# FROM ILLUSORY PRECISION TO FATEFUL MISREPRESENTATION OF MEANING IN THE TRANSLATION OF POLITICAL DOCUMENTS

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У статті висвітлено випадки хибної репрезентації значення в українському перекладі "European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages" (моя версія назви цього документа: "Європейська Хартія Регіональних або Міноритарних Мов") та в українських і англійських перекладах документа "Комплекс мер по выполнению Минских соглашений" (моя версія назви українською мовою: "Комплекс заходів з виконання мінських домовленостей"; англійською мовою: "The Set of Measures for Implementation of the Minsk Accords"). Застосовано поєднання ідей когнітивної лінгвістики, настанов теорії перекладацької дії та принципів екологічного підходу до аналізу концептуальних трансплантів у перекладі. Також вибудовано етно-етичну перспективу у вивченні перекладних політичних документів, екстрапольована автором з досліджень художнього перекладу. Вказується на те, що ключові, переплетені між собою концепти політичних документів, що розглядаються, зазнають істотних семантичних трансформацій у процесі перекладу, які або викликані впливом мови-посередника (російської), або спричинені (етно-) етичним підґрунтям культурного середовища перекладача. Найдетальніший аналіз у статті зосереджено на прикладах хибної репрезентації концепту "minority languages" в українській версії "Європейської Хартії" (укр.: "мови меншин" замість "міноритарні мови") та концепту "соглашения" в кількох українських та англійських версіях "Мінських домовленостей" (укр.: "угода / угоди" замість "домовленості"; англ.: "agreement / agreements" замість "arrangements / accords").

*Ключові слова:* політичний документ, хибна репрезентація значення, перекладацька дія, екологічні принципи, етно-етика перекладу, концептуальні транспланти, міноритарні мови, мінські домовленості.


This article discusses the cases of misrepresentation of meaning in the Ukrainian translation of the "European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages" (my version of the Ukrainian translation of the document title: "Європейська Хартія Регіональних або Міноритарних Мов") and the Ukrainian and English translations of the document "Комплекс мер по выполнению Минских соглашений" (my Ukrainian version for the document title is: "Комплекс заходів з виконання мінських домовленостей"; my English version is: "The Set of Measures for Implementation of the Minsk Accords"). It applies a combination of the ideas of cognitive linguistics, the precepts of translatorial action theory, and the principles of ecological approach to the analysis of the conceptual transplants in translation. It also develops an ethno-ethical perspective on the study of the translated political documents, extrapolated by the author from the study of literary translations. The discussion notes that the key intertwined concepts of the political documents in question undergo substantial semantic transformations in the process of translation, which are either provoked by the influence of the relay language (Russian), or motivated by the (ethno-)ethical grounds of the translator's cultural environment. The most detailed analysis in the article focuses on the instances of misrepresentation of the concept of "minority languages" in the Ukrainian version of the "European Charter" (Ukr.: "мови меншин" instead of "міноритарні мови") and of the concept "соглашения" in the Ukrainian and English multiple versions of the "Minsk Accords" (Ukr.: "угода / угоди" instead of "домовленості"; Eng.: "agreement / agreements" instead of "arrangements / accords").

*Key words:* political document, misrepresentation of meaning, translatorial action, ecological principles, ethno-ethics of translation, conceptual transplants, minority languages, Minsk accords.

The aim of this article is to demonstrate and prove that misrepresentation of the meaning of a single source-text word or phrase in translation can be conducive to far-reaching shifts in the overall interpretation of the entire target text, and consequently, to crucial misunderstanding, though present-day Translation Studies recognizes plurality and diversity of translations.

The ideas of translatorial action theory, social systems theories, and eco-translatology have laid the groundwork for this research.

The reasons for various interpretations of the one and the same source text can be found in contemporary functionalist theories, according to which a multitude of purposes underlies the variety of translation versions. The idea of textual precision in translating both literary and non-literary discourses has almost become an outcast from the informed present-day discussion on translation.

Following in the steps of social systems theory that bring to the forefront the significance of communicative processes, variegated functionalist theories, as outlined by Anthony Pym under the designation of "the purposes paradigm" [11], can be identified by a set of underlying principles of purpose-driven, co-operational communication. The theory of translatorial action by Justa Holz-Mäntärri [14] represents the radical functionalist approach popular among translators. Although applicable to a variety of professional translation situations, the theory of translatorial action as well as the whole theoretical spectrum of the functionalist paradigm in Translation Studies has been supplemented recently by a broader environmental approach, which came from the Oriental world.

