

PRAGMATIC EQUIVALENCE IN UZBEK-ENGLISH POLITICAL TRANSLATION

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Abstract: This article examines pragmatic equivalence in the translation of Uzbek political discourse into English. The study is based on a parallel corpus of official Uzbek political speeches and their English translations and focuses on how communicative meanings are preserved, adapted, or modified in the target text. Particular attention is given to politically and culturally marked expressions, metaphors, evaluative formulations, political concepts, and expressions of national identity. The analysis distinguishes between translation procedures and their pragmatic functions to determine how linguistic shifts contribute to communicative equivalence. The findings show that pragmatic equivalence is achieved through both direct correspondence and context-sensitive adaptation. While institutionally and internationally established political terminology is generally translated through conventional equivalents, culturally marked expressions and metaphors may involve explicitation, modulation, metaphorical adaptation, reduction, or lexical substitution. These shifts do not necessarily indicate pragmatic loss. In many cases, they enable the target text to preserve the political intention, evaluative orientation, and communicative force of the source while improving accessibility for an international audience. The study argues that pragmatic equivalence should be evaluated primarily through communicative function rather than formal similarity and demonstrates the value of this approach for Uzbek-English political translation.

Keywords: pragmatic equivalence, political translation, Uzbek-English translation, political discourse, translation shifts, pragmatic adaptation, presidential discourse

1. INTRODUCTION

Political discourse is a highly functional form of communication in which language is used not only to provide information but also to express political positions, evaluate social developments, construct collective identities, legitimize policies, establish solidarity, and influence audiences. These functions become particularly important when political discourse is translated for an international readership. A translated political text must communicate the propositional content of

the source while also reproducing meanings associated with evaluation, persuasion, stance, interpersonal relations, and cultural context.

Recent research has increasingly treated political translation as a complex form of cross-cultural communication rather than a simple process of linguistic substitution. Bibliometric research demonstrates the growing importance of political discourse within Translation Studies, particularly in relation to discourse analysis, ideology, interpreting, and corpus-based approaches [8]. Corpus-based research has also demonstrated that translation shifts in political discourse may affect evaluation, self-representation, modality, and ideological positioning [5; 13; 14].

Pragmatic equivalence is especially relevant to this problem. In political discourse, an expression may communicate meanings that are not completely recoverable from its lexical structure. A political slogan may encode an ideological position, a metaphor may construct a particular image of national development, and an evaluative expression may establish solidarity between the speaker and the audience. If these dimensions are altered during translation, the target text may remain semantically accurate while producing a different communicative effect.

Bartłomiejczyk [2], examining political interpreting, demonstrates that pragmatic equivalence can be affected by shifts between source and target discourse. Her study is particularly relevant because it treats equivalence in relation to discourse context rather than isolated lexical correspondence. Similarly, corpus-based research into political translation has shown that target-oriented shifts may reflect the communicative requirements of international audiences [3].

The Uzbek-English direction presents a particularly interesting case. Uzbek political discourse contains culturally established metaphors, historical references, proverbs, political slogans, and expressions of national identity. Such units may have a clear pragmatic function for Uzbek-speaking audiences but require adaptation when addressed to readers who do not share the same linguistic and cultural background. The official English translations of presidential speeches consequently provide valuable material for examining how pragmatic meaning is transferred across languages.

The present study focuses on official political discourse associated with President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. The corpus includes Uzbek source texts and corresponding official English translations. The analysis concentrates on communicative-pragmatic units that demonstrate meaningful relationships between source and target formulations. Routine factual statements are not treated as the primary evidence. Instead, the study selects expressions in which translation choices have a noticeable effect on metaphor, evaluation, political positioning, cultural meaning, or communicative accessibility.

The study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1. How is pragmatic equivalence constructed in the English translation of Uzbek political discourse?

RQ2. What translation shifts contribute to the preservation or modification of pragmatic meaning?

RQ3. How are culturally marked and metaphorical political expressions adapted for English-speaking audiences?

RQ4. To what extent do the English translations preserve the communicative function of the Uzbek source texts?

