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### FOCUSING ON THE PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF SYNONYMY IN ENGLISH- UKRAINIAN TRANSLATION

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*The article delves into the intricate relationship between contextual and lexical synonymy, exploring their theoretical underpinnings and practical applications in English-Ukrainian translation. The research aims to identify the nuances and challenges of translating synonymous expressions across these two languages. A robust theoretical framework was established to provide a solid foundation for understanding contextual and lexical synonymy. This framework draws upon relevant linguistic theories and methodologies, including the study of the meaning of words and expressions as well as the study of the vocabulary of a language and contrastive linguistics, meaning the comparative study of two languages. A comparative analysis of contextual and lexical synonymy in English and Ukrainian was conducted to highlight both similarities and differences. This analysis revealed that while both languages exhibit a wide variety of synonymous expressions, there are significant cultural and linguistic differences that can impact translation. To explore the practical challenges and strategies involved in translating synonymous expressions, John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* was selected as a case study. This novel provides a rich source of examples of synonymous expressions that can be analysed in detail. The translation approach involved identifying instances of synonymy in the source text, analysing the contextual nuances of each synonymous expression, selecting appropriate target language equivalents that convey the intended meaning and stylistic nuances and considering cultural and linguistic factors that may influence the translation choices. Thus, the research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining theoretical analysis with practical application. The theoretical framework is grounded in relevant linguistic theories, while the practical analysis is based on a detailed examination of the target text and its translation. This study is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex nature of synonymy and its impact on translation quality by identifying the key factors influencing the translation of synonymous expressions.*

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**Keywords:** contextual synonymy, lexical synonymy, comparative analysis, translation studies, the English language, the Ukrainian language.

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## **ПРАКТИЧНЕ ЗАСТОСУВАННЯ СИНОНІМІЇ В АНГЛО-УКРАЇНСЬКОМУ ПЕРЕКЛАДІ**

**Дячук Н. В.**

*У статті досліджено взаємозв'язок між контекстуальною та лексичною синонімією, вивчено їхні теоретичні засади та практичне застосування в англо-українському перекладі. Дослідження має на меті виявити нюанси та труднощі перекладу синонімічних висловів. Опрацьовано теоретичну базу для розуміння контекстуальної та лексичної синонімії, що базується на відповідних лінгвістичних теоріях та методологіях, зокрема семасіології, лексикології та контрастивній лінгвістиці. Здійснено порівняльний аналіз контекстуальної та лексичної синонімії в англійській та українській мовах, щоб виділити як подібності, так і відмінності, який виявив, що, хоча обидві мови мають широке розмаїття синонімічних висловів, існують значні культурні та лінгвістичні відмінності, які можуть вплинути на переклад. Для дослідження практичних труднощів та стратегій, пов'язаних із перекладом синонімічних висловів обрано роман Джона Бойна "Хлопчик у смугастій піжамі". Роман містить багато прикладів синонімічних висловів, які варто було детально проаналізувати. Підхід до перекладу вміщував ідентифікацію випадків синонімії в оригінальному тексті, аналіз контекстуальних нюансів кожного синонімічного вислову, вибір відповідних еквівалентів у мові перекладу, що передають передбачуване значення та стилістичні нюанси, а також урахування культурних та лінгвістичних факторів, які можуть вплинути на вибір перекладу. Дослідження поєднує теоретичний аналіз із практичним застосуванням: теоретичний фундамент базується на відповідних лінгвістичних теоріях, а практичний аналіз ґрунтується на детальному вивченні перекладеного тексту та його оригіналу. Очікуємо, що це дослідження сприятиме глибшому розумінню складної природи синонімії та її впливу на якість перекладу й дасть змогу ідентифікувати ключові фактори, що впливають на переклад синонімічних висловів.*

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**Ключові слова:** контекстуальна синонімія, лексична синонімія, порівняльний аналіз, перекладознавство, англійська мова, українська мова.

