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Linguocultural Aspects of PR Translation in the Modern World

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Abstract. The present study deals with the topical issue of professional public relations (PR) terminology translation into the Russian language. The discipline and the field of professional activity, which emerged in Russia in the late 1980s, still poses lots of problems in terms of translation. The aim of the study is to reveal what translation procedures are applicable in rendering subject specific terminology into the target language with the absence of equivalents in the professional field. The novelty lies in the disclosure of translation features as well as translation procedures applied to PR terminology with special attention to linguistic and extralinguistic factors. The methods of comprehensive analysis of English PR terms, comprising the general scientific method, the communicative method, the method of comparative analysis, the dictionary definitions method, as well as the method of translation adequacy and the method of analysis of translation procedures and transformations have allowed to reveal the peculiarities of PR terms' meanings and their functioning in the English professional discourse to be rendered into the Russian language. The findings illustrate the most adequate procedures to be used for the purpose of rendering PR terms and terminology as units of specific meaning into the target language. The conclusion drawn from the study postulates that along with the borrowing of PR terminological field, the English cultural and conceptual worldview was also adopted to produce a hybrid professional worldview sharing similar PR subject specific language units, which is a great advance towards English as a global language.

Keywords: terminology, public relations, transformations

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The authors have equally contributed to the research in terms of theory and practice.

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Лингвокультурные аспекты PR-перевода в современном мире

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Аннотация. Терминология по связям с общественностью (PR) — дисциплина и сфера профессиональной деятельности — появилась в России в конце 1980-х гг., и до настоящего времени продолжает испытывать сложности с точки зрения перевода терминов. Цель данного исследования заключается в выявлении способов перевода английской PR-терминологии на русский язык, в котором изначально отсутствовали эквиваленты означенной профессиональной области. Новизна работы заключается в раскрытии специфики перевода PR-терминов с учетом особенностей лингвистических и экстралингвистических факторов. Методы, используемые в данном исследовании, включают комплексный анализ английских PR-терминов, общенаучный метод, коммуникативный метод, метод сравнительного анализа, метод словарных дефиниций и метод анализа переводческих трансформаций, позволяющие выявить значения PR-терминов, функционирующих в английском профессиональном PR-дискурсе. Полученные результаты демонстрируют наиболее адекватные способы перевода, которые следует использовать при передаче на русский язык англоязычных PR-терминов. Вывод, сделанный на основе исследования, позволяет утверждать, что при переводе PR-терминов, относящихся к профессиональной PR-деятельности, ранее не существовавшей в предметно-профессиональной области русского языка, происходит перенос не только новой терминологии, но и всего терминологического поля PR в культурно-концептуальное пространство русского языка. Это позволяет заимствованной PR-терминологии органически войти в концептуальное пространство перевода, что приводит к выравниванию менталитетов разных народов и широкому распространению английского языка.

Ключевые слова: терминология, связи с общественностью, трансформации

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Introduction

Language and culture are interrelated and interdependent. This proposition is revealed not only in the semantics [1; 2] of language units but in the communicators' behavior determined by their culture. As any

language is a code of culture, various languages differ by means of coding the outward world and reflecting the life of native language speakers. All this is imprinted in the worldview of every nation that constitutes the basis for the construction of utterances which cause major difficulties in translation. Interest in translation as a social phenomenon is one of the distinctive features of modern intercultural communication within the anthropocentric paradigm [3]. It is obvious that a full understanding and thorough study of language phenomena is possible only if both linguistic and non-linguistic factors are taken into account in their full scope and diversity. In this regard, it is impossible to deny the fact that the modern linguistic theory of translation considers translation as a special form of interlanguage communication in the unity of linguistic and extralinguistic factors [4].

In the multilingual world undergoing drastic translations is regarded as an intercultural dialogue, which brings different nations closer together, harmonizing their culture and mentality [5].

The influence of globalization apart from the economy, politics, culture also becomes evident in the sphere of public relations. It is best illustrated by the linguistic study of public relations (PR) discourse representing the major trends of human development and social interests [6–8].

Translation as a specific type of intercultural communication [9], is fully embraced by the pragmatic categories of language. Accompanying the entire process and result of cross-language communication, pragmatic aspects are of great value concomitant with other various linguistic and extra-linguistic aspects. With the theorists focusing on the semiotic aspect involved in the translation [10; 11], the purpose of translation is formulated through the adequacy of means chosen in accordance with the situation, the professional needs and possibilities of the language.

It should be noted that in the domain of PR different languages demonstrate a certain similarity in verbalizing similar concepts and terminological units [12].

