

LEGAL TERMINOLOGY IN THE DOMAIN OF CORRUPTION: ETYMOLOGY, SEMANTIC FEATURES, AND LEXICOGRAPHIC TRANSLATION

ЮРИДИЧНА ТЕРМІНОЛОГІЯ У СФЕРІ КОРУПЦІЇ: ЕТИМОЛОГІЯ, СЕМАНТИЧНІ ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ТА ЛЕКСИКОГРАФІЧНИЙ ПЕРЕКЛАД

Zapolskykh S.P.,

orcid.org/0000-0002-8815-6688

Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor,

Associate Professor at the Department of Theory and Practice of Translation (English)

Zaporizhzhia National University

Berezhna M.V.,

orcid.org/0000-0002-3345-256X

Candidate of Philological Sciences,

Associate Professor at the Department of Theory and Practice of Translation (English)

Zaporizhzhia National University

Pohonets V.V.,

orcid.org/0000-0003-2002-4758

Candidate of Philological Sciences,

Associate Professor at the Department of Theory and Practice of Translation (English)

Zaporizhzhia National University

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of English legal terminology in the domain of corruption, addressing its etymological origins, semantic features, and lexicographic translation into Ukrainian. The research is based on a corpus of 185 institutionally established legal terms compiled from authoritative sources, including international anti-corruption conventions, specialized legal dictionaries, and bilingual reference works. The selection excluded journalistic and non-terminological expressions to ensure terminological precision and relevance for legal translation studies.

The findings reveal that corruption-related legal terminology constitutes a highly specialized and conceptually dense segment of legal language, shaped by historical, semantic, and institutional factors. Etymological analysis demonstrates that the majority of terms originate from Latin, transmitted through Old French legal discourse, reflecting the enduring influence of Roman law on English legal vocabulary. French borrowings account for a significant portion of the corpus, particularly in criminal and administrative law, while native and hybrid English formations and modern institutional coinages introduced through international compliance frameworks represent smaller but important groups.

From a semantic perspective, the terminology is characterized by abstraction, polysemy, and partial synonymy, resulting from its use across criminal, administrative, and international legal contexts. Many terms also incorporate evaluative and normative components, which complicate interpretation and translation. Contrastive analysis highlights substantial interlingual asymmetry between English and Ukrainian legal systems, often requiring translators to employ descriptive translation, functional equivalents, calques, or contextual adaptation to achieve semantic accuracy and functional adequacy.

Lexicographic analysis suggests that a considerable number of bilingual dictionary entries may lack sufficient detail or consistency, which points to the importance of closer integration of linguistic, legal, and terminological expertise. By addressing these challenges, the study contributes to improving terminological accuracy, enhancing cross-linguistic legal communication, and supporting the standardization of anti-corruption discourse in international law.

Key words: legal terminology, corruption, etymology, semantic features, lexicographic translation, interlingual asymmetry.

У дослідженні проаналізовано корпус із 185 англійських юридичних термінів корупційної тематики, сформований шляхом суцільної вибірки з авторитетних правових, термінологічних і лексикографічних джерел, зокрема міжнародних антикорупційних конвенцій, спеціалізованих юридичних словників та двомовних англо-українських довідкових видань. Корпус охоплює інституційно закріплені правові терміни, тоді як суто публіцистичні та нетермінологічні одиниці були виключені з кількісного аналізу. У межах дослідження поєднано описовий, компонентний, контрастивний та лексикографічний методи для аналізу етимологічних, семантичних і перекладних характеристик правової термінології, пов'язаної з корупцією.

Результати аналізу підтверджують, що ця терміносфера є високоспеціалізованим і концептуально насиченим сегментом правової мови, який створює суттєві труднощі для точної інтерпретації та перекладу в межах різних правових систем. Етимологічний аналіз засвідчує, що приблизно 55–60 % термінів мають латинське походження, переважно опосередковане старофранцузьким юридичним дискурсом, що відображає сталий вплив римсько-правової традиції на англійську юридичну термінологію. Французькі запозичення становлять близько 18–20 % корпусу та переважають у адміністративно-правовому й кримінально-правовому контекстах. Питомі або гібридні англійські утворення охоплюють приблизно 12–15 %, тоді як сучасні інституційні неологізми, пов'язані з міжнародними регуляторними механізмами, становлять близько 7–10 %. У семантичному вимірі термінологія характеризується висо-

