

PROBLEMS OF TRAINING OF MILITARY TRANSLATORS

Arustamyan Y. Y.

Department of Learning Languages University of
Public Safety of the Republic of Uzbekistan DSc, Professor

Abstract

The role of a military translator or interpreter is one of the most intellectually demanding and high-stakes professions in the linguistic world. Unlike general translation, where the consequences of a nuance lost might result in mild confusion or a minor business loss, military translation operates in an environment where linguistic precision is directly tied to operational safety, intelligence accuracy, and the preservation of human life. As international military cooperation and peacekeeping missions expand, the need for highly skilled linguistic mediators becomes paramount. However, the current landscape of training military translators faces significant structural, cognitive, and pragmatic hurdles. Addressing these challenges requires a shift from traditional pedagogical models toward a more holistic, technology-integrated, and psychologically resilient training framework.

Keywords: Military translation, training military translators, technical difficulties, authentic military materials .

Introduction

In the modern geopolitical environment, military translators play a crucial role in ensuring effective communication during multinational operations, peacekeeping missions, intelligence cooperation, military diplomacy, and humanitarian activities. Unlike civilian translators, military translators are required not only to possess high-level linguistic competence but also to understand military doctrine, operational procedures, cultural norms, and ethical responsibilities. (Liu, 2024) Despite their importance, the training of military translators faces numerous challenges that limit the effectiveness of their professional preparation.

“The main goal of teaching foreign language military discourse is to improve the primary level of proficiency in a foreign language acquired at the previous stage of education, and to enable students (cadets) to acquire foreign language communicative competence at a level sufficient to solve professional social and communicative tasks when communicating with native speakers, as well as for further self-education.” (Поляков, 2003) In the contemporary geopolitical landscape, the role of military translation has ascended from a niche linguistic specialty to a strategic instrument of national security and international cooperation. For the Republic of Uzbekistan, which has pursued an active, multi-vector foreign policy under recent reforms, the ability to communicate effectively with foreign military partners, NATO structures, and regional allies is no longer optional but imperative. Military translators serve as the critical interface in joint exercises, the procurement of defense technology, the analysis of



foreign doctrine, and the ratification of international treaties. Despite this elevated demand, the pedagogical ecosystem designed to cultivate these specialists remains critically underexplored and underdeveloped.

Currently, the system for training military translators in Uzbekistan faces a complex constellation of challenges. These range from macro-level issues – such as the absence of a unified state curriculum and a shortage of qualified instructor-cadres – to micro-level difficulties within the classroom, including the psychological stress of simulated combat interpretation and the lexical density of military-technical texts. (Kurbanova, 2023) While general translator training has received considerable scholarly attention in Uzbekistan, the military domain, with its unique demands of hierarchy, secrecy, operational tempo, and zero-tolerance for error, remains a peripheral subject. (Badalbayeva, 2024) Consequently, graduates often enter service with a gap between their theoretical linguistic knowledge and the practical, high-stakes requirements of the defense establishment. (Abdurazakova, 2025) This study posits that without a systematic identification and analysis of these specific pedagogical problems, the quality of national military translation will stagnate, potentially compromising operational effectiveness and international interoperability.

Research paradigm

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This paradigm is selected to capture not only the measurable frequency and scale of specific problems (e.g., percentage of graduates failing practical interpretation modules) but also the deep, contextualized experiences of the human actors – cadets, instructors, and military commanders – who navigate these challenges daily. The research is predominantly descriptive and exploratory, aiming to construct a holistic portrait of the current pedagogical reality.

Data collection proceeds over a four-month period. Following institutional ethical clearance and approval from the Ministry of Defense, questionnaires are distributed in paper format during scheduled class hours to maximize response rate. Interviews are scheduled individually in private settings on campus. Document analysis is conducted concurrently in the institutional libraries and archival departments.

Challenges in educational process

One of the most significant problems in training military translators is the *imbalance between linguistic training and military-specific knowledge*. Many training programs focus heavily on general language proficiency while paying insufficient attention to military terminology, genres, and communicative practices. Military translators must be capable of translating operational orders, intelligence reports, briefings, rules of engagement, and technical manuals. “An important criterion for mastering communicative skills when teaching professional foreign language discourse is the presence of an adequate response to the emerging communicative situation, since the discourse itself is the main reflector of the implementation of the communicative function of language in its various manifestations.” (Гураль, 2009) Without systematic exposure to authentic military texts and discourse, trainees struggle to perform



effectively in real operational contexts. To solve this problem, training curricula should integrate language instruction with military content from the early stages. Courses in military history, doctrine, and operational planning should be coordinated with translation practice to ensure contextual understanding.

Another major challenge is the *lack of emphasis on pragmatics and intercultural competence*. Military translators often work in high-stakes intercultural environments where misunderstandings can have serious diplomatic or operational consequences. Literal translation alone is insufficient when cultural norms, politeness strategies, or implicit meanings differ across languages. However, many programs still prioritize grammatical accuracy over pragmatic appropriateness. “The training system takes into account the professional focus of foreign language education in relation to the selection of content aimed at teaching foreign language professional discourse based on military knowledge.” (Шевченко, 2017) A potential solution lies in incorporating pragmalinguistics, cross-cultural communication, and discourse analysis into translator training. Role-plays, simulations, and case studies based on real multinational missions can help trainees develop sensitivity to cultural nuances and pragmatic meaning.