Universal issues of natural disasters, pandemics, politics, economic development, universal human values [13; 14] and modern technologies, — all bring the worldview of the representatives of different cultures closer together. Common conceptual fields foster the emergence of a universal language for the people of the globe. Translation into different languages in the current situation is no longer relevant, as the transmission of the message is facilitated by the shared code and vocabulary of the professional English PR language.

Methodology

The theoretical and methodological basis of the study is represented by the works of foreign and national scholars on terminology theory [15–21], translation theory [2; 3; 22–27; 43–44], the theory of intercultural

communication [28] and the works of the proponents of public relations theory [6; 29–31]. The material chosen for the study is authentic [28], as it is PR texts of major international corporations, operating globally. The chosen methods include the method of lexical analysis, the comparative-analytical method, classification and synthesis. The broad approach allowed for the comprehensive analysis and the empirical inference of results, which testify to the verisimilitude of the study. The quantitative analysis contributes to the understanding of the best translation procedures used to render professional terminological units into a different language. To achieve the aim set in the course of the present study it is also necessary to resort to the cognitive theory of translation based on the concept that the units of translation constitute the minimum mental units.

Methodologically it is also worth mentioning that the issue of terminology in linguistics in general and PR terminology in particular is one of the most complex ones, as different scientists tend to distinguish certain particularities of this phenomenon. Terminology as a separate scientific discipline of linguistics owns its emergence to three major researchers. They are the Austrian Wüster, the Latvian Ernst Drezen and the Russian Dmitriy Lotte, whose ideas are reviewed in the current study [32–34].

Results and Discussion

In the globalizing world, terminology is one of the entities due to which different mental spaces of the professionals of the world speaking different languages get harmonized. The shared concepts are verbalized in various languages by similar word- and sound- forms. It is terminology that defines the information content of a specific text, providing certain clues to organize, structure and encode/ decode specialized information.

The wide usage of PR terminology being a distinctive feature of the language for special purposes, is marked for its theoretical significance and practical application, as the sphere presupposes the mass communication with the audience. The initial definition of this communicative practice was given by the Chartered Institute of Public Relations in 1948: ‘Public relations practices is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics’ [30]. Later the definition was extended to the following: ‘Public relations is the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behavior. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics’ [30]. In essence, these definitions mean that public relations are about reputation: the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you’. All in all, PR is the practice of managing reputation [29].

It should be noted that although PR practices have widely been spread in the West since the 1920s [6], the official establishment of the professional sphere of public relations in Russia dates back to 1988, following certain transformations in political and social life of the country, including the setting up of the marketing system, the advent of international companies and public services, as well as the emergence of first international PR agencies in Moscow. The development of business activity contributes to the emergence of the first domestic firms that provide the simplest PR services. However, from the mid-1990s only PR started to evolve vigorously in Russia, which was connected with the real growth of Russian agencies that borrowed foreign experiences and adapted them to internal needs. Moreover, PR terminology has actively taken use of the terms of other academic disciplines and other fields of knowledge. The development in the social sphere and the emerging information market reflect the changing structure of mass consciousness and transformation of the worldview.

PR Terminology

Terminology as a separate scientific discipline is associated with “a set of needs, a set of practices, and a unified field of knowledge [15. P. 182]. Following the M.T. Cabré, a French scholar, we distinguish PR terminological units as multidimensional entities, given their functions as units of specific knowledge, units of special purpose language and units of professional communication. Terminology can also be understood as a set of all terms of a certain branch of scientific or professional activity comprising subject specific vocabulary [19. P. 62].

Although it is claimed that terminological space precedes the emergence of a term [16. P. 132], the idea is not valid for the present study, as PR is a new field of professional activity for Russia, and the emergence of the terms fostered the creation of terminological space.

The Russian school of terminology recognizes terms as words, compound words and multi-word expressions that acquire special meanings [18] within a subject oriented discourse. G.O. Vinokur stated that « any word can act as a term, <...> a term is not a special word, but only a word in a special function, the function of naming a special concept, the name of a special object or phenomenon» [18. P. 49]. According to A.A. Reformatsky, an outstanding scholar “terms are special words, limited by their special purpose; words that strive to be unambiguous as the exact expression of concepts and the naming of things [19. P. 61].

Scholars also speak about definiteness and determinacy when it comes to terminological standardization [17].

Given the particularities of the professional discourse of PR we are to speak of terms, which are equivalent to subject specific terms, professionalisms and jargonisms, distinguishing certain differences among them. Terms are

neutral, well-known to ordinary people and semantically easily decoded units. Professionalisms should also be distinguished from jargonisms, which can be defined as a code within a code, that are imposed on the dictionary meaning of the words¹.

