# A Theoretical Framework for Back-Translation as a Quality Assessment Tool[1]

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ABSTRACT
Back-translation is a validation tool widely used in international research settings, including, but not limited to, cross-cultural psychology, international marketing, educational assessments, quality of life research, and international nursing research. As a rule, researchers use back-translation to validate the quality of translated research instruments, such as tests and questionnaires. The method consists in re-translating the translated text back into the source language. The back-translation and the original document are compared for inconsistencies, and if none are found, the translation is considered equivalent. The method has many adherents and opponents; however, neither uses solid linguistic evidence in their arguments. This study is an attempt to suggest a theoretical linguistic framework for describing and evaluating the back-translation process, namely the cognitive linguistics approach, with the main focus on Langacker's Cognitive Grammar. The study is illustrated with examples from actual questionnaires translated from English into Ukrainian.

KEYWORDS: back-translation; cross-cultural research; cognitive linguistics.

## Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to offer an outline of a theoretical framework for describing a translation quality assessment tool known as back-translation. Clearly, it would be too ambitious – and hardly attainable – to develop a full-fledged framework within one article. That is the main focus of my Ph.D. research (see Tyupa in progress). The objective here is, rather, to acquaint readers with the possible application of cognitive linguistics to the description, and hopefully improvement of, the back-translation procedure as applied in cross-cultural social research. The article is organized as follows: Section 1 gives an overview of the back-translation method and its application in cross-cultural social research settings; Section 2 highlights the most relevant notions of cognitive linguistics and offers a tentative definition of the theoretical framework based on its premises; Section 3 describes the corpus that was used for the research and offers some examples from questionnaires translated in actual research settings as an illustration; and the last section is devoted to conclusions.

## 1. Back-translation for cross-cultural social research

Cross-cultural social research is understood here as a generic term that covers such diverse fields as anthropology, cross-cultural psychology, international marketing research, quality of life research, etc. All these areas use specific research instruments, usually in the form of questionnaires, that are used basically as measurement tools. As a consequence, cross-cultural researchers have very rigorous requirements of the quality of translation, asking of the target text "to have the same meaning" as the source. Such demands are easily understood given that important decisions, such as treatment options, are regularly made on the basis of questionnaires. One of the most popular methods to assess the quality of translation is the

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back-translation technique. Back-translation, as its name suggests, is a process whereby the translated text is re-translated back into the source language by a translator who does not see the original text. If any discrepancies are found between the back-translation and the original, this is taken as an indication of translation errors in the target language version.

Back-translation is by far the most popular quality assessment tool used in international and cross-cultural social research. In the realm of international nursing research, a recent survey (Maneesriwongul and Dixon 2004:175) showed that out of forty-seven studies devoted to instrument translation, thirty-eight used back-translation. In the area of international marketing, similar trends prevail: thirty-four out of forty-five reviewed international survey reports indicate the use of the back-translation procedure (Douglas and Craig 2007:31). Nevertheless, there are critical voices, too; some critics even claim that "back translation has no clear scientific basis and its use casts doubts on the ability of translators" (McKenna and Doward 2005: 89). Even proponents of the back-translation methodology warn against its uncritical use (Brislin 1986:161). In fact, most criticism stems not from the nature of the method itself, but from its uncritical application; very often researchers simply indicate that back-translation was used to validate the translation, but do not describe the details of the procedure.

It is important to mention that back-translation is never used as a stand-alone tool; it is part of a complicated translation procedure that varies depending on the research field and the purposes of the translation project. For example, in the field of quality of life and patient-reported outcomes research, the best practices have been identified, summarized and offered as guidelines for translating questionnaires (Wild *et al* 2005). According to these guidelines, back-translation is just one of the ten steps in the questionnaire translation process. In short, these are: 1) preparation; 2) forward translation, done simultaneously by two independent translators; 3) forward translation reconciliation, whereby the forward translations are compared and merged into one by either one of the forward translators or an independent translator; 4) back-translation, done independently by two translators who do not have access to the source text; 5) back-translation review, performed by an expert who compares the back-translations with the original text, identifies discrepancies and discusses with the translator who did the reconciliation if any changes need to be made; 6) harmonization, whereby back-translations of a number of language versions are compared to achieve a consistent approach in addressing translation issues; 7) pilot testing on a small group of patients; 8) review of pilot testing results and finalization; 9) proofreading; and 10) final report, that documents all the steps of the translation process for the client (adapted after Wild *et al* 2005).

