

## TRANSLATION ASPECTS OF CULTURE-SPECIFIC ELEMENTS IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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**Abstract.** This article considers peculiarities of culture-specific expressions in political discourse and deals with translation problems of socio-political realia in frame of political communication. Relevance of the study is identified by the importance of providing adequate translation of specific lexis in maintaining pragmatic effect of original speech in target language. Article analyses national and cultural aspects of American political discourse based on national values presented in inaugural speech. Features of inaugural speech showcase the functional characteristics of performative genre of political rhetoric such as glorification of national virtues, appeal to traditional values, unification of the nations. On the basis of the study authors suggest that background knowledge about national and cultural identities of speakers enables the translator to solve translation problems caused by cultural “gap” between participants of the discourse. It is also proved that effective application of translation techniques that helps to transfer not only form but also the content, meaning and cultural coloring of realia. Content analysis of source language speech, comparative translation analysis of materials in English and Russian as well as quantitative method are applied. Results show that mechanical transmissions, creation of new expressions and likening techniques are among frequently used techniques for translation of culturally marked expressions.

**Keywords:** culture-specific expressions, translation, political discourse, national values, translation techniques, inaugural speech, source language (SL), target language (TL)

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### Basic provisions

Role of translation in maintaining and promoting effective intercultural communication is indispensable. It explains the reason of using comprehensive and differentiated approach in finding both theoretical and practical solutions of translation tasks. Studies about culture related linguistic factors of political discourse reveal main issues of translation socio-political realia in terms of using effective ways of transmitting the authentic color of culture-specific expressions. Frequently where there is cultural focus, there is a translation problem due to the cultural “gap” or “distance” between the source and target languages [1, p.119]. Translation of culturally marked expressions, known as realia, is important problem caused by factors that arise due to divergence of national values, difference between historical

and cultural peculiarities of native speakers of different languages, social and political system of countries the live. Article considers translation techniques applicable to socio-political realia in inaugural speech and analyses its pragmatic functions in target language.

### **Introduction**

Increasing interest of specialists in various fields to the national and culture-specific expressions in foreign languages is justified by the importance of nationally marked units in the process of intercultural communication and by the frequent use in various discourses and areas of professional communication. The term “realia” was introduced by famous linguist A. V. Fedorov in the second half of the last century. S. Vlahov and S. Florin give explanation of its divergent meaning. G. V. Shatkov and G. V. Chernov consider realia as a synonym for “non-equivalent word”, P. Newmark describes realia as a “cultural word” and provide their classification. As a result of scholars’ attention and numerous researches in this field, realia became familiar as a lexis of special category, a linguistic and cultural phenomenon. It refers to a unique object or phenomenon typical to a certain ethnic or linguistic community, and its cultural equivalent (concept) and the means of nomination of this concept in the language.

Translating realia is a daunting challenge for interpreters due to the fact that nationally marked expressions mostly exist in one particular language and have no equivalence in other languages, accordingly it requires deep background knowledge and high cultural and social awareness about SL audience. Moreover, constant change and enrichment of the language by new realia that reflect the socio-political system of the country complicates translation process of political discourse. Lack of research on translation of socio-political realia in interpretation of political discourse and necessity of further development of fundamental problems of translation techniques to provide adequate interpretation of culture-specific expressions as well as systemic research of linguacultural peculiarities of translation of political discourse identify relevance of the study.

Aim of the study is to identify effective translation techniques of realia in political discourse from English into Russian that provides adequate interpretation from ST to TT. In compliance with the aim following objectives have been determined: to identify features of socio-political realia of American political discourse; to define translation techniques of culture-specific expressions; to analyze examples of socio-political realia which showcase national values of American nation; to analyze translation of political discourse.

The article provides illustrative examples of culturally marked expressions with comments and analysis, so they can be used in practice of translation and interpretation, international relations and teaching foreign language as well as in courses of intercultural communication.

