



PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATING GENDER TERMS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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gender tarjimasini, ingliz-o'zbek qiyosiy tilshunosligi, grammatik genderning yo'qligi, pronominal neytrallashtirish, leksik assimetriya, sotsiopragmatik nomuvofiqlik, ekspressiya strategiyasi, madaniy moslashuv, tarjima strategiyalari, gender tengligi

ANNOTATSIYA/ АННОТАЦИЯ

Ushbu maqolada ingliz tilidan o'zbek tiliga "gender" (jinsiy belgi) atamalarini tarjima qilish jarayonidagi tipologik, leksik-semantik, pronominal va sotsiopragmatik muammolar chuqur va har tomonlama tahlil qilinadi. Ingliz tilidagi tabiiy gender (he/she/they olmoshlari, actor/actress juftliklari) va zamonaviy inkluziv neytrallashtirish shakllari (chairperson, singular they) o'zbek tilining grammatik genderning to'liq yo'qligi (u olmoshi, neytral kasb nomlari) bilan keskin qarama-qarshilik tashkil etadi. Tadqiqotda leksik assimetriya (kasbiy va rol terminlaridagi bo'shliqlar), pronominal neytrallashtirish sababli yuzaga keladigan noaniqlik va ambigvlik, feministik, gender identifikatsiyasi va madaniy yuklamali terminlardagi sotsiokulturoviy to'qnashuvlar ko'rib chiqiladi. Adabiy, media, huquqiy, tibbiy va kundalik matnlar misollarida neytrallashtirish, eksplisatsiya (erkak/ayol qo'shish), madaniy substitutsiya, qarz olish va rekonstruksiya strategiyalari batafsil baholanadi. Kuzatish, qiyosiy-tahliliy, korpus tahlili va tajriba-sinov usullari asosida olingan natijalar o'zbek tilining neytral grammatikasi funksional ekvivalentlikni ta'minlashga yordam berishini, ammo manba matnining gender nuanslarini saqlashda qo'shimcha aniqlik, madaniy moslashuv va kontekstual kompensatsiya talab etishini ko'rsatadi. Maqolada tarjimonlar, pedagoglar va siyosatchilar uchun kontekstga mos, sotsiokulturoviy jihatdan sezgir yondashuvlar, amaliy tavsiyalar va kelajak tadqiqot yo'nalishlari ishlab chiqilgan.

ABOUT THE PAPER

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ANNOTATION

This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the typological, lexical-semantic, pronominal, and sociopragmatic problems encountered in translating gender terms from English into Uzbek. English employs natural gender through pronouns (he/she/they), lexical pairs (actor/actress), and modern inclusive neutral forms (chairperson, singular they), which sharply contrast with Uzbek's complete absence of grammatical gender. The invariant third-person pronoun *u* in Uzbek, along with its neutral occupational terms, creates significant challenges. The study examines lexical asymmetries and gaps in occupational and role terms, referential ambiguity caused by pronominal neutralization, and sociopragmatic clashes when rendering feminist, queer, and identity-sensitive terminology within Uzbekistan's traditional hierarchical context. Drawing on examples from literary, media, legal, medical, and everyday texts, the dominant translation strategies—neutralization, explicitation (insertion of *erkak/ayol*), cultural substitution, borrowing, and restructuring—are evaluated in detail. Through comparative-analytical, corpus-based, and experimental methods, the findings reveal that Uzbek's neutral grammar facilitates functional equivalence but often erases source-text gender specificity, requiring compensatory explicitness that affects tone, length, rhythm, and pragmatic force. The article offers context-aware, socioculturally sensitive recommendations for translators, educators, and policymakers, along with suggestions for future research.

Introduction. In the era of globalization, digital transformation, international migration, and the advancement of international standards on gender equality (UN, UNESCO), translation has become not merely a linguistic tool but a vital bridge between cultures and a catalyst for social change [5, 23-b.]. Translating gender-related terms from English to Uzbek is particularly complex due to profound differences in the typological structures, lexical-semantic systems, and sociocultural contexts of the two languages. English (a Germanic language) marks natural gender via pronouns (he/she/they), certain lexical pairs (actor/actress, policeman/policewoman), and increasingly inclusive neutral forms (chairperson, server, singular they). This trend, intensified since the 1970s by feminist linguistics and LGBTQ+ movements, aims to transform language into an instrument of gender equality [6, 112-b.].

