# The Semantic Challenges of Legal Translation: Synonymy and Polysemy in English and Uzbek Legal Terms

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A B S T R A C T

*This article examines the complexities of legal translation between English and Uzbek, focusing on the semantic challenges posed by synonymy and polysemy in legal terminology. It explores how nuanced differences in meaning between seemingly equivalent terms can lead to inaccuracies and misinterpretations in legal documents and contracts. The research analyzes specific examples of synonymous and polysemic terms, highlighting the importance of careful contextual analysis and a deep understanding of both legal systems for accurate and effective legal translation.*

## Introduction:

Legal translation demands meticulous accuracy, as even subtle semantic discrepancies can have significant consequences. This article focuses on the particular challenges posed by synonymy and polysemy in legal terminology when translating between English and Uzbek. The complexities of legal language, often characterized by dense technical jargon and culturally specific interpretations, are exacerbated by the presence of multiple terms with overlapping or ambiguous meanings.

The formalization of legal doctrine engendered a corresponding focus on legal language. The study of legal linguistics has a long history, with early contributions from scholars such as Abu Nasr al-Farabi. In his commentary on Plato's "Laws" ("Tal-xisu navomisi Aflotun"), al-Farabi highlights Plato's emphasis on clarity and accessibility in legal language, arguing that legislative language must be tailored to the comprehension of the citizenry to ensure effective implementation and avoid rejection or subversion of the law. This historical concern underscores the enduring significance of accurate legal translation.

The emergence of synonymy and polysemy within legal terminology presents a significant challenge, representing a problematic area of lexical ambiguity. The issue of terminological synonymy remains a complex and unresolved debate in contemporary linguistics, particularly regarding the optimal designation for a given concept.

A.P. Evgeneva defines synonyms as follows: "Synonyms are words whose meanings are close or similar to each other, express a concept, and differ from each other in meaning or stylistic color".

There are different views on the issue of terminological synonymy. Most scholars are in favor of reducing synonyms to maintain the accuracy of the terms. According to some scholars, the existence of synonyms in terminology is a natural process.

In particular, L.L.Kutina, who is specifically concerned with the history of scientific terminology, writes: "The phenomenon of widespread synonymy in the field of scientific terminology is characteristic of the first stage of the functioning of terminological systems, ie the period of its formation".

A.A.Reformatsky points out that in addition to synonyms that represent the same concept in terminology; there are many different variants of a word. The scientist calls such variants doublets (morphological, lexical, and syntactic). At the same time, A.A.Reformatsky emphasizes that doublets with synonyms are not the same phenomenon at all. When a series of synonyms consists of different words (*chidam-bardosh*), doublets are different forms of the same word (*yumaloq-dumaloq*).

Given the neutrality of terminology, some linguists call different expressions of the same concept "doublet terms", while others say that they can also be called "synonymous". Another group of scholars supports the idea of calling it a "double" because the synonymy in terminology differs from the common language.

In general, not only in terminology, but also in linguistics, the specific features of such concepts as "synonym", "doublet" and "variant" are not clearly defined, and the issues of their differentiation are not sufficiently explained.

R.A.Budagov defined synonymy as "words that have similar meanings but different pronunciations, expressing different aspects of the same concept. "It is clear from these definitions that in order to consider words as synonymous with each other, similarity and closeness in their meanings are used". However, these two criteria are not always used to identify synonyms.

As an example, we will interpret the term right of "*Vorislik huquqi - meros huquqi*". As an example, we will interpret the term "right of inheritance - the right of inheritance." These two terms are in fact the same concept and refer to the legal status of citizens' rights and obligations to private property after their death. However, as with any synonymous series, these two terms have their own semantic characteristics. In other words, "*meros huquqi*" has a much broader meaning than "*vorislik huquqi*". Inheritance consists of the rights and obligations that a person may transfer to another person after his death.

To be more precise, it is not the house, car and other property that belong to the citizen on the basis of the right of private property, but the right to this property as an object of inheritance. The right of inheritance consists of a set of legal norms that determine the conditions and procedure for the transfer of private property, property rights and obligations of the deceased to other persons, i.e. heirs.

The right of inheritance includes the rules of transfer of property, property rights and obligations included in the inheritance to the persons specified by law in the will, as well as in the conditions and in the manner prescribed by law or by the testator.

There are many synonymous lines in the texts of the Uzbek language law, such as *daromad- foyda; isbot-dalil; president respublikasi- dualistik respublika; baho- narx; chiqim- harajat; ish qo`zg`atish- ish ochish; ko`chirma- nusxa; xorijiy davlat- chet davlat; oqlash- aybsiz deb topish; tarafdor- yoqlovchi; zarar- ziyon- shikast; buyruq- farmon; xibsxona- qamoqxona; tomon- taraf; o`rinbosar- muovin.*

In English, the phenomenon of synonymy is observed mainly in two forms:

1. Complete synonyms of terms;

2. Partial synonyms of terms;

An example of a term being a complete synonym is terms such as *individual- person (shaxs), border-frontier (chegara),to own- to possess (egalik qilish), power- state- nation (davlat), to prohibit- to forbid(man qilish)*. In this case, they can often be used in combination; there is almost no significant difference between them.

