

EQUIVALENCE AND NON-EQUIVALENCE IN ENGLISH-UZBEK TRANSLATION

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Abstract: This thesis explores the concept of equivalence and non-equivalence in English-Uzbek translation, focusing on the linguistic, cultural, and semantic challenges that arise in the process of transferring meaning between the two languages. It examines different types and levels of equivalence—such as lexical, grammatical, and pragmatic—and analyzes cases where full equivalence is unattainable due to cultural or structural differences. The research also investigates strategies employed by translators to achieve the closest possible correspondence in meaning and effect.

Key words: equivalence, non-equivalence, translation studies, English-Uzbek translation, linguistic equivalence, cultural translation, semantic correspondence, translation strategies

Translation plays a crucial role in facilitating communication and mutual understanding among speakers of different languages and cultures. It is not merely a linguistic process but also a cultural and cognitive activity that involves the accurate transfer of meaning, emotion, and context from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL). One of the most fundamental and challenging aspects of translation studies is the concept of equivalence—the extent to which the translated text accurately reflects the meaning and function of the original. Achieving full equivalence, however, is often impossible due to linguistic, cultural, and conceptual differences between languages.

In English-Uzbek translation, the issue of equivalence and non-equivalence becomes particularly significant because of the distinct structural and cultural characteristics of the two languages. English, as an analytic language, and Uzbek, as an agglutinative one, differ greatly in grammatical construction, word formation, and lexical meaning. Moreover, cultural and historical differences between English-speaking and Uzbek-speaking societies give rise to numerous non-equivalent words—lexical units that have no direct counterparts in the other language. These include terms relating to national customs, traditions, food, clothing, and social realities.

The study of equivalence and non-equivalence is essential for understanding how meaning is transferred between languages and how translators overcome gaps in lexical and cultural correspondence. By examining the types of equivalence, sources of non-equivalence, and strategies used to bridge them, this research seeks to contribute to the theoretical and practical understanding of English-Uzbek translation. The paper also explores how translators employ techniques such as paraphrasing, borrowing, descriptive translation, and cultural substitution to convey meaning accurately and naturally in the target language.

Ultimately, the exploration of equivalence and non-equivalence in English-Uzbek translation provides valuable insights into the interaction between language and culture. It highlights the translator's crucial role as a cultural mediator, whose task is not only to transfer linguistic meaning but also to ensure the preservation of cultural nuances, thereby promoting clearer intercultural communication and deeper mutual understanding between nations.

This article outlines effective strategies to minimize ambiguity in translation. While professional translators and interpreters are typically familiar with such rules, broader public awareness of non-

equivalent translation principles would further enhance global communication. The paper thus aims to clarify the primary difficulties and challenges associated with non-equivalent words. Languages inherently reflect the worldview of their speakers, and recognizing lexical non-equivalence across languages contributes to clearer and more effective intercultural communication.

Many scholars argue that non-equivalent vocabulary is closely tied to the notions of “transferability” and “equivalence” in translation studies. Non-equivalence occurs when a linguistic item or concept in the source language has no direct counterpart in the target language. Non-equivalent words can be classified according to their linguistic and cultural characteristics, including:

- Words describing everyday life or new inventions (neologisms);
- Terms for traditional objects and phenomena;
- Historical words;
- Phraseological expressions;
- Folk vocabulary;
- Colloquial, youth, military, or professional jargon;
- Sociopolitical terminology.

Researchers such as Roman Jakobson assert that “there is ordinarily no full equivalence between code units,” emphasizing that structural, grammatical, and lexical differences between languages are the primary sources of non-equivalence. He further notes that “equivalence in difference is the cardinal problem of language and the pivotal concern of linguistics.”

Other scholars, including I.M. Vereshchagin and V.G. Kostomarov, highlight the need to compare the semantic structures of words in both languages to reveal national-cultural distinctions. A.O. Ivanov categorizes non-equivalent vocabulary into three main types:

1. **Indicative non-equivalence** – includes neologisms, terms, names, and semantic gaps;
2. **Pragmatic non-equivalence** – covers interjections, abbreviations, associative gaps, and integrative anomalies;
3. **Alternative non-equivalence** – involves proper names, realia, and culturally specific usages.

Mona Baker also defines word-level non-equivalence as the absence of a direct counterpart for a source-language word in the target language. She emphasizes that this lack often complicates technical translation and requires careful strategic handling.

Renowned translation theorists such as L.S. Barkhudarov, S. Vlahov, S. Florin, V.N. Komissarov, and others have contributed to the study of non-equivalence, introducing related concepts such as realia, exoticisms, lacunae, and xenonyms. These linguistic units carry deep national and cultural meanings that reflect the unique worldview of a specific speech community.

