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LEXICO-SEMANTIC FEATURES AND TRANSLATION OF U.S. NAVY RANK TITLES IN THE NATO OF/OR FRAMEWORK: ENGLISH, POLISH AND UKRAINIAN

Abstract. The article examines the lexico-semantic structure and translation of U.S. Navy rank titles within the NATO OF/OR framework into Polish and Ukrainian. The study is motivated by the growing importance of naval interoperability, defence terminology standardisation, and precise multilingual communication in NATO-related contexts. In contemporary multinational military cooperation, rank terminology functions not only as a lexical category but also as an operational instrument that ensures clarity of hierarchy, authority, and institutional role. The research demonstrates that NATO rank codes facilitate cross-national comparison, yet they do not eliminate semantic asymmetry between national rank systems, since these systems remain embedded in distinct military traditions, legal frameworks, and historical naming conventions. The article analyses the semantic composition of English naval rank titles, paying particular attention to their hierarchical, functional, and institutional components. English titles often contain explicit markers of rank progression and authority, such as petty officer, chief, senior chief, commander, and admiral, whose meanings are not always directly transferable into other languages. Through comparative analysis, the study reveals that Polish and Ukrainian equivalents display different degrees of terminological correspondence. Polish tends to preserve nationally institutionalised naval titles rooted in its own military tradition, whereas Ukrainian translation frequently relies on functional equivalence, contextual specification, or descriptive rendering in order to bridge structural gaps between systems. Special emphasis is placed on intermediate and

senior enlisted ranks, where the internal U.S. grading model does not fully correspond to either Polish or Ukrainian naval hierarchies. This creates challenges of partial equivalence, requiring translators to consider not only lexical form but also institutional status, NATO code, and communicative purpose. The study argues that translation of naval ranks should be based on a combined analysis of semantic structure, comparative hierarchy, and target-language military norms rather than on literal lexical similarity. The findings confirm that the dominant translation strategies are functional equivalence, descriptive rendering, contextual specification, and terminological substitution. The article proposes a three-level model of professional translation that preserves the original English title, supplements it with the NATO OF/OR code, and provides a target-language equivalent or explanatory note when necessary. The research highlights that accurate rendering of military terminology is essential for ensuring interoperability within multinational defence structures, avoiding misinterpretation in operational communication, and supporting effective academic and institutional discourse in the field of military linguistics.

Keywords: naval ranks; U.S. Navy; NATO rank codes; OF/OR system; military terminology; Polish; Ukrainian; translation equivalence; functional equivalent; descriptive translation.

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ЛЕКСИКО-СЕМАНТИЧНІ ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ТА ПЕРЕКЛАД НАЗВ ВІЙСЬКОВИХ ЗВАНЬ ВІЙСЬКОВО-МОРСЬКИХ СИЛ США У МЕЖАХ СИСТЕМИ НАТО OF/OR: АНГЛІЙСЬКА, ПОЛЬСЬКА ТА УКРАЇНСЬКА

Анотація. У статті досліджується лексико-семантична структура та переклад назв військових звань Військово-морських сил США у межах системи НАТО OF/OR польською та українською мовами. Дослідження



