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# TRANSLATION CHALLENGES AND TERMINOLOGICAL ISSUES IN PR DISCOURSE

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**Abstract**

In an era of globalized media and multilingual communication, the translation of Public Relations (PR) discourse has become a complex task that extends beyond linguistic transfer. This article investigates the major challenges involved in translating PR materials, with particular focus on specialized terminology, stylistic shifts, and communicative intent in English-Russian translation. Drawing upon Peter Newmark's functional theory of language, specifically the informative, vocative, and expressive functions, as well as Mona Baker's narrative theory and views on translator's activity, the study explores how translators navigate the tensions between semantic precision and persuasive impact. The analysis also engages with the terminological principles outlined by Hudeček and Ćutuk, demonstrating how standardized equivalents and culturally adapted choices shape the reception of PR discourse in target-language contexts. Using a case study approach, the article analyzes three bilingual press releases issued by Samsung, LUKOIL, and UNICEF, representing the domains of technology, corporate sustainability, and humanitarian advocacy. The research identifies dominant strategies, such as literal translation, cultural adaptation, terminological standardization, and stylistic transformation, and evaluates how they support or reshape communicative objectives in translation. The findings affirm that PR translators act not merely as linguistic intermediaries but as active cultural agents, mediating institutional narratives, public perception, and professional norms across languages and cultures.

Keywords: PR discourse; translation strategies; terminology; narrative theory; functional typology; bilingual press releases; cultural mediation; institutional communication..

## Introduction

In the age of global media, Public Relations has become one of the most influential instruments of organizational communication. Its primary aim is to shape public perception, construct narratives, and maintain the reputation of brands, institutions, and governments across linguistic and cultural boundaries. With the internationalization of business and the growing prominence of global audiences, the need for effective and culturally sensitive translation of PR materials is more pressing than ever. Translators today are not only linguistic mediators but also cultural interpreters who must balance fidelity to source language with resonance in the target audience's cultural and communicative expectations. This paper investigates the challenges of translating PR discourse, with particular emphasis on the complexity of PR terminology. Drawing on examples from real corporate press releases and multilingual communication campaigns, it is explored how core lexical units are transferred, adapted, or reformulated in Russian translations of English PR texts. The analysis also reflects on the broader implications of intercultural communication within PR, where emotional tone, persuasive intent, and branding language intersect in ways that challenge traditional translation strategies.

Public Relations discourse occupies a unique niche within professional communication. It is strategically constructed, goal-oriented, and often emotionally charged. At its core, PR discourse seeks to inform, influence, and inspire, shaping both immediate reactions and long-term attitudes toward a brand or institution. Unlike technical writing or journalism, PR language is deliberately stylized to align with a brand's ethos and values while engaging a broad, often international audience. One of the key features of PR discourse is persuasiveness. PR texts are designed not only to transmit information but to guide interpretation and evoke a desired emotional or behavioral response. This is achieved through lexical choices, rhetorical structures and direct audience engagement through imperatives or inclusive pronouns.

The notion of translator neutrality has long been contested in translation studies, particularly in the realm of politically or ideologically loaded texts such as PR discourse. Rather than serving as invisible conduits between languages, translators are increasingly recognized as active agents in the construction and circulation of meaning. Mona Baker elaborates on this by noting that "translators are depicted in our disciplinary discourse as honest and detached brokers who operate largely in the 'space between' cultures" [2; p.29], while in reality, "we participate in very decisive ways in promoting and circulating narratives and discourses of various types and make our own choice" [1; p.4]. This perspective is particularly relevant in the context of institutional translation, where choices made by translators can subtly, yet powerfully, shape the ideological orientation, tone, and cultural framing of a text. Closely related is the strategic nature of PR language. Every element, from terminology to tone, is selected to fulfill specific communicative objectives: shaping public narratives, enhancing visibility, neutralizing reputational threats, or reinforcing stakeholder loyalty. Whether it's a sustainability report or a product launch announcement, PR language is context-sensitive and carefully curated. Finally, PR discourse is often emotionally colored. It draws heavily on affective vocabulary, metaphors, and storytelling to humanize the brand and forge emotional bonds with the audience.

