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CASE STUDY ON THE USE OF INTERNATIONALISMS BY GRADUATED TRANSLATORS AND STUDENTS OF TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING STUDIES⁷³

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Abstract

Global developments often affect the language people use in order to express contemporary processes and novelties. The Macedonian language is not immune to the inflow of new international terminology, which is strongly evident in both oral and spoken form. This tendency is also observed among graduate translators as well as among students at the Faculty of Philology in Skopje attending translation and interpreting studies who face the growing challenge of using international vocabulary as opposed to domestic equivalents. The main purpose of this case study is to examine their tendency for use of international lexis as opposed to domestic lexis in the translations of specialised political and economic texts as well as to inquire into the reasons for such use. Moreover, the ultimate goal of this case study is to draw adequate conclusions in the relevant subject-matter, which will also produce statistically analysable data on the basis of which applicable solutions can be proposed for the current and future students at the Department of Translation and Interpreting.

Keywords: *international terminology, domestic lexis, specialised translation, survey*

1. Introduction

The recent global developments on the political scene, on the international business market and in the field of information technology innovations affect the everyday lives of all people and nations. For example, the recent United States financial crisis had global consequences and has affected the European countries as well. Global developments often affect the language people use in order to express contemporary processes and novelties on the international scene, whereas the Macedonian language is not excluded from this inexorable process. International terminology travels fast and becomes widespread through the mass media, and as a result no language is immune to the inflow of contemporary international terminology that is primarily of Anglo-Saxon origin, especially in the field of politics and economy.

In fact, the inflow of contemporary international terminology in the Macedonian language is strongly evident in both oral and spoken form, in particular in the everyday audio-visual and electronic media and has a strongly influence on the terminology used by the expert public, such as government officials, university professors, political and economic analysts, etc. This tendency is also observed among professional translators as well as among students as they have access to popular media, specialised literature in different fields, publications and contact with experts from various disciplines. In particular, this study

⁷³ Original scientific paper

focuses on graduated and current students at the Department of Translation and Interpreting within the Faculty of Philology “Blaze Koneski” in Skopje, who face the growing challenge and pressure of using international vocabulary in the translations they produce, which are intended for the general and expert public.

2. Purpose and Questions of the Case Study

Specialised translation is non-cultural and encompasses various areas, such as politics, commerce, finance, government, etc. (Newmark, 1988: 151). There is a great demand for translation in these areas in the Republic of Macedonia and they are also the main areas of focus of the students of translation and interpreting studies. The detailed evaluation of published translations in these fields shows a growing tendency among specialised translators for use of international vocabulary as opposed to domestic lexis, especially in the fields of politics and economy. This trend is also evident among fourth-year students attending courses of written translations and specialised terminology for translators and interpreters.

Considering the above, we shall begin the analysis with the general observation that both groups tend to use many internationalisms, whereas this preliminary observation will serve as an initial thesis for the research. Therefore, this case study strives to provide answers to two main questions:

- “Do graduate translators and students of translation and interpreting studies prefer to use international or domestic lexis in the specialised translations they produce?”

- “What are the main reasons for use of international lexis on one side and for use of domestic lexis on the other side in specialised translations?”

The results of the conducted research aimed at answering these two questions will confirm or discard the initial thesis, in particular whether there is a tendency for passive borrowing of international lexis (foreignisation) or for coming up with translation solutions by using standard Macedonian translation equivalents (naturalisation). In this manner, the main purpose of this case study is to answer both questions by performing a quantitative and qualitative analysis that will examine the degree of use and the reasons for use of international lexis as opposed to domestic lexis in specialised translations, with special focus on political and economic texts. Moreover, the ultimate goal of the case study is to draw adequate conclusions in the relevant subject-matter by applying the method of survey research that will provide statistically analysable data, as well as to propose applicable solutions for the current and future students at the Department of Translation and Interpreting.

3. Methodology of Research

The method of research used in this empirical study involves a survey research due to the fact that the survey method is considered as a useful tool for assessment of educational progress (Groves, Fowler, Couper, Lepkowski, Singer, Tourangeau, 2009: 20). Namely, for the purpose of this case study, a survey was conducted among 150 surveyees divided into three different groups (each group is composed of 50 surveyees), as follows:

a. Translators with professional experience in highly specialised translations of political and economic texts (who are graduated students at the Department of Translation and Interpreting);

b. Translators with professional experience in other non-specialised translations (with different educational background); and

c. Inexperienced fourth-year students at the Department of Translation and Interpreting without professional translation experience.

