

Translating Vita Sackville-West's *Seducers in Ecuador* into Polish: Cultural and Linguistic Challenges

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Abstract: Despite writing during Modernism, Vita Sackville-West generally avoided the formal experimentation associated with this literary period. *Seducers in Ecuador*, however, stands out as one of her most formally innovative works. To date, no translation of the novella into Polish has been undertaken. Thus, the author of this paper has carried out the task independently. This study examines the challenges encountered in the translation process. The analysis focuses on three principal areas: sociocultural differences, irony, and the translation of technical and archaic vocabulary.

Methodologically, the paper uses an autoethnographic approach to examine the translator's subjective experience and reflections on the linguistic and cultural challenges encountered during the translation process. Drawing on theories developed by Eugene Nida, Katharina Reiss, and Hans J. Vermeer, the study explores the tension between domestication and foreignisation, as well as between dynamic and formal equivalence.

The analysis demonstrates that dynamic equivalence is the most effective strategy in the majority of cases, particularly when translating culturally specific references, tonal irony, and syntactic structures that would sound unnatural if rendered literally in Polish. A reader-oriented approach enables the translator to preserve the communicative effect and readability of the original text while adapting it to the expectations of the target audience. At the same time, it is shown that formal equivalence remains necessary in passages where excessive adaptation would weaken the literary style or tone of the novella. The paper concludes that successful literary translation requires a flexible combination of strategies rather than exclusive reliance on either domestication or foreignisation.

Keywords: translation, Vita Sackville-West, literature, linguistics, dynamic equivalence

The first decades of the 20th century marked the flourishing of the Modernist movement. And although Vita Sackville-West lived and created during that time, she was reluctant to follow the exploratory trends of the period. She wrote a number of novels, short stories, plays and poems, and her writings are generally considered as "those of a traditionalist and a conservative" (Dennison 2014, 171). However, *Seducers in Ecuador* appears to align with the Modernist movement. Written in 1924, the novella tells the story of Arthur Lomax, who takes part in a cruise. During the cruise, the protagonist starts wearing coloured glasses that alter his perspective on the world. As a result, he believes in a false reality and makes a series of poor decisions, ultimately culminating in his tragic downfall. The story employs experimental techniques in both its narrative structure and perspective.

Not without importance is the fact that Vita Sackville-West was privately involved with Virginia Woolf when she wrote *Seducers in Ecuador*. It seems highly probable that the key Modernist innovator influenced Vita's writing – after all, the novella opens with a dedication to Virginia Woolf. In 1925, *The New York Times* wrote: "the author's dedication to Virginia Woolf would seem to indicate not only admiration for Mrs. Woolf's very splendid talent, but also a discipleship in her method" (Crawford 1925, 13). Also, scholars describe *Seducers in Ecuador* as "quite as Woolfian any of Woolf's stories, short or long" (Sackville-West 2003, 11). This speaks in itself about the work's place within a literary era.

However, at present Sackville-West remains largely in the shadow of Virginia Woolf, and her works are not widely recognised. This relative obscurity has consequently limited the translation of her oeuvre into other languages, with only a small number of her many works rendered into Polish. As Alison E. Martin correctly points out, "while scholars of translation studies and transnational book history are uncovering the networks that enabled works of 'high' British modernism to circulate across Europe, scant attention has been paid to middle-brow authors like Sackville-West" (2018, 78).

Consequently, very little of Vita Sackville-West's work has been translated into Polish. One example is *All Passion Spent*, published in 1982 as *Wygaste namiętności*. *Seducers in Ecuador* has never been rendered into Polish. The author of this paper translated the novella for her own purposes. The aim of this paper is to analyse the challenges encountered in the rendering process, including sociocultural differences, the use of English irony, and specific vocabulary (both technical and archaic). The study is structured into three sections, each devoted to a distinct category of translation challenges.

The methodological starting point for the analysis is an autoethnographic approach, which foregrounds the translator's subjective experience and reflexive engagement with the process of mediating linguistic and sociocultural challenges. Ellis et al. define this perspective as "an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)" (2011, 273). Ethnographers "intentionally highlight the relationship of their experiences and stories to culture and cultural practices" (Holman Jones, Adams and Ellis 2016, 22).

