



ТЕОРІЯ ТА МЕТОДИКА НАВЧАННЯ

УДК 378

DOI <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15596109>

Common difficulties of translating business correspondence in the training of pre-service philologists

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Прийнято: 19.05.2025 | Опубліковано: 29.05.2025

***Abstract.** This article investigates the multifaceted difficulties encountered in the written translation of texts within the official-business style, with particular attention to English-Ukrainian and Ukrainian-English translation. While translation studies have addressed various isolated challenges, there remains a significant lack of a structured methodological classification for translation difficulties, which can be used for training pre-service translators. This research addresses this gap by proposing a methodological typology grounded in linguistic, psycholinguistic, and stylistic analyses. Drawing upon previous studies and comparative insights, the paper outlines four stages of the written translation process: source-text analysis, translation realization, target-text evaluation, and editing. Each stage is associated with specific challenges, including semantic ambiguities, genre-stylistic discrepancies, sociocultural mismatches, and language-*



specific conventions. The typology reflects both the receptive and productive nature of translation, recognizing how directionality affects difficulty types. By systematizing these difficulties, the proposed classification enhances both theoretical understanding and practical training in translation. This framework provides a foundation for designing targeted pedagogical strategies and exercises, thereby improving the competence of philology students in producing functionally and stylistically accurate translations in official-business contexts. The study ultimately contributes to bridging the gap between translation theory and educational practice.

Keywords: *methodological typology of written translation difficulties, source text, stages of written translation, target text, written translation difficulties.*

Поширені труднощі перекладу ділового листування у підготовці майбутніх філологів

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Анотація. *У статті досліджено багатовимірні труднощі, що виникають у процесі письмового перекладу текстів офіційно-ділового стилю в напрямках англійсько-українського та українсько-англійського перекладу. Попри те, що проблематика перекладацьких труднощів розглядається в численних дослідженнях, на сьогодні відчутно бракує систематизованої методичної класифікації цих труднощів. У даному дослідженні*

запропоновано таку типологію письмових перекладацьких труднощів, що базується на лінгвістичному, психолінгвістичному та стилістичному аналізі. В основу класифікації покладено чотири етапи перекладацького процесу: аналіз вихідного тексту, реалізація перекладу, оцінювання цільового тексту та його редагування. Кожен із цих етапів супроводжується низкою специфічних труднощів, зокрема семантичними, жанрово-стилістичними розбіжностями, соціокультурними невідповідностями та мовними конвенціями. Запропонована типологія враховує як рецептивний, так і продуктивний аспекти перекладу, а також вплив напрямку перекладу на характер труднощів. Систематизація перекладацьких труднощів сприяє поглибленню теоретичного розуміння процесу перекладу та вдосконаленню навчальних практик. Розроблена класифікація слугує підґрунтям для створення цілеспрямованих педагогічних стратегій і вправ, що сприятимуть формуванню у студентів-філологів здатності створювати функціонально адекватні й стилістично релевантні переклади в офіційно-діловому дискурсі.

Ключові слова: методологічна типологія перекладацьких труднощів письмового перекладу, вихідний текст, етапи письмового перекладу, цільовий текст, труднощі письмового перекладу.

Problem statement. The intercultural communicative model of written translation developed and presented in our previous research, along with the identified features of English and Ukrainian texts within the official-business style, substantiates the claim that pre-service philologists may face a range of translation-related difficulties when working with such texts. Given the lack of comprehensive linguistic and methodological studies on this issue, the primary aim of the present article is to conduct a thorough analysis of these difficulties and to develop a systematic methodological classification. The proposed typology, in turn, may serve as a theoretical foundation for the creation of effective exercises designed to

cultivate professional skills in bidirectional written translation of official-business texts among philology students.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The classification of translation difficulties is based on the analysis of results from bilingual comparative studies and monolingual descriptions of the languages in contact, particularly in the field of functional stylistics. The development of the typology of written translation difficulties relied on linguistic studies of the English official-business style, studies of the Ukrainian official-business style, bilingual comparative studies, analyses of typical translation difficulties and errors, as well as psychological studies concerning translation challenges.

