenomenon of lacunarity. It should be emphasised that automatic searches for lexical lacunae cannot be performed in parallel corpora. However, semantically annotated parallel corpora can be used by researchers to contrast specific domains across languages and pinpoint the divergences in formal patterns of word usage and distinct semantic valences. Based on the researcher's linguistic competence and intuitive expertise it is possible to manually detect potential lacunae. However, it may still be necessary to confirm the word's lacunarity by using the dictionary-based method too.

This methodology was employed by Ibragimova (2017:149), who built her own corpus of legal texts which included the Model Penal Code of the USA, the Code of the Criminal Procedure of the Russian Federation, the Russian Family Code, various online resources focused on legal issues as well as media texts on the relevant subject.

Parallel corpora can be used in the analysis of various ways of bridging lexical gaps and translation strategies applied for the purpose of the adequate and fully-fledged conveyance of information from the source language to the target language. The practical implications of parallel corpora for lacuna-centred research are discussed in Sibirceva (2013:99-100). However, corpus-based methodology has not yet been widely adopted within the lacuna-centred approach due to its relatively recent emergence and availability. Sibirceva (2013) and Ibragimova (2017) have outlined the direction for future corpus-based research studies of lacunarity, but the full potential of the corpus-based approach in lacuna-centred research is still to be discovered.

Summing up the above, lexical lacunae can be detected using a variety of techniques. However, each method is appropriate for a particular purpose and a precisely-formulated task. A key problem with much of the literature within the lacuna-centred research is that there is a lack of consistency and uniformity in methodology. In other words, there is still considerable ambiguity with regard to the procedure of lacunae detection. The dictionary-based method, which gained ground within the Voronezh lacunological tradition, is currently the most robust and efficient way to pinpoint lexical lacunae. However, due to technological advances in corpus linguistics and the implementation of new techniques in electronic lexicography providing new opportunities for advanced search options, there would seem to be a need for a methodological update.

Having described the lacuna-centred approach to lexical lacunae, now this literature review proceeds to the discussion of the cognition-centred perspective.

## 2.3   Cognition-centred perspective

### 2.3.1   From Whorf to modern cognition-centred studies

Another research paradigm addressing lexical lacunae is defined in this thesis as cognition-centred studies. Having crystallised from the American anthropological linguistics,

cognition-centred studies continued the relativist tradition of investigating the relationship between linguistic patterns and diverse interpretations of reality by speakers of different languages. This research paradigm is often referred to as neo-Whorfian (e.g. in Evans and Green, 2006:96) since it continues the exploration of the influence of language via linguistic lacunae (albeit without naming them as such) on thought. While cognition-centred research is not limited exclusively to the study of lexical discrepancies, being significantly wider in scope, this section overviews the cognition-centred studies with a primary focus on lexical inconsistencies.

One of the most evident differences between the lacuna-centred and cognition-centred studies consists in the research terminology. While the lacuna-centred tradition primarily identifies linguistic discrepancies as gaps or lacunae, the cognition-centred approach conventionally denotes them as non-universals or linguistic variables.

Another fundamental distinction between these research paradigms lies in the establishment of the research object. Unlike the lacuna-centred research with primary focus on the linguistic phenomenon of a lexical lacuna itself (its interpretation and classification), the major concern of the cognition-centred approach is the investigation of cognitive abilities through the prism of lacunarity. The lacuna-centred tradition also tends to determine consistent patterns between existence of lacunae and particular traits of national character. However, establishment of the interplay between a linguistic inconsistency and a particular worldview is a peripheral aspect of the lacuna-centred approach. Conversely, cognition-centred research is aimed at finding the bond between language and thought.

It is of fundamental importance for the cognition-centred studies to prove the unique character of linguistic variables to evidence that these linguistic variables are the ones to induce peculiarities in cognition (e.g. as discussed in Pederson, 2007:1019). In fact, the cognition-centred tradition lays special emphasis on the following: for a lacuna to have influence on world-perception, it should be unique and should not be compensated at any other level. However, such conception contradicts the lacuna-centred approach. From the standpoint of the lacuna-centred studies, the linguistic discrepancy should not necessarily be unique. The notion of definiteness-indefiniteness is a case in point: while it is expressed in English by the grammatical category of articles, in Russian it can be compensated by lexical or syntactical means (Section 2.4.1.1). Due to the fact that articles represent a non-existent category for Russian, they can still qualify as a case of lacunarity within lacuna-

centred perspective (Bykova, 2003:14). This is clearly an example of grammatical lacunarity which is, however, useful as it illustrates the difference in the above-mentioned approaches.

Finally, lacuna-centred and cognition-centred studies differ in the methodological approaches they take towards the examination of lexical lacunae. Lacuna-centred research is largely theoretical employing methods from comparative linguistics. Conversely, modern cognition-centred studies primarily involve completion of behavioural tasks by the participants. However, the cognition-centred studies have not always used experimental methodology. As will be shown below, their approach evolved over time.

Whorf's work on Hopi, an American Indian language of the indigenous tribe of the north-eastern part of Arizona, enshrined the frameworks of empirical research into linguistic relativity and since then numerous research studies have drawn parallels between existing linguistic discrepancies and their influence on the way we perceive the world, revealing a connection between linguistic lacunae and thought (Carroll, 1956). The first wave of empirical research grew in intensity by the early 1950s and included research into a language spoken on the Trobriand islands undertaken by Lee (1950), and a study of Navajo (an Athabascan language) carried out by Hoijer (1951). These studies carried on the tradition of research into exotic languages (that is, exotic from the standpoint of Western science) characteristic of the American anthropological endeavour of the beginning of the twentieth century.

The pioneering studies identified lacunae referring to them as linguistic variables and investigated their link to cultural variables. In other words, employing an ethno-linguistic approach, researchers explored the interplay between lacunae and the speakers' behaviour and worldview. For example, Hoijer (1951) analysed how motion was encoded in Navajo verbs and found that in contrast to the Indo-European languages, in Navajo verbs the nature and direction of movement were reflected in much greater detail. Hoijer (1951:117) drew a parallel between this linguistic specificity and the itinerant lifestyle of the Navajo people and also found the reflection of this worldview in the tribal myths and legends traditionally depicting gods in constant motion.

However, insufficient non-linguistic evidence for the interplay between language and thought is often seen as a major limitation of these works (e.g. in Lucy, 1996:44). Hoijer (1951), for instance, relied in his investigation on tribal myths, regarding them as a cultural

variable whereas critics tend to see the myths as clearly linguistic material. Nevertheless, such criticism is also arguable. As is pointed out by Leavitt (2011:141), myths cannot be considered a purely linguistic material of the same type as grammatical or lexical discrepancies only because they are related by language. Therefore, criticism such as Lucy's (1996:44) which equates linguistic and ethno-linguistic data seems to be open to debate.

Over time a trend towards a strict separation of linguistic and non-linguistic variables emerged. To provide unbiased evidence for correlation between linguistic patterns and cognitive abilities, researchers started using experimental methodology involving completion of non-verbal tasks by participants. As pointed out in Lucy (1992:127), the use of experimental methodology became characteristic of the psycholinguistic research paradigm which emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, with primary focus on investigation of the influence of a linguistic idiosyncrasy on cognitive operations of speakers. A sharpened focus on the influence of a specific linguistic variable on a certain cognitive ability has since become a distinctive feature of the modern cognition-centred studies. Instead of investigating the broad and general issue of linguistic relativity, modern cognition-centred studies, which received a new impetus within the framework of cognitive sciences, introduced a tendency to narrow the investigation base to a specific and precisely formulated hypothesis so as to render it testable.

For example, Winawer et al. (2007) investigated the impact of the Russian term *голубой* "light blue" which can be seen as a lexical lacuna in English on the Russian speakers' ability to discriminate the dark and light shades of blue. The participants were presented with triads of colours depicting different shades of blue and were asked to detect within the shortest possible time and as accurately as possible the two matching stimuli. The experiment found that the lexical distinction between dark and light blue advantaged the Russian speakers: their reaction time in cross-category differentiation (i.e. between the shades which according to the Russian linguistic patterns fall within different categories of the colour spectrum) was shorter than that in the differentiation between the shades which fell within the same category (Winawer et al., 2007:7783).

This is an example of the experimental approach that evaluated the influence of a lexical lacuna on stimulus discrimination, whereas within the general cognition-centred research paradigm the impact of lexical lacunae was investigated on a much wider range of various cognitive faculties including attention (e.g. Berman and Slobin, 1994, Goller, Choi, Hong,

and Ansorge, 2020), categorisation (e.g. Carroll and Casagrande, 1958; Yun and Choi, 2018) and memory (e.g. Lenneberg and Roberts, 1955; Rosch Heider and Olivier, 1972).

Thus, the perennial speculation that language influenced thought and shaped worldview became old-fashioned, and there was a distinct need for empirical evidence. Whereas the above-mentioned pioneering descriptive research relied on ethno-linguistic data as evidence to showcase the effects of linguistic relativity, more recent cognition-centred studies tended to employ an experimental approach relying purely on non-linguistic evidence. Therefore, descriptive methodology gave way to experimental typically three-stage research. Three major challenges of the modern relativist approach, concisely summarised by Lucy (2014:18), can also be seen as consecutive research phases: establishment of a pair of contrasting languages allowing the demonstration of a distinct linguistic conceptualisation, formulation of a hypothesis of interplay between a linguistic variable (aka lacuna) and a cognitive operation and hypothesis testing by assessing native speakers through a variety of non-linguistic experiments, e.g. by asking them to perform basic non-verbal cognitive tasks.

While some studies did not detect any impact of language on thought (e.g. Franklin et al., 2005; Heider, 1972; Papafragou et al., 2002; Rosch Heider and Olivier, 1972), others have produced consistent evidence of the Whorfian effect. Such cognition-centred studies showcasing the impact of lexical lacunae on cognitive faculties can be organised, drawing on Pederson's (2007) classification principle, by the following domains: numbers (e.g. Everett, 2005; Frank et al., 2008; Gordon, 2004), time (e.g. Boroditsky, 2000, 2001; Núñez and Sweetser, 2006), colour (e.g. Kay and Kempton, 1984; Lenneberg and Roberts, 1955; Winawer et al., 2007) and motion (Berman and Slobin, 1994; Slobin, 1996a, 1996b).

Although some scholars (e.g. McWhorter, 2014; Pinker, 1995; Pullum, 1991, 2018) believe that the detected impact of language on thought is insignificant since it does not change to any substantial degree the way we perceive the world, there is at least one example of a mind-changing effect, as pointed out by Casasanto (2016:167). The case in point is the domain of numbers. In a range of experiments, Everett (2005), Frank et al. (2008) and Gordon (2004) demonstrated that lexical lacunae in Pirahã were not merely structural inconsistencies between lexical systems but rather conceptual divergences having profound effects on cognition.

Pirahã is an indigenous language of the Amazonian tribe in Brazil that lacks numerals. The Pirahã counting system distinguishes the following quantities: one, two and many, whereas the numbers exceeding two are referred to collectively without any further specification (Gordon, 2004:496). Everett (2005:623) suggested that the number words are not numerals as such and can be roughly glossed as "small size or amount", "somewhat larger size or amount" and "cause to come together (loosely many)". Therefore, the seemingly universal concept of numbers is construed in an idiosyncratic way in Pirahã, with numerals representing lexical gaps.

Frank et al. (2008) and Gordon (2004) carried out a number of experimental tests with the Pirahã involving matching tasks. The participants were asked to replicate certain quantities of objects. Pirahã speakers replicated the arrays consisting of one to three items relatively well, whereas the tasks involving replication of bigger quantities of objects produced inaccurate results. Everett (2005:625-626), in turn, reported on an unsuccessful attempt to teach the Pirahã numeracy. On a daily basis over an eight-month period, Everett taught some of the representatives of the Pirahã community to count to ten in Portuguese and to carry out elementary arithmetic operations. As is observed in Everett (2005:626), the participants in this educational experiment were highly motivated. While they successfully carried out barter exchange of goods with Brazilians, the concept of non-barter exchange was unclear to them and they wanted to be able to detect cheating (Everett, 2005:625-626). Nevertheless, this initiative failed due to the fact that not a single Pirahã speaker learned to count to ten.

However, the question remains open whether it was exclusively linguistic structure that affected the ability of the Pirahã speakers to count or whether other factors including level of schooling and cultural environment also played a significant role. Everett (ibid.) held that it was unreasonable to approach the absence of an elaborate numerical system in Pirahã in isolation from other conceptual gaps existing in this language. According to Everett, the scarcity of kinship and colour terms, the absence of numerals, perfect tense and subordinate clauses, the simplicity of the pronoun system as well as the lack of myths and legend stories should be considered in conjunction. Everett argued that lexical inconsistency was a manifestation of the impact of the socio-cultural environment on the interpretation of reality. The Pirahã community is a small indigenous tribe isolated from civilisation and leading a hunter-gather lifestyle. Pirahã people had no need for the elaboration of a sophisticated number system due to the absence of economic structure in their self-sustaining society and their irregular contacts with the outside world. It seems

logical that the development of the lexical inventory in a particular domain is aligned to the specific needs of a speech community.

Thus, it is still unclear whether it is a linguistic pattern that affects our cognition, whether it is our cognition that triggers formation of language-specific patterns, or whether there is a reciprocal impact of both. The idea of mutual influence between language and thought, expressed for instance in Bickel (2000) and Enfield (2000), seems reasonable as linguistic intelligence and cognitive abilities are parts of the same whole, of a complex multi-dimensional mental mechanism which is extremely flexible, sensitive and responsive to external impact factors and environmental conditions. This, however, brings into question the appropriateness of the experimental approach in its current state and requires further investigation into the processes of formation of language-specific lexicalisation patterns.

As evidenced by the discussion above, the cognition-centred studies are conceptually distinct from the lacuna-centred research. However, despite the variation in nomenclature, diverging research foci and different methodological approaches, the notion of a lexical lacuna appears central to both research paradigms. The cognition-centred studies complement the lacuna-oriented analysis by demonstrating experimentally that lexical lacunae may conceal profound conceptual divergences. Modern cognition-centred studies are largely representative of the cognitive approaches to the study of language, a brief overview of which is presented in the next section.

## 2.3.2  Cognitive linguistic approaches

Cognitive linguistics is a comparatively young field of research that came into being in the 1970s and has gained momentum since the 1980s (Croft and Cruse, 2004:1). However, it is not a separate discipline but rather an interdisciplinary enterprise or, as Geeraerts and Cuyckens (2007:4) put it, a "cluster" of consistent approaches to the study of language consolidated by a set of shared fundamental principles.

According to Croft and Cruse (2004:1-4), cognitive linguistics is guided by three major principles. According to the first principle, within the cognitive framework, linguistic competence is treated on par with other cognitive abilities. Therefore, linguistic intelligence is discussed in the context of perception, conceptualisation and categorisation which are believed to be governed by fundamentally the same cognitive processes. The second principle on which the cognitive approaches are premised is that grammatical

structures reflect conceptualisation. Thus, from the cognitive perspective, the study of linguistic expression provides insight into the thinking patterns. Finally, the third principle to which cognitive linguistics adheres is a usage-based view on language, establishing an influence of the language use on the development of linguistic structures. Commitment to these principles has crystallised in a view of language as a mental construct reflecting the underlying conceptual framework shaped by the experiential knowledge of speakers. In other words, a distinctive feature of cognitive linguistics is that it studies language through the prism of human cognition but in direct association with the surrounding world.

Acknowledging the interrelation between language, mind and the external environment, the approach employed by the cognition-centred studies is generally in line with the view on the study of language endorsed by cognitive linguistics. However, linguistic discrepancies are not the only concern of cognitive linguistics, with other areas of inquiry being categorisation, conceptual metaphor, embodiment, iconicity and organisation of human conceptual knowledge, to name just a few. Cognitive linguists hold that there are common principles shared by speakers of different languages, while acknowledging at the same time that languages can vary dramatically in the way they encode meaning (Evans and Green, 2006:101). Therefore, cognitive linguistics is equally interested in studying universals which shed light on the underlying general patterns in conceptual knowledge organisation and inconsistencies across languages which provide a glimpse of language-specific construals, i.e. ways of conceptualising experience.

### 2.3.2.1     Forms of linguistic expression and construals

Within the framework of cognitive linguistics, the way information is presented in language is believed to reflect how the speakers understand the event or situation. In other words, divergent forms of linguistic expression are seen as representative of distinct construals. Language allows us to describe a particular event in multiple ways using various grammatical constructions and lexical expressions. Communicating the experience differently, we unwittingly foreground certain aspects of information that appear most salient to us. Such linguistic framing occurs through the performance of various construal operations (for an overview of existing classifications of construal operations see Verhagen, 2007).

As an example of divergent construals, let us consider such a cognitive operation as metaphorical comparison. A series of studies by Boroditsky (2000), Boroditsky and

Ramscar (2002), Gentner (2001) and Gentner et al. (2002) demonstrated that English speakers construe time in radically different ways when using two contrasting spatial metaphors. The so-called ego-moving metaphor (e.g. *We are approaching the holiday season*) implies that time is construed as an imaginary horizontal axis along which the speaker moves towards the future. This metaphorical framing presupposes that front is associated with future events. Conversely, the time-moving metaphor (e.g. *The holiday season is approaching us*) implies that events move from the future towards a speaker who stays still on a timeline, with the front being associated with the earlier events that have already taken place. These contrasting metaphors convey the same idea. However, the ways these metaphors construe reality are different, with divergent conceptual schemas underlying different forms of linguistic expression.

There are distinct ways of conceptualising experience within one language, to say nothing about different languages. Motion events are one of the classical examples of divergent construals across languages. Talmy (1975, 1985, 1991, 2000), one of the founders of the cognitive linguistic approaches (Geeraerts and Cuyckens, 2007:7), revealed a stark contrast in the amount of information reflected in the semantics of the motion verbs across languages and suggested a classification of the motion event constructions on the basis of the semantic component present in the verbal structure. He distinguished six potential semantic components, among them cause, figure, ground, manner, motion and path (Talmy, 2000:21). The relation between internal semantic form and external grammatical form is not one-to-one, that is a single surface element can encode several semantic components or vice versa (ibid.). For instance, the verb stems of the Romance languages often encode motion and path (Talmy, 2000:60). This can be illustrated with the help of the Spanish verb *avanzar* "move forward" (ibid.:50) which expresses the fact of motion as well as the direction in which it occurs (i.e. path).

Talmy (ibid.:117) divided languages into two major groups: verb-framed and satellite-framed languages. In verb-framed languages (e.g. Romance languages), semantic components are encoded in the verb stem as in the Spanish verb *avanzar* "move forward" discussed above. In satellite-framed languages, the additional information (e.g. path, manner) is expressed, in Talmy's (ibid.) terms, by "satellites", that is by functional words immediately associated with the verb stem (e.g. adverbial particles) or bound affixes. This can be illustrated with the help of English and Russian, which are both classified as satellite-framed languages by Talmy (2000). In the English phrase *the ball rolled in*, the motion is expressed by a verb, whereas the path is encoded in the satellite *in*, specifying

that the ball entered a particular place (ibid.:214). In the Russian phrase *я выбежал из дома* "I ran out of the house", the motion is expressed by the verb, while the semantic component of path is encoded in the verbal prefix *вы-*, indicating that the person exited the house (Talmy, 1985:105). Talmy's analysis of conceptualisation of motion shows that different conceptual structures underpin lexicalisation patterns in different languages, constraining a speaker to pay particular attention to various aspects of the motion and reflect it in their speech.

The way meaning is encoded in language has covert impact on our perception of reality. For instance, Fausey and Boroditsky (2011) demonstrated that linguistic framing of agentivity affects how speakers remember events. In contrast to Spanish speakers, who tend to use non-agentive expressions when describing accidental events, English speakers typically use agentive expressions specifying the agents. Linguistically foregrounding the agents, in memory tasks English speakers remembered more clearly than Spanish speakers who performed accidental actions.

Similarly, Thibodeau and Boroditsky's (2011) study demonstrated that the way speakers construe events using figurative language may affect their reasoning. In a series of experiments participants were primed with two distinct metaphors and were asked to suggest a solution to tackling crime. To one group of subjects, crime was described as a virus, whereas to another group, it was described as a beast. The participants primed with the virus metaphor were more inclined to handle the crime problem by introducing social reforms. In contrast, the subjects primed with the beast metaphor were more likely to propose enforcement action. Therefore, metaphorical framing can influence people's reasoning by predisposing them to make inferences that are coherent with construed patterns.

In translation, the text is refracted through the prism of the target language, often presenting a different perspective on an event or situation (Chapter 6.1.2.12), a different degree of detail (Chapter 6.1.2.2), a different level of abstraction (Chapter 6.1.2.1) and a different frame of comparison (Chapter 6.1.2.9). Therefore, from the cognitive perspective, translation can be seen as a reconstrual of meaning in the target language involving reframing of the semantic content. In the event of lexical lacunae, a translator is constrained to select a construal that is different from that in the source text, thus inevitably redirecting the focus of attention. This thesis intends to analyse the implications that such a shift in construal may have in the cross-linguistic context.

Having outlined the concept of construal, this study proceeds to explain how such construal operation as Fillmore's framing can shed additional light on our understanding of the nature of lexical lacunae.

## 2.3.2.2   Lexical lacunae through the prism of frame semantics

So far, the issue of emergence of lexical lacunae has received little attention. Within the lacuna-centred perspective, occurrence of lexical gaps is generally attributed to discrepancies in linguistic consciousness between representatives of different cultures (Markovina, 2004:59), communicative irrelevance of the concept (Sternin and Bykova, 1998:65) and incongruence between cultures and languages (Papikyan, 2008:479). However, such assertions, being rather abstract, do not explain the processes underlying the formation of lexical lacunae across languages.

Fischer (2000), adopting the cognitive perspective, attempted to answer the question why lexical gaps emerge. He associated formation of lexical gaps with psychological salience, perceptual salience and prototypicality. For instance, the absence of a name for a dead plant in English was attributed to psychological salience: while dead people can have a traumatic effect on individuals, dead plants are less psychologically salient and have no specific nomination (Fischer, 2000:10). The absence of an English term to denote the lack of ability to smell or taste (in contrast to being blind or deaf) was due to perceptual salience (ibid.:11). The fact that there is no general English term for a bovine animal was explained by its low prototypicality: while it is easy to imagine a prototypical horse, it can be problematic to envisage a bovine animal as bulls are very different from cows (ibid.:12). However, Fischer's treatment of the causal factors leading to the emergence of lexical gaps was rather preliminary, as he himself acknowledged (ibid.:10), based on the analysis of a very limited number of examples. Moreover, his discussion was devoted to the analysis of intralinguistic lexical gaps, with the mechanisms of formation of cross-linguistic lexical lacunae still remaining little understood.

Fillmore's (1982, 1985) theory of frame semantics (developed within the framework of cognitive linguistic approaches) can offer a deeper understanding of how lexemes that can be seen as lexical lacunae from the cross-linguistic perspective emerge in language. Even though frame semantics has its primary focus on how human conceptual knowledge is

organised and does not explicitly mention lacunae or lexical gaps as such, it can shed light on the formation of language-specific lexicalisation patterns and, subsequently, lacunae.

Frame semantics sets word meanings against the backdrop of human encyclopaedic knowledge, explaining how understanding takes place. By *frame*, Fillmore (1982:111) understood an underlying conceptual structure containing the smallest units of human knowledge, i.e. concepts, organised in such a way that to decode a concept, a speaker should be familiar with the part of the structure within which it is contained. In other words, according to frame semantics, concepts do not exist in isolation from human experiential knowledge, but rather, are repositories of it, which can shed light on how speakers of a language conceptualise reality and categorise experience. By way of illustration, Fillmore (1982:116) argued that to understand the meaning of such verbs as *spend, cost* and *charge,* one should be familiar with the conventional socially accepted practice of exchanging items for money constituting the frame of commercial deal. This commercial deal frame also comprises such concepts as *buyers*, *sellers* and *goods* (ibid.). A choice of a certain lexical item contained within this frame evokes the knowledge of the principles of goods exchange established within the society. Likewise, to understand the notion of the hypotenuse, one should have the knowledge about the right-angled triangle in which the hypotenuse subtends the right angle (Fillmore, 1985:228). Therefore, the mention of a word activates the speaker's knowledge of the whole frame and corresponding extralinguistic experience.

However, social experience as well as knowledge systems vary across speech communities. Therefore, the frames can diverge in different languages. As evidenced by the discussion of various types of dwellings presented in Chapter 1.1, the knowledge systems about different types of private accommodation of Russian and English speakers are not fully equivalent. For instance, the English concept of *detached house* is profiled against a frame in which social status correlates with the type of accommodation. Thus, to understand the concept profile *detached house* to the full extent, one should understand the *property ladder* frame. In the Russian-speaking community, there is a similar frame in which an individual's economic well-being is measured in terms of housing conditions, namely the number of rooms in a flat. However, despite a definite overlap, these frames are structured differently. The awareness of cultural difference between the frames allows a better understanding of why language-specific terms and consequently lexical lacunae emerge.

As pointed out in Croft and Cruse (2004:19), the differentiation between profile and frame/domain can help in the understanding of the cross-linguistic semantic discrepancies and translation challenges associated with finding an adequate equivalent in the target language. Indeed, viewing lexical lacunae through the prism of frame semantics can reveal differences in conceptual frameworks across speech communities and mechanisms of formation of lacunae. Therefore, this thesis will approach lexical lacunae in line with the principles of Fillmore's frame semantics. For this purpose (as will be further outlined in Chapter 3.3.3), this project will draw upon the HTE (2$^{nd}$ edn., version 5.0) which allows the investigation of the semantic neighbourhood of lacunar lexemes (i.e. English lexemes identified as lacunae in Russian and Spanish) as well as of the relationships between lacunar lexemes and conceptual frames within which these are contained.

So far this literature review has presented two distinct approaches to the study of lexical lacunae, namely lacuna-centred (Section 2.2) and cognition-centred (Section 2.3) perspectives. The next section moves on to introduce an equivalence-centred perspective on lexical lacunarity.

## 2.4  Equivalence-centred perspective

Lexical lacunae were also approached from the standpoint of translation studies. This applied approach, aimed largely at finding optimal strategies for handling lacunae, progressed independently of the cognition-centred and lacuna-centred studies.

Lexical lacunae reveal layers of language-specific conventional knowledge, representing clusters of historically, culturally, socially and emotionally charged information shared by a speech community. The translation process, implying "decoding" information from the source language and its conversion to the target language, is often hindered by divergences between two linguistic codes. Lacunarity is traditionally addressed within translation studies in the context of equivalence. However, the concept of equivalence is controversial and has caused a great deal of debate among theorists of translation since there is no unanimous agreement on its nature and conditions.

### 2.4.1  Equivalence and lacunarity

Like lacunarity, equivalence is a relative concept. We usually envisage absolute equivalence in artificial code systems: conversion of numbers from a binary to a decimal

system is usually seen as an example of absolute equivalence. However, a mathematical calculation such as 0.1 + 0.1 + 0.1 carried out in the binary system produces surprising results, diverging from that in the decimal format due to the rounding error, and equates to 0.30000000000000004 (Buelta, 2018:28). Although the difference in values is not significant, this example highlights that absolute equivalence is not always achievable. Equivalence can become relative even within the artificial domain, and it becomes even more so with regard to natural human languages.

The idea of relativity of equivalence was explicitly expressed in Nida's (2003[1964]:156) study of translation theory; he argued that "there can be no absolute correspondence between languages". In Pym's (2010:37) opinion, "equivalence is always 'presumed' equivalence". This view was also shared by Jakobson (1959:233), who maintained that "there is ordinarily no full equivalence between code-units". Jakobson illustrated his point with a comparison of the English word *cheese* to its Russian counterpart *сыр* "cheese", the meaning of which could not be considered identical. English *cheese* also encompasses the concept of *cottage cheese*, whereas Russian has a specific lexeme to denote it - *творог* "cottage cheese". Thus, Jakobson held that two different languages encoded concepts on a different basis, fragmenting reality in slightly different dimensions. This clearly echoes Whorf's idea that languages "dissect nature" in a variety of ways (Carroll, 1956:239). However, Jakobson (1959:236) saw fundamental differences between languages in obligatory structural patterns, that is in "what they (languages) *must* convey and not in what they *may* convey" [italics original]. This idea was of the utmost importance in the discussion of cross-linguistic differences and can be traced in a number of subsequent works. Thus, Catford (1965:39) compared the English sentence "I have arrived" with its Russian equivalent and identified a set of divergent features in obligatory grammatical patterns, which were lost in translation. In the contrasting languages, even corresponding grammatical constructions and equivalent lexis reveal some covert inconsistencies.

Lacunarity and equivalence are two polar constants characterizing functionally significant relations between overlapping linguistic structures. Lacunarity was traditionally addressed from the standpoint of comparative linguistics detecting structural deficiencies, whereas a contrasting approach was employed by translation studies with a major focus on establishing an equivalence relation between the original and its translation. The major goal of translation is to find the most appropriate methods to achieve parity between the source text and the target text. Therefore, the point at issue in comparative linguistics and translation studies is essentially the same but addressed from opposite perspectives. We

can assume that lacunarity is a negative coefficient, whereas equivalence is a positive coefficient. Such an interpretation is partly compliant with Panasiuk's (2010:44) understanding of a lacuna which he defined as the "opposite side of equivalence". Both lacunarity and equivalence manifest themselves exclusively in the situation of a cross-linguistic clash. Lacunarity describes the relation between the source text and the target text *at the moment of* translation or contrastive analysis. Conversely, equivalence describes the relation between the source text and the target text *after* translation, estimating the quality of translation and assessing the rationale for the application of given translation methods.

The estimation of equivalence is carried out from the standpoint of the final product. In other words, the original text and its translation are compared, and based on the applied translation method, equivalence is evaluated. The original text represents the form and the content, and in the best-case scenario the translation should convey the information as close to the form and the content of the original as possible. However, sometimes it can be challenging. This is where the question arises whether to preserve the form or the content.

The controversy around form and content has a long history. This is one of the perennial problems that in various epochs was solved in different ways. In the first millennium BC in ancient India when the language of the Vedas appeared, it was seen as a sacred language enabling communication with gods, the use of which was restricted to specific social groups (Pollock, 2006:39). "Language of the gods" was to be kept pure, and any deviation from the original form was seen as a threat of disruption of this bond with the gods (ibid.:44). Therefore, there was an absolute superiority of form over content.

The theoretical questions of translation were also addressed in the Roman Empire, where, in contrast, content prevailed over form. Munday (2008:19), in his textbook on translation studies, mentioned Cicero and Horace among the first scholars to raise the question of priority of content over form in conveying Greek texts to the Roman readership, and to contrast translator with orator. Translators were believed to render source texts word by word, while orators' translations were deemed free and their work was more highly valued. The Romans took advantage of the knowledge of the ancient Greeks in numerous areas including fine arts and architecture, philosophy, literature and public speaking, theatre and playwriting, military expertise and engineering. Greek texts assumed salience since they provided access to the Greek cultural heritage. However, most Romans spoke Greek fluently, and there was no need for translation. Therefore, the profession of translator was

devalued. It is likely that issues of dominance of form over content or vice versa were determined by the status of the foreign language in the speech community and its availability to ordinary people.

This systematic opposition of "sense-for-sense" to "word-for-word" translation laid the groundwork for further development of the dichotomy which was reflected in numerous works addressing issues of translation (Munday, 2008:19). The initial opposition between form and content can be seen as a primary category which evolved over centuries in accordance with the understanding of the role of the translator and the main requirements of translation. However, the idea of bipolarity permeated the works of many scholars who distinguished two polar approaches to translation.

In his overview of translation theories, Pym (2010) argued that the principle of dichotomy could serve as a basis for forming one of the equivalence paradigms. Pym distinguished natural and directional equivalence. Natural equivalence implied an equally reversible relation between the source text and the target text. Conversely, directional equivalence was interpreted as an asymmetrical relation between the source text and the target text, not implying interchangeability. For instance, if we translate the target text item back to the source language, we might receive a result different from the original text. Thus, Pym (2010:33) organised translation theories into a paradigm based on the dichotomy which he summarised as the following sequence:

*Table 2.4 Pym's (2010:33) directed equivalence sequence*

| Cicero | ut interpres | ut orator |
|---|---|---|
| Schleiermacher | foreignizing | domesticating |
| Nida | formal | dynamic |
| Newmark | semantic | communicative |
| Levý | anti-illusory | illusory |
| House | overt | covert |
| Nord | documentary | instrumental |
| Toury | adequacy | acceptability |
| Venuti | resistant | fluent |

In the directed equivalence paradigm suggested by Pym, it appears that equivalence was analysed by various scholars through the prism of translation methods. The aim of

translation strategy was seen either as preserving the authenticity of the source language or as complying with the norms of the target language. As seen from Table 2.4, two opposite translation methods were referred to in a variety of ways, but the general principle unifying all these approaches, according to Pym, is based on binarism. However, such bipolar understanding of equivalence seems debatable since it leads to oversimplification of the concept. For example, as we shall see below, Nida's understanding of the formal equivalence involves orientation towards both form and content and is not based exclusively on the preservation of form. Conversely, Nida's dynamic equivalence should be conceived in a completely different dimension since it clearly involved a pragmatic aspect of translation and should not be equated with orientation towards content. Moreover, House (1997:30) emphasised that the distinction between the overt (aka the source text oriented) and the covert (aka the target text oriented) translation, is not premised on the dichotomy in the traditional sense such as "either-or". On the contrary, "this crucial distinction… is a cline" (House, 1997:30). Therefore, the concepts encapsulated in this binary paradigm should be treated with caution since they are not as straightforward as may seem at first sight.

In the subsections to follow, different interpretations of equivalence will be overviewed based on the convergence of views.

## 2.4.1.1 Equivalence as a semantic phenomenon

Catford (1965), in his analysis of the linguistic theory of translation, attached particular importance to the notion of equivalence, considering it pivotal in translation. Catford (1965:21) maintained that the central objective of translation theory was to establish the nature and conditions of equivalence to ensure a rapid solution to finding an equivalent in translation practice.

Catford (1965:27) laid special emphasis on the distinction between textual equivalence and formal correspondence. By textual equivalent he understood a target text item functioning as an adequate translation counterpart. Conversely, a formal correspondent was seen as a target text element formally matching the source text element, positioned at a congruent level of the linguistic structure and occupying a similar place in the abstract taxonomy. Catford (1965:28) illustrated this point with the following example:

Source language (English)    The woman came out of the house.

| Target language (Russian) | Женщина вышла из дому. |
| --- | --- |

| Source language (English) | A woman came out of the house. |
| --- | --- |
| Target language (Russian) | Из дому вышла женщина. |

Two very similar English sentences are translated into Russian. The difference between them is in the use of articles. Due to the absence of the grammatical category of articles in Russian, one-to-one translation is impossible. Since there is no formal equivalent of English articles in the Russian language, Catford (1965:29) argued that "the TL equivalent is *nil*".[7] However, in this example, textual equivalence is achieved through word order. Hence, the subject-predicator word order acts as the textual equivalent of the definite article, whereas the inverted word order acts as the textual equivalent of the indefinite article. Therefore, according to Catford, textual equivalence, established at the level of sentence, can be seen as a dynamic value due to a variety of potential translation solutions. Conversely, formal correspondence, established at the level of linguistic categories, was associated with the structuralist approach to language, implying a hierarchical breakdown of a linguistic system into components.

However, not all elements can function as textual equivalents. Catford (1965:49) defined contextual interchangeability as a *sine qua non* condition for textual equivalence. Textual equivalents should semantically overlap with the source text items and be "*relatable to (at least some of) the same features of substance*" [italics original] or, in other words, functionally relevant to the context (Catford, 1965:50). Therefore, Catford's understanding of equivalence lies in the semantic dimension.

## 2.4.1.2 Equivalence as a pragmatic phenomenon

Newmark's (1988) study of translation theory draws our attention to another aspect of equivalence, giving prominence to the pragmatic side. Achievement of "equivalence effect" is set as the "desirable *result*" [italics original] of translation (Newmark, 1988:48). According to Newmark, the equivalence effect is achieved if the target text produces the same or at least a similar impact on the readership as the original text. However, Newmark distinguished two cases when it might not be possible to achieve the equivalence effect. The first case is when the function of the source text and the function of the target text do

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[7] TL stands for target language.

not correspond, e.g. in Newmark's terms when the function of the source text is vocative and that of the target text is informative, or the other way around. That is when the source text was written to affect the reader, to make them act, think or reflect, and the target text only informs. The second case when the equivalence effect is unlikely to be achieved, according to Newmark, is when there is a cultural dissonance.

Newmark's understanding of equivalence chimes with the concept of "dynamic equivalence" introduced by Nida (2003[1964]:159). Analysing various correspondence principles, Nida (2003[1964]:159) distinguished between formal and dynamic equivalence. According to Nida, formal equivalence involved orientation towards the message and implied the translator's intention to preserve both form and content "as literally and meaningfully as possible" (Nida, 2003[1964]):159). Conversely, dynamic equivalence referred to the pragmatic aspect of translation and implied the existence of the "same" relationship between the source text and the readership as the one that was established between the target text and the readership. Nida's emphasis on the importance of the pragmatic impact of translation is quite logical if viewed in the context of his practical work, namely translation of the Bible. Translation of religious texts implies different translation goals due to the distinct function of the text. The Bible should teach believers the guiding principles for life, i.e. how to distinguish between good and bad, right and wrong. The biblical text should make the reader empathise and reflect, but most importantly it should show believers how to follow these guiding principles and to embark on the righteous path. This objective is significantly different from the objectives of informative texts and is achieved by different means. Therefore, it can be assumed that there is a positive correlation between the type of equivalence and the text function.

We can draw a parallel between Nida's dynamic equivalence and Sorokin's (1977:123) understanding of lacunarity as "a phenomenon of connotation" (Section 2.2.1.1) as a result of which different kinds of associations are triggered in the source text and target text readerships. Both clearly highlighted the pragmatic aspect: however, lacunarity was seen as a root cause whereas dynamic equivalence was seen as a consequence. The fundamental criterion for the definition of a lacuna for Sorokin was the absence of knowledge encapsulated in the term, as a result of which the reader was unable to decode the message. However, this criterion is subjective since this knowledge cannot be measured in any way. Likewise, Nida's dynamic equivalence, i.e. the impact on the target text readership, is also very abstract since it cannot be objectively estimated.

However, Nida held that the notion of equivalence was multifaceted and that within this dichotomy other grades of equivalence could also be distinguished. Nida (2003[1964]):171) described three "areas of tension between formal-equivalence and dynamic-equivalence translations" and defined them as "(1) formal and functional equivalents, (2) optional and obligatory equivalents, and (3) rate of decodability". The difficulty of dealing with formal and functional equivalents, according to Nida, consists in translating terms absent in the target language due to the absence of their referents in the target culture; these terms, however, can be compensated for by functionally relevant counterparts. Nida (2003[1964]):171) illustrated this area with the expression "white as snow", which can be translated as "white as kapok down" in those languages which have no word denoting snow.

In the second place, there may be a translation challenge in finding optional and obligatory equivalents, in other words, if the object or event exists in both languages, but has a different function in the target language. Among other examples, Nida (2003[1964]):172) mentioned the word "heart", which in a figurative sense, when talking about feelings, should be translated with words for "liver" in Greek and "abdomen" in one of the Mayan languages. According to Nida, this area of tension also encompasses the translation of honorifics, which in some languages have highly ramified systems.

Nida (2003[1964]):171) called the third area of tension "the rate of decodability" since it described the speed at which the addressee could decode the message. This rate was defined by the amount of additional explanatory information appearing in translation, crucial for decoding some cultural phenomena, for example. In other words, the third area of tension includes translation of terms not existing in the target language due to the absence of their referents, which could not be compensated for. The translation solution, suggested by Nida, is adoption of the loan-words in the target language and/or descriptive translation. For instance, the Navajo term *phylacteries* can be translated as "small leather bundles with holy words in them" (Nida, 2003[1964]:172). Thus, these three tension areas were seen by Nida as obstacles to producing an equal effect on the target readership.

## 2.4.1.3 Equivalence as a formal phenomenon

A formal understanding of equivalence can be found in Retsker (2007:13), who maintained that equivalence is an out-of-context correspondence between the source and the target language items. Retsker (2007:13) understood equivalents as "constant and

interchangeable" elements emerging due to the existence of the shared concepts across languages and constituting a solid basis for the translation process, enabling and accelerating it. In other words, according to Retsker, equivalents are the units with constant correspondence across languages irrespective of context, serving as the building blocks for the reconstruction of the meaning of the whole utterance in the target language. Retsker's stance on equivalence reveals the structuralist approach to the interpretation of language as a system of elements arranged in a particular order. In terms of the Saussurean dichotomy, such formal understanding of equivalence clearly lies within the dimension of *langue* in contrast to Catford's functional concept of equivalence and the pragmatic approach advocated by Newmark (1988) and Nida (2003[1964]), which views the issue through the lens of *parole*.

By way of illustration, Retsker (2007:14) provided the following examples of equivalents: geographical names, personal names and scientific terms. However, the assertion that personal names always have constant out-of-context equivalents seems to be debatable since within a cultural context, personal names often carry particular connotations and emotional associations and can also be used metaphorically. Therefore, the claim that proper names are always translated consistently and uniformly appears to be untenable.

The following examples, suggested by Retsker, were also meant to illustrate the category of equivalents: *доктринерство* "doctrinarianism", *повилика* "dodder", *улитка* "dodman", *трутень* "dog-bee", *откидной болт* "dog-bolt", *ошейник* "dog-collar" (Retsker, 2007:14). However, these examples raise serious doubts, since it is not clear on what basis they were included in the category of equivalents. For instance, the dog-collar can be used with reference to the collar worn by a dog as well as to the clerical collar worn by a human (OED, 2022, dog collar n. and adj.). Therefore, depending on the context the word can be translated differently either as *ошейник* "dog collar" or *церковный воротничок* "clerical collar". Thus, it does not seem reasonable to claim that the English term *dog-collar* and the Russian term *ошейник* "dog collar" always belong to the category of equivalents.

Along with equivalence, Retsker (2007:12) distinguished other kinds of relationships existing between the source text and the target text units, such as "alternative and contextual correspondence" and "all kinds of translation transformations". The category of "alternative and contextual correspondence" comprised the words having hyponymic-hypernymic relations with their counterparts in the target language. Among the examples

of alternative correspondence, Retsker (2007:20) included the English word *flying* which can be translated in a variety of ways into Russian depending on the context: *летающие тарелки* "flying saucers", *летательный аппарат* "flying apparatus", *лётная погода* "flying weather" (i.e. weather suitable for airplanes to fly), *Летучий Голландец* "the Flying Dutchman". According to Retsker (2007:24), contextual correspondence described the relationship of functional sameness between the source text and the target text units in a specific context and is illustrated by the English verb *resent* having a variety of matching counterparts in Russian such as *негодовать, возмущаться* and *обижаться.* The difference between alternative and contextual equivalents is not obvious at first glance and appears insignificant for translators. Apparently, this distinction is relevant only from the lexicographic perspective: whereas alternative equivalents are listed under separate senses in dictionaries, contextual correspondences are presented under the same meaning in comma-separated lists.

The third category, entitled "all kinds of translation transformations", stands out as it comprises the cases of translation challenges which should be dealt with on an individual basis. Therefore, this third type of correspondence distinguished by Retsker described the relations between linguistic units resisting translation and implied a context-specific translation solution. However, the suggested taxonomy seems dubious since it syncretises conceptually diverse phenomena lying in different planes. Retsker placed the relations between linguistic units on a par with a translation procedure since translation transformations are in essence techniques performed in the course of translation from one language to another. Moreover, contextual correspondence occurs, *inter alia*, as a result of translation transformations and, therefore, it does not seem reasonable to distinguish translation transformation as a specific type of relation between the source text and the target text items.

Retsker (2007:12) argued that traditional cases of equivalence (understood as formal out-of-context correspondence) essentially deprived translators of any choice, and that the translation solution not to use the equivalent could arise only in exceptional cases and had to be justified by the specific context or situation. Retsker maintained that the key to a good translation was translation adequacy rather than equivalence. In his view, translation adequacy encompassed achievement of the same impact on the target text readership as on the readership of the original text, which could be attained only in cases of functional equality of words and expressions. Retsker's interpretation of adequacy foregrounded the pragmatic function of translation, thus downplaying the role of equivalence. In Retsker's

vision of the potential relations between the source text and the target text items, equivalence was treated as an absolute constant existing irrespective of the variable context.

## 2.4.1.4 Equivalence as a relative phenomenon

A polar opposite view on equivalence was expressed by Ivir (1996:155), who envisioned equivalence as a relative concept that existed exclusively within the context from which it emerged. Ivir argued that consideration of relations between linguistic units out of context was meaningless since it is the context that gives rise to these relations.

This view on the relative nature of equivalence was also shared by House (1997). House, however, maintained that a relation of equivalence between the original text and its translation implied conveyance of three different aspects of meaning from one language to another; namely semantic, pragmatic and textual aspects. According to House, the semantic aspect of equivalence highlighted preservation of the relationship between the sign and the object of the material world it denoted (including abstract concepts). The pragmatic aspect singled out production of an impact on the target text readership, commensurate with the impact on the source text readership. The textual aspect involved reflection of the stylistic characteristics of the original. Thus, in House's view, meaning appears to be a more comprehensive concept and is interpreted more broadly, compared to the traditional understanding of it.

The issue of preservation of meaning in translation was also discussed in Shveitser's (1988:115) theory of translation. However, his analysis illuminated another facet of the problem. Shveitser maintained that meaning was a language category, belonging to the structuralist paradigm, in contrast to sense which he defined as a communicative category. He argued that meanings could vary across languages, whereas sense existed beyond cross-linguistic inconsistencies and could be expressed by distinct linguistic means in different languages. In Shveitser's work, sense appears as an invariant core component of the translation process. Therefore, according to Shveitser, preservation of sense, rather than meaning, is seen as a fundamental criterion of equivalence.

Summing up the discussion above, conceptualisation of the notion of equivalence varies significantly across scholarship and to a large extent depends on the view taken with regard to translation in general. Heterogeneous approaches reflected the diversity of

interpretations of translation itself and inconsistency within definitions of equivalence in particular. Over time, these concepts developed and changed. Chesterman (1997:24) compared this conceptual development of translation theory to numerous swings of the pendulum from the source-oriented to the target-oriented approach.

However, despite diverse approaches to the issue of equivalence, there is a general agreement on translatability as such: notwithstanding structural and cultural inconsistencies hindering translation practice, there are no untranslatable texts, even though the degree of equivalence may vary.

Like lacunarity, equivalence is a loose concept with fuzzy boundaries and is diversely interpreted by various scholars even within the framework of translation studies. It might appear at first sight that the relativity of these two concepts is due to the fact that two linguistic structures are aligned with respect to each other and there is no *tertium comparationis*. There is no absolute value against which lacunarity and equivalence can be measured. Due to the lack thereof, the source language or the source text always acts as the yardstick for comparison. However, in this cross-linguistic overlap different pairs of languages can be encountered; therefore, the yardstick for comparison is always different too.

Conversely, the Interpretive Theory of Translation, developed by Seleskovich and Lederer (discussed in Pym 2010:18-19), states that the yardstick, the third element against which the source text and the target texts should be compared, is the sense. In case of lacunarity the reader is unable to decode to the full extent the sense encapsulated in a lacuna and some amount of information is inevitably lost in translation. Both lacunarity and equivalence are premised on the notion of sense and are linked through it. Equivalence has been an issue of debate within the framework of translation studies just like lacunarity within lacuna-centred perspective (Section 2.2). Ideas about lacunarity and equivalence clearly intertwine, addressing essentially the same phenomenon from different perspectives.

## 2.4.2  Non-equivalence and lexical lacunae

The criterion of non-equivalence, that is the absence of a translation equivalent, is central to definition of lacunae within the framework of translation studies. The French-Canadian translators Vinay and Darbelnet (1995[1958]) were among the first scholars who

approached lexical lacunae from the perspective of translation studies. Vinay and Darbelnet (ibid.:31) pointed out that due to significant linguistic inconsistencies at the structural level, and also due to extralinguistic differences, there could be detected "gaps, or lacunae", i.e., words with no counterparts in the target language which could not be translated without restructuring the whole sentence. In the course of comparative analysis of English and French, they suggested potential ways of eliminating lacunae. Moreover, the first tentative steps were made towards the categorisation of lacunae. Although the issue of classification was not explicitly stated, Vinay and Darbelnet (ibid.:65) distinguished various kinds of lexical gaps and differentiated two fundamental cases of lacunarity: "The signified may not exist or not be acknowledged in one of the two languages; or it may exist in both but is only named independently in one of them".

Therefore, the first type of lacuna distinguished by the scholars revealed the absence of the signified and elsewhere in the text was referred to as "metalinguistic" (ibid.:31). To expound the notion of a metalinguistic lacuna let us gain a greater insight into Vinay and Darbelnet's outlook on the relationship between languages and extralinguistic environment. The scholars argued that to ensure an accurate translation of an utterance, not only the context should be taken into consideration, but also the metalinguistic information about the reality in which an utterance took place (ibid.:12). They argued that there was "a relationship between the outer world such as we perceive it and the linguistic form of our thoughts and our culture" (ibid.:277). Not only did the scholars acknowledge the interplay between our worldview and thinking, but they also linked it to the cultural substrate. Therefore, although Vinay and Darbelnet did not provide a definition of a metalinguistic lacuna, it can be assumed that by this term they understood words denoting objects or phenomena of a foreign culture emerging as a result of extralinguistic divergence. The category of lacunae emerging due to metalinguistic reasons was exemplified with the help of the French term *charcuterie* denoting a shop selling cooked meat products. They argued that this word had such counterparts in British and Canadian English as *delicatessen* or *deli* respectively but had no equivalent in American English since in America *delicatessen* meant a restaurant.

In the context of translation solutions, Vinay and Darbelnet (1995[1958]:31) illustrated metalinguistic lacunae with a few additional examples such as terms denoting new technological processes and terms denoting unfamiliar culture-bound concepts. They argued that borrowing was one of the most straightforward solutions for overcoming lacunae, in particular metalinguistic ones (ibid.). Thus, they pointed out that the Russian

words *roubles*, *datchas* and *apparatchik*; terms from American English such as *dollars* and *party*; and the Mexican Spanish words *tequila* and *tortillas* were often borrowed in translation (ibid.).

The second type of lacunarity distinguished by Vinay and Darbelnet (ibid.:65) revealed the concept existing in both languages but for some reason having no lexicalisation in one of the languages. Vinay and Darbelnet (ibid.) presumed that the lack of lexicalisation could be due to the fact that the speech community did not attribute sufficient importance to the concept and, therefore, it remained non-lexicalised. According to Vinay and Darbelnet (ibid.:66), this category of lacunarity included the following examples: the English words *pattern, privacy, emergency,* and *facilities* with no French single-word equivalents; and the French term *margelle* "edge of a well" with no English single-word equivalent.

Vinay and Darbelnet (ibid.:31) also suggested a taxonomy of translation solutions comprising three direct techniques (i.e. borrowing, calque, literal translation) and four oblique techniques (i.e. transposition, modulation, equivalence and adaptation). However, the identified translation techniques were not distinguished to handle specifically lacunae but could be applied in translation in general to handle various translation challenges.

Vinay and Darbelnet's study is a seminal work within the framework of translation studies that pinpointed the issue of lacunarity as problematic in translation and outlined the first attempt of classification of lexical lacunae. Despite the invaluable contribution of their work and brilliant comparative analysis of languages, the research was devoted to identification of translation units and overview of translation challenges on different levels of translation (e.g. lexical, grammatical, pragmatic), with lacunae being addressed only tangentially.

Barkhudarov's (1975) study (discussed in Section 2.2.1.2.1) along with Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995[1958]) work explicitly addressed the issue of translatability of lexical lacunae and touched upon the strategies for dealing with them in translation. However, despite using the same terminology, the scholars diverged in their understanding of lexical lacunae. While by lacunae Barkhudarov understood non-lexicalised concepts, differentiating them from realia (Section 2.2.1.2.1), Vinay and Darbelnet's view on lexical lacunae was broader, encompassing both realia and non-lexicalised concepts. Moreover, the approach taken by Barkhudarov and Vinay and Darbelnet can be considered outdated nowadays. These studies were premised on the personal insights of the authors, illustrated

either with examples from their personal experience or instances of translation that were conveniently sampled.

## 2.4.2.1 Research into translatability of the untranslatable

There can also be identified a line of more recent research studies which specifically examined the translatability of terms resisting translation and ways of tackling them. However, these studies did not examine lexical lacunae as such, focusing on closely related phenomena or on specific varieties of lacunae (albeit not identifying them as such). These studies can be classified according to the methodological approach they adopted as follows: text-based studies, corpus-based studies and mixed-methods studies.

Text-based studies represent perhaps the most traditional research area investigating solutions for overcoming non-equivalent terms in translation. A case in point is Sentov's (2017) study which analysed how "culture bound elements" (including but not limited to proper names, literary and historical references) were rendered from English into Serbian. The identified solutions were evaluated, and the most effective ones were discussed in further detail. The text-based approach was also used in Kniazkova (2019) who investigated how "realia" were handled in Czech and English translations of the Slovak novel. Kniazkova (ibid.) distinguished two types of realia which can be described as culture-specific referents (e.g. types of houses, furniture, national costumes, food items) and culture-specific idiomatic expressions (e.g. children rhymes, games).

