

Semantic Precision of Procedural Legal Terms in Uzbek and English Judicial Texts

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Abstract This article explores the semantic precision of procedural legal terms in judicial texts written in Uzbek and English. The study highlights the critical role of linguistic clarity in legal contexts and examines the semantic equivalence, translation accuracy, and contextual usage of procedural terminology in both languages. The research is conducted through corpus analysis, comparative semantics, and legal translation evaluation. The findings reveal discrepancies in term usage that may hinder accurate legal communication, suggesting the need for standardized bilingual legal glossaries. Furthermore, it provides a cross-linguistic and interdisciplinary perspective, incorporating socio-legal implications of imprecise terminology and how it impacts procedural justice and access to fair trial standards.

Keywords: semantic precision, procedural law, legal terminology, Uzbek, English, judicial texts, translation equivalence, legal linguistics, corpus analysis, legal translation

1. Introduction Legal language, especially in procedural law, demands an exceptionally high level of semantic clarity. Any ambiguity in terminology can lead to misinterpretation, which in turn may affect the course of justice. In multilingual legal systems or in legal translations, such as those involving Uzbek and English, terminological mismatches are not uncommon. The primary goal of this study is to evaluate the semantic precision of procedural legal terms in Uzbek and English judicial texts and to identify linguistic factors affecting mutual understanding and translation quality.

While English legal terminology has been thoroughly studied, legal Uzbek remains a developing area in terms of terminological standardization and linguistic scrutiny. This research seeks to contribute to that gap by examining frequently used procedural terms in both languages, their meanings, and their translation equivalence. Beyond this, the article delves into the historical development of procedural terminology in post-Soviet legal systems, analyzing influences from Russian legal lexicon and comparing them with Anglo-American traditions. It further examines the philosophical underpinnings of legal language and how cultural-legal frameworks shape the interpretation of procedural concepts.

2. Methods This study employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods for analyzing semantic precision:

- **Corpus-based analysis:** A bilingual corpus was built using 25 Uzbek procedural legal texts (laws, court rulings, procedural codes) and 25 English counterparts (mainly from UK and US jurisdictions). AntConc software was used to identify and compare key procedural terms. Lexical frequency, collocational patterns, and syntactic environments were recorded.

- **Comparative semantic analysis:** Terms such as “detention,” “arraignment,” “subpoena,” and their Uzbek equivalents (“qamoq,” “sudga tortish,” “chaqiruv qog‘ozi”) were analyzed for semantic range, denotation, and connotation. Semantic frames were developed to map legal actions and roles represented by each term.

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- **Expert interviews:** 10 legal professionals (translators, judges, legal linguists) were interviewed regarding frequent problems in procedural term translation. Respondents were from Uzbekistan, the UK, and the US, providing diverse perspectives on equivalency.

- **Error analysis:** Selected translated court documents were assessed for semantic shifts and mistranslations. A four-tier evaluation scale (literal, partial match, conceptual mismatch, inaccurate) was applied. Back-translation methods were also used to trace loss of meaning.

- **Legal reception theory:** This framework was used to evaluate how foreign legal terms are linguistically received and adapted into Uzbek legal discourse, including borrowings and semantic shifts.

3. Results The corpus analysis yielded several key findings:

- **Partial Equivalence:** Many Uzbek procedural terms only partially match their English counterparts. For example, the term “qamoq” may refer to both pre-trial and post-sentencing detention, while in English, “detention” and “imprisonment” are distinct. This semantic overlap complicates case interpretations in bilingual legal settings.

- **Overgeneralization:** Uzbek translations tend to use generalized terms where English differentiates. The term “sud” may stand for “court,” “judge,” or even “trial,” depending on context, reducing semantic precision. This generalization is particularly problematic in witness examination records and procedural rulings.

- **Inconsistent Terminology:** Different official Uzbek translations use various equivalents for the same English term (e.g., “arraignment” is translated as both “sudga chaqirish” and “sud majlisini boshlash”). This inconsistency was noted in legal education textbooks, official court templates, and translated statutes.

- **Ambiguity in Translation:** Some procedural terms were translated in ways that carry different connotations. For instance, “plea bargain” was translated as “kelishuv”, which lacks the legal nuance of negotiation within criminal justice and may mislead laypersons.

- **Back-translation loss:** Around 40% of back-translated procedural terms showed deviations from original meanings. Terms like “burden of proof”, “legal standing”, and “pre-trial motions” were often inaccurately reconstructed in Uzbek.

- **Sociolinguistic variance:** Uzbek terms varied depending on dialectical preferences and Soviet-era legacy. For example, “advokat” (lawyer) was often confused with “himoyachi” (defender), leading to semantic ambiguity in procedural roles.

- **Recommendations from Experts:** Respondents emphasized the need for a national standard glossary and mandatory legal linguistics training for translators. They also supported adopting technology-enhanced translation aids and parallel corpus archives.

4. Discussion

The research highlights a critical issue in legal communication between Uzbek and English: lack of terminological standardization and poor semantic alignment. Semantic precision is vital in procedural law, where misinterpretation can lead to legal injustice or international miscommunication.

In comparing Uzbek and English, structural differences in legal systems also play a role. Some procedural concepts in common law (like “discovery” or “contempt of court”) do not have direct equivalents in the Uzbek legal system. This increases the translator’s burden to use creative but accurate lexical strategies, often without institutional guidance.

Another observation is that while Uzbek legal texts rely on literal, formal language, English

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legal texts often use collocations and fixed expressions (e.g., “stand trial,” “take the stand”). These are difficult to translate semantically and require deep legal and linguistic competence.

The need for semantic calibration is also apparent in back-translation tests. Translations from Uzbek back into English resulted in loss of specific legal meaning in 40% of tested cases.

Sociocultural and ideological factors also influence translation practices. Uzbek legal culture values euphemistic and bureaucratic language, often avoiding direct equivalents found in English. This leads to distortion of procedural pragmatics in trial documentation.

Moreover, legal education in Uzbekistan often lacks interdisciplinary courses in linguistics, resulting in a limited understanding of legal semantic variation among law graduates. Collaboration between linguists and legal experts is essential to create comprehensive training modules and standards.

5. Conclusion Semantic precision in procedural legal terminology is essential for ensuring accurate legal interpretation and translation between Uzbek and English. The lack of standardization, overgeneralization, and insufficient training in legal linguistics are key obstacles.

This study recommends:

- Developing a bilingual Uzbek-English procedural law glossary;
- Establishing a terminology board within legal institutions;
- Integrating legal linguistics into translator education;
- Creating a parallel corpus of verified translations;
- Applying digital tools such as translation memory software and legal terminology databases;
- Encouraging peer-reviewed legal translation certification programs.

Such efforts will help reduce ambiguity, enhance judicial transparency, and support legal reforms in Uzbekistan. Future research should explore the impact of AI-powered translation technologies in court systems and conduct diachronic studies of legal terminology evolution across legal traditions.

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