A review of scholarly literature reveals a lack of consensus among researchers regarding the essence of translation difficulties. Each scholar interprets the notion differently, resulting in the absence of a clear and cohesive understanding – both in translation theory and practice – of what constitutes difficulties in written translation. Є. Makarenko, for example, associates translation difficulties with the challenge of identifying and conveying the genre-stylistic dominant in the translation [1]. Some authors, for instance, associate written translation difficulties with the challenge of finding suitable lexical equivalents [2, 3]. Other scholars identify translation difficulties in segments of the source text (ST) where the words, phrases, grammatical constructions, or entire utterances used to express particular communicative intentions lack direct equivalents in the target language and therefore require transformations [4, 5, 6]. Some researchers extend the scope of translation difficulties to include not only non-equivalent units but also partially equivalent ones, thereby producing comprehensive lists of lexical-grammatical difficulties [7, 8]. S. Campbell emphasizes that translation into a foreign language significantly differs from translation into one's native language, leading to distinct challenges [9]. W. Wilss contends that the optimal translation direction is from a foreign language into the native language, given that communicative competence is generally more developed in the native language [10]. This perspective supports

the idea that translating from a foreign language into one's native tongue offers a higher probability of producing an adequate translation, although it does not exclude the possibility of successful translation in the reverse direction. In translation from a foreign into a native language, difficulties of a receptive nature – associated with ST analysis – are more prominent, while productive difficulties – related to structuring the final text – are more typical of translation from the native into a foreign language.

Consequently, it may be concluded that the primary factors contributing to translation difficulties include: 1) differences in linguistic norms, 2) discrepancies in speech conventions (genre-stylistic differences), 3) translation direction, and 3) sociocultural differences.

Identification of previously unresolved parts of the overall problem.

Despite the growing body of research in translation studies, there remains a notable lack of systematic classification of translation difficulties. While many scholars have addressed specific challenges, few have proposed a comprehensive framework that categorizes these difficulties in a structured way. This gap limits both theoretical understanding and practical training in translation. Without a clear classification, it is difficult for educators to design targeted instruction or for students to develop strategic problem-solving skills. Moreover, professional translators lack a common reference for discussing and analyzing the challenges they encounter. Therefore, there is a pressing need to develop a detailed and universally applicable classification system that can guide both research and practice in the field of translation.

Formulation of the article's objectives. The objectives of the article are the following : 1) to identify the groups of translation difficulties of business letters, 2) to describe specific translation difficulties arising in English-to-Ukrainian translation and Ukrainian-to-English translation, 3) to suggest methodological typology of written translation difficulties, 4) to describe translation difficulties of commercial correspondence, 5) to formulate further research perspectives.

Summary of the main research material. Linguistic differences in written translation may challenge the translator, particularly when dealing with non-equivalent grammatical units, which may include specific morphological forms, parts of speech, or syntactic structures. Translation difficulties may also arise from units that resemble each other phonetically or grammatically across languages but diverge semantically. Such units are commonly referred to in translation studies as “false friends.” For instance, the English word *prospect* means *perspective*, not *avenue* (проспект in Ukrainian), and *actual* means *real* or *current*, not *relevant* (актуальний).

Linguistic norms distinguish between correct and incorrect usage, while speech conventions distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate usage in specific communicative situations. For example, expressions suitable for personal letters may be inappropriate in commercial correspondence, and vice versa. Moreover, differences in the conventions followed by speakers of the source and target languages pertain not only to the structure of phrases, sentences, and utterances but also to the traditional organization of entire texts within certain styles and genres. A given style or genre requires adherence to its conventions in the target language, even if they differ from those in the corresponding source language style. Some scholars do not classify violations of convention as errors but rather as inappropriacies; however, we argue that stylistic errors, which reflect violations of communicative norms, can hinder intercultural communication just as significantly as linguistic errors.

Another major factor contributing to translation difficulties is the sociocultural disparity between communicants. Every society is characterized by territorial, social, professional, and age-related distinctions, as well as by subcultures that influence the linguistic habits of particular social groups.

In what follows, we will employ the term “translation difficulties” instead of “translation-related difficulties” because the latter limits the concept exclusively to

the act of translation, whereas the former allows for the inclusion of other activities and factors involved in the process of written translation.

