

ON THE ROLE OF DIPLOMATIC LANGUAGE

Роль дипломатического языка

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Abstract

The article deals with the issue of a diplomatic language and the importance for future international relations experts to study it systematically. A diplomatic language is a professional language, or, LSP (Language for Specific Purposes) as well as LAP (Language for Academic Purposes) in case of being the object of the scientific research. Communication skills and the ability to master the diplomatic language are facilities by means of which diplomats try to achieve their goals peacefully within so called "soft power" as opposed to "hard power". Succinctly the situation in diplomatic language research and teaching in Slovakia is described as well.

Keywords: diplomatic language, Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), Language for Academic Purposes (LAP), diplomat, international relations expert

Абстракт

Статья посвящена проблеме дипломатического языка и необходимости его систематического обучения специалистами в области международных отношений. Дипломатический язык – это язык профессиональный, или LSP (язык для специальных целей, Language for Specific Purposes) и также LAP (язык для научных целей, Language for Academic Purposes), если он является предметом научного исследования. Коммуникативное мастерство дипломатов – это средство, принимаемое для достижения целей мирным путём в рамках так называемой „мягкой силы“ („soft power“) в противовес „твёрдой силе“ („hard power“). Вкратце описана ситуация в области изучения и преподавания дипломатического языка и коммуникации в Словацкой Республике.

Ключевые слова: дипломатический язык, язык для специальных целей (LSP), язык для научных целей (LAP), дипломат, специалист в области международных отношений

Today, in the world of complicated international relations LSP (Language for Specific Purposes), especially the language in international relations, is becoming increasingly influential. The globalization on international relations requires diplomats and representatives of various international organizations extended sophisticated knowledge not only in the humanities (e.g. history, political science, linguistics, psychology, communication), but also in other sciences, especially in computer science, mass media, economics or logic.

Accordingly, the language of diplomacy interacts with other linguistic registers, but in spite of all new processes, phenomena and the ever-changing environment in which diplomats work, the word of the international relations

expert is of particular significance. It is dangerous to neglect the content, to misuse words or phrases, to interpret subtleties of the language in a wrong or different way because it can lead to serious misunderstandings, tensions in relationships or even conflicts. Where a diplomat's word is absent, a general's word comes. Our history knows many examples when diplomatic negotiations have not been successful for various reasons and the time came when generals "started to speak".

In the scientific literature there are many works and publications of linguists and diplomats on the need to speak the language perfectly, to master it, to understand all the subtleties of the language, to be able "to read between lines" correctly, to perceive national and cultural peculiarities of the foreign partner's communicative behaviour, but only relatively recently articles about so called "soft power" in connection with international relations issues appeared. Language export as the main means of communication between participants in international relations is becoming an increasingly important segment in the implementation of so called "soft power" in international relations. Language specification and principles of the language and culture presentation abroad are the subject of international politics in the sense of the implementation national and state interests, because not every challenge of the international community can be solved today by force. Military approach as one of the strongest factors influencing the course of the world politics is displaced by other forces, especially economic, scientific, environmental, demographic and informational ones. As the bipolar confrontation is surmounted nowadays, voices for cultural and multicivilizational colourful modern world are heard more and more frequently. Due to the increasing globalization international relations experts of "small states" (but not only them) speak about the need to cultivate relations with other states and nations in the more "civilized" form – the form of culture export in general and language export in particular. Some aspects of language policy are considered to be part of the international cultural policy today.

Thus, language as the primary means of communication among subjects of international relations, including states and their inhabitants, is not only means of communication in order to exchange information, but also the means by which it is possible to affect the efficiency of a course of events in the world. By means of languages and their efficient use subjects of international relations exercise their influence in the world in order to protect their areas of interest, which can be considered to be a new approach in the world of politics, diplomacy as well as linguistics.

What is it – the language of diplomacy, the language of specialists in international relations, the language in which international negotiations are carried on? How powerful is the diplomat's word? Can we consider the language of diplomats to be at the same time the diplomatic language? Is the diplomatic language characterized approximately by the same or similar linguistic features in case of various language mutations?

Diplomatic language, as the subject of the scientific research, combines a number of scientific disciplines – linguistics in the broadest sense (and within its framework political linguistics as a new dynamic subdiscipline), diplomacy, communication theory, rhetoric, sociology, sociolinguistics, history and logic. This means that the diplomatic language, or the language of international relations experts (the term is preferred by some scholars in the Russian Federation), can

serve as an object of research of scholars from various areas, but primarily these are linguists, political scientists and diplomats as well as specialists in the field of communication, including intercultural communication. That means all those involved in the political sphere of communication and all those who consider linguistic and extralinguistic means to be at the same time one of means and methods in the struggle for political power in the process of communicative impact on the political consciousness of the society. *Diplomatic communication plays an essential role in shaping messages targeted at maximizing the desired impact and minimizing undesired collateral effects* (1, 2009, p.39).

