

LEXICAL AND STYLISTIC CHALLENGES IN TRANSLATING POPULAR SCIENCE PSYCHOLOGICAL DISCOURSE (BASED ON E. BERN'S MONOGRAPH "GAMES PEOPLE PLAY")

NATALIIA ROMANENKO*

*Corresponding author: nataliia.romanenko@nung.edu.ua

Abstract. The paper offers a comprehensive linguistic and translation analysis of the lexical and stylistic challenges encountered during the rendering of English popular science psychological discourse into Ukrainian. The research is based on Eric Berne's seminal monograph "Games People Play" and its official Ukrainian translation.

The relevance of the study is driven by the growing demand in Ukrainian society for high-quality popular science literature in social psychology, alongside the necessity to theoretically conceptualise the cross-linguistic recoding of texts that merge academic and colloquial styles. Popular science psychological discourse is treated as a complex inter-stylistic phenomenon where the translator's primary task is to maintain the source text's communicative and pragmatic function – ensuring that scientific frameworks remain highly accessible to a general audience while sustaining reader engagement.

The structural matrix of E. Berne's monograph dictates a clear differentiation of translation approaches. The theoretical framework, written in an academic yet simplified style to achieve immediate pragmatic impact, heavily relies on mono- and bi-component terms. The study indicates that simple terms are most effectively rendered via equivalent translation and transliteration, whereas complex terms and compound concepts (such as *Ego-State*) are reproduced through calquing, transliteration, or a combination of both techniques.

In the practical section of the monograph, which focuses on the typology of social games, the discourse shifts towards a colloquial register. This section features emotionally expressive vocabulary, stylistic tropes (epithets, metaphors, metonymies, personifications), slang, and unique onomastic units. While calquing remains the predominant method for translating both conventional and authorial epithets or metaphors, contextual substitution and connotative variation are selectively deployed to improve readability. Metonymic game titles are mostly transferred using direct lexical equivalents.

Special emphasis is placed on the translation of onomastics – the proper names of psychological behavioural scripts («games»), structural roles, and interaction patterns. The analysis demonstrates that accurate pragmatic recoding of these creative capitalised terms requires a flexible application of diverse translation transformations: lexical transformations (concretisation, generalisation, contextual substitution, and descriptive (explicative) translation for non-equivalent culture-bound items); grammatical transformations (reordering to align word sequences with Ukrainian syntactic norms, grammatical tense shifts, and nominalisation (replacing English participles with Ukrainian nouns)); stylistic transformations (attenuating vulgar/slang terms to neutral equivalents, or conversely, intentionally downgrading neutral elements into colloquialisms to replicate the source text's signature humor, sarcasm, or irony).

The study concludes that a successful reception of popular science psychological texts within the Ukrainian linguaculture depends heavily on the harmonious balance between strict semantic equivalence and pragmatic adaptation. This approach preserves the implicit psychological connotations of the source text while adhering strictly to the norms of the target language.

Keywords: popular science discourse, social psychology, translation transformation, terminology system, calquing, pragmatic adaptation, onomastics, stylistic devices.

1. INTRODUCTION

The translation of popular science literature imposes a unique responsibility on the translator. The task requires not only transcoding information into another language but also preserving the pragmatic component of the source text – specifically, ensuring that the target audience can easily comprehend the material while maintaining a high level of interest in the message content. Popular science works in psychology, particularly social psychology, are currently in high demand within Ukrainian society and require high-quality translation. Consequently, researching the specific features of translating popular science texts in the fields of psychology and social psychology is highly relevant.

The aim of the research is to identify, classify, and analyze the lexical and stylistic challenges encountered in translating popular science psychological discourse into Ukrainian, and to evaluate the translation strategies used to overcome them, based on the Ukrainian translation of Eric Berne's monograph "Games People Play." This source base was chosen deliberately: beyond the monograph's significant popularity, it serves as a unique example of popular science discourse due to its distinct structural and compositional design.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The issues regarding the translation of popular science texts remain the subject of active academic discourse. Among Ukrainian researchers, V. Karaban, A. Kovalenko, S.O. Kolosova and K.V. Zubkova, O.S. Palchevska, M. Malaniuk, S. Salamin have made significant contributions to the study of the characteristics of specialised and academic translation.

International experience is represented by the works of E.A. Basseby and G. Hebenstreit, M. Musacchio and V. Zorzi. However, despite a significant body of research, the translation of popular science literature in the field of social psychology remains understudied – every text in this genre presents the translator with unique challenges. The aim of this article is to analyse the lexical, stylistic and grammatical features of the Ukrainian translation of E. Bern's monograph «Games People Play».

