

The Concept Of Friendship In Uzbek And English Languages

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Received: 25 November 2025; **Accepted:** 17 December 2025; **Published:** 21 January 2026

Abstract: This article investigates the concept of friendship as a culturally embedded semantic construct in Uzbek and English from the perspective of comparative translation studies. Drawing on cognitive linguistics and linguoculturology, the research examines lexical units, phraseological expressions, and proverbs that encode emotional, axiological, and cognitive components of friendship. The analysis demonstrates that despite the universality of friendship as a human value, its conceptualization differs significantly across cultures, creating systematic translation challenges. The study argues that conceptual equivalence rather than formal correspondence should guide translation decisions when dealing with culturally marked units. A translation-oriented framework is proposed to address conceptual asymmetry and ensure functional and axiological adequacy in translation practice.

Keywords: Friendship, translation studies, conceptual equivalence, linguoculturology, Uzbek language, English language, culture, axiological meaning.

Introduction: In contemporary translation studies, the increasing attention to culturally marked concepts reflects a broader shift from purely linguistic equivalence toward cognitively and culturally informed approaches [1; 2; 5]. Translation is no longer viewed as a mechanical replacement of lexical units but as an interpretive act that reconstructs meaning within a new cultural framework. This paradigm shift has made concepts—understood as culturally conditioned mental constructs—central objects of translation analysis.

Among such concepts, friendship occupies a particularly complex position. On the surface, it appears to be a universal human value, present in all cultures and languages. However, closer examination reveals that friendship is conceptualized differently depending on historical experience, social organization, moral philosophy, and dominant cultural norms. These differences become especially salient in translation, where superficial lexical equivalence often conceals deep conceptual divergence.

Uzbek and English linguistic cultures represent two distinct models of social relations. Uzbek culture is

traditionally collectivist, emphasizing social solidarity, moral duty, loyalty, and long-term interpersonal obligations. English-speaking cultures, particularly in their modern Western form, are largely individualist, prioritizing personal autonomy, emotional authenticity, and voluntary social ties. These contrasting orientations significantly shape how friendship is understood, verbalized, and evaluated.

As a result, translators working between Uzbek and English frequently encounter difficulties when rendering friendship-related expressions, idioms, and proverbs. Literal translation may preserve grammatical form but distort pragmatic meaning or axiological force. Conversely, excessive adaptation risks diluting cultural specificity. This article addresses these challenges by reinterpreting the concept of friendship through the lens of comparative translation studies, with an emphasis on conceptual equivalence and functional adequacy.

Theoretical Background

Modern translation theory increasingly recognizes that translation operates at the intersection of language, cognition, and culture. Early linguistic models of

translation, focused on formal correspondence, proved insufficient for explaining meaning transfer in culturally loaded texts. In response, functionalist and cognitive approaches emerged, emphasizing communicative purpose and conceptual structure.

E. Nida's theory of dynamic equivalence highlights the importance of achieving equivalent effect rather than formal similarity [1, p. 159]. P. Newmark distinguishes between semantic and communicative translation, arguing that culturally embedded units often require adaptive strategies [2, p. 45]. A. Wierzbicka's work on cultural key words demonstrates that certain concepts cannot be translated adequately without reconstructing their cultural scripts [3; 4].

Within this theoretical framework, concepts are understood as mental representations that organize experience, values, and social expectations. Linguoculturology examines how these representations are encoded in language through lexical units, phraseology, metaphors, and paremiology. Conceptual asymmetry arises when different cultures encode the same phenomenon using divergent semantic priorities.

Friendship exemplifies such asymmetry. Although Uzbek *do'st* and English *friend* appear to be direct equivalents, their semantic cores, axiological orientation, and pragmatic usage differ significantly. Recognizing and systematizing these differences is essential for developing effective translation strategies.

The study employs a comparative, multi-level, translation-oriented methodology integrating linguistic, cognitive, and axiological analysis. The research corpus includes [10]:

- Friendship-related lexical units (nouns, adjectives, collocations);
- Phraseological units and idioms;
- Proverbs and sayings;
- Literary and culturally conventional examples commonly encountered in translation practice.

The analysis proceeds through five methodological stages.

First, componential semantic analysis is used to identify core and peripheral semantic features of friendship-related units in both languages. This step reveals which semantic components are central and which are context-dependent.

Second, axiological analysis examines evaluative and moral components encoded in language. This method is particularly relevant for identifying cultural priorities and value judgments associated with friendship.

Third, cognitive-associative analysis reconstructs

mental models and associative networks underlying the concept. This includes metaphorical patterns and implicit cultural scripts.

Fourth, comparative translation analysis investigates existing translation correspondences, identifying shifts, losses, and compensatory strategies.