Corpus-based studies investigating translation challenges represent a relatively new endeavour since the corpus approach began to be employed in translation only in the last decade of the twentieth century (Hu, 2016:5). One of the first works in this field is Pearson's (2003:19) corpus-based study which investigated translation solutions for handling "culture specific references" by which she understood, *inter alia*, the proper names of universities and institutions. This is a small-scale project which involved analysis of techniques for translating 102 university names and 32 institute names from English into French. Pearson's classification of the identified translation techniques is not particularly elaborate: it was found that such names could be translated literally, omitted, or translated by alternative means. However, as pointed out by Pearson (ibid.:23), the study intended to showcase the validity of employing a corpus-based approach to the analysis of translation solutions.

Within corpus-based research investigating lexical items resisting translation, there can be identified a cluster of studies using film subtitles as the main source of parallel data. A corpus-based study with focus on "extralinguistic cultural references" (aka ECRs) is presented in Pedersen (2011). Using the Scandinavian Corpus of subtitles, Pedersen (ibid.:44) analysed how ECRs, or as he alternatively referred to them "realia", were tackled in translation. He devised a classification of techniques targeted at overcoming ECRs, which included retention, specification, direct translation, generalisation, substitution, omission and official equivalent. However, within Pedersen's classification there seems to be an inconsistency in the established terminology. There is a separate category called substitutions, whereas according to the nature of transformations generalisation and specification can also be seen as substitutions of a source language item with a hypernym and a hyponym respectively in the target language. According to Pedersen's (2011:78) results, retention was the most popular strategy among translators for handling ECRs. It was also pointed out that retention could be combined with other supplementary techniques: retained terms could be placed in quotation marks or italicised (Pedersen, 2011:159). The use of quotation marks and italics in subtitling practice was also mentioned in Chen (2004:121) and Messerli (2019:536).

Drawing on Pedersen's (2011) taxonomy of translation solutions, Božović (2021) examined how "extralinguistic elements of culture" were translated from English into Montenegrin, retrieving data from the English-Montenegrin parallel corpus of subtitles. By extralinguistic elements of culture Božović (2021:11) understood various types of proper names (including personal names, names of institutions, geographical names), folklore objects and religious items. In line with Pedersen's (2011) results, Božović (2021) identified that the most frequent translation solution for tackling culture-bound terms was retention.

One of the pioneering studies using subtitles was Nedergaard-Larsen's (1993) investigation of translation techniques for handling "extra-lingual culture-specific elements" in Danish subtitles of French films. Although Nedergaard-Larsen did not define her approach as corpus-based, she may be considered a forerunner of the corpus-based studies involving subtitles analysis. She compiled a dataset of parallel data illustrating how extralinguistic culture-specific elements in French films were dealt with in Danish subtitles. Nedergaard-Larsen (1993:211) classified culture-bound items into four categories: geographical (e.g. names of rivers, regions, mountains, streets), historical (e.g.

names of monuments, holidays, wars, historical figures), societal (e.g. names of political institutions and parties, words denoting specific types of transport and accommodation) and cultural (e.g. names of newspapers, magazines, musicians, actors, words denoting educational institutions) items. Following her analysis, she came to the conclusion that culture-bound items could be translated with the help of verbatim transfer, culturally neutral explicitation, paraphrase and adaptation.

The third line of research in the investigation of strategies for translating non-equivalent terms is constituted by the studies employing mixed methodology. For instance, Mur Dueñas (2017) analysed how "culture specific references" were tackled in the Spanish translation of an English novel. The text-based approach, however, was combined with the interview method. The translator of the Spanish version of the novel was interviewed in an attempt to shed light on their decision-making logic. Mur Dueñas (ibid.:73) classified culture-specific references into three categories: "artefacts" (e.g. weights, measures, currencies, brand names, names of famous figures, geographical names, food items); "linguistic expressions" (e.g. idiomatic expressions) and "situations or habits" (e.g. expressions to decode which cultural knowledge is required). The category of "situations or habits" is perhaps the vaguest. It significantly overlaps with other groups: it includes food items (e.g. *fish and chips*) and proper names (e.g. *Ascot, Wimbledon*), which were listed in other categories. Having analysed the instances of translation of culture-specific references, Mur Dueñas identified six techniques for tackling them: target language cultural cognate, source language cultural and linguistic borrowing, source language cultural borrowing accompanied by explanation, replacement of source language cultural reference by explanation, target language cultural reference suppression, target language cultural reference literal translation.

A mixed methodology was also used by Rahimkhani and Salmani (2013) in their investigation of strategies for tackling "lexical gaps". However, by lexical gaps they understood culture-specific allusions. Using the text-based method, they analysed the techniques used to render Qur'anic allusions in English translations of Persian poetry. The text-based strand was complemented by a survey aimed at the analysis of the perception of the translated text by native English speakers. According to their findings, 87.5% of the participants reported that the meaning of the translated allusions was not fully clear.

Leppihalme (1997) also employed a mixed methodology combining text-based and experimental approaches, focusing on translation of allusions. First, she analysed

translations of allusions from English into Finnish in literary texts and then examined interviews with professional translators who carried out the analysed translations. The identified translation strategies were classified accordingly, with techniques requiring the least number of transformations being identified as the most popular solutions for tackling allusions. In particular, preservation of the source text item and literal translation were established as the most frequent strategies for translating proper names and key-phrases containing no proper names respectively (Leppihalme, 1997:102).

This brief overview is intended to highlight the general directions in the investigation of translation solutions for handling non-equivalent terms. As can be seen from the discussion above, these studies did not address lexical lacunae as such, focusing either on closely related phenomena or on specific dimensions of lacunarity. Some researchers used similar nomenclature: "culture bound elements" (Sentov, 2017), "culture specific references" (Mur Dueñas, 2017; Pearson, 2003), "extralinguistic cultural references" (Pedersen, 2011), "extralinguistic elements of culture" (Božović, 2021) and "extra-lingual culture-specific elements" (Nedergaard-Larsen, 1993). However, the criteria for what constituted culture-specific terms varied from study to study. Despite discernible parallelism their research objectives diverged. Therefore, the discussion of the translation solutions identified in the above-mentioned studies is beyond the scope of this literature review.

Thus far, lacuna-centred (Section 2.2), cognition-centred (Section 2.3) and equivalence-centred (Section 2.4) perspectives on lexical lacunae have been overviewed. The section that follows is devoted to loanword-centred research that is also relevant to the discussion of lacunarity.

## 2.5 Loanword-centred perspective

Lexical gaps are rarely discussed in the context of borrowings (with a few exceptions e.g. Backus, 2014:24; Daulton, 2004:286). Loanword-centred approaches addressed the issue of lacunarity only tangentially since lexical gaps tend to be mentioned exclusively with reference to the communicative need that occurred in the speech community to fill the existing gap.

In fact, research into loanwords is an extensive independent area with clearly delineated research foci. The following research endeavours can be distinguished within a loanword-centred perspective: investigation of the borrowing process seen through the prism of

language contact (e.g. Bauer, 2019); theoretical elaborations on the phenomenon itself and its classification (e.g. Greavu, 2013; Haugen, 1950); assimilation of borrowed terms in the receiving language (e.g. on phonetic nativisation see Lee and Hlungwani, 2020; on semantic nativisation see Winter-Froemel, 2014; on grammatical nativisation see Rothe, 2014); correlation between borrowing and linguistic interference (e.g. Myers-Scotton, 1992) and attitudes towards loanwords (e.g. Hassall et al., 2008; Ruediger, 2018).

Despite increased academic interest in this field, lexical gaps have not received due attention in the context of borrowings. While assimilation of borrowed terms in the receiving language is one of the traditional areas of inquiry, researchers tend to focus exclusively on the changes the loanwords undergo as a result of borrowing, overlooking the processes that occur to lexical lacunae. However, it would seem coherent to analyse what happens to a lacuna when a foreign term is borrowed to fill it, evaluate the extent to which a lacuna becomes eliminated in the process of borrowing and explore the paths along which a lacuna can be filled. It would seem important to discuss lexical lacunae and loanwords in conjunction with each other since loanwords are a logical extension of lexical lacunae. Approached from a diachronic perspective, borrowings could be seen as filled lacunae. In contrast to synchronically existing lexical gaps, the analysis of which typically first includes a laborious detection process, diachronic lexical gaps are readily available for investigation. For example, the OED advanced search tool allows for the English words to be filtered on the basis of language of origin. Therefore, the list of borrowings from a particular language (aka diachronic lacunae) can be easily generated, offering a wealth of material for research. Such symbiosis linking lacunarity and the borrowing process would shed light on the trajectories along which lexical lacunae evolve.

It should be acknowledged that within the loanword perspective, a traditional distinction is made between the terms borrowed to fill lexical gaps and the terms borrowed in addition to the synonymous native words (as discussed in Van Meurs, Hornikx and Bossenbroek, 2013:172). This thesis, however, adopts a broader view on lexical lacunarity, considering that lacunae may reveal connotative, nominative or denotative divergence of signs (Chapter 1.1). Connotative lacunarity occurs when there is connotative, stylistic, symbolic or associative non-equivalence despite the existence of the formal counterpart. From this angle, the borrowed terms that are synonymous with the existing native terms can qualify as filling connotative gaps. Therefore, a broader understanding of lexical lacunae allows for all borrowed terms to be treated as filling lacunae to even out a particular type of non-equivalence.

Zenner and Kristiansen (2014:6) advocated the need for the onomasiological approach to research into loanwords which would allow the investigation of the semantically-related concepts in the recipient language. They argued that it would help delineate a theoretical framework for the distinction of different types of borrowings (e.g. loanwords for naming new concepts vs. loanwords for duplicating already existing concepts) as well as forecast the probability of assimilation of the loanword taking into account potential alternatives in the recipient language (Zenner and Kristiansen, 2014:7). However, such a concept-centred approach would also enable a better understanding of the reasons for filling lexical lacunae.

Summing up the above, there would seem to be a need to bring together two aspects: viewing loanwords as diachronic lacunae to examine pathways along which lexical gaps can evolve and incorporating an onomasiological approach to the investigation of diachronic lacunae to get an insight into the reasons for filling lexical gaps.

## 2.6   Research gap

As evidenced by this literature review, lexical lacunae have attracted significant academic interest from different fields. Surveying four distinct perspectives on lexical lacunae, this chapter has attempted to highlight the remaining controversies and gaps in knowledge that will be addressed in this study.

Within the lacuna-centred perspective (Section 2.2), diverse and ambiguous criteria were selected for defining lexical lacunae, indicating a need for a theoretical refinement of the concept of lacunarity. The overview of the cognition-centred studies (Section 2.3) has revealed that the issue of formation of lexical lacunae has received insufficient attention. Addressing lacunae from the equivalence-centred perspective (Section 2.4), it has become clear that there is a need for a data-driven study investigating strategies for tackling lexical lacunae in translation. The studies that have explicitly addressed the issue of translatability of lexical lacunae (Section 2.4.2) employed an inconsistent approach to data retrieval, which does not meet the modern requirements for systematic and unbiased sampling. Conversely, more recent research into translation of non-equivalent lexis (Section 2.4.2.1) has tended to focus on specific manifestations of lexical lacunae including cultural references, realia and allusions. This has resulted in sketchy knowledge about the strategies for dealing with elements resisting translation. Finally, the analysis of the loanword-

centred perspective (Section 2.5) has demonstrated the appropriateness of the diachronic approach to lexical lacunae and importance of investigating paths along which they can be filled.

To sum up, the following research gaps have been identified: (1) ambiguity in the interpretation of lexical lacunae; (2) paucity of empirical data on how cross-linguistic lexical lacunae emerge and evolve and (3) lack of data-driven research into translation strategies for dealing with lexical lacunae.

# 3  Methodology

## 3.0  Chapter overview

This chapter, organised around the three main research strands, presents a detailed discussion of the methodology, explaining how the project will achieve the objectives at each stage. The beginning of this chapter outlines the project design. Then, the chapter proceeds to discuss the three main strands of the study one by one. Section 3.2 is devoted to the theoretical strand addressing the development of the lacuna model and its verification. Section 3.3 is dedicated to the lexicographic analysis of lexical lacunae, whereas Section 3.4 deals with the corpus-based investigation of their translation solutions.

## 3.1  Research design

This thesis employs methodological triangulation, drawing upon three interrelated research strands, as mentioned in Chapter 1.0. The overarching objective of this study is to unravel how lexical lacunae can be handled in a cross-linguistic context. For this purpose, the corpus strand investigates the strategies for translating English-specific lexemes into Russian and Spanish. Therefore, drawing upon a descriptive approach to translation, the corpus research strand intends to analyse how lexical lacunae are dealt with in subtitling practice.

However, before undertaking the corpus analysis of the translation solutions for tackling lacunae, a theoretical framework of lexical lacunarity should be clearly redefined. As mentioned in Chapter 2.6, in previous research studies, criteria for the definition of lexical lacunae were established without due cohesion. The absence of a universal definitional principle resulted in considerable terminological vagueness. The issue of the definition of a lexical lacuna is addressed in the theoretical strand of research that aims to provide a deeper understanding of lexical lacunarity. In line with traditions of the lacuna-oriented studies, this study places primary focus on lexical lacunae themselves and seeks to offer a nuanced interpretation of the phenomenon.

The emergence and evolution of lexical discrepancies are approached in the lexicographic strand of the study, which explores the lifecycle of a lexical lacuna. Various forms of realisation of lexical lacunae (actual lacunae vs. filled lacunae) are examined from various standpoints including etymology, grammar, semantics and semiotics.

The combination of the theoretical, lexicographic and corpus-based approaches allows a more comprehensive analysis of lexical lacunae. Methodological triangulation provides an opportunity to envisage lexical lacunae not only as theoretical abstractions, but also as living and developing phenomena showcasing their practical implications in the cross-linguistic context. A mixed methodology also enhances objectivisation of research findings. Integrating the corpus strand makes it possible to cross-validate lacunarity of the lexemes identified as lexical gaps in the theoretical strand of research. Finally, integrating three strands allows the combination of deductive and inductive reasoning for a more holistic understanding of the research object. While the theoretical strand uses data to test the working hypothesis (embracing deductive strategy), the lexicographic and corpus strands draw findings out of data (embracing inductive strategy).

## 3.2   Theoretical strand

As mentioned above, the theoretical strand seeks to circumscribe the notion of a lexical lacuna, suggesting a nuanced interpretation of lacunarity from a semiotic perspective. The literature review surveyed various understandings of a lexical lacuna in scholarship, laying bare its multifaceted nature. A triadic model, outlined in Chapter 1.1, brings together its various dimensions as highlighted in previous studies. This thesis adopts a working hypothesis, according to which, a lexical lacuna is a hiatus in one of the lexical systems manifesting itself in the contrastive analysis of two languages due to connotative, denotative or nominative incongruence of the sign.

The functionality of the theoretical model requires empirical verification against actual data. The criteria for assessment of the model in this study are defined as follows. The feasibility of grouping data into three categories (connotative, denotative and nominative) envisaged by the model should be taken as evidence of the model's robustness. Conversely, a failure to classify data into the hypothesised categories should be regarded as the model's inadequacy.

Consequently, the issue of methodology for data collection arises, which is a crucial aspect of research into lacunarity and one of the main research hurdles. Chapter 2.2.2 overviewed the existing procedures for the detection of lexical lacunae and pointed out their limitations, with a major part of the surveyed methods being of serendipitous character. Therefore, there seems a need for a revision of the currently available techniques. The

methodology for the retrieval of lacunar lexemes set out in the following subsection is a further contribution to the field since it offers a partly innovative approach to dictionary-based lacunae detection.

The data for this study comes from three languages, namely English, Spanish and Russian, belonging to different language groups: Germanic, Romance and East Slavic respectively. Research focuses on two language pairs with the following directionality: English-Russian and English-Spanish. The sequence of data collection is defined as follows: first lexical lacunae are identified in Russian and then in Spanish. In other words, as the English lexeme is identified as a lexical lacuna in Russian, its lacunarity is immediately assessed against the English-Spanish language combination. Thus, the datasets are not expected to differ widely. This approach has been selected for two reasons. Firstly, priority is given to the English-Russian language pair due to the relatively greater typological proximity of English and Spanish than English and Russian. [8] Therefore, the English-Russian combination can be assumed to be a richer source of lexical lacunae than the English Spanish language pair. [9] Secondly, the researcher's cultural and linguistic background cannot be ignored. [10]

## 3.2.1 Dictionary-based detection of lacunae

Drawing upon the dictionary-based procedure for detecting lexical gaps widely used by the Voronezh Psycholinguistic Research Group (Popova and Sternin, 2001:39), mentioned in Chapter 2.2.2.2.2, this work offers a revised approach for the retrieval of lacunar items involving the use of modern online dictionaries. The original dictionary-based method is premised on the manual sampling of data from printed bilingual dictionaries. Adherents of this approach argue that unavailability of direct translation equivalents manifesting itself, for instance, in lengthy dictionary definitions signposts lacunarity. However, this approach is inherently biased since it is bound to a lexicographer's linguistic outlook. Moreover, the

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[8] This assumption is supported by the fact that there are 1845 Spanish borrowings in English compared to only 406 Russian borrowings, as evidenced by the OED as of September 2021. This disproportion in the number of loanwords of Spanish and Russian origin suggests a closer cultural interference between Spanish/Latin American and English speech communities than that of English and Russian lingua-cultural groups. Besides, given the strong influence of French on Middle English, English adopted a significant number of French words. Since both French and Spanish belong to the Romance language family, it can be assumed that a large proportion of the adopted French words denoted concepts of shared origin with Spanish.

[9] Despite the established sampling sequence, there was, however, identified a handful of English lexemes that turned out to be lacunae in Spanish but not in Russian.

[10] Being a native speaker of Russian, I instinctively tend to contrast any language with my mother tongue in the first place. Although I was careful to present a balanced analysis of the language pairs and to control for personal bias throughout this thesis, this is perhaps an example of how a researcher's country of origin and native language subconsciously motivates the selection of the sequence in which lexical lacunae are detected.

transition of the lexicographic sources to online platforms with sophisticated search engines has created new opportunities for the detection of language-specific lexemes.

In this study, the Oxford English Dictionary Online (2022), hereinafter the OED, is a principal source for the retrieval of English-specific lexemes that can be identified as lexical lacunae in Russian and Spanish. The OED provides advanced search tools which allow for a more refined search of the whole dictionary text to be carried out according to the selected parameters. The search can also be restricted to certain areas of dictionary text, enabling a researcher to retrieve dictionary entries containing the keywords only in the headword, definition or quotation text, for instance.

### 3.2.1.1 Search by keyword

One of the most productive techniques for the detection of British English-specific lexemes that can be seen as lexical lacunae in other languages can be carried out by performing a search for dictionary entries containing the word "British" in the definition. It should be clearly understood that the search does not automatically return a ready-to-use list of lexemes not found in other languages. It only sorts out the dictionary entries by the selected keyword (in our case "British"), among which lacunar items can be potentially found after screening each headword for direct equivalents in the target language. Therefore, there is a significant amount of noisy and irrelevant data, which should be filtered manually on a case-by-case basis.

The generated list comprises both lexemes with a "British" label (thus differentiating British English from other varieties of English) and lexemes simply containing "British" in the text of the definition. However, this distinction is not relevant for the lacuna-detection process since lacunar items can be identified in both categories.

Before proceeding with the identification of lexical lacunae, it may seem reasonable to sort the entries by frequency (from the highest to the lowest) to facilitate retrieval of corpus evidence in the following research stage. Since lacunar items largely represent a peripheral layer of lexis (Chapter 4.1), their marginality significantly complicates corpus-based analysis, sometimes making it impossible to collect sufficient corpus data to illustrate translation of certain lacunar lexemes. Therefore, it is sensible to start the data collection with higher frequency items.

This study employs the following criterion for the detection of lacunar lexemes: items are identified as lacunar if they have no direct one-to-one equivalents in the target language (monolexemic equivalent counterparts in the case of one-word terms). Based on linguistic knowledge and expertise, the researcher should be able to detect potential lexical gaps, i.e., the terms denoting concepts that are likely to be absent in the target language and, as a result, resisting monolexemic translation. This stage of research, however, is fully subjective and relies on the researcher's language skills and linguistic intuition and, therefore, requires further verification (discussed in further detail in Section 3.2.3).

Particular importance has been attributed to monolexemic translation since the formation of a well-known dichotomy between free and literal translation, with faithfulness to the original being understood as one-to-one correspondence between the source and target text items (see Chapter 2.4.1). Therefore, the availability of a one-to-one equivalent in the target language is traditionally believed to determine translatability of the source text item (e.g. Newmark, 1988:17).

The main criterion adopted by this study for the selection of potential lacunar items is, therefore, the availability of direct equivalents, i.e. the feasibility of their one-to-one transference to the target language. This procedure should be particularly familiar to practising translators who, dealing with mapping from one linguistic system into another on a regular basis, are essentially involved in a constant search for direct equivalents.

In the results list, beneath each entry there is a preview of the corresponding extract from the dictionary article containing the "British" keyword. While this preview may be sufficient to immediately discard some data after the collation of the headword with its direct equivalent in the target language, some entries are worth viewing in full since they may contain lacunar lemmas. For instance, among other search results there is an entry *pillar box,* containing a lemma *pillar-box red,* defined as "a bright red colour, of the shade used on **British** pillar boxes" (OED, 2022, pillar box n., sense 2; boldface added). This definition is indicative of a culture-specific character of the term and, therefore, it can be identified as potentially lacunar.

The datasets are intended to include different types of lacunar items, irrespective of whether they are monolexemic items or compounds. This is because both can be seen as lexical gaps, and they are, therefore, treated alongside each other in the analysis. Besides, while the data collection is largely targeted at open-class words (except for the interjection

*ka-ching* identified as a lacuna in both Russian and Spanish), it is not limited to any particular part of speech. In translation practice, the source text units should be rendered into the target language regardless of their membership in formal linguistic categories. Therefore, this study aims to investigate heterogeneous data including but not limited to metaphors and proper names.

The keyword search, however, is not carried out exclusively by the modifier "British". It is also conducted on such terms as "connotation", "symbol", "figurative", and "extended use". These searches yield results that are particularly useful for the detection of connotative lacunae.

## 3.2.1.2 Search by date of entry

Another type of parametric search employed in this study to identify lexical gaps is the search by date of entry. This search technique enables the identification of lexical lacunae among words of modern coinage, many of which prove to be non-existent in other languages. Representing a layer of lexis constituted by recently formed words, neologisms can be seen as a valuable source of data.

The date of entry can be set manually by entering the desired time range in the "date of entry" box. This study restricts the search to the interval of the last thirty years since this produces a significant amount of data, but at the same time allows investigation of the concepts formed relatively recently.

Once the list of dictionary entries has been generated and arranged by frequency (from highest to lowest), potential lacunar items can be identified following the above-mentioned principle of one-to-one translatability.

## 3.2.1.3 Search by type of usage

Finally, dictionary entries can be filtered by "allusive usage". This method is particularly useful for the detection of connotative lexical gaps as it allows the investigation of implicit senses which often turn out to be lacunar in a cross-linguistic context. This search method can be carried out by entering "allusive" in the "usage" box.

### 3.2.2  Thesaurus-based detection of lacunae

Since data paucity is a crucial issue for research into lacunarity, this study employs an additional method for the detection of lexical lacunae, namely analysis of semantic domains. This method is a by-product of the lexicographic research strand, in which the HTE (2$^{nd}$ edn., v. 5.0) is used as the main source of information about the semantic neighbourhood of the identified lacunar items. During the analysis of semantic domains containing lacunar lexemes, additional lacunar items can be identified among their hypernyms, synonyms and hyponyms. This lacuna-detection method was not part of the original research design. However, in the course of the study, it became clear that it could be as productive as the parametric dictionary search. Therefore, this technique was used to enrich the datasets and, thus, to expand the illustrative framework of the study.[11]

### 3.2.3  Two-step verification of lacunarity

Since the lacuna-detection stage of research is entirely subjective, being confined to a researcher's linguistic knowledge and intuition, the retrieved potential lacunar items require further verification. To objectivise data, this study employs a two-step verification of lacunarity: first, with the help of lexicographic sources (aka bilingual dictionaries) and then with the help of corpora.

### 3.2.3.1 Verification by bilingual dictionaries

For the verification phase of the study, the following lexicographic sources are used:

- For the English-Russian language combination: Multitran dictionary (n.d.), a multilingual online editable dictionary; ABBYY Lingvo Live (n.d.), a multilingual online dictionary.

- For the English-Spanish language combination: Free Spanish Dictionary (2003-2022), a multilingual online dictionary; SpanishDict (n.d.), an English-Spanish online dictionary; Cambridge Dictionary (2022), an English-Spanish online dictionary.

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[11] In addition to the dictionary and thesaurus-based methods for the detection of lacunae, a handful of lacunar items was identified during the retrieval of corpus data. These lacunar items were detected by chance during the analysis of translation instances.

For instance, if no matches are found for a potential lacunar item in the bilingual dictionaries, it can be considered a lexical lacuna in the target language and can be subjected to a further step of verification of its lacunarity (i.e. retrieval of corpus data). Sometimes a lacunar item is translated synonymically: instead of a direct equivalent, the dictionary entry comprises a list of functional equivalents each of which is very close to the original meaning of the source language term without reflecting it to the full extent. Moreover, if a lacunar item is translated descriptively or even transliterated, this can also be taken as evidence of its lacunarity. However, in the case of transliteration, a question arises whether a lexical lacuna has become definitely and unconditionally filled over time, with a borrowed concept being well-entrenched in the target language community, or if it is on its way to becoming filled, with a borrowed concept potentially being unfamiliar to the general target audience. Corpus-based analysis can shed light on the term's usage and clarify the extent of lacunarity of the concept.

To sum up the above, to assess the lacunarity of the identified items, the study adopts the following criteria:

- Absence of translation equivalent
- Absence of one-to-one counterpart and, hence, availability of a number of functional equivalents
- Lengthy descriptive definition in dictionary
- Loan-word translation in dictionary

## 3.2.3.2 Verification by corpus evidence

Integration of the corpus approach to the verification of lacunarity of a term makes it possible to depart from the introspective analysis limited by the researcher's personal knowledge of the different languages, which is so common in the lacuna-oriented studies, and to rely on the empirical data. Besides, lexical lacunae are knowledge-dependent phenomena meaning that a particular lacunar term may be familiar to an individual but incomprehensible to a larger audience. In this regard, corpus evidence is crucial as it allows for objective inferences about the average usage of the term to be drawn based on the frequency of its occurrence in the corpus. For instance, if bilingual dictionaries translate a source text item with the help of borrowing, the corpus search can be performed to check whether the borrowing indeed appears to be a stable equivalent in the target language (in which case it can be assumed that a lacuna has been filled) or if it is only

occasionally used, with alternative strategies being employed in most cases (in which case it can be assumed that a lacuna is on its way to being filled). To investigate the degree of entrenchment of various concepts in the speech communities, monolingual corpora are used such as the British National Corpus (Davies, 2014), hereinafter BNC; Corpus del Español del Siglo XXI (CORPES XXI, v. 0.94) and the Russian National Corpus (2003-2022). All of these are large corpora: the BNC contains one hundred million words; CORPES XXI incorporates over three hundred and twelve million words; the Russian National Corpus includes over three hundred million words.

Verification of the lacunarity of a term with the help of parallel corpora is also crucially important for practical reasons. There should be sufficient corpus evidence (in our case instances of translation of lacunar items) to investigate translation strategies for tackling lexical lacunae at the subsequent stage of this research. For this purpose, the occurrences are tallied, and if their number is less than five, then the lacunar item is discarded. Therefore, the availability of corpus data constitutes an additional selective filter for the inclusion of the lacunar lexemes into the final datasets. For the verification of lacunarity, this study uses parallel corpora consisting of film subtitles and their Russian and Spanish translations. The main sources of corpus data are web-based parallel concordances which are discussed in further detail in Section 3.4, devoted specifically to the corpus strand of research.

The lacunarity is verified by corpus searches on a potentially lacunar item. The instances of translation of the item are analysed to identify whether it has a stable direct equivalent in the target language or not. A term can be considered lacunar if it is translated in a variety of ways using diverse techniques. Unavailability of a stable equivalent is a characteristic feature of lacunar items. Furthermore, such translation solutions as transliteration/preservation of the source text item and omission, as well as instances of incorrect translation, are indicative of translation challenges and usually signal lacunarity.

A researcher should be able to evaluate the equivalence of the source text item and its counterpart in the target language to identify whether any amount of contextually relevant information becomes lost in the process of "transcoding". However, this should be done relying not only on linguistic expertise but also drawing on the cultural knowledge of the speech communities. For instance, the compound *letterbox,* despite having stable direct equivalents in Russian and Spanish (*почтовый ящик* and *buzón* respectively), identified as such in both dictionary- and corpus-based verification stages, can still be considered a

lexical lacuna due to the referential differences between the British letterboxes representing an aperture in the front door and Spanish and Russian typically wall-mounted mailboxes. At first sight, this extralinguistic discrepancy may seem insignificant as it is barely discernible: the corpus analysis revealed that it manifests itself only in the use of a specific preposition in English. In English sentences, the preposition *through* is a frequent collocation of the compound *letterbox,* with this referential idiosyncrasy of British letterboxes being encoded grammatically. While in most cross-linguistic situations this inconsistency between the mental representations of the speakers, construed on the basis of the prototypical letterboxes, may pass unnoticed, it may prove relevant for the translation of film subtitles, where the textual information (in this case, imprecise translation of the lacunar item not reflecting referential particularities of the lexical item) can clash with the visual content on the screen (depicting a traditional British letterbox). Therefore, although lexicographic sources and parallel corpora are important benchmarks against which lacunarity can be verified, the researcher's extralinguistic expert knowledge is also essential in the detection of lexical lacunae.

## 3.3   Lexicographic strand

The lexicographic strand of research explores the lifecycle of a lexical lacuna, examining how culture-bound lexemes occur and develop over time. Therefore, there are two main aspects of investigation: the formation of language-specific lexicalisation patterns and the evolutionary pathways of lexical lacunae, with each being addressed in a separate sub-strand.

The first sub-strand is devoted to the mechanisms of emergence of lacunar items. It examines actual lacunae understood as synchronic phenomena since they are detected at the time of this study. The second sub-strand focuses on filled lacunae which are understood as diachronic phenomena since they were once lexical lacunae which manifested themselves at a certain point in time and, therefore, became filled through borrowing. It explores the trajectories along which lexical lacunae develop and the metamorphoses that take place during their evolution.

Data analysis involves identifying general patterns from a number of perspectives including semiotic, etymological, semantic and grammatical across distinct sets of data since systematic regularities can reveal links between different forms of realisation of

lexical lacunae and allow inferences to be made about how lexical lacunae emerge and evolve.


## 3.3.1 Types of data and data organisation

The lexicographic research strand involves analysis of different sets of data:


Synchronic data, aka actual lacunae:

1. Currently existing English lexical gaps in Russian (195 lexemes)
   (Electronic Appendix:14 Lacunae in RUS)
2. Currently existing English lexical gaps in Spanish (141 lexemes)
   (Electronic Appendix:15 Lacunae in SPA)


Diachronic data, aka filled lacunae:

3. Russian borrowings in English (401 lexemes)
   (Electronic Appendix:10 RUS borrowings)
4. Spanish borrowings in English (1825 lexemes)
   (Electronic Appendix:12 SPA borrowings)


Both synchronic and diachronic data are retrieved from the OED, with English being the focal point of analysis.

Actual lacunae are detected with the help of the procedure outlined in the theoretical strand of this study (Sections 3.2.1- 3.2.3.2). Diachronic data is collected in a similar fashion by exploiting the OED advanced search tool which, among other things, allows dictionary entries to be filtered by the language of origin. Thus, the lists of Russian and Spanish borrowings are retrieved from the OED and are included in the corresponding datasets, with data being organised in tabular form in Excel format. The datasets form part of the Electronic Appendix.

The compiled datasets are arranged semantically on the basis of the HTE (2nd edn., v. 5.0). Thus, for all the lexical items that are included in the synchronic and diachronic datasets, the corresponding HTE reference numbers are indicated along with the names of categories on level three of the semantic hierarchy within which they are nested (Section 3.3.3).

### 3.3.2  Semiotic perspective

Semiotic analysis implies investigation of lexical items in terms of their relationship with the referents of the material world they denote and the conceptual meaning they encode. This type of analysis is employed in the first sub-strand of research to unravel what becomes the driving force for formation of language-specific concepts.

Semiotic analysis is essentially related to the classification of lacunar items according to the lacuna model. Lexical lacunae are classified into different categories depending on what type of divergence can be identified, namely denotative, nominative or connotative, with the relevant information being entered in the "Type of lacuna" column. Denotative lacunae, for example, stem from referential discrepancies, and by calculating the proportion of denotative lacunae (emerging due to the absence of a corresponding referent in the target speech community), it is possible to evaluate the impact of extralinguistic environment on formation of language-specific lexicalisation patterns.

### 3.3.3  Semantic perspective

A semantic perspective is incorporated into the lexicographic strand to explore how meaning is encoded in lacunar lexemes and to what extent mental representations diverge across speech communities. Semantic analysis, involving establishing the place of lacunar items in the semantic hierarchy, is expected to give a better understanding of the language-specific conceptualisation principles, thus contributing to the first research sub-strand devoted to the emergence of lexical lacunarity. Investigation of the categorisation levels of lacunar items as well as their hypernymic and hyponymic relationships should yield insights into the categorisation patterns idiosyncratic to speech communities and the nature of transformations that occur on the level of meaning when lexical lacunae become filled.

As mentioned in Section 3.2.2, this study draws upon the HTE (2nd edn., v. 5.0) as the primary source of information about the semantic environment of lacunar items. The HTE is a record of English vocabulary where concepts are organised semantically, forming a multi-layered hierarchical structure. In terms of the historical range of material coverage and granularity of the classification, the HTE represents a unique lexicographic resource that allows a systematic, consistent and objective approach towards the analysis of such a relative category of lexis as lacunae. The HTE provides a hierarchical organisation of vocabulary where the most general categories contain the more specific ones. At the root

level of categorisation, there are three main semantic divisions: The World, The Mind and Society, within which the more specific subcategories are encapsulated. Each lexeme contained in the HTE is assigned a unique reference number to allow its immediate identification in a highly ramified conceptual network.

Relying on the HTE conceptual classification, the lexical items in four compiled datasets (see Section 3.3.1) are broken down into semantic domains, with the data being arranged according to level three of the hierarchy. The third level of the semantic framework is selected for the classification as it most closely corresponds to the basic level of categorisation. Therefore, four different datasets are arranged semantically, and the results are then contrasted. The results of the semantic analysis are presented in Chapter 5 in tabular form. However, in addition to the basic-level breakdown, the classification is also carried out at the highest level of the semantic hierarchy, that is, according to three superordinate categories, namely The World, The Mind and Society. The thesaurus-based approach is one of the most efficient ways to gain an understanding of the distribution of synchronic and diachronic lacunae across semantic domains and to explore the most fertile areas for cross-linguistic divergences as well as the areas most prone to lexical borrowing.

While the Russian and Spanish borrowings are constituted by completely different sets of lexemes, the lexical items in the datasets of currently existing English lexical gaps in Spanish and currently existing English lexical gaps in Russian are expected to recur. Therefore, the similarity in the distribution of lexemes across semantic domains between the latter two datasets can be expected from the outset. What is important, however, is to identify whether there is any general pattern in the semantic distribution of lacunar items across all four datasets.

Classification of lexemes according to the semantic domains is, however, not as straightforward as it may seem at first glance since it is compounded by several factors. Firstly, some lexemes contained in the OED are not found in the HTE. For instance, *churro,* a borrowing from Spanish (meaning a particular type of sweet dish), is listed in the OED but is not included in the HTE. The OED provides a semantic classification of the lexeme according to the version of the Historical Thesaurus which is linked directly to the

OED (the OED HT).[12] Such lexical items are classified relying on the semantic taxonomy of the OED HT and flagged in the datasets as "as in the OED HT".

However, there are also lexemes such as *soft play,* which are neither included in the HTE nor contained in the OED HT. Such lexemes are marked as "not included" and arranged semantically following the main principles underlying the HTE classification as well as with a reliance on the classification of the immediate English equivalents (in case of Russian and Spanish borrowings) and nearest synonyms (in case of English lacunae).

Secondly, words tend to have multiple related meanings, and a question arises as to which sense should be included in the semantic classification. To avoid double-counting, it was, therefore, decided that the polysemous diachronic data should be classified according to the first meaning, which was originally lacunar. For instance, the Russian borrowing *apparatchik* belongs to two different categories of the HTE. It appears in the category 03.04.06.17.03.01|12.04.01n. *Society > Authority > 03.04.06 n. Rule/government > A party > communist party > party machine of > member of* (with first recorded use in 1941) as well as in the category 03.04.07.01|21 n. *Society > Authority > Office > 03.04.07.01 n. Holder of office | 21 functionary/one who officiates* (with first recorded use in 1973). Since the term *apparatchik* was initially borrowed into English to denote members of the Soviet communist party and subsequently fill in the lexical gap, the lexeme is recorded according to the earliest attestation and treated as contained in the semantic category *Rule/government.*

Conversely, the polysemous synchronic data is classified pursuant to the currently lacunar meaning. By way of illustration, the term *lemming,* identified as a currently existing lexical gap in Spanish, is contained in two categories, namely 01.05.19.05.08.02|03.02 n. *The world > Animals > Mammals > Group Unguiculata/clawed mammal > Order Rodentia/rodent > 01.05.19.05.08.02 n. Superfamily Myomorpha (mouse/rat/vole/hamster) | 03 family Microtidae/member of > 03.02 genus Lemmus/lemming* (with first recorded use in 1607) and 01.15.18.01|06.01 adj. *The world > Action/operation > Adversity >*

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[12] Once the revision of the OED for the third edition (which was expected to be largely a web-based dictionary) started, the work involving conversion of the print edition of the Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary to the electronic format began (Dallachy, 2021). Both the University of Glasgow and the OED teams started developing online platforms for a revised digital version of the Historical Thesaurus (ibid.). As a result, there are two different interfaces through which the Historical Thesaurus can now be accessed: the one available on the University of Glasgow website (https://ht.ac.uk/) and the one directly linked to the OED (www.oed.com/thesaurus). Due to the ongoing updates, there are some misalignments between the HT and the OED HT.

*01.15.18.01 adj. Marked/attended by misfortune | 06 doomed to misfortune > 06.01 rushing headlong to disaster* (with first recorded use in 1969). While the first sense cannot be considered lacunar in Spanish due to existing counterparts *el lemming/el lemino* (SpanishDict, n.d.), the connotative meaning associated with the rush towards a catastrophe does appear to be lacunar in Spanish. Thus, the term is classified according to the currently lacunar sense and treated as included in the semantic category *Adversity*.

Finally, there are monosemous lexemes which are contained in several categories of the HTE. For instance, *sporran,* which is identified as a lexical gap in Russian, is contained in the following two categories: 01.08.02.02.14|03 n. *The world > Textiles and clothing > Clothing > Types/styles of clothing > 01.08.02.02.14 n. Bag/pouch worn on person | 03 sporran* and 03.12.15.10.04 n. *Society > Trade and finance > Money > Place for keeping money > 03.12.15.10.04 n. Money-bag/-purse/-belt, etc.,* with the dates of attestation for both senses being identical (1818-). Such lexemes are recorded in the datasets as contained in both categories. However*,* such cases are sporadic and marked appropriately in the datasets.

Another aspect of semantic analysis involves identification of the categorisation levels, namely "superordinate", "basic" and "subordinate". The HTE does not specify to which level each lexeme belongs. Therefore, in this study, the highest level of the hierarchy is taken as a superordinate, whereas the lowest level is considered subordinate. The basic level, in turn, is treated as a floating level comprising the categories located in between. Thus, for each lexical item, the categorisation level is identified relying on the HTE and entered in the "Categorisation level in English" column. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, this is expected to cast light on the language-specific categorisation patterns.

Contrasting the categorisation levels between the borrowed terms adopted into English and their counterparts in the donor languages (i.e. Spanish and Russian) may reveal the metamorphoses that occur in the lifecycle of lexical lacunae. However, due to the unavailability of Spanish and Russian thesauri equivalent in size and scope to the HTE, it is not feasible to carry out a systematic comparison of the categorisation levels. However, it is possible to pinpoint certain patterns by comparing the definitions provided in the OED and Spanish and Russian explanatory dictionaries. For this purpose, the following resources are used: Diccionario de la lengua Española de la Real Academia Española (2022), hereinafter DLE RAE, and encyclopaedic portal Academic (2000-2021), on the

basis of which the categorisation levels are identified in the donor language. Where relevant, the divergence is recorded in the datasets.

### 3.3.4  Etymological perspective

Within the first sub-strand of research, the synchronic data is analysed from an etymological perspective to explore the origin of English-specific lexemes to identify how lacunar concepts emerge. The etymological analysis of the diachronic data, in turn, contributes to the second sub-strand of research since it reveals the journey of once-lacunar lexemes into English to fill in the lexical gaps. However, not only is the origin of the borrowed terms examined but so are the paths along which lacunar concepts evolved. Therefore, the diachronic data is also approached from the semasiological standpoint to investigate the metamorphoses that occurred to the filled lexical gaps.

The major source of etymological data is the OED (2022). The OED etymology data gives insight into the origins of lexical items and is particularly useful for tracing the history of formation of the words and development of their meanings in language. Thus, a brief origin statement from the OED is included in the "Etymology" column in the datasets upon availability. The dates of attestation are entered in the "First record" column.

However, the amount of detail provided in the OED etymology section varies from item to item, with etymology being uncertain in some cases. The etymology data retrieval is also compounded by the fact that numerous lexical items are listed in the "Compounds" section or "Derivative" section of the OED, meaning that the etymology is available only for the headword. Therefore, all the relevant information is retrieved where possible. Otherwise, the "n/a" abbreviation is included in the datasets.

Etymological information, in particular, the attestation dates, can be useful for the diachronic analysis of filled lacunae. The OED timeline charts available in the OED advanced search tool are used for this purpose. Once the language of origin is used in an advanced search tool to generate the search, the results can be viewed as a timeline. The OED timelines can be used to display when words of Spanish and Russian origin were

adopted into English.[13] Analysing the peak periods of adoption of loan words on the timeline and collating them with different periods in the history of the speech communities (of the donor and recipient languages) allows hypotheses to be made about the factors motivating the evolution of lexical lacunae and their subsequent filling.

The HTE (2nd edn., v. 5.0) is also used to incorporate an onomasiological approach to investigating the origins of lacunar items since it may shed additional light on the roots of lacunar concepts which sometimes cannot be fully understood without considering alternative means of their expression in language. For example, analysis of the concept expressed by the compound *paternity leave* can yield greater insights when carried out in combination with another member of the same semantic category, *maternity leave* (Chapter 4.2.3). Besides, the onomasiological approach, being cognitive in nature, allows identification of whether a lacunar item belongs to a highly lexicalised domain. This information can be valuable since it reflects the extent of conceptualisation priority for a speech community, based on which hypotheses about the cultural relevance of certain concepts can be formed. Therefore, all the category members are retrieved from the HTE for each analysed lexical item. In the datasets, the immediate semantic environment for each lexeme appears in a pop-up comment box when the cursor is hovered over the cell containing the HTE reference number.

### 3.3.5  Grammatical perspective

Synchronic as well as diachronic data is analysed from the grammatical perspective in terms of word formation and part of speech identification. The corresponding information is retrieved from the OED (2022) and is included in the datasets in the "Word formation" and "POS" columns upon availability.

For example, analysis of word formation of actual lacunae is expected to be useful for tracing potential intralingual regularities contributing to the emergence of language-specific lexicalisation patterns. Part of speech identification for filled lacunae, in turn, can yield insights about grammatical metamorphoses occurring when a lexical lacuna becomes filled.

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[13] The OED attestation dates indicate the first recorded occurrence of lexemes in English. Historical evidence, however, can be patchy, and the actual adoption may predate the first recorded mention of a word. In fact, antedating is a common practice in lexicography when the dictionary entries are revised for new editions. Therefore, although the OED timelines can prove useful in the diachronic analysis, it should be borne in mind that the actual adoption of the loanwords may have occurred earlier than their first recorded use.

### 3.3.6 Methodological considerations

The major methodological hurdle is associated with the ongoing updates of the OED and HTE. The OED is, at the time of writing, being updated for the third edition, whereas the second edition of the HTE commenced in 2020. Therefore, when this research project started, the data from the first edition of the HTE was used which was mainly based on the second edition of the OED (1989). However, it was deemed necessary to update records against the latest available version of the HTE (2nd edn., v. 5.0).

As a result of the updates, some discrepancies were identified with respect to dates of attestation. Further, some inconsistencies were also detected in semantic classification of certain lexical items. For example, the lexeme of Russian origin *babushka* "grandmother" was borrowed into English in the first half of the nineteenth century to denote an elderly lady of Russian origin (OED, 2022, babushka, n. 1). However, over time it acquired an additional meaning in the American context and in the twentieth century came to mean a specific type of headwear. Shortly thereafter, the term came to be used interchangeably with the lexeme *matryoshka* "Russian doll". Apparently, this extension occurred on the basis of similarity: classical matryoshkas are depicted wearing Russian traditional headscarves. Therefore, the original meaning of the concept radiated to encompass two additional senses. This OED entry was updated for the third edition and lists three related senses. In contrast, the HTE lists *babushka* only in one category (01.08.02.02.03|16.01 n.), as headwear. All such inconsistencies have been flagged appropriately in the datasets.

Further, the updating of the OED, involving addition of new terms and revision to the existing entries, resulted in numerous changes to the number of Russian and Spanish borrowings. The diachronic data was retrieved for this study during the period from November 2019 to January 2020.

### 3.4 Corpus strand

Corpus linguistic research methods have begun to be applied to translation studies relatively recently. Until the 1990s corpora were not used in translation (Hu, 2016:5), and it was only in 1995 that integration of the corpus-based approach to the translation research paradigm gradually started to unleash its potential (Baker, 1995:224). Over roughly the past thirty years such symbiosis has given rise to a hybrid research endeavour which came

to be called *corpus-based translation studies*. The fusion of two disciplines marked a fundamental shift from a prescriptive to a descriptive stance in translation (Hu, 2016:1), allowing, *inter alia,* a diagnostic analysis of how translation challenges can be overcome in translation practice.

The corpus strand of this research continues the methodological tradition of the corpus-based translation studies (Chapter 2.4.2.1) and aims to examine how lexical lacunae are handled in translation of film subtitles, revealing their implications for the cross-linguistic situation, as anticipated in Section 3.1. The corpus-based approach is selected for this project as it is hoped to enable systematic data collection compared to the traditional text-based manual sampling. The analysis of literary texts and their translations allowed researchers to retrieve only a limited number of instances of translation of lexical lacunae (subject to the availability of translations of the original text and number of occurrences of the identified lexical lacuna in the whole text). By way of illustration, if a study focused on the analysis of two Spanish translations (undertaken by two different translators) of an English novel, it was possible to retrieve two instances of translation for each identified lexical lacuna. If a researcher was lucky enough to encounter several occurrences of the same lexical lacuna in the text, additional examples illustrating its translation could be retrieved. Therefore, such a method of data collection can be seen as convenience sampling, with scarce and serendipitous data representing an insufficient basis for generalisable inferences. Conversely, the use of parallel corpora is expected to enable retrieval of several instances of translation for each lexical lacuna, thus making data collection more systematic.

Over the past decades, subtitles have become a popular source of data in research within translation studies, having been used in Chen and Wang (2022), Needergard-Larsen (1993), Pavesi and Zamore (2022) and Pedersen (2011). Offering large quantities of parallel data across multiple language combinations, subtitles serve well the translation research purposes. In line with this methodological tendency, the present study uses translations of TV series and film subtitles as parallel corpora accessed through the web portals Sub-a-Sub (n.d.) and Reverso Context (2013-2022). These digital platforms position themselves as online contextual multilingual dictionaries allowing users to see real-life translations of lexical items in context. Being essentially web-based parallel concordances, they allow the query to be performed by keyword (in our case by the sampled English lexemes identified as lexical lacunae in Russian and Spanish), after which the search returns instances of its translation.

Sub-a-Sub (n.d.) contains exclusively TV series and film subtitles. Reverso Context (2013-2022), in turn, apart from containing translations of TV series and film subtitles (marked as "Subtitles of movies/series"), also includes translated UN documents (marked as "United Nations"), parallel texts extracted from Wikipedia (marked "Wikipedia") and other sources of unspecified origin (marked as "various sources"). For the sake of research consistency, in this thesis, every effort was made to focus exclusively on the translations of TV series and film subtitles. For this reason, Sub-a-Sub (n.d.) was selected as the main source of data, whereas Reverso Context (2013-2022) was used as a backup source to retrieve additional corpus examples in the event of data shortage. As a result, apart from the translations of the film subtitles, the datasets contain a small number of entries from other sources which are marked appropriately.[14]

## 3.4.1  Specificity of the selected corpora

Being a separate area within translation studies, subtitling is often referred to as audiovisual translation or AVT (e.g. in Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2014; Gambier and Pinto, 2018). AVT occupies a special place in the field as it involves a multimodal perception of information by a translator (activating both audio and visual channels) and its subsequent processing with orientation to the visual content on the screen. In Assis Rosa's (2018:17) terms, "semiotic complexity" is what distinguishes subtitles from other sources of data such as literary texts. A translator's task consists in "recoding" linguistic text from the source to the target language but in full compliance with the visual input. Film subtitles are also subject to word limits. Subtitles displayed on a screen per unit of time should not consist of more than two lines of text, with each line not exceeding 42 characters for Latin, Arabic and Cyrillic scripts (Baños and Díaz Cintas, 2018:317). This technical feature should also be taken into consideration during the analysis of translation strategies. Therefore, in a certain sense, the translator of film subtitles enjoys less freedom than translators of literary texts, for instance.

Translations of subtitles often cannot boast precision nor grammatical and orthographic correctness despite existing standards for the quality of the final product in AVT (AVTEUROPE, 2021). As many film-lovers may be aware, typos and translation mistakes

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[14] The proportion of examples from sources other than film subtitles amounts to 4% and 5% in the English-Spanish and English-Russian datasets respectively.

can often be spotted on the screen. One of the main reasons for this negligence is a harmful practice of not giving credit to the translator of the subtitles. Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2014:40), citing Díaz-Cintas and Papadakis, claim that in Spain and Greece respectively the copyright for the translation of film subtitles is not recognised. Apart from undermining the importance of AVT, the failure to acknowledge the translator's work results in anonymity which goes hand-in-hand with the lack of accountability, thus increasing the chances of a mistake. For this study, however, translation mistakes are more of an advantage than a limitation since they allow an additional analysis of actual pitfalls that lexical lacunae may pose in translation practice. In other words, instances of translation potentially containing errors seem to be even a more attractive source of data than perfectly accurate translations.

Another distinguishing feature of film subtitles is their intentional approximation to informal speech (Levshina, 2017:311). Credibility is one of the central concepts in the film and theatre industry. It suffices to recall Stanislavski's famous yardstick for quality assessment in the performing arts summed up in just one phrase addressed to the actors "I don't believe you!" (Stanislavski, 1989:27). While the cast of the film strives to obtain credibility through acting, scriptwriters likewise aspire to achieve it linguistically by the deliberate use of language typically featuring real-life situations. As is pointed out in Levshina (2017:312), the aspiration for realism on the part of the scriptwriters is reflected in their use of an informal register plausible in everyday conversations.

The specificity of the subtitles register, however, served well the purposes of this study. Alternative parallel corpora that matched the language combinations selected for research (English-Russian vs. English-Spanish) and that were comparable in size and genre, were not suitable for the analysis of lexical lacunae. For example, Europarl multilingual parallel corpus (Koehn, 2005) and the United Nations parallel corpus (Ziemski, Junczys-Dowmunt and Pouliquen, 2016) feature a formal register, offering very few opportunities for the investigation of lacunar items, many of which in the lacuna-detection stage of research turned out to be lexemes denoting objects of everyday use, colloquial terms and figurative expressions. Conversely, film subtitles containing large amounts of argot, colloquialisms, swearing terms and culture-specific words were deemed a rich source of data suitable for this research.

## 3.4.2  Data collection and organisation

Since the corpus strand investigates the translation of English-specific lexemes into Russian and Spanish, focusing on two language pairs, the corpus data is organised in two different datasets: "English-Russian" and "English-Spanish". Both datasets are set out in tabular form in the Electronic Appendix saved as an Excel file (Electronic Appendix: 1ENG-RUS and 2ENG-SPA).

In the datasets, lacunar items are arranged semantically according to the categorisation system of the HTE with an indication of the HTE reference code (in the "HTE No." column) and name of the category on level three of the semantic hierarchy (in the "Semantic category" column). Each lacunar item is classified according to the lacuna model, and the corresponding type is indicated in the "Type of lacuna" column. The OED definition of the lacunar items is provided in a pop-up comment box on mouseover.

Every lacunar lexeme is illustrated with five instances of translation. The corpus evidence is collected for both datasets in the following fashion: the queries in the web-based parallel concordances are performed by keywords (aka lacunar items), and five instances of translation are retrieved for each lacunar item. Given the importance of unbiased sampling in corpus linguistics (e.g. discussed in Baker, 2010:96), every second occurrence from the concordance is included in the datasets to ensure systematic selection of examples. However, in individual cases where the search results return fewer than ten instances of translation, the first five occurrences are retrieved.

The data collection is, however, slightly different for the category of connotative lacunae which reveal conceptual discrepancies only in specific contexts. For instance, the connotative component of cowardice intrinsic, *inter alia*, to the English colour-term *yellow* is not implied in every usage of the lexeme. Thus, the ten occurrences, in which the connotative meaning is activated, are retrieved from the corpora, out of which every second occurrence is included in the final datasets.

