



VAGUENESS OF EXPRESSION IN PUBLIC SPEECHES: INTERPRETER'S STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES

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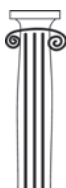
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Introduction

The tumultuous 21st century has brought about considerable changes in all the aspects of human lives: the enlargement of the EU, globalization, global warming, deep economical recession, financial crisis, sharp rise of high technologies. It has also brought about considerable changes in the way people communicate: communicating via e-mails, blogs, SMS messages, Skype, and other modern means of communication have become a daily routine. On the other hand, the new means of communication have considerably influenced and changed languages themselves: the human verbal expression is becoming both more generalized and compressed. Moreover, it is becoming obscure and often vague, especially in public speeches of politicians. As Leon Felkins (2009) states, "Society somehow plods on in a sea of vagueness and ambiguities!"

The aim of the present paper is to summarize the ideas and approaches on the issue of vagueness in public speeches and its implications for conference interpreters, both at linguistic and communicative (discourse) level. The author analyses the possible reasons of vagueness, provides her approach of identifying speaker's vague expression and suggests possible strategies and techniques for novice conference interpreters in dealing with vagueness of expression in public speeches.

It should be admitted that both the theoretical and empirical research of the issue of vagueness and its implications for conference interpreters is rather limited. The issue has been discussed both from the philosophical and linguistic aspects by Leon Felkins (2009), Timothy Williamson (1994), Daniel Lassiter (2008), Randal N. Graham (2001); from interpreting aspect the issue has been studied by Robin Setton (1999) and a few other authors. However, the issue of vagueness in interpreting has



not been studied and analysed separately. It has been partially looked at along with other cognitive-pragmatic aspects of interpreting. Therefore the author of the present paper acknowledges that her analysis of the issue is more of prescriptive and didactic nature and it requires further empirical research.

To carry out the study the author has set forth three simple study questions: why, what, and how? Why is it worth and necessary to look at the issue of vagueness in public speeches from the perspective of a conference interpreting? What actually is vagueness? How to deal with vagueness in conference interpreting?

To answer the first question, it should be admitted that attitudes towards language in social discourse (including public speeches) or speech style is clearly an important social cue in many applied social contexts: educational, medical, legal, judicial and also political settings. Both the audience (recipients) and the interpreter (mediator of the communicative act) expect to perceive a logically structured speech with clearly formulated arguments *pro* and *con*. Both the audience and the interpreter are prepared to perceive (and they even favour) expressive speeches, containing examples “*from life*”, metaphorical comparisons, allusions, etc. Professional interpreters are “well-armed” with both linguistic and professional knowledge and skills to deal with complicated intra-linguistic and extra-linguistic issues to interpret the communicative goals of most speeches.

However, the speaker’s linguistic expression quite often presents certain vagueness or obscurity causing both linguistic and communicative problems for interpreters. Vague speeches can be compared to such extreme speech conditions for interpreting as syntactic complexity and high delivery speed. The studies carried out have proved that even experienced professional interpreters find it hard to cope with extreme speech conditions, like syntactic complexity and high delivery speed (Setton 1998).

The author was prompted to study the issue of vagueness by recent interviews and presentations given by Latvian politicians to foreign mass media. The speeches by the politicians turned out to be so obscure and vague that they caused a storm of dissatisfaction among the general public. The phrase pronounced by a Latvian ex-minister – “nasing special, just crisis” – has become a popular meme in Latvia. Another speech by a Latvian politician has been characterized by the journalist Philip Birzulis (Oct 15, 2009), “A bumbling interview given to a foreign TV network by Latvian Economy Minister (...)¹ also got cringe-worthy airtime. (He) certainly needs to improve his English, and (Prime Minister) could also use some elocution lessons. But besides presentation, they also need to focus on content by formulating a clear vision.” Prior to specifying appropriate strategies and techniques applicable for an interpreter in the cases similar to the above, it is worth studying the phenomenon of vagueness itself.

