



LEXICAL AND GRAMMATICAL PECULIARITIES OF ENGLISH INSTRUCTION MANUALS AND STRATEGIES FOR THEIR TRANSLATION INTO UKRAINIAN

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The paper focuses on lexical and grammatical peculiarities of English instruction manuals and outlines the main strategies used to translate them into Ukrainian. Instruction manuals are a highly regulated form of technical discourse intended to ensure the safe and effective operation of consumer devices, yet they have not received enough attention and remain insufficiently researched within the English-Ukrainian language combination. The increasing amount of technical documentation in the Ukrainian market and the requirement for precise, user-friendly, and standard-compliant translations make the study relevant. The research concentrates on determining the most common grammatical structures and lexical units in English instruction manuals and examining how these elements are represented in Ukrainian. The material includes authentic instructions for digital gadgets, construction tools, and household appliances. The methodology used in this study combines descriptive and comparative approaches, which makes it possible to trace both the inherent linguistic features of instructional discourse and the transformations applied in translation. The results demonstrate that the lexical profile of instruction manuals consists of general technical vocabulary, device-specific terminology and risk-related signal words. From a grammatical perspective, English manuals rely on imperatives, modal verbs, passive forms, and concise noun groups. Since many of these structures do not have direct equivalents in Ukrainian, translators frequently employ various lexical and grammatical transformations. The most effective strategies include concretisation, generalisation, addition, omission and reordering, which help

maintain clarity, naturalness and functional equivalence. Special attention is paid to the translation of safety markers, where maintaining the hierarchy of risk levels is extremely important for accurate risk communication. The study concludes that effective translation of instruction manuals requires more than linguistic competence: translators must take into account standardisation norms, user perception, and the functional specifics of technical discourse.

ЛЕКСИЧНІ ТА ГРАМАТИЧНІ ОСОБЛИВОСТІ АНГЛОМОВНИХ ІНСТРУКЦІЙ ТА СТРАТЕГІЇ ЇХ ПЕРЕКЛАДУ УКРАЇНСЬКОЮ МОВОЮ

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Ключові слова: *технічна документація, орієнтація на користувача, комунікація про ризики, узгодженість термінології, директивні структури, трансформації, модальні конструкції, функціональна еквівалентність.*

У статті розглянуто лексичні та граматичні особливості англійськомовних інструкцій та окреслено основні стратегії їх перекладу українською мовою. Інструкції користувача є регламентованою формою технічного дискурсу, призначеною для забезпечення безпечної та ефективної експлуатації побутових і електронних пристроїв, проте цей жанр в межах англо-української мовної пари досі залишається недостатньо дослідженим. Зростання обсягу технічної документації на українському ринку та потреба у точних, стандартизованих та зручних для користувача перекладах зумовлюють актуальність проведеного дослідження. У центрі уваги – виявлення найбільш поширених граматичних конструкцій і лексичних одиниць англійськомовних інструкцій та аналіз способів їх відтворення українською мовою. Матеріалом дослідження є автентичні інструкції до цифрових пристроїв, будівельних інструментів і побутової техніки. Методологія поєднує описовий і порівняльний підходи, що дає змогу простежити як внутрішні мовні особливості інструктивного дискурсу, так і трансформації, застосовані в перекладі. Результати показують, що лексичний рівень інструкцій формують загальнотехнічна лексика, вузькоспеціальні терміни та сигнальні слова, пов'язані з безпекою користування приладами. Якщо аналізувати

граматику, англійські інструкції активно використовують імперативи, модальні дієслова, пасивні конструкції та стислі іменникові групи. Оскільки значна частина цих структур не має прямих відповідників в українській мові, під час перекладу обов'язковим є застосування різних лексичних і граматичних трансформацій. Найефективнішими серед них є конкретизація, генералізація, додавання, вилучення та перестановка, які сприяють збереженню зрозумілості, природності й функціональної еквівалентності тексту. Особлива увага приділяється перекладу сигнальних слів, де надзвичайно важливим є дотримання ієрархії рівнів ризику для забезпечення коректної комунікації про ризики. Зроблено висновок, що ефективний переклад інструкцій вимагає не лише мовної компетентності, а й урахування норм стандартизації, правильного сприйняття користувачем та функціональної специфіки технічного дискурсу.

