THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES OF INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION IN THE FORMATION OF PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMATIC CONVERSATION USING LEXICONS OF FRENCH, ENGLISH, AND UZBEK LANGUAGES

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Abstract. This article explores the theoretical and practical issues faced in the interpretation and translation of diplomatic communication across these three languages: French, English, and Uzbek. We will examine how lexicons—specialized vocabulary and phraseology—are constructed, interpreted, and deployed in diplomatic contexts. Furthermore, we will consider the broader challenges of ensuring clarity, accuracy, and cultural sensitivity in professional diplomatic conversations. The languages involved, particularly in the context of professional diplomatic dialogue, are usually diverse, such as French, English, and Uzbek. These languages, each rich in their own cultural, historical, and grammatical traditions, present unique challenges in translation and interpretation.

Keywords: professional diplomatic dialogue, diplomatic communication, interpretation and translation, theoretical and practical frameworks, French, English, Uzbek languages, multilateral communicative situations.

Introduction. Today's rapidly growing globalization requires many countries to perfect diplomatic and political lexical units in their native languages in order to clearly express their position in restoring relations with each other. "It is known from recent reports that the field of diplomacy is facing some linguistic and didactic difficulties in conducting international negotiations at a successful level, and as a result, it is facing conflicts such as the escalation of the situation between some countries."

It is a requirement of the time to note that identifying external threats in advance, taking appropriate diplomatic measures against them, expanding trade-economic and investment relations with foreign partner countries, and protecting the rights of compatriots abroad are the main tasks of Uzbek diplomacy. It should be said that communicative mistakes can cause cultural shock to another person, failure of interpersonal and inter-national communication or serious conflict with so-called "geopolitical consequences". After all, today's diplomat should take into account the mentality, outlook, customs, traditions, written and oral sources of the countries and peoples to which he is attached, even their tone of voice and facial expressions. After all, every country has its own national and cultural language.

It is known that language is a mirror of culture, in which not only the real existence that surrounds a person, his real living conditions, but also the social self-awareness of the nation, its mentality, lifestyle, traditions, reflects the national character such as customs, morals, set of values and worldview. Language is a treasure, a chest, a complex of culture. Language is a carrier of culture, it bequeaths the treasure of national culture from ancestors to generations. It is natural for the young generation to learn the rich cultural experience of their ancestors along with their mother tongue.

Over the last century, various ethnic groups have become more aware of their identity and rights. In some countries, ethnic minority groups have demanded the right to education, media and other services in their own languages, at times leading to armed conflict with the majority groups in their countries. In the last few decades, contact between nations has increased, as more and more countries take an active –

and interactive – role in international affairs. Both of these processes have led to an awareness of linguistic rights as human rights. At the same time as English has gained currency as an international language and as the most commonly used diplomatic language, international organizations are recognizing the various languages of member states as official or working languages for their proceedings, both oral and written. In diplomacy, now more than ever before, interpreters and translators are of vital importance. In an increasingly globalized world, communication between states is vital to diplomacy, economic cooperation, and international security. Diplomats often serve as the intermediaries of these conversations, where precise and accurate communication is paramount.

Theoretical Frameworks for Interpretation and Translation of Primary diplomatic communication. Although a single diplomatic language de jure, whose usage was universally and explicitly accepted by every state, has never existed, throughout history there have been languages that, despite being limited in time and space, have been preferred for interstate diplomatic exchanges. The first known peace treaty, concluded in the 12th century B.C. between Ramses II, Pharaoh of Egypt, and Hattusili III, King of the Hittites, provides historical evidence of this. A careful analysis of the preserved text of this treaty, written in both Akkadian and Egyptian, revealed that the original was written in Akkadian, with the Egyptian version being a translation. Later texts also confirm that Akkadian was the first known dominant language of diplomatic interactions in the ancient Near East. Akkadian's supremacy began in the first half of the 2nd millennium B.C. and lasted for about a thousand years, until it was replaced by Aramaic, which became *the lingua franca* of the Fertile Crescent for a millennium and a half.