Uzbek, a Turkic language, completely lacks grammatical gender: nouns, adjectives, verbs, and pronouns do not inflect for masculine, feminine, or neuter. The third-person singular pronoun *u* (and its forms *uni*, *unga*, etc.) indifferently covers *he*, *she*, *it*, and even singular *they*. Gender distinctions appear primarily at the lexical level (*opa/aka*, *singil/ukasi*), morphological level (*uylanmoq* "to marry" for men vs. *turmushga chiqmoq* for women), collocational, and pragmatic levels (honorifics, evaluative epithets, fictive kinship) [4, 67-b.]. This asymmetry significantly complicates the translation process and demands that translators possess not only linguistic competence but also deep cultural, sociological, and psychological knowledge [1, 45-b.].

In Uzbekistan, gender equality issues are reflected in the Constitution, the Law on Gender Equality, and national strategies. However, they remain closely intertwined with traditional family values, Islamic etiquette (*adab*),

and local customs. Consequently, translating Western-developed gender terminology often provokes cultural clashes and ideological resistance [7, 76-b.]. This article conducts a detailed comparative analysis of the main problems in translating gender terms—lexical gaps, pronominal ambiguities, and sociopragmatic conflicts. The research results underscore the need to enhance cultural sensitivity in translation practice, develop new strategies, improve machine translation models, and train professional translators [8, 98-b.]. The primary aim is to enrich English-Uzbek translation theory and contribute to high-quality translations that respect both gender equality and local cultural values [9, 134-b.].

Literature review. The relationship between gender and language has been a central concern in international linguistics for over five decades. Foundational works by Robin Lakoff (1975) in *Language and Woman's Place* revealed how everyday language reinforces gender stereotypes and power imbalances, particularly through the use of generic masculines and marked feminine forms [6, 112-b.]. Deborah Cameron (2003) further developed this line of inquiry in her analysis of gender and language ideologies, arguing that language is not a neutral medium but a site of ideological struggle where neutrality efforts often mask underlying patriarchal structures [10, 89-b.]. Jennifer Coates (2015) in *Women, Men, and Language* provided extensive empirical evidence on gendered speech patterns across English-speaking communities, highlighting the sociolinguistic dimensions that translators must consider [16, 89-b.]. Janet Holmes (2013) offered a broader sociolinguistic perspective, emphasizing how cultural norms shape gendered language use in different speech communities [11, 45-b.].

Judith Butler's influential *Gender Trouble* (1990) introduced the performative nature of gender, influencing later translation scholars to view gender terms not as fixed biological categories but as socially constructed identities that require careful cross-cultural negotiation [additional ref. 19, 67-b.]. Dale Spender (1980) and other early feminist linguists criticized the androcentric bias in English lexis, a critique that directly informs contemporary debates on inclusive language and its translation challenges. Lawrence Venuti (1995) in *The Translator's Invisibility* examined how domestication strategies in translation can erase source-culture gender ideologies, while foreignization may introduce alienating effects in conservative target cultures [8, 203-b.]. Mona Baker (2018) in her seminal coursebook *In other words* provided a systematic framework for analyzing translation strategies, underscoring the ethical responsibilities of translators when dealing with ideologically loaded terms [9, 134-b.]. Peter Newmark (1988) offered practical procedures for handling cultural and semantic gaps, many of which remain relevant for gender-specific translation problems [15, 55-b.].

In the Turkic and Central Asian linguistic context, research on gender has gained momentum only in recent decades due to the absence of grammatical gender in these languages. Nematjonov S. (2021) was among the first Uzbek scholars to systematically address the main problems of gender translation from English into Uzbek. His work highlights lexical asymmetries and the frequent need for explicitation strategies to compensate for the loss of gender information inherent in the pronoun *u* [1, 45-b.]. Matkarimova A. I. and Kamolova G. S. (2025) conducted a detailed comparative study of gender expression in English and Uzbek, emphasizing the obligatory use of kinship terms (*aka/opa*, *singil/uka*) and the resulting semantic gaps when translating English neutral generics [4, 67-b.].

Akhunov M. (2024) focused on comparative semantics, analyzing how lexical, morphological, and collocational mechanisms encode gender in the two languages and identifying persistent translation difficulties in occupational and evaluative terminology [12, 156-b.]. Bekmuradova et al. (2024) provided a revealing case study of Cholpon's *Night and Day*, comparing local and foreign translations. They demonstrated that native Uzbek translators often soften or omit gender-related critiques to align with cultural sensitivities, whereas foreign translators tend to preserve the original feminist intent, sometimes at the cost of naturalness in Uzbek [2, 112-b.].

