# ISRG Journal of Education, Humanities and Literature







# **ISRG PUBLISHERS**

Abbreviated Key Title: ISRG J Edu Humanit Lit

ISSN: 2584-2544 (Online)

Journal homepage: <a href="https://isrgpublishers.com/isrgjehl/">https://isrgpublishers.com/isrgjehl/</a>
Volume – II Issue – V (September-October) 2025
Frequency: Bimonthly





Role of historical documentaries and follow-up commentaries in learning and understanding other cultures and languages (on the basis of the English original and the Ukrainian and Russian translation)

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| **Received:** 13.09.2025 | **Accepted:** 21.09.2025 | **Published:** 25.09.2025

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#### **Abstract**

The article is focused on the study of historical documentaries and follow-up commentaries as a significant source of learning foreign languages and cultures through the Internet. History is reflected in any language and culture, making their vocabulary always rich and diverse. As an illustration material, we have chosen a mini-documentary about the family life and work in the Victorian England by the British historian Ruth Goodman and commentaries about the topic from ordinary people. Both the documentary and the commentaries abound in modern English idiomatic constructions, historical notions and terms, culture-bound vocabulary, and grammar constructions which often do not have direct equivalents in the Ukrainian and Russian translations. This means that studying such films and native speakers' opinions about their own history learners can easily grasp the main discrepancies and similarities between the source language/culture and the target language/culture, and draw relevant historical and cultural parallels. Since commentaries are very close to the colloquial speech learners of English and future interpreters may get an easy access to the conversational up-to-date English in use without quitting their native countries. All these things prove the importance of including such documentaries together with follow-up commentaries into the classes of English as a foreign language.

**Keywords:** incorporation of history into foreign language classes, historical documentaries, follow-up commentaries, source culture/language and target culture/language; richness of vocabulary, culture-bound words, colloquial speech.

# **Introduction**

Today, access to the Internet resources gives a broad opportunity not just for learning foreign languages, but, more importantly, for better understanding of other cultures and mentalities. This can be done through various special free authentic culture and history sites, tourism online guides, history documentaries, fiction movies, electronic books, etc. Even modern educators and scholars talk about the importance of "incorporating historical and cultural knowledge into English classes" [1; 6 - 10]. The same can be said about translation/interpreting classes as a translator, being a culture mediator, is supposed to have a deep understanding of both source and target cultures he works with.

History as past human experience and cultural traditions are reflected in language that is why teaching a foreign language and translation can't occur without reference either to historical background or current social issues of this or that country/region. Such references should help learners to see interconnection between Past epochs and Present, understand the reasons for many historical events, and to better grasp current issues through their connection with the Past. With the help of foreign historical texts and documentary films foreign language learners can easily notice that at different times of human history different nations lived through similar social experiences. This very fact helps us draw parallels with native history, culture, and language, since all countries have undergone similar periods of development of class inequality and material insecurity, revolutions and civil wars, feudalism, and economic and cultural periods of ups and downs.

To illustrate the point above we have focused our studies on English historical documentaries and follow-up commentaries from ordinary people in which we analyse the culture-bound and historical vocabulary, grammar constructions with their Ukrainian and Russian contextual or dictionary equivalents. The translation into the Ukrainian and Russian languages is done by us together with a brief linguistic and cultural commentaries.It is also important to note that including people's comments after various movies and documentaries into learning English process can become one of the cutting-edge and useful approaches to teaching foreign languages and related disciplines due to the Internet. Such comments always contain authentic language examples that learners can acquire without leaving their country. Speaking about commentaries to historical videos they are quite sincere as people are usually concerned about their native history and are willing to share their own life experiences and to tell others about their family background. This means they contain a plethora of grammar and lexical structures British people use in their everyday life. From the comments on historical movies and documentaries English learners can learn special household terms, modern colloquial set phrases, geographical names and culture-bound words (realia) related to British culture, modern English grammar constructions. These comments give us insight on how people in Britain perceive their native history, which may be different from the perception of representatives of other countries as they can just learn it from text-books and lectures, but they can't live through it. And this opportunity to be in the shoes of another culture, without quitting our home, may really enhance the mutual understanding between people from different cultures and bring them together.

Talking about the theoretical aspect of our research it is based primarily upon four groups of studies: translation and linguistic studies, modern teaching methods of foreign languages, background knowledge from history and culture studies. With this

matter we have studied the works on specificities of teaching foreign languages in the digital age [2 - 3], and in this respect this article is the continuation of our previous article published in this journal [4]; papers on the importance of historical knowledge in language classes [1; 6 - 7; 9 - 10], and one of the papers is a unique English text-book based on the exercises from British history [7]; cultural aspects of translation describing techniques of dealing with cultural and historical realia [5; 8].