**Main part**

To deepen the analysis of PR discourse functions in translation, it is useful to apply Peter Newmark's (1988) typology of language functions: **informative, vocative**, and **expressive**. He explains that the informative function is concerned with "the facts of a topic, reality outside language", and that, **"typical 'informative' texts are concerned with any topic of knowledge"** [4; p. 40]. This function corresponds directly to **press releases, public reports, and corporate statements** in PR discourse, which aim to inform the audience with clarity and precision. The vocative function, which aims to "call upon the readership to act, think or feel" [4; p. 41], clearly corresponds to promotional and persuasive PR materials. Although the expressive function is less central in PR, it still plays a role in stylistically crafted texts, especially those aiming for emotional or aesthetic appeal. As P.Newmark states, "few texts are purely expressive, informative or vocative," since most texts combine all three with different emphases [4; p. 42]. These functional layers often overlap, especially in multilingual contexts, where translation must capture not only the surface meaning but the embedded communicative intent. As such, the PR translator must simultaneously decode and recode text in a way that remains loyal to brand identity while aligning with the pragmatic and stylistic norms of the target language.

The translation of PR discourse presents a range of linguistic and cultural challenges, many of which stem from the dynamic, idiomatic, and context-dependent nature of English-language PR terminology. One of the key challenges in translating Public Relations (PR) discourse lies in balancing the communicative intent of the message with its semantic content. As P.Newmark points out, translation can be approached from the point of view of the reader, distinguishing between **semantic translation**, which focuses on the precise meaning of the original text, and **communicative translation**, which aims to produce the same effect on the target audience as the source text did on its original readers. Notably, P.Newmark acknowledges that "all translation must be in some degree both communicative and semantic, social and individual." [5; 97p.] This dual nature of translation becomes particularly relevant in PR, where the translator must retain terminological accuracy while also adapting stylistically and culturally to the expectations of a target audience.

To ensure terminological clarity and consistency in translation, especially in professional domains such as PR, translators often rely on principles established by terminologists. These principles help determine which terms should be used when multiple synonymous options exist. As noted by **Hudeček L. and Ćutuk I**, "Terminologists standardize terminology, i.e. they give preference to a certain synonymous pair or sequence over another pair or sequence, in accordance with these fundamental terminological principles: (1) Native terms take precedence over foreign terms; (2) Terms must be adapted to the standard language, then such terms take precedence over unadapted terms; (3) Terms take precedence over other synonymous terms if they correspond to the concept they were assigned to and reflect their place in the conceptual system." [3; p. 37]

This can be observed in the following relevant cases:
– brief → бриф (transliteration) vs. техническое задание (equivalent) – although *бриф* is commonly used in marketing, in formal contexts *техническое задание* may be preferred for clarity.
– internal communication → интерная коммуникация (calque) vs. внутренняя коммуникация (equivalent) – the Russian term *внутренняя* aligns better with standard usage “*внешняя коммуникация*”, maintaining conceptual consistency.
– feedback → фидбек (loan) vs. обратная связь (equivalent) – *обратная связь* is stylistically and terminologically neutral and more appropriate in formal or official communication.

Moreover, successful PR translation requires adaptation of tone and register. English PR texts tend to be direct, engaging, and optimistic, often using first-person plural, “we believe…”, “we deliver…”, to build rapport. In contrast, Russian PR writing typically favors a more formal, reserved style, emphasizing institutional authority and objectivity. Adapting the tone requires not only lexical changes but also syntactic restructuring and shifts in narrative perspective. The translator’s task, therefore, is to maintain the persuasive intent of the original while aligning the communicative style with the expectations and norms of the target audience. These issues highlight that translating PR discourse is a deeply interpretive act, one that requires not just language proficiency, but a nuanced understanding of semiotics, audience psychology, and communicative strategy across cultures. The translation of Public Relations discourse is not merely a technical procedure of word substitution, it is a strategic process that negotiates meaning between cultures, professional registers, and communicative intents. The strategies employed by translators in PR contexts are shaped by the goals of the campaign, the expectations of the target audience, and the linguistic resources of the target language. Four dominant approaches can be observed: literal translation, adaptive translation, the use of specialized glossaries, and neologism creation.

To examine the application of various translation strategies in institutional PR discourse, we analyze three bilingual press releases: *Samsung Solidifies Its Mobile AI Leadership at MWC 2025*, *LUKOIL Releases 2023 Sustainability Report*, and *War in Ukraine Pushes Generation of Children to the Brink, Warns UNICEF*. These texts represent different sectors: technology, corporate sustainability, and humanitarian response, and provide a rich basis for comparing how literal equivalents, adaptation, and transformation strategies are employed in Russian translations of English originals.

