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THE ETHICS OF USING EUPHEMISMS IN THE ENGLISH-UKRAINIAN TRANSLATION OF SOCIO-POLITICAL TEXTS

The article considers the ethics of using euphemisms in the English – Ukrainian translation of socio-political texts. The issue of euphemism in the social and political context from the Ukrainian and foreign researchers' point of view is analysed. The current political situation of a country is inseparably connected with the welfare of its society. An analysis of scholarly works confirms that to achieve adequacy and equivalence in translation and preserve the stylistic and pragmatic nuances of euphemisms in the target language, a translator can use a direct equivalent, employ stylistic transformations, or discard the euphemistic potential of the original vocabulary during the translation process. The competence of political figures and participants in political communication on the international stage, as well as within the state, allows for the dissemination of ideas, the establishment of connections, the promotion of civic engagement, and the ability to influence people's ways of thinking and behavior. It is stated that euphemization is a mandatory condition for politically correct speech in intercultural communication. Since the evolution of euphemistic potential is directly related to the characteristics of culture, euphemistic vocabulary is an unstable component of the language system, complicating the process of translation into the target language. Furthermore, over time, the pragmatic potential of euphemisms tends to change, acquiring the characteristics of the concepts they are used to denote. Euphemia, as a multidimensional and dynamic phenomenon, is extensively studied within various approaches, particularly in the context of translation. An analysis of speeches by contemporary American politicians shows that euphemisms are widely used to describe social, economic, and political issues. They help highlight the positive aspects of government actions or avoid addressing complex issues without losing their influence on the audience. At the same time, euphemisms reduce emotional tension, ensuring an attenuated approach to the conveyed and rendered information.

Key words: English – Ukrainian translation, ethics, euphemisms, socio-political context, socio-political texts.

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ЕТИКА ВИКОРИСТАННЯ ЕВФЕМІЗМІВ В АНГЛО-УКРАЇНСЬКОМУ ПЕРЕКЛАДІ СУСПІЛЬНО-ПОЛІТИЧНИХ ТЕКСТІВ

У статті розглядається етика використання евфемізмів в англо-українському перекладі суспільно-політичних текстів, зокрема в контексті методологічних позицій українських та зарубіжних дослідників. Аналіз наукових праць підтверджує, що для досягнення адекватності та еквівалентності перекладу, збереження стилістичних і прагматичних відтінків евфемізмів у цільовій мові перекладач може використовувати прямий еквівалент, застосовувати стилістичні трансформації або відмовлятися від евфемістичного потенціалу оригінальної лексики у процесі перекладу. Компетентність політичних діячів та учасників політичної комунікації як на національно-

му рівні, так і на міжнародній арені, дозволяє поширювати ідеї, налагоджувати зв'язки, сприяти громадянській активності, забезпечувати здатність впливати на спосіб мислення та поведінку людей. У статті зазначається, що евфемізація є обов'язковою умовою політкоректного мовлення в міжкультурній комунікації. Оскільки еволюція евфемістичного потенціалу безпосередньо пов'язана з особливостями культури, варто враховувати наступне: евфемістична лексика є нестійким компонентом мовної системи, що ускладнює процес перекладу на цільову мову. З'ясовано, що прагматичний потенціал евфемізмів має тенденцію змінюватися, пропонуючи нові ознаки для понять, у характеристиці яких використовуються. Євфемія, як багатовимірне та динамічне явище, досліджується в рамках різних підходів, зокрема в контексті перекладу. Аналіз виступів сучасних американських політиків демонструє, що евфемізми широко використовуються для опису суспільних, економічних і політичних проблем. Вони допомагають висвітлювати позитивні сторони дії влади або уникнути вирішення складних питань, не втрачаючи при цьому впливу на аудиторію. Водночас евфемізми знижують емоційну напругу, забезпечуючи пом'якшене ставлення до інформації, що передається з іноземної (англійської) на рідну (українську) мову.

Ключові слова: англо-український переклад, етика, евфемізми, суспільно-політичний контекст, суспільно-політичні тексти.

The relevance of this research. The current political situation of a country is inseparably connected with the welfare of its society. The competence of political figures and participants in political communication on the international stage, as well as within the state, allows for the dissemination of ideas, the establishment of connections, the promotion of civic engagement, and the ability to influence people's ways of thinking and behavior.