The above-mentioned online platforms through which corpus data is accessed align the original film dialogues and their translations with respect to each other on the sentence level. Therefore, the search results are displayed as concordance lines, with the surrounding co-text usually being restricted to a sentence. However, considering a potential pitfall for the corpus-based translation studies outlined by Malmkjær (cited in Hu,

2016:7) related to the insufficient analysis of the context, the surrounding environment is thoroughly investigated by expanding the co-text. Depending on the example, either a sentence containing a lacunar item or an entire fragment of the dialogue is included in the datasets. In certain instances, where the expanded co-text still does not provide enough information for the analysis of the translation, online databases of film subtitles, e.g. SUBZIN (2014) and QuoDB (n.d.) are used to explore wider context.

The corpus example in English is entered in the "Source text" column, whereas its translation is entered in the "Target text" column. Back translation of the target text is provided in a separate column, named appropriately.[15] Back translation, that is translation of the translated text back to the source language, is included to evaluate the correspondence between the source and the target texts. Being the most recommended technique for assessing translation quality in the cross-linguistic research (Brislin and Freimanis, 2001:22), back translation can often be unidiomatic since it is carried out as literally as feasible to reveal the discrepancies in meaning between the source text and the target text items.

Following the equivalence analysis of the source and the target text, a transformation that has occurred in the process of "transcoding" is identified, and the corresponding technique is recorded in the "Translation solution" column. Every instance of translation is assigned an individual identification code in "Unique identification code" column. If examples from the corpora are included in the thesis for the illustrative purposes, an identification number is included so that the reader could easily find the corresponding example in the dataset (e.g. Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:5 for the English-Russian dataset or Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:5 for the English-Spanish dataset).

Along with instances of translation of lacunar items, all available metadata is also retrieved. Unlike Reverso Context (2013-2022) which indicates only a general source of data (e.g. "Subtitles of movies/series"), as mentioned in Section 3.4, Sub-a-Sub (n.d.) provides a more detailed information about the data, namely the film title and the year of release. Film subtitle metadata, however, does not include translation directionality. Although multilingual web-based concordances allow a researcher to select a specific language combination (e.g. German-French), the selected directionality may not always reflect the real translational correlation between the texts. In other words, there is a

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[15] Back translation is carried out by me.

possibility that the source text (e.g. German) and target text (e.g. French) are both translations of an original text in a third language (e.g. English).

Ambiguous translation directionality is a common issue in research involving multilingual parallel corpora. An explicit acknowledgement of the actual translational relation between the source and the target texts is not always a *sine qua non* for multilingual parallel corpora, as discussed in Paquot and Gries (2020:259), Saldanha and O'Brien (2014:68) and Ustaszewski (2019:108). Lefer (2020:259) points out that the Europarl corpus (Koehn, 2005), the Eur-Lex corpus (Baisa, Michelfeit, Medved and Jakubicek, 2016) as well as the United Nations Parallel corpus (Ziemski, Junczys-Dowmunt and Pouliquen, 2016) do not specify translation direction. Unspecified translation directionality stems from the general underdevelopment of parallel corpora compared to monolingual corpora and can be a serious shortcoming when these corpora are used for linguistic research. For instance, if a study examines specific features of translated texts, identifying translation direction becomes of paramount importance.

Since this study focuses on the analysis of translation solutions for handling lacunae and evaluation of equivalence between lacunar items and their counterparts in the target language, unspecified translation directionality was not considered problematic. Nevertheless, for the purposes of research transparency it was decided to reduce this ambiguity by adjusting the study design: the choice of translation directionality for the corpus strand (i.e. English-Russian and English-Spanish) was not arbitrary. Despite certain changes that have been taking place in the film industry over the past decades (e.g. rapid development of the Asian film-making companies), America still exerts a dominant influence on the global film market, being one of the leading countries in terms of film production in the world (Crane, 2014). Therefore, the vast majority of films are produced in English and then subtitled or dubbed in various languages. Precisely for this reason, the corpus strand examines translations of English films into Russian and Spanish.

Moreover, to further assuage concerns about translation directionality, it was deemed necessary to retrieve additional information about the films from external sources (e.g. IMDb, 1990-2021) such as the country of origin and language of release. [16] Thus, the "Metadata" column in the datasets includes the following information about the source of

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[16] IMDb indicates all languages that are spoken in the film. If several languages are spoken, they are listed in the order most used in the film.

corpus data: the original title of the film or TV series, season and episode number in the case of TV series, the title in the target language, the year of release, the country of origin and the language of release where available. In the event of the unavailability of metadata, the generic source of data is indicated. Although most of the sampled data comes from films produced in English-speaking countries and originally released in English, there is a small number of examples (marked appropriately in the datasets) from films released in languages other than English. However, since English is traditionally used as a pivot language in subtitling (Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2014:32), it is assumed that the translation was first carried out in English and subsequently from English into other languages.

Film subtitle metadata lacks information on whether a translation has been carried out by a professional or an amateur translator. This could be a vital issue for the study investigating different translation styles, for example comparing stylistic idiosyncrasies of professional and non-professional translators. However, within the framework of this thesis, investigating existing translation solutions for tackling lexical lacunae, this limitation has not been deemed critical. As mentioned in Section 3.4.1, potential translation mistakes are of interest to the present study.

### 3.4.3  Data analysis and presentation

The corpus strand of research encompasses an equivalence analysis of the original text and its translation with a primary focus on the micro-level. In other words, the formal, idiomatic, pragmatic and semantic correspondence between the source text item (identified as lacunar) and its counterpart in the target language is examined first on the word level and then on the sentence level. The source and target texts are collated to trace how the meaning is reconstrued in the target language. However, this does not mean that the macro-level is overlooked. Conversely, the scene in which the dialogue containing lacunar item appears is also examined by analysing the surrounding context. The implications of lexical lacunarity and translation constraints are also assessed against the backdrop of the film plot and the general cultural and socio-historical setting of the target language speech community.

Employing the "source to target approach" (Lefer, 2020:263-264), the original text is mapped onto its translation to identify the strategies for handling lexical lacunae. Translators' choices and extralinguistic circumstances which might have motivated

translators' decisions are thoroughly analysed. Translation techniques are identified and recorded accordingly in the "Translation solution" column.

Once the strategies are identified for all instances of translation, a quantitative analysis is carried out to establish the most popular strategies for tackling lexical lacunae. The number of occurrences of each translation solution is calculated for each language pair. Subsequently, the raw data is converted into the percentage format, and the results are contrasted across language combinations. The results of the quantitative analysis of corpus data are presented diagrammatically with the help of a double-graph bar which is deemed in this study the most effective visual tool for comparing the occurrences of translation solutions across different language combinations.

Apart from the quantitative approach, the corpus strand involves a qualitative investigation of the translation transformations. The identified translation solutions are presented in the form of a taxonomy. The benefits and limitations of each translation solution are evaluated, and the inferences are presented in the form of a parallel discussion.

# 4   Lexical lacunae

## 4.0   Chapter overview

This chapter reports and discusses the findings emerging from the verification of the working hypothesis outlined in Chapter 1.1, seeking to answer the research question of what a lexical lacuna is. Section 4.1 discusses verification of the lacuna model. Section 4.2 overviews the main types of lexical lacunae, whereas Section 4.3 describes the intermediate categories additionally identified during the validation of the theoretical model. The concluding Section 4.4 is devoted to the revision of the lacuna model and reformulation of the initial hypothesis.

## 4.1   Lacuna model verification

Chapter 1.1 introduced a triadic model of lexical lacunae suggesting a theoretical interpretation of the notion of lacunarity from a semiotic perspective. Since previous research studies highlighted different aspects of lacunarity, sometimes leading to contradictory conclusions, the lacuna model was taken as a working hypothesis that would unite the categories at times seen as mutually exclusive. Therefore, the main objective of the model was to demonstrate that a lexical lacuna is a multifaceted phenomenon, the implications of which can manifest themselves at different levels. According to the model, there are three main types of lexical lacunae: connotative, denotative and nominative (Chapter 1.1).

As discussed in Chapter 3.2, to evaluate the robustness and functionality of the model, it was decided to verify it against the lexicographic data, i.e., lists of English lexemes detected as lacunae in Russian and Spanish. According to the initial hypothesis, each lexical gap would be assigned to one of the three categories: connotative, denotative or nominative. Therefore, the feasibility of such classification would determine whether or not the lacuna model is a reasonable means of representation of the category of lexical gaps. However, before proceeding to the discussion of the model validation itself, some methodology-related issues should be elaborated upon since they highlight some characteristic aspects of lacunarity revealed in the course of research and enhance our understanding of this phenomenon.

As anticipated in Chapter 3.2, during the lacuna-verification process, it appeared that not all English lexemes identified as lacunae in Russian were lacunae in Spanish. For instance, *barber*, established as a lexical gap in Russian, has a full equivalent in Spanish – *barbero*. The English term and its Spanish counterpart are cognates ultimately derived from Latin, as evidenced by the OED (2022, barber n.) and Spanish etymological dictionary DECEL (2001-2022, barbero). This methodological nuance reveals one of the fundamental properties of lexical gaps – their variability: lacunae that can be detected in a particular language combination (e.g. English-Russian) are not necessarily lacunae in a different language pair (e.g. English-Spanish). This is not an unexpected finding but is nevertheless of particular interest since the issue of lacunarity has been traditionally discussed in the context of a contrastive comparison of two languages and to the best of my knowledge has not been examined through a prism of multiple language combinations. This insight contributes to our understanding of the nature of lexical gaps, which represent a very dynamic category in a constant mercurial state. This is true from both cross-linguistic and diachronic perspectives (the latter will be discussed in further detail below).

Thus, the triadic model was verified against two datasets: English lexical lacunae in Russian, comprising 195 lexemes, and English lexical lacunae in Spanish, comprising 141 lexemes. The difference in sample sizes (195 as against 141 lexemes) is largely due to the above-mentioned cross-linguistic variability of lacunae. It was decided, however, for the sake of research integrity, not to go back to the sources to retrieve additional lacunae which would hold for Spanish but not for Russian as it could be seen as targeted sampling.

The original list of English lexemes that were identified as lacunae in Russian contained 312 items. The quantitative disparity between the original list and the final datasets (312 as against 195 English-Russian and 141 English-Spanish lexemes) is due to the availability of the corpus evidence. The English lexemes, forming lexical gaps in other languages, constitute mainly a peripheral layer of lexis with a relatively low average occurrence in Present-Day English. According to the average frequency, the detected lacunae fall within the OED Frequency Band 3 out of 8 potential Bands.[17] This means that on average English terms that can be seen as lacunae in other languages occur between 0.01 and 0.1 times per million words in Present-Day English. As a result, due to this marginality for a significant proportion of lexicographic data, there were examples for which no corpus evidence could be retrieved.

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[17] In the OED the bands are arranged in order of increasing frequency: Band 1 – low frequency words, Band 8 – high frequency words (OED, 2022, How to use the OED: Key to frequency).

However, reliance on corpus data was deemed crucially important in view of another property of lexical gaps that was revealed in the study: lexical lacunae are a knowledge-dependent phenomenon. In other words, a lexeme that is well-known to one person can be utterly unfamiliar to another and can be considered a lexical gap for them. Therefore, to eliminate perception bias over the course of research the main goal was to rely as much as possible on the objective lexicographic sources and corpus evidence, which allowed conclusions to be drawn on the basis of typical language usage. For the purposes of consistency of the analysis, the final lexicographic datasets included only those lexemes for which corpus evidence could also be retrieved. As a result, despite some divergence, the core lexicographic samples are uniform across language combinations, with most lexemes recurring across the datasets of currently existing lexical gaps.

The work with two separate lexicographic sets (the English-Russian and English-Spanish datasets) highlighted another facet of the variability of lexical gaps. If a lexical lacuna is classified as a particular type in one language combination, it is not necessarily of the same type in a different language pair. For instance, the English phrase *yellow line* (referring to parking restrictions) can be considered a connotative lacuna in Spanish. As in Britain, yellow road markings are also widely used in Spain and generally mean that parking restrictions are in force. However, there is a slight conceptual difference in the interpretation of the yellow line in Britain and Spain. In Britain, the single yellow line means that waiting restrictions apply during certain periods of time, which are usually specified on the accompanying traffic sign (Official Highway Code, 2015:115). Technically, this road marking allows a car to stop, drop off passengers and leave. Conversely, in Spain, the single yellow line means that both stopping and parking are prohibited or subject to time restrictions (Código de tráfico y seguridad vial, 2020:138). This means that it can be forbidden even to stop for a short period of time in such areas. This can be seen as a minor conceptual difference, but the English term *yellow line* can be considered a connotative lacuna in Spanish since there is such a discrepancy.

However, in a different language combination, the same concept can turn out to be a different type of lacuna. The English phrase *yellow line* was initially identified as a fully-fledged denotative lacuna in Russian since yellow markings were not used on the Russian roads, and such a concept did not exist in the Russian speech community until recently. However, in April 2018, the first yellow markings were used within the experimental design framework on public roads in Russia (Grigoryan, 2018). To comply with the

worldwide standards regulating traffic signs and road markings, it was decided to introduce yellow lines on Russian roads. In a relatively short period of time yellow box junctions appeared at crossroads which quickly became known as *вафельная разметка* "waffle road marking" in Russian (an interesting example of a metaphorical lacuna), and yellow lines appeared along the sides of roads, so a denotative lacuna was filled during the period of this study. This property of lexical gaps suggests that the definition of the lacuna type should be carried out in a particular language combination. A lexeme that appears as a connotative gap in one language can turn out to be a denotative gap in another.

This example also illustrates the diachronic variability of lexical lacunae: lexical gaps may be filled over time. In line with the previous lacuna-oriented studies (e.g. Muraviev, 1975:23), it can be concluded that lexical lacunae represent a continually evolving category. This aspect of lacunarity will be highlighted in further detail in the next chapter.

Returning to the model verification, the validity of the original hypothesis was assessed in terms of the feasibility of grouping lexemes into three suggested categories: connotative, denotative, and nominative. Table 4.1 shows the types of lexical lacunae across language combinations identified in this study. The results obtained from the classification analysis evidence the partial viability of the lacuna model. The three categories of lexical gaps proved robust, but in addition to the three main types initially hypothesised, three new intermediate kinds of lexical lacunae were established. This is the most important finding in this strand of research, suggesting that the lacuna model devised on the basis of the previous studies, highlighting different aspects of lacunarity, requires further revision.

*Table 4.1 The identified categories of lexical lacunae across language combinations*

| ENG-RUS | Number of lacunae | % |
|---|---|---|
| 1 - Connotative | 16 | 8% |
| 2 - Partially denotative | 11 | 6% |
| 3 - Fully denotative | 60 | 31% |
| 4 - Partially nominative | 41 | 21% |
| 5 - Fully nominative | 55 | 28% |
| 6 - Multi-layered | 12 | 6% |
| Total | 195 | 100% |

| ENG-SPA | Number of lacunae | % |
|---|---|---|
| 1 - Connotative | 11 | 8% |
| 2 - Partially denotative | 11 | 8% |
| 3 - Fully denotative | 41 | 29% |
| 4 - Partially nominative | 29 | 21% |
| 5 - Fully nominative | 43 | 30% |
| 6 - Multi-layered | 6 | 4% |
| Total | 141 | 100% |

Contrary to expectations, the three largest categories turned out to be fully denotative, partially nominative and fully nominative lacunae in both language combinations. This finding was somewhat surprising since the three initially hypothesised types of lexical

lacunae (connotative, denotative and nominative) were anticipated to be the largest groups. However, the corpus evidence of connotative lacunarity appeared difficult to retrieve, resulting in the paucity of examples of connotative lacunae. The reasons for this methodological hurdle are discussed in Section 4.2.1. Eventually, the category of partially nominative lacunae (Section 4.3.2) which had not been distinguished in the original hypothesis, turned out to be the third-largest group, containing slightly over one-fifth of the total data in both datasets.

A striking feature that can be seen from the table is that the sizes of the categories across the datasets are roughly equal in percentage terms. However, it should be borne in mind that this is due to the common core of data: the major proportion of lexemes were lexical lacunae in both Russian and Spanish and, therefore, recurred across the Russian and Spanish datasets of existing lexical gaps.

To demonstrate the robustness of the categories and to substantiate the appropriateness of such classification, the categories are explained in further detail below. Before proceeding to discuss the newly identified types of lexical lacunae (hereinafter intermediate types), it seems reasonable to consider the three main categories first.

## 4.2   The main types of lacunae

### 4.2.1   Connotative lacunae

From a theoretical perspective, connotative lacunae seemed a well-delineated category of lexemes possessing strong connotative components idiosyncratic to the source language. However, at a practical level, this type of lexical gap proved problematic in terms of exemplification. Of the three main groups in this research, the connotative category is the smallest in both Russian and Spanish.

There are three likely reasons for the small size of this category. Firstly, this may be due to the difficulty of identifying connotative gaps since they represent a less salient category than the other two main types. Connotative lacunae presuppose internal discrepancy, i.e., a conceptual divergence between signs across languages subject to availability of the formal equivalent. In other words, despite the equivalence of forms, there is lacunarity of content. For example, the English term *poppy* was identified as a connotative lacuna in Russian and Spanish at the stage of lacunae detection but was not included in the corpus dataset due to

the insufficient number of corpus examples. *Poppy* is translated as *amapola* "poppy" (SpanishDict, n.d.) and *мак* "poppy" (ABBYY Lingvo Live, n.d.) into Spanish and Russian respectively. However, the Spanish and Russian equivalents are devoid of the connotative component intrinsic to the English lexeme.

In Britain, red poppies are traditionally worn on 11 November to commemorate the soldiers and victims who perished in the First World War (OED, 2022, poppy n., sense 8). The poppy acquired its symbolic significance through a vivid poetic image that is epitomised in the poem *In Flanders fields*, by John McCrae, dedicated to those fallen in the war (Harrison, 2012:150). The scarlet poppies springing up on the battlefield became a symbol of hope and a new beginning appearing where every living thing had been destroyed. However, at the same time, the field of red poppies resembling the battlefield flooded with blood became a living reminder of the sacrificed lives (ibid.:151-152).

Thus, the red poppy became a remembrance symbol that was rapidly adopted by English-speaking countries such as the USA, Canada and New Zealand (OED, 2022, poppy n., sense 8). However, this tradition has not spread worldwide. The Russian and Spanish equivalents of *poppy* have no relevant symbolic association. Despite formal equivalence, these counterparts are lacunar in their inner conceptual structure. Therefore, despite the availability of the referential equivalents in Spanish and Russian, this English lexeme can be considered a connotative lacuna in Spanish and Russian since it possesses a culture-specific connotative meaning.

As a result, this category is the hardest to spot in the process of lacunae detection given the existence of the direct equivalents in the target languages corresponding to the primary meaning of the word in the source language. The typical indicators of lexical gaps such as non-inclusion in bilingual dictionaries, absence of one-to-one equivalents and lengthy definitions are irrelevant for this type of lexical gap. This category can only be identified in the targeted contrastive analysis of connotative senses across languages. Unlike nominative and denotative lacunae, the detection of connotative gaps requires a bottom-up approach: by comparing individual lexemes the illustrative data can be built. Conversely, the detection of denotative and nominative types of lexical gaps requires a top-down approach: from the data individual lexical gaps can be filtered based on the characteristic features of the lexical gaps. Therefore, the difficulties associated with the application of an alternative method in connotative lacunae detection may have resulted in a relatively small amount of connotative data.

Secondly, the relatively small sizes of the connotative categories in Russian and Spanish can be attributed to the fact that the connotative component, being essentially one of the secondary meanings of a word, is activated only in specific contexts. In contrast to primary senses, connotative meanings are triggered less frequently. As a result, sufficient corpus evidence could be retrieved for only a limited number of lexemes. Out of 30 connotative gaps initially identified in the lacunae detection process, only 16 were included in the final lexicographic English-Russian dataset of which only 11 became part of the English-Spanish dataset. As mentioned above, the availability of the corpus evidence became a selective filter for the inclusion of the lexemes into the lexicographic datasets. In the case of connotative lacunae, activation of connotative meanings only in specific contexts became an additional filter resulting in further selection and consequent data reduction.

Finally, the relatively small amount of connotative data may be due to the specificity of the parallel corpora selected for the study. Unlike poetry and literary texts where connotations along with allusions, creative metaphors and figurative meanings play a crucially important role, film subtitles used as parallel corpora offer fewer opportunities for connotative data analysis. Film subtitles feature a form of spoken language which from the stylistic perspective is closer to real-life conversations than most other multilingual parallel corpora (Levshina, 2017:311). Therefore, it can be assumed that the level of expressiveness and imagery of film subtitles is significantly lower than that of literary texts.

Summing up the above, the paucity of the connotative data turned out to be an unexpected finding *per se*. Due to the well-known connotative divergence of colour terms and animal names across languages and the overall polysemy of the lexical system (i.e. the capacity of lexical units to have multiple related meanings), it was anticipated that it would be relatively straightforward to detect connotative lacunae and retrieve the relevant corpus data. However, contrary to expectations, this category appeared to be the most covert of the three.

Being activated at a subtler level of communicative interaction, the connotations require an ever-deeper knowledge of the source language and awareness of the cultural realities on the part of the translator and often pass unnoticed. In fact, this study revealed that the most frequent strategy employed in the translation of connotative lacunae is calque (Chapter

7.1.5). This suggests that in the process of literal translation, the culture-specific connotative component becomes inevitably lost.

For instance, the literal translation of the English phrase *yellow ribbon* into Spanish and Russian does not trigger the same associations in the Spanish and Russian speakers as in English. Despite the existence of the formal equivalents (*желтая лента* "yellow ribbon" in Russian and *cinta amarilla* "yellow ribbon" in Spanish), these counterparts do not bear a corresponding connotation. In the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, the *yellow ribbon* was a symbol of honour in Prussia and Sweden respectively (OED, 2022, yellow ribbon n., sense 1). In contrast, at the end of the twentieth century during the Iranian hostage crisis, the yellow ribbon acquired another symbolic meaning in English (OED, 2022, yellow ribbon n., sense 2). Apparently, inspired by the song *Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree* (ibid.), people started expressing support for the hostages by displaying yellow ribbons and tying them around trees. Over the years in the USA and Britain, the yellow ribbon has become a universal symbol of solidarity with those people who face hardships away from their homes: troops, hostages, missing people, prisoners, etc. However, this connotative meaning appears to be culture-specific since the tradition of displaying yellow ribbons is not shared worldwide. Hence, if *yellow ribbon* is translated literally into Spanish or Russian with no additional gloss, the communicative purpose of the utterance as well as its pragmatic equivalence can be compromised, despite the availability of the formal equivalent. The following example from the parallel corpora of film subtitles illustrates this point.

Source text
(English)                 Hey, Kevin, you know I put a **yellow ribbon** on my car for you guys?

Target text 1
(Russian)                 Эй, Кевин, знаешь, я приделал **желтую ленту** на мою машину в честь вас? (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:661)

Back translation 1        Hey, Kevin, you know, I have attached a **yellow ribbon** on my car for you?

Target text 2             ¿Sabías que puse una **cinta amarilla** en mi auto por ustedes?
(Spanish)                 (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:502)

Back translation 2        Did you know that I put a **yellow ribbon** on my car for you?

As can be seen from this example, both Russian and Spanish translators opted for calque. However, word-for-word translation fails to reflect the communicative purpose of the utterance. To understand the goal of the text, the audience should weigh the immediate context against the background knowledge that yellow ribbons are displayed in honour of people away from home. Thus, for the English-speaking audience, it becomes clear why the character attached a yellow ribbon to their car: to show solidarity with Kevin, who was sent off to the Iraq war. Conversely, the Russian and Spanish audiences are likely to be perplexed as to why a ribbon was mentioned and why it was yellow.

Since the additional in-text explication cannot be included due to the limited line length in subtitles, to make the translation more comprehensible the optimal solution would have been to use an idiomatic expression or a metaphor which is more familiar to the target text audience. This strategy was employed in the following translation and proved effective in achieving pragmatic equivalence.

Source text

(English)                 - Have I told you I'm going to miss you?

                          - Write me, constantly.

                          - Every day.

                          - Cards and letters, full of hope and "see you soon".

                          - I'll be tying **yellow ribbons** around the old oak trees.

                          - I will be back for the wedding.

                          - You better be.

Target text

(Spanish)                 ¿Te dije que te extrañaré?

                          - Escríbeme seguido.

                          - Todos los días.

                          Tarjetas y cartas, con muchos "nos vemos pronto".

                          **Tejeré y destejeré como Penélope.**

                          Volveré para la boda.

                          - Más te vale.

Back translation                Have I told you that I'll miss you?

                                Write me constantly.

                                Every day.

                                Cards and letters, with many "see you soon".

                                I will **weave and unweave like Penelope**.

                                I'll be back for the wedding.

                                You better be.

                                            (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:505)

In this example, the lacunar English expression was substituted with a metaphor *tejer y destejer* "weave and unweave" more familiar to the Spanish audience. There is a clear allusion to Homer's Penelope, who, embodying conjugal fidelity (Esteban Santos, 2006:97), waited for her husband Odysseus to return home for 20 years. She remained faithful to her husband and dismissed numerous suitors saying she had to finish weaving a shroud first. During the day Penelope wove and unwove at night, to gain more time in the hope that Odysseus would return home in the meanwhile.

The Spanish metaphor perfectly suits the context where the characters say goodbye to each other before being apart. The main idea expressed in these lines is that the character who will be away from home will not be forgotten, but instead they will be thought of and waited for. Thus, by substitution of an unfamiliar expression with one that is more comprehensible to Spanish speakers, the translator managed to convey the original meaning and preserve the communicative purpose in the target language.

Failure to achieve pragmatic equivalence in translation implies that the target text does not have the same effect on a reader/interlocutor as the source text due to the loss of a certain amount of information in the process of "transcoding". Therefore, the literal translation of connotative lacunae puts at risk the completeness and comprehensiveness of the original idea. Conversely, the knowledge of the language-specific connotations brings our understanding of the textual meaning to a whole new level. In oral translation, such a loss of information may not prove essential and can be easily compensated for by other means as long as the translator is aware of such a connotative gap. However, in translations of literary texts unpacking lacunar senses may be vital since it enhances our understanding of the writer's imagery and contributes to the overall meaning of the work.

The following line from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* illustrates this point. In Act 4 Scene 5, when Juliet's seemingly dead body is found after she has taken the sleeping potion, the Friar utters: "Dry up your tears, and stick your rosemary On this fair corse" (Shakespeare, 2014:122). Here Shakespeare clearly alludes to the symbolic meaning of *rosemary*. [18] Throughout history in Western Europe, rosemary was attributed with a positive effect on improving memory and as a result became a symbol of remembrance, commonly used in wedding and funeral ceremonies (Hanson, 2016:83). Rosemary has preserved this connotative sense in English up to the present time (OED, 2022, rosemary n., sense 2). Therefore, an English speaker is less likely to be perplexed by the Friar's line than a Russian reader who does not have a corresponding associative link between rosemary and remembrance due to the total absence of such in the Russian language.

Being originally a Mediterranean herb (Hanson, 2016:83), growing in warmer climates, rosemary does not appear to have been common in Russia until comparatively recently. This is supported by the fact that the Russian equivalent of rosemary *розмарин* is a borrowing from German (Vasmer, 1964-1973, розмарин). Apparently, it was once a denotative lacuna which became filled over time. Instead of rosemary, Russian burial customs traditionally involve the use of spruce branches (Nevskiy, 2009), which must have been deliberately selected for the funeral rites. They grow in any part of Russia throughout the year, even in the harshest winters. The use of rosemary and spruce branches in burial customs in the English and the Russian cultures respectively may also have been linked to their association with the everlasting life force: they are both evergreen plants that can be seen as a symbol of immortality.

Both cultures have chosen diverse referents for essentially the same purpose and endowed them with symbolic meanings. The lexemes denoting these objects in the material world acquire associative relationships with the rites in which the objects are used. Existing within particular conceptual frames, these lexemes activate all the elements constituting the framework and trigger the corresponding communicative effect. In the case of connotative lacunae, the same communicative effect cannot be achieved since the source text lexeme and its counterpart in the target language form part of distinct conceptual frameworks. Similarly, the source item *rosemary* and its Russian equivalent *розмарин*

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[18] The English lexeme *rosemary* was identified as a connotative lacuna in Russian at the stage of dictionary-based detection of lexical gaps. However, it was in the end not included in the corpus dataset due to insufficient corpus evidence.

"rosemary" exist within different frames, leading to the divergence in connotative meanings.

In the Russian translations of *Romeo and Juliet* by Pasternak, Soroka, Schepkina-Kupernik and Grigoriev electronically available on the Romeo and Juliet portal (2007-2020), the lexeme *rosemary* in the given excerpt was translated literally. However, the literal translation does not reveal its conceptual meaning for a Russian speaker who can only guess why rosemary was supposed to be placed on Juliet's body. This is a good illustration of a connotative lacuna in action. Technically, the formal equivalence was achieved in translation, whereas the pragmatic effect was not obtained to an equal extent in the source and the target languages. This conceptual discrepancy could have passed unnoticed if the rosemary motif had not been interlaced in the main storyline. Despite its seeming insignificance, it appears to be related to Romeo's character and his role in the play.

In the 1951 edition of *Romeo and Juliet* (Morozov, 1951) translated by Pasternak, an attempt was made to unpack the covert meaning of the connotative lacuna for the Russian readership. According to the editor's footnote, rosemary is a symbol of true love (Morozov, 1951). However, this remark gives a one-sided interpretation of the rosemary motif, whereas the understanding of the multifaceted symbolism permeating the play provides a more in-depth insight into Shakespeare's imagery.

The ambiguous use of rosemary in both weddings and funerals mentioned above reflects the dichotomy in its connotation (Williams, 1953:402). On the one hand, it can be seen positively in relation to marriage and eternal love, whereas on the other, it can be associated with the anguish of loss. However, the Friar's line is not the only mention of rosemary in the play. It appears even earlier but with reference to Romeo, in Act 2 Scene 4 where the Nurse suggests that the words "rosemary" and "Romeo" begin with the same letter. This may seem an insignificant detail at first sight, but some Shakespeare scholars (e.g., Williams, 1953:402) argue that this context, where rosemary and Romeo are explicitly linked together, reveals the author's intent. By establishing this associative link between apparently incomparable things, a person and a plant, Shakespeare places them on the same plane, laying bare their ambiguity and, thus, foreshadowing Romeo's dual role in Juliet's destiny. Like rosemary, which instead of being used in the wedding ceremony, covers the lifeless body, Romeo, being the love of Juliet's life, becomes her doom. This duality echoes other images recurring in the play and is particularly interesting in terms of the hybridisation of secondary motifs developing the central storyline.

These intertwined themes may well not be obvious at first glance even for the English readership and require a more detailed literary analysis. Besides, the text reception changes over time: it is likely that a sixteenth-century reader of English would grasp the meaning more readily than a modern reader. However, even nowadays a closer look at connotative meanings allows a reader to see the storyline in a new light, revealing minor supporting details. Conversely, such secondary themes are erased from the Russian translations and are unavailable to the Russian reader. Thus, the above discussion has shown how, as a result of a connotative lacuna, a significant chunk of information, potentially bringing a reader to a different level of understanding of a piece, is cut off in translation, denying the target text reader an opportunity for further analysis.

Similarly, colour terms are a good illustration of how the understanding of the connotative meanings can shed new light on the utterance. Colour connotations have been widely investigated in previous research (e.g. Chirila, 2016; Goddard and Wierzbicka, 2014; Hamilton, 2016). Despite the seeming universality of colour, the same hues are seen differently in various speech communities. As a result, colour terms become parts of the ramified associative networks and acquire additional meanings which often do not correspond across languages. Frequently, a lack of familiarity with connotative meanings results in a more superficial perception of the text.

The language-specific symbolism of colour terms, well-entrenched in our linguistic knowledge, can not only be found in literary texts but is also commonly used in everyday speech. Various connotations become cemented in mental representations along with the primary meanings, and very often, even native speakers are unable to explain their etymology. However, a closer analysis reveals that a significant number of language-specific connotations stem from the extralinguistic experience.

By way of illustration, in the English-speaking world, *yellow,* along with its positive association with sunshine and light, also bears a strong negative connotation. It is the colour of jealousy, fear and cowardice (OED, 2022, yellow adj. and n., sense 3b). Apparently, such association with negative emotions is linked to the increased bile flow in the body of a person raging with jealousy, as a result of which their skin acquires a yellow hue. In the nineteenth century in American usage, yellow became a colour of cowardice, most likely due to the fact that liver was traditionally believed to be the place of accumulation of courage (Allan, 2009:630). People suffering from liver disorders have

yellowish skin tone: therefore, in the case of a damaged liver, it must have been assumed that the person had no courage.

However, these connotations turn out to be culture-specific since the Russian and Spanish equivalents of *yellow* (*желтый* and *amarillo*) are devoid of the corresponding senses. Conversely, they possess idiosyncratic meanings, which appear to be connotative gaps in English. For instance, in Russian, *yellow* is used metonymically with reference to a lunatic asylum due to the yellow exterior of the Obukhovskaya hospital, one of the first psychiatric hospitals in Russsia (Sindalovskiy, 2002, желтый дом). In Cuban Spanish, *amarillo* denotes an official of the Ministry of Transportation maintaining order at bus stops because of the yellow colour of their uniform (DLE RAE, 2022, amarillo, sense 9). Therefore, despite the existence of three formal equivalents in English, Spanish and Russian, their conceptual discrepancies evidence their connotative lacunarity.

Literal translation of connotative lacunae tends to undermine the purpose and the meaning of the whole utterance. The following example illustrates how word-for-word translation of the connotative gap in question results in failure to achieve the communicative effect:

Source text

(English)                    … our killer not only knew that this had become a homicide, he tried to hide it. Showed his true colors. Yes, **yellow**.

Target text

(Russian)                    … наш убийца не только знал, что это было убийство, он попытался скрыть это. Нарисовался во всей красе. Да, **желтым цветом**.

Back translation             …our murderer not only knew that this had been a murder, but he also tried to conceal it. Appeared in all his glory. Yes, in **yellow colour**.

(Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:464)

In the original English version, the combination of two metaphoric expressions (*show one's true colours* and *yellow*) creates a wordplay emphasising the cowardly nature of the killer. In the target language, an attempt was made to reproduce the same effect by translating the expression *to show one's true colours* with the help of the Russian idiom.

However, literal translation of the lacunar concept *yellow* derailed the translator's efforts, leaving the meaning of the utterance obscured. Due to the connotative lacunarity of *yellow* in Russian, there is no allusion to cowardice, and it is not evident why this colour term is used for the killer's description. Thus, pragmatic equivalence is clearly compromised.

Just as colours are associated with particular emotions, animals are similarly attributed with different characteristics across cultures which are subsequently transferred to humans. However, particular features appear to be more salient in some cultures than in others. For instance, the English expression *to work like a beaver* was coined in the American context (OED, 2022, beaver n. 1, sense 1d). Due to the ubiquity of beavers in all of North America (Cassola, 2016:1), the apparently hard-working nature of this species was striking to American people, and they transferred this beaver quality to humans. For some reason, this feature turned out to be less salient to the speakers of Spanish and Russian and as a result neither Spanish nor Russian share the same connotative component. Although the reasons for which Spaniards and Russians have not anthropomorphised beavers in the same way do not seem possible to identify with any reasonable certainty, it is known that at the end of the nineteenth-century Eurasian beavers were on the brink of extinction (Halley et al., 2012:168). Beavers, mostly preferring cooler climates and, therefore, not widely distributed in Spain, died out on the Iberian Peninsula in the seventeenth century (Halley et al., 2012:172). Although in Russia beavers never became extinct (Halley et al., 2012:172), their numbers were significantly reduced to a threatening degree. Therefore, it might seem reasonable to assume that prototypicality of the referent across countries could have been among the factors contributing to the divergent salience of its features for the speakers of different languages.

Thus far, the category of connotative lacunae has been presented in an attempt to highlight its characteristic features and substantiate its relevance with the help of supportive examples. Summing up the above, connotative lacunae emerge if the lexemes having formal equivalents in the target language diverge in the conceptual dimension. However, such conceptual discrepancy is often caused by extralinguistic factors idiosyncratic to the linguistic community. Due to the equivalence of forms and lacunarity of content, this is the most covert category, the hardest to detect. As a result, one of the main pitfalls of this category is its low profile. Frequently passing unnoticed, connotative lacunae impede the establishment of the pragmatic equivalence between the source and target texts. Although this kind of gap can be encountered in our everyday speech, its impact manifests itself to a

greater extent in the literary contexts abundant with imagery, allusions, and metaphorical and figurative senses.

## 4.2.2 Fully denotative lacunae

Fully denotative lacunae represent one of the most robust categories of lexical gaps in research carried out here, being the largest and the second largest group in English-Russian and English-Spanish datasets respectively (Table 4.1). Even from a qualitative perspective, this category is the most obvious one. Such lexemes are relatively straightforward to identify, and the standard lacuna-detection criteria such as lengthy definitions in bilingual dictionaries are applicable to this group (Chapter 3.2.3.1).

Fully denotative lacunae occur when the source text lexeme denotes a culture-specific referent which does not exist in the target language community. In other terms, the given category features cultural realia traditionally forming part of everyday routines, which from a cross-linguistic perspective turn out to be specific to the source language community. Fully denotative lacunae provide insight into the cultural diversity revealing traditional customs, practices and lifestyles of the speakers, as well as social, political and historical realms of life.

For instance, the lexemes *kilt* and *sporran,* denoting traditional elements of Scottish dress, were once fully denotative lacunae in Russian due to the absence of the corresponding referents in the Russian speech community. However, the corpus-based study revealed that at the present time these terms are located in the interim stage between fully denotative lacunae and borrowings. These terms are not yet included in modern Russian encyclopaedic dictionaries (e.g. Kuznetsov, 2000; Efremova, 2020), but in the analysed translations of the film subtitles the lexeme *kilt* was transliterated in all five instances, whereas the transliterated form *спорран* "sporran" was identified in two out of five cases. This demonstrates that in the corpus analysis *килт* "kilt" turned out to be an invariant equivalent. Conversely, *sporran* had alternative translations: it was also substituted with a hypernym *сумка* "bag" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:270) and translated descriptively as *шотландская сумка* "Scottish bag" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:266) and *меховая сумочка* "little fur bag" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:267).

Therefore, in terms of entrenchment of these concepts in the linguistic knowledge of the Russian speakers, *kilt* may appear more familiar to the Russian public than *sporran*. This is

also corroborated by the fact that the search for *килт* "kilt" in the Russian National Corpus (2003-2022) returned 83 occurrences, whereas the search for *спорран* "sporran" yielded only one occurrence. This does not seem surprising, however, since *kilt*, being one of the most famous Scottish symbols, is likely to be familiar to a larger audience than a secondary element of Scottish dress such as *sporran*.

However, the fact that the transliterated terms are not yet included in the Russian dictionaries should not be overlooked. Since the word frequency is one of the main parameters considered for the inclusion of the words in the dictionaries, it can be assumed that the transliterated forms have not yet entered common parlance and have not yet become sufficiently frequent. It can, therefore, be argued that although there is a tendency towards the adoption of these English terms into Russian, the transliterated forms may still be unfamiliar to the average target audience and are likely to require some additional clarification.

Likewise, in Spanish *kilt* was once a fully denotative lacuna due to the absence of the corresponding object in the Spanish speech community. However, the corpus analysis found a similar tendency towards the adoption of the English term into Spanish since the English lexeme was preserved in translation in two out of five instances. The search for the lexeme *kilt* in CORPES XXI (v. 0.94) returned 15 occurrences, also suggesting that the term may soon become borrowed into Spanish. In contrast to *kilt*, *sporran* cannot be considered a fully denotative lacuna in Spanish since Spanish has a term *escarcela* for a small belt bag originally used to carry tinder and flint (Enclave RAE, n.d., escarcela).

The above examples illustrate another important characteristic of lexical lacunae, namely their ability to exist in an intermediate state between lacunae and borrowings. Being diachronically variable, a lacuna tends to become filled over time, if the referent it denotes acquires relevance in the cross-linguistic context. However, this transition from the category of lexical gaps to a category of filled lacunae existing in the target language in the form of borrowings is not necessarily instantaneous. Sometimes such change can take place rather quickly and a lexical gap becomes filled in a short period of time, as in the case of the English lexeme *lockdown*. The transliterated form *локдаун* "lockdown" first entered common Russian parlance in the context of the Coronavirus outbreak in spring 2020 and the borrowed term came to be used in mass media (e.g. Krayushkins, 2020; RIA Novosti, 2020; Ezhova, 2020) and spread rapidly across the speech community. In contrast to *lockdown*, for other lexical lacunae the path towards the adoption of the foreign term

into the target language can be much longer. Therefore, lacunae can exist in a borderline state and become filled only when the corresponding concept becomes relevant in the target language community.

One of the difficulties faced by translators dealing with fully denotative lacunae is a necessity to explain an unfamiliar concept in a concise way. This may often be problematic since translation should preferably shed some light on the cultural background to unravel the concept but without rendering the target text cumbersome. However, the greatest pitfall associated with translation of fully denotative lacunae is that some compound terms usually consisting of two simple terms are often not recognised by translators as fully denotative lacunae as such. For instance, *mince pie*, a traditional British sweet pastry served during the Christmas season, is often incorrectly translated as *pastel de carne* "meat pie" into Spanish (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:128). The name of the dish can be misleading since *mince* denotes finely chopped beef or lamb (OED, 2022, mince n., sense 1). Therefore, a translator should be aware that the traditional filling of the Christmas *mince pie* is made of a mixture of dried fruits and spices; otherwise, literal translation is very likely to take place.

Likewise, *party bag* can be mistakenly translated into Russian as *подарок на вечеринку* "a gift for a party" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:474). Interestingly, the etiquette of giving bags filled with small gifts to every child who attends a children's birthday party is becoming more and more popular in Spain nowadays and, therefore, the corresponding expressions emerge to fill the fully denotative gap. However, the corpus study did not reveal any invariant equivalent and the *party bags* are referred to in Spanish in a variety of ways including *bolsitas de recuerdos* (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:355)*, bolsas de la fiesta* (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:352)*, bolsas de sorpresas de porquería* (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:353) and *cotillones* (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:351)*.

Another English compound *wedding list*, being a fully denotative lacuna in Russian, can also be incorrectly translated as *список гостей на свадьбе* "a list of wedding guests" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:478). To provide a correct translation of this compound term a translator should be aware of a currently common Western tradition of compiling a list of presents that the marrying couple would like to receive on their wedding day. However, very often translators interpret the unfamiliar concept based on the primary meanings of its constituents. As a result, such compound terms, being fully denotative

lacunae in the target language, are often not acknowledged as such and erroneously translated.

As mentioned above, fully denotative lacunae presuppose the absence of the referent in the target language community. However, the culture-specific referent can be not only a material object but also a phenomenon. The names of national holidays or festive occasions widely celebrated in a lingua-cultural community are a case in point. *Guy Fawkes' night,* alternatively called *Bonfire night* or *Gunpowder day* is a British observance commemorating a failed plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament and eventually to kill the king. On November 5, 1605, when the plot was uncovered, people started bonfires to celebrate that the king survived the attempted murder. This tradition has been preserved up to the present time and bonfires along with firework displays are part of the celebration. Although Guy Fawkes was not the leader of the plotters, he was the one caught in action when the explosives stored in a cellar of the Houses of Parliament were found (Ellis, 2010:24). Thus, the observance became associated with his name.

However, from a cross-linguistic perspective, this event is clearly culture-specific, marking a particular page in English history. Since the name of this festivity has no equivalent in the target language, a translator faces a challenge of "transcoding" a lexical unit denoting a phenomenon that has never existed in the target language community. In translation of fully denotative lacunae a dilemma usually arises whether to provide a brief overview of the socio-historical context to bring the concept to light or to rely on the general knowledge of the audience, not overloading the translation with historical background. Unfortunately, there is no universal solution, and a translator's decision should be premised on a whole array of considerations taking into account the immediate context, text type and its function as well as the target audience/readership.

Since translation of film subtitles does not presuppose inclusion of translators' notes in contrast to, for instance, fiction, one of the most frequent strategies for handling fully denotative lacunae is the substitution of the lacunar item with a hypernymic term in the target text (translation strategies are briefly addressed here, whereas a more detailed discussion follows in Chapter 6). This technique was used in the following example:

Source text

(English)                    You've seen one **bonfire night**, you've seen them all.


Target text

(Russian)                    Я уже была на **праздновании**, ничего нового не увижу.


Back translation             I have already been at the **celebration**, I won't see anything new
                             there.

                                               (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:918)


In the target text, *bonfire night* was substituted with a more general term *празднование*
"celebration". Generalisation, being a reasonably adequate translation solution for film
subtitles, nevertheless inevitably leads to the loss of information in the process of
"transcoding". The mention of the specific holiday in the source text creates a certain
temporal reference, contextualising the event in time, whereas the target text is completely
devoid of it as well as of the corresponding associations.


In some translations, as in the case below, the focus, by contrast, is shifted to the
orientation in time.


Source text

(English)                    - When did you stop working together?
                             - It was November 1998, two days after **Bonfire Night**, and it was at
                             my request.


Target text

(Spanish)                    - ¿Cuándo dejaron de trabajar juntos?
                             - En noviembre del 98, **el día tres**, y fue a petición mía.


Back translation             - When did you stop working together?
                             - **On 3 November** 1998, it was my request.
                                               (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:674)


Despite this translation not being accurate (two days after November 5 would be
November 7), the substitution of a holiday with its date may seem a useful strategy in some
contexts.

Some fully denotative lacunae pose serious problems in translation since they not only highlight the absence of the referent in one of the speech communities, but they also reveal historically entrenched discrepancies between cognitive attitudes, traditional values, beliefs and knowledge of the lingua-cultural society. An English phrase *baby shower* is a fully denotative lacuna in Russian and Spanish. However, there is much more at stake than just a structural inconsistency. Without any additional information as to the story behind this festive occasion, the general Russian audience may remain puzzled by such festivity. The *baby shower* tradition originated in the USA and is chiefly spread in the English-speaking world (OED, 2022, baby shower n.). Nowadays, *baby showers* are becoming more common in the UK. However, there is a more traditional British custom of "wetting the baby's head" when a new father invites his friends to drink the health of a new-born (Fox, 2004:361).

Apparently, the term *baby shower* was formed metaphorically. Sense 4a of the word *shower* (OED, 2022, shower n., sense 4a) suggests that it is "a liberal bestowal of something". Therefore, an expectant mother is showered in the figurative sense with presents for a baby including baby clothes, blankets, milk bottles, dummies, diapers etc. In Russian culture, however, there is no tradition of pre-birth celebrations. Moreover, it appears fundamentally antithetical to the well-established custom of keeping pregnancy out of the public eye.

The secrecy around childbearing in Russian culture, shrouded in superstition, is rooted in the old Slavic mythology. The early Slavs had an ambivalent attitude towards pregnancy. On the one hand, a pregnant woman was seen as the very embodiment of fertility, and magical forces for healing and protection were attributed to her. On the other hand, pregnancy was regarded as a vulnerable and dangerous period since the expectant mother, carrying two souls inside her body, was believed to be on the borderline between life and death (Anisov, 1995:43). This belief was reflected in the old Slavic saying *с брюхом ходить — смерть на вороту носить* "to have a pregnant belly is to have death tied around one's collar" (ibid:43). Therefore, various superstitious pieces of advice were given to protect a mother-to-be: pregnant women were not supposed to knit, to touch rope, or to twirl thread (ibid:44). The thread was associated with an umbilical cord. Thus, knitting involving making knots and entangling thread was avoided to prevent knotted cord (Kononenko, 2013:780). Not only was knitting inadvisable for expectant mothers, but preparation of any layette in general before giving birth was associated with bad luck too.

Even nowadays due to superstition, some mothers-to-be avoid buying infant clothes and toys before the baby is born and tend to keep the pregnancy secret as long as they can in order to avert the evil eye. It is also uncommon to reveal a baby's name before giving birth. This echoes the old Slavic tradition of concealing the babies' real names received during christening in an attempt to cheat fate and protect the new-borns from misfortune (ibid:277).

Due to the influence of American culture, the compound *baby shower* can be occasionally encountered in the present-day Russian in the form of a borrowing *бэйби шауэр* "baby shower" (e.g. in Chunikhina, 2016). However, the search for the transliterated form yielded no results in the Russian National Corpus (2003-2022). No matches were found in the Russian lexicographic portals either (Academic, 2000-2021; Rubricon, 2001-2011). The corpus study also shows that this concept is likely to be unfamiliar to the general Russian audience. In one out of five instances, it was incorrectly translated as *день рождения ребенка* "child's birthday" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:930), whereas in the remaining four cases it was substituted with hypernymic terms such as *вечеринка* "party" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:927; Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:928), *праздник* "celebration" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:926) and *посиделки* "get-togethers" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:929).

Therefore, when a fully denotative lacuna turns out to be a conceptual lacuna, generalisation may seem the optimal translation solution. A hypernymic equivalent allows the translator not to go into detail which can potentially cause perplexity in the target audience due to the conflicting attitudes to the phenomenon in question across different speech communities.

Interestingly, even if a fully denotative lexical gap is bridged in translation, its connotative lacunarity is likely to persist at the conceptual level. For instance, if *brown Windsor* is literally translated into Russian or Spanish and accompanied by an explanatory note that it is a traditional British soup, in formal terms the fully denotative lacuna is eliminated. However, the target text expression is devoid of the corresponding connotative component. In English *brown Windsor* is sometimes used disparagingly, seen as a symbol of British cuisine (OED, 2022, brown Windsor n.), whereas the translation fails to convey this association. Therefore, fully denotative gaps resist translation, additionally requiring explication to compensate for lacunarity at the connotative level.

Certain semantic domains stand out for their propensity for the occurrence of fully denotative gaps. These domains include *FOOD, CLOTHING, MEANS OF TRAVEL, ENTERTAINMENT* and *EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION*, corresponding to the third level categories of the semantic hierarchy of the HTE (Chapter 5.2.2). Although this study employed a combination of methods for lacuna detection (as discussed in Chapter 3), with reference to fully denotative lacunae, the method of analysis of semantic domains proved particularly useful in the detection of culture-specific referents and phenomena.

Summing up the above, fully denotative lacunae emerge if there is no referent in the target language community. The referent can be either a material object or a phenomenon. Besides, fully denotative lacunae pose problems in translation when they reveal conflicting attitudes, beliefs and traditions across different speech communities.

## 4.2.3  Fully nominative lacunae

Fully nominative lacunae can be detected in the target language when the source text item is devoid of a structural equivalent symmetrically located at the same categorisation level of cognitive taxonomy. Fully nominative lacunae, being non-lexicalised concepts, have no specific denomination in the target language. This type of lacuna encompasses the notions which are conceptualised in the target language but have no specific name and are usually referred to using a hypernymic term.

This category can be illustrated with the English expression *paternity leave,* which is a fully nominative lacuna in Russian. In English, there is a clear distinction between *maternity leave* and *paternity leave.* However, these concepts were not lexicalised simultaneously: the first attested use of *maternity leave* was in 1919, whereas *paternity leave* is only recorded as in use from 1973 by the HTE. This time interval may indicate that the notion of *paternity leave* crystallised in English in response to the change of the woman's role in the British society of the twentieth century, which resulted in the revision of the social norms.

In Russian, however, there is no such differentiation, with *paternity leave* being a fully nominative lacuna. The corpus analysis revealed that in three instances out of five it was translated with the help of a hypernym *отпуск по уходу за ребенком* "leave to care for a child" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:971; 972; 975). Alternative translations such as *декрет* (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:974), an abridged form of *декретный отпуск*

"leave for pregnancy and childbirth" along with the calque *отцовский декрет* "paternity leave for pregnancy and childbirth" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:973) do not seem appropriate translation variants. In the Russian lingua-cultural community there is a clear distinction between *отпуск по уходу за ребенком* "leave to care for a child" and *декретный отпуск* "leave for pregnancy and childbirth". While only women are entitled to the latter, the former can be granted to either parent. Therefore, the coined expression *отцовский декрет* "paternity leave for pregnancy and childbirth" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:973) can be seen as an oxymoron.

Thus, in the corpus analysis, generalisation was identified as the most popular strategy in translation of the English compound *paternity leave* into Russian. It may be assumed that paternity leave is a less frequent phenomenon than maternity leave in the Russian culture and, therefore, it is not lexicalised separately. Indeed, in 2017 only 2% of Russian men took time off work to care for a child, which is significantly less than in Europe: for the same timeframe in question, in Germany, for example, one in four men took paternity leave (Lysenko, 2017). Although in 2007 Russian men obtained equal legal rights to take paternity leave as Russian women*, отпуск по уходу за ребенком* "leave to care for a child" still remains mainly a women's prerogative in the public consciousness with individual cases of paternity leave being actively discussed in the mass media (Lysenko, 2017).

However, should the need arise to lexicalise the relevant concept in Russian and translate it precisely, it can still be done, but with the help of a more extended syntactic structure: *отпуск по уходу за ребенком отцу,* where *отцу* is a noun in the dative case acting as an indirect object, i.e. "[granted] to a father". Although this expression can be formed in Russian and perhaps can be seen as the most precise translation solution, no evidence of such translation was found in the corpus analysis. Besides, the search for *отпуск по уходу за ребенком отцу* "leave to care for a child granted to father" in the Russian National Corpus (2003-2022) returned no results (for comparison, the search for *отпуск по уходу за ребенком* returns 12 occurrences). Therefore, although this notion is conceptualised in both English and Russian, in terms of formal equivalence, the English expression *paternity leave* is a fully nominative lexical gap in Russian since it has no symmetric counterpart and can only be translated descriptively.

