

# **Grammatical Transformations in Ukrainian-English Translation of Official Texts**

SERGII GORBACHOV  
University of Arizona

In our globalized world, both business and political decisions increasingly depend on translations of official documents. In this paper, the reader will be introduced to the stylistic peculiarities of official documents and the concept of grammatical translational transformations. The text of the Constitution of Ukraine and its official translation into English will be analyzed from the viewpoint of grammatical transformations; the grounds for using the grammatical transformations will be analyzed and explained.

## **1. Introduction**

Official translations are generally documents that serve as legally valid instruments. To a large degree, the success of translating legal, economic, diplomatic and official business papers depends on the translator's comprehension of the peculiar features common to all stylistic varieties of official documents that include the following: definite compositional pattern and design, the use of abbreviations, conventional symbols and contractions, absence of emotiveness, and the use of standard linguistic structures (Miram 177).

The Constitution of Ukraine and its official translation into English served as the material for our research. In this paper, the text of the Constitution of Ukraine and its official translation into English have been analyzed.

The relevance of the current paper is determined by the necessity to identify and analyze instruments used to obtain translation equivalence. It is only in a few areas of translation that the cultural and grammatical differences are so acute and the consequences of failure are so palpable. In our globalized world, both business and political decisions increasingly depend on translations of official documents.

The ability to choose and make the right transformation is one of the translator's main professional skills, one that requires exercise in imagination, intuition, and cultural outlook. Literary talent may also help. A successful translation is largely comprised of successful transformations. Achieving equivalence in translation is connected with the ability to identify a translational problem correctly and to make a suitable translational transformation for any given situation. This paper's goal is to research translational transformations in the translation of an official document. The main tasks used to achieve this goal in the current paper include the following: to identify translational transformations in the text; to determine the reasons for using the transformations; to analyze the grammatical transformations.

To solve the aforementioned tasks, we have compared and analyzed the target text and the original text, and performed transformational and quantitative analyses. Two texts of the Constitution of Ukraine, one in Ukrainian and one in English, were compared and analyzed from the viewpoint of transformations. By analyzing and comparing the original text with the translation, grammatical transformations have been identified. The search of the transformations was very precise and meticulous. Obtained transformations have been sorted out into four categories: replacement, transposition, addition, and omission (Karaban, *Navchalniy posibnyk dovidnyk dlia studentiv vyshih zakladiv osvity* 22). All the grammatical transformations were counted and percentages of each category were calculated. Excerpts of the text in which certain types of transformation were very numerous were analyzed, and the choice of transformations was explained. Some of the examples might contain other transformations that were counted in the research as a whole, but were not discussed in the given example. The most common situations that cause problems for translation of official texts have been described. The knowledge of these situations and familiarity regarding when to use the right transformation are crucial for achieving equivalent translation.

## **2. Stylistic peculiarities of official documents**

The problem of translation equivalence is highly connected with the stylistic aspect of translation – one cannot reach the required level of equivalence if the stylistic peculiarities of the source text are neglected. Full translation adequacy includes as an obligatory component the adequacy of style, i.e., the right choice of stylistic means and devices of the target language to substitute for those observed in the source text. This means that in translation one is to find proper stylistic variations of the original meaning, rather than only meaning itself (Miram 68).

If we compare translation of literal and official texts, literary translating is more art than craft, which is accounted for by the nature of literary texts. Translation of a literary text is unique and unprecedented; it cannot be standardized and obeys almost no rules. Unlike literary texts, the texts of official documents are highly standardized; this applies both to the structure of the whole text and to the arrangement of individual paragraphs and sentences (Miram 176).

Official texts comprise a category of their own because of the specific requirements of the quality of their translation. Such translations are often accepted as authentic official texts that are equivalent to originals. They are important documents, every word of which must be carefully chosen as a matter of principle. This makes the translator very particular about every minute meaningful element of the original, which he scrupulously reproduces in his translation. This scrupulous imitation of the original results sometimes in the translator's more readily erring in literalism than risking the omission of even an insignificant element of the original contents (Komissarov, *Praktikum po perevodu* 53).

