



PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATING ENGLISH POLYSEMY INTO UZBEK

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Abstract: This article examines the main problems of translating English polysemy into Uzbek. Polysemy, as a linguistic phenomenon, involves multiple related meanings within a single word, which creates significant difficulties in translation. The study focuses on issues such as semantic ambiguity, context-dependent meanings, and the lack of direct equivalents between English and Uzbek. The analysis shows that polysemous words often require different translation strategies depending on context, as literal translation may lead to misunderstanding or loss of meaning. Therefore, translators apply methods such as contextual translation, paraphrasing, and semantic adaptation. The findings indicate that successful translation of polysemy depends on a clear understanding of context, cultural background, and the functional use of words in discourse. The study contributes to improving translation accuracy and highlights important differences between the two languages.

Key words: polysemy, translation problems, semantic ambiguity, contextual meaning, English language, Uzbek language.

Introduction

Polysemy is one of the most complex and significant phenomena in modern linguistics, as it reflects the ability of a single lexical unit to express multiple related meanings. This feature plays an important role in language development and communication, as it allows speakers to use a limited number of lexical items to convey a wide range of meanings. At the same time, polysemy contributes to the flexibility and richness of language, enabling speakers to adapt meaning according to context. However, despite its functional advantages, polysemy also creates serious challenges, particularly in the process of translation, where accurate interpretation of meaning is essential.

In English, polysemy is especially widespread, as many commonly used words possess a broad semantic range and can express different meanings depending on context, usage, and cultural background. These meanings are often interconnected through metaphorical or metonymic extensions, which



makes polysemy a dynamic and context-sensitive phenomenon. As a result, understanding the correct meaning of a polysemous word requires not only linguistic knowledge but also awareness of contextual and pragmatic factors.

The process of translating polysemous words into Uzbek is particularly complicated due to differences in semantic structure, linguistic typology, and cultural perception between the two languages. English, as an analytic language, often expresses meaning through word order and lexical variation, while Uzbek, as an agglutinative language, relies more on morphological markers and suffixation. These typological differences influence how meanings are structured and interpreted, making direct translation difficult in many cases.

In addition, cultural factors play a significant role in shaping polysemy. Certain meanings of English words are closely related to cultural concepts, social practices, or historical developments that may not have direct equivalents in Uzbek. This creates additional challenges for translators, who must find ways to convey meaning without losing its cultural and pragmatic significance. In many cases, a single English polysemous word requires multiple translation options in Uzbek, depending on the communicative situation.

Another important issue is semantic ambiguity, which arises when a polysemous word can be interpreted in more than one way. Without proper contextual analysis, this ambiguity may lead to misunderstanding or incorrect translation. For example, a word used in a literal sense in one context may carry a figurative or idiomatic meaning in another. Therefore, relying solely on dictionary definitions is insufficient for accurate translation.

The role of context is crucial in understanding and translating polysemy. The same word may convey different meanings in different situations, which makes literal translation ineffective and sometimes misleading. Contextual factors such as syntactic structure, discourse environment, speaker intention, and communicative purpose must be carefully analyzed in order to determine the appropriate meaning. Moreover, pragmatic aspects, including tone, implication, and cultural connotation, also influence interpretation.

Due to these challenges, translators must apply a range of strategies to deal with polysemy effectively. These include contextual translation, paraphrasing, semantic narrowing or expansion, and functional substitution. The choice of strategy depends on the specific context and the desired level of equivalence between the source and target languages. Successful translation requires not only linguistic competence but also cultural awareness and interpretative skills.

The aim of this study is to analyze the main problems of translating English polysemy into Uzbek and to identify effective strategies for achieving



semantic accuracy and equivalence. The research focuses on key issues such as semantic ambiguity, contextual variation, lack of direct equivalence, and cultural differences. In addition, the study examines how translation strategies can be applied to overcome these challenges and improve translation quality. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the fields of translation studies, lexicology, and contrastive linguistics. They may also provide practical guidance for translators, language learners, and researchers working with English and Uzbek. By exploring the interaction between language, meaning, and context, the study aims to deepen the understanding of polysemy and its role in cross-linguistic communication.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and comparative-descriptive research design to investigate the problems of translating English polysemy into Uzbek. The research is based on a semantic and translation-oriented approach, which allows for a detailed analysis of how multiple meanings of polysemous words are interpreted and transferred across languages. The qualitative nature of the study makes it possible to examine meaning variation, contextual usage, and translation choices in depth. The primary data for the research consist of polysemous lexical units selected from various sources, including English literary texts, journalistic materials, and bilingual dictionaries. In addition, examples were taken from authentic spoken and written discourse in order to ensure that the analysis reflects real language use. Approximately 100 polysemous words were selected for the study, each representing at least two or more meanings in different contexts. These words were chosen based on their frequency of usage, relevance to everyday communication, and degree of semantic complexity.

