

Stylistic features of English and Ukrainian official-business texts in a comparative perspective

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Paper received 19.12.16; Accepted for publication 02.01.17.

Abstract. The article focuses on one of the central issues of comparative functional stylistics which consists in singling out of convergent and divergent stylistic features of official-business texts written in different languages. It aims to describe those most conspicuous homologous and distinguishing characteristics of English and Ukrainian official-business style documents that should constitute the subject of special attention in situations of interlanguage communication.

Keywords: *official-business style, clichés, technical terms, abbreviations, nominalization, doublets, foreign words, archaisms, ceremonial forms of address.*

1. Introduction. Assignment formulation. The problems of stylistic studies of official-business discourse draw increasing attention of many foreign and domestic scholars as at the present stage stylistic features of official texts have ceased to be equaled to purely linguistic characteristics. In the light of modern cognitive paradigm they are inevitably interpreted as those manifestations of certain historical-cultural background that are highly relevant in intralanguage and interlanguage communication. The four classically isolated varieties of official-business style – the language of legal documents, the language of diplomacy, the language of military documents and the language of business documents [1, p.312-313], correlate with two very important spheres of activity that are urgent for any culture: administrative and legislative domains, on the one hand, and the sphere of business, public life, and community service, on the other.

Previous publications on the topic. A special interest of scholars is invariably attached to such variants of official style as legal language and texts of diplomacy analyzed in a number of papers, in particular, in the scholarly works by P. Dámová [3], B. Danet [4], R. Hiltunen [5], D. Kappeler [6], N. Krivchikova [7], N. Lisina [8], O. Matsko [9], V. Shabunina [10].

At the same time although there is a considerable volume of studies that focus on the style of official-business discourse in English and Ukrainian traditions one should mention lack of comparative papers in the scholarly field under discussion. However, the relevance of such comparative analysis seems to be unquestionable in view of the necessity to supply a solid linguistic basis for both further linguistic and translational studies. Therefore **the aim of this paper** consists in giving a comparative description of the most important convergent and divergent stylistic features of English and Ukrainian official-business texts.

It should be mentioned that this formal, matter-of-fact variety of speech is reckoned to be the most conservative of all functional styles in any language, scholars describe it as a neutral “zero style” where practical criterion takes precedence over other literary standards. Accordingly, in both English and Ukrainian its distinguishing linguistic characteristics are the following: the use of a special system of clichés, terms and terminological expressions, abbreviations, conventional symbols, contractions; avoidance of words with emotive meaning except those that are used in official and business letters as formulaic phrases

of greeting, close, apology, gratitude, etc.; restricted choice of syntactic patterns; fixed paragraphing; stereotyped compositional design. Here are the most conspicuous stylistic features of English and Ukrainian official-business discourse of both homologous and dissimilar nature.

2. Homologous features and discriminants of English and Ukrainian official-business style. Impersonality or objectivity has been always of high concern in any kind of English and Ukrainian official discourse, especially in legal language. In legal documents objectivity is achieved by at least three basic ways: 1) absence of the first and second person pronouns, all types of legal documents are typically written in the third person; 2) addressing persons not by their names, but by their position in legal process: the *Grantor, the Grantee, the Borrower, the Lender, the Contractor, agent* etc.; 3) preferring passive sentences to active ones. Sometimes passive constructions are employed because it is impossible to use active structures but in the majority of cases passives are resorted to for definite strategic reasons: to add to the degree of formality, to deliberately de-emphasize or obscure the actor and thus to build up an aura of authoritativeness and objectivity. Besides, impersonal passive sentences allow to project the impression of the impartiality of Law.

Clichés. The bureaucratic discourse is a considerably standardized type of speech that is conditioned by stereotypical situations which arise in the course of official communication: addressing documents, signing them, expressing reasons that lead to the subject of the document and so on. The most characteristic manifestations of standardization are: a) widespread use of ready-made verbal structures, established clichés, some stenciled beginnings and endings of the documents; b) frequent repetition of the same words, forms, phrases, structures as a result of striving for uniform ways of expression in such situations.