Euphemization is a mandatory condition for politically correct speech in intercultural communication. Since the evolution of euphemistic potential is directly related to the characteristics of culture, euphemistic vocabulary is an unstable component of the language system, complicating the process of translation into the target language. Furthermore, over time, the pragmatic potential of euphemisms tends to change, acquiring the characteristics of the concepts they are used to denote. Euphemia, as a multidimensional and dynamic phenomenon, is extensively studied within various approaches, particularly in the context of translation.

The actuality of this research stems from the need for a detailed study of euphemisms in the speeches of well-known world leaders and the search for adequate translation solutions in political discourse, as they reflect the cultural characteristics of the country and play a significant role in mass communication.

Analysis of the research problem. The issue of euphemism in the political context has been studied by the following researchers: I. Myazova (Myazova, 2026) and F. Batsevych (Batsevych, 2024) explored intercultural communication and its barriers; I. Milyeva examined the specifics of translation; O. Stasyuk (Stasyuk, 2012) analyzed the functions of euphemisms in parliamentary discourse. V. Velykoroda (Velykoroda, 2008) classified political euphemisms, while B. Warren

(Warren, 1992) studied their structural diversity. H. Payonkevich (Payonkevich, 2014) and K. Lut (Lut, 2015) focused on translation and cultural differences. R. Povorozyuk (Povorozyuk, 2022) and L. Slavova (Slavova, 2020) investigated special aspects of discursive strategies in the English-Ukrainian translation.

According to I. Myazova, intercultural communication functions as a system of knowledge and skills necessary for the implementation of speech activities with representatives of other national and ethnic communities in accordance with established social practices (Myazova, 2026: 109). F. Batsevych equates intercultural communication with belonging to different linguistic and cultural groups. He identifies the variability of communicative competence and the cultural and linguistic estrangement of the interlocutor, which can lead to cultural shock or failure to overcome communication barriers, as key characteristics of verbal and non-verbal intercultural communication (Batsevych, 2024: 254).

The peculiarities of translation into the target language and the associated intercultural misunderstandings were the subject of study by I. Milyeva. According to her theory, communicative strategies within a culture are directly based on behavioral norms and acceptable (desired) limits (Milyeva, 2004). The researcher believes that the communicative channel reflects the cultural experience, priorities, and values of a specific culture, and differences in value hierarchies are often the cause of misunderstandings between individuals from different cultures. At the same time, the scholar proposes an alternative method for overcoming communicative collapse through the theoretical and practical enhancement of communicants' competence in the characteristics of other cultures (Milyeva, 2004: 64).

According to the proposed definitions, we can assert that the contrast between intercultural and intracultural communication occupies a central position. Successful communication is possible only when there is adequate understanding and mutual comprehension among participants who speak different languages and come from different cultures. Preventing and resolving misunderstandings in the process of intercultural communication is considered one of the key goals of intercultural communication theory. F. Batsevich has no doubt that participants use various techniques and tools to avoid communication breakdowns due to a lack of cultural awareness or differing views on tact and political correctness in language and speech (Batsevych, 2024: 261).

In her study of euphemia in parliamentary communication, O. Stasyuk distinguishes five functional characteristics of euphemistic vocabulary: manipulation, demobilization, profiling, politeness, and achieving political correctness. The implementation of neutral or positive associations to replace negative phenomena lies at the core of the manipulation function (Stasyuk, 2012). In this way, the speaker influences the thinking, views, ideas, and behavior of the recipient. The demobilization function, according to the researcher, involves establishing a barrier between the recipient and undesirable phenomena. Such euphemisms are intended to soothe, create comfortable listening conditions, and distance the communication participant from the negative aspects of reality. The profiling function of euphemisms is centered on maintaining the speaker's reputation. By using euphemistic nominations with this function, the speaker tries to conceal the illegitimacy of their actions or their often negative consequences. O. Stasyuk believes that politeness is one of the essential criteria for politically correct communication. Euphemisms that perform this function help the speaker consider communicative demands and generally accepted norms in a specific environment (Stasyuk, 2012: 7).

