

POLISH-ENGLISH TERMINOLOGICAL EQUIVALENCE IN THE LANGUAGE OF POLITICS

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ABSTRACT. In the present study we put forward a translation method that would help ensure the proper rendering of Polish political terminology into English (or any other language since the tenets of this method are universal and can be applied to any pair of languages). The translation procedure is based on findings of Barbara Z. Kielar. We also present the classification of equivalents that are obtained after applying the method. This is followed by considerations on the possibility of attaining particular types of terminological equivalence and an appeal that the presented method be applied universally in order to improve the quality of political translations produced in Poland.

A sample Polish-English glossary of political terms compiled on the basis of the advocated method is enclosed as the "Appendix".

This article is an attempt to suggest a model of a translation procedure that could be employed while deriving English equivalents for Polish political and systemic terms of art. The proposed method can be also used as a tool for the standardisation of translated political terminology counteracting the existence of too many disparate and incorrect English renderings of Polish institutional terms.

We have selected this area of study after observing an increased demand for translations concerning Polish political reality. Greater interest in political translation seems to be connected with the systemic change that has taken place in our country as well as Poland's attempts to join various political and military international structures which, in turn, results in our government's stepping up activities designed to prop-

agate knowledge about the Polish political system. Unfortunately, these propagatory activities are often hindered by the poor quality of the translations offered by official teams of translators and the Polish English-speaking media. The translation problems become particularly vivid in the area of political terminology as the English equivalents to these lexical items often blur the already intricate character of the concepts expressed by means of particular Polish terms. The inappropriateness of the existing equivalents stems from the fact that the translators either develop their idiosyncratic, fragmentary approaches or do not follow any coherent body of rules at all, making indiscriminate choices instead. Therefore, a need arises to take a closer look at these translations, verify them and suggest solutions to certain recurrent problems.

The proposals put forward in the course of this article will be based on the model developed by Polish scholar Barbara Z. Kielar (1973), a very similar approach advocated by Derek Boothman (1983) and reflections on terminological equivalence by Reiner Arntz (1993). The terminology that served as the substance for our observations has been extracted from a variety of sources such as translated Polish constitutional and statutory materials, translated speeches, English-language press published in Poland, specialist dictionaries and English-language textbooks for Polish students of law and political science.

To achieve satisfactory results a translator of terminology referring to the political system of the Republic of Poland (or, for that matter, any other political system) should pursue a formal analysis of the lexical elements constituting the original term in the source language (SL) as well as of those of which the target language (TL) version is composed. Thus, adhering in principle to Kielar's method (1973:7-20) a translator is advised to adopt the following pattern:

1. Determine the relevant characteristics of a given Polish institution or (political) procedure expressed by means of a particular term (i.e. establish its definition).

2. Investigate whether a similar (i.e. displaying at least some characteristics matching those of the Polish concept) institution or procedure exists in the British or American political system (selected owing to the fact that the majority of political systems in the Anglo-Saxon world is based on either the British or American one). These first two steps can be completed by means of a close examination of relevant sources both in SL and TL such as constitutional acts (if they exist); other acts of parliament; legal, institutional and administrative textbooks; parallel texts (i.e. texts describing parallel aspects of SL and TL political realities); specialist and general mono- and bilingual dictionaries.

3. If such an institution exists in the target language political system, its relevant features will be analysed to determine the degree of equivalence between the Polish term and its prospective English rendering which will then be adopted unchanged (if the degree of equivalence is high) or modified according to the varying degree of terminological equivalence.

4. If such an institution is not detected in the TL political system, the translator is advised to suggest his or her own translation that can be based either on the already existing renderings which, however, should be critically evaluated in the process of coining a new term in the TL or on a profound analysis of the semantic properties of the original term and/or its constituent parts determined according to the procedure outlined in step 1) or, preferably, on a combination of both patterns presented above (cf. also Kielar 1973:19). It is worth mentioning here that step 4) is the only procedure that can be adopted when translating the names of political parties.