## **3. Theory of transformations**

The process of translation is a set of interlanguage transformations or transforming the text in one language into the text in another. Linguistic theory of translation aims at constructing a definite translation process model, a scientific scheme, which more or less exactly reflects the existing issues of the given process (Sydoruk 27). Translation is the process of transforming any spoken or written text in one language into the text in another while preserving the invariable, unchanged meaning of the text (Sydoruk 30).

Transformations in translations have been profoundly studied by many linguists. Different linguists define transformations in different ways; for example, Russian linguist, Vilen Komissarov, who was a leading representative of linguistic theory of translation in Russia, defined transformation as a change through which a translator can make a transition from the elements of the original text to the elements of the translation in a specified context. (*Teoriya perevoda* 177).

Another Russian linguist, Yakov Retsker, defined transformations as devices of logical thinking that help the translator reveal the meaning of the source language words in the context and find corresponding meaning of target language words that do not coincide with a meaning from the dictionary (Retsker).

Leonid Barhudarov is another Russian linguist who made a significant contribution to the development of typology of translational transformations. In his book "Language and Translation", Barhudarov states that in order to achieve equivalence in translation, a translator needs to know how to make numerous and various interlanguage transitions, which he calls translational transformations (Barhudarov).

Based on the aforementioned definitions, we may say that translational transformations are interlanguage transitions, reconstruction of source language elements, and operations of rephrasing the meaning in order to achieve an equivalent translation. The knowledge of the transformations and the right choice of them are an integral part of translators' skills.

We should remember that not every transformation gives us an equivalent translation. We must keep in mind that in translating, the equivalence of meanings of the whole unit is more essential than that of isolated words. Example (1) illustrates this point; it was taken from the novel of the American writer Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*:

(1a) Mr. Raymond sat up against the tree-trunk.

(1b) Містер Реймонд сів і притулився до дуба  
Mr. Raymond-N.NOM. sit-V.PST and.CONJ lean-V.PST against-PREP oak-N.GEN.

In the Ukrainian translation (1b), there is the word "притулився," which is absent in the original text. The English preposition "up" in the phrasal verb "sat up" indicates the fact that the subject performing the action assumed a sitting position after lying, while in the Ukrainian sentence (1b) this information is absent. The English word "tree-trunk" (1a) does not mean "oak," but "стовбур дерева." From the previous chapter in the text, it is clear that he had been in a lying position under the oak: "Come on out under the trees." I said. "Heat got you. I expect." We chose the fattest live oak and we sat under

it” (Lee 106). In this example, we see that semantic equivalence may not exist between separate elements of these texts, but it exists between the two texts as a whole.

#### 4. Grammatical transformations in translation

The ability to choose and make the right transformation is one of the translator’s main professional skills, one that requires exercise in imagination, intuition, and cultural outlook. A successful translation is largely comprised of successful transformations. Achieving equivalence in translation is connected with the ability to identify a translational problem correctly and to make a suitable transformation.

For the current paper we used the classification of grammatical transformations by V. I. Karaban, who is a Ukrainian linguist mainly in the area of translation studies. This Ukrainian linguist is the author of about 120 scientific and methodical works; he is one of the most influential current linguists in Ukraine (“Karaban V. I.” *Academy of Higher Education of Ukraine*). His works served as a basis for the theory of the current paper.

In one of his books devoted to the translation from Ukrainian to English, Karaban defines a grammatical transformation as a change of grammatical characteristics of words, word phrases, or sentences in translation (*Pereklad z ukrainskoi na angliysku movu* 22). Sometimes, we may see much in common between the languages, e.g., at the syntactic level (e.g., subject-verb-object sequences, attribute-noun structures, etc.). On the other hand, total similarity of syntactic structures is a rare case, which means that in translation we often observe transformations (Miram 78).