English and Russian represent two opposite poles in terms of lexicalisation of these concepts, whereas Spanish occupies an intermediate position in this regard. DLE RAE

(2022) contains an expression *permiso de maternidad*, whereas *permiso de paternidad* is not yet included in the dictionary. However, the latter has already crystallised and can be found in the CORPES XXI (v.0.94): 53 occurrences (for comparison, the search for *permiso de maternidad* returns 34 occurrences). Thus, in contrast to Russian, the English expression *paternity leave* is not a lexical gap in Spanish due to the existence of the equivalent expression *permiso de paternidad,* which, however, has not gained widespread acceptance to a sufficient extent to be included in the dictionary.

Lexicalisation patterns of these concepts in English, Spanish and Russian clearly reflect the development of the mental representations and related social frameworks entrenched in the speech communities. However, due to the dissemination of the concept of same-sex families, the Russian hypernym *отпуск по уходу за ребенком* "leave to care for a child"*,* which makes no reference to the gender of a parent and their relevant social role, eventually may become the optimal variant in terms of social correctness. Perhaps such gender-neutral expressions as *parental leave* in English or *permiso parental* "parental leave" in Spanish may come to the fore in the not-too-distant future.

Summing up the above, there are referents (in this case the phenomena) in all three speech communities; the concept has fully crystallised (the phenomenon is generally acknowledged and even legally accepted) in Russian, English and Spanish. However, apparently due to the lack of prototypicality of paternity leave in the Russian lingua-cultural community, this phenomenon bears no specific lexicalisation in Russian. Therefore, the English lexeme *paternity leave* can be considered a fully nominative lacuna in Russian.

Kinship terminology, well known for being culture-specific, can reveal some fully nominative lacunae. Another example of an English lexeme having no structural equivalent in Russian is *grandparent.*[19] Although each of the grandparents bears a specific name in Russian: *бабушка* "grandmother" and *дедушка* "grandfather," there is no equivalent of the English gender-neutral term. The equivalence can be established only at a more specific level of categorisation. Likewise, in Spanish, there is no structural counterpart of the English *parent.* It can be translated either with the help of one of the

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[19] The term *grandparent* was previously mentioned as an example of lexical lacunae in Popova, Sternin and Sternina (2002:75). The present study, however, offers a distinct classification of lacunae and views this lexeme as a fully nominative lacuna in Russian.

hyponymic terms *madre* "mother" or *padre* "father" or by using a plural form *padres* "parents".

Thus, fully nominative lacunae are non-lexicalised concepts that have fully crystallised in the speech community and reveal divergence at the categorisation level.

## 4.3   The intermediate types of lacunae

During the validation of the triadic model, it was found that in addition to the three main types of lexical gaps, intermediate categories could also be identified. Although sometimes the line between the categories appears to be fine, a more fine-grained classification of lexical gaps may prove useful in translation practice for the analysis of the equivalent relations between the source text and the target text.

### 4.3.1   Partially denotative lacunae

The first intermediate type of lexical gaps identified in this study is a partially denotative lacuna. This type is transitional between connotative and fully denotative lacunae since the conceptual divergence is caused by the differences between the referents across speech communities. However, due to this referential discrepancy, the internal concept of the source item and the target item also appears distinct. Therefore, this intermediate type was placed in between these two major groups. This category encompasses lexemes denoting shared concepts with significant referential discrepancies. An example of a partially denotative lacuna is a *Christmas cracker,* which is traditionally linked to the Christmas season in Britain and can usually be seen on festive tables in the form of a wrapper containing a small present, a paper crown and a joke or a riddle (OED, 2022, Christmas cracker n., sense (b)). When pulled, Christmas crackers snap and produce a distinctive sound.

Christmas crackers, as they are known in Britain, are part of neither the Russian nor the Spanish Christmas celebrations. Nevertheless, Christmas crackers are traditionally translated as *petardos de Navidad* "Christmas crackers" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022) and *рождественские хлопушки* "Christmas crackers" (Multitran dictionary, n.d.) into Spanish and Russian respectively. The corpus data provide evidence that these are the most used equivalent expressions. However, in terms of referential equivalence, these counterparts cannot be considered fully adequate since the only thing that the English, Spanish and

Russian crackers have in common is the cracking sound they produce. The ways in which the crackers are pulled, the occasions on which they are used (Christmas in the UK and Spain vs. New Year in Russia), and their contents differ across these countries. Of course, the contents of the British Christmas crackers can also vary, but the Russian crackers never contain anything apart from the confetti. Therefore, even though there are functional equivalents in both Spanish and Russian, the Christmas cracker can be seen as a partially denotative lacuna since the mental representations of speakers of English, Spanish and Russian significantly diverge due to the referential dissimilarity.

Similarly, the English compound *pillar box* can be considered a partially denotative lacuna in Spanish. The referents exist in both speech communities but differ in colour with Spanish *pillar boxes* being typically yellow and the English ones red. The British *pillar box* has become one of the symbols of the UK along with *double-decker* and *Big Ben,* whereas its prototypical colour served as a basis for the formation of another culture-specific expression *pillar box red* which can be translated into Spanish either with the help of a hypernym or alternatively descriptively.

Another similar example of a partially denotative lacuna is English *letterbox,* which unlike typical letterboxes in Spain and Russia represents an aperture in the front door, through which the post is delivered (Chapter 3.2.3.2). Being an idiosyncratic element of the British culture, it may cause some ambiguity in translation with culture-bound components usually being lost. Thus, partially denotative lacunae reveal referential discrepancy which can cause confusion in the cross-linguistic context if their lacunarity is not acknowledged.

## 4.3.2  Partially nominative lacunae

To establish the second intermediate category identified in the classification analysis, the main difference between the fully denotative and fully nominative types is worth reiterating. While fully denotative lacunae encompass terms denoting culture-specific referents which do not exist in other speech communities (e.g., *kilt, sporran*), fully nominative lacunae are lexemes which have no particular denomination despite the existence of their referents (e.g. *grandparent* is a fully nominative lacuna in Russian, whereas *parent* is a fully nominative lacuna in Spanish). Therefore, fully nominative lacunae are concepts which have crystallised in other languages but at a more specific or, conversely, at a more general level of categorisation.

However, in the classification analysis, an intermediate type between fully denotative and fully nominative lacunae was identified: partially nominative lacunae. Being essentially invisible concepts, they have crystallised only in part. There are some phenomena that are common across speech communities (in other words, the referents exist), but for some reason, they are not fully conceptualised. This category includes non-verbalised concepts which, due to lack of cultural salience, pass unnoticed and have not crystallised in the form of lexical units.

For instance, most British, Spanish and Russian parents have first-hand experience of the *school run,* i.e. a daily practice of driving children to and from school. Although school runs are also widespread in both Russia and Spain, neither Russian nor Spanish has a corresponding concept. The OED records two senses for *school run.* It can be used with reference to cross-country races at Rugby School (OED, 2022, school run n., sense (a)), whereas in British English it has a meaning of a daily trip typically by car to school (ibid.: sense (b)). The extralinguistic circumstances are most likely to have shaped a communicative need to develop the second sense.

Across Britain, an average primary school day usually starts at nine o'clock in the morning and finishes at three o'clock in the afternoon. Conversely, in Russia and Spain school hours vary significantly. In 2015 25% of Russian schools employed a double shift system which presupposed pupils' division into strands attending lessons at different times, with some educational institutions using even a triple shift system (Ivoylova, 2015). Across Spain, school hours also vary, and each school sets its own timetable. Besides, Spanish lessons are delivered in blocks: the morning block takes place before *siesta* "afternoon break" followed by the afternoon block (Sánchez Caballero, 2017). Thus, it can be hypothesised that the relative uniformity of the British school hours could have contributed to the salience of a journey usually taken by car during drop off and pick up times to school, which, in turn, triggered the formation of the second sense of the lexeme *school run*.

Multitran dictionary (n.d.) translates *school run* into Russian descriptively: *отвозить ребенка в школу и забирать обратно на машине* "to take a child by car to and from school", and so does Lexico (2022), English-Spanish dictionary: *viaje en coche que hacen los padres para llevar o ir a buscar a los niños al colegio* "a journey by car taken by parents to take their children to or from school". The corpus analysis also revealed that there is neither a functionally equivalent hyponym nor a hypernym in Russian and Spanish

that could substitute *school run,* requiring a complex syntactic restructuring of the sentence.

Another example illustrating this category of lexical gaps is an English lexeme *pescatarian* which can be seen as a partially nominative lacuna in both Russian and Spanish. *Pescatarian* is a relatively new word which was first attested in 1991 (OED, 2022, pescatarian adj. and n.). This term denotes an individual who follows a diet which includes fish but not meat. Although people who eat fish but avoid meat can also be found in Russia and Spain (referents exist in both Russian and Spanish speech communities), this concept has not fully crystallised in Russian and Spanish. In fact, the corpus analysis revealed that this lexeme is often transliterated or translated erroneously as *вегетарианец* "vegetarian" (e.g. Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:207) and *vegetariano* "vegetarian" (e.g. Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:165) in Russian and Spanish respectively.

The main difference between fully nominative lacunae and partially nominative lacunae lies in the extent of conceptualisation of a certain object or phenomenon. Fully nominative lacunae denote concepts which have fully crystallised in the public consciousness but have no specific denomination (e.g. *paternity leave* in Russian). Speakers do refer to such concepts in speech, albeit indirectly (typically with the help of hyponyms/hypernyms or near synonyms). Conversely, partially nominative lacunae reveal non-lexicalised concepts which have crystallised only in part and seem almost invisible in the speech community (e.g. *school run)*. This is obviously a very subtle distinction, and since this fine line is not tangible, sometimes it is quite difficult to establish to what extent the concept has crystallised (this issue will be taken up further in Section 4.4). Partially nominative lacunae can be seen as an interim step in the concept's development towards full conceptualisation.

### 4.3.3  Multi-layered lacunae

Finally, the third detected intermediate category is located between fully nominative and connotative lacunae since it reveals lexical discrepancy (lack of denomination) but entails several conceptual inconsistencies. This category encompasses lexemes that are identified as lexical gaps in the target language but have additionally developed typically figurative meanings that also form lexical gaps. This category can be characterised as a multi-layered lacuna.

For example, the name of the musical genre *blues* is an example of a multi-layered lacuna in Spanish and Russian. The English concept of the *blues* draws on the association with sadness and melancholy. Blues music emerged in the USA in the late nineteenth century (OED, 2022, blues n.) and received its name as a result of the metonymic transference of meaning. A characteristic feature of the blues is a melancholic melody replete with flat notes, also known as blue notes (OED, 2022, blues n., sense 2b). Blue notes in chords lower the pitch, changing tonality to a minor key. In contrast to the melodies in a major key, the tunes in a minor key are usually perceived as sad. Taking into account that one of the meanings of English *blue* is low-spirited (OED, 2022, blue adj. and n., sense 4a), it makes sense why flat notes are also referred to as the blue ones: on the basis of a shared characteristic, i.e. an association with sadness and melancholy, *blue* has come to mean off-pitch notes. A distinctive flat tonality that makes the melody sound so blue is what distinguishes the blues from other musical styles. It is possible that this conceptual mechanism underpins inclusion of the term *blues* in the titles of the first blues songs such as *Dallas Blues* and *Memphis Blues*, as a result of which the name was transferred to the whole genre (OED, 2022, blues n., sense 2a). Thus, considering that the concept of blues music is premised on the idea of melancholy, it can be argued that the meaning of the English lexeme *blue* radiated, forming a multi-layered lacuna in Spanish and Russian.

Unlike English *blue*, Spanish *azul* "blue" and Russian *синий* "blue" are devoid of the relevant negative connotations and are not associated with melancholy. This is the first conceptual discrepancy, on the basis of which the English lexeme *blue* can be considered a connotative lacuna in Spanish and Russian. Besides, before blues as a genre came to prominence and became known world-wide, the metaphorically extended unit of meaning could reveal a second discrepancy. In other words, in the first half of the of the twentieth century *blues* could also be seen as a fully denotative lacuna since the referent (the musical style in this case), having originated in the USA, was unknown to Spanish and Russian speakers. This lexical gap became filled over time and the English term was adopted into Spanish and Russian. Enclave RAE records the first use of *blues* in Spanish in 1958, whereas the word was first included in the dictionary as a borrowing in 1992 (Enclave RAE, n.d., blues). Similarly, only in the second half of the twentieth century was the transliterated form *блюз* "blues" included in the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia (1969-1978). Thus, the English lexeme *blues* existed in the form of a multi-layered lacuna for almost a century until it became filled in both Spanish and Russian.

Therefore, apart from the primary colour meaning (to varying degrees equivalent across all three languages), the meaning of melancholy and that of the musical genre were once lacunar in Spanish and Russian.[20] Interestingly, when the lexeme *blues* was adopted from English into the other languages, the lexical lacuna became filled only at one particular layer. However, the semantic concept remained obscure, and the relationship between the term and its sense became disrupted in the target languages. Although nowadays the term *blues* exists in all three languages, only in English can the concept be deconstructed, and the relationships between various components of meaning be traced. Conversely, in Spanish and Russian these links appear compromised due to the existence of lacunar elements. Thus, having adopted a borrowed term from English, the languages filled in a lacuna only at one level.

Another example of a multi-layered lacuna is an English lexeme *afterthought*.[21] The word was first attested in 1590 in the sense of an idea coming to one's mind at a later stage or a subsequent thought about something that happened in the past (OED, 2022, afterthought n., sense 1a). By the end of the nineteenth century as a result of semantic change the word developed an additional meaning and started being used with reference to the youngest of the siblings, often an unplanned child (OED, 2022, afterthought n., sense 3). In Russian and Spanish, both of these senses appear lacunar, i.e. have no monolexemic lexicalisation, revealing a multi-layered lexical gap. This, of course, does not mean that these concepts cannot be expressed in Russian and Spanish. In Jakobson's terms (1959:234), any idea can be conveyed in any language. However, from the structural perspective the lexeme *afterthought* reveals multiple lacunarity in Russian and Spanish and, therefore, can be seen as multi-layered lacuna.

## 4.4   Revision of the lacuna model and reformulation of the hypothesis

As a result of the classification analysis, six categories of lexical lacunae were identified. Three main categories were consistent with different dimensions of lacunarity highlighted in previous research studies, whereas the three intermediate categories were newly identified. However, there can be discerned certain similarity between partially nominative lacunae and lacunae understood as non-existing concepts (Chapter 2.2.1.2.2). Therefore, the working hypothesis implying three main types of lacunae can be considered only partly

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[20] The difference between English *blue* and Russian *голубой* "light blue" and *синий* "dark blue" has been widely discussed in scholarship (e.g. Winawer et al., 2007).

[21] This lexeme was previously mentioned in Popova and Sternin (2002:76) as an example of a lacuna. This thesis, however, takes the discussion further and classifies this item as a specific type of lacuna.

valid since identification of the new categories clearly calls for a revision of the lacuna model.

Initially, the order in which lexical lacunae were presented did not seem to have particular importance. However, this strand of research revealed that the order of priority is essential for understanding the mechanisms behind the formation of lexical gaps. It may seem more reasonable to start enumeration with fully denotative lacunae. Fully denotative lacunae embody the entire asymmetry between signs in the cross-linguistic "transcoding". As can be seen from Figure 4.1, all three links between the triangles' vertices are disrupted (the dashed lines represent disruption). Due to the absence of the referent in the target language community, the denotative discrepancy turns out to be pivotal, implying further nominative and conceptual inconsistencies. Therefore, the salience of the denotative gaps is likely due to the entire asymmetry.

*Figure 4.1 Schematic representation of a fully denotative lacuna*
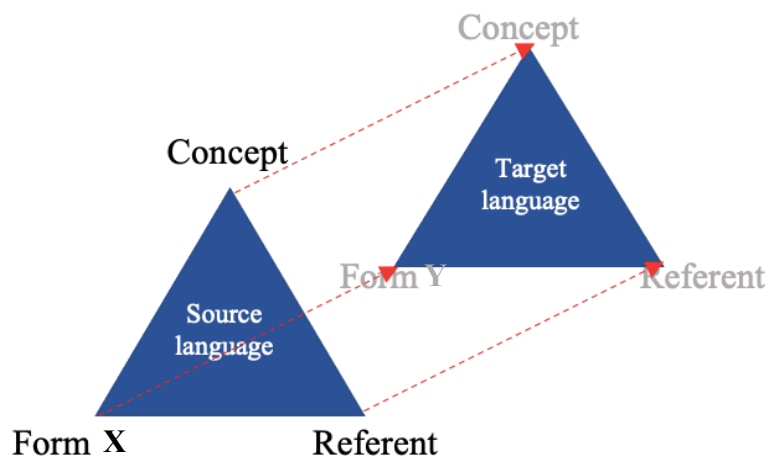


Unlike fully denotative lacunae, which have no referent in the target language community, partially nominative lacunae denote an existing referent, which for some reason has no name. Therefore, partially nominative lacunae can be established when the notion is only partially conceptualised: the referent exists (the phenomenon takes place) in the target language community, but the concept has not yet crystallised or has crystallised only in part. For instance, school runs occur all over the world, but neither Russian nor Spanish has an equivalent term for this activity.

Fully nominative lacunae reveal full conceptualisation of the notion in the target language community, which for some reason has no specific name. Thus, this category includes

fully conceptualised but non-lexicalised concepts. These lexical gaps usually reveal categorisation inconsistency. The English lexeme *grandparent* as well as its plural form *grandparents* are fully nominative lacunae in Russian due to there being no structural equivalents. However, the collective concept of grandmothers and grandfathers clearly exists in Russian as well. In case of fully nominative lacunae, the lexemes have a corresponding counterpart either at a more general or at a more specific level of categorisation. As shown in Figure 4.2, in the case of fully nominative lacunae, there is a referential link stable between the source item and the target item, whereas nominative and conceptual links between the signs are still disrupted.

*Figure 4.2 Schematic representation of a fully nominative lacuna*
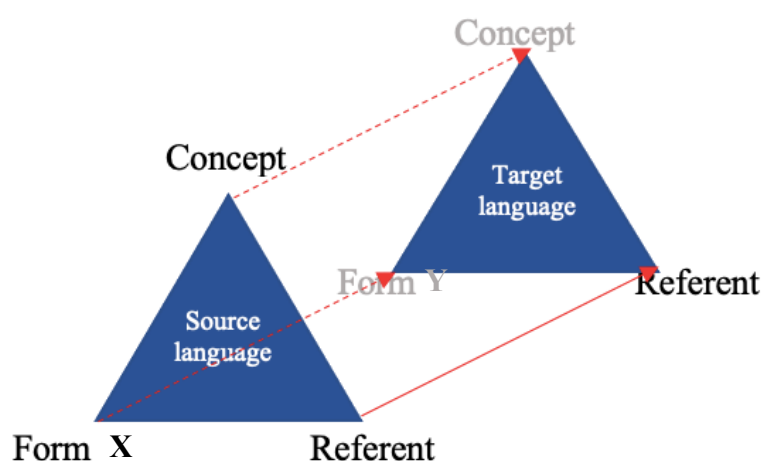


Multi-layered lacunae reveal lacunarity between multiple components of meaning and are an intermediate category between fully nominative and connotative lacunae since discrepancy in form entails further conceptual inconsistency.

The category of connotative lacunae reveals conceptual inconsistency. Despite the existence of a referent in both source language and target language communities and the availability of structurally equivalent designations, there is an inconsistency in the inner form of the concept as in the case of translation of the English lexeme *yellow* into Russian. Figure 4.3 depicts the relations between signs in the process of "transcoding", where referential and nominative links are stable, whereas the conceptual bond is disrupted.

*Figure 4.3 Schematic representation of a connotative lacuna*
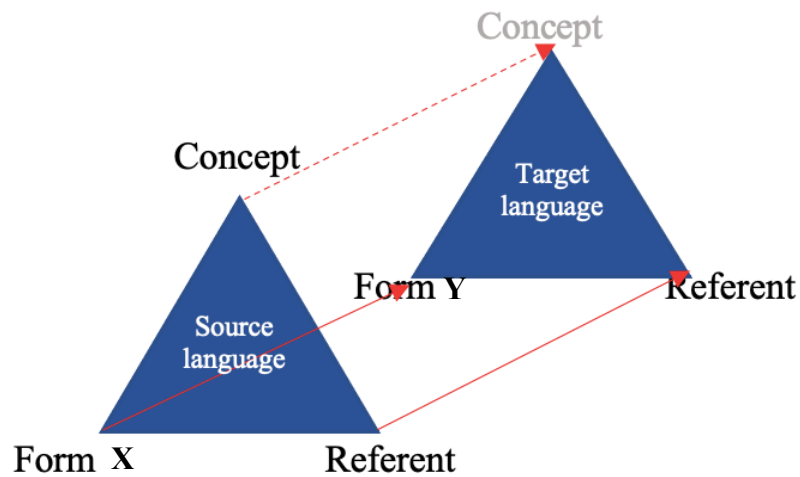


In the case of partially denotative lacunae, the referential link is only partly disrupted since the referent exists in both speech communities despite being slightly different.

Having identified six categories of lexical gaps, it appears more reasonable to transform the triadic model into a hexadic one which would unite various types of lacunae as depicted in Figure 4.4. Different sets of characteristics applicable to each category are listed in the corresponding text boxes.

*Figure 4.4 The hexadic model of lexical lacunae*

| | |
|---|---|
| + | Referent |
| + | Conceptualisation |
| + | Lexicalisation |
| - | Connotation |

| | |
|---|---|
| + | Referent |
| + | Multiple conceptualisation |
| - | Lexicalisation |
| - | Connotation |

*(yellow, rosemary, beaver, yellow ribbon)*

## 5.  **Connotative**

| | |
|---|---|
| ± | Referent |
| + | Conceptualisation |
| + | Lexicalisation |
| ± | Connotation |

4.  Multi-layered
*(blues, afterthought)*

6.  Partially denotative
*(Christmas cracker, letterbox)*

3. **Fully nominative**
*(grandparent, paternity leave)*

1. **Fully denotative**
*(kilt, sporran, bonfire night, baby shower)*

2. Partially nominative
*(school run, pescatarian)*

| | |
|---|---|
| + | Referent |
| + | Conceptualisation |
| - | Lexicalisation |
| - | Connotation |

| | |
|---|---|
| - | Referent |
| - | Conceptualisation |
| - | Lexicalisation |
| - | Connotation |

| | |
|---|---|
| + | Referent |
| ± | Conceptualisation |
| - | Lexicalisation |
| - | Connotation |

Symbols:

-    non-existent
+    existent
±    partially existent

According to the order in which the categories appear in Figure 4.4, starting from fully denotative lacunae and going clockwise, the concept that a lexical lacuna denotes starts taking an ever more concrete shape: from no conceptualisation due to the absence of the referent towards greater conceptualisation and eventually lexicalisation. Starting from fully denotative lacunae that reveal no equivalent links at all, in each successive category more equivalent links are established: instead of the dashed lines, direct links emerge. Therefore, the curved arrow in the middle of the triangle in Figure 4.4 depicts the extent of the concept crystallisation: from the total absence of a mental representation (due to the absence of referent) towards a more distinct conceptualisation.

This order also reflects the salience of lexical gaps: fully denotative gaps, revealing complete asymmetry of signs, are the most evident lacunae, whereas partially denotative gaps are the least obvious lacunae since they reveal alignment of all the links between the signs despite some denotative and connotative deviation in equivalence. Besides, the establishment of a certain consistency in the formation of lexical gaps can be helpful in understanding the mechanisms of their genesis (Chapter 5).

Summing up the above, it can be argued that a lexical lacuna always reveals a kind of asymmetry between signs in the process of "transcoding". Therefore, being a knowledge-dependent lingua-cultural artefact, a lexical lacuna manifests itself as an absence of a full one-to-one equivalent in the target language due to the structural discrepancy arising from the semiotic asymmetry of signs.

The classification process of lexical gaps revealed the fine demarcation lines between the categories. Sometimes, these lines were blurred, and a lexeme appeared to belong to both categories. In some cases, when the lacunar item appeared to be on the borderline between two categories, it was impossible to establish with any reasonable accuracy whether the concept had crystallised in language to a sufficient extent or not. Conversely, in other cases, lexemes genuinely belonged to more than one category. On the one hand, it may seem a fully denotative lacuna that became filled over time. On the other hand, a closer analysis reveals that there are some additional conceptual inconsistencies between the seemingly equivalent counterparts in different languages. A lot depends on the angle of view and, of course, on a certain point in time when the classification is made.

Interestingly, not only is there fuzziness between different categories of lexical gaps, but there is also fuzziness between the category of lacunae and borrowed lexis. There is no

distinct line between a lexical gap and a borrowing (Section 4.2.2). We cannot identify a moment in time when a lexical gap becomes officially filled. Even if a source text item becomes included in dictionaries in the form of a borrowing, it may still be unfamiliar to some speakers of a language since lacunarity is a knowledge-dependent phenomenon. As discussed above, being a dynamic category, lexical gaps can transform from one type into another as well as become filled in a relatively short period of time. This transformation can be so rapid, that it is impossible to identify a particular moment in time when the metamorphosis takes place. Lacunae can be in the interim stages, but then what can be used as a measure to define what category a lacuna belongs to? Of course, we can rely on lexicographic sources and corpus evidence. However, some languages have no up-to-date dictionaries comparable in size, level of detail and format to the OED (2022), for example. Some dictionaries, considered the most modern and reliable, may have been published twenty years ago. However, in linguistics twenty years can be seen as a comparatively long period of time during which a great number of processes can take place leading to language change. Therefore, it should be borne in mind that there will always be a degree of relativity in the analysis and in the identification of a category of a lexical gap.

Although there is a general fuzziness at the boundaries between categories, in the centre of each category, there can be found some prototypical examples. *Kilt* can be considered a more representative example of the category of fully denotative lacunae than *sporran*, for instance. While it is clear that there is no equivalent of *kilt* in Russian, it may be argued that there are Russian counterparts equivalent to *sporran* as it can simply be translated as *сумочка* "small pouch". While sporran and *сумочка* "small pouch" belong to the same semantic domain, they cannot be considered fully equivalent. Thus, there are some representatives of a category which are less exemplary than others.

Apart from the fuzzy boundaries between categories and varying prototypicality, there is also an issue with the definition of lexical gaps. Throughout the discussion, the properties of lexical lacunae were identified to provide a definition based on the main characteristics by the end of the chapter. Recapitulating the main characteristics of lexical lacunae, the following list can be compiled:

1. Lexical lacunae reveal asymmetry between signs
2. Lexical lacunae are cross-linguistically variable
3. Lexemes that can be seen as lexical lacunae in other languages constitute mainly a peripheral layer of lexis in the source language

4. Lexical lacunae are knowledge-dependent
5. Lexical lacunae are variable in terms of belonging to a particular category
6. Lexical lacunae are diachronically variable
7. Lexical lacunae are inherently relative

Some lacunae share all of these properties, whereas others can be characterised by just a few. In other words, not all the established features of a category are applicable to all of its members. Similarly, the properties attributed to each category of lexical gaps are shared by the best examples, whereas less representative members share just some of them.

Ultimately, the classification analysis revealed the fuzziness of the categories, varying prototypicality and definitional difficulty. These issues clearly echo the typical problems of the classical theory of categorisation. Having originated in Ancient Greece, the classical theory implied clearly delineated boundaries between categories, their mutual exclusivity and category membership based on an exhaustive set of characteristics (Evans and Green, 2006:249). However, the interrelations between the elements of the real-world categories are much more complex, and sometimes it is impossible to fit them within rigid frameworks. The problems stemming from the classical approach were resolved with the help of the prototype theory devised by Rosch and her colleagues (summarised in Rosch, 1978), which viewed human categorisation through the prism of cognitive psychology. According to prototype theory, categories are formed around good examples, whereas less prototypical examples, being more marginal, appear to be on the borderline between categories, thus, making the boundaries fuzzy.

Extrapolating prototype theory onto the lacuna model, lexical gaps can be seen as a continuum constituted by various foci emerging around the most prototypical examples. This more flexible approach allows us to explain the above-mentioned inconsistencies related to the suggested classification. Through the lens of prototype theory, the lacuna model becomes a continuum with seamless transition between categories and categories formed around the most prototypical category members.

Recapitulating what has been discussed above, this chapter has reported and analysed the results of the verification of the triadic model of a lexical lacuna. The model proved valid only in part, since three additional categories of lexical gaps were identified, clearly requiring revision of the working hypothesis. Thus, the model was reviewed through the prism of the prototype theory originating from cognitive psychology. Extrapolation of the

prototype theory onto the lacuna model allows for the reflection of the dynamics of the category of lexical gaps, which can be seen as a continuum with focal points emerging around prototypical examples. Lexical lacunae represent an extremely variable category. Therefore, being an inherently relative phenomenon, lexical lacunarity starts where equivalence ends. In other words, lacunarity is determined to a large extent by the degree of equivalence which a translator would like to achieve. From the semiotic perspective, lexical lacunae always reveal some kind of asymmetry between signs.

# 5   The lifecycle of lexical lacunae

## 5.0   Chapter overview

This chapter presents the results of the lexicographic data analysis, seeking to answer the research question of what the lifecycle of a lexical lacuna is. The findings discussed in the previous chapter and the results set out here underpin the pivotal part of the study concerning the issue of how a translator should handle lexical gaps which will be addressed in Chapter 6. Section 5.1 presents the results of the contrastive analysis of different forms of realisation of lexical lacunae (filled lexical lacunae aka borrowings vs. actual lexical lacunae) in an attempt to establish the causes of their formation in a language. The findings are discussed in the context of various factors underlying the formation of the language-specific lexemes. Section 5.2 highlights the pathways for filling lexical gaps and provides an overview of the metamorphoses occurring at semantic and grammatical levels in the process of borrowing. Section 5.3 concludes this chapter by bringing together the main findings emerging from the lexicographic strand of the study.

## 5.1   Formation of lexical lacunae

This section seeks to trace how lexical lacunae emerge, highlighting the mechanisms that trigger the asymmetric formation of the lexical systems in contrasting languages. Although there is no single clear-cut answer to the question of why lexicalisation patterns diverge across languages, by analysing and contrasting distinct sets of language-specific words across different language combinations, a number of empirical regularities can be identified. Such common features seen as indirect indicators of the emergence of lexical lacunae provide insight into the impact that various factors may have on lexical lacunarity.

At the outset, two phenomena should be differentiated: the detection of lexical gaps should be clearly distinguished from the formation of the language-specific lexemes in the source language. Lexical lacunae are visible only through the prism of contrastive analysis and manifest themselves strictly in a cross-linguistic situation. Therefore, lacunae can be detected due to the fact that one language turns out to have culture-specific terms, i.e. lacunar words that do not exist in the other language. Conversely, research into the formation of the lexemes, which eventually can be seen as lexical gaps in other languages, presupposes investigating the reasons behind the idiosyncratic development of the lexicalisation patterns.

The main objective of this section is, therefore, to explain how a lacunar lexeme emerges in the source language in order to establish the factors that contribute to its lacunarity in the cross-linguistic situation. If a word emerges in response to a communicative need, then what makes these communicative needs diverge across lingua-cultural groups? Why is a term coined for a specific concept in a certain speech community, whereas in others, the same concept is not lexicalised? What makes some features of an object or a phenomenon more salient for the speakers of a certain language, whereas others do not seem to notice them? These questions are addressed in this part of the study.

As discussed in Chapter 3.3, this strand of research involved semiotic, semantic, etymological and grammatical analysis of lacunar lexemes. In an attempt to pinpoint the general patterns in the formation of culture-bound lexemes, different forms of realisation of lexical gaps (borrowings aka filled lacunae vs. unfilled currently existing gaps) across different pairs of languages were investigated. For the establishment of the shared patterns, the four datasets were contrasted according to the following parameters: type of lexical gap, place in the semantic hierarchy of the HTE, categorisation levels where possible, date of attestation, part of speech, word formation and frequency.

The contrastive analysis revealed some regularities and consistent patterns grouped according to the two underlying factors giving rise to lexical lacunae: **extralinguistic** and **linguistic**. The factors can manifest themselves at different levels of human perception, as reflected in Table 5.1. The levels of perception reflect a simplified sequence of human interaction with the external world (involving sensory and psychological perception) and subsequent information processing (involving cognitive conceptualisation and lexicalisation). Extralinguistic factors affect both sensory and psychological processing, whereas linguistic factors reveal themselves during cognitive and verbal processing. It is important to stress that none of these levels can be investigated in isolation, since word-formation takes place due to their joint impact. The formation of lacunar items is not triggered by one particular factor; on the contrary, at each level of perception, certain processes take place, all of which contribute to the emergence of a language-specific word.

The extralinguistic factors motivating formation of the language-specific lexemes include external stimuli (aka culture-specific environment) and internal stimuli (changes in psychological perception, i.e. salience and prototypicality), which in turn foster conditions for subsequent cognitive and linguistic operations. In other words, the external stimuli

form a basis for the subsequent processes taking place at the higher levels. The linguistic factors include cognitive operations such as conceptualisation, categorisation and verbal processing as a result of which lexical forms are moulded.

The ovals superimposed on the table represent the integral link between the external environment and its psychological salience as well as the interrelatedness between prototypicality and conceptualisation. The external environment is related to salience since it predisposes speakers of a language to attribute attention to a certain phenomenon which should first appear for them sufficiently prominent from the psychological perspective to be lexicalised. For example, back in 2000 Fischer (2000:9) argued that English had no adjectives that would describe people who could or could not smell. However, twenty years later in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic the loss of smell acquired particular significance since it became one of the symptoms of Covid-19. In other words, the social change made the loss of smell psychologically salient, and the term *anosmic,* the use of which was earlier restricted to specialised contexts, began to be used more frequently in common parlance, as evidenced by the Coronavirus corpus (Davies, 2019). Therefore, environment and salience are intrinsically linked since environment can determine psychological centrality of an object/phenomenon.

Likewise, there is an integral link between prototypicality and conceptualisation. Bullfighting is obviously a more prototypical sport for Spanish speakers than for English speakers. Thus, in Spanish bullfighting is a productive source domain for metaphoric extensions (Dzantieva, 2015:1), whereas the same cannot be said of English. The Spaniards often talk about the relationship between a man and a woman in terms of a fight of a torero with a bull (ibid.). To convey meaning about a more abstract domain of LOVE, the Spanish speakers use a more concrete but highly prototypical (for them) domain of BULLFIGHTING.

The following sections will first outline extralinguistic factors and then proceed to the discussion of linguistic factors triggering formation of language-specific lexicalisation patterns.

*Table 5.1 Correlation between the parameters of data comparison, factors underpinning the emergence of the lacunar lexemes in the source language and levels of perception*

| Parameters | Factors | | | Levels of perception in sequential order |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Type of lexical gap (established on the basis of semiotic and etymological analyses) | Extralinguistic | External stimuli | Environment | Sensory |
| | | | Salience | |
| Place in the semantic hierarchy of the HTE | | Internal stimuli | Prototypicality | Psychological |
| Categorisation levels where possible | Linguistic | | Conceptualisation | Cognitive |
| Date of attestation | | | Categorisation | |
| Part of speech | | | Lexicalisation | Verbal |
| Word formation | | | | |
| Frequency | | | | |

## 5.1.1 Extralinguistic factors

The impact of extralinguistic factors can be established from several perspectives including semiotic, etymological and semantic.

## 5.1.1.1 Semiotic perspective

Firstly, under the semiotic approach, viewing language in conjunction with the objects and phenomena of the surrounding world through the prism of human perception, the influence of external factors on the formation of language-specific lexemes becomes apparent.

Lexis, being the most flexible layer of language, immediately reflects social, historical and cultural shifts in society. Lexical plasticity has been an enduring idea in linguistics. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Sapir argued that lexis, being "a very sensitive index of the culture of a people", absorbed cultural changes and immediately reflected them through meaning change, loss of outdated terms, the formation of new words and adoption of borrowings (Mandelbaum, 1970:36). More than sixty years later, the same thought was echoed by Wierzbicka (1997:1) and remains fully relevant today. The socio-cultural environment shapes the need for new words as well as triggering semantic change. We have all witnessed how the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic determined the surge in development of new expressions to describe our changing reality. Various terms acquired new senses, whereas many long-forgotten phrases which had been coined in the context of the bubonic plague or Spanish flu regained their prominence (OED Webinar, 2020). *Covid crisis, self-isolating, social distancing, face coverings* and many other painfully familiar Coronavirus-related notions have become an intrinsic part of our everyday routine. Consequently, the related concepts have entrenched themselves in language. Driven by extralinguistic factors, through the lens of human perception, lexis immediately transforms and adapts to the new circumstances to fill the communicative niche.

However, in contrast to the Coronavirus pandemic, which affected the whole world, the socio-historical development of individual speech communities goes along distinct trajectories. Various communicative needs occur to denote culture-specific realia, in response to which new terms emerge. Lexical lacunarity is determined to a significant extent by the idiosyncrasies of the cultural and historical environment, playing a

fundamental role in the formation of lexical items in the source language, which can eventually be seen as lexical gaps in the target language.

Social upheavals affecting a lingua-cultural community are instantly echoed in its language. Thus, the Great October Socialist Revolution triggered the formation of numerous language-specific terms in Russian (Section 5.2.1). For instance, the Russian word *большевизм* "Bolshevism" was coined to refer to a period of reign of the communist party after the overthrow of the Romanov dynasty. Likewise, the Spanish term *Reconquista* "reconquest" was coined to describe a period in the history of the Iberian Peninsula associated with battles between the Christian kingdoms and the Muslim Moors. These events, marking significant milestones in the history of the countries, turned out to be salient for speakers of Russian and Spanish who conceptualised them in the form of mental representations and subsequently verbalised them in language. These terms were subsequently borrowed into English to refer to the corresponding historical periods of development of the Russian and Spanish states, and, therefore, the fully denotative lacunae became filled.

Discrepancies in the material world, whether it be socio-historical idiosyncrasies or referential differences, are extralinguistic in nature and play the primary and perhaps the most prominent role in the formation of language-specific lexemes, which in contrastive analysis prove to be lexical gaps. The analysis revealed that such denotative inconsistencies account for a significant proportion of the analysed lexical gaps in Russian and Spanish.

As can be seen from Table 4.1, fully denotative lacunae (lexemes denoting culture-specific referents) constitute 31% and 29% of the detected lacunar items in Russian and Spanish respectively. Therefore, 31% and 29% of the detected lacunar items in Russian and Spanish respectively originate from the explicit referential differences in the extralinguistic environment. In addition to this, partially denotative lacunae (lexemes having no full equivalent in the target language due to the referential difference) make up a further 6% in Russian and 8% in Spanish. Therefore 37% of the analysed lexical gaps in both Russian and Spanish occur due to the obvious referential inconsistencies.

## 5.1.1.2 Etymological perspective

Incorporating the etymological approach into this investigation of the causes of the emergence of language-specific lexemes, it becomes clear that other types of lexical gaps can also occur due to the differences in the external environment. While fully denotative and partially denotative lacunae emerge due to the obvious discrepancies in the material world, other more covert divergences in form and content also stem from the extralinguistic environment to a significant extent and can be traced during etymological analysis. This point is well illustrated by the connotative incongruence between the English *back-garden* and its Russian equivalent *задний двор* "back yard", which in the corpus-based analysis turned out to be the invariable counterpart (in five out of five instances *back-garden* was translated as *задний двор* "back yard" into Russian). *Задний двор* "back yard" may seem a functional equivalent, but a closer examination of this concept reveals that it is a false friend, being a typical connotative lacuna due to the divergent connotative component: the Russian equivalent possesses a strong negative connotation non-existent in English.

One of the likely reasons for this connotative lacunarity is that the Russian concepts denoting front entrance and back entrance (related in meaning to the *front* and *back garden*) are not contrasted in terms of spatial reference, but rather their intended use underlies their juxtaposition. This distinction by function is reflected in the metaphorical conceptualisation of the expressions *парадный вход* "gala entrance" and *задний ход* "back entrance", often metaphorically referred to as *черный ход* "black entrance". *Парадный вход* "gala entrance" was historically used by the masters, whereas the servants would usually walk through *черный ход* "black entrance". Such a colour-based metaphor is likely to have originated from the idea of the social contrast to emphasise the origins of the people who used it, which were considered ignoble. The negative associations of the Russian *задний ход* "back entrance" must have been attributed to the expression *задний двор* "back yard" by contiguity. The latter subsequently came to be used in a figurative sense to mean the worst state of affairs in any endeavour (Fedorov, 2008, задний двор), contributing to the overall negative connotation of the Russian *задний двор* "back yard".

The English speech community was not immune to social segregation either. Separate entrances for the representatives of different strata of society were also used in the UK, and such stratification is similarly reflected in language. The English expression *poor door* along with its antonym *rich door,* can be encountered even in the modern parlance in the

context of social contrast in housing (e.g. Graham, 2015). Therefore, English has separate pairs of lexical items corresponding to each type of conceptual juxtaposition: *front* and *back entrance* if the entrances are distinguished in terms of their spatial location; *poor* and *rich door* if the entrances are distinguished in terms of social segregation. The expressions *poor* and *rich doors* are obviously socially loaded expressions and are very likely to trigger a strong emotional reaction, whereas *front* and *back entrances* appear to have a more neutral connotation.

Unlike the relatively neutral *front* and *back entrance* in English, the Russian expressions *парадный вход* "gala entrance" and *черный ход* "black entrance" are conceptual metaphors which reflect the ingrained perception of the material reality by Russian speakers.

Further formation of this connotative asymmetry across languages seems to have been influenced by the historical context. In modern Britain, urban housing is widely spread, and, therefore, the distinction between the back and front entrance as well as the back and front garden is quite relevant. Conversely, this type of urban accommodation is not typical in today's Russia due to the ubiquity of the standardised multi-storey apartment buildings. The communicative need to differentiate between the masters' and servants' entrances started to wither away, as the Soviet revolution, having bridged the drastic social divide, eradicated the distinction between nobles and non-nobles. The former palaces, mansions and so-called profitable houses belonging to the rich, where the poorer members of the society could rent accommodation, were handed over to the proletarian class (Encyclopaedic Handbook, 1992, дома-коммуны). As a result, the salience of the conceptual distinction between noble and non-noble parts of buildings vanished as the social contrast was smoothed. The notions as well as the lexemes denoting them, however, survived in language. Although these expressions have forfeited their semantic transparency in present-day Russian, their original conceptualisation footprint can be reconstructed through etymological analysis laying bare the historical and cultural contexts in which they were formed. Thus, the divergent grounds of the notional juxtaposition underlying the given Russian and English expressions may be due to the fact that diverse environments give salience to different features, on the basis of which inconsistent conceptual frameworks are moulded.

As can be seen from the above, even connotative lacunarity can be underpinned by the extralinguistic experience of the lingua-cultural community. Therefore, not only fully

denotative but even more covert connotative gaps often stem from the culture-specific development of the speech group.

Therefore, in contrast to fully denotative lacunae, which can be quantified with comparative ease and which clearly reveal the discrepancies of the objective reality across cultures, the extralinguistic origin of the more covert types of lacunae is less evident. Etymological data is not always available, and the origin of the words often cannot be established with reasonable accuracy. Besides, sometimes etymological analysis reveals more than one potential origin of the word and hypothesising mechanisms of lacunarity acquires an even more speculative character. Although it does not seem possible to estimate precisely the impact of the extralinguistic factor on the formation of culture-specific lexemes in quantitative terms, from the etymological perspective, the given examples illustrate the impact extralinguistic factors may have on the formation of lacunar terms in the source language.

## 5.1.1.3 Semantic perspective

Finally, the importance of the extralinguistic context in the formation of lexical lacunae can also be demonstrated from the semantic perspective and is supported by the results of the semantic analysis of different forms of realisation of lexical gaps. Russian and Spanish filled lacunae (aka borrowings) in English, as well as currently existing English lexical gaps in Russian and Spanish, were arranged according to the semantic categories of the HTE (2$^{nd}$ edn., v. 5.0). Figures 5.1-5.4 display the breakdown of the four types of data at the most general level of the semantic hierarchy. Each segment of the circle corresponds to a single semantic category, namely The World, The Mind and Society, arranged clockwise.

It should be borne in mind that while the Russian and Spanish borrowings are two completely different datasets, the English lacunae in Russian and the English lacunae in Spanish are constituted by a common core of data. Thus, the similarity between Figure 5.3 and Figure 5.4 is not statistically significant since it was expected that the recurring lexemes would produce consistent results. What is important, however, is the general pattern shared by all four datasets.

*Figure 5.1 Distribution of the Russian borrowings in English at the highest level of semantic hierarchy (Electronic Appendix:11 RUS borrowings statistics)*
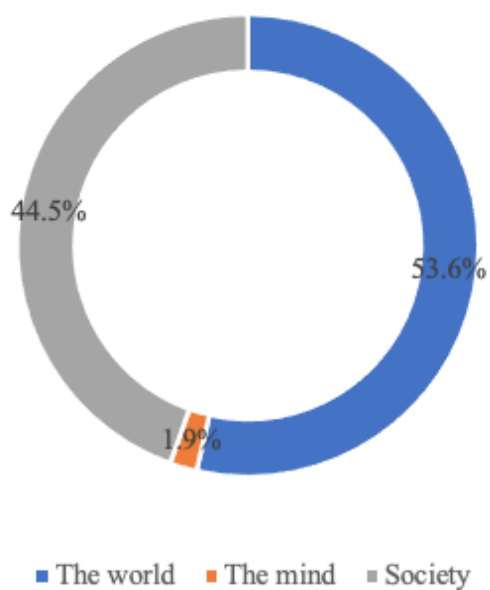


|  | Absolute value | % |
|---|---|---|
| The world | 225 | 53.6% |
| The mind | 8 | 1.9% |
| Society | 187 | 44.5% |

*Figure 5.2 Distribution of the Spanish borrowings in English at the highest level of semantic hierarchy (Electronic Appendix:13 SPA borrowings statistics)*
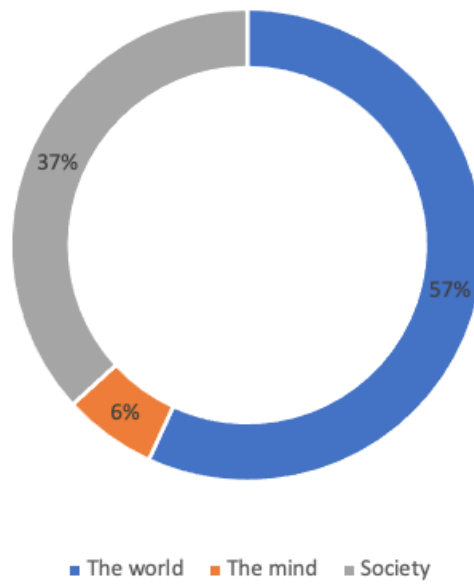


|  | Absolute value | % |
|---|---|---|
| The world | 1117 | 57% |
| The mind | 125 | 6% |
| Society | 725 | 37% |

*Figure 5.3 Distribution of the English lacunae in Russian at the highest level of semantic hierarchy (Electronic Appendix:16 Lacunae statistics)*
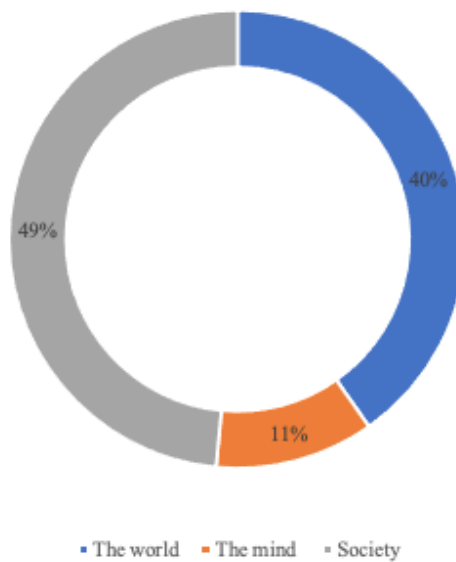


|  | Absolute value | % |
|---|---|---|
| The world | 93 | 40% |
| The mind | 26 | 11% |
| Society | 112 | 49% |

*Figure 5.4 Distribution of the English lacunae in Spanish at the highest level of semantic hierarchy (Electronic Appendix:16 Lacunae statistics)*



|              | Absolute value | %       |
|--------------|----------------|---------|
| The world    | 67             | 40.36%  |
| The mind     | 22             | 13.25%  |
| Society      | 77             | 46.39%  |
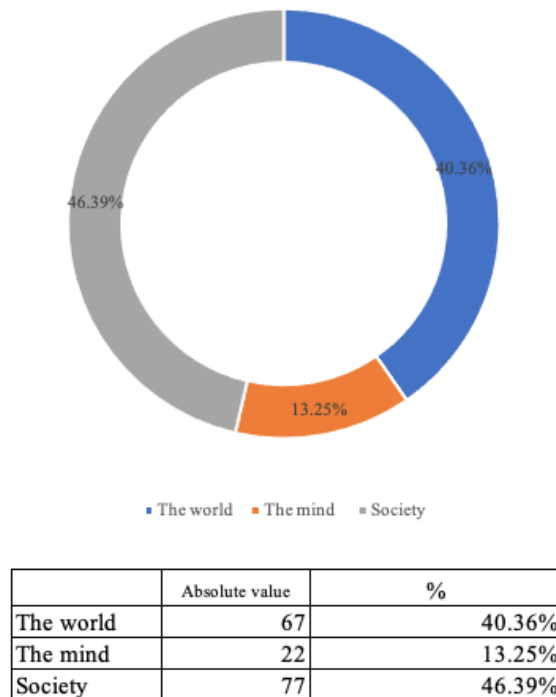
It is apparent from the charts that at the highest level of categorisation, the least represented category is The Mind across all four datasets, whereas The World and Society make up the bulk of data. This is the most striking observation to emerge from the data, suggesting that lexical lacunae largely emerge in response to external stimuli: the tangible discrepancies in the surrounding world and social infrastructure underlying lifestyles of different speech communities are the most salient ones, shaping the need for culture-specific lexemes.

However, this finding should be interpreted with caution for two reasons. Firstly, it should be taken into consideration that The Mind category is the smallest part of the HTE (Kay, 2010:262). Secondly, the data selected for the study cannot be representative of all lexical gaps in all language combinations. Although this research strand was designed in a way allowing for bidirectional investigation (English-Spanish vs. Spanish-English) of different forms of realisation of lexical gaps (filled vs. unfilled) across language combinations (English-Spanish vs. English-Russian), it is not possible to extrapolate these results to all lacunae without reservation. Nevertheless, this finding corroborates the importance of the extralinguistic factor in the formation of language-specific lexemes, which eventually can be seen as lexical lacunae in contrasting languages.

The analysis of the mechanisms of formation of language-specific lexemes, as exemplified above, highlights four perception levels, at each of which a word can potentially become lacunar: sensory, psychological, cognitive and verbal. The environment, either in the form of the culture-bound referents (aka physical stimuli) or socio-historical context (aka emotional stimulus), functions as a kind of catalyst at the sensory level. At the level of psychological perception, the salience of the object or phenomenon gives rise to the communicative need to name it. At the cognitive stage, the mental representation is construed, which is eventually lexicalised at the verbal level. In other words, a language-specific lexeme can emerge due to the discrepancies on the sensory level, which immediately trigger changes in our psychological perception of the object or phenomenon, making it more salient or prototypical. This, in turn, results in further conceptualisation and subsequent lexicalisation. Thus, the extralinguistic factors, triggering the formation of the language-specific lexemes, encompass external stimuli (environment) as well as internal stimuli (changes in psychological perception of objects and phenomena, i.e. salience and prototypicality).

Thus far, environmental discrepancies in conjunction with psychological salience have been discussed. However, prototypicality is another important extralinguistic factor triggering the formation of lexical gaps on the psychological level. Psychological prototypicality is intrinsically related to our conceptualisation. The way we construe mental representations and metaphors, in particular, is based on our empirical knowledge and experiential memory to a significant extent. This idea is not new and has been widely discussed in the literature (e.g. Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), but it is fundamental for our understanding of the mechanisms of formation of language-specific lexemes and expressions. Metaphorical extensions often stem from experience-based knowledge. Anthropomorphisation is a case in point. Attributing human properties to animals, people are likely to be guided by prototypicality. Some anthropomorphisms are universal across cultures, whereas others appear to be lexical gaps from the cross-linguistic perspective. For instance, English, Spanish and Russian speakers consistently distinguish the hard-working nature of bees. Thus, the English simile *busy as a bee* is fully equivalent to the Spanish counterpart *ocupado como una aveja* "busy as a bee". Likewise, Russian has a figurative expression *трудиться как пчела* "to work as a bee".

However, some metaphors appear lacunar across languages. Returning to the example mentioned in Chapter 4.2.1, namely the English lexeme *beaver,* it is worth emphasising

that its connotative lacunarity may be due to the prototypicality of the referent in the English, Spanish and Russian speech communities. While the English attribute diligence to beavers, speakers of Russian and Spanish do not distinguish beavers' hard-working nature. This may be due to the ubiquity of beavers in all of North America, where this metaphor originated. Therefore, speakers appear to construe mental representations on the basis of their perception of prototypicality.

Extralinguistic factors are not the only drivers of the formation of lacunar terms and expressions in the source language. Linguistic factors also come into play when the communicative need arises to name a concept. These include the way speakers of different languages construe and categorise the surrounding world as well as the way these conceptualisation and categorisation patterns become embedded in the linguistic structure.

## 5.1.2   Linguistic factors

### 5.1.2.1 Conceptualisation

It is well known that speakers of different languages often construe the same concepts in different ways. For instance, in contrast to Russians, English and Spanish speakers conceptualise the curved shape of the upper lip differently. English has an expression *Cupid's bow* fully equivalent to the Spanish counterpart *arco de Cupido* "Cupid's bow". These metaphors have emerged due to the resemblance between the shape of the lip curve and the bow of Cupid. Russian also uses metaphors to denote this physical characteristic of the human lips: *губной желобок* "lip groove" and *галочка над верхней губой* "a tick on the upper lip". The Russian metaphors are also based on the similarity of form between the source domain and target domain items; however, the source domain was chosen differently. Being a curious linguistic discrepancy, this example cannot be considered a prototypical lexical gap since the inconsistency is covert and can be identified only from the formal perspective at the conceptual level.  Nevertheless, this is a helpful example illustrating how conceptualisation patterns can diverge in different speech communities.

