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## **Linguocultural Approach to Audiovisual Translation on the Example of “Game of Thrones”**

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### **Abstract**

The article examines common issues and difficulties of rendering culture-specific vocabulary in a popular American fantasy television series “Game of Thrones”. In a fantasy genre, translators have to deal with different concepts that might have no equivalents in the target language. The purpose of the research is to identify basic methods of adapting non-equivalent vocabulary in the Russian translation of the “Game of Thrones” television series. The descriptive, comparative, and statistical analysis methods provided a comprehensive investigation of audiovisual translation in the linguocultural aspect. The scientific novelty of the research involves the authors’ attempt to compile some essential guidelines for overcoming cultural barriers in audiovisual translation. The research findings prove that a competent linguocultural approach to audiovisual translation facilitates an adequate representation of the source culture through television series in the modern globalized world. As a conclusion of the research, the guidelines for overcoming linguocultural barriers in audiovisual translation were provided.

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## 1. Introduction

The film industry is considered one of the dominant forms of culture in the modern age. Going beyond art, it has inevitably become a part of people’s lives, having a considerable impact on the formation of their language, lifestyle, and even values. In this regard, audiovisual translation is undoubtedly the most common type of translation oriented towards a huge market and audience. However, it can be problematic for a translator to overcome both linguistic and extralinguistic barriers while translating audiovisual products. Since there is a wide range of platforms for watching films and television series of different genres, it is not relevant to deal with standard forms and stereotyped storylines. Screenwriters, producers, and directors have to look for new ways of interacting with an intended audience that will make them hooked on watching the next franchises. The old genre of television series is no exception to that popular trend. The concept of television series has been given a new interpretation (Dovolnova & Samarin, 2018; Krasnoyarova, 2016). It is not merely a set of television episodes shown at certain time intervals. Over the past few years, the quality and quantity of television series produced in the world have significantly increased. In terms of the art of acting, directing, and camerawork, some series can be highly competitive with wide-screen blockbusters and are no longer perceived as soap operas. Moreover, many viewers consider series as an integral part of their lives, watching their favorite episodes several times.

Nowadays, there are a lot of transnational fandoms whose participants identify themselves with the heroes of their favorite television series, take part in acting scenes of the most interesting episodes, and create fanfictions, i.e., fans’ literary works based on television series. Fanart is another new direction in contemporary art that involves the creation of artwork depicting fan-favorite characters of television series. Global fandoms consist of organized communities whose members practice both virtual and real-life communication and identify themselves depending on their favorite television series (Jenkins, 2011). There are such popular fandoms as Whovians (fans of “Doctor Who” British science fiction television series),

Schwiftites (fans of “Rick and Morty” American animated television series), SPN family (fans of “Supernatural” American adventure television series), etc. Fans from all over the world discuss their favorite episodes on forums, belong to thematic groups on social networking sites, take part in various events such as Comic-Con (the world’s major event that brings together the fans and producers of comics, television series, and computer games). All the above-mentioned groups, works, and events make an indispensable part of modern pop-culture.

Having considered all the above issues, we take up the position that audiovisual translation comprises the following linguocultural components: linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge, verbal and non-verbal communication skills, and abilities. The translator first needs to choose the linguistic material, then reflect the target culture, background, connotative lexical units, common forms of speech as well as non-verbal elements (gestures, facial expressions, and common behavior patterns). One of the main requirements for audiovisual translation is its communicative and pragmatic equivalence to the original. The communicative effect that a film or television series will produce on the viewers is largely determined by the translator’s ability to identify and adapt not only explicit but also implicit ideas and intentions hidden in the characters’ speech. The research is aimed to identify basic methods of adapting non-equivalent vocabulary in the Russian translation of the “Game of Thrones” television series.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

It should be pointed out that new fantasy films and television series have become extremely popular with the audience of all ages and categories. One example is an American fantasy television series the “Game of Thrones”, released in 2011-2019 and quickly excited the curiosity of millions of people around the world. It claims to be a cult television series and has already been translated into more than 45 languages. Since a fantasy genre implies the creation of a fictional world, it is necessary to identify how professional translators cope with various culture-specific elements of the original (Walters, 2011). Tomakhin (1988) noted that the cultural factor

is represented by a set of specific features of the source culture, which can be either untranslatable or misunderstood when they are directly projected onto the target culture. An inadequate communicative effect involves such problems as misperception of the target text, unequal emotions, loss of emotional and aesthetic perception (Tomakhin, 1988). In this regard, the translator should take into account the difference between the linguistic environments of both source and target recipients following different cultural subtexts and a set of knowledge. If the difference causes misunderstanding, the translator should try to compensate it by making necessary changes to the translation (Vinogradov, 2001).

In modern linguistic and cultural studies, special attention is paid to the linguocultural approach to the study of national realia, denoting ethno-specific concepts of a particular country, nation, and historical epoch. At the same time, many researchers (Baker, 2011; Ritva, 2011; Tomakhin, 1988) note that there are no clear criteria for determining these extralinguistic elements either in communication theory or in translation studies. Moreover, this foreign vocabulary layer is called differently in different scientific works: non-equivalent vocabulary, exotic vocabulary or exoticisms, culture-bound vocabulary, barbarisms, localisms, gaps or lacunas, linguoculturemes. It should be noted that all these terms are similar in some way since they denote objects and phenomena with national, local, or historical coloring that do not have correspondences or equivalents in the target language. However, the above-mentioned terms cannot be considered synonymous or interchangeable, as they denote slightly different concepts.

