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## TITLES OF A. CHRISTIE'S DETECTIVES AS A TRANSLATION PROBLEM

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## НАЗВИ ДЕТЕКТИВІВ А. КРІСТІ ЯК ПЕРЕКЛАДАЦЬКА ПРОБЛЕМА

**Objective.** *The objective of this article is to consider the problem of translating the titles of A. Christie's novels.*

**Methods.** *The main scientific results are obtained using a complex of general scientific and special research methods, namely: analysis and synthesis of scientific literature on the problems of translation; theoretical generalization and concretization; comparative method and methods linguistic research (contrastive and structural).*

**Results.** *The most striking feature of A. Christie's novels is her repeated use of nursery rhymes in the titles of her literary texts. Indeed, the use of songs and rhymes in the text of the novel and in the title is considered to be the author's favourite technique, which has found a wide audience response. Translation of poems that include nursery rhyme requires a special skill of the translator, who has to find the optimal ratio between the poetic form as such and the content of the poem for his/her linguistic culture. At the same time, verbal accuracy can be detrimental to poetic translation, and in poetry for children, any translation of the original is basically impossible.*

*According to scholars, the title, being an integral component of artistic time itself, is based on the consistent step-by-step disclosure of positional connections with the text in its decoding.*

*The interlingual and intercultural transmission of titles thus poses significant difficulties due to several circumstances, which, based on the results of the analysis of the actual material, include: the high communicative significance of the name; the multifunctionality of the name; the plot-forming role determined by the genre specificity of the detective story; intertextual connection with the plot (without revealing the intrigue), determined by A. Christie's authorial idiom; intertextual connection with precedent texts of British linguistic culture.*

*Thus, on the example of the analysed fragments of the original texts and translations of the novels under consideration, which seem to us to be one of the most illustrative among many other such examples, we can conclude that one hundred per cent equivalence of translation is achievable in principle and in a number of cases, but to a large extent the translations have certain, smaller or larger deviations from absolute equivalence.*

*In our opinion, this can be explained, justified and justified by the main goal of translating a literary text to make the translated text understandable, enjoyable and fascinating for the reader, taking into account his or her linguistic culture and linguistic worldview.*

**Key words:** titles, nursery rhyme, A. Christie, equivalence of translation

### **Introduction**

Translating a title is a particular challenge, as the translator faces a serious task: to express the main idea of the work, its essence, the quintessence of its content, sometimes not even expressed explicitly in the text of the literary text itself, in a concise and preferably brief manner. The greatest difficulty faced by a translator begins with the translation of a literary text's title, and solving this issue requires a deep scientific philological understanding along with an intuitive approach. As recent studies have shown, a title is a bifunctional unit that is part of not only the surface but also the deep level of language, which a translator has no right to ignore, as otherwise the adequacy of the source and translated text is compromised. The title of a literary text of any genre (fiction, journalism, etc.) is a text within a text, the strongest position of the text that reflects the main content of the literary text.

The popularity of A. Christie's numerous works in the detective genre is largely due to the fact that the writer was not afraid to experiment and break some of the rules of building a detective story. An example of such an experiment was her repeated use of nursery rhymes in the titles of her literary texts. Indeed, the use of songs and rhymes in the text of the novel and in the title is considered to be the author's favourite technique, which has found a wide audience response [6].

However, A. Christie's success among fans of the detective genre played a cruel joke on her literary reputation: her work did not attract the attention of literary critics. In the rare cases when the writer's works became the subject of serious literary analysis, the intertext was declared to be a way to entertain readers. A similar opinion was also expressed by R. Barnard, who paid tribute to the successful use of this technique in *Ten Little Niggers*, but spoke sharply negatively about its appropriateness in later texts of *Hickory Dickory Dock* [7, p. 95].

An attempt at an in-depth study of the role of precedent texts in A. Christie's detective stories was made by scholars in a study conducted within the framework of the linguistic and cultural approach, where some of A. Christie's novels (in particular, *Ten Little Niggers* and *One, Two, Buckle My Shoe*) are analysed by the method of cognitive discourse analysis and it is concluded that songs, nursery rhymes and other rhymes in A. Christie's literary texts are precedent-setting phenomena that function as polypredicative units and are popular due to the combination of a humorous and non-serious form and a frightening outcome, which, in turn, contributes to the perception of the detective text as a game.

