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EUPHEMISMS IN ENGLISH POLITICAL DISCOURSE AND THEIR RENDERING INTO UKRAINIAN

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The article deals with the analysis of functions of euphemisms in English political discourse on the material of political speeches of ex-presidents of the USA. The author gives variants of their translation onto Ukrainian, analyzes translation transformations, which are used for adequate translation.

Key words: euphemisms, political discourse, political speech, translation formations, lexical and semantic, grammatical transformations.

В статті проаналізовані функції евфемізмів в англійському політичному дискурсі на матеріалі текстів політичних виступлень екс-президентів США, даються варіанти їх перекладу на український мову, аналізуються перекладацькі трансформації, які застосовуються для адекватного перекладу.

Ключевые слова: евфемизм, политический дискурс, выступление, переводческие трансформации, лексико-семантические, грамматические трансформации.

Палєй Т.А. ЕВФЕМІЗМИ В АНГЛОМОВНОМУ ПОЛІТИЧНОМУ ДИСКУРСІ ТА ЇХ ПЕРЕКЛАД УКРАЇНСЬКОЮ МОВОЮ

У статті проаналізовані функції евфемізмів в англійському політичному дискурсі на матеріалі текстів політичних промов екс-президентів США, наводяться варіанти їх перекладу на українську мову, аналізуються перекладацькі трансформації, що застосовуються для адекватного перекладу.

Ключові слова: евфемизм, политический дискурс, промова, перекладацькі трансформації, лексико-семантичні, граматичні трансформації.

Political discourse has repeatedly attracted the attention of researchers from various fields, including linguists, since the connection between language and politics is clear: no political regime can ever exist without communication. Particular attention is paid to its extra-linguistic features as well as tools and technologies of impact on the recipient in order to manipulate his/her mind, for political discourse is the most influential phenomenon in modern political communication [1, p. 27].

A lot of widely-known researchers, including linguists, made great contribution to the political discourse studies: G. Carlin, H. Halmari, O. Sheigal, P. Serio, P. Wodak, A. Belova, L. Synelnikova, T. van Dijk, G. Cook, N. Fairclough, D. Lee, D. Schiffrin and others. A new discipline "Political linguistics" emerged. One of its tasks is "the investigation of manipulation strategies and tactics, their efficiency and rhetoric rules of political argumentation" [2, p. 565]. Linguistic means of conscience manipulation are sentence structure, lexical synonymy, metaphors and expressivity, prosodic and phonetic means [2, p. 567]. Stylistic means are also of great importance. To such stylistic means belong euphemisms.

The problem of political euphemisms and their role in political manipulations have been

studied by G. Carlin, C. Thurlow, H. Halmari, M.S. McGlone, G. Beck, R. Pfister and others. But the problem of their translation into Ukrainian is still far from being solved.

So the task of our research is to research the ways of rendering political euphemisms into Ukrainian on the material of texts published in The New York Times and political speeches of ex-presidents of the USA.

Modern political vocabulary is characterized by the double-nature of its usage, for it may be used for both reporting on information, as well as its concealing; it is not only means of attracting public attention, but also a way to distract or significantly weaken it. The specificity of political discourse is that it defines the political priorities of society, sets parameters of interpretation of political events, directs members of a society in the world of politics, stimulates political activity, which may be implemented directly (beliefs, call to action) or implicitly (creating a certain emotional state, mood, background) and brings together members of a society around certain political groups, alienating other social gatherings.

According to Mikhail Didenko, focusing on a recipient in order to encourage the audience to the public and political reaction is a defining

feature of political communication. Members of political communication are usually representatives of certain socio-political positions, and the exchange of information occurs with sufficiently pronounced pragmatic orientation, the communicative process in politics always has an intentional nature [3, p. 56]. To achieve the goal, an addresser has to present a careful selection and organization of linguistic resources at different levels of the speech interaction.

Addressee is always the final link in a communication and the object of speech influence in political discourse. Sender deliberately builds his/her message according to the conceptual and emotional evaluation model of a recipient, which determines choosing of specific speech means and way of constructing a discourse in general [1, p. 89]. Making up a discourse based on socio-psychological models of a recipient ensures that the information is adequately perceived, which means that discourse performs its communicative tasks. However, the main task of political discourse is to convince the audience of the correctness of a particular position, to impose certain views, and to achieve certain reaction from recipient. That is why political discourse in all its forms is anthropo-directed. In order to realize his/her intentions, sender of a political discourse must predict the recipient, giving him/her the opportunity to construct the discourse adequately taking into account the type of information and its evaluative aspect. While working on the script for the speech, an experienced politician has to carefully think through its composition and linguistic content [4, p. 58–59]. Moreover, each relatively complete semantic fragment of speech (introduction, main part, conclusion) is to be made on the basis of its communicative, contextual, and stylistic purposes.

