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<https://doi.org/10.31861/gph2026.858-859.12-25>LEXICAL CREATIVITY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CHICK LIT
AND MACHINE TRANSLATION

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The article examines lexical creativity in English language chick lit, focusing on neologisms formed through deliberate deviations from conventional word-formation rules. Such innovations, while stylistically and pragmatically significant within the genre, pose considerable challenges for translation, especially between typologically distant languages such as English and Ukrainian. In the context of rapid advancements in machine translation, it becomes increasingly important to evaluate the capacity of automated systems to process linguistically creative input in literary texts. This study investigates the performance of a widely used generic machine translation system, DeepL, in rendering creative neologisms into Ukrainian. The analysis is based on a corpus of neologisms extracted from contemporary chick lit novels, representing a range of morphological processes, including derivation, compounding, clipping, and conversion. Particular attention is paid to the interaction between formal innovation and semantic transparency, as well as to the extent to which machine translation can preserve both. The findings indicate that DeepL encounters substantial difficulties in translating creative neologisms, with error rates exceeding 80%. The most common issues include morphological mismatches, semantic loss, misinterpretation of constituent elements, and the production of non-viable or unnatural target-language forms. These errors suggest a systematic limitation in the system's ability to process deviations from entrenched linguistic patterns. Overall, the results demonstrate that the very features that make neologisms creative – novelty, unpredictability, and context sensitivity – are precisely those that fall outside the distributional and probabilistic capacities of current machine translation algorithms. The study underscores the need for enhanced translation models and informed post-editing strategies to better capture stylistic nuance and linguistic creativity in literary translation.

Key words: *linguistic creativity, neologism, chick lit, English-Ukrainian machine translation, algorithm.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Language, as a fluid and flexible cultural concept, is not a delimited, standardized countable entity. It is a dynamic phenomenon that accounts for the agency and creativity of individual speakers who often control highly diverse linguistic repertoires (Storch, 2017, p. 300), including the grammar of words (morphology). The considerable creativity of fiction authors makes language an arena that displays an extraordinarily impressive and lavish production of new words, a testament to the sheer volume of linguistic creativity.

This paper explores creative neologisms – new words that derive their expressive power from the violation of core derivational morphology (Bielova, 2025). The term “neologism” here is a broad category, encompassing any fusion of existing elements to create something new. This includes occasionalisms / nonces (new coinages used in a specific context only, which are not officially recognized in the lexicon (Bauer, 1983) and authorisms (words, phrases or names with a clear origin and a known creator (Dickson, 2014).

For literary translators, the exploration of creative neologisms presents a unique and challenging research endeavor for several reasons. Firstly, these words have no established equivalents in the target language. Translators are either forced to create a new word or find an approximate alternative, which can be difficult without distorting the meaning or tone. Secondly, they often emerge from specific cultural, technological, or social contexts. The translator’s task is not just to comprehend the word’s meaning, but also to grasp its cultural nuances, which may not readily transfer to another language or culture. Thirdly, these neologisms often reflect the author’s creative use of language. Translators are entrusted with the responsibility of balancing accuracy with maintaining the original style, playfulness, or innovation of the source text, a task that can be challenging but is crucial for preserving the original impact. Also, translators need to consider how target language readers will understand the neologism. Introducing a completely new word may confuse readers, especially if the lexeme is not commonly used or recognized in the target language. Lastly, creative neologisms may involve wordplay, puns, or subtle shifts in meaning that are difficult to replicate in another language. Finding a suitable equivalent that retains the humor or layered meaning is particularly complex.

In recent decades, there has been a consistent increase in studies focused on the translation of neologisms in literary texts. Two literary genres mainly known for fostering the creation of new words are science fiction and children’s literature. The abundance of newly coined terms in English works from these genres highlights the importance of lexical innovation in shaping their imaginative worlds, as authors often create fictional realms complete with unique histories, cultures, peoples, and languages (Aksoy & Söylemez, 2023; Cheyne, 2008; Sáenz, 2020; Salich, 2020). The translation of newly coined words in these two genres is equally essential. Here, the translator emerges as a key figure, playing a crucial role in shaping the imagined reality of the target text.

A review of literature on the translation of neologisms in science fiction and children’s literature reveals a strong emphasis on the practical aspects of translation. Researchers have examined various language pairs, including English-German, English-Swedish, English-Danish, English-Norwegian, English-Spanish, English-Turkish, English-Polish, and Chinese-English. These studies primarily focus on the techniques used for translating neologisms, highlighting the decisions translators must make regarding priorities and suggesting potential methods for handling these new terms (Aksoy & Söylemez, 2023; Cheyne, 2008; Sáenz, 2020; Salich, 2020).

The present-day technological progress prompts researchers to experiment with the latest digital technologies in translation. This raises an obvious question of whether machine translation (MT) can assist literary translators in handling the reproduction of newly coined words from the source language (SL) into the target language (TL). This study **aims** to investigate how MT systems address new words in English language chick lit (ELCL) and whether translators can use these tools

to discover potential creative solutions in the target language (Ukrainian) or gain inspiration for generating their own.