¹ Due to ethical reasons the author has omitted the names of the speakers.

How to define vagueness

Language users usually apply vague words, like ‘thing’, or ‘stuff’ when they find it necessary “to hide their identity from bystanders or overhearers” (Verschuere 1999, 128). On the other hand, we usually describe something as vague just when it presents a problem for our understanding. The problem of vagueness occurs when a given context requires greater precision than the uttered statement supplies. Does it mean that the problem of vagueness can be solved just, by using more precise words? Unfortunately, the problem is not as simple as that. Many terms in any language are inherently vague and cannot be precisely explained or interpreted. Moreover, there is another question – whether vagueness is only a linguistic problem, or whether it is also a philosophical problem – problem of the knowledge of the subject matter. To answer these questions it is necessary to specify the definition of the notion ‘vagueness’.

Leon Felkins (2009) admits that there is neither a single definition nor general solution to vagueness. The standard dictionary definition of vagueness reads, “not clear in a person’s mind; not having or giving enough information or details about something; suggesting a lack of clear thought or attention” (Hornby 2000, 1434). Felkins sees vagueness as an issue of “possession of borderline cases” (ibid). But the borderline cases, in Felkins’ opinion, are “inquiry resistant” (ibid). From the interpretation aspect vagueness is defined as a “low degree of specification or determinacy of epr²” (Setton 1999, 372) allowing “a range of interpretations by leaving some aspects of meaning (reference, boundedness, set-membership, etc.) unspecified” (ibid.).

Nevertheless, the study of sources presents two distinct approaches to defining vagueness: philosophical and linguistic. The advocates of philosophical approach (T. Williamson, R.N. Graham, D. Lassiter) view vagueness as “symbolic representation of many real-world problems” (Williamson 1994). Randal N. Graham (2001) refers vagueness to “the breadth of the language used” which “gives rise to a range of meanings that may or may not be consistent”. In his opinion, “a vague speaker” might not have had a single precise intention when delivering a vague statement. In such an approach vagueness can be explained as indeterminance in thought.

The advocates of linguistic approach to vagueness (Bussmann 1998, etc.) view vagueness as an epistemic phenomenon – speakers have only inexact knowledge of the language they speak. H. Bussmann (1998, 19) defines vagueness as a “pragmatic ambiguousness or indeterminacy, which cannot be systematically described”. This would be then indeterminance in language.

The above definitions allow to view the issue of vagueness from two different angles: philosophical, which would mean viewing vagueness from a broader perspective or macroscopic view on vagueness, and linguistic angle, which would mean viewing vagueness from a narrower perspective or microscopic view on vagueness. Although the main concern of the present paper is to view vagueness from the lin-

² Sub-propositional unit of conceptual representation comprising either an entity, a property, or a relation (Sotton 1999, 361).



guistic perspective, i. e., to have a microscopic view on vagueness, the author is aware it cannot be separated from the other – macroscopic view. Therefore a brief insight into macroscopic view of vagueness would be appropriate.

Approaches to vagueness

Macroscopic view of vagueness

Macroscopic view suggests vagueness as a part of theory of language in use related to the speaker's incomplete conceptual system. This theory supports the notion that language in its usual sense is “not well-defined object but a cluster of (...) similar sound-meaning mappings which speakers and interpreters choose among in concrete circumstances to achieve particular communicative goals” (Lassiter 2008). Furthermore, Lassiter (ibid.) argues that normal usage of language is subject to variation, which is typically gradual. Therefore, in Lassiter's opinion, linguistic communities cannot be defined precisely. Lassiter proposes an alternative – a theory of “code switching and sociolinguistic accommodation” (ibid.). His hypothesis reads, “vagueness is not incomplete knowledge of a precisely defined common language, but incomplete knowledge of the intended language of communication (...)” (ibid.).

