


# Challenges Of Synonymy And Word Choice In Translation Studies

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**Abstract:** In this article, the role and significance of semantic relations in the process of translation are examined. It analyzes the difficulties that arise in translation between languages belonging to different families, particularly in the case of English and Uzbek, focusing on issues related to mismatches in grammatical structures, lexical items, and semantic units. Special emphasis is placed on the translator's skill in correctly applying semantic transformations, deeply understanding the context, and adequately conveying culturally specific concepts. Furthermore, the views of linguists such as E. Mednikova, N. Maskalyunen, Ibn Rashi al-Kayravani, Sh. Sirojiddinov, A. Cruse, and J. Lyons are discussed on a scholarly basis. The article also substantiates the invaluable role of semantics in the translation process through the works of prominent representatives of the Uzbek school of translation, including the translations of Mirzakalon Ismoilov and Alisher Navoi. According to the findings, an in-depth analysis of semantic relations is demonstrated to be one of the key factors in ensuring the reliability, effectiveness, and adequacy of translation.

**Keywords:** Translation, semantics, semantic relations, context, synonymy, antonymy, denotative meaning, connotative meaning, linguistic differences, translation transformations, translation studies.

**Introduction:** Translation processes between closely related, cognate languages tend to proceed more easily. However, translations between languages that are not linguistically related and belong to different families are undoubtedly much more complex. In particular, direct translation between English, which belongs to the Indo-European language family, and Uzbek, which belongs to the Turkic language family, encounters various difficulties. This situation is primarily explained by the grammatical structures, lexical-structural features, and systematic semantic differences of these languages. Under such circumstances, the main focus in the translation process should not be on the external form of linguistic units, but rather on the precise and adequate transfer of semantic content within the text.

Many words and expressions that reflect national concepts specific to different peoples are gradually becoming more widely understood by speakers of the target language, as a result of cultural, socio-political,

economic, trade, and diplomatic relations between states. However, in the process of translation carried out between languages that do not share genetic relatedness and belong to different language families, the translation activity of the renowned translator, writer, and literary scholar Mirzakalon Ismoilov deserves special attention. The fact that his translation legacy has been the subject of scholarly research by a number of researchers indicates the exceptional mastery of his word choice. Moreover, foreign translation scholars have noted that Lillian Voynich's novel *The Gadfly* (So'na), translated into Uzbek by M. Ismoilov, significantly differs from its translations into other languages, emphasizing that the Uzbek translator's version is remarkably superior.

Researcher D. Ahmedova, in her article, pointed out that the following types of problems may arise for a translator during the process of translation:

- lack of lexical equivalents;
- insufficient knowledge in the specific field of the

translated unit;

- misunderstanding of proverbs, idiomatic expressions, and sayings;
- structural complexity of sentences.

In his monograph devoted to literary translation, Sh.Sirojiddinov emphasizes that merely knowing a foreign language is not sufficient for engaging in translation; a translator must also acquire spiritual and cultural knowledge. He states: "The selection of equivalents for phraseological units, proverbs, aphorisms, idioms, and figurative expressions requires the translator to possess appropriate spiritual knowledge." Indeed, such knowledge provides the basis for an adequate translation, since it enables the translator to understand not only the values of the source text community but also those of the target language community, including their way of life and culture.

## METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative approach based on descriptive and comparative methods. The study involves the analysis of both theoretical sources and practical examples of translation between English and Uzbek. Primary attention is given to identifying semantic relations, lexical choices, and cultural adaptation strategies in translation. Works of leading Uzbek translation scholars such as Sh.Sirojiddinov, D.Ahmedova, and U.Abdurakhmonova are examined alongside international linguistic theories, including the semantic triangle of Ogden and Richards. Furthermore, selected translations of literary and historical texts, particularly the works of Alisher Navoi and the Uzbek translations of foreign authors by Mirzakalon Ismoilov, serve as case studies. These examples are analyzed to highlight the main difficulties arising from differences in grammatical structure, semantic fields, and cultural concepts, and to demonstrate strategies translators use to ensure adequacy and expressiveness.

Uzbek translation scholar Sh.Sirojiddinov emphasizes that the translator must adapt to the text and focus on expressiveness: "When a translator sets the goal of translating Uzbek classical literature, he must, first of all, seek ways of exerting pragmatic influence. Whatever new method or means is required should be employed so that the foreign recipient, like the Uzbek recipient, may experience aesthetic and artistic enjoyment. It is in this way that the pragmatic value of translation increases."

Furthermore, a translator must not only understand individual words and sentences, but also entire chapters, as well as the distinctive features that set a given work apart from the author's other writings, and,

in some cases, their methodological interconnections. Such literary mastery is manifested in the ability to deeply comprehend the events depicted in the work and to convey them through imagery, to fully grasp the ideological and artistic devices of a historical text, to analyze their functions on a scholarly basis, to skillfully employ various layers of language and artistic expression, and to capture all the subtle nuances of meaning. Particularly when the text being translated is poetry, the translator is required to possess poetic talent, to be able to create in both languages, and to reproduce rhyme while preserving the original content.

