

**SPECIFICS OF RENDERING POSITIVE POLITENESS IN UKRAINIAN AND RUSSIAN
TRANSLATIONS OF ENGLISH BUSINESS LETTERS**
**ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ВІДТВОРЕННЯ ПОЗИТИВНОЇ ВВІЧЛИВОСТІ В УКРАЇНСЬКИХ ТА
РОСІЙСЬКИХ ПЕРЕКЛАДАХ АНГЛІЙСЬКОМОВНИХ ДІЛОВИХ ЛИСТІВ**

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Abstract. *The paper focuses on the analysis of transformations aimed at rendering the strategies of positive politeness in Ukrainian and Russian translations of English based business correspondence. The research purpose consists in revealing the markers of intensification and de-intensification of positive politeness. To achieve the purpose, the paper has applied the methodology composing of the methods of descriptive analysis, elements of comparative translation analysis as well as the explanatory tools of pragmatic analysis within the framework of "face and politeness" theory. The major findings refer to the identification of the translation transformations that affect the change in the scale of positive politeness towards its decrease or intensification. The transformations-based intensification of positive politeness is much less frequent than its weakening in favor of the negative politeness of "distance". This feature can be explained by the specifics of the genre of business correspondence characterized by stability, tradition, standardization, accuracy, objectivity, specificity, conciseness, lack of imagery and emotionality. The group of transformations, which de-intensify positive politeness, include the addition of "honorific" adjectives Шановний and Уважаемый – often in combination with honorific lexemes пане or господин; the grapho-stylistic foregrounding of the pronoun as capitalized; the syntactic-grammatical re-categorization of a two-member sentence into a definite-personal sentence in combination with the syntactic transformation of omission of subject – personal pronoun and a part of the predicate, which distance the subject from his / her own discourse thus decreasing the scale of positive politeness as the politeness of proximity; grammatical transformation of the replacement of perfect time has been with the present simple. Intensifiers of positive politeness involve the omission of the modal verb should and grammatical re-categorization of the conditional into future tense – since both the modal verb and the conditional structure are hedges of varying complexity, and are considered markers of negative politeness; accordingly, their omission in translation results in a decrease in negative and an increase in positive politeness.*

Key words: *positive politeness, business letter, translation, transformations, intensifier, de-intensifier.*

Introduction. With the development of international business, a huge role is assigned to the translation of official business correspondence. The study of strategies of both negative and positive politeness in business communication is an important area

of pragmatic linguistic research as it is related to the problem of improving the efficiency and optimization of communication in the business environment. This issue acquires special significance in the intercultural perspective, allowing to clarify the differences

in the communicative patterns of representatives of various business linguistic cultures since culture is reflected in the mind of a person and determines the features of his / her behavior in different spheres of communication, including institutional one. Differences in verbal and non-verbal communication of people belonging to different cultures can lead to misinterpretation of attitudes, intentions of communication partners and their non-verbal signs. A significant part of verbal and non-verbal communication, both in everyday and institutional interactions, is determined by the strategies and maxims of politeness, which, despite the universal nature of the principle of politeness, have a national specific of their expression.

The underlying cause of differences in communicative behavior is the type of culture to which the interlocutors belong. The type of culture, including business culture, determines the characteristics of business communication, social and communicative norms, rules of business interaction. If the British and Americans belong to monoactive (monochrome) types of business cultures, which are characterized by low-context communication, individualism and "masculinity", then Ukrainians and Russians in their behavior in business gravitate towards polyactivity, collectivism and "femininity" of culture. Accordingly, such differences in the types of business cultures affect the choice of means of business communication, including such its written variety as business correspondence.

The problem of rendering the strategies of both positive and negative politeness in Ukrainian and Russian translations of English-based business letters has not yet been the subject of analysis either within the linguistic or translation studies frameworks, which determines the scientific relevance and novelty of this paper.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The theoretical basis of the article includes research on the theory of positive politeness, studies on the isomorphism and allomorphy of the positive politeness devices in languages under consideration as well as investigations on the specifics of English commercial style.

Over the past 30-35 years, a large number of articles and monographs have

appeared on the issues of politeness, including in different cultures. It is no coincidence, in this regard, that the world-famous journal "Journal of Pragmatics" devotes to this topic both special issues (14:2, 21:5), and many separate articles [20; 24; 25]. In the most recent years, the issue of politeness strategies, including in different cultures, are invariable focus in the monographs by authoritative foreign researchers [6; 9; 10; 11; 13; 19; 21; 23].

