



SYNONYMY AND MEANING SELECTION IN ENGLISH–UZBEK TRANSLATION

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Abstract: This article examines synonymy and meaning selection in English–Uzbek translation from a semantic and pragmatic perspective. It argues that synonym choice in translation is a context-dependent process influenced by stylistic, cultural, and communicative factors. The study highlights the asymmetry of synonymic systems in English and Uzbek and emphasizes the importance of functional equivalence in achieving accurate translation.

Keywords: synonymy, meaning selection, English–Uzbek translation, lexical semantics, functional equivalence.

Introduction

In contemporary translation studies, synonymy and meaning selection constitute one of the most intricate semantic challenges in interlingual transfer. This issue becomes particularly salient in the context of English–Uzbek translation, where typological, structural, and cultural asymmetries significantly affect lexical choice. Synonyms, while sharing a core denotative meaning, often differ in stylistic register, pragmatic force, emotional coloring, and cultural associations. Consequently, the translator’s task extends beyond lexical substitution to the accurate selection of contextually appropriate meaning [1].

English is characterized by a rich synonymic system resulting from its historical stratification (Germanic, Romance, and Latin layers), whereas Uzbek exhibits a comparatively more context-dependent and culturally grounded lexical structure. This asymmetry complicates the translation process, as multiple English synonyms may correspond to a single Uzbek equivalent, or vice versa. Therefore, meaning selection in synonymy is not merely a linguistic operation but a cognitively driven interpretative act shaped by discourse context, communicative intention, and cultural norms [2].

The present article aims to analyze synonymy as a semantic phenomenon in English–Uzbek translation and to examine the principles governing meaning selection. The study draws on semantic theory, functional equivalence, and cognitive linguistics to demonstrate how translators navigate synonymic variation to achieve communicative adequacy.



MAIN PART

Theoretical Foundations of Synonymy in Translation

Synonymy is traditionally defined as a relationship between lexical units with identical or nearly identical meanings. However, modern linguistic theory rejects the notion of absolute synonymy, emphasizing instead degrees of semantic overlap [3]. According to In Other Words, synonyms differ along parameters such as collocation, register, expressive meaning, and cultural loading. These differences become especially significant in translation, where context determines which synonym best preserves the source text's communicative function. In English–Uzbek translation, synonymy often manifests asymmetrically. For example, English verbs such as ask, request, inquire, and demand share a core semantic component but vary in formality and pragmatic force. Uzbek, by contrast, may rely on fewer lexical items, compensating through context or syntactic modification. This mismatch necessitates conscious meaning selection rather than mechanical equivalence [4].

Meaning Selection as a Context-Dependent Process

Meaning selection in translation is fundamentally context-driven. The translator must consider not only the immediate linguistic environment but also the broader discourse and situational context. As argued by Comparative Stylistics of French and English, equivalence in translation is achieved through functional rather than formal correspondence. This principle is particularly relevant when dealing with synonyms, where literal equivalence may distort pragmatic meaning. For instance, the English adjective strong may be translated into Uzbek as kuchli, qat'iy, or mustahkam depending on whether it modifies an argument, a flavor, or a structure. The correct choice emerges only through semantic interpretation of the co-text and communicative intent. Thus, meaning selection operates at the intersection of semantics, pragmatics, and cognition [5].

Cognitive and Cultural Factors in Synonym Choice

From a cognitive perspective, synonym selection reflects the translator's conceptualization of meaning rather than mere lexical knowledge. Cognitive linguistics emphasizes that meaning is constructed dynamically based on mental representations and cultural experience [6]. In English–Uzbek translation, culturally embedded synonyms often pose additional challenges. English synonyms with subtle evaluative connotations may lack direct Uzbek counterparts, forcing the translator to prioritize meaning over form. Moreover, Uzbek linguistic culture tends to favor clarity and explicitness, whereas English frequently employs stylistic variation through synonymy. This divergence requires translators to adapt synonym choice to target-language norms while



preserving the original message. Failure to account for cultural and cognitive factors may result in semantic loss or pragmatic distortion [7].

Implications for Translation Practice

The analysis of synonymy and meaning selection underscores the importance of semantic competence in translation. Translators must develop sensitivity to contextual nuances and cultivate an awareness of synonymic hierarchies in both source and target languages. Pedagogically, this suggests the need for corpus-based and discourse-oriented training that exposes learners to authentic usage patterns and contextual variation [8].

CONCLUSION

Synonymy and meaning selection represent a central semantic challenge in English–Uzbek translation. The study demonstrates that synonymic equivalence cannot be reduced to dictionary correspondence; instead, it requires context-sensitive, cognitively informed decision-making. Differences in lexical organization, cultural norms, and pragmatic conventions between English and Uzbek necessitate a functional approach to synonym selection. Ultimately, successful translation depends on the translator’s ability to interpret meaning holistically and to select synonyms that preserve not only denotative content but also stylistic and pragmatic intent. Further research incorporating corpus analysis and empirical data may deepen understanding of synonymy in translation and contribute to more effective translation pedagogy.

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