Autoethnography remains an underexplored area of translation studies. Recent scholarship supports this observation. For example, Borg (2025) notes that few translation researchers have adopted autoethnographic approaches. More broadly, Marin-Lacarta and Yu (2023, 147) argue that ethnographic methodologies were incorporated into translation studies relatively late and have received limited methodological reflection. Nevertheless, several scholars have advanced perspectives that align with the principles of autoethnography. For example, Michael Cronin considers translation as a culturally situated act, emphasising the translator's reflexivity and positionality. His approach shares affinities with ethnographic inquiry, highlighting how translation involves deep engagement with identity negotiation, cultural norms, and intercultural encounters (Cronin 2006, 4).

Accordingly, the analysis of Vita Sackville-West's *Seducers in Ecuador* is grounded in an examination of the translator's own experience. The study demonstrates how cultural norms can influence the rendering of the text, considering that "the question of the identity of the interpreter is inseparable from the practice of interpreting" (Cronin 2006, 5). While formulated in relation to interpreting, this insight is equally applicable to translation, since translational choices are likewise influenced by positionality, lived experience, and sociocultural context.

Furthermore, the examination in this paper builds upon the debate around two broad strategies: foreignisation and domestication. The starting point for this dispute was Friedrich Schleiermacher's statement that "either the translator leaves the writer alone as much as possible and moves the reader toward the writer, or he leaves the reader alone as much as possible and moves the writer toward the reader" (1992, 42). Venuti later reinterpreted this binary as an ideological opposition between ethnocentric domestication and foreignising resistance to target-culture norms (Venuti 1995, 20), thereby

shifting the discussion from a descriptive model to an explicitly ethical and political framework.

The foreignisation-domestication framework continues to be employed as an analytical tool for examining translation strategies and ideological positioning across a range of contexts, including literary, legal, audiovisual, and institutional translation. Recent studies have applied the model in corpus-based analyses (Bažjić and Dobrić Basanež 2020), subtitling research (Yonamine 2022), and media localisation studies (Nasution et al. 2019), confirming its continued relevance in contemporary translation studies.

At the same time, while domestication and foreignisation have been extensively examined through textual and comparative analyses, relatively little research has investigated these strategies from an autoethnographic perspective. Autoethnographic studies have tended to focus on translators' experiences, identities, and professional practices rather than on domestication and foreignisation as explicit analytical categories. Consequently, there remains considerable scope for research exploring how translators experience, negotiate, and justify domesticating and foreignising decisions during the translation process.

Within the broader debate on domestication and foreignisation, several theoretical frameworks have emerged that seem to be important for this study. For example, the functionalist (or Skopos) approach, developed by Reiss and Vermeer, holds that translation strategies should be determined primarily by the purpose of the translation rather than by strict loyalty to either the source or target culture (2014, 85-86). From this perspective, domestication and foreignisation are practical choices shaped by context, audience, and function. Going further, Eugene Nida explores the distinction between formal and dynamic equivalence (Bassnett 2013, 34). Formal equivalence focuses on preserving the grammatical structure, wording, and cultural features of the source text, which seems to align with foreignisation. Dynamic equivalence, by contrast, aims to produce the same effect on target readers that the original had on its audience, even if this requires adaptation or simplification; this approach is thus more closely connected with domestication.

This study attempts to determine which of these perspectives may be regarded as the more effective translation strategy for addressing the challenges encountered in rendering *Seducers in Ecuador*. The translator's approach is primarily reader-oriented and therefore based largely on dynamic equivalence; however, in some cases, formal equivalence proves necessary.

1. Sociocultural Differences

Seducers in Ecuador is steeped in cultural markers, such as class distinctions, notions of English identity or even colour symbolism. These nuances, which would be instantly recognisable to English readers, appear to be far less transparent to the Polish audience. And hence their translation may be problematic. This section of the paper examines selected aspects of cultural reference that generated difficulties in the Polish rendering of Vita Sackville-West's story.

First of all, the novella contains multiple allusions to class stratification, even if these allusions are veiled at times. The opening passage describes one of the characters – Bellamy – this way: “a tall, cadaverous man, with a dark skin, white hair, and pale blue eyes, he belonged to Lomax's club” (Sackville-West 1995, 4). The details concerning the protagonist's physical appearance do not seem to pose problems in translation – the first part of the sentence can be rendered easily in a literal manner; the issue arises when it comes to interpreting the phrase “Lomax's club”.