After employing the method presented above, it is possible to attain different types of terminological equivalents as described by Arntz (1993). As has been already said "(...) the common basis for the determination of equivalence remains the definition; the definition provides the only reliable instrument for the analysis of equivalence" (Picht & Draskau 1985: 105). Thus, the definitions of the concepts we are working with (both in the SL and TL system) will be juxtaposed to determine the degree to which the characteristics of the two terms match one another. Two instances are possible here. The same or similar characteristics are named in both definitions (cf. Arntz 1993:12-3) or the terms from the two languages differ significantly. In extreme cases a given term exists in only one of the languages (ibid.:15). Arntz's distinction generally corresponds to Nida's (1964) two basic types of equivalents known as dynamic equivalents (DE) (evoking a TL response similar to that evoked by the original in the SL audience (cf. Nida 1964:159 and 166)) and formal equivalents (FE) (preserving as many formal traits of an SL message as possible (cf. ibid.:159)). We wish to maintain this distinction throughout for convenience's sake.

If we apply the above provisions to the possible results of comparing the definitions of any two terms of art we will be examining it is clear that the first outcome (i.e. when the terms display the same or similar traits in both languages) will result in dynamic equivalence in translation being achieved. In such a case an SL term will be translated by means of an already existing TL expression familiar to the TL audience. In this way, we will be perfectly able to achieve both "naturalness of expression" and "equivalent effect" (cf. Nida 1964:159). Since, however, the

characteristics of the terms are not always identical there are various degrees of DE that can be attained. The following typology comes from Arntz (1993:13-5):

A. Complete conceptual equivalence takes place when there is a total conceptual identity between the two terms (i.e. when they match in all characteristics) (e.g. *ustawodawstwo* = "legislation").¹ This type of equivalence is, however, relatively rare and rather restricted to those Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) varieties which are characterised by the existence of a so-called "international" terminology (e.g. language of medicine, natural sciences, technology etc.).

B. Conceptual overlapping exists in two basic variations, namely:

(i) *intersection* which occurs when the equivalence of the content denoted by the two terms is large enough for them to be correlated (e.g. *urzędnik państwowy* ≈ "civil servant").² This seems to be quite a common instance of DE in the case of cultural and institutional terms.

(ii) *too small intersection* which means that the two terms cannot be correlated as they do not overlap to an extent which would allow for that (e.g. *kancelaria* ≠ *chancellery*; but *kancelaria* = "office" and *urząd kancelerza* = "chancellery").

C. Inclusion exists when one concept is included in the other and when the second ('larger') term has one or more additional characteristics (e.g. *Prezydent* (RP) < "(US) President"). This is also a very common occurrence in 'cultural' translation.

D. No conceptual equivalence which is particularly the case with false friends whereby the similarity of the terms (often graphical or phonological only) leads a translator to believe that the concepts are similar or identical (e.g. *blok* [polityczny] ≠ *block*).

When the terms are only roughly similar, differ considerably (as in D. above) or when a given term exists only in one of the two systems a translator is as if forced to come up with a formal equivalent to the term that is being translated. This seems to be a natural consequence of the fact that since it is impossible to render a given concept by means of an already existing TL expression, it is necessary to coin an equivalent which *nolens volens* will reflect both the structure and content, at least to some extent, of the original SL term (cf. step 4) in Kielars method). There are several ways of achieving that and Arntz (1993:15-6) presents three basic techniques:

¹ The examples we use correspond to the terms (or their constituent parts) we have encountered while examining the sources listed in the introduction. The direction of the translation will always be: Polish (SL) ⇒ English (TL).

² The symbols used in the above examples (i.e. '=', '≈', '≠' and '<') are taken over from mathematical notation and mean "are equal/is equal to", "is approximately equal to", "are not equal/is not equal to" and "is less than", respectively.