Problem Statement. Technical instruction manuals are one of the most popular mediums for scientific and technical communication in the modern world. They are now essential for guaranteeing safe, effective, and legally compliant use of consumer electronics, home appliances, construction tools, and digital devices as they continue to be distributed throughout the world.

Users themselves are a diverse audience with varying degrees of technical expertise, and the increasing technological complexity of devices makes the accompanying documentation more linguistically complex. This means that instruction manuals' clarity, accuracy, and usability are not just matters of linguistic interest, they are matters of practical necessity.

Despite the significant attention given to scientific and technical translation in academic research, instruction manuals are still a relatively unexplored subgenre, especially in the English–Ukrainian linguistic pair. Ukrainian scholars such as V. Karaban and L. Chernovaty have examined technical terminology and translation techniques. International researchers also provide important contributions: J. Byrne studies the structure and functions of manuals, A. Trosborg analyses directive text types, and M. Olohan discusses terminology and signal words. Together, these works form the methodological background for analysing the lexical and grammatical features of instruction manuals and their translation.

Nonetheless, there are still a number of problems with translating English instruction manuals into Ukrainian. These include transferring safety markers (WARNING, CAUTION, TIP), rendering imperative and modal structures, adapting compressed noun clusters, and ensuring consistency in technical terminology. Despite existing research, many of these features have not been systematically described for the English–Ukrainian language pair, which makes their analysis particularly relevant.

The **aim** of the study is to give a thorough examination of the lexical and grammatical peculiarities found in English instruction manuals and to deter-

mine the main techniques employed in their translation into Ukrainian.

The following **tasks** must be fulfilled in order to accomplish this goal:

- 1) to determine the main lexical and grammatical characteristics of English instruction manuals;
- 2) to systematise the methods used for translating these features into Ukrainian;
- 3) to identify the most common translation challenges and discuss possible solutions.

The **object** of the study is English instruction manuals representing various types of technical devices, including household appliances, construction tools, and video equipment.

The **subject** of the research is the set of lexical and grammatical characteristics of instruction manuals and the translation techniques applied to reproduce them in Ukrainian.

Research findings. Instruction manuals represent a highly specialized subtype of scientific and technical discourse whose main function is to help users operate a product safely and correctly. Byrne defines manuals as “*educational documents... tools which help readers acquire new information to learn how to do something or understand something*” and emphasizes that their purpose is to give users “*easy access to precisely the information they need at a particular moment and to ensure that it is clear and comprehensible*” [Byrne, 2006, p. 59]. The subgenre's linguistic and structural norms are determined by this dual communicative role, which is at the same time instructive and informative.

Instruction manuals belong to what Trosborg classifies as directive or instructive text types, which are primarily used to influence the reader's actions [Trosborg, 1997, p. 50]. According to her classification, directive texts aim to influence the reader's behavior by giving them instructions on how to carry out tasks. Instruction manuals rely on clear, unambiguous language and a highly standardized structure, because their primary function is regulatory.

Kussmaul's analysis of instructional discourse shows that English manuals use a variety of structures

that indicate directive intent, such as the “*imperative (press, insert, remove), please + imperative, must, should, have to, it is advisable, it is important, and we recommend*” [Kusssmaul, 1995: p.77]. His results show that imperatives are frequently used in English, making procedural instructions concise and direct. To preserve the target text's communicative clarity, translators must be able to identify such forms.

The highly predictable structure of instruction manuals is one of its key characteristics. Byrne underlines that the organization of technical documentation “*is not random*”, but guided by the function of the text and the conditions in which it is used [Byrne, 2006, p. 69]. Manuals typically include safety warnings, technical specifications, descriptions of components, installation guidelines, step-by-step instructions, maintenance advice and troubleshooting information. This structured format gives the user easier navigation and supports the central aim – to provide accessible and reliable instructions to a diverse audience.

Legal and safety-related function is another important aspect of this subgenre. Standardized danger markers like WARNING, CAUTION, DANGER, and IMPORTANT are widely used since manuals are frequently required to alert users about possible risks. As Byrne points out, such warnings are not merely stylistic choices, they are part of a “*legal requirement... to alert users to potential hazards caused by the incorrect use of a product*” [Byrne, 2006, p. 61]. To obtain an adequate translation, it is necessary to maintain hierarchy and clarity.

In summary, instruction manuals are shaped by their directive purpose, regulatory function, standardised structure and emphasis on clarity. These characteristics directly determine the lexical and grammatical features, which we are going to analyse in the following sections.