Bellamy owns a yacht, and Lomax is invited to join a cruise. One reads: “this trip would serve to pass the time. A yachting trip was a pleasant, civilised thing to undertake, and Lomax preferred civilised things” (Sackville-West 1995, 5). From all these hints, the reader may deduce that both characters are comfortably situated and make no effort at physical work, which indicates their affiliation with the upper class. In her article, Amy Milne-Smith (2006) explores gentlemen's clubs in nineteenth-century London. According to the scholar, such centres played a significant role in the leisure of upper-class men at that time: “in the middle of the city, clubs afforded private spaces dedicated to relaxation and camaraderie. Both married and single men regarded their club as a central part of their lives, functioning as a surrogate home” (Milne-Smith 2006, 796). The word “club” in Vita Sackville-West's novella may thus stand for a gentlemen's club.

If one translates the passage literally – “należał do klubu Lomaxa” (“he belonged to Lomax' club”) – the aspect of the character's social position will be lost. Thus, a more appropriate option appears to be a contextual adaptation, such as “należał do tego samego klubu dżentelmenów co Lomax” (“he belonged to the same gentlemen's club as Lomax”). This subtle change encourages the target reader to recognise the character's privileged social status.

What may also pose a challenge in the translation of *Seducers in Ecuador* are behavioral norms associated with English culture. The example appears in this elliptical description: “Bellamy with his reserve, and Heaven knows

what tragedy at the back of it" (Sackville-West 1995, 10). Reserve, which is "powściągliwość" or, a bit closer to the original, "rezerwa", seems to constitute a culturally specific quality; combined with Englishness, it represents a sublime politeness mixed with emotional distance. The phrasing which best reflects the aspect of Englishness is therefore needed. The variants such as „Bellamy z właściwą sobie rezerwą" ("Bellamy with his usual reserve") or "Bellamy z typową dlań powściągliwością" ("Bellamy with the reserve typical of him") read naturally and are true to the original, though they lack the cultural undertone. In this situation, it would be more accurate to expand the sentence slightly. Thus, two variants step on board: „Bellamy ze swoją angielską powściągliwością" ("Bellamy with his characteristically English reserve") or „Bellamy z typową dla Anglika rezerwą" ("Bellamy with the reserve typical of an Englishman"). The second one seems a better option, as it is more concise and polished.

People interpret symbols in diverse ways, assigning them unique meanings shaped by their culture and traditions. This also concerns colours, which hold various associations across different regions of the world. An obvious example is blue, which has a unique implication in English. *Oxford English Dictionary* suggests that "blue", in relation to "a person, the heart etc.", means "depressed, low-spirited, sad, sorrowful; dismayed, downcast; (of a state or feeling) miserable, melancholy, dejected. In early use often in to look blue; now frequently in to feel blue (originally U.S.)" (*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "blue"). The colour lacks such connotations in Polish. In *Seducers in Ecuador*, Lomax wears coloured glasses which distort his perception of reality, and it is while looking through the blue lenses that the protagonist makes decisions which result in his failure and misery. Thus, the colour of lenses adds an extra semantic layer in the original language. This additional meaning is lost in the Polish translation due to the cultural difference – neither "niebieski" nor "błękitny" foreshadows the character's subsequent misery and death, and no other colour in Polish could serve this function either.

It seems that the only colour associated with sorrow and death in Polish tradition is black. Stanulewicz, Komorowska, and Pawłowski observe that Polish respondents link black with sadness, depression, and mourning (2014, 262). However, it is impossible to replace blue with black in translation, as Lomax possesses black glasses as well, which he uses in other circumstances. Thus, the only option that remains is a direct translation. The author of this paper opted for "błękitne okulary" i "błękitne soczewki", and added a note explaining the colour's extra meaning to the Polish reader.

Some of the difficulties in translating Vita Sackville-West's *Seducers in Ecuador* from English into Polish arise from sociocultural differences, including an alternative view of social division, dissimilar behavioural norms, and varying symbolic interpretations of colours. These are instances in which formal equivalence proves inadequate or even impossible, requiring explanatory notes or supplementary information. Thus, dynamic equivalence, which seeks to produce the same effect on target readers as the original had on its audience (even if adaptation is required), becomes an appropriate strategy in the cases discussed. The next sections of the paper discuss translation challenges resulting from the use of irony and non-standard vocabulary in the novella.

