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OFFICIAL AND BUSINESS DISCOURSE THROUGH THE SCOPE OF TRANSLATION STUDIES

ОФІЦІЙНО-ДІЛОВИЙ ДИСКУРС КРІЗЬ ПРИЗМУ ПЕРЕКЛАДОЗНАВСТВА

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The paper offers a comprehensive account of an official and business discourse as a highly regulated communicative realm characterized by precision, formality, and adherence to institutional norms. This study examines official and business discourse through the lens of translation studies, emphasizing strategies for achieving functional equivalence rather than literal translation.

The evidence collected allows for a conclusion that rendering such texts from English into Ukrainian poses significant challenges due to differences in structural, stylistic, lexico-semantic, and grammatical features.

Structural features such as the arrangement of permanent or temporary compositional elements remain unchanged in translation, as they pertain to the inherent organization of the text rather than its linguistic expression. Stylistically, both languages maintain formality, yet Ukrainian discourse demonstrates greater rigidity and reliance on standardized formulas, while English favors concise phrasing and modal politeness. Lexico-semantic peculiarities enclose terminological consistency, and set expressions, which demand careful selection of appropriate equivalents. Grammatical differences, that is sentence complexity, passive constructions, extensive use of modal verbs, tense choice, and nominalization, further complicate translation, necessitating syntactic restructuring – thus, require adaptation to the target language's conventions.

The research argues that successful translation of official-business texts depends on preserving legal and pragmatic accuracy, and stylistic norms rather than word-for-word rendering. By analyzing these features, the paper contributes to developing practical guidelines for translators, ensuring clarity, professionalism, and compliance with institutional standards in both English to Ukrainian and Ukrainian to English translation.

Key words: official and business discourse, translation, translation transformation, translation techniques, terminology.

Наукова розвідка комплексно досліджує офіційно-діловий дискурс як суворо регламентовану сферу комунікації, що характеризується точністю, формальністю та дотриманням інституційних норм. Дослідження аналізує офіційно-діловий дискурс крізь призму перекладознавства, акцентуючи увагу на стратегіях досягнення функціональної еквівалентності, а не буквального перекладу.

На основі аналізу отриманих даних можна зробити висновок, що переклад таких текстів з англійської мови на українську є досить складним завданням через відмінності в структурних, стилістичних, лексико-семантичних та граматичних характеристиках.

Структурні особливості, такі як розташування сталих або змінних композиційних елементів, залишаються без змін у перекладі, оскільки вони стосуються внутрішньої організації тексту, а не його мовного вираження. Стилістично обидві мови зберігають формальність, проте український дискурс демонструє більшу жорсткість і залежність від стандартизованих формул, тоді як англійська мова віддає перевагу лаконічним формулюванням і модальній ввічливості. Лексико-семантичні особливості стосуються термінологічної узгодженості й усталених виразів, що вимагають ретельного підбору відповідних еквівалентів. Граматичні відмінності, а саме складність речень, пасивні конструкції, широке використання модальних дієслів, вибір часу та номіналізація, ще більше ускладнюють переклад, вимагаючи синтаксичної реструктуризації, а отже, адаптації до норм мови перекладу.

Дослідження доводить, що успішний переклад офіційно-ділових текстів залежить від збереження юридичної та прагматичної точності, а також стилістичних норм, а не від дослівного перекладу. Аналізуючи ці особливості, стаття сприяє розробці практичних рекомендацій для перекладачів, забезпечуючи чіткість, професіоналізм та відповідність інституційним стандартам як в англійсько-українському, так і в українсько-англійському перекладі.

Ключові слова: офіційно-діловий дискурс, переклад, перекладацька трансформація, перекладацькі техніки, термінологія.

Stating the Problem. Among the various domains of translation practice, the translation of official documents arguably represents one of the most frequently encountered and socially significant activities. Individuals, institutions, and governments routinely engage with documentation that requires precise translation – be it a personal authentication certificate or a legal contract. This prevalence is largely attributed to the increasing mobility of the populace, the expansion of international cooperation, and the growing demand for legal and procedural transparency across linguistic boundaries.