Finally, functional equivalence assessment evaluates whether translated units fulfill the same communicative, pragmatic, and cultural function in the target language.

This integrated methodology allows the study to move beyond descriptive comparison and generate translation-relevant generalizations.

At the semantic level, the concept of friendship in Uzbek is structured around moral and ethical attributes. Core semantic components include *sadoqat* (loyalty), *vafodorlik* (faithfulness), *fidoyilik* (self-sacrifice), and *ma'naviy burch* (moral duty). Friendship is frequently conceptualized as a relationship that proves its authenticity through hardship and shared responsibility.

This semantic structure is reinforced by axiological values emphasizing collective responsibility, social reliability, and ethical evaluation of interpersonal behavior. A friend is not merely a source of emotional comfort but a moral agent expected to act decisively in critical situations.

In English, the semantic structure of friendship prioritizes trust, emotional support, mutual understanding, and psychological comfort. Friendship is framed as a voluntary and flexible relationship, sustained by shared interests and emotional resonance rather than obligation. Axiologically, English friendship discourse values authenticity, respect for personal boundaries, and individual well-being.

These differences create a fundamental translation challenge: Uzbek friendship expressions often carry moral intensity that has no direct equivalent in English, while English expressions may appear emotionally insufficient when translated literally into Uzbek.

Phraseological units provide particularly clear evidence of conceptual divergence. Uzbek collocations such as *jon do'st*, *chin do'st*, and *do'stga sodiq* encode strong axiological commitments. Literal translations like *soul friend* or *true friend* preserve lexical meaning but fail to convey the depth of moral evaluation inherent in the original [18; 19].

Functional translations such as *closest friend* or *trusted friend* better approximate communicative intent, though some semantic loss remains inevitable. In such cases, translators must prioritize axiological equivalence over lexical correspondence.

Conversely, English collocations such as close friend or best friend often require semantic amplification in Uzbek translation. Contextually reinforced forms such as yaqin do'st, ishonchli do'st, or jon do'st are frequently employed to restore emotional and cultural adequacy.

This asymmetry illustrates a stable translation pattern: translation into Uzbek tends toward semantic expansion, while translation into English often necessitates semantic compression.

From a practical translation perspective, friendship-related units frequently occur in narrative, journalistic, and academic texts where interpersonal relations play a central role. In such contexts, the translator must operate under time constraints and genre conventions, which increases the risk of conceptual loss. For example, Uzbek literary texts often employ friendship expressions not as neutral descriptors of social relations, but as evaluative markers that signal ethical alignment between characters. When such units are translated into English without sufficient contextual reinforcement, the reader may interpret the relationship as emotionally close but ethically neutral.

Conversely, English narrative discourse often employs the term friend in a broad and context-dependent manner, encompassing acquaintances, colleagues, and emotionally close individuals alike. When translated into Uzbek, this semantic breadth can cause ambiguity unless additional qualifiers are introduced. As a result, translators frequently rely on contextual cues, narrative voice, and character interaction patterns to select an appropriate Uzbek equivalent. This demonstrates that friendship translation is rarely a matter of isolated lexical choice but rather a discourse-level decision influenced by genre, register, and communicative intent.

Proverbs and sayings encapsulate culturally sanctioned interpretations of friendship. Uzbek paremiology consistently frames friendship as a moral test and a measure of character. The proverb Do'st og'ir kunda bilinadi emphasizes reliability in adversity. While a literal English translation is grammatically correct, it lacks pragmatic force.

The proverb A friend in need is a friend indeed functions as a culturally equivalent substitute, preserving conceptual meaning through a different linguistic form. This example demonstrates that paremiological translation must operate at the level of conceptual scripts rather than surface structure.

Similarly, English proverbs such as A friend to all is a friend to none encode skepticism toward excessive sociability. Uzbek equivalents employ different imagery but convey comparable evaluative judgments. Such

cases confirm that functional substitution is often the most effective strategy.

Cognitive analysis reveals distinct metaphorical frameworks underlying friendship. In Uzbek discourse, dominant metaphors include FRIENDSHIP IS A MORAL TEST, FRIENDSHIP IS A SACRED BOND, and FRIENDSHIP IS LIFE SUPPORT. These metaphors reflect a worldview in which interpersonal relations are ethically charged and socially consequential.

English discourse favors metaphors such as FRIENDSHIP IS EMOTIONAL SUPPORT, FRIENDSHIP IS A SAFE SPACE, and FRIENDSHIP IS A PERSONAL CHOICE. These metaphors foreground emotional security and autonomy rather than duty.

Understanding these metaphorical models is essential for translators, as metaphors guide interpretation and influence lexical selection in both source and target texts.