There are numerous modifications of this translation process, but the general algorithm is the following: forward translation > back-translation > back-translation review and discussion > finalization. I believe that the most critical stage here is the review process, whereby a reviewer compares back-translation with the original and tries to identify possible errors or problem areas. In my view, the success of this process depends on the linguistic skills and linguistic knowledge of a reviewer and her general understanding of what is involved in the translation process. Practical as it may be, the back-translation procedure cannot do without the support of a sound linguistic theory. I suggest that cognitive linguistics can be successfully used as a "clear scientific basis" not only for the back-translation process, but also for describing translation phenomena in general.

This does not mean that the back-translation has been used for over five decades without any theoretical consideration. Richard W. Brislin, one of the most quoted authors in the area of

back-translation, claims that "translation quality can be predicted, and that a functionally equivalent translation can be demonstrated when responses to the original and the target versions are studied" (Brislin 1970:185). He based this statement on Nida's idea that one of the requirements of translation is "to produce a similar response" (Nida 1964:164). At the same time, Brislin agrees with Nida that equivalence of meaning is the most important aspect of translation (*ibid.*). The problem, in my view, with such a framework is that meaning was viewed from an objectivist position, the approach adopted in the mainstream linguistics of the day. This contrasts with the view adopted in cognitive linguistics, which treats meaning as inherently dynamic and equates it with conceptualization, as described below.

## 2. Cognitive linguistics and back-translation

The idea of bringing together cognitive linguistics and translation studies is not new: in 1993 Elżbieta Tabakowska published a pioneering work that applied the cognitive framework to translation theory (Tabakowska 1993); and a more recent publication skillfully ties together cognitive linguistics with the problem of translation universals (Halverson 2003). It is important to recognize from the onset that cognitive linguistics (CL) is not a specific and well-delimited theory, but rather "an approach that has adopted a common set of guiding principles, assumptions and perspectives which have led to a diverse range of complementary, overlapping (and sometimes competing) theories" (Evans & Green 2006:3). It originated in the early 1970s primarily as a reaction to formal approaches to language, particularly to generative grammar. CL is also closely connected to the development of cognitive science in the 1960s and 1970s, especially to the research on human categorization, as well as to earlier traditions such as Gestalt psychology (*ibid.*).

What makes CL distinctly different from other schools of thought is that it treats language as a primarily semantic phenomenon; in other words, meaning is the cornerstone of the CL enterprise. The term *cognitive* in *cognitive linguistics* not only signals

> that language is a psychologically real phenomenon (and that linguistics is part of the cognitive sciences), but also that the processing and storage of information is a crucial design feature of language. Linguistics is not just about knowledge of the language… but language itself is a form of knowledge – and has to be analyzed accordingly, with a focus on meaning (Geeraerts 2006: 3).

The mainstream tradition adheres to Ferdinand de Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole*, and takes the former as the main focus of linguistics. CL, on the contrary, is a usage-based model: it puts greater emphasis on the actual speech and builds its models not around abstract constructions but actual language-in-use.