Microscopic view of vagueness

On the other hand, microscopic view of vagueness suggests that language is an external object of knowledge for the speaker (Williamson 1994). Thus, this approach underlines strong externalism of vagueness. Linguistically vagueness is viewed from the perspective of pragmatics, and not as an object of internal linguistic representation. As Bussmann states, “an expression is pragmatically vague with respect to certain semantic features which it leaves unspecified” (1998, 510). In a narrower sense vagueness is often viewed as a problem of semantics. As R. N. Graham (2001) states, vague language leads to a broad continuum of meanings giving rise to “marginal questions of degree”. Summarizing the paradox of having two different approaches to the same notion Felkins concludes that the problem of vagueness is common to the problem of “social dilemmas” (2009). Vague expressions, like “violation of human rights still exists”, “important international instruments”, “addressing global challenges”, or “prioritise activities”³, may be compared to “an empty basket into which any number of objects – in this case meanings can be placed” (Graham 2001). However, it should be noted that both philosophically and linguistically vague expression is ‘truly vague’ where the uncertainty of meaning cannot be resolved by referring to the context.

People sometimes use vagueness to their advantage in dealing with other people. Their intention is not necessarily to harm their interlocutors, but maybe to avoid hurting them or even to improve communication in the given situation. As L. Felkins (2009) points out, “humans seem to be able to communicate quite well using vague terms”. A certain paradox can be observed in social communication – there are situ-

³ Examples taken from political speeches.

ations where vague expression seems to be required, and there are situations where a more precise expression creates unintended result. However, when vagueness is used in a personal life in a private social communication it may not be a problem, sometimes it may be quite useful. Whereas used in public discourse, in the field of governance it may cause serious consequences. A difficulty with vague expression in public discourse, especially the use of vague terms, if they are not assigned a distinct borderline is that their vagueness will tend to live on. Therefore, logically, the next question arising is – why is vagueness a problem?

Problems associated with vagueness

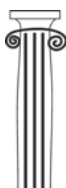
There is no single or unanimous assessment of vagueness in social discourse among the authors (L. Felkins, R.N. Graham, etc.). They point out both the problems and advantages of using vagueness in public discourse. However, it should be pointed out that in many instances vagueness creates difficulties not only for interpreters in carrying out their professional duties. Its effects are much broader – one cannot but agree with L. Felkins (ibid.) that the great problem of vagueness is that it is “notoriously abused by bureaucrats, particularly the government bureaucrats and politicians”. Most of their public speeches, presentations and interviews contain plenty of vague words similar to the ones mentioned above. Vagueness is also widely used by businesses in promoting their products, by governments and in legislature. Felkins (ibid.) outlines the purpose of the use of vagueness by politicians:

- Vagueness fosters growth of things that are good for them but bad for general public or society.
- Vagueness allows arbitrary condemnation and harassment of individuals.

On the other hand, Graham (2001) argues that politicians apply vagueness to avoid making political choices, and for legislature vagueness is the only way to carry out its duties. He also points out the effects of vagueness to facilitate the work. Felkins (ibid.) attributes vagueness as the basis for the growth and abuse of governance than any other factor. Therefore, it can be concluded that politicians take advantage of vagueness more than anybody else and the consequences, correspondingly – the problems – are serious.

The use of vague expression complicates the interpreter’s task as a mediator in communication act – it causes translation problems to translate the discourse in a plausible way. Vagueness may cause problems of understanding for an interpreter, consequently, the problems of translation, as the provided context may require greater precision than the utterance supplies. The specific issues of vagueness in interpreting will be dealt with in the final part of the article.

Since the society “is plodding on in the sea of vagueness” and “it works so well” (Felkins 2009) another study question arises – is all vagueness bad?



Duality of vagueness

As it has been described above vagueness can be either the speaker's incomplete conceptual system (macroscopic view) or an epistemic phenomenon – lack of language skills (microscopic view). Vagueness can also be either intentional or unintentional. The speaker of vague language might not have had a single intention when uttering vague statements. On the other hand, vague language may imply the speaker's intent, and thus not imply the speaker's lack of skill. As long as both parties of the discourse have roughly the same background reference vagueness does not interfere with the communication act. Sometimes, as it has been pointed out above, a vague message may be quite adequate. Some authors (R. N. Graham, R. Dickerson) highlight the positive benefits of vagueness and argue that vagueness is often “desirable” (Dickerson 2001).