The central argument is that pragmatic equivalence does not require formal identity between the source and target texts. A translation may change lexical items, metaphors, syntactic structures, or levels of explicitness while maintaining the communicative purpose of the source. In political translation, therefore, a difference in linguistic form may represent not a failure of equivalence but a strategy for achieving functional correspondence.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

2.1. Pragmatic Equivalence and Political Translation

Pragmatic equivalence may be understood as correspondence between the communicative functions performed by source and target expressions. This perspective places the emphasis on what an expression does in context rather than on whether the same linguistic form is reproduced. Political translation requires such an approach because political language is frequently evaluative, persuasive, relational, and ideologically meaningful.

Recent studies support this functional perspective. Bartłomiejczyk [2] demonstrates that pragmatic equivalence in political discourse can be affected by shifts resulting from linguistic and contextual differences. Pan and Wang [3], using a corpus-based comparison of political interpreting, identify an increase in target-oriented shifts and connect these shifts with the communicative requirements of the target context. Farahani and Kazemian [4] likewise demonstrate that translation changes can affect interaction between political speakers and audiences, including changes in explicitness, information, visibility, and emphasis.

Political translation is also closely connected with ideological representation. Li and Hu [5] show that corpus-based analysis can reveal changes in the representation of self and others in translated political discourse. Du and Chen [8] identify political discourse and translation as an increasingly established area of research involving discourse, ideology, diplomacy, and translation strategies. More recent work has examined specific interpersonal resources. Du and Afzaal [13], for example, demonstrate that modality shifts in translated political discourse can modify the strength of political statements and can be related to the social relationship between the official translator and the international audience.

These findings are directly relevant to pragmatic equivalence because they show that translation choices may affect the force of political statements even when their basic propositional meaning remains recognizable.

Communicative strategy is another important dimension. Mamarasulova [1] emphasizes the relationship between communicative strategies in political texts and their realization in translation. From this perspective, translation choices can be examined as part of a broader communicative process in which the translator seeks to maintain political intention while adapting the message to the target linguistic and cultural environment.

2.2. Translation Shifts and Pragmatic Meaning

A translation shift is an observable difference between a source formulation and its target counterpart. However, not every linguistic difference has pragmatic significance. The present study therefore distinguishes between a translation procedure and its pragmatic function.

For example, explicitation describes an increase in the explicitness of information in the target text. Its pragmatic function may be clarification for an international audience. Modulation changes the perspective through which an idea is expressed. Its pragmatic function may be adaptation to target-language conventions. Metaphorical adaptation changes the source image while preserving its communicative value. Reduction removes or weakens part of the source imagery while potentially preserving its basic evaluative meaning.

The analytical model used in this study is:

Source expression → Translation shift → Pragmatic function → Communicative effect

The final stage is particularly important. The target text may preserve the source function fully, partially, or with a modified orientation. The study therefore uses the categories full, partial, and partial-to-full pragmatic equivalence where appropriate.

This approach is consistent with recent corpus-based research into metaphor and political translation. Liu and Wang [6] demonstrate that political metaphors may be translated through different procedures depending on conceptual and cultural relations between source and target languages. Wu [7] similarly shows that translated political metaphors can be transformed in ways that affect the political image presented to international readers. Thus, metaphorical translation should be evaluated not only according to whether an image survives but also according to whether its political and pragmatic function survives.

2.3. Corpus and Research Procedure

The empirical material consists of official Uzbek presidential speeches and their English translations. The corpus is organized as a parallel Uzbek-English political

speech corpus, with the Uzbek text treated as the source text and the English version as the target text.

The analysis proceeds in four stages. First, corresponding Uzbek and English texts are aligned. Second, communicative-pragmatic units are selected according to their political, cultural, evaluative, metaphorical, or persuasive significance. Third, each unit is classified according to the translation shift or combination of shifts involved. Fourth, the pragmatic function and degree of equivalence are evaluated.

The selected material includes political slogans, metaphors of national development, expressions of national identity, formulations of political commitment, culturally marked expressions, and institutional terminology. The analysis does not attempt to treat all differences between the two languages as translation shifts. Only differences that are relevant to communicative meaning are included.

This procedure combines qualitative discourse analysis with corpus-based comparison. The qualitative analysis explains the relationship between linguistic form and pragmatic function, while the corpus perspective makes it possible to identify recurrent patterns across different political speeches.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Preservation of Political Principles

A significant pattern in the corpus is the preservation of political principles through natural English equivalents. One representative example is:

Uzbek ST: "Inson manfaatlari hamma narsadan ustun"

English TT: "The human interests come first."