Taking into consideration the conceptualization of translation difficulties based on the mechanisms involved in the translation process, incorporating psycholinguistic studies of the written translation stages, and considering the linguistic features of the official-business style, we propose a methodological typology of translation difficulties. Based on the phases of the written translation process, we argue for the logical delineation of difficulties arising in each phase. Accordingly, we identify four groups of translation difficulties: 1) difficulties in the source-text analysis phase, 2) difficulties in the translation realization phase, 3) difficulties in the target-text evaluation phase, 4) difficulties in the target-text editing phase. Based on the view of S. Campbell and W. Wilss, we identify specific translation difficulties arising in English-to-Ukrainian translation and Ukrainian-to-English translation.

The most comprehensive prediction of written translation difficulties is possible when the following factors are considered: the model of the written translation process, the linguistic characteristics of official-business texts, the students' level of linguistic, speech (especially reading and writing), and sociocultural competence in the foreign language, the students' level of linguistic, speech, and sociocultural competence in their native language, students' knowledge of translation theory and practice.

To identify difficulties associated with the ST analysis phase, it is necessary to refer to scholarly concepts of "text" and its defining categories. Some scholars define the text as a primary unit of communication, a reflection of reality constructed through the language system. Other scholars outline three defining characteristics of text: semantic (thematic) unity, communicative unity, and structural cohesion. Thematic unity encompasses the text's conceptual meaning and semantic structure. The concept refers to the meaning of the text, embodying the author's intentions. The principal communicative unit must exert some influence on the recipient. This

influence varies depending on the author's intent: to inform, to obtain information, or to persuade. Hence, communication takes place for the sake of conveying, receiving, or exchanging information, along with some degree of communicative influence. Structural cohesion encompasses text-forming categories, including syntactic, lexical, and phonological components. Text analysis should direct the translator's attention to both the communicative and subject-matter context of the ST, as well as its linguistic features.

Acknowledgment of the importance of analytical stages in translation has led to the development of educational models designed to train translators in identifying translation-relevant characteristics of both the ST and TT, determining potential difficulties, and devising strategies for overcoming them. One such model is Christiane Nord's pre-translation text analysis framework. This model is structured as a questionnaire composed of two parts. The first part focuses on communicative situation specifics – who, with what aim, to whom, via which channel, where, when, for what reason the text is transmitted, and what its function is. The second part addresses the content and language of the message: what information is presented, what is excluded, in what sequence, with what non-verbal means, and with what communicative effect [11]. S. Maksymov proposed an alternative translation analysis framework based on the aforementioned characteristics. His model includes analysis of communicative-pragmatic features, structural-semantic features, and linguistic-stylistic features [5]. Based on these models, we identify the following ST analysis difficulties:

- 1) analyzing ST content (including communicative-pragmatic features or semantic and communicative unity): determining the sender's intentions, identifying the main message, and isolating semantic blocks;
- 2) analyzing linguistic-stylistic features;
- 3) analyzing structural and extra-linguistic features (structural-semantic traits and structural cohesion): examining coherence and cohesion devices, as well as formatting.

S. Campbell further notes that while understanding the ST poses challenges when translating into one's native language, such difficulties are less prominent when translating from one's native into a foreign language [9].

In the second phase – the translation realization phase—the translator must select appropriate translation techniques based on the presence or absence of equivalents in the target language, account for genre-stylistic discrepancies between the languages, and perform either a full or abbreviated translation. Hence, the translator may encounter linguistic, genre-stylistic, and translation-mode difficulties. The challenges of translating typologically equivalent, non-equivalent, or variably equivalent units are typical of translation in both directions and are generally examined at the lexical and grammatical levels. While many translation difficulties are shared across different genres and styles, some are specific.

While many translation difficulties are shared across different genres and styles, some are specific to official-business texts. These include translating address forms, dates, numbers, and proper names, as well as standardized expressions and formulaic phrases (e.g., “Dear Sirs,” “Yours faithfully,” “We acknowledge receipt,” etc.). These are particularly challenging when translating from Ukrainian into English, given the strict conventional framework of English business correspondence. Additional difficulties arise from the necessity of adapting formatting conventions, such as address alignment, punctuation in dates, and signature blocks, which vary significantly between Ukrainian and English standards.