A. Loan words or loan translations. It is a particularly effective procedure when the content of the term is unique for the area in which the SL operates (e.g. Sejm – “Sejm”, Zgromadzenie Narodowe – “National Assembly”).

B. Coining a new term in the target language. It is the best solution to this problem in our opinion as a newly coined term may be able to incorporate some of the grammatical and word-formation TL patterns which, in turn, make it sound more natural and understandable to the TL audience (an equivalent derived in this way can, therefore, be quite similar to a dynamic equivalent) (e.g. Najwyższa Izba Kontroli – “Supreme Board of State Audit”). Such an equivalent is often more informative than, for instance, a loan translation (cf. Najwyższa Izba Kontroli – “Supreme Chamber of Control”).

C. Creating an equivalent paraphrase. This method consists in giving an explanatory paraphrase of an SL term previously unknown in the TL. It may be the most favoured solution from the informative point of view but it runs contrary to the practice of terminology as it would result in substituting a definition for a term.

These three options do not exhaust all the possibilities and can be further expanded by other methods such as Newmark’s widely known and comprehensive translation procedures which will not be discussed here due to spatial limitations. For details the readership is referred to Newmark (1981:75-7).

Theoretically, a translator or terminologist must decide whether he or she wishes to stress the specific character of the SL system (and consequently put forward an FE) or to highlight certain similarities that exist between the two systems in question (and find a DE) (cf. Arntz 1993:17).

However, we have discovered that cases of ‘absolute’ formal (i.e. loan words) or dynamic equivalence (i.e. complete conceptual equivalence) are quite rare and the mixture of both is the most frequent occurrence (e.g. conceptual overlapping and inclusion often have to be further modified to adequately convey the message; sometimes a newly coined term may also draw upon the already existing terminologies). Moreover, we feel that the freedom of a translator is significantly restricted particularly when no direct TL counterpart of a given SL term is available. Then, he or she simply has no choice but to coin a new term in the TL. Similarly, if the translator faces a possibility of using an already existing TL term he or she will rarely decline to take such an opportunity unless specifically asked to do so in order to underline differences between the two systems.

Unfortunately, as stated in the introductory paragraphs, the vast majority of the translations we have examined displays a high degree of carelessness and inconsistency as far as coining renderings for specifically Polish terms is concerned (e.g. "Marshal of the Sejm" for Marszałek Sejmu, "President's Chancellor" for Kancelaria Prezydenta RP, to name the most appalling ones). Likewise, the available English equivalents are often selected at random and without a proper semantic analysis and comparative work (e.g. "voivode" for wojewoda, "Government Presidium" for Prezydium Rządu).

Therefore, greater emphasis should be laid on propagating and implementing a proper translation procedure in which the "equivalence between a Polish (...) term and a relevant English term can be established with the content as tertium comparationis" (Kielar 1977:153). Thus, it would be advisable to first compare the two systems in question, establish corresponding or roughly corresponding institutions, posts or procedures, compare their definitions and then attempt to derive an equivalent which would be not only informative (as we have to realise that the vast majority of the translated political materials [i.e. statutory texts, speeches, party platforms, governmental programmes etc.] will chiefly serve as informative substance for the TL audience) but also meet the TL norms so as to be accepted by the TL receptors. Finally, it is worth noting that a translator would be well-advised not to expect to be able to find a perfect DE or FE but be ready to seek a compromise between these two poles.

