

Pragmatic Adaptation in Translation of Ideologically-Loaded Lexicalized Concepts

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Abstract: This article considers certain issues relating to pragmatic adaptation of apparent lexical and semantic equivalence in order to ameliorate the “foreign accent” in the target text when translating a particular group of lexicalized concepts, specifically those related to ideology and politics. The article looks at the task of a translator in tackling the issues of cultural determinism.

Keywords: ideologue, lexicalized concept, cultural determinism, pragmatic meaning, pragmatic adaptation, target text

Introduction. In recent years it has become universally accepted that a translator should not only know the language from which they translate, i.e. the source language, and into which they translate, i.e. the target language, but also have broad background knowledge or otherwise cultural competence - the knowledge of the foreign culture to which the source language belongs. The purely linguistic focus in translation studies which for a long time has prevailed, seemed “to come into conflict with the understanding of translation problems offered by literary studies, philosophical and culture studies [1, p. 16]. A new paradigm is being formed as we shall see, with much of its focus on philosophy and culture, which has expanded the role of pragmatics in translation.

For the purposes of translation, culture must be understood broadly, in terms of history, politics, ideology, customs and tradition, including political tradition, mentality and social values pertaining to a particular people. Social consciousness and prevailing ideology as part of an individual’s mentality is reflected in their language. This is examined in more detail when assessing cultural determinism, which states that common patterns of behaviour, attitudes, and values which persist for generations are the result of cultural factors rather than biological or other factors [2]. An individual’s mentality also includes an ethnic component, a gender component, an age component as well as others, all of which also find their reflection in language. In this article we will look at the ideological effects on semantic and pragmatic meanings of words which are driven by politics, the legacy of which creates a significant area of difficulty for translators today.

Short review of publications. The influence of politics and the State on social conscience was described in philosophy and political studies by Jaques Ellul in the following way:

“Political doctrine, since about 1914, works in this way: the state is forced by the operation of its own proper techniques to form its doctrine of government on the basis of technical necessities. These necessities compel action in the same way that techniques permit it. Political theory comes along to explain action in its ideological aspect and in its practical aspect (frequently without indicating its purely technical motives). Finally, political doctrine intervenes to justify action and to show that it corresponds to ideals and to moral principles. The man of the present feels a great need for justification. He needs the conviction that his government is not only efficient but just. Unfortunately, efficiency is a fact and justice a slogan. We conclude that the political doctrine of today is a rationalizing mechanism for justifying the state and its

actions and is the source of the dangerous intellectual acrobatics indulged in by official journalists and statesmen” [3, p. 281].

Our cognitive formulation of the language (in terms of the lexicon) under different circumstances has resulted in two substantially different perceptions of ideologically-loaded terms – those of political theory and doctrine in the West and the resultant cultural determinism and those of the Soviet ideology that governed Ukraine for a long time and its resulting legacy in the social consciousness.

Trying to prioritize an individual’s mentality components, we cannot but agree with Professor Taras Kiyak who states that “as a mentality is formed at a group level, national (ethnic) specifics will come to the forefront” [4, p. 22]. Hence, social and ideological views, preferences, and moods of ethnic or national communities will always have a national “colouring” related to its history, tradition and, broadly, culture. A good translator should keep this mentality in mind when they are set to tackle any particular text.

In this article we research certain social and ideological concepts which form an individual’s mentality in their lexicalized form. We aim to demonstrate that understanding the nature of such concepts in the source language underlies the practical task of overcoming certain hurdles in translation, specifically those that are related to social thinking and ideology.

The link between a lexicalized concept and the social and cultural situation in which it is used, otherwise called a context, is often referred to in linguistics as a pragmatic meaning. The study of such pragmatic meanings must include concept analysis, which by many researchers is regarded as an extension of lexical and semantic analysis. Thus, for instance, discourse researcher Yelena Sergeeva writes the following:

“Without any doubt, the study of concepts requires a method, which is appropriate for the subject and broadens the borders of research beyond the boundaries of lexical analysis as such, requiring the use of the methods of cognitive semantics, since cognitive studies pay special attention to the mental representation of language phenomena and to the influence of culture on the language of an individual. Contemporary linguists not only study language and mental activity in general, but its implementation in verbal units and worldview categories of native speakers, defining the link between such units and categories to the world perception” [5, p. 3].