Thus, realia are the words and phrases naming objects existing in the life and culture of one nation and absent in another (Vlakhov & Florin, 2012). Given that the original culture-specific units are unknown to most target language speakers, they do not have exact equivalents in the target language. In our research, the analysis of linguocultural peculiarities of translating the fantasy television series "Game of Thrones" is based on this interpretation of realia since it seems to be the most precise and appropriate. While translating fantasy television series from English into Russian, it is difficult to choose the method of transferring the concept of a non-

existent world to a viewer from the real world on its certain cultural, social, and historical development.

Over the last several decades, realia-related matters have been actively discussed in the field of translation studies, intercultural communication, theory of literature, linguistic and cultural studies. It is not a new linguistic problem. Baker (Baker & Saldanha, 2008, p. 25) claimed that "there are no such things as untranslatable words, i.e., any words can be translated at least descriptively". Therefore, the question is not whether it is possible or impossible to translate realia, but what methods of translation should be applied.

Let us first consider the term 'audiovisual translation', which usually means the transfer of the original multimodal and multimedia texts to another language and culture (Tveit, 2005; Zabihi et al., 2015). It is a special type of translation activity that cannot be referred to as either oral or written translation. Translation of audiovisual products requires rendering of the source content through audiovisual channels and various types of codes synchronous with the scenes depicted on the screen (Dovolnova & Samarin, 2018; Khoshsaligheh et al., 2020). The main semantic modes of audiovisual texts comprise language, image, music, and color. There are the following common types of audiovisual translation: dubbing, subtitling, and voice-over translation.

Dubbing or official translation is a scrupulous and time-consuming work involving a complete re-voice of all television heroes from one language into another. It is not relevant just to translate the source text, dub it, and write it down. The text should be consistent with the timeline and articulation of characters (Tveit, 2005). It is presumed to be the most destructive stage of translation since the dubbing editor has to introduce considerable changes into the audiovisual text to achieve a high-quality visualization. The translator's task is usually limited to the translation of a script. Nevertheless, in order to complete the work, the specialists need to synchronize the audio and video sequence with the lip sounds, which is known as a lip-synch technique (short for lip synchronization). This is a difficult task when dubbing, and therefore requires more careful analysis since the pronunciation of sounds (pitch frequency, intensity, and duration) does

not follow one and the same patterns in different languages. Thus, the translator of audiovisual texts should be familiar with the peculiarities of dubbing to learn how to preserve the original content of the script.

According to scholars (Anderman & Diaz-Cintaz, 2009) engaged in audiovisual translation problems, the term 'subtitling' can be defined as an abridged translation of the film dialogues reflecting their main content and presenting the visual sequence of the original film in the form of a printed text, usually given at the bottom of the screen. Voice-over translation is another type of audiovisual conversion of the film dialogue from one language into another. The script is first translated, then recorded by a native-speaking voice-over translator. It is vital for a voice talent to have an appropriate voice accent, articulation, and interpretation to appeal to the target audience.

The process of audiovisual translation goes hand in hand with cultural phenomena (Jenkins, 2006). The translator's task is to overcome the cultural distance between the source and target languages by applying basic methods of adapting original culture-specific elements in translation. If the meaning of these non-equivalent units is conveyed properly, it will provide an adequate perception of the author's intention by the target audience. The translator is a guide for the television viewers as well as a part of their culture. Consequently, a translation for strangers will certainly result in a loss of adequacy (Reiss, 2000). On the one hand, the adaptation of the film dialogue includes conveying the meaning of the characters' statements. On the other hand, it serves to preserve the stylistic features of dialogues and achieve a pragmatic effect.

### 3. Methodology

Our research is based on the works by Baker (2011), Dovolnova and Samarin (2018), Jenkins (2011), Krasnoyarova (2016), Newmark (1988), Schleiermacher (2012), Venuti (2008), Vlahov and Florin (2012), etc. who investigated the linguocultural, media, and audiovisual translation issues. Besides, linguistic and terminological dictionaries by Mueller (2012) and Summers et al. (2005) have been used to solve the problems set out in the article.

The aim of the research is achieved by implementing the linguocultural approach to audiovisual translation along with the traditional research methods. The linguocultural approach was used to find the connection between language and culture. The descriptive analysis is applied to characterize culture-specific elements of audiovisual content, whereas the comparative analysis provides further insight into the nature of cultural gaps between the source and target languages. The statistical analysis allows revealing the most common modes and principles of adapting audiovisual materials in translation. The research results serve to improve the process of audiovisual translation specifying new requirements for the translator's professional competences. It should be emphasized that the linguocultural peculiarities of audiovisual translation are not only one of the most complex translation aspects but also one of the most interesting and informative issues. The process of audiovisual translation requires a special linguocultural approach that can provide an adequate perception of the audiovisual content by the target audience.

It should be pointed out that in the film industry, the timeline and linguistic features have a significant effect on the translator's work. Taking into account this fact, the translator should not only possess standard translation skills but pay attention to the role of the film dialogue and the peculiar features of the main characters' colloquial speech. In this case, it will be possible to adapt the original audiovisual text to the target audience. The linguocultural aspect of audiovisual translation usually involves the following difficulties:

- the presence of audiovisual channels of perception interacting and complementing each other;
- the compliance of the translation to the image on the screen;
- the inability of the translator to interpret concepts unknown for the new target audience;
- the dominance of the principle of ensuring a pragmatic effect.

The "Game of Thrones" television series consisting of 8 seasons, 73 episodes served as the actual material for our study. Its official Russian translation is presented by the LostFilm project group. The series is an adaptation of the



novel “A Song of Ice and Fire” by George Martin. The choice of the “Game of Thrones” television series to be analyzed in our research is due to its widespread popularity all over the world. Since it has already been ended, it is possible to study this series as a full-fledged completed story.