Analysis of research on the pragmatic theory of politeness [7; 8; 11; 12], and its practical application in various types of discourse [6; 10; 16; 18; 19] allows us to formulate the definition of politeness as a face-saving balance between proximity and distance aimed at avoiding face threatening acts. If negative politeness is focused on creating distance, which is expressed by linguistic means of hedging and polite pessimism [8, p. 129], then positive politeness is focused on demonstrating closeness and interest in the interlocutor. It is a politeness that demonstrates indifference, solidarity, and togetherness. 15 strategies of positive politeness, singled out by scientists [8], primarily focuses on the assertion of commonality; belonging to the "inner" group; manifestation of cooperation between communicators and movement towards the wishes of the addressee. The strategies of positive politeness are primarily viewed in this paper from sociopragmatic approach – being conceptualized within cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics considering contexts of business environment and the interconnections between context and culture [17; 20; 23-25].

Of particular interest for solving the problems of our research are studies, albeit very few, revealing the isomorphism and allomorphy [11; 12; 21] of the means to convey the strategies and maxims of positive and negative politeness, including in business correspondence. Promising for this paper is the research exploring the iconic and indexing properties of the strategies of politeness in signifying a certain situational connotatum, together with other sign-like pragmatic devices [15].

However, in the translation aspect, the problem of rendering the strategies of positive politeness of English-language business correspondence in Ukrainian and Russian target texts is being solved for the first time.

English commercial style, including in its translation facet has been conceptualized by a number of scientists, including Jo. Angouri [5], D. Archer et al [6], P. Shvanyukova [22], etc. In particular, the researchers attempted to analyze the English letters technicalities and their associating difficulties in translations into other languages as well as to examine the politics of language use at work via a critical sociolinguistic approach.

The purpose of this paper consists in revealing the markers of politeness in Ukrainian and Russian translations of English-based business letters. The purpose is specified by the following tasks:

(1) To identify the markers of positive politeness in English business correspondence and its Ukrainian and Russian translations.

(2) To reveal and analyze the translation transformations, which result in certain intensification in target texts of positive politeness strategies of the source texts.

(3) To identify transformations resulted in de-intensification in target texts of positive politeness strategies of the source texts.

Methods of research. The data analyzed in this paper include 10 English-based business letters and their translations into Ukrainian and Russian taken from textbooks and guidelines for business English [1-4].

To realize the aim set in the paper, the following methods have been used: (a) the explanatory tools of pragmatic analysis within the framework of "face and politeness" theory – to identify the markers of positive politeness in source and target business correspondence added by (b) descriptive analysis – to describe translation transformations used in the target Ukrainian and Russian texts; (c) elements of method of comparative translation analysis – to compare the scale of positive politeness in English-based business letters and their Ukrainian and Russian translations.

Results of the research and their discussion. Business correspondence in both source and target languages contains the different markers of positive politeness. The way of their translation from analytical English into synthetic Ukrainian and Russian can influence the change in the scale of such politeness.

The analysis of the data showed that various types of transformations used in

translation of English business letters into Ukrainian or Russian can result either in the strengthening or, vice versa, in the weakening of positive politeness strategies.

Weakening of the degree of positive politeness is provided by adding "honorific" part-adjective with connotations of honor and respect, due to which the positive politeness connotated in the original text by *Dear* address is transformed in the target text into negative politeness forms *Шановний* and *Уважаемый* – often in combination with the addition of honorific lexemes *пане* or *господин*.

In addition, Ukrainian translations apply the grapho-stylistic foregrounding of the pronoun *Ви / Вы, Ваш* as capitalized, thus connotating respect and esteem to the addressee.

Dear Mr. Michalov,

Thank you for your letter dated September 1, 2007 concerning your order for consignment of peat moss [1]

Шановний пане Міхальов!

*Дякуємо за **Ваш** лист від 1 вересня 2007 року щодо Вашого замовлення на партію торфу [1].*

In Russian business letters, the greeting formula will look like this: *Уважаемый господин Михалев!* Besides, in business correspondence in Ukrainian and Russian, it is customary to address the addressee by name and patronymic, which also increases the communicative distance and conveys the connotations of deference and esteem towards a business partner. Accordingly, lexical semantic transformations replacing adjective *Dear* with Ukrainian and Russian honorifics de-intensify the positive politeness strategy in favor of negative politeness.

