

TRANSLATING NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC HEADLINES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Nurken AUBAKIR¹, Velinur U. MAKHPIROV², Aida K. SADYKOVA³,
Zhanat S. KANLYBAYEVA⁴

¹Department of Translation and Philology, Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages, Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

²Department of East Studies, Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages, Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

³Department of Foreign Language Education Methodology, Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages, Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

⁴Department of Foreign Language and APK, T. Zhurgenov Kazakh National Academy of Arts, Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan

Abstract: *Translating headlines has long been one of the most difficult tasks in the translator's agenda. Journalists need to think about its brevity, capacity, content, originality and style when creating a headline. There are different types of heading classifications. Some linguists subdivide titles into factual, figurative, and cliché, as well as nominal and verbal headings. Another less common type of classification is a division into regional and relational headings. The aim of the article is to investigate the translation procedures that are followed during the rendering of headlines of National Geographic magazine from English into Russian and Kazakh languages using both the traditional classification of nominal and verb titles and the new theory, dividing the headings into regional and relational ones. This paper investigates the translation procedures that are followed during the rendering of headlines of National Geographic magazine from English into Russian and Kazakh languages using both the traditional classification of nominal and verb titles and the new theory, dividing the headings into regional and relational ones. The Russian edition is published starting from October 2003 whereas the Kazakh edition of the National Geographic magazine is published only since 2016 and the translations of the latter are yet to be analysed.*

Keywords: nominal and verbal headlines, regional and relational headlines, National Geographic Qazaqstan, Kazakh language, National Geographic Russia, Russian language.

Headlines, as linguistic means, introduce a topic of the article to the readers and encourage them to read it. The word 'headline' is defined as "a line of words printed in large letters as the title of a story in a newspaper..." by the Cambridge Dictionary; while the Oxford Dictionary describes, "headlines are the most important items of news in a newspaper or a broadcast news bulletin". The headline is one of the crucial components of journalistic articles since words written in a large, black type mechanically catch the eye of a reader and therefore the probability of its perusal raises up. In case if a headline does not capture the attention, there is a likelihood that the article will remain

unread. The ill-sorted headline can devalue all efforts of a journalist or an author spent on writing good material, thus their creation often takes not less time than writing the article itself.

There are two main functions of headlines: informative and communicative. It must show to potential readers what the article is about, and encourage them to read this article. Therefore, the title can be compared with shop windows. As a signboard or a store window is a promise that the one can find products of this nature in the store, so the headline is a promise that the article will contain certain information. Therefore, the requirements for the headline in general terms are as follows: to be attractive enough to interest the readers, but do not disorient them, promising what is not in the article. Deception causes irritation, and eventually, a person will stop reading the publication, which promises in headlines information missed in the article.¹

Andrey Miroshnichenko² defines three types of headlines: factual, figurative and headline-cliché. The factual title in the form of a simple sentence, normally with a verb, conveys the main idea or intrigue of the text. It is often used in the business press. The presence of the verb gives the headline dynamics and corresponds to the business style. Headings of information and analytical genres usually include verbs while publicist genres are freer in the choice of headline. In National Geographic magazine, factual headlines are mostly used in a form of questions, where explorers, conservationists, innovators, and other personalities who are working for positive changes are interviewed in a quick, but informative way. For example, “Were humans built to drink alcohol?” (September 2016, Patrick McGovern, archaeologist) “Why am I bullish about the Earth’s future?” (October 2016, Thomas Lovejoy, conservationist). A figurative headline forms an emotional reaction, designed to draw the reader into the text. It is clear that National Geographic editorial board pay much attention to the play of words and meanings: “Pandas Gone Wild” (August 2016), “The Cold Rush” (March 2016).

The headline-cliché uses well-known aphorisms, clichés, catchphrases, and sayings, proverbs to provoke in the minds of the reader stable emotional and semantic associations that facilitate the reader's “entry” into the text. Usage of mentioned lexical devices is a well-known technique in journalism. However, with an inept approach, the cliché heading often causes aversion, so authors try to be careful with them. In most cases, such headlines as “One step forward and two steps back”, “Vertigo from success” – look inappropriate and ostentatious. For the successful application of the title-cliché, one must have a sense of proportion and taste. Without vulgarity and deliberateness,

¹ A.V. Kolesnichenko, *Practical Journalism. Tutorial*, Moscow State University named after M.V. Lomonosov, Moscow, 2010.