“Game of Thrones” is a popular American fantasy television series that gives us the reference to hard times in the fictional Middle Ages, the world of the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros. In this world, there is no ordinary change of seasons; instead, there exists the summer that can last from one to ten years. Summer symbolizes peace, harmony, and a rich harvest. However, summer is replaced by winter, a period of terrible dark events and extreme cold. According to legend, mythical creatures known as white walkers (otherworldly beings that destroy everything in their path) are reborn in winter. The plot is based on the events that led to the tragic death of King Robert Baratheon and put an end to the state’s life of happiness and prosperity. Intrigues and conspiracies are woven in the palace; the late king’s advisers lust after power and money. One of the main characters, childhood friend and hand of the late king, Eddard Stark learns a terrible secret about the king’s successor, his eldest son Joffrey – the truth about his origin, which resulted in a fierce war for the Iron Throne between several representatives of noble families. All heroes and the entire state are war-torn. Each pretendent to the throne pursues his own goals, considering himself worthy of the throne and being sure that his rights are legal. During the hostilities, the fair perishes at the hands of traitors, the worthy are killed by the dishonest, while cunning and magic win over experience and military strategy. No one can imagine that this is just the beginning; the real war is yet to come. An army of the living dead is coming from the North, and it’s only the Wall that separates them from people.

Currently, it’s fair to say that “Game of Thrones” is one of the biggest cult series of the past decade released from 2011 to 2019. Throughout all nine years, the public interest in the series continued to grow rapidly. In spite of the fact that “Game of Thrones” is intended for a mass audience, the series has many episodes with unexpected deaths, cruelty, and a large

number of explicit bed scenes. This is something of a novelty to this genre because such projects are usually created very carefully, trying to win not only an adult audience but almost everyone’s favor. Despite the medieval era of narration, the television series reveals female characters in a completely different way. In this series, each character plays an important role. All the main female characters are strong-willed and wise, although each of them has a difficult fate. In fact, a woman’s place was not the easiest and most pleasant in the Middle Ages, but the creators of the “Game of Thrones” television series managed to turn the plot so that it was women who became at some point the head of the story.

It is impossible to deny that “Game of Thrones” has been one of the most culturally significant television series of the past decade. Moreover, it is really difficult to overestimate its impact on mass culture since the symbols of the series have got a reflection in the form of board games, figurines of the Iron Throne, costumes, mugs, etc. Once released to a wide audience, “Game of Thrones” inspired a lot of students to study the history of the Middle Ages at universities and even to organize together with the authors the Dothraki language courses at Berkeley College (“Game of Thrones” television series..., 2021a; 2021b; 2021c).

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Types of Realia and Strategies for Their Adaptation in the “Game of Thrones” Television Series

According to some researchers (Baker, 2011; Ritva, 2011; Tomakhin, 1988), the translation of realia and their classification are one of the most relevant issues in translation studies since there are still no clear criteria for determining the concept of realia. It means that none of the existing classifications claim to be absolutely complete and precise. Nowadays, there are a lot of typologies of realia proposed by various researchers. For example, Vinogradov (2001) gives a thematic classification of realia and subdivides them into the following categories:

- I. Realia of everyday life (names of food, clothes, banknotes, units of measurement, musical instruments, folklore, holidays, etc.);
- II. Ethnographic and mythological realia (names of ethnic and social groups and their

representatives, names of fairy-tale creatures, sacred and legendary places);

III. Realia of a natural world (names of animals, plants, and landscapes);

IV. Sociopolitical realia (names of administrative units, state institutions, public organizations, parties, industrial and agricultural enterprises, trading establishments, military and non-military professions, titles and ranks);

V. Onomastic realia (names of anthroponyms, toponyms, literary heroes, companies, museums, theaters, restaurants, shops, beaches, airports, etc.);

VI. Associative realia (names of vegetative and animalistic symbols, color symbols, historical, literary, and linguistic allusions).

This classification is considered quite complete, and its scope covers many spheres of life. However, we are unlikely to deal with the vocabulary that reflects associative realia in our research material because the series narration doesn't pay much attention to it. Bulgarian scholars Vlahov and Florin (2012) propose a different approach. They classify realia into the following groups:

#### I. Geographic realia:

1. Names of objects of physical geography, including meteorology;
2. Names of geographic objects related to human activity;
3. Names of endemic species (plants and animals existing in a specific region).

#### II. Ethnographic realia:

1. Names of everyday objects (food and drinks, furniture and dishes, clothes, transport, etc.);
2. Names related to labor (professions, positions, ranks, tools, labor organizations);
3. Names of elements of art and culture (styles of music and dance, musical instruments, folklore, customs and rituals, holidays and games, mythology, cults, calendars);
4. Names of ethnic objects (ethnonyms and nicknames);
5. Names of measuring and monetary units.

#### III. Sociopolitical realia:

1. Names of administrative and territorial structure (administrative and territorial units, locations);
2. Names of government agencies and authorities;

3. Names of social and political life structure (political activity and figures, patriotic and social movements; titles, degrees, appeals; educational and cultural institutions; estates and castes, estate signs and symbols);

4. Names related to the military sphere (weapons, uniforms, military units, and personnel).

Let us consider other classifications proposed by English scientists Newmark (1988) and Katan (2014). According to Newmark (1988), realia can be divided into the following categories:

1. Names related to the field of ecology (flora, fauna, climate, etc.);
2. Names of material culture (food, clothes, cities, transport);
3. Names of social culture (work and leisure);
4. Names of organizations, customs, procedures, policies (religious, political, and administrative). This category also includes names of heads of state, political authorities, international organizations, temples, cathedrals, etc.;
5. Description of gestures and habits (this refers to non-verbal communication and perception of the same gestures in different cultures).

