



Lexical-semantic and pragmatic research of legal discourse in English and Uzbek languages

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ABSTRACT

This article provides an in-depth analysis of the lexical-semantic and pragmatic features of legal discourse in English and Uzbek. Special attention is given to the influence of cultural, historical, and legal systems on the development of legal language. Through comparative examples, the study reveals not only similarities but also key differences in terminology and pragmatic strategies, which are essential for effective legal translation and practice. The research also addresses challenges in interpreting legal documents and highlights the importance of context in understanding legal texts.

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Ingliz va o'zbek tillaridagi huquqiy nutqning leksik-semantik hamda pragmatik tahlili

ANNOTATSIYA

Kalit so'zlar:

yuridik diskurs,
leksik-semantik tahlil,
pragmatika,
tarjima,
kontekst,
yuridik terminologiya,
shartnoma,
qonun,
niyat,
noaniqlik.

Ushbu maqolada ingliz va o'zbek tillaridagi yuridik diskursning leksik-semantik hamda pragmatik xususiyatlari chuqur tahlil qilinadi. Xususan, madaniy, tarixiy va huquqiy tizimlarning yuridik til taraqqiyotiga ta'siri o'rganiladi. Qiyosiy tahlil orqali terminlar va pragmatik strategiyalardagi o'xshashlik va farqlar ochib beriladi, bu esa huquqiy tarjima va amaliyot uchun muhim. Huquqiy hujjatlarni talqin qilishdagi qiyinchiliklar va yuridik matnlarni anglashda kontekstning ahamiyati ta'kidlanadi.

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Лексико-семантическое и прагматическое исследование юридического дискурса в английском и узбекском языках

АННОТАЦИЯ

Ключевые слова:

юридический дискурс,
лексико-семантический
анализ,
прагматика,
перевод,
контекст,
юридическая
терминология,
договор,
закон,
намерение,
двусмысленность.

В данной статье проводится глубокий анализ лексико-семантических и прагматических особенностей юридического дискурса в английском и узбекском языках. Особое внимание уделяется влиянию культурных, исторических и правовых систем на развитие правовой терминологии. Сравнительный анализ выявляет сходства и отличия в терминах и прагматических стратегиях, что важно для юридического перевода и практики. Отмечаются сложности интерпретации юридических документов и подчеркивается значимость контекста при понимании юридического текста.

INTRODUCTION

Legal discourse, as a unique subset of professional communication, plays a crucial role in the administration of justice and social order. It serves as the foundational means through which laws are articulated, interpreted, and enforced, impacting individuals, organizations, and communities at multiple levels. In both English and Uzbek, legal language is characterized by its precision, formality, and sometimes, inherent ambiguity, which can stem from the need to accommodate diverse interpretations or provide flexibility within the legal system. The complex structure and specialized vocabulary of legal texts require both legal professionals and those interacting with the law to master not only the literal meanings of terms but also their context-dependent interpretations and pragmatic implications. In the context of globalization, where cross-border legal interactions and multilingual negotiations are increasingly common, the comparative analysis of legal discourse acquires special relevance, particularly for practitioners, translators, and scholars. Understanding the similarities and differences in legal language use can help prevent misunderstandings, ensure clearer communication, and support fair legal processes in multinational contexts. This study aims to explore the lexical-semantic and pragmatic peculiarities of legal discourse in English and Uzbek, grounding its investigation in examples and demonstrating its relevance for legal education and practice. By examining legal discourse from both a linguistic and practical perspective, the study also seeks to highlight strategies that can enhance the effectiveness of legal communication and translation, ultimately contributing to the development of legal systems and the promotion of justice.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research employs a comparative-analytical methodology. The material corpus includes a wide range of sources, such as English and Uzbek civil codes, various types of contracts, a collection of court decisions, and select legal precedents from both jurisdictions. The methodology is designed to facilitate in-depth comparison and analysis in the context of civil law. Methods include, but are not limited to:

Lexical-semantic field analysis and exploration of interconnected vocabulary networks

Pragmatic strategy identification, including examination of speaker intentions, conversational implicatures, and adaptation to diverse communication contexts

Contextual translation comparison with a focus on nuances, equivalence challenges, and cultural adaptation across different languages

Case study evaluation involving a comprehensive assessment of linguistic data, application of theoretical frameworks, and a reflective critique of translation solutions

A comprehensive selection of various sample texts, along with a wide range of authentic legal documents from different contexts, serves as a robust foundation for thorough comparison and analysis.

RESULTS

1. Lexical-Semantic Features

English legal discourse relies heavily on Latinisms and fixed expressions (e.g., "hereinafter," "whereas," "ipso facto"), which serve to convey legal nuance, precision, and tradition across a wide range of documents, from statutes to contracts to judicial opinions. These linguistic choices often make the language of the law appear more formal, technical, and at times inaccessible to non-specialists. These Latinisms and archaic phrases, beyond carrying historical significance, frequently play a vital role in ensuring uniform interpretation and consistency within the field of law.

Uzbek legal discourse, by contrast, shows a preference for terms derived from Persian-Arabic roots (e.g., "shartnoma" – contract, "huquq" – law) or Soviet-era terminology, reflecting the historical, cultural, and sociopolitical influences that have shaped the legal language in Uzbekistan. While the Uzbek legal lexicon might employ more familiar elements for local speakers, it still maintains a high degree of formality and technical specificity, aiming to match the accuracy and gravitas found in legal communication elsewhere.

