

TEACHING LANGUAGE OF PUBLIC SERVICES AND TRANSLATION*

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Abstract

Communication within the sphere of public services covers a wide range of linguistic issues concerning the use of specific vocabulary, comprehension of public service texts, documents and requires among others such skills as telephone communication, letter writing and using new technologies.

One of the communication problems in public service system is the complexity of language. There are a lot of examples of language misuse which confuse the public, service users and service providers, lead to obscure accountability. Failed communication is inconsistent with quality services. Inaccurate use of terminology can undermine efforts to reform public services which are under way in many countries. The requirements to use professional language are often set up in the code of practice of public workers. Particular importance is attributed to language skills in the countries where two or more official languages are used. Language training in the public services sector is provided to improve delivery of services and communication and for professional development. The need to communicate in foreign language has become a common practice in our days.

Foreign languages are considered not only as important skills but also services. Language services are provided by translators and interpreters. The educational programmes on LSP and specialized translation in public services sphere are provided at universities, where students are taught specifics of public services language, terminology and communication. Terminology of public services sector is under way of development, new terms appear, they are often borrowed into other languages, where they may acquire new features, the specialists and translators have to be aware of. The analysis of terminology used in the sphere of public services provided data necessary to comprehend the complexity of concepts represented by terminological units.

Keywords: language and discourse of public services, specific terminology, language training requirements, translation in public services sphere, language services.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The system of public services is complicated, the effective functioning of its branches depends on effective communication and organization. Public services system (PS) comprises a wide range of institutions and companies both governmental and private. Reforming of this system is intended to improving the quality and effectiveness of services. The reforms in public sphere have encouraged more research on integrating communication and social science in public service management, education and language issues. Language

skills have become an important aspect of public services. The aim of this research has been set to analyze language and communication in public services sphere, language use and language services. The development of public sphere requires considering issues related to competency-based training of specialists.

2. METHODOLOGY

The language and discourses of public services are specific due to their heterogeneity. Considering theoretical and practical purposes of the research, it could not be confined to one particular sphere or approach. The discourse and social analysis, communication and linguo-didactic principles provide useful and reliable methods to deal with the language use and study in the new environment of public services.

Discourse analytical approach suggests the following main points: language is structured in patterns or discourses, these discursive patterns are maintained and transformed in discursive practices, the maintenance and transformation of the patterns has to be explored through the specific contexts of language use (Jorgensen, Phillipps, 2002).

Contemporary linguo-didactics aims at developing communicative competence of learners in foreign languages which they need in various situations. One of widely acclaimed approaches to language learning and acquisition is learning language for specific purposes, academic or professional (LSP). LSP approach combines traditional and innovative methods to train students and adults in using language and terminology in a particular context (Arno, 2011, Alcina, 2011).

3. THE SCOPE OF PUBLIC SERVICES COMMUNICATION

Public service communication could be described as communication process and interactions between actors and discourses. Overview of the scope of public services communication provides data of participants and the main topics and needs of communication. The importance of communication in the public sphere has been recognized at the international level with the view of improving the quality of public services and reaching the aims of public services reforms. The research of public services system and communication within the system has been growing in the recent years (Coleman, 2004). The studies reveal that communication processes in the PS sphere introduce specific language, discourses, terminology, practices, knowledge transfer or education. Communication proceeds in various genres of written and spoken language and specialized fields.

The system of public services developed specialized discourses, which bear specific features of particular field in which services are delivered. They comprise social and economic services provided by local authorities. Social services are services for people and families (child care, basic education, health services, etc.). Economic public services include water and energy supply, public transport, waste collection, etc. Terminology varies in different sectors and could create barriers in communication. For the purposes of effective communication the glossaries of terminology have been compiled to help those involved in the field cope with language problems (Glossary of terms, 2013, 2013a, 2015).

Communication has been affected greatly by the use of new technologies. Telecommunications and computer industries have been changing social structure and environment, allowing better logistics and more accessible goods and services. Governments of many countries initiated e-government programmes to transform the delivery of services to the public and other activities. New technologies extend the scope of communication and require new skills both on the part of service providers and customers (Coleman, 2004).