R.N. Graham (ibid.) points out the following positive benefits of vagueness:

- It demonstrates the intent to permit the language of enactment to take on a life of its own;
- it delegates the power, or expresses the desire to permit language to evolve.

Therefore, it may be argued that vagueness may be both appropriate and inappropriate. From the position of an interlocutor, vagueness is considered appropriate if the statement or utterance does not require more precision. This vagueness is usually not a problem for interpreters either. On the other hand, if more precision is needed, vagueness may be considered inappropriate. This vagueness may cause both communicative and translation problems. Since an interpreter is an impartial participant of the communicative act the same approach to vagueness may be adopted in carrying out translation of vague statements.

When studying and describing the use of unclear language, the following three issues are usually in focus: vagueness, ambiguity, and over-generality. Since ambiguity is a common phenomenon in spoken discourse and interpreters have several strategies and techniques at hand to deal with it the author of this article considers it necessary to provide a brief insight into ambiguity and, what is most important, to compare vagueness and ambiguity from the interpreter's point of view.

Ambiguity

Ambiguity is a linguistic universal, common to all languages (Walls 2001). The ambiguity of language and disambiguation have been widely studied and described in linguistic literature. Therefore the author has limited her description of the issue just by highlighting the basic aspects of ambiguity concentrating on the comparison between vagueness and ambiguity.

One of the traditional dictionary definitions of ambiguity describes ambiguity as having “double (or multiple) meaning; an ambiguous expression has more than one interpretation” (Walls 2001, 15). Bussmann (1998, 19) defines ambiguity as the “property of expressions that can be interpreted in several ways, or, that can be

multiply specified in linguistic description from lexical, semantic, syntactical and other aspects". R. N. Graham (2001) points out that ambiguity "supports two or more constructs that are different and specific." However, it should be noted that ambiguity is not just having more than one meaning; nearly all words have more than one possible meaning. A word, a phrase or a sentence is ambiguous if it is unclear in a given communicative context which meaning is intended for a word, a phrase or a sentence. Thus, ambiguity is, by definition, a problem of unclear meaning.

The attitude towards ambiguity is controversial. Some claim, it is a bad phenomenon in language. R. N. Graham (2001) calls ambiguity "a disease of language". Some call it "a fundamental property of human language" (Grady, Archibald 2000, 464). R. Setton (1999) admits that natural languages must display some lexical ambiguity, otherwise, if all words were semantically unambiguous, "the size of the basic vocabulary would be increased by several orders of magnitude" (Kunan, cited in Setton 1999, 71).

Distinction of ambiguity

Proceeding from Bussmann's (ibid.) definition of ambiguity the following distinction of ambiguity can be made: lexical, structural and syntactical ambiguity.

Lexical ambiguity is ambiguity within the word resulting from the use of specific lexemes (Bussmann ibid.). It is related to homonymy and polysemy of language. Some examples of lexical ambiguity from political speeches: *symbol of a drive for democracy, choosing leadership is the right and the responsibility of people, we need a strong political will, we have arrived at a common ground.*

Syntactic ambiguity is ambiguity within a sentence resulting from the syntactic structure of complex expressions:

- (a) component words of a sentence can be combined in more than one way (also called – constructional homonymy), e. g., *energy security, diversification and supply;*
- (b) morphological ambiguity – the word can be both a noun and a verb, e. g., *we are willing to share and address global challenges, Latvia honours its commitments.*

Although ambiguity presents a problem of unclear meaning, it can be resolved both by interlocutors of communicative act and interpreters translating this communication. However, their strategies towards resolving and describing ambiguity will differ. Ambiguity offers the interpreter (here: the recipient) a choice between a number of specific interpretive choices which are easily to ascertain (Graham 2001) or "multiple interpretations" (Bussmann 1998). These multiple interpretations or specific interpretive choices are the most important criterion for resolving and describing ambiguity. Bussmann (ibid.) specifies two ways of resolving ambiguity:

- 1) by competent speaker who can clarify the different readings with the help of paraphrases;
- 2) by grammatical analysis (disambiguation).



