TEACHING DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENCE TRANSLATION THROUGH THE FLIPPED CLASSROOM: A CASE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS STUDENTS

НАВЧАННЯ ПЕРЕКЛАДУ ДИПЛОМАТИЧНОГО ЛИСТУВАННЯ НА ОСНОВІ МОДЕЛІ ПЕРЕВЕРНУТОГО КЛАСУ: ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ ДОСВІДУ СТУДЕНТІВ СПЕЦІАЛЬНОСТІ "МІЖНАРОДНІ ВІДНОСИНИ"

This study investigates the pedagogical effectiveness of teaching diplomatic correspondence translation to master's students in International Relations through a flipped classroom approach. Diplomatic correspondence translation represents a highly specialized form of intercultural and interlinguistic mediation where linguistic precision intersects with international relations, requiring not only language proficiency but also deep understanding of diplomatic protocols, terminology, and cultural conventions. The research addresses the challenge of preparing ESP students without prior theoretical linguistic or translation training for this demanding professional domain within a two-semester course.

Employing a mixed-methods design, the study combined quantitative analysis of student performance with qualitative examination of questionnaire responses from 20 first-year master's students who completed the course "Theory and Practice of Translation in Diplomatic Correspondence" at Odesa I.I. Mechnikov National University in 2025. The flipped classroom model enabled students to engage with theoretical content independently before class, thereby maximizing face-to-face time for practical application, collaborative problem-solving, and individualized feedback.

The results demonstrated high levels of student achievement across learning objectives (average rating 4.4 on a 5-point scale), with participants reporting significant progress in linguistic competence, cultural awareness, terminology acquisition, and understanding of diplomatic conventions. The flipped classroom approach received consistently positive evaluations (4–5 ratings), with students highlighting improved preparation for practical work, increased active participation, and enhanced comprehension of theoretical concepts. All participants stressed that the course was highly relevant to their future careers in international relations.

Mastering complex domain-specific terminology, managing time constraints, and maintaining a diplomatic register reflect the inherent complexity of the domain rather than pedagogical limitations. The findings demonstrate that the flipped classroom model effectively addresses the unique demands of diplomatic correspondence translation pedagogy, while identifying opportunities for further enhancement through additional scaffolding in specialized vocabulary and research workflows. Carefully designed pedagogical approaches combining theoretical foundations with extensive practical application successfully prepare future specialists for professional diplomatic communication.

Key words: *diplomatic correspondence translation, flipped classroom, translation pedagogy, International Relations, specialized translation, intercultural mediation, diplomatic correspondence, ESP students, terminology acquisition, professional competencies.*

У дослідженні розглядається педагогічна ефективність навчання перекладу диплома-тичного листування студентів-магістрів спеціальності «Міжнародні відносини» через застосування моделі перевернутого класу. Переклад дипломатичного листування є високоспеціалізованою формою міжкультур-ної та міжмовної медіації, де лінгвістична точність перетинається з міжнародними відносинами, вимагаючи не лише мовної компетентності, а й глибокого розуміння дипломатичних протоколів, термінології та культурних конвенцій. Дослідження при-свячене особливостям формування профе-сійних компетентностей у студентів, які вивчають англійську мову для спеціальних цілей, без попереднього досвіду теоре-тичної лінгвістичної чи перекладацької під-готовки, в умовах двосеместрового курсу навчання.

Використовуючи змішаний дизайн дослі-дження, було поєднано кількісний аналіз успішності студентів із якісним аналізом відповідей на анкетне опитування. У дослі-дженні взяли участь 20 студентів першого курсу магістратури, які завершили курс «Теорія і практика перекладу в диплома-тичному листуванні» в Одеському націо-нальному університеті імені І.І. Мечникова у 2025 році. Модель перевернутого класу надала студентам можливість самостійно опрацьовувати теоретичний матеріал перед заняттям, що дозволило ефективно використовувати аудиторний час для прак-тичного застосування знань, обговорю-вання складних теоретичних питань, спіль-ного розв'язання проблем та отримання індивідуального зворотного зв'язку.

Результати продемонстрували високий рівень досягнення студентами навчаль-них цілей (середній бал 4,4 за 5-бальною шкалою); учасники також повідомили про суттєве покращення мовної компетент-ності, поглиблення культурної обізнаності, розширення термінологічного апарату та краще розуміння дипломатичних конвенцій. Студенти високо оцінили модель перевер-нутого класу (4 – 5 балів), відзначивши кращу готовність до практичної роботи, вищий рівень активної участі та глибше осмис-лення теоретичних концепцій. Усі учасники підтвердили високу релевантність курсу для їхньої майбутньої кар'єри у сфері міжна-родних відносин.

Опанування складної фахової терміноло-гії, управління часовими обмеженнями та дотримання дипломатичного регістру відображають притаманну цій галузі склад-ність, а не педагогічні недоліки. Результати демонструють, що модель перевернутого класу ефективно відповідає унікальним вимогам педагогіки перекладу диплома-тичного листування, водночас визначаючи можливості для подальшого вдосконалення через додаткову підтримку у розвитку спе-ціалізованої лексики та дослідницьких прак-тик. Ретельно підібрані педагогічні підходи, що поєднують теоретичні основи з інтен-

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сивним практичним застосуванням, успішно готують майбутніх фахівців до професійної дипломатичної комунікації.