Thus, according to Natalia Karpchuk, a politician aiming at achieving communicative effect on a recipient while formulating specific expression has to solve both the problem of constructing a model of the recipient, modeling their relationship with the recipient and predicting his reaction [1, p. 121]. To influence the recipient in the course of a discourse a politician uses many technologies at different levels of speech. This can include special tone used to attract the attention of the audience, breaking rules of tenses coordination to highlight the desired aspect, or specially selected vocabulary aiming at evoking the desired emotional response. To implement the illocutionary task (to convey information to the recipient) and achieve perlocutionary effect (to induce the recipient to certain actions) in the

course of political discourse at the lexical level are usually used: neutral vocabulary (world, effect, matter, person, experience, to become, to admit, to carry), book vocabulary (vow, challenges, to neglect, to emphasize), terms (the general maritime law, maritime jurisdiction, admiralty) and nomenclature lexicon (the Civil Code, American admiralty court, the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, the National Space Development Agency (NASDA) of Japan) [5, p. 114–116]. But it goes without saying, that these are the very euphemisms that come to help to a politician when he/she faces situation of the need of informing or explaining an inconvenient or unpleasant situation which is likely to evoke indignation of a public.

In addition to euphemisms, the political discourse is rich in the use of neologisms, foreign words, metaphors and idiomatic expressions. But all of them in certain cases implement the function of euphemisms. For example, neologisms are used to create expressive and emotional background. A politician can fill neologisms with comfortable and emotional content that is in favour for him/her in a particular situation. Quite often, neologisms are used to describe awkward concepts. In this case, their function gets close to the one of euphemisms. It should also be noted that a politician who successfully uses and creates neologisms is considered to be creative and intelligent person [6, p. 67]. It promotes designing of a positive image of a politician and strengthens his/her influence on the masses. Moreover, in political discourse, there can be traced many figures of concealment and paraphrasing functioning as euphemisms. They are used to mitigate unpleasant messages from the opposition. Political euphemisms help to convince voters, or to change the perception of facts and events that may cause audience's antipathy. They focus on unimportant details, displacing the main information in the background. Often, euphemisation in political discourse can be traced in such aspects as activity and private lives of politicians and their environment, economic and political activities of the authorities and political parties, elections, military campaigns, the means of attack and defense, terrorist or counter-terrorist campaigns, coverage of negotiations and summits in the media, espionage, etc. [7, p. 42]. In general, political euphemisms are the means of semantic manipulation which task is to form ideology of a recipient, and effect on the mind and behavior control of the audience.

It should also be added, that such phenomenon as different semantic organization of information is



closely related to the use of euphemisms in political discourse, that is different nomination of the same concepts by politicians belonging to different parties. In their speech course, these concepts may acquire different nomination, which, respectively, may be interpreted as having both positive and negative nature, for every politician endows these terms with his/her own content. The means of making up political concepts is used to create ambiguity and manipulate the addressee's consciousness as well as to subordinate recipient's views according to the views of a speaker [8, p. 60].

Foreign words may also act as euphemisms in a political speech course. They allow a politician to use various nuances of the concepts, evoke the desired emotions, impress an addressee in terms of linguistics, and to avoid tautology [3, p. 12]. A political metaphor that makes a text easier and interesting, as well as draws the attention of a recipient with the help of unusual constructions is often used to influence recipient in the course of a political discourse. Political metaphor is one of the strongest means of influencing the political consciousness of a society. It serves for changing the current political picture seen by a recipient, urges him/her to take certain steps, and forms the desired emotional state [9, p. 122]. In addition, the metaphor may distract the recipient's attention of weaknesses in the system of reasoning. In general, manipulation with public opinion with the help of linguistic means leads to the fact that ideological connotations of certain words distort their meanings. Lexical-semantic variations in the meaning of words usually occurs in such models as the old word (form) – new content, old content – a new word (form), paraphrase, substitution of concepts, unclear meaning, and semantic contamination. According to Kateryna Serazhym, in order to influence a recipient, politicians deliberately use such language features as flexibility of semantic structure of words, difficulty in distinguishing connotations of direct denotative meanings, denotative and connotative variation in the meanings of the same language units under the influence of social factors, multi-component nature of lexical and pragmatic meaning, the existence of cognitive and communicative, as well as objective and subjective aspects in the lexical meaning, synonymous and associative links between words, as well as modality of expressions and evaluation of semantics [10, p. 6]. So, as one can see, in a political discourse, there are a lot of ways of using euphemisms. They may acquire different forms of expression, though their function always remains the same, that is to implement linguo-pragmat-

ical function of connection between a speaker and audience in order to veil uncomfortable facts and sound more agreeable.

