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POLITICAL CORRECTNES IN UKRAINIAN-ENGLISH TRANSLATION: THE USE OF GENDER-NEUTRAL WORDS

The article deals with the problem of using politically correct gender-neutral words in translation from Ukrainian into English. Suggested are several ways of avoiding gender-specific lexis in English translations.

Key words: *Ukrainian-English translation, political correctness, gender-neutral words.*

Political correctness (further referred to as PC) as a term has been broadly used in the USA since the1980-s; later, it has been adopted by other cultures. According to The Oxford Dictionary, PC is 'the avoidance, often considered as taken to extremes, of forms of expression or action that are perceived to exclude, marginalize, or insult groups of people who are socially disadvantaged or discriminated against' [NOAD 2010]. In practice, according to O. Koltunov, the term is used to denote at least four phenomena. First, it is the technology of solving social conflicts through avoiding forms of expression that exclude, marginalize, or insult groups of people who are (or have been) socially disadvantaged or discriminated against. Second, it is the ideological program lying in the basis of the above-mentioned technology. Third, it is the political movement realizing this ideological program. Fourth, it is used to denote the farcical consequences of replacing derogative terms with neutral ones [Колтунов 2005, 7]. A translator should understand the many-faceted and ideological nature of PC, though its linguistic aspect is of primary importance for the practical purposes of translation.

The translator's role in a politically correct language culture mediation is very substantial. The degree to which PC influences

translation depends first of all on the correlation of PC norms of the societies for which the source and target texts are created. When these norms differ, conveying PC concepts (especially of sensitive texts) in translation can be problematic. For example, analyzing Russian-English and English-Russian translations, S. Pshenitsyn describes four strategies of dealing with PC in translation: a) using PC correlates already existing in the target language; b) functional adaptation of the source text in translation (making the translated text functionally similar to the 'socially accepted' original); c) introducing new words and expressions in translation in order to convey PC concepts, and d) omitting PC features of the ST (typical for English-Russian translations when without inventing a new word it is impossible to convey in Russian that in accordance with PC rules one has to avoid using some kind of words) [Pshenitsyn 2011].

The degree of adaptation of a translated *literary* text according to the PC norms of the receiving culture can also depend on the status of the author of the original. According to T. Paperny, translators are 'cautious and selective when introducing a new voice that hasn't been brought into English before. But members of the literary canon… can survive, even if some of their writing is pegged as offensive' [Paperny 2014]. To soften the impression from the translated text that might look offensive to the target reader some translators and publishers use paratextual means (a translator's note, a foreword, etc.). For example, Iwanami Publishing Company, a leading publisher in Japan, declared its policy in its edition of Hugh Lofting's *Doctor Dolittle* stories (translated by Ibuse Masuji): '(1) Every literature is historically and culturally bound and is not totally free from discrimination. (2) Inappropriate discriminatory phrases and terms should be, and have been, replaced by more appropriate ones. (…) (4) The publisher asks contemporary readers to read even classics critically and hopes to contribute toward eliminating discrimination from the world [Ohsawa 2008, 35].

PC is in fact a kind of (self)-censorship; this fact is emphasized by its opponents when they characterize PC as a challenge to democracy. Nevertheless PC is a typical feature of the modern Western discourse reflecting the basic values of the corresponding

societies (equality, personal rights and freedoms). Breach of PC norms in texts translated for Western readers would produce additional effect and could struck the latter as offensive. Translation of texts sensitive in this respect requires critical thinking on the part of the translator.

PC is a relatively new area of lexical problems in translation. New politically correct words continue appearing in languages, which calls for keeping track of their appearance for studying techniques of their translation and compiling translation dictionaries and glossaries of politically correct words. PC is considered important in official publications, including mass media.

In Ukraine, the movement for political correctness in speech is not so prominent, there are only some trends in this direction. But in the sphere of gender-neutral lexis nearly nothing is done. One can say that in the domestic translation theory gender-related problems have not been practically dwelled upon. At the same time, this is very important for translators, especially would-be translators who translate from Ukrainian into English for English-speaking audience, in particular, Americans and Britons. Students of translation should be taught how to use English politically correct gender-neuter words in their translations from Ukrainian.

The number of politically correct lexical items in English is constantly growing from year to year. Currently, they are given preference when gender-marked words are considered to be socially unacceptable. In fact, such lexis is a sort of political euphemisms, which makes them like neologisms unknown mainly to learners of English, specifically, to novice translators who are not native speakers of English. So, actually translators have to do with translation of euphemistic neologisms or recently adopted usage of common words.