As was mentioned above, cognitive linguistics is an approach to the study of language sharing some (albeit essential) common features rather than a neat and complete theory. For the purposes of this paper, it seems appropriate to focus on a more specific and well-defined theory of language that forms one of the cornerstones of the cognitive linguistics enterprise: Langacker's Cognitive Grammar (CG) (1987, 2000, 2002, 2008). Contrary to what the term 'grammar' may evoke, this theory treats both grammar and lexicon and views them as occupying the same continuum of symbolic units, differing only in the degree of schematicity. The two important claims of CG directly applicable here are that meaning resides in conceptualization and that grammar is symbolic, and therefore meaningful, in nature (Langacker 2008:161). Conceptualization presupposes that meaning is not objective in nature and that it resides both in our mental activity and in social interaction. Interlocutors actively

*negotiate* meanings "based on mutual assessment of their knowledge, thoughts, and intentions" (Langacker 2008: 4). In the context of the translation process, meanings need to be negotiated not only between interlocutors (in our case, the author of the source text and the translator), but also inside the translator's head, and the key to success here is whether the translator, in the search for equivalents, finds the proper point of access to the conceptual structures of the text; in other words, whether the translator understands the source close enough to the way that it is understood by the author of the original message.

As regards back-translation, its current understanding and use presupposes that in the case of successful or equivalent translation three conceptualizations – those of the author, translator, and back-translator – are all identical. Yet, clearly, this is not possible. What back-translation can do, instead, is shed some light on how conceptualization operated in the translator's and back translator's minds and thus help to make some inferences regarding the comparability of the source and the target versions. Back-translation is viewed here as an auxiliary process of clarifying the meaning (i.e. conceptualization) of the items in the source and the target language. This requires from reviewers special knowledge and skills allowing them to understand the possible patterns of conceptualization and explain the differences in the original and the back-translation not by the 'lack of equivalence', or 'lack of words with the same meaning', as is often done, but with the help of more substantial linguistic arguments.

Returning to the second claim of CG – that grammar is symbolic and therefore meaningful in nature – its direct implication for the back-translation process is that discussion should not focus on the lexical level only and that changes in the grammatical structure of sentences should not be explained merely by language idiosyncrasies but by the different ways of construal through which the situation in question is conceived and portrayed. These differences in construal necessarily change the meaning of the utterance, but the degree of deviation from the original language wording can be negligible and in such cases the translation can be deemed equivalent.

With this brief introduction, that obviously runs the risk of oversimplification, it is possible now to formulate the basic tenets of a CL theoretical framework for the back-translation process. Firstly, there is no inherent, or objective meaning in the original questionnaires; meanings arise through the process of conceptualization, be it that of the developers, translators, or reviewers. Secondly back-translation, then, should be used not to establish equivalence, but to make the conceptualization process as evident as possible to all the participants of the back-translation procedure, and finally, reviewers of the back-translation should be equipped with sound linguistic knowledge so that, on the basis of clues that can be singled out with the help of the tools offered by cognitive linguistics in general and the Cognitive Grammar theory in particular, they are able to identify, explain and account for the possible deviations from the meaning that the reviewer believes is intended in the original documents.

## 3. Research methodology and outcomes

The present research is based on a corpus of questionnaires that had been translated from English into Ukrainian. The questionnaires, devoted to various diseases and conditions, were used during international clinical trials by large pharmaceutical companies that subcontracted a UK-based company to simultaneously translate the original English questionnaires into a variety of languages, including Ukrainian. The company strictly followed the translation methodology described in Section 1, i.e. went through all ten steps of the process, including back-translation and back-translation review. There are a number of companies on the market

that offer such services; some specialize exclusively in the translation of patient-reported outcomes and quality of life questionnaires. They all follow some standard procedures which may differ from company to company; however, back-translation, with rare exceptions, is present in all methodologies.

An important point needs to be made here: back-translators working for the company which provided the questionnaire for this research were advised to make literal translations for general items and more conceptual translations for items dealing with subjective issues, such as those that referred to quality of life: "Depending upon the nature of the content of the measure, it should be made clear by the project manager whether a literal or conceptual back translation is required" (Wild *et al* 2005:100). This recommendation reveals some intuitive thinking that researchers have when dealing with translation: they realize that some items are more easily back-translated than others. This can be explained from the cognitive linguistics standpoint, in that subjective feelings, emotions, and attitudes (referred to here and in social research as 'quality of life issues') involve a much greater degree of deviation in individual conceptualizations than more objective items, such as instructions or explanations, which are grounded in social interaction to a greater extent.