² A. Miroshnichenko, *Work in the Press Service. Journalism for Press Secretaries*, MediaLine, Alpina Publisher, Moscow, 2012, 192 p.

such headlines usually succeed only to great masters. Here are a few examples from National Geographic: “Deadly Trade” (October 2016), “A Fight to Survive” (March 2017). Other researchers divide headlines into nominal and verbal.³ A nominal headline is an incomplete sentence, usually a phrase from two nouns or a noun and an adjective. For instance, “The Cold Rush”, “The Other Iraq” (March 2016). A verbal headline is, on the contrary, a complete sentence, and it can either be accompanied by a subtitle or act independently. As a rule, the verbal headline is used in short news, while nominal – in larger materials.

Theoretical overview

The inferred theory is that the translation of headlines requires the acquirement of syntactic specificities and preferences in both source and target languages. In rendering titles, the translator’s main tool is syntactic transformations and the key constraint they have is to keep the style of the original text. As far as rendering is concerned, it has transpired that translators often modify the original text in order either to make it more alluring or to affect per users. Lakoff⁴ asserted that influence methods vary from one culture to another and, therefore, convincing different groups of people about a similar thing, as a rule, requires diverse methods of persuasion. Dor⁵ claims that headlines are employed as “relevance optimizers”. Ifantidou⁶ also notes that headlines “aim to perform two functions: summarize and draw attention to the full-text”. She also observed that if “there is a lack of information in a headline regarding the article, their function to pull in may be more promising as an objective to implement.”

The propensity of intensifying data⁷ may seem quite irrelevant to the translation of article-headlines in National Geographic; however, it must be remembered that regardless of whether National Geographic is not a newspaper but a scientific magazine, the purpose of attracting a large number of readers is still germane. Qualitative translation of headlines is as crucial as

³ A.S. Vanderbergen, *The Grammar of Headlines in the Times: 1870-1970*, vol. 95, AWLSK, Brussels, 1981, 362 p.; A.V. Kolesnichenko, *Practical Journalism. Tutorial*, Moscow State University named after M.V. Lomonosov, Moscow, 2010, 159 p.

⁴ R.T. Lakoff, *Talking Power, The Politics of language in Our Lives*, Basic Books, New York, 1990, 324 p.

⁵ D. Dor, “On newspaper headlines as relevance optimizers”, in *Journal of Pragmatics*, 2003, vol. 35, no. 5, p. 695-721.

⁶ E. Ifantidou, “Newspaper headlines and relevance: Ad hoc concepts in ad hoc contexts”, in *Journal of Pragmatics*, 2009, vol. 41, no. 4, p. 699-720.

⁷ P. Charaudeau, “Discours journalistique et positionnements énonciatifs”, in *Frontières et dérivés. Semen*, 2006, no. 22, Available at <http://journals.openedition.org/semen/2793>

their creation process, as translators seek to interest readers and encourage them to read the article. Therefore, the rendering of press articles requires the abilities of a translator as well as of a gifted columnist. The translator is expected to be aware of the rules of journalistic genre and to use them dexterously, always reckoning in different journalistic conventions (in both source and target languages).

Hence, word-for-word translation and calquing do not enable the translator to cope with these tasks, and therefore can be considered as inaccurate translation. Polish researcher Marta Pikor-Niedzialek⁸ in her paper analyzed rendering National Geographic headlines from English to Polish using traditional and new approaches. Headlines, as a rule, in British and American newspapers and magazines, are written in “telegraphic language”, i.e., with the help of concise, extremely laconic phrases in which all semantically secondary elements are omitted. At the same time, in order to ensure maximum intelligibility, headlines are built based on common vocabulary and simple grammatical means.

