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## INSTITUTIONAL TERMINOLOGY IN TRANSLATION: A CULTURAL-LINGUISTIC INTERFACE IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

*This paper examines the challenges and strategies involved in translating institutionally bound terms across languages within the context of international institutional discourse. It highlights the importance of understanding the socio-political, legal, and cultural frameworks that shape these specialized lexical units, as they often reflect the structural and ideological foundations of national governance systems and rarely have direct equivalents in other languages. Emphasizing the translator's role as a cultural mediator, the study draws on contemporary translation theory and interdisciplinary research to explore adaptive, context-sensitive strategies, such as function-oriented descriptive translation, borrowing with explanatory apposition, and contextual adaptation, that ensure semantic precision and functional relevance. Strategic decisions must account for systemic (dis)equivalence between legal traditions, the communicative purpose of the text, and the institutional literacy of the target audience. Particular attention is given to the behaviour of institutional vocabulary within formal registers, which demand terminological consistency, pragmatic clarity, and genre-specific precision. Through comparative analysis of examples from Anglo-American and post-Soviet legal and administrative systems, the study demonstrates how cultural distance and divergent legal traditions necessitate informed, flexible translation solutions. Institutional terms are shown to mirror national ideologies and governance models, reinforcing the need for nuanced, culturally informed translation practices. The findings advocate for a systematic, interdisciplinary approach that combines linguistic proficiency with legal and cultural competence. This ensures accurate and transparent communication across multilingual professional environments, particularly when translating high-stakes documents such as treaties, policy statements, and international agreements.*

**Key words:** terminological asymmetry, institutional discourse, translation strategies, target-oriented equivalence, cross-cultural specificity, legal-linguistic competence, pragmatic adaptation.

**Statement of the problem.** As international business communication becomes more frequent and complex, the accurate and culturally appropriate translation of institutional terminology has taken on critical importance. Institutional terms, often deeply rooted in a country's unique legal, administrative, or socio-political systems, pose considerable challenges for translators due to their lack of direct equivalents, context-dependence, and culture-bound nature.

The official business style, characterized by precision, formality, and terminological consistency, requires a high degree of functional equivalence when rendering institutional lexis into another language. However, the transfer of such terminology often extends beyond mere linguistic substitution. It involves a complex interplay of semantic adaptation, stylistic alignment, and pragmatic consideration, particularly when bridging different institutional and cultural realia.

Despite the growing interest in terminology translation within legal and administrative domains,

insufficient attention has been given to the specific cultural-linguistic interface that shapes the translation of institutional vocabulary in business contexts. This gap hampers effective intercultural communication and may lead to misunderstanding, ambiguity, or even legal inconsistencies in translated documents.

Therefore, a systematic analysis of translation strategies, typologies of institutional terms, and their cultural implications is essential to enhance the quality, clarity, and functional relevance of business translations. This study addresses the urgent need for a deeper theoretical and practical understanding of institutional terminology translation within the framework of official business communication.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Institutional terminology continues to be a focal point in both linguistic and translation studies, with numerous scholars emphasizing its pivotal role in mediating legal, political, and economic communication across languages. Research

widely recognizes that institutional terms serve as linguistic markers of specific legal systems, administrative structures, and governance ideologies, often reflecting the historical and cultural matrix from which they originate. These characteristics inherently complicate the translation process, as linguistic form alone often fails to convey the embedded institutional function and context.

On the global front, the contributions of House [6] and Prieto Ramos [10] highlight the tension between system-specific incongruity and the need for harmonization in multilingual legal communication. House positions translation as intercultural communication, while Prieto Ramos emphasizes functional consistency across legal systems. These themes are expanded upon by scholars such as Thelen [11], Abdulrazaq [2], and Goodarzi & Mehrpour [5], who focus on the cultural-linguistic interplay that informs terminological choices.

Empirical studies of Adhikari [1], Huang [7], Kim & Park [8], Gomez & Lee [4], Liu & Zhao [9], Chen & Zhang [3] further confirm that institutional terminology poses unique challenges in real-world translation practice. These works examine translation across various genres – including legal contracts, advertisements, and government communications – showing that effective strategies often involve a mix of borrowing, descriptive translation, and contextual adaptation.