зумовлене зростаючою важливістю військово-морської взаємосумісності, стандартизації оборонної термінології та точної багатомовної комунікації у контекстах, пов'язаних із НАТО. У сучасній багатонаціональній військовій співпраці термінологія військових звань функціонує не лише як лексична категорія, а й як операційний інструмент, що забезпечує чіткість ієрархії, повноважень та інституційної ролі. Дослідження демонструє, що коди військових звань НАТО полегшують міжнаціональне порівняння, однак не усувають семантичної асиметрії між національними системами звань, оскільки ці системи залишаються вкоріненими у різних військових традиціях, правових рамках та історичних номінаційних практиках. У статті аналізується семантичний склад англійських назв військово-морських звань із особливою увагою до їхніх ієрархічних, функціональних та інституційних компонентів. Англійські назви часто містять виразні маркери просування за рангом і влади, такі як *petty officer*, *chief*, *senior chief*, *commander* та *admiral*, значення яких не завжди можуть бути безпосередньо передані іншими мовами. Завдяки порівняльному аналізу дослідження виявляє, що польські та українські відповідники демонструють різний ступінь термінологічної відповідності. Польська мова схильна зберігати національно інституціоналізовані військово-морські назви, укорінені у власній військовій традиції, тоді як український переклад часто спирається на функціональну еквівалентність, контекстуальну конкретизацію або описовий переклад для подолання структурних розбіжностей між системами. Особлива увага приділяється проміжним і старшим званням рядового та сержантського складу, де внутрішня модель градації США не повністю відповідає ані польській, ані українській військово-морській ієрархії. Це створює труднощі часткової еквівалентності, що вимагає від перекладача врахування не лише лексичної форми, а й інституційного статусу, коду НАТО та комунікативної мети. У статті обґрунтовується, що переклад військово-морських звань має ґрунтуватися на поєднаному аналізі семантичної структури, порівняльної ієрархії та військових норм мови перекладу, а не на буквальній лексичній подібності. Результати підтверджують, що домінантними перекладацькими стратегіями є функціональна еквівалентність, описовий переклад, контекстуальна конкретизація та термінологічна заміна. У статті пропонується трирівнева модель професійного перекладу, яка передбачає збереження оригінальної англійської назви, доповнення її кодом НАТО OF/OR та надання відповідника мовою перекладу або пояснювальної примітки за потреби. Дослідження підкреслює, що точне відтворення військової термінології є необхідною умовою забезпечення взаємосумісності у багатонаціональних оборонних структурах, уникнення непорозумінь в оперативній комунікації та підтримки ефективного академічного й інституційного дискурсу у сфері військової лінгвістики.

Ключові слова: військово-морські звання; ВМС США; коди військових звань НАТО; система OF/OR; військова термінологія; польська мова; українська мова; перекладацька еквівалентність; функціональний еквівалент; описовий переклад.

Problem Statement. The development of multinational naval cooperation has made military rank terminology a practical issue of interoperability rather than a purely lexicographic problem. In NATO-related communication, the OF/OR system is used to compare personnel categories across national armed forces; however, the system correlates rank levels rather than replacing national naming traditions.

Analysis of recent research and publications. NATO documents refer to STANAG 2116/APersP-01 as the basis for military rank indicators and their cross-national use [1]. Consequently, naval ranks should be interpreted simultaneously as institutional terms, hierarchical markers and culture-bound linguistic units.

The problem is especially visible when U.S. Navy rank titles are transferred into Polish and Ukrainian. English rank titles such as Petty Officer Third Class, Chief Petty Officer or Lieutenant Commander are structurally transparent in English but do not always have one-to-one equivalents in target naval systems. Polish law lists the ranks of the Polish Navy as a national sequence that includes *marynarz*, *mat*, *bosman*, *chorąży marynarki*, *podporucznik marynarki*, *komandor* and *admiral* [2]. Ukrainian legislation, in turn, has introduced reforms intended to harmonise senior military ranks with NATO-compatible categories, including naval analogues such as *commodore* and *admiral* ranks. These parallel systems create a field of partial equivalence, where code-based comparison must be supplemented by semantic and functional analysis.

The purpose of the article. The aim of this article is to identify the major lexico-semantic features of U.S. Navy rank titles and to determine the dominant translation strategies used for their rendering into Polish and Ukrainian. The article focuses on three questions: (1) how the meanings of English naval rank titles are structured; (2) how Polish and Ukrainian equivalents correspond to these meanings; and (3) which translation strategies are most appropriate for ranks that lack direct target-language equivalents.

Presentation of the main research material. The research material consists of U.S. Navy enlisted and officer rank titles, their NATO OF/OR correlation, and their Polish and Ukrainian functional equivalents. The original Ukrainian draft of the article served as the basis for selecting the core set of examples, but the revised version verifies terminology against open official sources. U.S. Navy sources were used to check the English rank sequence, pay-



grade logic and insignia terminology, including official Navy personnel and uniform-regulation materials [3]. Polish equivalents were checked against the Act on Defence of the Homeland, which codifies ranks in the Polish Navy [2]. Ukrainian equivalents were compared with current Ukrainian military-rank legislation and NATO-oriented rank reform materials [4].