**Table №1 Translation Strategies used in PR Discourse**

| Strategy Type | Example | Translation | Analysis | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Equivalent** | *“Language packs”* | *“языковые пакеты”* | Clear calque; preserves semantic transparency and aligns with interface expectations of Russian-speaking users. | Samsung |
| | *“Settings app”* | *“приложение «Настройки»”* | Institutional localization matching Russian UI language. | Samsung |
| | *“Sustainability Policy”* | *“Политика в области устойчивого развития”* | Lexical fidelity to global ESG terminology. | LUKOIL |
| | *“Forcibly displaced”* | *“вынужденные переселенцы”* | Matches official UNHCR lexicon, ensuring terminological consistency in humanitarian discourse. | UNICEF |
| **Literal Translation** | *“Over 100 school classes have also been equipped with air-conditioning systems”* | *“100 классов оборудовано системами кондиционирования”* | Passive voice and round figure adapt to Russian formal style norms. | LUKOIL |
| | *“Lowering language barriers”* | *“снизить языковые барьеры”* | Maintained due to conceptual clarity and high recognizability. | Samsung |
| **Modulation** | *“The world is failing these children”* | *“Мир терпит неудачу в обеспечении прав этих детей”* | Bureaucratic tone replaces emotional appeal, aligning with Russian institutional language. | UNICEF |
| | *“Stepping into a larger world with the power of Galaxy AI”* | *“открыть для себя безграничное общение с помощью Galaxy AI”* | Abstract metaphor reformulated into a more functional tech-focused message. | Samsung |
| **Adaptation + Expansion** | *“Collateral damage”* | *“стать жертвой бесконтрольных войн”* | Avoids euphemism; reflects ethical preference for explicit suffering in Russian war discourse. | UNICEF |
| **Adaptation + Lexical transformation** | *“More users will be able to step into a larger world”* | *“все больше пользователей смогут открыть для себя безграничное общение”* | Tone softened, less personal, more formal—typical of Russian institutional discourse. | Samsung |
| | *“Children in war zones face a daily struggle for survival that deprives them of a childhood”* | *“Детям в зонах военных действий приходится ежедневно бороться за выживание, и это лишает их детства”* | More impersonal, report-like tone in keeping with Russian humanitarian PR norms. | UNICEF |
| | *“Became winner of ‘Best Social Projects of Russia’ contest”* | *“эта работа отмечена высшей наградой на конкурсе”* | Comparative form removed; elevated declarative tone emphasizes prestige rather than competition. | LUKOIL |

The analysis of bilingual PR texts from Samsung, LUKOIL, and UNICEF shows that translation in PR discourse requires more than linguistic accuracy, it demands strategic cultural positioning and stylistic modulation. While terminological fidelity is largely preserved to ensure institutional coherence, figurative language and emotional tone are often recalibrated to reflect the expectations and norms of Russian PR communication. These findings affirm that bilingual PR translation functions at the intersection of global branding, local resonance, and rhetorical credibility.

## Conclusion

The translation of Public Relations discourse is a complex and multidimensional process that extends far beyond the literal rendering of words. As demonstrated throughout this study, PR communication is characterized by persuasive intent, strategic tone, and terminological specificity, all of which require careful linguistic and cultural mediation in translation. Accurate and effective PR translation depends on a fine balance between consistency in key terminology, adaptation to the sociolinguistic norms of the target culture, and creative strategies to maintain the emotional and rhetorical force of the original message. Through an analysis of corporate and institutional PR materials, this article has highlighted how literal translation, adaptation, the use of glossaries, and neologism each serve specific purposes within the broader framework of intercultural communication. Cultural sensitivity emerges as a crucial factor, particularly in the rendering of metaphors, slogans, and idiomatic expressions, where overly direct translation may obscure intended meanings or alienate local audiences.

Ultimately, successful PR translation is both an art and a science: it demands terminological precision and fidelity to corporate messaging, while also embracing the linguistic creativity necessary to ensure resonance and relevance within the target culture. As global brands continue to navigate multilingual markets, the role of the translator becomes ever more strategic, shaping not just language, but perception, trust, and public connection.

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