Overall, the recent body of scholarship reinforces that institutional terminology cannot be approached as static or isolated. Instead, it must be understood as embedded in a web of socio-political functions, legal traditions, and communicative conventions. This perspective not only strengthens theoretical foundations but also provides practical guidance for translators working in high-stakes, formal communication settings. The convergence of theoretical, methodological, and applied research signals an ongoing evolution in how institutional terms are understood, analysed, and rendered across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

**Task statement.** The primary purpose of this research is to examine the translation of institutional terminology within the framework of official business communication, with a particular focus on the cultural-linguistic interface that influences the choice of translation strategies. This research intends to contribute to both theoretical understanding and practical methodology in the field of institutional terminology translation, particularly within the context of intercultural business communication.

### Outline of the main material of the study.

The translation of institutional terminology within the official business style is influenced by a complex interplay of linguistic and extralinguistic factors.

**Linguistically**, institutional terms often exhibit *high terminological density*, meaning that a significant portion of official texts consists of domain-specific vocabulary, much of which has a narrow field of application. For example, terms like *memorandum of understanding*, *preliminary injunction*, or *regulatory compliance* are integral to legal and business documentation but are rarely used in everyday speech. This density contributes to the formal and technical tone of official business communication and presents a challenge for translators who must retain both meaning and register.

Institutional terms are also marked by a *formal syntactic structure* and the use of *fixed lexical collocations*, i.e., word combinations that frequently occur together in institutional discourse. For instance, *binding agreement*, *statutory authority*, or *official seal* are set phrases whose components are not easily interchangeable without altering the meaning or diminishing clarity. In translation, preserving these collocations often requires finding target-language equivalents that are also commonly used in administrative practice, rather than translating word-for-word. Literal translation may result in awkward or unfamiliar phrasing that fails to convey the institutional meaning or stylistic conventions of the source.

A key linguistic feature is the *semantic specificity* of institutional terms. Each term often denotes a clearly defined legal or administrative concept with little room for interpretation. For instance, the English term *plea bargain* refers to a specific legal process in the U.S. justice system, where a defendant agrees to plead guilty to a lesser charge to avoid trial. Translating this term into Ukrainian requires not only lexical accuracy but also an understanding of the procedural mechanism it represents – something that may not have a direct equivalent in different legal systems.

Additionally, institutional terms typically exhibit *limited polysemy*, meaning that they tend to have one dominant meaning within their context, unlike general vocabulary, which may be contextually flexible. For example, the term *jurisdiction* in legal contexts refers to the official power or authority of a court or institution to hear and decide a case. While the word might carry different meanings in other contexts (e.g., geography or politics), in official

business and legal discourse, its interpretation is narrowly fixed and contextually bound.

Despite their semantic clarity, many institutional terms *lack direct equivalents in the target language* because they are embedded in specific national institutional frameworks. For example, the English term *Commonwealth* (as in *Commonwealth of Nations*) refers to a historical and political organization with unique features rooted in the British Empire. Translating it into Ukrainian may involve the use of a descriptive phrase ‘співдружність націй’ or a borrowed term with a footnote to maintain precision and avoid misinterpretation.

Therefore, translators must consider both the lexical norms and syntactic patterns typical of official discourse in the target language, ensuring that the translated expression sounds natural, retains legal or procedural accuracy, and aligns with the expectations of professional or governmental communication.

**Extralinguistic factors** play a pivotal role in the accurate and contextually appropriate translation of institutional terminology, as they profoundly influence both the interpretation and the communicative function of such terms within their original sociocultural environment. These factors transcend the purely linguistic level and include a range of socio-institutional dimensions such as *legal traditions, governmental systems, historical trajectories of institutional development*, and the *cultural conventions* that govern official discourse.

For example, legal traditions – such as the distinction between common law and civil law systems – shape the very logic of institutional terms. Translators must account for these systemic divergences when dealing with legal or administrative vocabulary that lacks direct equivalents. The governmental framework, for instance, *federal* vs. *unitary states*, also affects how institutions function and are perceived, further complicating the translation process.

Consider the term *Parliamentary Committee* in the British context. It refers to a formally established body within the U.K. Parliament tasked with monitoring legislation and government activities. At first glance, the Ukrainian equivalent ‘парламентський комітет’ appears adequate. However, a closer examination reveals significant discrepancies in committee structures, legislative power, and procedural operations between the U.K.’s Westminster model and Ukraine’s Verkhovna Rada. A literal translation may obscure these

distinctions unless supplemented with a translator’s note, explanatory phrase, or functional paraphrase, particularly in legal or comparative texts.