The methodology combines lexico-semantic analysis, componential analysis and comparative translation analysis. Each rank title is treated as a specialised term whose meaning is built from several components: service branch, hierarchy, function, seniority and institutional status. Translation strategies are classified as normative equivalent, functional equivalent, generalisation, specification, borrowing/calque and descriptive rendering. This classification is consistent with open studies of military terminology translation, which stress that military terms require accuracy, consistency and contextual adaptation when direct equivalence is absent [5, 6].

The NATO OF/OR framework is designed to facilitate comparison between national rank systems. OF codes refer to officers, whereas OR codes refer to other ranks, including enlisted personnel and non-commissioned officers. Yet NATO codes do not create identical semantic content across languages. They indicate relative level and interoperability category, while the national rank title remains embedded in the institutional history of a particular navy. For this reason, translation based only on code equivalence may be misleading.

For example, the *English Petty Officer* series reflects an internal U.S. Navy structure in which the sequence third class, second class and first class marks a graded non-commissioned hierarchy. Polish uses terms such as *mat*, *starszy mat*, *bosmanmat*, *bosman* and *starszy bosman*, which belong to a different national naming tradition. Ukrainian uses *матрос*, *старший матрос*, *старшина* and higher senior enlisted titles, but the internal distribution does not coincide fully with the U.S. model. Thus, code-based correlation must be interpreted as functional proximity rather than lexical identity.

English naval rank titles may be divided into simple and composite terms. Simple terms include *Seaman*, *Commander*, *Captain* and *Admiral*. Composite terms include *Seaman Apprentice*, *Petty Officer Third Class*, *Senior Chief Petty Officer* and *Lieutenant Commander*. Composite titles are especially important because their meaning is distributed across several components. In *Seaman Apprentice*, the element *seaman* indicates the maritime domain, whereas *apprentice* denotes an early stage of professional training. In *Petty Officer Third Class*, *petty officer* identifies a non-commissioned naval authority, while *third class* specifies the lower grade within that subgroup. In *Senior Chief Petty Officer* and *Master Chief Petty Officer*, *senior* and *master* intensify the hierarchy and mark advanced professional authority.

Officer titles also reveal compositional meaning. *Lieutenant* historically denotes an officer acting in the place of a superior; junior grade specifies the lower level within the lieutenant category. *Lieutenant Commander* combines two command-related markers and refers to an intermediate officer level between lieutenant and commander. *Rear Admiral* and *Vice Admiral* preserve historical naval positional semantics: rear and vice indicate differentiated levels within the admiralty hierarchy. Such semantic layering explains why literal translation is insufficient. The translator must determine whether the target language has an institutional equivalent or whether the title should be rendered descriptively.

The comparative material is presented below in a continuous analytical form rather than as a table. This format makes it possible to explain not only the formal OF/OR correlation but also the semantic motivation of each rendering, the degree of institutional equivalence, and the translation procedure used in Polish and Ukrainian.

At the enlisted level, *Seaman Recruit* (OR-1) is best rendered in Ukrainian by a generalised descriptive equivalent such as *новобранець* or *матрос початкового рівня*, whereas Polish uses *marynarz*. The English title combines the *maritime component seaman* with the institutional status component recruit; therefore, the Ukrainian translation tends to generalise the initial service status, while the Polish term foregrounds branch affiliation. *Seaman Apprentice* (OR-2) is translated through functional equivalence: Ukrainian *матрос* or *матрос-курсант* and Polish *starszy marynarz* convey an early stage of professional naval training rather than the literal meaning of apprenticeship. *Seaman* (OR-3) requires contextual specification in Ukrainian as *старший матрос*, while Polish *mat* functions as a stable naval equivalent.

The *Petty Officer* group illustrates the limits of direct equivalence most clearly. *Petty Officer Third Class* (OR-4) has no full direct Ukrainian equivalent because the U.S. class-based system does not coincide with the Ukrainian hierarchy of naval enlisted and non-commissioned ranks. In academic translation, a descriptive equivalent such as *старшина нижчого рангу* level is preferable. Polish offers functional alternatives, including *starszy mat* and *bosmanmat*, depending on the institutional table used. *Petty Officer Second Class* (OR-5) and *Petty Officer First Class* (OR-6) can be rendered more consistently as *старшина 2 стамми* and *старшина 1 стамми* in Ukrainian explanatory contexts, while Polish *bosman* and *starszy bosman* serve as functional equivalents.