Similarly, the compounds *brown goods* and *white goods* exemplify inconsistent conceptualisation in English and Russian and are likely to pose certain difficulties in translation. These compounds have no formal equivalents in Russian since conceptualisation occurred along a different path. In English the distinction between these two types of home appliances was made on the basis of colour. The first recorded use of

the expression *white goods* dates back to 1947 (OED, 2022, white goods n., sense 2), whereas the compound *brown goods* emerged almost three decades later in 1976 (OED, 2022, brown goods n.). When such household appliances as cookers, dishwashers, refrigerators, tumble driers and washing machines started to appear, they were traditionally white (OED, 2022, white goods n., sense 2), whereas smaller electronic devices like audio equipment, radios and television were conventionally produced in brown colour (OED, 2022, brown goods, n.). Therefore, colour distinction formed the basis for the differentiation of the given concepts in English. Conversely, in the Russian speech community these types of domestic appliances are counterposed on the basis of their size, hence the expressions *крупно-габаритная бытовая техника* "large-size household appliances" and *мелко-габаритная бытовая техника* "small-size household appliances". Therefore, distinct principles underlie conceptualisation patterns in English and Russian. While the given English expressions can be considered covert lexical gaps in Russian at the conceptual level, Spanish has equivalent counterparts *línea blanca* "white line" and *línea marrón* "brown line", demonstrating that English and Spanish speakers construed these concepts in a similar way drawing on distinction by colour.

However, in some cases conceptualisation across languages occurs along completely distinct trajectories, giving rise to overt lexical lacunae. For instance, the English lexeme *butterfly*, being a connotative lacuna in Russian and Spanish, can be used derogatively in combination with the modifier *social* to denote a person who attends numerous social events. Therefore, the English metaphor reflects the frivolity of a person who flits from one social event to another like a butterfly. *Social butterfl*y is a lexical gap in Russian due to the absence of a full equivalent, but people who lead active social lives also exist in the Russian speech community, and this characteristic feature of their lifestyle became salient for Russian speakers as well. However, Russians followed a different conceptualisation pattern and associated such people with the magnitude of their influence in society, coining a term *светская львица* "secular lioness". This Russian expression is gender-specific, and there is no equivalent for male persons leading a socially active lifestyle. Thus, English and Russian conceptualisation paths diverged. While in English, not particularly positive characteristics of people leading a socially active lifestyle are highlighted, in Russian a greater emphasis is placed on the high social status of socialites and their privileged position in society.

The corpus analysis revealed that *social butterfly* was indeed translated into Russian as *светская львица* "secular lioness" but considering the above, these two expressions do not

appear fully equivalent counterparts due to their connotative divergence.[22] This example demonstrates once again that lacunarity is determined to a great extent by equivalence that the translator would like to achieve. Even though these expressions can be used as functional equivalents in some contexts, from the structural perspective, they appear to be lacunar, illustrating how different languages opt for divergent conceptualisation patterns.

In Spanish, no equivalent metaphors were identified in the corpus analysis, with demetaphorisation being the most frequent translation solution in handling this lexical gap. In one out of five instances, *social butterfly* was literally translated into Spanish. In contrast to Russian, in Spanish calque can potentially work well in some contexts provided there are some further details shedding light on the concept. The literal translation in Russian is extremely unfortunate due to the immediate association with another metaphoric expression *ночная бабочка* "night butterfly" used with reference to a woman of loose morals.

Summing up the above, the referent existed in all three speech communities, but its characteristics appeared salient enough only for the English and Russian speakers to form a concept denoting a socially active person. However, the English conceptualisation pattern diverged from that in Russian, resulting in the emergence of a lexical gap. Inconsistency at the cognitive level stemming from diverse conceptualisation patterns can be seen as one of the linguistic factors influencing the formation of the language-specific lexemes. Such human ability as conceptual thinking gives rise to associative, stylistically loaded and emotionally charged components of meaning which are often lacunar from the cross-linguistic perspective as they crystallise through idiosyncratic cultural experience and historical knowledge.

The English lexeme *seesaw* is another example of a lexical gap in Russian, the analysis of which reveals distinct conceptualisation of motion in English and Russian. *Seesaw* has no direct equivalent in Russian and is typically translated with the help of what can be considered a hypernym in Russian *качели* "swings", as evidenced by the corpus-based study. From the viewpoint of Russian speakers, *seesaw* is a variety of *swings*. However, this perspective clearly contradicts the English speakers' understanding of the notion of *swings*. The reason for this discrepancy most likely lies in the divergent conceptualisation

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[22] This translation solution was identified at the earlier stage of the analysis but was not included in the final corpus dataset since it did not fit the sampling pattern, according to which every second occurrence was selected.

of the motion produced by the *seesaw* and *swings* across English and Russian speech communities.

The Russian lexeme *качели* "swings" is a noun derived from the verb *качать* "to dangle, to rock, to swing, to sway". In Russian this verb denotes any smooth alternating motion associated with oscillation of an object in space, hence corresponding cognate expressions with a common stem in bold: ***кач**ели* "swings"*, кресло-**кач**алка* "rocking chair"*, **кач**ать ногами* "dangle legs"*, у**кач**ивать ребенка* "lull a child to sleep"*, **кач**ать колыбель* "rock a cradle"*, **кач**ка на море* "sea-swell". Interestingly, in Russian the verb *качать* "to dangle, to rock, to swing, to sway" can also be used with reference to a pendulum, as illustrated by the following corpus example (Reverso Context (2013-2022)):

Source text

(English)      For a time, the pendulum of political opinion may have **swung** too far against the nation state and its role.

Target text

(Russian)      Возможно, определенное время маятник политического мнения **качался** слишком далеко от идеи национального государства и его роли.

In the source text, the verb *swing* describes a particular type of motion of an object suspended from the fixed support above. Therefore, the English verb encodes two conceptual components: motion type and existence of the point of suspension. In this regard, the English lexeme *swing* contrasts with its Russian equivalent ***качаться*** since the amount of information they encode is different. In the target text, the reflexive verb ***качаться*** characterises the manner of the motion, i.e. the alternating slow movement of the object. The reflexive suffix *-ся* indicates the agency of the subject, thus emphasising the fact that the pendulum moves on a self-induced basis after having received the impetus. However, the Russian verb ***качаться*** does not encode any information on the suspension point with this semantic component being completely absent in the target text.

As can be seen, the meaning of the target language verb *качать* is not fully equivalent to that of its source language counterpart. English and Russian speakers conceptualise motion on a divergent basis focusing on different underlying principles of construal. While the English distinguish the point of support, for Russian speakers this nuance appears to be

irrelevant and passes unnoticed. In contrast to Russians, English speakers go into further detail in the description of the type of motion. Thus, if the object is suspended from above, it *swings* like a pendulum. If the object has a fixed point on the ground, it *sways* like *trees sway in the wind*. If the object is placed on the ground it *rocks* like *a rocking cradle*. In English different verbs are appropriate for different contexts with collocational restrictions being applicable to certain idiomatic expressions. Conversely, all these phrases can be translated into Russian with the help of a single verb *качать.* Summing up the above, unlike Russians, apart from the manner of motion, the English also distinguish the type of support or suspension.

Reverting to the *seesaw,* it may be assumed that this English term originated on the basis of the association with a reciprocating motion of a saw. However, since *seesaw* is not suspended from above, it becomes clear why it cannot be considered a variety of *swings* in English. Lacunarity occurred at the cognitive level with speakers of English and Russian construing the concepts distinctly.

## 5.1.2.2 Categorisation

Another linguistic factor triggering the formation of lexical lacunae on the cognitive level is categorisation. The way people categorise objects and phenomena of the surrounding world varies across speech communities resulting in the formation of inconsistencies between lexical systems.

According to Fillmore's frame semantics (1977, 1982), human knowledge is organised by means of cognitive frames within which various concepts are nested. Therefore, the experience is categorised with the help of concepts, understanding of which is possible exclusively in the context of cognitive frames to which they belong. To understand the meaning of the verbs *buy* and *sell* one should be familiar with the notion of a *commercial operation* involving *buyers*, *sellers, goods* and *money* used as a unit of account (Fillmore, 1982:116). In line with frame semantics, concepts exist in a hierarchy within corresponding semantic frames, some of which can be culture-bound.  Thus, lexical lacunae emerge due to the cultural idiosyncrasy of some frames against which lacunar concepts are profiled.

As mentioned in Chapter 3.3.3, it was decided to classify the identified lexical lacunae according to the categorisation levels of the HTE (2nd edn., v. 5.0) in an attempt to

determine systematic regularities. Due to the unavailability of the equivalent historical thesauri in Russian and Spanish, it was not possible to compare categorisation levels in the source language (English) and the target languages (Russian and Spanish) on a systematic basis. However, even a classification of the source language items according to the categorisation levels of the HTE yielded curious results. It should be borne in mind that the HTE provides for a twelve-tiered hierarchical classification of concepts. Therefore, the identification of category levels (superordinate, basic and subordinate) has been conventionalised in this study, stipulating a floating basic level, as further explained in Chapter 3.3.3.

The categorisation levels could not be identified for a significant amount of the detected English-specific terms since some lexemes were not included in the HTE. Due to the ongoing updates of the HTE and OED, some English-specific terms established with the help of the OED advanced search tool could not be found in the HTE. In the tables below the number of such lexemes is indicated in the category labelled "n/a". Besides, the lexemes that belong to more than one semantic category are grouped separately as "Multiple categories".

As can be seen from Table 5.2, showing the distribution of the identified English lexical gaps in Russian across the categorisation levels of the HTE, the largest number of lexemes was identified on the lowest level, i.e. the subordinate level of categorisation. The same holds true for the English lexemes, which can be seen as lexical gaps in Spanish (Table 5.3). In other words, the vast majority of the detected English lexemes which can be seen as lexical gaps in Russian and Spanish reveal the inconsistency between the lexical systems at their peripheries, that is at the finest level of categorisation. No single lexical gap was identified at the higher tiers of the hierarchy. However, the most interesting finding is related to the lexemes identified on the floating basic level.

*Table 5.2 Distribution of the identified English lexical lacunae in Russian across the HTE categorisation levels*

| HTE categorisation level | Number of occurrences |
|---|---|
| Subordinate level items | 63 |
| Factual basic level items – the name of a category | 13 of which 13 categories contained lacunae |
| Basic level items | 35 of which 25 contained lacunar members |
| Multiple categories | 31 |
| n/a | 53 |

With respect to the English-Russian language combination, there were 13 lexemes identified which technically were located on the subordinate level, but even on the lowest level of the HTE categorisation they were listed as headings and formed further subcategories, containing hyponymic members. Thus, strictly speaking, such lexemes could be considered as factual basic level items, whereas the members could be seen as subordinate level words. Such lexemes were grouped together under the label "Factual basic level – the name of a category". For instance, *shortbread* (01.07.01.15.24|04 n.) is located on the lowest categorisation level, but in fact, it forms a further subcategory containing other lexemes such as *short-cake, petticoat tails, strawberry shortcake, shortie*, all of which are also lexical lacunae in Russian. In all 13 instances, it was found that the hyponymic members were also lacunar. The same regularity was identified in the other language combination, English-Spanish. As shown in Table 5.3, there were identified 6 English lexemes (lexical gaps in Spanish) which technically were located on the subordinate level, but formed further subcategories, 5 members of which were also lacunar in Spanish. This result indicates that if a lacunar item forms a subcategory, the members are highly likely to be lexical gaps too.

*Table 5.3 Distribution of the identified English lexical lacunae in Spanish across the HTE categorisation*

*levels*

| HTE categorisation level | Number of occurrences |
|---|---|
| Subordinate level items | 43 |
| Factual basic level items – the name of a category | 6 of which 5 categories contained lacunae |
| Basic level items | 29 of which 19 contained lacunar subcategories |
| Multiple categories | 21 |
| n/a | 42 |

The same pattern holds true for the lexemes located at the basic level of categorisation of the HTE. There were detected 35 basic level lexemes seen as lexical gaps in Russian. In 25 of 35 instances, lexical gaps were additionally detected at the subordinate levels. Basic level English lexical gaps in Spanish also fall into the same pattern. For example, the English lexeme *scone* (01.07.01.15.23|01.05.02 n.), which was identified as a lexical gap in both Russian and Spanish, is located at the basic level with a subcategory *dropped scone* (01.07.01.15.23|01.05.02.01 n.) nested within it. Thus, all the lexemes contained in the category 01.07.01.15.23|01.05.02 n. as well as the members of the subcategory 01.07.01.15.23|01.05.02.01 are lexical gaps in both Russian and Spanish.

If a lacunar term is located at the subordinate level with a conceptual frame existing in both the source and the target languages, such a lexical gap can be relatively easily bridged in translation with the help of a synonym or a hypernym. Conversely, if a lacunar item is located at the basic level, translation of such a term may require an explanation of the whole conceptual frame non-existent in the target language and is likely to pose certain difficulties for a translator. By way of illustration, a lexeme *brownie* (03.01.04.04.02|06.06 n.) is nested within a category entitled "Members of scouts/guides". Therefore, to understand the meaning of the word *brownie*, one should be aware of the functions of the scouts/guides associations. Interestingly, the term *scout* along with the subordinate level word *brownie* used to be a fully denotative lexical gap in Russian due to the absence of the referent. Over time the lexeme *scout* was borrowed into Russian, whereas *brownie* remained a lexical gap. Therefore, filling of a lexical gap seems to follow the hierarchical pattern: higher-level lexical gaps are likely to be eliminated first, thus

establishing an equivalent frame, within which other lacunar lexemes can also potentially become filled.

Summing up the above, analysis of the distribution of lexical lacunae across the categorisation levels revealed that the major part of the identified English-specific lexemes is located at the lowest categorisation level. This finding along with the observation that lexical lacunae are largely peripheral words due to their low frequency (Chapter 4.1) suggest that lexical lacunae emerge largely at the limits of the lexical systems. These results corroborate Pym's idea that lexical gaps are "limits of culture" (Pym, 1993:27). The processes of conceptualisation and categorisation are universal to humankind. However, extralinguistic discrepancies conditioned by cultural idiosyncrasies of the speech communities manifest themselves as lexical gaps. These results may help us to understand why lexical gaps often pass unnoticed. Predominantly, lexical gaps reveal non-core discrepancies between the lexical repertories and can be relatively easily compensated for with the help of synonyms or higher-level words. Greater challenges occur if lexical lacunae are identified on the higher levels of the semantic hierarchy. Basic level gaps tend to reveal more striking conceptual discrepancies. This strand of research revealed that if language-specific lexemes are located on the basic categorisation level, the members of the subordinate categories are likely to be lexical gaps as well. This accords with frame semantics which stipulates that concepts exist within frames and that reference to a particular concept activates the whole conceptual frame.

## 5.1.2.3 Verbalisation

When a culture-bound lexeme emerges in language, at the structural level, there can also be identified specific processes that contribute to the overall lacunarity of the lexical item. Word-formation can also follow language-specific patterns due to the typological differences between linguistic systems.

The compiled datasets of the English lexemes which were identified as lexical gaps in Russian and Spanish are deliberately heterogeneous as explained in Chapter 3.2.1.1. Therefore, the datasets contain monolexemic terms as well as compounds. It was also decided not to focus exclusively on nouns, and as a result different parts of speech were included in the analysis.

Comparing word-formation methods showed that English-specific lexemes could emerge as a result of different processes including compounding (e.g. *yellow ribbon, butterfly, baby shower, bake-off*), blending (e.g. *brunch, glamping, staycation, bromance*), acronym formation (e.g. *DIY, DVLA, BTEC*), clipping (e.g. *scone*), affixation (e.g. *toddler, intruder*), conversion from one word class to another (e.g. the noun *kilt* derived from the verb *to kilt* of Scandinavian origin (OED, 2022, kilt n.)) and borrowing (e.g. *barber* with the ultimate Latin etymon *barba* "beard" (OED, 2022, barber n.)). Some lexemes that were identified as lexical gaps in Russian and Spanish emerged due to a combination of word-formation methods. For instance, *scone* is apparently a clipped form of a borrowing from Middle Dutch *schoonbrot* "fine bread" (OED, 2022, scone n.). Thus, this term was once a denotative lacuna in English, which was filled over time. Then the clipped form entered common parlance and became a well-entrenched concept in the lingua-cultural community.

However, there is one more important source of formation of lexical lacunae. The datasets also included English-specific lexemes which emerged due to semantic change and metaphoric extension. By way of illustration, the compound *corn row* was first attested in the eighteenth century in the USA and originally was used with reference to planting lines in which corn typically grows. However, by the end of the twentieth century, the meaning was metaphorically extended to denote Afro-American plaits resembling by form the lines of corn. Thus, whereas in English on the subordinate level, a more fine-grained categorisation appeared, a lexical lacuna emerged in Russian and Spanish since there was no equivalent expression.

Taken together, the identified methods of the formation of English-specific lexemes follow naturally occurring word-formation patterns. In other words, compared to specialist terminology, which is often artificially constructed, the analysed lexemes identified as lexical lacunae in Russian and Spanish occurred in language naturally.

Compounding, being the most common method of formation among the analysed English-specific words, merits more detailed consideration. This type of word-formation occurs when two lexemes are joined together to denote a new concept. A significant number of the investigated lacunar compounds is formed with the help of attributive nouns such as *baby shower, school run, bamboo curtain, victory garden, window shopping* etc. While in English nouns quite often function as adjectives modifying other nouns, this type of construction can be considered lacunar to a certain extent in Russian and Spanish.

This does not mean, however, that two nouns cannot form constructions in Spanish and Russian. In fact, this linguistic phenomenon can be encountered in Russian as illustrated by the following examples: *писатель-фантаст* "writer-fantasist"*, бабочка-капустница* "cabbage butterfly"*, дети-подростки* "children-teenagers" (Gramota, 2020-2022). In Spanish, attributive use of nouns has become significantly wider recently (Maniez, 2019), and can be exemplified by the following expressions: *palabra clave* "key word", *falda-pantalón* "trouser skirt", *coche cama* "sleeping car", *pez espada* "swordfish" (Buenafuentes, 2014). However, such binominal constructions both in Russian and Spanish are idiomatic, whereas in English, every noun can be used attributively (Merriam-Webster Online, 2022: Explanatory notes). Therefore, due to this fundamental difference, the attributive use of nouns cannot be considered fully equivalent across the given languages.

The corpus-based study revealed that English attributive nouns could be translated into Russian in several ways: with the help of adjectives (e.g. bamboo curtain as *бамбуковый занавес* "bamboo curtain" where *бамбуковый* is an adjective modifying the noun), genitive constructions (e.g. hit list as *список жертв* "the list of victims" where the noun *жертва* "victim" in genitive case modifies the headword *список* "list"), prepositional modifiers (e.g. *trust fall* as *прыжок на доверие* "jump of trust"*, where the modifier *доверие* "trust" is introduced by the preposition) and participial constructions (e.g. *childminder* as *лицо, присматривающее за детьми* "a person looking after children"). Alternatively, attributive nouns can be translated descriptively with the help of subordinate clauses (e.g. *baby shower* as *вечеринка, которая устраивается за три-четыре недели до рождения ребёнка с вручением подарков будущим родителям* "a party which is thrown three or four weeks before childbirth and involving gift-giving to the future parents").

According to the analysis of the English-Spanish dataset, attributive nouns are typically translated with the help of prepositional modifiers (e.g. *dulce de roca* "rock candy", *asado de domingo* "Sunday roast"). However, other translation solutions such as descriptive translation, or translation with the help of a hypernym or adjective are also possible.

However, in the analysed translations, not a single English-specific compound containing an attributively used noun was translated into Russian or Spanish with the help of the binominal construction. This result corroborates the above-discussed idea that attributive use of nouns can be considered a grammatical lacuna in itself to some extent. Therefore, at the structural level, certain word-formation patterns can further contribute to the overall

lacunarity of a lexical item, thus making its translation into the target language even more challenging.

This section has analysed the processes that occur during the language-specific lexeme formation in the source language at various levels of human perception in an attempt to identify the factors triggering the emergence of lexical lacunae. It has been argued that lexemes which can be seen as lexical gaps from the cross-linguistic perspective occur in the source language due to the joint impact of extralinguistic and linguistic factors. The next section turns to the analysis of further development of lexical lacunae, namely, pathways through which they are filled. The causes of the adoption of the foreign words and various processes occurring in the borrowing process are discussed in the context of the results emerging from the analysis of the Russian and Spanish borrowings in English.

## 5.2   Pathways for filling lexical lacunae

Once lacunar lexemes emerge in the source language, their lacunarity can either remain invisible provided that the concepts they denote do not acquire communicative relevance in the cross-cultural perspective or, alternatively, they can be borrowed from the source language to fill the niche. Adoption of a foreign term, however, does not necessarily mean that it will immediately enter common parlance and become a deeply entrenched concept in the recipient speech community. For instance, a lacuna can be filled for a certain period of time, and the term filling it can fall out of use, once the concept it denotes loses relevance. Thus, if a lexical gap becomes filled, it can develop according to various trajectories. To investigate the pathways for filling lexical lacunae, Russian and Spanish borrowings were examined.

As outlined in Chapter 3.3.1, the dataset of Russian borrowings consisted of 401 lexemes, whereas the dataset of Spanish borrowings was significantly larger, comprising 1825 lexemes. Such a radical difference can be accounted for by the volume of socio-cultural links between the countries. It may be assumed that Britain and Spain/Latin America interact more closely than Britain and Russia and, therefore, intensive cooperation reveals numerous points of divergence in the form of lexical gaps which eventually become filled. Here, however, a question arises as to whether languages are more receptive to the borrowings from one language than from another. Perhaps certain linguistic structures are less flexible to adopt foreign words, or words from typologically very different languages are adopted to a lesser extent. This question can be answered in the context of the analysis

of translation solutions and will be dealt with in Chapter 6.2, whereas the following sections will outline how lacunae evolve.

## 5.2.1 Diachronic perspective

Analysing the adoption of Russian and Spanish words into English from a diachronic perspective, some curious regularities can be noticed. The borrowing of Russian and Spanish words into English occurred in a wave-like manner, as evidenced by Figure 5.5 and Figure 5.6 respectively. The number of borrowed items is not distributed uniformly across the timelines; on the contrary, certain time intervals are associated with a significant rise in the number of loanwords. However, such peaks are followed by a dip. Not surprisingly, the peaks coincide with periods of important socio-historical events taking place in the donor language communities.

Thus, the largest number of the Russian terms investigated here was borrowed into English in the first half of the twentieth century. Such Russian words as *apparatchik, Bolshevik, Gulag, kolkhoz, Komsomol, Menshevik* and *Soviet* among many others were adopted in this timeframe. In 1917 the Tzarist monarchy was overthrown in Russia as a result of the Great October Socialist Revolution, and by 1922 the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics was established. This drastic socio-political upheaval can be associated with the formation of a significant number of new terms denoting new Soviet realia. New lexemes emerged in response to the communicative need to name new concepts, which, in turn, was triggered by the extralinguistic changes.

During the earlier peak in the second half of the sixteenth century, such words as *tzar, boyar* and *muzhik* as well as the names of some food items were borrowed into English. This period is marked by the reign of Ivan the Terrible who was crowned the first tzar of all Russia and showed himself to be unprecedentedly cruel with his subjects. In fact, he introduced *oprichnina,* i.e. *"*a government policy involving repressions against boyars".
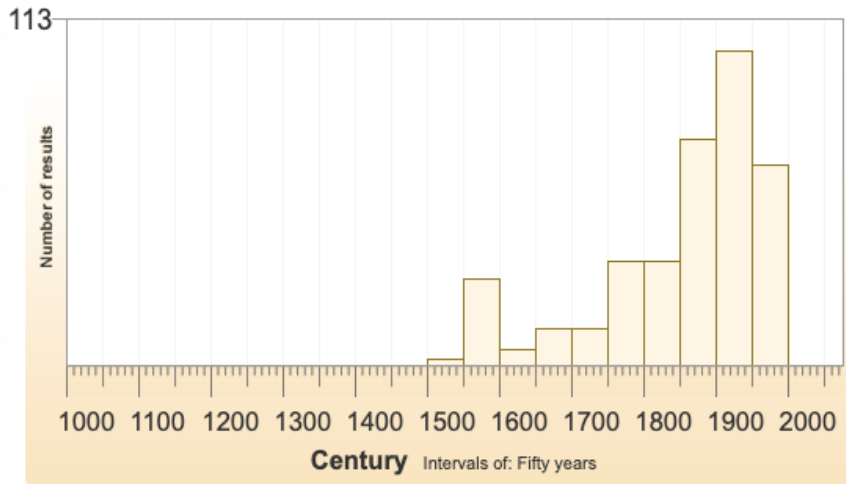
Similarly, two major rises in the number of the Spanish borrowings were associated with important socio-historical periods in the history of Spain/Latin America. Thus, the first rise took place in the second half of the sixteenth century, whereas the second one occurred in the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1492 Columbus discovered America, and the sixteenth century was marked by an increase in the prestige of the Spanish Empire, which became one of the most powerful countries in the world (Payne, 2011:4). As a result, given the privileged status of Spanish, a significant number of Spanish words were borrowed into English during this period. Following the discovery of the New World, many Spanish terms denoting American realia were also adopted into English (e.g. *cacao, potato, frijoles, guava, alligator, iguana*). In 1585 The Anglo-Spanish War broke out, which lasted up to the beginning of the seventeenth century (Barratt, 2005), further enhancing language contact between English and Spanish.

The second peak in the borrowing of Spanish words took place in the first half of the nineteenth century. During the period from 1810 to 1822, the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America gained independence from Spain (Burns, 1983:7). Post-colonial Latin America was deemed a rich source of natural resources by the North Atlantic capitalists and attracted significant investments (ibid.) This resulted in a strengthened language contact between American English and Latin American Spanish. This period was also associated with political unrest in Spain, the war of independence from Napoleon and the Carlist wars (Payne, 2011:146). Hence, such Spanish terms as *tragalism, Carlism* and *jefe politico* were adopted into English.

*Figure 5.6 Screenshot of the OED timeline graph representing the adoption of Spanish terms into English (OED image2, 2022)*
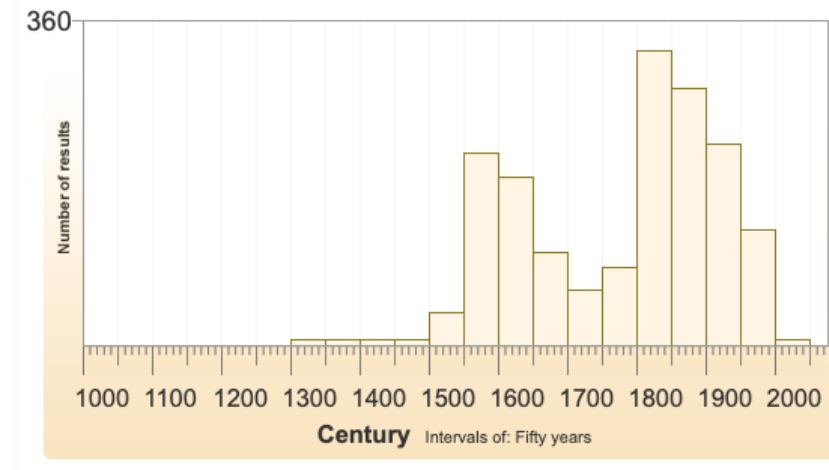


These examples demonstrate that the peaks of the adoption of foreign terms corresponded with the active interaction between the countries or with periods when the events in the donor linguistic communities were in the spotlight of public attention, thus defining the communicative need for the borrowing process.

## 5.2.2 Semantic perspective

The Russian and Spanish borrowings were arranged semantically in accordance with the third level of the HTE categorisation in order to establish the most productive domains and, therefore, the most divergent areas of experience across the speech communities.

Table 5.4 shows the distribution of the Russian borrowings across semantic domains. This table represents only a portion of the dataset and contains exclusively the largest categories (the categories accounting for less than 3% of the total number of Russian borrowings are not listed here). The semantic analysis revealed that the largest category "Ethnicities" makes up 11% of the total Russian borrowings and comprises names of various ethnic groups inhabiting the territory of the Russian Federation. Russia is a plurinational state, and numerous ethnicities represent fully denotative lexical lacunae in Russian. Due to the fact that there were no English equivalents, the corresponding Russian terms were adopted into English. The second-largest category is "Rule or government" (10%), largely made up of terms denoting political organisation of the Soviet state. "Minerals" is the third-largest category comprising 8% of the total Russian borrowings. Since Russia is a resource-rich country, it is not surprising that Russian has a significant number of lexemes denoting minerals first discovered on its territory. "Food" (5%) and "Drink" (3%) are other

important semantic domains containing lexemes denoting Russian traditional beverages and dishes which were borrowed into English. The significant size of these domains reflects the diversity and idiosyncrasy of Russian cuisine. The "Mammals" category, accounting for 3% of the total Russian borrowings, includes the names of Russian fauna. The "Law enforcement" category (3%) contains largely the names of the law enforcement agencies. Finally, the "Sect" category (3%) comprises the names of various religious movements.

*Table 5.4 Distribution of the Russian borrowings across the third level of the HTE categorisation (Electronic Appendix:11RUS borrowings statistics)*

| Name of category | HTE hierarchy number | Percentage of lexemes |
|---|---|---|
| Ethnicities | 01.04.06 | 11% |
| Rule or government | 03.04.06 | 10% |
| Minerals | 01.01.08 | 8% |
| Food | 01.07.01 | 5% |
| Mammals | 01.05.19 | 3% |
| Drink | 01.07.02 | 3% |
| Law enforcement | 03.05.10 | 3% |
| Sect | 03.08.02 | 3% |
| Categories accounting for less than 3% | | 54% |
| Total | | 100% |

Before proceeding to compare these results with the outcomes of the semantic analysis of the Spanish borrowings, it is important to acknowledge that the largest semantic domains mainly contain the lexemes which were borrowed to fill fully denotative lacunae.

Turning to the dataset of Spanish borrowings (see Table 5.5), the largest domain, accounting for 10% of the total amount of the borrowed lexemes, is the category "Particular plants". For comparison, the same category in the Russian dataset contains only 1% of the total number of lexemes. Apparently, due to the significantly warmer climates of Spain and South America, more exotic flora can be encountered there. Therefore, a larger number of lexemes denoting various exotic plants was borrowed into English from Spanish than from Russian. The second-largest category is "Food" comprising 9% of the total amount of the borrowed Spanish terms. "Ethnicities" and "The arts" account for 4% of

Spanish borrowings each. "Drink", "Sport", "Mammals", "Rule or government" and "Nations" constitute 3% of all Spanish borrowings each.

The category "Sport" is noteworthy as it mainly contains Spanish lexemes associated with bullfighting. Bullfighting vocabulary represents a culturally important semantic domain in Spanish. The vast majority of Spanish lexemes belonging to this lexical field can be seen as fully denotative lacunae in other languages. Due to the absence of such a phenomenon in the English speech community, some of the key bullfighting terms were borrowed into English.

*Table 5.5 Distribution of the Spanish borrowings across the third level of the HTE categorisation (Electronic Appendix:13SPA borrowings statistics)*

| Name of category | HTE hierarchy number | Percentage of lexemes |
|---|---|---|
| Particular plants | 01.06.13 | 10% |
| Food | 01.07.01 | 9% |
| Ethnicities | 01.04.06 | 4% |
| The arts | 03.13.03 | 4% |
| Drink | 01.07.02 | 3% |
| Sport | 03.13.04 | 3% |
| Mammals | 01.05.19 | 3% |
| Rule or government | 03.04.06 | 3% |
| Nations | 01.04.07 | 3% |
| Categories accounting for less than 3% | | 58% |
| Total | | 100% |

The borrowed Russian and Spanish terms were once lexical lacunae in English. However, it turned out to be impossible to classify these lexemes according to the lacuna model. Retrospective identification of the lacuna type became unreliable due to the paucity of etymological data. The earliest attested Spanish borrowings date back to the fourteenth century. Therefore, in certain cases, it proved to be impractical to establish whether the concept existed in the speech community or not. However, the nature of the lexical borrowings from Russian and Spanish reflects significant referential discrepancies across speech communities. The largest domains are constituted by the terms that were borrowed

into English to fill mainly fully denotative lacunae. Fully denotative lacunae reveal the most obvious referential inconsistencies between the lingua-cultural communities and, therefore, appear to be the most salient discrepancies for human perception. Therefore, fully denotative lacunae are likely to become filled with the help of borrowing more frequently than the other types of lexical gaps.

In the course of this study, a particular property of the borrowed terms to change categorisation levels was found. In the process of borrowing, foreign terms are usually adopted in one particular sense. Therefore, it would be logical to expect that the meaning of the foreign word is preserved in the recipient language. However, this is not necessarily the case: borrowing often involves semantic specialisation.

For instance, in Russian, the superordinate category *головной убор* "headdress" includes a basic level term *шапка* "hat". Within the category "hat" a great variety of subordinate terms is nested, among them *шапка-ушанка* "ear-flap hat". However, when in the middle of the twentieth century the Russian term *шапка* "hat" was borrowed into English, it came to mean a particular type of Russian hat without a brim, typically made of fur or sheepskin (OED, 2022, shapka n.). Indeed, the HTE lists the term *шапка* "hat" at the lowest level of categorisation. A possible explanation for this divergence between categorisation levels in the donor and recipient languages could be that a clipped form was borrowed into English. However, this is not an isolated example.

The term *tvorog* is another case in point. In Russian, *творог* "cottage cheese", being a variety of dairy products, can be of different types including *зерненый творог* "crumbly cottage-cheese" and *творожная масса* "sweet cottage-cheese with raisins" to name just a few. However, the borrowed term is used exclusively with reference to a particular type of Russian cheese. As discussed in Chapter 2.4.1, there is a general categorisation discrepancy between the Russian *творог* "cottage cheese" and the English *cottage cheese,* mentioned in Jakobson (1959:233). While in English, cottage cheese is a variety of cheese, as evidenced by the HTE, in Russian *творог* "cottage cheese" and *сыр* "cheese" are basic level terms which cannot be used interchangeably. A similar categorisation inconsistency was also identified in the dataset of Spanish borrowings and can be illustrated by the following example: *relleno*. This term was borrowed into English to denote a Mexican dish consisting of a stuffed pepper (OED, 2022, relleno n.). The meaning of the Spanish term *relleno* is broader and can be used with reference to any material that is used to stuff with (DLE RAE, 2022, relleno). Therefore, when a foreign term is adopted into the recipient

language, certain changes can occur at the semantic level. This finding corroborates Winter-Froemel's (2014:73) suggestion that semantic narrowing is a characteristic feature of borrowing. However, specialisation is not the only process taking place at the semantic level when foreign words are adopted.

Another particular property of the borrowings that was established in this strand of research is that the borrowed lexemes can acquire additional senses in the recipient language, often not related to the original meaning. As already mentioned in Chapter 3.3.6, the Russian term *babushka* originally meaning "grandmother" almost a century after its first recorded use in English came to mean a headscarf styled in a particular way with a knot under the chin (OED, 2022, babushka n.). Besides, sometimes *babushka* is used with reference to Russian dolls (OED, 2022, babushka n., sense 3) Thus, *babushka* and *matryoshka* can often be used interchangeably.

Summing up the above, filling a lexical gap is a complex process which on the semantic level may involve such metamorphoses as narrowing of meaning and development of new senses in the receiving language. When the term is borrowed into another language, it will not necessarily preserve its original meaning. Conversely, it is most likely to develop in accordance with the communicative needs of the speakers of the recipient language.

## 5.2.3 Grammatical perspective

Metamorphoses on the semantic level are not the only processes which borrowing entails. Certain changes can be identified on the grammatical level as well. The vast majority of both Russian and Spanish borrowings in English is constituted by nouns. In the Russian dataset, nouns account for 99% of the total amount of borrowed lexemes, whereas in the Spanish dataset nouns make up 96% of all Spanish loanwords. However, the fact that the datasets predominantly comprise lexemes that were borrowed into English to fill nominal lacunae is not surprising. Nominal lacunae might be easier to overcome by applying the lexical borrowing strategy. Compared to nouns, verbs are less flexible and more embedded within the sentence structure, being in obligatory concord relationships with other components of a sentence. In Matras' terms (2007:48), in contrast to verbs, nouns require less "grammatical effort" to become fully incorporated into the linguistic structure of the recipient language. Besides, verbs usually denote more abstract concepts, compared to nouns which often have specific referents.

The analysis of the loanwords revealed that foreign terms can be borrowed into the recipient language with significant grammatical changes. For instance, the Russian borrowing *osetrova* (denoting a type of caviar) is listed as a noun in the OED (2022). However, there is a clear contradiction with the Russian grammar. In Russian, there is a compound *осетровая икра* "sturgeon caviar", where the word corresponding to sturgeon (*осетровая)* is an adjective. Thus, during the borrowing process, the original form must have been clipped and was adopted into English as a noun.

Another conclusion arising from this study is that the degree of adoption of the word is determined by its integration into the grammatical structure of the recipient language. The concept can be considered well-entrenched in the speech community, if the borrowed lexeme starts functioning according to the rules of the recipient language, even if it runs counter to the grammatical patterns of the donor language. As mentioned in Section 5.1.2.3, attributive use of nouns (typical for English grammar) can be considered to a certain extent lacunar in Russian and Spanish. However, numerous borrowed Russian and Spanish lexemes form compounds, for instance: *Barzois Club, skaz tradition, chocolate icing, guerrilla war*. Therefore, integration to the grammatical rules of the recipient language can demonstrate the degree of assimilation of the borrowed word.

## 5.3    Conclusion

This chapter has sought to describe the lifecycle of a lexical lacuna, overviewing the mechanisms of its formation in the source language and highlighting the pathways for its filling in the target language. Although the reasons for the emergence of lexical gaps cannot be established with sufficient precision, the contrastive analysis of the different types of data according to a common set of parameters revealed extralinguistic and linguistic factors triggering the formation of the language-specific lexemes. However, the influence of neither of these factors can be evaluated in isolation. Conversely, lexical lacunae emerge due to their joint impact. The analysis also demonstrated that the factors triggering formation of language-specific lexemes can manifest themselves at various levels of human perception (sensory, psychological, cognitive and verbal), which are in close interaction with each other. The results of this substrand are in line with the position of scholars advocating for mutual influence of linguistic and cognitive processes (Chapter 2.3.1) and further corroborate the idea of inseparability of linguistic competence from other cognitive faculties.

Another interesting finding is that English-specific lexemes that were identified as lacunae in Russian and Spanish are largely located at the lowest levels of the semantic hierarchy, with members of subcategories also being lacunar. This suggests that lacunar items are likely to emerge at the periphery of lexical systems.

The second part of this chapter has been devoted to the analysis of the pathways along which lexical lacunae evolve. The trajectories of the development of lacunae can be distinct. Some lacunae can remain covert throughout their lifespan: not manifesting their relevance in the cross-linguistic context, they fail to complete their lifecycle. Others, conversely, explicitly reveal themselves through cultural interactions which determine a communicative need to fill the lexical niche. As a result, such lacunae can become filled with the help of loanwords, thus completing their lifecycle. However, borrowing is a complex process, typically involving a number of metamorphoses at various levels, including semantic and grammatical (leaving aside phonetic aspects). Very often loanwords remain divergent to some extent from their counterparts in the donor language, with a lacuna being still alive. The implications that such seemingly dead lacunae can have for the cross-cultural communication are discussed in Chapter 6.1.2.1.

# 6  Translating lexical lacunae

## 6.0  Chapter overview

This chapter discusses the outcomes of the corpus-based research on the strategies employed in translation of lacunar lexemes from English into Spanish and Russian. It draws upon the results of the theoretical (Chapter 4) and lexicographic (Chapter 5) strands in order to answer the central research question of how lexical lacunae are handled in translation of film subtitles. For this purpose, the solutions used in translation practice for bridging lexical gaps are investigated in the corpus analysis integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative approach aims to establish the most frequent translation solutions, whereas the qualitative research seeks to highlight their benefits and limitations so as eventually to suggest the optimal strategies for successfully tackling lexical lacunae in the process of linguistic "transcoding".

Section 6.1 overviews various translation solutions identified in the corpus-based study and discusses their effectiveness, pinpointing the benefits and drawbacks. Section 6.2 presents the results of the contrastive analysis of the techniques for handling lexical gaps in English-Spanish and English-Russian translations. Finally, the concluding section summarises the findings and compares the results of the quantitative strand with the outcomes of the qualitative analysis.

## 6.1  Translation strategies for handling lexical lacunae

Lexical lacunae are sometimes discussed in the context of untranslatability (e.g. in Sankaravelayuthan, 2020). Untranslatability is premised on the concept of a language-specific worldview incomprehensible to speakers of other languages. However, understanding lexical lacunae as untranslatable elements would imply consideration of lacunarity through a prism of linguistic determinism and would reduce the whole argument to absurdity. Lexical lacunae can and should be translated. Jakobson (1959:234) argued that all languages possessed sufficient resources to encode our learning experience and cognitive practices. Likewise, the principle of translatability was fully endorsed by Newmark (1988:6), who argued that professional translators could not enjoy the luxury of claiming the source text was untranslatable.

 The major concern in dealing with lexical lacunae is not untranslatability as such but the extent of equivalence of meaning of the original utterance to that of its counterpart in the

target language and the volume of information lost in translation. It would seem more appropriate to use the term *translatability* instead of *untranslatability* in order to avoid any ambiguity. Translatability is determined by the immediate availability of a formal equivalent in the target language and the translator's ability to substitute the source language item with a contextual equivalent. A key question, therefore, is what translation methods should be applied to achieve an "equivalent effect" (Newmark, 1988:48) when dealing with lexical lacunae.

This chapter reports the results of the corpus-based strand and overviews translation techniques used in subtitling practice for handling lexical lacunae. As outlined in Chapter 3.4, the data for this research strand came from the web-based concordances of film subtitles which were used as parallel corpora. Examples from the corpora were retrieved by performing searches on the sets of English lexemes which were identified as lexical gaps in Russian and Spanish in the first step of the study. The corpus-based investigation involved the analysis of 975 instances of translation of lacunar English lexemes into Russian and 705 instances of translation of lacunar English lexemes into Spanish. The retrieved examples were investigated one by one, and the identified translation strategies were classified accordingly.

The corpus-based strand of the study established 26 strategies for handling lexical lacunae, each of which will be discussed in the sections that follow. The translation solutions are classified in three major categories: nominal, semantic and explicative transformations. Nominal transformations are aimed at formal bridging of a lexical gap but not at conveying the meaning of a lacunar concept. Semantic transformations typically occurring at the word level focus on substitution of a lacunar item with a semantically deviant but pragmatically acceptable functional counterpart in the target language. Finally, explicative transformations usually affecting translation at the sentence level are intended to explain the obscured meaning of a lacunar item by means of extension of the source text.

This classification principle allows for a comparatively clear distinction between different types of translation techniques without excessive inter-category overlapping. However, such classification is inherently relative since metamorphoses in translation rarely occur in isolation and tend to involve multiple transformations.

## 6.1.1  Nominal transformations

This section overviews translation strategies encompassing formal techniques which allow a translator to render the lacunar source text item in the target language, but without conveying its meaning. As a result of such transformations, the lexical gap becomes bridged in the process of "transcoding" from the formal perspective, but the sense remains obscured.

## 6.1.1.1 Calque

Calque is a literal translation involving inclusion of direct equivalents to the target text. However, in translation of lexical gaps, calque can hardly be considered an effective solution. Certain types of lacunae (e.g. monolexemic fully denotative, partially nominative, fully nominative and multi-layered lacunae) cannot be literally translated into the target language due to the absence of direct equivalents, whereas in translation of other types of lacunae (e.g. connotative, partially denotative lacunae and lacunar compounds) this technique acquires a nominal character, not shedding light on lacunar concepts.

In the case of connotative and partially denotative lacunae, direct equivalents are devoid of symbolic and associative connotations, meaning that calque is inefficient. Moreover, calque can have disastrous implications, as evidenced below:

Source text

(English)                    So, the bottom line here – don't be the oak.

                             Don't be the **oak**.

                             Be the **willow**.


Target text

(Russian)                    Вывод какой... не будь дубом.

                             Не будь **дубом**.

                             Будь **ивой**.


Back translation             So the conclusion is…don't be the oak.

                             Don't be the **oak**.

                             Be the **willow**.

                                              (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:600)

Apart from triggering associations with sorrow, the English lexeme *willow* can also be used allusively with reference to its pliable wood (OED, 2022, willow n., sense I.1.c). It can often be found in juxtaposition with *oak* which, in contrast, is known for its hard wood. At first glance, the oak may seem more robust than the willow. However, the strong winds may bring the oak down, whereas the willow will resist them due to its capability to bend. Thus, in the given example a meaningful metaphorical image is created based on comparison of human flexibility with the pliability of the willow and human stubbornness with the hardness of the oak.

Literal translation of *oak* and *willow* destroys the metaphorical image in the target language since the formal Russian counterparts are devoid of the respective connotations. Moreover, *дуб* "oak" in Russian has a distinct connotative meaning and can be used with reference to a stupid person (Ozhegov and Shvedova, 2009-2018, дуб). Thus, the literally translated phrase "Don't be the oak" is understood as "Don't be stupid" in Russian, which is fundamentally divergent from the source text. This is compounded by the meaninglessness of the final line in the target language as *ива* "willow" is unlikely to trigger any associations in Russian whatsoever. Therefore, if the connotative, associative or symbolic meaning is activated in the source text, calque on its own is insufficient to convey it.

Lacunar compounds are often translated with the help of calque. However, the meaning of the compound cannot always be understood from the meaning of its components (e.g. *baby shower, bamboo curtain, quarter pounder*). Therefore, in such cases calque becomes a formal technique, formally allowing a translator to bridge the lexical gap, but leaving the meaning of the concept obscured. Summing up the above, calque should be employed with caution since used on its own in the vast majority of cases it is less than effective in handling lexical gaps. Therefore, through the prism of lacunarity calque can be seen as a nominal technique not shedding light on lacunar concepts. As a result of calque, the gap becomes bridged in the target language from the formal perspective, but its meaning remains obscured.

## 6.1.1.2 Semi-calque

Semi-calque is a combination of transliteration (Section 6.1.1.4) and calque (Section 6.1.1.1). As a result of this technique, one part of the word becomes transliterated in the

target language, whereas the other part becomes literally translated, as in the following example:

| | |
|---|---|
| Source text | |
| (English) | Lost **green card**? |

| | |
|---|---|
| Target text | |
| (Russian) | Потерял **гринкарту**? |

| | |
|---|---|
| Back translation | Have you lost **greencard**? |

(Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:580)

The first component of the compound was transliterated in Russian as *грин* *"green"* (double *e* is transliterated by a single Russian letter *и)*, whereas the second one was literally translated as *карта* *"card".* Eventually the two elements were blended, and a two-stem word *гринкарта* "greencard" was formed in the target language.

This technique is not universal and can be applied in translation of lacunar compounds or blends.

## 6.1.1.3 Introduction of deictic elements

Introduction of deictic elements presupposes replacement of a lacunar source text item with a deictic marker pointing to the concept but not denoting it. This technique is included in the category of translation solutions not conveying meaning since deixis does not translate the lacunar item but rather provides an alternative means of referring to it. By way of illustration, in the following example a lacunar compound *mince pie* was substituted with a direct object pronoun *lo* in Spanish:

| | |
|---|---|
| Source text | |
| (English) | Here, have a **mince pie**, Phyll. |
| | I made it myself. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Target text | |
| (Spanish) | Prueba**lo**. |
| | Lo he hecho yo misma. |

Back translation          Try **it**.

                          I have made it myself.

                                        (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:126)

This translation strategy has a limited application since deictic markers encode information accessible in a concrete communicative act. In other words, the meaning of the concept encrypted in the above example with the help of the deictic pronoun is understandable to the target audience only in the given context where all components of the communicative act are clear. In the case of film subtitles, where the vague lexical reference can be potentially compensated for by the visual input, this technique is acceptable, albeit undesirable. Apart from lacking elegance, substitution of lacunar items with deictic elements inevitably evokes associations with excessive use of demonstrative pronouns by novice learners of foreign languages with a limited vocabulary. As a last resort, this strategy can also be applied when tackling lexical gaps in oral translation where the concepts are activated on the referential level but is unconceivable in translation of literary texts and formal documents.

However, in contrast to personal and spatial deixis, the use of temporal deixis may seem a less unfortunate solution, as evidenced by the following example:

Source text

(English)                 Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and **Boxing Day**.


Target text

(Spanish)                 Nochebuena, Navidad y **día siguiente**.


Back translation          Christmas Eve, Christmas and **the next day**.

                                        (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:667)

Instead of introducing an unfamiliar concept to the target text, the translator smartly opted for a temporal deictic expression *the next day*. However, it is the context that makes this translation solution effective since the preceding element *Christmas* allows the audience to establish the reference point in time and thereby to deduce what day is referred to, avoiding ambiguity.

In this translation, the deictic expression serves as a functional equivalent that conveys the meaning by virtue of the context, whereas introduction of deictic elements to the target text generally is a nominal transformation, leaving the lacunar concept obscured. Summing up the above, substitution of lacunar items with deictic elements in the target text is not a universal translation solution and is only appropriate within very limited contexts.

## 6.1.1.4 Transliteration

Transliteration implies conversion of the source text item to the target language with the help of the target language alphabet. This solution is relevant when the source and the target languages use different scripts (e.g. Latin alphabet in English and Cyrillic alphabet in Russian). For instance, the English lexeme *bridezilla* can be transliterated into Russian as *бридзилла*.

There is another very similar translation solution, namely transcription which, according to some scholars (e.g. Aissing, 1995:207), should be distinguished from transliteration. Transcription involves transferring of the source text item to the target language with the help of the target language alphabet but based on the phonetic form of the source text item. For example, the above-mentioned *bridezilla* can be transcribed into Russian as *брайдзила*, thus reflecting the phonetic pronunciation of the word in the source language.

Strictly speaking, transliteration and transcription are two distinct techniques which may yield different outcomes. By way of illustration, the Russian acronym *ОГПУ* (*Объединённое государственное политическое управление* "Joint State Political Directorate") was borrowed into English in two distinct forms: *OGPU* as a result of transliteration and *Gay-Pay-Oo* as a result of transcription.

However, in practice, transliteration and transcription are often used in combination, and it may be hard to draw the line between the two. In the transliterated form *бридзилла* the silent letter *e* of *bridezilla* was omitted in line with the pronunciation pattern. Since most transliterated terms to some extent rely on transcription, it was decided to unite these translation solutions in one category under the title transliteration.

Transliteration allows a translator to render the source item in the target text with the help of a different script, but it does not convey the meaning which is a significant limitation of this strategy. While this translation solution is not applicable to English-Spanish

translation, it is very commonly used in English-Russian translation as an alternative to the preservation of the source text item, which is often seen negatively. Besides, when using transliteration, it should be borne in mind that there are different transliteration standards for the Cyrillic alphabet, e.g. transliteration systems of the Library of Congress, International Organization for Standardization and British Standards Institution (Aissing, 1995:208).

## 6.1.1.5 Preservation of the source text item

As understood from the title, this translation solution is a zero-transformation implying transference of the lacunar item from the source text to the target text without any change. In translation studies, this strategy is often referred to as "borrowing" (e.g. Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995[1958]:31). However, this term may seem excessively vague, requiring further refinement. Borrowings are the words of foreign origin adopted to the recipient language that have already reached a certain frequency of usage within a speech community. Conversely, if a term is preserved in translation and rendered in the target language in its original form only once, it cannot be considered a borrowing. This distinction was acknowledged by Poplack, Sankoff and Miller (1988) who suggested the terms "established borrowings" and "nonce borrowings" to differentiate the foreign words that have been assimilated into the recipient language and single occurrences of terms from another language. For this reason, there seems to be a need to delineate the borrowing process and the translation solution involving the introduction of the source text item, which will not necessarily become a borrowing. Besides, borrowing may occur based on various transformations including transliteration, transcription and calque. Therefore, to avoid ambiguity, in this thesis the technique involving zero-transformation is referred to as preservation of the source text item.

Preservation of the lacunar source text item is much more common in translation into Spanish than into Russian and is, therefore, illustrated here with examples from the English-Spanish dataset. In the following translation, a lacunar lexeme *glamping* was preserved in Spanish:

Source text

(English)           I mean, I'm not going on a cruise.

                          I'm not going **glamping** with my girlfriends.

Target text

(Spanish)                  O sea, no me iré a un crucero.

                           No me iré de glamping con mis amigas.


Back translation           I mean, I won't go on a cruise.

                           I won't go **glamping** with my friends.

                                        (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:427)


*Glamping* is an English term used with reference to a camping holiday involving the use of more glamorous facilities compared to ordinary camping (OED, 2022, glamping n.). This lexeme was formed in English as a result of blending the two words: either *glamour* or *glamorous* and *camping* (ibid.). It can be assumed that this concept has not fully crystallised in the Spanish speech community and can be considered a partially nominative lexical gap causing difficulties in translation. Intact preservation of the lacunar item in the target text, as in the given example, can be seen as an alternative strategy in dealing with lacunae which allows a translator to bridge a lexical gap from the formal perspective, leaving the meaning of the term obscure.

While preservation of the source text item is a common technique in translation of proper names, along with transliteration, it should be used with caution if a proper name is a connotative lacuna, as evidenced by the following example:


Source text

(English)                  - Considering what?

                           - Your past.

                           - Mmm?

                           - Thank you.

                           - I mean **Harley Street**...