The interpreter's role in the case of ambiguity is to select the appropriate meaning output in light of the sound output using evidence such as the context in which the expression was generated. The two techniques of resolving ambiguity are well-known among interpreters – translators, both of them being applied in consecutive interpreting, the second is in conference interpreting. Besides the above techniques, dealing with ambiguity requires some additional specific interpreter's skills and techniques, like base knowledge. In conference interpreting interpreters prolong time lag to acquire more context or if the decision has to be made immediately, apply generalization in translating ambiguous expression.

When the definitions and distinction of ambiguity have been disclosed it is possible to compare the core issue of the study – vagueness – with ambiguity.

Vagueness vs ambiguity

As the author has pointed out ambiguity is a problem of meaning, whereas vagueness is a problem of understanding. If occurring in public speeches both may cause difficulties for interpreting both for recipients and interpreters – translators. Therefore, it is necessary to look at both the phenomena by comparing them. When any two phenomena are compared the first thing that is looked for is whether the two phenomena are complementary to each other or in sharp contrast.

R. N. Graham's (2001) evaluation of ambiguity as of "a disease of language", but that of vagueness – as a "positive benefit" of language suggests a sharp contrast between the two. Graham agrees with Reed Dickerson in that vagueness may cause interpreting problems resulting from "open texture of concepts" (ibid.) that is inherent in vague language. This contrasting approach to both the phenomena can be well characterized by a quote by Dickerson quoted in Graham (ibid.), "Whereas 'ambiguity' in its classical sense refers to equivocation, 'vagueness' refers to the degree to which, independently of equivocation, language is uncertain in its respective application to a number of particulars. Whereas the uncertainty of ambiguity is central, with an "either-or" challenge, the uncertainty of vagueness lies in the marginal questions of degree".

Leon Felkins (2009) and Bussmann (1998), on the contrary, approach vagueness as complementary to ambiguity. They argue that the contrast between ambiguity and vagueness is obscure since most words are both vague and ambiguous. Furthermore, in Felkin's opinion, "every natural language is both vague and ambiguous" (ibid.). He points out that words are vague only indirectly, by virtue of having a sense that is vague. In contrast, words are ambiguous directly – by virtue of having multiple meanings. However, one cannot but agree with Felkins in that "both vagueness and ambiguity ought to be minimized" (ibid.). Moreover, he regards both the terms "pejorative" and therefore both "deserve their bad reputation".

As it has been stated, any mystery posed by ambiguity in interpreting, can be solved by a clarifying paraphrase. Whereas in the case of vagueness the "mystery" has to be resolved applying different strategy, i. e., the interpreter has to modify the



conceptual scheme, so that it optimally corresponds to the speaker's intention and communicative goal. In the final section of the study the author describes the suggested techniques for interpreters to deal with vagueness in public speeches.

Interpreter's strategies and techniques in dealing with vagueness

As the author has underlined in the introductory part of the paper professional interpreters often experience extreme interpreting conditions – syntactical complexity of speeches, as well as fast delivery speed. The empirical study suggests (Setton 1999) that even experienced interpreters find it very hard to cope with the above extreme interpreting conditions. Therefore the author would argue that vagueness in public speeches could also be attributed to an extreme interpreting condition causing difficulties to deal with. In this section of the paper the author highlights the difficulties for interpreters associated with vagueness and suggests the possible interpreter's strategies and techniques to cope with it.

The empirical study (Setton 1999) on extreme interpreting conditions (syntactic complexity and high delivery speed) has found the following results: in simultaneous interpreting mode the interpreters apply a greater time lag, there are more interpreting errors than in "normal" interpreting conditions, there are more omissions than usually. Since the author regards vagueness as an extreme interpreting condition, similar results could be expected. Therefore it is important to supply interpreters with corresponding strategies and techniques to minimize the possible interpreting errors in case of vague expression.