This is an interdisciplinary approach to translation activity from an ecological perspective, which became known as eco-translatology. It is already acknowledged by Cay Dollerup, Douglas Robinson, Michael Cronin, and some other leading Western scholars. The ecological paradigm confines itself to the natural habitat of a translational activity, focusing on the principles of the target text functions while considering it as an ecosystem in the target environment, i.e. as a specific configuration of systemic functions in and under the influence of the translator's environmental conditions. Eco-translatology looks into translational eco-environments broadly regarding translation, with its own unique ecological profile, as adaptation and selection.

To be more specific, I would like to refer to an ecological undertaking which has been much talked about lately. This is David Latimer's successful experiment of growing for over 50 years a locked-in-a-bottle garden that has become an "example of a closed but functional ecosystem" [19]. The seedlings of spiderworts, or tradescantia, grown by Latimer into a giant plant inside a sealed bottle might have represented a metaphor of precise translation, as a closed ecosystem, performed independently from the translator's ambient environment. Yet unlike the sealed tradescantia, hardly any translation can be defined as a self-sufficient ecosystem, nor does it squarely "grow" from the source-text conceptual seedlings into their replicated transplants. It is clearly a product of cultural exchange, of mimicry and hybridity, utterly dependent on the translation participants and their variegated social environments.

According to the eco-translatologist approach, each translation manifests a particular textual configuration and a new interplay of the transplanted source-text concepts resulting from the processes of adaptation and selection (both deliberate and spontaneous). This approach suggests a complex methodology for description and interpretation of the translated text based on the principles of holism, dynamics, relevance, balance (harmony), and ecological esthetics. It can serve as practically the broadest research paradigm for the comparative holistic study of the source and target text, as well as for probing into the grounds for conceptual shifts in translation as a new functional ecosystem, which is umbilically linked with its ambient translational environment.

In the methodological framework of eco-translatology, which suggests the broadest functional view of translation as an ecosystem, the research of conceptual transplants in present-day Ukrainian-to-English literary translations will point to the more or less crucial semantic shifts in the translated texts. Although the strict lexical and semantic precision in literary translation is rather more illusory

than realistic, the identification and description of the key source-text concepts proves important to an inquiry into their disposition and hierarchy in the target text, as well as for the analysis of the reasons for semantic shifts in the transplanted concepts.

If we take, for instance, the recent English translations released by the British-Dutch press "Glagoslav Publications" (specializing in fiction and non-fiction English translations from the Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian languages) both from the classical Ukrainian authors, such as the 18th-century philosopher and poet Hryhory Skovoroda or the 19th-century poet and artist Taras Shevchenko, and the most popular contemporary writers including Yuriy Andrukhovych, Maria Matios, Irene Rozdobudko, Serhiy Zhadan, and Eugenia Kononenko, among others, we will first have to focus on each translators' interpretations of key intertwined concepts. They include *happiness, heart,* and *love* in Skovoroda, *freedom, truth,* and *glory* in Shevchenko, *burlesque-circus-buffoonery* in Andrukhovych, *guilt, redemption,* and *remembrance* in Maria Matios, *the city* in Serhiy Zhadan, *the man* and *the woman* in Irene Rozdobudko, and *the road* and *the home* in Eugenia Kononenko. A comparative linguistic and cognitive study of the source-text concepts above, along the ascending axis from the individual author's/translator's cognition to their ambient culture, will help us to analyze both the ethno-ethical character of conceptual transplants in translation and the culture-specific shifts of meaning.