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research employs a comprehensive translation studies approach. The functional-stylistic method is used to identify the communicative-pragmatic functions of stylistic devices in the original and the translation. The comparative analysis method helps to compare the original text of E. Bern's monograph and its Ukrainian translation. The contextual analysis method is applied to identify stylistic and pragmatic features of the source text. Lexical and grammatical transformations are grouped using the classification method. The descriptive method is used to systematise translation strategies.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The monograph can be conventionally divided into a theoretical section and a practical section. The theoretical part outlines the characteristics of a series of ego-states and behavioral models that form the basis for a wide spectrum of psychological manipulations, alongside a characterization of the terminological system.

The practical part presents a practical analysis and typology of social games. Due to this compositional specificity, the communicative-pragmatic goal of the monograph is realized differently across these sections. The theoretical section of the monograph is written in a scientific style. However, in an effort to achieve the desired pragmatic-communicative effect—namely, presenting the theory in a manner accessible to a wide audience—the author simplifies the exposition of his concept as much as possible. This is achieved by selecting widely known and structurally simple (one- and two-component) terms, such as *psychosis*, *depression*, *sensory deprivation*, *psycho-dynamic*, *extero-psyche functioning*, *overstimulation*, *impairment*, *Ego-State*, *duplex transaction*, and *angular transaction*.

Conversely, the practical section of the monograph is written in a colloquial-everyday style, utilizing emotionally expressive vocabulary, vernacular language, and occasionally vulgarisms and slang. To achieve the respective pragmatic-communicative goal—establishing a sustained interest in the psychological concept among the target audience—the author actively employs tropes (epithets, metaphors, metonymy, and personification) to describe typical scenarios of interpersonal behavior, such as *belligerent argumentativeness*, *emotional starvation*, *healthy balance*, *ulterior purpose*, and *immature person*.

The translation of this popular science monograph aims to adequately reproduce the pragmatic objective of the book's theoretical section. Consequently, the translator selects decoding strategies that allow for the creation of a highly clear and accessible exposition in the target language. Regarding the translation of terminological vocabulary, several approaches were employed:

Simple psychological terms: The primary methods for rendering these terms are equivalent translation (*anger* — *гнів*; *irritability* — *драмівливість*; *acceptance* — *прийняття*) and transliteration (*apathy* — *анатія*; *hysteria* — *істерія*).

Complex psychological terms: The most productive approaches to reproducing complex terms are calquing (*shifting states* — *мінливі стани*; *social psychiatry* — *соціальна психіатрія*) and transliteration (*duplex transaction* — *дуплексна транзакція*; *angular transaction* — *ангулярна транзакція*; *sensory deprivation* — *сенсорна депривація*; *obsessive-compulsive* — *обсесивно-компульсивний*).

To introduce variety, the translator may use different approaches to render the same term. For instance, the composite term *Ego-State* can be calqued (*neopsychic ego-state* — *неопсихічні Я-стани*; *archaeopsychic ego-state* — *археопсихічні Я-стани*) or rendered through a combination of calquing and transliteration (*Ego-State* — *Его-стан*).

The practical part of the monograph is rendered in a popular science style to maximize the engagement of a broad readership. The translation fully supports the fulfillment of the source text's pragmatic purpose by utilizing a range of stylistic expressive means.

The text of the monograph frequently features both conventional and individual-author epithets, such as *long-suffering look*, *psychological vector*, *healthy balance*, *factual memory*, *mild game*, *belligerent argumentativeness*, *mean things*, and *emotional starvation*. In the translation, these epithets are preserved to achieve the communicative-pragmatic effect intended in the original.

Calquing serves as the primary method for reproducing epithets: *Natural driver* — природний водій; *justifiable anger* — виправданий гнів; *serious illness* — важка хвороба; *immature person* — незріла персона; *ulterior purposes* — приховані цілі.

Contextual replacement is used in specific cases: *mild game* — легка гра and *reasonable grounds* — обґрунтовані підстави. In the former case, from a range of synonymous meanings for the adjective *mild*, the variant *light/easy* was chosen to better indicate the complexity of the game. However, in this instance, the epithet structure itself was not preserved in the translation. In the latter case, the synonymous equivalent обґрунтований (substantiated) was selected to translate the adjective reasonable.