The semantic structure of professionalisms is not easily understood due to their metaphorical and metonymical character. Unlike professionalisms that are used by the people connected by common interests, jargonisms are used for the purpose to preserve secrecy within a certain social group. Professional jargon units function in the work place communication of the representatives of different professions [35].

The present study concentrates on subject specific terms functioning in professional PR discourse. On par with the development of PR practices in Russia its terminological system started to take shape in the Russian language. As the whole sphere was borrowed from the English-speaking countries, not only the terminology, but the concepts and the whole PR conceptual field was adopted and adapted for the use in Russia. Within the framework of cognitive approach the concept system rather than traditional terminology is given special prominence [36]. PR terminology fostered the development of PR discourse with its special characteristic features of suggestive language and mind-shaping influence.

Cognitive linguistics considers these verbalized entities reflecting certain concepts in the minds of professional speakers as mental units of public consciousness, that represent the speakers' worldview. New terminological units borrowed by the Russian language contribute to the development of the professional sphere, promote the advance of knowledge and expand the vocabulary. They also constitute certain challenges for linguodidactics [37]. This includes not only the enrichment of the professional vocabulary, but the everyday one as PR becomes part of everyday life and common communication practice. Moreover, in terms of cognitive approach we see a liaison between the new vocabulary coming into the language and the formation of a new worldview.

English PR terminology that entered the Russian language was unusual linguistically and culturally as both nations did not share the same PR conceptual framework. As both – the concepts and the words that embodied them were unfamiliar in Russian culture, it was problematic to find the appropriate equivalents in the Russian language not only because the two nations saw the reality differently, but because PR conceptual field was unfamiliar for the Russian speaking people. It is necessary to analyze the

¹ Ozhegov, S.I. (1992). *Tolkovyj onlajn-slovar` russkogo yazy'ka* [Explanatory online dictionary of the Russian language]. URL: <https://tolkovyj-slovar-ozhegova.slovaronline.com/search?s=%D0%B6%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%BD> (accessed: 10.02.2022).

strategy that was used for the assimilation of the English PR terminology and making it a part of the Russian language vocabulary. To translate into another language, the terminological units, which concepts did not exist in the worldview of other nation, is a great problem. It was necessary to find equivalents for PR terminological units of the language of the nation of different cultural and historical settings. The task of the translation is to convey concepts from one language into another, which does not mean the planting of the concepts in another language, but their formal and conceptual transformations to inscribe in the paradigm of other nations. As not only signs are borrowed by other nations, but they are borrowed together with the concepts they indicate. Terminology is a conceptual entity and its use in another culture gives new senses to the original one.

PR Terminology Translation

The term “translation” originated in Latin implying “carrying across” or “bringing across”. On par with being a science it is also a skill [3], which demands creativity on part of a translator to carry out certain procedures. In the traditional theory researchers do not confine the definition of translation to mere transference of meaning, but extended it to ‘reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message’, both in terms of meaning and in terms of style [3. P. 12]. When dealing with PR terminology translation we shall bear in mind the definition of translation as ‘the expression in the receptor or target language of what has been expressed in another, source language, preserving semantic and stylistic equivalences [38. P. 5–6]. In case of PR terminology translation from the source language into the Russian language we cannot speak about equivalents in the target language, but other forms of rendering the semantic and stylistic elements. It means the transfer of not only terms but their concepts as well.

Table 1 shows how English PR terminological units (SL) are rendered in the Russian language (TL) by means of different translation procedures

When transferred from English PR terms were seen differently from the Western images as every language is noted for its particular, culturally specific connotation. PR terminology translation was a difficult task for the translators, who were not to limit themselves with the replacement of “a written message and/or statement in one language by the same message and/or statement in another language” [22], their task dealt with the introduction of new concepts in the mentality of the people for whom PR technologies were a novelty. Every translated PR terminological unit was difficult to understand and interpret due to the lack of PR conceptual field in Russian mentality and culture as this cross-linguistic action required “a lot of effort to find similar modes of expression and cross culturally demand for parallel social sets” [39].

