
Challenges of political translation

Abstract. *Research topicality: Political texts are mainly available in translation. Thus, it is very important to provide the reader with an overt translation. To improve the quality of political text translation, it is important to understand and be able to notice the key language elements of the text, keeping in mind that political texts and political translations are manipulative. Figurative language is used to give language elements a figurative meaning and therefore creates a much more vivid image of the text.*

The aim: To study manipulative devices in political speeches.

Research methodology: The analytical method is used in the analysis of literature on political translation and in transcript translations of political speeches. A contrastive analysis on source and target texts is made. To show the stylistic differences or similarities between the source text and translated text, two political speeches and their translation are analysed. A questionnaire for experienced and novice translators is used to prove, or reject the results of the analysis.

Main findings: Not only political texts, but their translations as well are always manipulative. Figurative language tools are often used in translations of political speeches, mostly metaphors and epithets. The results of the questionnaire show that figurative language tools are used in everyday translations of political texts, and they reinforce the results gained from the political speeches analysis.

Key words: *political texts, manipulation mean, figurative language devices, political translation.*

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Introduction. Political translation undeniably is a large part of translator's workload and is important to the audiences that it is delivered to. In recent years the studies and importance of political translation has increased and become more popular (Dimitriu, 2002, 2; Bassnett, Lefevere, 1990, 12; Hatim, Munday, 2004, 313). Translation studies have shown interest in analysing political speeches and political discourse. For example, Barack Obama's inauguration speech was analysed by Lasse Hansen (2010) in the work "Translation of political speeches", showing differences between the English version and the one translated into Norwegian.

The topic is chosen to find out what language tools are used in political text translations. Firstly, the authors studied the specifics of political texts. Secondly, a questionnaire for translators was carried out to find out how often they have to translate political texts, what main language means they use, and what main difficulties in translating political texts can be noticed. Thirdly, two political speeches and their transcript analyses were analysed, focussing on researching the main tools of figurative language, such as metaphors and epithets.

Information gained from this study can be useful to students and translators and help them with the translation of political texts in the future,

as political texts are not only political news, but slogans, speeches, TV shows and movies.

The theme is important to translation and its studies, because it provides knowledge and basic information any translator who deals with this field should know, as well as the problems they can have while translating political texts and how to avoid them.

On translating current political events, it is important to understand and interpret them, not changing idea of the text, thus having an overt translation (Riccardi, 2002), so that the readers could keep up with the latest events and changes in the political world and not be misinformed.

Literature Review. Political texts are important to our everyday life. They are the most known form of giving political information to people and their main task is to influence and sometimes strongly manipulate public opinion regarding political events and political matters, for example, elections. Current events presentation sometimes is different in different sources/countries, and even diametrically opposite, as can be seen lately in the description of political post-election events in Belarus, or “Navalny poisoning”.

Types of political texts are, but are not limited to, political slogans, ads, fliers, articles, political speeches, publications. In his work *Translating Political Metaphors*, Bulut (2012) states that the key elements of what makes political texts are their *context* and the use of *persuasive language* that function as a production item in their discourse (Bulut, 2012).

Schaffner in *Strategies of Translating Political Texts* (1997) indicates that political texts are instances of political discourse, that is, a political language, and that such language may come in different forms. As a result, she argues that political texts can be of different genres – political speeches, multilateral treaties, editorials, commentaries in newspaper, a press conference with a politician etc. (Schaffner, 1997).

Different political texts have different objectives and have different tasks, and their development and the tricks used to make them specific are unique to every text, but a number of common techniques used to create persuasive texts can be classified (Чепепанова, 2002; Melkonyan, 2015):

- “Black-and-white fallacy”, or false dichotomy;
- Negative spiralling argument;
- False precision fallacy (presenting numbers, statistical data to prove a statement, when they are untrue);
- Conventional knowledge appeal trap (“it has been already proved that...», «it is obvious that...”);
- Assuring one’s beliefs, using personal authority (“there is absolutely no doubt that...”);
- Divisions and enemy image (“us” and “them”);
- Overgeneralised blaming (to amplify a statement the innocents can be blamed inclusively - “thick-headed law enforcers”);
- Over-emotional appeals;
- Attributing future actions (violent actions, if not now, then in near future);
- The Red Herring (leading attention away from the main topic of the argument);
- Glittering Generalities (powerful words and phrases, such as freedom, patriotism, courage, hope);
- Loaded Language (strongly positive or negative connotations - “boo!” and “hurrah!”).

