

Problems of translating customs terminology from Uzbek into English: a comparative and functional analysis

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Abstract: This article examines the problems of translating customs terminology from Uzbek into English within the framework of comparative linguistics and translation studies. The study focuses on structural and semantic features of customs-related terms, the degree of equivalence between source and target language units, and the presence of terminological gaps. Particular attention is paid to the influence of national legal systems and international standardization on the formation of customs terminology. The analysis identifies cases of full, partial, and zero equivalence, highlighting the challenges translators face when rendering culture-specific and institution-bound concepts. The findings demonstrate that discrepancies in legal frameworks and administrative practices significantly affect translation accuracy. The results can contribute to improving translation strategies, enhancing terminological consistency, and supporting the professional training of specialists in customs and international trade.

Keywords: customs terminology, translation problems, equivalence, Uzbek language, English language, comparative linguistics, legal translation, professional discourse

Introduction. In the context of globalization and the intensification of international trade, customs communication has become increasingly multilingual. English functions as the dominant language of international commerce, while national languages, such as Uzbek, serve as the primary medium of legal regulation and administrative practice. This linguistic duality creates significant challenges in the translation of customs-related texts, where precision and consistency are of critical importance.

Customs terminology represents a specialized subsystem of language that reflects not only economic processes but also legal and institutional frameworks. Unlike general vocabulary, customs terms are closely tied to national legislation and administrative procedures. As a result, their meanings are often context-dependent and may not have direct equivalents in other languages.

The problem of equivalence in translation is particularly relevant in this domain. While some terms can be translated directly due to international standardization (e.g., import, export), many others are culture-specific and require interpretation rather than

literal translation. This leads to cases of partial equivalence or even terminological lacunae, where no direct counterpart exists in the target language.

Furthermore, the influence of international organizations, such as the World Customs Organization, has contributed to the unification of certain aspects of customs terminology. However, national variations remain significant, especially in countries with distinct legal and administrative traditions.

The aim of this study is to analyze the problems of translating customs terminology from Uzbek into English by examining structural, semantic, and functional aspects of selected terms. The research seeks to identify types of equivalence, reveal translation difficulties, and propose approaches that may improve the accuracy and effectiveness of professional communication in the customs sphere.

Literature review. The study of customs terminology and its translation is situated at the intersection of terminology studies, translation theory, and specialized discourse analysis. A substantial body of research has addressed the nature of terms, their structure, and their role in professional communication.

Early work in terminology theory emphasized the systematic nature of terms and their function within specialized domains. Dmitry Lotte (1961) defined terms as standardized lexical units used to denote precise scientific or technical concepts. He highlighted the importance of consistency and unambiguity in terminological systems, particularly in fields where misinterpretation may lead to practical or legal consequences. This perspective is especially relevant to customs terminology, where accuracy is essential.

Similarly, Gennady Vinokur (1939) examined the linguistic nature of technical terminology, emphasizing its distinction from general vocabulary. He argued that terms are characterized by semantic precision and stability, functioning independently of contextual variation. However, in practice, customs terminology often demonstrates context sensitivity due to its dependence on national legal frameworks.

Modern approaches to terminology incorporate cognitive and communicative dimensions. E. S. Kubryakova (2004) proposed that terms should be viewed not only as naming units but also as elements of knowledge representation. From this perspective, customs terms encode institutional knowledge, which may differ across countries, thereby complicating translation.

The issue of equivalence in translation has been widely discussed in translation studies. Roman Jakobson (1959) distinguished between different types of equivalence and introduced the idea that full equivalence between languages is often unattainable. This is particularly evident in legal and administrative terminology, where concepts are embedded in specific socio-cultural contexts.

Building on this, Peter Newmark (1988) differentiated between semantic and communicative translation, arguing that specialized texts require a balance between accuracy and comprehensibility. In the context of customs terminology, this implies that translators must preserve the legal meaning of terms while ensuring that they are understandable in the target language.

