

CHALLENGES OF TRANSLATING POLYSEMANTIC WORDS FROM UZBEK INTO ENGLISH

Mokhlaroy Shukhratbekova
shuxratbekovamohlaroy@gmail.com
Scientific advisor: Sevara Nazarova
Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages

Abstract: This article examines the challenges of translating Uzbek lexical items into English, primarily due to linguistic, cultural, and contextual differences between the two languages. Translating polysemantic words from Uzbek into English presents a complex task for linguists and translators, as such words carry multiple related meanings that may lead to semantic nuances and potential misinterpretations. The translation process becomes even more complicated because of lexical gaps, where certain Uzbek terms lack direct English equivalents, making it difficult to fully reproduce their meanings. The study highlights the major problems encountered in rendering Uzbek expressions into English and discusses possible strategies for overcoming these difficulties.

Keywords: cultural nuances, context, idiomatic expressions, equivalents, paraphrasing, direct translation, semantic interpretation, original meaning, semantic ambiguity, context dependency

Introduction

Translation is a complex and nuanced process that requires a high level of linguistic proficiency in both the source and target languages. A translator must convey not only the literal meaning of a text but also preserve its stylistic, emotional, and cultural nuances. Since English and Uzbek belong to different language families - Indo-European and Turkic respectively - significant differences in grammar, syntax, and vocabulary often create additional challenges in translation.

One of the most demanding aspects of translation involves polysemantic words. The prefix *poly-* originates from Greek and means “many” or “much,” while *semantic* relates to meaning in language or logic. Thus, a polysemantic word is one that possesses multiple related meanings. These meanings usually stem from a common origin or metaphorical extension. Polysemy differs from homonymy, where words share the same spelling and pronunciation but have entirely unrelated meanings (e.g., *bat* as a flying mammal and *bat* as sports equipment). Polysemy is frequently used for wordplay and for creating double meanings in literary works. As Kayimova (2025) notes, multiple interpretations of a word may contribute to humor, irony, or dramatic effect, particularly in poetry, novels, and drama. This makes the translation of polysemantic words especially challenging.

Methodology

According to the renowned translation scholar Kudrat Musaev, translation is the process of recreating a text in another language without altering its content or formal properties, using the expressive means of the target language. Modern translation theory regards translation as a creative process in which the translator reconstructs the source text while maintaining its

semantic and stylistic integrity. In transferring a work from one language to another, the translator employs linguistic competence, interpretative skills, and cultural awareness.

The present analysis is based on comparative and contextual methods. The study examines how polysemous verbs and lexical items are rendered from Uzbek into English. The findings show that translators employ various strategies to achieve semantic adequacy, including:

- 1) analyzing contextual clues
- 2) consulting specialized dictionaries
- 3) relying on linguistic and cultural competence
- 4) paraphrasing and rewording

These strategies are supported by translation scholars such as Baker (2018) and Hatim & Mason (2017), who emphasize the importance of context-sensitive interpretation and functional equivalence.

Major Challenges in Translating Polysemantic Words

1. **Lexical Differences: Lack of Direct Equivalents.** Uzbek may use a single lexical unit to express a range of meanings that English renders through several distinct words. Conversely, English may employ one word where Uzbek uses separate lexical items. This mismatch complicates the search for precise equivalence.

Idiomatic Expressions and Cultural Nuances. Polysemantic words are often embedded in culturally specific expressions. A literal translation may fail to convey the intended meaning or may sound unnatural in the target language. Cultural connotations must therefore be carefully interpreted and adapted.

2. **Grammatical and Syntactic Differences: Word Order and Sentence Structure.** The grammatical role and position of a polysemantic word significantly influence its meaning. Uzbek and English follow different syntactic patterns, which can complicate semantic preservation during translation.

Inflectional Differences. Uzbek is an agglutinative language, relying on suffixes to modify grammatical and semantic meanings. English, by contrast, depends more on word order, auxiliary verbs, and prepositions. Transferring the full semantic load of Uzbek affixation into English can therefore be challenging.

3. **Semantic Ambiguity and Context Dependency.** The meaning of a polysemantic word is almost always determined by context. Translators must analyze the surrounding text, discourse structure, register, and implied cultural background to select the most appropriate equivalent.

As Boyqo'ziyeva (2023) emphasizes, register and tone - whether formal, informal, neutral, or emotionally marked - play a crucial role in accurate translation. Even seemingly equivalent English words may differ subtly in connotation, leading to minor distortions if chosen incorrectly.

4. **Translator's Knowledge and Expertise.** Accurate translation of polysemantic words requires:

- 1) deep knowledge of both languages;
- 2) understanding of etymology, semantics, and pragmatics;
- 3) awareness of cultural context;
- 4) subject-specific expertise

In technical, medical, or legal texts, polysemantic words may acquire specialized meanings. As Mamarakhimova notes, vocabulary expansion, improved grammatical awareness, and cultural studies significantly enhance translation accuracy.

Illustrative Example

Consider the Uzbek word “*yurak*.” It demonstrates polysemy clearly:

Heart (organ): *Uning yuragi og‘riyapti.* → *His heart is hurting.*

Courage: *Yurakli odam ekan.* → *He is a brave person.*

Center/Core: *Shahar yuragi.* → *The heart of the city / city center.*

Desire/Will: *Mening yuragim buni istaydi.* → *I truly want this / My heart yearns for this.*

The translator must determine the intended meaning based on context and select the most appropriate equivalent.

The main challenges arise from:

- 1) Divergent vocabulary and semantic fields
- 2) Cultural specificity and idiomatic usage
- 3) Structural differences between languages
- 4) Contextual interpretation across linguistic systems

Conclusion. To overcome these challenges, translators rely on comprehensive dictionaries, thesauruses, parallel texts, and a thorough understanding of communicative intent. Effective translation of polysemantic words requires a combination of strategies, including descriptive translation, cultural adaptation, contextual interpretation, and functional equivalence. Each strategy seeks to bridge linguistic and cultural differences while preserving the richness and depth of the original Uzbek text. Ultimately, successful translation depends not only on linguistic knowledge but also on analytical thinking, cultural sensitivity, and professional expertise.

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