2. Irony

The incorporation of humour, wit, and irony into the text makes it more lively and dynamic. As Caws puts it, *Seducers in Ecuador* is "enlightened by irony" (Sackville-West 2003, 355). Indeed, the literary rhetorical device that involves "saying what is contrary to what is meant" (Colebrook 2004, 1), permeates Vita Sackville-West's story. This part of the paper analyses various types of irony in the novella, examining which translation strategy – dynamic or formal equivalence – proves more suitable in each case.

The first example concerns verbal irony which, as Colston explains, bears "the characteristic of a linguistic creation by a speaker or writer, that somehow expresses some proposition, stance, attitude, description, etc., concerning objective reality, that is somehow contrary to that reality" (2017, 236). A special type of verbal irony is sarcasm, defined as "a nasty, mean-spirited or just relatively negative form of verbal irony" (Colston 2017, 236). The example can be seen in Sherlock Holmes' reply for other character's "commonsensical" theory explaining the murder in *The Sign of Four*: "on which the dead man very considerably got up and locked the door on the inside" (Doyle 1908, 104). It is obvious that the dead man could not do it.

The example in *Seducers in Ecuador* is somehow related to the socio-cultural issues examined in the previous section. The main character is somehow sarcastically defined in these words: "such inclinations as he had towards the finer gestures – and it is not to be denied that such inclinations were latent in him – had been judiciously repressed, until Lomax could congratulate himself on having achieved the comfortable ideal of all true Englishmen" (Sackville-West 1995, 5). In a neutral sense, a "true Englishman" refers to a male of a particular

nationality, and also a particular type of person – the conventionally proper and emotionally reserved one. The phrase may look simple, but in the story it is used ironically, thereby acquiring an extra semantic layer. So, a “true Englishman” in Vita Sackville-West’s novella indicates simultaneously: 1. a man from England, of a pure national and homogeneous identity; 2. someone who embodies the idealised English traits, such as self-control or conventional morality; 3. an ironic critique or denial of these very traits. Due to this semantic ambiguity, rendering the phrase into Polish may present a challenge.

It seemed that the best course of action was to find a Polish equivalent that reflects all these nuances. The literal translation, „prawdziwy Anglik” (“a true Englishman”), preserves the idea of national homogeneity but tends to sound neutral or even complimentary in Polish, thereby weakening the original ironic undertone. Another option considered was „typowy Anglik” (“a typical Englishman”), which conveys stereotypical cultural associations and can sound slightly pejorative, yet it still fails to capture the original tone. Consequently, the author chose the variant „Anglik z krwi i kości” (“an Englishman through and through”), as it combines a sense of authenticity with an implicit capacity for irony without becoming overtly complimentary.

The example discussed corresponds to Eugene Nida’s concept of dynamic equivalence, positing that a translation should aim to reproduce the effect of the source text – including its tonal dimension – rather than its formal structure. At the same time, this case also seems to align with Skopos theory, which holds that translation strategies are determined by the intended purpose of the text in the target culture and therefore often require adaptation rather than literal correspondence.

Apart from sarcasm, *Seducers in Ecuador* contains metafictional irony. In this type of irony, “the author takes the role of an elitist ironist who makes the reader question the literal meaning of the text” (Peña-Cervel and de Mendoza Ibáñez 2022, 244–245). In other words, the text openly acknowledges itself as a constructed narrative, playing with readers’ expectations about conventional storytelling. This can be exemplified by *A Series of Unfortunate Events: The Bad Beginning* by Lemony Snicket, where at the very beginning the implied author claims: “if you are interested in stories with happy endings, you would be better off reading some other book” (1999, 1).