Official and business discourse text translation is widely regarded as «an extremely constrained form of translation» [1, p. 1] stipulated by rigid norms and standards. It is performed by certified professionals called sworn translators (literally meaning «given under oath»), which only underscores that errors and ambiguity in translation may lead to legal consequences. Nevertheless, transgression of the norms is not that infrequent here. Translators, when faced with terminological lacunae or institutional discrepancies, may resort to transcreation or any creative strategy to achieve accuracy. Additionally, official translation lacks a clearly delineated definition, as it intersects with oral interpretation, legal and judicial translation.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The phenomenon of official and business discourse has begun to garner interest from scholars as a distinct object of linguistic analysis, reflecting the specific features of communication in this sphere. Noteworthy contributions have been made by R. Asensio [1], F. Burton, P. Carlen [2], O. Levchuk [3], and O. Muhalets [4], whose works provide in-depth analyses of English official and business discourse. However, these papers do not address the peculiarities of Ukrainian texts under consideration, neither do they provide a comparative outline.

This research aims to investigate structural, stylistic, lexico-semantic, and grammatical features of the texts of English and Ukrainian official and business discourse that should be the primary focus for their translation from English into Ukrainian and vice versa. This pilot study takes a comprehensive approach to the normative nature of official and business texts and elucidates translation techniques and transformations for overcoming the most relevant translation challenges.

The objectives of this study are to 1) examine the notion of official and business discourse, 2) identify its specific features (structural and linguistic ones), and 3) outline techniques and transformations used in the translation of English-language documentation of various types and genres into Ukrainian and vice versa.

Results and discussion. The term «official and business discourse» is as vague and fuzzy as the word «discourse». To begin with, discourse has not acquired a unified definition yet despite being under close scrutiny within linguistics since the 1960s and 1970s. Overall, the interpretations adduced by different scholars essentially concerns an understanding of discourse as written and spoken text produced in the context of a certain activity used for meaningful communication [5]. In other words, discourse can be related to as language in use, and its analysis, according to Canning and Walker, reveals «how linguistic forms *function* when they are *used* in different contexts» [6, p. 23]. Drawing on the aforementioned statement, official and business discourse can be interpreted as *talk, text and discursive practice used in the official settings*. It is a type of institutional communication characterised by formal tone and standardised language.

However, heterogeneity of official and business discourse looms behind its definition. Though this type of discourse is goal-oriented, it exploits various registers, it can be oral or written, which inevitably leads to stylistic shifts. It can be formal or informal depending on the communication channel (verbal or non-verbal). It can be conducted due to administrative, legal, diplomatic, and commercial purposes. Such a diverse spectrum of instances entails the impossibility to fully capture all linguistic nuances across different texts. Now, inherently the communicative purpose of a legal contract differs significantly from that of a press release or the power of attorney. While this study offers an in-depth analysis, it also recognizes certain constraints.

Official business texts are typically characterised by conservatism, traditional modes of expression, correspondence to the norms, precise and concise formulations, authenticity, emotional neutrality, and information simplicity. Such documents contain argumentation and conviction, as well as results prediction. All these features arise from the nature and function of communication within a formal environment – specifically, its binding nature and authoritative tone [4], which serve to establish clear expectations, enforce compliance, and maintain institutional order.

Official business texts possess a number of specific features that must be taken into account during translation. Firstly, there are ***structural*** peculiarities. Any official paper, even an oral text, has a specific composition. The division into structural parts varies depending on the type of text with some requisites being permanent and some temporary. Among permanent compositional elements are usually the name of a document, the emblem of an enterprise, the body of a text, indication of dates, place of issue, signatures and seals. The variables include the witness mark of a copy, names of addressees, a reference number, a preamble, a visa, the name of a structural subdivision, a watermark, etc.

Conventionality of expression and structural integrity should be maintained in translation to ensure the same legal and procedural value. The structure, layout and formatting of a document should be kept consistent. Some parts of a document, however, require placeholders in the translation. For instance, copying images of seals and signatures is unacceptable. Instead, square brackets (or other symbols) are to be used to indicate where these elements appear in the original document: <*підпис*>, <*печатка*>, and similarly <*Coat of Arms of Ukraine*>. Additional explication may be applied upon request, as in the following example: *<official round seal>:/*Kyiv*Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine*/*Kyiv National Linguistic University*/*Identification code 02125987*/.*

Additionally, the translated output should include several more structural elements missing in the original, namely translator's full name, their signature, and contact information of the translation agency to ensure traceability and legal validity. What is more, it is customary to include a certification statement: *I hereby certify that…*; *by this we declare the accuracy of the translation of the text from … into …* Without the legal procedure of authentication, the translation does not have any legal force.