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APPENDIX

SAMPLE POLISH-ENGLISH GLOSSARY OF POLITICAL TERMS³

Centralny Urząd Planowania – Central Planning Office	Ministerstwo Gospodarki – Ministry of Economy
decyzja administracyjna – administrative decision	Ministerstwo Gospodarki Przestrzennej i Budownictwa – Ministry of Urban and Rural Planning and Construction
dokument do użytku wewnętrznego – restricted document	Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki – Ministry of Culture and Art
gmina – commune	Ministerstwo Łączności – Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications
głos (~ nieważny, ważny) – vote (valid, invalid ~)	Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej – Ministry of National Defence
głosowanie przez podniesienie ręki – vote by show of hands	Ministerstwo Ochrony Środowiska, Zasobów Naturalnych i Leśnictwa – Ministry of Environmental Protection, Natural Resources and Forestry
Główny Urząd Cel – Central Customs Office	Ministerstwo Pracy i Polityki Socjalnej – Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Główny Urząd Statystyczny – Central Statistical Office	Ministerstwo Przekształceń Własnościowych – Ministry of Privatisation
inicjatywa ustawodawcza – legislative initiative	Ministerstwo Przemysłu i Handlu – Ministry of Industry and Trade
kancelaria – office	Ministerstwo Rolnictwa i Gospodarki Żywnościowej – Ministry of Agriculture and Food Economy
Kancelaria Prezesa Rady Ministrów – Government Office	Ministerstwo Skarbu Państwa – Ministry of the Treasury
Kancelaria Sejmu – Sejm Office	Ministerstwo Sprawiedliwości – Ministry of Justice
Kancelaria Senatu – Senate Office	Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych – Ministry of Internal Affairs
klub parlamentarny – parliamentary party	Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji – Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration
Komendant Główny Policji – Chief Police Commissioner	Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych – Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Komitet Ekonomiczny Rady Ministrów – Council of Ministers Economic Committee	Ministerstwo Transportu i Gospodarki Morskiej – Ministry of Transportation and Maritime Economy
Konferencja Episkopatu Polski – Conference of the Polish Episcopate	
Konwent Seniorów – Sejm Council of Seniors	
Senate Council of Seniors	
Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji – National Radio and Television Council	
lustrować – to vet	
Mała Konstytucja – Interim Constitution	
Marszałek Sejmu – speaker of the Sejm	
Marszałek Senatu – speaker of the Senate	
Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej – Ministry of National Education	
Ministerstwo Finansów – Ministry of Finance	

³ This list has been compiled in accordance with the provisions of the method presented above. The terms have been selected from a much larger corpus of examples gathered in the course of preparatory research we have carried out. We have decided to analyse the terms that are used to refer to the most important institutions of Polish political life and, hence, are frequently translated into English, or the terms whose TL renditions are diverse and arouse controversy as far as their lexical or semantic correctness is concerned.