The third stage – evaluating the target text (TT) – requires the translator to assess the semantic adequacy, stylistic accuracy, and communicative effectiveness of the translation. This phase can be complicated by the translator's insufficient awareness of the functional and stylistic expectations of the target language community, especially in the case of L2 (foreign language) translation. Translators may struggle to recognize inaccuracies or inadequacies in their work, leading to compromised translation quality. Key areas of difficulty at this stage include verifying the completeness and clarity of the information rendered, the

appropriateness of terminology, and the adherence to stylistic conventions specific to official-business texts.

The fourth phase – the editing stage – focuses on refining the target text for grammar, style, formatting, and coherence. Editing becomes especially demanding when the translator lacks a sufficiently high level of linguistic competence in the target language, or when they are unaware of contemporary business writing conventions. Errors at this stage may include misuse of articles, incorrect word order, verb tense inconsistencies, or overuse of literal translation that results in awkward or unnatural phrasing. Editing also includes verifying that document formatting adheres to expected standards, which may vary widely between cultures and institutions.

In conclusion, our methodological typology of written translation difficulties in the sphere of official-business communication includes four distinct stages:

- 1) difficulties in source text analysis,
- 2) difficulties in translation realization,
- 3) difficulties in target text evaluation,
- 4) difficulties in editing the target text.

In addition to the general difficulties encountered in the translation of official-business texts, commercial texts – such as business proposals, marketing brochures, advertisements, product descriptions, contracts, and company reports – pose their own distinct challenges. These arise primarily due to the dual function of such texts: they must not only convey precise and accurate information but also persuade, promote, or build a corporate image. As a result, the translator must operate at the intersection of linguistic precision and rhetorical effectiveness, adapting the message to meet both the communicative intent of the source text and the cultural and commercial expectations of the target audience.

Lexical and terminological challenges. One major difficulty lies in terminological variability. Unlike legal or technical documents, where terms are often standardized, commercial language frequently employs creative, idiomatic, and metaphorical expressions. For instance, brand slogans, catchphrases, or marketing taglines may use puns, cultural references, or wordplay that do not

translate directly. The translator must find equivalent expressions that capture the tone, connotation, and persuasive power of the original while making them resonate with the target culture. This process is often closer to transcreation than to direct translation.

Cultural and market-specific adaptation. Commercial texts are highly culture-bound, reflecting societal norms, values, humour, and consumer behaviour. A phrase that is compelling in one language may fall flat or even offend in another. The translator must consider intercultural communication strategies to ensure that the message remains effective and culturally appropriate. For example, visual and verbal elements in advertising often require adaptation to align with the visual aesthetics and ethical standards of the target market. This may involve changing not only the text but also layout, images, colours, and units of measurement.

Stylistic flexibility and tone management. The stylistic register of commercial texts varies widely from formal and technical to casual and playful, depending on the brand identity and the target audience. Translators must skilfully shift between registers while preserving the brand's voice. Misjudging the tone can lead to an ineffective or even misleading message. Furthermore, certain styles, such as emotive or evocative writing, do not have direct linguistic equivalents and require creative reformulation.

Legal and ethical considerations. Commercial translations must also respect legal standards (e.g., disclaimers, warranties, promotional claims) that differ from country to country. Misinterpretations or omissions can result in misleading advertising or non-compliance with local regulations, potentially leading to legal disputes. Thus, the translator must be familiar not only with linguistic nuances but also with the legal environment of the target market.

Multimodal and digital constraints. Modern commercial texts are often embedded in multimodal platforms, such as websites, apps, social media, or videos, where space and format constraints affect translation choices.

These complexities make commercial translation a highly demanding field that calls for a sophisticated understanding of language, culture, marketing strategy, and legal frameworks. Addressing these challenges requires not only advanced linguistic competence but also creativity, cultural sensitivity, and strategic thinking.

Conclusions. The suggested methodological classification of translation difficulties provides a structured framework for training of pre-service philologists. It has been successfully applied in the Business English course. The classification allows for a targeted approach in teaching translation, enabling students to recognize and address specific types of difficulties systematically. This typology may also serve as a practical tool for curriculum developers and instructors in designing exercises that simulate real-world challenges faced in the translation of business and administrative documents. Ultimately, fostering awareness of these translation difficulties enhances students' readiness to engage in intercultural professional communication and improves their ability to produce functionally equivalent and stylistically appropriate translations in both directions – into and out of their native language.

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