

## RENDERING CULTURALLY SPECIFIC ELEMENTS OF THE FIRST LADIES' RHETORIC INTO UKRAINIAN

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The article deals with rendering Michelle Obama's speeches into Ukrainian. The topicality of the study is explained by the fact that the rhetoric strategies of the First Ladies have not been properly studied in the Ukrainian perspective. The First Ladies' rhetoric abounds in cultural concepts that must be properly interpreted for the target audience.

*Key words:* First ladies' rhetoric, cultural concepts, rendering Michelle Obama's speeches into Ukrainian.

Analysis of First Ladies' rhetoric has undergone a progressive development and maturation in recent years. From a virtually exclusive focus on the women's life stories, they now include more conceptual analyses conducted by scholars from an increasingly diverse set of disciplines [Borrelli 2006, 713–71].

Communication and media studies specialists examine the public communication practices of the presidents' wives, while the interpreters are searching for adequate cross-cultural methods of rendering their interventions.

Unlike other spokespersons, the First Lady's attachment to the President is presumed to be permanent, binding, established through familial ties, based on close physical proximity and personal selection, and rooted in intimate knowledge [White 2011].

A First Lady reflects her husband – her attributes are presumed to be his, her temperament is judged in part by what the public is shown of their relationship and the relationship they have with their children. As a result, she serves as an extension of the President himself. Thus, a First Lady's words become her husbands' words – her experiences meld with his biography, her choices reflect her husband's beliefs, her skills become his political tools – and her weaknesses can easily become his political liability [Meinen 2003, 2–3].

Unlike in the USA, the Ukrainian president's wife does not enjoy the same degree of national and international presence. We do not identify her as a separate entity apart from her husband, which might be explained by the perceived lack of rhetorical training. Meanwhile, the whole new generation of the Ukrainian "First Ladies-in-Waiting" is desperately searching for their own voice, their unique rhetorical strategies. Interpretation studies of their American counterparts' output might give them at least a few tips.

Khadijah L. White posits that Michelle Obama presents a complex picture of modern America – she embodies the combined efforts of the Modern Civil Rights and Feminist movements. At the same time, she must also embrace the gendered labour required of a First Lady – she must be a wife and mother who is patriotic, gracious, well-spoken, politically fluent and inoffensive in carriage and manner. In Michelle Obama's speeches and interviews throughout her husband Barack Obama's presidential campaign, she used discourse to cultivate an identity that was both legible and palatable to a broad American audience – which was a strenuous task [White 2011].

Subsequently, her rhetoric strategies follow two principal courses – celebrating inter-ethnic and intercultural diversity and presenting a strong family front to the outsiders. The scholars involved in the interpretation studies are especially interested in the latter course,

as translation and interpreting are now viewed primarily as acts of intercultural communication [Schäffner 2003, 79].

The object of our analysis is Michelle Obama's plea for education and its translation into Ukrainian by Marta Nykolayeva ([http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/uk/michelle\\_obama.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/uk/michelle_obama.html)). This speech was delivered at a London girls' school, and the American First Lady is addressing a culturally-diverse and divergent audience. In this situation her rhetoric skills come to the fore.

Near the beginning of the speech, Michelle Obama attempts to include the members of her audience in her argument by alluding to the daily experiences of women across the world. The concept of inclusiveness is highlighted by her expression of gratitude for the acceptance on the part of the target audience:

*During my visit I've been especially honored to meet some of Britain's most extraordinary women – women who are paving the way for all of you.*

*Під час мого візиту мені випала особлива честь зустріти незвичайних британських жінок – жінок, які прокладають шлях для всіх вас.*

Interpreter felt the necessity of reproducing the protocol formulae almost word for word, which proves the fact that in the modern day diplomatic rhetoric, ceremony and symbol are identified as modes of public communication [Borrelli 2006, 713].

By describing the innate properties of the 'most extraordinary' women, the First Lady turns the mundane into the collective. Drawing on her own experience as a human rights advocate and politician's wife, Michelle Obama mentions her travels as first lady, sharing her personal glimpses of women struggling to carve public niches for themselves [Meinen 2003, 56]:

*I am an example of what's possible when girls from the very beginning of their lives are loved and nurtured by the people around them. I was surrounded by extraordinary women in my life: grandmothers, teachers, aunts, cousins, neighbors, who taught me about quiet strength and dignity.*

*Я є прикладом того, що стає можливим, якщо дівчата із самого малку відчують любов і опіку людей довкола себе. У житті мене оточували незвичайні жінки: бабусі, вчительки, тітки, сестри, сусідки, які навчили мене спокійної сили й гідності.*

Marta Nykolayeva quite aptly uses here the strategy of domestication. By introducing the idiomatic expression *із самого малку* she brings her version of the text closer to the Ukrainian audience.