Different specifics or elements of political texts are mentioned above, but the audience will still interpret them differently. The speaker in his or her political campaign could be using “divisions and enemy image” and try to pit, for example, immigrants against the country’s nationals, and some will be happy about it and will cast their vote for this person, while others could be turned away from them.

In addition, numerous manipulative techniques (Altunyan, 2010) are widely used in political texts:

- Repetition: over the time it will be accepted or reinforced in the target audience’s consciousness;
- Use of quotation marks to indicate irony (US president Richard Nixon was known to popularize the phrase “silent majority”, the specific political/ social context is not pronounced, but is well understood by the audience);
- Using capital letters: (“Armenia World”);

- Parallel and opposite constructs: (“West vs. totalitarian countries that violate human rights”).

Sarosi-Mardirosz (2014) and Schaffner (1997) agree that political texts require a specific lexicology and vocabulary, and that they are the specific markers that pinpoint a political text. The translator, before translating a text, should make sure that the provided ST is political in nature by looking at the vocabulary, the tone of the text – is it persuasive or not – and if it is related to politics or political events.

This is a reason why political texts and political translation have an impressive field of studies, even though it seems a lot less wide and more specific. By this classification even musicals (Lin Manuel Mirandas’ *“Hamilton”*) or TV shows (*“House of Cards”*, *“The Newsroom”*) are considered political texts, because there are numerous political references or political language in general is used. Facebook posts or “tweets” from the site twitter.com can be considered political texts if they are made by persons who work in, or are associated with the political field. Translating such texts can be difficult, especially if the language used is specific to a certain country or event; if it is translated directly it could be hard to find the accurate phrase in the target language.

Newmark (1988) believes that additions in translation can be informative and essential. However, Baker (1992) regards translation addition as an explanation of the cultural gap between the SL and the TL. Podkalicka (2007) is sure that the cultural diversity influences translating political texts very much.

Badran (2001) proves that the same political text can be translated differently by different translators. In addition, Badran (2001) and Fairclough (2001) claim that translations are often dependent on institutional policies or ideologies. Simon goes further with the idea that translation and interpreting are socially- and politically- directed professions, not simply language-related activities (Simon, 2005). Hence, translation students should be aware of this new change of scope in the area of translation studies. Nord (2003) believes that translation is affected by ideological criteria, consciously or unconsciously.

Readers expect that translators should be objective, faithful and trustful. On the contrary, the translator’s ideology is integrated in every word they choose, and during the whole process of translation (Toury, 2000). Therefore, Baker (2006) claims that translators and interpreters are responsible for being faithful to the values of their society.

Riccardi (2002) studies overt and covert translation equivalents. Overt – when one cannot distinguish the TT from the ST, while covert translation can be considered a mistranslation, because the translation result is unlike the ST neither at the pragmatic levels nor at the stylistic level.

To improve the quality of political text translation, it is important to understand and be able to notice the key language elements of the text. Obeng and Hartford (2008) state that the discourse of politics is figurative.

Figurative language is used to improve one’s writing and delivery of a thought. It helps the reader or listener to better imagine the written or spoken word, and to make the story, poem, essay or even a speech a lot more enjoyable. In translation this can provide several difficulties. While some figurative language tools like simile or hyperbole are easier to translate, others are not. For example, metaphors, synecdoche, puns or idioms are harder to translate, because not all of them will have the same meaning or direct expression in the target text as in the source text.

