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MILITARY METAPHOR IN TRANSLATION

Abstract. The article analyses the peculiarities and difficulties of translating military metaphor that translators face when conveying metaphorical expressions in military and political texts. Military metaphor is an important aspect of communication that plays a significant cognitive, stylistic and pragmatic role in conveying the content of military messages and journalistic materials. The translation of such metaphors is challenging due to the lack of exact cross-linguistic equivalents, cultural and political differences between languages, and the specific ideological load of military terminology. The paper proposes several effective strategies for translating military metaphors: using cross-language equivalents whenever possible, contextual adaptation, semantic rephrasing, replacing the metaphor with a neutral expression when necessary, or retaining the original metaphor with an explanation to preserve its meaning. The use of these strategies allows the translator to convey the exact meaning of the original without violating the stylistic and cultural features of the target language. The testing of the research results in the educational process of Poltava State Agrarian University has shown the high efficiency of the proposed methods. Students noted the importance of using specialised terminology dictionaries and glossaries, as well as the need to adapt metaphors to the cultural context of the target language. Practical exercises and analysis of authentic texts helped students to gain a deeper understanding of the peculiarities of translating military metaphors and contributed to the development of their translation skills. The



results of the study emphasise the relevance of studying military metaphors in translation and the need to improve existing translation methods in the context of globalisation and international political communication. Further research could focus on expanding the corpus of texts for analysis, studying the impact of new technologies on the translation process, and improving machine translation with regard to the specifics of military terminology.

Keywords: military metaphor, translation, contextual adaptation, terminology, interlingual equivalents, political discourse.

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ВІЙСЬКОВА МЕТАФОРІКА У ПЕРЕКЛАДІ

Анотація. У статті здійснено аналіз особливостей і труднощів перекладу військової метафорики, з якими перекладачі стикаються під час передачі метафоричних виразів у військових та політичних текстах. Військова метафорика є важливим аспектом комунікації, що має значну когнітивну, стилістичну та прагматичну роль у передачі змісту військових повідомлень та публіцистичних матеріалів. Переклад таких метафор є складним завданням через відсутність точних міжмовних еквівалентів, культурні та політичні відмінності між мовами, а також специфічне ідеологічне навантаження, яке має військова термінологія. У роботі пропонуються кілька ефективних стратегій перекладу військових метафор: використання міжмовних еквівалентів, де це можливо, контекстуальна адаптація, семантичне перефразування, заміна метафори на нейтральний вираз у разі потреби або збереження оригінальної метафори з поясненням для збереження її смислового навантаження. Застосування цих стратегій дозволяє перекладачеві передати точний зміст оригіналу, не порушуючи стилістичних і культурних особливостей цільової мови. Апробація



результатів дослідження у навчальному процесі Полтавського державного аграрного університету засвідчила високу ефективність запропонованих методів. Здобувачі освіти відзначили важливість використання спеціалізованих термінологічних словників і глосаріїв, а також необхідність адаптації метафор до культурного контексту цільової мови. Практичні заняття та аналіз автентичних текстів допомогли студентам глибше зрозуміти особливості перекладу військових метафор і сприяли розвитку їхніх перекладацьких навичок. Результати дослідження підкреслюють актуальність вивчення військової метафорики у перекладі та необхідність удосконалення існуючих методів перекладу в умовах глобалізації та міжнародної політичної комунікації. Подальші наукові розробки можуть зосереджуватися на розширенні корпусу текстів для аналізу, дослідженні впливу новітніх технологій на процес перекладу, а також вдосконаленні машинного перекладу з урахуванням специфіки військової термінології.

Ключові слова: військова метафорика, переклад, контекстуальна адаптація, термінологія, міжмовні еквіваленти, політичний дискурс.

Problem statement. Metaphor plays an important role in military discourse, as it not only reflects the specifics of communication in the military sphere, but also performs a strategic function - shaping the perception of conflicts, mobilising society, and influencing decision-making. Military metaphors are widely used in official documents, analytical reports, journalism, and even in everyday speech, including political and economic discourse.