In the translation of official business texts maintaining a formal ***style*** and tone is paramount. However, some stylistic features can have slight variations depending on the sub-style of official papers. Texts pertaining to official and business discourse can be roughly classified into:

− legislative (laws, codes, regulations, constitutions, decrees, and other normative legal documents),

− diplomatic (international relations, treaties, diplomatic notes, conventions, communiqué, protocols, and official statements),

− administrative and clerical (official correspondence, orders, statements, reports, instructions, and internal documents of institutions),

− business (contracts, memos), and

− personal (private certificates, diplomas, autobiography, motivation letters).

Some linguists single out juridical and military varieties [4, p. 5], but this division seems to be redundant here since the style in question is applied across nearly every sphere of life, which presupposes distinguishing banking, industrial, and other sub-styles as well. The aim of this article is to consider the general features of official and business discourse.

Communication in official and business style, being inherently binding, is intended to modify the conduct of the parties involved, namely individuals, citizens, companies, institutions, and states. The legal force of these texts is upheld by:

− Performatives (that is performative nouns and verbs expressing a high degree of responsibility encoded, e.g., *agreement*, *request*, *recognize*, *guarantee*), or performative utterances changing the social reality (*I hereby grant the power of attorney to… – цією довіреністю уповноважую…*),

− Highly literally formal words (among such lofty bookish words are *to proceed* (instead of *to go*), *to be determined* (instead of *to wish*), to assist (instead of *to help*),

− Absence of any expressive means or stylistic devices (such as idioms and epithets),

− The encoded character of language (that is the use of contractions, e.g. *RNOKPP* (*РНОКПП – Реєстраційний номер облікової картки платника податків*), Co. (*company – компанія*), *Ref. No*. (*Reference number* – in Ukrainian it usually stands for the symbol «№»). Shortenings should not be ambiguous, though.

− Speech etiquette formulas namely greetings, farewells, gratitude, refusals, etc. (*on behalf of*, *I beg to inform you*, *Dear Sirs*),

− Persuasive constructions (*according to employment order – наказ про зарахування, grounds for making record: decision on state registration of rights, titles and encumbrances*, *index number – підстава внесення запису: рішення про державну реєстрацію прав та їх обстежень, індексний номер*),

− First-person pronouns *I* or *we*,

− The deliberate preservation of archaisms (*therein*, *thereof*).

Notwithstanding the aforementioned stylistic features, sometimes violations can occur so as to add a personal touch in modern corporate communication (e.g., *Thank you for choosing us!* at the end of a formal letter). At times unintentional violations result from overuse of complex wording that obscures the meaning (*pursuant to the circumstances that are mentioned above* instead of *in this case*).

It should be noted that there are differences in stylistic tendencies between English and Ukrainian discourse, particularly concerning formality. Ukrainian demonstrates greater rigidity relying on established formulas, while English prioritizes modal politeness. For instance, in Ukrainian to dictate the action the imperative mood is used quite often (*просимо надати*), while English opts for polite auxiliary verbs (*Could you please provide…*).

Lexico-semantic features of official and business texts comprise subject-field specific terminology and set expressions, clichés. A good command of such lexical units ensures official tone of the paper, its uniformity and precision. Commonly used clichés and formulaic expressions, such as *subject to approval*, *hereinafter referred to as*, or *per your request*, reinforce clarity and objectivity in official documentation. Such expressions are typically binomial or trinomial. These are either pared lexical units joined by a conjunction (*rules and regulations*) or expressions with prepositions (*in lieu of*).

Every official text has its own specific terminology that should be utilized. Such specialized terminology is distinct from everyday language: *litigant* is an example of professional jargon denoting a person involved in a legal action. Overall, the terms of official discourse can be divided into simple (*title – право власності*), derived (*the consignment – партія товару*), compound (*ownership – власність*), and terminological word combinations (*extract index number – індексний номер витягу*, *at maturity – у день погашення*). Regarding the part of speech, terms in English official discourse mainly function as nouns and verbs (*to serve and avail – для подання*, *in kind – в натуральній формі*). In contrast, adjectives are less frequent (*primary – основна*, *total area – загальна площа*).

Texts of official and business discourse strive for high lexical density, particularly in written reports. This is achieved not only through nominalization, but also by using word families (*product – production – producer*).

One more peculiar feature is that numbers are as a rule conveyed in words: *The sewed together, numbered and sealed pages total 2 (two).* In such a way any hypothetical misreading is eliminated.

