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Conference interpreting of institutional discourse

Конференц-переклад інституційного дискурсу

Summary. *The proposed paper explores the peculiarities of conference interpreting within the context of institutional discourse. The research is grounded in the understanding that interpreting is a complex process embedded in the interplay of linguistic, social, and cultural factors, as well as the physical and institutional settings. Focusing on the speeches of Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, the study aims to unravel the core competencies and translation strategies crucial for high-quality interpretation in institutional discourse. Methodologically, a corpus of political speeches in English and Ukrainian is examined using continuous sampling, comparative translation and contextual analyses. The research unfolds the distinctive features of institutional discourse, marked by goal orientation, formality, specialized vocabulary, and role-driven communication.*

The paper underscores the interpreter's pivotal role in ensuring effective communication at conferences involving diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It highlights the challenges posed by unique professional titles and gendered language, showcasing his/her role not merely as a language expert but as a cultural mediator. The analysis results show that pragmatic adaptation is crucial in rendering institutional discourse into the target language, requiring adjustments beyond linguistic equivalence to align with cultural, contextual, and audience-specific factors. While the research reveals the translation adaptation strategies employed by interpreters, it also exposes challenges in maintaining emotional and rhetorical tones. The paper concludes by emphasizing that conference interpreting in institutional settings is a complex social and practical

activity, demanding interpreters to convey not only lexical meanings but also emotional tones and cultural specificity.

Key words: conference interpreting, institutional discourse, linguistic, social and cultural factors, translation strategies, pragmatic adaptation, cultural specificity.

Анотація. Пропонована стаття розглядає особливості конференц-перекладу в контексті інституційного дискурсу. Дослідження ґрунтується на розумінні усного перекладу як складного процесу, що передбачає взаємодію лінгвістичних, соціальних та культурних чинників, а також фізичних та інституційних контекстів. Зосереджуючи увагу на виступах Урсули фон дер Ляйєн, Президента Європейської комісії, дослідження спрямоване на розкриття основних компетенцій перекладача та перекладацьких стратегій, необхідних для якісного перекладу інституційного дискурсу. У праці аналізується корпус політичних виступів англійською та українською мовами із залученням суцільної вибірки, компаративного перекладацького та контекстуального аналізу. Проведене дослідження виокремлює характерні риси інституційного дискурсу, які виявляються в орієнтації на мету, формальності, використанні спеціалізованого вокабуляру тощо.

Стаття підкреслює важливу роль перекладача у забезпеченні ефективної міжкультурної комунікації на конференціях з участю представників різних мовних та культурних спільнот. Перша висвітлює проблеми, з якими стикається перекладач при перекладі професійних титулів та гендернозумовлених лексичних одиниць, демонструючи його роль не тільки як лінгвіста, але й як культурного посередника. Результати аналізу свідчать, що прагматична адаптація виявляється вирішальною у відтворенні інституційного дискурсу у мові перекладу і вимагає адаптації згідно з культурними, контекстуальними чинниками та потреб адресованої аудиторії. Хоча дослідження розкриває стратегії перекладацької адаптації, воно також вказує на труднощі у збереженні емоційного та риторичного тонів. Дослідження доводить, що конференц-переклад інституційного дискурсу є складною соціальною та практичною діяльністю, яка вимагає від перекладача не тільки передачі лексичного значення, але й емоційного тону та культурної специфіки повідомлення у мові перекладу.

Ключові слова: конференц-переклад, інституційний дискурс, лінгвістичні, соціальні та культурні чинники, перекладацькі стратегії, прагматична адаптація, культурна специфіка.

Introduction. Interpreting as a social practical activity was necessitated by «the human need to communicate, which has always existed and will continue to exist every time speakers of different languages come into contact» [3, p. 161]. Since coverage of major events of global political agenda across national and language boundaries has become an inseparable part of people's daily routine worldwide, interpreters have been increasingly in demand.

In the context of institutional discourse, where precision and faithfulness are paramount, the role of conference interpreting becomes

particularly pivotal. Simultaneous interpreting has long been inevitably linked to international organizations and multilingual conferences, broadly recognized as an integral component of conference settings. The latter are widely regarded as the determinant feature for distinguishing among different modes of interpreting.

