

FUNDAMENTALS OF MILITARY TRANSLATION

Ukraine’s strategic course towards Euro-Atlantic cooperation, allies’ support in the Russian-Ukrainian war, Ukraine’s participation in UN and NATO peacekeeping operations, and international training of our soldiers emphasize the importance of structuring the fundamental principles of military translation to ensure quality communication at the international level regarding military issues.

Military translation is a complex translation that requires accuracy, knowledge and understanding of military terminology. Military materials differ from all others in their saturation with special military vocabulary, the use of military and scientific and technical terminology, the presence of stable phrases characteristic only for the military sphere of communication, special abbreviations and legend. The main message in military texts is given by terms and term combinations, so the correct translation of these texts largely depends on the correct translation of terms. And in terms of syntax, such materials differ from others by a large number of clichéd constructions, a poverty of verb forms, and a concise form of expression, which ensure brevity, clarity and accuracy of wording inherent in the military sphere communication.

The professional task is to convey the original text using the Ukrainian military language style and to neutralize unnecessary figurativeness and jargon elements, because they are not inherent in our language.

As a rule, a term is translated by a corresponding term of another language, so techniques such as synonymous translation and descriptive translation are used only when there is no corresponding term in the language. The main way of translating terms is using lexical equivalents.

According to the difficulty of translation, military terms can be divided into three groups:

1. Terms denoting realities of foreign life. Translation of such terms does not cause difficulties for the translator and occurs as follows:

a) usage of international terms: brigade – бригада, bunker – бункер, tank – танк;

b) usage of the Ukrainian equivalent, the form of which is not related to the form of the English term: paratrooper – десантник, sniper rifle – снайперська гвинтівка;

c) a multi-component English term is translated into Ukrainian one, the components of which coincide in form and meaning: military base – військова база, air support – повітряна підтримка;

d) a multi-component English term is translated into Ukrainian one, the individual components of which differ: grenade launcher – гранатомет, machine gun – кулемет.

2. The terms denoting the realities of foreign life are absent in Ukrainian reality, but they have generally accepted Ukrainian equivalents: National Security Council (NSC) – Рада національної безпеки (РНБ) (США). Such terms are translated using the selection of appropriate Ukrainian analogues. In this case, the context is of great importance.

3. Terms denoting realities of foreign life that are absent in Ukrainian reality and do not have generally accepted Ukrainian equivalents: overseas housing allowance – житлова субсидія за кордоном (грошова допомога для оплати житла в інших країнах під час служби за кордоном), hazardous duty pay – винагорода за небезпечну службу (додаткова оплата за виконання військових обов'язків у небезпечних умовах). The translation of such terms should be done using the etymological analysis of its components, and using such translation methods as:

a) descriptive method: friendly fire – вогонь або обстріл, зазвичай з власної сторони, який наносить шкоду або уражає власних військових;

b) literal translation: frontline – передова лінія або фронтова лінія;

c) partial or full transliteration: major general – майор-генерал;

d) transliteration with literal translation: second lieutenant – другий лейтенант, staff sergeant – штаб-сержант;

e) transcribing: officer – офіцер.

When translating, one should not forget about the unambiguity of the terms (e.g., biometric authentication) and the ambiguity of the terms (e.g., asset), as well as the presence of lexical units for the designation of military grade titles and rungs, which differ, for example, in the terminology of NATO and the US Army: sergeant – sergeant – staff sergeant; генерал-лейтенант – lieutenant general – major general; генерал-полковник – colonel general – lieutenant general etc. One should also pay attention to abbreviations and acronyms, which mostly do not have counterparts in the translated language: CI (counter-intelligence) – контррозвідка; HN (host nation) – приймаюча країна; PO (peace operations) – миротворчі операції.

Summing up, we can claim that precise understanding and correct translation of terms depends not only on a good knowledge of the language, but also on knowledge of the realities of the English language, the structure of the Ukrainian army, weapons and combat equipment, ways of conducting armed conflict, as well as the specifics of international military documentation in English.