Language Deviations and Translation

The article provides linguistic information about the language norm and the definition of ‘language deviation’. Translators and interpreters have to deal with language deviations expressed in public speeches by prominent policy-makers and public figures, and they have to know how to avoid (if necessary) and how to render these deviations in the target text. Generalized ideas are presented of how to translate the parasite-words into Russian.

Key words: language norm, language deviation, parasite-word, extraneous word, filler word, violation of norms, neutralization.

Language norm is one of the fundamental linguistic and sociolinguistic notions. A norm is a set of rules of word choice and word use in this or that community and in this or that period of time. The notion of a norm is closely connected with literary language, sometimes called standard language, although currently we face a lot of challenges in defining what a standard is. The norm ensures integrity and comprehensibility of the literary
language of any nation. They can change during some historic period, but the change takes place very slowly and that’s why we can state that the norm is a very conservative language notion.

Some linguists find that a significant social and cultural role is played by norms. All public life sectors of any society utilize the language based on norms and rules of usage in various dimensions. It is a kind of filter that eliminates all misused and accidental words in our speech.

Any well-developed national language has a great capacity not only for implementing system regularities, but also for developing various deviations from norms and rules, thus enriching the creative and adaptive capacity of the language. Yu.D. Apresyan pointed out that “these language abnormalities function as growth cites for new language phenomena” [1, p. 64]. Language abnormalities (which we call in this article ‘deviations’) make up a significant layer in any national language, and can be used in works of literature, including speech mistakes, slips of the tongue, slips of the pen, etc.

The typological characteristics of a norm proposed by N.D. Arutyunova prove availability scope for deviations. These characteristics include the following: possibility/impossibility of deviation; social/natural character of a norm, positive/negative character, variability/standard character, diachronic/synchronous nature. With taking into account these specific features of norms we can easily see that there will be deviations, because norms are relative (possibility of deviations), social (made up by users), positive (i.e. recommended but not restrictive), variable (average user focus), diachronic (i.e. are developing and fine-tuning the language). It means that any language can have abnormalities that are used and widespread among the population speaking this or that language [2].

Abnormality in language can be sometimes well-grounded, because it is sometimes motivated, communicatively adequate, semantically reasoned and pragmatically successful.

In general terms, a language abnormality (deviation) is a violation of rules of using a language or text unit in some context. “Parasite”-words represent a linguistic phenomenon of using extra and meaningless words in the context, usually in spontaneous and low-controlled speech. Mostly these words are represented by interjections and parentheses. Any word is a nominative language unit functioning as a ‘brick’ in building up a sentence. Each element of the sentence takes part in formation of its general meaning, and according to language rules there should not be any word in the sentence, which does not take part in expressing its meaning. If such words occur, it means that we observe deviation from language norms and violation of the principle of saving speech efforts. The words having no
semantic meaning are usually called parasites (or extraneous words). Actually we realize that these words are not extraneous, because the language does not contain meaningless or needless words, but if a speaker has some difficulties in expressing his/her ideas and has to break his/her speech with lots of pauses, usually s/he prefers to fill them in with semantically empty lexical units. It is said that parasite-words are the enemy of the language purity. People use them for making their ‘uninteresting’ speech more emotional, colloquial and then they do not pay attention to these words. Every person has his/her own stock of such extraneous words. But if we take a look at our present-day journalists and reporters, characters of modern books, policy-makers and public figures, we will see that not all words can be classified as parasites. Some of them are clichés, linking words, which are sometimes even taught in the courses of foreign languages as communicative units showing interest/disinterest, surprise, etc.

Parasite-words mark redundancy and diffusion of the speaker’s statements. Some remarks, as a result, are full of word fillers, lack logic and accuracy. And, certainly, translators and interpreters try to avoid these misconceptions when working on a public statement of a policy-maker or a public figure, thus “improving” the authentic (source) text.

However, we should mention that sometimes these extraneous words serve a specific feature of the speaker. They are still filler and empty words, but they are used for some purpose describing particular verbal inclinations expressed by the speaker, who is deprived of a possibility to be very emotional. Parasite words sometimes become linking words, which are usually used in colloquial speech as a habit. The speaker does not feel these words and does not make notice of them. The listener (the receiver of information) is tired of it, and notices each and every parasite word.

It is found that a person expresses about 90% of what he/she is thinking about. All the rest is expressed in non-verbal communication, i.e. gestures, posture, facial expressions and parasite words. Pay attention to the fact that we put parasite words in this category of non-verbal communication. In some communication theories it would be noted as paraverbal communication.

Some linguists say that parasite words appear as a result of some ‘fashion’ in public speaking. Just try to remember several public speeches you have heard recently. We are sure that they will be full of filler words, because now it is becoming a standard, we have to provide information in the simplest possible way but with the view of regularities in the language we speak. That is why people, who actually do not have any problems with “speech purity”, use these words just “to be in trend”.