Lexical Features of Instruction Manuals. The lexical profile of this subgenre is characterized by maximum level of clarity and minimum level of ambiguity. The figurative and stylistically marked statements are usually avoided in favor of precision and functional transparency, and their language is mostly referential and denotative.

The vocabulary used in instruction manuals can be seen as a combination of specialized, device-specific vocabulary and general technical terms. The use of general technical terms that are common to a variety of devices is a key component of instruction manuals. Terms such as *power cord, filter, safety instructions, adapter* or *input source* appear in manuals for household appliances, audio-video equipment and construction tools. This cross-sectoral terminological layer ensures predictability for users and facilitates the establishment of stable Ukrainian equivalents.

Alongside this shared vocabulary, each type of device has domain-specific terminology. Washing

machine manuals contain textile and washing-cycle vocabulary, drill manuals rely on mechanical and construction terms, while digital camera manual includes terms connected to photography and computers. Olohan notes that instructions for consumer goods often rely on component labels “*which may only ever be encountered by users in written instructions on use, maintenance or repair*” [Olohan, 2016, p. 72]. Such terms require careful terminological research during the translation to ensure consistency across the target text.

Safety-related vocabulary forms another important lexical layer. Olohan points out that consumer documentation frequently uses signal words such as CAUTION or NOTE, which must be translated in a way that reflects the standard hierarchy of warning terms in the target language [Olohan, 2016, p. 72]. This ensures clarity of communication and compliance with legal requirements.

Signal words appear consistently across several device types in the instruction manuals analyzed for this study, showing how English manuals encode distinct levels of risk. For example, the lowest-severity marker NOTE typically highlights additional useful information. The phrase “*NOTE: To ensure a good washing result, always follow the instructions on the detergent packaging*” is translated as “*ПРИМІТКА: Для кращого результату прання дотримуйтеся інструкцій на упаковці мийного засобу*”, which preserves its informational, non-critical function [Dishwasher Bosch, p. 22; Посудомийна машина Bosch, p. 24].

The next level, CAUTION, is used to warn users about the possibility of damage to equipment. One of the manuals states: “*CAUTION: The appliance is not intended to be operated by means of an external switching device*”, which is rendered into Ukrainian as “*ЗАСТЕРЕЖЕННЯ: Прилад не призначено для керування зовнішнім перемикачем*”. This example illustrates how Ukrainian uses the equivalent ЗАСТЕРЕЖЕННЯ to reflect low-to-medium operational risk [Washing machine Whirlpool, p. 3; Пральна машина Whirlpool, p. 5].

The higher-severity marker is WARNING, which signals the possibility of serious physical injury or death. For example: “*WARNING: Risk of scalding!*” and translation “*ПОПЕРЕДЖЕННЯ: небезпека опіку!*” maintains the intended warning level [Dishwasher Bosch, p. 9; Посудомийна машина Bosch, p. 10].

These examples show that when translating signal words, maintaining the original hierarchy of severity is just as important as reproducing their lexical meaning since it influences user behavior, safety awareness, and adherence to technical standards.

Finally, compact noun groups and multi-element compounds like *water-filter housing, speed-control system, and child-proof lock* are frequently used in

instruction manuals. In English, such compressed constructions are used to condense complex technical information into short nominal units. In Ukrainian, however, in order to preserve clarity, these patterns are usually extended into analytic phrases. For example, *anti-theft lock* is rendered as «замок для захисту від крадіжок», *built-under appliances* as «прилади, які встановлюються під стільницю», and *wall mount bracket* as «кронштейн для настінного кріплення». These transformations reflect the structural differences between the two languages: while English favours left-branching noun clusters, Ukrainian relies on syntactic decomposition, the use of prepositions, and reordering of components to ensure clear semantic relations between elements.

Grammatical Features of Instruction Manuals. The grammatical structure of instruction manuals is determined by their functional purpose: to instruct, regulate behavior, and ensure safe operation of the device. For this reason, grammar in this genre prioritizes clarity and short structures. Several grammatical structures appear repeatedly in instruction manuals regardless of the device category.

The most distinctive grammatical feature of instruction manuals is the frequent use of the imperative, which expresses direct commands or steps in a procedure. Imperatives make instructions concise and easy to follow, allowing users to identify required actions instantly. Examples include:

- Press the START/PAUSE button [Washing machine Whirlpool, p. 10];
- Insert the drill bit into the chuck [Drill Makita, p. 4];
- Select the highlighted item [Digital camera Nikon, p. 16].