In Vita Sackville-West’s novella, one reads: “the practised reader will have observed by now that the element of surprise is not to be looked for in this story” (Sackville-West 1995, 7). If translated literally into Polish, the passage may take

on an overtly descriptive, didactic quality. The literal variant: “wprawny czytelnik powinien był już zauważyć, że w tej historii nie należy szukać elementu zaskoczenia” conveys the instructive and intrusive tone – not to mention that the sentence sounds a bit clumsy. To avoid this, the translator may employ one of indirect narrative strategies that soften the tone of the passage, but are more in keeping with Polish stylistic conventions. Again, this strategy is consistent with Eugene Nida’s concept of dynamic equivalence.

One of the solutions is to avoid addressing the reader directly. The sentence rendered this way reads: “nietrudno zauważyć, że w tej opowieści element zaskoczenia nie odgrywa istotnej roli” (“it is easy to observe that surprise is not a significant element in this story”). In this case, the tone is more neutral than in the original, and irony is muted but not erased; at the same time, the didactic quality disappears. Or, if opting for a variant that is more faithful to the original, one may resort to a compromise. The sentence “jak łatwo się przekonać, ta opowieść nie obiecuje czytelnikowi zaskoczeń” (“as becomes readily apparent, this story offers the reader no surprises”) also softens irony, but it preserves the reader’s presence and addresses them in a conventionally Polish, non-instructional way. And this is the option the author of this paper chose.

Furthermore, *Seducers in Ecuador* presents philosophical insights into existence and perception, which are quite often ironical. For example, the narrator declares: “to those blessed with perception, let perception remain sacred” (Sackville-West 1995, 4). The irony of this observation stems from the fact that the main character’s “perception” is artificial and it leads him away from truth and responsibility, although he believes otherwise. Philosophical irony also poses certain difficulties in English-Polish translation. For example, there is the risk that the Polish rendering of the passage quoted will acquire a quasi-Biblical, didactic quality. The literal translation: “dla tych, którzy zostali pobłogosławieni percepcją, niech percepcja pozostanie świętością” sounds scriptural in tone – and it somehow loses the ironic nuance of the original. Modifying the phrasing or syntax appears to eliminate the Biblical undertone of the passage. The author of this paper opted for the version: “niech percepcja pozostanie święta – przynajmniej dla tych, którzy jej doświadczają” (“let perception remain sacred – at least for those who experience it”). In this variant, the word “przynajmniej” (“at least”) is added; it appears to retrieve the irony in the statement.

The last example concerns dramatic irony, namely the one where “the audience knows something of which one or more of the characters is unaware”

(Mackey and Cooper 2000, 90). The classic example of this type of irony is from *Romeo and Juliet*, where Romeo kills himself believing Juliet to be dead, while the reader knows she is only in a deep sleep (Shakespeare 1901, 131–132). As for *Seducers in Ecuador*, the beginning of the story offers such a revelation: “perhaps Miss Whitaker deserves precedence, since it was she, after all, who married Lomax. And perhaps Bellamy should come next, since it was he, after all, for whose murder Lomax was hanged” (Sackville-West 1995, 7). The characters’ fates are already established; the reader knows from the start what will happen to them.

This sort of irony seems to be the least challenging for the translator, because it is structural rather than tonal; in other words, it is independent of phrasing or cultural context and therefore requires no adaptation for the target audience to understand it. Thus, formal equivalence appears to be an appropriate strategy in this case. The literal variant: “być może panna Whitaker zasługuje na pierwszeństwo, skoro to ona, koniec końców, poślubiła Lomaxa. A być może Bellamy powinien znaleźć się na drugim miejscu, skoro to właśnie za jego zabójstwo Lomax został powieszony” works fine, as it perfectly retains the dramatic irony embedded in the disclosure of the characters’ ends to the reader. This is, naturally, not the only option – due to the aforementioned structural quality of dramatic irony, quite a lot of equivalents may be formed which would work equally well.

The analysis in this section demonstrated that *Seducers in Ecuador* contains irony of different types, and their translation into Polish posed various difficulties. In most cases, the irony is based on tonal nuances; this applies to three of the four examples discussed. In these instances, translating from English into Polish required certain modifications, either in the overall tone of the passages or in their syntactic structure. Consequently, dynamic equivalence proved to be the most appropriate translation strategy here. At the same time, one type of irony in *Seducers in Ecuador* – namely, dramatic irony – is not grounded in tonal or cultural factors. It does not require adaptation, as a literal translation preserving the structure of the original is sufficient. In such a case, structural equivalence appears to be the most suitable approach.