Lexical aspects of translating the texts of the discourse under consideration include the following:

1) Avoiding synonyms

When translating, it is usually recommended to avoid tautology, however in official and business discourse the usage of synonyms is highly restricted. For instance, the term *articles* in invoices should be rendered as *товари*, and should not be replaced by contextual synonyms, such as *артикули*, *вироби*, *предмети* or *продукти*. Quite often the seemingly synonymous words have different referents and legally denote different things (*акції* and *паї*, *суспільний* and *громадський*).

2) The usage of corresponding borrowings in Ukrainian

In order to preserve the integrity of the native language, translators typically prioritize the use of inherently Ukrainian lexical units. Nevertheless, within the framework of official and business discourse, the preference is usually given to loanwords, as in the following: *outsourcing – аутсорсинг* (instead of *підрядництво*), *promoter – промоутер* (instead of *рекламіст*), *the Lend-Lease Act – Закон про ленд-ліз* (instead of *Закон про передачу майна в оренду*), with the exception of common vocabulary when native Ukrainian words should be used (*випадок* instead of *інцидент*, *звертатися* instead of *апелювати*).

3) The usage of lexical substitutions

Lexical substitutions are needed as there are differences in a semantic range of English and Ukrainian words, such as *facilities*, *activity*, *power*, etc. (*lending activity – кредитування*, *business activity – підприємницька діяльність*).

4) The choice of lofty words and phrases

In both languages bookish words are an indispensable part of official style. They help the binding force encoded in them. For example, *to inform – довести до відома*, *to assist – надати допомогу*.

5) The usage of calque

In translation calques help retain the conceptual structure of the source language and its clarity: *agreed price – узгоджена ціна*, *bilateral trade – двостороння торгівля*, *creditworthiness – платоспроможність*.

6) The usage of modulation or description

When calques do not faithfully convey the intended meaning, modulation or description can serve the goal: *notice of assessment – сповіщення про розмір податку*, *employees affected – ті працівники, які підлягають скороченню*.

The stereotypical nature of official and business communication is reflected in its **grammatical** features as well. Official documents adhere to precise grammatical norms that ensure a high degree of authority. Grammatical specificities lie in:

− The extensive use of modal verbs *shall*, *may*, *must*, *will* that express necessity, obligation, permission, that is deontic modality [7], a legal duty, and prohibition.

− Complicated syntax referring to sentence structures with multiple enumerations, intricate subordinate parts beginning with a new paragraph; sentences with participial and infinitival constructions. This complexity arises from information density.

− Tense restrictions (mostly present and future tenses are used to convey factual information or changes of status occurring in the future).

− I-statements that establish legal intent, accountability, and help avoid misinterpretation (*I, the undersigned, being a shareholder of … with its registered office in … hereby represent that … – Я, що нижче підписався, будучи акціонером … із зареєстрованим офісом у …, цим засвідчую, що…*).

− Passive voice, which on the contrary, is an agent-suppressing structure that creates objective tone and aligns with the norms of official templates and forms (*has been awarded*).

These grammatical characteristics cause certain difficulties when rendering them into the Ukrainian language. The general rule is to stick to the original as close as possible with minimum transformations.

The articles

(I) remain under the control of customs authority…

(II) do not enter into the commerce…

(III) have not been subjected to operations other than loading…

Товари

(I) залишаються під митним контролем…

(II) не вступають у торгівлю…

(III) не зазнавали жодних операцій, окрім завантаження…

Such an approach ensures a high degree of authority and the legal force of a document. However, some changes are inevitable: the order of words can be changed, and grammatical structures can be substituted with the aim of preserving the meaning and style. As demonstrated above, the tenses and structure in the sentences are identical, but the prepositional phrase *under the control of customs authority* in Ukrainian has a more commonly used equivalent *під митним контролем*, though it can be translated word for word. The exceptions from general rules may be observed when rendering the infinitive, the gerund, and the participle. One example of this is when the infinitive is not preserved in translation and instead a noun or present tense is used, e.g. *to safeguard this right – до забезпечення цього права*.

The inversion and structures like *neither … nor* should be kept in translation so as to maintain the original tone. The same applies to complicated structures that should remain intact. In contrast, some grammatical aspects like one-word predicates require split forms in translation: *to supervise – здійснювати нагляд* (not *наглядати*).

Conclusions. When translating texts of official and business, the primary focus should be on preserving the functional equivalence rather than literal wording. This requires attention to structural, stylistic, lexico-semantic and grammatical features. Successful translation in this domain is about conveying meaning, tone, and legal/business precision in a way that aligns with the conventions of the target language. This approach guarantees clarity, professionalism, and compliance with official style requirements.

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