Thus, there is a special system of clichés and standardized expressions. These set phrases are basically similar in English and Ukrainian: *hereinafter called, at the specified conditions, in consideration of this, without prior notice, according to the terms quoted, order stand until ...// названий далі, на вказаних умовах, з огляду на це, без попереднього повідомлення, згідно з наведеними умовами, розпорядження чинне до ...*, etc.

Technical terms are specific vocabulary items from a particular discipline or domain, or the so-called “terms of

art” that constitute a homogeneous characteristic of English and Ukrainian official-business discourse. Each variety of the official style has plenty of its special terms in both English and Ukrainian traditions. For instance, in commercialese one finds such terms as: *extra tax / додатковий податок, taxable capacities / податковоспроможність, liability to profit tax / зобов’язанність платити податок з прибутку, stock market indices / індекси ринкової активності, imbalances in trade / невірноважені торговельний баланс*. Terms and phrases like *warranty deed (документ на право володіння майном), criminal proceeding / кримінальне судочинство, arbitration / арбітражне провадження, libel suit / позов за наклеп, real action / позов у майнових справах* immediately indicate that the document is legislative. At last, here are a few examples of diplomatic vocabulary stock that includes words and expressions used in the sphere of international law: *Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary / Надзвичайний і Повноважний Посол, envoi / дипломатичний представник, immunity / недоторканість, a signatory to a diplomatic document / сторона, що підписала дипломатичний документ; підписант*. Such terms of terminological nomenclature impart specific semantic preciseness and make a considerable contribution in the formality of the official-business language.

Abbreviations, conventional symbols and contractions. The encoded character of language symbols belongs to the integrating features of all the subcodes of official style. Accordingly, abbreviations, conventional symbols and contractions are often used in different kinds of bureaucratic documents and there are special addendas in dictionaries to decipher them. For instance, in the language of diplomacy one can frequently come across encoded names of certain international institutions: *ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations – Асоціація держав Південно-Східної Азії), ACCSQ (Consultative Committee for Standards and Quality – Консультативний комітет зі стандартів та якості), NIST (National Institute of Standards and Technology -- Національний інститут стандартів та технологій), ITA (International Trade Administration – Управління з міжнародної торгівлі)* and others. The most common abbreviations used in commercial texts, namely, contracts are: *C&F (Cost and Freight), C&I (Cost and Insurance), ltd. (limited), Inc. (incorporated), encl. (enclosed), et al. (and others), v.v. (quite the opposite), i.e. (that means)*, etc. All who are engaged in international trade know the abbreviations *c.i.f. (cost, insurance and freight)* or *f.o.b. (free on board)* which may be even uttered as a word: CIF and FOB. Conjunction *but* is marked as # in contract texts. In military documents an abundance of abbreviations is accounted for their double function because in this substyle they are used not only as conventional symbols but as signs of the military code, which is supposed to be known only to the initiated: *D.A.O. (Divisional Ammunition Officer), Adv. (advance), Atk. (attack), Obj. (object), A/T (anti-tank), ATAS Air Transport Auxiliary Service)* [1, p.313-314].

Nominalization, or a process of deriving nouns from verbs, is considered to be a noticeable feature of the bureaucratic discourse by many linguists [see: 11, p.19; 3, p.20]. Some of the examples are the following: the use of

provision instead of *provide*, *to be in opposition* instead of *oppose*, *implementation* instead of *implement*, *погашення кредиту* instead of *погасити кредит*, *вирішення питання* instead of *вирішити питання*. This practice is frequently condemned because it disjoins the parts of sentences and makes syntactic structures rather long. However, some lawyers and expertise acknowledge its importance and state that these nouns cannot be replaced by verbs as they are having definite meanings in legal English. Upon the whole, it is worth mentioning that Ukrainian bureaucratic language differs from English in using a greater number of nominal phrases instead of verbs, evidently, because nominal structures provide a special formal overtone to the style of bureaucratic documents: *завдавати шкоди власності – to damage property, здійснювати обслуговування техніки – to maintain the equipment, здійснювати огляд майданчика – to examine a site*.