Hence, concept analysis, together with lexical and semantic analysis, must be a mandatory tool for translators

in overcoming problems related to the rendering of such pragmatic meanings of lexicalised concepts.

Translation problems arise not only in situations where a source language concept is missing in the target language altogether, but also where the pragmatic component in the meaning of a language unit becomes so significant that it competes with its semantic meaning or even dominates it. This phenomenon can be observed at all language levels, in particular at the lexical one. Lexical units of this type have already drawn the attention of linguists, in particular those focusing on translation studies. Thus, Iryna Malinovska suggests differentiating between ethnically coloured lexical units and ideologically coloured lexical units, which she calls ideologemes [6]. The author further gives some examples of such units:

"Ideologemes include, for instance, such lexicalized/verbal political and philosophical concepts as *individual, civic state, human rights, citizenship, power, social institute, democracy* and others" [7, p. 156].

All these units have appeared in European languages in the process of understanding the relationships between an individual and society, an individual and the State. They are at the same time both terms central to politics and philosophy, while also units in general use by a wide circle of those who use a particular language.

The results of the research. Our practical translation experience tells us that one such concept difficult for adequate rendering is undoubtedly *the State*, which can easily wrongly be translated as "держава". Below we will try to show that the pragmatic meaning of this particular lexical unit is such that it becomes an ideologeme, an ideologically-loaded lexical unit, the translation of which into Ukrainian in many contexts will require extension of the translation options beyond the equivalents offered by dictionaries.

To begin with, let us consider the components of the lexical and semantic meaning of the English word *State* as given by the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary. In addition to the meaning of an administrative federal territory in such countries as, for instance, the USA, which traditionally translates as "штат" in Ukrainian, other meanings of "state" and their translations in bilingual dictionaries include: 1) a legal sovereign entity (суверенне політичне утворення, держава), 2) the political organization or management which forms the government of a country or nation (державний апарат), 3) the ruling power of a country, which forms its supreme political administration (державна влада) [8, p. 3008]. From this we can see that the only translation equivalent offered by bilingual dictionaries for "state" is the word "держава" and its derivative "державний" [8].

"The Big Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language" specifies that the word "*держава*" in the above definitions is mostly used in the second meaning, in certain contexts - in the first one and does not even have the third meaning, which tells us that the semantic volume of "держава" is narrower in Ukrainian [9, p.215]. The stylistic marking for this word in Ukrainian is neutral, which coincides with our own observations as for the use of the word in different contexts.

It is extremely difficult to quantify scientifically whether and how much in the way of negative pragmatic meaning in English a term may carry, where only a contextual analysis of statistically significant amount of texts

may help to overcome the subjectivity of a reader of a given text. The contextual study of the use of the lexicalised concept "the State" in contemporary English, and specifically in journalistic discourse, tells us of the overtly negative attitude of native speakers to the concept signified by the word "State". Much of this attitude may have emerged from the sociological equivalence of the State and the State Apparatus as described by Louis Althusser in his essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses":

"... the Marxist-Leninist "theory" of the State has its finger on the essential point, and not for one moment can there be any question of rejecting the fact that this really is the essential point. The State Apparatus, which defines the State as a force of repressive execution and intervention "in the interests of the ruling classes" in the class struggle conducted by the bourgeoisie and its allies against the proletariat, is quite certainly the State, and quite certainly defines its basic "function". [10, p. 6]

In the USA especially, this results in a dichotomy where very many terms using "State" are seen as limiting freedom, restricting choice and affecting the principles of the "market economy", while on the other hand, the Foreign Ministry of the USA is called by tradition "The Department of State", often referred to simply as "State" (where the word is used without an article). We can observe how frequently careful avoidance is made of the term in a neutral or positive context. In other words, the term "State" is rigorously avoided in the contemporary lexicon and retained only in traditional contexts such as to signify the US 'Ministry of Foreign Affairs' and in the context of, for instance, criminal trials under Federal Law, where the following set phrase may be heard: "The State versus Defendant".

Below follow examples of the contemporary use of the word "State" in the BBC news service. For instance, a rather typical attack by a right-wing politician David Cameron, Leader of the UK right-wing Conservative Party and later Prime Minister, on the left-wing UK Labour Party in Government on 25 June 2009 during a speech at London University produced such quotes as:

"Labour's belief in the state led them to increase state power and thereby diminish personal freedom".