## RESULTS

The young researcher U.Abdurakhmonova, who has studied translations of A.Navoi's works, emphasizes: "Translators must carefully select English words and expressions that convey the essence of Navoi's language, while at the same time ensuring precision of the text and fidelity to the original." Moreover, it is not only poetic works but also historical novels whose translation demands the recreation of artistic and methodological features. This, in turn, provides the foundation for understanding and interpreting the original text, while also contributing to the study of the complex issues related to how closely the translation corresponds to the source text.

A number of Alisher Navoi's unique works have been translated into several foreign languages and published. Among the earliest examples is the English translation of the epic poem *Lison ut-Tayr* by E. Fitzgerald, which was published in the United States in 1899. Later, a prose rendition of this very work was jointly translated by N. Qambarov and the Canadian Navoi scholar Harry Dick. Navoi's aphorisms, rubaiyat, ghazals, and excerpts from the epic *Farhod va Shirin* have also been translated into English and published in the press. The treatise *Muhokamat al-Lug'atayn* was translated into English by R. Devereux and published in book form in the United States in 1966, while the great poet's epic *Sab'ai Sayyor* was rendered into English by the American professor V. Ferman. In 1988, Navoi's aphorisms were published in English translation by M. Bettlin under the auspices of the "Vatan" Society of Uzbekistan.

"Although the works of Navoi, considered the highest examples of Uzbek literature, have been translated into Eastern and Western languages and studied, according to Navoi scholar Mark Toutant, Babur is more widely known in Western countries".

Translation is considered the most essential tool for the exchange of information across the world. Translators, in turn, serve as a bridge between two nations, connecting them to one another, and represent one of

the most vital professions in society. They convey to people everything from literary masterpieces created in one language to historical and cultural monuments and even the latest scientific discoveries. For a translation to be reliable, impactful, and sufficiently comprehensible to representatives of another culture, the role of semantic relations in the translation process is of paramount importance.

The Arab translator and linguist Ahmed Moneus, in one of his articles, notes: "Translation not only requires understanding the content of a text and conveying it to speakers of another language, but also demands an analysis of the meanings beyond it." Thus, conducting the translation process with an emphasis on semantic relations and in a harmonious manner can be considered the primary means of preserving the originality of the source text within the translated version. Semantic relations are, in fact, a crucial factor not only in translation theory but also in practice, as they are intrinsically and organically interconnected.

"Differences between languages and the semantic relations among words often create difficulties for language learners and young specialists who are just beginning their work in translation. While the task of translation is to convey a text from one language to the speakers of another, the role of semantic relations is to ensure that this process delivers the content adequately and without losing the original meaning."

The study of meaning, that is, semantics, provides researchers with theories, approaches, and methods that are useful for understanding "meaning" in the process of translation. Translators often encounter difficulties related to meaning when rendering a text into another language. "Translation is the replacement of the material of a text in one language with the equivalent material of a text in another language." If it is impossible to incorporate the essential features of a situation into the contextual meaning of the target text, cases of untranslatability arise. Such difficulties occur due to linguistic factors, for instance, when several grammatical or lexical units of the source language have the same expression, when ambiguity arises as a result of polysemy or monosemy, or when cultural barriers exist. Semantic relations play an important role in understanding and systematizing the meaning of natural language. They form an integral part of the process of communication and are widely applied across various fields. In this regard, the main content of texts emerges not so much through the individual meanings of words, but rather through the semantic interrelations of terms that denote concepts used within the field.

## DISCUSSION

There are several methods of analyzing word meaning in semantics. Ogden and Richards proposed the well-known "triangle concept," which links semantics with semiotics, pragmatics, and discourse. The central idea derived from this triangular model is that, in order to properly understand meaning, it must necessarily be connected with context—that is, a pragmatic approach is required. At the same time, the aforementioned linguists demonstrated the fundamental difference between symbolic meaning and emotive meaning. The notion they referred to as "symbolic meaning" has also been termed ideational, denotative, propositional, or referential meaning by other researchers. The concept of "emotive meaning," in turn, corresponds to the interpersonal, expressive, non-propositional, and stylistic aspects of meaning. Their main thesis was that ideational meaning can be studied within the domain of competence independently of context, whereas interpersonal meaning does not lend itself to systematic analysis and is instead regarded as a discourse phenomenon.

The Russian linguist E. Mednikova expressed the following views on the semantic properties of words: "The individual semantics of a word is manifested through its opposition to other units within the semantic field to which it belongs on the basis of certain features. The lexical system of a language is expressed precisely through the distribution of lexical units within semantically unified groups".

In the field of translation studies, the study of lexical semantics is also of great importance, as it encompasses such concepts as synonymy, antonymy, polysemy, homonymy, and hyponymy. Lexical-semantic analysis of a text involves examining the various interpretations of a word's meaning that is, identifying the lexical units associated with a given lexeme. In translation, a word in the source language may have several equivalents in the target language, or there may exist culturally specific words that cannot be directly translated. In such cases, the translator must employ lexical transformations or select from among possible equivalents the one that can establish the appropriate semantic relation within the given context.