The source formulation presents human interests as the highest political priority. The English expression "come first" is not a word-for-word reproduction, but it is a conventional English formulation that communicates the same evaluative principle. The pragmatic function is therefore preserved. The expression continues to present people-oriented governance as a central political value.

A similar pattern appears in:

Uzbek ST: "Xalq davlat organlariga emas, davlat organlari xalqimizga xizmat qilishi kerak"

English TT: "It is not the people who serve the state bodies, but the state bodies must serve the people."

The English version preserves the contrastive structure and the normative relationship between citizens and state institutions. The translation therefore maintains the legitimizing function of the source expression. Rather than weakening the political statement, the target text reproduces its citizen-centred orientation.

These examples illustrate full pragmatic equivalence. The linguistic form is adjusted to English syntax, but the political proposition, evaluative force, and communicative purpose remain substantially unchanged.

3.2. Cultural Adaptation and Explicitation

The strongest evidence of pragmatic adaptation occurs in culturally marked political expressions. A particularly significant example is:

Uzbek ST: "Haq berilmas, haq olinur!"

English TT: "Freedom will hardly be granted by fiat, it has to be fought for."

The Uzbek expression is aphoristic and culturally marked. Its literal structure does not directly communicate the full political meaning to an international audience. The English version instead expands the implicit meaning into an explicit proposition concerning freedom and struggle.

The shift combines cultural adaptation and explicitation. The source formulation is transformed into a more explanatory target formulation, but its political function is preserved. The expression frames independence as an achievement requiring active struggle. The target text therefore reproduces the source's mobilizing and legitimizing force while increasing accessibility for readers unfamiliar with the Uzbek aphorism.

This example demonstrates why pragmatic equivalence cannot be measured solely by lexical similarity. A literal translation might preserve the wording but fail to communicate the intended political message. The expanded English formulation is less formally equivalent but more pragmatically accessible.

3.3. Metaphorical Equivalence

Metaphor is one of the most productive areas of pragmatic adaptation in the corpus. The following example illustrates metaphorical equivalence:

Uzbek ST: "mustaqillik g'oyasi, istiqlol ruhi bizga doimo tog'dek tayanch bo'lmoqda"

English TT: "the idea of independence and the spirit of freedom were always a solid backbone for us."

The Uzbek expression uses "tog'dek tayanch," literally constructing support through the image of a mountain. The English version replaces the mountain image with "solid backbone." Although the conceptual images differ, both expressions construct independence as a source of strength and stability.

The procedure can therefore be classified as metaphorical equivalence combined with modulation. The source metaphor is not reproduced literally, but its evaluative and political function is maintained.

A second example is:

Uzbek ST: "yangi bir uyg'onish - Uchinchi Renessans davriga poydevor yaratilmoqda"

English TT: "the foundation for a new era of the reawakening - the Third Renaissance is being laid."

Here, the construction metaphor is preserved. "Poydevor yaratilmoqda" is rendered through "the foundation ... is being laid," while "Uchinchi Renessans" is retained. The translation therefore maintains both the metaphorical structure and the politically significant concept of the Third Renaissance.

The preservation of this metaphor is pragmatically important because the construction image presents current reforms as the foundation of a larger national historical project. The English translation consequently retains the legitimizing relationship between present political action and future national development.

3.4. Reduction and Generalization of Cultural Imagery

Not all metaphors are preserved. Some culturally dense expressions undergo reduction or generalization. For example:

Uzbek ST: "Tosh kelsa kemirib, suv kelsa simirib toblangan xalqimiz"

English TT: "Our people, tempered by life itself."

The Uzbek formulation contains vivid physical imagery involving stone, water, and endurance. The English version replaces this culturally marked image with the more generalized expression "tempered by life itself."

The procedure is best described as metaphorical reduction and generalization. The target text removes much of the original imagery but retains the central evaluative meaning of resilience. The Uzbek formulation presents the people as exceptionally hardened through experience, while the English version communicates the same broader characterization through a conventional metaphor.

The pragmatic equivalence is therefore partial. The evaluative function is preserved, but the culturally specific expressive imagery is weakened.

A similar process occurs with:

Uzbek ST: "taraqkiyot kushandasi bo'lmish illat, korrupsiya"

English TT: "corruption, a disgusting phenomenon that causes great harm to development."

The Uzbek metaphor presents corruption as a destroyer or enemy of development. The English version removes the metaphor and explicitly describes its harmful consequences. This is a combination of metaphorical reduction and explicitation. The target text loses part of the figurative force but gains direct semantic accessibility.