To address this issue, I examine 35 chick lit novels. Protagonists in these novels strive to be “socially successful with their speech” (Haspelmath, 1999, p. 1056) when they build and maintain relationships, construct identities and the world around them, mitigate, and persuade (Littlemore, 2022). ELCL texts are characterized by an accessible, witty, humorous, ironic, and playful style (Harzewski, 2011; Missler, 2019). This together encourages the use of creative neologisms. In the following sections, I will study the translation of these neologisms by the generic neural MT system DeepL, to understand its effectiveness. The key **objectives** I aim to address are: 1) How successful is machine translation in rendering creative neologisms in chick lit? 2) Are certain creative neologisms easier for the engine to handle than others? 3) Do any machine-generated translations offer viable solutions or are intriguing enough to be considered by translators from a pragmatic perspective, aligning with what I assume to be the original author’s intent?

Data and method. Designed as a product-oriented research, this study uses a self-compiled corpus of 35 English language chick lit novels as source texts (ST) and their Ukrainian machine translations as target texts (TT). The original neologisms have been collected by following the morphosemantic approach, which presupposes the identification of word-formation processes employed to manufacture neologisms and their semantic interpretation. This approach sampled a wide variety of creative neologisms, including affixed derivatives, compounds, clippings, and conversions. The total number of samples is 100.

Table 1

The ratio of creative neologisms by type, %

| Type of creative neologisms | % |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Affixed derivatives | 49 |
| Compounds | 30 |
| Clippings | 6 |
| Conversions | 6 |

For machine-generated translation, I chose a widely used general-purpose MT engine – DeepL, as it operates on artificial neural networks and is commonly employed for the English-Ukrainian language pair. The machine-generated target texts were produced in December 2025. The neologisms were translated within their broader textual contexts rather than as standalone units. The DeepL translations analyzed in this article are presented **without any post-editing**, in order to assess the system’s raw performance and to ensure that all observed solutions, shifts, and errors can be attributed solely to the machine translation engine rather than to human intervention.

This research adopts an evaluative approach to the translation of neologisms, with a particular emphasis on assessing translation quality. The assessment is conducted on the basis of a set of predefined criteria rooted in established translation theory (House, 1997), complemented by Newmark’s (1988, p. 143) observation that neologisms in fictional texts should be rendered creatively through comparable morphemic structures and sound patterns, while maintaining morphological and phonological naturalness in the TL. In this study, translation quality is understood as the degree to which the TT successfully maintains the semantic content, stylistic function, morphological inventiveness, and pragmatic adequacy of the ST. Transparency of evaluation is ensured by the systematic use of annotated illustrative examples.

Building on previous research into the translation of neologisms (Delabastita, 2004; Kenny, 2001; Kolb et al., 2023; Salich, 2020), the study distinguishes three main strategies for conveying both the meaning and effect of newly coined lexical items: occasionalistic translation, non-occasionalistic translation, and omission. Occasionalistic translation involves the creation of novel expressions in the TL in order to preserve the creativity and stylistic impact of the SL neologisms. Where this strategy was employed, the Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language in 11 volumes (Білодід, 1970-1980) and the Corpus of Ukrainian Language Texts (CULT) were consulted to verify whether

the proposed equivalents could reasonably be perceived as new or unconventional by the target readership. Non-occasionalistic translation, by contrast, relies on established lexical resources of the TL and often entails a reduction of creative effect. The strategy of omission involves the complete removal of the neologism from the translation, resulting in the loss of both its semantic content and stylistic value.

These strategies were applied to a dataset comprised of 100 creative neologisms from ELCL novels. Table 2 presents a summary of their Ukrainian translations, with an additional category introduced to account for major translation errors, such as semantic misrepresentation, loss of essential nuance, or incoherent renderings.

Table 2

Translation strategies and errors for ST's creative neologisms, %

| Occasionalistic | Non-occasionalistic | Omission | Error |
|-----------------|---------------------|----------|-------|
| 6 | 12 | 0 | 82 |

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the examples collected in the dataset demonstrates that DeepL's handling of creative neologisms in chick lit is marked by a clear asymmetry between semantic accuracy and stylistic preservation. While the system generally succeeds in conveying the basic meaning of neologisms in case of satisfactory translation, it struggles to reproduce their expressive, humorous, and character-building functions, which are central to the genre. As a result, the translations often remain intelligible but lose the playful creativity that motivates the original coinages.