                           Rolls-Royce, lovely ladies.

                           All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.


Target text

(Spanish)                  ¿Considerando el qué?

                           - Su pasado.

                           -¿Mmm?

                           - Gracias.

- Quiero decir **Harley Street**...

Rolls-Royce, encantadoras señoritas.

Todo, todo se ha ido, los viejos rostros familiares.

| Back translation | - Considering what? |
|---|---|
| | -  Your past. |
| | - Mmm? |
| | - Thank you. |
| | -  I mean **Harley Street**… |
| | Rolls-Royce, lovely ladies. |
| | Everything, everything is gone, the old familiar faces. |

<div align="right">(Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:32)</div>

*Harley Street* is one of the central streets in London where the most expensive private medical centres are located. The name of this street is often used allusively with reference to the healthcare specialists (OED, 2022, Harley Street n.). In the given example, the allusion is made to a character's former medical profession. The background knowledge about Harley Street allows English speakers to make inferences about their occupation, whereas the Spanish audience is unlikely to decode this allusion, with this detail being lost in translation. It could have been useful to employ some supportive techniques (e.g. addition) to make this covert reference more transparent for the Spanish speakers.

## 6.1.1.6 Diversion

Diversion in translation of lexical lacunae is an extreme case of intentional deviation from equivalence, implying introduction of a semantically non-equivalent but pragmatically suitable text to the target language. Thus, a translator diverts the narrative in the target language, deliberately including an alternative passage, as in the example below:

| Source text (English) | I made you a nice **mince pie.** |
|---|---|
| | I can't eat that. |
| | It gets in me [*sic*] teeth. |

| Target text (Russian) | **Угощайся, Дед Санта.** |

Я это не ем.

Он в зубах застревает.

Back translation **Help yourself, GrandSanta**.

I don't eat that.

It gets stuck in my teeth.

(Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:151)

The source text contains a fully denotative lacuna in Russian *mince pie* which in this instance of translation is handled with the help of diversion. Instead of conveying the literal meaning of the original utterance, a translator preserved the conversational implicature. Although it is not explicitly expressed in the source text, it is contextually implied that Santa Claus is welcome to try the mince pie prepared specially for him. As a result of diversion, the target text is semantically non-equivalent to the source text but is pragmatically appropriate.

However, there is a culturally specific nuance that becomes lost in this translation. On Christmas Eve in Britain children usually leave mince pies as a treat for Santa. Therefore, Santa is generally believed to like mince pies, whereas in the given example Santa says that he cannot eat them. This yields a conflict between the audience's existing expectations and reality. On the one hand, this stylistic device in combination with the explanation that follows (involving some oral health details) creates a comic effect. On the other hand, it contributes to the overall understanding of the unconventional character of GrandSanta who according to the plot is the only person coming to help the main character thanks to his ability to think outside the box. However, this detail, as a result of diversion, becomes lost in the target language.

Diversion is similar to contextual equivalence which also presupposes the introduction of a counterpart remotely related to the original text item. However, whereas contextual equivalence is based on substitution at the word level, diversion occurs at the sentence level implying a complete substitution of the original utterance. Besides, diversion may involve introduction of unrelated passages to fill in the blanks (occurring as a result of the translator's inability to translate lacunar items) in the captions.

## 6.1.1.7 Omission

Omission involves elimination of a source text item from the target text and in general can be an effective strategy allowing a translator to avoid tautology and pleonasms which may occur in the target text in the process of "transcoding". In translation of lexical lacunae, however, omission may seem an unsuccessful strategy, betraying a translator's lack of ability to convey the meaning of the lacunar item. In most of the analysed instances of translation where omission was employed, a certain loss of information in the process of "transcoding" was observed. The example below is a case in point:

Source text

(English)                   He's sitting in the car in the **driveway**.

                            He's refusing to get out unless he can speak to the president.


Target text

(Spanish)                   Está sentado en su auto.

                            Sólo saldrá si habla con el Presidente.


Back translation            He is sitting in his car.

                            He will get out of the car only if he speaks with the President.

                                        (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:561)

Being a lexical lacuna in Spanish, the lexeme *driveway* functions as an adverbial of place refining the location of the car in which the character was seated. However, in the target text the adverbial was omitted, thus leaving the location of the car unspecified. Although in the given context the dropping of the lacunar item has no critical implications, in formal terms the amount of information encoded in the source text and the amount of information conveyed in translation are distinct. For the integrity of the translation, it would have been desirable to render the source text into the target language in its entirety.

However, there can be instances in translation of lexical lacunae, where omission is a useful technique for handling semantic redundancy in the target language, as evidenced by the following example:

Source text

(English)              Betraying me to Bill and Virginia, cleaning me out of house and
                       **home…**


Target text

(Russian)              Предать меня Биллу и Вирджинии, оставить меня без **дома**.


Back translation       Betraying me to Bill and Virginia, leaving me without **house.**
                                        (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:559)


Leaving aside the first part of the target text sentence, which is an obvious example of bad translation revealing violation of the Russian lexico-grammatical norms (in the given context the verb *предать* "betray" cannot take indirect object), let us consider translation of the conjuncts *house* and *home* into the target language. English speakers differentiate these concepts: while *house* is used with reference to a tangible object, e.g. a building, *home* is a more abstract notion encompassing one's dwelling place. Therefore, the semantic distinction between *house* and *home* in English is premised on the principle of concreteness.

Conversely, the English lexeme *home* can be considered a fully nominative lacuna in Russian due to the absence of a specific designation for one's dwelling place despite the existence of such a concept. Thus, Russian makes no lexical distinction between *house* and *home*. In the given example, *house and home* is an idiom which was rendered into Russian by omitting the lacunar item *home*. Omission of the term *home* seems a reasonable solution as it does not disadvantage translation in any way and allows the translator to avoid semantic redundancy in the target text.

Summing up the above, while omission can be generally seen as a last resort in translation of lexical gaps, it can prove effective in dealing with fully nominative lacunae. This type of lacuna may reveal contextually superfluous semantic details which can be omitted without compromising the quality of translation.

## 6.1.1.8 Partial omission

Partial omission is a technique that was identified in the translation of lacunar compounds. This technique presupposes translation of one of the components of the compound and omission of the other one as in the example below:

Source text

(English)                      I don't see it saying "**charity shop**" anywhere.

Target text

(Russian)                      Не    вижу,    чтобы    где-то    здесь    было    написано    "**благотворительность**".

Back translation        I don't see anywhere here any signs saying "**charity**".

<div align="right">(Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:820)</div>

*Charity shop* is a fully denotative lacuna in Russian due to the absence of retailers that fundraise money for charitable purposes through the trade of pre-owned goods. Charity shops should not be confused with so called *секонд-хенды* "second-hand [shops]" that sell second-hand goods for their own profit. Thus, due to the absence of a Russian equivalent, a translator opted for the partial omission, dropping the second element of the compound, thus preserving only the attributive noun *charity* in the target text.

This strategy yields an effect similar to that of generalisation, increasing the level of abstraction in the target text. However, unlike generalisation which typically involves a one-step upward shift in categorisation level and reveals a clear hierarchical link between the source text hyponymic and target text hypernymic terms, partial omission may result in a significant increase of the level of abstraction, with the hierarchical link being more indirect.

While this translation solution may prove effective in certain cases, it should be used with caution as it may put the source text at the risk of distortion, as illustrated by the following example:

| Source text | |
|---|---|
| (English) | Taylor left Kirk in charge of the Easter **egg hunt**, and they didn't exactly find them all. |
| Target text | |
| (Spanish) | Taylor dejó a Kirk a cargo de **los huevos** de pascua y no los encontraron. |
| | |
| Back translation | Taylor left Kirk in charge of the Easter **eggs** and they didn't find them. |

<div align="center">(Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:180)</div>

The compound *egg hunt* is a fully denotative lacuna in Spanish due to the absence of such a phenomenon in the Spanish speech community. In the given example, one of the components of the compound, namely *hunt* was omitted in the target text. As a result, the translated sentence states that the Easter eggs were not found, which contradicts the source text stating that not all the eggs were found and presupposing that some of the eggs were found. Besides, the target text gives the impression that Kirk was guarding the Easter eggs, with no indication that they were being searched for.

## 6.1.2  Semantic transformations

This category encompasses translation solutions involving substitution of the source language item with a semantically deviant target language item as a result of which various asymmetric semantic relationships are established between the source text and target text items. Therefore, semantic transformations entail deviation of varying degrees from semantic equivalence and are aimed at compensation of semantic divergence by means of pragmatic equivalence. This type of transformation typically occurs at the word level in contrast to the techniques aimed at explication of lacunar items that affect translation on the sentence level.

## 6.1.2.1 Generalisation

The corpus-based study revealed that generalisation is the most frequent translation solution in translation of the identified English lacunar lexemes into both Russian and Spanish (Section 6.2). Generalisation implies substitution of the source language item with a target language item of a broader meaning. Through the prism of frame semantics this

translation technique can be seen as an upward deviation from the categorisation level within the semantic hierarchy: the lacunar lexeme is replaced in the target language with a more general term.

Generalisation is a very efficient strategy, especially in dealing with fully denotative lexical lacunae, allowing the translator to bridge conceptual gaps and convey the original meaning, albeit with a certain loss of equivalence. The following example illustrates this point:

| | |
|---|---|
| Source text | |
| (English) | Beautiful wedding cakes. |
| | Wedding cakes. |
| | You... You look at the banqueting brochures... and I'll look at **plum-duff**. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Target text | |
| (Russian) | Красивые свадебные торты. |
| | Торты, посмотри. |
| | Посмотри свадебные каталоги, а я посмотрю **пуддинги**. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Back translation | Beautiful wedding cakes. |
| | Cakes, look. |
| | Look at the wedding catalogues and I will look at the **puddings**. |

<div align="right">(Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:104)</div>

*Plum duff*, being a variety of pudding, is a fully denotative lacuna in Russian due to the absence of the corresponding referent in the Russian speech community. Therefore, there is no direct counterpart from the structural perspective. Translating this lacunar lexeme with the help of a higher-level term allows for the preservation of the gist of the utterance without excessive overloading of the context and introduction of an unfamiliar concept to the target text.

However, this technique has a significant limitation: it inevitably entails a certain loss of information in the process of "transcoding". While a reference to *plum duff* in the source text activates the English speakers' knowledge about the typical ingredients of the dish and its traditional taste, the target text becomes devoid of this layer of information as a result of

generalisation. Furthermore, the higher-level term *пудинг* "pudding", opted for in this translation, is a borrowing from English. This suggests that the English lexeme *pudding* was once a fully denotative lacuna in Russian which became filled over time. However, although this structural discrepancy was evened out with the help of a loanword, it can be assumed that lacunarity has remained at the connotative level. For instance, in contrast to the English speech community, the borrowed term is unlikely to trigger any specific associations with the Christmas season in the Russian speakers.

In this example, the loss of information is not crucial since the connotative component does not seem to be particularly relevant. However, in certain contexts, where translation requires a higher degree of equivalence, generalisation alone may be insufficient, requiring additional transformations.

Generalisation allows a translator to establish different levels of abstraction: the higher the categorisation level in the semantic hierarchy, the broader the meaning and hence the more information becomes lost in the process of "transcoding". For instance, in the translation of the above-mentioned example into Spanish, the same strategy was used but with a slightly different outcome: the level of abstraction achieved in Spanish turned out to be different from that in Russian.

| | |
|---|---|
| Source text | |
| (English) | Beautiful wedding cakes. |
| | Wedding cakes. |
| | You... You look at the banqueting brochures... and I'll look at **plum-duff.** |
| | |
| Target text | |
| (Spanish) | Tartas de boda. |
| | Esas. |
| | Ahora, ... mira los catálogos de los banquetes y yo veré **los postres**. |
| | |
| Back translation | Wedding cakes. |
| | These ones. |
| | Now, … look at the banqueting catalogues and I will look at **the desserts.** |

(Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:73)

Just like in Russian, in Spanish, the source text item *plum-duff* was substituted with a more general term *los postres* "the desserts". Back translation from Russian and back translation from Spanish may seem equivalent to a native English speaker since the words *pudding* and *dessert* can be used interchangeably in British English (OED, 2022, pudding n., sense 4e). However, a closer investigation reveals that the translation into Russian appears to be more specific than that into Spanish, concretising a particular type of sweet dish. While the Spanish translation simply makes reference to a more abstract dessert category, the Russian one conveys a greater amount of detail. The reason for this inconsistency is the semantic specialisation that occurred during the borrowing of the term *pudding* into Russian (cases of semantic narrowing of meaning in the borrowing process are discussed in Chapter 5.2.2). The lexeme *pudding* was adopted into Russian with a change of categorisation level, with its meaning having been narrowed to a particular type of sweet baked dish typically made of flour or grain with added spices and fruits (Great Dictionary of Foreign Words, 2007, пудинг). Thus, although a lexical lacuna became filled with the help of borrowing, thus completing its lifecycle, it remained alive. Such seemingly dead lacunae can cause misunderstanding in the cross-cultural dialogue. A British English speaker can use the word *pudding* to refer to a category of desserts. However, a Russian speaker is very likely to misinterpret the intended message by decoding the meaning of *pudding* against the backdrop of the Russian semantic frame within which *пудинг* "pudding" is located on the lower categorisation level.

Since generalisation involves moving up the levels in the semantic hierarchy, it may seem reasonable to ascertain that the hypernym of the lacunar source text item is located at the same categorisation level as its equivalent in the target language to avoid confusion in translation.

## 6.1.2.2 Specification

Specification, being the opposite translation solution to generalisation, envisages downward deviation from the categorisation level within the semantic hierarchy. In other words, specification involves substitution of the source language item with a target language term of a more specific meaning. In translation, in general, specification is a commonly used strategy that allows a translator to downplay various stylistic discrepancies between the source and the target text items and to comply with grammatical and lexical

norms of the target language. However, the corpus-based analysis revealed that in the translation of lexical lacunae, specification is a technique with limited applicability.

There seems to be a logical explanation as to why this translation solution is comparatively uncommon in dealing with lexical gaps. Lexical lacunae tend to be located at the lowest categorisation level, laying bare the finest differences in conceptualisation of reality across speech communities (see Chapter 5.1.2.2 for further discussion). A significantly smaller proportion of lexical lacunae is located at the tiers higher than the subordinate level. Therefore, a translator is far more likely to come across a lacunar word which has no hyponyms, in which case specification becomes untenable.

Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapter 5.1.2.2, the analysis of the distribution of the lacunar lexemes across different levels of the HTE revealed that if a lacunar item is located on a floating basic level (discussed in Chapter 3.3.3), there is a strong possibility that the members of the subordinate category are lacunar as well. In this case, specification loses relevance. Summing up the above, in the translation of lexical gaps specification can be employed in rare instances where a lexical lacuna is located at a level other than the subordinate level of the semantic hierarchy, and the subordinate category members are not lacunar.

Kinship terms form the bulk of the lacunar lexemes translated with the help of specification. For instance, the English lexeme *sibling* is a lexical gap in both Russian and Spanish. There is no same-level counterpart in Russian or Spanish, with hyponyms *брат* "brother"/*сестра* "sister" and *hermano* "brother"/*hermana* "sister" functioning as common equivalents respectively, as evidenced by the corpus analysis. This translation is an example of specification involving substitution of a more general word with a more specific term. Interestingly, the plural form *siblings* can be directly translated in Spanish as *hermanos* meaning both "brothers" and "siblings". Likewise, *grandparent* is traditionally translated into both Russian and Spanish with the help of hyponyms *дедушка* "grandfather"/*бабушка* "grandmother" and *abuelo* "grandfather"/*abuela* "grandmother" respectively. Similarly, translation of the English term *godchild* requires specification of gender in both Russian and Spanish, with hyponymic equivalents being *крестный сын* "godson"/*крестная дочь* "goddaughter" and *ahijado* "godson"/*ahijada* "goddaughter".

As illustrated by the above examples, Russian and Spanish leave no other option for expressing the given concepts without gender marking. Thus, due to the absence of the

gender-neutral hypernymic terms, in the process of "transcoding", a translator has no other choice but to follow an obligatory linguistic pattern. In this respect, specification does not appear as an independent translator's decision in tackling lexical lacunae but rather a forced solution requiring a good knowledge of the general context.

However, it may be argued that Spanish allows some room for manoeuvre by using plural forms (e.g. *uno de los hermanos* "one of the siblings"). Hypothetically, such an alternative could work well in certain contexts but cannot be a universal solution especially in translation of film subtitles where the number of characters in each line is strictly limited, and any text expansion should be carefully considered. In this regard, the Russian lexical system appears to have an even more rigid framework with no lexemes to denote grandparents and siblings collectively.

## 6.1.2.3 Converse translation

Converse translation is a translation solution premised on the principle of oppositeness, involving substitution of the source text item with the target language item of opposite meaning, with subsequent transformation of the phrase structure as appropriate to achieve equivalence. In some literature on translation, this strategy is referred to as "antonymic" (e.g. Retsker, 2007:54) as it is usually associated with the use of an antonym coupled with a negation element (e.g. source language item *small* can be substituted with the target language item *not big* without distortion of meaning). However, the use of the term *converse* may be more appropriate since this technique is not limited to the substitution of the source text items with their antonyms and is not restricted exclusively to the word level. The corpus-based analysis showed that converse translation might involve metamorphoses on various levels including lexical, morphological and grammatico-syntactic.

Substitution of a positive source language item with a negative target language item (or vice versa) on the lexical level is perhaps the most common example of converse translation, and can be illustrated as follows:

Source text

(English)                          You could **dress down** at work.

Target text

(Spanish)                          Podrías **arreglarte menos** en el trabajo.

Back translation                   You could **spruce yourself up less** for work.

                                              (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:211)

The phrasal verb *dress down* can be considered a lexical gap in Spanish due to the absence of the structural equivalent. As evidenced by the corpus analysis, it is usually translated descriptively as *vestirse casual/informalmente* "dress oneself casually/informally" or simply by using a hypernym *vestirse* "dress oneself", in which case a significant amount of detail becomes lost. However, in the example above an alternative strategy was employed: the lacunar phrasal verb was substituted with the verb *arreglarse* which has the opposite meaning, "spruce oneself up", modified by an adverb *menos* "less*"* implying negation.

Converseness can also be carried out on the morphological level, for instance, with the help of a prefix rendering the antonym opposite in meaning. The English lexeme *naughty,* being a connotative lacuna in Russian, can be translated as *непослушный* "disobedient". The use of the negative prefix *не-* makes it possible to achieve semantic equivalence between the source and target text items.

Finally, converse translation of a lexical lacuna can also entail metamorphoses on the grammatico-syntactic level. The following example illustrates how a lacunar lexeme can be handled in translation with the help of converseness, requiring restructuring of the whole sentence:

Source text

(English)                          Plus you're just a **part-timer**!

Target text

(Russian)                          Разве ты здесь **не постоянно работал**?

Back translation                   Didn't you **work here full time**?

                                              (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:791)

Due to the absence of the direct equivalent of the English lexeme *part-timer* in Russian, the translator opted for the converse translation, which allowed them to substitute a positive (exclamative) sentence with a negative interrogative sentence in the target language. Restructuring of the utterance made it possible to avoid a wordy explanation of the lacunar term, thus making the target text concise and clear.

## 6.1.2.4 Synonymic translation

Synonymic translation is a technique opposite to converse translation, implying substitution of the lacunar source text item with a synonym in the target language. Viewed through the prism of frame semantics, this strategy involves replacement of the lacunar term with another member of the same semantic category. The lexemes contained within one semantic paradigm are the closest in meaning, and therefore, translation of the lacunar item with the help of another category member may seem an ideal solution.

In the following example the English compound *pelican crossing,* which is a lexical lacuna in Spanish, was substituted with a synonymic phrase *paso de cebra* "zebra crossing":

Source text

(English)                          We have **Pelican Crossings** that beep, and we have ramps in front of public buildings…

Target text

(Spanish)                          Tenemos **pasos de cebra** que pitan y tenemos rampas de acceso a los edificios públicos…

Back translation             We have **zebra crossings** that beep and we have access ramps to public buildings…

                                                    (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:549)

According to the HTE, both compounds *pelican crossing* and *zebra crossing* are nested within a larger semantic category "Part where pedestrians can cross" (03.10.03.01.02.04.01.17). Technically speaking, pelican and zebra crossings are quite different. In contrast to a pelican crossing, a zebra crossing is not light controlled: instead, there are black and white stripes across the carriageway, at which drivers must stop if a pedestrian decides to cross the road and steps on the stripes (OED, 2022, zebra crossing,

n.). Conversely, at a pelican crossing there is a traffic light activated by pedestrians by pressing a button (OED, 2022, pelican crossing, n.). Despite this technical difference, in the given context these two members of the same semantic category can be used interchangeably without compromising the general meaning of the utterance.

Similarly, the following example illustrates substitution of the English term *pigtail,* identified as a lexical gap in Spanish, with the same category member *cola de caballo* "horsetail":

Source text
(English)                                  Thought you'd be wearing a **pigtail**.

Target text
(Spanish)                                  Creí que llevarías la **cola de caballo**.

Back translation          I thought you would wear a **horsetail.**

(Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:325)

According to the HTE, both lexemes *pigtail* and *horsetail* (in the form *horse('s) tail*) are nested within a larger category "Tresses/plaits" (02.02.18.02.03.07.03) and can be considered synonyms. What is noteworthy is that in the earlier usage, *pigtail* usually denoted a single plait, whereas in Present-Day English this lexeme tends to be used in the plural form with reference to the hairstyle with two symmetrical plaits or tails on both sides of the head (OED, 2022, pigtail n.). Since the film from which this example was retrieved was released in 1930, it is possible that the lexeme *pigtail* was still used in the former sense, and therefore, *pigtail* and *horsetail* could function as adequate equivalents in translation. However, nowadays, there is a slight semantic difference between these terms, and the given solution can be applied in those contexts where the distinction between the two types of hair styles is not essential. In other settings, for instance, in a scene at the hairdressing salon, such differentiation could be of crucial importance, and synonymic translation would not be the optimal solution.

Substitution of the lacunar item with the member of the same category which is closest in meaning may seem an ideal scenario but in practice is rarely possible. It should be borne in mind that category members often vary semantically and stylistically. Besides, some

categories of the HTE may contain just one word, while in other cases, members of the same category might be lexical lacunae as well, as evidenced by the following example:

Source text

(English)                        Hyatt again?

                                 Yep.

                                 I love the **brunch**.

Target text

(Russian)                        Опять в Хаятте?

                                 Да.

                                 Там **завтраки** хорошие.

Back translation              Again in Hyatt?

                                 Yes.

                                 There are good **breakfasts** there.

                                 (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:187)

Being a lexical lacuna in Russian, the term *brunch* is contained within a HTE category labelled "Brunch/pre-lunch" (01.07.01.20.13) along with a synonym *pre-luncheon*. As is frequently the case, both lexemes nested within a semantic category formed by a lacunar term are lexical gaps too (see Chapter 5.1.2.2). Therefore, substitution of the word *brunch* with its synonym *pre-luncheon* makes no sense since it does not have a direct equivalent in Russian either. In this case, a slightly different approach can be used: adjacent categories may be worth investigating.

The neighbouring categories "Breakfast/morning meal" (01.07.01.20.12) and "Brunch/pre-lunch" (01.07.01.20.13) are located at the same level of categorisation, representing different varieties of "Meals" (01.07.01.20). Despite a certain conceptual difference, the terms *brunch* and *breakfast* can be considered quasi-synonyms. As exemplified by the translation above, in particular contexts *breakfast* can be used as a functional equivalent of *brunch* in the target language since it does not distort the conversational implicature. From the standpoint of pragmatics, the underlying idea of this extract from the dialogue is that Hyatt has been selected among other hotels because the morning meals it serves are appreciated by the speaker. In other words, in the given context, the difference between *brunch* and *breakfast* fades into insignificance, allowing a

translator to use them as functional equivalents. Therefore, if a lacunar item cannot be substituted with another member of the same semantic category, a translator may wish to explore the neighbouring categories located on the same categorisation level.

To sum up, synonymic translation may involve substitution of the lacunar source text item either with a synonym or with a quasi-synonym. However, in either case, semantic and stylistic differences should be carefully evaluated.

Within the category of synonymic translation, a particular case of substitution with the help of a synonym of foreign origin can be distinguished. A lexical gap reveals a conceptual hiatus in the contrastive analysis of two languages, which potentially could already have been established in a different language combination, and hypothetically could already have been filled with a loanword. For instance, the corpus-based analysis revealed that in the Russian translation, *lunchbox* was substituted with a term of Japanese origin *бенто* "bento" and *knickerbockers* were substituted with a word *пумпы* *"pumpas"* borrowed from German (Karta Slov, n.d., пумпы). Despite conceptual differences, in certain contexts this strategy may function well, allowing a translator to convey the meaning of an unfamiliar term concisely without overloading the context with explanatory descriptions.

However, there is one pitfall in the substitution of lacunar items with synonymic borrowings from other languages that should be considered. Loanwords are often stylistically loaded and unless fully assimilated are intrinsically linked to the donor language. Thus, in certain contexts when the national identity and culture-specific atmosphere are foregrounded, it is important to preserve them and not to ruin this imagery by triggering associations with a different country.

## 6.1.2.5 Contextual equivalence

The strategy of substitution of a lacunar item with a contextual equivalent is similar to synonymic translation. However, instead of translating a lacunar item with the help of a member of the same semantic category or a neighbouring category, a lacunar lexeme is substituted with a more distant member of the same semantic domain. The source text and target text items are still semantically related, although it is impossible to consider them near-synonyms or even quasi-synonyms. Thus, translation with the help of a contextual equivalent can be considered an exceptional form of synonymic translation.

Thus, among other examples the corpus analysis revealed that *scrunchie* was translated into Spanish as *diadema* "tiara" (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:311), *Wendy house* as *casa de muñecas* "doll's house" (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:656), *black pudding* as *pierna de carnero* "lamb leg" (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:79), and *plum duff* as *mermelada de ciruela* "plum jam" (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:72). Likewise, in the Russian translation *Sunday roast* was substituted with *воскресный пикник* "Sunday picnic" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:195), *zip line* with *канатный мост* "rope bridge" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:881) and *spotted dick* with *эклеры с кремом* "eclairs with cream" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:97).

As can be seen, the source text items and their translations belong to the same semantic fields and function as contextual equivalents. This means that these translation options cannot be used as stable equivalents and function well only in the given contexts. This translation solution can be seen as an intentional deviation from the potentially achievable equivalence and is acceptable only provided that the benefits associated with the audiences' perceptions of the translated text outweigh the risks related to the loss of equivalence. For instance, in the following example a lacunar lexeme *shortbread* was translated as *bocadillos* "sandwiches":

Source text

(English)          Now it's teatime.

                   I just love English hotel teas.

                   Cream cakes and **shortbread** and ...[23]

                   No, Grandma.

Target text

(Spanish)          Bien, es la hora del té.

                   Me encantan los tés ingleses en hoteles.

                   Con pasteles de crema y **bocadillos**...

                   No, abuela.

---

[23] The original punctuation has been preserved.

| Back translation | Well, it's teatime. |
|---|---|
| | I love English teas in hotels. |
| | With cream cakes and **sandwiches**… |
| | No, Gran. |

(Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:116)

Strictly speaking, *shortbread* and *bocadillos* "sandwiches" can hardly be considered equivalents. However, this translation solution appears to be particularly successful. Both lexemes *shortbread* and *bocadillos* "sandwiches" are semantically related and belong to the semantic domain of food served for tea along with *scones*, *jam*, *biscuits* and *buns*. Apparently, the translator decided to create an image of an English afternoon tea which in the Spanish speech community is more likely to be associated with traditional sandwiches than with Scottish biscuits which can be unfamiliar to a wider audience. Thus, equivalence was sacrificed for the benefit of the target text, namely, to ensure a better pragmatic effect of the translated text on the audience.

Translation with the help of contextual equivalence can be a useful solution provided that a lacunar item does not play a central role in the context. In cases where centrality of the lacunar item is determined by the logical emphasis and pragmatic significance, and equivalence and precision acquire vital importance, this strategy may be less suitable.

## 6.1.2.6 Adaptation

Adaptation involves substitution of a lacunar item with a lexeme familiar to the target audience that can function as a contextual equivalent in the given utterance. In contrast to contextual equivalence, adaptation implies introduction of a culture-specific target text item which has no direct equivalent in the source text. Therefore, in the case of adaptation, a lacunar source text item and its functional equivalent in the target text can be seen as oppositely directed lacunae. The solution to replace a lacuna with a concept idiosyncratic to the target speech community may be prompted by pragmatic factors as well as by the translator's intention to reproduce a word play existing in the source text.

This solution can be particularly useful in translation of fully denotative lacunae since it allows activation of a familiar semantic frame in the target language and the triggering of links between known concepts. In other words, this strategy enables a translator to tune the audience to the situation-specific circumstances, thus achieving a desired pragmatic effect.

For instance, in the following example a lacunar item *O-Levels* was substituted with what can be considered an adequate Spanish counterpart *selectividad* "university admission examinations":

Source text

(English)          His family's even more distinguished.

                   Dad ran a hospital.

                   Mom's a judge.

                   He got 10 distinctions at **O-Levels**.

Target text

(Spanish)          La familia de él es incluso más distinguida.

                   Papa dirige un hospital.

                   Mama es juez.

                   Tuvo 10 sobresalientes en la **selectividad**.

Back translation   His family is even more distinguished.

                   His dad runs a hospital.

                   His mom is a judge.

                   He had 10 distinctions at the **university admission tests**.

                                        (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:491)

Being a fully denotative lacuna, O-level examinations do not exist as such in Spain. Therefore, from the structural perspective, there is a lexical gap. In the given example, the lacunar item was substituted with a lexeme that is comprehensible to the target audience to achieve a desirable communicative effect. A familiar semantic frame of life-changing decisive examinations is activated, and the audience can draw relevant conclusions about the outstanding performance of the character in question. As a result, the lacunar concept is adapted to the target language.

Adaptation can be a particularly efficient translation strategy in bridging conceptual gaps arising as a result of divergent extralinguistic circumstances. The following example of translation from English into Russian illustrates this point:

Source text

(English)              Presumably you get the same effect when there's a police car in the **slow lane** doing 68 as well.


Target text

(Russian)              По-видимому, тот же эффект получается, когда полицейская машина движется **по крайней правой полосе** в лучшем случае на 68 км/ч.


Back translation       Apparently the same effect occurs when police car moves along the **outer right lane** at a speed of 68 km/hour.

(Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:716)


In British English the phrase *slow lane* is conventionally used with reference to the left-hand lane on the motorway in contrast to the right-hand lane, which is also called the *fast lane* intended for overtaking. However, both these expressions can be deemed partially nominative lacunae in Russian. The concepts of *slow lane* and *fast lane* have not fully crystallised in the form of lexical items in Russian, with calques being generally non-idiomatic. Out of eleven occurrences of translation of *slow lane* into Russian (Reverso Context, 2013-2022), only one literal translation was identified, which can possibly be considered an infelicitous translation of the lacunar expression. In contrast to English, in Russian, differentiation of road lanes on the basis of traffic speed appears significantly less conventional than their distinction based on the driver-centred frame of reference (*правая полоса* "right lane" vs. *левая полоса* "left lane").

However, there might be a trend towards further crystallisation of these concepts in Russian, since a few occurrences of calques have been found on the Web. Interestingly, in all detected instances where the expressions *медленная полоса* "slow lane" and *быстрая полоса* "fast lane" are used, they are enclosed in quotation marks. For instance, in Batushenko's (2014) article, *медленные полосы* "slow lanes" are mentioned in the context of innovations in speed limit regulations. The systematic use of quotation marks may further suggest that these concepts can be potentially unfamiliar to a larger Russian audience.

It should also be borne in mind that Russia uses a right-hand traffic system, as opposed to Britain. Thus, in Britain the overtaking lane (aka the fast lane) is the right lane, whereas the

*slow lane* is the left one. Exactly the opposite is true for Russia: the overtaking lane is the left lane, with the *slow lane* being the right one.

In fact, in the given example the lacunar English expression was substituted with a functional equivalent that would be comprehensible to the Russian audience: *slow lane* was replaced with *крайняя правая полоса* "outer right lane". Therefore, a translator has adapted the unfamiliar lacunar concept to the target language audience and substituted an extraneous component with a more familiar and more understandable element, with translation being reoriented towards compliance with the norms of the target language.

As illustrated by this example, this translation strategy can be efficient in handling lexical lacunae as it allows a translator to even out structural discrepancies, rendering conceptual gaps invisible. However, adaptation is not without pitfalls, too. The introduction of culture-specific elements can pose certain stylistic challenges. For instance, in the translation below, *shepherd's pie*, being a fully denotative lacuna in Russian, was adapted to the target language audience and substituted with a culture-specific canned food:

Source text

(English)               Or we have some **shepherd's pie** peppered

                        With actual shepherd on top.


Target text

(Russian)               Есть ещё начинка с **завтраком туриста** приправленная

                        самим туристом.


Back translation        There is also a stuffing with **breakfast of a tourist** seasoned

                        with a tourist.

                                        (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:119)

In order to reproduce a word play in the target text, a translator has opted for the food item well known to the target audience, which, however, has little to do with English *shepherd's pie,* thus sacrificing equivalence. Both expressions *shepherd's pie* and *завтрак туриста* "breakfast of a tourist" are formed according to a similar genitival pattern, the difference being that in English possession is expressed with the help of possessive markers: an apostrophe and affix -s, but in Russian through a possessive construction with postpositioned possessor in the genitive case. In the source text the wordplay becomes

possible since the possessor appears in the sentence twice. In the first case the possessor modifies the headword *pie,* whereas in the second case the possessor reappears in the participial phrase modifying the same headword. A similar grammatical pattern was effectively reproduced in the target text because of the translator's witty lexical choice that enabled him or her to recreate an equivalent humorous effect.

However successful this translation strategy may seem, the introduction of a culture-specific term, which *завтрак туриста* "breakfast of a tourist" definitely is, can be stylistically risky. Being a variety of canned meat, *завтрак туриста* "breakfast of a tourist" was widely produced in the Soviet Union. Therefore, a diachronic element moves to the foreground and inexorably triggers specific associations with the Soviet past. Such associative parallels may, however, be dubious and even undesirable in a film set in the Victorian Era such as *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:119).

As illustrated by the example above, a translation strategy aimed at bridging a lexical gap should always be considered in a wider perspective and should not be limited exclusively to the word level. Adaptation may be an efficient solution in particular contexts but should always be evaluated against broader stylistic and pragmatic objectives.

## 6.1.2.7 Neologisation

Another translation solution that was identified in the analysis of the corpus data is neologisation which presupposes substitution of a lacunar item with a newly coined term in the target language, i.e. a neologism.

Neologisms represent a dynamic category just as lexical lacunae do. It is difficult to identify at what point a lexeme ceases being a neologism and becomes a common usage term. Likewise, it is not feasible to determine at what stage a lexical lacuna becomes filled. Besides, both notions are knowledge-dependent. What is a neologism or a lexical gap for one individual is not necessarily such for another. With due regard to the relative character of the category of neologisms, in this thesis neologisation is understood as a translation solution involving a translator's brand-new coinage of a term.

During the analysis of the translation solutions, only three instances of neologisation were identified. This is an insufficient amount of data to allow for general conclusions on this

translation strategy. However, a closer investigation enables some specific observations, outlined below.

The three lacunar items that were translated with the help of newly coined words were two-stem lexemes. In each case neologisation occurred by analogy with the source text lacunar item drawing upon additional supportive techniques. The following example illustrates formation of a new word in the target language relying on a combination of calque and transliteration:

Source text

(English)                   I mean, we were in a pretty serious **bromance**.


Target text

(Russian)                   То есть... у нас с тобой был серьезный **БРО-ман.**


Back translation            That is… we had a serious **bromance**.

<div align="right">(Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:443)</div>

A colloquial English term *bromance* that was formed as a result of blending of the two stems *bro-* and *romance* (OED, 2022, bromance n.) denotes close male friendship. However, this lexeme is a fully nominative lacuna in Russian since the corresponding concept has no monolexemic lexicalisation. In the given example, a translator coined a new term in the target language relying on different techniques in translating each of the stems. The first stem *bro-* was transliterated into Russian, whereas the second stem *romance* was literally translated with the help of a word *роман* of French origin (Great Dictionary of Foreign Terms, 2007, роман). Analogously to the source language, the translated stems were blended. This translation solution was reinforced by the use of non-standard orthography. The first three letters were capitalised and separated by a hyphen, thus laying an emphasis on the transliterated stem and triggering associations with a slang word *бро* "bro" borrowed from English. As a result of the combination of transliteration, calque and the use of non-standard spelling, a new term was coined in Russian for the translation of the lacunar item.

When there is no direct counterpart in the target language, a translator may resort to neologisation and suggest their own word for an unfamiliar concept. However, the efficiency of this translation solution is determined by a translator's inventiveness and

potential to think creatively. While this strategy may be useful in translation of film subtitles and literary texts, it seems inappropriate for formal texts.

## 6.1.2.8 Metaphorisation

Metaphorisation involves substitution of a non-metaphorical lacunar source text item with a metaphor in the target text. When there is no direct counterpart, the meaning can be conveyed with the help of metaphorical means, thus preserving pragmatic equivalence of the original utterance. The example below illustrates how metaphorisation can be effectively employed in tackling lexical gaps:

Source text

(English)                        He'll be on a **no-fly list** tomorrow.

Target text

(Russian)                        Завтра он будет **в чёрном списке** всех авиакомпаний.

Back translation         Tomorrow he will be **on the black list** of all the airlines.

(Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:769)

An expression *no-fly list* appeared in English along with the increasing practice among airlines of drawing up lists of passengers not allowed to use their services for security reasons. However, this phrase has no direct counterpart in Russian and can be translated either descriptively or with the help of metaphorisation as in the given example. The colour-term metaphor used in this translation is premised on the negative association of *black* with unlawful activities. Legality is one of the earliest attested figurative meanings of *black* in English, with *black* being used to refer to illicit operations (Hamilton, 2016:115-116). This metaphorical pattern is not idiosyncratic to the English speech community and is also used in Russian. Thus, the use of this metaphor in the target language suggests that the people on the black list are dangerous and can threaten the security of the airline and other passengers. The lacunar English expression and its metaphorical equivalent in Russian are pragmatically equivalent and can be used interchangeably without any loss of information or semantic deviation.

To replace a lacunar item or compound with a target text metaphor, the metaphor should be pragmatically equivalent to the source text utterance. Thus, pragmatic equivalence may help to neutralise semantic divergence.

## 6.1.2.9 Remetaphorisation

Remetaphorisation involves substitution of a metaphorically used lacunar lexeme or compound with a different metaphor that produces the same pragmatic effect in the target language. This translation strategy is particularly useful in handling connotative lacunae which often appear in metaphorical contexts, presupposing activation of the covert senses necessary to decode the overall meaning of the utterance. In cases of connotative lacunarity, literal translation destroys figurative meanings, whereas remetaphorisation can prove to be efficient.

For instance, in the following example, the lexeme *yellow* is used metaphorically, with the connotative component being in the foreground:

Source text

(English)              And you know why?

                       Because you're **yellow**.

                       A yellow bastard.


Target text

(Spanish)              ¿Y sabes por qué?

                       Porque eres un **gallina**.

                       Un miedoso sinvergüenza.



Back translation       Do you know why?

                       Because you are a **hen**.

                       A scared scoundrel.

                                        (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:350)

Since in Spanish the equivalent colour term *amarillo* "yellow" is devoid of the relevant connotative meaning and is not associated with cowardice, it was replaced with a pragmatically equivalent animal metaphor. In Spanish the term *gallina* "hen" can be used

figuratively to denote a coward (DLE RAE, 2022, gallina). Thus, the lacunar source text item was adapted to the target language. Remetaphorisation allows a translator to create a different image in the target language, which, however, has a similar pragmatic effect on the audience.

This translation technique is not limited to connotative lacunae and can be successfully used in tackling partially nominative lacunae too. Non-verbalised concepts that have only partially crystallised in the speech community can be effectively introduced to the target language with the help of metaphorical images. The alien concepts are then reframed with different figurative expressions more familiar to the target audience and become more comprehensible. For instance, the corpus study revealed that the English expression *property ladder*, which can be seen as a partially nominative lacuna in both Russian and Spanish, was successfully remetaphorised in both languages, thus creating different metaphorical images, yet having a roughly equivalent pragmatic impact on the Spanish and Russian audiences.

In the following example illustrating translation of the given expression into Russian, the lacunar unit was replaced with a modified metaphor *бороться* за *место под солнцем* "to fight for a place in the sun", which is more familiar to Russian speakers:

Source text

(English)                          Property value has gone one way: up.
                                   And this has left the natives struggling to keep a foothold in the **property ladder.**

Target text

(Russian)                          Цены на недвижимость идут вверх и только вверх.
                                   Поэтому аборигены вынуждены бороться за **место под солнцем недвижимости.**

Back translation                   Real estate prices are only increasing.
                                   That's why aborigines have to fight for **a place in the real-estate sun**.

                                                                   (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:535)

Leaving aside a dubious lexical choice employed in the translation of a relatively neutral term *natives* as *аборигены* "aborigines", which has strongly negative connotations in Russian and clashes stylistically with the source text item, this translation can be seen as a successful instance of remetaphorisation. This metaphorically reframed image reflects the original idea that the local residents face certain housing difficulties.

In contrast, a completely different image was created in the translation of the given expression into Spanish:

Source text

(English)               Property value has gone one way: up.

                        And this has left the natives struggling to keep a foothold in the
                        **property ladder**.

Target text

(Spanish)               El valor de los inmuebles ha ido en un sentido: Hacia [*sic*] arriba.

                        Y los nativos luchan por **llevarse un trozo del pastel inmobiliario.**

Back translation        The value of real estate has gone in one direction: upwards.

                        And the natives struggle to **get a slice of real estate cake.**

                                        (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:414)

The lacunar expression was replaced with the *slice of the cake* metaphor, implying that the real estate market is a cake, with natives trying hard to get a share in it. As can be seen, similar concepts can be created in other languages with the help of different metaphorical images.

## 6.1.2.10    Demetaphorisation

Demetaphorisation involves replacement of a metaphorically used source text lacunar item with a non-metaphorical target text counterpart, allowing a translator to convey the same idea in the target language but at the expense of losing figurative imagery.

Demetaphorisation may result in a monolexemic substitution of a metaphorically used lacunar term with a non-metaphoric counterpart (e.g. English *yellow* can be translated into

Spanish as *cobarde* "coward"). However, it may also imply a more complex transformation of the sentence structure, as in the following example:

Source text

(English)          Morning, darling.

                   You look like the last grave over near the **willow**.

                   Are you worried about something?

Target text

(Spanish)          Buenos días, cariño.

                   **Tienes muy mal aspecto.**

                   ¿Te preocupa algo?

Back translation    Good morning, darling.

                   **You don't look well.**

                   Is something bothering you?

<div align="right">(Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:327)</div>

The English lexeme *willow* is a connotative lacuna in both Russian and Spanish since the direct counterparts *ива* "willow" and *sauce* "willow" are devoid of the symbolic meaning present in English. By the end of the sixteenth century, the willow in the English lingua-cultural community became a symbol of sorrow over a loss of a beloved one or one-sided love (OED, 2022, willow n., sense I1d).

The association with sadness is reflected in the compound *weeping willow,* which can be seen as a conceptual metaphor rooted in our experience. Grigorieva (2014:89-90) links the origin of the expression *weeping willow* with the biological process guttation to which willows are prone. Willows expel excessive moisture through the tips of their leaves (ibid.), giving an impression of shedding tears. Besides, this figurative imagery fits a common metaphorical pattern "HAPPY IS UP, SAD IS DOWN" discussed, *inter alia,* in Lakoff and Johnson (1980:15). Drooping willow branches bring to mind the hunched posture usually associated with grief and depression.

Although *weeping willow* seems to be a common metaphor shared across different languages (e.g. *плакучая ива* in Russian, *sauce llorón* in Spanish, *salice piangente* in Italian, *saule pleureur* in French, *Trauerweide* in German), it is only in English that the

symbolic meaning of the lexeme *willow* alone is transparent enough to allude to sadness. For instance, in Spanish the symbolic meaning is only reflected in this compound, whereas the term *sauce* on its own is unlikely to activate any associative link with sorrow.

In the given example, in the source text a vivid metaphorical image is created due to the combination of negative connotations evoked by the lexeme *grave* and the symbolic meaning of the lexeme *willow*. In the target language, this figurative representation would be less effective, and therefore, a translator opted for demetaphorisation, substituting a metaphorical image with a pragmatically equivalent non-metaphorical counterpart. Despite losing the stylistic expressiveness, the source text was successfully translated, with the connotative gap being bridged.

## 6.1.2.11     Idiomatisation

Idiomatisation implies substitution of a lacunar item with an idiom in the target language. The main objective of this translation strategy is to preserve pragmatic equivalence but with the help of different lexical means. This translation solution is similar to metaphorisation since the introduction of both idioms and metaphors to the target text is underpinned by the use of figurative meaning.

The following corpus example illustrates the efficiency of this translation strategy:

Source text

(English)                    Break out the **yellow ribbon**, Sue. We are stranded in Iran.


Target text

(Russian)                    **Бей тревогу**, Сью. Нас бросили в Иране.


Back translation              **Raise the alarm**, Sue. They abandoned us in Iran.

(Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:663)

In contrast to the English speech community, where yellow ribbons are displayed in solidarity with hostages, prisoners, soldiers and people away from their homes (Chapter 4.2.1), in Russian culture the formal equivalent *желтая лента* "yellow ribbon" is devoid of any symbolic meaning. To even out this conceptual inconsistency, in this translation a

lacunar expression was substituted with a pragmatically equivalent idiom *бить тревогу*, literally meaning "beat the alarm".

Idioms are semantically bleached expressions the meaning of which cannot be deduced from the semantic content of their components. It may be assumed, however, that the idiom used in the given translation was formed as a result of metonymic transfer. In Russian culture the use of church bells was not limited to liturgical purposes but included, *inter alia*, raising the alarm in case of fire (Great Russian Encyclopaedia, 2005-2019, колокольные звоны), hence the expression *набатный колокол* "warning bell". The origin of this tradition can likely be traced back to the use of drums in case of emergency. The term *набат* derived from Arabic *naubât* "drum beat" (Ushakov, 1935-1940, набат) and was borrowed into Russian to denote copper drums used by the Russian troops (Brockhaus and Efron, 2012, набат, в старину). While the militaries used drums to warn of impending danger, the civilians used church bells for the same purpose. Thus, as a result of semantic change the term *набат* came to mean alarm raised with the help of bells (Great Russian Encyclopaedia, 2005-2019, набат). The bell sound was associated with the signal of danger in the Russian lingua-cultural consciousness, and, apparently, based on this causal relationship between the bell sound and alarm, the idiomatic expression *бить тревогу* "beat the alarm" was formed. Although the tradition of bell ringing in case of emergency was lost in the mid-twentieth century (ibid.), the expression remained, thus becoming semantically bleached.

Being semantically divergent counterparts, the source text expression and the target text idiom are pragmatically equivalent and can be used interchangeably in the given context without any significant loss of information.

It should be borne in mind that idiomatic expressions often represent culture-specific fixed combinations of lexical units, the back translation of which may yield different results in the source language. The same holds true for the previously discussed translation solution implying replacement of a lacunar item with a metaphor. Metaphors can also be idiosyncratic to a speech community and may resist back translation. Therefore, certain instances of metaphorisation, remetaphorisation and idiomatisation implying introduction of culture-specific metaphors and idioms to the target text can be seen as particular cases of adaptation.

## 6.1.2.12    Metonymic substitution

Metonymic substitution is a translation solution premised on metonymic transfer. In other words, this strategy implies substitution of a lacunar lexeme with a target text item logically related to it. This logical link can be based on different kinds of relationships between the source text and the target text items, including temporal, functional, spatial and causal. Therefore, metonymic substitution always involves a change of viewpoint. The source and target texts express essentially the same idea but approached from different perspectives.

Based on formal grounds, metonymic substitution is classified in this taxonomy as a variety of semantic transformation. However, it may be assumed that it is more likely to occupy an intermediate position between semantic and explicative transformations. For instance, metonymic substitution based on the part-whole relationship between the source and the target text items implies a straightforward replacement of a lacunar lexeme with a closely related term, as in the instance of translation of the English lexeme *toes* with the help of the Spanish term *los pies* "feet" (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:19). In this case the substitution occurs at the word level, with the part being replaced with the whole. However, metonymic substitution on the basis of causal relationship may involve changes even on the sentence level, requiring a complex structural transformation of the utterance as in the following example:

Source text

(English)              Slaya hip-checks Smashley into the rail. She's up and over and she's **crowd surfing**.

Target text

(Russian)             Толчок Слеи отправляет Смэшли за бортик. **Ее подхватывает толпа**.

Back translation      Slaya's push sends Smashley over the ledge. **The crowd catches her**.

                                            (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:954)

The originally Canadian verb *crowd-surf* (OED, 2022, crowd-surf v.) is a lexical lacuna in Russian since there is no direct counterpart. To avoid a lexical lacuna in the target text, the

translator changed the viewpoint, thus establishing the cause-and-effect relationship between the source and target text. The meaning of the source and target texts is essentially the same but conveyed from different perspectives. This translation solution involves more than a simple lexical substitution, causing grammatical and syntactic transformations on the sentence level.

As illustrated by the examples above, metonymic substitution may result in different outcomes ranging from lexical substitutions to complex structural transformations. Therefore, metonymic substitution is positioned as the last translation solution in the list of semantic transformations, bordering with explicative transformations.

Metonymic substitution holds a special place in this classification also because it allows the analysis of a translator's cognitive mechanisms occurring in the process of "transcoding". At first glance the relationship between the lacunar source text item and its counterpart in the target text may seem unobvious, but a closer investigation makes it possible to identify certain patterns behind a translator's reasoning. Table 6.1 summarises the underlying patterns of metonymic substitutions identified in the course of this analysis. The metonymic patterns are listed according to their frequency of occurrence in the datasets. Having been compiled on the basis of the analysed data, this list is not exhaustive and could be extended further. The diversity of metonymic substitutions employed in each individual translation practice directly relates to the translator's ability to think abstractly and to draw logical parallels between objects and phenomena of the surrounding world.

There is a great variety of classifications of metonymic patterns suggested by different authors, some of which are overviewed in Geeraerts (2010:32-33). The classifications vary according to the level of detail. However, the underlying principle of all of them is identification of the logical relationship between the two concepts. The metonymic patterns listed in the Table 6.1 below draw upon the existing terminology.

*Table 6.1 The identified patterns of metonymic substitutions*

| Metonymic pattern | Instances of translation from English into Spanish | Instances of translation from English into Russian |
|---|---|---|
| CAUSE – EFFECT | *Freebie – regalo* "present" | *Gap year – перерыв на год* "break for a year" |
| PART – WHOLE | *Highlands – Escocia* "Scotland" | *Toe – лапка* "paw" |
| OBJECT – FUNCTION | *Driveway – salida* "exit" | *Lay-by –* остановка "stop" |
| CONTAINER – CONTENTS | No available data | *Yule log – камин* "fireplace" |
| PRODUCER – PRODUCT | *Council tax – el registro del ayuntamiento* "the council register" | *DVLA – водительские права* "driving licence" |
| DISH – MEAL | No available data | *Sunday roast – обед* "lunch" |
| DISH – INGREDIENT | *Bubble and squeak – verduras fritas* "fried vegetables" | *Baked Alaska – меренга с морожёным* "meringue with ice-cream" |
| EVENT/PLACE – PARTICIPANT/VISITOR | *Amateur hour – aficionados* "amateurs" | *Charity shop – бедные* "the poor" |
| EVENT – LOCATION | *Sleepover – campamento* "camp" | *Booze cruise – круизное судно* "cruise ship" |
| EVENT – DATE | *Boxing Day – el 26 de diciembre* "26 December" | No available data |

Examination of the underlying patterns gives insight into the logic of the translator's reasoning. It may be assumed that after a translator's familiarisation with the source text certain semantic frames are activated and contrasted in the source and in the target languages, and the identified lexical lacunarity is compensated for by the establishment of the alternative links with closely related frames. By way of illustration, let us consider the following translation premised on the principle of metonymic substitution:

Source text
(English)                    You got the address from the **DVLA**?


Target text
(Russian)                    Получил адрес из **водительских прав**?


Back translation            Have you got the address from **the driving licence**?

(Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:700)


The English acronym *DVLA* stands for the *Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency* which is a British executive body in charge of issuing driving licences and registering vehicle holders. Following Fillmore's (1982) frame semantics logic, to understand the meaning of the acronym, one should be familiar with the functions of this organisation. Therefore, a frame encompassing driving licensing procedure should be activated. A speaker familiar with this frame will have a knowledge of its constituents: an applicant wishing to obtain a driving privilege, a certifying body, a document entitling an individual to drive vehicles and criteria for issuing driving licences. However, approached from a cross-linguistic perspective, this frame contains certain elements that do not appear universal: the certifying bodies vary across speech communities. An equivalent frame in the Russian national consciousness contains *подразделения ГИБДД МВД России* "units of the State Road Traffic Safety Inspectorate of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs" as the certifying body. The names of both English and Russian organisations issuing driving licences are culture-specific expressions having no direct equivalents in other languages. Therefore, they can be seen as oppositely directed lexical lacunae.

In the given example, the adaptation (Section 6.1.2.6) could hypothetically have been employed to render the lacunar item into the target language, and *DVLA* could have been substituted with *подразделения ГИБДД МВД России* "units of the state Road Traffic Safety Inspectorate of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs". However, such a translation would have created dissonance with the audience's expectations watching a film about the London-based police department. Therefore, a translator opted for an alternative strategy, namely metonymic substitution.