In our opinion, this classification does not provide an appropriate basis for our research. Although the fifth category of realia is obviously presented in the “Game of Thrones” television series, it is given in the form of gestures that do not have a speech embodiment.

Katan (2014) classifies realia in accordance with the following logical levels:

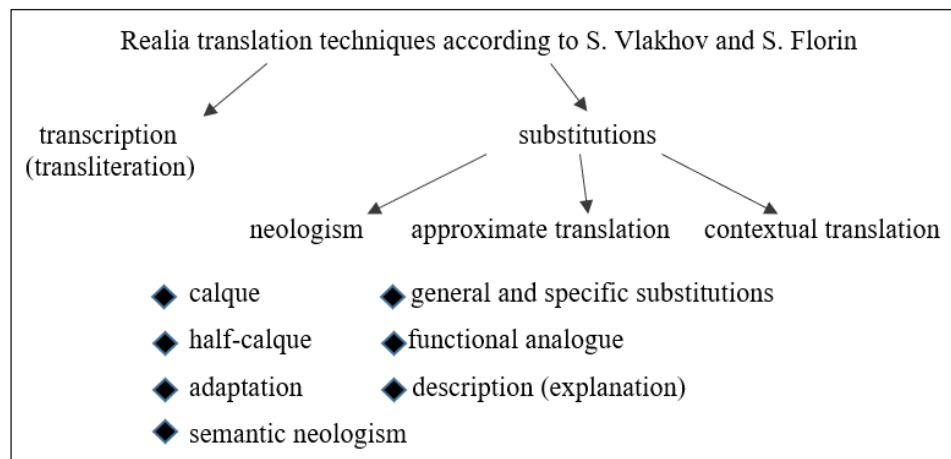
1. Names of environmental objects (climate, housing, food, etc.);
2. Description of behavior (actions and behavioral patterns in a particular culture, e.g., shaking hands or kissing on the cheek when meeting someone);
3. Capabilities, strategies, and skills used in verbal and non-verbal communication (e.g., it is typical to use the imperative mood when addressing a waiter in Spanish, while such an address is absolutely unacceptable in English);
4. Values of a society and its hierarchy (names of estates, castes, etc.);
5. Beliefs (names of religious holidays, patron saints, mythical creatures).

As for this classification, it is focused more on the description of behavior, gestures, and

habits, which correlates with the visual rather than the linguistic or speech component in the series. Therefore, the two above-mentioned classifications cannot be used in our study.

Taking into account the above facts, we believe that the realia typology offered by Vlahov and Florin (2012) can provide an appropriate basis for our study since it fully reflects the most relevant areas of human life. Furthermore, this

classification will allow us to give full consideration to different types of realia in the selected research material. It is also important to note that translation scholars propose different classifications of techniques for translating realia. Although these classifications have no crucial differences, we will consider them in two versions: 1) Vlahov and Florin (2012); 2) Guerra (2012). The first classification is schematically presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1**

*Scheme of Realia Translation Techniques according to Vlahov and Florin*

According to Figure 1, Vlahov and Florin (2012) give the following classification of realia translation techniques:

*1. Transcription – transliteration: phonemic or spelling imitation of the foreign word with the target language phonemes or letters.*

*2. Neologism: the creation of a new word preserving only the basic ideas of the original. There are four ways to create a neologism:*

- a) calque: direct transfer or imitation of a word or phrase adapted to the target language;
- b) half-calque: the partial imitation of a word or phrase using both source and target languages;
- c) adaptation: the creation of a foreign word preserving the form of a native word;
- d) semantic neologism: the invention of a new word conveying the semantic content and not etymologically associated with the original word.

*3. Approximate translation: the closest possible equivalent in the target language coinciding in some connotations and associations with the original word. This category comprises the following translation techniques:*

- a) general and specific substitutions (generalization and concretization): replacement of the original word with a general meaning by the target language word with a specific meaning or vice versa;
- b) functional analogue: choice of a word or phrase in the target language performing the same functions as the original word or phrase;
- c) description or explanation: substitution of the source language unit by the target language phrase defining or explicating its meaning.

*4. Contextual translation: transfer of context of the original word specifying its meaning.*

In the article “Translating culture: problems, strategies, and practical realities”, Guerra (2012) classifies realia translation methods into the following categories:

- 1) adaptation is creating a new situation in the target language that can be defined as the situational equivalence;
- 2) borrowing a term is adopting a word or phrase directly from the target language;
- 3) calque is a word-for-word translation of the target language word or phrase;

- 4) compensation is a technique aimed to balance the semantic losses in translation;
- 5) compression is the reduction or omission of the source language unit in the target text if it is considered unnecessary;
- 6) description is the replacement of the original word or expression by the target language unit describing its function.
- 7) exploitation/expansion is the expression of original implicit units in the target language by introducing additional information, translator’s notes, or explanatory paraphrasing;
- 8) the literal translation is a word-for-word translation involving minimal adjustments and preserving word order and functional words of the source text;
- 9) particularization is the replacement of the original word with an abstract meaning by the target language unit with a narrow meaning;
- 10) substitution (linguistic-paralinguistic) is the replacement of linguistic elements by paralinguistic elements (gestures, mimics, intonation, etc.) or vice versa.

It is useful to highlight in this regard that the development of different classifications and methods of transferring non-equivalent vocabulary has led to the formation of two main translation strategies: foreignization and domestication (Venuti, 2008; Yang, 2010).

Domestication is an approach that emphasizes the cultural and historical values of the target language so that the text can be easily perceived by the target recipient. Foreignization sets to preserve norms and values of the source culture, which may involve violation of the target language conventions. The choice of a translation strategy depends on many factors: the essence of the translation, its purposes, the individual characteristics of a translator, the linguistic environment. In the modern globalized world, foreignization has become a dominant translation strategy. However, this is not to say that the domestication strategy should be ignored; on the contrary, these strategies are intended to complement each other (Schleiermacher, 2012). It is necessary to remind that our study is based on the classification of realia proposed by Vlahov and Florin (2012). Thus, we have analyzed different types of realia, which are divided into three main categories: geographic, ethnographic, and sociopolitical.