In instances where DeepL manages to satisfactorily render a creative neologism, the most productive strategy observed in the dataset is **non-occasionalistic translation**, whereby the engine replaces a SL neologism with a descriptive paraphrase. This tendency is particularly visible in the translation of adjectival and evaluative neologisms. One example is *watermelon-esque* in (1):

Table 3

The translation of watermelon-esque

| 1 | Source text | Target text |
|---|--|--|
| | <i>Well, I was big and fat, that was for sure. Very watermelon-esque</i> (Keyes, 1997, p. 49). | Ну, я була великою і товстою, це було точно. Дуже схожою на кавун. |

In (1), the adjective *watermelon-esque* is rendered as *схожа на кавун*, which accurately conveys the visual comparison of the protagonist's pregnant body with a watermelon but removes the stylistic effect of the suffix *-esque*, a productive marker of humorous approximation in English. A similar neutralization occurs in *Cinderella-esque [evening]*, translated as [вечір], *схожий на казку про Попелюшку* in (2):

Table 4

The translation of Cinderella-esque

| 2 | Source text | Target text |
|---|---|---|
| | <i>There were bound to be long lists of irritating requests from irritating people, but nothing could take away my Cinderella-esque evening</i> (Weisberger, 2013, p. 357). | Звичайно, були довгі списки дратівливих прохань від дратівливих людей, але ніщо не могло затьмарити мій вечір, схожий на казку про Попелюшку. |

In both cases, the semantic core is preserved, but the morphological creativity is lost, resulting in a stylistically flatter Ukrainian text.

DeepL also frequently resorts to **approximation in translation**, especially when dealing with reduplicative compounds like, for instance, in (3):

Table 5

The translation of achey-painy

| 3 | Source text | Target text |
|---|---|--|
| | <i>The baby suddenly kicks me hard inside and I wince. Everything's so ... achey-painy. Me. Luke. The whole horrible situation (Kinsella, 2007, p. 283).</i> | <i>Дитина раптом сильно штовхає мене всередині, і я здригаюся. Все так боляче... Я. Люк. Вся ця жахлива ситуація.</i> |

In this fragment, the English adjective *achey-painy* represents a creative reduplicative neologism that combines affective evaluation with a playful, almost childlike tone. It simultaneously conveys physical discomfort and emotional exhaustion, while its reduplicated structure intensifies subjectivity and intimacy. In the Ukrainian translation, this neologism is rendered as *боляче*, a pre-existing, stylistically neutral adverb. While this choice successfully transfers the core meaning of pain, it eliminates the expressive and evaluative dimensions embedded in the source form. From a translational perspective, this solution constitutes a non-occasionalistic strategy realized through approximation sacrificing their **stylistic expressiveness and structural originality**.

A similar case is *clippy-cloppy* in (4):

Table 6

The translation of clippy-cloppy

| 4 | Source text | Target text |
|---|---|--|
| | <i>'Because what? I peer at her, and Leila suddenly swivels on her clippy-cloppy heel to Jake (Kinsella, 2019, p. 23).</i> | <i>«Чому? Я дивлюся на неї, і Лейла раптом обертається на своїх кляцаючих підборах до Джейка.</i> |

In the source text here, the reduplicative onomatopoeic form *clippy-cloppy* imitates the sound of heels and contributes to the vivid, sensory quality of the narrative. The Ukrainian rendering *кляцаючі [підбори]* retains the auditory reference and thus preserves the core semantic component – sound production. Nevertheless, the translation abandons reduplication, rhythm, and sound symbolism, replacing a creative, morphologically marked form with a conventional descriptive adjective. This results in the loss of the source text's phonetic playfulness and iconicity.

In both cases, approximation functions as a meaning-oriented strategy that prioritizes intelligibility and semantic clarity over stylistic equivalence. While the communicative intent of the neologisms is largely retained, their **structural-compositional creativity and expressive force** are significantly diminished. These examples illustrate a broader tendency in MT to favor semantic adequacy at the expense of literary playfulness, particularly when dealing with morphologically inventive and stylistically marked neologisms.

A similar case of approximation accompanied by transposition of the ST creative adjective to a conventionalized verb is *clippy* in (5):

Table 7

The translation of clippy

| 5 | Source text | Target text |
|---|--|--|
| | <i>How's the be-wheeled suitcase?" "Big beyond all sense. How are the ear-hair clippers?" "Oh, marvelously – you know – clippy" (Fielding, 1996).</i> | <i>Як тобі валіза на колесах?» «Величезна, аж занадто. А як тобі машинка для стрижки волосся у вухах?» «О, чудово – ти знаєш – стриже».</i> |

In the ST, *clippy* is an adjectival neologism derived from the verb *to clip* through informal suffixation with *-y*. It functions predicatively and playfully evaluates the ear-hair clippers, conveying not only their functionality ('they clip well') but also a light, humorous, conversational tone characteristic of chick lit dialogue. Importantly, this neologism also performs a **pragmatic and interpersonal function**. Within the dialogue, *clippy* serves as a marker of shared irony and emotional alignment between father and daughter. Both characters have received similarly impractical and slightly absurd gifts from the mother/wife, and the playful label *clippy* allows them to acknowledge the uselessness of the object without explicit criticism. Through humour and linguistic creativity, the neologism mitigates potential negativity and reinforces familial solidarity. In this way, *clippy* becomes a linguistic tool of **affective bonding**, subtly unifying the speakers in a shared, affectionate attitude toward the absent third party, whom they gently mock but clearly love.