Consequently, drawing on the postulate that may be defined as ecological, that a translator both adapts and selects in accordance with the specific configuration of their eco-environment, the researcher of literary translations will be able to probe into the ethno-ethical grounds for conceptual shifts in translation. An ethno-ecological stand point might suggest a complex methodology for the holistic study of translation based on the analysis of both the source and target texts as organic literary works in their specific physical and mental environment. And the present-day versatile renditions of the oeuvre by Shevchenko (whose fluency of verse has been called "untranslatable" by many a scholar) testify to this fact. If we apply the basic principles of ecological analytics, i.e. the principles of holism, dynamics, relevance, balance (harmony), and ecological esthetics, to Ukrainian literary texts and extrapolate them to their English translations, having supplemented the proposed spectrum of ecological principles by the principle of ethno-ethics, and pinpoint that each of the translated versions (for instance, the translations from the book of poetry by Taras Shevchenko, entitled *The Kobzar*, done by Michael Naydan [16; 18], Vera Rich [15], and Peter Fedynsky [17]) is in itself a new functional ecosystem, we will be able to explain the reasons for conceptual shifts in translation. For example, the British translator Vera Rich always rhymed her translations from *The Kobzar*, while the American translators Michael Naydan and Peter Fedynsky, unrhymed their versions of Shevchenko's verses. This verse-pattern asymmetry allegedly depends on the discrepancies between British and American versification traditions. In any case, in literary translation the culture-specific shifts of meaning are unavoidable to a greater or lesser extent whilst the poetic and stylistic norms and dynamics of the target culture inevitably affect the translators' semantic decisions.

The list of basic ecological principles pertaining to the study of literary translation could thus be amplified with the principle of ethno-ethics, which is concerned with socio-cultural stereotypes and their ethical values across cultures. The objective of an ethno-ecological approach to translation is to identify the translator's strategic ethical moves and to enquire into the cultural disposition of conceptual transplants in translation and the culture-specific semantic shifts.

In my view, an ecological approach and the study of the source and target text ethno-ethics should constitute the present-day requirement for the translators of both literary and non-literary works. An insight into conceptual transplants in translation, based on ecological principles, together with the functionalist theories, in particular Holz-Mäntärri's theory of translatorial action, oriented at translating the source-text message in such a way that the target recipient understands it as fully as the source sender did in his/her ambient culture, is key. This will help both the translators

of literary and non-literary texts to avoid the far-reaching cases of misrepresentation of meaning in translation and those sweeping consequences, as well as the most insidious, objectionable, or at times even unacceptable, semantic shifts in the key source-text concepts.

Bearing in mind an ecological approach to the translatorial action, which substantiates the cultural environment-motivated variability of expression in present-day translations (both literary and non-literary), I will further refer to the two political documents of burning importance for Ukraine as telling examples of deviating interpretative shifts in both directions of translation: English-to-(Russian)-to-Ukrainian and (Russian)-to-Ukrainian-to-English. Among numerous examples of such kind, the most glaring one, and perhaps the most fatal, is the case of the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (ECRML; Strasbourg, 5.XI.1992) ratified by the Parliament of Ukraine on 15 May 2003 [8].

The ECRML is a European treaty adopted under the auspices of the Council of Europe "to protect and promote historical regional and minority languages in Europe" [9]. What is critical to note is that it excludes languages used by recent immigrants to a sovereign state from other countries and only applies to languages traditionally spoken by the nationals of particular areas within that nation. The term "minority language" is popularly defined by Wikipedia as "a language spoken by a minority of the population of a territory" [10]. According to this common source, "such people are termed *linguistic minorities* or *language minorities*" (my emphasis) [10].

Beyond any doubt, this international multilingual document has paramount importance for the salvation of endangered languages from extinction, however its misrepresenting translation into Ukrainian puts the future survival of the majority *Ukrainian* language in danger. Contrary to basic rules, the *Charter* text submitted for ratification by the Ukrainian Parliament had not been translated into Ukrainian directly from the official authentic copies (English and/or French), but evidently from its Russian version, which served as an offstage relay language for the Ukrainian text. Although the text of the Ukrainian official version includes a mention that the document was "translated from English by Y. M. Vyshnevskyi" ("Переклад з англійської мови Є. М. Вишневського") [7], it is by no means independent from the linguistic and cognitive stereotypes transplanted from the Russian-language interpretation of the document. Consequently, the key term *"minority languages"* in the *Charter* heading was imported into the Ukrainian text from Russian as *"languages of minorities" (мови меншин)* where by the word "minorities" the concept of *"national minorities"* is meant (note: not "linguistic" or "language" minorities, as the term originally suggests). The official Russian translation of the Treaty title sounds as "Европейская хартия региональных языков или языков меньшинств" (Yevropeyskaya khartiya regional'nykh yazykov ili yazykov men'shynstv) [European Charter for Regional Languages or Languages of Minorities] [4].http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/euro/Rets148.html – bottom The official Ukrainian-language title of the Charter was approved by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine in the formulation that mirrors the Russian one: Європейська Хартія Регіональних Мов або Мов Меншин (Yevropeis'ka Khartiia Rehional'nykh Mov abo Mov Menshyn) [European Charter for Regional Languages or Languages of Minorities].