The main problem with translating military metaphors is that different languages and cultures have their own established conceptual metaphors, which may differ significantly from the original images. This leads to difficulties in conveying the meaning, as a literal translation may carry an inappropriate meaning or distort the author's intention. In addition, military metaphors are often used to euphemise the brutal realities of war and for propaganda purposes, which creates additional ethical challenges in the translation process.

Insufficient consideration of the cultural context and pragmatic aspects of military metaphor can lead to a loss of communicative effect or even cause misinterpretations. Therefore, the study of military metaphors in translation is relevant both from a theoretical and practical point of view, as it allows us to identify the basic principles, strategies and difficulties of adapting these metaphors in interlingual communication.

This study aims to analyse the types of military metaphors, their functions and possible ways of translation, taking into account lexical and semantic, cultural and pragmatic aspects.



Analysis of recent research and publications. The problem of military metaphor and its translation is a subject of study within the framework of cognitive linguistics, linguocultural studies, discourse studies and translation theory. Military metaphors are studied as a means of conceptualising military and political events, as well as a tool for influencing public consciousness.

The works of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson examine the conceptual nature of metaphor and its role in shaping the worldview. They note that military metaphor is not only a means of describing reality, but also a mechanism for understanding it. For example, war metaphors are often used in political and economic discourse («fight against inflation», «battle for the market»), which makes them difficult to translate due to different cultural traditions.

The analysis of military metaphors in media discourse is presented in the works of Charles Fillmore and other cognitive linguists who emphasise that the translation of military metaphors requires preserving its ideological load. In particular, in English-language texts, military actions are often depicted in terms of a game («mission accomplished», «collateral damage»), which, when translated into Ukrainian, can lose its euphemistic effect or change its emotional colouring.

Researchers of military discourse, in particular Ukrainian scholars (e.g., M. Kochergan, L. Masenko, T. Polyakova), analyse the transformation of military metaphor in the process of translation, focusing on the issues of terminology adaptation, interpretation of metaphorical images and their connotations. In the Ukrainian context, the translation of military rhetoric related to the war in Ukraine is of particular importance, as it should reflect not only the accuracy of concepts, but also the cultural and historical dimension.

Recent publications pay special attention to the automated translation of military texts, including the use of neural network machine translation (NMT) models to work with metaphorical expressions. Research shows that even the most advanced systems, such as DeepL or Google Translate, often incorrectly process military metaphors, reducing them to their literal meaning or creating misinterpretations.

Thus, modern research points to the complexity and multidimensionality of military metaphors in translation, which necessitates a deep analysis of semantic and cultural features to ensure adequate interlingual communication.

The purpose of the article is to identify the peculiarities of military metaphors in translation, analyse the main strategies of their transmission and study the difficulties that arise in the process of adapting military metaphors in interlingual communication. The study is aimed at identifying lexical and semantic, pragmatic and cultural aspects of military metaphors, as well as at establishing effective approaches to their translation, taking into account the context and ideological load.



Presentation of the main material. Military metaphor is used to describe various aspects of military actions and relations in the context of conflicts, power struggles, political and economic disputes. It facilitates cognitive understanding of complex and often traumatic processes. Military metaphors are widely used in political, media and social texts covering various aspects of military conflicts and relations between states [5]. Since many war-related terms and expressions have cultural, ideological and historical connotations, their translation becomes a complex task that requires taking into account the specifics of each language and its conceptual system.

War metaphors are used to transform abstract concepts into more concrete and imaginative representations, making them accessible to a wide audience. In addition, they can have a moral, emotional or ideological load, which plays an important role in manipulating public opinion.

Metaphor is a system of metaphors used in language to transfer meanings from one sphere to another in order to create figurative representations or explanations. Metaphor allows you to express complex and abstract concepts through concrete images and comparisons. It serves as a tool for better understanding or emotional perception of certain phenomena, helping to convey not only the literal meaning but also the emotional, cultural or social context.

Military metaphor is the use of military terms, expressions and images to describe phenomena, processes or situations that are not directly related to war or military operations [2]. It is based on metaphors related to war, battles, strategy, struggle, defence and attack to explain or emphasise complex or abstract concepts. These metaphors are used to express the idea of competition, conflict, opposition, or struggle for resources or power, often on a political, economic, or social level.