ким рівнем абстракції та функціональної спеціалізації. Майже половина термінів є полісемічними, функціонуючи в кримінально-правовому, адміністративному та міжнародно-правовому контекстах, тоді як часткова синонімія спостерігається приблизно у п'ятій частині корпусу внаслідок концептуального перетину між правовими підгалуззями. Крім того, оцінні та нормативні семантичні компоненти виявлено понад у третині термінів, що відображає моральний та інституційний виміри антикорупційного дискурсу. Контрастивний аналіз засвідчив міжмовну асиметрію більш ніж у половині випадків, коли прямі українські відповідники відсутні або лише частково корелюють з поняттями мови-джерела. У зв'язку з цим перекладачі найчастіше застосовують описовий переклад, а також функціональні відповідники, калькування та контекстуальну адаптацію, залежно від правового статусу й прагматичної функції терміна. Лексикографічний аналіз також показав, що значна частина словникових статей у двомовних словниках містять неповні або непослідовні дефініції, що підкреслює необхідність поєднання лінгвістичної, правничої та термінознавчої компетентності для забезпечення семантичної точності та функціональної адекватності перекладу правничої термінології корупційної тематики.

Ключові слова: правничі термінологія, корупція, етимологія, семантичні особливості, лексикографічний переклад, міжмовна асиметрія.

Problem Statement and Its Relevance. In recent decades, the fight against corruption has become a key priority of international legal cooperation, leading to the adoption of numerous international conventions, regulatory frameworks, and compliance mechanisms. In the context of globalization and intensified cross-border interaction, anti-corruption legislation increasingly operates beyond national legal systems, requiring precise and consistent legal communication among different jurisdictions. As a result, corruption-related legal terminology plays a crucial role in ensuring the effective implementation, interpretation, and enforcement of legal norms at both national and international levels.

The growing volume of international legal instruments and transnational legal practice has significantly increased the demand for accurate interpretation and translation of corruption-related legal terminology. However, legal terms in this domain often demonstrate a high degree of semantic abstraction, conceptual complexity, and contextual dependence, which complicates their transfer between languages and legal systems. These difficulties are further intensified by interlingual asymmetry, where equivalent concepts are absent or only partially aligned across legal cultures.

Moreover, corruption-related legal discourse is characterized by semantic ambiguity and terminological inconsistency, arising from the coexistence of criminal, administrative, and international legal frameworks, as well as from divergent national approaches to defining and regulating corrupt practices. Inadequate or inconsistent translation of such terms may lead to misinterpretation, legal uncertainty, and ineffective implementation of anti-corruption measures.

Given these challenges, a systematic linguistic analysis of corruption-related legal terminology is of particular relevance for legal translation studies, comparative law, and bilingual legal lexicography. By addressing etymological, semantic, and translational aspects of this terminological domain, the

present study contributes to improving terminological accuracy, enhancing cross-linguistic legal communication, and supporting the standardization of anti-corruption legal discourse.

Review of Recent Research and Publications.

Legal terminology has been extensively studied within the framework of general terminology theory and specialized discourse analysis. Foundational contributions by M. T. Cabré [1], C. Way [2], R. Kyiak [3] emphasize the systemic nature of terminological units, their conceptual dependence, and their function within professional communication. These scholars highlight that legal terminology constitutes a highly structured subsystem of language, characterized by precision, stability, and institutional regulation, while also being historically layered and semantically complex. Their approaches provide a theoretical basis for analyzing legal terms from etymological, semantic, and functional perspectives.

Considerable attention has also been devoted to legal translation and the problem of equivalence. Within translation studies, E. Nida's [4] concept of functional equivalence, further developed in legal contexts by P. Newmark [5], has been instrumental in addressing the transfer of legal meaning across languages and legal systems. These studies stress that formal equivalence is often unattainable in legal translation due to systemic differences between legal cultures, necessitating the use of descriptive translation, functional equivalents, or contextual adaptation – an issue particularly relevant for corruption-related terminology.

A number of linguistic studies focus on the semantic properties of legal terms, including polysemy, synonymy, and contextual variability. Researchers note that legal terms frequently operate across multiple branches of law, which leads to semantic extension and partial overlap of meanings [6]. Such semantic phenomena are especially prominent in areas where criminal, administrative, and international legal norms intersect, as is the case with anti-corruption legislation.

Research in legal lexicography, particularly concerning bilingual legal dictionaries, has revealed persistent problems related to incomplete definitions, lack of contextual information, and insufficient differentiation between closely related terms. Scholars emphasize that bilingual legal dictionaries often fail to reflect pragmatic and systemic aspects of legal concepts, which significantly complicates translation and interpretation [7].

In addition, international anti-corruption instruments – such as the United Nations Convention against Corruption [8], OECD Anti-Bribery Convention [9], and FATF recommendations [10], Transparency International [11] – have been analyzed as influential sources of contemporary legal terminology. These documents contribute to the formation and dissemination of institutional coinages and standardized legal concepts across jurisdictions.