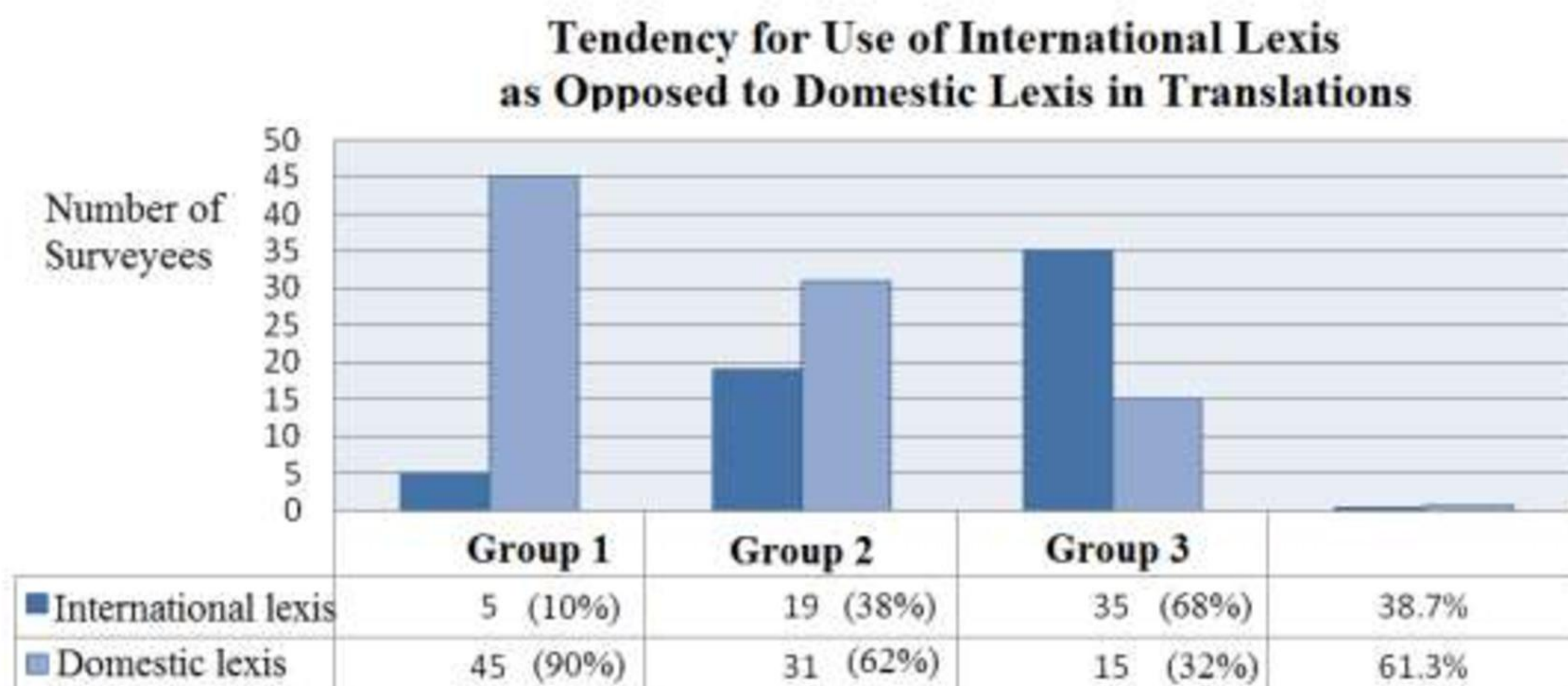
The conducted survey is of non-standard type with no pre-determined answers to the questions and it is specifically designed to obtain detailed and elaborated input from the surveyees. In particular, the survey is composed of two complementary parts. The purpose of the first part is to compare the surveyees' opinions and views on the following seven questions:

- I. Provide personal information (year of birth, type of education, current profession, translation experience);
- II. Which are the areas of your translation expertise (politics, economy, finance, government, literature, etc.)?
- III. Do you think that for translation of specialised political and economic texts it is more adequate to use international lexis or to provide Macedonian translation equivalents in compliance with the standard language norms? Please elaborate.
- IV. What are the main reasons for use of international lexis as opposed to domestic lexis in specialised translations? Please elaborate.
- V. Replace the specialised terms given below with a suitable Macedonian translation equivalent.
- VI. Which of the specialised terms given below are internationalisms?
- VII. Are you familiar with quality specialised dictionaries from English to Macedonian that are helpful for translation of political and economic texts?