Methodology

The corpus under consideration comprises article headlines drawn from electronic editions of English version and Kazakh and Russian paper monthly editions of National Geographic. Drawing from a corpus of headlines, gathered from 2016 issues, our study demonstrates that translation of headlines tends to ignore standard norms of length and clarity, giving a priority to the attraction of the narratee’s attention. We investigate in our corpus some phenomena in order to enunciate conclusions about the linguistic regularities emerging in the rendering of various discourse genres. Some scholars categorize headlines in terms of nominal and verbal headlines.⁹ The focus here is on the absence and presence of a verb. The “nominal-verbal” classification is a rather structural distinction and causes some difficulties as underappreciated importance of semantic side of headlines.

Schneider¹⁰ gives illustrates the possibility of transmission of action by dint of adjectives and prepositions usage. Langacker,¹¹ who claims that not

⁸M. Pikor-Niedzialek, “The Semantic Analysis of National Geographic Headlines: The Case Study of English and Polish”, in *US-China Foreign Language*, 2014, vol. 12, no. 11, p. 886-894.

⁹A.S. Vanderbergen, *The Grammar of Headlines in the Times: 1870-1970*, vol. 95, AWLSK, Brussels, 1981, 362 p.; H. Maurer, “The development of the press headlines from the middle of the 20th century to the present”, in *Swiss English Works*, vol. 70, Francke Verlag, Berlin, 1972, 188 p.

¹⁰ K. Schneider, “The emergence and development of headlines in British newspapers”, in *English Media Texts Past and Present: Language and Textual Structure*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam, 2000, p. 45-65.

only verbs can express what he calls “relations”, but also adjectives and prepositions, developed this theory. Schneider¹² used this concept distinguishing between regional qualities (expressed by nouns) and relational qualities (expressed by adjectives, verbs, and prepositions). In the new classification, Schneider defines the following subdivisions: regional structures comprise proper nouns, common nouns, common nouns pre-modified by denominal adjectives (Ghost lands, Flight School), and common nouns in connection with the preposition of and/or the genitive (Kingdom of Girls). These examples are seen as profiling a region but do not indicate any relation in the sense of action. All the headlines consisting of proper nouns have been counted as regional structures (Walk on China’s Wild Side); the only exception is proper nouns pre-modified by deverbal adjectives since they have been classified as relational adjectives. All common nouns pre-modified by deverbal or evaluative adjectives are classified as relational adjectives.

Relational nominal structures, in contrast, consist of deverbal nouns (Inspiration for Exploration), deverbal nouns that modify common nouns or are modified by common nouns; the most relational type of headlines is being gerunds or verbal nouns in -ing (Seeing the Light or the Crossing). Relational adjectives include deverbal adjectives or evaluative adjectives. Relational prepositions are all prepositions other than *of*, the most relational type probably is being local prepositions such as *in*. Relational verbs include finite verb forms, infinitives, participles (“The People’s Princess’ Remembered), and relational subject-complement structures.

Results and discussion

Authors consider the titles of National Geographic magazines, breaking them down into two classifications: nominal with verbal, and regional with relational. Table 1 presents nominal headlines of National Geographic in English, Russian and Kazakh versions. As usual, the translation is semantic in some cases and literal in other cases. Some articles are not published in the Russian edition. As seen from Table 1, almost all the headings that are nominal in the English language are nominal in both Russian and Kazakh languages. In the first example, English headline “Bloody Good” does not give an idea of exactly who will be discussed in the article, there are illustrations for the explanation. The title either tells that it will be about something bloody and possibly cruel or about something damn good. Whereas the Russian version

¹¹ R.W. Langacker, *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar. Vol. 1: Theoretical Prerequisites*, Stanford University Press, Redwood City, 1987, 540 p.

¹² K. Schneider, “The emergence and development of headlines in British newspapers”, in *English Media Texts Past and Present: Language and Textual Structure*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam, 2000, p. 45-65.

tells us about some “Dead Devourers”, and Kazakh article is called “Birds Carrying out Bloodshed”. Devourers in Russian is a noun derived from a verb *to devour*. *Carrying out Bloodshed* in Kazakh is one adjective. Russian and Kazakh versions show some acting characteristic and they do not have verbs in the composition.