Ключові слова: переклад дипломатичного листування, перевернутий клас, педагогіка перекладу, міжнародні відносини, спеціалізований переклад, міжкультурна медіація, дипломатичне листування, студенти ESP, засвоєння термінології, професійні компетентності.

Introduction. Translation in diplomatic settings represents a specialized form of intercultural and interlinguistic mediation where linguistic precision intersects with high-stakes international relations. In diplomatic correspondence, translation errors or misinterpretations can have significant political consequences, potentially affecting bilateral relations or multilateral negotiations. As Schäffner [8] notes, "translations are facts of target cultures" that can significantly impact how diplomatic intentions are perceived across linguistic borders.

The practice of diplomatic translation dates back to antiquity, with historical records showing formal translators facilitating communication between ancient civilizations. However, it was the 1815 Congress of Vienna that first formalized French as the lingua franca of diplomacy, a position it held until the mid-20th century when English began to emerge as an equally prominent diplomatic language [2]. Despite the predominance of certain languages in diplomatic settings, translation remains an essential component of international relations as nations continue to conduct diplomacy in their national languages for reasons of sovereignty, national identity, and legal precision.

The aim of the article is to explore how educational programs can effectively prepare students for this demanding professional domain, with particular focus on pedagogical innovations that address the unique challenges of teaching translation to ESP students without prior theoretical linguistic training.

Literature Review. The flipped classroom model, in which students engage with instructional content independently before class and use face-to-face time for active learning and application, has gained considerable traction in translation pedagogy over the past decade. González-Davies and Enríquez-Raído [3] observe that this approach addresses a fundamental challenge in translation education: balancing theoretical foundations with extensive practical application within limited contact hours. In the flipped model, students access lectures, readings, and multimedia materials outside class, freeing classroom time for practical collaborative tasks, problem-solving, and instructor feedback, activities that benefit most from direct interaction.

This pedagogical approach proves particularly valuable in specialized translation domains such as diplomatic correspondence, where students must simultaneously acquire domain knowledge and develop translation competencies. Traditional lecture-based instruction in such contexts often results in insufficient time for the hands-on practice essential to skill development [5]. The flipped classroom resolves this tension by restructuring how instructional time is allocated, prioritizing active engagement over passive content delivery.

For ESP students without prior linguistic or translation training, as is the case with the International Relations program, the flipped classroom becomes not merely advantageous but practically necessary. These learners must grasp foundational translation concepts (equivalence, register, cultural adaptation) while mastering specialized diplomatic lexis, terminology, and correspondence conventions. As Li and Ni [6] demonstrate in their study of specialized translation courses, the flipped approach enables students to process theoretical content at their own pace while dedicating class time to guided practice with authentic texts, immediate feedback on translation choices, and collaborative problem-solving around domain-specific challenges.

The model also supports the development of learner autonomy, a critical competency for professional translators. By taking responsibility for their initial engagement with theoretical materials, students develop research skills and self-directed learning strategies that serve them beyond the course itself [4]. In diplomatic translation specifically, where practitioners must continually update their knowledge of evolving terminology and shifting geopolitical contexts, this autonomy proves essential.

Empirical studies of flipped classrooms in translation pedagogy report positive outcomes including increased student engagement, deeper understanding of theoretical concepts, improved practical performance, and higher satisfaction with the learning experience [7; 9]. However, researchers also note that successful implementation requires careful scaffolding; particularly for the students new to this learning model, and that the quality of pre-class materials significantly impacts outcomes [1].

Methods. This study utilized a mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative (statistical analysis of test results from an experimental group), qualitative (a written questionnaire to gather student opinions), and descriptive approaches. The quantitative and statistical methods processed test scores, while the qualitative data provided evidence supporting the effectiveness of the university course "Theory and practice of translation in diplomatic correspondence" among the students. Finally, the descriptive method helped analyze the questionnaire responses and the overall research findings. The data were collected through a structured online questionnaire completed at the end of academic term. The instrument included both closed and open-ended items

addressing: demographic and linguistic background, prior experience, perceived achievement of learning objectives (Likert scale 1–5), confidence in key competencies, challenges encountered, evaluation of the flipped classroom approach, overall course satisfaction and relevance.

Participants. A total of 20 first-year master's students majoring in International Relations participated in this research. The majority (75%) had obtained their bachelor's degree in International Relations, while 25% held their first degree in other academic fields. All students self-assessed their pre-course English proficiency as ranging from Upper-Intermediate to Advanced (B2+ – C1). Regarding previous translation experience, 60% of students had no prior formal training, whereas 40% had taken translation courses, with one student having extensive exposure to diplomatic texts.