While the first group of positive politeness de-intensifiers implements the negative-politeness strategy of emphasizing respect for the business correspondence partner, the second group of tools, discussed below, reinforces another basic negative-polite strategy of distancing from the interactant.

Among such means of positive politeness de-intensifiers, the paper identifies the syntactic-grammatical transformation of a two-member sentence into a one-member definite-personal sentence in combination with the syntactic transformation of omission of subject – personal pronoun and a part of the predicate.

We are grateful to receive information about the new advertising design of our courses [2]. –

З вдячністю підтверджуємо отримання інформації стосовно нового дизайну реклами наших курсів [2].

We acknowledge receipt of your letter dated September 2, 2007 [2]. –

Підтверджуємо отримання Вашого листа від 2 вересня 2007). [2]

In accordance with the agreement reached during our recent meeting, we send you our price list [3].

В соответствии с соглашением, достигнутым во время нашей недавней встречи, высылаем вам наш прайс-лист [3] (Відповідно до угоди, досягнутої під час нашої нещодавньої зустрічі, надсилаємо вам наш прайс-лист).

These transformations weaken the degree of expression of positive politeness, as they deprive the sentence of the phrasal subject, thus "removing" the subject from performing his / her own communicative actions.

Some transformations identified in above translations do not affect the scale of positive politeness. Among such transformations there are the transformation of addition of lexical unit *підтверджуємо* as well as a part-of-speech re-categorization of the infinitive form of the verb *to receive* into noun *отримання* and adjective *advertising* into a noun *дизайну*.

The transformation of syntactic-grammatical recategorization of the sentence type is often combined in Ukrainian and Russian translations of English-language letters with a complex of other translation tools.

So, the fragment below displays the transformation of the double omission of the personal pronoun *we*, added by the replacement of the analytical form of the future tense with a synthetic one (*will be able* – *сможем*), transposition (*will be able to be useful to you* – *сможем быть вам полезными*) and lexical-semantic transformation of meaning differentiation – with the replacement of the verb with the meaning «believe» by the verb with the denotative seme «hope» (*верим*).

We believe that in the future we will be

able to be useful to you.

Верим, что в будущем сможем быть вам полезными [4].

Among other markers of de-intensification of positive politeness, the paper identifies grammatical transformation of the replacement of perfect time *has been* on the present simple *работает*, which reduces the degree of positive politeness, because perfect times demonstrate effectiveness and, accordingly, can be considered a separate marker of positive politeness.

Similar transformations should be expected when translating a letter into Ukrainian, since such transformations are based on the "system-linguistic" features of the Slavic languages, using synthetic forms of verbs instead of analytical ones: Віримо, що у майбутньому зможемо вам бути корисними.

The transformation that does not affect the de-intensification of positive politeness strategies is, in the above example, the formal-syntactic transposition consisting in a change in word order. In particular, instead of *to be useful to you*. Ukrainian translation uses *быть вам полезными*.

At the same time, the example below shows that the phrasal subject is not always omitted in Ukrainian and Russian translations of English-language business correspondence and can be equivalently reproduced.

We are pleased to inform you that this company enjoys an excellent reputation and has been in business since 1985. –

Мы рады сообщить Вам, что эта компания пользуется отличной репутацией и работает с 1985 года [4] (Ми раді повідомити Вам, що ця компанія має відмінну репутацію і працює з 1985 року).

However, the target text uses a syntactic-grammatical transformation of the replacement of the analytical form of the verb with a synthetic one with a change of the perfect tense into the present simple. In addition, the syntactic transformation of adding a lexical unit is used: *has been in business* is replaced by *работает*. The intensification or de-intensification of positive politeness is also not affected by the grammatical transformation of the case replacement – objective into instrumental: *enjoys an excellent reputation* is replaced by

пользуется отличной репутацией.

Means of de-intensification of positive politeness strategies in Ukrainian and Russian

translations of English-language business correspondence are represented by a Table 1.

