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COMMUNICATIVE FAILURES IN THE MACHINE TRANSLATION OF BUSINESS TEXTS FROM UKRAINIAN INTO ENGLISH

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Abstract: This article examines communicative failures that may arise during the machine translation of business-related texts from Ukrainian into English. It focuses on typical translation tasks encountered by students at the Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Kyiv, such as translating press releases, website news, business correspondence, conference and symposium agendas, invitations, and announcements. For the purpose of analysis, the author has developed model segments that illustrate potential discrepancies between the original message, the machine-generated draft, and the suggested revision; these are not direct quotes from student assignments, nor do they represent the output of any specific machine translation system. The study demonstrates that a translation that appears formally coherent can, in fact, alter the subject matter of a message, the status of an agreement, the agenda of an event, or the expected action of the recipient. A post-editing procedure is proposed, based on verifying both the communicative function of the text and its factual content.

Keywords: Machine translation, Ukrainian-to-English translation, business communication, translation practice, communicative failure, post-editing.

Introduction. Translating business texts for an organisation that engages with both Ukrainian and international partners encompasses several genres. A press

release reports on an event and its outcome; a business letter requests action or formalises an agreement; a conference program guides participant, and a news article explains the significance of an event to a broader audience. During a translation internship at the Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Kyiv, students worked with such texts. Using machine translation can speed up the production of an English draft, but requires checking that the intent and implications of the message are still intact.

Research into this issue highlights various aspects of the editorial process. Bashmanivskyi [1] examines the challenges of using automated translation for business correspondence and the essential role of a human translator in refining the output. Pryima, Dzekun, and Zuenko [2] analyze translation errors that arise when using ChatGPT to translate from Ukrainian into English and German. Popovych [3] demonstrates that a machine-generated text may appear intelligible while still containing significant errors in conveying the intended meaning. Sarti et al. [4] investigate the effort required for post-editing across several languages, including Ukrainian, and focus on variations depending on the specific systems and language pairs involved. In total, these studies underscore the importance of meaning, context, and the necessity of human review.

The purpose of this article is to describe the mechanisms behind communicative failures when translating the above-mentioned genres and to identify which elements require priority during the review process. The unit of analysis consists of a segment of a message considered alongside its intended situational context. The Ukrainian original, a potentially risky English version, and a corrected translation are compared based on subject matter, action, timeframe, and genre appropriateness. The examples provided below are constructed for the purpose of analytical illustration and do not constitute an empirical corpus of student translations. So, the article does not contain quantitative findings regarding error frequency.

Results and discussion. A misidentification of the subject matter in a letter or document can occur when machine translation selects an English term that is

formally similar but functionally incorrect. While the recipient may easily understand the sentence, they might end up preparing the wrong materials or drawing an incorrect conclusion regarding the purpose of the request. For instance, in the case of the request *Просимо надіслати комерційну пропозицію до п'ятниці* the translation *Please send a commercial offer by Friday* carries a risk. If the sender requires pricing and delivery terms, *Please send us a quotation by Friday* would be more precise; if they are expecting a plan for cooperation, *Please send us your proposal by Friday* is more appropriate. Since the original Ukrainian phrase does not resolve this ambiguity, the intended meaning must be verified by consulting the broader correspondence or the specific task requirements.

In another business communication *Надсилаємо рахунок на оплату послуг* the English word *bill* might not correspond to the actual title of the attached document. If the attachment is a request for payment, *Please find attached the invoice for the services* is the correct phrasing. Conversely, if the text refers to a bank account, the term *bank account* should be used instead of *invoice*. A machine translation system, processing the word *рахунок* without considering the attachment, could lead the recipient to the wrong document. In a professional workflow, such an error is typically identified not through grammatical analysis, but by cross-referencing the text of the message with the filename and content of the attachment.

The title of a publication can also alter the subject matter of a message. In a conference announcement, the Ukrainian phrase *Захід відбудеться 12 листопада* should not be translated as *The measure will take place on 12 November*. In this context *захід* means an *event*, not a *measure* or an *action taken by authorities*. Using *The event will take place on 12 November* ensures the reader correctly understands the message. When post-editing, the genre is crucial: the same word may require different equivalents depending on whether it appears in a business letter, a program, or a news report.

Distortions regarding the status of a decision or obligation can occur when a machine-translated text presents a preliminary agreement as a final approval, or when

the strength of a requirement is altered. In the context of a request *Просимо погодити оновлену редакцію договору* translating it as *Please coordinate the revised agreement* fails to convey the intent of seeking agreement with the text, while *Please approve the revised agreement* might imply final, formal authorisation. If the recipient is expected to examine the changes, a more precise phrasing would be *Please review the revised agreement and confirm whether you agree with the changes.* The term *approve* should only be used if the recipient is explicitly authorised to grant final approval under the parties' established procedures.