Lexico-semantic coincidence of the Russian and Ukrainian texts of the Treaty is undoubtedly not confined to the formulaic "languages of minorities" in its title. But let us primarily focus on this key concept in the Treaty. More precise in this case would have been a calque translation *"міноритарні мови,"* i.e., those languages that are used in a particular region and are less common than other languages within the region. As a result, the Russian language, which is the national minority language in Ukraine, appeared in confrontation with the official Ukrainian language, and that has led to social unrest and imminent threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. Several authoritative Ukrainian linguists and lawyers have pointed out this translation inaccuracy as well as the fact that the Russian language cannot have a status of regional language because it prevails not only in the southern and eastern regions of Ukraine but is spread nationwide.

And it is not an endangered language which needs defending like the Crimean Tatar and Gagauz languages [1; 2; 5]. This opinion is summarized, for instance, in the article "Міноритарна мова? Чи правова неграмотність?" (Minorytarna mova? Chy pravova nehramotnist'?) [Minority language? Or legal illiteracy?] by Liuba Vasylyk: "The Law on ratification of the Charter needs to be reviewed, taking into account Ukrainian language and political realities, and it is notably valuable to legally and competently formulate the terms "regional languages or languages of minorities," "territory where a regional language or a language of minority is used," "non-territorial languages," and "official language." Our version of the Law has to defend not all of the languages that exist in Ukraine, but the ones which are really threatened with extinction. According to the latest report by UNESCO, there are 15 such languages in Ukraine (the Russian language is not mentioned among them) (my translation. – *L. K.*)" [2].

Thus, a more correct title for the document would have been "Європейська Хартія Регіональних або Міноритарних Мов" (Yevropeis'ka Khartiia Rehional'nykh abo Minorytarnykh Mov) [European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages] since, in the first place, its strategy is designed to ensure protection for endangered languages, which are in the minority on one or another territory, i.e., the languages that may disappear as a valuable asset of European cultural heritage.

Though Ukrainians have been the largest native ethnic group on the vast territory, which remained de facto a colony of Russia till the early 1990s, Ukrainian cultural identity has suffered tremendous devastation under tsarist and communist rule. In today's Ukraine, which is a postcolonial nation-state undergoing a post-communist transformation, the use of the Russian language throughout the country – the inheritance of Russia's imperialistic policy of colonization – precludes it from pretending to assume the status of a "minority language." Parenthetically, although the Russian Federation joined the countries-signatories of the *Charter* in 2001, it nevertheless has not ratified this Treaty.

Therefore in dealing with vitally important documents, as indeed in any translatorial action, the specifics of social, political, juridical, and governmental systems should be taken into account lest the best intentions be negated. In addition to this, a close working relationship between the translators and the compilers and developers of the National and Research Corpus of the Ukrainian Language, is a must.

Another glaring example of the fateful intervention of misunderstanding in translation suggests itself in the title of much-quoted political document known in the language of the original as "Комплекс мер по выполнению Минских соглашений" (Kompleks mer po vypolneniyu Minskikh soglasheniy) [3]. My translation of the document title is "The Set of Measures for Implementation of the Minsk Accords."

Ukrainians have been a stateless indigenous nation for over three hundred years because of the colonization policy of the Moscow Empire. Mass de-Ukrainization, Holodomor, deportations, and persecutions of the Ukrainian population in the 20th century must have prepared the ground for making the Ukrainian language a minority language, doomed to disappear. That is why granting official status to the national language of the Ukrainian people in the post-colonial, independent Ukraine has been a matter of the return of historical justice and the survival of the indigenous language and ethnic culture. At the same time, self-determination of the Russian language in Ukraine as a minority language and the claims for the status of the official language can endanger the national Ukrainian language and once again put it on the brink of survival.

Due to the fact that the key concepts in the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* had been notoriously misconstrued in the Russian and Ukrainian translations, the Charter pleaded in justification of Russia's military aggression against independent Ukraine in 2014 on the pretext of protection of the Russian-speaking population. Thus the *European Charter* and the *Kompleks mer po vypolneniyu Minskikh soglasheniy* happened to be by implication interlinked.