The euphemistic potential of certain nominations is indeed fluid. However, it is important not to equate all euphemisms with deception or concealment. Many formulations have a transparent nature and function within a sentence to achieve a high level of mutual understanding and avoid conflicts of interests and cultures. They aim at politically correct, tactful communication. According to

H. Payonkevich, they do not provoke obvious disagreements between the speaker and the recipient, ensuring the creation of a positive image of reality (Payonkevich, 2014: 206–209).

V. Velykoroda suggests dividing politically oriented euphemisms into three groups according to their areas of usage and pragmatic characteristics: military-political, diplomatic, and ideological. According to her theory, military-political euphemisms, which are the subject of this study, are characterized by the following features: motivation; slogan-like nature; dialectical transformation of euphemism; the ability to create an «us vs. them» opposition; and the ability to serve as a means of implementing a strategy of deviation from the truth (Velykoroda, 2008: 144).

V. Velykoroda also proposes a classification of the functions of political euphemisms based on the analysis of their pragmatic features. Specifically, she highlights the veiling, cooperative, preventive, rhetorical, elevative, conspirative, and distortive functions (Velykoroda, 2008: 135). It is important to explain the essence of each function for the correct understanding of information and for the appropriate use of the classification in further research.

B. Warren emphasizes the structural diversity of euphemisms and proposes dividing them into the following types: 1) *word-euphemisms: nouns* (*underachiever – a person who is not successful, entanglement – a difficult situation*); *adjectives* (*liberal – intolerant, special – with special needs*); *verbs* (*to whitewash – to gloss over an awkward situation, to pass away – to die*); *adverbs* (*friendly – without significant compromise*); 2) *phrase-euphemisms: free* (*gradual increase in prices and wages – inflation, confidential source – informant*); *idiomatic expressions* (*three sheets to the wind – a drunkard; to send somebody to glory – to kill someone*); 3) *sentence-euphemisms* (Warren, 1992: 128–172).

H. Rawson presents a range of implicitly motivated euphemisms in English-language political discourse: the nomination «*depression*» as an equivalent of the term «*crisis*» is considered taboo, and it is more commonly referred to as «*deflation*» or «*disinflation*». To describe unemployment as a result of an economic crisis, politicians use «*underutilization*»; misunderstandings between political parties and opposition are typically described as an «*exchange of views*»; illegal appropriation of money is presented as «*expropriation*»; the term bribery is disguised under «*contribution*»

or «*commission*»; and the assassination of a political figure is referred to as (Rawson, 2003: 147).

The purpose of the article is to study the ethics of using euphemisms in the English – Ukrainian translation of socio-political texts

The main part. Thus, the constant evolution of language, speech, and culture, and the pursuit of politically correct communication, necessitate the implementation of euphemisms in political texts. Semantic uncertainty, theatricality, and the variety of techniques and tactics used to attract attention and influence the recipient's way of thinking distinguish political discourse from other types of discourse and contribute to the creation and use of mitigating expressions. This environment facilitates the realization of the euphemistic potential of nominations for negative concepts and the creation of a positive image.

Researcher I. Milyeva takes a critical view of the process of conveying euphemistic potential into the target language. She argues that euphemisms used to convey the connotative meaning of the original often cannot be adequately interpreted. Ignoring the euphemistic nature of the original statements will lead to a misunderstanding of the information (Milyeva, 2004:66).

In K. Lut's work, the issue is also addressed. The researcher believes that knowledge of the target language, cultural background, subjective preferences, and understanding of the original all influence the adequacy of interpretation. The clear and hidden differences between the cultures and traditions of nations, and thus their different perceptions of phenomena and processes, complicate the search for equivalent units. The researcher emphasizes that the translation of euphemistic vocabulary does not exclude situations where there is no direct equivalent with the same pragmatic and stylistic potential as the original nomination. Moreover, one of the difficulties lies in interpreting the euphemism in the source text (Lut, 2015: 144 – 146).

