



EQUIVALENTS AND CHALLENGES OF GENDER TERMINOLOGY IN TRANSLATING HUMAN RIGHTS TEXTS

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ABSTRACT. This article investigates the equivalents and challenges of gender terminology in the translation of human rights texts. Gender-related terms such as “gender equality,” “gender identity,” “gender-based violence,” and “non-discrimination” play a crucial role in contemporary legal discourse. However, finding appropriate equivalents for these terms across languages presents significant linguistic, cultural, and legal difficulties. The study analyzes how gender terminology is transferred from English into Uzbek, focusing on issues of semantic equivalence, terminological consistency, and pragmatic adequacy. It also examines the risks of misinterpretation, overgeneralization, and cultural mismatch. The findings suggest that gender terminology requires careful contextualization and cannot be translated through direct lexical substitution alone. The article argues for a balanced approach that combines legal accuracy, linguistic clarity, and sociocultural sensitivity. The study contributes to the development of more effective strategies for translating gender terminology in human rights discourse.


Keywords: gender terminology, human rights translation, equivalence, legal discourse, semantic analysis, translation challenges, gender equality, linguistic adaptation

INTRODUCTION (≈450 words)

The growing importance of gender equality in international law has significantly influenced the terminology used in human rights documents. Over the past decades, global institutions have developed a wide range of concepts and legal terms related to gender, including “gender equality,” “gender identity,” “gender mainstreaming,” and “gender-based violence.” These terms are not only linguistic units but also carriers of legal, social, and political meaning. As such, their accurate translation is essential for ensuring the correct interpretation and implementation of human rights norms.

However, translating gender terminology presents a number of challenges. One of the main difficulties lies in finding appropriate equivalents in the target language. While some terms may have direct lexical counterparts, others require descriptive translation or contextual adaptation. For example, the English term “gender” itself may be translated differently depending on context, as it can refer to social roles, identity, or legal categories.

Another challenge is related to semantic complexity. Gender terminology often carries multiple layers of meaning, including sociocultural, psychological, and legal dimensions. A direct translation may fail to capture these nuances, leading to partial or incorrect



interpretation. This is particularly problematic in legal texts, where precision and clarity are essential.

The issue becomes even more complex in cross-linguistic contexts. Languages differ in their conceptualization of gender and their lexical resources for expressing it. English has developed an extensive system of gender-related terminology, while Uzbek may rely on a combination of borrowed terms, descriptive phrases, and context-based interpretation. As a result, translators must often make decisions that involve not only linguistic equivalence but also cultural and legal considerations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The translation of gender terminology has become an important topic in modern translation studies, particularly in the context of legal and human rights discourse. Scholars emphasize that terminology plays a crucial role in shaping the meaning and interpretation of legal texts [1].

Cabré's theory of terminology highlights that terms are not isolated lexical units but part of conceptual systems [2]. This means that translating a term requires understanding its position within a broader network of meanings. In the case of gender terminology, this network includes legal definitions, social theories, and institutional practices.

Temmerman argues that terminology is dynamic and evolves with social change [3]. Gender-related terms are a clear example of this evolution. New concepts such as “non-binary,” “gender identity,” and “intersectionality” have emerged in recent years, creating additional challenges for translators. These terms may not have established equivalents in all languages, requiring creative and context-sensitive solutions.

Legal translation scholars also stress the importance of consistency. As noted by Šarčević, inconsistent use of terminology can lead to legal ambiguity and misinterpretation [4]. This is particularly relevant for gender terminology, where slight differences in wording may affect legal meaning.


Research by Engberg shows that legal terms must be interpreted within their institutional context [5]. For example, the term “gender equality” may have specific legal definitions in international conventions, which must be reflected in translation. A general or approximate equivalent may not be sufficient.

Recent studies also focus on the role of discourse in shaping terminology. Fairclough argues that language is a form of social practice [6]. This means that gender terminology reflects not only legal norms but also social values and ideologies. Translators must therefore consider both linguistic and discursive aspects.

Another important perspective comes from corpus-based research. Studies show that the frequency and usage of gender-related terms vary across languages and contexts [7]. This variation affects the availability of equivalents and the choice of translation strategies.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The analysis of gender terminology in human rights texts reveals several key challenges. The first challenge is the lack of direct equivalents. Some English terms, such as “gender



mainstreaming,” do not have a single-word equivalent in Uzbek. In such cases, translators must use descriptive phrases, which may be longer and less concise.

The second challenge is semantic ambiguity. Terms like “gender identity” can have different interpretations depending on context. If the translator chooses an inappropriate equivalent, the meaning of the text may be distorted.

Another issue is terminological inconsistency. If different translators use different equivalents for the same term, the resulting texts may be confusing. For example, “gender equality” may be translated as “gender tengligi” or “erkak va ayol tengligi,” each carrying slightly different implications.

Pragmatic challenges also arise. Some gender terms may be unfamiliar to the target audience, especially if they reflect concepts that are relatively new in the target culture. In such cases, the translator must decide whether to use a borrowed term, a descriptive translation, or an explanatory addition.

Legal challenges are equally important. Gender terminology often appears in legally binding documents, where precision is essential. An inaccurate translation may affect the interpretation of rights and obligations.

In English, gender terminology is highly developed and includes a wide range of specialized terms. These terms are widely used in legal, academic, and institutional contexts.

In Uzbek, the system is less developed and often relies on borrowed or adapted terms. For example, “gender” is often used as a loanword, while other terms are translated descriptively.

This difference creates challenges in translation. English terms may be more precise, while Uzbek equivalents may be more general. As a result, translators must ensure that the target text preserves the specificity of the original.


Conclusion

The study shows that translating gender terminology in human rights texts is a complex process that involves linguistic, semantic, and legal challenges. Accurate translation requires more than finding lexical equivalents; it requires understanding the conceptual and contextual meaning of each term.

The findings suggest that translators should adopt a flexible approach that combines consistency, clarity, and cultural sensitivity. Future research may focus on developing standardized terminology for gender-related concepts in different languages.

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