The conquests of Alexander the Great, however, significantly increased the importance of Greek during diplomatic interactions between different empires. Over time, Greek was used alongside Aramaic for diplomatic communication.

Alexander's successors, however, began to force other peoples to use Greek for official purposes, forbidding the use of other languages. Although the Roman emperors knew and used Greek, the spread of Latin became inevitable. Soon, Latin was used for communication between all provinces of the vast empire and with peoples beyond its borders. This widespread use of Latin ensured that it played a significant role in diplomacy even centuries after the fall of the Roman Empire. Several factors contributed to Latin's continued importance in diplomacy: during the Middle Ages, diplomatic envoys were often drawn from the educated clergy, and the language of the Church was Latin. Additionally, being a "dead" language, Latin did not harm the pride of any nation, as its use in diplomacy did not signify a difference in rank. Latin had developed a specific linguistic register to address nearly every situation in diplomacy, and its long-standing use made it easier to interpret diplomatic texts, even if decision-makers were not fluent in it.

However, Latin gradually lost its significance in Western Europe following the Renaissance and the rise of Humanism. The emergence of new terms in law, administration, politics, and economics, which had no equivalents in Latin, further weakened its relevance. The invention of the printing press also diminished the clergy's monopoly on reading and writing, and many new books were published in vernacular languages that the general population could understand. As more diplomats had no ties to the Church, many were either not fluent in Latin or unable to speak it at all.

In the 1670s, when France was at the height of its power under the Sun King, diplomatic negotiations following his military successes were still conducted primarily in Latin. However, there was a notable shift with the conclusion of one treaty between the Netherlands and France, written in French, and another bilingual Spanish-French treaty. Under the successors of Louis XIV, France's political decline in Europe began. As Charles Cogan explains, "…. under Louis XIV's successor, Louis XV, French diplomacy became less effective, as in the unnecessary renunciation of French gains in the northeast and in Savoy in the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle at the end of the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–48). In this and the next conflict, the Seven Years' War (1756–63), the principal beneficiaries were England, supreme on the seas, and Prussia, now emerging as a powerful land-army state under Frederick II. In the Seven Years' War, France lost two hundred thousand men fighting – in a change of alliances – with Austria against Prussia while losing its colonies in America and India to England for want of men to defend them. From that point until the French Revolution in 1789, France did not play a very active role in European power politics". Despite its political and military decline, France retained intellectual hegemony in Europe, contributing to the growing dominance of French as the main language for diplomatic communication.

Although France lost a war against the Holy Roman Empire, the Treaty of Rastatt in 1714 was formulated in French, marking a departure from the earlier dominance of Latin. The French general, Villars, did not speak Latin, while the commander of the Habsburg Empire's army, Prince Eugene of Savoy, who was born in Paris, was fluent in French. The treaty was written in French, but it included a "mention spéciale" stating that the use of French was an exception and should not set a precedent. Despite this, French began to be used more frequently in diplomatic treaties, even though a special note was still added to emphasize that French was not the officially adopted language for negotiations. It was only with the Treaty of Paris in 1763 that the special note was omitted for the first time, signaling that French had become the dominant language in international diplomacy.

Though France lost its political influence with the fall of Napoleon Bonaparte, French retained its special place in diplomatic communication. However, alongside Prussia, another emerging power, the United States, began to challenge France in various fields, including diplomatic language. Due to Britain's traditional isolation from mainland Europe, English was not widely spoken during the height of the British Empire. Despite its vast expansion and political dominance, English did not become a predominant language in European diplomacy until the late 19th century, when both England and the United States began to engage more directly in European affairs. The Treaty of Paris in 1783, which recognized the independence of the USA, was written in English at the special request of the Americans. In 1895, a tribunal was established in Paris to address legal disputes between England and the United States regarding the Behring Sea and the protection of sea lions. English was chosen as the language for discussions. Similarly, the Treaty of Portsmouth between Japan and Russia, mediated by the United States, was written in both English and French, with the French version being considered the original. This was a reflection of the growing influence of English in diplomatic communication, similar to how French had overtaken Latin two centuries earlier.