In the Ukrainian translation, *clippy* is rendered as *стриже*, a **finite verb in the present tense**. This shift from an adjective to a verb constitutes a clear instance of **transposition**, i.e. a translation transformation involving a change in grammatical category. Instead of reproducing the adjectival evaluation, the MT reformulates it as a verbal predicate that directly denotes the action performed by the object ("it clips").

This transpositional shift results in several notable effects. Firstly, by replacing the vague, evaluative quality of *clippy* with a concrete, action-oriented meaning, the translation prioritizes clarity over stylistic play. Secondly, while the communicative meaning is retained, the speaker's idiosyncratic, ironic voice is flattened. The utterance becomes informational rather than characterizing.

DeepL resorts to descriptive translation when rendering prefixations with *un-*, which are numerous in my self-compiled corpus. Witness one example:

Table 8

The translation of un-fire

| 6 | Source text | Target text |
|---|---|--|
| | 'You are fired.' Alex's voice is like a bullet. 'End of.' | «Ти звільнена». Голос Алекса звучить як куля. «Кінець розмови». |
| | 'You can't do that!' I cry, outraged. 'Un-fire her!' (Kinsella, 2017, p. 348). | «Ти не можеш цього зробити!» — кричу я, обурена. «Відміни її звільнення!» . |

In the ST, *un-fire* is a creative, context-bound neologism that exploits the productivity of the prefix *un-* in a non-standard way. Rather than simply negating an action, *un-* here conceptualizes the idea of 'reversing' or 'undoing' an event, producing a humorous and emotionally charged effect that reflects the speaker's frustration or impulsiveness. DeepL translates *un-fire* as «Відміни її звільнення!», which accurately conveys the **semantic core** of the SL verb. However, the translation neutralizes the **word-formation creativity** and erases the childlike, improvised logic that characterizes the original neologism. The result is stylistically conventional and emotionally flatter. The reason for DeepL's reliance on descriptive translation in these cases lies in **systemic differences between English and Ukrainian word-formation**, particularly with regard to the semantics of negating prefixes. In English, the prefix *un-* is highly productive and polyfunctional: alongside simple negation (*unhappy*), it frequently carries a **reversive meaning**, allowing speakers to conceptualize telic actions as processes that can be undone (*unlock, unplug, unfriend*). This reversibility makes *un-* especially suitable for occasional and playful atelic verb formation in informal discourse, as seen in *un-fire*. In Ukrainian, by contrast, the prefix *не-* **does not encode reversive meaning**. Its primary function is logical negation rather than process reversal. Ukrainian expresses reversive meanings analytically or lexically, through verbs such as *скасувати, відмінити, передумати*. As a result, creating forms such as *не-звільнити* or *не-сказати* would not convey 'undoing an action' but rather its **non-occurrence**, which would be semantically incorrect in the given contexts. This morphological

asymmetry makes direct or occasionalistic replication of English *un-* neologisms in Ukrainian both linguistically unnatural and pragmatically ambiguous.

Also, descriptive translation is often used by DeepL when dealing with compounds and blends. One example is *bendy-back* in (7):

Table 9

The translation of bendy-back

| 7 | Source text | Target text |
|---|--|---|
| | “Suze, do that <i>bendy-back</i> pose where you look over your shoulder,” I say, and then hurry over to a photographer with dark hair and a denim jacket who’s leaning on the barrier, yawning. Yawning! (Kinsella, 2014, p. 162). | Сюз, зроби ту позу, коли ти нахиляєшся назад і дивишся через плече», — кажу я, а потім поспішаю до фотографа з темним волоссям і джинсовою курткою, який, позіхаючи, спирається на огорожу. Позіхає! |

In the ST, *bendy-back* is a compound adjective, or what Bauer (1983, pp. 202–213) refers to as lexical uses of syntactic groups. Originally, a transparent syntactic phrase (*bendy back*), it has been semantically and morphologically fixed into a compound noun functioning as a premodifier to *pose*, denoting a stylized, culturally recognizable physical posture. Pragmatically, it functions as in-group shorthand: the speaker assumes shared knowledge with Suze, treating the pose as familiar, routine, and slightly ironic. Rather than attempting to recreate the compound or invent a playful adjectival equivalent, DeepL explicates the meaning through a relative clause – *коли ти нахиляєшся назад*. As a result, the **semantic core** of the neologism – physical bending backwards – is fully preserved, ensuring referential clarity. However, this strategy comes at the cost of **stylistic and morphological creativity**. The original’s compactness, informality, and playful naming of the pose are lost. The Ukrainian version is longer, syntactically heavier, and stylistically neutral, resembling an instructional description rather than spontaneous dialogue. The loss of the neologism’s compressed form also weakens its pragmatic function as shared, casual knowledge between characters.