The choice of particular devices depends on the text type, genre, and style, as well as on the translation variety (oral, written, consecutive, simultaneous), and translation direction (into or from a foreign language of a translator). The basic set of translation devices (a kind of “translator’s tool kit”) usually comprises the following grammatical transformations: replacement, addition, transposition, and omission (Karaban, *Pereklad angliyskoi naukovoї i tehničnoi literatury* 20).

Replacement is any change in the target text at the morphological, lexical, or syntactic levels of the language. During the process of translation word forms, parts of speech, or syntactic function can undergo replacements. In the example (2), the number of the noun “обґрунтованість” (2a) was translated as a combination of two words, and the category of number was changed from singular to plural in (2b). Example (2) shows the replacement of the number of the translated word, and also the fact that grammatical transformation rarely go alone; they are usually combined into complex ones:

(2a) обґрунтованість

(2b) reasonable grounds.

Example (3) shows the replacement of parts of speech:

(3a) за                           ознаками                   раси  
according to-PREP.    features-N.INSTR.    race-N.GEN.

(3b) based on race

In example (3), the preposition “за” was translated by the phrasal verb “based on.”

Integration of sentences as a type of a replacement is shown in example (4). In the original Ukrainian sentence (4a), we can see two single sentences, whereas in the English translation, there is just one complete sentence.

(4a) Олена любить усі свої ролі. Якщо якусь із них довго не танцює – починає сумувати.

(4b) Olena loves all her roles and even misses them should too much time pass without performing them.

Example (5) shows partitioning of sentences that is the opposite of integration:

(5a) There was a real game too, not a party game played in the old school and invented by my eldest brother, Herbert, who was always of an adventurous character until he was changed by the continual and sometimes shameful failures of his adult life.

(5b) Була і справжня, а не салонна гра, у яку ми грали в актовому залі старої школи. Цю гру вигадав мій старший брат Герберт – людина винахідлива і схильна до всіляких пригод, доки постійні і часом ганебні негаразди дорослого життя не змінили його вдачу.

After translating into Ukrainian, the translation (5b) consists of two sentences, and in the original text (5a), there is one sentence.

Addition in translation is a device intended to compensate for structural elements implicitly present in the source text or paradigm forms that are missing in the target language (Miram 90). Addition stems from differences in the syntactic and semantic structure of the two languages. Example (6) illustrates addition:

(6a) Green Party federal election money

(6b) гроші                      Партії                      зелених, призначені  
 money-N.NOM.PL    Party-N.GEN.    green-ADJ. intended-PST.PCTL  
 на                      вибори                      на                      федеральному                      рівні  
 for-PREP. election-N.ACC.PL    on-PREP    federal-ADJ                      level- N.LOC

The word “federal” in (6a) was translated as “на федеральному рівні” (6b); in the Ukrainian translation (6b), we see three words instead of one as in the original sentence. The word “election” in (6a) was translated as three words: “призначені на вибори” in (6b). Example (7) shows that one single compound word in (7a) was translated as two words in English (7b).

(7a) загальноновизнаний

(7b) generally acknowledged

Transposition is a peculiar variety of inner partitioning in translation, meaning a change in the order of the syntactic elements or words in the target sentence as compared to that of the source sentence. These changes are dictated either by peculiarities of the target language syntax or by the communication intent (Karaban, *Pereklad angliyskoi naukovoï I tehnicnoi literatury* 314).

Example (8) will suffice to illustrate the idea of transposition:

(8a) “The flight will be boarding at Gate 17 in about fifteen minutes,” the girl added with a smile.

(8b) “Приблизно                      за                      п'ятнадцять хвилин                      на                      цей

Approximately-ADV in-PREP fifteen-NUM. minutes-NOUN.GEN on-PREP this-PRON  
 рейс буде посадка біля виходу  
 flight-N.ACC will be-V.FUT boarding-N.NOM near-PREP gate-N.GEN  
 номер 17”, - посміхаючись, додала дівчина  
 number-N 17-NUM smiling-VERBAL ADV add-V.PST girl-N.NOM

In this example, we can see that in the translation the position of “in about fifteen minutes” (8a) was changed. In the translation (8b), the words “приблизно за п'ятнадцять хвилин” figure at the beginning of the sentence; their position changed compared to the position in the original sentence (8a). In the original sentence (8a), the words “with a smile” were translated as “посміхаючись” (8b), and the position of this word is different in the translation and in the original sentence.

