

MACHINE TRANSLATION OF UZBEK CAUSATIVE VERBS INTO ENGLISH

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ИНФОРМАЦИЯ О
СТАТЬЕ

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**КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ
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АННОТАЦИЯ:

A causative suffix in Uzbek may require a separate verb in English: make, have, let or get. This pilot study examines how four translation systems handle that difference. Google Translate, Yandex Translate and two chat-based large language models (LLMs) translated 28 causative verbs from modern Uzbek prose. The resulting 112 outputs were coded blind using a scheme designed for causative errors. Google and Yandex preserved the causative meaning in 18 and 16 cases; the LLMs did so in 22 and 24. When borderline cases were counted as correct, the totals rose to 19, 19, 27 and 28, respectively. The MT services most often confused who caused the action with who performed it. The LLMs tended to retain causation but change its type. Most errors occurred where English required an analytic construction. *ия на безгражданство в XXI веке.*

1. Introduction

In Uzbek, a small change to a verb can change who does what. Ich- 'drink' becomes ich-dir- 'make (someone) drink'; yuv- 'wash' becomes yuv-dir- 'have (someone) wash'. English sometimes has a lexical equivalent, such as teach or kill. Elsewhere, it uses make, have, let or get, and the choice matters: make implies pressure, let conveys permission, and have and get express handing a task over to someone [4]. Both languages distinguish coercion, permission and delegation, but mark these meanings differently [9]. Karimjonova [5, pp. 19, 24] describes

the correspondence between Uzbek suffixal causatives and English analytic constructions. Alimova and Jilina [1] report the same contrast.

MT services and chat-based LLMs are widely used for Uzbek translation. Yet the studies consulted here address overall quality, general error categories or culture-specific vocabulary rather than particular verb categories [10, 7, 2]. Sultonova [10] compares Google Translate, Yandex Translate and an LLM, identifying suffix dropping as one source of error. This finding gives a reason to examine suffixal causatives more closely. I found no evaluation of machine-translated Uzbek causatives in those sources. This study asks two questions: (RQ1) how often does each system preserve causation, the roles of causer and causee, and the type of causation; and (RQ2) what errors occur when it does not?

2. Material and method

I assembled a small, targeted set from modern Uzbek prose [6, 8, 3]. It contains 27 sentences and 28 target verbs. The suffixes represented are -dir (11 sentences), -tir (8), -t (4), -giz/-qiz (2), -iz (1) and -it (1). An analytic control sentence with *ijozat bermoq* ‘give permission’ was analysed separately. On 3 October 2026, I translated each Latin-script sentence once using Google Translate, Yandex Translate and two LLM chat interfaces, all with default settings. LLM 1 was labelled GPT-5.6 Luna; LLM 2 was Gemini, with no version displayed. For the LLMs, each sentence went into a new chat with the prompt “Translate this Uzbek sentence into English. Output only the translation.”

As a native speaker of Uzbek, I coded the 112 outputs against the source sentences and short statements of the required meaning, rather than reference translations. System names were hidden behind shuffled letters during coding. I adapted the MQM-based error typologies used in recent Uzbek studies to this task [10, 2]. Each target received one causative code, checked in this order: C7 untranslated or garbled, C6 wrong verb, C2 roles confused, C1 causation lost, C3 wrong type of causation, C4 recast (for example, as a passive), C5 double causative flattened, and C0 correct. English lexical causatives counted as correct. I coded errors elsewhere in the sentence separately and rated each causative error as minor or major. If two codes fitted equally well, I assigned the earlier code in the sequence. I report both a strict count and a lenient count that treats these ties as correct. A blind re-coding of 24 randomly selected outputs one week later changed two codes, both between C3 and C0.

3. Results

Table 1 shows the distribution of codes for each system. No output received C5.

Table 1. Causative codes per system (number of target verbs, n = 28 per system)

Code	Google	Yandex	LLM 1	LLM 2
C0 Correct	18	16	22	24
C1 Causation lost	2	1	1	0
C2 Roles confused	5	1	0	0
C3 Wrong type	0	3	4	3
C4 Recast	0	1	1	1
C6 Wrong verb	2	1	0	0
C7 Untranslated or garbled	1	5	0	0
Errors rated major	9	8	1	0
C0, lenient count	19	19	27	28

Both LLMs preserved causative meaning more often than the MT services under the strict and lenient counts. Their errors were also less severe. Of the MT services' 22 errors, 17 were major; only one of the ten LLM errors was major. The differences between Google and Yandex, and between the two LLMs, are too small to support a ranking within either pair. Google most often confused the participant roles (C2), while Yandex most often produced an untranslated or garbled verb (C7). For the LLMs, the main problem was a change in the type of causation (C3). All four systems translated 14 targets correctly. None translated UZC-003, 022 or 029 correctly. The following examples illustrate the difference (target verb in bold):

- (1) UZC-001: ...*buvim ugra isitib kelib, qistay-qistay oxirigacha **ichdirdi***. 'Grandmother kept insisting until I drank it all.' Google: "my grandmother warmed up and slowly drank" – C2; LLM 1: "kept insisting until she made me drink it all" – C0.
- (2) UZC-003: ...*kiyimimniyam o'zimga **yuvdiradi***. 'She has me wash even my own clothes.' Yandex: "he'll even wash my clothes for me" – C2; LLM 2: "she makes me wash my clothes myself too" – C3.

4. Discussion

The MT services' role errors followed a recurring pattern: they translated the base verb inside the causative—*ich-*, *yuv-* or *ergash-* 'follow'—and treated the subject as the person performing the action. The causative suffix effectively disappeared. Example (2) adds a case-marking problem. The Uzbek dative can mark either the causee of a transitive causative or a beneficiary, so the system read *o'zimga* as "for me". Here, the suffix and case marking together carry information that English needs an extra verb to express.

Of the 14 targets translated correctly by all four systems, all but one had a readily available English lexical causative. The equivalents included introduce, teach, kill, frighten, convince, graze, lay, hang, put on and train. The difficult cases generally required make or have

followed by another verb, or a less common lexical verb such as extort or nurse. This pattern is consistent with Karimjonova's [5] account of analytic equivalents.

The LLMs usually retained causation. Choosing the right kind was harder. The suffix -dir tells the reader that someone was brought to act, but does not by itself say how; English requires a choice among make, have, let and get. When the sentence supplied a clear cue, such as qistay-qistay 'insisting', the LLMs chose correctly. Without one, they sometimes used make for delegation or have for coercion. Six of their seven C3 codes were ties with C0. These borderline cases matter: the source leaves the type of causation to context, so some choices cannot be judged confidently from the sentence alone.

5. Conclusion

For these 28 Uzbek verbs, the practical checks differ by system. In MT-service output, a post-editor should check who performs the action expressed by each -dir/-tir/-t verb. In LLM output, the closer question is whether make, have, let or get conveys the intended relationship. Most errors arose when English needed an analytic construction. The LLMs preserved causative meaning more often in this set, but the evidence remains descriptive: the sample is small and literary, each system was run only once, and I coded all the outputs myself. Planned work includes a larger set drawn from several registers, a second annotator, and translation in the English–Uzbek direction.

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