An alternative PRODUCER-PRODUCT semantic frame can be extrapolated onto the components of the above-discussed frame, i.e. the certifying bodies can be seen as

PRODUCERS, whereas the driving licences which they issue can be considered PRODUCTS. While PRODUCERS are cross-linguistically divergent, the PRODUCTS appear universal: *driving licence* in English and *водительские права* "driving licence" in Russian.

In the given translation, the lacunar PRODUCER was replaced with the PRODUCT easily translatable into Russian. At the conceptual level such a substitution becomes clear since the information about the individual's place of residence can be obtained both from the PRODUCER and the PRODUCT itself. However, from the referential perspective, this solution may seem less effective since the residence information indicated on Russian driving licences is limited to the city of residence, whereas the British driving licences provide the full address of a holder. Therefore, this instance of metonymic substitution only partly resolves the translator's problem of bridging the lexical gap. On the one hand, as a result of this translation strategy the source of information through which the address was obtained is formally indicated in the target language. On the other hand, the target audience associates the target text with the Russian driving licence which stands as a conceptual prototype for Russian speakers and may be confusing since the exact address is not indicated on it. There may arise a cognitive clash because the concept does not map onto extralinguistic reality.

Metonymic transfer occurs based on the translator's encyclopaedic knowledge anchored in their extralinguistic experience. Thus, metonymic substitutions reflect the translator's conceptualisation patterns and provide a valuable insight into the cognitive mechanisms in the process of translation. Metonymic substitution is a widely used translation strategy in handling lexical lacunae, as evidenced by the quantitative analysis, being the third most popular solution employed by Russian translators and the fourth most frequent technique in Spanish translations. From the qualitative perspective, this strategy is efficient: however, it is worth verifying that the lacunar source concept and the target concept substituting it are contained within comparable semantic frames across languages.

### 6.1.3 Explicative transformations

Complex explicative transformations constitute a separate category of translation solutions involving fundamental restructuring of the source text. Sometimes a lacunar item cannot be substituted with a functional equivalent on the lexical level, requiring more complex changes to the structure of the original sentence. Transformations may be due to a

translator's intention to enhance clarity and comply with the norms of the target language avoiding cumbersome structures.

## 6.1.3.1 Grammatical transformations

Lexical gaps can be handled in translation with the help of grammatical transformations, for instance by translating a lacunar item with a different part of speech. Vinay and Darbelnet (1995[1958]:36) referred to this translation solution as "transposition". As a result of this technique, the semantic meaning remains preserved in the process of "transcoding" but becomes expressed through different grammatical means in the target language. The following example illustrates how a noun can be translated with the help of a participle:

Source text

(English)                    I've captured an **intruder**... who's entered my home.


Target text

(Russian)                    Я поймал **вторгшегося** в мой дом.


Back translation             I have caught **the one who intruded** my house.

                                        (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:625)


Due to the absence of the semantically equivalent noun in Russian, the English term *intruder* cannot be rendered in the target language without any grammatical change. However, there is a Russian verb *вторгаться* "intrude", on the basis of which, with the help of the suffix *-ш-*, a past participle can be formed. Substantivisation of adjectives and participles is a frequent grammatical phenomenon in Russian and is one of the methods of word-formation (Mukasheva, 2016:67). Thus, in the Russian translation the participle functions as an object in place of the noun in the source text. This grammatical metamorphosis allows a translator to retain a syntactic structure and at the same time to avoid semantic deviation, which would have occurred in the case of semantic substitutions.

Various combinations may occur as a result of grammatical transposition including transformation of nouns into adjectives, verbs and infinitive constructions. Besides, lacunar items are not limited to nouns, and even interjections can be seen as lexical gaps. For instance, the English interjection *ka-ching* is a lexical lacuna in both Russian and Spanish

which is often translated with the help of nouns. Thus, the interjection transforms into a nominal one-member sentence in the target text, e.g. "Баблище!" (Electronix Appendix:1ENG-RUS:300) and "Plata" (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:221). The Russian and Spanish counterparts are colloquial terms for *money* which approximate the translation to the original text from a stylistic perspective. Therefore, depending on the word class of the lacunar lexeme, diverse word-class transformations are possible.

Another form of grammatical transformation used in handling lexical gaps is pluralisation. This technique involves transformation of the singular form of a lacunar item into the plural. However, this translation solution is of limited applicability. It can be effective in dealing with fully nominative lacunae revealing absence of gender-neutral terms, for example. The following translation illustrates the use of pluralisation:

Source text
(English)                    Is there a **grandparent** or someone else we could call?

Target text
(Spanish)                    ¿Tiene **abuelos** o alguien a quien podamos llamar?

Back translation             Do you have **grandparents** or somebody who we can call?
                                            (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:386)

The English term *grandparent* is a fully nominative lacuna in Spanish (Section 6.1.2.2). Since there is no gender-neutral equivalent, this lacunar item was rendered in the target language with the help of a plural form.

However, this translation solution is rarely used in isolation. Pluralisation is typically employed in combination with generalisation, as illustrated by the example below:

Source text
(English)                    This isn't about my **council tax**? 100%?

Target text
(Spanish)                    ¿No es por mis **impuestos**, 100%?

Back translation            This isn't about my **taxes**, 100%?

<div align="right">(Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:639)</div>

From the formal perspective, the English compound *council tax* has no direct equivalent in Spanish. This does not mean, however, that Spanish householders are exempt from the municipal taxes payable to the local authorities. On the contrary, Spaniards pay a local variety of council tax called *impuesto sobre bienes inmuebles* "tax on real estate property". However, in the given example, the translator seems to have chosen intentionally not to employ adaptation, so as to depart from any culture-specific associations that this translation solution may evoke. Thus, the translator opted for generalisation which, in combination with pluralisation, helped to increase the level of abstraction, avoiding unnecessary culture-specific parallels.

Grammatical transformation can also occur on a morphological level. However, morphological changes are insufficient in themselves in tackling lexical gaps, although they can be used as a supportive measure, for example, together with generalisation as in the following translation:

Source text
(English)                   You okay in there, **bestie**?

Target text
(Russian)                   У тебя там все в порядке, **подруженька**?

Back translation            Are you alright, [dear female] **friend**?

<div align="right">(Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:455)</div>

The colloquial British term *bestie,* typically used with a reference to a person's best friend, is a lexical lacuna in Russian since there is no equivalent gender-neutral lexeme. In the given example, *bestie* was translated with the help of a more general term *подруга* "[female] friend" to which a diminutive suffix *-еньк-* was added. *Inter alia*, the diminutive suffix conveys the feeling of affection which allows the stylistic and pragmatic approximation of the translation to the source text despite some semantic discrepancy. The source text item *bestie* and its counterpart in the given context *подруженька* encode different amounts of information. *Bestie* is a best friend of unspecified gender, whereas *подруженька* is a female friend, but not necessarily the best one. Grammatical

transformation in combination with generalisation allows the translator to approach the original text in terms of stylistic and pragmatic equivalence, thus balancing out the semantic inconsistency between the lacunar item and its counterpart.

## 6.1.3.2 Grammatico-syntactic transformations

Grammatico-syntactic transformations imply a complex restructuring of the source text. Thus, the same idea is expressed in both source and target texts but with the help of different grammatical and syntactic means. Sometimes translation of a lacunar item requires syntactic transformation of the whole sentence, as illustrated by the following example:

Source text

(English)                    I need to go back to sleep, Kel.

                             No way. You're doing the **school run.**

Target text

(Spanish)                    Necesito volver a dormir, Kel.

                             De ningún modo. **Tú llevarás a los niños a la escuela.**


Back translation             I should go back to sleep, Kel.

                             No way. **You will take the children to school**.

                                         (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:518)


The compound *school run* is a lexical lacuna in Spanish (Chapter 4.3.2), the translation of which required a complex restructuring of the source text sentence. While the source text structure consists of a subject, a predicator and an object, the syntactic pattern in the target text is different, with an animated noun *los niños* being introduced as the object and the prepositional phrase *a la escuela* functioning as the adverbial of place.

Translation of a lexical gap may also involve transformation of a simple sentence into a complex sentence:

Source text

(English)                    Let's put on something more **child-friendly.**

Target text

(Spanish)                    Pongamos algo **que sea más apropiado para niños**.


Back translation          Let's switch on something **that is more appropriate for the kids.**

(Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:43)


Since the English adjective *child-friendly* has no direct equivalent in Spanish, in the given translation the lacunar item was transformed into a subordinate clause. Such transformation involves alteration of the syntactic structure of the whole sentence. Thus, a simple sentence in the source text becomes a complex sentence in the target text. However, this kind of syntactic extension may seem undesirable for the translation of film subtitles as there is a risk of exceeding permitted character limits for each line.

## 6.1.3.3 Descriptive translation

Descriptive translation is perhaps one of the most intuitively obvious solutions for handling lexical lacunae, providing an extended explication of a lacunar item. Lengthy dictionary definitions which are often used in bilingual dictionaries for the translation of lacunar lexemes are paradigmatic illustrations of descriptive translation. Although this strategy allows a translator to provide an exhaustive explanation of a lacunar item, it should be used with caution as it may overload the target text, thus making translation cumbersome. Besides, this strategy is not universally applicable. For instance, in film subtitles, where a character limit per line is applicable, increase in the word count may be undesirable.

A distinctive characteristic of descriptive translation is the transformation of a lacunar item into a lengthier passage in the target language typically containing a more general term modified by a descriptive word (e.g. *coleslaw* translated into Russian as *капустный салат* "cabbage salad" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:124); *cornrows* translated into Spanish as *trenzas africanas* "African plaits" (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:316)), a phrase (e.g. *shepherd's pie* translated into Russian as *картофельная запеканка с мясом* "potato casserole with meat" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:118); *part-timers* translated into Spanish as *gente a tempo parcial* "people on part time basis" (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:603)) or even a subordinate clause, as in the following example:

| Source text | |
|---|---|
| (English) | College was the end of Jenna Hamilton, that girl, and the birth of Jenna Hamilton, **it girl**. |
| | |
| Target text | |
| (Spanish) | La universidad era el final de Jenna Hamilton, esa chica, y el nacimiento de Jenna Hamilton, **la chica que marca tendencia**. |
| | |
| Back translation | University was the end of Jenna Hamilton, that girl, and the birth of Jenna Hamilton, **the girl who sets the trend.** |

<div align="right">(Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:273)</div>

The English compound *it girl*, which has no direct equivalent in Spanish, in this example is translated descriptively with the introduction of a subordinate clause into the target text which provides an explication of the lacunar concept. However, introducing the subordinate clause into the target text directly impacts the structure of the sentence, meaning that the original source text undergoes a significant change. In this regard, descriptive translation is closely related to the previously discussed grammatico-syntactic transformation which presupposes a complex restructuring of the source text.

## 6.1.3.4 Calque in combination with supportive techniques

While calque on its own is not a particularly helpful strategy in tackling lexical gaps, in combination with addition it can prove effective. Addition involves inclusion of a gloss (i.e. a brief definition) of a lacunar item within the target text to convey the implicit components of meaning. It is preferable to integrate the gloss into the target text to make the translation smooth. However, where this is not possible, supplementary information can be introduced within brackets as in the following example:

| Source text | |
|---|---|
| (English) | It's easy to fix Britain's town centres. |
| | Rip up every **double yellow line** and sack every single traffic warden. |
| | |
| Target text | |
| (Russian) | На самом деле легко исправить центры в британских городах. |

Нужно стереть **двойные жёлтые линии ("стоянка запрещена")** и уволить всех до одного инспекторов дорожного движения.

Back translation    As a matter of fact, it's pretty straightforward to fix centres in British cities. One should cancel **double yellow lines ("no parking")** and fire every single traffic warden.

<div align="right">(Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:710)</div>

Literal translation of a fully denotative lacuna *double yellow line* does not convey the meaning of the concept in the target text, with the purpose of this road marking remaining unclear. However, if used in combination with addition, as in this example, calque allows a translator to provide a brief explanation of the unfamiliar concept. Based on the additional commentary within brackets, it becomes clear that double yellow lines indicate parking restrictions.

However, the addition of a gloss may significantly increase the word count which is undesirable in translation of film subtitles. For this purpose, in the film subtitles the use of quotation marks in combination with calque is commonly used. The emphatic use of inverted commas allows a translator to signpost potentially unknown objects and phenomena, thus drawing the audience's attention to them:

Source text
(English)    You saw him at **Bonfire Night**.

Target text
(Spanish)    Lo viste en la **"Noche de las Hogueras"**.

Back translation    I saw him at the **"Night of Bonfires"**.

<div align="right">(Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:673)</div>

Being a culture-specific holiday, *Bonfire night* is unlikely to be familiar to a wider Spanish audience (Chapter 4.2.2). Therefore, the literal translation of the compound was placed within quotation marks thus highlighting that this extraneous collocation is the name of the festivity.

### 6.1.3.5 Preservation of the source text item in combination with supportive techniques

Preservation of the source text item *per se* does not help to achieve a translator's paramount objective, namely, to convey the sense. Therefore, if a lacunar item is rendered into the target language intact, other supportive solutions are often employed to enhance the integrity of translation. For instance, this technique can be coupled with addition of supplementary information either in the form of a gloss or of a translator's note (TN). Glossing involves inclusion of a brief definition of the lacunar item either integrated into the target text or placed within brackets. A translator's note, in turn, includes an explanatory commentary clarifying a potentially unfamiliar concept, as in the example below:

Source text

(English)                    It's more natural than **Baked Alaska** or nylon socks.

Target text

(Spanish)                    Es más natural que el **Baked Alaska** o los calcetines de nailon.

                             **(Ndt: Baked Alaska = helado de tarta y merengue)**

Back translation             It is more natural than **Baked Alaska** or nylon socks.

                             **(TN: Baked Alaska = ice cream and meringue cake)**

                                         (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:141)

*Ndt* meaning *nota del traductor* "translator's note" is explicitly indicated in the target text to signpost a brief definition of the lacunar compound *Baked Alaska* provided by the translator. A translator's note can be seen as a means of compensation for the denotative meaning which was not conveyed in the target text as a result of preservation of the source text item.

As an alternative to a gloss or translator's note, quotation marks can be added to the target text to lay emphasis on the extraneous element preserved from the source text:

Source text

(English)                    So I can't tell you what they are, but you know they're **Jaffa Cakes**.

Target text

(Spanish)              Así que no puedo decir lo que son, pero saben, claro, que son
                       **"Jaffa Cakes".**

Back translation       So I can't tell what they are, but you know, of course, they are
                       **"Jaffa Cakes".**

                                      (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:114)

While addition of inverted commas cannot be considered an autonomous translation strategy, emphatic use of quotation marks in combination with calque, transliteration or preservation of the source text item is characteristic of the film subtitles translation and can be seen as a supportive technique in handling lexical gaps.

Finally, the preserved source text item may undergo a grammatical transformation involving change of part of speech, as in the following example:

Source text

(English)              Yes, he's terribly **jet-lagged.**

Target text

(Spanish)              Está con **jet lag.**

Back translation       He is with **jet-lag**.

                                      (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:30)

In this translation a source language item was included in the target text, with the adjective being transformed into a noun. The noun is likely to be more familiar to the Spanish audience and perhaps can be seen as a lacuna on its way to be filled with the help of a borrowing.

The analysis of the corpus data also revealed that the lacunar source text item can be preserved but with some orthographic changes. For instance, in all three instances of the preservation of the adjective *pescatarian,* it was spelled differently in Spanish: *piscitariana*, *pescetariana* and *pescatariana*.

## 6.1.3.6 Transliteration in combination with supportive techniques

Similarly to the previous two translation solutions, transliteration is often used in combination with other supportive techniques. The corpus analysis revealed that transliterated items can be placed within inverted commas (e.g. the English lexeme *glamping* was translated into Russian as *"глэмпинг"*). Besides, they can be accompanied by a translator's note as in the following example:

Source text

(English)                              Got nothing to do with me.

                                       **Solicitor's** asked for you.

Target text

(Russian)                              Я тут ни при чем, **солиситор\*** попросил тебя.

                                       **(\*солиситор – в Англии, адвокат, подготавливающий материалы для ведения дела)**

Back translation                       I have nothing to do with it, the **solicitor\*** asked you.

                                       **(\*solicitor in England is a lawyer who prepares the case materials)**

                                                              (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:608)

In this example the translator's note appears in the form of a footnote without typical abbreviation TN. However, this may seem a less suitable solution since the common practice involves explicit indication of translator's commentary.

Finally, a transliterated item can be used in combination with an addition well-integrated into the target text, as evidenced below:

Source text

(English)                              I don't know what was wrong with her, but she had to have an operation.

                                       She went up **Harley Street.**

Target text

(Russian)          Я не знаю, что было с ней не так, но ей собирались делать операцию.

**Она лечилась на Харли-Стрит.**

Back translation      I don't know what was wrong with her, but they were going to do the surgery.

She was **treated at Harley Street.**

(Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:41)

As mentioned in Section 6.1.1.5, Harley Street is a lexical lacuna in Russian since it does not trigger any associations with healthcare facilities. Transliteration on its own is not effective as it does not shed light on the lacunar concept. To convey the implicit meaning in the target text, a translator added a verb that was absent in the source text to make clear the purpose of the visit to Harley Street.

## 6.2   Contrastive analysis of translation solutions in Russian vs. Spanish

Figure 6.1 shows the frequency of translation solutions in transference of English lacunar items into Russian and Spanish. The vertical axis shows the percentages of the identified translation solutions, whereas the horizontal axis depicts a range of translation strategies across language combinations, i.e. English-Russian vs. English-Spanish. The green bars correspond to the Russian translations, while the blue bars represent the Spanish translations.

The strategies for tackling lexical gaps are employed fairly evenly across language combinations, with most of the solutions being used in both English-Russian and English-Spanish translations. Only three techniques identified in Russian translation were not detected in Spanish, two of which involve transliteration: transliteration (implying substitution of the Latin letters with the Cyrillic characters) and transliteration in combination with supportive techniques. A transliteration-based approach is not applicable in English-Spanish translation since English and Spanish share the same alphabet. The third technique established in Russian but not in Spanish translation is idiomatisation. However, while no instances of idiomatisation were identified in translation of the English lacunar lexemes into Spanish, this does not suggest that such a technique cannot be used. Rather, it means that this solution was not identified in this particular set of data but is

hypothetically possible. Therefore, the only fundamental difference between the Russian and Spanish translations is the applicability of transliteration-based techniques.

Generalisation turned out to be the most popular strategy for tackling lexical lacunae in both Russian and Spanish. Qualitative analysis also revealed that generalisation is one of the most concise and effective techniques in bridging lexical gaps. In the English-Russian dataset, generalisation was identified in 22% of instances, whereas in the English-Spanish dataset it accounts for 18% of all translations. However, the prevalence of this strategy may be related to the specificity of the analysed data: in translation of film subtitles where there is a limited number of characters per line, the word count acquires particular relevance. Therefore, other equally effective explicative techniques such as descriptive translation appear less popular in translation of the film subtitles.

Spanish translators tend to use calque more often than their Russian colleagues. In Spanish calque was detected in 12% of instances of translation, but in Russian only in 9%. In Spanish, calque along with descriptive translation is the second most popular translation solution, whereas in Russian it is only the fourth most frequent approach. However, it should be pointed out that Russian translators prefer to employ calque in combination with other supportive techniques (3%). If calque and calque in combination with other solutions are added together, the sum value reaches 13% in Spanish and 12% in Russian. Despite the relatively high popularity of calque, qualitative analysis demonstrated that it is not particularly effective in tackling lexical lacunae as it usually involves a significant loss of information in the process of "transcoding".

*Figure 6.1 Strategies for handling English lacunar items in Spanish and Russian translations (Electronic Appendix:3Statistics)*
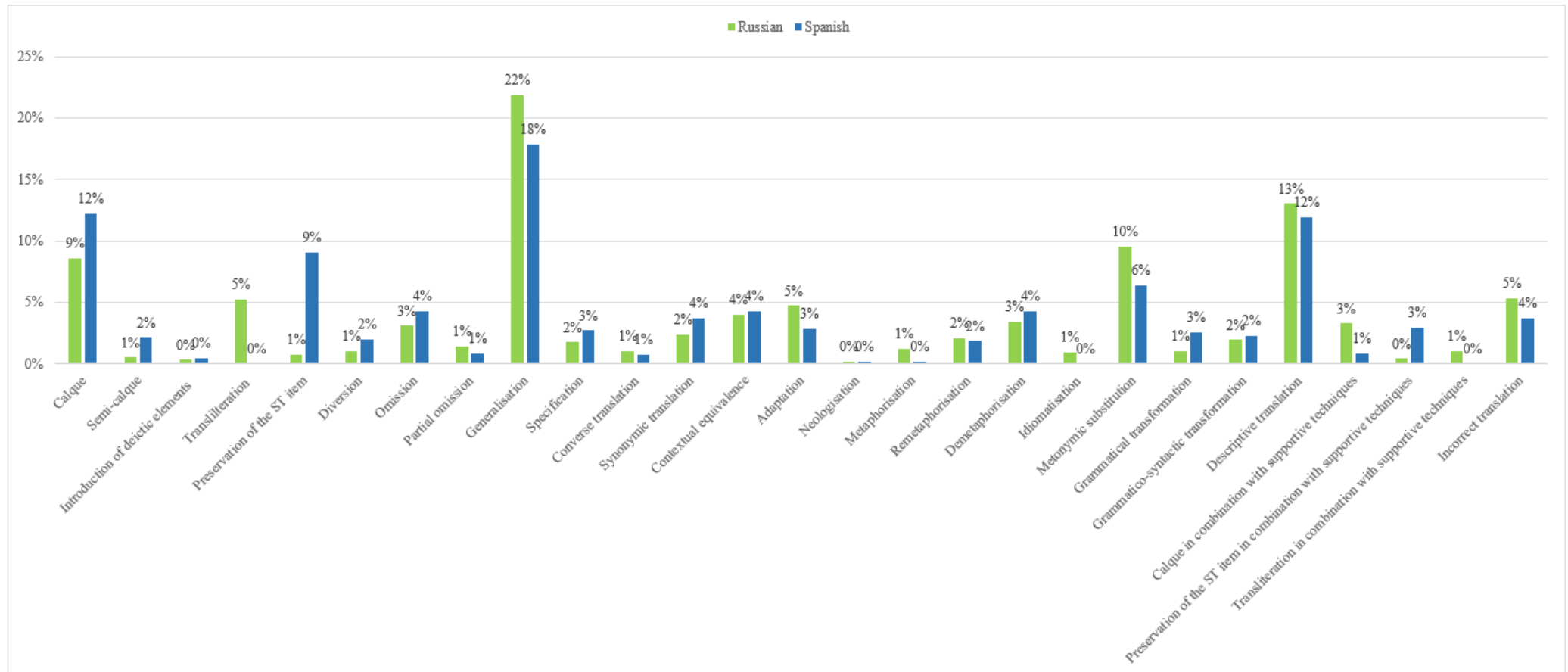
As mentioned above, in Spanish the second most common solutions are descriptive translation and calque. Similarly, in Russian descriptive translation is also the second most frequent technique. Involving a brief gloss of the unfamiliar concept, descriptive translation is intuitively the most obvious strategy for handling lexical lacunae. However, one of its major limitations is the potentially cumbersome structure of the target text.

Metonymic substitution is the third most popular solution in Russian and the fourth most popular technique in Spanish. Based on metonymic transfer, it allows a translator to substitute a lacunar item with a logically related target text item and avoid overloading the context with supplementary information.

Other translation solutions account for less than 5% of translations in the corpus and are fairly evenly employed across language combinations.

Translation errors form a distinct category and account for 4% and 5% of all translations in Spanish and Russian respectively. This category contains obvious and critical mistakes (e.g. translation of *mince pie* into Spanish as *pastel de carne* "meat pie" (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:128); translation of *Christmas crackers* into Russian as *рождественские печенья* "Christmas biscuits" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:898)). Deviation from equivalence often resulting in imprecise and sometimes even poor translation was considered an intentionally employed practice and, therefore, was not included in this category. Literal translation of connotative lacunae was not classified as a translation mistake either since formal equivalence was achieved between the source and the target text items, with only pragmatic equivalence being compromised.

Returning to the issue of receptivity of languages to adoption of foreign terms (raised in Chapter 5.2), it is worth noting that a significant discrepancy can be identified in the use of the translation solution involving zero-transformation across language combinations, namely preservation of the source text item. While this technique was identified in the English-Spanish dataset in 9% of instances, in English-Russian dataset it accounts for only 1% of all translations. At first glance it may seem that this suggests that Spanish is more receptive to the adoption of English terms than Russian. This may seem quite logical since if the source language and the target language share the same alphabet, the inclusion of a unit foreign to the target language is less conspicuous than in the case of different scripts. For instance, in Cyrillic text, a word written with Latin characters stands out and looks like an extraneous element.

However, a closer analysis reveals that both Spanish and Russian are equally receptive to foreign terms. The major difference consists in how Spanish and Russian adopt them. While English terms can be rendered intact into Spanish, in Russian translations they often undergo additional transformations such as transliteration. If transliteration (5%), transliteration in combination with supportive techniques (1%) and preservation of the source text item (1%) are added together in the English-Russian dataset, the sum value reaches 7% of all translations. Hence, the proportion of adopted terms from English accounts for 9% of all translations in Spanish and for 7% in Russian. Therefore, it can be assumed that both Russian and Spanish are fairly equally receptive to the adoption of foreign terms, with the main difference consisting in the ways of adoption.

## 6.3   Conclusion

The main objective of this chapter was to investigate how lexical discrepancies are handled in translation practice, demonstrating the extent to which they may prove relevant in the cross-linguistic context. The corpus strand of research showed that translation of lacunar items entails inherent deviation of varying degrees from the desired equivalence, but despite this lexical gaps can and should be bridged in translation. The corpus-based study combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches identified 26 translation strategies and highlighted their benefits and drawbacks. While 23 techniques were used both in Russian and Spanish translations of the English lacunar items, 3 solutions were identified in only one of the language combinations: transliteration, transliteration in combination with supportive techniques and idiomatisation were established in Russian but not in Spanish translations. Transliteration-based approach is relevant only in the case of different scripts used by source and target languages. While no instances of idiomatisation were identified in transference of English lacunar items into Spanish in the analysed dataset, it does not imply that this translation strategy cannot be used in this language combination. On the contrary, idiomatisation can potentially be as effective in Spanish as it is in Russian translation.

The 26 translation solutions detected were classified into three categories, namely: nominal, semantic and explicative transformations. The order of listing of these categories reflects the degree of transference of explicit and implicit meanings to the target language. Depending on the centrality of the lacunar item in the context and its role in understanding the whole utterance, different transformations may be applicable. If a lacunar item is of

minor or peripheral importance in the context, a translator can opt for nominal transformations which represent formal ways of bridging lexical gaps in translation, leaving lacunar concepts obscured in the target language from the practical perspective. In contrast, if a context requires a more precise conveyance of meaning, semantic transformations may be more suitable allowing the approximation of a lacunar item to the existing target language concepts. Semantic transformations attempt to substitute a lacunar item with a semantically related alternative more familiar to the target audience. Such semantic substitutions usually occurring at the lexical level are intended to retain pragmatic equivalence at the expense of semantic deviation. Finally, explicative transformations involving complex metamorphoses of the source text on the sentence level reveal the greatest effort on the part of a translator to unpack the meaning of the lacunar concept in the target language. However, explicative transformations should be used with caution since they may encumber translation. A successful translation is elegant and seemingly effortless and should not normally betray challenges encountered in the process of "transcoding".

The quantitative analysis revealed that the most frequent solution for translating English lacunar items into both Russian and Spanish is generalisation. However, it should be borne in mind that the popularity of this strategy may be related to the specificity of the analysed data: translation of film subtitles requires compliance with character limits per line on the screen. The qualitative investigation of generalisation demonstrated that it produces a concise pragmatically acceptable translation outcome but inevitably leads to a certain loss of information, associated with semantic divergence across categorisation levels.

Another common technique in dealing with lexical lacunae is descriptive translation which involves inclusion of a gloss to the target language. Descriptive translation can be particularly efficient provided that the gloss is succinct and does not overload the target text with excessive details.

Despite the results of the quantitative analysis that revealed a relatively high popularity of calque in translation of lexical gaps, the qualitative approach pinpointed that calque can be used to translate lacunar compounds and monolexemic connotative lacunae. The meaning of lacunar compounds is not necessarily construed on the basis of the literal meanings of its components; thus, calque may disorient the target audience. Besides, literal translation of compounds tends to be unidiomatic and potentially incomprehensible to the target audience (e.g. *playdate – игровое свидание* "playing date" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-

RUS:921)). Monolexemic connotative lacunae, in turn, can be literally translated, but in this case the covert meaning (e.g. connotative, associative, symbolic) becomes lost due to the cross-linguistic divergence. Therefore, calque on its own does not appear an appropriate solution for tackling lexical lacunae. However, in combination with other supportive techniques (e.g. a brief gloss) it can yield acceptable results but often devoid of translation elegance.

In contrast, the idiomaticity and clarity of the target text can be achieved through metonymic substitution which along with generalisation and descriptive translation seems to be a universal strategy for tackling lexical gaps. Metonymic substitution allows a translator to avoid translation of a lacunar item itself, substituting it with a logically related term. Thus, semantic equivalence becomes refracted in the process of translation but if a context allows a certain extent of deviation, metonymic substitution can produce efficient results.

One unanticipated finding is that apart from the traditional translation strategies (e.g. descriptive translation, generalisation) the corpus-based study identified less conventional techniques such as the emphatic use of inverted commas, partial omission and non-standard orthography. The use of inverted commas is, of course, not an autonomous fully-fledged strategy; however, in combination with calque or preservation of the source text item it can produce effective results signposting a potentially unfamiliar term. The use of quotation marks does not allow a translator to convey the meaning of the lacunar concept but enables them to highlight it to the target audience. Partial omission, in turn, can result in a significant increase in the level of abstraction, but can also be seen negatively as an apologetic approach rather than an actual strategy for tackling lexical gaps, i.e. a translator's attempt to justify their lack of competence to translate lacunar compounds. Finally, the use of non-standard orthography (e.g. capitalisation of the word stem discussed in Section 6.1.2.7) can be useful in laying additional emphasis on specific words or even parts of the word.

Another important finding emerges from the combination of qualitative and quantitative analyses, that is, not all translation solutions are equally successful for handling various types of lexical lacunae. Whereas Figure 6.1 gives the overall percentages for each type of translation solution, they are not evenly distributed across different types of lacuna. Therefore, an additional – or fourth – research question emerged in the course of the corpus strand of the study: "what are the optimal strategies for tackling lexical lacunae in

translation of film subtitles?". The next chapter will answer this question by comparing the outcomes of the quantitative analysis (establishing the most frequent techniques for handling each type of lexical gap) with the results of the qualitative analysis (pinpointing the optimal strategies).

# 7  Translating lexical lacunae by type

## 7.0  Chapter overview

This chapter answers the fourth research question (set out in Chapter 6.3) of what solutions are optimal for handling lexical lacunae in translation of film subtitles. Chapter 6 outlined the most frequent translation solutions for bridging lexical gaps and identified their advantages and limitations. In the course of the analysis, it was established that different strategies are most appropriate for different types of lacunae. Therefore, in this chapter, translation solutions are analysed depending on the type of lacuna in accordance with the hexadic model (Chapter 4.4). Section 7.1 compares the outcomes of the quantitative and qualitative analyses to suggest the optimal ways of bridging different types of lexical gaps. Section 7.2 views lexical lacunae through the prism of translatability, seeking to establish the degree of their translation resistance. Section 7.3 rounds off the chapter with concluding observations.

## 7.1  Analysis of the translation solutions depending on the type of lacuna

This chapter offers a more fine-grained analysis of translation solutions for tackling lexical lacunae. However, before proceeding to the discussion of the outcomes, an important methodological remark should be made about the data representativeness. The total number of Russian translations accounts for 975 instances, whereas the total number of Spanish translations comprises 705 occurrences. However, to carry out a more fine-grained analysis involving investigation of the translation solutions for each type of lacuna, these samples should be broken down into smaller subsets. Table 7.1 shows the sizes of the subsets distinguished. The subsets composed of translations of multi-layered, connotative and partially denotative lacunae are not sufficiently substantial for the results to be generalisable to the whole categories of the respective lacunae. Therefore, the results of the quantitative analysis of multi-layered, connotative and partially denotative lacunae should be interpreted with caution.

However, the overall objective of this chapter is to suggest the optimal translation solutions for handling each type of lexical lacuna based on the combination of the quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative research enables identification of the most frequent solutions for handling each of the six identified types of lexical gaps. These results are then contrasted in a parallel discussion with the conclusions underpinned

by the qualitative analysis, allowing formulation of the optimal strategies for handling each type of lexical lacuna. Thus, since the inferences presented in this chapter are not premised exclusively on the quantitative parameters, the small sample size for the three above-mentioned subsets may be deemed acceptable.

*Table 7.1 Sizes of the English-Russian and English-Spanish datasets with breakdown by subsets*

|  | Instances of translation in ENG-RUS dataset | Instances of translation in ENG-SPA dataset |
|---|---|---|
| Fully denotative | 300 | 205 |
| Partially nominative | 205 | 145 |
| Fully nominative | 275 | 215 |
| Multi-layered | 60 | 30 |
| Connotative | 80 | 55 |
| Partially denotative | 55 | 55 |
| Total sample size | 975 | 705 |

## 7.1.1  Fully denotative lacunae

Fully denotative lacunae comprising culture-bound realia emerge due to the absence of the referent (object or phenomenon) in the target language speech community. This type of lacuna causes problems in translation due to the unavailability of the relevant concept in the target language and challenges associated with the necessity to describe it.

As evidenced by the quantitative analysis, fully denotative lacunae are most frequently handled with the help of generalisation in both Russian (27%) and Spanish (23%) translations (see Figure 7.1). The efficiency of this translation strategy in dealing with fully denotative lacunae is corroborated by the qualitative examination: lexemes denoting culture-specific referents tend to be located at the lowest categorisation level and, therefore, can be easily substituted with the help of more general terms. In contrast, specification is not generally relevant for fully denotative lacunae, with only 1 instance being identified in Russian translation. *Booze cruise* was translated into Russian as *пивной круиз* "beer cruise" due to the existence of the corresponding fixed expression in Russian. Beer cruises presuppose boat tours across cities' rivers and canals, the cost of which includes beer tasting. The meaning of the functional equivalent is slightly different from

the original compound which in British English denotes a short ferry voyage from Britain to France taken by British citizens to buy non-taxable alcohol (OED, 2022, booze-cruise n., sense 2). Therefore, this instance of specification is due to the availability of a semantically similar fixed expression in the target language.

Descriptive translation is another popular solution for translating fully denotative lacunae, being employed in 15% of Russian and 10% of Spanish translations. From the qualitative perspective, a brief gloss seems to be one of the best options for dealing with lexemes denoting culture-specific referents.

Calque is also commonly used in handling fully denotative lacunae by Russian (8%) and Spanish (14%) translators. This strategy cannot be employed in dealing with monolexemic fully denotative lacunae and is limited to the lacunar compounds denoting culture-specific referents. However, literal translation of each component of the lacunar compound can often disorient the target audience as the meaning of the compounds cannot always be understood from the meaning of their constituents (e.g. *baby shower*). Calque tends to be more effective in combination with other supportive techniques.

A very similar translation solution, namely semi-calque, is used more frequently in Spanish (5%) than in Russian (1%) for tackling fully denotative lacunae. Similarly to calque, it is suitable for translation of compounds (*green card – грин карта* "green card" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:580)), but can be particularly useful in handling fully denotative lacunae which are proper names (e.g. *Brown Windsor soup – la sopa Brown Windsor* "Brown Windsor soup*"* (Electronix Appendix:2ENG-SPA:57)). Despite its limited applicability it can be an alternative to other strategies such as transliteration and preservation of the source text item.

Semantic transformations including metonymic substitution, adaptation and contextual equivalence are also widely used for bridging fully denotative gaps. For instance, metonymic substitution, being the third most frequent solution in Russian (10%), is less used in Spanish (4%) for handling fully denotative lacunae. Qualitative analysis revealed that semantic transformations can be seen as viable approaches to handling fully denotative lacunae, but always result in semantic deviation to varying degrees. Therefore, based on the general context a translator should evaluate the potentially acceptable extent of deviation when employing semantic transformations and try to minimise it.

In 14% of cases Spanish translators preferred to preserve fully denotative lacunae intact in the target language, whereas in 4% of Spanish translations preservation of the source text item was accompanied by supportive techniques (e.g. inclusion of inverted commas). In contrast, Russian translators opted for transliteration (6%) and transliteration in combination with additional transformations (3%). While preservation of the source text item and transliteration are only nominal translation solutions, coupled with supportive techniques they prove more effective in handling fully denotative lacunae.

There are some semantic transformations which were not identified in translation of fully denotative lacunae (e.g. neologisation, remetaphorisation). Besides, there are some single instances of metaphorisation, demetaphorisation and idiomatisation. Fully denotative lacunae comprise lexemes denoting tangible objects and phenomena, and therefore, techniques involving the use of figurative language generally seem to be inappropriate for their translation.

Summing up the above, generalisation is the most common strategy for handling fully denotative lacunae. In terms of translation adequacy, this solution allows a translator to convey the general meaning of the unfamiliar concept to the target language, thus effectively mitigating the gap. Descriptive translation is another useful strategy for dealing with lexemes denoting culture-specific referents. Besides, such semantic transformations as metonymic substitution, contextual equivalence, adaptation and synonymic translation can also be effective in tackling fully denotative lacunae. However, the outcomes of the semantic transformations can only be considered an approximation to the original text due to the semantic deviation. Moreover, adaptation should be used with circumspection as it is likely to trigger undesirable culture-specific associations in the target language which may give rise to some discord with the original context.

There are also nominal transformation techniques that can be helpful in bridging fully denotative gaps, namely transliteration and preservation of the source text item. While these solutions do not unpack the lacunar concept when employed in isolation, in combination with supportive techniques they can be effective.

*Figure 7.1 Strategies for handling fully denotative lacunae in Russian and Spanish (Electronic Appendix:4Fully denotative)*
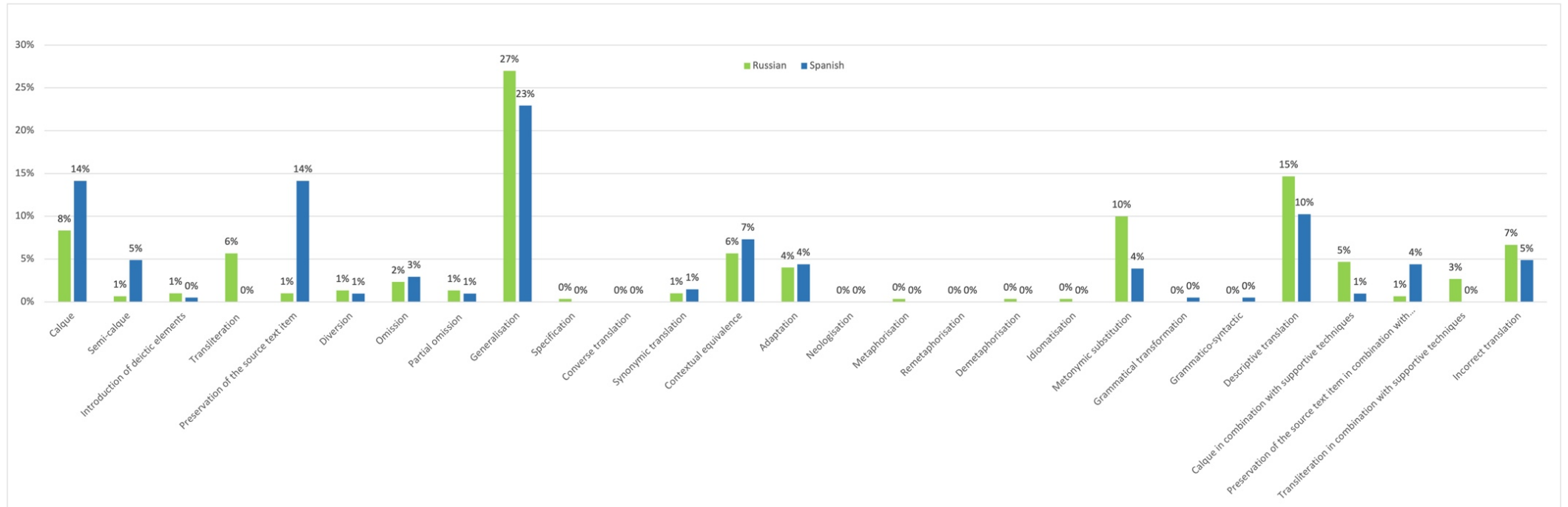
## 7.1.2  Partially nominative lacunae

Partially nominative lacunae emerge if the concept has crystallised only in part in the target language speech community. In other words, the referent exists (the phenomenon takes place), but it has no specific designation.

Quantitative analysis revealed that the two most frequent strategies for handling partially nominative lacunae in both Russian and Spanish are generalisation and descriptive translation (Figure 7.2).  Generalisation is the most popular technique for handling this type of lacuna in Russian (19%), with descriptive translation (15%) being the second most popular. The opposite is true for Spanish: while descriptive translation was used in the majority of cases (17%), generalisation (15%) is the second most popular technique.

From the qualitative perspective, descriptive translation and generalisation appear helpful solutions for tackling partially crystallised concepts. Descriptive translation provides a brief gloss of a potentially unfamiliar concept (e.g. *slow lane – полосы для тихоходного движения* "the lanes for slow traffic" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:717); *staycation – vacaciones en casa* "holidays at home" (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:701)), whereas generalisation results in the substitution of a non-lexicalised concept with a more general term (*plimsolls – обувь* "footwear" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:262); *teenyboppers – niñas* "girls" (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:48)).

Calque is the third most frequent strategy in Spanish for handling non-lexicalised concepts, being used in 12% of instances of translation. Spanish translators also employ it in combination with supportive techniques (1%). However, it can be used for tackling only lacunar compounds and is not effective in the case of monolexemic partially nominative lacunae. Calque on its own is rarely used in Russian translation (5%), but together with supportive techniques it accounts for another 3%. Therefore, calque-based solutions cumulatively make up 8% and 13% of Russian and Spanish translations respectively.

Transliteration-based approaches cumulatively account for 9% of the Russian translations of partially nominative lacunae. In contrast, Spanish translators opt for the intact preservation of the source text item, which is used either in isolation (10%) or in combination with supportive techniques (4%). These figures are relatively high and are comparable to the frequency of use of transliteration- and preservation-based techniques in translation of fully denotative lacunae. This may suggest that partially nominative and fully

denotative lacunae pose particular difficulties in translation since transliteration and preservation of the source text item are usually used as a last resort. The relatively high percentages of diversion, omission and translation mistakes also may be indicative of the problematic character of these types of lexical gaps. The challenges which partially nominative lacunae and fully denotative lacunae pose in translation may be attributed to the unavailability of equivalent concepts in the target language.

However, unlike fully denotative lacunae, partially nominative lacunae often result in a complete restructuring of the source text sentence. This is corroborated by the quantitative analysis, according to which grammatical and grammatico-syntactic transformations in translation of fully nominative lacunae account together for 4% of Russian and 9% of Spanish translations respectively. In contrast, grammatical and grammatico-syntactic transformations are not suitable for fully denotative lacunae which are significantly more easily translated with the help of alternative techniques.

Semantic transformations for tackling partially nominative lacunae appear more common among the Russian translators than their Spanish colleagues, with the exception of synonymic translation which is slightly more frequently used in Spanish translations.

*Figure 7.2 Strategies for handling partially nominative lacunae in Russian and Spanish (Electronic Appendix:5Partially nominative)*
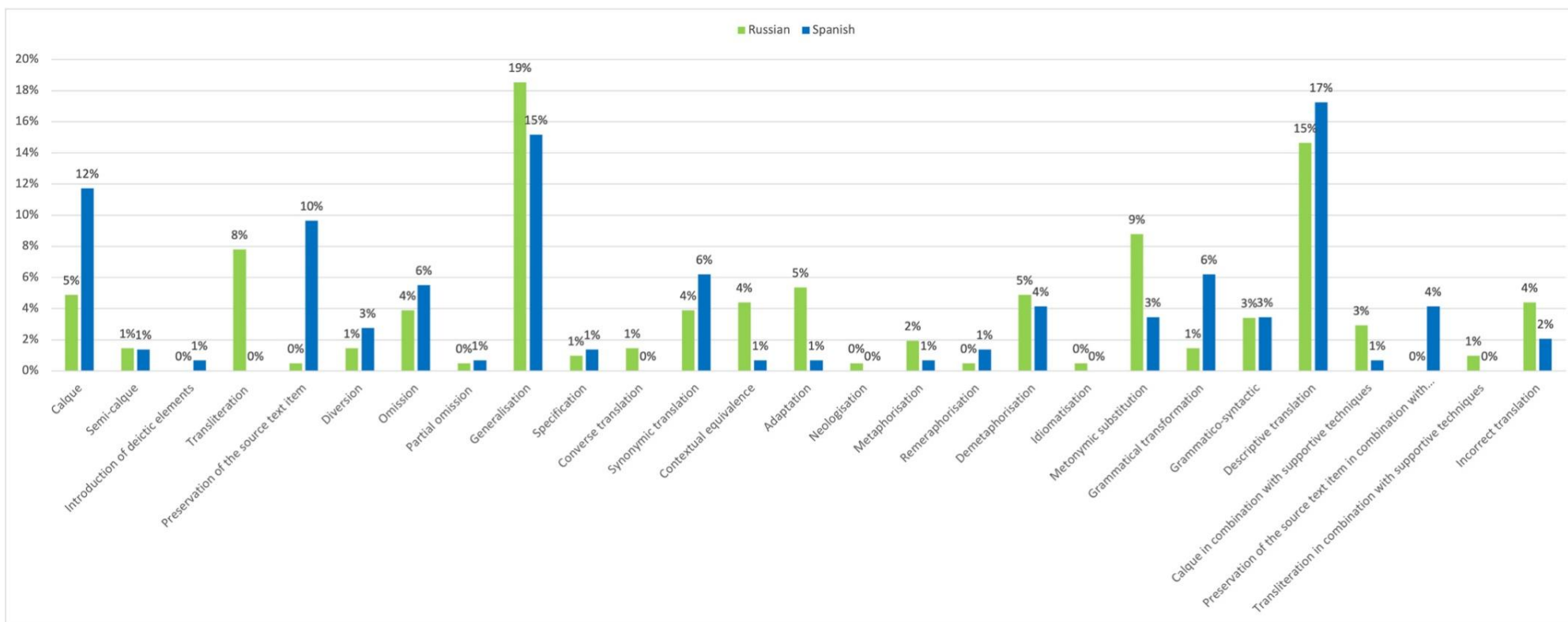
### 7.1.3 Fully nominative lacunae

Fully nominative lacunae represent fully conceptualised notions which have been lexicalised on alternative categorisation levels or according to divergent grammatical patterns. This type of lexical gap poses problems in translation since the absence of the direct structural equivalent makes it impossible to reproduce a similar syntactic structure, convey the same amount of semantic detail, or retain stylistic equivalence in the target language.

As is the case with the two types of lexical lacunae discussed above, the most popular translation strategy for handling fully nominative lacunae is generalisation in both Russian (27%) and Spanish (20%), as shown in Figure 7.3. It allows the successful neutralisation of fully nominative gaps (e.g. *pigtails – косички* "braids" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:416), *commuters – пассажиры* "passengers" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:756); *toddler – niño* "child" (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:51), *taupe – gris* "grey" (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:234)) despite a certain loss of semantic detail.

Descriptive translation is the second most frequent technique in dealing with fully nominative lacunae, being employed with almost equal frequency in Russian (15%) and Spanish (16%) translations. From the qualitative perspective, descriptive translation of fully nominative lacunae is another efficient strategy enabling a translator to unveil the meaning of the lacunar item without significant loss of semantic details (e.g. *multitask – делать несколько вещей сразу* "do several things at the same time" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:340); *jaywalker – peatón imprudente* "imprudent pedestrian" (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:521)).

Metonymic substitution is the third most popular solution in dealing with fully nominative lacunae in both Russian (12%) and Spanish (9%). Resulting in a shift of focus from a non-lexicalised concept to a logically related cognitive unit (e.g. *lunchbox – обед* "lunch" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:198), *lay-by – остановка* "stop" (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:726); *driveway – entrada* "entrance" (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:562); *toe – pie* "foot" (Electronic Appendix:2ENG-SPA:20)), metonymic substitution can be considered an adequate strategy for tackling fully nominative lacunae allowing a translator to express the same idea but from a different perspective.

Fully nominative lacunae are the only category of lexical gaps in translation of which specification is widely used. Specification was employed in 5% and 8% of Russian and Spanish translations respectively. The use of this technique results in divergent amounts of information conveyed in the source and target texts. For instance, the English kinship term *godchild* is gender-neutral, whereas its common Spanish equivalents *ahijado /ahijada* provide more information in the target language specifying the gender of the person in question. Usually, this semantic discrepancy is not problematic but requires a more detailed knowledge of the general context on the part of a translator, i.e. they should be certain about the gender of the godchild to choose an appropriate semantically specialised counterpart.

Compared to fully denotative and partially nominative lacunae, the rate of transliteration- and preservation-based approaches is lower in translation of fully nominative lacunae. This may suggest that fully nominative gaps are easier to bridge in translation by using alternative periphrastic equivalents. From the standpoint of the qualitative analysis, transliteration- and preservation-based approaches are less appropriate for tackling fully nominative lacunae. Non-lexicalised concepts can be expressed through alternative lexical or grammatical means, with relative ease.

*Figure 7.3 Strategies for handling fully nominative lacunae in Russian and Spanish (Electronic Appendix:6Fully nominative)*
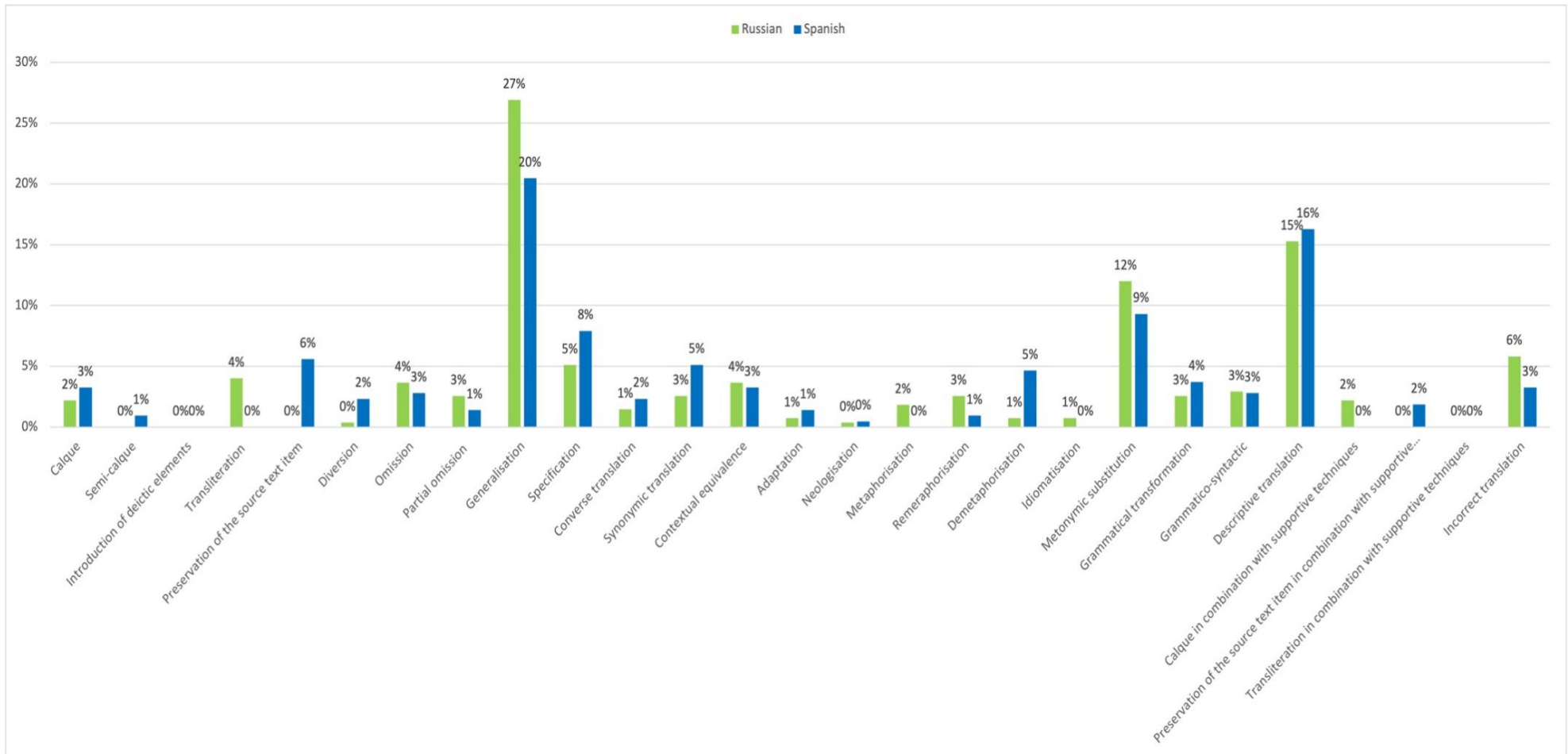
### 7.1.4  Multi-layered lacunae

Multi-layered lacunae encompass lexemes seen as lexical gaps in the target language that develop additional figurative meanings that are also lacunar. In other words, multi-layered lacunae emerge when polysemous expansion takes place on the basis of an existing lacunar lexeme.