Another common stylistic device is metonymy (the substitution of one word or another based on contiguity or close association). Metonymy is used for the titles of games or typical conversations conducted by game participants. For instance, under the title *Wardrobe* (Гардероб), the author refers to women's conversations about fashion, clothing, or clothing purchases. In the vast majority of cases, equivalent translation is used to reproduce metonymy: *Wardrobe* — Гардероб, *Kitchen* — Кухня.

Simple metaphors represent another stylistic device utilized in the monograph, for example: *If you are not stroked, your spinal cord will shrivel up* — Якщо вас не погладити, ваш спинний мозок зморщиться. Calquing is the primary method for translating these metaphors: *barriers to intimacy* — бар'єр для близькості; *If you are not stroked, your spinal cord will shrivel up* — Якщо вас не погладити, ваш спинний мозок зморщиться.

Isolated instances of personification as a type of metaphor are also present in the text, such as: *Where is the mind when the body is here?* When translating personification, the interpreter employed several transformations to creatively reproduce the meaning and introduce an element of humor. Specifically, specification was applied, where the verb *is* (which possesses a broader semantics) was rendered by the verb *знаходиться*, which has a narrower semantic scope. Simultaneously, a contextual replacement transformation was utilized: *here* — за кермом (at the wheel). This unusual collocation creates a humorous effect.

An analysis of the lexical composition of the monograph proves the presence of colloquial vocabulary, vulgarisms, and slang in certain instances. Certain vulgarisms are reproduced using Ukrainian equivalents, such as *as prig* — зануда; *cling* — причема. In other cases, stylistic substitutions are observed, such as *jerk* — нікчема. In this instance, the vulgarism *jerk* is rendered by the stylistically neutral lexical unit *нікчема*.

Conversely, there are cases where stylistic substitution operates in the opposite direction—from a neutrally unmarked lexical unit to a vulgar or stylistically lowered one, such as *Stupid people* — тупоголова.

Lexical transformations involving the specification of meaning can also occur, for example, the noun *Sulk* (Бука) is reproduced by the specified synonym *Мурмило*, which carries an additional connotative meaning of a rude and uneducated person.

The translation of onomastics presents a distinct challenge. Proper names of psychological behavior scenarios, names of the participants; psychological roles, and descriptions of their typical activities are highly figurative. From a stylistic perspective, many onyms in the monograph function as metonymies. Therefore, in this study, proper names were treated as manifestations of the artistic and, less frequently, colloquial styles.

Proper names in the monograph can consist of individual lexemes, phrases, or even entire sentences. Notably, the author uses stylistically neutral, metaphorical, and colloquial lexical units as proper names. Numerous approaches are used to translate onomastics.

The key method of reproduction single-word titles was translation via equivalents, meaning the titles were rendered using their Ukrainian dictionary equivalents: *Debtor* — *Боржник*; *Sweetheart* — *Милий*; *Blemish* — *Дефект*; *Greenhouse* — *Теплиця*.

For phrase- or sentence-based titles calquing is frequently applied: *Wooden Leg* — *Дерев'яна нога*; *Frigid Woman* — *фригідна жінка*; *Frigid Man* — *фригідний чоловік*.

To ensure an adequate translation of game titles, a series of lexical and grammatical translation transformations are applied. Among lexical transformations, specification was identified, for example: *Let's Pull a Fast One on Joey* — *Давай швидко розберемося з Джої*.

The lexical transformation of generalization was found. For instance, in the translation of the game title *Kick Me* — *Вдар мене*, the verb *kick* (to strike with the foot) is translated using a verb with a broader semantics (*вдарити* — to hit/strike).

Alongside other transformations, descriptive (excriptive) translation is employed. For example, the scenario title *Busman's Holiday* is a dead metaphor that lacks an equivalent in the Ukrainian language; thus, this title is reproduced descriptively as *Відпустка, яку провели на роботі* (A vacation spent at work). The translator clarifies its meaning for the Ukrainian recipient through descriptive translation.

To adequately reproduce onyms in Ukrainian, the translator resorts to the lexical transformation of contextual replacement, for example: *Homely Sage* — *Звичайний мудрець*; *Balance Sheet* — *Бухгалтерський баланс*. In the translation of *Homely Sage*, the adjective *homely* (which generally means *domestic*) is replaced by the adjective *звичайний* (*ordinary/plain*), which more accurately reflects the essence of the psychological game. The lexical transformation of transliteration was utilized to the least extent in the translation of onyms: *Psychiatry* — *Психіатрія*; *Alcoholic* — *Алкоголік*.