The latter document with an illegible official status, originally written in Russian and known as Minsk II, was agreed by the Trilateral Contact Group for the peaceful  the conflict in the Donbas region and signed at the Summit in Minsk on 12 February, 2015. As President Petro Poroshenko noted at his press-conference, this "Package of Measures" had to have been implemented by the end of 2015 [6]. However by the decision of the "Normandy Four" (French President Francois Hollande, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, and Russian President Vladimir Putin), the implementation period had been prolonged to the year 2016. Meanwhile the awaited elections in the occupied territories, which were to be held under Ukrainian law, proved effectively impossible, while the idea to legalize a "special status" for the territories of Donbas outside the control of the Ukrainian government, has been, and still is, considered unacceptable by a substantial part of Ukrainian society as well as by the majority of members of the Ukrainian Parliament (Verkhovna Rada) [6]. The reasons for this view are that the elections should be preceded by the withdrawal of Russian troops and mercenaries, an end to active hostilities, a ceasefire, and the rehabilitation of the region's infrastructure, while the issue of the timing for the Ukrainian government to regain control over the state border of Ukraine is still in the air.

The Russian-language original of this key political document in the Minsk process has been translated into Ukrainian and English more than once. The translations are not identical, and even the title became subject to varying readings. Even if those interpretative discrepancies be more or less minute, they nevertheless influence the overall interpretation of the Minsk II document, which is of such a high political importance.

As it was mentioned earlier, the document in Russian is entitled "Комплекс мер по выполнению Минских соглашений". Let us consider some of translation pitfalls inherent. The title phrase "Минских соглашений" could be contentious since it includes the plural noun in the Genitive case "соглашений" (from Nominative "соглашения"), which in English means "arrangements" or "accords". Would it then be semantically accurate to translate the plural noun "соглашений" as "agreement" or "agreements"? The latter terms, in fact, in back-translation from English to Russian would be "договор" (dogovor) or "договоры" (dogovory), respectively. In their turn, the terms "договор" and "договоры" in the semantically precise back-back-translation into English would become the terms "contract" and "contracts," correspondingly. But account should also be taken of the difference between *a* contract and *several* contracts, which is obviously crucial for the situation with the Minsk process and the only document known as Minsk II. Actually, the source text concept "соглашений" does not pertain to the idea of "contract" or "contracts" whatsoever. It refers to some previously arranged and broadly formulated mutual positions ("соглашений") of the Trilateral Contact Group. In point of fact, thus, the signed document alludes to a set of accords rather than any contract or contracts.

As to certain discrepancies between the multiple English versions of the document, suffice it to compare the alternative translations, starting from the very title, to make sure that this is the case. I will give below several full-length and shortened versions of it (the respective nouns for "соглашений" emphasized):

"A List of measures to fulfill the Minsk <u>Agreement</u>" (UNIAN) [23];

"A complex of measures to fulfill the Minsk <u>agreements</u>" (Kyiv Post) [21];

"Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk <u>Agreements</u>" (Financial Times) [22];

[The same version: "Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk <u>Agreements</u>" (UN Department of Political Affairs – United Nations Peacemaker)] [26];

"Minsk Ceasefire <u>Deal</u>: Full Text Of Agreement Between Russia, Ukraine, Germany And France" (International Business Times) [25].

The variety of versions can simply be reduced to "(the) Minsk agreement(s)," "Minsk Deal," and "Minsk Accords," as in the heading: "Russia, US Agree No Alternative to Minsk <u>Accords</u>

on Ukraine Reconciliation” (Sputnik News) [12]. In fact, most media sources are silent in terms of any information about the translator(s) of the document, and rarely do they label the versions that they publish on their pages as being unofficial ones. In this regard, the *Kyiv Post* Newspaper is a rare case of the stipulation in the Editor’s note that the readers will deal with “the unofficial translation of the full text of agreements reached by the leaders of Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia in Minsk on Feb. 12, 2015” [21].

English paraphrases in place of the Russian noun “соглашений” can also be encountered in the document translations and thematic headings (emphasized), such as “Minsk agreement on Ukraine crisis: text in full. Read a translation of <u>the full text agreed upon</u> by the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany, and signed by pro-Russian separatists” (The Telegraph) [24]; as well as in the speeches of the top (Russian) politicians, for instance: “We have indeed pledged to ensure that Donbass, that the self-proclaimed republics of Donetsk and Lugansk (DPR and LPR), implement <u>what they and their representatives signed under</u> in Minsk,” said Sergey Lavrov, the Foreign Minister of Russian Federation [12].