My dataset also contains examples where DeepL resorts to generalization which fully **omits the neological effect**, particularly in socially or culturally embedded coinages. One example is *twunking* – a creative blend of *twitting* and *drinking* (‘going on twitter after drinking’):

Table 10

The translation of twunking

| 8 | Source text | Target text |
|---|--|--|
| | <@_Roxter@JoneseyBJ Why? Are they all hung-over because they too were <i>twunking</i> about birds last night?> (Fielding, 1914, p. 147). | <@_Roxter@JoneseyBJ Чому? Вони всі мають похмілля, бо теж вчора ввечері базікали про дівчат?> |

This is an extract from a longer conversation between Bridget Jones and a Roxter on Twitter when Bridget had made an inappropriate post about birds after drinking a few glasses of wine. When Bridget begins to regret yesterday’s tweeting about birds, Roxter immediately coins the past tense of *tweet* – *twat*. Bridget reacts by asking him if he is being grammatical or rude, to which Roxter playfully responds: “The former” and to refute his own words adds the fictional *twitto*, *twittarse*, and *twittat*, which are humorously constructed to mimic real Latin conjugations. They appear to be modelled analogously to *mitto*, *mittere*, *misi*, *missum* (meaning ‘to send’), with a playful twist incorporating *twit* (from *Twitter*). The form *twittarse* is particularly creative, since it not only resembles a mock-Latin infinitive, but also works as a blend of *twit* and *arse*. This extra layer of earthy British humour collapses the prestige of classical Latin with the vulgarity of slang. Likewise, *twittat* resembles a Latin-style third-person singular form but also echoes the clipped sound of a

childlike or mocking *-at* suffix, reinforcing the comic parody of grammatical seriousness. Both forms thus enhance creativity by manufacturing “double readings” – one anchored in linguistic erudition, the other in playful or even rude associations. Catching up with the vibe, Bridget jokingly warns him that the man’s followers on Twitter –*Twitteratis* (a derivative adding the libfix *-erati* to *Twitter*) – will soon be demanding sick bags. In a few days, when Bridget and Roxter meet in person, the man continues to jokingly rile Bridget about her obsession with Twitter by using the newly coined *twutting* and *twunking*.

In this case, DeepL uses a neutral verb *базікати* meaning ‘to talk’, thereby erasing the metalinguistic humour and the explicit reference to digital culture.

Cases of **occasionalistic translation**, where DeepL attempts to recreate a novel expression in Ukrainian, are comparatively rare but revealing. They occur mainly with morphologically transparent compounds. For example, *braincyclopedia* is translated as *мозкова енциклопедія* (9), *testosterone-meter* as *тестостеронометр* (10), and *Protestant desert* as *протестантський десерт* (11):

Table 11

The translation of *braincyclopedia*

| 9 | Source text | Target text |
|---|--|---|
| | <i>The image is immediately filed in my braincyclopedia as an Ethan Posture, and subcategorized as Surprisingly Hot (Lauren, 2019, p. 159).</i> | <i>Цей образ відразу ж зберігається в моїй мозковій енциклопедії як «Поза Етана» і класифікується як «Несподівано сексуальна».</i> |

Table 12

The translation of *testosterone-meter*

| 10 | Source text | Target text |
|----|---|---|
| | <i>If we had a testosterone-meter hanging on the kitchen wall the mercury level would have gone through the ceiling (Keyes, 1997).</i> | <i>Якби у нас на стіні кухні висів тестостеронометр, ртутний стовпчик піднявся б вище стелі.</i> |

Table 13

The translation of *testosterone-meter*

| 11 | Source text | Target text |
|----|---|---|
| | <i>I always bought fruit and no one ever ate it. Protestant dessert, Judy called it (Keyes, 1997).</i> | <i>Я завжди купувала фрукти, але ніхто їх не їв. Джуді називала це протестантським десертом.</i> |

In these instances, the system successfully mirrors the internal structure of the source neologisms and produces TL forms that remain compact, intelligible, and stylistically marked. Although these solutions are somewhat more neutral than the originals, they can be considered pragmatically viable and potentially acceptable to human translators.

DeepL does not omit creative neologisms in translation, and this tendency can be explained by both its design principles and its underlying neural architecture. As a general-purpose neural machine translation system trained on vast amounts of parallel data, DeepL is optimized to **maximize semantic coverage** and minimise information loss. Omission would represent a high-risk strategy, as it would create gaps in meaning and reduce textual coherence. Consequently, when encountering creative or non-standard lexical items, the system prioritizes rendering *something* in the target text rather than leaving the unit untranslated. It often happens with clippings, which have **the ambiguous status in the target language**. One example is (12):

Table 14

The translation of testosterone-meter

| 12 | Source text | Target text |
|----|---|--|
| | <i>They do strange things, too. ... Like they call sandwiches 'witchies.' Moreover, a drink is a 'titchy' (except if it's water, which is 'Ho') (Kinsella, 2000, p. 178).</i> | <i>Вони також роблять дивні речі. Наприклад, вони називають бутерброди «witchies». Більше того, напій називається «titchy» (за винятком води, яка називається «Ho»).</i> |