In parallel with lexical transformations, grammatical translation transformations are actively employed.® Permutation (word order rearrangement) is used to translate titles consisting of phrases or sentences: *Stocking Game* — *Гра панчix*; *How Do You Get Out of Here* — *Як ти звідси виліз*. Typically, this transformation is used to ensure the text conforms to the grammatical norms of the Ukrainian language.

Replacement is also actively used in translating psychological games. Specifically, in the translation of the title *Harried* — *Виснаження*, nominalization is applied, whereby the English participle is reproduced as a Ukrainian noun (*виснаження*). The replacement transformation can also affect the tense category of the verb; for example, the game title *They'll Be Glad They Knew Me* is translated as *Вони пишалися тим, що знали мене*. In this case, the grammatical tense of the verb is altered.

Finally, stylistic and complex transformations are used when translating game titles. In some cases, stylistically marked colloquial vocabulary is replaced with stylistically unmarked vocabulary. For example, the stylistically coarse lexical unit *Schlemiel* is replaced in translation by the stylistically neutral *Тюхтій*. Conversely, there are instances where stylistically neutral vocabulary with a low connotation is translated as a vulgarity; for example, the standard colloquial word *stupid* is rendered by the vulgar *тупоголова*. In certain game titles, a complex transformation is used. For instance, in the translation of *Lets You and Him Fight* — *А давайте ви почубитесь*, we observe a combination of omission and stylistic substitution: the component *him* is omitted, while the component *fight* is rendered by the equivalent *почубитесь*, which is stylistically more expressive.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the analysis conducted demonstrates that the translation of E. Berne's monograph "Games People Play" constitutes a complex inter-stylistic phenomenon, requiring the translator to flexibly combine various strategies. Psychological terminology is rendered primarily by standard methods – equivalent translation and transliteration – for simple terms, and by calquing for complex ones. Stylistic devices – epithets, metaphors, metonymies and personifications – are preserved in the translation through calquing and contextual substitution. The translation of onomastics requires the greatest flexibility, involving numerous lexical, grammatical and stylistic transformations: concretisation, generalisation, descriptive translation, reordering and nominalisation. Overall, the translator focuses on preserving the pragmatic effect of the original, adapting linguistic means to the norms and stylistic expectations of the Ukrainian-speaking recipient.

REFERENCES

- [1] Bern, E. (2021). *Games people play*. Klub simeinoho dozvillia. 256 p. (In Ukrainian).
- [2] Karaban, V. I. (2018). *Translation of English scientific and technical literature: Grammatical difficulties, lexical, terminological and genre-stylistic issues*. Nova Knyha. 656 p. (In Ukrainian).
- [3] Karaban, V. I. (2001). *Translation of English scientific and technical literature. Part 2. Lexical, terminological and genre-stylistic difficulties*. Nova Knyha. 303 p. (In Ukrainian).
- [4] Karaban, V. I. (2004). *Translation of English scientific and technical literature: Grammatical, lexical, terminological and genre-stylistic problems*. Nova Knyha. 576 p. (In Ukrainian).
- [5] Karaban, V. I., & Meis, Dzh. (2003). *Translation from Ukrainian into English*. Nova Knyha. 608 p. (Ukrainian).
- [6] Kyiak, T. R. (2007). Functions and translation of terms in professional languages. *Visnyk Zhytomyrskoho derzhavnoho universytetu imeni Ivana Franka*, 32, 104–108. <https://eprints.zu.edu.ua/id/eprint/1545> (In Ukrainian).
- [7] Kovalenko, A. Ya. (2002). *General course of scientific and technical translation*. INKOS. 317 p. (In Ukrainian).
- [8] Matsko, L. I., Sydorenko, O. M., & Matsko, O. M. (2003). *Stylistics of the Ukrainian language* (L. I. Matsko, Ed.). Vyshcha shkola. 462 p. (In Ukrainian).
- [9] Palchevska, O. S., Malaniuk, M. S., & Salamin, N. A. (2022). Grammatical aspects of translating a popular science article into Ukrainian. *Lvivskyi filolohichnyi chasopys*, 12, 132–137. <https://doi.org/10.32447/2663-340X-2022-12.21> (In Ukrainian).
- [10] Basse, E. A. (2000). *Terminology and language planning: An alternative framework of practice and discourse*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- [11] Berne, E. (1964). *Games people play: The psychology of human relationships*. Grove Press.
- [12] Hebenstreit, G. (2019). Coming to terms with social translation: A terminological approach. *Translation Studies*, 12(2), 139–155. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14781700.2019.1681290>
- [13] Kolosova, S. O., & Zubkova, K. V. (2018). Terms of psychology and ways of their creation in the English and Ukrainian languages. *Naukovyi visnyk mizhnarodnoho humanitarnoho universytetu*, 37(4), 58–60. https://www.vestnik-philology.mgu.od.ua/archive/v37/part_4/19.pdf
- [14] Musacchio, M. T., & Zorzi, V. (2019). Scientific controversies and popular science in translation: Rewriting, transediting or transcreation. *Lingue e Linguaggi*, 29, 481–501. <https://doi.org/10.1285/i22390359v29p481>

Nataliia Romanenko, Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor of the Department of Philology, Translation and Interpreting of Ivano-Frankivsk National Technical University of Oil and Gas, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine.