# **Description of methods and results**

The illustration material of our research is a YouTube minidocumentary by the popular historian Ruth Goodman about the life of families in the Victorian England (Victorian Family Life / Historian Ruth Goodman on marriage and the home. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0aSdXnhyk0). Her main point is that in the pre-Victorian age there was no big division between family life and work, and both men and women shared their household work actively participating in providing for their families. Whereas in the Victorian times of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the spread of factories the separation between men and women began, with men going to factories and becoming main breadwinners, and women staying at home. The attitude towards man was as to the lord and provider of the house, and women and small children got secondary roles of housekeepers. The video also narrates of the hard life of children who were supposed to do home chores at the very young age, and then were sent to work in factories, on a par with adults, as their tiny hands and bodies could easily go through small and narrow gaps and passages between machines. This topic turns out to be quite significant for modern generations of people as we, living in post-Victorian age, still can feel the consequences of it. This may be one of the reasons why this video elicited so many lively comments.

For our analysis, we have picked up the lexical units reflecting the epoch and compared them with their Ukrainian and Russian counterparts. These lexical units describe the life in Victorian working families and the peculiarities of work in factories in this period. They have their established translation equivalents in both the Ukrainian and Russian languages, though with certain insignificant transformation deviations which correspond to linguistic and cultural discrepancies between the English and the two Slavic languages and cultures. This is due to the fact that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century ordinary working families in Europe lived through similar live conditions which presupposed hard toil of men (and sometimes women) in factories, heavy house chores done by women at home, and the widespread use of child labour. Here are selected examples of such expressions with their contextual translations into Ukrainian (before the slash) and Russian (after the slash):

- 1. **Male breadwinner pattern** модель сім'ї, коли чоловік стає годувальником / модель семьи, когда мужчина становится кормильцем) rendered with the use of transformation of addition.
- 2. **Employment of boys** наймання на роботу хлопців / найм на работу мальчиков rendered with the use of transformation of addition.
- 3. to share many of the making tasks ділити між собою багато виробничої роботи / делить между собой много производственной работы rendered with the use of transformation of addition and differentiation.

- 4. **to work on the land** працювати на землі / работать на земле rendered with the help of the direct equivalent.
- 5. farmhouse / farmyard фермерський будинок / фермерський двір (фермерський дім / фермерский двір (фермерський дім / фермерский двір / фермерский двір / фермерский двір / деревенская изба (хозяйственный двор).
- 6. to go off to the factory nimu на заводи / уйти на заводы - rendered with the direct equivalence using the technique of domestication. The dictionary equivalents of the English word "factory" are the words фабрика (fabrica) which is of the Latin origin, and 3a800 (zavod) which has a Slavic etymology and is very popular in both the Ukrainian and Russian languages. For our translation we've used the latter variant. Besides, the English original uses an emphatic phrasal verb to go off, the construction of which is absent both in the Ukrainian and Russian languages. In Russian we managed to render it more adequately with the help of the prefix "v" plus the verb "xodumb" which also, as in the English original, underlines the idea that men left their families, wife and children, to find a paid job and to become a provider for them. In the Ukrainian variant we just translated the verb omitting the preposition. We see the same difference in the Ukrainian and Russian translations of the similar phrasal verb to go out to work - nimu на роботу / yйти на работу.
- 7. wages for urban workers зарплатня для міських робіьників / зарплата для городских рабочих rendered with the direct lexical equivalent using the grammar substitution of the noun in plural (wages). by the noun in singular (зарплатня / зарплата).
- rise in male purchasing power зростання купівельної спроможності чоловіків / рост покупательной способності мужчин - rendered with the help of calque translation. We talk about the calque translation, and not the direct equivalence when we deal either with neologisms or culture-bound words of the source language. In this case we come across a slight mentality realia which shows the difference between the orthodox Slavic family culture and all the rest of the Christian Western culture. In the 19th century, the Ukrainian and Russian orthodox families were also patriarchal as in Western Europe and Great Britain. However, their respect for the man as the lord of the house was more of the spiritual and religious nature rather than the material one. Neither Ukrainian nor Russian women of the 19<sup>th</sup> century could think in the category of "purchasing power" of their husbands and fathers. This very fact should be taken into account by learners of English and translators of such kinds of historical information.
- 9. Working class family ciм'я poбітничого класу (ciм'я poбітників) / семья paбочего класса (семья paбочих) may be rendered with the direct equivalent or the transformation of omission.