Omission is the reduction of the elements of the source text that are considered redundant from the viewpoint of the target language’s structural patterns and stylistics (Miram 92). In omission, a word combination is replaced by a word or word combination with fewer words. Example (9) illustrates omission:

- (9a) Припинити передплату газети  
 stop-V.INF subscription-N.ACC newspaper-N.GEN  
 (9b) to discontinue a newspaper  
 (9c) Шкала ставок оплати  
 scale-N.NOM rates-N.GEN. payment-N.GEN  
 (9d) scale of payment

After the translation of the Ukrainian word combinations the number of elements in English is fewer; the word “передплату” in (9a) was omitted in the English translation (9b), as well as the word “ставок” in (9d). In (9d) we also see an addition of the preposition “of.” However, the number of words in the English sentence is larger. English verb infinitive “to discontinue” and “a newspaper” (9b) are regarded as two elements, therefore the number of elements in English is fewer.

In different cases due to language norms and the peculiarities of building word combinations in English, the omission of unnecessary words is made in abstract verbal nouns, as in example (10):

- (10a) Причини виникнення війни.  
 Reasons-N.NOM occurrence-N.GEN war-N.GEN  
 (10b) Causes of war.

The abstract verbal noun “виникнення” in (10) was omitted in the English translation, because the word “causes” already means something that brings about an effect or a result, and the use of a verbal noun in this case would not be appropriate for the English language.

## 6. Analysis of the material

In the research, we examined 40 out of 161 articles of the original text of the Constitution of Ukraine in English and Ukrainian. The total number of identified grammatical transformations is 133.

Type of transformation	Number	Percentage, %
Replacement	69	52
Addition	35	26
Transposition	20	15
Omission	9	7
Total	133	100

We can see that the most frequent type of grammatical transformations is replacement with 52%, then addition with 26%, transposition in 15% of instances, and omission with 7%.

Replacements are the most used transformations found during the analysis; they comprise 52% of all transformations. One of the numerous types of replacement is the replacement of parts of speech, and, interestingly, many nouns and verbal nouns were translated by the use of the infinitive. Examples (11) and (12) illustrate the replacement of a verbal noun by a verb infinitive:

- (11a) Утвердження і забезпечення прав  
 affirmation-N.NOM. and-CONJ securement-N.NOM. rights-N.GEN  
 і свобод людини є головним  
 and-CONJ freedoms-N.GEN human-N.GEN are-V.PRES main-ADJ  
 обов'язком держави.  
 duty-N.INSTR state-N.GEN

(11b) To affirm and ensure human rights and freedoms is the main duty of the State.

The verbal nouns “утвердження і забезпечення” in (11a) were translated with infinitives “to affirm and ensure”(11b).

- (12a) Забезпечення екологічної безпеки і  
 securement-N.NOM ecological-ADJ safety-N.GEN and-CONJ  
 підтримання екологічної рівноваги  
 maintenance-N.NOM ecological-ADJ balance-N.GEN

(12b) To ensure ecological safety and to maintain the ecological balance

In the original sentence (12a), the verbal nouns “забезпечення” and “підтримання” were translated as verb infinitives (12b).

Example (13) shows the replacement of parts of speech from a noun to a verb infinitive:

- (13a) Захист суверенітету і територіальної  
 Protection-N.NOM sovereignty-N.GEN. and-CONJ territorial-ADJ  
 цілісності України є найважливішою  
 indivisibility-N.GEN. Ukraine-N.GEN are-V.PRES most important-ADJ  
 функцією держави.

function-N.INSTR state-N.GEN.

(13b) To protect the sovereignty and territorial indivisibility of Ukraine is the most important function of the State.

The word “захист” in (13a) was translated as “to protect” in (13b).