The comparative analysis identifies recurring translation risks, including excessive literalism, axiological attenuation, over-neutralization, and pragmatic weakening. These risks correspond to different levels of conceptual loss: lexical loss, emotional attenuation, axiological distortion, pragmatic misalignment, and broader cultural misinterpretation.

Failure to recognize conceptual asymmetry often results in translations that are formally accurate but culturally inadequate. Systematic awareness of these risks allows translators to adopt compensatory strategies consciously.

A closer examination of translation practice allows the identification of a systematic typology of difficulties associated with the translation of friendship-related units between Uzbek and English. First, lexical overgeneralization occurs when the English word friend is translated uniformly as do'st, ignoring contextual nuances such as emotional depth, duration of relationship, or moral obligation. Second, axiological attenuation arises when Uzbek expressions encoding loyalty and sacrifice are rendered into English using emotionally neutral vocabulary, resulting in the loss of evaluative force. Third, pragmatic misalignment is observed when a translation preserves semantic meaning but fails to reproduce the intended interpersonal effect on the target audience. Fourth, cultural script substitution errors occur when translators unconsciously impose target-culture norms onto source-culture concepts, thereby distorting the original worldview. Finally, metaphorical mismatch emerges when culturally specific metaphors of friendship are translated literally, producing expressions that are semantically transparent but

cognitively unnatural in the target language.

Recognizing these categories enables translators to anticipate potential problem zones and select strategies proactively rather than reactively.

Based on the analysis, four primary translation strategies are recommended: conceptual adaptation, axiological compensation, functional substitution, and explicitation. These strategies are particularly effective for idioms, proverbs, and culturally marked collocations.

Translation adequacy should be evaluated according to five criteria: preservation of the conceptual core, emotional function, axiological orientation, pragmatic impact, and cultural acceptability. Lexical fidelity alone is insufficient when translating culturally loaded concepts.

The findings of this study also contribute to broader methodological discussions within translation studies. Concept-based translation analysis enables researchers to move beyond surface-level equivalence and address the deeper causes of translation difficulty. In the case of friendship, conceptual asymmetry does not stem from lexical gaps but from divergent cultural models of social relations. This observation confirms that translation problems are often epistemological rather than linguistic in nature.

By integrating semantic, axiological, and cognitive analysis, the present study demonstrates the effectiveness of an interdisciplinary methodology for addressing culturally loaded concepts. Such an approach allows translators and researchers to predict potential problem areas, select appropriate compensatory strategies, and justify translation decisions analytically. Consequently, concept-oriented analysis should be regarded not as an auxiliary tool, but as a central methodological principle in comparative translation research, particularly when working with languages representing different cultural paradigms.

Based on the comparative analysis conducted in this study, a set of practical guidelines can be formulated for translators working with friendship-related material. First, translators should identify the conceptual core of the source expression by determining whether it emphasizes moral duty, emotional support, or social proximity. Second, the axiological orientation of the unit should be assessed to establish whether positive evaluation, ethical judgment, or emotional intimacy is dominant. Third, translators should analyze the discursive function of the expression within the text, considering genre, register, and communicative intent. Fourth, when direct equivalence is unavailable, functional substitution should be preferred over literal translation

to preserve pragmatic impact. Finally, controlled explicitation may be employed when essential conceptual information is implicit in the source language but culturally opaque in the target language.

These guidelines reinforce the principle that effective translation of friendship-related units depends on conceptual mediation rather than lexical substitution.

The findings have important implications for translation pedagogy. Translation training should emphasize concept-based analysis rather than word-level equivalence. Students must be taught to identify conceptual cores, recognize cultural asymmetry, and apply linguoculturological analysis in practice.

Proverbs and idioms should be used as diagnostic material to develop cultural sensitivity. Assessment criteria should prioritize functional and axiological equivalence, preparing students for real-world translation challenges.

CONCLUSION

Beyond its specific focus on friendship, this study illustrates a generalizable model for analyzing other culturally embedded concepts such as honor, loyalty, family, and freedom. Applying a similar conceptual framework to these notions may further enhance translation theory and practice. Thus, the present research not only addresses a particular semantic domain but also contributes to the development of a systematic approach to culturally informed translation.

This study demonstrates that friendship, while universal in human experience, is conceptually asymmetric across cultures. Uzbek and English encode this concept through distinct moral, emotional, and cognitive frameworks, which directly affect translation outcomes.

By adopting a comparative, translation-oriented methodology, the article shows that effective translation of friendship-related units depends on conceptual mediation rather than dictionary substitution. The concept of friendship thus serves as a model case illustrating how language, culture, and cognition intersect in translation, underscoring the necessity of interdisciplinary approaches in contemporary translation studies.

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