### **Description of materials and methods**

Typescript of the Inaugural statement of the US President Joe Biden in [whitehouse.archives.com](http://whitehouse.archives.com) and its translation into Russian in [ru.usembassy.gov/serve](http://ru.usembassy.gov/serve)

as a material of the study. Researchers on political communication pay particular attention to the presidential rhetoric such the bright examples of which is the inaugural speech. Pragmatic effect of inaugural speech, its communicative setting is to represent the President as a protector of unity of the nation and of the governmental power defines set of particular linguistic tools which are considered as the main tactics of leverage strategy, which in its turn requires linguistic and stylistic analysis of inaugural statements and identification of social and cultural aspects through realia that reflect social and cultural values of American nation. Content analysis is applied to identify specific lexical units in research material; linguo-stylistic analysis is used to define features of socio-political realia in inaugural speech; contextual analysis helps to define the meaning of specific lexis; comparative translation analysis applied to identify effective translation techniques. Integrated approach provides an analytical description of nationally and culturally marked units and the difficulties of their translation that interpreter may encounter.

### **Results and Discussions**

Public statements are status related discussion on the level of "politician - society or big social groups" [2, p.314]. The performative nature of the inaugural speech is associated with the main features that distinguish it from other genres of the rhetoric. K. Campbell and K. Jamison identify certain characteristics of inaugural speech of American Presidents: a) the unification of the audience into a single people, a single nation, as a witness and full participant in the ceremony of legitimizing the new president; b) appeal to the past as a source of traditional values of the nation and etc [3, p. 349] The inspiring function of inaugural speech is to encourage the nation for great things to come and glorify traditional values. The new president must instill in the audience hope for a better future, faith in the success of her/his activities, and confirm that she/he is the successor to the tradition of predecessors:

*Over the centuries through storm and strife, in peace and in war, we have come so far. But we still have far to go (J. Biden)*

*We dare not forget today that we are heirs of that first revolution (J. F. Kennedy).* Thus, as we can see, the glorification of national virtues is inextricably linked with the assertion of national values. The idea of commitment to traditional values and the need to preserve them is constantly emphasized not the need to develop new ones.

*We look ahead in our uniquely American way – restless, bold, optimistic – and set our sights on the nation we know we can be and we must be (J. Biden)*

The affirmation of traditional values also refers to "the greatness of the nation". *Freedom, labor, faith, discipline, comfort, security, safety, prosperity* are the values most often mentioned in the inaugural speeches of American presidents [2, p.339]. Those values are always reflected in the form of particular words or expressions i.e. realia in the official statements of governmental authorities. Most of them we classify as socio-political realia as they are considered as nationally colored vocabulary, which reflects the features of the state-political system of the country and the socio-political structure of the society served by this language. According to

G. D. Tomakhin, this specific lexis includes a wide range of lexical units that describe the administrative-territorial structure of the country, authorities, country's socio-political life, the military sphere in detail [4, p.195].

Translation of realia in its turn is a result of using complex of translation techniques, which provide linguacultural "adaptation" of the word. Thus, the translation of this non-equivalent lexis is not limited by the search for direct correspondence in the target language; it is an enhanced thinking process of "reconceptualization of cultural equivalent, concept and transfer of the form, content, national and historical coloring by means of the target language" [5, p.14]

Vlakhov S. and Florin S. identify two main issues in translating realia: 1) the lack of equivalence in the TL due to the lack of the referent among the native speakers of the language; 2) the need to transfer not only the reference meaning (semantics) but also the coloring (connotation) i.e. national and historical marking of the realia [6, p. 340].

In publications of the famous translator, Feodorov A.V., translation techniques that can be applied to convey the meaning of culturally marked expressions were mentioned for the first time. He suggested several translation transformations and mentioned about the importance of cultural background of the translator in translation of this unique lexis. It goes without saying that the ability to correctly convey the designations of the things referred to in the original, and the images associated with them, requires certain knowledge about the reality that is depicted in the translated work, regardless of whether such knowledge is acquired by direct acquaintance with it or gained from books or other sources [7, p.303].

Gudii K.A. provides the categorization of translation techniques according to the method of conveying the form and the content, as well as maintenance or, on the contrary, elimination of national and historical coloring:

- 1) methods of mechanical transmission;
- 2) techniques for creating a new word;
- 3) explanatory techniques;
- 4) likening techniques [8, p.3].

Choice of particular these types of translation techniques to be applied to translation analysis of the material is justified by the fact that the researcher used comprehensive scholastic approach on identification and categorization of translation techniques that help to provide adequate interpretation and accurate translation of cultural bound expressions.