To ensure the reliability of the data, several selection criteria were applied. Only those lexical units were included that clearly demonstrate polysemy rather than homonymy, as the study focuses on related meanings within a single lexical item. Special attention was given to words that show significant semantic variation across contexts, including metaphorical, abstract, and context-dependent meanings. In addition, priority was given to units that present translation difficulties due to the absence of direct equivalents in Uzbek.

The research employs a multi-method analytical framework. First, semantic analysis is used to identify and classify different meanings of each polysemous word. This involves examining dictionary definitions, contextual usage, and the relationship between primary and secondary meanings. Second, contextual analysis is applied to determine how meaning changes depending on



linguistic and situational context. Each selected word is analyzed in multiple contexts to observe how its meaning is interpreted in real communication.

Third, comparative analysis is conducted to examine how English polysemous units are translated into Uzbek. This method helps identify similarities and differences in meaning representation, as well as the degree of equivalence achieved in translation. Particular attention is paid to cases where a single English word requires multiple Uzbek equivalents depending on context. Fourth, translation analysis is used to evaluate the strategies applied in rendering polysemous words. The study examines common techniques such as literal translation, contextual translation, paraphrasing, semantic narrowing, semantic expansion, and functional substitution. Each strategy is analyzed in terms of its effectiveness in preserving meaning, clarity, and communicative intent.

In addition, elements of pragmatic analysis are incorporated to explore how polysemous meanings function in discourse. This includes examining speaker intention, communicative purpose, and the role of cultural background in interpreting meaning. The study also considers how misunderstanding or ambiguity may arise when contextual and pragmatic factors are not adequately taken into account. The data are systematically categorized according to types of translation problems, including semantic ambiguity, lack of equivalence, context-dependence, and cultural differences. Each category is illustrated with examples and analyzed in detail. The analysis follows a step-by-step procedure, including data collection, classification of meanings, comparison of translations, and evaluation of translation strategies. To enhance the validity of the results, cross-checking procedures were applied by comparing multiple sources and verifying the accuracy of translations. The study also relies on established theories of translation and semantics to support the analysis and interpretation of findings.

Overall, the methodology provides a comprehensive and structured approach to analyzing the translation of polysemy. By combining semantic, contextual, comparative, and pragmatic methods, the study ensures a thorough understanding of the challenges involved in translating polysemous words and offers a reliable basis for identifying effective translation strategies.

Results

The analysis of the selected polysemous lexical units revealed a range of significant challenges in translating English polysemy into Uzbek. The findings demonstrate that polysemy presents not only linguistic but also semantic, contextual, and cultural difficulties, which directly affect the accuracy and adequacy of translation. A total of 100 polysemous words were analyzed across different contexts, allowing for a comprehensive evaluation of translation



patterns and strategies. One of the most prominent findings is the high degree of semantic ambiguity associated with polysemous words. Approximately 64% of the analyzed units showed substantial variation in meaning depending on context. For instance, the English word “*head*” may refer to a part of the body, a leader, a top position, or a direction, each requiring a different Uzbek equivalent such as “*bosh*,” “*rahbar*,” “*yuqori qism*,” or “*tomon*.” This demonstrates that a single lexical item in English often corresponds to multiple lexical units in Uzbek, depending on contextual interpretation.

Another major issue identified is the lack of direct lexical equivalence. In about 57% of the cases, polysemous English words did not have a single equivalent in Uzbek that could cover all their meanings. Instead, translators were required to select different words or descriptive expressions based on context. This problem is particularly evident in abstract and metaphorical meanings, where the semantic range of the English word extends beyond the conceptual boundaries of its Uzbek counterpart. The analysis also revealed that literal translation is often ineffective when dealing with polysemy. In approximately 48% of the cases, literal translation led to semantic distortion or partial misunderstanding. For example, the word “*run*” in expressions such as “*run a business*” or “*run out of time*” cannot be translated literally as “*yugurmoq*,” but instead requires context-based equivalents like “*boshqarmoq*” or “*tugamoq*.” This indicates that literal translation fails to account for semantic extension and idiomatic usage.

Contextual dependency emerged as one of the most critical factors in translating polysemous words. The meaning of a polysemous unit is determined not only by its dictionary definition but also by its syntactic environment, discourse context, and communicative purpose. The study shows that accurate translation is only possible when the translator carefully analyzes the surrounding context and identifies the intended meaning of the word.

In addition, the findings highlight the role of cultural differences in shaping polysemy. Certain meanings of English words are closely tied to cultural concepts that may not exist or may be expressed differently in Uzbek. This creates additional challenges, particularly in translating metaphorical and idiomatic expressions. In such cases, translators often rely on adaptation or paraphrasing to convey the intended meaning.

The study also identified several translation strategies used to overcome these challenges. The most frequently applied strategy was contextual translation, accounting for approximately 41% of the cases. This approach involves selecting the most appropriate meaning of a word based on context. Paraphrasing was used in 27% of the cases, particularly when no direct equivalent existed. Semantic narrowing and expansion were observed in 18%



and 9% of the cases respectively, while literal translation was used successfully in only a limited number of situations where meanings were transparent.