It should be underlined that in interpreting vague speeches there is always a purposive component present, i. e., the analysis of the speaker's intentional purpose of using certain forms of language, e. g., vague expression. As it has already been pointed out, intentional vagueness, or hedging, leaves some options open for interpretation, or does not allow only a single interpretation (Setton 1999). Therefore a professional interpreter should distinguish between hedging or intentional vagueness and unintentional vagueness (epistemic phenomenon). This, in its turn, requires certain knowledge to understand utterances. Professional interpreters use both their linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge to understand utterances. Without going into detail, it should be pointed out that the interpreter's linguistic knowledge does not consist only of a grammar and lexicon of the target language (TL). It also consists of the interpreter's knowledge of speech processing which is always subject to some degree of modularity. Interpreters should be aware that interpreting is not only semantic interpretation but also thematic reference – "integration of the utterance meaning with the discourse model itself" (Altman & Studman, cited in Setton 1999, 78). Therefore non-linguistic knowledge is necessary to relate the sentence utterances to people and things in the world, helping interpreter to choose the most plausible reading of vague expression.

Since hedging is a part of the author's intended meaning it should be also preserved in translation. Thus, vague phrases, like "violation of human rights still exists",



“addressing global challenges”, “prioritize activities”, etc. will be translated by interpreters without any linguistic problems.

Whereas unintentional vagueness (epistemic phenomenon) requires interpreter’s knowledge of particular interpreter’s techniques, the various interpreting strategies and techniques have also been well documented and described in specialized literature (Veisbergs 2007; Gile 1995; Setton 1999, Lederer 2003, etc.).

On a theoretical level, the approach to interpreting ambiguity and vagueness is based on the Relevance theory (RT), developed by Sperber and Wilson and also referred to by Setton (1999) and Lederer (2003). The RT is based on the idea of deriving the meaning in speech exchanges by integrating inferential model with a parsing account, i. e., in primary decoding the interpreter decodes the language forms; then the meaning is elaborated by inference in particular context. RT allows for imperfect communication (including vagueness) and “interpretive” uses of language.

Based both on the RT and empirical research (Meuleman 2009) on extreme interpreting conditions the following interpretation strategies could be suggested for interpreters to deal with vagueness:

- 1) *the use of dynamic interpretation* – the current context will determine the construction of interpreting;
- 2) *the use of compensation strategy* – due to the interpreter’s own forced approximations to incoming meaning the production system is instructed to assign focus or intonational stress, and adjusted to reference and perspective for late meaning and voice modulation;
- 3) *the use of independent generation strategy* – allows the interpreter generate structures or placeholders of vague pro-forms. Note: it should not be confused with interpreter’s ‘anticipation’ which is usually the expression of a spontaneous inference.
- 4) *the use of apparently “free” translation strategy* – the linguistic form of production is far removed from the input;
- 5) *the use of generalization strategy* – the lexical meaning is dissoluted and redistributed, and the generality of the meaning is conveyed.

Technically vagueness requires a lot more parsing by interpreter than in a normal production of contextuality when appropriate chunks of meaning are delivered by the comprehension system. Since vague expression causes extreme interpreting conditions the parsing is also considerably affected: a) the interpreter’s short-term memory is overloaded; b) a greater decoding effort is required; c) the psychological mechanisms deployed in such conditions are not the same which mediate the automatic and fluent processes of normal speech comprehension (Setton 1999).

Basing on Gile’s (1995) and Jones’s (1998) studies of interpreting process the following interpreting techniques could be highlighted for interpreter’s use to cope with vagueness:

- a) *“salami technique”* – a widely known and used technique in interpreting implying division of utterances into shorter, independent segments of tran-



- slation; this technique helps the interpreter to unload the short-term memory;
- b) *simplification technique* – the interpreters should avoid following the speaker into subordinate clauses, and use short, simple sentences;
 - c) *omission technique* – the interpreter should be selective what to interpret and what – not; some parts of the source speech may be deleted, especially in case of redundancy;
 - d) *reformulation technique* – the interpreter changes the order of clauses, produces neutral, non-committal sentence beginnings; this technique is especially helpful in cases of structural disparity, and makes the translation in the target language (TL) sound natural.