“The Great White Mystery” became “Big White Shark” in Russian, which gives the reader an idea of the content of the article to a greater extent than in the English and Kazakh versions. If there were no shark photos in the magazine, it is impossible to understand by the title of the article in the English and Kazakh languages, which is a word for word translation from English that the article is about a shark. A great white mystery can be Antarctica, a cloud, a white food product, and so on. In addition, Russian translators went even further. In order not to leave in the title of the article only the name of the animal, and add more mystery, the article asks whether the shark is an enemy or a victim. However, in any case, the verb in the title is not presented in all versions of the journal, and the headline remains nominal.

Table 1: Nominal headlines of National Geographic in English with translation into Russian and Kazakh

English version	Russian version	Kazakh version
Bloody good January 2016	Пожиратели мертвых January 2016	Қанқұмар құстар February 2016
Science vs. Mosquitos August 2016	Наука против вампиров August 2016	Мазасыз масалар August 2016
The DNA Revolution August 2016	Скальпель для генов: как взломать код жизни August 2016	ДНҚ төңкерісі August 2016
Backstage at the Big Top September 2016	Вьетнамский цирк October 2016	Сахна сыртындағы өмір September 2016
Deadly Trade October 2016	Смертельные игры November 2016	Азғын Сауда November 2016
The New Europeans October 2016	Новые европейцы October 2016	Жаңа Еуропалықтар (Еуропаның жаңа

		бейнесі) November 2016
Race to the Red Planet November 2016	Вперёд к Красной планете November 2016	Марс: Ғарыштағы жарыс January 2017

The analogical situation with “Backstage at the Big Top”, when the Russian nominal version contains the official representation of the article, simply calling “Vietnamese Circus”. Translation into Kazakh sounds like “Backstage Life”, and, as in English, we can talk about any backstage: theatrical, pop, and so on. Translation from English into Kazakh is not literal, but the same mysterious title is remaining. Nominal in all three languages “Science vs. Mosquitos” is interesting to study as there are free translations that reflect the semantic nuances of the translation languages. In Russian, mosquitoes have become vampires. In general, they both drink blood, so there is some truth in this, and vampires can be used as a figurative meaning for mosquitoes. In the Kazakh language, they removed the word Science from the title, leaving the Mosquitoes and adding to an adjective restless or anxious. An interesting fact is that, although the headlines have lost its original exact meaning, since the “Science vs. Mosquitoes” will not sound clear and beautiful in the translation languages, but the general type of the title remains nominal.

The article about new Europeans in the content and in the text itself is called in two versions in all three editions. In English and Russian, this is either “New Europeans” or “New Europe”. In Kazakh, it is either “New Europeans” or the “New Look of Europe”. In all three languages, the headline is nominal and the translations coincide with each other by almost 100%. There are two exceptions in Table 1 when nominal headline is translated as verbal one. First of them is “Midnight Slalom” rendering into Kazakh as “Light Seen from the Night Mountains”. Notably, the verb seen could be omitted and the heading would be almost 100% left with the same meaning. Nevertheless, the authors decided to add this verb for clarity, and the titled ceased to be nominal when translated. Another exception is Russian rendering of “The DNA Revolution”. The Kazakh version is a literal translation, and in Russian National Geographic for August 2016, only photo helped to find the article. The caption in the Russian is radically different from the original and from the Kazakh literal translation and sounds like “Scalpel for Gene: How to Crack the Code of Life”. In the Russian version, the verb crack appeared, and it changed the type of the original nominal heading to the verbal headline. In addition, there may be a reverse situation where verbal headlines in English are translated as nominal ones (Table 2).

Table 2: Examples of exceptions where verbal headlines in English are translated as nominal ones

English version	Russian version	Kazakh version
Losing the Canyon September 2016	Большой каньон – не парк развлечений September 2016	Қатер құшағындағы Гранд Каньон September 2016
Where Dreams Live On December 2016	По следам будущего December 2016	Болашақтың бұлдыр елесі December 2016

Translation of the verbal heading “Losing the Canyon” into Russian and Kazakh languages conveys the meaning of the text, but it is a very loose translation, losing the verb and adding new words to the headline. The Russian title says that the “Big Canyon is not an amusement park”. At the same time, in the Russian language, it is not necessary to add the verb to be, it is omitted and this Russian headline can be classified as nominal. Not an amusement park – this is the description of the main noun – the Grand Canyon. In the Kazakh language, the title remains nominal, but the translation is different from the original and from the Russian version. In the title of the “Grand Canyon in the embrace of danger”, the original geographical name of the proper name is preserved, which is not done in the Russian version. An embrace of danger is a phrase not quite characteristic of Russian and English, but in Kazakh, this phrase is perfectly intertwined with the subject of an article on the ecological disaster of the canyon, and it is a frequently used stable expression.