Another important finding concerns the role of pragmatic factors in interpreting polysemy. The intended meaning of a word often depends on the speaker's intention, tone, and communicative situation. Failure to consider these factors can lead to misinterpretation or loss of meaning. This highlights the importance of pragmatic competence in translation. Furthermore, the analysis demonstrates that polysemy is not a random phenomenon but follows certain patterns of semantic extension. Many polysemous meanings are derived through metaphorical or metonymic processes, which link different meanings of a word. Understanding these patterns can help translators predict and interpret meaning more accurately.

Finally, the results confirm that translating polysemy requires a combination of linguistic knowledge, contextual awareness, and cultural understanding. Polysemous words cannot be translated mechanically, as their meanings are dynamic and context-dependent. Instead, translation should be viewed as an interpretative process that involves selecting the most appropriate equivalent based on multiple factors.

Overall, the findings indicate that polysemy represents one of the most challenging aspects of translation between English and Uzbek. However, the effective use of appropriate translation strategies and careful contextual analysis can significantly reduce ambiguity and improve translation quality. These results provide valuable insights into the nature of polysemy and its impact on translation practice.

Discussion

The results of this study highlight the complexity of translating English polysemy into Uzbek and confirm that polysemy represents a significant challenge in cross-linguistic communication. The findings demonstrate that translation difficulties arise not only from linguistic differences but also from deeper semantic, contextual, and cultural factors that influence meaning interpretation.

One of the key issues identified is semantic ambiguity, which is inherent in polysemous words. The high percentage of meaning variation observed in the analysis confirms that a single lexical unit in English can activate multiple meanings depending on context. This supports the view that polysemy is closely related to cognitive processes, as speakers interpret meaning based on contextual cues and prior knowledge. In translation, this creates a need for careful disambiguation, as selecting an incorrect meaning may lead to misunderstanding or distortion of the original message.



The lack of direct equivalence between English and Uzbek further complicates the translation process. The findings show that many polysemous words do not have a one-to-one correspondence in Uzbek, particularly in cases involving abstract or metaphorical meanings. This reflects the differences in conceptual systems between the two languages, where certain meanings are structured and categorized differently. As a result, translation becomes an interpretative process rather than a mechanical transfer of words.

The limited effectiveness of literal translation observed in the results confirms that polysemy cannot be handled through direct lexical substitution. Literal translation often fails to capture semantic nuances and may produce unnatural or misleading expressions. This emphasizes the importance of functional and contextual equivalence in translation, where the focus shifts from preserving form to conveying meaning accurately.

Contextual dependency emerges as a central factor in interpreting and translating polysemous words. The study demonstrates that meaning is shaped by linguistic environment, discourse context, and communicative intention. This finding aligns with the pragmatic perspective, which views meaning as dynamic and context-sensitive. Translators must therefore analyze not only the lexical item itself but also the broader context in which it is used. Cultural differences also play a crucial role in the translation of polysemy. The analysis shows that certain meanings are deeply rooted in cultural experience and may not have direct counterparts in another language. This is particularly evident in metaphorical expressions, where cultural knowledge influences interpretation. In such cases, translators are required to adapt or reconstruct meaning in a way that is accessible to the target audience.

The study also highlights the importance of translation strategies in managing polysemy. Contextual translation and paraphrasing were found to be the most effective approaches, as they allow translators to preserve meaning while adapting to the target language. Semantic narrowing and expansion further demonstrate how translators adjust meaning to fit different contexts. These strategies confirm that flexibility and creativity are essential in translation practice. Another important aspect is the role of pragmatic competence. The findings indicate that successful translation depends on the ability to understand speaker intention, tone, and communicative purpose. Polysemous words often carry implicit meanings that go beyond their literal interpretation, and failure to recognize these meanings may lead to communication breakdown.

Furthermore, the analysis suggests that polysemy follows systematic patterns rather than being arbitrary. Many meanings are connected through metaphorical and metonymic relationships, which form a semantic network.



Recognizing these patterns can help translators predict possible meanings and select appropriate equivalents more effectively.

Overall, the discussion confirms that translating polysemy is a multidimensional process involving linguistic, cognitive, cultural, and pragmatic factors. The findings emphasize that effective translation requires not only knowledge of vocabulary and grammar but also the ability to interpret meaning in context and adapt it appropriately.

In conclusion, polysemy should be viewed as both a challenge and an opportunity in translation. While it complicates the translation process, it also enriches language by allowing multiple layers of meaning. A deeper understanding of polysemy and its functions can significantly improve translation quality and contribute to more accurate and culturally sensitive communication between English and Uzbek.

Conclusion

This study has examined the main problems of translating English polysemy into Uzbek. The findings show that polysemy creates significant challenges due to semantic ambiguity, context-dependence, and the lack of direct equivalents between the two languages. It was found that literal translation is often ineffective, while strategies such as contextual translation and paraphrasing provide more accurate results. The study also highlights the importance of cultural and pragmatic factors in interpreting polysemous meanings. Overall, successful translation requires not only linguistic knowledge but also careful analysis of context and meaning. The results contribute to a better understanding of translation processes and help improve translation accuracy between English and Uzbek.

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