3. Lexical (and Syntactic) Challenges. Nautical and Period-specific Vocabulary

Two types of vocabulary presented difficulties in the translation of *Seducers in Ecuador*. First of all, as the plot of the novella is set on a ship, the nautical terminology is applied there. Secondly, the text employs vocabulary that nowadays

may be considered archaic and obsolete. Setting aside the period in which the narrative was created, its style appears deliberately mannered, leaning toward an old-fashioned aesthetic. This section of the paper examines these two lexical fields. Wherever possible, the translator employed a reader-oriented translation approach, corresponding to dynamic equivalence. However, in some cases, it was necessary to depart from this strategy when the literary style of the original suffered too greatly.

To begin with, the use of nautical terminology is illustrated in this passage: “the Nereid, when she was not running before a fair wind on an even keel, lay over to the water, so low that now and then she shipped a gobbet of sea, only a thin little runnel that escaped at once through the open scuppers of the lee runner” (Sackville-West 1995, 20). The literal translation of “on an even keel” (where a keel refers to the lowest beam stretching from a bow to a stern) is “na równym kilu” (*Cambridge Dictionary*, s.v. “keel”). The expression “na kilu” may sound a bit clumsy for the person unfamiliar with nautical terms, yet it is entirely correct in Polish.

At the same time, the phrase “open scuppers of the lee runner” may be rendered with no modification as “otwarte szpigaty przy linie biegowej po stronie zawietrznej” (Puchalski 2003, s.vv. “scupper”, “lee”). However, the meaning of the phrase may remain unclear for an average Polish reader. One of the solutions available is to provide a note with a further explanation of the phrase. Another one is to replace that direct part with a less literal, though more descriptive rendering, such as: “otwarte odpływy pokładowe po tej stronie systemu lin roboczych, na którą nie wiał wiatr” (“the open deck drains of the running rigging on the side sheltered from wind”). This would make the expression at least a bit more imaginable for an average Polish reader. However, in this case, the overall literary quality of the text could be compromised – such a translation would depart excessively from the stylistic character of the original. Consequently, with regard to terminology, the translator’s decision is to remain close to the source text, adding necessary footnotes. Formal equivalence, therefore, emerges as the predominant translation strategy in this instance.

Other fragments that include nautical terms constitute similar challenges. For example, the narrator says: “what he liked was a day with plenty of tacking, and then he would turn the mate or the captain off . . . and cry ‘Lee-o!’ to the crew” (Sackville-West 1995, 21). The command “Lee-o!” appears problematic. The sailing terminology glossary published by Grenada Bluewater Sailing explains the expression as “the action of putting the helm across to go about” (Grenada

Bluewater Sailing n.d.). Furthermore, *The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea* suggests that the term indicates "the warning given by the helmsman of a sailing vessel that he is starting to tack" (Hattendorf 2007, s.v. "lee-oh"). In Polish, this command can be translated into "zwrot przez sztag!". However, similar to "szpigaty", this rendering may also mean nothing to an average Polish reader. Thus, a certain degree of simplification, reflecting aspects of dynamic equivalence, seems to be helpful. One of the best options is "na wiatr!", because it sounds natural and remains readily comprehensible, without compromising the tone or the stylistic and literary value of the original text.

Another lexically demanding passage reads:

The men were black figures clinging to stays for support, going down with the ship when she swooped from the crest down into the trough, rising again with her, thankful to find the deck still there beneath their feet, lashed by the rain, blinded by the darkness, unable to see, able only to feel, whether with their hands that, wet and frozen, clung to rail and stanchion, or with their bodies that sank and rose, enduring the tremendous buffeting of the tossing ship, and the shock of water that, as it broke over the deck, knocked the breath from their lungs and all but swept them from their refuge into the hopeless broiling of the sea (Sackville-West 1995, 26).

Again, a few technical terms ("stays" – "sztagi", "stanchions" – "kłonicy") (Puchalski 2003, s.vv. "signal stays", "stanchion") emerge there, presuming the reader's familiarity with nautical vocabulary. Yet, the translator's main challenge in this case seems to stem from the syntax construction. The sentence is lengthy and paratactic; the main clause – "the men were black figures" – is followed by a series of participial phrases ("clinging", "rising", "blinded", "enduring") that denote sensory perception.