Transformations affecting the de-intensification of positive politeness	Transformations-based negative politeness strategies
addition of honorific adjective	strategy for emphasizing deference to a business correspondence partner
addition of honorific noun	strategy for emphasizing deference to a business correspondence partner
capitalization of the personal pronoun	strategy for emphasizing deference to a business correspondence partner
syntactic-grammatical re-categorization of a two-member sentence into a definite-personal sentence	strategy of distancing from the interactant
syntactic transformation of omission of subject – personal pronoun and a part of the predicate,	strategy of distancing from the interactant
syntactic-grammatical replacement of perfect time by the present simple with a lexical unit omission.	strategy of distancing from the interactant

Table 1. Markers of de-intensification of positive politeness in Ukrainian and Russian translations of English-based business letters

Transformations that do not affect the de-intensification of positive politeness is

displayed by the Table 2.

Transformations not affecting the de-intensification of positive politeness in favor of negative politeness
formal-syntactic transformation of transposition
syntactic transformation of addition of a lexical unit
grammatical transformation of the case replacement
the replacement of the analytical form of the verb with a synthetic one
a part-of-speech re-categorization of the infinitive form of the verb into a noun
a part-of-speech re-categorization of the adjective into a noun

Table 2. Transformations not affecting the de-intensification of positive politeness

In addition to de-intensifiers of positive politeness, the article reveals markers of intensification of this type of politeness. The intensification of positive politeness resulted from the application of translation transformations is much less frequent than the weakening of such politeness of "proximity" in favor of the negative politeness of "distance".

This feature can be explained, in our opinion, by the specifics of the genre of business correspondence characterized by stability, tradition, standardization, accuracy, objectivity, specificity, conciseness, lack of imagery and emotionality.

In particular, intensifiers include the transformation of the omission of the modal verb *should* and grammatical re-categorization of the conditional form *should be grateful* into future tense *Буду вдячний*.

Another intensifier is the transformation of replacement of the conditional form *could* by second person singular verb *можете*.

I should be grateful if you could forward your confirmation. – Буду вдячний, якщо ви можете переслати своє підтвердження [2].

Since the hedges *should* and *could* are the basic negative politeness markers the transformations of their omission and replacement by more direct forms in the Ukrainian translation significantly decreases the degree of such type of politeness and, accordingly, increase the scale of positive politeness – while maintaining the basic positive-politeness connotations marked by the lexeme *grateful / вдячний*.

However, the above fragment of the Ukrainian translation displays the combination of both intensifiers and de-

intensifiers of positive politeness. So, in addition to the omission and replacement of modal verbs-hedges with increasing the politeness of proximity, there is also a marker of deintensification of this type of politeness represented by the syntactic-grammatical transformation of a two-member sentence *I should be grateful* into a one-member definite-personal sentence in combination with the syntactic transformation of omission of subject – personal pronoun: *Буду вдячний*.

In addition to the omission and replacement of modal verbs, the article identifies as de-intensifiers of negative politeness and, accordingly, intensifiers of positive politeness, the omission of other hedges – in particular, the adverb *rather*.

I rather think it is hopeless – *Я вважаю, що це безнадійно* [2].

The formal transformations that do not affect the intensification of positive politeness are represented by addition in the Ukrainian translation of the conjunction *що* with omission of the auxiliary verb *is*.

Another identified marker associated with intensification of positive politeness, is the syntactical transformation of addition of positively connotated adjective *велике* – a noun modifier, which signify the increase of the degree of feeling designated by a noun.

We were greatly impressed by all that we saw and enjoyed our discussions with you (PLU:2) – Ми були дуже вражені всім побаченим і отримали велике задоволення від обговорення з вами деталей угоди [2].

In above example of Ukrainian translation, several transformations do not change the positive politeness degree neither in direction of its weakening, nor strengthening. Among these transformations we can identify the syntactical-grammatical transformation of replacement of a complex sentence including a subordinate clause introduced by conjunction *that* by a simple sentence, which is added by corresponding transformations of omission of subject-predicate group *that we saw*, grammatical transformation of part of speech replacement (a verb-predicate *saw* is replaced by a participle-adjective *побаченим*), as well as the transformation of the meaning modulation in combination with addition of the lexical units *деталей угоди* and omission of the pronoun *our*.

Means of intensification of positive politeness strategies in target business correspondence texts compared to English-based source texts can be presented by a Table 3.