There are cases when a translator should imply addition:

town dump (міське звалище) – volume reduction unit (територія збуту зайвого майна);

The given example demonstrates implementation of synonymous translation. First of all, it should be mentioned, that English-language euphemisms are frequently formed with the help of asyndetic noun clusters. That is the construction inherent to the English language, but not the Ukrainian one. That is why, as a general rule, translation of such clusters should start with the noun standing in the final position. In the given case, it is a noun «unit». The Ukrainian equivalent of this lexical unit is unlikely to render the intended meaning, so it would be agreeable to choose the Ukrainian noun «територія», which does not violate the idea of the expression. Also there should be implied addition and lexical concretisation. However, the last transformation is not obligatory to use, for it violates the neutrality of expression. Another example where addition or expanding is used is:

bum (бомж) – hard-core unemployed (безробітний з обтяжливими життєвими обставинами).

Here is another example of asyndetic noun cluster which translation demands the addition of conjunctions. In this very case, it is the Ukrainian conjunction “з”:

disabled person (людина з інвалідністю) – minimally exceptional person (людина з обмеженими можливостями).

However, there exist cases, when there should be implied omission instead of addition:

invasion (вторгнення) – reinforced protective reaction strike (посилена захисна реакція)

It goes without saying, that the suggested variants of translation do not claim the status of the sole ultimate ones. They may vary, though the principle is to remain the same, that is preserving of positive lexical coloring. The English-language political discourse is characterized by existence of some common widely-used euphemisms that have already acquired their generally-accepted equivalents in the Ukrainian language, but, sometimes, a translator or an interpreter faces a situation when he/she has to render a euphemism which doesn't subject to a direct way of translation. For example, when a company makes layoffs, it is simply resorting to “involuntary methodologies” – “недобровільні методи” [11, p. 8]. When an Air Force missile crashes, it “impacts the ground prematurely” – “передчасне зіткнення із землею”. When a cor-

poration closes a plant, it is a “volume-related production-schedule adjustment” – “регулювання графіку, пов’язане з обсягом виробництва”. Companies that go belly-up have a “negative cash-flow problem” – “проблема негативного грошового потоку” [11, p. 9].

Thus, the use of euphemisms is not a new phenomenon, but it wasn’t until the middle of the XX cent that it started to take the front position in the English-language political discourse. As G. Orwell pointed out in “Politics and the English Language”, an essay written in 1946 [12] but often cited during the wars in Cambodia, Vietnam, and Iraq, “political speech and writing are largely the defense of the indefensible... Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness”. Orwell’s warning that clutter is not just a nuisance but a deadly tool came true in recent decades of American military adventurism. It was during George W. Bush’s presidency that “civilian casualties” (жертви серед цивільного населення) in Iraq became “collateral damage” (побічний збиток) [12].

It was noted that maintaining of evaluative and expressive functions of political euphemisms is provided by the use of lexical and grammatical transformations, especially, the one of holistic transformation. Formal lexical transformations are used to transfer political euphemisms that belong to the international vocabulary or represent a terminological database of a particular industry. Concretization is used to render euphemisms of general semantics which meaning is realized in the context. Modulation is based upon a logical connection between the concepts and allows translation of functionally identical units, especially when functions of euphemisms are combined. Grammatical transformations are used for both translating euphemisms with a specific structure that have no counterparts in the target language, and preventing complications in the course of translation [13, p. 149].

Thus, one may observe the most common euphemisms with the suggested variants of their translation, for example, linguo-cognitive characteristics of euphemisms in political discourse in the light of the theory of conceptual metaphor “WAR IS PEACE” include [14, p. 8]:

For instance, there are some citations from “The New York Times” newspaper:

“Get in, gather the intel, launch a surgical strike, get out, no troops lost. <...> Any time you can use a drone instead of using a Marine, I think it’s a good thing” (The New York Times, 22/08/2012).

Peace keeping action	Миротворчі дії
peace offensive (invasion)	мирний наступ (вторгнення)
peace-keeping force	миротворчі сили
peaceful nuclear device (bomb)	мирний ядерний пристрій
pacification of the enemy (bombing)	умиротворення супротивника (бомбардування)
Atoms for peace (nuclear power)	Атом для миру (ядерна зброя)
Surgical strike	Прицільний удар
protective reaction (bombing)	захисна реакція (бомбування)
pre-dawn vertical insertion (invasion by parachutists)	доцентрова вертикальна вставка (вторгнення парашутистів)
quarantine (military blockade)	карантин (військова блокада)

«Зайти, зібрати дані розвідки, зробити прицільний удар, вийти, жодних втрат військового складу... Щоразу, коли ви використовуєте безпілотний літак замість моделі Marine, ви виграєте».