Let us consider each of these groups of realia and the methods of their translation separately. We will first examine geographic realia found in the “Game of Thrones” television series and translated into Russian by the LostFilm project group (Table 1).

**Table 1**  
*Adaptation of Geographic Realia in the “Game of Thrones” Series Translation*

| Type of realia    | Original name | Definition  | Russian translation | Translation strategy/method       |
|-------------------|---------------|---|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Geographic realia | Blackwater    | one of the largest and deepest rivers in Westeros                           | Черноводная         | foreignization; calque            |
|                   | Lannisport    | a large city on the western coast of Westeros, famous for its goldsmiths    | Ланниспорт          | foreignization; transliteration   |
|                   | God’s Eye     | a large lake in the middle of Westeros known for its warm green water flows | Божье Око           | foreignization; calque            |
|                   | Manticore     | a poisonous scorpion-like insect  | Мантикора           | foreignization; transliteration   |
|                   | Summer Isles  | a large archipelago located south of Westeros                               | Летние острова      | foreignization; calque            |
|                   | Asshai        | a mysterious city in the far southeast of Westeros                          | Асшай               | foreignization; transcription     |
|                   | Fingers       | a group of peninsulas located in the Vale of Arryn                          | Персты              | domestication; semantic neologism |

The names of geographical objects are widely used in the “Game of Thrones” television series. In our research, we have determined that the dominant strategy for translating

geographic realia is foreignization which suggests that the translators try to preserve the national coloring of the original work and adapt it for the Russian audience. Besides, the most



common methods of translating geographic objects are the calquing technique and transliteration, while the least used ones are translation transcription and creation of a

semantic neologism. We will further analyze ethnographic realia used in the “Game of Thrones” television series and translated into Russian by LostFilm studio (Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Adaptation of Ethnographic Realia in the “Game of Thrones” Series Translation*

| Type of realia      | Original name          | Definition  | Russian translation | Translation strategy/method  |
|---------------------|------------------------|---|---------------------|--|
| Ethnographic realia | Eyrie                  | an ancient castle and seat of House Arryn                               | Орлиное гнездо      | domestication; semantic neologism                                      |
|                     | Casterly Rock          | a large castle and seat of House Lannister                              | Утес Кастерли       | foreignization; half-calque (calque + transliteration)                 |
|                     | First Keep             | an abandoned tower in Winterfell  | Первая твердыня     | foreignization+ domestication; half-calque (calque+semantic neologism) |
|                     | Children of the forest | a mysterious non-human race living in the depths of the forests         | дети леса           | foreignization; calque   |
|                     | Greenseers             | the wise men of the Children of the Forest who have supernatural powers | древовидцы          | domestication; semantic neologism                                      |
|                     | Dragon                 | a golden coin used in Westeros  | дракон              | foreignization; calque   |
|                     | Bowl of brown          | a cheap meager stew served for the poor in the slums of King’s Landing  | бурая жижа          | domestication; description   |

It has been revealed that another group of realia consists of names of food, residences of noble families, monetary units, and religious and mythological concepts. Ethnographic realia are widespread in the series. According to the analysis, the most frequent translation methods are calquing, creation of a half-calque, and semantic neologism. Transliteration and description are the least frequently used translation techniques. We have also

determined that both domestication and foreignization strategies are applied to translate ethnographic realia from English into Russian. The above-mentioned ways and strategies are aimed to provide the linguocultural adaption of the original work for the Russian audience. Finally, let us examine sociocultural realia of the “Game of Thrones” television series translated into Russian by the LostFilm project group (Table 3).

**Table 3**

*Adaptation of Sociopolitical Realia in the “Game of Thrones” Series Translation*

| Type of realia        | Original name        | Definition  | Russian translation | Translation strategy/method       |
|-----------------------|----------------------|---|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Sociopolitical realia | King-Beyond-the-Wall | a title given to a leader who has united several tribes of wildings | Король-за-Стеной    | foreignization; calque            |
|                       | Khal                 | a leader of the Dothraki tribe                                      | Кхал                | foreignization; transliteration   |
|                       | Stormlands           | a kingdom in the southeast of Westeros                              | Штормовые земли     | foreignization; calque            |
|                       | Reach                | a kingdom in the southwest of Westeros                              | Простор             | domestication; semantic neologism |
|                       | Seven Kingdoms       | a state in Westeros ruled by a king                                 | Семь Королевств     | foreignization; calque            |
|                       | Small Council        | a committee headed by a king  | Малый Совет         | foreignization; calque            |
|                       | Bannerman            | a vassal who owes military service to his lord                      | Знаменосец          | domestication; semantic neologism |

The last group of words belonging to sociopolitical realia is also commonly used in the “Game of Thrones” television series. This category includes names of administrative and territorial units, titles, ranks, political authorities, organizations, etc. In our study, we have revealed that the original sociocultural realia are translated by calquing technique since they have target language equivalents. Transliteration and the creation of a semantic neologism are rarely applied when conveying this category of realia. The dominant strategy for translating sociopolitical objects and concepts is foreignization. It should be pointed out that we have not revealed any realia describing the decoration of the house, clothes, dishes, etc. This is due to the fact that most of the elements of everyday life are shown on the screen, and they are mainly named in the books where the writer describes all household items in detail. In the “Game of Thrones” television series, the number of geographic, ethnographic, and sociopolitical realia is almost equal to each other.