4. LANGUAGE OF PUBLIC SERVICES

The field of public service is more complicated and ambiguous than the field of technology, so the use of terms has to be considered within certain social and cultural environment. The notions related to the field of public sphere could vary in different countries. This is the case when we consider the economic services. The terminology of economic services differs, reflects conceptual differences between countries and may be confusing. In the UK and the USA the term 'public utilities' is commonly used, meaning services offered by enterprises on a market basis. This notion has been used in many European countries and is represented by terms such as 'servizi di pubblica utilita' (in Italy), 'services publics industriels et commerciaux' (in France), 'Daseinsvorsorge' (in Germany, which is translated as 'provision for existence'), (Wollmann, Marcou, 2010). In Russia the term 'komunalnye uslugi' is used to designate this type of services, literal translation is 'communal services'. For the sake of clarity the European Union introduced the term 'services of general economic interests' (SGEI) to refer to economic services and to designate personal social services and health services the term 'social services of general interests' (SSGI) is used (Wollmann, 2016).

The misuse of terminology could be confusing for public and should be avoided. Inaccurate use of terminology can undermine efforts to reform public services which are under way in many countries. New terminology could be embarrassing not only for specialists and translators but for the whole community. Some examples of incorrect language can be provided. The term 'commissioning' is often misused to describe procurement or even outsourcing which is misleading for the public. When used in public services sector the term 'commissioning' means identifying need and the wishes of communities and service users, determining the outcomes necessary to address these needs and options in affordable way. While 'procurement' implies using competitive tendering to secure both service provider and specified outcomes on a contractual basis. Another example is the use of 'outsourcing' synonymously with 'privatization'. The term 'outsourcing' is used to designate the process of contracting public services to the business, social or voluntary and communities sectors with providers being rewarded depending on outputs. The term 'privatisation' describes situation when public assets and businesses are transferred to non-public sector ownership (Tizard, 2015). There are a lot of examples of language misuse which confuse the public, service users and service providers and can lead to obscure accountability. Language as an effective and authoritative means of managing public services has to be used competently and responsibly.

5. TEACHING LANGUAGE OF PUBLIC SERVICES AND TRANSLATION

5.1. Language Training

In 2002 the United Nations instituted the United Nations Public Service Day, which is held June, 23 every year to celebrate the value and virtue of public service to the community, highlight the contribution of public service in the development process, recognize the work of public servants and encourage young people to pursue careers in the public sector (UN Resolution 57/277, 2002).

Language training system in the public services sphere has evolved in many countries and is intended at training employees who wish to improve their communication skills and upgrade their language skills. Language training is considered a key component of professional development (Office COL, 2013). Public officials have to display knowledge of official language and language culture. Besides courses on foreign languages are provided, as communities become more internationalized, particularly in big cities. LSP courses are designed to meet public servants' needs of using foreign languages in multilingual societies.

They have to acquire a range of interpersonal communication skills such as negotiating, listening, problem-solving skills and language skills, such as reading skills (skimming, scanning and detailed reading), writing skills (writing letters, memorandums, reports, email and note-taking), verbal communication skills (questioning skills, presentation skills, emphasis, use of terminology, abbreviations etc., listening skills (receiving orders, directions, etc.).

5.2. Translation as Language Services

Language services have become important social services provided in public sphere for linguistically disadvantaged groups. Language specialists are in demand as there is a need to ensure access to information in all sectors of society (Hogan-Brun, 2017). The programmes to train public services interpreters and translators are part of governmental policies. But this sphere used to be neglected by public authorities in many countries when interpreting was provided by family members or other people having no qualification. The situation has been changed considerably. In the European Union the translation and interpreting is regulated by specialized department Directorate-General Translation (DGT), which develops standards and requirements for translation and is also helpful in organizing courses for training interpreters and translators.. In Russia the situation could be described as very specific due to the fact, that a lot of people come to work and live here from former soviet republics where Russian has been widely used and they do not have problems with communication. But when it comes to document translation, legal issues and courts, translators and interpreters are required. According to statistics in Moscow courts translation of 44 languages including European languages and languages of Asian regions have been used.

6. CONCLUSION

Public services set up its specific language and discourses, the studies of which are necessary to comprehend and cope with communication problems. Effective communication provides for quality services thus improving the whole system. The growth of the public services sphere requires competent specialists and comprehensive educational system.

Language and terminology are a particular concern to specialists as the terminology is specific and has to be considered in social and cultural contexts.

Language training pursues the goals of competent use of official language or languages in case there are more than one and terminology. Foreign languages' training is helpful while dealing with multilingual communities. Language training is important vector of professional development of public service workers.

Programmes on Public Services Interpreting and Translation (PSIT) are introduced at universities as qualified translators are needed to provide language services in various public spheres. This is a new educational environment which has to be developed to meet current requirements of the field.

The studies of public services language and discourses reveal important issues in the functioning of this system and provide for its further development.

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