As a matter of fact, the plural noun “agreements” appears to be the prevailing, although erroneous, version for the plural noun “соглашений” in English translations of this particular document, as well as in the related English-language publications released by Russian, European, and Ukrainian mass media. This strategy can be exemplified, for instance, by the title of the official article “Poroshenko: No alternative to Minsk <u>Agreements</u>” (Ukrinform News) [27].

I will now proceed to compare the varying Ukrainian versions of the source Russian-based document. Actual Ukrainian-language translations of the phrase “Минские соглашения” (Minskiye soglasheniya) vary from “Мінська угода” (Mins’ka uhoda) [Minsk agreement] or “Мінські угоди” (Mins’ki uhody) [Minsk agreements] to “Мінські домовленості” (Mins’ki domovlenosti), though it is more appropriate to merely refer to “Мінські домовленості” [Minsk arrangements/ accords]. The prevailing version, however, is “Minsk agreements.” For instance (the respective phrases emphasized): “Комплекс заходів щодо виконання <u>Мінських угод</u>” (УНІАН) [20]; “Комплекс заходів з виконання <u>Мінських угод</u>” (Ukrayinska Pravda) [3]. The above examples are practically identical, but what testifies to the uncertainly even in the document title, which leads to a plurality of recognized versions, is that the newspaper “Ukrayinska Pravda” [Ukrainian Truth] just beneath the editorial heading “Комплекс заходів з виконання <u>Мінських угод</u>” gives an alternative title for the Minsk II document in the following statement: “Контактною групою підписано документ, який називається “Комплекс заходів, спрямований на імплементацію <u>Мінських домовленостей</u>”” [“The contact group signed a document called “Kompleks zakhodiv, spriamovanyi na implementatsiyu <u>Mins’kykh domovlenostei</u>”] (my emphasis) [3].Semantically precise English translation for the document title “Kompleks zakhodiv, spriamovanyi na implementatsiyu <u>Mins’kykh domovlenostei</u>” would be “The set of measures for implementation of the Minsk accords.”

The point is that the full semantic equivalent to the Russian plural noun “соглашения” (soglasheniya), which is a synonym of “договоренности” (dogovorionnosti), would be “домовленості” (domovlenosti) in Ukrainian. The term “домовленості,” which is usually used in the plural form, mostly denotes a set of the planned actions that are mutually prearranged or previously accorded by the parties. It refers to a less formal type of the agreement. As for the existing Ukrainian translations of this term from the Russian language, the plural noun “домовленості,” thus, appears to be the closest semantic equivalent to the English terms “arrangements” and “accords” (together with the Russian original word “соглашения”).

In the meantime, the singular noun “угода” (uhoda) and its plural form “угоди” (uhody), which are nevertheless more frequently used in the Ukrainian translations of the Minsk II document, appear deviating from the substance of this document, inasmuch as the term “угода” semantically matches the English term “agreement,” as a type of official document. Besides, in this exact meaning

it does not need any plural form at all. Thus the Ukrainian terms "угода" and "угоди" can serve merely as partial equivalents to the Russian plural noun "соглашения" in the document title, while the plural noun "домовленості" fits it in as the direct correspondent and full equivalent of the noun "соглашения." The latter term is less formal than the juridical term "договор" (dogovor), a direct Russian correspondent to the English term "agreement." The original Minsk II document, however, concerns a compromise, or a deal, less formal than the international agreement: as the means to stop warfare and prevent the growth of Humanitarian crisis in self-proclaimed the Donetsk and the Lugansk People's Republics (DPR and LPR), supported by Russian Federation.

Table I below reflects the equivalence relations between the Russian terms "соглашения" and "договор" (*pl* "договоры") and their semantically accurate Ukrainian and English correspondents:

**Table 1**

The equivalence relations between the Russian terms "соглашения" and "договор" and their semantically accurate Ukrainian and English translations

| **Russian terms** | **Ukrainian equivalents** | **English equivalents** |
|---|---|---|
| соглашения (*Gen. case* соглашений) | домовленості (*Gen. case* домовленостей) | arrangements / accords |
| договор (*pl* договоры) | угода (*pl* угоди; *Gen. case* угод) | agreement (*pl* agreements) |