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**Introduction.** Translation constitutes one of the most highly complex and intricate human activities. Despite the centuries of its existence and the continuous exploration of its various facets, many problems remain unresolved and without definitive solutions. Literary translation stands apart from other types of translation due to its inherent multiplicity. This means that the same literary work can be translated by various translators, yielding different original interpretations. These differences are attributed to the fact that, for a particular work being translated into a specific language by a native speaker, the sole variable is the translator's individual perspective. Thus, literary translation is a specialised cognitive process and a unique intellectual endeavour involving the establishment of informational correspondence between linguistic units of the source and target languages. This results in a foreign language counterpart of the original literary text. This

secondary sign system meets the literary-communicative needs and linguistic habits of a specific society at a given historical moment [1: 3].

The notion of a translator's creative individuality represents one of the most intriguing, complex, yet understudied facets of translation studies. This concept remains largely unexplored within linguistic and textual theories of translation, as scholars in these fields often seek to develop universal models applicable to all forms of translation, thereby neglecting the subjective and creative dimensions inherent in literary translation. While theorists may strive for objective and systematic approaches, literary translators have consistently challenged this perspective. Every translator, regardless of specialisation, possesses a unique set of stylistic preferences and translation techniques [11: 13]. Contemporary research methodologies enable the identification of these individual tendencies, often unconscious, which manifest in the

translator's choice of lexical items, syntactic structures, and terminology. Such analysis can provide valuable insights into the quality of a translator's work but is unlikely to yield universally applicable principles. After all, a single thought can be expressed in countless ways across different languages, and in technical translation, the primary concern is the accurate conveyance of information rather than stylistic nuance.

In contrast, the success of a literary translator hinges not only on the fidelity of their translation to the source text but also on the aesthetic appeal and semantic richness of the target text. The translator's style plays a crucial role in shaping the reader's experience and in determining the overall impact of the translated work [3: 6]. Consequently, the study of translatorial individuality is indispensable for a comprehensive understanding of the literary translation process.

Words evoke not merely cognitive concepts but also affective responses and evaluative judgments. The emotional connotations associated with a word can be both positive and negative, and it is crucial to understand that semantic equivalence does not necessarily imply affective equivalence. While the denotative meaning of a word may be shared across languages, the connotative or emotional meaning can vary significantly. The challenges of translating emotional nuances are compounded by the cultural and historical factors that shape the meanings of words [4; 8]. What may be considered a positive attribute in one culture may be viewed negatively in another. Additionally, the emotional impact of a word can change over time, reflecting shifts in cultural values and attitudes.

Synonymy creates a semantic field anchored by a dominant term – the most frequently used, neutral, and syntactically flexible word. While lexical synonymy refers to the interchangeable use of words across various contexts, contextual synonymy is more nuanced, as words may be synonymous only

within specific contexts. In literary discourse, contextual synonyms are crucial in crafting vivid imagery, conveying the author's unique perspective, and enriching the reader's experience [3: 8].

Cultural factors profoundly influence the nature and use of synonyms across languages. Each language possesses its unique linguistic system, shaping its inventory of synonyms and their contextual nuances. Consequently, the translation of synonyms necessitates a deep understanding of both the source and target languages and the cultural contexts in which they are used [9].

Literary discourse, characterised by its emphasis on imagery, metaphor, and figurative language, presents unique challenges for translators. The preservation of the author's style and the conveyance of the full range of meanings and associations embedded in the original text is paramount. Literary translation often falls short of capturing the nuances of literary language and may result in a loss of the author's style [1: 3].

Thus, synonymy is not simply a matter of finding equivalent words; it involves understanding the semantic relationships between words within a broader conceptual field. Synonyms can vary in their stylistic register, from formal to informal and from neutral to emotionally charged. The meaning and usage of synonyms can vary significantly depending on the context. Furthermore, synonyms may differ in their connotative meanings, evoking different associations and emotions. Cultural differences can influence the use of synonyms and the connotations associated with them. The translation of literary texts, therefore, requires a delicate balance between accuracy and expressiveness. Literal translation can often lead to a loss of the original text's stylistic and aesthetic qualities. Admittedly, translators may employ various strategies to handle synonymy, such as paraphrasing, modulation, or compensation.