Doublets or binomial expressions. These are word pairs “fixed in the mind as frozen expressions, typically irreversible” [Danet 1985: 281]. Many doublets used in English legal date back to the Norman period: *will and testament, give and bequest, will and bequest, aid and abet, cease and desist* and so on. They represent a special case of parallelism described as “sequence of two words belonging to the same form class, which are syntactically coordinate and semantically related” [2, p. 75]: *liable and responsible, primary and foremost, engage or participate, protect and defend, order and decree, case and matter, goods and materials, generally and specifically*, etc. Apart from binomials, one can observe the use of trinomial and multinomial expressions in English legalese: *control, direct or supervise; employee, partner, agent, or principal*, etc. The main function of such expressions in legal discourse is clarity and preciseness, since any ambiguity may complicate understanding and call for additional legal interpretation of the document. Binomials are also found in Ukrainian legal tradition: *правила і положення, справи і питання*, however, they are paid much greater attention in English scholarly literature on the topic under discussion.

Foreign words. The English bureaucratic style makes use of a number of foreign – mostly Latin and French – words and phrases which are less frequently employed in Ukrainian official and commercial texts: *as per – згідно з, ex officio – з огляду на займану посаду, ultra vires – поза компетенцією, за межами повноважень кого-н., per capita – на душу населення, neto dat quod not habet – принцип, згідно до якого ніхто не може передати або продати те, на що він не має права власності, condition sine qua non – обов’язкова умова, laissez-faire – невтручання, en attendant – в очікуванні, fait accompli – доконаний факт*. The English legal language was influenced by both above-mentioned languages throughout different periods of history. For instance, many Latin terms entered the legal language since 597 when the Christian missionaries landed. As there was no standard for written English at that time, a major impact of Latin was to encourage the use of writing, however, a considerable number of non-assimilated Latin words and phrases are still employed in legal documents today: *bona fide (доброчесно, чесно, без обману), lex fori (закон місця розгляду справи, закон суду), lex loci delictus*

(закон місця скоєння злочину), *quid pro quo* еквівалент, компенсація), *pro rata* – пропорційно, відповідно, *pari passu* – на паритетних засадах, на рівній основі, *versus* (проти (у назві судових справ, при позначенні сторін у процесі) and others. When in 1066 the Norman Conquest made French the language of aristocracy English lawspeak started to draw from French legal terminology. Some of the characteristics of legal French that have left traces in contemporary legal English comprise “addition of initial *e* to words like *squire*, creating *esquire*; adjectives that follow nouns (*attorney general*) and a large amount of technical vocabulary, including many of the most basic words in the English legal system” [10]. Non-assimilated borrowings are especially relevant for English diplomatic practice because for many centuries Latin and French remained dominant languages in diplomatic relations and all diplomatic documents were written in Latin and French until the 16th century: *ad hoc committee* (спеціальний комітет), *modus vivendi* (тимчасова угода), *verbal note* (вербальна нота), *persona grata* (персона граата, прийнятна особа) [9]. Although some well-known internationally expressions can be found in both English and Ukrainian bureaucratic language: *status quo* – статус кво, *a priori* – априорі, *terra incognita* – terra інкогніта, *homo sapiens* – гомо сапієнс, *persona non grata* – персона нонграта.