The corpus includes thirty-seven questionnaires with 1,321 original English items, the same number of items translated into Ukrainian and, consequently, 2,642 back-translated items, which gives a total of 5,284 units for analysis. An 'item' is not an official term; it is used to refer to the most convenient unit to which the questionnaire can be broken down for the purposes of translation and review. An item can be a whole instruction line (e.g. "Please answer the following statements by filling in one circle for each statement"), a statement (e.g. "I felt down"), or a response option (e.g. "Most of the time"). During the back-translation review step, described briefly in Section 1, the discussion between the reviewer and the translator touched upon forty-three percent of the items; this means that the reviewer suspected some discrepancies with the original in almost half of the items. As a result of the discussion, ten percent of the total number of items were changed. In other words, after the back-translation process, every tenth item in the questionnaires underwent some changes.

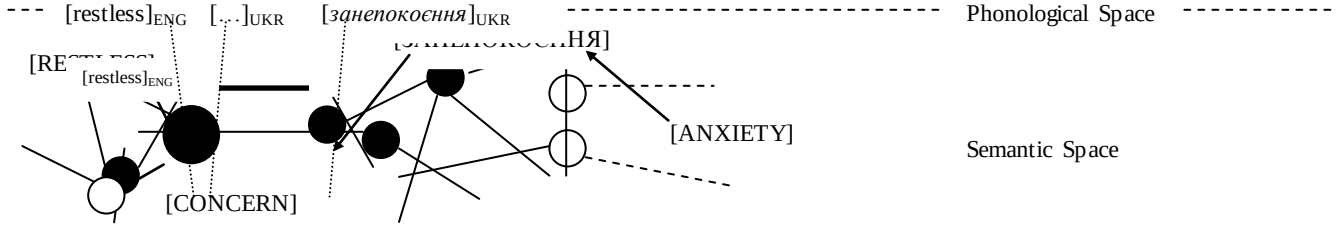
Generally speaking, any item from the corpus and its back-translation could be used to illustrate the theoretical framework proposed here. However, the items below have been selected as particularly vivid exemplars of explanation, while at the same time avoiding the need to delve into complicated theoretical details that lie beyond the scope of this paper. The examples contain an original English item, its forward translation (after the reconciliation step), and two back-translations. It is quite challenging to offer a gloss of the Ukrainian translation with two back-translations already there, which technically are a gloss for the reviewer; for this reason, it was decided to make very rigid word-for-word glosses using accompanying grammatical abbreviations that help to shed some light on the actual grammatical and lexical structure of the Ukrainian translation.

*Example (1)*
Original: Have you felt very **restless**?
Ukrainian translation: *Ви відчували сильне **занепокоєння**?*
You feel-PAST[2] strong **unrest**-ACC?
Back-translation 1: You have experienced significant **anxiety**?
Back-translation 2: Have you felt very **concerned**?

In example (1), we can see that back-translators associated the Ukrainian word for 'restless', *занепокоєння*, (*zanepokoyennia* – literally, 'feeling of unrest') with 'anxiety' and 'concern'. The reviewer believed that these words did not represent the concept of 'restless' adequately, so, during the discussion step, she asked the Ukrainian translator to find a closer synonym. The translator insisted that the Ukrainian translation was adequate. This example can be used to illustrate how the conceptualization process might be taking place (naturally, by means of a simplified model, since at the present moment there are no techniques that would actually make it possible to 'see' how the conceptualization is taking place inside a person's mind).