- Ministerstwo Współpracy Gospodarczej z Zagranicą** – Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations
- Ministerstwo Zdrowia i Opieki Społecznej** – Ministry of Health and Social Security
- Naczelny Sąd Administracyjny** – High Administrative Court
- Najwyższa Izba Kontroli** – Supreme Board of State Audit
- nomenklatura** – 1) establishment
2) terminology, nomenclature
- nowela do ustawy, nowelizacja ustawy** – amendment
- obwód głosowania** – polling district
- odpowiedzialność konstytucyjna** – constitutional accountability
- Ogólnopolskie Porozumienie Związków Zawodowych** – All-Poland Trade Unions Alliance
- okręg wyborczy** – constituency
- ordynacja wyborcza** – voting regulations
- ordzie** (~ o stanie państwa) – address (State of the Nation ~)
- Państwowa Inspekcja Handlu** – State Trade Inspectorate
- Państwowa Inspekcja Pracy** – State Labour Inspectorate
- Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza** – State Electoral Commission
- partia polityczna** – political party
- Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność** – Solidarity Electoral Action
- Krajowa Partia Emerytów i Rencistów** – National Pensioners Party
- Krajowe Porozumienie Emerytów i Rencistów RP** – National Alliance of the Pensioners of the Republic of Poland
- Liga Republikańska** – Republican League
- Narodowo-Chrześcijańsko-Demokratyczny Blok dla Polski** – National-Christian-Democratic Bloc for Poland
- Partia Konserwatywna** – Conservative Party
- Polska Partia Socjalistyczna** – Polish Socialist Party
- Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe** – Polish Peasants Party
- Porozumienie Centrum** – Centre Alliance
- Ruch Odbudowy Polski** – Movement for the Reconstruction of Poland
- Socjaldemokracja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej** – Social Democratic Party of the Republic of Poland
- Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej** – Democratic Left Alliance
- Unia Polityki Realnej** – Realpolitik Union
- Unia Pracy** – Labour Union
- Unia Prawicy Rzeczypospolitej** – Union of the Right of the Republic of Poland
- Unia Wolności** – Freedom Union
- Zjednoczenie Chrześcijańsko-Narodowe** – Christian-National Union
- Polska Agencja Prasowa** – Polish Press Agency
- poprawka** – amendment
- porządek obrad** – agenda
- poseł** – deputy, Member of the Sejm, Member of Parliament
- poseł sprawozdawca** – Rapporteur Deputy
- posiedzenie plenarne** – plenary meeting
- postępowanie wyborcze** – electoral procedure
- powiat** – district
- Prezes Narodowego Banku Polski** – Governor of the National Bank of Poland
- Prezes Rady Ministrów** – Prime Minister, premier
- prezydent miasta** – Mayor
- prezydium rządu** – Cabinet
- Program Powszechnej Prywatyzacji** – Mass Privatisation Programme
- Prokurator Generalny** – Attorney General
- racja stanu** – raison d'état
- Rada Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego** – National Security Council
- rada gminy** – commune council
- Rada Ministrów** – Council of Ministers
- regulamin Sejmu** – Sejm rules of order
- regulamin Senatu** – Senate rules of order
- Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich** – Ombudsman
- Rzeczpospolita Polska (1918-1939)** – Polish Republic
- Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa** – Polish People's Republic
- Rzeczpospolita Polska (obecnie)** – Republic of Poland
- samorząd terytorialny** – local government
- Sąd Najwyższy** – Supreme Court
- sąd rejonowy** – district court
- sąd wojewódzki** – province court

- sejmowa komisja nadzwyczajna** – Sejm special committee
- senator** – senator, Member of the Senate
- Skarb Państwa** – Treasury
- Służba Bezpieczeństwa** – Security Service
- społeczeństwo** (~ obywatelskie) – society, people, nation (civic society)
- Szef Kancelarii Prezesa Rady Ministrów** – Head of the Government Office
- Szef Kancelarii Prezydenta RP** – Head of the President's Office
- Szef Kancelarii Sejmu** – Head of the Sejm Office
- Szef Kancelarii Senatu** – Head of the Senate Office
- Szef Sztabu Genralnego Wojska Polskiego** – Polish Army Chief of Staff
- Szef Urzędu Rady Ministrów** – Head of the Council of Ministers Office
- traktat** (~ o przyjaźni i stosunkach dobrośasiędzkich) – treaty (~ on friendship and good neighbourly relations)
- Trybunał Konstytucyjny** – Constitutional Tribunal
- Trybunał Stanu** – Tribunal of State
- uchwała** – resolution
- Urząd Antymonopolowy** – Antimonopoly Office
- Urząd Kultury Fizycznej i Turystyki** – Physical Education and Tourism Office
- Urząd Ochrony Państwa** – State Security Office
- urząd pracy** – job centre
- Urząd Rady Ministrów** – Council of Ministers Office
- urząd wojewódzki** – province governors office
- urzędnik państwowy** – civil servant
- ustawa** – act of parliament
- ustawa lustracyjna** – vetting act
- Wicemarszałek Sejmu** – deputy speaker of the Sejm
- Wicemarszałek Senatu** – deputy speaker of the Senate
- większość** (~ bezwzględna, kwalifikowana, zwykła) – majority (~ absolute, qualified, simple)
- wojewoda** – province governor
- województwo** – province
- Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych** – Social Security Agency
- Zastępca Prezesa Rady Ministrów** – Deputy Prime Minister, deputy premier
- Zgromadzenie Narodowe** – National Assembly