I. Korunets, in reflecting on the translation of euphemisms, identifies the following methods: concretization, generalization, descriptive, calquing, and equivalence selection (Korunets, 2011: 235). The method of concretization involves replacing a word or phrase with a broad meaning with a word or phrase with a narrower meaning. The prevalence of the method of concretization is explained by the large number of English words with broad semantics, which do not have direct equivalents in

Ukrainian. V. Velykoroda assures that Ukrainian vocabulary is generally more specific compared to English. Thus, euphemisms that contain such components as «*affair*», «*matter*», «*effort*», «*mission*» are usually translated into Ukrainian using concretization. Bright examples of using the method of concretization in the translation of political euphemisms include the following words: «*challenge*» – «*crisis*», «*illegal substances*» – «*narcotic substances*», «*to lose someone*» – «*to lose someone (as a result of death)*» (Velykoroda, 2013: 140).

According to O. Tkachyk, the descriptive method is typical for the translation of terms related to different types of discrimination, and descriptive translation is necessary for the meaning of a politically correct expression to be understandable to the target recipient (Tkachyk, 2014: 55). Here are a few examples: «*lookism*» – «*creating beauty standards and limiting the rights of those who do not meet them*», «*shapeism*» – «*discrimination based on body size*», «*eurocentrism*» – «*oppression of individuals whose ancestors did not originate from Europe*».

It is generally accepted to use the descriptive method when translating euphemisms that contain components such as «*challenged*» and «*impaired*». These lexemes are part of a fairly large number of euphemistic expressions, and therefore are translated differently in each case, including «*challenged*» – «*with limited capabilities*», «*has other abilities*», «*underdeveloped*», «*experiencing difficulties*», «*overcoming difficulties due to...*»; «*hearing-impaired*» – «*hearing impaired*», «*with hearing limitations*», «*hard of hearing*»; «*attractively impaired*» – «*with reduced attractiveness*»; «*speech impaired*» – «*speech deprived*» (Rawson, 2003: 245).

O. Zastrovsky's work focuses on the study of lexical translation transformations. The researcher develops a classification based on four levels: componential, pragmatic, referential, and stylistic. The first componential level of semantic valence includes substitutions in the translation process. At the second, pragmatic level, the scholar proposes compensation, substitution of stylistic means, substitution of allusions with analogous ones, and explanatory translation. The researcher refers concretization, generalization, and substitution of realia to the referential level. He separately examines compression and expansion within the stylistic level (Zastrovsky, 2009: 273–277).

An analysis of scholarly works confirms that to achieve adequacy and equivalence in translation and preserve the stylistic and pragmatic nuances of euphemisms in the target language, a translator can use a direct equivalent, employ stylistic transformations, or discard the euphemistic potential of the original vocabulary during the translation process.

Given Ukraine's current role on the international political stage, the use of euphemisms to replace taboo terms and harsh details is appropriate. It is well known that the rhetoric of U.S. It is widely recognized that President Joe Biden's rhetoric is distinguished by clarity and accessibility in his speeches. The use of numerous stylistic devices enhances the structured argumentation and facilitates the easy reception of his messages. Euphemism, as a means of maintaining politically correct intercultural communication, plays a significant role and is one of the key elements of his political strategy.

An example of using a euphemism to refer to an undesirable phenomenon: «*In the lead-up to the current crisis, the United States and NATO worked for months to engage Russia to avert a war. I met with him in person and talked to him many times on the phone*» (переклад: «Напередодні нинішньої кризи Сполучені Штати та НАТО місяцями працювали над тим, щоб не допустити Росію до розв'язування війни. Я зустрівся з ним особисто і багато разів спілкувався по телефону») (President Biden's Speech, 2024: What America Will and Will Not Do in Ukraine).

Joe Biden successfully neutralizes the pragmatic significance of the negative concept of «*war*» through the use of the euphemism «*the current crisis*». In this way, we observe a shift from the recipient's sharply negative attitude to a more neutral one. It is worth noting that the use of the euphemism in this case is determined by the context, and its understanding directly depends on the background knowledge of the audience. In this regard, the euphemism can be characterized as veiling, meaning it is aimed at concealing information that is undesirable in a certain context. During translation, the method of calquing («*the current crisis*») was applied, which allows us to assert the preservation of the stylistic and pragmatic nuance of the euphemism in the target language.

Let us examine in detail the use of euphemisms and the preservation of their functions based on the speech delivered by Joseph Biden at the White House in Washington on May 31, 2022. This speech

was addressing the international political situation and the efforts of the United States to support the Ukrainian people.