Archaisms. English bureaucratic documents incorporate many archaic words used only in this style which have non-archaic equivalents in Ukrainian business and official texts: *aforsaid* – вищезазначений, *henceforth* – надалі, *відтепер*, *hereby* – цим, *hereinafter* – надалі (у подальшому), *herein*, *thereat* – при цьому, *therein* – у ньому, *therewith* – з ним, *whereupon* – після чого, *whereas* – оскільки, *whereby* – на основі. In consequence in Ukrainian such words have a less expressed terminological character if any, whereas in English they are obviously stylistically marked. The archaisms that consist of an adverbial word of place to which a preposition-like word has been suffixed, originate in Old English and are rarely used in common and everyday conversation: *aforsaid* – discussed or mentioned before or previously; *hereto* – to this document or file; *herein* – in or within this document; *subsequent* – coming or following; *pursuant* – in accordance with; *anterior to* – before to; *abutting to* – next to. They “may have originally been introduced as ambiguity resolving elements or means of abbreviation” [5, p. 84]. Undoubtedly, all these ritualistic expressions of bureaucratic style are useful for the kind of precise references – especially to the document or its parts, and to the contracting parties – which lawyers find it so necessary to make: *the meaning set forth in Section 7 hereof* (значення, визначене у пункті 7 цього Договору); *Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973 [hereinafter referred to as “the Constitution”]* (Конституція Ісламської Республіки Пакистан, 1973 [надалі “Конституція”]) and so on. However, the use of archaisms does not win universal approval as nowadays some authors tend to dismiss the use of such expressions stating that archaic words are devoid of any important semantic function and only add a touch of formality to the text in which they occur. According to this standpoint the outdated expressions are obscure for common users and consequently they should be replaced by currently used

lexis e.g. *aforsaid* by *previously mentioned*, *anterior to* by *before* to etc.

Ceremonial forms of address. A distinctive feature of British official style consists in the existence of special ceremonial forms of address which correlate with a hierarchy of nobility titles thus actually constituting a rather orderly system that prescribes correspondences between the courtesy title, the beginning and the closing formulas of the letter:

Courtesy Title		
Queen	Her Majesty the Queen	
Prince	His Royal Highness, the Prince of... <i>or</i> His Royal Highness, Prince (<i>name</i>) <i>or</i> His Royal Highness, the Duke of... (<i>in case of the Royal Duke</i>)	
	Duke	His Grace the Duke of...
	Marquis	The most Hon the Marquis of...
Earl	The Rt Hon the Earl of...	
Viscount	The Rt Hon the Viscount of...	
Baronet	Sir (<i>name and surname</i>)	
Knight	Sir (<i>name and surname</i>)	

Address (the beginning of the letter)	
Queen	Madam With my humble duty <i>or</i> May it please Your Majesty
Prince	Sir
Duke	My Lord Duke
Marquis	My Lord
Earl	My Lord
Viscount	My Lord
Baronet	Dear Sir
Knight	Dear Sir

Complimentary close	
Queen	I have the honour to remain (<i>or to be</i>) Madam Your Majesty’s most humble and obedient servant <i>or</i> Your Majesty’s faithful subject
Prince	I have the honour to remain (<i>or to be</i>) Sir Your Royal Highness’s most humble and obedient servant <i>or</i> Your Royal Highness’s most dutiful subject
Duke	I have the honour to be, Your Grace’s most obedient servant <i>or</i> Respectfully
Marquis	I am, sir, your obedient servant <i>or</i> Yours faithfully
Earl	I am, sir, your obedient servant <i>or</i> Yours faithfully
Viscount	I am, sir, your obedient servant <i>or</i> Yours faithfully
Baronet	Your obedient servant <i>or</i> Yours faithfully
Knight	Yours faithfully

Adherence to the patterns of ceremonial forms which once served a means of reflecting the specificity of social stratification is also manifested in the existence of two title forms in British English which equal to Ukrainian 'nan' – *Mister* and *Esquire*. Today the latter title is considered to be very formal and *Mister* is much more widely used.

3. Conclusions. Identical aims of official-business communication in both compared cultural traditions pre-determine the homologous character of bureaucratic language forms in English and Ukrainian such as: impersonal, passive sentences, bureaucratic clichés, technical terms, abbreviations, conventional symbols and contrac-

tions. However, some stylistic means employed in English and Ukrainian official discourse do not display such unambiguous correlation. It concerns, for instance, the process of nominalization which is more typical of Ukrainian bureaucratic language, whereas doublets or binominal expressions are more frequently cited as a distinguishing stylistic feature of English official documents. At the same time such rather conspicuous stylistic phenomena of English official-business discourse as foreign words and archaisms do not find analogy in Ukrainian. Besides, ceremonial forms of address which correlate with the titles of aristocracy also constitute a discriminant of British official style.

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