Transformations-intensifiers of positive politeness
omission of the modal verb-hedge <i>should</i>
replacement of the modal verb-hedge <i>could</i> by second person singular verb
grammatical re-categorization of the conditional forms into future / present tenses
omission of the adverb-hedge <i>rather</i>
syntactical transformation of addition of positively connotated adjective – noun modifier, increasing the degree of positive feeling designated by a noun.

Table 3. Intensifiers of positive politeness in Ukrainian translations of English-based business correspondence

Transformations that do not affect the intensification of positive politeness is displayed by the Table 4.

Transformations not affecting the intensification of positive politeness
syntactic transformation of addition of lexical units
omission of the auxiliary verb / other lexical units
syntactical-grammatical transformation of replacement of a complex sentence with a subordinate clause by a simple sentence
omission of subject-predicate group
a part of speech re-categorization of a verb-predicate into a participle-adjective
meaning modulation

Table 4. Transformations not affecting the intensification of positive politeness

Conclusions and future perspectives. The group of transformations,

which de-intensify positive politeness, include the addition of "honorific" adjectives

Шановний and *Уважаемый* – often in combination with honorific lexemes-noun *пане* or *господин*; the grapho-stylistic foregrounding of the personal pronoun as capitalized; the syntactic-grammatical re-categorization of a two-member sentence into a definite-personal sentence in combination with the syntactic transformation of omission of subject – personal pronoun and a part of the predicate, which distance the subject from his / her own discourse thus decreasing the scale of positive politeness as the politeness of proximity; grammatical transformation of the replacement of perfect time *has been* with the present simple.

Transformations-intensifiers of positive politeness involve the omission of the modal verb *should*, replacement of the modal verb-

hedge *could* by second person singular verb and grammatical re-categorization of the conditionals into future or present tense – since both modal verbs and conditional structures are hedges of varying complexity, constituting the markers of negative politeness; accordingly, their omission in translation results in a decrease in negative and an increase in positive politeness.

In the prospect of further research is the study of ways of rendering the negative politeness strategies as well as other pragmatic phenomena such as speech acts, cooperative maxims flouting, conventional and conversational implicatures, etc. in Ukrainian and Russian translations of English-based business correspondence.

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Анотація. Стаття присвячена аналізу трансформацій, спрямованих на відтворення стратегій позитивної ввічливості в українських та російських перекладах ділового листування англійською мовою. Мета дослідження полягає у виявленні маркерів інтенсифікації та деінтенсифікації позитивної ввічливості. Для досягнення мети в роботі використано методологію, що складається з методів описового аналізу, елементів порівняльного перекладацького аналізу, а також інструментів прагматичного аналізу в ракурсі теорії «обличчя та ввічливості». Основні висновки стосуються виявлення перекладацьких трансформацій, які впливають на зміну шкали позитивної ввічливості у бік її зменшення або посилення. Інтенсифікація позитивної ввічливості на основі трансформацій відбувається значно рідше, ніж її послаблення на користь негативної ввічливості «дистанціювання». Цю особливість можна пояснити специфікою жанру ділової кореспонденції, що характеризується стабільністю, традиційністю, стандартизацією, точністю, об'єктивністю, конкретністю, лаконічністю, недостатньою образністю та емоційністю. До групи трансформацій, що деінтенсифікують позитивну ввічливість, належать додавання «гонорифічних» прикметників «шановний» та «уважаемый» – часто у поєднанні з гонорифічними лексемами «пане» чи «господин»; графо-стилістичне виділення особового займенника з великої літери; синтаксико-граматична перекатегоризація двочленного речення на означено-особове речення у поєднанні із синтаксичною трансформацією опущення підмета – особового займенника, а також частини присудка, які у такий спосіб віддаляють суб'єкт від його / її власного дискурсу, зменшуючи шкалу позитивної ввічливості як ввічливості зближення; граматична трансформація заміни перфектного часу теперішнім. Інтенсифікатори позитивної ввічливості включають трансформацію опущення модального дієслова *should* та граматичну перекатегоризацію умовного способу на майбутній час – оскільки і модальне дієслово, і умовна структура є хеджами різної складності, які вважаються маркерами негативної ввічливості; відповідно, їхній пропуск у перекладі призводить до зменшення негативної та збільшення позитивної ввічливості.

Ключові слова: позитивна ввічливість, діловий лист, переклад, трансформації, інтенсифікатор, деінтенсифікатор.