"This is progressive Conservatism in action, a traditional suspicion of state power combined with a clear grasp of the modern world".

"And the tentacles of the state can even rifle through your bins for juicy information".

"How have we got ourselves into the position where there is such a marked imbalance of power between the citizen and the state?"

"But stopping the state from exerting too much power over us demands another big change.

"This Government is running not just a control state, but a surveillance state". [11]

Such rhetoric capitalises on the negative associations in the public mind and even uses a dramatic oxymoron in this speech ("progressive Conservatism") to appeal to voters and claim that the right-wing political party is supporting the interests of the "people" in fighting the State. Of course, Labour politicians and voters see exactly the opposite, where the Tories are seen as the drivers of the machine of the *State*.

This may be contrasted with the introductory sentence to the mission statement of the US Department of State that defines the reason for its existence:

“Create a more secure, democratic, and prosperous world for the benefit of the American people and the international community” [12].

Although this is a highly positive definition, the term “The State” does not appear once in the US Strategic Plan manuals site other than in the title of the Secretary in order to avoid any negative pragmatic meaning. The origins of the contemporary negative pragmatic meaning of the lexicalized concept “the State” in English can to a significant degree be explained by history.

Britain was invaded many times until 1066, since when there has been unbroken tradition, in terms of major influence from any external country, race or culture. The first parliament was formed in 1266, although there was a monarch, and it was only when Charles I decided that he should rule instead of Parliament that he was executed and replaced by a Lord Protector in 1653. Later, it was agreed that a monarch should be reinstated as a Head of State, as a symbol of the State in addition to government by the People and as a formal, if token, control over the power of parliament.

The USA achieved independence from Britain and the language employed at the time referred to the People that were superior to the State. Unlike the UK, the USA has never had its own monarch, therefore its attitude to politics and government is based upon a Constitution, while the UK has never had such a document. The USA Constitution refers to the people, and not the State.

Today’s term “The Body Politic” has an identical meaning both sides of the Atlantic, originally taken from Thomas Hobbes’ book of 1651 [13], that of a State, although previously it tended to mean the physical body of a monarch. So before the middle of the 17th century, when Charles I of England was executed, the State and the government were embodied in a monarch, since then the body has been perceived as a fundamentally democratic entity, comprising the People where, in theory, the power actually lies. In the USA and the UK we may take a simplistic view that “The People” is good, i.e. a positive pragmatic meaning, whereas “The State” is bad, i.e. a negative pragmatic meaning.

The situation was fundamentally different in the Ukraine, where after 1917 the ruling ideology has been such where the State was considered to be comprised of workers and peasants, which meant that the State was us, the fabric of society, and not its enemy. This gave an ideological legacy of the *State* being the *People*, at least in ideological theory, and hence these two words had to be treated as synonyms for ideological reasons.

This legacy can be demonstrated by the abundant use of the word “державний” in different collocations, in particular, in the names of different departments, establishments, committees, commissions etc. After Ukraine became independent, the word “державний” was in many instances replaced by the word “національний” (national), for instance in the names of many universities. As the formation of an independent nation was taking place, we could observe that the concept “nation” has been gaining more weight for Ukrainian speakers as compared with the “State”. But in Western societies, as we may see from

these examples, “Nation” historically has always carried a higher societal value than the “State”.

Given the negative pragmatic meaning of the English word “State” will its translation by the words “державна” or “державний” as suggested by bilingual dictionaries be in fact equivalent? Tetyana Krylova writes in this respect: “Taking into account social and cultural factors means in itself a wider interpretation of equivalency where translation options may vary to a different degree” [14, p. 221]. In translation practice, especially when journalistic texts need to be translated, the focus is always on the target culture rather than the source culture. Such translation strategy requires that the translator uses “such translation methods as naturalisation and adaptation to avoid the so-called discourse ‘accent’ ”[ibid]. To render the same pragmatic meaning a translator must go beyond the equivalents offered by dictionaries.

We will often find that the target language reader’s perception and understanding require the use of “диктатура держави” (state dictatorship) or “державний/бюрократичний апарат” (state/bureaucratic apparatus) or some such similar word combinations to reflect “the State’s” negative pragmatic meaning in English.

All the above considerations are especially important when we translate from Ukrainian into English where we should in most cases try to avoid the use of the word “State” altogether. The most common options for translation are the words “national”, “government”, and “public”.