**Analysis of previous research.** Various aspects and specifics of

contextual and lexical synonymy in translation have been the subject of research by numerous domestic and foreign scholars, including V. Vasylenko, N. Holikova, H. Hrymashevych, T. Hulenکو, O. Stepanova, A. Yarova, and others. Nevertheless, their research has overlooked the problems of translating synonymy in literary discourse, necessitating the present study. When translating fiction, it is essential not only to convey the content but also to preserve the author's style and mood, which are shaped by stylistic elements such as synonyms.

**This study aims** to investigate the principles of functioning of contextual and lexical synonymy and explore the practical aspects of applying these principles in the translation of John Boyne's novel, "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas".

Following this goal, the following research **objectives** have been formulated: to describe the features of literary discourse and the specifics of its translation; to characterise the features of using synonyms in English prose and the peculiarities of their translation; to investigate the use of translation transformations in the process of translating synonyms; to analyse the problems associated with the translation of contextual and lexical synonymy.

**The object** of the study is contextual and lexical synonymy in the translation of English prose. **The subject** of the study is the principles governing the functioning of contextual and lexical synonymy, as well as the practical applications of these principles in the translation of John Boyne's novel, "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas," from English.

**Research Methods.** A variety of methods were used to ensure a comprehensive analysis was performed. The analytical method involved breaking down the text into its constituent parts to study them in detail. The descriptive method provided a detailed account of the data and findings. Several specific techniques, such as observation, sampling, and various types of analysis,

were carried out to delve deeper into the data. The functional analysis was used to understand how language functions within the broader context of the novel and its translation. The method of systematisation made it possible to organise and present the findings clearly and concisely. Thus, various tools and techniques were used to study how synonyms function in a novel and how they are translated. These tools included close reading, statistical analysis, and a deep understanding of language and culture. The goal was to understand the role of synonyms in the original text and how these were handled in the translation.

**Results.** As demonstrated in the preceding analysis, synonymy plays a pivotal role in constructing the stylistic nuances of a literary work. While the language of the novel ("The Boy in the Striped Pajamas") is characterized by its simplicity and lack of ornate language, this stylistic choice is deliberate. The author effectively captures the perspective of a young child, mirroring the simplicity and naivety of a child's worldview. Despite this apparent simplicity, the narrative remains emotionally resonant and thematically profound.

A notable linguistic feature of the novel is the author's strategic use of epithets, often employed in pairs. This stylistic device not only contributes to the novel's chronotype but also serves several literary functions. By providing multiple descriptors for the same entity, the author enhances the reader's understanding and interpretation of the narrative, creating a more immersive reading experience and reinforcing the underlying themes and motifs of the text.

One illustrative example is the author's varied references to the protagonist's father, a Nazi officer. The initial introduction as "*Father*" gradually evolves to include epithets such as "*the Commandant*" and "*the man in the uniform*". This shift in nomenclature serves to underscore the character's authoritative role and the dynamics of power within the narrative.

In some cases, these lexical items are combined to create a semantic field, as illustrated in the following passage: *A week or so before, there had been great excitement in the house and it had something to do with the fact that **Father** was now to be addressed as 'Commandant' by Maria, Cook and Lars the butler, as well as by all the soldiers who came in and out of there and used the place – as far as Bruno could see – as if it were their own and not his* [2: 123] – *За тиждень до свята весь будинок охопило надзвичайне збудження. Воно було якось пов'язане з тим, що відтепер Марія, кухарка, дворецький Ларс, а також військові, що приходили до них як додому, мали звертатися до тата "пан комендант"* [7: 94].

As evident, the author deliberately highlights the character's evolution by contrasting the terms "Father" and "Commandant". Such contextual synonyms are frequently employed to underscore character development: *'My mother knew your **father** when he was just a **boy** of your age,' said Maria after a few moments. 'She worked for your grandmother.* [2: 114] – *Моя мати знала твого **батька** ще **хлоп'ям**, – неквапливо продовжувала Марія. – Вона працювала у твоєї бабусі* [7: 86].