Figure 1 below can be viewed as a 'snapshot' of a possible pattern of conceptualization during the forward translation process. The diagram is divided into two parts: a so-called phonological space and a semantic space. This reflects the fact that any word, just as any symbol, is a form-meaning pairing. In the phonological space we see the actual word forms, in this case the English 'restless' and the Ukrainian '*занепокоєння*' ( 'feeling of unrest'). In the semantic space that could also be referred to as a semantic-conceptual space, the circles stand for concepts. Dotted lines join concepts with word forms in the phonological space. Small and capital letters stand for the phonological and semantic poles respectively (i.e. how we pronounce the words and what meaning we attach to these word forms). As we can see, concepts are not isolated: the lines that join them symbolize the fact that our conceptual world has a certain organization. In other words, there are some relations that hold between concepts, which can be thought of as organized into networks. The lines that join the concepts (or the nodes in the network) are of different length: this means that we perceive concepts as more or less similar to each other; longer lines indicate less similarity and shorter lines indicate more. The blank circles and dashed lines indicate that the degree of association weakens from the centre to the periphery. Not all the nodes are labelled: this is meant to represent the fact that we do not have the exact label for all the concepts, just because there is an infinite amount of concepts that has to be served with a limited number of words. But we are aware of them: the node between [RESTLESS] and [CONCERN], for example, represents a feeling where we would describe ourselves neither as 'restless' nor as 'concerned', but rather as 'feeling restless because of something and at the same time being concerned because of this something'.

*Figure 1. Pattern of conceptualization created during forward translation*



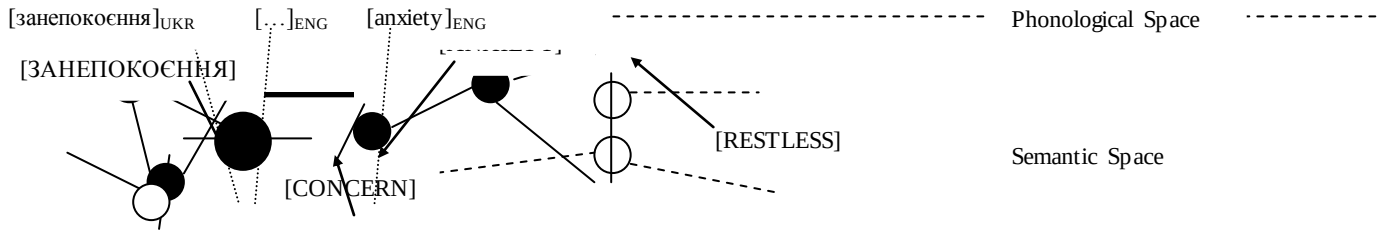

[2] PAST and ACC stand for 'Past Tense' and 'Accusative' accordingly. All such abbreviations are found at the end of the paper after the Conclusions.

Two important observations need to be made here. Firstly, as observed above, there are infinitely more concepts than words - recall the difficulty we all have when trying to find the proper words to express 'exactly' what we feel and failing to do so. Secondly, no matter how many languages we speak, we can claim with a fair degree of certainty that there is only one conceptual world in our minds (at least psychologists and psycholinguists have not yet found counterevidence to this claim). Furthermore, the model has certain limitations: first of all, the diagrams represented here are absolutely arbitrary and used only as an illustration of the model. In other words, the lengths of the lines joining the nodes, or the number of nodes in the network, are not representing any actual picture. Moreover, the diagram by nature is static, while conceptualization, which it is supposed to represent, is by definition dynamic and always changing. Even if it was possible to develop a satisfactory diagram of a conceptual network around a certain concept, like RESTLESS, it would hold true only for this specific use of the word in this specific context at this specific point of time and only for this language user. This is why I refer to this diagram as a 'snapshot'.

Now it is possible to try and describe how the conceptualization was (theoretically) taking place inside the forward translator's head. The translator has a concept in his mind that he associates with the English word form 'restless' in this particular context. However, he cannot find a Ukrainian word that might represent the same concept (this is represented by [...] in the Phonological Space). What can a translator do in such a situation? He browses the network around [RESTLESS] to find a concept that might be represented in the Ukrainian phonological space. In other words, he is looking for a concept that is 'embodied' in a Ukrainian word as close as possible to [RESTLESS]. This relation is represented with a bold line. In this specific case, the translator chose the word '*занепокоєння*' ('feeling of unrest'). Once again, in a different situation, for example, when translating a different questionnaire with the word 'restless', the same translator would have a different network and may well use a different Ukrainian word. Notice that the forward translator does have [ANXIETY] and [CONCERN] in his network, but they are quite peripheral to the meaning of [RESTLESS], according to his conceptualization.