It is immediately apparent from Figure 7.4 that unlike other types of lexical gaps, there is less consistency between Russian and Spanish translators in the ways of handling multi-layered lacunae. As mentioned in Section 7.1, this is one of the categories that cannot boast large sample size. Data paucity is compounded by the quantitative difference between the Russian and Spanish subsets: the Russian subset is twice as large as the Spanish one. Although the data are contrasted in percentage values, this difference may still be relevant taking into consideration the small sizes of the subsets. Therefore, taking these limitations into account, this section will be largely based on the outcomes of the qualitative analysis of the multi-layered gaps in an attempt to identify the most successful strategies for bridging them.

Nevertheless, despite data scarcity certain quantitative observations can be made. Multi-layered lacunae with multiple lacunar senses pose an increased challenge representing the most difficult category for translation (this issue will be taken further in Section 7.2). This is corroborated by the frequency of use of preservation-based strategies in translation of multi-layered gaps. As previously discussed, preservation-based approaches are widely used by Spanish translators in contrast to their Russian colleagues who tend to avoid them using transliteration-based techniques instead. However, multi-layered lacunae are the category of lacunar lexemes which were most frequently transferred intact into Russian, with the cumulative preservation-based rate reaching 8% of cases (Figure 7.4). For reference, fully denotative lacunae were handled with the help of preservation-based techniques in Russian in 2% of instances, whereas for other types of lacunae, preservation-based approaches turned out to be irrelevant.[24] Thus, multi-layered lacunae undergo zero-transformation more frequently than other types of lexical gaps, which may be an indication of the problematic character of this group.

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[24] 0% of preservation-based approaches were identified for partially nominative, fully nominative, connotative and partially denotative lacunae. However, in absolute values, a single instance of preservation of the source text item was identified for the category of partially nominative lacunae (the acronym *DIY* was rendered intact into Russian), which following the percentage conversion resulted in 0%.

Besides, the percentage of omission of multi-layered lacunae in Spanish translations is the highest of all types of lexical gaps, at 13% of instances. This may suggest that translators experience significant difficulties in dealing with lexemes possessing multiple lacunar senses, being unable to find alternative strategies for tackling them other than entirely excluding them from the target text.

Indeed, correct translation of an additional figurative sense of a lacunar lexeme often requires a complex understanding of the primary meaning of a lacunar lexeme. For example, the English term *granola* was first coined in 1886 as a trademark for Kellogg's breakfast cereal (OED, 2022, granola n., sense a). However, by the end of the twentieth century the proprietary name became a generic term meaning a typical variety of processed oats coated with sugar or honey and mixed with nuts, dried berries etc. (ibid.). This breakfast food has traditionally been considered healthy and, therefore, people consuming it have been seen as appreciating organic ingredients, typically leading a healthy lifestyle and by association caring about the environment. Thus, the term also began to be used allusively to refer to a social group with pro-environmental views.

*Granola* denoting a breakfast cereal has been a fully denotative lacuna in Russian due to the initial absence of the referent in the Russian speech community which, however, is likely on its way to being filled with the help of borrowing as a result of the recent proliferation of the product on the Russian market. The transliterated lexeme *гранола* "granola" has as yet been included neither in the Russian dictionaries (Academic, 2000-2021), nor in the Russian National Corpus (2003-2022), but can be encountered in the translated film subtitles and occasionally on price tags in a few Russian stores offering this type of breakfast cereal. Therefore, in the first place, the lexeme *granola* is a fully denotative lacuna in Russian which has formed an additional allusive meaning on the basis of its primary sense.

When dealing with multi-layered lacunae, the first step should be to identify the sense which is activated in the context. For instance, if the referential meaning comes into play, the lacuna should be handled as fully denotative. Thus, descriptive translation seems the optimal strategy for achieving the highest accuracy and precision, whereas semantic transformations including generalisation appear most appropriate for conveying the approximated meaning of the lacunar concept (see Section 7.1.1). However, if the figurative component is invoked, a partially nominative lacuna is formed in Russian, which should be handled accordingly. In the following example *granola* is used metaphorically,

with demetaphorisation appearing to be the most appropriate technique in the given context:

| Source text | |
|---|---|
| (English) | I always used to make fun of my crunchy **granola** friends for taking bottles down to the stream to collect water, but now I get it. |
| Target text | |
| (Russian) | Я всегда подшучивала над друзьями, **предпочитающими всё натуральное**, за то, что набирают в бутылки воду из ручья, но сейчас я их понимаю. |
| | |
| Back translation | I have always made fun of my friends, **preferring everything natural**, for filling bottles with water from the stream, but now I understand them. |

<div align="center">(Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:530)</div>

In the source text the lexeme *granola* is used metaphorically to create a vivid image of a character's friends concerned with environmental protection. Due to the unavailability of an equivalent concept in the target language, the metaphor was substituted with a participial phrase conveying the same characteristics but through non-metaphorical means. However, the adjective *crunchy* reflects a deliberate allusion to the breakfast cereal itself, producing an element of humour that is lost in translation. Alternatively, if there is a pragmatically equivalent metaphor or idiom in the target language, it can be used to reflect the same idea in the translation, albeit with the help of a semantically different figurative image.

A multi-layered lacuna does not necessarily emerge on the basis of a fully denotative lexical gap: various combinations are possible. The English lexeme *off-colour* is another example of a multi-layered lacuna, which, however, was formed on the basis of what can be identified as a partially nominative lacuna in Russian. There is no equivalent adjective in Russian reflecting the idea of being a slightly different colour than expected. However, the extended meaning of being "slightly unwell" (OED, 2022, off-colour, adj., 2b) can also be seen as lacunar due to the unavailability of a stylistically and structurally equivalent counterpart, thus forming a fully nominative lacuna in Russian. As mentioned in Section 7.1.3, the whole range of semantic and complex transformations can be used to tackle non-lexicalised concepts. For instance, demetaphorisation of this figurative meaning would

result in the following alternatives: нездоровый "unhealthy', испытывающий недомогание "experiencing malaise", болезненный "sickly". The causal type of metonymic substitution could also be a good option: *off-colour* could be translated as *бледный* "pale", with paleness seen as a consequence of ill-health. Alternatively, this fully nominative gap can be bridged with the help of descriptive translation, as in the example below:

Source text
(English)                        You look a bit **off-colour**.

Target text
(Russian)                        **Ты не очень хорошо выглядишь**.

Back translation         **You don't look very well**.

(Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:427)

Therefore, when dealing with multi-layered lacunae, the level at which the concept reveals its lacunarity should be identified first. For this purpose, the sense of a lacunar item activated in the context should be established. A lacunar item in different senses can be seen as different types of lacuna in the target language and should be handled accordingly, taking into account the context, the author's intention and the needs of the target audience.

*Figure 7.4 Strategies for handling multi-layered lacunae in Russian and Spanish (Electronic Appendix:7Multi-layered)*
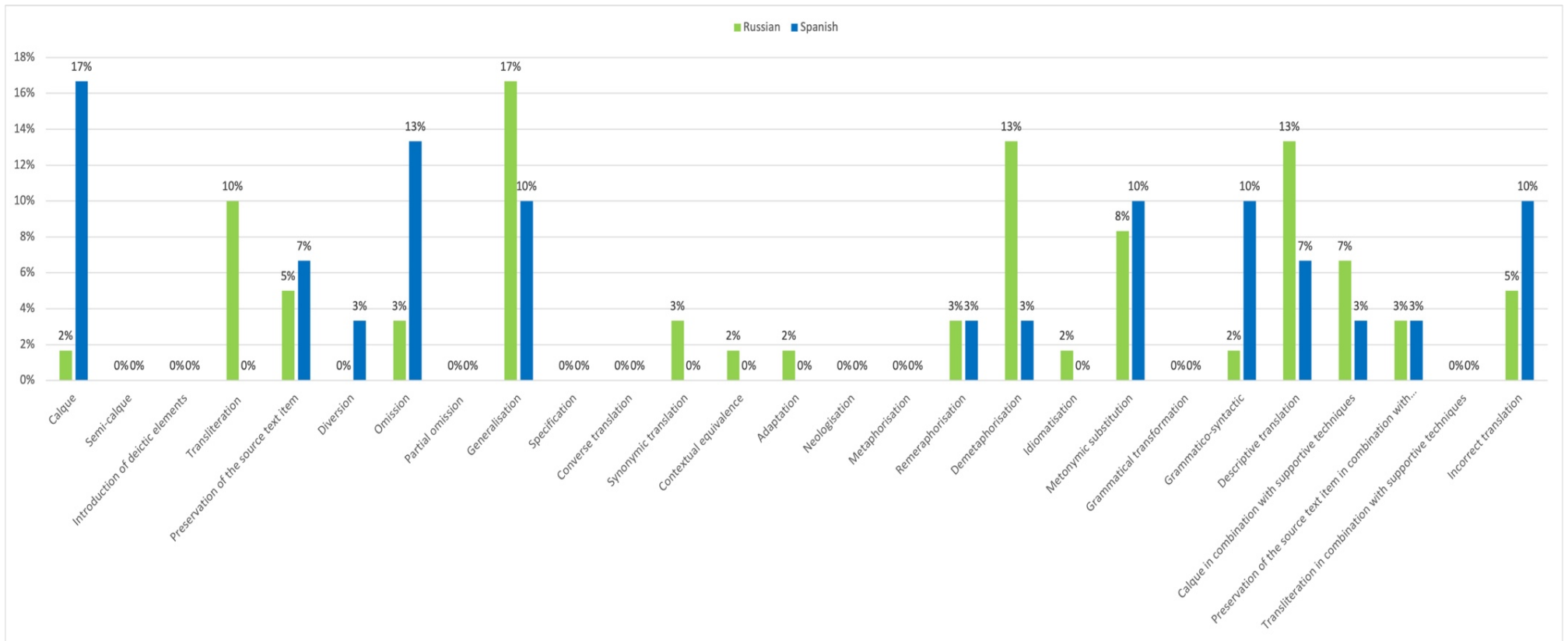
## 7.1.5  Connotative lacunae

The quantitative analysis of translation solutions employed in handling connotative lacunae revealed that in 31% and 43% of instances of translation into Spanish and Russian respectively, they were tackled with the help of calque (see Figure 7.5). However, as evidenced by the qualitative analysis, literal translation of connotative lacunae results in a loss of the culture-specific connotative component. This suggests that in the vast majority of cases lexical lacunae were not adequately translated into the target languages, leaving the implicit meaning obscured.

Demetaphorisation is the second most popular solution in dealing with connotative lacunae in both Spanish (24%) and Russian (15%). From the standpoint of translation adequacy, demetaphorisation seems to be one of the optimal strategies in bridging connotative gaps. Connotative lacunarity often manifests itself through implied meaning, with positive or negative feelings emerging on the basis of the underlying conceptual metaphors (e.g. the colour-term *yellow* discussed in Chapter 4.2.1). Therefore, a lexeme with implicit meaning (e.g. *yellow*) that is seen as a connotative lacuna in the contrasting language can be substituted with a counterpart explicitly expressing the same meaning (e.g. Spanish *cobarde* "coward").

Remetaphorisation can be equally effective in dealing with connotative lacunae, allowing a translator to fill a connotative lacuna with a semantically different but pragmatically equivalent metaphorically used counterpart in the target language. In fact, many translators appreciate the usefulness of this method since it is the third most frequent solution in handling connotative gaps in both Spanish (15%) and Russian (11%).

Adaptation is another solution that is fairly commonly used to tackle connotative lacunae in Spanish (4%) and Russian (8%) translations. However, the qualitative analysis revealed that adaptation should be employed with caution as it may trigger culture-specific associations which may come into conflict with a more general context.

*Figure 7.5 Strategies for handling connotative lacunae in Russian and Spanish (Electronic Appendix:8Connotative)*
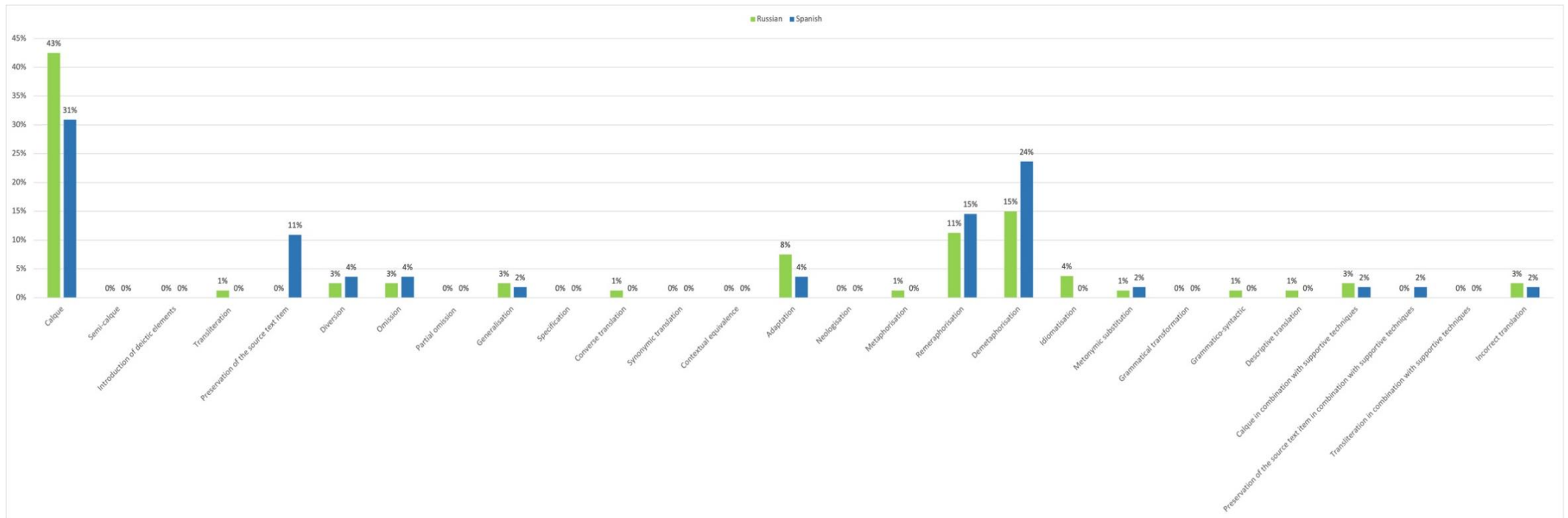
## 7.1.6  Partially denotative lacunae

Partially denotative lacunae emerge due to the referential differences between the source text item and its seemingly stable equivalent in the target language. Therefore, the major pitfall posed by this type of lexical gap is the potential unawareness by a translator of this discrepancy on the referential level.

Although the investigation of the most appropriate translation strategies for this category is largely based on the qualitative analysis due to the comparatively small number of examples contained in the subset (as in the case of connotative and multi-layered lacunae), some quantitative observations can still be made.

Calque and adaptation are among the most common translation solutions for dealing with partially denotative lacunae (Figure 7.6). However, both techniques result in overlooking the referential differences. For example, in the film subtitles an English compound *black pudding* is often translated with the help of adaptation as *кровяная колбаса* "blood sausage" and *morcilla* "blood sausage" in Russian and Spanish respectively. Moreover, bilingual dictionaries (e.g. ABBYY Lingvo Live (n.d.) and SpanishDict (n.d.)) also list these counterparts as equivalent translations. However, a closer analysis reveals that *black pudding*, *кровяная колбаса* and *morcilla* are not exactly the same. The main ingredients of black pudding include blood, suet and usually oatmeal (OED, 2022, black pudding n.). In contrast, Spanish morcilla is a blood sausage typically filled with blood, rice, breadcrumbs and pine nuts (DLE RAE, 2022, morcilla). Unlike black pudding and morcilla, *кровяная колбаса* "blood sausage" is made of meat trimmings, suet and blood without adding any type of cereal nor flour (Semikova, 2003, кровяная колбаса).

While these discrepancies in the product composition may prove relevant in specific culinary or allergy-related contexts, they often turn out to be insignificant in more generic contexts. Therein lies the challenge associated with translation of partially denotative lacunae: a translator should be able to identify to what extent the referential inconsistencies can go unacknowledged. The high rate of adaptation in translation of partially denotative lacunae in Russian (27%) indicates that Russian translators tend to ignore or overlook referential differences. In contrast, their Spanish colleagues seem to be more sensitive to differences or more aware of the dissimilarities between the referents in the source and target language communities, opting for alternative strategies (e.g. contextual equivalence).

Similarly, the wide use of calque for tackling partially denotative lacunae is not always appropriate. For instance, the English lexeme *letterbox* is traditionally literally translated as *почтовый ящик* and *buzón* (as evidenced by bilingual dictionaries ABBYY Lingvo Live (n.d.) and SpanishDict (n.d.) as well as by the corpus-based analysis). However, the mention of a lexeme *letterbox* triggers a clear mental image in speakers of British English significantly different from that of Spanish and Russian speakers. A British letterbox is a narrow aperture in the front door through which post is delivered, whereas Spanish and Russian mailboxes are typically wall-mounted and lockable (Chapter 3.2.3.2 and Chapter 4.3.1).

There are cases where culture-specific referential differences explicitly manifest themselves, requiring greater acknowledgement on the part of a translator. In instances where this discrepancy is relevant, metonymic substitution may seem the optimal solution, as illustrated in the following example:

Source text

(English)                     This came through the **letterbox** on Monday.

Target text

(Russian)                     ¬ от [*sic*] это пришло в **конверте** в понедельник.

Back translation     This came in an **envelope** on Monday.

(Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:671)

An envelope passes through a letterbox, and, therefore, the letterbox can be seen as a temporary container for an envelope. From the original text it becomes clear that the object was small enough to be delivered through the letterbox, whereas from the target text it is evident, that the object was flat enough to be posted in the envelope. Due to the metonymic substitution the communicative effect is achieved, and the pragmatic equivalence is retained in translation.

Apart from metonymic substitution, generalisation is another solution which can be effective in dealing with partially denotative gaps. For instance, *General Practitioner* and its abbreviation *GP* can be substituted with more general terms such as *врач* "doctor" in Russian (Electronic Appendix:1ENG-RUS:50) or *médico* "doctor" in Spanish (Electronic

Appendix:2ENG-SPA:36). However, as repeatedly mentioned above, generalisation always involves a loss of semantic detail.

Summing up the above, if the inconsistencies on the referential level are not semantically or pragmatically relevant, they can go unacknowledged in translation. However, if the context requires referential differences to be highlighted, metonymic substitution seems one of the most effective ways to tackle partially denotative lacunae.

*Figure 7.6 Strategies for handling partially denotative lacunae in Russian and Spanish (Electronic Appendix:9Partially denotative)*
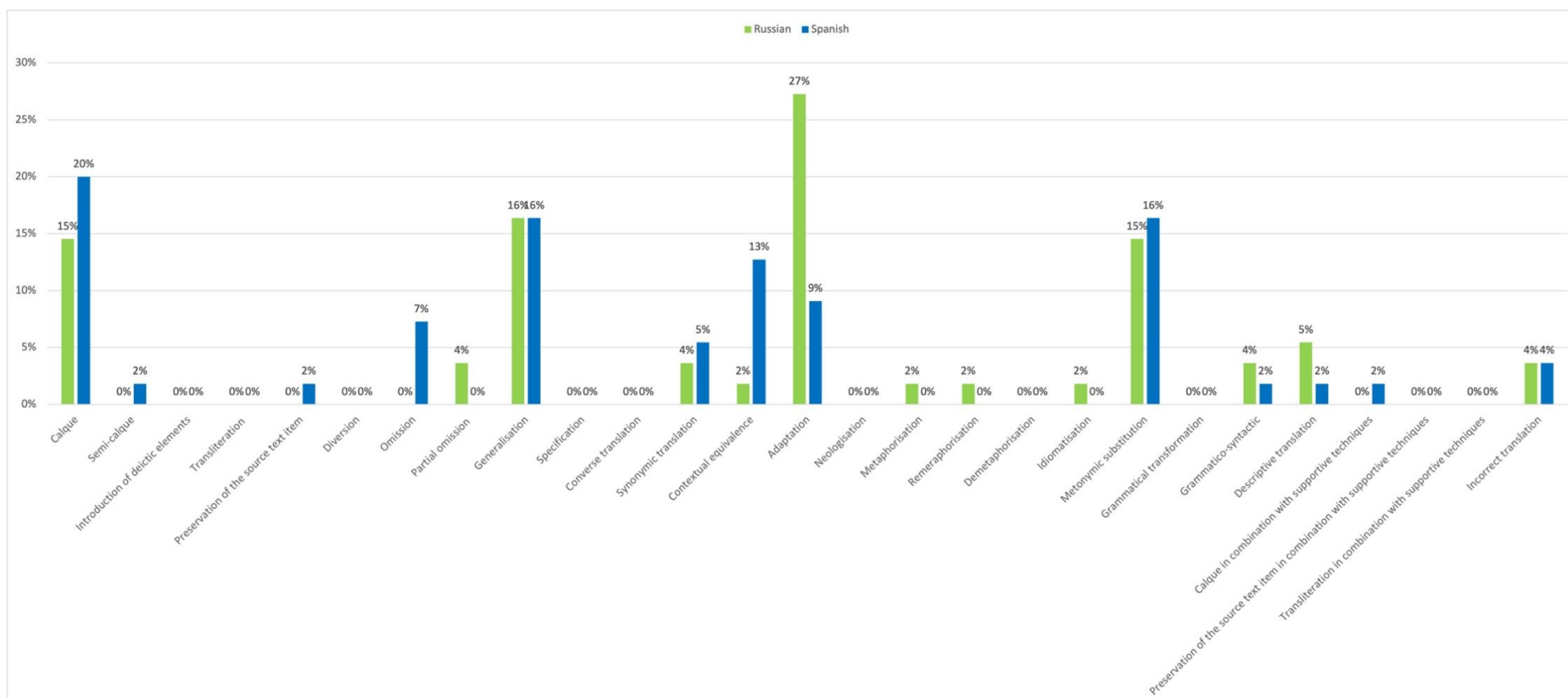
## 7.2   Translation resistance index

Employment of certain strategies may reflect the difficulties encountered by a translator in the process of "transcoding". On the one hand, translation error rate can be used as a direct indicator of translation complexity. On the other, there are also indirect markers of particular constraints hampering translation. For instance, preservation of the source text item and transliteration are usually used as a last resort due to the unavailability of direct equivalents in the target language. Such techniques as omission and diversion also lay bare translation challenges. Although in individual cases omission is a well-thought-out strategy enabling a translator to avoid tautology by excluding semantically superfluous units from the target text (e.g. translation of the lacunar lexeme *home* into Russian as shown in Chapter 6.1.1.7), in the vast majority of the analysed data, omission and partial omission seem to have been employed due to the lack of translation competence.

Therefore, a cumulative translation resistance index (hereinafter TRI) for each of the six types of lexical lacunae can be calculated by aggregating the percentages of the following translation solutions:

- transliteration
- transliteration in combination with supportive techniques
- preservation of the source text item
- preservation of the source text item in combination with supportive techniques
- omission
- partial omission
- diversion
- incorrect translation

Figure 7.7. reproduces the hexadic model of lexical lacunae (for further details see Chapter 4.4) outlining the TRI for each type of lexical gap with a breakdown by target language (i.e. translation of English lacunar lexemes into Russian vs. into Spanish). Multi-layered lacunae have the highest TRI, which comes as no surprise since this type of lexical gap, by definition, encompasses lexemes with multiple lacunar meanings construed on the basis of one another, thus representing a double difficulty in translation.

A discernible pattern emerges from the distribution of the TRI across categories 1-3, namely fully denotative, partially nominative and fully nominative lacunae. As mentioned

in Chapter 4.4, the order in which the categories are located on the model reflects the degree of crystallisation of lacunar concepts: from no conceptualisation towards greater conceptualisation. The TRI in both language combinations decreases as the lacunar concept crystallises in the target language. The TRI for fully denotative lacunae amounts to 22% and 28% in Russian and Spanish translations respectively. It decreases slightly for partially nominative lacunae revealing partially crystallised concepts, making up 20% in Russian and 25% in Spanish translations. The TRI for fully nominative lacunae (aka fully crystallised concepts with no specific designation) drops to 16% and 17% in Russian and Spanish respectively. This regularity suggests that there is an inverse correlation between concept crystallisation and translation resistance of a lacunar item: the higher the degree of conceptualisation, the lower the degree of untranslatability. In other words, the more the concept takes shape in the target speech community, the more easily it can be translated into the target language.

*Figure 7.7 The hexadic model of lexical lacunae with an indication of the TRI for each group*

|   |   |
|---|---|
| + | Referent |
| + | Conceptualisation |
| + | Lexicalisation |
| - | Connotation |

**TRI: Rus – 9%    Spa – 22%**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| + | Referent |
| + | Multiple conceptualisation |
| - | Lexicalisation |
| - | Connotation |

**TRI: Rus – 27%    Spa – 37%**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| ± | Referent |
| + | Conceptualisation |
| + | Lexicalisation |
| - | Connotation |

**TRI: Rus – 7%    Spa – 13%**

(*yellow, rosemary, beaver, yellow ribbon*)

5.  **Connotative**

4.  Multi-layered                                                    6.  Partially denotative

(*Blues, afterthought*)                                          (*Christmas cracker, letterbox*)



3.  **Fully nominative**                                          1.  **Fully denotative**

(*grandparent, paternity leave*)                          (*kilt, sporran, bonfire night, baby shower*)

2. Partially nominative

(*school run, pescatarian*)

|   |   |
|---|---|
| + | Referent |
| + | Conceptualisation |
| - | Lexicalisation |
| - | Connotation |

**TRI: Rus – 16%   Spa -17%**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| - | Referent |
| - | Conceptualisation |
| - | Lexicalisation |
| - | Connotation |

**TRI: Rus – 22%   Spa – 28%**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| + | Referent |
| ± | Conceptualisation |
| - | Lexicalisation |
| - | Connotation |

**TRI: Rus – 20%    Spa – 25%**

While categories 1-4 of lexical lacunae (i.e. fully denotative, partially nominative, fully nominative and multi-layered) constitute explicit difficulties in translation, categories 5-6 (i.e. connotative and partially denotative lacunae) conceal hidden pitfalls. As outlined in Sections 7.1.5 and 7.1.6 respectively, connotative lacunae are often translated literally, passing unnoticed by translators, whereas partially denotative lacunae are frequently handled with the help of adaptation (especially in Russian translations), leaving the referential discrepancy obscured. Therefore, the six categories of lexical lacunae can generally be divided into overt (categories 1-4) and covert (categories 5-6) types.

Interestingly, the TRI for connotative lacunae in Spanish translations amounts to 22% which is significantly higher than in Russian translations. Russian translators handled connotative lacunae by employing a wider range of solutions including metaphorisation, idiomatisation and grammatical transformations that were not used by Spanish translators.

## 7.3   Conclusion

This chapter has shown that different translation solutions are appropriate for bridging different types of lexical gaps. The six identified types of lexical lacunae can generally be divided into two main categories: overt and covert lacunae, with the overt category comprising fully denotative, partially nominative, fully nominative and multi-layered lacunae, and the covert category comprising connotative and partially denotative lacunae. Overt lacunae pose explicit difficulties in translation due to the unavailability of lexical equivalents in the target language, whereas covert lacunae, despite the availability of seemingly equivalent counterparts in the target language, may reveal significant conceptual and referential discrepancies in specific contexts.

Generalisation along with descriptive translation seem to be the most universal strategies for tackling overt types of lexical lacunae at least in film subtitles. However, generalisation should be used with caution since it results in a coarse-grained transformation, and, therefore, certain semantic nuances become lost in the process of "transcoding". Descriptive translation, in turn, can be effective provided that it is succinct.

Covert types of lexical lacunae can be more problematic in translation than overt types. There does not seem to be a universal solution for tackling covert lacunae since conceptual and referential differences require distinct approaches. Implicit connotative meanings are

best handled with the help of remetaphorisation, demetaphorisation and idiomatisation. Referential discrepancies, on condition that they are relevant for the context, can effectively be handled with the help of metonymic substitution.

As mentioned in Section 7.1, in the course of the analysis, the categories of multi-layered, connotative and partially denotative lacunae turned out to be relatively small. Therefore, the conclusions drawn for these types of lexical gaps are preliminary and require further validation. A further study of translation solutions with a particular focus on strategies for handling multi-layered, connotative and partially denotative lacunae would be recommended.

# 8   Conclusion

## 8.0   Thesis overview

Lexical lacunae have been a long-standing focus of scholarship in a variety of fields including cognitive psychology, contrastive stylistics, lexical semantics, anthropological linguistics and translation studies. The main directions taken towards the investigation of lexical lacunae were outlined in the literature review presented in Chapter 2, which contextualised this study within a wider research paradigm and identified the gaps in existing knowledge. The multidisciplinary approaches had resulted in numerous interpretations of lexical lacunarity, leaving the nature of lexical lacunae obscured and the ways of neutralising their implications in translation unclear. Therefore, this research set out to delineate a theoretical framework of lexical lacunae and establish practical ways of bridging them in translation. For this purpose, three research questions were formulated in Chapter 1.0. An additional (fourth) question that emerged in the corpus strand of research was set forth in Chapter 6.3. In the course of the study, the research questions were addressed in the following order:

- What is a lexical lacuna?
- What is the lifecycle of a lexical lacuna?
- How are lexical lacunae handled in translation of film subtitles?
- What are the optimal strategies for tackling lexical lacunae in translation of film subtitles?

Chapter 3 explained how research questions would be answered in the course of the study by outlining research design and methodological approaches. The findings emerging from the verification of the triadic model were discussed in Chapter 4, where a revised model of lexical lacunae was introduced. Chapter 5 presented the outcomes of the investigation into the emergence of lexical lacunae along with the results of the analysis of different forms of their realisation seeking to determine their lifecycle. Chapter 6 addressed the findings derived from the corpus analysis of the existing solutions for tackling lacunae in translation. Chapter 7 was devoted to a more fine-grained analysis of translation solutions for dealing with each type of lacuna in turn.

Finally, this concluding chapter, being structured according to the research questions, brings together the results of the different research strands and summarises the key findings. It sets the project outcomes against the background of the existing research

paradigm by analysing its contribution to knowledge and discusses recommendations for further studies.

## 8.1   What is a lexical lacuna?

The research question of what a lexical lacuna is, addressing the nature of lexical lacunarity, emerged from the multidisciplinary approaches to the investigation of the phenomenon that had given rise to the contradictory, often mutually exclusive definitions of a lexical lacuna.

Despite distinct terminology for defining lacunae, in the second half of the twentieth century cross-linguistic lexical discrepancies were in the spotlight of different research endeavours. This thesis identified lacuna-, cognition-, equivalence- and loanword-centred perspectives on lexical lacunarity. The approaches taken by cognition-centred and lacuna-centred studies were conceptually distinct. Whereas cognition-centred studies investigated the link between cognitive processes and linguistic lacunarity using mostly experimental methods, lacuna-centred studies addressed the phenomenon of a linguistic lacuna itself using theoretical methods. Although the adherents of both approaches unanimously acknowledged lexical inconsistencies manifesting themselves as words absent from one of the contrasting languages, the nomenclature and the criteria for definition varied across studies. Cognition-centred studies gravitated towards a functionalist approach, attributing particular importance to the uniqueness of a lacuna: for the integrity of experimental research, a lacuna, through the prism of which cognitive processes were examined, had to be unique and not compensated for at any other language level. In contrast, lacuna-centred research drifted towards formal structuralism, considering a lacuna to be any lexical item that was present in one language but absent from another.

However, within the lacuna-centred research paradigm further definitional refinement could be distinguished. Some researchers investigated so-called realia in the context of lacunarity, that is lexemes denoting culture-specific referents (Chapter 2.2.1.3). Others argued that lacunarity was a connotative phenomenon arising due to the lack of culture-specific knowledge associated with a certain concept (Chapter 2.2.1.1). Still others envisaged lacunae as non-lexicalised concepts (Chapter 2.2.1.2.1). Some researchers, however, tried to employ a more complex approach to the understanding of lacunae (Chapter 2.2.1.5).

Ambiguity in the interpretation of a lexical lacuna indicated a need to bring further consistency to the understanding of the phenomenon. Thus, drawing on the previous scholarship, this study adopted a working hypothesis viewing a lacuna as a triadic entity. A model was presented in Chapter 1.1 suggesting a nuanced interpretation of a lacuna that would encompass its various dimensions. The model offered a semiotic interpretation of a lexical lacuna.

The initial hypothesis viewed a lexical lacuna as a conceptual discrepancy between languages manifesting itself as non-equivalence of either denotative, nominative or connotative components of sign across languages. The validity of the model was assessed against the two sets of lexicographic data comprising English lexemes identified as lexical lacunae in Spanish and Russian. Lexicographic data was collected using an original methodological approach premised largely on the revised dictionary-based detection of lexical lacunae (the procedure is described in Chapter 3.2.1). The robustness of the model was estimated in terms of the feasibility of grouping the lexemes identified as lexical gaps in Spanish and Russian into three suggested categories, namely denotative, nominative and connotative lacunae. However, the model's validity was borne out only in part since in addition to the three initially hypothesised types of lexical lacunae, three intermediate categories were distinguished. The hypothesis was, therefore, revised, and the triadic model was transformed into a hexadic diagram comprising six different categories of lexical lacunae:

- Fully denotative
- Partially denotative
- Fully nominative
- Partially nominative
- Connotative
- Multi-layered

In other words, apart from the three main levels on which lacunarity can occur (i.e. denotative, nominative and connotative), the study identified further varieties within levels.

Firstly, in addition to the lexemes denoting culture-specific referents, aka fully denotative lacunae (e.g. *scone, kilt*), on the denotative level the research established partially denotative lacunae revealing referential non-equivalence (e.g. *letterbox, black pudding*).

Secondly, in addition to the fully crystallised concepts lexicalised at divergent categorisation levels, aka fully nominative lacunae (e.g. *toe, grandparent*), on the nominative level there were identified partially nominative lacunae, that is partially crystallised concepts denoting notions which seem to exist in the speech community but with no specific denomination (e.g. *school run, pescatarian*).

Finally, connotative and multi-layered lacunae occupy a special place in the classification model since both of these categories are concerned with non-equivalence of secondary figurative meanings. Thus, in addition to connotative lacunae revealing divergent associative, symbolic or allusive meanings (e.g. *yellow, rosemary*), lexemes with multiple lacunar meanings, aka multi-layered lacunae, were identified (e.g. *granola, off-colour*).

The study showed that a lexical lacuna is a knowledge-dependent discrepancy between two lexical systems manifesting itself as the absence of a direct equivalent in one of the languages due to the divergent culturally-conditioned denominative practices.[25] At the same time, the equivalence of the counterpart is not limited to structural sameness but should be understood in a broader sense also including referential, semantic, idiomatic, stylistic and pragmatic uniformity. Therefore, the study highlighted the graded nature of lexical lacunarity which should be viewed in direct association with translation equivalence, thus providing additional support to the viewpoint held by some scholars (Chapter 2.4.1) that lexical lacunarity and translation equivalence are opposite sides of the same coin.

The hexadic model which revealed the multifaceted nature of this linguistic phenomenon is the most significant theoretical finding to emerge from this research project. Drawing upon the existing knowledge in the field, it ties together polar-opposite projections of lacunarity offering a revised understanding of the phenomenon, while identification of the new intermediate categories of lexical lacunae offers a deeper insight into lexical lacunarity.

## 8.2   What is the lifecycle of a lexical lacuna?

The issues of formation and evolution of lacunae have been beyond the primary focus of the studies investigating lexical discrepancies. To address these gaps in knowledge, the

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[25] Knowledge-dependent is understood here in the sense that acknowledgement of a lexeme as a lexical lacuna in the target language is dependent on an individual's knowledge of a concept denoted by the given lexeme and, therefore, can vary from individual to individual.

aspects of formation and evolution of lacunae were merged together in a complex research question devoted to the investigation of the lifecycle of lexical lacunae.

Thus, the first part of Chapter 5 was devoted to the analysis of the processes of formation of lacunar items. For this purpose, a qualitative analysis of distinct sets of lacunar lexemes (Russian lacunae vs. Spanish lacunae) and distinct forms of realisation of lacunae (current lacunae vs. filled lacunae) was carried out from various perspectives including semiotic, etymological, semantic and grammatical. The datasets were contrasted according to a common set of parameters including HTE categorisation levels, date of attestation and frequency in English, and part of speech. It was anticipated that this investigation would not give a direct answer to the question of how lacunar items are formed. However, it allowed identification of general patterns, on the basis of which it was possible to hypothesise how lacunar concepts crystallise in language.

This research strand suggested a simplified sequence of processes occurring on different levels of human perception, preceding formation of a lacunar item:

- stimulation of the sensory receptors by external stimuli (aka culture-specific environment)
- changes in psychological perception driven by internal stimuli (aka salience and prototypicality)
- conceptualisation and categorisation on the cognitive level
- lexicalisation on the verbal level as a result of information processing

The environment, either in the form of the culture-bound referents (aka physical stimuli) or socio-historical context (aka emotional stimulus) functions as a principal catalyst triggering the psychological importance of construing a mental representation on the cognitive level and its subsequent lexicalisation on the verbal level. Thus, the factors giving rise to lexical lacunarity were classified into extralinguistic (comprising environment, salience and prototypicality) and linguistic (comprising conceptualisation, categorisation and lexicalisation). The analysis revealed that divergence in lexicalisation patterns could occur at any level, but in close interaction between the processes on various levels. In other words, this research strand highlighted the synergy of linguistic and other cognitive faculties (e.g. conceptualisation and categorisation) closely intertwined within a single mental framework.

The second part of the research question focused on the evolution of lexical lacunae exploring the pathways along which they can be filled. For this purpose, the datasets of English lacunar items in Spanish and Russian were contrasted with the datasets of Spanish and Russian borrowings in English. The study found that lexical lacunae can evolve according to different trajectories. These trajectories as well as the further development of the terms borrowed to fill lexical gaps are determined by the communicative relevance of the concepts they denote. For instance, lacunae can remain undetected during their entire lifespan, not completing their lifecycle. Alternatively, a lacuna can become filled with the help of a loanword, thus bringing a logical end to its lifecycle if the relevance of a lacunar concept is acknowledged from the cross-linguistic perspective. The communicative importance of lacunar concepts typically manifests itself during the active interaction between the speech communities or during the periods when the events in the donor speech community (e.g. social upheavals) become the focus of public attention, as evidenced by the diachronic analysis which compared the timelines of adoption of Russian and Spanish borrowings into English.

However, even the filling of a lexical lacuna with the help of a borrowing does not necessarily mean that its lifecycle becomes fully complete. Even a seemingly filled lacuna can remain partly alive in the target language. For instance, a borrowing of a loanword can involve a change of categorisation level resulting in a divergent amount of information encoded in the lacunar lexeme in the source language and its conventional counterpart (aka loanword) in the target language. Besides, as a result of semantic change a lexical lacuna filled with the help of a borrowing can acquire additional meanings thus yielding further semantic inequivalence.

## 8.3   How are lexical lacunae handled in translation of film subtitles?

The research question of how lexical lacunae are handled in translation of film subtitles stemmed from the intention to investigate how lexical inconsistencies are dealt with in actual translation practice, demonstrating the extent to which they can prove relevant in the cross-linguistic context. For this purpose, it was decided to employ a bottom-up approach, starting with data investigation and moving up towards identification of techniques used for bridging lexical gaps in Russian and Spanish translations. The data derived from the online concordances of multilingual film subtitles which were used as parallel corpora. A data-driven approach was deemed the most appropriate since it would allow the empirical evidence to underpin the formulation of strategies for handling lexical lacunae. In light of

this, a corpus analysis combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies was undertaken, the outcomes of which were presented in Chapter 6.

The corpus-based research strand demonstrated that despite speculative discussions surrounding untranslatability of lexical gaps, they can and should be bridged in translation. The study has identified 26 possible translation strategies for tackling lexical lacunae which were subsequently classified into three major groups, namely nominal, semantic and explicative transformations. The order in which the translation solutions were presented in Chapter 6.1 reflects the extent of transference of meaning to the target language. Nominal transformations result in formal translation of lacunar lexemes, leaving the concept obscured. Semantic transformations, aimed at an approximation to the lacunar concept, involve substitution of a lacunar item with a semantically-related alternative, which, inevitably incurs certain loss of semantic detail in translation. Finally, explicative transformations are targeted at the most comprehensive conveyance of meaning encoded in a lacunar item.

The outlined classification of the strategies for tackling lexical lacunae has a practical application: when dealing with lexical lacunae, a translator can choose the most appropriate translation technique from the suggested list, bearing in mind that not all techniques are equally effective, and the decision should be taken on an *ad hoc* basis. The qualitative analysis demonstrated that translation of lacunar lexemes nearly always entails a certain loss of information. Therefore, when selecting a strategy, a translator should consider the centrality of a lacunar item in the context as well as the objectives of the source text and the needs of the target audience in an attempt to identify the acceptable extent of deviation from the desired equivalence. Without doubt, every effort should be made to minimise and mitigate potential distortion of the target text. However, when dealing with lexical lacunae, instead of trying to achieve full equivalence by all means in the target language, the translator should endeavour to identify what can be sacrificed in translation without jeopardising the integrity of the source text.

The corpus study also established some less conventional solutions for handling lexical gaps such as the emphatic use of inverted commas, non-standard orthography and partial omission. Although these techniques cannot be considered fully-fledged strategies, they can be effective in combination with other translation solutions. Identification of these complementary approaches contributes to our knowledge of the ways in which lexical gaps

can be bridged in translation and offers translators a greater variety of practical options for tackling lacunae.

Another important finding that emerged from the quantitative analysis of the translation solutions is that generalisation was the most common strategy employed by both Russian and Spanish translators. However, this does not suggest that generalisation is also the most effective strategy in translation of lacunae since frequency is not necessarily an indication of quality. Besides, the popularity of generalisation is likely to be due to the specificity of the corpus data: film subtitles displayed on screen are subject to a character limit. Therefore, generalisation may have appeared the most suitable solution in the context of the subtitles since it typically produces the most concise outcome.

Collating the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses, it was established that not all translation solutions are equally effective for dealing with different categories of lexical gaps. The next section will address the appropriateness of using specific techniques for certain types of lacunae in further detail and summarise the main conclusions in this regard.

## 8.4   What are the optimal strategies for tackling lexical lacunae in translation of film subtitles?

The final research question of how best to handle lexical lacunae in translation of film subtitles emerged in the course of the corpus analysis which found that not all strategies were suitable for different types of lexical lacunae (Chapter 6.3). To address this question, the Russian and Spanish datasets, comprising instances of translation of lacunar items, were sorted according to the type of lacuna. Thus, each dataset was divided into six subsets: fully denotative, partially nominative, fully nominative, multi-layered, connotative and partially denotative lacunae. To identify the most effective translation strategies, a mixed methodology, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, was employed. First, in the quantitative analysis the most frequent translation solutions were identified for bridging each type of lacuna. Then, the results of the quantitative analysis were contrasted with the outcomes of the qualitative investigation (for further details see Chapter 7.1).

The study identified an interesting pattern in the translatability of different types of lacuna (Chapter 7.2). Certain translation solutions can serve as indicators of the translation complexity of lacunar items. For instance, transliteration- and preservation-based

approaches, along with omission (partial and full), diversion and translation errors reflect the difficulty of transference of lacunar lexemes into the target language. By aggregating percentages of these translation solutions a cumulative translation resistance index (TRI) was calculated for each type of lacuna in Russian and Spanish translations. The TRI revealed an inverse correlation between concept crystallisation and translation resistance of a lacunar item: the more the concept is crystallised in the speech community, the lower the TRI. In other words, the more the concept takes shape, the more easily it can be translated.

Thus, the study found that depending on how lexical lacunae manifest themselves in translation, they can generally be divided into two categories: overt (comprising fully denotative, partially nominative, fully nominative and multi-layered lacunae) and covert (comprising connotative and partially denotative lacunae). Overt lacunae lay bare explicit structural discrepancies between the lexical systems of the source and target languages. In contrast, covert lacunae conceal hidden pitfalls and reveal conceptual and referential inconsistencies, despite the apparent availability of direct equivalents.

The analysis revealed that overt lacunae are most effectively handled with the help of generalisation and descriptive translation. However, it is worth reiterating that generalisation, as any other type of semantic transformation, inevitably incurs a certain loss of semantic nuances. Covert types of lacunae pose even greater challenges for translators since they are not limited to inconsistencies in denomination, but also involve implicit differences between concepts and referents. Thus, connotative lacunae are best tackled with the help of remetaphorisation, demetaphorisation and idiomatisation, whereas partially denotative lacunae can be successfully dealt with by metonymic substitution.

This, however, does not suggest that alternative strategies are not applicable. For instance, overt lacunae can also be tackled with the help of nominal transformations, which allow translators to render lacunar items into the target language but without conveying their meaning. Therefore, the choice of technique should be driven by the translator's objectives. As has been demonstrated, selection of the translation solution largely depends on the immediate and wider context as well as on the text function and target audience.

Summing up the above, this study suggests taking an analytical approach to translation of lacunar items. Identification of the type of lexical lacuna allows a translator to understand the nature of the lexical discrepancy and to employ an onomasiological approach to translation, crucial for adopting the optimal strategy for bridging a lexical gap and for

preventing it from turning into a cultural gap. Translation is far beyond the level of words and should not be oversimplified to a mere process of establishing structural equivalents across different linguistic systems. Due to the natural process of semantic change, inherent to all living languages, words tend to become polysemous, acquiring new related senses. Sometimes new senses replace the older ones, but sometimes they exist side-by-side with older meanings. As a result, meanings are not clearly delineated categories strictly aligned with lexical items. Therefore, translation should take its starting point in a concept encoded in a lexical item in a given context. Conceptual representations, however, often diverge across speech communities, being shaped by linguistic and extralinguistic experience. Therefore, translation requires not only bilingual competence on the part of a translator but also cultural sensitivity and enhanced awareness of the extralinguistic realia.

## 8.5  Contribution to knowledge

This project provides a deeper insight into lexical lacunarity by bringing together distinct research paradigms with a particular focus on lexical lacunae which have not been discussed in conjunction with each other prior to this study. Thus, it offers a more comprehensive view of the research object and methods of its investigation. It also synthesises various conceptual understandings of lexical lacunae in a theoretical lacuna model and identifies new types of lacunae which have been previously overlooked. Therefore, one of the major theoretical contributions of this study is an empirically validated hexadic lacuna model which brings clarity to ambiguous interpretations of lacunae and offers a novel broad view on lexical lacunarity.

This project further adds to existing knowledge by employing a diachronic approach to the analysis of lexical lacunae which allowed identification of extralinguistic and linguistic factors triggering formation of language-specific lexicalisation patterns and exploration of various trajectories of evolution of lexical lacunae. Unlike previous scholarship that tended to examine cross-linguistic lexical lacunae as static synchronic phenomena, the lexicographic strand of this study approaches lexical lacunae from the diachronic perspective, viewing them as constantly evolving entities and highlighting their dynamic character. The findings emerging from the lexicographic strand of research are of particular significance to translation studies demonstrating that even seemingly dead lacunae may remain alive: lexemes borrowed to fill in lacunae may develop additional senses in the receiving language (which are non-existent in the donor language) and conceal discrepancies in categorisation levels. This indicates the importance of using

thesauri in translation practice especially when dealing with dead lacunae and paying specific attention to potential divergences between the words borrowed to fill lacunae in the receiving language and their equivalents in the donor language.

The major applied contribution of this work is that it has demonstrated a broad range of practical ways of handling lexical lacunae in translation. Instead of using an existing classification of translation solutions such as that of Vinay and Darbelnet (1995 [1958]) or Barkhudarov (1975) and trying to fit the data into the predefined categories, this thesis employs an inductive approach. It seemed crucially important not to be influenced by the preconceived opinions on how lexical gaps should be bridged. Therefore, the identified translation techniques emerged from the analysed data. It was also deemed essential not to present the established solutions as a list, but rather to organise them into the logical not excessively overlapping categories for the ease of application of this classification in translation practice. As a result, depending on the extent to which the meaning of a lacunar item should be conveyed in the target language in a certain context, a translator can select whether to use one of the nominal techniques (enabling only formal translation of the term without conveying its meaning), semantic techniques (enabling approximative translation) or explicative techniques (enabling the fullest possible conveyance of meaning of the lacunar term in the target language). The data-driven analysis undertaken here also provides an insight into the ways in which different types of lacunae can be tackled in translation. The results of the corpus strand are expected to be of interest to professional translators, semanticists who work across languages and learners of foreign languages.

The corpus strand has also yielded some interesting insights into the multimodal practices of meaning making. The identification of such translation techniques as the emphatic use of inverted commas and non-standard orthography corroborates and complements the results of the studies that have also used film subtitles as the main source of data and distinguished the use of quotation marks and italics in subtitling (Chapter 2.4.2.1). The specificity of film subtitles (Chapter 3.4.1) leaves a certain imprint on the strategies employed by translators prompting them to exploit all means of expression available to them. While translation studies traditionally focus on the linguistic dimension, this finding highlights that translation may also encompass the non-verbal level demonstrating alternative ways of construing meaning beyond words.

Another contribution of this thesis is methodological. Exploiting the opportunities that digital lexicography offers, this study presents an original approach to the detection of

lexical lacunae following the revision of the traditional dictionary-based method (Chapter 2.2.2.2.2). This methodological advancement lays the groundwork for further studies outlining how modern online dictionaries can be used for a more consistent retrieval of lexical lacunae.

This study contributes to existing research by offering an interdisciplinary perspective on lexical lacunae, addressing them from the standpoint of both cognitive linguistics and translation studies. Integration of the cognitive and translational perspectives has generated some interesting insights. Firstly, such an interdisciplinary approach is useful in expanding our knowledge of the divergent conceptualisation and categorisation patterns underlying lexical inconsistencies across languages, ultimately enhancing our understanding of the challenges posed by lexical lacunae in translation.

Secondly, viewing lexical lacunae through the prism of Fillmore's frame semantics explains the difficulty of bridging lexical gaps in translation: a conceptual frame containing a lacunar item can be divergent from that in the target language or even totally absent requiring recontextualisation of the whole frame in a ramified system of knowledge of the target language speakers. Thus, cognitive linguistics, provides a theoretical ground for understanding the nature of lexical lacunarity which is crucial for knowing how best to deal with it in translation practice.

Thirdly, extrapolating the prototype theory onto the study of lexical lacunarity this thesis has treated various types of lexical lacunae as constituting a continuum. This, in turn, has led to the discovery of the Translation Resistance Index (Chapter 7.2) which is a novel coefficient determining the degree of resistance of a term to translation. Calculating the Translation Resistance Index for each category of lacunae, this thesis has shown that concept crystallisation and translation resistance of a lacunar term denoting the concept are inversely proportional. In other words, in a data-driven analysis it has been demonstrated that the more the concept acquires shape in the speech community, the easier it is to handle it in translation. Therefore, this study has transformed a longstanding speculative discussion on the limits of translatability of lacunae into empirical evidence showcasing that the degree of lexicalisation of a concept determines the capacity of meaning of a lacunar item to be translated to a different language.

## 8.6   Directions for further research

The investigation of lacunar items in terms of categorisation levels has revealed that the vast majority of the analysed lacunar lexemes were located at the subordinate level. It is worth considering this finding in connection with the outcome of the corpus strand which established that generalisation was the most popular technique among both Russian and Spanish translators. Generalisation could have been employed due to the specificity of the analysed corpora (space constraints in subtitling). However, from the cognitive perspective, translators could have opted for this solution since moving up the level would result in the establishment of the basic level which is the most salient for human perception. Instead of searching for the synonyms of lacunar items on the subordinate level that could work as functional equivalents, translators have preferred hypernyms located at the level that is perceptually more prominent. A future study could further investigate the correlation between categorisation levels and application of such a translation solution as generalisation. This cognitive view could afford a new angle on generalisation, explaining its appeal to translators. Therefore, further expansion of the interdisciplinary perspective from which cognitive linguistics and translation studies converge is highly recommended since it can yield valuable insights into translators' decision-making.

As well as this, there is potential for further research into translation solutions for handling lexical lacunae. The data for the corpus-based strand of this study came from online parallel corpora of the multilingual film subtitles. At the time of writing, multilingual film subtitles were deemed the most appropriate source of data meeting this project's requirements for corpus comparability and specific language combination.  However, subtitles can be seen as an approximation to spoken language and, therefore, are hardly representative of other registers, as acknowledged in Chapter 3.4.1. Further research involving the use of alternative parallel corpora and different language combinations, would, therefore, seem worthwhile.

Furthermore, some of the categories of lacunae, namely connotative, partially denotative and multi-layered lacunae, cannot boast large sample sizes since the classification of lacunar items into categories was carried out after the list of the detected lacunar lexemes had been compiled to verify a theoretical model of a lexical lacuna. Therefore, for the purpose of research integrity it was decided to preserve unequal category sizes and not to align them with respect to one another since additional targeted sampling would entail data manipulation. However, the comparatively small sizes of these three categories had

implications for the analysis of the translation solutions for handling each type of lacuna (see Chapter 7.1). The scarcity of data in the given categories made the findings less generalisable. In other words, the translation strategies that were identified as optimal for handling connotative, partially denotative and multi-layered lexical lacunae require further validation by larger sample sizes. Future studies could, therefore, focus on investigation of translation solutions for tackling connotative, partially denotative and multi-layered lacunae.

Finally, due to the unavailability of Russian and Spanish lexicographic sources comparable in scope and size to the HTE, this research has only tangentially addressed the divergence in categorisation levels between lacunar items and loan-words borrowed into the target language to fill the lexical gaps (Chapter 5.2.2). With the creation of analogous Russian and Spanish thesauri, it would be possible to carry out a systematic contrastive analysis of the categorisation patterns across languages, which appears to be a fruitful area for future studies.

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