Addressing both American and international audiences, President Biden repeatedly emphasizes his full readiness to assist Ukrainians in their fight for freedom and democracy. He uses concise, logically structured statements with politically correct elements that carry a high emotional charge. This helps to quickly achieve mutual understanding and significantly influence the listeners.

At the beginning of his address, the U.S. president emphasizes the primary goal of financial and humanitarian aid to Ukraine: «*America's goal is straightforward: We want to see a democratic, independent, sovereign, and prosperous Ukraine with the means to deter and defend itself against further aggression*» (переклад: «Мета Америки проста: ми хочемо бачити демократичну, незалежну, суверенну та процвітаючу Україну із засобами для стримування та захисту від подальшої агресії») (President Biden's Speech, 2024: the United Efforts of the Free World to Support the People of Ukraine).

From a pragmatic standpoint, the phrase «*the means to deter and defend*» serves as an interesting example. It encourages the recipient to search for the real facts, analyze the context, think logically, and draw conclusions. By using this euphemism, Joe Biden avoids directly mentioning «*ammunition*». The translation into the target language was carried out with a loan, which preserved the stylistic features of the original.

Moreover, the translation fully conveyed the pragmatic aspect and the veiling function of the expression. In the same sentence, we encounter the attenuated use of term «*aggression*» instead of «*war*». The reason for this substitution lies in the president's desire to avoid categorical terms that could provoke mixed reactions among the audience, such as fear, irritation, or panic.

The speeches of contemporary American political figures provide notable examples. Euphemisms are most commonly found in socio-political texts about the economy, as evidenced by the following examples: «*We are taking tough, targeted action to protect our auto sector from security risks and to ensure China does not unfairly undercut our auto sector*» (переклад: «Ми вживаємо жорстких, цілеспрямованих заходів, щоб захистити наш автомобільний сектор від загрозованих ризиків

та створити безпекове середовище щодо Китаю, аби не підривав наш автомобільний сектор нечесно») (Remarks by National Economic Advisor Lael Brainard on Sustaining American Auto Leadership, 2024).

This sentence includes several euphemisms. The phrase «*tough, targeted action*» serves as a euphemism for harsh measures, such as the imposition of tariffs or restrictions on the Chinese automobiles and components. Instead of directly using terms like «*sanctions*» or «*restrictions*», the politician softens their impact with more neutral and positively connoted language. This allows these measures to be presented as necessary actions for protecting domestic industries from threats, particularly from China, without intensifying negative emotions among the audience. «*Security risks*» also functions as a euphemism here, concealing more specific threats such as industrial espionage or unfair competition.

The translation of the phrase «*tough, targeted action*» may lead to the loss of its mitigating effect, as a direct translation into Ukrainian might sound harsher. Additionally, the euphemism «*security risks*» is all-encompassing, and while translated into Ukrainian could lose the implicit reference to specific issues, such as unfair competition.

The following is an example referring to the economic situation: «*We are investing in America's auto supply chain from end to end to make sure American autos remain best in class*» (переклад: «*Ми інвестуємо в американський нескінченний потік поставок автомобілів, аби переконатися, що американські автомобілі залишаються найкращими у своєму класі*») (Remarks by National Economic Advisor Lael Brainard on Sustaining American Auto Leadership, 2024).

In this case, the euphemism «*investing*» is used to denote the support of various government economic initiatives, which may include state subsidies, tax incentives, or direct financial aid. It softens the harsher rhetoric about government economic intervention, making it more appealing to the public and businesses. The phrase «*best in class*» is a typical example of rhetoric aimed at praising the domestic industry, but without providing specific details about the challenges manufacturers face in the context of global competition.

A sample sentence demonstrates the use of multiple euphemisms to soften the impact of restrictive measures, such as tariffs on Chinese goods, and to

conceal more specific threats like industrial espionage or unfair competition, while avoiding strong negative reactions: «*China is flooding global markets with a wave of auto exports at a time when they are experiencing overcapacity*» (переклад: «*Китай заливає світові ринки хвилею експорту автомобілів саме в той час, коли вони відчують надлишок потужностей*») (Remarks by National Economic Advisor Lael Brainard on Sustaining American Auto Leadership, 2024).