Further developments in terminology theory are associated with Maria Teresa Cabré (1999), who emphasized the multidimensional nature of terms, integrating linguistic, cognitive, and communicative aspects. Her approach is particularly useful for analyzing customs terminology, as it allows for the consideration of both form and function in translation.

From a practical perspective, Juan C. Sager (1990) highlighted the importance of terminology management and standardization in professional communication. He argued that inconsistencies in terminology can lead to misunderstandings and inefficiencies, which is especially critical in international trade and customs procedures.

International standardization plays a key role in shaping customs terminology. The World Customs Organization develops frameworks such as the Harmonized System (HS) and data models that promote consistency across countries. However, despite these efforts, national variations persist, leading to discrepancies in term usage and interpretation.

In addition, ISO standards, particularly ISO 704 (2009), provide guidelines for terminology work, including principles of concept orientation, consistency, and definition-based description. These principles are essential for analyzing equivalence and identifying translation problems in specialized domains.

Despite the extensive research in terminology and translation studies, the specific issue of translating customs terminology from Uzbek into English remains underexplored. Most existing studies focus on widely used international languages, while less attention is given to languages with distinct typological and legal characteristics, such as Uzbek. This gap highlights the relevance of the present study, which aims to contribute to both theoretical understanding and practical solutions in the field of specialized translation.

Methodology. This study adopts a qualitative comparative approach to analyze the translation of customs terminology from Uzbek into English. The research is based on a corpus of selected terms extracted from official customs documents, legislative texts, bilingual glossaries, and materials developed by the World Customs Organization. The dataset includes commonly used terms representing key concepts in customs regulation and international trade.

The analysis combines several complementary methods. First, a comparative method is employed to identify correspondences between Uzbek and English terms

and to determine their structural and semantic relationships. Second, a semantic analysis is conducted to examine the meanings of terms in both languages and to classify them according to degrees of equivalence: full, partial, or zero equivalence.

In addition, a structural analysis is applied to investigate the morphological and syntactic patterns of terms, including single-word units, multi-word expressions, and calques. This allows for the identification of language-specific features that influence translation strategies.

To address translation challenges, elements of translation analysis are incorporated, focusing on strategies such as direct equivalence, descriptive translation, and functional substitution. Special attention is given to cases where terms are embedded in national legal contexts and therefore resist direct translation.

The methodological framework is guided by principles of terminology theory and translation studies, particularly the concept-oriented approach to terminology and the functional perspective on equivalence. This integrated approach ensures a systematic examination of both linguistic form and professional usage, enabling a comprehensive analysis of translation problems in the customs domain.

Results and discussion. The comparative analysis of Uzbek and English customs terminology reveals a complex system of correspondences characterized by varying degrees of equivalence. Based on semantic and functional criteria, the examined terms were classified into three main categories: full equivalence, partial equivalence, and zero equivalence (terminological lacunae).

Table 1.

Comparative Analysis of Uzbek–English Customs Terminology

| No. | Uzbek Term | English Equivalent | Type of Equivalence | Commentary |
|-----|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|---|
| 1 | bojxona deklaratsiyasi | customs declaration | full | Identical concept and function in both systems |
| 2 | bojxona rasmiylashtiruvi | customs clearance | partial | Similar process, but procedural differences exist |
| 3 | bojxona qiymati | customs value | partial | Differences in calculation methods across jurisdictions |
| 4 | bojxona to'lovlari | customs duties | full | Functionally equivalent financial obligation |
| 5 | yuk deklaratsiyasi | cargo declaration | full | Equivalent in both legal and practical use |
| 6 | bojxona nazorati | customs control | full | Same regulatory function |
| 7 | deklarant | declarant | full | Identical role in customs procedures |
| 8 | tovarning kelib chiqishi | country of origin | full | Internationally standardized concept |
| 9 | bojxona rejimi | customs procedure | partial | Terminological variation and conceptual scope differ |
| 10 | bojxona hududi | customs territory | full | Equivalent legal concept |
| 11 | erkin muomala uchun chiqarish | release for free circulation | partial | Requires descriptive translation; system-specific nuances |
| 12 | vaqtincha olib kirish | temporary importation | full | Standardized international term |
| 13 | bojxona ko'rigi | customs inspection | full | Equivalent procedural term |
| 14 | bojxona ruxsati | customs authorization | partial | Broader or narrower scope depending on context |

