Ilmiy tadqiqotlar va ularning yechimlari jurnali
Aoka guvohnoma № 323759 ISSN: 3060-4818

TERMINOLOGY TRANSLATION AS A PROBLEMATIC CONCEPT: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Umidaxon Aslamova
Bachelor Student, Faculty of English Philology and Translation Studies (Ingliz Filologiyasi va Tarjimashunoslik Fakulteti),
Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages,
Samarkand, Uzbekistan
https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23431762

Abstract:
Terminology translation is one of the most challenging parts of professional translation because specialised words often carry meanings that cannot be understood through ordinary dictionaries alone. A term may look familiar but represent a different concept in medicine, law, economics, technology, or another field. Translators must therefore understand not only the words themselves but also the knowledge, context, and professional conventions behind them. This article examines the main problems of terminology translation, including conceptual differences, polysemy, inconsistent equivalents, cultural factors, and the limitations of machine translation. It also discusses practical solutions such as terminology databases, subject-specific dictionaries, parallel texts, consultation with experts, and the development of personal glossaries. The article argues that accurate terminology translation depends on research, contextual understanding, and consistent decision-making rather than simple word replacement.

Keywords: terminology translation, specialised language, conceptual equivalence, terminology management, translation accuracy, polysemy, technical translation, bilingual glossary, translator competence.

Introduction:

Translation is often described as transferring meaning from one language into another, but this process becomes more complicated when the text contains specialised terminology. In everyday communication, a translator may be able to understand a word from its surrounding sentence. In a legal contract, medical report, scientific article, or technical manual, however, a small terminological mistake can change the meaning of an entire statement. For this reason, terminology is not simply a collection of difficult words; it is an important part of professional knowledge and accurate communication. Terminology refers both to the specialised words and expressions used in a particular field and to the systematic study and management of those terms. International terminology standards distinguish between objects, concepts, definitions, and the designations used to express them. This distinction matters because two languages may use different words for similar concepts, or the same-looking word may refer to different concepts in different professional settings (ISO, 2019, 2022). A translator who focuses only on the word form may overlook the concept that the source text actually communicates. The problem is especially relevant for English–Uzbek translation. English is widely used in international research,

business, technology, and education, while Uzbek terminology continues to develop across many specialised fields. Some concepts already have established Uzbek equivalents, while others appear in several competing forms or are translated inconsistently. The challenge is not to replace every English term with a completely Uzbek expression, but to select a clear, accurate, and appropriate equivalent for the intended audience. This article explores the main difficulties of terminology translation and offers practical ways to deal with them. It draws on established terminology research and professional translation resources, using illustrative English–Uzbek examples to show why context, subject knowledge, and consistency are essential.

Why Terminology Translation Is Difficult:

One of the most basic problems is that languages do not divide knowledge in exactly the same way. A concept that has a well-established name in one language may have no direct equivalent in another. The translator may need to use a descriptive phrase, adopt an accepted international term, or consult subject-specific sources before making a decision. Cabré (1999) explains terminology as an interdisciplinary field connected with language, cognition, communication, and specialised knowledge. This means that terminological decisions cannot always be solved through grammar or vocabulary alone. For example, the English term **"public procurement"** is generally translated into Uzbek as **"davlat xaridlari."** Translating it word for word as something like "ommaviy sotib olish" would fail to communicate the established administrative concept. Public procurement refers to the process through which public authorities purchase goods, services, or works under specific rules and procedures. The established equivalent is therefore more useful than a literal translation because it connects the reader to the recognised concept and its institutional context. This example shows why terminology translation requires conceptual understanding. The translator should identify the field, determine how the term functions in the source text, and check whether the target language already has an accepted equivalent. If the text concerns legislation or public administration, consistency with official terminology becomes particularly important.

Polysemy and context

A second challenge is polysemy, which occurs when one word has several related or context-dependent meanings. General dictionaries can provide possible meanings, but they cannot always determine which one is appropriate in a specialised text. Temmerman (2000) also challenges the assumption that specialised terminology always has a single, clearly separated meaning. In real professional communication, terms may change across contexts and develop different uses over time. Consider the English word **"cell."** In biology, it usually means **"hujayra."** In a prison context, it may refer to a **"kamera"** or individual detention room, while in a spreadsheet it may be translated as **"katak."** Choosing "hujayra" in all three contexts would be incorrect. The surrounding text and the subject area determine the intended meaning. This example demonstrates that the translator must interpret a term in context rather than select the first dictionary equivalent. A useful method is to read the whole sentence and surrounding paragraph, identify the subject field, and compare the term with examples from reliable texts in that field. When uncertainty remains, a specialist dictionary or consultation with an expert can help prevent an avoidable error.

Inconsistent equivalents

Terminological inconsistency is another common problem. A translator may use one equivalent at the beginning of a document and a different one later, even though the source uses the same term for the same concept. This can confuse readers and create serious difficulties in technical, legal, and academic texts. In multilingual institutional communication, consistent terminology supports clarity and can contribute to legal certainty (European Parliament, n.d.). For instance, if **"renewable energy"** is translated as **"qayta tiklanuvchi energiya"** in one section and **"qayta tiklanadigan quvvat"** in another without a meaningful difference in the source, the text may appear to describe two separate concepts. In some contexts, "energy" and "power" do have different technical meanings, so the translator must not automatically treat them as interchangeable. The right choice depends on the source concept and the terminology already used in the document. A terminology list can help solve this problem. It records the source term, approved target equivalent, definition, subject area, and relevant notes. For long documents or team projects, this list allows translators and editors to apply the same choices consistently instead of repeatedly making independent decisions.