On the other hand, the second part of the survey is practical and it contains two tasks where the surveyees are asked to produce translation of excerpts from political and economic texts. In this manner, the purpose of the survey is to compare the opinions and views of three versatile groups of surveyees and to analyse whether they have a tendency for passive borrowing of international lexis or for coming up with adequate translation solutions by using standard Macedonian translation equivalents.

4. Results of the Research

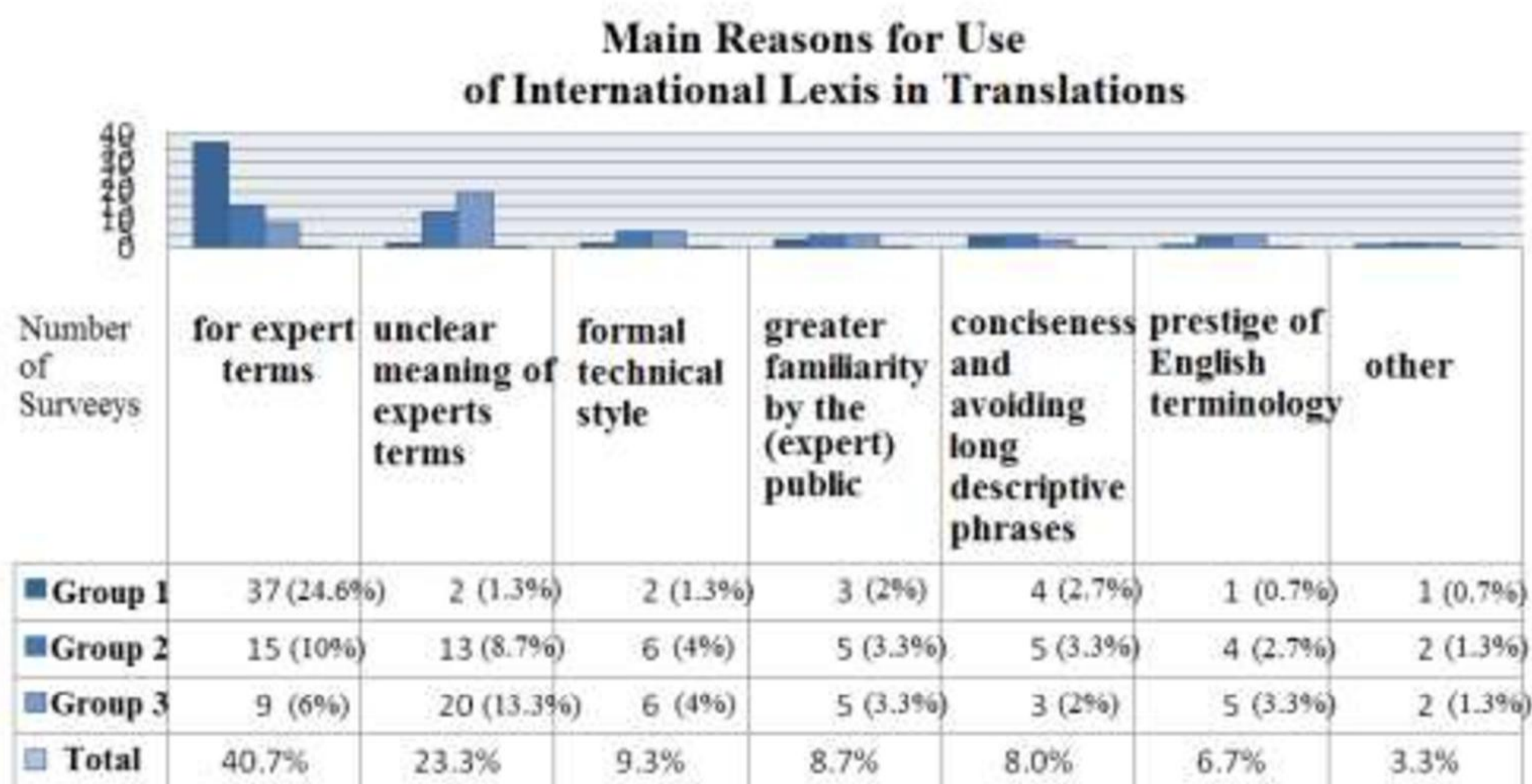
The summarised results from the conducted survey provide statistically analysable data presented in three graphs given below. *Graph 1* below shows whether the surveyees prefer to use international or domestic lexis in specialised translations.