By 1919, during the negotiations that ended World War I, English became the dominant language in diplomatic communication. The Peace Conference, particularly a committee of four statesmen representing the victorious powers, formulated the peace terms in both English and French. While the French representatives, Georges Clemenceau and Vittorio Emanuele Orlando, were fluent in English, British Prime Minister David Lloyd George spoke limited French, and American President Woodrow Wilson spoke no French at all. For the first time since the Treaty of Rastatt in 1714, French was no longer the sole language used in Western European diplomatic negotiations. The decision to use both English and French was controversial and met with strong opposition from defenders of the French language, including the President of the Republic and the Académie Française. Nevertheless, the dominance of French as the single language of diplomacy was effectively ended, ushering in an era of bilingualism. This period lasted until the end of World War II, after which English assumed the role previously held by French as the dominant language of international diplomacy.

Practical Challenges in Diplomatic Interpretation. In practice, interpreters and translators face numerous challenges when working with languages as diverse as French, English, and Uzbek. These challenges are compounded by the technical nature of diplomatic language, where precision and nuance are paramount. The difficulties of interpreting might be the result of various factors. The speaker might not be a talented orator and in case he's not well prepared for his speech, he might struggle with the ways of expression himself, which also might cause hardships for the interpreter. Especially when the speaker has a tendency of accumulating negatives used within the same sentence, the interpreter might lose count on these and finally he won't know whether it should be expressed in the negative or in the positive. It's quite awkward and not always possible to ask a question to the speaker to clarify his meaning.

Some of the speakers might have a heavy accent, especially if they deliver their speeches in a second language. Sometimes the obscure way of expressing the thoughts gives hard times to the diplomatic interpreters, as in this case they need to decide within a moment, whether it was the speaker's intention to formulate his thoughts in such an obscure way, in which case the translation should reflect the same obscure character, or whether it was accidental, when the interpreter shall make a clear expression of what the speaker wished to share with his audience.

When speakers use quotations and references during their speech – especially in simultaneous interpretation –, it is always a source of difficulty for interpreters, all the more so if they haven't been provided with the required reference material in advance, so that they can find the documents from which the orators draw their quotations. It can also be a nightmare for interpreters, when speakers read out their speeches, as in this case they don't need to think what they say, thus they speak faster, time their pauses in a different way, and usually use a more formal, more bureaucratic way of expression.

Lexical Gaps and Untranslatability: One of the most pressing issues in translation is the absence of equivalent terms across languages. For example, French and English may share many words derived from Latin, but Uzbek, a Turkic language, may have unique expressions rooted in different historical, cultural, and social contexts. Words like “sovereignty” or “multilateralism” may not have direct counterparts in Uzbek, requiring interpreters to either use borrowed terms or construct new phrases. Moreover, the legal language of international treaties often contains specialized vocabulary that is highly technical and not easily translatable.

Cultural and Ideological Differences: The lexicons of French, English, and Uzbek reflect distinct historical, cultural, and ideological underpinnings. For instance, certain words in French might carry colonial connotations or post-revolutionary significance that would not be understood in the same way by an English or Uzbek speaker. Similarly, the concept of “human rights” in Western diplomacy often requires careful contextualization when translated into Uzbek, where traditional notions of collective well-being may take precedence over individual rights. These cultural and ideological differences require interpreters to be not only linguistically skilled but also culturally competent.

Register and Formality: Diplomatic language often requires a high level of formality, and the ability to navigate varying registers is essential for interpreters. In French, for example, the use of “vous” versus “tu” in addressing another person can signal a formal or informal relationship. In Uzbek, there are even more nuanced forms of politeness, such as different verb endings or address forms that vary depending on the speaker’s social status, the relationship between participants, and the situation at hand. English, while often more neutral, also has its own ways of adjusting formality through lexical choices and syntax.

Simultaneous vs. Consecutive Interpretation: In the world of diplomacy, interpretation typically occurs in one of two forms: simultaneous or consecutive. Simultaneous interpretation, where the interpreter speaks almost concurrently with the speaker, demands quick thinking and an intimate understanding of both the language and the cultural nuances. Consecutive interpretation, where the interpreter waits for the speaker to finish a segment before translating, offers more time for reflection but can create delays in fast-paced diplomatic negotiations. Both forms require different sets of skills and present their own challenges in terms of accuracy and maintaining the flow of conversation.