The compulsory course "Theory and Practice of Translation in Diplomatic Correspondence" covers three principal components: Lexical, Grammatical, and Stylistic Aspects. The present analysis is based on data obtained after one term of instruction in 2025, which consisted of 40 academic hours and focused on Lexical Aspects of Diplomatic Correspondence. All the students provided informed consent to participate in the study.

Results. The students rated their achievement across the course learning objectives between 4 and 5 (on a 5-point scale), with an average of 4.4, demonstrating marked improvement in their performance. The most challenging aspects involved mastering complex diplomatic terminology, maintaining the formal diplomatic register, acquiring cultural and contextual awareness, and translating concepts lacking direct linguistic equivalents. This difficulty was observed among the students who had not previously studied diplomacy or diplomatic correspondence, as they needed to develop both subject-matter knowledge and translation skills. The qualitative responses emphasized the cognitive demands of integrating linguistic, pragmatic, and cultural dimensions in translation tasks.

All the students (100%) affirmed the course's relevance to their future careers. The skills they considered most applicable included translating diplomatic correspondence and official documents, ensuring cultural sensitivity and accuracy, and adhering to diplomatic norms and stylistic conventions. These findings confirm that the course content aligns well with professional requirements in international relations.

The self-reported confidence levels after completing one term of the course ranged between 3 and 4, with most students rating themselves at 4. The students reported increased confidence in several areas: research and terminology management (40%), critical analysis of translation quality (20%), understanding of diplomatic language conventions (20%), and cultural awareness in translation (20%). The areas students

identified as needing further development included technical translation skills, rapid processing of multiple reference sources and accurate use of specialized terms. These reflections underscore the importance of ongoing practice and structured support in advanced translation training.

The main challenges the students identified included dealing with complex domain-specific terminology, interpreting legal and political nuances, managing time constraints during translation tasks, understanding culturally embedded references, and maintaining appropriate formal register and tone. The students addressed these difficulties through the use of online dictionaries, additional independent practice beyond the assignments they received, and collaborative learning with the peers. These adaptive strategies demonstrate resourceful learning behavior and highlight the critical role of reference tools in specialized translation.

The students rated the flipped classroom model highly, with scores ranging between 4 and 5. They reported several benefits: better preparation for in-class practical work, more opportunities for active participation, improved understanding of theoretical concepts, and greater responsibility for their own learning. One student mentioned struggling initially to adapt to the model, suggesting that additional guidance at the outset might ease the transition in future.

Analysis of students' responses revealed that the glossary of theoretical terms was an important resource, enabling them to verify the precise lexical equivalence, maintain conceptual consistency, and rapidly expand their specialized vocabulary. The consistently high ratings for this resource underscore its value in the courses requiring specialized vocabulary acquisition.

All the students rated the course as either "meeting expectations" (75%) or "exceeding expectations" (25%). Every respondent considered the course highly relevant to their academic and professional development, which demonstrated strong alignment between course objectives and student needs.

Discussion. The findings indicate that the course effectively supports the development of core competencies in diplomatic translation, as evidenced by consistently high student ratings and self-reported skill gains. High ratings for both relevance and effectiveness point to strong pedagogical alignment with learners' professional needs and career aspirations. The flipped classroom approach, combined with comprehensive terminology support and authentic practical activities, proved particularly beneficial for professional skill development in this specialized translation domain. This model allowed the students to engage with theoretical concepts independently before applying them in supervised practice, maximizing the value of classroom time for addressing complex challenges and receiving individualized feedback. However, difficulties with complex

terminology and time constraints suggest that more scaffolding could improve student learning. Difficulty with specialized terminology was observed primarily among the few students (25%) lacking background in diplomatic practice. To mitigate this issue, a more moderate progression of text complexity or introductory diplomatic vocabulary training is recommended. Similarly, the time management challenges reflect the inherently demanding nature of diplomatic translation, which requires consultation of multiple specialized resources, a skill that develops through extended practice and might be supported through explicit instruction in efficient research workflows.

Conclusions. Effective translation in diplomatic correspondence requires a sophisticated integration of theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Translators in this field must function not merely as linguistic mediators but as intercultural communicators with specialized knowledge of international relations, diplomatic protocols, and geopolitical contexts. The complexity of diplomatic translation stems from its multifaceted nature: simultaneously technical and cultural, precise and ambiguous, formal and functional. This complexity is further heightened by the high-stakes environment in which diplomatic translation occurs, where translation choices can influence international relations and affect political outcomes. For students of international relations, developing competence in diplomatic translation offers valuable insights not only into linguistic mediation but also into the nature of diplomatic communication itself.

The study reveals that the course "Theory and Practice of Translation in Diplomatic Correspondence" successfully prepares students for professional practice by equipping them with necessary linguistic and professional competencies. The respondents demonstrated marked improvement across linguistic, cultural, and analytical domains.

Future studies would benefit from follow-up surveys conducted after the course completion to investigate how effectively students transfer their acquired skills to real-world diplomatic translation contexts. Additionally, comparative studies of diplomatic translation across different cultural and political contexts would enhance understanding of how translation norms vary across diplomatic traditions.

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