A similar risk arises in a press release stating *За підсумками зустрічі сторони домовилися продовжити консультації*. Translating this as *The parties agreed to cooperate* sounds natural, but it mischaracterises the meeting as having resulted in an agreement to cooperate, whereas the original text merely indicates that consultations will continue. A more accurate translation is *Following the meeting, the parties agreed to continue consultations.* In a public statement, such a shift is significant, as readers will interpret the stated outcome as the official position of the parties involved.

In a business letter, the instruction *Оплату необхідно здійснити до 15 листопада* might be weakened from a mandatory requirement to a mere recommendation if translated as *Payment should be made by 15 November*. If the deadline is contractually binding, it should be rendered as *Payment must be made by 15 November.* However, *must* should not be added automatically when the author is merely suggesting a preferred date. The post-editor must align the modality of the English version with the document referenced in the letter, ensuring that the level of obligation present in the original message is maintained.

Terms, conditions and speech action can also change when a preposition, conjunction or verb is automatically selected. In the invitation *Просимо підтвердити участь не пізніше 15 листопада,* the phrase *Please confirm your attendance on November 15th* denotes a specific day for the response, whereas the author has set a deadline. The *Please confirm your attendance by November 15* option retains the opportunity to respond earlier. The error is especially noticeable

when registering for an event: the recipient may miss the time required by the organizers to compile a list of participants.

The sentence *Участь у форумі можлива за умови попередньої реєстрації* informs about the necessary condition for admission. The option *Participation in the forum is possible after registration* describes the sequence of events, but does not express the requirement as clearly. More precisely, *Participation in the forum is subject to prior registration* or *You must register in advance to attend the forum.* The second option is useful for an announcement if its purpose is to give the reader direct instructions. In both cases, the link between registration and participation remains.

In the symposium program, the expression *Вільне спілкування учасників* can take the literal version *Free communication between participants.* The English-speaking reader will not understand whether this line indicates a discussion, a break, or an open part of the program. If we are talking about informal contacts after a meeting, *Networking* or *Informal networking* is appropriate. Similarly, *Підбиття підсумків* in the final paragraph of the program is often better conveyed as *Closing remarks* rather than *Summing up.* Here, the translation determines the participants' expectations regarding the format of the event.

Writing style and hidden meanings influence how the recipient perceives the sender's intent. The machine version can make the refusal sharper, the request less specific, or add an action that is missing in the Ukrainian original. Thus, *На жаль, ми не можемо прийняти запропоновані умови* should not be translated as *We are forced to reject your conditions* – the word *forced* attributes a motive to the author, and *reject* enhances the harshness. The neutral *Unfortunately, we cannot accept the proposed terms* maintains a refusal and a businesslike tone. On the contrary, too soft *The terms may be difficult for us* hides the solution and can cause unnecessary continuation of negotiations.

In the news publication *Палата сприяє виходу українських компаній на міжнародні ринки* the literal *The Chamber promotes the exit of Ukrainian companies to international markets* creates an undesirable association with companies leaving the market. A more accurate option is *The Chamber helps*

Ukrainian companies enter international markets. Both the meaning of the verb and the focus of the action are important here: the publication reports on the promotion of international activities, and not on the cessation of work in Ukraine. Such an error can distort a public message even if the sentence is formally correctly constructed.

The principles of post-editing machine translation must account for both linguistic accuracy and the practical implications of the text. The process begins by determining exactly what the intended recipient is expected to understand or do; this is followed by verifying names, job titles, document titles, dates, conditions, and the outcomes of events against the original source. For any given genre, its specific function must be preserved: a press release should not report an agreement that was never reached, an invitation should not alter registration deadlines, and an agenda should not obscure the format of a presentation. Once the meaning has been verified, the text is refined to remove literal translations (calques) and unnatural phrasing. If the context is insufficient to choose between two possible interpretations, the post-editor should seek clarification from the author rather than relying on guesswork to fill the gap.

Conclusions. It is important to note that a communicative failure is not always manifested through the linguistic awkwardness of machine-generated text. Such a failure occurs when an otherwise clear English version leads the reader to take a different course of action or to interpret an event differently than the Ukrainian original intended. Illustrative examples highlight several high-risk areas: document titles, stages of an approval process, modal nuances, deadlines, conditions, and the conventional formulas specific to agendas or news reports. Further empirical research requires access to anonymised source materials, machine-generated drafts, and student-edited versions provided with explicit permission for analysis. Only a corpus of this nature will allow for an assessment of the actual frequency and distribution of errors as they occur in professional practice.

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