The first thing that comes into mind when dealing with figurative language is that it is mainly used in literary texts and less in informative or political texts. This could happen, because readers do not consider the background of creating these texts and how the language used is meant to influence them. Translators sometimes struggle to stay invisible in the translations and not to influence the readers with their opinion. It can be hard to pass the meaning of metaphors, idioms, puns etc. to target text without losing the meaning of them. It is twice as important to do it correctly in political texts as to not create problems because of an incorrect translation – in some texts even the slightest offset from the original can be a cause for an international incident.

Methodology. The data used for the research consists of two political speech transcripts and their translations into Latvian, which are adopted by the White House Foreign Ministry and distributed to many news channels and media, which is supposed to be an adequate translation version. The choice to use speech transcripts instead of direct speech interpreting was made, because it gave a better access to the structure of the speeches, thus making it easier to spot the figurative language tools used in them. The source speech is in English and the target speech is in Latvian. The source speech, the transcripts for both speeches, were taken from the homepage of American embassy in Latvia. The translated speech transcripts were also taken from the same homepage, so that the translation would be accurate and done on a professional level. It is important that both, the source speech and the translated speech, were taken from a legitimate source.

The first speech transcript analysed was *“Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden at the National Library of Latvia”* and its translation into Latvian – *“ASV viceprezidenta Džo Baidena uzruna Latvijas Nacionālajā bibliotēkā”* (2016). The second speech transcript analysed was Donald Trump’s inauguration speech - made on 21st January 2017 - and its translation into Latvian – *“Donalda Trampa inaugurācijas runa”*.

Both speeches could be considered dated, because they were made in 2016 and 2017, but their content is relevant for the research, and for both of them the transcripts and translations were available from legitimate sources, thus allowing the research to be precise and correct.

In addition to the speech analysis, a questionnaire within the professional translator community and students of translation studies was carried out. The aim of the questionnaire was to determine the main problems translating political texts; to find out how often translators have to translate political texts; if and how often they have to translate figurative language tools/means; what main language pairs they have to translate are; what, and if any, additional materials/sources they use for translating; and if they were taught political text translation while studying translation, etc.

The processing of the data consists of excerpts of examples from different parts of the speech transcripts that contain figurative language means in the source language and the comparison with the translations in the target language – if and how they are translated, if the figurative language tools used in the source speech remain in the target speech - and interesting and visible translation differences.

Results. The first text analysed was *“Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden at the National Library of Latvia”* and its translation into Latvian *“ASV viceprezidenta Džo Baidena uzruna Latvijas Nacionālajā bibliotēkā”*. The text is a political speech made for the people of the Baltic States and is meant to encourage the friendship between the states and their standing with USA and NATO. The speech was also made to highlight and show the issues that Latvian government has to work on – fighting corruption and solving problems with Latvian banks.

In general, the text is simple and easy to understand. It is a semi-formal text, but has elements and themes that make it at times serious. It is appropriate for the audience that it was delivered, too. Throughout the source speech, many repetitive phrases are used and they have been carried out in the translation as well. Grammatically, the target text differs from the source speech, but those changes have been made to improve the quality of the translation. It is quite easy to determine that it is a political text. The speaker is a former Vice president of the United States of America and the speech was made during his visit to the Baltics in order to meet with the leaders of the three nations and unite the allegiance among them.

Taking a closer look at the text, we can see that it is a political speech, because it uses the classifications of political texts made by Cherepanova (Черепанова, 2002) and Bredemayer (Бредемайер, 2008). The speaker uses political references, draws on historical events or people, and refers to Latvian culture and history connected to it.

The second speech analysed is *“Donald Trump’s inauguration speech”* and its transcript translation into Latvian *“Donalda Trampa inaugurācijas runa”*. The text is a political speech

made by a person – the prospective president – who is going through the process of a person's swearing into an office. It is usually a public event and the person gives a speech thanking the voters and talking about their plans and ideas for their time in the office. This is a simple type of speech to classify as a political speech, just by the nature of it, the meaning behind it and the reasons of having been written and delivered to the public. It is apt for the classifications made by Schaffner (1997) and Sarosi-Mardirosz (2014): it has a historical context, mentions different political stances and different political leaders. As for the classifications made by Cherepanova (Черепанова, 2002) and Bredemayer (Бредемайер, 2008), there are many examples to justify that the speech is a political one.