The passage, which by means of the overuse of participial clauses seems to reflect the chaos during the storm, sounds somewhat natural in English; however, the Polish language appears far less tolerant of extended chains of participles ("‑ąc", "‑any", "‑ony"). A literal rendering, corresponding to foreignisation and Eugene Nida's concept of formal equivalence, seems to be somehow risky, for at least two reasons: 1. it may disrupt the natural rhythm of the sentence; 2. it may lead to ambiguity as to who performs which action. The translator has

two options then: either to preserve the original's continuity or just to break the sentence into shorter, more Polish-friendly units, which aligns with the strategy of domestication. The author of this paper preferred the second option, as it renders the passage stylistically more natural in Polish, even though part of the original style – conveying the storm's breathless anarchy – seems to be partly lost. Thus it reads:

Ciemne sylwetki mężczyzn kurczowo trzymały się sztagów dla podparcia. Schodzili w dół razem z okrętem, gdy ten zsuwał się z grzbietu fali w jej dolinę, po czym znów wznosili się z nim, wdzięczni, że pokład wciąż pozostaje pod ich stopami. Smagani deszczem, oślepieni ciemnością, niezdolni do widzenia, zdani jedynie na dotyk. Czuli go zarówno w rękach, które mokre i zziębnięte zaciskały się na kłonicach i słupkach, jak i w ciałach, które opadały i unosiły się wraz z okrętem. Znosili potężne szarpnięcia miotanego statku. Znów i znów uderzała w nich woda, która zalewając pokład, wybijała im powietrze z płuc i niemal zmiatała ich z bezpiecznego miejsca w bezkresne, wzburzone morze.

Further translation difficulties arise from the text's stylised language. *Seducers in Ecuador* contains words and expressions that may sound old-fashioned today; some of them seem to be characteristic of early-20th-century British English. An example is the description of Lomax at the beginning of the novella: "attired in a suit of white ducks, a solar topee on his head, his blue spectacles on his nose, he contemplated the Sphinx" (Sackville-West 1995, 3). What may appear specifically confusing to the Polish reader are colonial-era terms referring to clothing: white ducks and solar topee, the former denoting white cotton trousers and the latter – a sun helmet. Again, in this case the translator has two options: foreignising, which involves using expressions close to the original and supplying them with footnotes ("spodnie typu white ducks", "kapelusz solar topee"), or domesticating, which amounts to replacing these foreign terms with more descriptive – and, at the same time, more understandable to Polish readers – phrases.

It seems that the expression "spodnie typu white ducks" does not say much to an average Polish person, except for the confusing connotation with farm birds. The same goes for the specific kind of hat used by British men in the colonial period. Thus, the translation option chosen by the author of this paper is

the second one, also associated with dynamic equivalence. In this perspective, white ducks may be rendered as "białe spodnie płócienne", and a solar topee – as "tropikalny hełm korkowy" or "kapelusz safari". This strategy makes these expressions more accessible for the target audience, without diminishing the literary merits of the original.

Other examples of old-fashioned English vocabulary in *Seducers in Ecuador* include: "bounder", "care a fig" and "confounded". *Cambridge Dictionary* labels each of these words as old-fashioned (*Cambridge Dictionary*, s.vv. "bounder", "not care/give a fig", "confounded"). What may pose a challenge in this case is finding Polish equivalents that carry the same old-fashioned stylistic quality. In fact, the objective here is to reproduce the same tone and effect in translation, which is the domain of dynamic equivalence.

One reads in Vita Sackville-West's story: "Miss Whitaker admired only one type of man, and dismissed as perverts or bounders all those who did not belong to it" (Sackville-West 1995, 9). *Cambridge Dictionary* explains a "bounder" as "a man who behaves badly or in a way that is not moral, especially in his relationships with women" (*Cambridge Dictionary*, s.v. "bounder"). Words such as "łobuz" or "prostack" do not reflect the outdated tone of the original. Perhaps "niegodziwiec" or even "łotr" would fulfil this requirement. The best option found by the author of the paper is "łajdak" – not only does it sound old-fashioned, but it also somehow emphasises the social and moral context of indecent behaviour (especially when relating to male-female relationships).