Military metaphors often have a powerful emotional charge and can be used to mobilise society, increase patriotism or, conversely, to destabilise certain groups. It is an effective tool in political and media communications, as it actively influences the perception of social processes.

Let's look at the main classification of military metaphors:

- tactical and strategic metaphors. They are used to describe specific actions or big plans. For example, «plan of attack», «manoeuvre on the battlefield», «strike» (blow). They often convey actions that are similar to physical strategies in war, but are used in social, economic and political contexts;

- battle metaphors. These are used to convey the emotional and real aspects of war («information warfare», «political battle», «economic negotiation front»). War metaphors can be applied to various areas of life where there is competition or struggle for resources or influence;

- euphemistic metaphors. Used to mitigate the negative aspects of war. For example, terms such as «collateral damage» or «targeted strikes» are metaphors



that replace direct expressions with less harsh ones, such as «accidental casualties» or «bombing». They create the impression that the violence is less terrible and dramatic than it actually;

- metaphors of heroism and patriotism. Used to create images of heroes or defenders. For example, «freedom fighters», «shield of the nation», «strategic resistance» [1]. These metaphors contribute to the formation of a positive image of certain groups or states in the public consciousness.

Translating military metaphors is a challenging task, as each language has its own unique concepts and lexical structures. Cultural and historical differences between languages can lead to inadequate conveyance of meanings.

Translators face a number of difficulties when translating into such terminology. Let's analyse them in more detail.

1. Differences in the conceptual systems of languages. Each culture has its own conceptual metaphors based on its historical experience. In the English language, the concept of war is often expressed through metaphors related to games or sports, while the target language may have metaphors more related to battles or heroism.

2. Ideological influence of metaphors. Military metaphors have a significant political and ideological load. When translated, terms such as «freedom fighters» or «terrorists» can be interpreted differently depending on the cultural, social or political context [3]. Depending on the perspective from which they are presented, the same actions can take on different meanings.

3. The problem of literal translation. Since many military metaphors are based on deep cultural beliefs and traditions, literal translation can be ineffective or even disadvantageous. The «fog of war» in translation may lose its metaphorical depth if the translator does not take into account the specifics of the metaphor, which implies strategic ambiguity in military operations.

There are different translation strategies, depending on the purpose and context in which military metaphors are used. We propose translation strategies that allow us to preserve or adapt the semantic load of the metaphor in the translated text.

1. Preservation of the metaphor. If there is an equivalent in the target language, the literal translation of the metaphor is used:

- «mission accomplished» → «mission accomplished»;
- «war on terror» → «war on terrorism».

2. Adaptation or paraphrasing. When a metaphor does not have a direct analogue in the target language, you can use adaptation or paraphrase to achieve a similar semantic effect:

- «fog of war» → «military uncertainty»;
- «shock and awe» → «shock and awe».



3. Replacing with a cultural equivalent. Sometimes replacing a metaphor with the most appropriate term for the target culture is an effective approach:

- «war of attrition» → «war of attrition»;
- «front line» → «frontline».

4. Neutralising metaphors. When a metaphor is not important for understanding the text, it can be omitted or replaced with neutral terms:

- «surgical strike» → «point strike» (without medical metaphor).

War metaphors often have a significant impact on shaping public opinion, as they can create images of enemies, heroes or victims [4]. They are also used to increase social mobilisation and to create a positive or negative image of certain groups or states.

Incorrect translation can lead to distortion of meanings, manipulation of public opinion, or cause negative consequences for diplomatic relations.

Table 1.

**Examples of the application of the translation transformations
proposed by us for military metaphors**

English metaphor	Translation (equivalent)	Translation strategy	Note
Fog of war	Військова невизначеність	Adaptation	A modern military metaphor denoting the ambiguity of war.
Collateral damage	Супутні втрати	Euphemisation	A euphemistic expression to minimise the brutal consequences of war.
War on terror	Війна з тероризмом	Preservation of metaphor	It is widely used in international politics.
Shock and awe	Удар і залякування	Adaptation	It is used to describe a strategy of psychological pressure on the enemy.
Freedom fighters	Повстанці/Партизани	Replacement with a cultural equivalent	The term can acquire different connotations depending on the context.

