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PROBLEMS OF PRAGMATIC ADEQUACY IN ENGLISH–UZBEK TRANSLATIONS PRODUCED BY PROFESSIONAL TRANSLATORS AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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Abstract: This article analyzes pragmatic adequacy in English–Uzbek translation by comparing professional human translation with contemporary AI-based translation. Pragmatic adequacy is understood as the preservation of communicative intention, implicature, politeness, register, cultural presupposition, speech-act force and expected reader response rather than formal similarity alone. The study uses a theoretical-comparative approach based on recent research in translation studies, machine-translation evaluation and Uzbek scholarship on pragmatic adaptation. The analysis shows that AI systems can produce fluent and lexically plausible output, especially in informational texts, but their reliability decreases when interpretation depends on discourse history, social relations, indirectness, irony or culture-specific conventions. Professional translators are better able to reconstruct the communicative situation and deliberately adapt the target text, although human translation also requires quality control. The most reliable model for high-stakes English–Uzbek translation is therefore a hybrid workflow in which AI supports drafting and consistency while a qualified translator performs semantic, cultural and pragmatic verification.

Keywords: pragmatic adequacy, English–Uzbek translation, professional translation, artificial intelligence, neural machine translation, large language models, pragmatic adaptation, context, cultural equivalence.

INTRODUCTION

Neural machine translation and large language models have transformed translation practice. Modern systems often produce grammatically correct and stylistically smooth target texts, so quality differences are no longer always visible at the sentence level. Yet translation quality cannot be reduced to fluency. A sentence may be lexically accurate while failing to reproduce the intended request, criticism, politeness, irony or cultural implication. Studies comparing professional and machine translation show that document context and expert evaluation reveal errors that surface-oriented assessment can miss. This issue is especially relevant to English–Uzbek translation because the languages differ in address forms, politeness conventions, modality, word order and cultural presuppositions, while Uzbek remains comparatively low-resource for machine translation .

The purpose of this article is to identify the main pragmatic adequacy problems in English–Uzbek translations produced by professional translators and AI systems. The discussion concentrates on indirect speech acts, implicature, politeness, register, cultural references, idioms and discourse context. The article does not assume that human translation is always superior or that AI output is always defective. Instead, it explains the different decision environments of human and machine translation and determines where professional intervention is most necessary. Recent Uzbek research emphasizes that pragmatic adaptation is required whenever direct transfer prevents adequate comprehension or an equivalent communicative response .

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MAIN PART

Pragmatic adequacy as a translation criterion

Pragmatic adequacy describes the extent to which a target text performs an equivalent communicative function for its recipients. Baker treats translation equivalence as a multilayered problem involving lexical, grammatical, textual and pragmatic choices rather than one-to-one substitution . Consider the English sentence “You might want to check that figure again.” In many professional contexts it functions as a mitigated directive, not a statement about desire. The literal Uzbek version “Siz bu raqamni yana tekshirishni xohlashingiz mumkin” preserves the modal wording but sounds unnatural and weakens the request. A contextually adequate rendering may be “Bu raqamni yana bir bor tekshirib ko‘rsangiz yaxshi bo‘lardi” or, in a more formal instruction, “Iltimos, bu raqamni yana bir bor tekshirib ko‘ring.” The translator must therefore identify what the utterance is doing, not only what its words denote.

This distinction is important because English and Uzbek encode interpersonal meaning differently. English often uses modal verbs, questions, hedges and understatement to soften commands or criticism. Uzbek may use polite plural forms, particles, verbal morphology and conventional formulas. The correct choice depends on speaker status, social distance, genre and previous discourse. Document-level research shows that human preference over machine translation becomes clearer when evaluators see full context, while expert MQM-based assessment confirms that trained evaluators identify errors that sentence-level or crowd-based scoring can overlook. Pragmatic adequacy should therefore be assessed within the complete communicative situation.

Human and AI translation: different decision environments

A professional translator normally constructs a situational model before finalizing a segment: text type, authorial intention, target audience, social relations, cultural background and the connection between the current sentence and surrounding discourse. On this basis the translator may use explicitation, modulation, paraphrase or cultural substitution when literal equivalence would distort the intended effect. Bekmurodova, Djumabayeva and Madiyorova show that translation of culture-specific references between Uzbek and English may involve loss of connotation or misunderstanding if pragmatic equivalence is not deliberately reconstructed. Tadjibayev similarly stresses the role of pragmatic adaptation in English–Uzbek translation when direct transfer fails to secure adequate understanding.

AI-based translation relies on learned linguistic patterns and probabilistic generation. Its major strengths are speed, broad lexical coverage, structural fluency and terminological consistency. Large multilingual models can translate many languages and generalize beyond narrowly supervised data, but research still reports uneven performance and larger gaps in low-resource directions. Uzbek machine translation is additionally affected by limited corpora, agglutinative morphology and syntactic complexity [10]. When the source is pragmatically ambiguous, AI may choose the statistically probable reading rather than the contextually intended one. The output can therefore be fluent and still carry the wrong interpersonal force.