The task of translation and interpretation involves much more than merely converting words from one language to another. It requires a deep understanding of the nuances, structures, and sociocultural contexts of the languages involved. The theoretical foundations of translation and interpretation in diplomatic settings can be categorized under several key concepts:

Equivalence: In translation studies, equivalence refers to the concept of conveying the same meaning in the target language as in the source language. This is particularly significant in diplomacy, where the misinterpretation of a word or phrase could lead to diplomatic misunderstanding or even conflict. However, achieving perfect equivalence is often impossible due to linguistic and cultural differences between languages. For example, certain terms in Uzbek might not have direct equivalents in French or English, and vice versa, requiring nuanced interpretations or the creation of new terms to bridge the gap.

Contextualization: Diplomatic discourse is not only defined by the lexical choices made, but also by the social, political, and cultural context in which it occurs. The interpretation of a phrase or idiomatic expression depends heavily on its context. For instance, a phrase such as “je suis désolé” in French, which literally means “I am sorry,” may be interpreted differently depending on the situation and the level of politeness or apology required. Similarly, in Uzbek, the word “kechirmoq” can imply different levels of formality based on the relationship between the speaker and the listener. This context-specific aspect of interpretation makes it critical for interpreters to have deep cultural knowledge in addition to linguistic competence.

Dynamic vs. Formal Equivalence: The dynamic equivalence theory, developed by Eugene Nida, contrasts with the formal equivalence approach. Dynamic equivalence prioritizes the message’s effect on the target audience over the exact wording, while formal equivalence stresses the preservation of the linguistic structure. In diplomatic communication, both approaches may be necessary. For example, a direct translation of a legal term in a treaty may require formal equivalence, while a speech aimed at fostering bilateral relations may lean towards dynamic equivalence to ensure emotional resonance.

Pragmatics and Speech Act Theory: Understanding how language functions in context is crucial for interpreters. Pragmatics examines how language is used to perform various functions, such as requesting, advising, or apologizing. In diplomatic exchanges, speech acts often go beyond direct language translation and include indirect speech acts, where the literal meaning is often veiled in politeness or strategic ambiguity. A statement such as “It would be helpful if you could provide us with this information” may be a polite request, but its meaning in a diplomatic conversation goes beyond the simple request—it is a subtle negotiation tool.

Lexical Considerations in the Translation Process. When translating or interpreting in diplomatic contexts, several lexical factors play a crucial role in ensuring clarity and precision. Among these, the choice of words, phrases, and their interpretations in different languages is essential.

Diplomatic Jargon and Terminology: Professional diplomatic conversations often rely on specific terminology related to governance, law, international relations, and security. These terms carry specific connotations and should be translated with utmost care to maintain their legal or political weight. In translating a term like "détente" from French, for example, the interpreter must ensure that the term captures not only the literal meaning of "relaxation of tensions" but also the historical and political significance it may carry.

Ambiguity and Strategic Communication: Ambiguity is a powerful tool in diplomacy, often employed to maintain flexibility in negotiations. Phrases such as "We will consider your proposal" or "We are open to discussions" may not have direct, clear equivalents in other languages. This requires interpreters to manage not just the lexical meaning of words but also the diplomatic intent behind them. Translators must also be sensitive to how these ambiguous statements might be perceived in different cultural contexts, ensuring that they do not lead to misunderstandings or diplomatic faux pas.

The 1996 Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights is one of the results of increased awareness of linguistic rights. Professor Dietrich Kappeler, former director of the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, describes the history of language use in diplomacy: Documents exchanged between countries in the past were written in the single vehicular language then in use in Europe: Latin. In the 18th century French had become the generally accepted diplomatic language, so much so that even diplomatic notes addressed to the British Foreign Office by the Legation of the USA were written in that language. The 20th century saw a gradual emergence of English as a second and later even dominant diplomatic language. At the same time, a growing number of countries insisted on the use of their own language in diplomatic correspondence and joint diplomatic documents. As a result, the United Nations admitted to five languages at its inception (Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish), to which Arabic has later been added by informal agreement. In the European Union, all twelve languages of the members are currently in use and their number is bound to grow as new members will be admitted.