The quantitative results presented in Graph 1 show that 61.3% of the surveyees prefer the use of domestic lexis in specialised translations, as opposed to 38.7% who prefer to use internationalisms. Namely, the first group composed of graduate translators with professional experience in highly specialised translations has a preference to find proper translation equivalents in Macedonian whenever possible (90% as opposed to 10% who mainly resort to internationalisms), for example *merger* > *спојување*, even in cases when the internationalism is accepted among the expert public, for example *Greenfield investments* > *инвестиции од нула*, where they also tend to provide descriptive translation rather than adaptation of the foreign word, for example *outsourcing* > *ангажурање надворешни соработници*.

The second group of surveyees with professional experience in other non-specialised translations mainly prefers domestic translation equivalents (62% as opposed to 38%), but they still prefer to use internationalisms for more specific expert terms, for example *Greenfield investments* > *Гринфилд инвестиции*. In this group, an attempt for balance is visible. However, deviations from the standard language were noticed among the inexperienced translators from the third group, with 68% of them resorting to unnecessary direct transcription to Cyrillic alphabet and literal translation, for example *outsourcing* > *аутсорсинг*, *to generate profit* > *генерира профит*. Many surveyees from this group avoid using Macedonian translation equivalents and prefer the foreign word, such as *bankruptcy* > *банкрот* (instead of *стечај*), whereas only a small number of them (32%) have used Macedonian translation equivalents for the expert terms. It is therefore important to inquire into the reasons for such a large use of internationalisms among the third group (68%) and even the second group (38%).

To summarise, on the basis of the statistical data from Graph 1 we can conclude that many foreign terms and even professional expressions can be translated with adequate translation equivalents in the target language and that internationalisms are not always necessary or irreplaceable even in the case of terminological lexis. As for the reasons for use of international lexis (rather than domestic lexis) in specialised translations, the elaborations given by the surveyees can generally be classified into several groups as presented on *Graph 2* below:



The statistical data presented in Graph 2 show that approximately 40.7% of the surveyed translators prefer to use foreign lexis because it is part of the internationally used expert terminology, for example *depreciation* > *депресијација*. In addition, they specifically emphasise that many international terms do not have Macedonian equivalents, for example *holding* > *холдинг*, and that sometimes the Macedonian equivalent may have general