The second example contains a verb live on in English. The article is about a photographer working at an abandoned research station in Tanzania. The few remaining employees of the scientific station dream that someday life will return to this station, built some time ago in tropical thickets. About these dreams, English headline speaks. The Russian and Kazakh translation of the headline tells about the other side of the story: that in this research station it was once planned, during colonial times, to study the latest technologies, to make discoveries for the benefit of the future generation. Due to the lack of funding in a poor African country, scientific research of the future is not needed at this time by the state. However, the trace of these studies remained.

Thus, these Russian and Kazakh titles do not say anything about unfulfilled dreams, or that they live here, that is, there is no verb in the headline and the nominal heading has become completely different: “Following the Trail of the Future” in Russian and “Blurred Vision of the Future” in Kazakh. The difficulty of the classification is in distinguishing the border between nominal and verbal headlines. For example, *‘Ет жейтін өсімдік*

(Et zheitin osimdik)’, which is the translation of original “A plant that Preys”, can be rendered directly as “A plant that eats meat”. Here we can claim that this headline is an example of a verbal headline. Yet if to consider peculiarities of Kazakh language, the headline “The plant that eats meat” answer the question “what kind of a plant?”, “that eats” performing the role of an adjective. Headers containing verbs or verbal headlines are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Verbal headlines of National Geographic in English with translation into Russian and Kazakh

English version	Russian version	Kazakh version
Why (Claw) Size Matters? August 2016	Размер имеет значение: любовь в мире крабов August 2016	Қысқышың қандай, жігітім? August 2016
Pandas Gone Wild August 2016	С чего началась пандамания (Панды: спасенные в неволе) August 2016	Паңдана басқан паңдалар August 2016
Snail Shells Reveal Secret To Asymmetry November 2016	Не просто улитки November 2016	Ұлу сұлу November 2016

The first headline from the Table 2 contains a question in English: “Why (Claw) Size Matters?” Word *claw* suggests that the article will focus on animals with claws. The verb to matter is present in both Russian and English. The question in Russian became an affirmative sentence: “Size Matters: Love in the World of Crabs.” Only in Kazakh, the verbal heading became nominal, remaining interrogative, although it lost its original meaning. In Kazakh, the headline is: “What is your claw, dear?” The article about pandas in the August issue of 2016 attracts attention both with photos of cute animals and with the title. In the Russian version in one issue, the article appeared on different pages with different headings that fit the semantic translation of the original: “What Started Pandanism and Pandas: saved in captivity.” All three headings include verbs. The most interesting is the Kazakh headline since it contains the consonant Kazakh word ‘паңдану’ (pandanu) or the stable phrase ‘паңдана басу’ (pandana basu)’, which translates as being arrogant. Thus, the Kazakh headline sounds like Arrogant Pandas. The meaning of the title does not coincide with the original either in Russian or in Kazakh languages. The only common word panda allows us to understand that the content of the article is identical. In Kazakh, the uniqueness of the translated title is that it contains a word that

sounds the same as the panda, and therefore, in our opinion, this is an example of one of the most successful headline translations, distinguished by the creativity and imagination of translators.