The senior enlisted ranks require an even more cautious strategy. *Chief Petty Officer* (OR-7), *Senior Chief Petty Officer* (OR-8) and *Master Chief Petty Officer* (OR-9) form a coherent U.S. Navy sequence, but their hierarchy is not reproduced structurally in Polish or Ukrainian. Ukrainian translation should therefore combine the original title, the NATO code and a descriptive-functional



rendering, especially for training and analytical texts. Polish uses *młodszy chorąży marynarki*, *chorąży marynarki* and *starszy chorąży marynarki*, which are institutionally valid but do not reproduce the internal metaphor of chiefness and mastery embedded in the English titles. Thus, this group demonstrates that NATO codes are comparative tools, not automatic lexical equivalents.

At the officer level, translation is generally more stable, although not free from ambiguity. *Lieutenant Junior Grade (OF-1)* is rendered by Ukrainian *лейтенант молодшого рангу* and Polish *podporucznik marynarki*; Lieutenant is context-sensitive because the OF code and national hierarchy may differ across systems. *Lieutenant Commander* corresponds functionally to Ukrainian *капітан-лейтенант* and Polish *kapitan marynarki*, while *Commander* is associated with Ukrainian *капітан 2-го рангу* and Polish *komandor podporucznik*. *Captain* is particularly problematic because the naval title differs from the land-force title: in Ukrainian it corresponds to *капітан 1-го рангу* whereas in Polish it may be compared with *komandor*-level ranks depending on the relevant national table.

Flag-officer ranks show a higher degree of terminological transparency because many European languages share cognate forms. *Commodore* can be rendered by borrowing in Ukrainian *комодор* and by a functional comparison with Polish *komandor* or admiral-level categories. *Rear Admiral*, *Vice Admiral* and *Admiral* are relatively stable: Ukrainian *контрадмірал*, *віцеадмірал*, and *адмірал* correspond to Polish *kontradmiral*, *wiceadmiral* and *admiral* or *admiral floty* in specific national contexts. *Fleet Admiral (OF-10)*, however, has no current direct Ukrainian or regular Polish equivalent; it is therefore best treated through historical and descriptive rendering, with explicit reference to the absence of an active national counterpart.

Naval ranks are not only administrative labels; many of them preserve metaphorical and metonymic traces of earlier maritime practice. These figurative elements should not be translated mechanically, because their historical imagery has usually become conventionalised within the rank system. The translator must therefore distinguish between a living metaphor that requires explanation and a lexicalised metaphor that functions as a technical term. This distinction corresponds to a general principle of military terminology translation: institutional meaning has priority over etymological transparency, but etymology may help clarify why direct calquing is misleading [5, 6].

The title *Rear Admiral* is a clear example of spatial metaphor. The component *rear* originally evokes the back part of a naval formation, where one of the flag officers commanded a section of the fleet. In Ukrainian, *контрадмірал* and in Polish *kontradmiral* do not reproduce the English spatial image literally; instead, they use established terminological equivalents. A literal translation such as «задній адмірал» would be semantically transparent but professionally

incorrect. The same principle applies to *Vice Admiral*: *vice* historically means “in place of” or “deputy,” but Ukrainian *віцеадмірал* and Polish *wiceadmiral* preserve the conventional rank title rather than translating the underlying substitution metaphor [7].

The titles *Captain* and *Lieutenant* also contain metaphorical or metonymic motivation. *Captain* is historically connected with the idea of the “head” or leader, while *Lieutenant* denotes a person who holds the place of another. In translation, however, these internal meanings are subordinated to rank equivalence. Thus, *Navy Captain* should be rendered as Ukrainian *капітан 1 рангу* rather than simply *капітан*, because the latter may activate a land-force association. *Lieutenant Commander* combines the idea of deputised authority with command; its Ukrainian equivalent *капітан 3 рангу* and Polish *kapitan marynarki* translate the institutional level, not the inner metaphor of command replacement [7, 8].

