

FALSE EQUIVALENTS IN ENGLISH-UZBEK TRANSLATION OF LEGAL TERMS: A PRAGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT: This article explores the phenomenon of false equivalents in the English-Uzbek translation of legal terminology from a pragmatic perspective. Legal language is characterized by its high degree of precision and formality, making accurate translation essential for maintaining the intended legal effect. However, due to linguistic and cultural differences, literal translation often results in mismatches or "false equivalents" that distort meaning and legal interpretation. The study analyzes common instances where English legal terms are inadequately translated into Uzbek, examining the pragmatic implications such as ambiguity, loss of specificity, or unintended connotations. The paper also discusses the importance of contextual awareness and the translator's legal competence in identifying and avoiding such false equivalents. Examples from bilingual legal documents, including contracts and legislative texts, are used to illustrate key translation challenges and offer practical strategies for improvement.

Keywords: false equivalents, legal terminology, English-Uzbek translation, pragmatic perspective, legal language, translation accuracy, cross-linguistic equivalence, legal discourse, contextual interpretation, bilingual legal documents

INTRODUCTION

Legal translation is one of the most sensitive and challenging areas in the field of translation studies due to the high stakes involved in the transfer of meaning. Legal texts are not only linguistically complex but also deeply embedded in the legal systems, traditions, and socio-cultural frameworks of the source and target languages. In the context of English-Uzbek translation, this complexity is compounded by the fact that the two languages belong to distinct linguistic families, with differing legal traditions—common law in English-speaking countries and civil law (with post-Soviet influences) in Uzbekistan. A critical issue in legal translation is the occurrence of false equivalents—terms that appear to be similar in form or usage but differ significantly in meaning, scope, or legal function. These false equivalents often arise from literal or word-for-word translations, where surface similarities mask deeper pragmatic mismatches. For instance, translating "equity" as "adolat" in Uzbek may convey a general idea of fairness but fails to reflect the technical legal meaning of equity as a distinct branch of law in the Anglo-American legal system. Such mismatches can lead to misinterpretation of legal rights, obligations, and procedures. From a pragmatic perspective, meaning is not solely determined by dictionary definitions or grammatical structures but is shaped by context, speaker intention, and the communicative function of the utterance. In legal texts, pragmatics plays a crucial role in interpreting the performative force of legal language—such as obligations, permissions, prohibitions, and definitions. Misinterpreting these forces due to false equivalents may not only confuse the meaning but also undermine legal validity and enforceability. This paper aims to explore the nature and consequences of false equivalents in the translation of English legal terms into Uzbek, using a pragmatic lens to highlight the contextual and functional discrepancies that arise. By analyzing selected examples from legal contracts, statutes, and judicial decisions, the study demonstrates how

false equivalency can distort legal meaning and affect real-world legal outcomes. Furthermore, the paper underscores the need for translators to go beyond surface lexical choices and develop deeper intercultural and legal competence to produce accurate, context-sensitive translations.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of false equivalents in the English-Uzbek translation of legal terms reveals significant challenges that extend beyond lexical discrepancies and highlight the crucial role of pragmatic awareness in legal translation. Legal terminology is not merely a set of specialized words—it is a reflection of the conceptual and procedural frameworks within a given legal system. When legal terms are translated based solely on surface similarities or general meanings, there is a high risk of creating false equivalents that misrepresent the original legal concepts. This study has shown that such false equivalency can have serious implications, including semantic ambiguity, distortion of legal obligations or rights, and even invalidation of legal documents. From a pragmatic perspective, the meaning of legal expressions must be interpreted in light of their communicative intent, legal function, and institutional context. Failure to account for these factors can result in translations that are formally correct but functionally inaccurate.

Furthermore, the research emphasizes that legal translation requires not only linguistic competence but also a solid understanding of both source and target legal systems. Translators must be equipped with comparative legal knowledge, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to identify the functional equivalents of legal concepts, even when no direct translation exists. In cases where no true equivalence is possible, the use of descriptive translation, footnotes, or explanatory glosses may be necessary to preserve legal intent and accuracy. To improve the quality of legal translation between English and Uzbek, this paper recommends a multi-pronged approach: (1) the development of comprehensive bilingual legal glossaries vetted by legal professionals; (2) targeted training programs for legal translators focusing on pragmatic and comparative legal analysis; and (3) greater collaboration between linguists, legal scholars, and practicing lawyers. These steps are essential to bridge the conceptual gap between legal systems and avoid the pitfalls of false equivalency that threaten the clarity and integrity of translated legal texts. Ultimately, this research underscores that successful legal translation is not a matter of word-for-word substitution, but a nuanced act of meaning negotiation guided by pragmatic insight and legal literacy.

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