In other words, it can be argued that the subject of our research – the diplomatic language – is a focus of three major research areas – linguistics, diplomacy and communication. If to study the diplomatic language in the narrow sense, given the relationship with other disciplines, the number of scientific fields is much bigger. In our view this is natural, since the politics and language are closely related, interlaced with one another and multidirectional political processes in the multipolar world are reflected in language, which itself becomes multifunctional and diverse.

Language as such, including LSP, continues to be the focus of linguists around the world today. In their scientific monograph, Russian linguists A. P. Minyar-Beloruicheva and O. A. Vdovina deal with theoretical questions related to the specific functioning of the language of International Relations as the functional and stylistic variety of the scientific speech. A.P. Minyar-Beloruicheva and O. A. Vdovina identify five stages in the LSP development: *register analysis, discourse analysis, target situation analysis, skills and strategies and learning-centered approach, i. e. an approach that focuses on training. It is possible to talk about the appearance of the sixth stage in the LSP development- learner-oriented approach. The distinguishing feature of this approach is the focus on the learner and his/her needs and interests* (2, 2008, p. 7). Later, from LSP LAP (Language for Academic Purposes) was developed. It is further subdivided into LGAP (Language for General Academic Purposes) and LSAP (Language for Specific Academic Purposes). And the language of the experts in international relations is part of LSAP.

Diplomatic language (the language of diplomats) as a way and a tool of conducting diplomatic relations between states is a specific language, a professional language. It can be classified as the Language for Specific Purposes. As a subject of the scientific research it is LSAP – Language for Specific Academic Purposes. In any language mutation it is an inseparable part of the standard, codified language that is not territorially determined, but used in certain professional situations, particularly in diplomacy, in international relations, but not only in them. As Language for Specific Purposes – a diplomatic language is

- a) means of the state's communication with the outside world,
- b) means of communication in the field of international relations,
- c) language by means of which official bilateral and multilateral negotiations among states are carried on,
- d) language of treaties.

Some scholars emphasize that it is a language which is characterized by certain expressions and phrases that make up the diplomatic vocabulary (for

example A. P. Minyar-Beloručeva and O. A. Vdovina from Russia, Ľ. Tóth, P. Rusiňák, P. Vršanský from Slovakia). The others write that the diplomatic language serves as “lingua franca” of diplomats, i. e. common and the most frequently used language in the world of diplomacy. In the historical overview in the world of “lingua franca” they argue that, historically, the first common diplomatic language was the Akkadian language (approximately 3rd millennium BC), then the Aramaic language (approximately 10th century BC), later there was a period of “competition” of three diplomatic languages – Latin (in Europe), Greek (dominant especially in Byzantium), and Chinese (in Asia). French became a dominant diplomatic language in the 18th century as a language “par préférence”. English became the language of “lingua franca” of diplomacy after World War I (Ch. Jönsson and M. Hall, H. Nicolson).

Sir H. Nicolson gives the diplomatic language specific features of some common language of diplomats as their means of communication, both orally and in writing. Such a language was Latin in the past, later French, and today it is English. Sir Nicolson also describes the diplomatic language as *a language of courtesy* (3, 1977, p. 57).

I. V. Popov, the famous Russian diplomat, was comparing means of core activities of a soldier and a diplomat in the attempt to achieve objectives of the state in foreign policy. *For a soldier these are weapons, for a diplomat it is a word* (4, 2006, p. 35).

A Brazilian linguist F.G. Matos based his claim on the role of the diplomatic language on the theory of positivism in diplomacy, i.e. understanding of the diplomatic language from a positive point of view and he characterized it as *a defender of peace and the management of conflicts between nations peacefully* (5, 2004, p. 283). It is possible to add that this view is shared by many scientists and politicians. It is the truth – the main role of diplomacy is to solve tensions and conflicts among states peacefully and through negotiations.

One of the prominent representatives of the French School, E. Pascual, also reflects on the role of the diplomatic language and writes that the art of diplomacy is, above all, *the ability to communicate. The successful diplomat can always be recognized through his ability “to work with the language”, whether orally or in writing* (6, 2004, p. 10).

O. A. Vdovina from MGIMO (Moscow) writes that *the touch of the political systems of countries throughout the world requires clarification of terms, national and international concepts, that, of course, is the crucial problem of the present stage in the development of international relations. Accordingly, the study of EIRS (English for International Relations Students) as part of LSAP (Language for Specific Academic Purposes) includes the analysis of language structures, the study of lexical-phraseological composition, grammar and style of scientific texts on international relations.* (7, 2010, pp. 236 – 237). The study of scientific texts on international relations is necessary for an adequate understanding, which is an indispensable stipulation for successful communication in international contacts.