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|----|---------------------|--------------------|----------------|--|
| 15 | bojxona imtiyozlari | customs privileges | zero / partial | No direct equivalent; context-dependent rendering required |
|----|---------------------|--------------------|----------------|--|

The findings indicate that full equivalence is most common among internationally standardized terms, particularly those regulated or harmonized through global frameworks. Concepts such as customs declaration, customs duties, and country of origin demonstrate a high degree of semantic and functional alignment. This can be attributed to the influence of international regulatory bodies, including the World Customs Organization, which promote terminological consistency across national systems.

However, a significant portion of the analyzed terms falls into the category of partial equivalence. These terms share a common conceptual core but differ in scope, procedural implementation, or legal interpretation. For example, *bojxona rasmiylashtiruvi* and customs clearance both refer to the process of completing customs formalities, yet the specific steps and requirements may vary depending on national legislation. Similarly, *bojxona qiymati* (customs value) reflects a shared concept, but calculation methods differ across jurisdictions, leading to potential discrepancies in interpretation.

The presence of partial equivalence highlights the limitations of direct translation and underscores the need for context-sensitive approaches. In such cases, translators must possess not only linguistic competence but also domain-specific knowledge of customs regulations.

Particularly noteworthy are instances of zero equivalence or terminological lacunae. Terms such as *bojxona imtiyozlari* lack a stable one-to-one equivalent in English and require descriptive or functional translation depending on context. This reflects the fact that certain legal and administrative concepts are deeply embedded in national systems and cannot be easily transferred across languages.

The structural analysis further reveals that Uzbek customs terminology often employs multi-word expressions and agglutinative constructions, while English tends to favor standardized compound terms. This structural divergence can lead to additional translation challenges, especially when dealing with complex procedural terms.

Overall, the results demonstrate that translation problems in customs terminology are primarily обусловлены (driven by) three factors:

- (1) differences in legal systems,
- (2) varying degrees of international standardization, and
- (3) structural and typological differences between Uzbek and English.

These findings confirm that achieving full equivalence in specialized translation is not always possible. Instead, effective translation requires a flexible approach that balances terminological accuracy with functional adequacy.

Conclusion. The present study has examined the problems of translating customs terminology from Uzbek into English through a comparative and functional perspective. The analysis has demonstrated that the degree of equivalence between terms varies significantly depending on their semantic structure, legal embedding, and level of international standardization.

The findings confirm that full equivalence is primarily observed in internationally harmonized terms, which are widely used in global trade and regulated by international frameworks. In contrast, partial equivalence is more frequent in terms that are shaped by national legal systems and administrative practices. These discrepancies often result in subtle but important differences in meaning, which may affect the accuracy of translation.

Particular attention has been given to cases of zero equivalence, where no direct counterpart exists in the target language. Such instances highlight the limitations of literal translation and the necessity of employing alternative strategies, including descriptive translation and functional adaptation. These strategies allow translators to preserve the intended meaning while ensuring comprehensibility in the target context.

The study also emphasizes the role of structural differences between Uzbek and English. The agglutinative nature of Uzbek and the analytic structure of English influence the formation and interpretation of terms, creating additional challenges in translation. This structural divergence requires careful analysis to avoid semantic distortion.

Overall, the research demonstrates that translation in the field of customs is not merely a linguistic operation but a complex interdisciplinary process involving legal, institutional, and cultural dimensions. Accurate translation depends on the translator's ability to integrate linguistic knowledge with an understanding of the professional domain.

The results of this study have practical implications for improving translation practices, developing bilingual terminological resources, and enhancing the training of specialists in customs and international trade. Furthermore, the findings contribute to the broader field of translation studies by providing insights into the nature of equivalence in specialized discourse.

Future research may focus on expanding the corpus of analyzed terms, incorporating additional languages, or exploring the role of digital tools and automated translation systems in the processing of customs terminology.

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