- 10. the good stuff is funneled towards the bloke все гарне віддавалось (перепадало) чоловікам / всё хорошее отдавалось (перепадало) мужчинам. This emphatic English expression underlining the material power of man in the Victorian family is rendered with a more neutral generalised phrase both into Ukrainian and Russian, with slight grammar changes.
- 11. **hiearchy of eating** iєрархія у споживанні їжі / иерархия в потреблении пищи. This historical realia is rendered with the calque translation with the use of the syntactic addition.
- 12. *help out at home* допомагати по дому / помагать по дому. The English emphatic phrasal verb highlights that in the working families of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was the obligation of all children to help their moms at homes. However, due to the absence of this type of verbs in Ukrainian and Russian it is rendered with neutral phrases by leaving out the preposition.
- 13. to starve голодувати, вмирати з голоду / голодать, умирать с голода. This emotive single English word meaning 'to suffer from the lack of food' doesn't have the direct equivalent in Ukrainian and Russian, and that is why it is rendered either with a neutral word or an explanatory translation.
- 14. *textile industry текстильна промисловість* / *текстильная промышленность*. The textile industry was one of the most popular both in Britain and the Russian Empire. In the Ukrainian and Russian translations, the Latin word *textile* is transcribed and the word *industry* is translated by the Slavic equivalent which is close to the meaning of *trade*.
- 15. *child labour was at a premium дитяча праця була в ціні / детский труд был в цене.* This phrase is rendered with the direct translation emphasizing the spread of child labor in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 16. 15) to encourage children out of the workplace знімати дітей з робочих місць / снимать детей с рабочих мест. This phrase refers to the time when working conditions of people in the Victorian England were a bit mitigated and children were taken to work at older age. The same thing happened in other parts of Europe at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is rendered with the contextual equivalent within lexical and stylistic norms of the Ukrainian and Russian language.

# Historical terms and figures of speech from people's commentaries with underlined English terminological and idiomatic phrases

In the first comment the commentator narrates us about the real tragic story from the history of her family. It is about the skeleton of a young cleaning boy found in the chimney of the Victorian house by her mom when she moved in. A poor lad couldn't just get out from the chimney he was supposed to clean and was just left there completely neglected by his lords for a hundred years. That was, unfortunately, the fate of many working children of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in many countries of the world including Great Britain, Ukraine, and Russia. That is why this information must resonate with many people who learn and care about their native and world history, culture, and languages. In the commentary we have

underlined the expressions and terms which might be of linguistic, grammar, and culture interest to native speakers of Ukrainian and Russian who learn English, and offered their translation.

#### 1. @pollywaffledoodah3057

In the 1950s, my Mum was living in an old Victorian terrace house in Islington in London, which she shared with a group of other young trainee female teachers. It was 4 stories high, and was then a bit run down, but in Victorian times, it had been rather a grand house, with servants living on the very top floor. It had lots of ornate marble fireplaces, and lovely stained glass windows and doors. It was a bitterly cold winter, when my Mum moved in, and she decided she needed to light a fire in her fireplace, as the radiator was broken. She managed to do this, but soon the chimney was smoking very badly, filling her room with clouds of smoke and soot - the chimney was obviously blocked. So, the landlord was told about this, and although he said he preferred that his lodgers used electric heaters, he supposed he should get the chimney seen to - so he arranged for a chimney sweep to unblock the chimney. The sweep looked up there, and was tut-tutting, and shaking his head, complaining about these old Victorian terraces, with their narrow chimneys that went on forever, up and down, all over the building. He kept ramming his brush up the chimney, but it got stuck, and he could not budge it. So he climbed up, with a long ladder, and after a while, my Mum heard him yell out - 'Oh my gawd! Bloody hell! Gawd help us!' Mum said he just about fell down that chimney, he was so keen to get out of there, he slid down the ladder. 'What's wrong?' asked my Mum, seeing how shaken and upset he was. But he wouldn't tell her - not straight away, it was too shocking, for a young lady to hear about, he said. 'I've got to fetch a copper! Is there a copper about on this street?' he asked Mum, and before she could answer, he raced out the door, returning a few minutes later with a Bobby. Mum told me years later, that even though the sweep was covered in soot, he suddenly looked as pale as a ghost - all because of his horrible discovery. He had found the skeleton of a small boy, still wearing tatty, filthy rags, and no more than 6 years old, stuck in the middle of the chimney. This child had been apprenticed to a sweep, about 100 years earlier. And when he was taking too long to come back down from sweeping out the soot, the boss sweep just left him there, to find his own way out. He had plenty more apprentices to do his dirty work for him. The policeman said, it was a scandal, what the bosses got away with, back in the bad old days, and the poor kid had most likely just been forgotten about. But my Mum said she never could forget about that lost little boy, trapped in a chimney for a hundred years.