We can readily see that in our target language, a “державний гімн” is always “a national anthem”, “державний прапор” is a “national flag”, “державні стандарти” are “national standards”, “державний комітет” is “a national committee” or “government committee”, “державний бюджет” is a “national budget” or “government budget”, “державні закупівлі” are better translated as “public procurement”, “державна політика” as “public policy”, “державна служба” as “public service”, “державне управління” as “public administration” and others. A term that has frequently been shown to throw translators off-balance is that commonly used in Governmental bulletins and legalese – “державне замовлення” which actually has the semantic and pragmatic value of “public spending” rather than its literal (dictionary) translation of “State Order”.

As can be seen above, another conceptually tricky word for translators is “public”, since as a generalization, in Ukrainian “громадський” (public) is used as an antonym of “державний” (State), while in English “public”, as seen above, is a synonym of “State”(державний) , while at the same time being an antonym of “private” (приватний). This is a core dichotomy that we have been bequeathed from the respective ideological apparatuses of East and West. The early communists coined the slogan “Property is theft” but later property became the ownership of the State. This often meant that what should have been “public property” was not allowed to be accessed or used by the public.

It must be noted that the Ukrainian terminological lexicon divisions systems (such as law, land use, and urban development) have only started to introduce the concept of “публічний” (public) used as an adjective, as there has historically never been the necessity to involve the concept in the past, due to the State policy of paternalism

intrinsic to a Communist State, where society on the whole, and local communities in particular, as part of communist ideology, could not have been: self-sufficient, could not self-administer in a decentralised manner, self-organise in a manner described by the word “community” in the target language, could not be defined in law as entities, but had everything decided by, and implemented by, the State.

There is a term with no direct equivalent in English to describe the policy of “роздержавлення” which could only be translated with true adequacy by a created term such as “De-State-ification”, as it differs from “децентралізація” which is mirrored by its translation of “decentralization”. The latter is that of the devolution of centralised State authority and power back to the local communities, i.e. the public sector, while the former is a re-orientation of absolute control.

This has brought to active use the lexicalized concept of “публічний” in contemporary Ukrainian, and in particular, in specialist terminology. A review of a whole number of academic works shows that many word combinations that include “публічний” are now finding their way into the terminology systems of different sciences, for instance sociology, political science, culturology, land use and urban development and others. For instance, the concept of public space (публічний простір) is now being discussed by experts in various areas in order to define the volume of its semantic meaning, whereas some ten years ago the same or similar concept would have been described using other words such as “суспільний”(meaning literally ‘societal’) or “громадський”(meaning ‘community’ or ‘communal’).

Thus, the architect Maksym Kotsyuba defines “public space” as “community space that is open and easily accessible for everybody. It may exist in the form of pavements, squares, public gardens, parks, beaches, areas adjacent to apartment blocks and others” [15, p.50]. But immediately in the next paragraph he uses the word “громадський” as its complete synonym, which tell us that the word combination is not a strict term yet [Ibid]. This quite loose interpretation of the concept was also described by sociologists Olena Zhylykivska and Maria Hryshchenko:

“As for “суспільний” (societal) urban space it must be noted that our national academic tradition does not have a fixed term to denote this special concept. In Western tradition the term “public space” is commonly used whereas our Ukrainian sociologists use a whole row of terms: суспільний простір” (societal space), “публічний простір” (public space),

“громадський простір” (community or communal space) or even “соціальний простір”(social space)” [16, p. 62].

The same thought is repeated by a political scientist Oleksandr Kotukov who says:

“In our academic literature the concepts of State are being replaced by that of public, more and more. But the concept of ‘public space’ or ‘public political space’ have not yet become common in academic use. Hence the necessity of academic research into the essence and specifics of ‘public space’ and ‘public political space’” [17, p. 65].

Architects and urban development experts also use the terms “публічний об’єкт” and “публічний сервітут”,

which are new terms related to public space. “Публічний об’єкт” cannot be readily translated into English, and a descriptive translation of “a public building or any other property” can resolve the issue. “Публічний сервітут” (lit. “public servitude”), which denotes the permission of use of public land by the general public, corresponds to the English “public right of way”, but in Ukrainian it is strictly a land use term unknown to the general public. If the target audience is not comprised of experts well-versed in disciplines related to land use, etc. then only descriptive translation may be offered, such as “право проходу через чужу територію”(lit.“the right to go through somebody else’s territory”).