We have determined that there is a number of techniques for translating realia. The choice of the appropriate method is determined by the following features:

- the nature of the text,
- the nature of the culture-specific unit, its place in the lexical systems of both the source and target languages,

- the literary and linguistic traditions as well as the target receptor,
- the significance of realia in the context of the target language.

According to Baker (2011), the translator should keep in his mind the following main criteria for conveying realia: firstly, it is necessary to take into account the context clarifying and revealing new lexical units unknown to the target audience. Secondly, when choosing between preserving or omitting the realia, the translator should be guided by its significance in the context. And, thirdly, it is a well-known fact that the original realia have no direct or exact equivalents in the target culture.

#### 4.2. Challenges in Audiovisual Translation

Having analyzed different types of realia and basic methods of their translation in the “Game of Thrones” television series, we will now continue reviewing realia-related issues and common challenges in audiovisual translation. Let us now review common ways of linguocultural adaptation of the original speech extracts of the “Game of Thrones” series in Russian translations made by LostFilm and Wolrone project groups. In the following example (Season 2, Episode 9: Blackwater), Stannis Baratheon’s army arrives at King’s Landing, and the epic battle for the city begins. A dialogue takes place between Matthos and Davos Seaworth talking about an upcoming battle (Table 4).

**Table 4**  
Linguocultural Adaptation of the “Game of Thrones” series in Russian Translations

| <b>Original speech fragment</b>   |  |
|---|--|
| Matthos: “You’re coming home”. Davos: “ <i>King’s Landing</i> hasn’t been home for 20 years”. |  |
| <b>Translation by LostFilm</b>  | <b>Translation by Wolrone</b>  |
| Маттос: “К родному дому”. Давос: “ <i>Королевская Гавань</i> мне не дом уже 20 лет”.          | Маттос: “Ты возвращаешься домой”. Давос: “ <i>Королевская гавань</i> не была мне домом уж лет двадцать”. |

First of all, it should be pointed out that ‘King’s Landing’ is the capital of the Seven Kingdoms, the largest city of Westeros, located on the eastern side of the Blackwater River. In the original, the name is closely related to history. Once, the first ruler of the state with his army and dragons landed there. In this example, the name of the geographical object ‘*King’s Landing*’ is rendered as ‘*Королевская гавань*’ by using a half-calque technique in both versions of translation. The first part of the

word is conveyed by calquing, while its second part is translated by a contextual equivalent since it is not just a landing place but a harbor near Blackwater Bay. The foreignization strategy is applied in both cases. However, it is obvious that the translation presented by the LostFilm project group is more concise than the one made by Wolrone studio. That’s why the translation by LostFilm makes the process of watching convenient for the Russian audience.

Let us examine another example from the “Game of Thrones” series and its Russian translations, which clearly illustrates that misinterpretation of cultural information results in an inadequate translation. In the following passage (Season 1, Episode 1: Winter is

coming), the Night’s Watch rangers meet supernatural creatures – the White Walker and the real dead. Will is one of the rangers who manage to escape and survive, but he is caught and then executed by Ned Stark for desertion (Table 5).

**Table 5**

*Linguocultural Adaptation of the “Game of Thrones” Series in Russian Translations*

| Original speech fragment  |  |
|---|--|
| Will: “I know I broke my oath. And I know I’m a deserter. I should have gone back to the <i>Wall</i> and warned them. But I saw what I saw. I saw the <i>White walkers</i> ”. |  |
| Translation by LostFilm   | Translation by Wolrone   |
| Уилл: “Я знаю, что нарушил клятву. И я дезертир. Нужно было вернуться на <i>Стену</i> и предупредить, но... Я уверен, что видел ... <i>Белых ходоков</i> ”.                   | Уилл: “Я знаю, что нарушил клятву. И я дезертир. Я должен был вернуться и предупредить, но я видел то, что видел... <i>Белых бродяг</i> ”. |

First and foremost, let us define the meaning of the sociopolitical realia used in the original: ‘Wall’ is a huge ice fortification designed to protect the Seven Kingdoms from the wildings who live beyond. It is reported to be 700 feet tall, stretching for 300 miles along the northern border of the Seven Kingdoms. LostFilm project group translates the word ‘Wall’ as ‘*Стена*’ using a calquing technique, while Wolrone studio omits this lexical unit in translation.

Another culture-specific word-combination ‘White Walkers’ used in Will’s speech before his execution, can be described as follows: The White walkers are mythical creatures that live beyond the Wall. Despite having an overall human appearance, they differ greatly from human beings. They have ice-white skin and bright blue eyes that glow in the dark. These fearsome creatures fight with a sword and ride their dead horses. Nothing is known about their real motives, but these creatures of the legend are believed to kill everyone in their path. In the first variant of translation, the English word-combination ‘*White Walkers*’ are transformed

into the Russian phrase ‘*Белые Ходоки*’. Translators create a half-calque combining two methods of translation: the semantic neologism ‘*Walkers*’ – ‘*Ходоки*’ and the calque ‘*White*’ – ‘*Белые*’. Here, LostFilm applies both domestication and foreignization strategies to preserve the specific coloring of the source and target cultures. In the second variant of translation, the name of a mythical creature ‘*White Walkers*’ is replaced with the Russian word-combination ‘*Белые бродяги*’, which is considered wrong. Wolrone studio provides inadequate translation since the Russian word ‘*бродяга*’ (Mueller, 2012) means the person who does not have his or her own home, wanders on the streets of a city (Summers et al., 2005).

If we analyze another passage from the “Game of Thrones” series (Season 1, Episode 9: Baelor), where Robb Stark and his army head the South to start a war against the Lannisters, we can observe that the usage of too long structures in the target language may cause the incompliance of actors’ speech to the video sequence on the screen (Table 6).