Methods of mechanical transmission is presented as automatic transfer of sound and graphic representation of realia in SL into TL. Transformations such as transliteration and transcription can transfer the form of the realia but not its national and historical features, its meaning is identified only in the context.

Techniques for creating a new word is creation of neologisms or new expressions in accordance to the model of SL with the means of TL. Calque and neologisms can help to keep national marking of the expression and have potential to domesticate and enrich TL vocabulary.

Explanatory techniques disclose the meaning of the word by providing brief or full explanation in different forms: within the text, in reference page or as translator's comment.

Likening techniques include substitutions for various kind of equivalents: equivalents in TL, equivalents in other languages or contextual equivalence.

Table 1. Realia related to administrative-territorial structure

Source text	Target text	Translation technique
Capitol	Капитолий	Mechanical transmission; transliteration
red against blue	красный цвет противопоставляется синему	Creation of new expression; calque
conservative versus liberal	консервативное находится в оппозиции к либеральному	Mechanical transmission; transliteration

Table 2. Realia related to governmental bodies and authorities

Source text	Target text	Translation technique
Chief Justice	Председатель Верховного суда США	Likening techniques; substitution
Roberts	Робертс	Mechanical transmission; transliteration
Vice President Harris	вице-президент Харрис	Mechanical transmission; transliteration
Speaker Pelosi	спикер Пелоси	Mechanical transmission; transliteration
Leader Schumer	лидер Шумер	Mechanical transmission; transliteration
Leader McConnell	лидер Макконелл	Mechanical transmission; transliteration
Vice President Pence	вице-президент Пенс	Mechanical transmission; transliteration

Table 3. Realia related to social and political life

Source text	Target text	Translation technique
racial justice	Расовая справедливость	Creation of new expression; calque
Emancipation Proclamation	Прокламация об освобождении рабов	Explanatory techniques; explication
Civil War	Гражданская война	Creation of new expression; full calque
the Great Depression	Великая депрессия	Creation of new expression; full calque
World War	Вторая мировая война	Creation of new expression; full calque, addition
9/11	9 сентября	Explanatory techniques; explication
the sacred oath	священная присяга	Likening techniques; substitution
swearing-in of the first woman in American history	присяга первой в истории Америки женщины	Likening techniques; substitution

Table 4. Realia related to geographical names

Source text		Target text	Translation technique
great Mall		величественный Молл	Mechanical transmission; transliteration
Potomac		Потомак	Mechanical transmission; transliteration
Arlington Cemetery	National	Арлингтонское кладбище	Omission

Table 1 illustrates translation and techniques used in transferring the meaning of realia related to administrative-territorial structure in the US. Capitol is a name of the building or set of buildings in Washington D.C., the place where the US Congress meets is translated by transliteration. Main political parties represented by groups divided by political ideology as conservatives and liberals, Republican and Democratic Party respectively also transferred through transliteration. Names of government authorities and their state titles as well as geographical names as shown in Table 2 and Table 4 respectively are mainly transmitted by transliteration.

The political and social life of a country is reflected in its institutional terms. Where the title of a head of state (“President”, “Prime Minister”, “King”) or the name of a parliament (Assemblée Nationale, Camera dei Deputati or “Senate”) are “transparent”, that is, made up of “international” or easily translated morphemes, they are through-translated [1, p. 99].

Technique of creating new words or expressions in accordance to the model in source language through calque is mainly used translation of words that describe social and political life. Target language speakers with the background knowledge about political system and history of the US can possibly understand the meanings of “красные и синие штаты”, “расовая справедливость” and “Великая депрессия”. Nevertheless, some realia such as “Emancipation Proclamation” and “9/11” should be explained as it is merely impossible to provide adequate translation and convey their meaning by other techniques.

Substitution of some expressions by their equivalents in TL are used. Out of the context dictionary translation of “sacred oath” into Russian, “нерушимая клятва”, “священная клятва” do not fully explain the meaning that culture specific expression. Interpreter’s choice to substitute that concept by its equivalent in TL is effective in terms of bringing pragmatic effect of such a solemn ritual into TL.