By drawing on the concept of «setting» in interpreting, N. Grbić maintains that its specificity is «shaped by the interplay of the agents (including their mental, social and cultural dispositions) and the locations involved (including all physical, material structures), both of which are governed by institutional conditions as well as broader social forces» [5, p. 371]. Thus, interpreting is a complex process not confined to a mere language exchange but is deeply embedded in the contextual intricacies of mental, social, and cultural factors and the physical and institutional contexts in which it unfolds.

Intricately linked to the social structures regulating their member's conduct, institutions are essentially products of societal discourse. Given this connection, a translation carried out on behalf of institutions fulfills «a gatekeeping role» [6, p. 469]. In other words, interpreting in the institutional context serves as a means to maintain and control certain discursive boundaries. Consequently, the act of translation within institutional settings is not merely a linguistic transfer but also a complicated process embedded in the power dynamics and social constructions inherent in definite institutions.

Interpreters play a vital role in institutional conference settings, where precise communication is crucial for effective discourse delivery. Conferences often convene representatives from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, necessitating skilled interpreters to facilitate seamless communication. Hence, their role extends far beyond receiving the input «as a listening material that includes semantic, syntactic and pragmatic (or cultural) layers within» [1, p. 55]. Interpreters in these settings require a suite of skills, serving as indispensable communication bridges, employing linguistic, cultural, and cognitive skills to ensure the transfer of accurate and seamless discourse across diverse linguistic landscapes. In this regard, the research deepening the understanding of the specific skills and approaches that contribute to effective interpretation in institutional settings seems relevant and promising as it can provide insights informing training programs, enhance interpreter's professional development, and contribute to the broader discourse on conference interpreting quality within various institutional contexts.

The current paper aims to analyze the core interpreter's competencies and translation strategies ensuring high-quality translation of speeches delivered by the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen.

The following tasks have been set before the research: 1) to examine the fundamental interpreter's competencies required for the effective institutional discourse translation; 2) to conduct a comparative analysis of speeches to understand how interpreters navigate language-specific challenges in political settings; and 3) to identify various strategies employed by interpreters in translating political speeches.

Methods and material. Various research methods have been employed to achieve the designated objectives. Firstly, continuous sampling has been utilized to compile the corpus in both source and target languages, further subjected to comparison. Secondly, the comparative translation method facilitated the contrastive analysis of the authentic political speech with its corresponding counterpart in the output language. The former helped to disclose the similarities and differences in transmitting institutionally embedded meanings. Thirdly, contextual analysis has proven indispensable for scrutinizing the linguistic, cultural, and discursive features underpinning institutional communicative acts. Finally, the descriptive method, in turn, has been instrumental in making systematic observations and deriving generalizations from the obtained results.

A corpus comprising political speeches in English and Ukrainian has been assembled. The compilation has proven invaluable for scrutinizing linguistic and cultural aspects inherent in institutional discourse. The speech in question encompasses a broad spectrum of subjects connected to global issues and a full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. Thus, a collection of video recordings featuring interpreted political speeches has been amassed to elucidate the complexities of the interpreting process and evaluate the interpreter's competencies necessary to navigate them efficiently. The analyzed corpus has facilitated meticulous textual analysis, enabling a thorough exploration of the translation choices made by interpreters and their consequential impact on the overall interpretation outcome.

Results and discussion. Conference interpreting, epitomized as «a setting-based designation» [5, p. 370], is orchestrated as being «performed 'here and now' for the benefit of people who want to engage in communication across barriers of language and culture» [8, p. 10]. As an integral component of intercultural communication, the former is pivotal in fostering understanding and discourse exchange among individuals within institutional settings. In the latter, language use is conditioned and shaped by formal organizations or institutions' specific contexts and objectives. Institutional settings involve communication within structured and regulated environments, where language serves particular functions and follows established societal norms.

The interdisciplinary nature of institutional discourse engenders its multiple varieties, reflecting the diverse research traditions contributing to its study. Situated at the intersection of sociology, anthropology, «critical linguistics», psychology, and philosophy [2, p. 810], institutional discourse encompasses a broad range of communicative phenomena. Consequently, the discourse in various institutions acquires distinctive features shaped by the interplay of these diverse disciplinary perspectives.

In each variety of institutional discourse, communication exhibits several distinct features. Firstly, there is a pronounced goal orientation, with interactions geared towards achieving specific objectives closely aligned with the institution's purpose or mission. Moreover, institutional discourse is characterized by a heightened formality compared to everyday conversation. Imperatives for clarity, authority, and adherence to professional standards shape this formality. Additionally, institutions develop and employ specialized vocabulary, encompassing technical terms, acronyms, and context-specific phrases, contributing to a shared linguistic framework within the organizational context.