The form *witchies* appears to be a playful, phonologically motivated clipping and diminutive reanalysis of *sandwiches*. Rather than preserving a recoverable part of the word (*sand* or *wich*), the speaker isolates the rhyming component *wich*, reinterprets it as *witch*, and then adds a diminutive plural suffix *-ies* (commonly seen in nursery or slang registers: *bickies* < *biscuits*, *choccies* < *chocolates*). This transformation results in *witchies*, which has no transparent connection to the base form without contextual support. The term *Ho*, used to refer to *water*, is even more opaque. It is not a recognizable clipping, blend, or abbreviation of *water*, and lacks phonological or morphological cues that might lead to easy recoverability. It seems to be a playful clipping derived from the chemical formula H₂O. While initially opaque, its interpretation becomes clearer when viewed as a sound-based abstraction of the common scientific representation of water. By removing the numerical component and simplifying the phonological structure, the speaker arrives at *Ho* – a novel lexical item formed through conceptual reanalysis and radical truncation.

From a **neural MT perspective**, such creative neologisms often have **low or zero frequency** in training data. Unlike conventional vocabulary, they do not have stable translation equivalents and rarely appear in parallel corpora. When the system fails to establish a reliable mapping between a source neologism and a Ukrainian counterpart, it defaults to **copying the source form** rather than generating an uncertain or potentially erroneous translation. This behaviour is a well-documented fallback mechanism in neural MT, especially for out-of-vocabulary or stylistically marked items.

Quite often DeepL produced nonsensical equivalents turning to transliteration of creative neologisms, especially those that are grounded in highly original metaphors and/or metonymies. One example is (13):

Table 15

The translation of pashmina and its derivatives

| 13 | Source text | Target text |
|----|--|--|
| | <i>“Pashminas,” I slurred, slurping on my Chardonnay. “That’s it!” said Tom excitedly. “It’s fin-de-millennium pashmina-ism, Sbazzer is Simon’s “pashmina” because she wants to shag him most so he diminishes her and Simon is Shazzer’s pashmaster.” ... we could come up with a list of further definitions, as follows: Pashmincer: A friend who you really fancy who’s actually gay. ... Pashmarried: A friend who you used to go out with and is now married with children who likes having you around as memory of old life but makes you feel like mad barren pod-womb imagining vicar is in love with self.</i> | <i>«Паиміні», – пробурмотіла я, потягуючи шардоне. «Ось воно!» – радісно вигукнув Том. «Це паиміна-ізм кінця тисячоліття. Сбазер – це «паиміна» Саймона, бо вона найбільше хоче з ним переспати, тож він принижує її, а Саймон – паимайстер Шезер». ... ми могли б скласти список додаткових визначень, наприклад: Паимінець: друг, який вам дуже подобається, але насправді є геєм. ... Паиодружений: друг, з яким ви раніше зустрічалися, а тепер він одружений і має дітей, який любить, коли ви поруч, як спогад про колишнє життя, але змушує вас почуватися божевільною безплідною матусею, уявляючи, що вікарій закоханий у себе.</i> |

Продовження таблиці 15

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | <p>Ex-pashspurt: An ex-partner who wants to get back with you but pretends just to want to be friends then keeps making passes and getting cross. “What about ‘pash-hurts’?” said Shaz sulkily. “Friends who turn your own private emotional disaster into a sociological study at the expense of your feelings” (Fielding, 1996).</p> | <p>Екс-нашспурт: колишній партнер, який хоче повернутися до вас, але прикидається, що хоче бути просто другом, а потім продовжує робити вам аванси і сердитися.</p> |
|--|---|--|

A pashmina is a large woolen shawl that women wear around their shoulders in cold weather. In the passage, it functions as an embodied metonymy, drawing on the embodied experience of warmth and comfort associated with wearing a pashmina. At the same time, a pashmina can be quickly and easily removed, unlike a coat. These properties together are mapped onto the woman it represents: she provides warmth and comfort but can be easily discarded after fulfilling that role. Thus, the shawl stands for a woman who is sexually desired and temporarily valued, with her social and sexual functions conveyed through the characteristics of the garment. This is a perfect case of embodied metonymy (see Gibbs, 2025). This metonymic meaning of *pashmina* becomes the grounding for further derivation – the coinages *pashmina-ism*, *pashmaster*, *pashmincer*, *pashmarried*, *ex-pashspurt* and *pash-hurts*.

In the analyzed fragment, DeepL consistently resorts to transliteration when rendering the series of creative neologisms derived from *pashmina* (*нашміна-ізм*, *нашмайстер*, *нашмінцер*, *екс-нашспурт*). This strategy allows the system to preserve the formal unity of the neologistic paradigm and to maintain the semantic core of the SL metonymy. Since *pashmina* is an internationally recognizable item of clothing, its transliteration does not fully obscure meaning and enables the reader to reconstruct the underlying metonymic logic through context. From the perspective of semantic adequacy, the translations are therefore largely functional: the metonymy remains accessible and the internal coherence of the word family is retained.

