

Lexical-Semantic Features of French Diplomatic Texts and Their Translation Methods

Khodjayeva Khurshida Sharafitdinovna¹

Senior Lecturer, University of World Economy and Diplomacy¹

Merzaitova Hilola²

Master's student, University of World Economy and Diplomacy²

Abstract- This article analyzes the lexical-semantic structure, pragmatic orientation, and methods of translating French diplomatic texts into the Uzbek language. Particular attention is given to the features of diplomatic discourse, such as terminological precision, formulaic language, cautious modal expression, euphemization, semantic ambiguity, and standard protocol-specific units. The research is based on descriptive, comparative, contextual-pragmatic, and translational transformation analysis. Uzbek equivalents of units found in French notes, statements, conventions, communiqués, and official addresses are demonstrated through examples. The findings indicate that diplomatic translation requires not only the preservation of lexical equivalence but also the combined maintenance of legal clarity, communicative intent, and protocol-stylistic norms.

Keywords— diplomatic discourse, French language, lexical semantics, diplomatic term, pragmatics, euphemism, translation transformation, equivalence, protocol formula, Uzbek language.

I. INTRODUCTION

A diplomatic text is a form of institutional discourse that formalizes the legal, political, and protocol aspects of international relations through language. In such texts, word choice performs a broader function than simply transmitting information: it expresses a state's position, defines the level of commitment, mitigates confrontation, and preserves the communicative space necessary for negotiations. Therefore, in diplomatic translation, the misinterpretation of a single term or modal unit can affect the political and legal force of the text.

Historically, French has been one of the most influential languages in the fields of diplomacy and international law. In modern multilingual diplomatic practice, French-language documents are actively used as part of the parallel official texts of the UN, European, and Francophone institutions. The French text of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations is also considered one of the authentic texts. This situation requires particular precision in preserving terminological consistency and legal semantics when translating French diplomatic vocabulary.

The purpose of this article is to systematize the main lexico-semantic features of French diplomatic texts, identify typical problems encountered in their translation into Uzbek, and describe practical translation strategies. The objects of research include units specific to diplomatic notes, official statements, international treaties, memorandums, and protocol speeches.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed descriptive-linguistic analysis, componential-semantic analysis, contextual-pragmatic analysis, comparative translation analysis, and the classification of translation transformations. As a theoretical basis, approaches related to equivalence, functional adequacy, communicative translation, and discourse analysis were integrated. The materials were grouped based on terms, formulas, modal units, evaluative lexemes, and mitigating constructions characteristic of diplomatic genres.

The unit of analysis is not limited to a single word. Diplomatic meaning often emerges through a phrase, a cliché, a modal form of a verb, or the

pragmatic construction of an entire sentence. For example, the French phrase **exprimer sa profonde préoccupation** is better suited to the institutional style as 'to express deep concern' rather than a literal translation. For this reason, the semantic, pragmatic, and genre levels of the translation were evaluated jointly.