Main pragmatic problem areas

Indirect speech acts are a major source of error. English workplace discourse often converts directives into questions or suggestions: “Could you send it by noon?”, “Why don’t we revisit this point?”, “I was wondering if you could help.” Literal transfer may preserve the form without preserving the degree of politeness expected in Uzbek. Implicature creates a similar problem. Expressions such as “That is not ideal,” “He is not exactly easy to work with,” or “We may have a slight problem” may communicate stronger criticism than the words alone indicate. AI can under-

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translate or over-translate this force when context is insufficient. A professional translator can calibrate the target wording according to genre, relationship and discourse history rather than simply reproduce surface negation or modality.

Politeness and social deixis are equally sensitive. English "you" does not encode the Uzbek distinction between "sen" and "siz"; a wrong choice can alter respect, intimacy or aggression. Culture-specific references may require explanation, borrowing or functional substitution, while idioms and figurative expressions require conceptual rather than literal transfer. "Read the room," for example, is better rendered as "Vaziyatni his qiling" or "Atrofdagilarning munosabatini hisobga oling" than through a word-for-word equivalent. Register also matters: formal institutional phrases such as "We regret to inform you…" must retain official tone in Uzbek. These problems show that pragmatic failure often arises not from unknown vocabulary but from selecting a linguistically possible form that is communicatively inappropriate.

Figure 1. Recommended pragmatic verification workflow

SOURCE CONTEXT → AI DRAFT → SEMANTIC CHECK → PRAGMATIC & CULTURAL REVIEW BY TRANSLATOR → DOCUMENT-LEVEL CONSISTENCY CHECK → FINAL UZBEK TEXT

Context, evaluation and professional intervention

Pragmatic adequacy also depends on discourse continuity. Pronouns, lexical repetition, ellipsis and ambiguous references often require previous sentences for correct interpretation. A system translating isolated segments may generate acceptable sentences but introduce inconsistent terminology, unstable forms of address or contradictory reference across the document. Läubli, Sennrich and Volk demonstrated that document-level evaluation exposes differences between human and machine translation that are less visible in isolated sentences. Freitag and colleagues reached a related conclusion using expert error annotation with full context. Such findings are directly relevant to Uzbek because person, possession, case, tense and politeness marking must remain coherent across longer passages.

Evaluation should therefore combine semantic accuracy with functional criteria: preservation of speech-act force, politeness and social distance, implicature, register, culture-specific meaning and document cohesion. Automatic metrics are insufficient for several of these dimensions because different Uzbek formulations may be equally valid. Krüger warns that evaluation methods can favor machine output when they rely too heavily on surface similarity or weak representations of professional quality. Fischer and Läubli likewise show that errors in human and machine translation are distributed in complex ways rather than along a simple human-good/machine-bad division. Expert review should identify the communicative consequence of an error, not only its formal type.

The professional translator's role is consequently expanding from direct production to AI selection, prompting, verification and post-editing. Jia and Sun show that post-editing effort depends on source-text complexity and initial machine-translation quality. For English–Uzbek translation, human review is particularly important in legal and administrative communication, public health information, literary dialogue, advertising, institutional correspondence and other texts where implied meaning or politeness affects interpretation. The workflow in Figure 1 assigns AI the tasks it performs well—rapid drafting, reformulation and consistency support—while reserving context-sensitive pragmatic decisions for a bilingual professional. This model is more realistic than either unrestricted automation or rejection of AI tools.

Implications for English–Uzbek translation research

Future research should develop a pragmatic error taxonomy specifically for the English–Uzbek pair. Existing frameworks such as MQM provide a useful basis, but local categories are needed for sen/siz selection, honorific conventions, culturally marked realia, modality, evidential nuance,

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idiomatic transfer and pragmatic explicitation. Balanced corpora should contain professional human translations, raw AI outputs and professionally post-edited versions of the same texts. Evaluation should be performed by trained bilingual experts with full document context. Such a design would distinguish genuine errors from legitimate stylistic variation and would measure the actual value of human intervention. It would also provide a stronger basis for assessing whether claims about AI quality remain valid in low-resource, pragmatically complex English–Uzbek translation.

CONCLUSION

Pragmatic adequacy is one of the most difficult dimensions of English–Uzbek translation because it requires preservation of communicative effect rather than formal correspondence alone. Contemporary AI systems can produce fluent and useful translations, yet their reliability decreases when meaning depends on indirect speech acts, social hierarchy, implicature, irony, culture-specific assumptions, idioms or discourse history. The English–Uzbek pair intensifies these risks because of differences in politeness marking, morphology, address conventions and available language resources. Recent international and Uzbek research therefore supports expert, context-sensitive and document-level evaluation rather than judgments based only on sentence fluency.

Professional translators remain essential because they can reconstruct the communicative situation, justify adaptation and assume responsibility for target-reader understanding. Human translation is not error-free, so professional review must also control inconsistency and over-interpretation. The most effective model is a hybrid workflow in which AI provides drafting speed and linguistic alternatives while the translator verifies semantic, cultural and pragmatic adequacy. Future studies should build representative English–Uzbek corpora and pragmatic error taxonomies to compare human, AI-generated and post-edited translations systematically.

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