#### Lexically challenging terms and expressions:

- the house was run down будинок був занедбаний / дом был заброшен. - translation of a phrasal verb;
- lodger пожилець / постоялец translation of an accommodation industry term;
- sweep трубочист / трубочист translation of the name of the ancient profession;
- tut-tut дратувався / раздражался translation of the English interjection used here as a verb with a help of conversion; this may be challenging as the phenomenon of conversion is absent in the Ukrainian and Russian languages.
- to ram забивати, проштовхувати, втискувати / забивать, проталкивать, втискивать - translation of a specific verb of movement;

- to budge поворушитися / пошевельнуться translation of a specific verb of movement;
- to fetch a copper покликати поліцейського / позвать полицейского - translation of a colloquial phrase;
- to be apprenticed to smb. служити підмайстром у когось, навчатися у когось / служить подмастерьем у кого-то, учиться у кого-то - translation of a specific education verb converted from a noun;
- to get away with уникнути покарання / уйти безнаказанным - translation of a phrasal verb and colloquial police term.

#### **Grammar units and constructions**

- He should get the chimney seen потрібно, щоб хтось подивився димохід - translation of modal passive construction which is absent in Ukrainian and Russian;
- Oh my gawd! О Боже / О Боже translation of an alternative colloquial culture-bound spelling of the word
- he wouldn't tell her він мовчав / он молчал antonymic translation of an English modal verb which doesn't have the direct equivalent in the Ukrainian and Russian languages;
- I've got to fetch (a copper) я повинен покликати (поліцейського) / я должен позвать полицейского neutral translation of a colloquial modal set phrase;
- -This child had been apprenticed to a sweep ця дитина вивчилася на трубочиста /этот ребёнок выучился на трубочиста - translation of Past Perfect Tense construction used in the Passive Voice with a Past Simple construction; there are only three main tenses in Ukrainian and Russian.

As we can see from this relatively small commentary learners of English and translation can learn the difference between various modal constructions which are abound in English.

#### Culture words

- Victorian terrace house одна із секцій вікторіанського з'єднаного будинку / одна из секций викторанского соединенного дома - explanatory translation;
- Islington Іслінгтон, район Лондона із стародавніми вікторіанськими будівлями / Ислингтон, район Лондона со старинными викторанскими зданиями transcription and explanatory translation of a geographical name;
- fireplace камін / камин equivalent translation of a term meaning an essential part of the British house interior.

The documentary contains many other eloquent commentaries in which Ukrainian and Russian learners and translators of English can come across various challenging lexical and grammar units. Let's analyse a few more of them:

#### @florencegaye1391

Why has Ms. Goodman not been recognised in the King's New Year's honours list? I am among the countless people who have been educated by her extensive historical knowledge. She is such a compelling presence, and her ability to convey a real understanding of the lives of ordinary people makes history a vibrant, living thing. I do so hope we see her as Dame Ruth Goodman in the near future. And long may she continue to bring us all that step closer to the past in her own unique way.

This commentary conveys vivid emotions of the commentator after watching the documentary. It also contains the specific culture-bound phrases, colourful epithets, grammar structures:

#### **Culture phrases:**

- King's new year's honours list новорічний список нагород короля / новогодний список наград короля the translation of this culture phrase requires the knowledge of British history and political traditions according to which at the end of every year the most outstanding people are honoured by the British monarch.
- Dame Ruth Goodman ∂ama Pym Γy∂man / ∂ama Pym Γy∂man the expression with the name of the historian uses the culture bound title given to women for certain valuable services to the country and is "equivalent to the rank of knighthood" [https://study.com/academy/lesson/dame-england-history-uses.html].

### **Epithets and grammar constructions:**

- she is such a compelling presence вона настільки приваблива особистість / она настолько притягательная литчность this peculiar epithet doesn't have its direct equivalent in Ukrainian or Russian, so it is translated with a help of contextual equivalence.
- vibrant living history жива, насичена історія / живая, насыщенная история this phrase uses common English epithets for the word 'history' which are translated with their dictionary equivalents into Ukrainian and Russian.
- And long may she continue to bring us closer to the past... i нехай вона ще довго нас зближує з минулим / и пусть она ещё долго нас сближает с прошлым this English inverted modal grammar construction doesn't have its direct equivalents in Ukrainian and Russian grammar, and it is translated with the longestablish Ukrainian and Russian syntactic units.