Another instructive example is the *Civil Service Code* in English-speaking contexts, typically denoting a binding or semi-binding framework of rules and ethical standards for civil servants. Translating it as ‘Кодекс державної служби’ in Ukrainian superficially aligns with the source term, but may obscure differences in legal enforceability, scope of application, and institutional oversight mechanisms. In some jurisdictions, such a code may have the force of law, while in others it serves only a consultative or ethical function. Misinterpreting this nuance could lead to incorrect assumptions about the responsibilities and protections afforded to public officials in the target culture.

Moreover, *cultural norms of communication* – including degrees of formality, hierarchical structuring, and expectations regarding institutional tone – must also be taken into account. For instance, English legal and official texts frequently employ impersonal and declarative constructions, such as *It is hereby declared, The Ministry reserves the right*, which convey authority and legal objectivity. Translating such formulations into Ukrainian or another language requires careful stylistic calibration to preserve both the formal register and the functional tone appropriate to the institutional context of the target culture.

Beyond legal and structural considerations, *public attitudes toward governance, institutional trust*, and *civil society* also constitute crucial extralinguistic variables. Take the term *ombudsman*, which is widely used in Scandinavian countries to denote an independent agent of government accountability. In Ukraine, this term may be rendered as ‘омбудсмен’ or ‘уповноважений з прав людини’, yet these equivalents differ in historical grounding, public perception, and actual institutional authority. Whereas the role in Scandinavia is deeply embedded in traditions of citizen advocacy and systemic oversight, in other regions it may be relatively new, under-resourced, or even symbolic. Thus, even where a linguistic equivalent exists, its functional equivalence may be partial or contextually misleading.

Institutional terms are deeply embedded in a country’s specific *socio-political and legal framework*, making it essential for translators to grasp not only their lexical meaning but also their functional role and implications within that system. A thorough understanding of the source culture’s

institutional realia allows the translator to identify appropriate equivalents in the target language that reflect both meaning and function. Moreover, the *expectations of the target audience* and the *communicative purpose of the text* – whether it prioritizes legal precision, diplomatic nuance, or promotional clarity – play a decisive role in shaping translation strategies. Therefore, the effective translation of institutional terminology requires a careful balance between literal accuracy and cultural-functional adaptation, ensuring clarity, terminological consistency, and pragmatic adequacy in both the source and target contexts.

In essence, extralinguistic competence is indispensable for translators working with institutional terminology. They must possess not only a solid command of legal-administrative lexicon but also a thorough understanding of the interplay between language and governance structures, historical institutional evolution, and the normative frameworks of public communication. Without such interdisciplinary insight, translations risk semantic distortion, conceptual ambiguity, or pragmatic failure.

Ultimately, the accurate rendering of institutionally bound terms hinges on the translator's ability to mediate between two legal-cultural systems, ensuring that the translated text maintains semantic precision, functional relevance, and communicative clarity across languages and socio-political realia.

Building on these considerations, effective strategies for translating culturally specific institutional terminology involve selecting approaches that balance accuracy, clarity, and cultural relevance to faithfully convey the original meaning while making the terms understandable and appropriate for the target audience.

Given the lack of full equivalence between institutional systems across countries, the translation of culturally specific institutional terminology demands the use of adaptive and context-sensitive strategies. Let's consider some of the most effective translation strategies.

***Borrowing with explanatory apposition strategy*** preserves the original term, either in its source-language form or in transliteration, to retain institutional authenticity or because of the absence of an adequate equivalent in the target language. To ensure clarity and comprehension, the borrowed term is immediately followed by a brief explanatory phrase or appositive. This strategy enables the translator to maintain the cultural and terminological

integrity of the source term while making its meaning accessible to the target audience.

Key features of this strategy are:

- maintaining the formal or cultural specificity of the source-language term;
- providing immediate explanatory context to aid the reader's understanding.

For example, *The court's decision was based on principles derived from Sharia law, which governs personal status and family matters in many Muslim-majority countries.* – Рішення суду було ухвалене на основі принципів, що впливають із шаріатського права (ісламська релігійна система законодавства), яке регулює питання особистого статусу та сімейні справи в багатьох країнах із мусульманською більшістю.