Rakhimova F. (2020) examined the influence of cultural traditions on gendered linguistic forms in Uzbek mass media, showing how pragmatic mechanisms (honorifics, fictive kinship, and evaluative adjectives) compensate for the lack of grammatical gender while reinforcing traditional hierarchies [13, 201-b.]. Turakulova B. (2020) investigated the translation of phraseological units and proverbs containing gender components, noting significant losses in pragmatic force and cultural connotations [20, 98-b.]. Qudratullayeva Sh. (2025) analyzed gender bias in English-Uzbek machine translation systems, revealing that neural models frequently default to male interpretations due to training data imbalances and insufficient contextual training [16, 23-b.]. In my article "Origins and historical development of gender-related terms" (2024), I traced the historical development and etymology of gender-related terms in the Uzbek language, providing valuable diachronic insights for understanding current translation problems. [7, 76-b.].

Recent comparative studies (2024–2025) from Kokand University and other Uzbek institutions have begun exploring the sociopragmatic dimension, including address forms (*sen/siz*), fictive kinship extensions, and the reception of Western feminist terminology in conservative contexts. These works collectively underscore that gender translation in the English-Uzbek pair is not merely a linguistic exercise but a complex intercultural negotiation involving ideological, religious, and sociocultural factors [17, 167-b.; 14, 312-b.].

Although substantial progress has been made, gaps remain in corpus-based empirical studies, non-binary and transgender terminology adaptation, and the development of practical guidelines tailored to Uzbek translators. The present study aims to address some of these gaps by combining theoretical depth with extensive empirical evidence.

Methodology. The present study integrates both theoretical and empirical approaches to ensure a thorough and multifaceted investigation of the problems associated with translating gender terms between English and Uzbek. This mixed-method design was chosen because translation issues in gender linguistics require not only theoretical conceptualization but also practical validation through real textual materials and translator behavior analysis.

In the theoretical phase, a comparative-analytical method served as the cornerstone. This involved systematic juxtaposition of grammatical, lexical, morphological, and pragmatic gender-marking systems in the two languages. Key theoretical frameworks applied include Eugene Nida's

formal and dynamic equivalence, Peter Newmark's semantic and communicative translation procedures, Lawrence Venuti's concepts of domestication and foreignization, and Mona Baker's translation strategies framework. Additionally, insights from feminist linguistics (Lakoff, Cameron), sociolinguistics (Holmes), and contrastive typology of Turkic and Germanic languages were extensively utilized. Special attention was paid to the sociocultural dimension of translation, drawing on postcolonial and gender studies perspectives to contextualize the ideological implications of translation choices in Uzbekistan [15, 55-b.].

The empirical phase was designed to test theoretical assumptions against authentic language data. A parallel corpus was compiled consisting of:

Literary texts (translations of Cholpon's *Kecha* va *Kunduz* and selected modern English novels dealing with gender themes);

Media discourse (over 200 texts from BBC Uzbek, OzTV, Kun.uz, and English-language sources such as *The Guardian* and *CNN*);

Legal and official documents (Uzbekistan's gender equality laws and their English counterparts);

Medical and administrative texts (patient information leaflets and official reports);

Everyday spoken and written interactions (recorded dialogues and social media posts).

More than 50 literary translation excerpts, approximately 200 media texts, and 30 legal and medical documents (totaling over 450,000 tokens) were manually and semi-automatically analyzed using corpus tools.

Qualitative methods included observation of professional translators during gender-sensitive text translation workshops, in-depth semi-structured interviews with 25 practicing translators and linguists (15 native Uzbek speakers and 10 bilingual experts), and experimental testing. In the experimental part, two groups of translators (one using only neutralization and the other combining explicitation and cultural adaptation) were given identical English texts containing gender terms. The resulting Uzbek translations were compared for accuracy, naturalness, ideological shift, and reader response through blind evaluation by a panel of 12 experts.

Quantitative analysis focused on measurable indicators such as: frequency of referential ambiguity, percentage increase in text length due to explicitation, occurrence rate of male-default interpretations, and success rate of different strategies in preserving pragmatic force. Reliability was ensured through inter-rater agreement (Cohen's Kappa = 0.87) and triangulation of data sources. Ethical considerations were strictly observed: all interviewees gave informed consent, and corpus materials were used in accordance with fair-use academic principles.

This comprehensive, multi-method approach enabled the researcher to capture not only linguistic phenomena but also the sociocultural realities influencing translation decisions in the Uzbek context. It provided robust evidence for identifying dominant patterns, evaluating strategy effectiveness, and formulating practical recommendations [11, 203-b.].

Results. 1. Lexical Asymmetry and Semantic Gaps English frequently uses gender-marked occupational pairs, though inclusive language increasingly favors neutral forms [6, 112-b.]. In Uzbek, terms such as *rais*, *politsiyachi*, and *shifokor* are inherently neutral. While this provides functional equivalence, it can erase the feminist intent of the source text [1, 45-b.].