Although she does not delve into her own experience exclusively, Michelle Obama frequently bases her inferences on her own life story. This strategy helps to empower her audience because it encourages them to value their own practical wisdom.

*Please remember that. If you want to know the reason why I'm standing here, it's because of education. I never cut class. Sorry, I don't know if anybody is cutting class. I never did it. I loved getting As. I liked being smart. I liked being on time. I liked getting my work done. I thought being smart was cooler than anything in the world.*

*Будь ласка, запам'ятайте це. Якщо ви хочете дізнатися, чому я тут, я відповім – через освіту. Я ніколи не прогулювала уроків. Вибачте, я не знаю, чи хтось із присутніх прогулює уроки. Я ніколи цього не робила. Я любила отримувати "відмінно". Мені подобалося бути розумною. Я любила приходити вчасно. Я любила виконувати свої завдання. Я думала, що бути розумною – це набагато крутіше, ніж усе решта.*

Informal expressions associated with the high-school slang (*to cut class, to get As, being smart was cooler than anything in the world*) find their equivalents in the Ukrainian text, building blocks to the same colloquial register (*прогулювати уроки, бути розумною – це набагато крутіше, ніж усе решта*). The set expression *"вчитися на п'ятірки"* might serve a better contextual equivalent though.

The cornerstone of the First Ladies' rhetorical strategies is an appeal to the cultural identity of the audience. To this end, she is both trying to raise the listeners' awareness of her culture as she is its principal envoy with tasks of the same magnitude as the president's. On the other hand, she shows her own cultural competence which comprises four components: (a) awareness of one's own cultural worldview, (b) attitude towards cultural differences, (c) knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews, and (d) cross-cultural skills [Leavitt 2010, 23].

Unfortunately, what is perceived as a cornerstone of the First Ladies' rhetoric is also a stumbling block for many interpreters, a sign of lacking background knowledge:

*And this school, named after the U.K.'s first female doctor, and the surrounding buildings named for Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, Mary Seacole, the Jamaican nurse known as the "black Florence Nightingale", and the English author, Emily Brontë, honor women who fought sexism, racism and ignorance, to pursue their passions to feed their own souls.*

*Ця школа названа на честь першої британської жінки-лікаря. Вона оточена будівлями, названими на честь мексиканської художниці Фріди Кало, Мері Сікоул, ямайської медсестри званої як "чорний флорентійський соловей", і англійської письменниці Емілі Бронте. Ці благородні жінки боролися із сексизмом, расизмом і неосвіченістю, щоб займатися своїми захопленнями й задовольнити душевні потреби.*

The interpreter fails to recognize the name of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing. However, as Michelle Obama is addressing the British public, it is not surprising that she mentions the names of outstanding women that embody the British culture. Thus, the interpreter fails on two levels: the level of cultural competence and the level of probability prediction described by Ghelly V. Chernov [Chernov et al. 2004].

In the further passages, when the absence of corresponding cultural concept in the Ukrainian language provided a creative leeway, the interpreter copes quite expertly with its rendering:

*My husband works in this big office. They call it the Oval Office. In the White House, there's the desk that he sits at – it's called the Resolute desk. It was built by the timber of Her Majesty's Ship Resolute and given by Queen Victoria.*

*Мій чоловік працює в цьому великому кабінеті. Його називають Овальним. У Білому домі є стіл, за яким він сидить, цей стіл називається Рішучий. Він збудований з дерева корабля Її Величності "Рішучий". Це подарунок королеви Вікторії.*

Thus, we might say that the difficulty in rendering Michelle Obama's rhetoric into Ukrainian resides in the fact that the First Ladies' discourse is a phenomenon underdeveloped in the Ukrainian political setting, its strategies and methods still in need of refining. On the other hand, abundance of cultural concepts inherent in this type of rhetoric may prove to become a stumbling block to an interpreter lacking the adequate degree of cultural competence.

Стаття присвячена темі перекладу промов Мішель Обама українською мовою. Актуальність дослідження пояснюється тим, що риторичні стратегії Перших леді не отримали достатнього висвітлення в українських джерелах. Виступи Перших леді рясніють культурними концептами, які необхідно адекватно донести до цільової аудиторії.

*Ключові слова:* виступи Перших леді, культурні концепти, переклад промов Мішель Обама українською мовою.

Статья посвящена теме перевода речей Мишель Обамы на украинский язык. Актуальность исследования объясняется тем, что риторические стратегии Первых леди не получили достаточного освещения в украинских источниках. Выступления Первых леди изобилуют культурными концептами, которые необходимо адекватно донести до целевой аудитории.

*Ключевые слова:* выступления Первых леди, культурные концепты, перевод речей Мишель Обамы на украинский язык.

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