

**EQUIVALENCE OF LEGAL TERMINOLOGY IN CHINESE–UZBEK LEGAL TEXT TRANSLATION: A TRANSLATION PRACTICE REPORT**

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**Abstract:** *This study investigates the equivalence of legal terminology in Chinese–Uzbek translation. Focusing on a case study of a Chinese criminal judgment, it analyzes procedural, substantive, and institutional terms to identify challenges caused by linguistic, conceptual, and systemic differences. The study applies formal, dynamic, and functional equivalence theories to evaluate effective translation strategies, including descriptive translation, borrowing, and functional adaptation. Findings highlight the importance of combining linguistic expertise with legal knowledge to achieve accurate, consistent, and legally valid translations between Chinese and Uzbek.*

**Keywords:** *Chinese–Uzbek translation, legal terminology, equivalence, functional equivalence, criminal law, translation strategies*

**1.Introduction.** The translation of legal texts is a highly specialized task that requires both linguistic competence and legal knowledge. Chinese and Uzbek legal systems have different historical backgrounds, structures, and terminologies, which makes translation particularly challenging. Legal terms are not mere words; they convey precise legal concepts that carry rights, obligations, and legal consequences. Therefore, achieving equivalence in translation is crucial to ensure accuracy, clarity, and legal validity [Nida, 1964; Šarčević, 1997].

The purpose of this study is threefold: to analyze the types of equivalence in Chinese–Uzbek legal terminology translation, to identify common challenges arising from linguistic, conceptual, and systemic differences, and to evaluate effective translation strategies used to address these challenges. A case study of an excerpt from a Chinese criminal judgment will be used to illustrate the practical application of translation theories and strategies. Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to the development of more accurate and systematic approaches to legal translation between Chinese and Uzbek [Cao, 2007; Harvey, 2000; Wang & Zhang, 2024].

## **2.Literature review**

### **2.1 Concept of Equivalence in Translation Studies**

Equivalence is one of the most central and widely debated concepts in translation studies. It refers to the relationship between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT) in terms of meaning, function, and effect. Eugene Nida (1964) introduced the concepts of

formal and dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalence focuses on preserving the linguistic structure and content of the original text, while dynamic equivalence aims to produce a similar response in the target audience [Nida, 1964]. Peter Newmark (1988) distinguished between semantic and communicative translation. Semantic translation seeks to maintain the precise contextual meaning, whereas communicative translation prioritizes clarity and naturalness [Newmark, 1988]. Werner Koller (1979) identified five types of equivalence: denotative, connotative, text-normative, pragmatic, and formal, which are particularly useful in legal translation [Koller, 1979].

### 2.2 Equivalence in Legal Translation

Legal translation requires not only linguistic accuracy but also the transfer of legal concepts. Šarčević (1997) emphasized functional equivalence, which ensures that the target term performs the same legal function as the source term. Cao (2007) highlighted the system-bound nature of legal terminology and the distinction between linguistic and conceptual equivalence. Absolute equivalence is often impossible, so translators aim for approximate equivalence while maintaining legal consistency [Biel, 2008; Alcaraz & Hughes, 2002].

### 2.3 Terminology in Legal Translation

Legal terminology is often monosemic within a system, ensuring precision [Biel, 2008]. However, some terms are polysemic across systems, such as “判决” (judgment). Many terms are system-bound, reflecting cultural and procedural differences, e.g., “再审” (retrial under judicial supervision) has no direct Uzbek equivalent. Consistency is critical, and standardization is recommended to avoid misinterpretation [Tiersma, 1999; Biel, 2014].

### 2.4 Studies on Chinese Legal Terminology Translation

Research on Chinese legal terminology translation has mainly focused on Chinese–English translation. Studies show that challenges include system-bound terms, collocations, and culture-specific concepts. Few studies have examined Chinese–Uzbek translation, which leaves a gap in understanding how equivalence can be achieved between these languages [Harvey, 2000; Wang, 2024].

### 2.5 Gap in Research

Although legal translation has been widely studied in Chinese–English and English–Uzbek contexts, research on Chinese–Uzbek legal terminology equivalence is extremely limited. Most existing works focus on general translation strategies or bilingual dictionaries, but they do not analyze how legal terms should be matched across two different legal systems. There is no systematic framework for identifying the types of equivalence between Chinese and Uzbek legal terms. This gap makes translation inconsistent and sometimes inaccurate. Therefore, this study is necessary to provide a more structured and practical approach to achieving equivalence in Chinese–Uzbek legal term translation [Šarčević, 1997; Cao, 2007; Dong & Zhang, 2024].