Sometimes, and it is a regular technique for interpreters, parasite words are used to ‘win some time’, e.g. to think over the possible version of
interpretation, to recollect some vocabulary items, etc. But in some cases people use parasite-words as tactical means in their public speaking. If a person does not want to answer a question, but still he/she has to do it, he/she plays for time, and when mentioning such phrases as “you see” (“видите ли”), “you understand that...” (“понимаете, какое дело...”) actually at this very moment he/she is shaping the idea to express.

Plain English Campaign, a commercial editing and training firm based in the United Kingdom, founded in 1979 by Chrissie Maher, is a world leader in plain-language advocacy, working to persuade organizations in the UK and abroad to communicate with the public in plain language. 5,000 respondents had to identify the most irritating words in modern English. The findings were the following:

**Rank 1** – ‘at the end of the day’ («в конечном счете»).
**Rank 2** – ‘at this moment in time’ («в данный момент времени») и ‘like’ («как бы»);
**Rank 3** – ‘sort of’, ‘kind of’ («типа»).
**Rank 4** – ‘with all due respect’ («при всем должном уважении»).
**Rank 5** – ‘jigamy’ («от самое», «ну это, как его там...»);
**Rank 6** – ‘that’s the way the cookie crumbles’ («вот такие пироги», «вот такие дела», «как-то вот так вот»).
**Rank 7** – ‘I was like’ («я такой (-ая) ему»— чтобы заменить “I’ve said” / “I say”). Например:

It was like, amazing, I mean they were just, like, so gorgeous, and like, I dunno, everyone was like, just really excited, and like, screaming and yelling...

**Rank 8** – ‘basically’ («вообще-то»).
**Rank 9** – ‘well’ (можно предложить много эквивалентов).

**Well, um,** I kind of fell over and sort of landed on this jagged rock which, er, was what basically caused the injury.

But the first and foremost parasite is still ‘you know’.

Among other words and word expressions that irritate English-speakers are the following: ‘absolutely’ – «абсолютно», ‘the matter of the fact is’ – «суть состоит в том...» и ‘to tell the truth’ – «честно говоря». 

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Colloquial English speech is quite different from the written “standard” language, because in conversations various slang and colloquial expressions are used. Though we should mention that sometimes colloquialisms are quite appropriate, e.g. using don’t instead of “do not” is quite proper in speech, and ‘dunno’ instead of ‘do not know’ is also quite appropriate in youth slang. So, the major point to take into account by an interpreter or a translator is the communicative situation and communicative intention of speakers.

It is easy to demonstrate by analysis of the remarks (public speeches and briefings) by Donald Trump, the President of the United States of America. We can identify lexical markers of language deviations in his speeches within the official public speaking context. They are as follows: 1) use of interjections; 2) use of colloquial expressions (usually not used in rhetoric).

In translation translators and interpreters are proposed to use lexical means of finding adequate equivalents, neutralization, word-for-word translation, etc.

Some examples are provided below (from “Donald Trump’s Speech Attacking His Accusers” [3]):

Английский текст
But I'm standing at my podium and she walks in front of me, right? She walks in front of me, you know?

Sometimes they do it for fame, maybe they get money, who knows?

The other day at the debate, where by the way, I absolutely destroyed her, OK?

Now, just so you understand. That’s a big story. If I did. She wrote the most beautiful story, honestly the most beautiful story, 100 percent story, like beautiful.

Русский перевод
Но я стою на подиуме, а она идет передо мной, верно? Она идет передо мной, понимаете?

Они делают это ради славы, может, ради денег, как знать?

На днях, во время дебатов я полностью уничтожил ее, верно?

Просто, чтобы вы поняли. Это большая история. Как я понимаю. Она написала длинную, красивую историю. Честно, самую красивую историю. На 100% просто красивую историю.
Quite often interpreters say that they render the idea of the message delivered by the speaker. But often they are blamed for making these ideas quite colorful and righteous in comparison to what really sounded in the floor. Actually, all translators and interpreters have linguistic (philological) education, which means that they have to use standard (literary) language, except for the cases of ethnic and national deviations depiction in works of literature (e.g. specific accents, specific vocabulary based on mix of languages – “trasynaka”, “surzhyk”).

The main task for translators and interpreters is to get to know the norms of the languages he/she works with (native tongues and foreign languages). Then the translator/interpreter has to take into account stylistics of the text he/she translates/interprets. Only in this case the adequacy of translation will be achieved.

References

Alla Golovnia
Kyiv, Ukraine

Graphon as a Linguistic Means of Representing a Character’s Psychological State

The article dwells on graphon as a linguistic means of representing a character’s psychological state based on the story by Daniel Keyes “Flowers for Algernon”. Particular attention is paid to graphon as a type of linguistic innovation aimed at rendering characteristic features of the psychological state of the character, his or her mental visualization of the world, progress and regress of their development. It is characterized by peculiar structural, semantic and pragmatic aspects.

Key words: graphon, graphic form, pronunciation, accent, psychological state.

“Flowers for Algernon” is a science fiction story by American writer Daniel Keyes. In the center of the story is Charlie Gordon, a 32-year-old man with mental disabilities who works as a cleaner at a factory, volunteers to participate in an experiment to improve intelligence, the essence of which