The back translator (see Figure 2) has the same task and the same challenge: there is a conceptualization of [ЗАНЕПОКОЄННЯ] in her head, but she lacks its phonological pole in English. The closest concept that stands to [ЗАНЕПОКОЄННЯ] in her network and that can be expressed in English is that of [ANXIETY], whereas [RESTLESS] is quite peripheral.

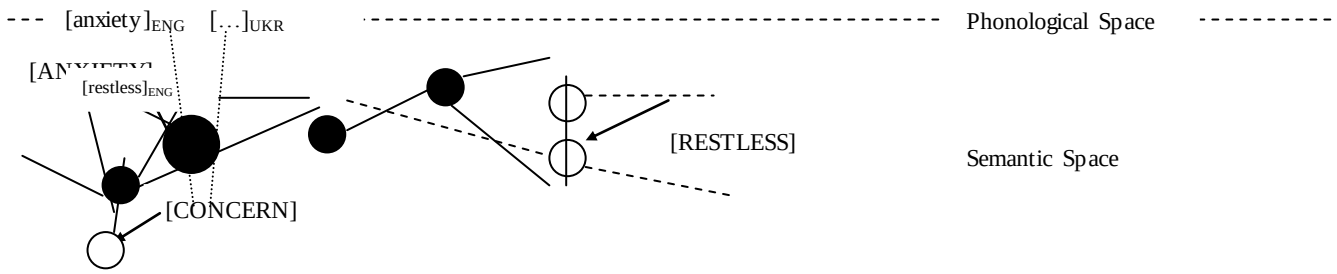
*Figure 2. Pattern of conceptualization created during back-translation*




We can anticipate that the reviewer (see Figure 3) would not be happy with the forward translator's choice, because in her network [ANXIETY] is too distant from [RESTLESS] to allow synonymy. But the reviewer, in fact, says that she is not happy with the *back translator's* choice. If we look at Figures 1 and 3, it is obvious that the reviewer's and the

forward translator's networks are very similar and that they both agree that [ANXIETY] is a poor choice to represent [RESTLESS]. Once again, I have to emphasize that the networks represented in the figures above are arbitrary drawings used only as a rough illustration of the conceptualization process.

*Figure 3. Pattern of conceptualization created during back-translation review*




In order to avoid such misunderstandings, it is suggested that the reviewer explains the meaning of the nodes in her network (sometimes the phonological pole might be a whole phrase instead of a single word) and asks the forward translator do the same. In other words, not just individual nodes but whole frameworks should be compared. This does not necessarily mean that reviewers need to draw sketches similar to the figures above and ask the translators do the same. What the reviewer can do instead is to tell, for example, what kind of behaviour she would describe as restless, what factors may bring about restlessness, what words she considers as synonymous to 'restless', what definition of 'restless' she can give, etc. All this information will inevitably change the translator's network around the concept of RESTLESS. As a result, he may either feel confirmed in his choice or try and find another representation for RESTLESS in his native language.

In example (2) below, the central concept 'self-conscious' was back-translated as 'embarrassed' and 'uncomfortable'. What does this tell the reviewer? The first impression would be that the Ukrainian language does not have a direct equivalent for 'self-conscious', and that the synonym used in the translation does not fully reflect the meaning that the original author had in mind. If we look closer, however, and draw on intuition and dictionary entries, both 'embarrassed' and 'uncomfortable' are present in the meaning of 'self-conscious'. They are part and parcel of its conceptualization. In this specific example, the forward translator does have a concept for 'self-conscious' in his mind, but he expressed it with the means that the Ukrainian language offers him. Thanks to the dialogical nature of back-translation, the reviewer can ask the forward translator to confirm that the concept of 'self-conscious' is prominent enough in the Ukrainian translation or if there is another synonym where it is even more salient.