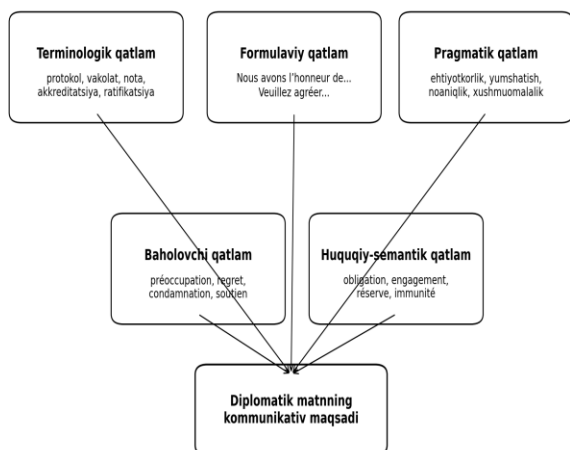


Figure 1. Lexico-semantic layers of a French diplomatic text

III. LEXICAL-SEMANTIC FEATURES OF FRENCH DIPLOMATIC TEXTS

1. Terminological precision and legal semantics

In diplomatic texts, terminology constitutes a relatively closed and standardized system. For units such as **accréditation**, **immunité diplomatique**, **note verbale**, **traité**, **ratification**, **réserve**, **partie contractante**, and **mission diplomatique**, the arbitrary substitution of synonyms is inappropriate. This is because most of these terms are linked to specific concepts in international law. For example, **réserve** does not mean 'explanation' but rather 'reservation' in the context of an international treaty, or 'conditional stipulation' depending on the context. Similarly, the term **engagement** can mean 'obligation,' 'undertaking,' or, in a political context, 'commitment/firm stance.'

2. Formality and Protocolary Clichés

In diplomatic correspondence, established formulas serve as genre identifiers for the text. Constructions

like **Nous avons l'honneur de vous informer...**, **Le Ministère présente ses compliments...**, and **Veuillez agréer, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, l'assurance de notre haute considération** convey a level of protocol beyond their direct lexical meaning. When translating them into Uzbek, the formal register of respect must be preserved along with the semantic content. For this reason, a functional equivalent is often used: variants such as 'We have the honor to inform you,' 'The Ministry presents its compliments,' and 'Please accept the assurance of our highest consideration' are chosen depending on the context and the institution's style.

3. Euphemism, Softening, and Strategic Ambiguity

In diplomatic discourse, avoiding direct negative assessments serves as a means of continuing political dialogue. Expressions such as **regretter**, **déplorer**, **exprimer sa préoccupation**, **prendre note avec préoccupation**, and **ne pas être en mesure d'accepter** soften sharp rejections or accusations. Scholarly literature identifies ambiguity and mitigation strategies, as well as euphemistic substitution and communicative tolerance, as important tools in diplomatic communication. The translator must neither intensify nor diminish this level of mitigation.

4. Modal Semantics and the Degree of Obligation

In French diplomatic and legal texts, expressions such as **devoir**, **pouvoir**, **s'engager à**, **être tenu de**, **il convient de**, and **il est souhaitable de** convey various degrees of obligation, possibility, recommendation, and desire. For instance, **doit** typically indicates a strict obligation, whereas **devrait** implies a recommendation or a soft norm.

In the Uzbek translation, it is necessary to carefully select equivalents such as 'shart', 'lozim', 'kerak', 'tavsiya etiladi', and 'maqsadga muvofiq'. A difference in normative force can alter the political-legal interpretation.

Table 1. Semantic-Pragmatic Description of French Diplomatic Expressions

French Expression	Core Meaning	Pragmatic Function	Recommended Uzbek Version
exprimer sa profonde préoccupation	to express deep concern	diplomatic mitigation of a negative assessment	chuqur tashvish bildirmoq
prendre acte de	to formally note	documenting a position	to note officially / to take note
to commit to	to undertake / to take upon oneself	to express a future commitment	to make a commitment / to undertake
in a spirit of cooperation	in a spirit of cooperation	to create a framework for positive dialogue	in a spirit of cooperation
not to be in a position to	not to have the opportunity	to soften a direct refusal	not being able to find an opportunity for now / not being able to accept at this time
to reaffirm one's commitment to	to reaffirm commitment	to show the continuity of a political position	to reaffirm one's commitment once again

IV. METHODS FOR TRANSLATING FRENCH DIPLOMATIC TEXTS

1. Full and Functional Equivalence

If a term in the source language has a stable equivalent in Uzbek diplomatic and legal practice, full equivalence is prioritized: traité - treaty, ambassadeur - ambassador, mission diplomatique - diplomatic mission. However, in formulaic expressions, functional equivalence is more effective, as a protocol-based phrase has its own traditional form in each language. The task of the translator is not to create a morphological copy of the original formula, but to recreate its formal communicative function.