In this translation, the strategy involves retaining the original term *Sharia law* in its transliterated form 'шаріатське право' to preserve its cultural and institutional specificity. As the term may be unfamiliar or carry complex connotations for the Ukrainian-speaking audience, it is immediately followed by a concise explanatory phrase 'ісламська релігійна система законодавства', clarifying that it refers to the Islamic religious legal system. This approach maintains the formal authenticity of the source term while providing the necessary context for clear understanding, ensuring both precision and accessibility in translation.

***Function-oriented descriptive strategy*** is employed when culturally specific institutional terms lack direct equivalents or when borrowing fails to capture their full meaning. Instead of attempting literal translation, the term is replaced with a contextualized explanation that reflects its institutional role, function, and status within the source system. By prioritizing communicative function over linguistic form, this strategy ensures that the core intent and institutional logic of the original term are preserved and made intelligible to the target audience.

Key features of this strategy are:

- focusing on conveying the function of the term rather than its linguistic form;
- preserving institutional meaning by explaining the role, scope, or authority of the original concept.

For example, *The president issued an executive order to streamline federal agency operations and enforce new regulations.* – Президент видав офіційний акт, який має силу закону в межах виконавчої влади, для оптимізації роботи федеральних установ та впровадження нових нормативів.

The term executive order is specific to the U.S. presidential system and does not have a direct equivalent in many parliamentary systems like Ukraine's. Rather than opting for a literal translation, the strategy involves using a contextualized explanation 'офіційний акт, який має силу закону в межах виконавчої влади' to convey the institutional function and legal authority of the term. This approach enables the target audience to grasp its role and scope without conflating it with less authoritative directives that exist within their legal-administrative framework.

**Contextual adaptation strategy** involves modifying the translation of culturally specific institutional terms to align with the institutional literacy, expectations, and communicative norms of the target audience. Rather than translating terms literally, the translator adapts terminology to suit the purpose of the text and the sociocultural context in which it will be received. This strategy ensures that the message is not only linguistically accurate but also functionally effective and culturally intelligible.

Key features of this strategy are:

- tailoring terminology based on the institutional awareness and cultural framework of the target audience;
- prioritizing the function and pragmatic effect of the term in context.

For example, *The company must comply with the Sarbanes-Oxley Act to ensure financial transparency and accountability.* – Компанія повинна дотримуватися Закону США про фінансову прозорість і відповідальність (Sarbanes-Oxley Act), щоб забезпечити прозорість фінансової звітності та підзвітність.

The original term, Sarbanes-Oxley Act, refers to a U.S. federal law enacted to protect investors from fraudulent corporate financial reporting. This concept is highly specific to the legal and regulatory framework of the United States and may be unfamiliar to Ukrainian readers lacking background knowledge of American financial legislation. To address this, the strategy involves adapting the culturally specific institutional term to ensure clarity, functional relevance, and cultural intelligibility. Rather than relying solely on a literal translation or direct borrowing, the translator offers a contextually adapted equivalent 'Закон США про фінансову прозорість і відповідальність', which conveys the law's function in terms accessible to the Ukrainian audience. To preserve formal identification and institutional authenticity, the original title, Sarbanes-Oxley Act, is retained in parentheses. This combined

approach enhances comprehension while maintaining legal precision and cultural relevance.

Institutional terminology is not merely a set of professional labels but serves as a linguistic reflection of a nation's governance structures, legal traditions, and societal organization. These terms encapsulate culturally and historically conditioned concepts that are often untranslatable in a direct, word-for-word manner. For example, Anglo-American legal systems are grounded in common law principles and include notions such as precedent, judicial review, or grand jury – all of which lack precise equivalents in civil law traditions predominant in many European countries. The translation of such terms demands careful contextualization, which may involve explanatory additions or the use of functionally analogous terms that convey the intended meaning within the target legal framework. This complexity underscores the need for translators to combine linguistic competence with comparative legal and cultural awareness.

Similarly, terminology such as federal government, unwritten constitution, or executive privilege is deeply rooted in the political heritage and institutional arrangements of specific countries, particularly those with Anglo-Saxon traditions. These terms carry unique legal and historical connotations that do not always have direct counterparts in other systems. Translating them without sufficient regard for their socio-political embeddedness may lead to semantic distortion, misinterpretation, or loss of nuance. On the other hand, in post-Soviet contexts, terms like народний депутат (people's deputy) or державна адміністрація (state administration) reflect the distinctive evolution of political and administrative systems shaped by centralized governance models. Their accurate translation requires not only linguistic equivalence but also an understanding of the underlying institutional and historical frameworks from which they emerge.