*Example (2)*
Original: Because of my weight I am **self-conscious**.
Ukrainian translation: ***Я комплексую*** *через свою вагу*.
I [experience] **complex**-PRES because [of] my weight-ACC.
Back-translation 1: I feel **embarrassed** because of my weight.
Back-translation 2: I feel **uncomfortable** because of my weight.

In examples (3) and (4), the discussion between the translator and the reviewer dealt with the networks of [BOTHERED] - [WORRIED] - [CONCERNED] and [PRODUCTIVE] -

[EFFICIENT(LY)] - [EFFECTIVE(LY)]. In example (3), it was agreed that the Ukrainian term accurately represented the English original, whereas in (4) a decision was made to change the Ukrainian term for 'productive' since both the translator and the reviewer agreed that, in this particular context, the Ukrainian word was too remote from what the original intended to say.

*Example (3)*
Original: Over the past two weeks, how **bothered** have you been by...
Ukrainian translation: *Протягом останніх двох тижнів, якою мірою Вас* ***турбували*** *наступні фактори*:
During last-GEN two-GEN weeks-GEN, what-INSTR extent-INSTR you-ACC **bothered** following factors:
Back-translation 1: During the last two weeks to what extent have you been **worried** by the following factors:
Back-translation 2: Within last two weeks to what extend you were **concerned** about the following factors:

*Example (4)*
Original: Because of my weight I am less **productive** than I could be.
Ukrainian translation: Через свою вагу я не можу працювати так **ефективно**, як міг (могла) би.
Because-of my-ACC weight-ACC I cannot work as **efficiently** as could-MASC (could-FEM) [SUBJ PART].
Back-translation 1: Because of my weight it is difficult for me to perform as **efficiently** as I could.
Back-translation 2: I cannot work as **effectively** as I could, due to my weight.

The examples (1) – (4) above can be taken as purely lexical ones, as they deal with individual words. However, one of the central claims of Cognitive Grammar is that lexicon and grammar form a continuum of symbolic units. The limited number of examples presented below to illustrate this point is conditioned not by the lack of possible examples in the corpus: on the contrary, every item and its translation and back-translations can be analyzed with the help of CG tools. The limitations are of a practical character: it was necessary to give at least a brief outline of the grammatical concepts behind the processes observed, so only those examples were chosen where it was believed that explanation would not be too cumbersome or complicated. Thus, example (5) below illustrates Langacker's point that modal verbs derive from lexical verbs (Langacker 2008:304). Here, a lexical verb (in the form of the past participle) was used in the passive construction in Ukrainian. A reviewer equipped with such knowledge would be able to make a more balanced and informed judgment about the equivalence of translation.

*Example (5)*
Original: You must complete this form independently at each visit. Therefore, you **MUST NOT** review your prior assessments.
Ukrainian translation: *Протягом кожного візиту Ви повинні самостійно заповнювати цей бланк. У зв'язку з цим,виконуючи поточну оцінку Вам* ***ЗАБОРОНЕНО*** *переглядати свої попередні відповіді.*
During each visit-GEN You [are] obliged independently fill in-INF this form-ACC. In connection with this, performing current evaluation-ACC You-DAT **FORBID**-PART II review-INF your previous responses-ACC.
Back-translation 1: You should complete this form yourself at each visit. In this respect, when making the current evaluation, you are **FORBIDDEN** from looking back over your previous answers.
Back-translation 2: During each visit you must complete this form independently. In view of this, using the point by point assessment **YOU ARE PROHIBITED** from reviewing your previous answers.