Despite the breadth of existing research, there remains a lack of comprehensive studies that integrate etymological analysis, semantic characterization, and lexicographic translation of corruption-related legal terminology within a single analytical framework. This gap underscores the relevance of the present study, which seeks to provide a multidimensional examination of this terminological domain.

The aim of the article is to analyze English legal terminology in the domain of corruption with regard to its etymological origins, semantic features, and lexicographic translation into Ukrainian, highlighting the factors that complicate interpretation and interlingual transfer.

The article pursues the following **objectives**: 1) to compile a corpus of corruption-related legal terms from authoritative sources; 2) to identify their main etymological sources; 3) to examine key semantic features, including polysemy, partial synonymy, and evaluative components; 4) to analyze cases of interlingual asymmetry and the main translation strategies employed in English–Ukrainian legal translation; 5) to assess the adequacy of lexicographic representation of these terms in bilingual legal dictionaries.

Presentation of the Main Research Findings

5.1. Corpus Compilation and Methodology.

The empirical basis of the study is a corpus of 185 English legal terms related to corruption, compiled through continuous sampling from authoritative legal, terminological, and lexicographic sources [12]. The selection was guided by the principle of terminological relevance, which implies that only institutionally established legal terms with a stable presence in legal discourse were included. Purely journalistic, metaphorical, or context-dependent expressions were excluded from quantitative analy-

sis unless they demonstrated consistent terminological usage across multiple legal sources. The corpus was formed on the basis of international anti-corruption instruments, specialized legal reference materials [8-11], as well as monolingual and bilingual legal dictionaries [13-16]. This approach ensured both terminological authenticity and practical relevance for translation studies.

The research methodology combines descriptive and analytical methods with componential, contrastive, and lexicographic analysis. The descriptive method was applied to systematize the selected terms, while componential analysis was used to identify core and peripheral semantic features. Contrastive analysis enabled the identification of interlingual asymmetry between English and Ukrainian legal terminology, and lexicographic analysis was employed to assess the adequacy and consistency of dictionary definitions and translation equivalents.

5.2. Etymological Characteristics of Corruption-Related Legal Terminology.

The etymological analysis shows that corruption-related legal terminology in English is historically layered, reflecting the influence of Roman law, French legal tradition, and modern international regulation. The largest group of terms (approximately 55–60%) is of Latin origin, largely transmitted through Old French legal discourse. These terms typically denote abstract legal concepts and institutional procedures and include corruption (*Lat. corruptio*), prosecution (*prosecutio*), jurisdiction (*jurisdictio*), legislation (*legislatio*), and administration (*administratio*). Their semantic abstraction and terminological stability reflect long-standing institutional use.

French borrowings, accounting for 18–20% of the corpus, entered English mainly during the Norman period and are closely associated with criminal and administrative law. Typical examples include *bribery* (Old French *briber*), *embezzlement* (*embesiller*), *fraud* (*fraude*), and *misconduct*. These terms retain features of formal legal style and play a central role in describing corrupt practices.

A smaller group of terms (approximately 12–15%) consists of native or hybrid English formations, resulting from semantic specialization or the combination of Germanic bases with Romance affixes. Examples such as *wrongdoing*, *kickback*, *whistle-blower*, and *lawbreaking* are semantically transparent but acquire specialized meanings in legal contexts.

Finally, modern institutional coinages (around 7–10%) have emerged through international anti-corruption instruments and compliance frameworks. These include *illicit enrichment*, *conflict of interest*, *asset recovery*, *money laundering*, and *undue advan-*

tage, reflecting contemporary regulatory and standardization processes in anti-corruption law.

5.3. Semantic Features of Corruption-Related Legal Terminology. The semantic analysis shows that corruption-related legal terminology is marked by a high level of abstraction and contextual variability. A key feature of the corpus is polysemy, observed in nearly half of the analyzed terms, which function across criminal, administrative, and international legal contexts. For example, terms such as *corruption*, *misconduct*, and *abuse of office* may acquire different legal scopes depending on the institutional framework, complicating both interpretation and translation.

Partial synonymy is also characteristic of this terminological domain. Approximately one fifth of the terms display overlapping semantic fields, particularly in the designation of corrupt practices. Terms such as *bribery*, *undue advantage*, *illegal benefit*, and *kickback* may appear semantically similar but differ in their legal definitions, scopes, and pragmatic usages across various legal systems.