3.5. Preservation of Interpersonal and Ceremonial Meaning

Pragmatic equivalence is also evident in expressions that establish interpersonal relations between the political speaker and the audience. In a speech devoted to Teachers and Mentors Day, the Uzbek expression of deep respect is rendered as:

Uzbek ST: "chin dildan ta'zim qilamiz"

English TT: "we bow to you with deep respect."

The English version preserves both the respectful meaning and the ceremonial character of the original. "Bow" retains the physical image of deference, while "with deep respect" communicates the emotional and interpersonal dimension. The translation therefore avoids reducing the expression to a neutral formulation such as "we thank you." The communicative function of respect remains visible in the target text.

The same speech contains another metaphorical expression:

Uzbek ST: "ilm-fan mash'alasi ... qayta porladi"

English TT: "the torch of science ... shone again."

The source metaphor of intellectual light is retained through the English metaphor "torch." The target formulation therefore preserves the symbolic relationship between science and enlightenment.

3.6. Institutional and Terminological Equivalence

A different pattern appears in institutional terminology. Political concepts with established English equivalents generally undergo less pragmatic adaptation. Examples include "qonun ustuvorligi" rendered as "the rule of law" and "inson kapitalini rivojlantirish" rendered as "development of human capital." These formulations demonstrate that pragmatic equivalence can be achieved through conventional terminology when the political concept has an established international form.

This finding suggests that pragmatic adaptation is not synonymous with extensive reformulation. The degree of adaptation depends on the communicative and cultural status of the source expression. Internationally recognized institutional terminology benefits from terminological consistency, whereas culturally marked metaphors may require more substantial reformulation.

4. DISCUSSION

The results indicate that pragmatic equivalence in Uzbek-English political translation is constructed through a dynamic relationship between preservation and adaptation. The English translations generally maintain the political intention of the source texts, but the linguistic means used to achieve this intention vary according to the type of expression.

The first important finding is that formal difference does not necessarily indicate pragmatic loss. Expressions such as "Inson manfaatlari hamma narsadan ustun" and "The human interests come first" differ in structure but communicate essentially the same political principle. The translation uses an idiomatic English construction while maintaining the evaluative force of the source.

The second finding concerns culturally marked expressions. The translation of "Haq berilmas, haq olinur!" illustrates a more substantial departure from formal correspondence. The target text explains the political implication of the source

expression rather than reproducing its compact form. This supports the argument that pragmatic equivalence may require explicitation when source meaning depends on cultural knowledge that cannot be assumed by the target audience.

The third finding concerns metaphor. The corpus demonstrates both metaphor preservation and metaphorical adaptation. "Tog'dek tayanch" becomes "solid backbone," while "poydevor" becomes "foundation." These examples show two different ways of achieving equivalence. In the first case, the source image is replaced by a natural English metaphor with a similar evaluative function. In the second, the conceptual metaphor is sufficiently compatible with English and can therefore be preserved more directly.

Recent research similarly demonstrates that metaphorical translation in political discourse involves more than lexical replacement. Liu and Wang [6] show that political metaphors may be rendered through different procedures depending on conceptual relations between source and target cultures. Wu [7] further demonstrates that metaphorical shifts can influence the representation of political actors for international audiences. The Uzbek-English examples examined here support this broader observation while also demonstrating the relevance of cultural and national identity in Central Asian political discourse.

A fourth finding concerns pragmatic reduction. When the culturally dense expression "Tosh kelsa kemirib, suv kelsa simirib toblangan xalqimiz" is reduced to "Our people, tempered by life itself," the target text retains resilience as the principal evaluation but removes much of the source imagery. This can be interpreted as a trade-off between expressive specificity and international accessibility.

The same relationship can be observed in the translation of "taraqqiyot kushandasi" into an explicit description of corruption as a phenomenon causing harm to development. The target version makes the evaluative proposition more transparent but reduces the metaphorical intensity. Pragmatic equivalence is therefore not always complete. The source's core evaluation may survive while its rhetorical form becomes weaker.

This distinction is important because it prevents translation analysis from treating every adaptation as either successful or unsuccessful. Pragmatic equivalence is better understood as a continuum. A translation may preserve the propositional and evaluative functions while weakening cultural imagery. Alternatively, it may substantially modify the linguistic form while preserving the political intention.