The phrase "not care a fig", denoting "to not be at all worried by or interested in something" (*Cambridge Dictionary*, s.v. "not care/give a fig"), occurs in the novella in the following fragment: "'tell me, Lomax,' said Artivale, 'do you care a fig for humanity?'" (Sackville-West 1995, 52–53). Interestingly, Polish has a literal equivalent, "figa", which in this context also sounds somewhat dated and archaic in contemporary usage. Retaining it in translation appears to be an appropriate solution, although a more natural rendering can be achieved by shifting the interrogative structure into a declarative one. The translation therefore reads: "'Przyznaj, Lomax,' rzekł Artivale, 'że figę cię ta ludzkość obchodzi'".

The last example of the outmoded terminology is "confounded". The narrator in *Seducers in Ecuador* says: "now, when he tried to meet with fact the fantastical world which so suddenly and so utterly swamped him, was a man confounded, a man floundering for a foothold" (Sackville-West 1995, 54–55). *Oxford English Dictionary* provides such a definition of the term "confound": "to throw into

confusion of mind or feelings; so to surprise and confuse (a person) that he or she loses for the moment his or her presence of mind, and discernment what to do" (*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "confound"). As for Polish equivalents, "zdezorientowany" sounds quite too modern; "zmieszany" appears too mild in tone. At the same time, "skonfundowany", although it is the most direct rendering, sounds a bit too archaic for a contemporary reader; thus, "skonsternowany" seems to be the best option. It is also outdated, but there is no risk that the Polish audience – especially the younger ones – will misunderstand the meaning.

Two lexical groups in *Seducers in Ecuador* appear to be particularly challenging for the translator: nautical terminology and archaic vocabulary. With the target audience in mind, rendering these elements often required either additional explanation outside the main text or the incorporation of supplementary information into the translation itself. In the case of archaic expressions, preserving the tone of the original was also essential. Thus, dynamic equivalence proves effective even at the level of individual lexical items. Exceptions occur in passages where the literary style of the original would otherwise suffer significantly; for example, nautical terminology could not be rendered in an overly explanatory manner without disrupting the text's stylistic qualities.

At the syntactic level, dynamic equivalence likewise proved necessary. Although certain features of the original phrasing and stylistic effect may be diminished in translation, reproducing the source text's syntactic structures too closely would often result in constructions that sound unnatural or even ungrammatical in Polish.

Conclusions

The analysis conducted in this paper demonstrates that translating *Seducers in Ecuador* from English into Polish requires a flexible approach that balances fidelity to the source text with the needs and expectations of the target audience. The difficulties discussed throughout the study – including sociocultural differences, irony, archaic vocabulary, nautical terminology, and syntactic disparities between English and Polish – reveal that no single translation strategy can be applied consistently in every case.

Overall, dynamic equivalence emerges as the dominant and most effective approach. Since many elements of the novella depend on cultural associations, tonal nuances, or linguistic structures that do not function in the same way in

Polish, preserving the intended effect on the reader often requires adaptation rather than literal reproduction. This applies not only to broader cultural references and ironic passages, but also to lexical and syntactic choices. In many instances, attempts to preserve the formal structure of the original too closely would result in translations that sound unnatural, unclear, or stylistically inappropriate in Polish. Dynamic equivalence, therefore, enables the translator to maintain readability, communicative clarity, and the atmosphere of the text while still remaining faithful to the spirit of the original work.

At the same time, the analysis also demonstrates that formal equivalence cannot be dismissed entirely. Certain elements of the novella – particularly those in which literary style or narrative structure are central – require greater adherence to the original wording or form. Excessive adaptation may weaken stylistic qualities or disrupt the aesthetic character of the text. Consequently, the translation process involves constant negotiation between accessibility for the target reader and preservation of the stylistic and artistic features of the source text.

The study, therefore, suggests that effective literary translation should not rely exclusively on either dynamic or formal equivalence. Instead, successful rendering depends on the translator's ability to evaluate the function of each passage individually and to select the strategy that best preserves both meaning and literary effect. In the case of *Seducers in Ecuador*, a predominantly reader-oriented approach proves most effective, yet it must remain sufficiently flexible to accommodate moments in which closer formal correspondence is necessary to retain the distinctive style of Vita Sackville-West's prose.

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