2. Modulation and Semantic Restructuring

Modulation is used when there is a difference in the point of view between a French expression and natural Uzbek syntax. For example, the French construction *Il a été convenu que...* can be rendered more precisely by explicitly stating the subject, such as 'The Parties agreed on...', depending on the context, rather than simply 'it was agreed that...'. This method adapts the logical structure of

the sentence to the Uzbek language while preserving the original meaning.

3. Explication and Concretization

A brief explication is necessary when a diplomatic term may be unclear to an Uzbek audience. For instance, *note verbale* could be introduced as a 'verbal note (an unsigned official diplomatic note)' upon its first mention, and subsequently, the form 'verbal note' can be used. However, in a legal text, the translator should not insert an explanation directly into the main text but should use a footnote or a translator's note if necessary.

4. Transposition and Grammatical Adaptation

French frequently uses nominalized constructions and prepositional phrases, such as: *en vue de la mise en œuvre*, *à la suite de consultations*, *conformément aux dispositions*. In Uzbek, their natural translation is often achieved using a verbal or adverbial form: 'for the purpose of implementation' (*amalg oshirish maqsadida*), 'after consultations' (*maslahatlashuvlardan so'ng*), 'in accordance with the provisions' (*qoidalariga muvofiq*). This transposition prevents the text from containing awkward calques and improves the fluency of the formal style.

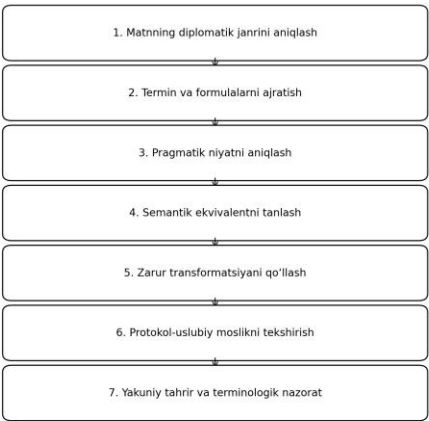


Figure 2. Decision-making algorithm in diplomatic translation

Table 2. Sample translation of French diplomatic sentences into Uzbek

Source text	Literal approach	Suggested translation	Primary method
The Party reaffirms its commitment to the principles of the UN Charter.	The Party reaffirms its adherence to the principles of the UN Charter.	The Party once again affirms its commitment to the principles of the UN Charter.	Modulation + Functional equivalent
The Government expresses its deep concern over the escalation of tensions.	The government expresses its acute concern in the face of escalating tensions.	The government expresses serious concern over the escalating tensions.	Contextual equivalence
We have the honor to bring to your attention...	We have the honor of bringing to your knowledge...	We have the honor to inform you of the following...	Protocol formula equivalent
The Parties agree to continue consultations	The parties agree to continue consultations	The parties have agreed to continue consultations	Grammatical adaptation
This position cannot be interpreted	This position cannot be interpreted	This position should not be	Modal-semantic adaptation

as a waiver of our rights.	as a waiver of our rights.	interpreted as a waiver of our rights.	
----------------------------	----------------------------	--	--

V. DISCUSSION

Analysis shows that the main complexity of diplomatic translation lies not so much in the terms themselves, but in the pragmatic force they acquire within a given context. The same lexeme can express different degrees of firmness in different genres. For example, in ordinary speech, "regret" may simply mean sorrow, whereas in a diplomatic statement, it can signify a mild criticism of a specific action. Similarly, the degree of evaluative units like "concern" or "préoccupation" serves as a form of political signaling; if this gradation is lost in translation, the original position may be misinterpreted.

The active use of passive and impersonal constructions is also significant in French diplomatic syntax. Phrases such as "Il a été décidé," "il convient de," and "il est rappelé que" relegate the author or agent to the background, creating an effect of institutional impartiality. In Uzbek, mechanically rendering these constructions in the passive voice is not always fluent. Therefore, an impersonal form or a version with a specific subject is chosen, staying within the norms of the formal style. If the deliberate concealment of the agent is politically significant, this strategy must also be preserved in the translation.

