

GRAMMATICAL ASPECTS IN TRANSLATING COMPLEX NOUN PHRASES IN CIVIL PROTECTION TEXTS

Complex noun phrases (CNPs) are among the most frequent and functionally significant elements in modern technical and official texts, as they convey dense information in a concise form. The correct rendering of CNPs from Ukrainian into English requires not only lexical equivalence but also careful attention to grammatical structures, word order, agreement, prepositional constructions, and article usage. Analyzing the grammatical characteristics of CNPs in both languages allows translators to identify potential difficulties and apply strategies that preserve meaning and readability.

A noun phrase (NP) is a syntactic unit centered around a noun or pronoun that determines its semantic and grammatical role in a sentence. It may include modifiers such as adjectives, determiners, numerals, or prepositional phrases that specify or limit the noun's meaning. Noun phrases function as subjects, objects, adverbials, or parts of complex structures, highlighting their versatility in language. This understanding of noun phrases aligns with modern descriptive English grammar, as elaborated by Huddleston and Pullum [*Huddleston, R., Pullum, G. K., 2002*], who describe a noun phrase as a structurally organized unit possessing well-defined functional and semantic characteristics.

Understanding the general concept and function of noun phrases provides a foundation for examining their grammatical characteristics in English and Ukrainian. Despite sharing the same fundamental role, CNPs in the two languages differ in structural patterns, word order, agreement, use of prepositional constructions, and the presence of articles. A comparative analysis of these features highlights the specific challenges that translators face when rendering Ukrainian CNPs into English and informs strategies to preserve both semantic precision and syntactic naturalness.

The grammatical organization of noun phrases in English and Ukrainian demonstrates both structural similarities and systemic differences, which are especially visible in technical and civil protection contexts. These differences concern the structure of noun phrases, word order, agreement in number and case, prepositional constructions, and the use of articles, each of which presents specific challenges for translators.

1. Structure of Noun Phrases

In both languages, noun phrases are built around a head noun that may be accompanied by modifiers, yet the means of expressing syntactic relations differ. English typically follows patterns such as *Adj + N* (e.g. *underground parking*), *N + N* (e.g. *air raid alarm*), and *N + Prep + N* (e.g. *rooms for service staff*). For instance, “*underground parking lots*” appears in the English version of *Dovidka.info* describing shelters [*Dovidka.info*. What is shelter?].

In Ukrainian, adjective + noun and noun sequences are more common (e.g. *цокольні та підвальні приміщення, підземні паркінги, підземні переходи* [*Довідка.інфо*. Укриття]). The Ukrainian case system allows expressing relations between nouns without prepositions (e.g. *номер телефону людини*). English often requires inserting prepositions or restructuring to render relations that in Ukrainian are expressed through case endings (e.g. *номер телефону людини* → *phone number of the person*).

This example illustrates the structural pattern **Adj + N**, typical of English, where modifiers precede the head noun to create a compact and clear phrase.

2. Word Order

English noun phrases have a fixed order, with modifiers almost always preceding the head noun; this structure ensures clarity and precision (e.g. *shelter for citizens, underground parking lots*). In the English version of *Dovidka.info*, the sentence reads: “*The simplest shelters are basements and semi-basements, underground parking lots, and underpasses.*” [*Dovidka.info*. What is shelter?].

In contrast, Ukrainian word order is more flexible; modifiers can appear before or after the noun depending on emphasis or stylistic intent (e.g. *укриття для*

громадян, підземні переходи). The Ukrainian *Dovidka.info* version renders this as: “Найпростіші укриття — це цокольні та підвальні приміщення, підземні паркінги та підземні переходи.” [Довідка.інфо. Укриття].

To achieve natural English phrasing, the translator must often reorder elements of the original sentence while preserving the logical hierarchy and overall meaning.

3. Agreement in Number and Case

In Ukrainian, adjectives, numerals, and nouns agree in gender, number, and case, e.g. *підземні переходи, найпростіші укриття*.

In English, nouns inflect only for number (*shelter* → *shelters*), and adjectives remain unchanged. The English *Dovidka.info* renders this as *the simplest shelters* [Dovidka.info. What is shelter?].

Ukrainian case distinctions are often conveyed in English through prepositional phrases or syntactic restructuring (e.g. *приміщення будинків* → *premises of buildings*) [Довідка.інфо. Укриття].

An additional example illustrating agreement can be observed in the phrase *заряджений павербанк, ліхтарики на батарейках* → *a charged power bank, battery-powered flashlights*. In the English version, it appears as: “Have at home: a radio receiver and battery-powered flashlights, a charged power bank...” [Dovidka.info. Blackout in winter].

This example illustrates how English maintains number agreement while adjectives remain uninflected, and compounds such as *battery-powered* function as premodifiers.

4. Prepositional Constructions

English relies heavily on prepositions to express relations between nouns (e.g. *rooms for service staff, during an air raid alarm*). In the English version of *Dovidka.info*, we find expressions such as *rooms for service staff, in any city or building, in case of danger* [Dovidka.info. What is shelter?].

In contrast, Ukrainian frequently conveys the same relations through case endings rather than prepositions (e.g. *кімнати для персоналу, під час повітряної тривоги*). *Dovidka.info* provides examples like *під час нетривалих обстрілів, в*

контакті з господарями, підземні станції метро [Довідка.інфо. Укриття].

Selecting the appropriate English preposition (*for, during, in, under*) is crucial for conveying precise meaning; errors can cause ambiguity or semantic distortion.

5. Articles

In English, articles (*a, an, the*) are obligatory markers of definiteness or generality. For example, *The simplest shelters are basements and semi-basements...* [Dovidka.info. What is shelter?].

Ukrainian lacks articles, and definiteness is inferred from context, as seen in the Ukrainian *Dovidka.info* version, which uses none.

The translator must determine whether to use *a/an/the* or omit the article (zero article) based on context and specificity; incorrect usage can distort meaning or reduce the naturalness of the translation.

The comparative analysis of complex noun phrases in English and Ukrainian reveals both structural similarities and systemic differences that influence translation accuracy and stylistic naturalness. While both languages center noun phrases around a head noun, Ukrainian relies on a case system, whereas English depends on fixed word order, prepositions, and articles. These contrasts create translation challenges, especially in technical and civil protection contexts where precision is vital. Effective translation requires grammatical adaptation to English norms, accurate preposition and article use, and preservation of modifier hierarchy to maintain informational density and readability.

References

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