This kind of replacement was numerous in the analysis. The reason behind this is the difference in use of verbs in two languages. In English, infinitives and verbs in general are used more often than in Ukrainian. The process of verbalization in the translation from Ukrainian into English is very widespread. As a rule, verbal nouns, and semantically abstract nouns verbalize. Official texts are abundant with this type of nouns. Verbalization is the feature of a sentence that shows the presence and the quantity of verbal forms in it, which are characterized by special verbal grammatical categories. Verbalization in translation means the appearance of additional verbal word forms or transformation of other parts of speech into verbal word forms (Borisova). In her dissertation “Transformation of verbalization in English-Ukrainian translation”, Olesia Borisova studied verbal systems in English and Ukrainian, and based on the morphological and syntactic comparative analysis, she found out that in English verbal forms are used more often than in Ukrainian (Borisova). It explains the abundance of verbalization processes during the translation.

In English, there is no morphological genitive case marker in, and if the translator had not made a replacement in the example (13), he would have needed to insert the preposition “of” to show the relationship between the elements, and it would be redundant.

Another frequent type of replacement is the replacement of the active voice of a verb by the passive voice. Example (14) illustrates this:

(14a)	Від	імені	українського	народу	права
	From- <small>PREP.</small>	name- <small>N.GEN</small>	Ukrainian- <small>ADJ.GEN</small>	people- <small>N.GEN</small>	rights- <small>N.ACC</small>
	власника	здійснюють	органи	державної	влади.
	owner- <small>N.GEN</small>	exercise- <small>V.PRES</small>	bodies- <small>N.NOM</small>	state- <small>ADJ</small>	power- <small>N.GEN</small>

(14b) Ownership rights on behalf of the Ukrainian people are exercised by bodies of state power.

By looking at the syntactic structure of this sentence, we can say that the word order is object – verb – subject. This construction is not characteristic of English syntax. The most used and neutral order is subject – verb – object (Krapp 297). But if the translator had used this word order, he would have excluded information. The information structure in Ukrainian implies that the known information that has the least communication value (topic or theme) goes first, and more important and new information goes last (Shopen 98). In order to maintain the equivalence, the translator should preserve the communication intent of the source sentence. This situation requires a replacement, so the translator changes the active voice to the passive voice and adds the preposition “by.” In this example, we can also see a change in grammatical information; “bodies of state power” was the subject in Ukrainian, but not anymore in the translation.



Addition is another widely used type of transformation. Of all transformations, this one was used 26% of the time. When making other transformations, we often need an insertion of additional elements. This insertion of additional elements is conditioned by many reasons. One of them is the grammatical and stylistic norms of English, for instance, when a conjunction or a pronoun should be added; see example (15):

(15a) ...усвідомлюючи                      відповідальність                      перед                      Богом,  
           being aware-VERBAL ADV    responsibility-N.ACC                      before-PREP    God-N.INSTR  
           власною совістю,                      попередніми, нинішнім                      та                      прийдешніми  
           own-ADJ    conscience-N.INSTR.    past-ADJ                      present-ADJ    and-CONJ                      future-ADJ  
           поколіннями...  
           generations-N.INSTR.PL

(15b) ...aware of our responsibility before God, our own conscience, past, present and future generations...

In the English translation, we can see the possessive pronoun “our” (15b); however, it is not in the original Ukrainian sentence (15a). The norms of English dictate that there should be a determiner in front of a noun or noun phrase to show its reference in the context, and the pronoun “our” perform this function in the given example (Guillemin 199).

Addition is also used for word-phrase correspondence, as in example (16):

(16a) Житло – dwelling place

(16b) Обґрунтованість – reasonable grounds

(16c) господарювання - economic management

In the translation of each of the words in (16a), (16b), and (16c), the translator gave word combinations, because they match the meanings of the single words in Ukrainian. But these phrases consist of more elements than in the original.