Furthermore, the rules and regulations inherent to institutions find expression in the discourse, emphasizing the importance of alignment with established norms in communicative exchanges. Finally, role-driven communication is a hallmark of institutional discourse, where participants assume specific roles or positions, guiding their contributions in a manner befitting their organizational responsibilities. This role-based interaction adds a layer of complexity to the communicative processes within institutional settings since there is the presence of certain asymmetry between speakers [2, p. 811].

In his seminal work on discourse, identity, and power in translation, J.-H. Kang claims that «enhancing our understanding of translation as a socially situated act entails systematically probing and densely contextualising the role of institutions in influencing and shaping how translation is conceptualised and practiced, how the translator's role and identity are ascribed and negotiated, and how complex text trajectories and intertextual chains are formed» [6, p. 469]. The suggested perspective underlines the need for a deeper understanding of linguistic and extralinguistic factors in unraveling the complexities inherent in the translational process. Consequently, conference interpreting in institutional settings is «a craft and a service to which the interpreter brings language, knowledge, skills and professionalism» [9, p. 9].

While interpreting institutional discourse, the interpreter must ensure complete conformity to requirements and instructions. In the context of institutional speeches, translating unique positions and professional titles into Ukrainian represents a considerable challenge for interpreters. For

instance, while rendering the fragment containing the unique post, he/she should take into consideration the tendency towards feminization in Ukrainian: *I am very pleased this morning to welcome the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, to our European Parliament for the annual state of the European Union Address* [10]. *Для мене справжнє задоволення вітати тут Президентку Європейської Комісії. Вона буде звертатися до країн-учасниць Європейського Союзу* [11]. The choice of the equivalent is not merely a linguistic adaptation but also a reflection of the evolving sociolinguistic landscape and gender dynamics in the target language. Like many languages, Ukrainian has witnessed efforts to promote gender inclusivity by avoiding default masculine forms. The interpreter's decision, therefore, goes beyond a literal rendering. Consequently, it aligns with the broader discourse on gender equality and sensitivity in language use. The analysis highlights the intricate interplay between language, culture, and sociolinguistic trends in translation. The interpreter serves not only as a linguistic mediator but also as a cultural interpreter, navigating the complexities of gendered language to convey the intended meaning while staying attuned to the cultural and linguistic shifts in the target language community.

Given the multilingual and multicultural nature of European Commission events, where participants and stakeholders represent diverse linguistic backgrounds, ensuring accurate and culturally relevant translations of specialized terminology becomes paramount. The translation process involves navigating through legal terms and policy-related vocabulary unique to the context of European governance: *Among them will be millions of first-time voters. The youngest of them were born in 2008, the economic and financial crisis. As they stand in that polling booth, they will think about what matters to them* [10]. *Будуть мільйони тих, хто буде голосувати вперше. Люди, які народилися у 2008 році, коли була світова економічна криза. Вони будуть думати про те, що для них має значення* [11]. Achieving terminological consistency across languages is crucial for effective communication and the successful dissemination of information among participants.

As can be seen from the example in the source language, the terms «*first-time voters*», «*the economic and financial crisis*» and «*the polling booth*» need to be adapted to maintain the intended meaning in the target language text. In order to render the term «*first-time voters*», the interpreter has applied transposition and changed the part of speech in the output («*голосувати вперше*»). This choice is deemed rational to avoid potential inconsistency and misinterpretation arising from a literal translation. In translating the collocation «*the economic and financial*

crisis», the interpreter employs both omission and amplification strategies, introducing the word «світова» to underscore the global nature of the event. However, despite these adaptation efforts, an inadequate selection of interpretation strategies, coupled with the omission of «*as they stand in that polling booth*», results in a notable loss of the emotional and rhetorical tone present in the source language text upon its transfer to the target language.