Translation and interpretation have therefore become a major element in present-day diplomatic life.

Dr Stanko Nick, Croatian Ambassador to Hungary, makes the point that although it has frequently been argued that one language or another is more suitable for diplomacy as it is clearer, more flexible, more expressive, or more eloquent, the "mere fact that historically such a role has been taken in turns by so many languages (Acadian, literary Chinese, Greek "koin`e", mediaeval Greek, Latin, Arabic, Turkish, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Italian, Dutch, German, French, and English) proves that linguistic or semantic reasons are not decisive. On the contrary, it can be said that the dominant role of one language or another in diplomacy has resulted from the political, strategic, economic, cultural or other domination of one power or another in international relations."

The aim of translation and interpretation is not the semantic and syntactic transmission of the sentences from one language to another, but to achieve the same effect with the translation as what the original version is supposed to achieve. Communication can be called successful, if we know when, what, to whom and how to say in order to reach a certain goal or effect. For this success in communication, however, an interpreter needs to be aware of the cultural features of the other party. Roger Chriss, a professional translator, describes the role of the translator: Translators are language professionals. They are applied linguists, competent writers, diplomats, and educated amateurs. Like linguists, translators have to be capable of discerning subtleties and nuances in their languages, researching terminology and colloquialisms, and handling new developments in their languages. Like writers, translators have to be accustomed to working long hours alone on a subject which interests few people and with a language that few people around them know. Like diplomats, translators have to be sensitive to the cultural and social differences which exist in their languages and be capable of addressing these issues when translating. And like educated amateurs, translators have to know the basics and some of the details about the subjects they deal with.

In diplomacy one of the main drawbacks of the growing need for translation is cost. Nick points out that although most organizations and conferences try to limit the number of languages used by selecting several official or working languages, the cost of interpretation and translation is astronomical. “Several years ago, it was calculated that the translation of one single page to all official languages of the UN amounted to the value necessary to cover the cost of living for one person in India for a whole year! When one takes into account the number of international organisations, and the thousands of pages translated almost daily it is easy to subscribe to the proposal of introducing Esperanto as the language for international communication.”

Another drawback to the use of translation in multilateral diplomacy is the complexity of the task of producing equivalent documents in different languages. Kappeler writes: “Versions in working languages are based on the records of simultaneous interpretation. Versions in other languages have to be prepared separately. All have to go before the drafting committee which therefore needs at least one member for each language”. Preferably however members of a drafting committee should master two or more of the languages used so as to ensure proper concordance of texts. The drafts submitted to the committee are prepared by the secretariat of the negotiating body, which must check recordings of simultaneous interpretation and produce versions in languages which were not used as working languages. The complexity of the task of a drafting committee explains why, in some cases, it will re-convene after the treaty has already been authenticated, with the express competence of making linguistic adjustments between the various versions.

Vicky Cremona and Helena Mallia, professional conference interpreters, explain the difference between the work of a translator and that of an interpreter:

Translators work alone, facing a white sheet of paper and a text. They recreate the text by becoming its second author, understanding and recreating the author's writing skills… . The interpreter's work is not a solitary one. The interpreter works directly with an orator, who possibly elaborates his text as the topic unfolds, expressing his thoughts directly without any time for re-elaboration or rewording. The interpreter also works directly with a public, the floor, who is listening simultaneously to him and to the orator.

There are two main types of interpretation: consecutive and simultaneous.

In consecutive interpretation, the interpreter listens to the speaker and takes notes, and when the speaker chooses (at intervals of anything from a few minutes to half an hour), renders the speech into the target language. In simultaneous translation, the interpreter sits in a booth and listens to the speaker through headphones, then instantly renders the speech into the target language, a few seconds to a minute behind the speaker. Although quality and accuracy are not as high as in consecutive interpretation, speed and intensity are higher.