**Table 6**

*Linguocultural Adaptation of the “Game of Thrones” Series in Russian Translations*

| Original speech fragment   |   |
|--|---|
| Robb: “We need to cross the <i>Trident</i> and we need to do it now”. Theon: “You can take the <i>Twins</i> if you have to”. Umber: “Not in time. <i>Tywin Lannister</i> marches north as we speak”. |   |
| Translation by LostFilm  | Translation by Wolrone  |
| “Робб: “Нужно пересечь <i>Трезубец</i> немедленно”. Теон: “Мы захватим <i>Близнецы</i> , если нужно”. Амбер: “Не время. <i>Тайвин Ланнистер</i> движется на север”.                                  | Робб: “Мы должны пересечь <i>Трезубец</i> и сделать это немедленно”. Теон: “Если что, ты можешь взять <i>Близнецы</i> ”. Амбер: “На это нет времени. <i>Тайвин Ланнистер</i> движется на север, пока мы тут болтаем”. |

The Trident is one of the largest rivers in Westeros. It consists of three main tributaries. The Trident is known for its blue and green water flows covered with reed. The original name of the river ‘*Trident*’ is rendered in Russian by the noun ‘*Трезубец*’. In both cases, translators find an appropriate semantic equivalent to the original word. Domestication is the strategy chosen by both project groups. Another object related to the ethnographic realia is the word ‘*Twins*’. It is the ancestral castle of the Freys. In fact, it consists of two towers on the opposite banks of the river with a bridge between them. The Freys have made a fortune on the tolls from the bridge. Here, the English word ‘*Twins*’ is conveyed as the Russian word ‘*Близнецы*’ by calquing technique in both variants of translation.

Finally, the proper name ‘*Tywin Lannister*’, being one of the most powerful and rich lords

of the Seven Kingdoms, is translated into Russian as ‘*Тайвин Ланнистер*’ by transliteration. Translators of LostFilm and Wolrone project groups choose the same translation method. Consequently, the foreignization strategy is dominant in both Russian translations. Despite using similar techniques for rendering culture-specific words, it should be noted that the translation made by Wolrone” is considered too long, and therefore it does not follow the video sequence. The translation provided by “LostFilm” preserves the stylistic features of the television series, and it is not overloaded with many words. In the final passage from the series “Game of Thrones” (Season 2, Episode 7: A man without honor), during the War of the Five Kings, Robb Stark goes to the Westerlings’ castle to demand their surrender. Talisa goes with him to ask the castle’s maester for some medications she needs (Table 7).

**Table 7**

*Linguocultural Adaptation of the “Game of Thrones” Series in Russian Translations*

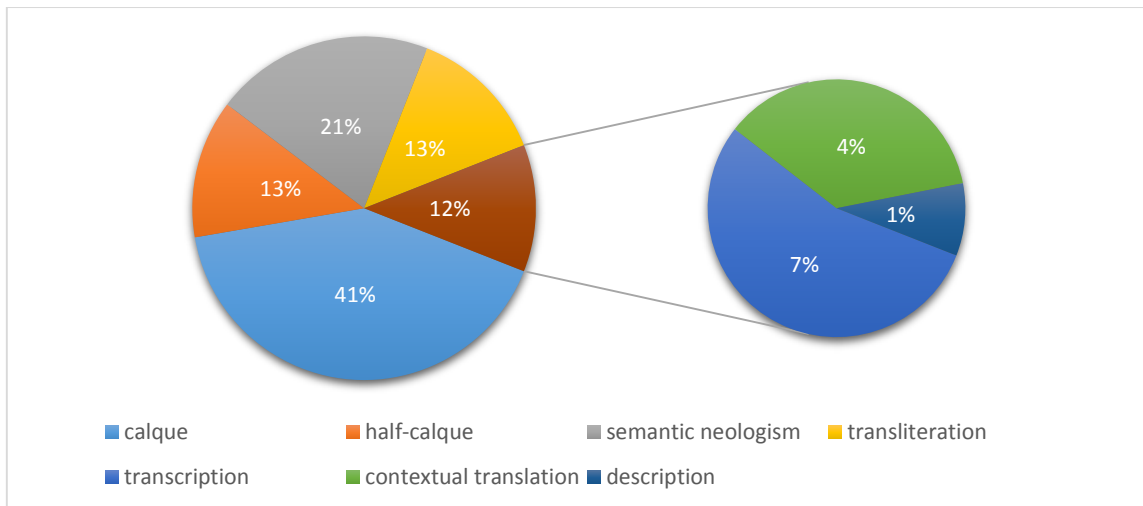
| Original speech fragment   |   |
|--|---|
| Talisa: “The <i>Crag</i> will have a <i>maester</i> and he will have what I need”. Robb: “I expect he will”. |   |
| Translation by LostFilm  | Translation by Wolrone  |
| Талиса: “В <i>Крэге</i> есть <i>мейстер</i> , и у него есть всё, что мне нужно”. Робб: “Надеюсь, что так”.   | Талиса: “В <i>замке</i> есть <i>мейстер</i> , у него найдётся всё, что мне нужно”. Робб: “Полагаю, да”. |

In this example, we reveal two words related to the group of ethnographic realia: ‘*Crag*’ and ‘*maester*’. The *Crag* is the ancestral castle of the Westerlings located on the western coast of Westeros. Maesters are healers and scholars who serve a noble house. If a lord does not have a master, he is seen as unpowerful. In the first variant of translation, we can observe that the English word ‘*Crag*’ is transformed into the Russian word ‘*Крэг*’. Translators apply translation transcription. As for the translation made by “ostFilm, they substitute the name of a castle ‘*Crag*’ with the object it denotes ‘*замок*’. This translation technique is known as generalization, which involves the replacement of the original word with a specific meaning by the target language word with a general meaning. Next, the original word ‘*maester*’ is rendered as ‘*мейстер*’ by transcription in both

Russian variants of translations. The dominant strategy is foreignization.