The issues of title translation and intertext functioning are insufficiently studied in Ukrainian translation studies. Some aspects of the research are studied in the works of by such translation scholars as Y. Begma, O. Herasymenko, V. Humenii, T. Zhuzhgina-Allahverdian, I. Korunets, V. Kukharenko, T. Nekriach, Y. Chala, S. Ostapenko, S. Revutska, C. Landers, M. Rose and others.

**The objective** of this article is to consider the problem of translating the titles of A. Christie's novels.

### **Methods**

The main scientific results are obtained using a complex of general scientific and special research methods, namely: analysis and synthesis of scientific literature on the problems of translation; theoretical generalization and concretization; comparative method and methods linguistic research (contrastive and structural).

### **Results and Discussions**

In 1939, the famous novel *Ten Little Niggers* was written, known to Ukrainian readers as *Ten Negroes*, but later the title was changed by the author herself (based on this novel, A. Christie wrote a play based on this novel with a different ending, which gave rise to further free handling of the title) [6].

It was followed by other novels in which the title was a fragment of a precedent text of British linguistic culture.

*One, Two, Buckle My Shoe* (1940) was published by Collins Crime Club. In the United States, a linguistic culture closely related to the original, the novel was published under the title *The Patriotic Murders* in 1941 and *An Overdose of Death* in 1953. In the related German linguistic culture, Germany, it was published under the title *Das Geheimnis der Schnallenschuhe* (*The Mystery of the Buckle Shoe*) in 1951. The Ukrainian translation attempts to preserve the intertext in the title of the novel, with a greater or lesser degree of success, *The Mystery of the Torn Buckle* (trans. by Andriy Zornytskyi, 2023).

The novel begins with a popular nursery rhyme, parts of which are repeated separately throughout the novel, marking the climax of the plot (see Table 1).

Table 1 – A nursery rhyme from A. Christie's novel ‘One, Two, Buckle My Shoe’

Original (in English)	Translation (in Ukrainian)
One, two, buckle my shoe, Three, four, shut the door, Five, six, picking up sticks, Seven, eight, lay them straight, Nine, ten, a good fat hen, Eleven, twelve, men must delve, Thirteen, fourteen, maids are courting, Fifteen, sixteen, maids in the kitchen, Seventeen, eighteen, maids in waiting, Nineteen, twenty, my plate's empty...[11, p. 1]	Один, два – пряжку застіба, Три, чотири – двері зачинили, П'ять, шість – збирають хмиз, Сім, вісім – принесли з лісу, Дев'ять, десять – курка несеться, Одинадцять, дванадцять – у городі копаються, Тринадцять, чотирнадцять – до дівчат залицяються, П'ятнадцять, шістнадцять – на кухні служниця, Сімнадцять, вісімнадцять – час розібратися, Дев'ятнадцять, двадцять – дійшли до кінця...[5]

The detective novel *Five Little Pigs* (1942), published by Dodd, Mead and Company under the title *Murder in Retrospect*, was only published by Collins Crime Club in 1943 under its original title. The novel was translated into German in 1957 under the title ‘*Das unvollendete Bildnis*’ (‘The Unfinished Portrait’), revealing a clear deviation from the title in the source language. The novel was translated into Ukrainian as *The Five Little Pigs* by Y. Lyshevets and M. Oliynyk, where the original title was retained [6].

The text of the novel uses a poem about five pigs, which is not integrated into the text as a whole, but fragmented (in separate stanzas and lines) throughout the work. The fourth line of the rhyme is the title of the ninth chapter, and the fifth and sixth lines are the titles of the tenth chapter. As a result, the poem acts as an architectonic tool that marks the integrity of the novel's text (see Table 2).