**3.Theoretical framework.** The study adopts a multidimensional approach to equivalence, incorporating formal, dynamic, and functional perspectives. Formal equivalence addresses direct linguistic matching, dynamic equivalence focuses on meaning transfer and reader response, and functional equivalence ensures that legal roles and outcomes are preserved [Nida, 1964; Šarčević, 1997; Cao, 2007]. This theoretical framework is particularly applicable to Chinese–Uzbek translation due to linguistic, cultural, and legal system differences [Harvey, 2000; Wang, 2024].

**4.Methodology.** This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design to examine how equivalence is achieved in the translation of Chinese legal terminology into Uzbek. Legal translation is not only a linguistic process but also a transfer of legal concepts rooted in different legal systems. Therefore, a purely linguistic comparison is insufficient; instead, this research analyzes legal terms in their semantic, functional, and systemic dimensions. A case study of an excerpt from an official Chinese criminal judgment is used as the primary data source, as judicial texts contain highly standardized terminology such as “被告人” (defendant), “判处有期徒刑” (sentence to fixed-term imprisonment), and “依法审理” (conduct trial according to law) [Cao, 2007; Wang & Zhang, 2024].

The selected data focuses on legal terms that have high legal significance, frequent use in judicial documents, and potential differences in meaning across the two systems. For instance, “人民法院” (People’s Court) refers specifically to the state judicial institution in China’s hierarchical court system, while the Uzbek equivalent “Xalq sudi” historically referred to lower-level courts and may not fully reflect the modern structure of the Uzbek court system [Harvey, 2000].

The analysis is guided by key translation theories. Nida’s concept of dynamic equivalence emphasizes conveying the intended meaning and effect, which is essential when literal translation leads to misunderstanding. Catford’s notion of formal equivalence is applied when a direct linguistic match exists, such as “法院” → “sud” [Catford, 1965]. Šarčević’s functional equivalence model is applied when no direct linguistic equivalent exists and the term must be translated based on its legal effect, e.g., “缓刑” → “shartli hukm” rather than a literal word-for-word translation [Šarčević, 1997].

**5.Analysis and discussion** . Several key terms from the Chinese criminal judgment were analyzed to illustrate how equivalence is achieved in practice. Procedural terms, such as “被告人” (defendant), can be translated as “ayblanuvchi” or “sudlanuvchi” depending on the legal context, demonstrating functional equivalence [Cao, 2007; Dong & Zhang, 2024]. Substantive terms, such as “故意伤害罪” (intentional injury), require careful rendering as “qasddan tan jarohati yetkazish jinoyati” to align with Uzbek criminal law. “犯罪事实” (criminal facts) corresponds to “jinoyat holati,” ensuring the legal meaning is preserved.

Institutional terms such as “人民法院” (People’s Court) require adaptation; in Uzbek, it may be translated simply as “sud” or, for clarification, as “Xitoy Xalq sudi” [Wang,

2024]. Punishment-related terms, such as “判处有期徒刑” (sentence to fixed-term imprisonment) and “缓刑” (suspended sentence), are translated as “ma’lum muddatli ozodlikdan mahrum etish” and “shartli hukm,” respectively, reflecting functional equivalence [Šarčević, 1997; Cao, 2007].

Challenges include partial or zero equivalence, system-bound differences, collocations, and false friends. For instance, “依法审理” (conduct trial according to law) is translated as “sud jarayonini qonun asosida yuritish” to maintain both legal and linguistic accuracy. Strategies such as functional equivalence, descriptive translation, and borrowing are applied to resolve these challenges [Biel, 2008; Butler, 1999].

**6. Conclusion.** This study has examined the challenges and strategies involved in translating Chinese legal terminology into Uzbek. By analyzing key terms from a Chinese criminal judgment, it was found that achieving equivalence requires more than literal translation. Terms such as “被告人” (ayblanuvchi/sudlanuvchi), “故意伤害罪” (qasddan tan jarohati yetkazish jinoyati), and “缓刑” (shartli hukm) illustrate the importance of functional and conceptual equivalence in maintaining legal accuracy and clarity [Nida, 1964; Šarčević, 1997; Cao, 2007].

The study highlights common challenges, including partial or zero equivalence, systemic differences between Chinese and Uzbek legal systems, and false friends. Effective strategies include functional equivalence, descriptive translation, borrowing, and explanatory adaptation. Consistency and standardization are crucial to ensure reliable and legally valid translations [Biel, 2014; Dong & Zhang, 2024].

Ultimately, this research contributes to a better understanding of Chinese–Uzbek legal translation, offering practical guidelines for translators. Combining linguistic expertise with legal knowledge enhances the accuracy, clarity, and effectiveness of legal communication across these languages [Harvey, 2000; Wang, 2024].

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