At the same time the commonly-used English lexicalized concept “Public Footpath” also does not have any readily available translation, as this concept was obviously not relevant or important for communist ideology, and societies dominated by it, where everything was at least in theory commonly owned and used. A descriptive translation of “стежка загального користування” (lit. “common use path”) would be appropriate in most non-specialised contexts. Even the simplest concept of “public land” should be translated descriptively as “землі спільного/загального користування” (lit. “land of joint/common use”).

The recent societal changes in Ukraine also brought to life new Ukrainian lexicalised concepts of “цивільний службовець” (lit. “civil servant”) [18] or “публічний службовець” (lit. “public servant”) [19], which are used in many areas of knowledge as well as by general public, and are in fact loanwords from English that correspond to the US term *Public Servant* or the UK term *Civil Servant*. These two terminological combinations seem to replace the older traditional term of “державний службовець” (lit. “State Servant”).

Another specialist area where the meaning of “public” is being rethought and reassessed is law. In spite of the existence since 2011 of a dedicated academic journal called “Публічне право” (Public Law) in Ukrainian academia, the contents and the volume of the term “публічний”(lit. “public”) in such terminological word combinations as “публічне право” (public law), “публічне адміністрування” (public administration) and others, remain debatable and the terms themselves are relatively new. There are still many lawyers and academics who will use “державний” (state) and “публічний” (public) as completely synonymous and interchangeable in such terminological combinations as “державне/публічне управ-ління” (lit. “State/Public management”) and “державне/публічне адміністрування” (lit. “State/Public Administration”). But at the same time there are academics that are now starting to differentiate between them. For instance, Kateryna Kolesnikova in her article “The Correlation of State Management and Public Administration in the Process of Societal Transformation” writes:

“Let us consider the etymology and analyze such word pairs as “державний – публічний” (State - Public) and “управління – адміністрування” (management – administration). Undoubtedly, the notion “публічний” (Public) is broader than “державний” and includes not only the definition “державний” (State), but also such definitions as social, people’s, common, generally accessible, communal,

open, and transparent. Thus, when we use “public” we mean everything that belongs to the bodies of executive power, administrative structures, local authorities, everything under common ownership, or nationalised.”

The key elements of State Management are the State and State Power, while for Public Administration it is society and the power of the public. In State Administration the subject of administration is the State, and in Public Administration the subject of administration is society. State Management is characterized by authoritarianism, Public Administration by democracy. Thus, Public Administration introduces democratic values and promotes a steady development of our nation in the process of societal transformation” [20].

Wikipedia explains the current changes in the semantic volume of the discussed lexicalised concept “public” by the post-Soviet legacy:

When the Soviet State existed the official legal science had a negative attitude to the division of law into public and private. Such approach was conditioned by the Marxist-Leninist ideology. Lenin used to say: “We do not acknowledge anything “private”, for us everything in the area of national economy is legally “public”, and not “Private”.

Now when private property is legally acknowledged, post-Soviet states build their economies on market principles. Hence, the legalization of private law and its areas is quite necessary for the formation of a civic society, stimulating entrepreneurship. Thus, it only follows that the

division of law into private and public was brought back to life [21].

A different way to demonstrate the complexity of translating “public” into Ukrainian, in addition to the above described cases of “публічний”, is to consider how many options in Ukrainian exist to render this concept. To give a number of examples: public figure – громадський діяч, public protest – громадянський протест, public holidays – загальнонаціональні свята, public law – цивільне право, public sale – відкриті або публічні торги, public mind – суспільна свідомість, public limited company – відкрите акціонерне товариство, or public utilities - комунальні послуги.

Conclusions. As we can see, pragmatic adaptation of ideologically-loaded lexicalized concepts requires far more from a translator than the use of dictionary equivalents. Lexical and semantic analysis of such concepts must be enhanced by the study of the pragmatic meanings inherent in the public mind of the target language audience, and the linguistic and cultural context, in which such concepts are used. Methods of translation, in addition to translation by equivalents, may also include loanwords, description, contextual translation and others. An ideologically-loaded lexicon must be defined by a translator as incorporating culturally sensitive terms and often requiring pragmatic adaptation. Neglecting such factors may lead to inadequate literal translations evoking wrong concepts in the minds of the target language readers.

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