In both speech transcripts the following figurative language tools were used: metaphors - 26 times; epithets - 18 times; hyperboles - 20 times. In the speech transcript translations figurative language tools were used just as much: metaphors - 29 times; epithets - 18 times; hyperboles - 22 times.

The use of figurative language tools throughout both speeches is frequent. During the analysis of the speech transcript and speech transcript translations it is concluded that the use of the figurative language tools depends largely on the speaker and on the event the speech is made for. If the speaker tries to make an emotional appeal to the audience, they will use a lot more figurative language tools, such as metaphors and hyperboles. They are meant to put emphasis on a certain part or point of the text, so that the speaker can get what he or she wants from the speech. Many politicians use this technique to gain votes. Donald Trump used this method not only in his inauguration speech, but also during his political campaign. Most recently, he uses figurative language tools not only in his speeches, but in his *tweets* regarding different political situations. Translators need to be mindful of such things – even simple things like *tweets* online can be considered political discourse and they can contain figurative language tools.

Another figurative language tool that Trump loves to use in his speeches is repetition. In his inauguration speech he used the phrase “Make

America great again” and the word “again” was used several times to imply all the thing that he and his cabinet would make again great. It was lost in the translation. During his campaign trail speeches, he frequently used the word “tremendous”. The word was used many times in a row, so the translator chose not to use the word in the translation, as it would have made it clustered and make it sound unnecessarily repetitive.

The translated versions of the speeches are well done, they are both official translations provided by the American embassy in Latvia. Both speeches use metaphors. In the speech “Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden at the National Library of Latvia”, metaphors are used 6 times in the speech transcript and all of them are kept in the speech transcript translation. In this speech, the speaker used more epithets than Donald Trump used in his. Donald Trump used more metaphors and hyperboles, which is his personal style, which is an important note to make – the use of figurative language tools depends not only on the purpose of the speech, but also on the speaker's style. If he or she is used to using many exaggerations in their daily vernacular, then they will use many of them in the speeches as well.

Conclusion. All classifications of political texts can be applied to identify if the text is political or not. In addition, Schaffner (1997) and Sarosi-Mardirosz (2014) put forward an idea that the political text can be determined by its context and what references in the text are made. In both speeches, references were made to historical events and political persons. These references remained in the translations of the speech transcript, as well. If the speaker knows how to use the correct language to make a political speech, it is already a step forward to delivering a good speech. If the translator knows how to identify the language used in the speech and knows that it is a political speech, it is immediately easier for them to translate it. If a translator knows the purpose of the speech, they can easier address the intended target audience and reach the same goal as the actual speaker of the text.

The Literature Review gives important information about political texts and their

translations – what should the translator pay attention to, what some of the problems faced by translators are. It provides important information, which can be later used in the translator's career.

The job of the translator who has to translate a speech transcript is much easier than of those who have to interpret the speech while the speaker is still speaking. They have the advantage of weighing the pros and cons of a certain phrase used in the source speech, but the interpreter who has to interpret on the spot, has to take the risk of being wrong. Because of this, they can misinterpret figurative language tools or not use them entirely, which is one of the reasons why political speech transcripts have been analysed.

Based on the research results, it can be proved that the most commonly used figurative language tools in political speeches are *metaphors*, *epithets* and *hyperboles*.

It is obvious that the use of figurative language tools can be very subjective and it depends on the speaker, theme and the purpose of the speech. Some speakers want to get a big reaction out of the crowd, they use more figurative language tools, the ones who want to deliver simple, but none the less, rousing speech, use less figurative language tools. It is noticed that figurative language tools are most commonly used in

political texts that will be used or heard by a larger part of the public – political news articles, political speeches, political TV shows, movies and others. Figurative language tools are rarely, or not used at all in reports about political events provided by governments.