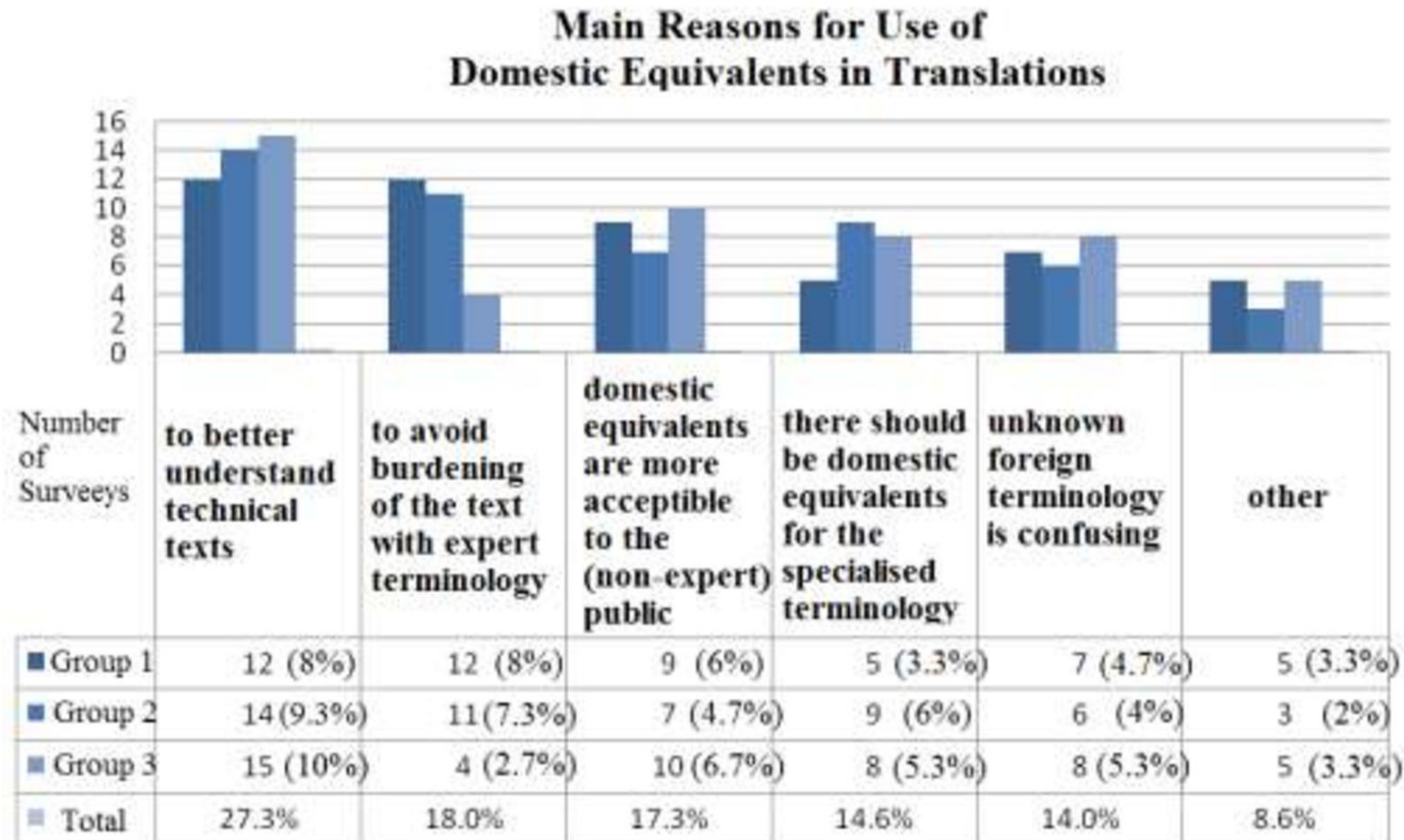
meaning, such as *cluster* > *грозд (од претпријатија)* (compared to *кластер (од претпријатија)*). This was the main answer of 37% from the surveyees from group 1.

In addition, 23.3% of the surveyees (mainly from group 3) explained that when they do not understand the meaning of expert terms they use foreign words as a simpler and easier solution, for example *inputs* > *инпути* (instead of *фактори (чинители) на производство*). 9.3% (mainly from group 2 and 3) tend to use international lexis to make the translation more formal and to preserve the technical style, for example *entity* > *ентитет* (instead of *субјект*), *recipient* > *реципиент* (instead of *примател*), whereas this was the opinion of only a small number of surveyees from group 1 (only 1.3%).

Some of the surveyees from all three groups (8.7%) consider internationalisms to be more familiar to the public, especially to the expert public, and that it is superfluous to explain their meaning, for example *spin-off enterprises* > *спин-оф претпријатија*, whereas there are those who believe that the Anglo-Saxon terminology is more accepted due to the prestige of the English language in the political and economic sphere (6.7% of the surveyees), for example *off-shore companies* > *офшор компании* (instead of *прекуморски компании*).

Several surveyees from all three groups (8%) have used internationalisms in order to avoid long descriptive phrases with the purpose of conciseness and economy of the translation, for example *business start-up* > *бизнис стар-ап* (instead of *отпочнување нова компанија*). 3.3% of the surveyees have indicated other reasons for use of internationalisms in their translations, mainly that the recent global developments result in new contemporary lexis, mainly neologisms, that are not included in the specialised dictionaries from English to Macedonian language, so translators are forced to use foreign terms and expressions.