# 3. @londonshirefilms-angelaell8191

My mother was the last girl of nine children. One boy followed her. Theirs was a working class Victorian family. I say this because my grandmother was born in 1880. Her oldest children were born at the turn of the 20th century and my mother, being the last but one, in 1928, so the sensibility was very Victorian. They lived in a two up two down. My mother never, until the day she died, had slept in a bed on her own. She shared a bed with her sisters and then got married and shared a bed with her husband. She was the skivvy. She said all her brother and sisters and mother were working. She taught me that the man gets the best food, the children the second best and the mother whatever is left over.

This commentary describes the reminiscences about the life in the Victorian family of the commentator's mother. Here we come across such terms as:

#### **Historical terms:**

**Working class Victorian family** - робоча вікторіанська сім'я / рабочая викторианская семья - translated with the help of omission;

#### **Epithets:**

- the sensibility was very Victorian атмосфера була вікторіанською / атмосфера была викторанской translated with contextual equivalent;
- *the second best food* другосортна їжа / второсортная еда translated with dictionary equivalent;

#### **Colloquial culture-bound terms:**

- they lived in a two up two down вони жили в будинку з двома спальнями вгорі і внизу / они жили в доме с двумя спальнями наверху и внизу this abbreviated culture-bound architectural term should be translated with the knowledge of the structure of the Victorian house and that the numeral 'two' refers to 'two bedrooms);
- *skivvy прислуга / прислуга -* this colloquial derogatory term doesn't have its direct equivalent in Ukrainian or Russian and it is generalized in translation.

#### 4. @mizteek5024

My dad was the breadwinner; it was kind of frowned upon for women with kids to work. My dad got all his meals put down to him the minute he got in from work and he never needed to do any housework, my mum and us kids did it all. This was in the 70s. It sounds like things hadn't changed that much from the Victorian era to 60/70s.

Here is another example of the separation of work between man and woman within a British Victorian family. We come across the very term the breadwinner which has its direct equivalents in the Ukrainian and Russian languages: годувальник/кормилец; phrasal verbs it was frowned upon for women...to work and to get in from work the first of which is translated with the help of dictionary equivalent with the slight stylistic change of meaning: на жінок, які працювали, косо дивились / на женщин, которые работали, косо смотрели the second - with the help of direct equivalent: повертатися з роботи / возвращаться с работы. Besides, the first phrase is used in the English passive form, which also might pose certain challenge to a translator of the Ukrainian and Russian languages, in which Passive Voice has slightly different functions.

#### 5. @serahloeffelroberts9901

One job women did in Victorian times which no longer exists was professional wet nurse. Wealthy women never nursed their own babies but outsourced this job to professional wet nurses who often lived in the country.

In this commentary we come across two child raising terms the first of which refers to a disappeared profession which was common for European noble families of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Both have direct equivalents in Ukrainian and Russian:

- wet nurse годувальниця / кормилица;
- to wean відлучати від грудей / отлучать от груди.

In the commentary describing the past epoch we also come across a modern term often used in Business English. Since it is a neologism for the Ukrainian and Russian languages, it may be translated in two ways: by transcription and an adequate equivalent. In this case, we've opted for the second variant:

**to outsource the job** - делегувати, доручати роботу / делегировать, поручать работу.

# **Conclusion**

The analysis has shown that both the documentary and the comments contain a plethora of historical terms, authentic idioms, up-to-date grammar constructions, interesting live historical facts, which makes it possible for the learners to get in touch with the English language in use and the real British culture and history without quitting their homes. Many of the English culture-bound phrases and grammar structures do not have their direct equivalents in the Ukrainian and Russian languages, and require contextual or explanatory translation, which proves the existence of certain differences between the British and Ukrainian / Russian cultures. However, certain historical and linguistic parallels between the cultures and languages can help learners to notice similar processes that occurred in Great Britain and their native countries in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

If previously foreign language learner could get authentic colloquial vocabulary only from fiction style, newspapers, and sometimes long fiction movies, now they can acquire it from such short informative videos and the comments of ordinary native speakers after it. This must contribute to quick acquisition of the English language and understanding of British culture and history like it happens during real life conversation. Besides, learners can leave their own commentaries and share the information about Ukrainian and Russian history, thus launching an international discussion of the issues of European history. The closeness of these documentaries and commentaries to the colloquial speech make them of use to interpreting students, who can acquire a great deal of new up-to-date idiomatic English expressions they may come across during their work.

So, based on the above, we can say that it is highly important to use historical documentaries and follow-up commentaries in the process of learning the English language and culture, and develop educationally correct methods of working with them.

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