Cremona and Mallia describe some of the techniques they use as conference interpreters, which center on identifying key words for the conference topic before the conference and listening carefully for those words during the speeches:

Interpreters are chameleons, they have to lend themselves to the topic under discussion, and blend themselves with the general decor…Certain interpreters choose to specialize in particular areas, in order to be able to handle the language peculiarities of a particular field.

An interpreter must seek other sources of information beforehand. It is important for an interpreter working in the diplomatic field to follow closely world political, social and cultural events. Sources for these may include local and foreign newspapers, journals dealing with current affairs, news broadcasts, as well as a very good knowledge of history and geography. Interpreting for diplomatic conferences takes some particular skills, according to Cremona and Mallia:

In diplomatic conferences, confidence in the interpreters is essential. The underlying tensions which may arise between delegates or country representatives can worsen if the interpreters are not trusted. In fact, in certain cases of great tension, delegates prefer to speak in or translate into a language they do not really master rather than passing through an interpreter. This is why it is important to ensure that the interpreters chosen are of the caliber and have experience in dealing with situations where tact and savior-faire are an asset.

Interpretation — and translation — pose some difficulties in diplomacy, for example, cost, lack of accuracy, and the difficulty of translating exactly the same concepts to a different language. However, so far, interpretation is the best option we have. Stanko Nick examines the various ways diplomats speaking different languages can communicate with each other, and the drawbacks of each method:

One solution, obviously, is that one of the interlocutors speaks the language of the other. Problems may arise: the knowledge of the language may not be adequate, one side is making a concession and the other has an immediate and significant advantage, there are possible political implications, it may be difficult to apply in multilateral diplomacy, etc. A second possibility is that both sides use a third, neutral, language. A potential problem may be that neither side possesses full linguistic knowledge and control, leading to possible bad misunderstandings. Nevertheless, this method is frequently applied in international practice because of its political advantages. A third formula, using interpreters, is also very widely used, particularly in multilateral diplomacy or for negotiations at a very high political level – not only for reasons of equity, but because politicians and statesmen often do not speak foreign languages. This method also has disadvantages: it is time consuming, costly, and sometimes inadequate or straightforwardly incorrect (even if the translator has a good knowledge of both languages, he/she may not be familiar with the particular subject which can be extremely specific – from the protection of the ozone layer to the homologisation of sports records; it was not without reason that the *slogan traduttore-traditore, translator = traitor*, could be found in mediaeval Italy). Finally, there is the possibility of using one international synthetic, artificial language, such as Esperanto; this solution would have many advantages, but unfortunately is not likely to be implemented soon, mostly because of the opposition of factors that dominate in the international political – and therefore also cultural and linguistic – scene.

Lexical choices are inherently tied to cultural perceptions. In Uzbek, for example, there may be terms that carry a more collectivist connotation, emphasizing group harmony and shared responsibility, which could contrast with the more individualistic framework often found in English or French diplomatic language. Therefore, interpreters need to adapt their translations to ensure that the intended message resonates appropriately with the target audience while preserving the integrity of the original message.

Conclusion. The various languages spoken in the different countries necessitate solutions to bridge the linguistic gap during the interstate exchanges, which challenge had been addressed by the actual political elites in numerous ways throughout the history. Although the requirements of the multilateral communicative situations cannot be compared to those of the bilateral meetings; however, as a rule, the most commonly used method in both cases is the employment of interpreters and translators. The practice of translation and interpretation in professional diplomatic conversations, especially involving languages as distinct as French, English, and Uzbek, presents a range of theoretical and practical challenges. Effective communication in this domain requires a profound understanding of linguistic structures, cultural contexts, and the specialized lexicons of international relations.

As we have discussed, issues such as lexical gaps, cultural differences, varying levels of formality, and the need for strategic ambiguity all play crucial roles in shaping the success of diplomatic exchanges.

In the increasingly interconnected global landscape, the role of interpreters and translators in diplomacy cannot be overstated. Their ability to ensure accurate, clear, and culturally sensitive communication is vital in maintaining peaceful international relations and facilitating meaningful dialogue between nations. Therefore, investing in the skills of professional interpreters and translators, while also considering the theoretical foundations of interpretation and translation, is essential for the continued success of global diplomacy.

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