Mystery of Meaning Transformation: Metaphoric Terms

The content and structure of the technical text are continuously in the process of change and reorganization. Contemporary technical text is characterized by the growing level of hybridity, cross-disciplinarity, and multi-functionality. This tendency has determined the change of the nature of contemporary terms, which often appear to be polysemic, metaphoric, and context-dependent. Synonymy, polysemy and pragmatic variation of meaning of terms in context have become natural phenomena of the technical language giving rise to conflicting tendencies in the development of the contemporary technical vocabulary.

In the present article we analyse one of the most frequently applied mechanisms of meaning transformation, namely, semantic shift based on different types of meaning extensionsuch as metaphor, metonymy and allusion, used in creation of new terms in such technical fields as civil and mechanical engineering, technology, telecommunications, and computing.

In technical texts metaphoric terms are often used to denote notions that have not received a name yet. They perform several functions: first of all, metaphoric terms expand the scope of information communicated at the same time compressing the information following the principle of linguistic economy; extending the meaning of the existing linguistic items, they fix new meanings by designating new concepts; at the same time, they make the text more attractive for the reader.

The pattern of the colour-based term creation is frequently applied to denote the emerging concepts, as colour-based terms reveal different aspects of life, including scientific ideas, artistic and cultural traditions, beliefs and even personal values shared by individuals or a particular group. Awareness of the similarities and differences of denotative and connotative meanings of the colour-based terms across the languages (translating/aligning/comparing/contrasting) is of utmost importance in the process of interlingual and intralingual professional communication.

Metaphoric terms are investigated using a combination of methods of semantic, pragmatic and semiotic analyses taking into consideration the fact that these terms may potentially pose problems in transferring their meaning into other languages. These problems may be caused by various reasons, such as meaning change in the context, lack of referential equivalence, intradisciplinary polysemy, culture specific allusions embodied in the meaning of a term, and impossibility to transfer the metaphoric component of meaning of the term into the target language. Such terms cannot be described in traditional categories due to their complicated

semantic structure, and their manifold meaning potential can be revealed only in the particular communicative setting.

Different degree of lexicalization of certain metaphors in different languages is determined by the structure of a particular language. Thus, inability to recognize the connections and links among symbols and images within conceptual systems of the working languages leads to production of inadequate, inequivalent and reader-unfriendly texts in translation.

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