The situation is similar with the latest example from Table 2. The long English version was reduced to “Not Just a Snail” in the Russian version, and to the “Snail Beauty” in the Kazakh version. Kazakh translators, as well as in the previous case, used the consonant words ‘улу (ulu – snail)’ and ‘сұлу (sulu – beauty)’, which has nothing to do with the original title. The verb is present only in the English version, both rendered headings became nominal, and the translation is very different from the original. The second type of headlines classification is regional and relational classification. Using 12 National Geographic numbers from 2016, we analyzed headlines dividing English versions into regional and relational. The breakdown is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Regional and Relational Headlines in National Geographic

Regional headlines		
English version	Russian version	Kazakh version
The Cold Rush March 2016	Арктическая лихорадка April 2016	Арктика аязына бет алу April 2016
The Power of Eight December 2016	Сила восьми November 2016	Сегізаяқ December 2016
Urban Parks April 2016	Городские парки April 2016	Қалалық саябақтар May 2016
Lost empire of the Maya September 2016	Затерянный мир майя (Змеинные цари майя) September 2016	Қираған империя September 2016
Relational headlines		
English version	Russian version	Kazakh version
This is Your Brain on Nature January 2016	Лечебный пейзаж, или Как бороться со стрессом с помощью природы February 2016	Саябақтар қасиеті February 2016
A Plant That Preys April 2016	Смертельная ловушка для муравьев April 2016	Ет жейтін өсімдік May 2016

Why (Claw) Size Matters? August 2016	Размер имеет значение: любовь в мире крабов August 2016	Қысқышың қандай, жігітім? August 2016
Pandas Gone Wild August 2016	С чего началась пандамания (Панды: спасенные в неволе) August 2016	Паңдана басқан пандалар August 2016
The Shipwreck Shark August 2016	Длиннокрылая акула: спутница кораблекрушений August 2016	Апатқа ұшыратқыш акула October 2016
Snail Shells Reveal Secret To Asymmetry November 2016	Не просто улитки November 2016	Ұлу сұлу November 2016

As mentioned above, regional headlines include headings containing proper names, adjectives derived from nouns, as well as headings that include the preposition *of*. So, first, we will analyze why we attributed this or that title to the regional type. 1. Headers with proper names:

The Other Iraq
Return of Seychelles
Lost Empire of the Maya

Almost all proper names were preserved as part of the translated headings, except for the last example, which is translated into Kazakh as the Destroyed Empire, without mentioning the name of the tribe. 2. Headlines with adjectives derived from nouns:

The Cold Rush
Tsunami Memories
Urban Parks

Words cold is often used both as a noun and as an adjective. The word tsunami here is not exactly adjective but it is a noun, and the headline could be Memories of a tsunami, which is also a regional headline. The word urban is used as adjective more often than as noun, but still in the example it can be considered as denominal adjective. Almost all translation variants also include adjectives derived from the noun, since almost all translations are verbatim. Only in the Kazakh translation, The Cold Rush is translated as Being Exposed to the Arctic Frost, or else it can be translated simply as the Arctic Frost. In any case, the verb appeared in the Kazakh version in connection with the specifics of the language. Therefore, in Kazakh, the name can be both regional

due to the presence of the proper name the Arctic and relational due to the presence of the verb. 3. Headlines with the *of*-preposition:

Return of Seychelles

The Power of Eight

Lost Empire of the Maya

First and the last example could be considered as regional ones because of proper name and, besides that, they have preposition of region *of*. The headline The Power of Eight was translated into Russian just like the original. The Kazakh article is called with one word Octopus, which concisely explains everything in the text, and there is no region or sign of affiliation in it. Thus, the Russian and English versions can certainly be considered regional headings, which cannot be said about the Kazakh version. Thus, we looked at two different classifications of headlines, dividing original headings first into nominal and verbal, and then into regional and relational. Both classifications are interesting and deserve attention when translating. The task of the translator is to reflect the essence of the article, without losing the idea of the original, and at the same time decide whether to retain the heading structure or different headline's structure would be more attractive to the readers in Russia and Kazakhstan.

Conclusion

In our corpus, we observed that both considered classifications of headlines could be used when studying headlines in English and rendering them into other languages. Translation of each heading is of interest from the point of view of using generally accepted translation techniques, with the translators trying to draw attention to the text. When readers read the contents of National Geographic magazine, it is the titles that help decide on further reading of the entire article and even decide on the purchase of a paper or electronic version of the magazine. Therefore, for the team of professional translators, it is so important to keep the reader interested in original articles published in English. At the same time, the task of the translator also comes down to conveying the meaning in the title and in the text itself, since readers who do not speak English do not have access to the information without reading it in Russian or Kazakh.