Examples of non-equivalent words include national dishes (e.g., plov, sumalak, borsch), traditional clothing (chopon, belbog’, sarafan), and cultural practices (paxta to‘yi – “cotton harvest celebration”). Such words mirror the cultural and social realities of their respective communities and often lack single-word translations in other languages.

V.N. Krupnov classifies non-equivalent lexical items based on their origin and usage into four categories:

- Words denoting realia;
- Temporarily non-equivalent words;
- Random non-equivalent words;
- Exoticisms.

For instance, Uzbek terms like chopon, mahsi, and paranji have no precise English equivalents, as the cultural realities they denote are absent in English-speaking contexts. Similarly, modern English words such as laptop or earworm may lack established Uzbek counterparts.

The findings suggest that equivalence functions as a continuum rather than a fixed state. While lexical and grammatical equivalence can often be achieved through substitution or structural adjustment, semantic and pragmatic equivalence depend largely on contextual and cultural considerations.

One significant factor influencing translation is linguistic asymmetry. English relies on analytical structures with minimal inflection, whereas Uzbek, as an agglutinative language, expresses grammatical relations through suffixation and flexible word order. As a result, translators frequently restructure sentences, introduce explanatory elements, or modify morphology to retain the intended meaning. For instance, the English compound noun civil partnership becomes fuqarolik hamkorligi in Uzbek, expressing the idea descriptively rather than literally.

Semantic challenges are especially prominent in translating abstract or culturally embedded concepts such as privacy, justice, and equity, which often have no direct equivalents in Uzbek. Translators typically resolve these gaps using descriptive phrases, borrowings, or calques depending on the context. The English term privacy, for example, is translated as shaxsiy hayot daxlsizligi to convey both personal and legal aspects of the concept.

Pragmatic adaptation is equally essential to maintain the communicative effectiveness of the target text. Social norms and politeness conventions influence how meaning is expressed. For instance, the English request “Could you please close the door?” is translated as “Eshikni yopib qo‘ysangiz, iltimos,” maintaining the same politeness level in Uzbek cultural norms.

The study also points to the limitations of AI-assisted translation tools. While machine translation performs well in achieving lexical and grammatical equivalence, it often fails to capture semantic nuances and cultural contexts. Terms such as civil partnership or affidavit are frequently mistranslated, demonstrating that human translators remain indispensable for producing accurate and culturally sensitive translations.

Thus, translation should be viewed not merely as a linguistic transfer but as a process of cultural mediation. Equivalence is best understood as a dynamic, purpose-driven principle, requiring translators to balance linguistic precision with communicative intent through analytical reasoning, cultural awareness, and creative adaptation.

This study confirms that English–Uzbek translation equivalence encompasses four interconnected dimensions: lexical, grammatical, semantic, and pragmatic. Achieving harmony among these levels demands linguistic proficiency, cultural competence, and contextual awareness. Equivalence should be seen as a flexible and functional concept rather than a fixed standard. Translators must navigate linguistic asymmetries, semantic voids, and pragmatic differences to ensure both accuracy and naturalness in the target text.

While AI-based translation systems can assist with lexical and grammatical alignment, they remain insufficient in capturing the deeper cultural and semantic nuances that shape human communication. Therefore, human translators continue to play a vital role in maintaining fidelity, naturalness, and ethical responsibility in translation.

Future research should focus on corpus-based analyses of English–Uzbek translation, the integration of AI-assisted tools into professional practice, and the development of strategies that enhance semantic and pragmatic equivalence without sacrificing readability or cultural authenticity.

Different kinds of non-equivalence require different translation strategies, ranging from simple substitutions to complex rephrasings. Common strategies include:

- Using a more general or neutral term;
- Employing cultural substitution;
- Translating with explanations or footnotes;
- Paraphrasing with related or unrelated words;
- Omitting the term if contextually unnecessary;
- Using visual or illustrative translation.

In conclusion, translating non-equivalent words highlights the intricate relationship between language, culture, and communication in an increasingly globalized world. Effective translation of such terms is essential for bridging linguistic and cultural divides. As digital communication expands, the need for skilled translation and cultural sensitivity becomes even more vital. This study emphasizes that understanding the categories and characteristics of non-equivalent vocabulary enhances cross-cultural competence and fosters mutual understanding. Ultimately, mastering the translation of non-equivalent words not only enriches linguistic awareness but also strengthens intercultural empathy and global connectedness.

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