In principle, the techniques of translating euphemistic neologisms are already well known. The major problem of translation of politically correct lexis is knowledge of their translation equivalents. The point is that in the case of available English politically correct words there is no need to resort to special translation by far because their number by far exceeds that of Ukrainian words which must be translated with a view to political correctness.

That is why in order to learn to translate from Ukrainian into English using politically correct translation equivalents, translators should be acquainted with a possibly exhaustive list of English politically correct translation equivalents of Ukrainian "politically incorrect" words. As a first step in this direction, we compiled a short Ukrainian-English translation glossary of gender-marked Ukrainian of and English words and their gender-neutral English correspondences (*see the article in this issue*: [Karaban V.I, Karaban A.V.]). Currently, Ukrainian would-be translators do not study politically correct English speech, including word use.

Gender-neutral lexis [Гендерно нейтральный язык; Writing Gender_neutral Language; Karoubi B.; Miller C., Swift K.; Translation and Gender] is a substantial part of politically correct words which merits attention with respect to its translation because languages differ in the number of such words (some languages, for example, English, can boast of many such words due to great attention payed in the United States and Great Britain to political correctness in speech, while other languages are not so abundant in such words because of a relative neglect of political correctness in speech communication).

The aim of this paper is to analyze ways of doing politically correct translations of Ukrainian sentences with gender-marked words and phrases. Earlier, such translation has not been studied by translation scholars. In Ukrainian dictionaries and other reference books, there are no materials on politically correct use of words.

One of the major criteria of professionalism in the field of translation practice is one’s ability to respond adequately to the need of correct choices of ST word equivalents in translation, since the translator faces a host of problems associated with this side of professional activities.

It should be noted that political correctness is a substantial feature of the modern official and journalistic styles.

Under gender-neutral words, we understand words (largely, nouns) which lack an explicit seme [female] or [male] (some of such words can have the above implicit semes, as, for example in the words *orphan* and *sibling*. English gender-marked words include lexical

items with word-building elements *woman, girl, man, girl, boy, maid, father, mother, sister, brother, king, queen, master, wife, husband*, the so-called feminine suffixes *-ess, -ette, -ine*, some pronouns (he, she, his, her, hers), some borrowed words from Latin (*alumna, alumnus*), etc. that should be avoided in translations into English.

In order to fill the above-mentioned gap in teaching would-be translators and their information support, in this article we consider the translation of sentences with a group of politically incorrectlexis, viz. gender-marked words, from Ukrainian into English to avoid the violation of such speech norms.

The translation of such Ukrainian words is somewhat similar to the process of the translator's self-censorship, determined by socio-political requirements of some English-speaking societies.

In translation practice, a politically correct gender-neutral rendering is based mainly on avoiding gender-marked words and phrases (translating, for instance, *голова (зборів – жінка або чоловік)* by the word *chairperson*, using gender-neutral pronouns instead of source sentence gender-marked one and avoiding gender-specific words in translations altogether.

It should be noted that such gender-neutral English equivalents are largely used in the official and journalistic styles in neutral contexts where mentioning a person genderis not appropriate: **Спортсменка** не повинна рекламувати сигарети – **An athlete** should not appear in cigarette advertising.

Using attributes to denote female gender as, for example, *female* or *woman*, in Ukrainian-English translation is appropriate only when in a Ukrainian sentence the logical accent is made on the very attribute, for example: Вона була єдиною **спортсменкою** з богинь *(про Артеміду)*. – She was the only **sportswoman** of the Hellenic deities *(about Artemis)*; Голосування за спортсменку 2015 року закінчилось. – Voting for Sportswoman of the Year 2015 is now closed.

Further on, we will consider some translation techniques that help avoid using gender-marked English words in translation.

A well-established way of rendering Ukrainian gender-marked personal pronouns *вона* and *він* is the use in English target sentence of the gender-neuter third person "singular" they.

Many authors and speakers use the "singular their" as an easy way to avoid the more awkward repetition of "he or she". Although this usage is common and hotly debated among descriptive and prescriptive grammarians, it is generally unacceptable in formal academic writing. [Writing Gender-Neutral Language]

One more translation technique of avoiding gender-marked words in Ukrainian-English translation in order to do a gender-neutral translation is using in an English translation a plural form of the noun used in the Ukrainian source text: Якщо учень з обмеженими можливостями має право на житло, коли вчится у середній спеціальній школі, чи може він отримати житло, якщо в унверситеті? – If a student with a disability qualifies for accommodations in high school, will they receive the same accommodations in college?; Будь-яка людина має право захищати свою гідність – All human beings have the right to defend their dignities.

In order to avoid using gender-marked personal pronouns, a cataphoric singular pronoun they is usually used in translation into English: Коли **працівник** отримав травму, співробітники повиннідоправити його на лікування та повідомити про нещасний випадок Комісію із соціального страхування. – When a worker is injured employers must transport **them** to treatment and report the accident to the Worker's Compensation Board.