As an example of the fact that the terms are partially (relatively) synonymous, we can include the most commonly used terms in the field of judicial law, such as *tort- crime, conviction- sentence, acquisition-takeover, branch- subsidiary, agreement- contract, seller- vendor, condition- term, lawsuit- claim, legal-lawful, legitimate, interim- temporary, to accuse- to charge, responsibility- liability, to appoint- to assign, to ignore- to waive, mandatory- compulsory- obligatory*. They include lexical and phraseological units with semantic-methodological differences and are divided into three groups: semantic (ideographic), methodological and semantic-methodological.

The following terms and their synonyms, which are actively used in the legal system, are given in the table below, and it is impossible to predict exactly which of them fully corresponds to a given situation or text. This requires the translator to be able to choose the most appropriate synonym in the translation process:

| TERM | SYNONYMS |
|---|---|
| Juridical | administrative, authoritative, constitutional, discriminating, equitable, forensic, impartial, judgelike, judiciary, jurisdictional, juristic, lawful, legalistic, magisterial, official, pontificial, principled, regular, statutory. |
| Lawyer | advocate, counselor, attorney, barrister, counsel, defender, jurist, mouthpiece, pleader, practitioner, proctor, procurator, solicitor, jurisprudent, legist, legal adviser. |
| Order | form, line, procedure, regulation, rule, adjustment, aligning, assortment, cast, codification, composition, disposal, disposition, layout, ordering, pattern. |
| Evidence | clue, confirmation, data, deposition, indication, testimony, witness, dope, grabber, info, manifestation, mark, substantiation, testimonial, cincher. |
| Judge | expert, referee, adjudicator, arbiter, assessor, chancellor, evaluator, judiciary, magistrate, ombudsman, peacemaker, reconciler, umpire, legal official, justice of peace, warden. |
| Witness | bystander,eyewitness, observer, spectator, testimony, attestant, beholder, dependent, gawker, onlooker, proof, signatory, signer, testifier, viewer, watcher, corroborator. |

Although these terms are used interchangeably in P.H. Collin's Dictionary of Law, each of these terms has its own meaning and differs in its scope.

There are different views on the issue of terminological synonymy. Many scholars are in favor of reducing synonyms in order to maintain the accuracy of the terms. Some scholars believe that the existence of synonyms in terminology is a natural process.

In particular, L.L.Kutina, a researcher in the history of scientific terminology, writes: "The phenomenon of synonymy in the field of scientific terminology is characteristic of the first stage of the functioning of terminological systems, ie the period of its formation."

The number of changes taking place in the social life of mankind at the current stage of development is so great that it is impossible to express all of them in new words. For this reason, words and phrases that already have a meaning in the language are often used to express something new, event or concept. Therefore, as a result of the expansion of the meaning of some words, they become ambiguous, that is, polysemantic words. MM Pokrovsky's opinion is as follows: "As culture changes, so do our perceptions and perceptions, and accordingly, the meanings of words change."

Polysemy has long been a problem for scientists. The word polysemy is derived from the Greek words "poly" - plural, "sema" - meaning plural. Words that serve to express two or more meanings are called polysemous or polysemantic words.

For example, the original meaning of the word head is the head (the main part of the body). However, this word has different meanings in Uzbek in different combinations: represents such meanings as *ishning boshi birikmasida - ishning boshlanishi; bosh vazifa birimasida - muhim, asosiy vazifa, bosh ko`tarmoq birikmasida – qo`zqalmoq, harakatga kelmoq; bosh bo'lmoq iborasida - rahbarlik qilmoq, idora etmoq, ishni boshqarmoq; bosh egmoq iborasida – bo`ysunmoq, taslim bo'lmoq, o`zini aybdor his qilmoq; bosh biriktirmoq (qo`shmoq) iborasida - ahillik, ittifoqlik, birdamlik; boshboshdoqlik yasalmasida – o`zboshimchalik, tartibsizlik.*

The ambiguity of words is actually the result of the transfer of meanings in different ways, the occurrence of the phenomenon of expansion or contraction in the meaning of some words over time. People's perceptions of nature, society, and industry, and the words that express those perceptions and concepts, expand and enrich their meanings.

Analyzing the above-mentioned problems, it is possible to make a number of recommendations for further improvement of the judicial system in the country and the effective use of terms:

First of all, we need to simplify the translated legal terms as much as possible, that is, we should use them with only one word (without synonyms). As an example, *muassis- ishtirokchi; ihotalangan- o`ralma; kontrakt- shartnoma; fors major- favqulotda va muayyan sharoitlarda oldini olib bo`lmaydigan vaziyatlar; aybdor- aybli.*

We also recommend that in the process of translating codified normative documents, translators choose the appropriate version of the terms in the Uzbek language, in difficult situations it is possible to take the term on its own, in its original form, and give additional explanations. For example, terms such as *transplatatsiya, bankrotlik, kreditor, abort, (transplantation, bankruptcy, creditor, abortion)* can be included in the original normative documents of the industry, as they have different meanings when used disproportionately with the Uzbek version, which leads to a number of misunderstandings. It is not advisable to use legal terms together with other Uzbek words to make them short, clear and understandable.

**Conclusion:**

This study has demonstrated the significant semantic challenges inherent in translating legal texts between English and Uzbek, particularly those arising from synonymy and polysemy within legal terminology. The analysis of specific examples highlighted the crucial role of contextual understanding, cultural awareness, and a deep knowledge of both legal systems in achieving accurate and effective translation. Further research could explore the development of specialized legal glossaries incorporating contextual nuances and cultural considerations. Moreover, investigating the impact of these translation challenges on legal practice and judicial interpretation would provide valuable insights into the practical implications of semantic ambiguity in cross-lingual legal communication.

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