In this case, the phrase «*flooding global markets*» serves as a euphemism intended to criticize China, hinting at aggressive trade policies. Instead of directly accusing China of dumping or violating trade agreements, this euphemism shifts focus to the issue of market oversaturation, which negatively affects domestic markets in the US and EU. Additionally, the term «*overcapacity*» is used to describe problems related to overproduction, which is a softer way of addressing serious economic challenges for China and their impact on the global economy.

The euphemism «*investing*» may present challenges in translation, as the Ukrainian equivalent may not carry the same mitigating effect. Similarly, the phrase «*best in class*» could lose its rhetorical formality when translated.

Here are examples of euphemism usage by Vice President Kamala Harris: «*We have supported another 15,000 jobs at Montgomery Locks*» (переклад: «*Ми підтримали ще 15 000 робочих місць у Монтгомері Локс*») (Remarks by Vice President Harris at a Campaign Event, 2024). The euphemism «*supporting jobs*» is used here, which can imply the provision of government subsidies, employment programs, or other forms of economic intervention. Instead of directly describing financial expenditures or government support, the politician focuses on the positive impact these measures have on the labour market. This creates a sense of active economic support without mentioning the actual financial or political efforts.

The Ukrainian phrase may not fully convey the subtle implication of government financial aid. The translation could lose the positive connotation and instead give the impression of direct economic support without softening its meaning.

An example of describing social issues: «*The cost of living in America is still just too high*» (переклад: «*Вартість життя в Америці все ще занадто висока*») (Remarks by Vice President Harris at a Campaign Event, 2024).

The phrase «*cost of living*» is a euphemism that replaces detailed descriptions of issues such as rising prices for groceries, rent, or healthcare. It is a softer way of addressing real economic challenges without focusing on the specific difficulties faced by citizens. Using this term allows politicians to highlight general aspects without delving into the complexities of economic problems. When translated into Ukrainian, the phrase may be perceived as a general term and may fail to capture the underlying nuances implied in the original, such as economic difficulties on various levels.

An example for indicating indirect manipulation: «*We will take on bad actors who exploit emergencies and drive up grocery prices by enacting the first-ever federal ban on corporate price gouging*» (переклад: «*Ми викриємо поганих дійових осіб, які використовують надзвичайні ситуації та підвищують ціни на продукти, запровадивши першу в історії федеральну заборону на підвищення корпоративних цін*») (Remarks by Vice President Harris at a Campaign Event, 2024).

This sentence uses the euphemism «*bad actors*» to refer to companies that take advantage of crises to raise prices. Instead of directly accusing them of manipulation or illegal actions, a less harsh phrase is employed, creating the impression that the issue is more objective and requires a political solution. The translation of this euphemism may not fully convey the implied hint of manipulative actions by companies. In Ukrainian, this term might appear too neutral and fail to capture the underlying criticism of the companies' price-raising practices.

Conclusions. The study of euphemisms in socio-political texts highlights their crucial role in communication, particularly in the context of intercultural interaction and political rhetoric.

Euphemisms allow politicians and public figures to express negative or controversial opinions gently, avoid conflicts, and attenuate criticism. They also contribute to maintaining political correctness, which is especially important in multinational societies and on the international stage. The translation of euphemisms presents certain challenges related to conveying their pragmatic and stylistic potential. A translator must consider the cultural context, as euphemisms often reflect the social and cultural features of a particular nation. If mistranslated, there is a risk of losing the original's attenuated interpretation or inaccurately conveying its meaning. For instance, phrases like «*supporting jobs*» or «*bad actors*» may have different interpretations depending on the context, complicating their translation into other languages, namely into Ukrainian. Another important aspect is preserving the rhetorical formality that is common in many political speeches, especially in the economic sphere. In such cases, the translation may lose its persuasiveness and have a weaker impact on the audience (Kosharnyi, Povoroznyuk, 2024).

An analysis of speeches by contemporary American politicians shows that euphemisms are widely used to describe social, economic, and political issues. They help highlight the positive aspects of government actions or avoid addressing complex issues without losing their influence on the audience. At the same time, euphemisms reduce emotional tension, ensuring an attenuated transfer of the information. It is also important to note that euphemisms are fluid and dependent on specific cultural and political contexts. The translator must strike a balance between translation accuracy and preserving the original's stylistic tone, which is a key to the effectively conveyed message.

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