Unfortunately, students of translation programmes are not usually trained to translate political texts. The findings of Abdel-Hadi (2015) indicate that only 27% of the students' translations is adequate, which means that these translation problems are serious and worth investigations. He claims that translation students are not trained properly to manipulate the texts based on their contexts of translation.

Based on the results of the questionnaire (Šmite, 2019), it can be proposed that it would be beneficial to students of translation studies as future translators to know the basics about political text translation, what the biggest downfalls of it are and how to improve them. It could be argued that the ones interested in political text, political speech or any other form of political discourse material translation, should and could gather the information about it by themselves, but it would be helpful to provide at least basic knowledge of it during their studies.

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Аңдатпа. Зерттеудің өзектілігі: Саяси мәтіндер, негізінен, аудармада қолжетімді. Осылайша, оқырманға ашық аударманы ұсыну өте маңызды. Саяси мәтіндерді аудару сапасын арттыру үшін мәтіннің негізгі лингвистикалық элементтерін түсіну және байқай білу маңызды, өйткені саяси мәтіндер мен саяси аудармалар манипуляциялық болып табылады. Бейнелі тіл лингвистикалық элементтерге бейнелі мағына беру үшін қолданылады, сондықтан мәтіннің анағұрлым жарқын бейнесін жасайды.

Мақсаты: манипулятивті техниканы саяси баяндамаларда оқып үйрену.

Зерттеу әдістемесі: Аналитикалық әдіс саяси аударма туралы әдебиеттерді талдауда және саяси сөйлеудің транскрипциялық аудармасында қолданылады. Бастапқы және мақсатты мәтіндерге салыстырмалы талдау жасалды. Түпнұсқа мәтін мен аударылған мәтін арасындағы стильдік айырмашылықтарды немесе ұқсастықтарды көрсету үшін екі саяси баяндамалар мен олардың аудармасы талданады. Талдау нәтижелерін растау немесе жоққа шығару үшін тәжірибелі және жаңа бастаған аудармашыларға арналған сауалнама қолданылады.

Негізгі нәтижелер: Саяси мәтіндер ғана емес, олардың аудармалары да әрқашан манипуляциялық сипатта болады. Саяси баяндамаларды аудару кезінде, көбінесе, бейнелі лингвистикалық құралдар қолданылады, негізінен, метафора мен эпитеттер. Сауалнама нәтижелері бейнелі тілдік құралдар күнделікті саяси мәтіндердің аудармасында қолданылатынын және олар саяси баяндамаларды талдау кезінде алынған нәтижелерді күшейтетіндігін көрсетті.

Түйін сөздер: саяси мәтіндер, манипуляция құралдары, бейнелі тіл техникасы, саяси аударма.

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Проблемы перевода политических текстов

Аннотация. Актуальность исследования. Политические тексты в основном доступны в переводе. Таким образом, очень важно предоставить читателю открытый перевод. Чтобы повысить качество перевода политических текстов, важно понимать и уметь замечать ключевые языковые элементы текста, помня, что политические тексты и политические переводы являются манипулятивными. Образный язык используется для придания языковым элементам переносного значения и, следовательно, создает гораздо более яркое изображение текста.

Цель: изучить манипулятивные приемы в политических выступлениях.

Методология исследования. Аналитический метод используется при анализе литературы по политическому переводу и в транскрипционных переводах политических выступлений. Проведен сравнительный анализ исходного и целевого текстов. Чтобы показать стилистические различия или сходства между исходным текстом и переведенным текстом, анализируются два политических выступления и их перевод. Для подтверждения или опровержения результатов анализа используется анкета для опытных и начинающих переводчиков.

Основные выводы. Не только политические тексты, но и их переводы всегда являются манипулятивными. При переводе политических выступлений часто используются образные языковые инструменты, в основном метафоры и эпитеты. Результаты анкетирования показывают, что образные языковые инструменты используются в повседневных переводах политических текстов, и они подкрепляют результаты, полученные при анализе политических речей.

Ключевые слова: политические тексты, средства манипулирования, образные языковые приемы, политический перевод.

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