

Oksana Klymchuk

*Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design
(Kyiv, Ukraine)*

Yana Boiko

*Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design
(Kyiv, Ukraine)*

SLANG AND DIALECTS AS A CHALLENGE IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND TRANSLATION

In contemporary intercultural communication, translation performs a crucial practical function – ensuring mutual understanding between individuals from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. However, real-life discourse includes not only standard language forms. A significant portion of communication is composed of slang and dialects, which complicate the translation process due to their instability and strong dependence on specific social and regional contexts.

Slang is generally regarded as an informal layer of vocabulary used in everyday communication and rapidly evolving under the influence of social factors. According to David Crystal, slang performs not only a referential but also a social function, as it helps signal a speaker's membership in a particular group (Crystal, 2019). This creates difficulties for translators, since the meaning of such expressions often extends beyond dictionary definitions.

Slang is highly context-dependent and often carries strong connotative, emotional, and stylistic nuances. Its meaning may vary depending on factors such as age, profession, social group, or the communicative situation. The same expression can function as humorous, ironic, or even offensive depending on the context, which makes its interpretation particularly challenging. Furthermore, slang is characterized by a high degree of variability and rapid obsolescence: expressions that are widely used at one moment may quickly fall out of use or acquire new meanings. For translators, this creates a double challenge: they must accurately decode the intended meaning within a specific communicative context while also finding an appropriate equivalent in the target language that conveys not only the denotative meaning but also the stylistic and

pragmatic effect. In many cases, direct equivalents are absent, which necessitates the use of adaptive strategies such as functional substitution, paraphrase, or stylistic compensation. As a result, the translation of slang often involves a shift from formal equivalence to dynamic equivalence, prioritizing communicative effect over lexical similarity.

For example, the English expression “*hit the books*” means “to study intensively”, rather than “to strike books”. In this case, literal translation is ineffective, and the translator must prioritize meaning over form. Such expressions occur in both informal communication and semi-formal texts, complicating the choice of an appropriate translation strategy.

Dialect, in contrast to slang, is relatively more stable and is associated with geographical or social variation. It may include specific vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. As Peter Trudgill notes, dialects function as important markers of speaker identity, and ignoring them in translation leads to a partial loss of meaning (Trudgill, 2000).

In translation practice, translators often face a complex choice between preserving dialectal features and rendering the meaning in neutral language. Full preservation of dialect is usually impossible due to the absence of direct equivalents in the target language, as dialectal systems are deeply embedded in specific linguistic and cultural environments. At the same time, substituting dialects with those of the target language (for example, Ukrainian dialects) is not always appropriate, since this may distort the original cultural context and create unintended associations for the target audience.

As a result, translators frequently resort to partial or functional compensation strategies. These may include the use of non-standard language elements, colloquial expressions, or subtle stylistic markers that signal social or regional variation without directly reproducing the original dialect. In literary translation, such strategies help preserve characterization and narrative voice, whereas in non-fiction or informational texts, dialectal features are often neutralized to ensure clarity and accessibility. Thus, the translation of dialect requires a careful balance between fidelity to the source text and the communicative needs of the target audience.

Mona Baker emphasizes that translation should be guided by the function of the text and audience expectations (Baker, 2018). In the case of slang and dialects, this means that translators often balance between accuracy and comprehensibility. For instance, in journalistic or educational texts, clarity tends to be prioritized, whereas in literary texts, stylistic preservation becomes more important.

Another important aspect is the cultural embeddedness of linguistic units. Many slang expressions emerge within specific social environments and have no direct equivalents in other cultures. According to Peter Newmark, in such cases descriptive translation or functional equivalence is recommended (Newmark, 1988).

In intercultural communication, translation errors involving slang or dialects can significantly affect message interpretation. Inaccurate rendering may alter tone, level of formality, or even communicative intent. This is particularly critical in contexts where precision is essential, such as business communication or educational materials.

Practice shows that effective translation of such linguistic elements relies on three key factors: contextual understanding, cultural awareness, and the ability to adapt the text. A translator does not work with isolated words but with communicative situations as a whole. This approach helps avoid literal errors and ensures clarity for the target audience.

Slang and dialects remain complex objects of translation in intercultural communication. They lack stable equivalents, are highly context-dependent, and perform important social and stylistic functions. In most cases, successful translation requires adaptation rather than direct reproduction. Further research should focus on analyzing translation strategies across different text types and communicative contexts.

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