We can also mention such a translation technique of avoiding gender-marked lexical elements and using gender-neutral English, as substituting a Ukrainian gender-marked anaphoric personal pronoun of the third person singular (*she* or *he*) by a an English noun phrase consisting of a demonstrative pronoun and an equivalent of the noun used in the first clause of the Ukrainian sentence: Це не стосується тих випадків, коли **пасажир** не встиг на стиковочний рейс, на який **він** зробив броню. – This does not apply when **a passenger** misses a connecting flight for which **that passenger** has a reservation.

In order to make a translation into English a gender-neuter one, it is also possible to use the definite article instead of a third person possessive

pronoun, usual in other cases, in a translation: Член Ради може бути позбавлений **права** на привілеї. – A member of the Council may deprived of **the right** to privileges (замість, наприклад, her right).

Sometimes it is possible to drop gender-marked possessive forms of personalpronouns *(her, his)* in translation altogether or to substitute an article, for example: Середній студент турбується про **свої оцінки**. – The average student is worried about **grades**.

Sometimes Ukrainian sentences with gender-marked possessive forms of personal pronouns can be transformed using the transformation of passivization which will remove the need to use such forms in translation, for example: Кожний учасник іспитів повинний негайно **здати** свою роботу. – Papers should **be handed** in promptly; Кожний учасник змагань повинен **здати** свою форму після змагання. – Sports gears should **be returned** after the competition.

Another transformation that helps avoid using gender-marked possessive forms of personal pronouns is recasting a participial phrase into a clause in translation, for example: Тільки послухайте дворічну дитину**, як вона використовує короткі прості речення у спілкуванні**. – Only listen to the two-year-old **using short, simple sentences to communicate**.

Now we come to consider translating of Ukrainian sentences with indefinite pronouns **хтось** as a subject. The first technique is trying to transform a sentence to avoid using such an indefinite pronoun, for example: Якщо на мене так **хтось** хоче тиснути, то **він** глибоко помиляється. – If I am being pressurized me in this way, **people (they)** are grossly mistaken;

To make one's translation gender-free, a complex sentence may be transformed into a simple sentence in order to avoid the use of gender-specific pronouns in translation: Якщо **учень** навчається серйозно, то **він** буде навчатися успішно. – Students who study hard will succeed. (but not *If **a student** studies hard, **he (she)** will succeed.*)

Using the inclusionary pronoun *one* instead of an exclusionary pronoun may also help avoid exclusionary words in translations into English: Вона може задуматися, якою може бути її відповідь. – One might wonder what one's response might be. (But not *She might wonder what her response might be*).

To avoid using the gender-specific word man in translation into English, the pronoun "no one" can be used instead: **Жодна людина** не хоче війни. – **No one** wants a war (instead of ***No man*** *wants a war*).

When we translate a Ukrainian general statement with words like *child, man* etc., it is better to make a noun in it in the plural which helps avoid a gender-specific translation: Якщо **дитина** хвора, то **її** слід показати лікарю. – If **children** are sick, **they** should be seen by a doctor; Якщо **кожний студент**висловить **свою** думку, то дискусія буде плідною. – When **all the students** contribute **their** own ideas, the discussion will be a success.

Sometimes, to transform a Ukrainian sentence into an English gender-neutral sentence one can use omission of a gender-biased possessive pronoun: Вона турбується про **своє** здоров'я. – She is concerned about health.

Although the Ukrainian language does not have enough gender-neuter words, there are roundabout ways of translating Ukrainian sentences with gender-marked words which employ grammatical transformations of source texts sentences. But this does not preclude any further work on trying to find gender-neutral words in Ukrainian. Other prospects of dealing with gender-specific Ukrainian words in translation include compiling Ukrainian-English translation glossaries of gender-neuter equivalents and finding other grammatical and stylistic ways of transforming Ukrainian sentences into gender-neuter English sentences.

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Політична коректність у перекладі: використання гендерно нейтральної лексики

У статті розглядається проблема використання політично коректної гендерно нейтральної лексики у перекладі з української мови англійською. Прпонується низка шляхів уникнення гендерно маркованих слів в англійському перекладі.

Ключові слова: *переклад з англійської мови українською, політична коректність, гендерно нейтральні слова.*

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Политическая корректность в переводе: использование гендерно нейтральной лексики

В статье рассматривается проблема использования гендерно нейтральной лексики в переводе с украинского языка на английский. Предлагается ряд способов избегания гендерно маркированных слов в английском переводе.

Ключевые слова: *перевод с украинского языка на английский, политическая корректность, гендерно нейтральные слова.*