Due to political correctness and elimination of gender discrimination in the Western world, it is usually necessary to add pronouns of both genders. Example (17) illustrates this:

(17a) Людина,                      її                      життя                      і                      здоров'я  
           Human-N.NOM                      her-PRON                      life N.NOM                      and-CONJ                      health-N.NOM

(17b) The human being, his or her life and health

In Ukrainian (17a), only a feminine pronoun was used, and it refers to “людина,” which is a feminine gender noun. In the English translation (17b), both masculine and feminine pronouns were used.

During transposition the elements that undergo the changes are usually words, word phrases, or clauses of compound sentences. This kind of transformation was used in 15% of all transformations, and they are mainly caused by syntactic differences between the two languages. In English, word order is much stricter, whereas in Ukrainian it is relatively free. Different parts of speech can take almost any

position in the sentence and that will not change the meaning significantly. One of the problems in translation is the inverse word order; example (18) shows this:

- (18a) Членами політичних партій можуть  
 Members-N.INSTR political-ADJ.PL parties-N.GEN.PL may-V.PRES  
 бути лише громадяни України.  
 be-V.PRES only-ADV citizens-N.NOM.PL Ukraine-N.GEN

(18b) Only citizens of Ukraine may be members of political parties.

During the process of translation from Ukrainian into English, the problem of inverse word order is very widespread. In such situations, a translator needs to use direct word order subject – verb – object. In the example above, the word order of the Ukrainian sentence (18a) is object – verb – subject and in the English translation, the word order is subject – verb – object in (18b).

Word order in Ukrainian is dictated by the information structure. Old and known information usually appears at the beginning of the sentence, and new information appears at the end of the sentence (Shopen 98). However, in the English language word order is dictated not by the communication intent but by the syntax, when the subject precedes the verb, if we are not talking about sentences without inversion that happen in limited contexts (Krapp 298).

Omission was used in 7% of all the cases. This transformation is the opposite of addition. Words that are semantically useless are omitted; see example (19):

- (19a) Кожному, хто на законних підставах  
 Everyone-PRON who-PRON on-PREP legal-ADJ.PL grounds-N.LOC.PL  
 перебуває на території України...  
 is present-V.PRES on-PREP territory-N.LOC Ukraine-N.GEN.

(19b) Everyone who is legally present on the territory of Ukraine...

The Ukrainian words “на законних підставах” in (19a) are translated as one word “legally” (19b); these two elements are semantically equal, and a literal translation would be excessive.

## 7. Conclusion

The discrepancies of the two languages cause problems in translation. These discrepancies range from single untranslatable elements and word combinations to whole sentence structures. The knowledge of translation devices such as grammatical transformations makes it possible to solve the emerging problems.

The main reason for grammatical transformations is the syntactic differences between the languages, as well as semantic and stylistic ones. After the analysis we found out that replacements, with 52%, were the most used transformations; additions, with 26%, were used in fewer instances. The transformation of transposition was used in 15%, and the least one is omission at 7%. Unfortunately, similar research has not been found due to the narrow research topic and the lack of use of quantitative analysis in Ukrainian or foreign works on the given topic.

For replacement of parts of speech, the frequency of use of verbs in the two languages is different. English, being a more verbal language, requires verbalization of nouns and verbal nouns when translating from Ukrainian. The conversion from active to passive voice is necessitated in order to preserve the communication intent in the target text.

Addition is necessary for conveying all the information in a source text; sometimes there are no perfect lexical matches between the languages, and an addition of elements helps to restore the full meaning. Omission is the opposite process to addition; some of the words in a word combination can be excluded without a loss of the information in the translation.

Transpositions are conditioned by the strict word order of the English language. Certain syntactic constructions in Ukrainian are not possible in English, and therefore we need to change the word order in the target text. One of the most common syntactic constructions that may cause problems in translation is the inverse word order, which is used in limited contexts in the English language.

In the current paper we have identified 133 grammatical transformations and explained the reasons for using them. We have described the most common situations that cause problems for translation of official texts. The knowledge of these situations and familiarity regarding when to use the right transformation are crucial for achieving equivalent translation.

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