However, the author would like to underline that the suggested strategies and techniques are of prescriptive character, since so far no empirical study on coping with vagueness in interpreting has been done.

The success in interpreting speeches with vague expression will depend on the interpreter's professional skill, comprising both the passive (source language) and active (target language) pragmatic competence, as well as interpretation coordination – the ability to derive the range of implicatures and provide access to it using the appropriate devices in the target language (TL). Moreover, the choice of the interpreting strategy and technique or techniques will be determined by the interpreter's own style.

Conclusions

Vagueness as a linguistic phenomenon could be regarded as one of the inevitable consequences of the arbitrariness of language – it “demonstrates the intent to permit the language of an enactment to take on a life of its own” (Graham 2001). In public discourse where utterances are produced with a certain communicative intent vagueness is often “desirable” (ibid.). As Setton (1999, 55) admits, language “must be imprecise, but this imprecision in itself assists communicative efficiency”.

On the other hand, vagueness as a philosophical phenomenon suggests “a lack of clear thought or attention” (Hornby 2000, 1434). The speaker uttering vague sentences may not have enough information or details on the subject matter, or may have “a rough idea of the meaning being conveyed” (Graham 2001).

However, vagueness is only a true vagueness if the uncertainty of the meaning cannot be resolved by referring to context. There may be no vagueness if the audience has a relevant cognitive input, since the human mind integrates the semanticism of uttered sentences into its real world knowledge.

Vagueness may lead to a broad continuum of meanings, giving rise to “marginal questions of degree” (ibid.). Hence, the domain of interpretation can offer a unique window on real-time comprehension, acquisition and refinement of meaning representations allowing translation of vagueness into a completely different language. This requires both the experience and expertise of interpreters to cope with such extreme interpreting condition as vagueness. Although there is a number of interpre-



ters' strategies and techniques that may be applied in interpreting vague speeches, it should be taken into account that interpreters are influenced by social and factual context that surrounds the interpretive problem, in this case – vagueness. Moreover, it should be underlined that interpreters' potential and production in the domain may be limited by factors that cannot be changed through experience and training, such as: abilities, mental capacities, and innate talent.

Finally, it should be underlined that the issue of vagueness has been described and analysed in relation to linguistics, namely, pragmatics, but has not been researched and analysed in relation to real-time interpretation. Therefore, the author hopes that this work will complement in further studies of the issue of vagueness and interpreter's approaches to coping with it.

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VIEŠŪJŲ KALBŲ NEAIŠKUMAS: VERTIMO STRATEGIJOS IR TECHNIKOS

Santrauka

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: *viešosios kalbos, raiškos priemonės, neaiškumas, miglotumas, dviprasmiškumas, dviprasmiškumo pašalinimas, episteminiis reiškinys, vertimo strategijos ir technikos, generalizacija, kompresija, kompensacija, gramatinis nagrinėjimas, relevantiškumo teorija (RT), dinamiškas vertimas, „laisvas vertimas“, „salami“ technika, segmentacija.*

Dabartinės bendravimo priemonės pastebimai pakeitė žmonių bendravimą. Jos paveikė ir kalbą: kalbinė raiška tampa vis labiau apibendrinta ir glausta. Be to, kalba darosi sunkiau suprantama, dažnai miglota, ypač politikų kalbose.

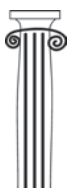
Straipsnyje apibendrinamos viešųjų kalbų neaiškumo problemos ir pateikiami lingvistiniai ir komunikaciniai patarimai vertėjams. Autorė analizuoja neaiškumo priežastis ir siūlo galimas strategijas ir technikas verčiant viešąsias kalbas.

