

*M.L. Pylypchuk, Senior Lecturer
O.O. Studolyak,
(National Aviation University, Ukraine)*

Idioms in Aviation Discourse

The article deals with the use of idioms in aviation discourse and difficulties that can be encountered during the process of their translation from English into Ukrainian and vice-a-versa as well as finding out what kind of effects they have on the development of the professional language culture and intercultural dialogue.

Effective intercultural interaction includes the understanding of other people's thoughts, methods of tackling business problems, and mastering speech culture. The term "professional language culture" stands for the appropriate use and understanding of language means according to the situation of professional discourse. Discourse and text are language occurrences. The first one is in stark contrast to the second one since it includes a text and possesses extra-textual factors. In other words, discourse is linked to the communication act and to the realization of the particular communicative aim [1].

Successful professional discourse requires the use of terminology, phrasal verbs, idioms, and many other language means. Every language possesses its own set of idioms related to different areas of activity and the sphere of aviation is not an exception [3].

From the perspective of the aviation sphere, phraseology, particularly, the use of idioms, is rather important. English has been a lingua franca for a while now but the language of air interaction is rather special and delicate. Idioms are used in aviation discourse on a daily basis, in routine situations, because they promote mutual understanding and clarity of communication between both native and non-native speakers.

Sometimes it is even difficult to believe that aviation has reached such a great level we can observe today. There is no wonder that airmen are considered a separate population group with its own rules and communication particularities. Today's aviation discourse appears to be a frequent subject of the majority of linguistic studies due to the big number of language means, particularly, idioms, that it possesses. Notwithstanding the fact, those idioms are expressions that have a metaphorical meaning, they are frequently used in aviation discourse. We can encounter them in aviation texts, articles. Idiomatic expressions can also be used in oral interaction, particularly, in pilots' communication with each other and ATC (Air Traffic Control).

The key function of idioms is arranging our thoughts and ideas. Since the meaning of idiomatic expressions cannot be understood from the direct meaning of the single words constituting them, so there are some obstacles in the processes of translating and understanding them. People of different countries use completely different expressions to render the same meaning, that is why a translator is supposed to have a good deal of knowledge of both the source and the target languages, cultural differences and be ready to tackle the problem of finding an efficient equivalent.

However, in most cases, it is not possible to find a proper equivalent for idiomatic expressions. Hence, a translator should adjust a translation of these language means to the target audience on the basis of their background knowledge and cultural particularities for a better understanding. There are a majority of cases when idioms are used in the aviation context. The examples are taken from the FluentPilot aviation podcast [2]; translation is provided by the authors: “*The jet engine appeared to be one of the biggest milestone in the aviation history. It’s reliable, it’s simple and airplanes can fly faster and higher with them.*” – «Поява повітряно-реактивного двигуна стала проривом в історії авіації. Двигуни такого типу надійні, мають просту конструкцію, що дозволяє літакам, які ними оснащені, літати швидше й на більших висотах.» In this context “a milestone” has nothing to do with a stone. Instead it stands for “an exceptionally significant event or situation in someone’s life.”

One of the frequently used idiomatic expression in aviation is “to be on the safe side” which means “to avoid potential problems.” For example: “*The total fuel on board calculated by the dispatch officer was OK but to be on the safe side we decided to tank an extra ton of fuel. And it turned to be a smart decision.*” – «Загальна кількість палива на борту ЛА, розрахована диспетчером, була достатньою, однак про всяк випадок ми вирішили заправити ЛА додатковою тонною палива, що виявилось розумним рішенням».

To highlight a significant part of an effort or an important step towards achieving something the idiom “half the battle” is applied. For example: “*Getting ICAO aviation English certificate is half the battle of getting hired by an airline.*” – «Отримання сертифікату ІКАО з авіаційної англійської – це запорука успіху у справі працевлаштування в авіакомпанії.» This idiom stems from an older proverb “the first blow is half the battle”, but nevertheless it is successfully used in the aviation context. Let’s get down to another example. “*Reconfiguring the fuel pumps was half the battle as the fuel leak was no longer a factor and they managed to safely make it to the destination airport.*” – «Реконфігурація паливних насосів стала запорукою успіху, адже витік палива більше не загрожував безпеці і вони змогли безпечно долетіти до аеропорту призначення».

The idiom “to be on the same page” is used in both everyday communication and aviation discourse. For example: “*Before the flight, pilots and cabin crew brief in the cabin – this gets everyone on the same page for the time of the intended flight.*” – «Пілоти й бортпровідники проводять інструктаж перед польотом, тому що це налаштовує всіх на одну хвилю впродовж запланованого часу польоту.» As we can see the meaning of a previously mentioned idiom is “to think in the same manner or to have the same understanding of something”.

The other idiom used in aviation discourse is “around-the-clock” which means “all day long”. For example: “*The maintenance crew of this airline provides the customers with around-the-clock support.*” – «Бригада технічного обслуговування цієї авіакомпанії надає своїм клієнтам цлодобову підтримку».

There is one more idiom that is frequently used when we feel like making ourselves clear in a particular communication act, especially when our opinion is different. This idiom is “just for the record”. For example: “*The pilots of Airplane A confused the traffic controller’s instructions but just for the record, the flight crew of Airplane B didn’t do much to minimize risks – they could have adjusted the taxing*

speed as visibility was seriously impaired by that heavy fog” – «Пілоту літака А не слідували інструкціям диспетчера, але, до вашого відома, льотний екіпаж літака Б не доклав багато зусиль, щоб звести ризики до мінімуму – вони могли регулювати швидкість руління, у зв’язку з тим, що густий туман погіршив загальну видимість».

The last but not the least idiomatic expressions that are worth our attention are “*in a nut shell*” and “*to wrap it up*”. Basically, they are regarded as discourse markers. They are great to introduce our concluding marks. For example, we are going through a lengthy story of what it takes to become a pilot and we need to say about all the training, the ground school, the English certificate, etc. And in the end we say “*so in a nut shell it is very complicated path that consumes lots of your time and your money. So you got to be really passionate about it in order not to give up halfway.*” – «*Коротко кажучи, цей шлях є не з легких, адже він вимагає багато часу й коштів, тому потрібно бути заклятим фанатиком цієї справи, щоб не опустити руки на півдорозі*».

Conclusions

A study of Aviation English involves not only a perfect knowledge of professional terminology but also sifting through language stereotypes, typical conversational formulas, phraseology, particularly, the use of idioms, which have a universal character and hardly depend on specialization but make our communication more idiomatic. The right use of language means promotes more efficient communication, especially in aviation discourse, and improves an intercultural dialogue. A good translator needs to spend a good deal of time on a proper translation of idiomatic expressions in order to adjust them to the target culture and target audience.

References

1. Чуксина О.В. Совершенствование культуры профессиональной речи при обучении техническому переводу в авиационном вузе // Интернет-журнал «Мир науки» 2017, Том 5, номер 6 <https://mir-nauki.com/PDF/88PDMN617.pdf> 1-7 с.
2. Aviation English. ICAO Level 5. Idioms- Vocab Tips. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3LI59qhUQ> (дата звернення: 31.03.2021).
3. Pylypchuk M., Palii V. The importance of subject matter knowledge in aviation translation / Pylypchuk M., Palii V. // Abstracts of the 5th International scientific and practical conference “Science and Education: Problems, Prospects and Innovations”. CPN Publishing Group. Kyoto, Japan. February 4-6, 2021. P. 174-178.