In this passage, a reversal of nomination occurs: "father" is replaced by "boy" as Mary recounts a time when the protagonist's father was himself a boy. This type of synonymy can be categorised as ideographic, as it differentiates the lexical meaning of the nominatum, revealing different facets of the same concept. Literary language distinguishes between ideographic synonymy, which involves differentiation of lexical meaning, and stylistic synonymy, which refers to words that are identical or nearly identical in meaning (or share a common semantic basis) but differ in stylistic connotations. A significant portion of stylistic synonyms lack a direct, independent nominative meaning. Such synonyms convey their primary meaning not directly but through a semantically basic or pivotal word that serves as the

foundation of the corresponding synonymous series and whose nominative meaning is directed towards reality [5: 9].

Another example of the use of contextual synonyms in the novel is the author's various references to the concentration camp where the protagonist's friend Shmuel is imprisoned. While the camp is initially referred to as "Out-With," the author later employs other descriptions such as "the other side," deliberately avoiding the actual name of the concentration camp, "Auschwitz," or "Oświęcim," as it is more commonly known in the post-Soviet region: *'It is called **Out-With**,' he protested. 'It's not,' she insisted, pronouncing the name of the **camp** correctly* [2: 169] – *Але я ї говорю правильно, "Геть- Звідси", – заперечив Бруно. – Ні. – Сестра вимовила назву **табору** як належить, спробувавши навчити брата* [7: 127].

The use of such synonyms underscores the horrors of the camp and the inhumane conditions endured by its prisoners. A similar role is played by synonyms in the following example, although stylistic synonymy is employed here: *'Of course,' said Bruno. 'It would be a **great** adventure. Our **final** adventure. I could do some exploring at last'* [2: 197] – *Звичайно. Це стане нашою **останньою** пригодою. **Великою** пригодою. Нарешті мені буде що досліджувати* [7: 143].

In this case, the words "great" and "final" are employed as synonyms to denote the magnitude and temporal boundaries of the adventure planned by the friends. They are interchangeable, intensifying the expression and heightening its emotional impact. Both words underscore the significance and uniqueness of the planned adventure. Nevertheless, while contextual synonyms, realised through ideographic and stylistic variations, constitute a fairly common group [10: 12], they represent a minority in the work under analysis. Lexical synonyms are used much more frequently.

Indeed, in the novel "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas," one of the central concepts and most frequently used words is "boy". However, the author also employs synonyms such as "little man," "youth," "youngster," and "child". For instance, *He was carrying a box in his hands and walking towards the staircase, but he stopped for a moment when he saw Bruno standing there watching him. He looked the **boy** up and down as if he had never seen a **child** before and wasn't quite sure what he was supposed to do with one: eat it, ignore it or kick it down the stairs.* [2: 31] – У руках він ніс коробку і прямував до сходів, але, помітивши Бруно, що спостерігав за ним, на секунду зупинився і оглянув **хлопчика** з ніг до голови з таким виразом обличчя, ніби вперше в житті бачив **дитину** і не зовсім розумів, що з нею робити. з'їсти або байдуже пройти повз, а може, спустити тусаном зі сходів. [7: 27].

Using the synonyms "boy" and "child" allows the author to increase the diversity of terms describing the protagonist and endow him with a broader range of emotions and characteristics. At the same time, in this particular case, they also highlight the officer's lack of communication skills with children, e.g. *On the rare occasions when he spoke to **Bruno**, he addressed him as '**little man**', which was just plain nasty because, as Mother pointed out, he just hadn't had his growth spurt yet.* [2: 169] – У тих рідкісних випадках, коли він розмовляв з **Бруно**, він звертався до нього "**малюк**", що було просто образливо, тому що, як пояснила мати, ще не настав його час **нідростати** [7: 121].