Thus, in the process of rendering a text from one language into another, the translator is required to make careful decisions when choosing words or set expressions that fully convey the meaning of the source context. This plays a crucial role in preserving the national character and cultural distinctiveness of the work.

The possibility of translation indicates that full correspondence may exist between the lexical units of two languages. In a given context, two elements from

different languages that are semantically equivalent may serve as substitutes for each other in translation. At times, however, the translator resorts to antonymic translation in order to render the speech of the text more expressive. The Lithuanian linguist N. Maskaliuniene emphasizes this point by noting: “The paradox of antonyms in constructing synonymous sentences is that an antonymic pair, consisting of positive and negative forms, is neutralized within certain contexts” This, in turn, requires the use of an antonymic form in the target language to produce a more elegant rendering of a sentence.

Nevertheless, antonymic translation is often the translator’s deliberate choice. In most cases, literal translation is possible, but it is clear that the translated text as a whole becomes more effective, persuasive, and stylistically original when approached in a creative manner. This demonstrates the translator’s skill and ability to employ the various resources of their native language to preserve the style and mood of the source text.

The linguist Ibn Rashi al-Kayrawani states: “Context is like the body of the text, and meaning is like its soul. There is a very close connection between them. The weakness of one leads to the weakness of the other, and conversely, the strength of one strengthens the other”.

Translation, therefore, cannot be accomplished without interpreting the meaning of words and without taking into account what lies beyond the immediate text. A translation that compares the meaning conveyed in the original context with the inherent meaning of the word plays a crucial role in ensuring that the translated text is both clear and accessible to the reader. Professional texts, however, often present difficulties for translators due to their abundance of scientific and technical terminology, mathematical symbols and formulas, as well as the presence of terms that lack direct equivalents in the target language. The accurate translation of scientific texts is of particular significance, since it ensures that information delivered in conferences and academic discussions is not distorted or rendered incomprehensible.

In the field of translation studies, various scholars have sought to investigate meaning and its influence on translation, since meaning has a profound impact on the translation process. J.Dickins, S.Hervey, and I.Higgins distinguish between two principal types of meaning: denotative meaning and connotative meaning .

Denotative meaning is defined as the direct meaning of words; however, in certain expressions such as metaphors, it may convey something different.

Denotative meaning corresponds fully to conventional semantic traditions, representing the direct, literal, or dictionary meaning of a word. In other words, it is the specific semantic content of a word that can be understood on the basis of ordinary semantic rules, regardless of the context in which it occurs.

Connotative meaning, by contrast, is defined as the type of meaning that arises from context, culture, or individual experience, and which may differ from the direct meaning of the word. This is arguably one of the reasons why many translators face difficulties when translating historical works from one language into another, since such texts are characterized by complexity and by the presence of unique and context-dependent meanings. Translation in this sense requires not only an understanding of denotative meaning, but also of connotative meaning and the specific contexts in which words occur. Inevitably, this also demands a deep knowledge of the culture of both the source and the target language communities.

Semantics is the discipline that deals with meaning, and since meaning is regarded as the most essential component of language, the role of semantics in translation is invaluable. In the process of translation, it is of utmost importance to thoroughly examine the linguistic context and to accurately convey into the target language the meaning expressed by the author in the source language. It is self-evident that the semantic structure of a text serves as the primary instrument in fully transmitting the content and essence of the original work.

Semantic relations serve to provide alternative renderings that, though a perfect translation may seem impossible, are semantically the closest equivalents to the original text. For this reason, translation and semantics function in an inseparable interrelation. In translations between languages that are typologically very close and belong to the same family, the degree of semantic shifts tends to be relatively low. This is due to the high degree of correspondence between the lexical elements and grammatical categories of the two languages. Consequently, translation between closely related languages does not yield extensive insights into semantic relations.

By contrast, in typologically distant languages, mismatches between lexical and grammatical structures demand a much higher level of precision in achieving lexical and grammatical adaptation. This, in turn, demonstrates beyond any doubt that the degree of accuracy in establishing semantic relations must be maximized.

## CONCLUSION

Within the framework of Russian linguistics, the issues



of stylistic synonymy and lexical synonymy began to be the subject of special research in the mid and later half of the 20th century by such scholars as V.V.Vinogradov, A.D.Grigorevna, and A.P.Yevgenevna.

In the first chapter of our dissertation, we have already examined in detail the views of the English scholar A.Cruse, who classified synonyms into three types—absolute, cognitive, and plesionym—and analyzed synonymy accordingly. J.Lyons, on the other hand, in his classification of synonyms, employed the term absolute in the sense of perfect, arguing that such synonyms do not exist in language. However, we cannot entirely agree with this assertion, since, although rare, instances of complete synonyms do occur in our language, and this point deserves special emphasis.

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