### **Conclusion**

Translation of culture specific words and expressions has never been an easy task in translation practice due to above mentioned factors. Adequate translation of socio-political realia in political discourse requires set of professional skills such as deep background knowledge of translator not only about the history and current political and social situation in the country but also about its national and cultural values and national identity that has repercussions in official statements of governmental authorities. Several translation techniques can be effectively applied to convey not only the form but also the meaning of realia and help to provide the same pragmatic effect for target language audience.

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## САЯСИ ДИСКУРСТАҒЫ МӘДЕНИ ЕРЕКШЕЛЕНГЕН ТІРКЕСТЕРДІ АУДАРУ АСПЕКТІЛЕРІ

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**Андатпа.** Мақала саяси дискурстағы мәдени-ерекшеленген тіркестердің сипаттарын қарастырады және саяси коммуникация аясындағы элеуметтік-саяси реалияларды аудару мәселелерін қарастырады. Зерттеудің өзектілігі түпнұсқада берілген прагматикалық әсерді аударма тілінде сақтауда арнайы лексиканың барабар аудармасын қамтамасыз ету маңыздылығымен анықталады. Мақалада сипатталған американдық саяси дискурстың ұлттық және мәдени аспектілері инаугурацияда ұсынылған ұлттық құндылықтарға негізделген. Инаугурациялық сөздің ерекшеліктері ұлттық қасиеттерді дәріптеу, дәстүрлі құндылықтарға үндеу, ұлттарды біріктіру сияқты саяси риториканың перформативті жанрының функционалдық ерекшеліктерін көрсетеді. Зерттеудің негізінде авторлар сөйлеушілердің ұлттық-мәдени ерекшеліктері туралы аялық білім аудармашыға дискурс қатысушыларының арасындағы мәдени «алшақтықтан» туындаған аударма мәселелерін шешуге мүмкіндік береді деп болжайды. Сондай-ақ реалияның формасын ғана емес, мазмұнын, мағынасын және мәдени бояуын беруге көмектесетін аударма әдістерін қолдану тиімділігі дәлелденді. Бастапқы тілдегі сөзге мазмұндық талдау жасау, ағылшын және орыс тілдерінде берілген материалдарға салыстырмалы аудармалық талдау жасау, сонымен қатар сан-мөлшер әдісі қолданылды. Нәтижелер механикалық әдіс, жаңа сөз жасау және ұқсату әдістері мәдени өрнектелген тіркестерді аудару үшін жиі қолданылатын әдістердің бірі екенін көрсетеді.



**Тірек сөздер:** мәдени ерекшеленген тіркестер, аударма, саяси дискурс, ұлттық құндылықтар, аударма тәсілдері, инаугурациялық сөз, бастапқы тіл (БТ), аударма тілі (АТ)

## **ПЕРЕВОДЧЕСКИЕ АСПЕКТЫ КУЛЬТУРНО-СПЕЦИФИЧНЫХ ВЫРАЖЕНИЙ В ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОМ ДИСКУРСЕ**

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**Аннотация.** В статье рассматриваются особенности культурно-специфических выражений в политическом дискурсе, а также проблемы перевода социально-политических реалий в рамках политической коммуникации. Актуальность исследования определяется важностью обеспечения адекватного перевода специфичной лексики для сохранения прагматического эффекта оригинальной речи на языке перевода. В статье анализируются национально-культурные аспекты американского политического дискурса на основе национальных ценностей, представленных в инаугурационной речи. Особенности инаугурационной речи демонстрируют функциональные характеристики перформативного жанра политической риторики, такие как прославление национальных достоинств, воззвание к традиционным ценностям, объединение наций. На основании проведенного исследования авторы предполагают, что фоновые знания национальной и культурной идентичности носителей языка позволяют переводчику решать переводческие проблемы, вызванные культурным «разрывом» между участниками дискурса. Также доказано эффективное применение переводческих приемов, позволяющих передать не только форму, но и содержание, смысл и культурную окраску реалий. Применяется контент-анализ речи исходного языка, сравнительный переводческий анализ материалов на английском и русском языках, а также количественный метод. Результаты показывают, что приемы механической передачи, создание новой лексемы и уподобляющие приемы являются одними из часто используемых методов перевода культурно маркированных выражений.

**Ключевые слова:** культурно-специфические выражения, перевод, политический дискурс, национальные ценности, приемы перевода, инаугурационная речь, исходный язык (ИЯ), язык перевода (ЯП).

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