In addition, many corruption-related legal terms contain evaluative and normative semantic components, reflecting the moral and institutional stance embedded in anti-corruption discourse. Terms such as *wrongdoing*, *illicit enrichment*, and *malfeasance* not only describe legal acts but also convey negative judgment, which increases semantic complexity and requires careful handling in translation to maintain both legal precision and pragmatic impact.

5.4. Interlingual Asymmetry and Translation Strategies. Contrastive analysis of English and Ukrainian corruption-related legal terminology reveals a high degree of interlingual asymmetry, observed in more than half of the analyzed cases. This asymmetry stems from differences between legal systems, conceptual frameworks, and levels of terminological standardization, resulting in the absence of direct Ukrainian equivalents or only partial conceptual correspondence. Translating legal terminology often reveals conceptual gaps between common law and the Ukrainian legal system. For instance, the English term *illicit enrichment* lacks a direct Ukrainian equivalent that captures its full legal burden; it is frequently rendered descriptively as *незаконне збагачення без доведення конкретного злочину* (*unlawful enrichment without proof of a specific predicate crime*). Similarly, *undue advantage* only partially overlaps with the Ukrainian *неправомірна вигода*, as the English concept often encompasses a broader range of intangible benefits than its Ukrainian counterpart.

To achieve functional adequacy, translators employ a range of strategies. Descriptive translation is

commonly used to explicate complex legal concepts, as in *abuse of functions* – *зловживання службовими повноваженнями з корисливою метою*. Functional equivalents are applied when comparable legal institutions exist, for example *bribery* – *хабарництво* or *embezzlement* – *привласнення*. Calques are primarily used for internationally standardized terms, such as money laundering – *відмивання коштів* and asset recovery – *повернення активів*. In cases requiring alignment with national legal norms, contextual adaptation is employed. The choice of translation strategy is determined by the legal status, semantic complexity, and pragmatic function of the term.

5.5. Lexicographic Aspects of Translating Corruption-Related Legal Terms. The lexicographic analysis of bilingual English-Ukrainian legal dictionaries reveals a persistent disconnect between dictionary entries and the nuanced reality of anti-corruption law. Many resources offer simplified or vague equivalents that fail to capture the precise legal burden or institutional context of the source terms, significantly diminishing their utility for practitioners and translators.

A primary concern is the reduction of complex legal concepts to broad generalities. For instance, *abuse of office* is frequently translated as *зловживання владою* (*abuse of power*), a rendering that often omits the vital legal requirement of exploiting official authority for personal gain – a distinction essential for differentiating criminal acts from general administrative misconduct. Similarly, *misconduct* in public office is often translated without acknowledging its specific status as a common-law criminal offense, potentially leading translators to misrepresent the severity of the charge.

The analysis further identifies a lack of procedural depth in terminology. The term *asset recovery* is typically reduced to the literal *повернення активів*, ignoring the sophisticated international frameworks and FATF-aligned procedural dimensions – such as *tracing*, *freezing*, and *confiscation* – that the English term implies.

Furthermore, the research highlights a failure to differentiate between conceptually adjacent terms: *Influence peddling* and *trading in influence* are often treated as interchangeable synonyms despite their distinct roles and subjects under the UN Convention against Corruption. *Graft* is frequently translated as a general synonym for corruption, yet in its specific American political context, it refers precisely to the unscrupulous use of a politician's authority for personal fortune, often involving public funds. Dictionaries often overlook that *embezzlement* specifically involves the theft of assets entrusted to the

offender, whereas *misappropriation* carries a broader scope of unauthorized use.

These shortcomings underscore the urgent need for a lexicographic methodology that bridges linguistic precision with cross-jurisdictional legal expertise. To ensure terminological consistency in the global fight against corruption, future dictionaries must prioritize detailed definitions, rigorous conceptual differentiation, and extensive contextual labeling.

Conclusions and Prospects for Further Research. The study shows that English legal terminology related to corruption forms a specialized sub-system influenced by historical, semantic, and institutional factors. Most terms originate from Latin and Old French, with additional native English formations and modern institutional coinages introduced through international anti-corruption instruments.

Semantic analysis indicates frequent abstraction, polysemy, and partial synonymy, as well as evaluative components that complicate interpretation and translation. Contrastive analysis confirms significant interlingual asymmetry between English and Ukrainian, making direct equivalents insufficient. Effective translation strategies include descriptive rendering, functional equivalents, calques, and contextual adaptation. Lexicographic review points to gaps in bilingual dictionaries, such as incomplete definitions and inconsistent treatment of related terms, suggesting the need for better integration of linguistic and legal expertise.

Future research should expand the terminological corpus, include other language pairs, and examine standardization processes for corruption-related terminology in international legal discourse.

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