Table 2 – A rhyme from the novel by A. Christie's novel ‘Five little pigs’

Original (in English)	Translation (in Ukrainian)
This little pig went to market. This little pig stayed at home. [8, p.22] This little pig has roast beef. [8, p. 22] This little pig had none. [8, p. 130] This little pig cried – ‘Wee Wee Wee’ [9, p. 148]	Одне поросятко пішло на ринок [3, p. 8] Одне поросятко зосталося вдома [3, p. 10] Одному поросяткові дали печеню...[3, p. 15] Одне поросятко не одержало нічого...[3, p. 16] Одне поросятко плаче: хрю, хрю...[3, p. 18]

It should be noted that despite the linguistic and cultural barrier, the translation of the title meets the requirements of adequacy.

*Crooked House* (1949) was published by Dodd, Mead and Company. In Germany, the novel was published in 1951 under the title ‘*Das krumme Haus*’ (‘The Crooked House’) in full equivalence to the source language. In Ukraine, it was published under different titles: ‘*The Crooked House*’ (trans. Kateryna Pityk, Anatolii Pityk, Kharkiv: KSD, 2024), and its film adaptation was called “*The Bent House*”.

Table 3 – A rhyme from the novel by A. Christie's novel ‘*Crooked House*’

Original (in English)	Translation (in Ukrainian)	Translation (in Ukrainian)
And they all lived together in a little crooked house [8, p. 11].	І всі вони жили разом у маленькому кривому будиночку	Отак і жили вони всі потихеньку Пильнуючи спільно хатину кривеньку [2, p. 4].

It should be emphasised that different semantic shades (crooked - saggy) did not distort the pragmatism of the original, conveying the author's name adequately, albeit with some deviations from the strict equivalence that is quite achievable in this case.

The novel *A Pocket Full of Rye* (1953) was first published by the British publishing house ‘Collins Crime Club’. It should be emphasised here that the allusion to the poem in the title (which serves as an architectonic device in the source language) is a product of British linguistic culture, and therefore difficult for interlingual and intercultural translation. In Germany, the novel was first published in 1956 under the title ‘*Das Geheimnis der Goldmine*’ (‘The Secret of the Gold Mine’), which destroys the integrity of the intertext and storyline, and also points to one of the characters as a criminal, i.e. partially deprives the story of intrigue. This novel was published in Ukrainian as *A Pocket Full of Rye*, translated by Viktor Shovkun [6].

The novel *A Pocket Full of Rye* contains a poem about a pocket full of rye and blackbirds, recited by the main character Miss Marple, to Inspector Neal, with whom she had to communicate in the process of solving another crime which is the murder of a businessman in whose pocket grains of rye were found during the examination of the scene. At the same time, a series of murders takes place with hints of the images of the children's nursery rhyme ‘*Sing for Sixpence*’ (see Table 4).

Table 4 – A nursery rhyme from the novel by A. Christie's *A Pocket Full of Rye*.

Original (in English)	Translation (in Ukrainian)
Sing a song of sixpence, a pocket full of rye, Four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie. When the pie was opened the birds began to sing. Wasn't that a dainty dish to set before the king? The king was in his counting house, counting out his money, The queen was in the parlour eating bread and honey, The maid was in the garden hanging out the clothes, When there came a little dicky bird and nipped off her nose.” [12, p. 96 ].	Жито у кишені хто знайти хотів? У пиріг запечено двадцять п'ять дроздів. Це пиріг незвичний, я такий люблю, Й хочу таку страву дати королю. А король в конторі, він у себе гість, Королева ж у вітальні хліб із медом їсть. А служниця за палацом лахи вішає свої, Чорний дрізд з'явився й хап за ніс її. [1]

In Ukrainian linguistic culture, the rhyme used by A. Christie is not represented as a cultural phenomenon. Despite its transmission into Ukrainian, it remains an alien element, which is why the allusive nature of reminiscence cannot be preserved in translation. Adequacy cannot be achieved here, because the dialogue between the author and the reader is broken due to cultural dissonance, but the Ukrainian version of the title should be considered equivalent in lexical and semantic terms.

A. Christie's novel *The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side* (1962) was first published by Collins Crime Club. Its title is a direct quote from the poem 'The Lady of Shalott' by A. Tennyson. In the novel, the poem is not modified by the protagonists and is presented in its original form. The third and fourth lines of the quatrain are uttered four more times by the novel's characters in different situations; the winged phrase appears as a poetic (and emotional) echo embodied by architectonic repetition [6] (see Table 5).