On the other hand, *Graph 3* below shows the main reasons for use of domestic lexis in the translations rather than internationalisms, which can be generally classified into several groups as shown below.



27.3% of the surveyees (from all three groups) explained that by using domestic equivalents the translation becomes more clear and understandable, while 18% indicated that in that way they avoid burdening of the translation with too much abstract terminology. Furthermore, 17.3% consider domestic equivalents to be more acceptable to the (non-expert) public, while 14.6% of the surveyees think that there should be proper Macedonian equivalents for expert terms that will enrich the lexical stock of the language because by passive borrowing of ready-made internationalisms, our language will become poor and

foreignised. Some translators from all three groups indicated that not everyone understands the meaning of international vocabulary so they are therefore often incorrectly used, i.e. translated and also misunderstood by the readers.

After summarising the main reasons indicated by the surveyees it is possible to draw relevant conclusions on the validity of their answers and to propose adequate and applicable recommendations.

5. Conclusions

On the basis of the presented results above, it is possible to partially discard the initial observation that served as a starting thesis for the research. Furthermore, the qualitative and quantitative results can be used to make relevant conclusions aimed at answering both questions of the research. The ultimate goal of this case study is to propose applicable solutions and recommendation for the current and future students at the Department of Translation and Interpreting.

As for the two specific questions of the case study, graduated translators and students of translation and interpreting studies prefer to use domestic lexis in the specialised translations they produce, whenever this is possible, whereas they do not resort to internationalisms at any cost. However, those with less experience, primarily the students, tend to use more internationalisms, i.e. foreign lexis in general. The main reason for use of international lexis is that it often appears to be the easier and safest solution in the case of unclear specialised terminology, whereas some think that it is more adequate in highly specialised formal translations and technical style and more familiar to the expert public.

However, the larger number of surveyees prefer to use domestic lexis in these types of translations because their primary goal is to achieve clarity and better understanding of the technical content. They think that it is best to find proper Macedonian translation equivalents whenever possible, but not at every cost. In fact, internationalisms play an important role for smooth communication, especially among experts in a specific field, but numerous examples from the survey show that they are not always necessary or irreplaceable so translators should not overburden the text with foreign words because their excessive use might produce abstract, static and incomprehensible translations, for example *Many mergers of enterprises generating enormous profits have been announced* > *Најавени се многу мерџери на компании што генерираат енормни профити* (is less clear and understandable than *Најавени се многу спојувања на претпријатија што остваруваат огромна добивка*).

It is irrefutable that there is massive inflow of new specialised terminology in all European languages that is strongly influenced by the recent global developments, however, even in the cases where there are no direct translation equivalents for the expert terms, it is recommendable to first resort to providing a descriptive explanation of the meaning of the term, rather than passive transference from Latin to Cyrillic alphabet, as shown with several examples above. One of the main recommendations for current and future students of translation and interpreting is that foreign words and phraseological expressions must not replace the domestic lexis where there are already proper Macedonian equivalents.

An important conclusion from the conducted survey is that the translators' experience is very important for high quality translation, but if one does not understand the meaning of the expert terms, he/she is more likely to make a mistake. Therefore, a strong recommendation for students translating highly specialised texts is to do extensive research, not only of terminological nature, but also of technical nature, because when translators do not understand the meaning of the term they tend to translate it incorrectly, for example *grace period* > *период на помилување* (instead of *период на одложување*). This is valid for both experienced and inexperienced translators and it is also important to emphasise that even

when translators want to be on the safe side, it is not justifiable to simply resort to the use of foreign words, for example *зрeјc нeрyод*, rather than exploring the meaning of the term. Last but not least, the provided answers by the surveyees point out that the target audience is very important when creating a translation. Namely, if the translation is intended for the general public it is understandable that laymen do not understand expert terms, for example, not everyone understands the meaning of *merit-based system, start-up companies*, etc. so the translation must not be abundant in foreign terminology. In such cases the translators must strive to achieve understanding of the content, for example, *систeм нa нaпpeдyвaњe cпopед зaслyги, нoви кoмпaнии*, etc. To conclude, in a period of growing challenge and pressure to use international vocabulary, translations face the difficult task to preserve the standard language on one side and to come up with suitable solutions accepted by the expert public.

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