The given example demonstrates that translation of the mentioned-above euphemisms involves the use of neutral vocabulary which may significantly influence perception of the event by public. Moreover, it is likely to remain uncomprehensible for some people, which, in its turn, plays a role of a ling-pragmatic means of influencing the masses. Thus, that very case of the use of euphemisms involves direct literal translation.

“Representatives of more than 60 nations and organizations <...> asked the United Nations to begin planning for a peace-keeping force, even as prospects for a diplomatic way out of the conflict appeared dim”. (The New York Times, 02/24/2012).

«Представники більш ніж 60 країн і організацій <...> звернулися з проханням до Організації Об’єднаних Націй щодо початку планування дій для миротворчих сил, тоді як перспективи дипломатичного виходу з конфлікту залишилися туманними». (The New York Times, 02/24/2012).



The mentioned-above example includes a euphemism formed with the help of asyndetic noun cluster construction. The translation of this euphemism has already become fixed due to the wide use of this utterance. The particle “keeping” (підтримуючі) has experienced a substitution by the Ukrainian lexical unit “творити”. Thus, the meaning is a little bit violated, but the idea remains the same, that is the “forces creating or maintaining peaceful state of the situation”.

There are also some examples of political euphemisms of conceptual metaphor “LIE IS TRUTH”:

Poetic truth (lies) to stretch the truth (to lie) stranger to the truth (habitual liar)	Гоетична правда (брехня) перекручування правди незнайомий із правдою (закоренілий брехун)
economical with the truth	видавати правду маленькими порціями з одного боку істини (неправда)
to one side of the truth (untrue) Embroidery (lying) to embroider the truth	прикрашання (брехня) прикрашати правду
to embroider reality to embroider the facts (to lie)	прикрашати реальність прикрашати факти (брехати)

The translation of the given euphemisms also demonstrates yearning for literal way of rendering these lexical units. The euphemism “economical with the truth” may be regarded as an exception. Surely, it may be translated literally, but it doesn’t seem to sound natural in the target language. That is why there should be implied such a transformation as synonymous translation or the method of explanation: «видавати правду невеликими порціями, видавати правдиві факти не в повному обсязі». For example:

“After Bild disclosed the loan, Mr. Wulff faced criticism that he had been economical with the truth in previously maintaining that he had no business relationships with Mr. Geerkens, a friend”. (The New York Times, 01/02/2012).

«Після того, як Bild відкрив кредит, пан Вульф зіткнувся з критикою з приводу того, що він не в повному обсязі видавав правдиві факти, раніше стверджуючи, що в нього не було ділових відносин із паном Гіркенсом, його товаришем» (The New York Times, 01.02.2012).

The given example demonstrates an attempt to soften the truth with the help of euphemisms. The person is accused of concealing the truth, though he is not called a liar directly. The linguo-pragmatic feature of this utterance lies in attempting to preserve the more or less positive image of the person spoken about and, thus, creating a positive evaluation of his actions. Another instance of presenting lie as truth is:

“It would be hard to exaggerate how far To Save America repeats the plot of the earlier election book – with Obama now, rather than Clinton, cast in the role of big-government intruder, and the bogey of the “secular-socialist machine” lifted from Fox News without much elaboration or embroidery” (The New York Review of Books, 01/12/2012).

«Було б важко перебільшити, наскільки книга «Врятувати Америку» повторює сюжет попередньої передвиборної книги – разом з Обамою, а вже не з Клінтоном, відлитим у ролі високопосадовця-порушника, і залякуванням «світсько-соціалістичною машиною», здертою з Fox News без особливого доопрацювання чи прикрашання».

It is obvious, that this euphemism is possible to render with the help of literal translation.

To speak about more recent examples of usage of euphemisms in political discourse, it is reasonable to cite Hillary Clinton who has got into trouble when she claimed to have been pinned down by sniper fire while on a trip to Bosnia. When video footage revealed the episode had been a figment of her imagination, she went in front of the cameras and admitted to “mis-speaking” [9, p. 210]:

“I did mis-speak the other day. You know this has been a very long campaign so occasionally I am a human being like everybody else”.

«Я неправильно нещодавно дещо висловилася. Ви знаєте, ця кампанія має дуже затьжний характер, а я все ж така ж людина, як і всі інші».

The results of the research have shown that the usage of euphemisms was characteristic of political texts which imply that politicians cover up the true nature of political events, deceiving the public with nice-sounding words implementing the ling-pragmatic characteristics of usage of euphemisms.

The given paper regards different types of translation transformations, such as formal, lexical-semantic, grammatical and lexico-grammatical. It was shown, that their usage is determined not only by lexical and grammatical gaps, but also by the functions that are performed by these

euphemisms in the original text. The study found that euphemistical nomination in the lexical systems of different languages is relative and often do not coincide. It was also found that one of the characteristics of the translation of political euphemisms in the political discourse is a combination of different types of transformations, which increases the reliability of the source language text reproduction.

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