In Ukrainian, imperatives are also widely used in instructions (*Натисніть, Вставте, Виберіть*), which makes this construction a natural and functionally equivalent choice.

Modal verbs are another essential grammatical component. Manuals rely on a small, functionally important set of modals:

- must – strict obligation, often safety-related: *The appliance must be grounded* – «Прилад має бути заземлений»;
- should – recommendation: *You should clean the filter regularly* – «Слід регулярно чистити фільтр»;
- may / can – permission or possibility: *You can adjust the angle by rotating the knob* – «Можна відрегулювати кут, повернувши ручку»;
- must not / do not – prohibition: *Do not use the appliance if the cord is damaged* – «Не використовуйте прилад, якщо шнур пошкоджений».

In Ukrainian, obligation and prohibition are frequently rendered through impersonal constructions (слід, необхідно, заборонено). This contrasts with

English manuals, which often address the reader using *you*. In Ukrainian technical documentation, however, such direct reference is generally avoided, producing a more formal and objective tone, for example: *You must remove the transit bolts before use* is translated as «Перед використанням необхідно зняти транспортні болти», where the Ukrainian version preserves the meaning while omitting the second-person subject.

English instructions often use the passive voice to emphasize the action or process rather than the subject of the action. This allows the text to remain objective and procedural. Several examples from the analysed manuals demonstrate this tendency:

- The childproof lock is deactivated. – Блокування деактивоване;
- The dishwasher has been preset with certain settings for your convenience. – Для полегшення роботи з посудомийною машиною значення деяких параметрів задано на заводі.

In Ukrainian, such passive constructions are frequently rendered through impersonal -но / -то forms (встановлено, деактивовано, задано) or other structures, which sound natural in technical documentation.

Translation of instruction manuals requires the use of appropriate translation techniques. In Ukrainian technical discourse many English structures cannot be reproduced directly, which makes translation transformations an essential tool for achieving accuracy. Following Karaban, lexical transformations are used when dictionary equivalents do not correspond to the meaning or usage norms of the target language. In the analysed manuals, the most common strategies are concretization, generalisation, addition, omission and reordering [Карабан, 2004, p. 300-314].

Concretisation occurs when a broad English term is replaced with a more specific Ukrainian equivalent. This is frequent in instruction manuals, where context narrows the meaning. Examples:

- *appliance* – «пральна машина / прилад» (specifying the exact device);
- *load* – «білизна».

Generalisation is the opposite process: a more specific English term is rendered by a broader Ukrainian equivalent when required by norms of target-language usage:

- *use the vacuum cleaner only for its intended purpose* – «використовуйте прилад за призначенням»;
- *remove any coins or small metal objects* – «вийміть дрібні предмети».

Addition occurs when implicit meaning in the source text must be made explicit in Ukrainian to preserve clarity. Additional components make the technical term transparent for the user:

- *wet grip* – «зчеплення шин з вологою поверхнею дороги»;

– *overview of menu* – «огляд меню приладу».

Omission is applied when English includes redundant or duplicated elements that sound unnatural in Ukrainian. Examples:

– *caring before loading* – *перед завантаженням*;

– *tie strap (Optional in some countries only)* – «стяжка (додатково)»;

Reordering is used when the English word order cannot be translated without violating the Ukrainian syntactic structure:

– *press the POWER button on the remote control* – «на пульті дистанційного керування натисніть кнопку POWER»;

– *select the programme on the control panel* – «на панелі керування виберіть програму».

Conclusion and prospects for further research.

The analysis shows that English instruction manuals are a highly structured and function-oriented form of technical discourse. Their lexical features include general technical vocabulary, device-specific terms and risk-related markers; the grammatical profile is dominated by imperatives, modal verbs and passive constructions. The comparison with Ukrainian translations shows that many of these elements require the use of translation transformations to ensure clarity and functional equivalence. Among the most frequent strategies are concretisation, generalisation, addition, omission and various grammatical shifts.

Future research could expand this analysis by examining a wider range of devices and brands or by comparing printed and digital instruction formats, which increasingly contain multimodal elements such as icons, diagrams, and interactive steps. Another promising area is to investigate terminology standardization practices in Ukrainian technical documentation and their impact on translation decisions.

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