The findings also support the importance of audience orientation. Official English translations of Uzbek presidential speeches operate in an international communicative environment. Their readers may include diplomats, foreign policymakers, international organizations, researchers, journalists, and other audiences who do not share the cultural assumptions of Uzbek-language political

communication. The translator therefore has to balance source-oriented fidelity with target-oriented comprehensibility.

This issue has been identified in recent research on political translation. Pan and Wang [3] found an increase in target-oriented shifts in translated political discourse, while Du and Afzaal [13] demonstrate that changes in modality can be related to the relationship between official translators and international audiences. These findings reinforce the interpretation that translation choices are shaped by the communicative situation in which the target text functions.

At the same time, the Uzbek-English corpus demonstrates that target orientation does not mean systematic domestication. Culturally and politically significant concepts such as “Uchinchi Renessans” and “mahalla” may be retained. In such cases, retention itself becomes a communicative choice because the source concept contributes to the political identity and ideological framing of the speech. For example, “mahalla is a mirror of our society and life values” preserves both the institutional term “mahalla” and the metaphor “mirror.”

This is particularly relevant to the representation of national identity. Translation can make political discourse internationally accessible without removing all source-cultural markers. The resulting target text can therefore function as a form of international political communication that simultaneously explains, preserves, and represents source-culture concepts.

The findings further suggest that pragmatic equivalence should be analyzed at three interconnected levels:

1. Translation operation: what changes between ST and TT;
2. Pragmatic function: what communicative purpose the change serves;
3. Communicative effect: how the political meaning is preserved or modified in the target discourse.

This model offers a more precise analytical framework than a simple classification of translation techniques. For instance, “modulation” alone does not explain the significance of “tog‘dek tayanch” becoming “solid backbone.” The relevant analysis must also identify the preservation of positive evaluation and the representation of independence as a source of stability.

The same principle applies to explicitation. Explicitation is not inherently a sign of improvement or loss. Its significance depends on what is made explicit and why. In “Haq berilmas, haq olinur!”, explicitation makes the political interpretation accessible to the target audience. In another context, excessive explicitation could potentially remove ambiguity that is deliberately maintained in the source. Pragmatic analysis is therefore necessary to distinguish functional adaptation from unnecessary intervention.

Overall, the results support a view of political translation as a form of pragmatic mediation. The translator mediates not only language but also political intention, cultural knowledge, evaluation, rhetorical imagery, and audience expectations. Pragmatic equivalence is consequently achieved through a series of decisions concerning what should be preserved, adapted, clarified, reduced, or reformulated.

5. CONCLUSION

The study has examined pragmatic equivalence in Uzbek-English political translation through a corpus-based comparison of official Uzbek presidential speeches and their English versions. The analysis demonstrates that pragmatic equivalence is not dependent on formal similarity between source and target texts. Instead, it is primarily related to the preservation of communicative intention, political evaluation, interpersonal meaning, rhetorical force, and audience accessibility.

Three major patterns were identified. First, political principles and institutional terminology are frequently preserved through established English equivalents. Second, culturally marked expressions often require explicitation, modulation, or cultural adaptation. Third, metaphors may be preserved, replaced by functional English metaphors, or reduced when their source imagery is culturally specific.

The analysis of “Haq berilmas, haq olinur!” demonstrates that substantial linguistic reformulation can nevertheless produce pragmatic equivalence when the target text successfully communicates the political intention of the source. Conversely, the reduction of culturally dense metaphors shows that a translation may preserve the central evaluation while weakening part of the original rhetorical imagery.

The findings therefore support a functional understanding of pragmatic equivalence as a relationship between source intention and target communicative effect. Translation shifts should not automatically be interpreted as losses. They may constitute necessary forms of pragmatic adaptation that enable political discourse to function effectively in a different linguistic and cultural environment.

The study contributes to Uzbek-English Translation Studies by focusing on a comparatively underexplored direction of political translation and by connecting translation shifts with their communicative functions. The proposed analytical sequence, translation operation, pragmatic function, and communicative effect, provides a useful framework for further corpus-based research into political translation.

Future research can expand the corpus chronologically and quantitatively and examine whether particular pragmatic strategies are associated with specific types of political discourse, including diplomatic addresses, human-rights discourse, economic speeches, regional cooperation, and ceremonial presidential discourse.

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