Transposition and modulation as described by Vinay and Darbelnet in translation theory, Newmark's distinction between communicative and semantic translation, Baker's levels of equivalence, and Nord's functional approach provide a complementary methodological framework for diplomatic translation. Although semantic precision is primary in a diplomatic document, functional-pragmatic correspondence in protocol clichés and forms of address often takes precedence over literal correspondence.

Practical Recommendations

- Maintain a unified bilingual terminological database for diplomatic terms and use each term consistently in the same form throughout the document.
- Determine the normative force of each modal unit: distinguish whether it signifies an obligation, recommendation, possibility, or political aspiration.
- Avoid intensifying or downplaying euphemisms and softening devices; preserve the diplomatic tone of the original text.
- Render protocol formulas not literally, but with their functional equivalents as accepted in official correspondence.
- If international treaties have authentic parallel texts, verify the terminology by comparing it against them.
- In the final editing stage, ensure the involvement of a subject-matter specialist or an expert knowledgeable in international law terminology, alongside a linguist.

VI. CONCLUSION

French diplomatic texts are distinguished by a combination of terminological consistency, formulaic structure, formal neutrality, modal gradation, euphemisms, and strategic ambiguity. These characteristics are determined not only by the linguistic system of the text but also by the political and protocol-driven nature of diplomatic activity. Therefore, the translation process must extend beyond merely searching for lexical equivalents to a comprehensive consideration of the communicative purpose, legal force, institutional register, and cultural-stylistic norms.

The most effective approach is to combine terminological equivalence with functional-pragmatic correspondence. In cases where a direct equivalent is unavailable, transformations such as modulation, transposition, concretization, explication, and functional substitution may be justifiably applied. In this process, the translator's primary criterion is to preserve the text's original communicative impact and diplomatic discretion. This approach enhances the accuracy, naturalness,

and institutional credibility of French-Uzbek diplomatic translation.

REFERENCES

1. Arifon, O. (2011). *Langue diplomatique et langage formel: un code à double entente*. Hermès, La Revue. DOI: 10.4267/2042/38676.
2. Ghukasyan, V. (2024). On Some Linguistic Features of Communication in Diplomacy. *Armenian Folia Anglistika*, 20 (1), 93-106. DOI: 10.46991/AFA/2024.20.1.93.
3. Zhunisbek, L., & Daulet, F. N. (2026). Stylistic-Pragmatic and Translation Aspects of Metaphor, Euphemism, and Rhetorical Formulas in Diplomatic Discourse. DOI: 10.48371/PHILS.2026.1.80.027.
4. United Nations. (1961). *Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations*. United Nations Treaty Series, Vol. 500, p. 95.
5. Vinay, J.-P., & Darbelnet, J. (1995). *Comparative Stylistics of French and English: A Methodology for Translation*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
6. Newmark, P. (1988). *A Textbook of Translation*. New York: Prentice Hall.
7. Baker, M. (2018). *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge.
8. Munday, J., Pinto, S. R., & Blakesley, J. (2022). *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications*. 5th ed. London: Routledge.
9. House, J. (2015). *Translation Quality Assessment: Past and Present*. London: Routledge.
10. Nord, C. (2018). *Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
11. Hatim, B., & Mason, I. (1997). *The Translator as Communicator*. London: Routledge.
12. Schäffner, C. (2004). Political Discourse Analysis from the Point of View of Translation Studies. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 3 (1), 117-150.
13. Chilton, P. (2004). *Analysing Political Discourse: Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge.
14. Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Longman.
15. Berridge, G. R. (2022). *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*. 6th ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

16. Satow, E. (2011). *Satow's Diplomatic Practice*. 6th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
17. Gile, D. (2009). *Basic Concepts and Models for Interpreter and Translator Training*. Rev. ed. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
18. Cao, D. (2007). *Translating Law*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
19. Šarčević, S. (1997). *New Approach to Legal Translation*. The Hague: Kluwer Law International.
20. Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (Eds.). (2016). *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*. 3rd ed. London: Sage.