Table 5 – A nursery rhyme from the novel by A. Christie's '*The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side*'

Original (in English)	Translation (in Ukrainian)
Out flew the web and floated wide; The mirror crack'd from side to side: "The curse is come upon me," cried The Lady of Shalott (Alfred Tennyson) [10, p. 2].	Вітер здмухнув павутину, Тріснуло дзеркало наполовину. «Мене проклято – я ж невинна!» – Зойкнула леді з Шейлота. <i>Альфред Теннісон</i> [4].

In the Ukrainian translation, the novel was published under the title '*The Cracked Mirror*'. This version of the title does not contain a quote, but only conveys a semantic idea (refusing to convey a pragmatic task).

### Conclusions

We share the opinion of scholars that it is the genre feature of the nursery rhyme, which consists in the rhythm of the verse, a clearly limited number of participants in the action and a predetermined outcome, that influenced A. Christie to use certain parallels between the formulaic form of the nursery rhyme and the formulaic form of the detective story.

Translation of poems that include nursery rhyme requires a special skill of the translator, who has to find the optimal ratio between the poetic form as such and the content of the poem for his/her linguistic culture. At the same time, verbal accuracy can be detrimental to poetic translation, and in poetry for children, any translation of the original is basically impossible [6].

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Thus, on the example of the analysed fragments of the original texts and translations of the novels under consideration, which seem to us to be one of the most illustrative among many other such examples, we can conclude that one hundred per cent equivalence of translation is achievable in principle and in a number of cases, but to a large extent the translations have certain, smaller or larger deviations from absolute equivalence.

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**Мета.** Метою статті є розгляд проблеми перекладу назв романів А. Крісті.

**Методи дослідження.** Основні наукові результати отримано за допомогою комплексу загальнонаукових і спеціальних методів дослідження, а саме: аналізу та синтезу наукової літератури з проблем перекладу; теоретичного узагальнення та конкретизації; зіставного методу та методів лінгвістичних досліджень (контрастивного та структурного).

**Результати.** Найяскравішою особливістю романів А. Крісті є неодноразове використання дитячих віршиків у назвах своїх художніх текстів. Дійсно, використання пісеньок та віршів у тексті роману та у назві вважається улюбленим прийомом авторки, який знайшов широкий відгук у читацької аудиторії. Переклад віршів, до яких належать лічилки, потребує особливої майстерності перекладача, який має знайти оптимальне для своєї лінгвокультури співвідношення між віршованою формою як такою та змістом вірша. При цьому, вербальна точність може бути згубною для поетичного перекладу, і в поезії для дітей будь-який переказ оригіналу в принципі неможливий.

Як зазначають вчені, назва, сама по собі будучи складовим компонентом художнього часу, у своєму декодуванні будується на послідовно покроковому розкритті позиційних зв'язків із текстом.

Міжмовна та міжкультурна передача назв становить таким чином значні труднощі у зв'язку з кількома обставинами, до числа яких за результатами аналізу фактичного матеріалу ми відносимо: високу комунікативну значущість назви; поліфункціональність назви; сюжетоутворювальну роль, визначену жанровою специфікою детектива; інтертекстуальний зв'язок із сюжетом (без розкриття інтриги), визначений авторською ідіостилістикою А. Крісті; інтертекстуальний зв'язок із прецедентними текстами британської лінгвокультури.

Таким чином, на прикладі проаналізованих фрагментів текстів оригіналів і перекладів романів, що розглядаються, які видаються нам одними з найпоказовіших серед безлічі інших таких прикладів, можна дійти висновку, що стовідсоткова еквівалентність перекладу в принципі та в низці випадків досяжна, але значною мірою переклади мають ті або інші, менші або більші відхилення від абсолютної еквівалентності.

На наш погляд, це можна пояснити, обґрунтувати і виправдати головною метою перекладу художнього тексту – зробити перекладений текст зрозумілим, приємним і захопливим для читача, зважаючи на його лінгвокультуру та мовну картину світу.

**Ключові слова:** назви, лічилки, А. Крісті, еквівалентність перекладу