

Lecture 1: Introduction to Administrative and Commercial Translation

I. Introduction

Specialized translation is one of the most important applied branches of translation studies. Unlike literary or general translation, it is a functional form of translation that serves a specific practical purpose within institutions, companies, and public and private bodies. Among the most prominent branches of specialized translation is Administrative and Commercial Translation, which is the focus of this course.

This course combines two closely related fields:

- Administrative Translation: concerned with official correspondence, documents, and formal transactions within institutions and government departments.
- Commercial Translation: concerned with documents and correspondence related to business, trade, and economics between companies and individuals.

II. Defining Administrative and Commercial Translation

Administrative Translation

The transfer of texts and documents of an official and regulatory nature from one language to another, while preserving the legal and administrative accuracy of the content. It includes:

- Official correspondence
- Administrative reports
- Decisions and circulars
- Administrative contracts and internal memos
- Certificates and official documents

Commercial / Business Translation

The translation of texts related to business and economic activity, with careful attention to precise financial and commercial terminology. It includes:

- Commercial contracts
- Invoices and purchase orders
- Financial reports
- Marketing plans and commercial advertisements
- Business-to-business (B2B) correspondence

III. Importance of Studying This Field

1. Growing practical demand: with the expansion of international trade and economic globalization, the need for translators specialized in the administrative and commercial field continues to grow.
2. Legal and financial accuracy: any error in translating a commercial contract or administrative document can lead to legal disputes or financial losses.
3. Career opportunities: this course opens doors for students to work in companies, embassies, chambers of commerce, and governmental and international institutions.
4. Linking language and subject-matter expertise: this type of translation requires linguistic competence alongside an understanding of the basics of administration, economics, and commercial law.

IV. Characteristics of Administrative and Commercial Texts

Characteristic	Description
Formality	A dry, formal style, free of emotion and unnecessary elaboration
Precision	No room for ambiguity or interpretation, especially with numbers, dates, and names
Terminology	Heavy use of specialized terms (legal, financial, administrative)
Fixed Formulas	Repetitive standard phrases (boilerplate), such as opening and closing formulas in correspondence
Abbreviations	Frequent abbreviations such as Ltd., Inc., VAT, CEO, Ref.
Format	Strict adherence to document layout (letterhead, date, reference number, signature, etc.)

V. Key Challenges in English–Arabic Administrative/Commercial Translation

1. Cultural and legal gaps: some English legal/administrative terms have no direct equivalent in the Arabic legal system (e.g., Power of Attorney, Escrow, Notary Public).
2. Differences in sentence structure: English administrative sentences tend toward long, passive-voice constructions, while Arabic prefers different structures to convey formality.
3. Precision in financial and commercial terms: e.g., the difference between Invoice, Bill, and Receipt, or between Shareholder and Stakeholder.
4. Maintaining a formal tone when translating into Arabic, without falling into stilted, overly literal translation.
5. Terminology consistency: the need for a unified glossary within a single institution.

VI. Skills of a Successful Administrative and Commercial Translator

- Mastery of both source and target languages at a formal, professional register.
- Basic knowledge of legal, financial, and administrative terminology.
- Accuracy and close attention to detail (numbers, dates, names, contract clauses).
- Familiarity with Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT) tools to ensure terminology consistency.
- Professional integrity and confidentiality, given the sensitive information such documents often contain.

VII. Illustrative Examples

English	Arabic Equivalent
Please find enclosed herewith...	يرجى الاطلاع على المرفق طيه...
We regret to inform you that...	يؤسفنا إبلاغكم بأن...
This agreement is made and entered into by and between...	أبرم هذا الاتفاق بين...
Terms and Conditions	الشروط والأحكام
Purchase Order (PO)	أمر الشراء
Yours faithfully / Sincerely	وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام والتقدير

VIII. Course Content Overview (This Semester)

1. Theoretical introduction: the concept of specialized translation and its classifications.
2. Types of administrative correspondence and their translation.
3. Translating commercial contracts and agreements.
4. Fundamental financial and accounting terminology.
5. Translating economic reports and studies.
6. Common legal and administrative formulas.
7. Practical projects: translating real-world samples (a contract, an invoice, an official letter).

IX. Lecture Summary

Administrative and commercial translation is a precise, functional form of translation that requires students to combine linguistic competence with knowledge of administrative, commercial, and legal contexts. It is a highly demanded practical skill in the job market, and it will be the focus of our hands-on training this semester through real-world samples and applied projects.

(End of Lecture One)