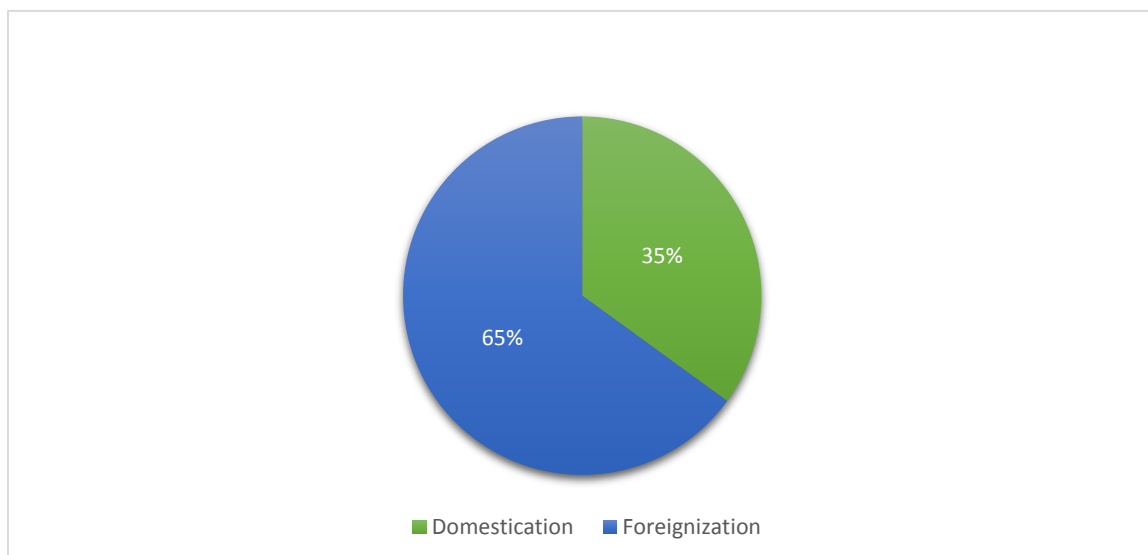
On balance, we can say that either LostFilm or Wolrone studios provide adequate translations which do not violate the norms of the source and target cultures. The domestication and foreignization translation strategies used by the two studios can also be considered appropriate since the pragmatic and semantic aspects have been preserved in most cases, which facilitates the perception of the text by the Russian audience. In our research, we have implemented a statistical analysis to reveal the most common and optimal modes of linguocultural adaptation while translating audiovisual materials from English into Russian (Figures 2 and 3).





**Figure 2**

*Correlation of Linguocultural Adaptation Methods in the "Game of Thrones" Series Translation*



**Figure 3**

*Application of Translation Strategies in the "Game of Thrones" Series Translation*

According to Figure 2, the calquing technique is the most common translation method, while descriptive translation is the least used mode in the Russian translation of the "Game of Thrones" television series. It implies that the linguocultural adaptation of the "Game of Thrones" series does not require the translator to create an entirely new context when adapting the cultural discrepancies between source and target language recipients. Apart from it, we have identified the most typical translation strategies applied in the Russian translation of the "Game of Thrones" series. According to Figure 3, foreignization is the dominant strategy in the Russian translation of the "Game

of Thrones" television series. It means that translators try to preserve the national features of the original work focusing on the source culture and mentality. It has also been determined that the linguocultural adaptation of audiovisual materials requires the choice of domestication strategy, which is rarely applied when conveying non-equivalent vocabulary of the "Game of Thrones" series from English into Russian. The strategy of domestication focuses on the linguoculture of the target language speakers and aims to make the cultural information convenient for the perception of the target audience.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

In our study, we have determined that the translator does not play a major role in audiovisual translation. The result of the translation will also depend on the work of editors and directors. Despite the fact that the translator has provided an adequate translation, after synchronizing the text with audio and video sequence, the degree of adequacy may decrease. Hence, we can conclude that when analyzing the translation of a script, the responsibility for its adequacy and equivalence rests not only with the translator. Besides, the main disadvantages of dubbing are poor-quality translation and misinterpretation of the content of the text. That's why the viewers who watch films in the original, often blame the translators for the deviations found in the target audiovisual text, being unaware of the fact that the translator takes little part in the process of synchronizing the text.

Summing up the main ideas of the article, we have compiled the following essential guidelines for overcoming linguocultural barriers in audiovisual translation:

1) depending on the genre, social, and age orientation of the audiovisual product, there is a tendency to use certain vocabulary which must be properly adapted for the target audience. The translator needs to possess a bicultural competence which implies a deep background knowledge in both source and target cultures;

2) unlike translation of a literary work, audiovisual translation requires the target text to be synchronized and consistent with the timeline and articulation of actors. Therefore, the translator has to shorten the original text so that it can follow the audio and video sequence on the screen;

3) first and foremost, a television series is a play of actors accompanied by a certain musical scale. In this regard, the translator's task is to convey all peculiarities of the original speeches without changing the series director's idea;

4) discrepancies between the source and target linguocultures based on a different system of values and concepts may cause inevitable losses in the perception of the text by the target receptor. That's why the translator usually

chooses between two basic strategies of foreignization and domestication. The first one is presumed to convey the national features of the source culture. The second one is expected to adapt the text so that it could be easily understood by the target audience;

5) the translator should bear in mind that the success of a film or television series depends on its spectacularity and visual appeal rather than on its equivalence to the original.

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