However, the stylistic and pragmatic effectiveness of these target-language equivalents is considerably reduced. In the ST, the pashmina derivatives are light, playful, and conversational, contributing to the humorous tone typical of chick-lit discourse. In Ukrainian, the transliterated forms appear phonologically heavy and visually complex, which undermines their immediacy and comic effect. Rather than sounding like spontaneous, witty coinages, forms such as *нашмінцер* or *екс-нашспурт* risk being perceived as foreign, opaque, or even technical, thereby shifting the register away from informal narration. As a result, the neologisms retain their novelty but lose the playful charm and rhythmic ease that constitute a key part of their stylistic function.

DeepL’s preference for transliteration in this case can be explained by its conservative approach to creative language. Transliteration represents a low-risk strategy that avoids semantic distortion and ensures consistency across a densely interconnected set of neologisms. Generating new, stylistically natural Ukrainian formations would require complex pragmatic and cultural modelling that current machine translation systems are not designed to perform reliably. Consequently, DeepL prioritizes semantic safety and formal fidelity over expressive re-creation.

The analysis also demonstrates that DeepL makes a substantial number of errors when translating creative neologisms in chick-lit from English into Ukrainian. Consider several examples.

Table 16

The translation of hum-ist

| 14 | Source text | Target text |
|----|--|--|
| | <p>“And Eric is such a sweet loving guy. It’s not his fault his back was</p> | <p>«А Ерік такий милий і люблячий хлопець. Це не його вина, що він пошкодив спину,</p> |

Продовження таблиці 16

| | |
|---|--|
| <p><i>damaged when he was a baby. And he's achieved so much. He's inspiring." – Now I am hot with shame. Maybe my husband does have a hump. I shouldn't be hump-ist (Kinsella, 2008, p. 26).</i></p> | <p><i>коли був немовлям. І він досяг так багато. Він надихає». – Тепер я горю від сорому. Можливо, у мого чоловіка дійсно є горб. Я не повинна бути горбоватою.</i></p> |
|---|--|

This example illustrates a clear error in DeepL’s handling of a creative neologism, resulting from a failure to recognize its word-formation logic and pragmatic function. In the source text, *hump-ist* is an adjective formed by analogy with established ideological and discriminatory labels such as *racist*, *sexist*, or *ageist*. The suffix *-ist* does not describe a physical attribute but encodes an evaluative stance: being *hump-ist* means holding a prejudiced attitude towards someone with a physical deformity. The neologism is self-ironic and morally reflective, signaling the narrator’s sudden awareness of her own internalized bias rather than making a literal statement about appearance

DeepL renders *hump-ist* as *горбовата*, which constitutes a semantic distortion. The translation mistakenly interprets the form as a descriptive adjective referring to bodily shape, rather than as a stance-denoting label. As a result, the focus shifts from ethical self-criticism to physical description, fundamentally altering the meaning of the utterance. The narrator is no longer condemning her own prejudice; instead, she appears to comment on her own (non-existent) physical condition, which is incoherent in context.

From a translational perspective, this error stems from DeepL’s tendency to process neologisms via surface morphology rather than functional analogy. The system correctly identifies the root *hump* but fails to map the suffix *-ist* onto its pragmatic role as a marker of ideology or discrimination. Ukrainian does have productive equivalents for such formations, which could have enabled an occasionalistic solution such as *горбістка* or a descriptive paraphrase (*упереджено ставитися до людей з горбом*). However, DeepL neither creates a new evaluative adjective nor resorts to explanation, instead defaulting to a literal adjectival interpretation.

Another example is worth describing:

Table 17

The translation of business meeting

| 15 | Source text | Target text |
|----|--|--|
| | <p><i>I altered my path to pass his table, at which he immersed himself deep in conversation with trollop, glancing up as I walked past and giving me a firm, confident smile as if to say “business meeting.” I gave him a look which said, “Don’t you business meeting me,” and strutted on (Fielding, 1996).</i></p> | <p><i>Я змінив свій шлях, щоб пройти повз його стіл, за яким він був занурений у розмову з повією, підвів погляд, коли я проходив повз, і посміхнувся мені впевнено, ніби кажучи: «ділова зустріч». Я кинув на нього погляд, який говорив: «Не роби з мене ділову зустріч», і гордо пішов далі.</i></p> |

This fragment provides another telling example of how DeepL mishandles pragmatic compression and irony embedded in seemingly simple lexical items.

In the ST, *business meeting* is not a literal description of an actual professional encounter. It is a verb converted from a compound noun. It operates as an **implicit excuse**, a socially recognizable alibi meant to neutralize suspicion and to reframe an intimate interaction with a *trollop* as something respectable, professional, and therefore unproblematic. The humor lies precisely in the gap between what is being claimed (a neutral, professional context) and what is visibly happening (flirtatious or illicit behaviour).

DeepL renders *business meeting* literally as *ділова зустріч*, which, taken in isolation, is a correct dictionary equivalent. However, the translation fails at the pragmatic and discursive level and does not recognize it is a verb and misconstrues the original implicature.

III. CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to examine how a generic neural MT system, DeepL, copes with the translation of creative neologisms in chick lit from English into Ukrainian. The analysis demonstrates that while the system consistently preserves the *referential core* of meaning, it struggles to reproduce the *stylistic, pragmatic, and affective dimensions* that make creative neologisms central to the genre. Across the analyzed corpus, DeepL overwhelmingly favors non-occasionalistic strategies, most notably description and approximation. These strategies ensure intelligibility but frequently neutralize creativity by dissolving compact, expressive neologisms into conventional lexical units or syntactically expanded constructions. Occasionalistic translation – the creation of novel TL forms – occurs only sporadically and typically in cases of transparent compounding or internationally recognizable bases. Even then, the output tends to lack the morphological playfulness and evaluative nuance of the source text.

The findings further indicate that neologisms formed through simple morphological processes, such as affixation with *-y* or compounding with semantically transparent elements, are easier for the engine to process than those involving reduplication, sound symbolism, pragmatic ellipsis, or metaphoric/metonymic extension. Reduplicative and onomatopoeic formations (e.g. *achey-painy, clippy-cloppy*) are systematically reduced to neutral adjectives, preserving the semantic core while erasing structural and stylistic originality. More complex formations that rely on cultural knowledge, irony, or social typification (e.g. *hump-ist, Monday-morning-ish*) often result in semantic distortion, pragmatic misfires, or unnatural target-language constructions.

Notably, DeepL almost never omits creative neologisms entirely. This suggests that the system is designed to maximize lexical coverage and avoid gaps in translation. However, in cases where it lacks adequate modelling of creativity, it either resorts to transliteration, leaving English forms embedded in the Ukrainian text, or produces formally correct but pragmatically inadequate equivalents. While transliteration can sometimes be justified – especially when neologisms function as naming devices or discourse markers – it frequently shifts the interpretive burden onto the reader and disrupts the stylistic cohesion of the target text.

At the same time, the analysis reveals that some MT solutions may be pragmatically viable or even suggestive for human translators, particularly where semantic approximation aligns with the communicative intent of the original. These instances, however, are exceptions rather than the norm and require human intervention to refine stylistic fit and cultural resonance.

Overall, the study confirms that machine translation remains fundamentally limited in handling creative neologisms and is characterised by a high degree of error. However, while it may appear as a negative result it can also be reinterpreted as theoretically confirmatory. The features that make neologisms creative are precisely those that lie beyond distributional capture. In this sense, the observed shortcomings of current MT systems do not merely point to a technological limitation but also provide indirect evidence for the fundamentally embodied and culturally embedded nature of creative language. If MT is used for creative tasks, the findings of this study indicate that literary translation still requires substantial human input, particularly in the form of post-editing or retranslation.

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ЛЕКСИЧНА КРЕАТИВНІСТЬ У ЖАНРІ АНГЛОМОВНОЇ ЧІК-ЛІТ І МАШИННИЙ ПЕРЕКЛАД

Марина БЄЛОВА

У статті досліджено лексичну креативність в англomовному жанрі чік-літ, зокрема неологізми, утворені внаслідок навмисного відхилення від продуктивних словотвірних моделей. Попри стилістичну й соціально-прагматичну значущість таких інновацій, вони становлять суттєві труднощі для перекладу, особливо між такими типологічно віддаленими мовами, як англійська та українська. В умовах постійного розвитку технологій машинного перекладу особливо актуальним видається оцінювання здатності автоматизованих систем обробляти лінгвістичну креативність у художніх текстах. У дослідженні аналізується ефективність широко використовуваної системи машинного перекладу загального призначення DeepL у трансляції креативних неологізмів українською мовою. Матеріалом слугує корпус неологізмів, відібраних із сучасних романів жанру чік-літ, що охоплюють різні словотвірні процеси, зокрема афіксацію, словоскладання, усічення та конверсію. Особливу увагу звернено на взаємодію формальної інноваційності та семантичної прозорості, а також здатність машинного перекладу відтворювати ці характеристики. Результати свідчать, що DeepL зазнає суттєвих труднощів у перекладі креативних неологізмів: рівень помилок перевищує 80%. Найпоширенішими є морфологічні невідповідності, семантичні втрати, неправильне тлумачення складників та утворення нефункціональних або неприродних форм у цільовій мові. Це вказує на системні обмеження алгоритмів у роботі з відхиленнями від звичних мовних моделей. Отже, результати дослідження демонструють, що саме ті ознаки, які забезпечують креативність неологізмів – новизна, непередбачуваність і контекстуальна зумовленість – виходять за межі дистрибутивних можливостей сучасних систем машинного перекладу. Це підкреслює потребу в удосконаленні перекладацьких алгоритмів і застосуванні постредагування для адекватної передачі стилістичних нюансів і мовної креативності.

Ключові слова: лінгвістична креативність, неологізм, чік-літ, англо-український машинний переклад, алгоритми.

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