Varying readings persistently manifest themselves throughout the English-language translations of the whole text of the document "Комплекс мер по выполнению Минских соглашений". For instance, the title of the Law of Ukraine, which the Minsk II document refers to and which was adopted by the Verkhovna Rada in efforts to find a peace formula, "О временном порядке местного самоуправления в отдельных районах Донецкой и Луганской областей" (O vremennom poriadke mestnogo samoupravleniya v otdel'nykh rayonakh Donetskoy i Luganskoy oblastey) / Ukrainian: "Про тимчасовий порядок місцевого самоврядування в окремих районах Донецької і Луганської областей" (Pro tymchasovyi poriadok mistsevoho samovriaduvannia v okremykh rayonakh Donets'koii i Luhans'koii oblastey) has more than three English variants:

"On a temporary order of local government in individual areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions" (UNIAN) [23];

"On interim local self-government order in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions" (Financial Times) [22];

"On the special procedure of local self-governance in some districts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions" (International Business Times) [25];

"On temporary Order of Local Self-Governance in Particular Districts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts" (The Telegraph) [24].

The southeastern territories of Ukraine, occupied by the DPR and the LPR, acquire various denominations, such as "individual areas" (UNIAN), "certain areas," "some districts" (International Business Times), or "particular districts" (The Telegraph), none of which is nevertheless fully equivalent to the concept of separation that underlies the phrase "в отдельных районах". Meanwhile, it is the seme of separation that is actualized in the English dictionary correspondent to the Russian collocation "отдельный район" (otdel'nyi rayon), as in the following Russian-to-English lexical equation: "отдельный район" > "a separate district" (my emphasis) [13], which is also exemplified by the phrase "выделить в отдельный район" > "make into a separate district" [13]. Thus, the actual contextual meaning of the source-text geographical reference to "отдельные районы в Донецкой и Луганской областях" would be "particular areas in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, separated / detached from mainland Ukraine (in a military way)".

A refutative attitude to Ukraine as a sovereign state, which implicitly imbues the tonality of the document, becomes flagrantly explicit in the signature section for the then Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Ukraine, M. Y. Zurabov, where an old imperialistic formula for the name of Ukraine as simply a geographic region, a certain territory but not a sovereign state, was used: "Посол Российской Федерации *на Украине*" (my emphasis) [3]. The emphasized prepositional phrase *"на Украине"* should have been translated into English with the definite article preceding the proper name, *"to the Ukraine"* [Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the Ukraine], with an accent on the territory inhabited by a stateless population, which accent virtually no translator ventured to introduce.

Therefore in rare cases the translator(s), guided by the principle of functional expediency, may deliberately shift the source-text semantics, and the above example serves as an illustration of such kind of a decision. Taken from a holistic political ecology and diplomacy perspective, the transplanted concept of Ukraine-the-territory has been unanimously transformed in the English translations of this document into the concept of Ukraine-the-state.

Therefore, if semantic shifts in the transplanted concepts occur in the political documents, as it is actually so in the majority of the cases observed in this article, they can lead to drastic misinterpretations of the source text.

Translation as a multi-dimensional meaning-making activity and the performance of cultural senses may produce (deliberately or not) a sheer illusion of precision where, in fact, a fateful misrepresentation of meaning takes place, as in the case with the noun '*minority*' from the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages,* or simply following in the track of expediency it may disavow important cultural and political source-text senses, which feel somewhat "inconvenient" in present-day political discourse, such as the imperialistic attitude to Ukraine encountered in the Minsk II key document, entitled *Kompleks mer po vypolneniyu Minskikh soglasheniy.*

A comparative analysis of the source-text key concepts and their target-text transplants points to the culture-specific reasons for semantic shifts in the transplanted concepts and, in broader terms, provides an insight into the individual translator's cognition as being influenced by the ambient cultural environment. An ethno-ecological perspective in combination with the methodology of functionalist theories, and in particular the translatorial action theory precepts, proves to be no less eligible for the translators of political and media discourses than for the translators of literary works.

In addition, when we look at the question of representing the vitally important documents, as those which are discussed in this article, the precision of semantic and stylistic detail in translation seen through the analytical prism of cognitive linguistics should be a must. And in such cases close cooperation with the cognitive linguists, lexicologists, and developers of the National and Research Corpora of the Russian and Ukrainian languages, in addition to the translatorial and environmental awareness, would be most opportune.

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