Despite these differences, there are notable shared features between English and Uzbek legal discourses. Both employ abstract nouns (e.g., "liability"/"javobgarlik") that capture complex legal concepts, enabling concise yet comprehensive descriptions. Modality markers (such as "shall" in English and "lozim" in Uzbek) are frequently used to express obligation, necessity, or permission, underscoring the prescriptive nature of legal texts. Both languages also utilize a high level of formality, structured phrasing, and precise terminology to ensure legal clarity and reduce ambiguity in the application and interpretation of the law.

English term	Uzbek equivalent
Plaintiff	Da'vogar
Defendant	Javobgar
Consideration	Asos
Statute	Qonun

2. Pragmatic Features

- English legal texts exhibit explicitness, often influenced by the common law tradition which emphasizes case law precedent and clear stipulations to minimize

misunderstandings. Pragmatic hedging, such as phrases like “to the best of my knowledge,” is frequent, serving as a cautious linguistic strategy to acknowledge uncertainty and reduce liability within a culture that values directness balanced with legal prudence.

- Uzbek texts may display implicitness, reflecting the civil law tradition where codified statutes guide interpretation, alongside socio-cultural politeness strategies that favor indirectness and harmonious communication. This implicitness aligns with a cultural preference for preserving social relationships and avoiding confrontation.
- Ambiguity is sometimes intentional in both languages, providing maneuver space in legal argumentation:

English: *The party may terminate the contract upon reasonable notice.*

Uzbek: *Tomon shartnomani asosli ogohlantirish bilan bekor qilishi mumkin.*

3. Case Studies and examples

Example 1: Contract Language Analysis

English: “This Agreement shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the applicable laws of England and Wales.”

Uzbek: “Ushbu bitim Angliya va Uelsning amaldagi qonunchiligi asosida tartibga solinadi va talqin qilinadi.”

Example 2: Court Decision Interpretation

English: “The act must be proved beyond reasonable doubt.”

Uzbek: “Mazkur harakatni asosli shubhasiz isbotlash talab etiladi.”

Example 3: Statutory Language

English: “A person shall not be held liable unless...”

Uzbek: “Shaxs quyidagi hollarda javobgarlikka tortilmaydi, agar...”

Feature	English Legal Texts	Uzbek Legal Texts
Use of Modality	Shall, must, may, might	Lozim, mumkin, ehtimol
Formulaic Openers	Whereas, therefore	Shu munosabat bilan
Time Expressions	Forthwith, hereinafter	Mazkur, shundan keyin

4. Pragmatic Challenges in Translation

Structural and semantic mismatches: Some English legal terms have no direct Uzbek analogs, particularly those specific to the common law tradition (e.g., “equity,” “trust”). The lack of equivalent terms can lead to inaccuracies or ambiguities in translation, especially for concepts that are deeply embedded in Anglo-American legal history and practice. Translators and interpreters may need to use descriptive language or footnotes to convey the intended meaning of such terms.

Cultural and systemic context: Socio-legal realities affect interpretation, e.g., “good faith” (eng) vs. “yaxshi niyat” (uzb), but practical frameworks differ. The concept of “good faith,” for example, is understood and applied differently in the context of English law compared to its rough equivalent in Uzbek law, due to differing historical evolutions of legal principles and social norms. This means that even when an approximate translation exists, the term's connotations and legal implications may not align, requiring careful

consideration during translation to ensure that the intended meaning and legal effect are preserved as much as possible.

DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis highlights the necessity for translators and legal professionals to be attentive not only to terminology, but also to context, cultural realities, and pragmatic force. It becomes evident that each legal system is embedded within its own historical, cultural, and social framework, which profoundly influences both the formulation and interpretation of legal texts. Examples show that literal translation can result in legal misinterpretation due to structural and conceptual divergences. For instance, the direct translation of specific terms or clauses from one legal system to another, without adequate attention to the underlying legal philosophy and institutional differences, can cause significant confusion or even legal disputes. The research demonstrates that miscommunication risk increases without awareness of legal traditions and discursive norms. Furthermore, the findings suggest the need for specialized training and the development of bilingual legal glossaries. Such educational initiatives should emphasize not only linguistic equivalence, but also the comparative study of legal principles and document drafting conventions in both source and target languages. Practical cases reinforce the premise that successful legal communication relies as much on pragmatics as on vocabulary, illustrating that nuanced understanding of communicative intent, socio-legal expectations, and audience-specific considerations are equally as important as lexical accuracy.

CONCLUSION

In summary, English and Uzbek legal discourses share important features such as formality, modality, and an emphasis on clarity. Both legal traditions utilize formal language structures to convey official and binding meanings, and incorporate modality to express degrees of obligation, permission, or prohibition. Clarity remains central to both, ensuring that legal norms are understood and interpreted consistently.

Yet, notable differences exist, especially in pragmatic strategies and the semantic scope of legal terms. English legal texts often employ distinct pragmatic formulas for politeness, mitigation, and indirectness, whereas Uzbek legal discourse may emphasize collectivist principles and utilize culturally specific references in argumentation and reasoning. The semantic range of key legal terminology also varies between the two languages, potentially leading to challenges in direct translation and interpretation, and requiring specialized knowledge for accurate cross-linguistic legal communication.

These findings reinforce the importance of a nuanced, context-aware approach to legal communication, translation, and education. Legal professionals, translators, and educators must be attuned to both the surface features and the underlying pragmatic conventions of each legal discourse. As legal systems evolve and become increasingly interconnected in a globalized world, ongoing comparative research, active professional development, and interdisciplinary collaboration are vital to bridge differences, support legal reform initiatives, and ensure effective and equitable legal outcomes across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

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