Here, yet another synonym, "little man," is employed, revealing a child's typical desire to grow up quickly and emphasising the protagonist's negative attitude towards Lieutenant Kotler. The majority of synonyms in the work are semantic-stylistic synonyms with emotional connotations. For instance: *In fact everywhere he looked, all he could see was two different types of people: either **happy, laughing shouting***

*soldiers in their uniforms or unhappy, crying people in their striped pyjamas, most of whom seemed to be staring into space as if they were actually asleep* [2: 232]. – Виходило, що жителі табору ділилися на дві категорії: на **веселих** солдатів в гарній формі, що **сміються** та голосно **кричать**, та людей в піжамах, що **нещасні** та **плачуть**, більшість з яких дивилися в простір бездумним поглядом. [7: 169].

In this passage, the words "happy," "laughing," and "shouting" indicate that the soldiers are in a joyful mood, perhaps celebrating successful military operations or simply reveling in their power over the prisoners. Conversely, the words "unhappy," "crying," and "staring into space" convey feelings of heaviness, sorrow, and hopelessness among the prisoners. These synonyms are crucial for conveying the emotional atmosphere of the scene and communicating the characters' moods. They help the reader better understand the thoughts and feelings of the characters and immerse themselves in the world of the work. A similar example from the work could be: *'**Marches!**' said Bruno, appalled. 'I can't go on a march. I have to be home in time for dinner. It's roast beef tonight.'* [2: 235] – **Маршувати?** – здивувався Бруно. – Я не можу, я не маю часу. Мені треба встигнути додому **на вечерю**. **Сьогодні** у нас смажена яловичина [7: 171].

As we can see, two different groups of synonyms are used here: "Marches – go on a march" and "in time for dinner – tonight". The first example belongs to stylistic synonymy, as it involves the use of two or more words with the same or similar meaning but with different stylistic connotations. In this case, "to march" and "to go on a march" have a similar meaning, but the first word is more concise and formal, while the second has a more informal and military connotation. Such usage allows the author to convey the specific features of the character's language and personality, which is an important stylistic element of the text. The second group of synonyms in the passage belongs to ideographic

synonymy, as it reveals different shades of meaning of the same concept of "evening time".

The following example also belongs to the category of stylistic synonyms: *He had very **large eyes** and they were the colour of caramel sweets; the whites were very white, and when the boy looked at him all Bruno could see was an **enormous** pair of sad **eyes** staring back.* [2: 136] – **Великі очі** хлопчика відливали карамеллю, а білки були дуже білими, і, коли хлопчик подивився на Бруно, то здалося, що на обличчі

незнайомця нічого більше і немає, крім **величезних сумних очей**. [7: 91].

The words "large" and "enormous" both indicate the large size of the eyes, however, the word "enormous" is more intense and expressive, thereby reinforcing the impression of the boy's enormous eyes, which had such a profound impact on the main character. In total, 97 instances of lexical and contextual synonymy of the following types have been identified in the novel (Fig. 1).