The *stressful and time-sensitive nature of military translation and interpretation* represents another training problem. In operational settings, translators are required to work under pressure, often in dangerous environments, with limited time for preparation. Traditional classroom-based training rarely prepares students for these conditions. As a result, graduates may possess strong theoretical knowledge but lack psychological resilience and decision-making skills. To address this issue, training institutions should introduce stress-based training methods such as timed interpretation exercises, simulated field environments, and crisis scenarios. Psychological training, including stress management and emotional resilience, should also be incorporated into the curriculum.

A further problem concerns the *insufficient use of authentic materials and real-life tasks*. Many military translator training programs rely on outdated textbooks and artificial exercises that fail to reflect contemporary military realities. This creates a gap between training and actual professional demands. The solution is to systematically use up-to-date authentic materials, including NATO documents, peacekeeping manuals, operational reports, and recorded briefings. Cooperation with military units and international partners can provide access to real materials while respecting security restrictions. (Heimburger, 2012) Task-based learning, where trainees complete realistic translation and interpretation tasks, can significantly enhance professional readiness.

The *technological gap* in military translator training also poses a serious challenge. Modern military translation increasingly relies on digital tools, terminology management systems, secure communication platforms, and, in some cases, AI-assisted translation technologies. However, many training programs fail to familiarize trainees with these tools or address cybersecurity concerns. To overcome this problem, military translator training should include courses on computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, terminology databases, and secure digital workflows. At the same time, trainees must be taught to critically evaluate machine translation output and understand its limitations in sensitive military contexts.



Another critical issue is the *limited number of qualified instructors* who possess both linguistic expertise and military experience. Effective military translator training requires instructors who understand military culture, hierarchy, and operational communication. In many institutions, language teachers lack military background, while military specialists lack pedagogical training. One possible solution is to promote team teaching, where linguists and military experts collaborate in course delivery. Additionally, professional development programs should be established to retrain instructors and enhance their interdisciplinary competence.

Ethical challenges also complicate the training of military translators. Translators may encounter confidential information, sensitive negotiations, or morally complex situations during operations. However, ethical training is often overlooked or treated superficially. Incorporating courses on professional ethics, confidentiality, and responsibility is essential. Case-based discussions involving ethical dilemmas can prepare trainees to make informed decisions in real situations.

Finally, assessment methods in military translator training often focus on linguistic accuracy rather than overall professional competence. Such assessment fails to measure readiness for real-world tasks. A more effective approach would involve performance-based assessment, including simulated missions, live interpreting tests, and integrated evaluation of linguistic, pragmatic, and psychological skills. Clear criteria and rubrics can ensure objectivity and fairness.

Conclusion

Overall, the training of military translators faces numerous interconnected problems, including insufficient military-specific content, lack of pragmatic and intercultural focus, inadequate preparation for stress, outdated materials, technological gaps, instructor shortages, and limited ethical training. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and integrated approach to curriculum design, teaching methodology, and assessment. By combining linguistic excellence with military knowledge, pragmatic competence, technological literacy, and psychological preparedness, training programs can produce highly qualified military translators capable of meeting the complex demands of modern military operations. Such improvements are not merely educational reforms but strategic investments in effective international military cooperation and security.

Strict adherence to research ethics is maintained. All participants are provided with an information sheet and sign a consent form. Anonymity is guaranteed; pseudonyms are used in all reporting. Participants are informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. Given the sensitive nature of military institutions, all data pertaining to specific operational capabilities or classified terminology are excluded from the public-facing findings, and institutional approval for publication is secured prior to dissemination.

This research holds both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it contributes to the sparse literature on Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) in a military context and extends the discourse on translator competence models into a high-risk, high-stakes domain. Practically, the findings will provide actionable data for the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, and individual military institutes to reform curricula,



develop specialized teaching materials, and design targeted professional development programs for instructors.

Despite an overall positive experiment overview, certain limitations also were acknowledged. In particular, the access to certain specialized units or classified training environments is restricted. Furthermore, the sensitive nature of military service may lead to social desirability bias in participant responses. These limitations are mitigated through the assurance of anonymity and the cross-verification of findings via multiple data sources.

References

1. Abdurazakova, S. V. (2025). Bridging Language and Strategy: The Significance of Communicative Competence in ESP Training for Military Cadets. *Journal of Universal Science Research*, 3(4), 411-416.
2. Badalbaeva, M. Y. (2024). Importance of teaching English by using professional terminology in the sphere of emergency situation. *International Journal of Scientific Researchers*, 4(1).
3. Heimburger, F. (2012). Fighting together: language issues in the military coordination of First World War Allied Coalition Warfare / ed. by H. Footitt, M. Kelly. Basingstoke: Languages and the Military: alliances, occupation and peace building.
4. Kurbanova, M. A. (2023). Positive factors in the use of interactive methods in the educational process (with the field of influence in the military field) and the role of the teacher. *Current Research Journal of Pedagogics*, 4(01), 1-7.
5. Liu, J. (2024). *From Classroom to War of Resistance: Chinese Military Interpreter Training during World War II*. Routledge.
6. Гураль, С.К. (2009). *Дискурс-анализ в свете синергетического видения*. Томск: Изд-во Том. ун-та.
7. Поляков, О.Г. (2003). *Английский язык для специальных целей: теория и практика: учеб.пособие*. 2-е изд., стереотип. М.: НВИ-Тезаурус.
8. Шевченко, М.А., Гураль, С.К. (2017). Цели, задачи, принципы и содержание обучения военных переводчиков иноязычному военному дискурсу // *Язык и культура*, 330-344. DOI: 10.17223/19996195/40/24.