Similar phenomena are observable in the following pairs of sentences: *Our union today reflects the vision of those who dreamt of the better future after the World War II, the future in which a union of nations, democracies and people work together to share peace and prosperity* [10]. *Наш союз сьогодні відображає думки і мрії тих, хто мріяв про краще майбутнє, майбутнє, де буде синергія демократії, роботи людей, миру та добробуту* [11]. In this case, the President of the European Commission utilizes temporal references to World War II, yet the interpreter omits a substantial part of the message in the target language text. The translation of the word «*vision*», which encapsulates the semantics of «*the knowledge and imagination needed in planning for the future with a clear purpose*», is justified as the phrase «*думки і мрії*» faithfully transmits the intended meaning. The omission in the translation, however, leads to a loss of specificity and contextual cues, which are inherent in the source language text. Such cases require using meticulous interpretation strategies capturing not only the denotative meaning but also the connotative and cultural aspects inherent in the authentic message.

Pragmatic adaptation of the message is crucial in conference interpreting. The former involves not only linguistic equivalence but also the adjustment of messages to suit cultural, contextual, and audience-specific factors and eliminate «*misunderstandings and ineffective communication*» [7, p. 378]. In the example below, the original English message begins with an evocation of shared ideals among the new generation, emphasizing a collective vision, burning desire, and a belief in Europe's historical role: *When I speak to the new generation of young people today, I see that same vision for a better future, that same burning desire to build something better; that same belief that in a world of uncertainty Europe once again must answer the call of history* [10]. The Ukrainian translation attempts to convey these sentiments but introduces shifts in emphasis and expression: *Коли я спілкуюся з новим поколінням молодих людей сьогодні, я бачу цю візію, візію кращого майбутнього, я бачу в них вогонь, жагу до того аби побудувати щось краще. Це переконання, ця віра, що у світі, в якому немає певності, Європа зараз має також відповісти на цей поклик історії* [11].

The source language text employs metaphors like «*burning desire*» and «*answering the call of history*», encapsulating culturally-biased idioms. In the target language, however, these are replaced with more direct expressions, such as «жага» and «відповісти на цей поклик історії». The pragmatic adaptation preserves the emotional tone but slightly alters the cultural resonance. In other words, replacing metaphors demonstrates the interpreter's strategic decision to maintain the emotional tone while making the message culturally accessible.

Regarding the stylistic characteristics of the analyzed message, the source language text employs anaphora for rhetorical effect, emphasizing the repetition of «*that same*». The Ukrainian version shifts the structure for stylistic reasons while maintaining the core meaning. The interpreter employs enumerations, using «ця візія» and «ця віра», creating a different stylistic impact in the target language. Thus, the former plays a pivotal role in negotiating the cultural gaps between the source and target languages. The applied stylistic modification aligns with the target language's rhetorical conventions, ensuring that the impact of the speech is preserved in a manner more suitable to the linguistic and stylistic expectations of the Ukrainian audience.

In summary, interpreting institutional discourse involves meticulous attention to linguistic, cultural, and sociolinguistic aspects. The interpreter serves as both a language expert and a cultural mediator, navigating the intricacies of language use and considering sociolinguistic shifts. Furthermore, achieving terminological consistency and the need for accurate and culturally relevant translations in multilingual and multicultural settings are of paramount importance.

Conclusions. Conference interpreting within institutional settings is a dynamic and multifaceted task, intricately linked to the complexities of language, culture, and societal norms. The interdisciplinary nature of institutional discourse manifests in diverse communicative phenomena. The discourse within institutions is marked by goal orientation, formality, specialized vocabulary, power dynamics, and role-driven communication, creating distinctive features shaped by varied disciplinary perspectives.

As exemplified in the interpretation of institutional speeches, the interpretation process reveals the interpreter's pivotal role in negotiating linguistic and sociocultural shifts. The adaptation of professional titles and gendered language reflects linguistic considerations and aligns with broader sociolinguistic trends, emphasizing the interpreter's function as a cultural mediator. The analysis of adaptation strategies in translating complex terms demonstrates the interpreter's role in maintaining accuracy and cultural relevance. However, challenges arise in maintaining emotional and rhetorical tones, as seen in examples

of inadequate interpretation strategies leading to a loss of intended meaning. The need for pragmatic adaptation becomes evident, involving adjustments not only for linguistic equivalence but also to suit cultural, contextual, and audience-specific factors. Thus, conference interpreting in institutional settings is a complicated social and practical endeavor that goes beyond linguistic faithfulness. It requires interpreters to convey words, their intended meaning, emotional tone, and cultural specificity across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

The **prospects** for further research lie in the deeper comparative translation analysis of institutional discourse and the peculiarities of its rendering in conference interpreting.

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