The table shows that the translation of military metaphors requires a careful approach, as the meaning of metaphors can vary depending on the context. Some terms have universal analogues, while others require adaptation to convey specific cultural and historical connotations.

Many military metaphors have political or ideological implications that can change when translated. Depending on the political situation in a country, terms can acquire different shades of meaning, which requires special attention from the translator.

The choice of a translation strategy (preservation, adaptation, replacement, euphemisation) largely depends on how a particular metaphor functions in the



original text and how it can best be conveyed in another language. The use of these strategies allows you to preserve the main ideas and emotional impact, while adapting the content to the conditions of another language and cultural system.

The results of the study of military metaphors in translation were tested in the educational process of Poltava State Agrarian University, in particular, as part of the training of higher education students majoring in Philology. The main task of the testing was to test the effectiveness of different strategies for translating military metaphors in the educational and professional activities of future translators.

1. Holding special seminars and workshops.

A series of classes was organised where students analysed military metaphors in authentic English-language texts (including news, military reports, and journalism). Comparative analysis of translations and evaluation of different strategies for adapting military metaphors were used. The difficulties of translating military terms and their possible impact on the perception of information were discussed.

2. Working with online platforms for translators.

The students tested machine and automated translation of military texts (Google Translate, DeepL, Trados) and analysed the accuracy of metaphorical constructions. It was found that most automatic systems do not always correctly convey the contextual meanings of military metaphors, which highlighted the need for post-editing of such texts.

3. Inclusion in term papers and diploma theses.

Some students chose the topic of military metaphor for their own research, which helped to expand the empirical basis of the analysis. They studied different approaches to translation, their impact on the stylistics of texts, and the possibility of using adaptive strategies to ensure the adequacy and accuracy of translation.

4. Survey and testing of students.

A survey was conducted among philology students on the difficulties in translating military metaphor and assessing the effectiveness of various methods of its adaptation. The test results showed that the combined approach, which includes contextual adaptation and the use of additional sources, is the most effective.

The test confirmed that military metaphor is a complex but important aspect of professional training of translators. The students of Poltava State Agrarian University noted that:

- the use of specialised glossaries and military terminology dictionaries significantly improves the quality of translation;
- contextual adaptation is a key strategy to avoid misinterpretation of the text;



- automatic translators require significant post-editing, especially for military vocabulary and metaphorical expressions;
- practical training in analysing authentic texts significantly increases the level of competence in working with military metaphors.

Thus, the results of the study have been successfully integrated into the educational process, which contributes to improving the training of future specialists in the field of military translation and ensures the development of their analytical and practical skills in working with military texts.

The analysis of military metaphor and its translation shows that this process is not only linguistic, but also cultural, cognitive and social. Translating military metaphors requires a deep understanding of the cultural and ideological aspects behind the terms and expressions used in each language system. Translation difficulties arise from differences in the conceptual systems of languages, ideological differences and the possibility of manipulation through language. However, the correct application of translation strategies, such as adaptation, replacement with a cultural equivalent or preservation of metaphor, allows to convey the exact meaning and emotional load of the original. It is also important to take into account the impact of military metaphors on public perception, as these metaphors can be used to shape or change public opinion, especially in conflict situations. The translation of military metaphors is a complex but necessary process to ensure the accuracy and adequacy of intercultural communication.

Conclusions. The study of military metaphors in translation has shown that this type of metaphor plays an important role in military and political texts, but the translation of such expressions is difficult due to cultural and political differences, as well as the specificity of terminology. The main difficulties are the lack of cross-language equivalents, the emotional and ideological load of metaphors, and the influence of the cultural context.

Effective translation strategies include the use of cross-linguistic equivalents, contextual adaptation, semantic paraphrasing, replacing a metaphor with a neutral expression, or retaining the original metaphor with an explanation. The test at Poltava State Agrarian University confirmed the effectiveness of the proposed approaches: the use of glossaries and military terms improves translation, while contextual adaptation preserves the accuracy of metaphors.

The translation of military metaphors remains an important area in translation studies, and further research could focus on improving methods and tools for working with such texts.

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