Major Challenges in Practice:

A translator may have strong language skills but still misunderstand a term because its meaning depends on professional knowledge. Medical, legal, financial, and engineering texts contain concepts that are not always explained in the sentence itself. Bowker and Pearson (2002) emphasise the value of specialised corpora for investigating how language is actually used in professional contexts. Translators need to learn enough about the subject to recognise when an ordinary interpretation is inappropriate. For example, **"clinical trial"** is commonly translated into Uzbek as **"klinik sinov."** It refers to a structured investigation involving human participants to evaluate a medical intervention under defined conditions. Translating it as "klinik tajriba" may sound understandable, but it can be less suitable where the established regulatory term is required. The translator should check the terminology used in the relevant medical or regulatory context rather than relying on personal preference. The lesson is not that every translator must become a doctor, lawyer, or engineer. Instead, translators should know the limits of their subject knowledge and recognise when additional research or expert review is necessary. This professional caution is particularly important when a text may affect health, legal rights, financial decisions, or public safety.

Legal and institutional terminology

Legal terms create special difficulties because their meanings are connected with particular legal systems. A term in one country may not have an exact equivalent in another because the institutions, procedures, or rights behind it differ. Translators should therefore avoid assuming that similar legal words represent identical concepts. Consider **"liability."** Depending on the context, it may refer to legal responsibility, financial obligations, or a specific form of liability recognised by law. In an appropriate company-law context, **"limited liability"** may be translated as **"cheklangan javobgarlik."** However, a translator should still check the relevant legal framework and established Uzbek usage before treating this as the correct solution for every document. The example illustrates the difference between linguistic similarity and legal equivalence. A reliable translation may require a short explanatory phrase when the

target audience does not share the source legal system. For contracts and official documents, terminology should be checked against the relevant legislation and reviewed by a qualified specialist when necessary.

Newly emerging terminology

Technology and scientific research constantly introduce new terms. Artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, biotechnology, renewable energy, and digital finance are good examples of fields in which terminology changes quickly. Some terms are translated into the target language, while others remain in their international form or are explained through a descriptive phrase. The best choice depends on whether an accepted equivalent exists and who will read the text. For example, **"green hydrogen"** is commonly rendered in Uzbek as **"yashil vodorod."** Yet a correct translation must preserve the concept, not just the two words. The term generally refers to hydrogen produced using renewable electricity, commonly through water electrolysis. Translating it correctly while misunderstanding its production conditions could still lead to an inaccurate explanation of the technology. This example is important because new terminology often appears before usage becomes fully standardised. Translators should check recent specialist publications, official documents, and reputable terminology resources. If several equivalents are in use, they should select the form best supported by the intended field and apply it consistently throughout the text.

Practical Solutions to Terminology Problems:

The first step is to identify what the source term means in its particular context. Translators should examine the sentence, the wider text, the subject area, and the communicative purpose. They should then check specialist dictionaries, official documents, parallel texts, and terminology databases. ISO 704:2022 provides principles for analysing concepts and relationships between objects, concepts, definitions, and designations, making it a useful reference for systematic terminology work. A translator should also distinguish between a source term's general meaning and its specialised definition. If a term appears in a technical report, an ordinary dictionary may be only the starting point. Its use in professional documents can provide stronger evidence of how specialists understand and express the concept.

Conclusion:

Terminology translation is a complex task because specialised words represent concepts shaped by professional knowledge, institutions, and context. The main difficulties include differences between conceptual systems, polysemy, inconsistent equivalents, specialised subject knowledge, and the rapid development of new terminology. Literal translation and general dictionaries alone cannot solve all these problems. More reliable results can be achieved through systematic research, terminology databases, specialised corpora, consultation with experts, and careful revision. Translators should identify the concept first, select the most suitable equivalent, record important decisions, and maintain consistency throughout the text. Machine translation can support this process, but it cannot replace informed terminological judgement.

References:

1. Bowker, L., & Pearson, J. (2002). Working with Specialized Language: A Practical Guide to Using Corpora. Routledge.
2. Cabré, M. T. (1999). Terminology: Theory, Methods and Applications. John Benjamins.
3. Demirkova, R. (2022). Terminology in the context of specialized translation. Studia Philologica, 39(2), 213–222. https://doi.org/10.54664/MOAD3604
4. European Commission. (n.d.). Translation quality. https://translation.ec.europa.eu/languages-and-translation-european-commission/translation-quality_en
5. European Parliament. (n.d.). About IATE. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/translation/en/terminology/about-iate
6. European Parliament. (n.d.). What we do: Terminology. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/translation/en/terminology/what-we-do
7. ISO. (2019). ISO 1087:2019: Terminology work and terminology science—Vocabulary. International Organization for Standardization. https://www.iso.org/standard/62330.html
8. ISO. (2022). ISO 704:2022: Terminology work—Principles and methods. International Organization for Standardization. https://www.iso.org/standard/79077.html
9. L'Homme, M.-C. (2004). La terminologie: Principes et techniques. Presses de l'Université de Montréal.
10. Montero Martínez, S., & Faber, P. (2009). Terminology competence in translation. Terminology, 15(1), 88–104.