Straipsnyje neaiškumas (miglotumas) analizuojamas dviem aspektais: makroskopiniu, arba filosofiniu, – susijusiu su kalbėtojo nedarnia konceptualiaja sistema, ir mikroskopiniu, arba lingvistiniu, susijusiu su kalbėtojo lingvistinėmis žiniomis.

Autorė nurodo problemas, susijusias su neaiškumu, taip pat išskiria viešojo diskurso neaiškumo privalumus. Neaiškumas sudaro sunkumų vertėjams, o politikai ir biurokratai juo piktnaudžiauja.

Straipsnyje lyginami du panašūs kalbiniai reiškiniai: dviprasmiškumas ir neaiškumas, išskiriami bendri jų bruožai ir lingvistiniai bei vertimo skirtumai. Dviprasmiškumas yra suprantamas kaip reikšmės, neaiškumas – kaip supratimo problema. Kadangi dviprasmiškumas yra būdingas reiškinys šnekamajame diskurse, vertėjai turi keletą strategijų ir technikų jam išvengti.

Neaiškumas, priešingai, gali būti laikomas ekstremalia sąlyga verčiant, pavyzdžiui, sudėtingos sintaksinės struktūros ar labai greitas kalbėjimas. Autorė siūlo įvairių vertimo strategijų ir technikų, kurios galėtų būti vartojamos susidūrus su neaiškumu: dinamiškas interpretavimas, kompensavimas, nepriklausomo generavimo strategija, laisvas vertimas ir generalizacija. Tačiau autorė pabrėžia, kad siūlomos strategijos ir technikos yra preskriptyvinio pobūdžio, nes iki šiol nebuvo atlikta empirinių tyrimų, kaip susidoroti su neaiškumu verčiant.



Indra Grietēna

**VAGUENESS OF EXPRESSION IN PUBLIC SPEECHES:
INTERPRETER'S STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES**

Summary

Keywords: *public speeches, means of expression, vagueness, obscurity, ambiguity, disambiguation, epistemic phenomenon, interpreting strategies and techniques, generalization, compression, compensation, parsing, relevance theory (RT), dynamic interpreting, "free translation", "salami" technique, segmentation.*

Modern means of communication have brought about considerable changes in the way people communicate. On the other hand, the new means of communication have also considerably influenced and changed the languages: the human verbal expression is becoming both more generalized and compressed. Moreover, it is becoming obscure and often – vague, especially in public speeches of politicians.

The report summarizes the ideas and approaches on the issue of vagueness in public speeches and its implications for conference interpreters, both at linguistic and communicative (discourse) level. The author analyses the possible reasons of vagueness, provides her approach of identifying speaker's vague expression and suggests possible strategies and techniques for novice conference interpreters in dealing with vagueness of expression in public speeches.

The report analyzes vagueness from two different angles: macroscopic or philosophical – related to the speaker's incomplete conceptual system, and microscopic or linguistic – related to the speaker's incomplete linguistic knowledge.

The author outlines both the problems associated with vagueness, as well as advantages of using vagueness in public discourse. Vagueness creates difficulties not only for interpreters in carrying out their professional duties. It is notoriously abused by politicians and bureaucrats.

The report compares two similar linguistic phenomena: ambiguity and vagueness pointing out their common features and distinctions between them from both linguistic and interpreting aspects. Ambiguity is seen as a problem of meaning, whereas vagueness – as a problem of understanding. Since ambiguity is a common phenomenon in spoken discourse, interpreters possess several strategies and techniques to deal with it.

Vagueness, on the contrary, may be regarded as an "extreme" condition in interpreting, like that of complicated syntactical structures, or very fast speeches. The author suggests a range of interpreting strategies and techniques that could be used to deal with vagueness: the use of dynamic interpretation, compensation strategy, independent generation strategy, "free" translation strategy, and generalization strategy. However, the author underlines that the suggested strategies and techniques are of prescriptive character, since so far no empirical study on coping with vagueness in interpreting has been done.