Table 1

PR terminological units and suggested procedures of their translation into Russian

English language	Russian language	Procedures of translation	Interpretation
by-liner	bai-lainer/ avtorskaya statja	transliteration+ modulation	an article with distinct authorship
corporate event	korporativnoe sobytie	transliteration+ calque	an event for the employees of the company
field research	polevoe issledovanie	calque	a research conducted on the spot
gatekeeper	geitkiper	transliteration	a person on guard of the company's reputation
Giffen effect	effect Dzhiffena	calque	a paradox describing an increase in demand resulting from a price increase
growth-hacking	"Growth-hacking"	barbarism	hacking mechanisms to boost sales for minimum cost
media-kit	press kit	modulation+ transliteration	a collection of texts or information about a company/a product to inform the journalist
round-up article	obzornaya statja	modulation	an article describing the general state of affairs connected with the market in question
PR tailor	PR spezialist	barbarism+modulation	a PR expert, practitioner
press-release	press-reliz	transliteration	information about the new product or corporate activities
tender	tender	transliteration	a competing for the best PR campaign project

When looking for equivalents for PR terminology in the target language, one could rely on monolingual dictionaries and PR books. Some of PR terms were phrases or idiomatic expressions which meaning could be understood as a unique whole. PR translator had to be very careful not to make inaccurate and inadequate translation as there were no readymade PR terminology equivalents in the Russian language. PR language is aimed at not only persuading people of their ideas but guiding them. Translators should be aware of the fact that PR terms may be highly meaningful in the source language and meaningless in the target one. PR texts change shape of the thoughts of the recipients and change the way they think.

Translation Strategy

Translation strategy is defined as “a potentially conscious procedure for the solution of the problem which an individual is faced with when translating a text segment from one language to another” [40]. Everything in translation strategies

imply the way translators strive to get over the difficulties they confront by trying to find a proper translation solution by means of correct translation procedures. Some theorists of translation reduce translation strategies to such as: “extension, amplification, compression, discursive creation, description, generalization, particularization, reduction, paralinguistic or linguistic substitution, and variation” [41]. Others expanded them to eighteen translation procedures, among them being adaptation, amplification, compensation, equivalence, explication, modulation, omission, transposition calque, loan, literal translation [22]. Adaptation, calque, equivalence, modulation, borrowing, literal translation and transposition are the translation procedures that were distinguished by Canadian scholars Vinay and Darbelnet [23]. Such procedures could be useful “either as tools for the study of completed translation (the analytic mode), or as helpmates in the act of translation (the operative mode)” [41].

Before getting to discuss the translation procedures used in the sphere of public relations it is also important to establish the notion of the unit of translation, which deals with cognitive ideas rather than terminological units. Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet define the unit of translation as “the smallest segment of the utterance whose signs are linked in such a way that they should not be translated individually” [23]. In the translation practice units of translation are nothing else but the units of thought that render the same concept in a different language, emphasizing their different cultural and linguistic aspects. Translation units are helpful tools to bridge the semantic gap between diverse cultures expressed in different languages. They are surface units that connect SL (source language) and TL (target language). Translation shifts are necessary to achieve the cognitive translation.

To render PR terminology translators employ such translation procedures as: borrowing, calque and modulation. These procedures have been used to foster the process of overcoming the PR terminological gap and to balance the PR professional concepts. It is necessary to recapitulate the essence of the well-established translation procedures [22] when applied for the sphere of public relations.

Borrowing

Borrowing is originally defined as the process of transmitting of words from the SL into the TL to fill in the conceptual gap existing between different cultures. It means that in the target language there exist no concepts and consequently the terms to denote them. In the present study we distinguish two types of borrowings: transliteration, when the words are rendered letter by letter by means of the Cyrillic alphabet (for example, press-release), and barbarisms, the lexical units which are taken directly from the English language (SL) and which pertain their original Latin alphabet form in the Russian language (TL). It should be noted, that barbarisms exist mainly within the abbreviation [42] (for example, POS, PR, BTL, MDA, SMM).

Calque

This procedure also borrows SL concepts and word forms to translate literally each of their elements into the TL. In translation terms we deal with lexical calques, as a result of which new terminological units and expressions emerge in the TL (e.g., target audience). Calques are not numerous for the sphere of PR, as the TL does not have its own corresponding concepts to render the notion from the SL.

Modulation

Modulation implies the process of adapting awkward sounding in the TL terms and terminological expressions to satisfy the phonetical and morphological norms of the TL. Modulation usually operates at the level of compound terms or expressions (e.g., a round-up article).

Interpretation

Translation act is inalienable from interpretation, as sometimes terminological units need to be explained to introduce them into the conceptual field and the Russian language dealing with PR processes (e.g., *growth hacking* — hacking mechanisms to boost sales for minimum cost, *astroturfing* — simulation of broad public support disguised as if it originates from grassroots participants).