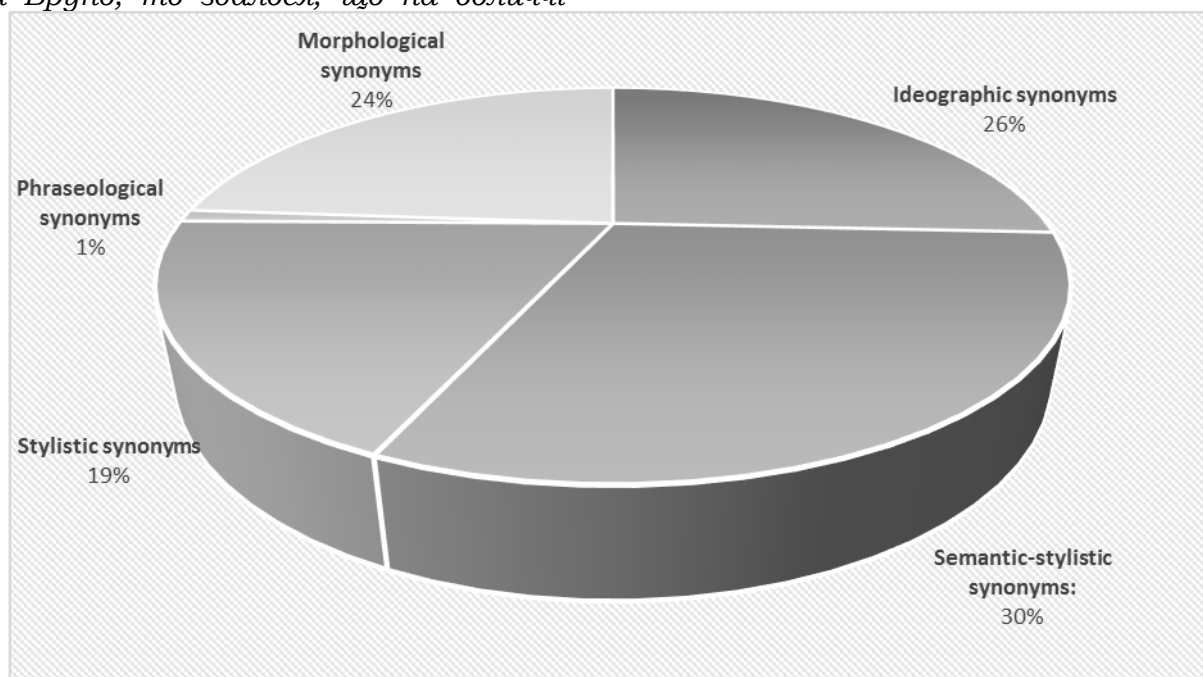


Figure 1 – Frequency of Synonym Usage by the Author

When discussing synonymy within the context of this research, specifically differentiating between contextual and lexical synonyms, it becomes evident that lexical synonyms are used significantly more frequently – in 64.9% of cases (63 lexical synonyms), while contextual synonyms account for 35.05% (34 contextual synonyms).

Unlike typical works of fiction that abound in literary devices, synonyms in the novel "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas" can be characterized as a lexical strategy employed by the author to enhance the expressiveness and depth of specific moments. The author minimizes the use of literary devices, as

the narrative is presented from a child's perspective. Therefore, the use of synonyms in "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas" serves as a powerful tool for conveying the significance of particular details that the author wishes to highlight for the reader.

**Conclusions.** For the study of synonymy in English prose and the specifics of its translation, John Boyne's novel "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas" and its Ukrainian translation by Viktor Shovkun were chosen. The author portrays the world through the eyes of a young boy, effectively reproducing his inner experiences, thoughts, and the simplicity of his perspective.

Consequently, the language used to describe these experiences is also simple and, to some extent, naive. Accordingly, the use of synonyms in the novel is quite infrequent. In total, 97 cases of lexical and contextual synonymy were identified. The most common are ideographic, semantic-stylistic, stylistic, phraseological, and morphological synonyms. When discussing synonymy in the context of this study, i.e., dividing it into contextual and lexical, it becomes evident that lexical synonyms are used significantly more frequently – in 64.9% of cases (63 lexical synonyms), while contextual synonyms account for 35.05% (34 contextual synonyms). When translating works of fiction from one language to another, the translator's task is not merely to convert words and phrases from one language to another, but also to deeply understand the source text and to be able to capture its essence in the target language. In the novel "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas," various transformations are used to translate

contextual and lexical synonyms. Lexical transformations are represented only by transcription, omission, generalisation, concretisation, and addition. At the same time, no grammatical transformations were found during the study of synonym translation. Although some transformations may lead to a loss of meaning, the overall quality of the translation is high and reflects the essence of the original text. In cases where the translator attempts to reconcile the artistic style with the content of contextual synonyms, problems sometimes arise, especially if the synonyms are rendered not by a single word but by a syntactic construction. Conversely, when translating lexical synonymy, the translation feels natural. In summary, the translator did not face any serious problems, and most contextual and lexical synonyms were rendered qualitatively, and the translation can be considered adequate.

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