

A COMPARATIVE LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF LEXICAL AMBIGUITY AND POLYSEMY IN ENGLISH-UZBEK TRANSLATION

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This article presents a comparative linguistic analysis of lexical ambiguity and polysemy in English-Uzbek translation. The study examines the semantic nature of ambiguous and polysemous lexical units and identifies their main types in both languages. Particular attention is paid to the influence of typological differences between English and Uzbek on meaning interpretation and translation strategies. The analysis demonstrates that lexical ambiguity in English often requires explicit contextual disambiguation in Uzbek, while polysemy demands flexible translation approaches to preserve semantic relations and functional adequacy. The findings highlight the importance of contextual, pragmatic, and cultural factors in achieving accurate and equivalent translation between the two languages.

Introduction

In contemporary linguistics and translation studies, the issues of lexical ambiguity and polysemy occupy a central position due to their significant impact on meaning interpretation and cross-linguistic equivalence. Lexical ambiguity, which arises when a single lexical unit possesses multiple unrelated meanings, and polysemy, characterized by a network of semantically related meanings within one lexical item, present persistent challenges in the

process of translation. These phenomena become particularly complex in translations between structurally and typologically different languages such as English and Uzbek. English, as an analytically structured language with extensive lexical borrowing and semantic expansion, demonstrates a high degree of polysemy and ambiguity across various parts of speech. Uzbek, by contrast, as an agglutinative language with rich morphological marking, often encodes semantic distinctions through affixation and contextual modifiers rather than through lexical multiplicity alone. This fundamental typological divergence creates notable difficulties in achieving semantic accuracy and functional equivalence in English–Uzbek translation, especially when ambiguous or polysemous lexical units are involved.

The relevance of this study lies in the growing demand for high-quality translations in academic, literary, and professional communication between English and Uzbek. Misinterpretation of ambiguous or polysemous words can lead to semantic distortion, pragmatic failure, and stylistic inconsistency in translated texts. Despite the importance of this issue, comparative studies focusing specifically on lexical ambiguity and polysemy in the English–Uzbek translation context remain limited, which highlights the necessity for further systematic investigation.

Literature review

Lexical ambiguity and polysemy have been widely examined in semantic theory and translation studies due to their crucial role in meaning interpretation. Scholars such as Lyons and Cruse distinguish ambiguity from polysemy by emphasizing the presence or absence of semantic relatedness among meanings. While ambiguity involves unrelated meanings, polysemy is understood as a network of interconnected senses activated by context. Cognitive linguists, including Lakoff and Langacker, view polysemy as a conceptually motivated phenomenon rooted in human cognition. This approach highlights the importance of conceptual and contextual factors in meaning interpretation, which is particularly relevant for translation between typologically different languages.

In translation studies, researchers such as Baker, Newmark, and Nida stress that lexical ambiguity and polysemy pose significant challenges for translators. They argue that accurate translation requires context-based disambiguation and functional equivalence rather than direct lexical substitution. However, comparative studies focusing specifically on English–Uzbek translation remain limited, indicating the need for further research in this area.

Results and discussion

Lexical Ambiguity and Polysemy as Linguistic Phenomena

Lexical ambiguity and polysemy represent two closely related yet conceptually distinct semantic phenomena. Lexical ambiguity occurs when a single lexical form corresponds to two or more unrelated meanings, often resulting from historical language change, homonymy, or borrowing. For example, the English word *bank* may denote a financial institution or the side of a river, with no semantic connection between the meanings. In contrast, polysemy involves multiple related meanings that emerge through semantic extension, metaphor, or metonymy, as seen in the English word *head*, which can refer to a body part, a leader, or the top of an object. In Uzbek, lexical ambiguity is comparatively less frequent due to the language's agglutinative structure, which allows semantic distinctions to be expressed through affixation and syntactic modification. Polysemy, however, is present in both languages, though its realization differs. For instance, the Uzbek word *bosh* functions polysemously, referring to the head, leader, or beginning of something, showing conceptual similarities with English *head*.

Comparative Analysis of Ambiguity in English–Uzbek Translation

In English–Uzbek translation, lexical ambiguity often requires explicit contextual analysis to determine the intended meaning. English ambiguous words frequently correspond to multiple Uzbek equivalents, each representing a distinct semantic field. For example, the English word *light* may mean “not heavy,” “illumination,” or “pale in color,” each requiring a different translation in Uzbek (*yengil*, *yorug‘lik*, *och rangli*). Failure to properly disambiguate such items may result in semantic inaccuracy or pragmatic distortion. Uzbek translators typically resolve ambiguity by relying on grammatical context, collocations, and pragmatic cues. In some cases, explicitation is employed, where additional lexical material is introduced in the target language to clarify meaning. This strategy reflects the tendency of Uzbek to favor semantic transparency over lexical economy.

Polysemy and Translation Strategies

Polysemy presents a different set of challenges, as the translator must preserve the semantic relatedness between meanings while ensuring contextual appropriateness. In English–Uzbek translation, a single polysemous English word may be rendered by several Uzbek lexical items depending on context, potentially leading to a loss of semantic cohesion. For instance, the English verb *run* exhibits a wide range of related meanings, such as physical movement, operation of machinery, or management, which are translated into

Uzbek using different verbs (yugurmoq, ishlamoq, boshqarmoq). To address this issue, translators employ strategies such as contextual modulation, semantic narrowing, or functional substitution. In literary and expressive texts, maintaining stylistic and metaphorical nuances of polysemous units is particularly important, whereas in technical or academic translation, precision and unambiguity take priority.

Linguistic and Typological Factors Affecting Translation

The typological differences between English and Uzbek significantly influence the treatment of lexical ambiguity and polysemy in translation. English relies heavily on lexical units with broad semantic ranges, while Uzbek often distributes meaning across morphological markers and syntactic constructions. As a result, English polysemous words may require descriptive or multi-word equivalents in Uzbek. Furthermore, cultural and pragmatic factors play a role in meaning interpretation. Certain polysemous expressions in English are culturally grounded and may lack direct Uzbek counterparts, necessitating adaptation or paraphrasing. This highlights the importance of linguistic competence and cultural awareness in resolving semantic multiplicity in translation.

Conclusion

This study has analyzed lexical ambiguity and polysemy in English–Uzbek translation from a comparative linguistic perspective. The findings show that these semantic phenomena are more lexically concentrated in English, while Uzbek often resolves meaning differences through morphological and contextual means. As a result, English ambiguous and polysemous words frequently require different translation strategies in Uzbek. The analysis confirms that accurate translation depends on careful contextual interpretation and the use of strategies such as disambiguation, explicitation, and functional substitution. Overall, the study highlights the importance of linguistic and cultural awareness in handling lexical ambiguity and polysemy in English–Uzbek translation and provides a basis for further research in this area.

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