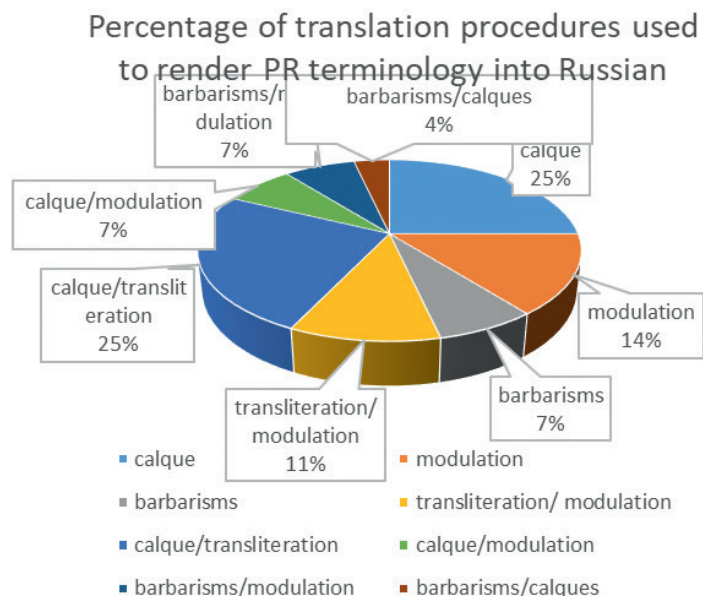
To translate PR terminological units into the Russian language such procedures as borrowing (including transliteration and barbarism), calques and modulation are most frequently used. These terminological units as ‘target audience’, ‘field research’ — include the procedure of calque. Transliteration procedures which serve the translation of such units as ‘benchmarking’, ‘by-liner’, ‘gate-keeper’ and ‘corporate event’ are calque + transliteration. Most prominent terminological units include borrowings, pertaining their Latin form — barbarisms. The examples include *growth hacking*, *product placement* and mostly concern abbreviations as an inalienable part of PR professional terminology.

The analysis of the PR terminology translation has demonstrated that there are no recognized or generally accepted solutions for their translation. And translators couldn't follow the guidelines, which indicate how to translate PR English terms. There are no translations of a great number of English PR terms and they are transmitted in the target language in their original English form.

Some PR terminology requires more than one translation strategy to be used by the translator. The conducted analysis has revealed that procedures most frequently used for PR terminological translation are calque + transliteration (25 %), calque (25 %), modulation (14 %), modulation + transliteration (11 %). The pie chart in Picture 1 shows in the majority cases during the PR terminological translation translators apply an untraditional procedure combining two procedures simultaneously (calque + borrowing). It means that the process of reconciliation

of different mental spaces is under way. Modulation is used to assimilate unknown PR terminological concepts in the new linguocultural environment and harmonize the divergence of different conceptual fields.

The conducted analysis of the applied translation procedures used to render English PR terminological units into the Russian language has yielded a vivid result indicating the prevalence of transliteration, barbarisms and calques (see fig.).



A chart pie reveals the percentage of different translation techniques. The overall study of lexical units amounted to 576 is quite convincing to speak about the validity of the results

PR terminology is determined by the specific profession which causes the semantic gap between the source and target languages and cultures. Translators do not always render the details of PR terminology due to the lack of common professional conceptual fields and differences in norms and conventions between the English and Russian languages. The results of the study testify to the fact that speakers of various languages and cultures start thinking alike, which is revealed in the sharing of identical English words borrowed, calqued or modified into different languages. PR terminology is the best pattern to illustrate all of the translation transformations and modifications which currently take place in the professionally oriented language.

Conclusion

In conclusion it should be said that a standardized terminology can facilitate professional communication within the domain of public relations. To standardize PR terminology, it is necessary to compile a reliable English-Russian PR dictionary with mostly used PR terms to expedite the process of PR texts translation.

Globalization renders all culture differences redundant making way for a unified and standardized global thinking, which cannot but be revealed in language.

The local background knowledge of different language speakers becomes less important, as the reality of global-specific elements of the modern development gains prominence. The new concepts are generally rendered through borrowings (transliteration or barbarisms), calque and modulation, which contributes to the shared mental space, verbalized identity in different languages. In these circumstances, it should be underlined that public relations play a leading role in promoting certain vision, ideas and values. By creating a positive image of a company PR experts appeal to the most urgent issues, relevant for the time-being and for all the people.

In rendering PR terminology professional translators are indispensable for constructing intercultural communication in the globalizing world. Shared professional terminology used by specialists of various fields of different countries contributes to the formation of the common mental space for international terminology which is a key to the universal language of the planet.

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