In the Slovak scientific literature there are many works, many publications of diplomats who agree that the ability to master the language (their own and foreign), the ability to communicate, the ability “to read between lines” is an essential prerequisite for a successful diplomat and, as a result, for a successful foreign policy of the state as well (P. Vršanský, Ľ. Tóth, P. Rusiňák). But in linguistics or political linguistics we have no work or monograph dealing with the

linguistic analysis of texts on international relations in the Slovak language. Political linguistics and rhetoric, public diplomacy are all new disciplines which are beginning to take their place among different humanities and are thought in Slovakia to be perspective. If diplomats write about the role of the language (apart from other issues), it is not a linguistic point of view, if linguists write about LSP, not in connection with diplomacy, and usually in relation to other sciences.

Discourse about the diplomatic language in Slovakia is only at the initial stage. Our scientific research of the diplomatic language as LSP and LAP, and the linguistic and intercultural analyses of texts on international relations in three language mutations (English, Russian, Slovak) has only begun. But what is possible to say already today is the fact that it is irony that certain steps in this area are taken quite slowly, primarily by universities and scientific institutions. Irony, because despite the general agreement and understanding of the need for training courses of the diplomatic language (English, French, Russian or any other, but especially the official languages in the UN) for future diplomats and specialists in international relations, despite the fact that Slovakia as a small country supports the concept of “soft power“ in international relations and understands the role of languages in the export of public diplomacy, universities do not offer their students such training and study programmes that would systematically and comprehensively develop an approach to learning diplomacy, linguistics and communication in international contacts, diplomatic language and diplomatic protocol. Some institutions offer study programmes in the field, but only partially. It is, first of all, Comenius University, Faculty of Law, Institute of International Relations and Legal Comparatistics in Bratislava, University of Economics, Faculty of International Relations in Bratislava, Matej Bel University, Faculty of Political Science and International Relations in Banská Bystrica, Central European University in Skalica. These are main academic institutions trying to contribute to the training of future experts in international relations and cooperate with the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic. And thus, it is assumed that graduates from these institutions will be able to protect the interests of the Slovak Republic in the European Union bodies as well as in international relations in general.

The study programmes of some other colleges and universities in Slovakia partially include international relations and diplomacy. This means that within the framework of such subjects as Political Science, Economics or European Union Issues students can choose such major fields to study as Introduction to Diplomacy, Diplomatic Protocol, Business Negotiations or Intercultural Communication. LSP, mostly English, is also in the list of subjects that are taught as compulsory or – in some faculties – even as optional ones only (in the Reference list some webpages of the above mentioned institutions are included). To emphasize the fact that in most cases a diplomat or a specialist in international relations works with the foreign-language word, speaks, writes, negotiates, collects data, makes analyses in a foreign language (not his/her mother tongue), professional training in the broadest sense is simply vital. Their communicative skills are results of many years of training – linguistic, cultural, diplomatic, professional, personal one. It is also the result of experience in international relations.

In connection with these requirements, it is necessary to state that, unfortunately, a systematic approach to the training of future international

relations experts in Slovakia is absent. There are, in our opinion, some reasons – lack of experience, low “demand“, low requirements in general, lack of emphasizing the needs of language cultivation and business behaviour cultivation (especially for businessmen), but also absence of diplomatic language research in general as well as the Slovak diplomatic language research.

In conclusion, we can say that the diplomatic language should not be a priority only for diplomats and politicians. It is also used in academic and professional communication in various other spheres, often in prestigious situations. Diplomatic language gives the opportunity to cultivate a common (general) language, which is, due to the influence of mass-media and information technologies, becoming too concise, superficial, sometimes even aggressive. It is possible to assume that the need for other forms of communication, more cultivated, will increase.

Summary

A diplomatic language is a specific professional language. It is necessary for diplomats to master and understand it. A word, written or spoken, is a diplomat's only weapon. The diplomatic language is also used in scientific, professional (internal and public) communication, in many cases in prestigious situations. Nevertheless it does not have to be only diplomats' privilege. It provides an opportunity to cultivate the language, common (or general) as well as professional. In other words, it can be classified as Language for Specific Purposes and by an object of the scientific research as Language for Academic Purposes.

Slovakia, as a small country, supports the concept of so called “soft power” and understands the importance of cultures and languages in the export of public diplomacy. But in our country the diplomatic language research is at initial stage only. The future desired results will relate to the definition of diplomatic language, to the confirmation of the hypothesis that in any language mutation it has certain similar linguistic features with intercultural specifications. The research is intended to be carried on the linguistic analyses of texts in international relations in three languages – English, Russian and Slovak.

In higher education system in Slovakia, it is highly important to introduce a complex systematic approach to the professional training of future diplomats and representatives of various international organizations due to the fact that today some universities and colleges provide the desired study programmes, though only partially.

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