The senior enlisted sequence *Chief Petty Officer*, *Senior Chief Petty Officer* and *Master Chief Petty Officer* contains a metaphor of professional mastery and hierarchical seniority. *Chief* marks leadership within the enlisted community, senior intensifies position in the hierarchy, and master suggests the highest level of expertise and authority. Ukrainian and Polish equivalents usually neutralise this metaphor and replace it with functional hierarchy: *головний старшина* or descriptive OR-7/OR-9 renderings in Ukrainian, and *chorąży marynarki*-type equivalents in Polish.

These examples show that metaphor in rank titles is often translated through functional demetaphorisation: the image is reduced, while institutional rank value is preserved.

Conclusions. Consequently, examples of metaphor translation in naval ranks demonstrate three basic procedures: terminological substitution, as in *Rear Admiral* — *контрадмірал* / *kontradmirał*; functional demetaphorisation, as in *Master Chief Petty Officer* — descriptive Ukrainian OR-9 rendering; and contextual specification, as in *Captain* — *капітан 1 рангу* in naval texts. These procedures help avoid false literalness and ensure that the translated rank performs the same classificatory function in the target military discourse.

The comparative analysis shows that U.S. Navy rank titles are not translated adequately by word-for-word substitution. Their semantic structure is hierarchical and institutional. The element *petty officer*, for example, should not be translated as a literal combination of petty and officer; it denotes a specific category of naval non-commissioned personnel. Similarly, chief, senior chief and master chief are not merely adjectives of intensity but formal markers of senior enlisted authority in the U.S. Navy. Official U.S. Navy documents define rates and paygrades as linked to training, experience, knowledge and skill, which confirms the functional nature of these terms [8].



Polish translation shows a relatively high degree of terminological autonomy. Rather than reproducing the English morphology, Polish uses historically established naval titles such as *mat*, *bosman*, *chorąży marynarki*, *komandor* and *admiral*. This makes Polish equivalents institutionally precise but sometimes less transparent for readers unfamiliar with the Polish Navy. Ukrainian translation, by contrast, often requires functional explanation because modern rank reform, NATO alignment and national naval tradition intersect. In such cases, the translator should preserve the NATO code in parentheses and, where necessary, add a short explanatory phrase.

The most problematic group is the senior enlisted category OR-7 to OR-9. The English sequence *Chief Petty Officer*, *Senior Chief Petty Officer* and *Master Chief Petty Officer* is internally coherent in the U.S. Navy, but Polish and Ukrainian systems distribute comparable responsibilities through different rank titles. Therefore, descriptive-functional translation is preferable in academic, training and analytical texts. In official documents, the safest solution is to keep the source title, provide the NATO code and add the national comparative equivalent only when required.

Officer ranks demonstrate greater stability because many European languages share cognate or historically related terms: *admiral*, *vice admiral*, *rear admiral*, *captain* and *lieutenant*. Nevertheless, even these terms may mislead if they are interpreted without service-branch context. Captain in the Navy is not equivalent to captain in land forces; in Ukrainian it normally corresponds to *капітан 1 рангу* in naval usage, while in Polish it may be compared with *komandor*-level ranks depending on the table used. Hence, rank translation must be branch-sensitive.

The analysis confirms that U.S. Navy rank titles constitute a specialised lexico-semantic subsystem with a high degree of compositionality, hierarchy and institutional embeddedness. NATO OF/OR codes provide an essential framework for comparison, but they do not guarantee full semantic equivalence between English, Polish and Ukrainian. The codes should therefore be used as comparative indicators rather than as automatic translation equivalents.

The dominant translation strategies are functional equivalence, contextual specification and descriptive rendering. Terminological equivalents are possible mainly for higher officer ranks such as *rear admiral*, *vice admiral* and *admiral*. Composite enlisted ranks, especially in the *Petty Officer* and *Chief Petty Officer* groups, require more cautious treatment because their internal U.S. grading logic has no exact structural counterpart in Polish or Ukrainian.

For professional translation practice, the recommended model is three-level rendering: (1) preserve the original English rank title when required by institutional context; (2) provide the NATO code; and (3) add the Polish or

Ukrainian functional equivalent or explanatory rendering. This model ensures accuracy, preserves interoperability and reduces the risk of semantic distortion in military, academic and defence-communication contexts.

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