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-3450-4752

Address: Oksana Riba-Hrynyshyn, Ivano-Frankivsk National Technical University of Oil and Gas, 15 Karpatska St., Ivano-Frankivsk, 76025 Ukraine.

E-mail: nataliia.romanenko@nung.edu.ua

Received: July 27, 2025; **revised:** October 02, 2025; **accepted:** October 29, 2025; **published:** December 22, 2025

Наталія Романенко. Лексичні та стилістичні труднощі перекладу науково-популярного психологічного дискурсу (на матеріалі монографії Е. Берна "Ігри, в які грають люди"). *Журнал Прикарпатського університету імені Василя Стефаника. Філологія*, 12 (2025), 89–95.

У статті здійснено комплексний лінгвоперекладознавчий аналіз лексичних та стилістичних викликів, що виникають під час відтворення українською мовою англomовного науково-популярного психологічного дискурсу. Дослідження виконано на матеріалі монографії Еріка Берна «Games People Play» («Ігри, у які грають люди») та її офіційного українського перекладу. Актуальність теми зумовлена високим попитом українського суспільства на якісну науково-популярну літературу в галузі соціальної психології та потребою теоретичного осмислення стратегій міжмовного перекладу текстів, що поєднують ознаки наукового та розмовного стилів. Науково-популярний психологічний дискурс розглядається як складне інтерстилістичне явище, де ключовим завданням перекладача є збереження комунікативно-прагматичної мети оригіналу — забезпечення доступності наукових концепцій для широкого загалу за одночасного утримання високого емоційного інтересу реципієнта.

Композиційна специфіка праці Е. Берна зумовлює диференціацію перекладацьких підходів. У теоретичній частині, яка викладена науковим стилем, але максимально спрощена авторами задля прагматичного ефекту, домінує використання одно- та двокомпонентних терміносистем. Встановлено, що для відтворення простих термінів найпродуктивнішими є способи еквівалентного перекладу та транслітерації, тоді як складні терміни та композити (зокрема концепт *Ego-State*) відтворюються шляхом калькування, транслітерування або їхньої комбінації.

У практичній частині монографії, де представлено типологію соціальних ігор, виклад зміщується в площину розмовно-побутового стилю з активним залученням емоційно-експресивної лексики, тропів (епітетів, метафор, метонімій, персоніфікацій), сленгізмів та ономастичних одиниць. Виявлено, що провідним способом відтворення загальномовних та індивідуально-авторських епітетів і метафор є калькування, хоча для оптимізації сприйняття контекстуально застосовується заміна та конотативне урізноманітнення. Метонімічні назви ігор переважно перекладаються за допомогою прямих лексичних еквівалентів.

Особливу увагу в статті приділено перекладу ономастики — власних назв психологічних сценаріїв поведінки («ігор»), ролей учасників та моделей їхньої взаємодії. Доведено, що адекватне прагматичне кодування онімів вимагає від інтерпретатора застосування комплексу перекладацьких трансформацій, а саме лексичних (конкретизація, генералізація, контекстуальна заміна, описовий/дескриптивний переклад для безеквівалентної лексики); граматичних (перестановка компонентів для дотримання норм цільової мови, заміна часових категорій дієслова та номіналізація — заміна дієприкметників іменниками); стилістичних (нейтралізація згрубілої лексики або, навпаки, навмисне зниження стилю до розмовного/вульгарного для відтворення гумористичного чи іронічного ефекту оригіналу).

Обґрунтовано, що успішна рецепція науково-популярного психологічного тексту в українському лінгвокультурному просторі залежить від гнучкого поєднання стратегій еквівалентності та прагматичної адаптації, що дозволяє зберегти імпліцитні конотації оригіналу, не порушуючи мовних норм мови перекладу.

Ключові слова: науково-популярний дискурс, соціальна психологія, перекладацька трансформація, терміносистема, калькування, прагматична адаптація, ономастика, стилістичні засоби.