The Ukrainian translation in example (6) can be interpreted as 'an assessment done by the patient'. However, the original item has some inherent ambiguity as it can also be construed as 'an assessment of the patient (done by someone else)', provided that it stands alone as a title and has no additional context. Where does this ambiguity come from? Cognitive Grammar offers a comprehensive way to explain the source of this difficulty. 'Patient assessment' is a composite structure, consisting of two component structures: [PATIENT/patient] and [ASSESSMENT/assessment] (capitals stand for the semantic and phonological poles respectively). The difference in meaning of the composite expression depends on which component structure it takes its *profile* from. In Langacker's words, "[t]he profile can...be characterized as what the expression is conceived as designating or referring to within its base (its conceptual reference)" (Langacker 2008:66). Profile is an example of language asymmetry – we tend to give more prominence to one linguistic (and mental) phenomenon at the expense of other related elements that constitute its *base*. In this specific case, the Ukrainian translator profiled the word 'assessment'. The reviewer should not have any doubts about the equivalence of translation since in both back-translations, although they are quite different from the original, the word 'assessment' (or 'evaluation') is also profiled.

*Example (6)*
Original: **patient assessment**.
Ukrainian translation: **оцінка** стану здоров'я **пацієнтом**.
evaluation condition-GEN health-GEN patient-INSTR.
Back-translation 1: **patient's evaluation** of state of health.
Back-translation 2: **assessment of patient** condition.

Profiling is also crucial in cases when we observe mismatches in the parts of speech, as in example (7), where *painful joints* came to be represented as *my joints hurt*. Examples like this are not uncommon in the corpus, and reviewers often wonder if the replacement of an adjective with a verb is justified and whether a closer equivalent could not be found. According to Langacker, "*what determines an expression's grammatical category is not its overall conceptual content, but the nature of its profile in particular*" (Langacker 2008:98 my italics). In other words, both verbs and adjectives can be used to describe the same situation, with the former profiling a temporal, and the latter – an atemporal relation. The absence of 'I am troubled' in the Ukrainian translation in (7) should not cause a problem in the translation, since the dynamic nature of the situation is rendered by the verb 'ache'. Curiously enough, the

second back-translator made a journey in the opposite direction and translated the verb with the same adjective as in the original, thus proving that the conceptualization that the Ukrainian phrase evokes is very similar to that brought about by the English utterance.

*Example (7)*
Original: I am troubled by **painful** or stiff joints.
Ukrainian translation: Мої суглоби **болять**, їх важко згинати.
My joints **hurt**, they-ACC difficult bend-INF
Back-translation 1: My joints **ache**, it is difficult to bend them.
Back-translation 2: My joints **are painful** and it is hard to bend them.

## Conclusions

Back-translation is currently the most popular tool for assessing the quality of translation used for cross-cultural social research purposes; there are no indications that any other methodology will replace it in the near future. Quality of translation is understood primarily as equivalence, and back-translation is used precisely to establish whether there is equivalence between the target and the source language versions. The procedure is based on the objectivist view of linguistic meaning, i.e. that there is some objective meaning that can be established for linguistic expressions. Cognitive Grammar, as one of the most important and well-elaborated theories in the general paradigm of Cognitive Linguistics, argues, on the contrary, that meaning resides in conceptualization, and that interlocutors actively 'negotiate' meaning in order to understand each other. I propose that back-translation procedure is the ideal platform for such negotiation. The most important precondition for the success of the process is to make sure that all its participants, and especially reviewers, understand the nature of linguistic meaning and share with each other their understanding of specific expressions. Another important claim of CG, that grammar is symbolic in nature, may, in practical terms, help reviewers to identify problem areas in translation by analyzing the back-translations alone; after identifying suspected problem areas they need to move on to discussing them with the translators and try to find out whether in fact the translation needs to be changed. Language, after all, is all about communication.

**Abbreviations:**
PAST – Past Tense
ACC – Accusative
GEN – Genitive
INF – Infinitive
DAT – Dative
FEM – Feminine
INSTR – Instrumental
MASC – Masculine
PART II – Past Participle
SUBJ PART – Subjunctive Particle

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