Examples:

a) English: "The chairman addressed the board with inclusive language." Uzbek: "Rais kengashga murojaat qildi." (retains male-default semantics in conservative discourse) [4, 67-b.].

b) English: "She is an actress and proud of her craft." Uzbek: Choice between *aktrisa* (may sound archaic) or *aktyor* (loses source nuance) [16, 89-b.].

Uzbek kinship terms (*aka*, *opa*, *yanga*, *xola*) obligatorily encode gender, age, and hierarchy, unlike English "sibling" or "cousin." Translating "My sibling came" forces the translator to choose gender and age, potentially distorting meaning [12, 156-b.].

Evaluative adjectives also carry strong gender layers: *kelishgan* (handsome, typically male) vs. *go'zal* (beautiful, typically female). Translating "They are attractive" inevitably introduces gender specificity [4, 67-b.].

Marginal pseudo-pairs (*shoir/shoira*, *muallim/muallima*) are often perceived as archaic or Russian-influenced.

Strategies and Risks:

a) Neutralization: Effective but erases ideological intent.
b) Explicitation (*erkak shifokor*, *ayol rais*): Provides clarity but increases length and emphasis.

c) Cultural substitution: Risks domestication.

d) Borrowing: Introduces Western connotations [9, 134-b.].

2. Pronominal Problems The most acute issue is the neutralization caused by the invariant pronoun *u*, which collapses English gender-marked distinctions and leads to referential ambiguity [5, 23-b].

Examples:

- a) “The doctor examined the patient. He said it was serious.” → “Shifokor bemorni ko’rdi. U bu jiddiy ekanligini aytdi.” (*u* may refer to either person). Solutions include noun repetition or sentence restructuring, which alter rhythm and increase length by 10–20% [1, 45-b].
- b) Multiple antecedents and literary suspense are frequently lost.
- c) Non-binary *they*: “Alex said they are coming” → Descriptive phrases or artificial plural *ular* feel explanatory or othering in Uzbek context [17, 145-b].

Uzbek’s pro-drop tendency requires pronoun insertion in English, making the target text sound unnatural [8, 98-b].

3. Sociopragmatic and Cultural Issues Uzbek second-person pronouns *sen/siz* and fictive kinship terms (*aka/opa*) encode hierarchy and respect, often with gender asymmetry (women more frequently use formal *siz* toward husbands). English neutral *you* loses this nuance [13, 201-b].

Feminist and identity terms (*non-binary, cisgender, feminism*) carry Western ideological load and clash with traditional values. In translations of Cholpon, local translators often soften critiques of patriarchy [2, 112-b]. Proverbs and stereotypes require careful handling to avoid reinforcing bias or losing cultural flavor [14, 167-b].

Table 1. Main Translation Strategies

Strategy	Description & Example	Advantages / Risks [source]
Neutralization	<i>Rais, aktyor</i>	Functional / loss of gender intent [1, 45-b.]
Explicitation	<i>Erkak shifokor, ayol rais</i>	Clarity / increases length & emphasis [4, 67-b.]
Cultural Substitution	<i>Opa</i> for “madam”	Cultural fit / domestication [7, 76-b.]
Borrowing + Adaptation	<i>Feminizm tarafdori</i>	Modernity / ideological resistance [9, 134-b.]

Discussion. The results show that Uzbek’s grammatical neutrality enhances functional translatability but poses serious challenges in preserving source-text gender nuances. Neutralization works well for general texts, while feminist or identity-focused materials require explicitation, footnotes, or restructuring. Machine translation systems exacerbate gender bias due to limited contextual understanding [5, 23-b].

Translators must possess high intercultural competence and strike a balance between traditional values and modern inclusivity. Recommendations include specialized translator training programs, development of parallel corpora, methodological guidelines, and gender-aware training for AI models. In Uzbekistan, translation plays a crucial role in advancing gender equality discourse while respecting cultural specificities. Future research should focus on corpus-based studies, integration of non-binary terminology, and audiovisual translation [18, 312-b].

Conclusion. Translating gender terms between English and Uzbek is a complex process shaped by typological differences, lexical gaps, pronominal limitations, and sociopragmatic conflicts. Uzbek’s neutral grammar provides functional equivalence but demands additional strategies to preserve source specificity. Translators should adopt context-sensitive, socioculturally informed approaches that balance fidelity, minimal domestication, and respect for local values.

This study contributes not only to translation studies but also to broader issues of gender equality, cultural exchange, and international dialogue in Uzbekistan. The findings offer practical recommendations for translator training, translation policy, and the development of digital tools. Further interdisciplinary research will help refine these practices in an evolving sociocultural landscape.

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