In official business communication, especially in treaties, agreements, policy documents, and correspondence, terminological choices affect not just linguistic clarity but diplomatic precision and legal validity. A mistranslation of a culturally embedded institutional term can result in misinterpretation of legal obligations or procedural requirements, underscoring the importance of interdisciplinary expertise in translation practice.

Building on this understanding, the application of adaptive and context-sensitive strategies becomes essential. Strategies such as function-oriented descriptive translation, borrowing with explanatory

apposition, and contextual adaptation offer flexible yet principled methods for conveying institutional meaning accurately. These strategies help translators bridge systemic gaps between source and target legal cultures while preserving both the informational and communicative value of the original.

Ultimately, the choice of strategy must be guided by a nuanced assessment of the institutional (dis)equivalence between systems, the expected legal and cultural literacy of the audience, and the communicative purpose of the text. Successful translation of institutional terms, therefore, demands not only linguistic proficiency but also deep socio-political awareness, ensuring that the resulting text remains both intelligible and legally sound across cultures.

**Conclusions.** The translation of culturally specific institutional terminology is a complex and context-dependent task that extends beyond linguistic equivalence. Such terms are deeply embedded in the socio-political, legal, and cultural systems of their source language, often lacking

direct counterparts in the target culture. As a result, literal translation or unexamined borrowing can lead to ambiguity, distortion, or loss of institutional meaning.

To address this challenge, translators must adopt adaptive and context-sensitive strategies that reflect the function, status, and communicative role of institutional terms. Strategies such as function-oriented descriptive translation, borrowing with explanatory apposition, and contextual adaptation allow for a nuanced approach that balances accuracy, clarity, and cultural appropriateness.

Effective translation of institutional terminology requires interdisciplinary competence, combining linguistic skills with legal, political, and cultural awareness. It also demands careful consideration of the target audience's institutional literacy and the communicative purpose of the text. By applying context-sensitive strategies, translators can preserve the integrity of institutional notions and contribute to transparent and effective cross-cultural communication in official and professional settings.

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**Бойко Я. В. ІНСТИТУЦІЙНА ТЕРМІНОЛОГІЯ У ПЕРЕКЛАДІ:  
КУЛЬТУРНО-МОВНИЙ ІНТЕРФЕЙС У БІЗНЕС-КОМУНІКАЦІЇ**

*У статті розглядаються виклики та стратегії, пов'язані з перекладом інституційно зумовленої термінології у межах міжнародного офіційного дискурсу. Акцентовано на важливості розуміння соціополітичного, правового та культурного контекстів, які формують ці спеціалізовані лексичні одиниці, що часто відображають структурні та ідеологічні засади національних моделей державного управління і зазвичай не мають прямих відповідників у мові перекладу. З урахуванням ролі перекладача як культурного посередника, дослідження спирається на сучасну теорію перекладу та міждисциплінарні підходи для аналізу адаптивних, контекстуально зумовлених стратегій, таких як функціонально орієнтований описовий переклад, запозичення з пояснювальним додаванням, контекстуальна адаптація, які забезпечують семантичну точність і функціональну релевантність. Стратегічний вибір способу перекладу має враховувати системну (не)еквівалентність правових систем, комунікативну мету тексту й інституційну обізнаність цільової аудиторії. Особливу увагу приділено функціонуванню інституційної лексики в межах формального стилю, який передбачає стандартизацію, термінологічну послідовність і прагматичну чіткість. Порівняльний аналіз термінів, запозичених із англійсько-американської та пострадянської адміністративно-правової традиції, демонструє, як культурна дистанція та правові відмінності зумовлюють потребу в гнучких, обґрунтованих перекладацьких рішеннях. Інституційна термінологія розглядається як відображення національної ідеології та моделі управління, що підкреслює необхідність чутливого до контексту, культурно обізнаного підходу до її перекладу. У підсумку, дослідження обґрунтовує потребу в системному, міждисциплінарному підході, який поєднує мовну компетентність із юридичною та культурною обізнаністю задля досягнення точного та прозорого міжкультурного спілкування в багатомовному професійному середовищі, зокрема у перекладі документів високого рівня відповідальності, таких як міжнародні угоди, політичні заяви та офіційне листування.*

**Ключові слова:** термінологічна асиметрія, інституційний дискурс, перекладацькі стратегії, цільова еквівалентність, міжкультурна специфіка, правничо-лінгвістична компетентність, прагматична адаптація.