INSTITUTIONAL VARIATION AND CONTEXTUAL EQUIVALENCE OF SOCIAL PROTECTION TERMINOLOGY IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK POLICY DISCOURSE

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Annotation. *This article investigates institutional variation and contextual equivalence in English and Uzbek social protection terminology. The study moves beyond purely structural or dictionary-based comparison and focuses on how terms change their scope, preferred designation, and functional meaning across international policy documents, national legislation, administrative communication, and public-facing social service discourse. The material includes terminology used by the International Labour Organization (ILO), current Uzbek social protection legislation, and institutional formulations connected with the National Agency for Social Protection. Particular attention is paid to such units as social protection, social security, social assistance, social services, benefit, allowance, cash transfer, social protection floor, vulnerability, disability inclusion, and case management.*

Keywords: *social protection, institutional discourse, terminology variation, contextual equivalence, policy discourse, social security, social assistance, translation, English, Uzbek.*

Annotatsiya. *Maqolada ingliz va o‘zbek tillaridagi ijtimoiy himoya terminlarining institutsional variantlashuvi hamda kontekstual ekvivalentligi tadqiq etiladi. Tadqiqot faqat struktur yoki lug‘aviy qiyoslash bilan cheklanmay, terminlarning xalqaro siyosiy hujjatlar, milliy qonunchilik, ma’muriy muloqot va aholiga qaratilgan ijtimoiy xizmat diskursida qanday ma’no hajmi va funksional xususiyat kasb etishiga e’tibor qaratadi. Xalqaro Mehnat Tashkiloti hujjatlari, O‘zbekiston Respublikasining ijtimoiy himoya sohasidagi amaldagi hujjatlari hamda Ijtimoiy himoya milliy agentligi bilan bog‘liq institutsional birliklar material sifatida olindi.*

Kalit so‘zlar: *ijtimoiy himoya, institutsional diskurs, terminologik variantlashuv, kontekstual ekvivalentlik, siyosiy diskurs, ijtimoiy ta’minot, ijtimoiy yordam, tarjima, ingliz tili, o‘zbek tili.*

Аннотация. *В статье исследуются институциональная вариативность и контекстуальная эквивалентность терминологии социальной защиты в английском и узбекском языках. В отличие от чисто структурного или словарного сопоставления, внимание уделяется тому, как объем значения, предпочтительное наименование и функция термина меняются в международных политических документах, национальном законодательстве, административной коммуникации и дискурсе социальных услуг. Материалом послужили документы Международной организации труда, действующие нормативно-правовые акты Узбекистана и институциональные единицы, связанные с Национальным агентством социальной защиты.*

Ключевые слова: *социальная защита, институциональный дискурс, терминологическая вариативность, контекстуальная эквивалентность, политический дискурс, социальное обеспечение, социальная помощь, перевод, английский язык, узбекский язык.*

INTRODUCTION

Social protection has become one of the most institutionally dense domains of modern public policy. Its vocabulary is used simultaneously in international labour standards, development reports, national legislation, administrative regulations, social service practice, academic research, and public communication. This multidimensional use makes social protection terminology especially sensitive to context. A term that appears stable at dictionary level may acquire a narrower legal meaning, a broader policy meaning, or a more accessible public-service formulation when transferred from one institutional environment to another. The International Labour Organization itself notes that social protection and social security are often used interchangeably, while also acknowledging that social protection may be employed in either a broader or a narrower sense depending on context [1]. This variability is not a defect of terminology; rather, it reflects the institutional organization of the field.

In Uzbekistan, the terminology of social protection has developed rapidly in parallel with institutional reforms. The Strategy for Social Protection of the Population, approved by Presidential Decree No. PF-175 of 25 July 2022, established long-term priorities for the development of the national system and explicitly referred to the principles of ILO Recommendation No. 202 [2]. Subsequent reforms created the National Agency for Social Protection and the “Inson” social service centres, which brought a large group of terms connected with social services, assistance, assessment, case management, benefits, vulnerability,

disability, and integrated support into active administrative circulation [3]. Decree No. PF-216 of 27 December 2023 further optimized the distribution of functions in the field of social services and assistance [4]. These institutional changes have also created a linguistic need: English–Uzbek equivalents must be not only formally correct but compatible with the conceptual and administrative realities of the national system.

Previous studies of English and Uzbek social protection terminology have productively addressed structural, semantic, lexicographic, and translation-related problems [5; 6]. However, institutional variation remains a distinct issue. The same English term can correspond to different Uzbek forms depending on whether the text is an ILO recommendation, a national legal act, an administrative guideline, a service-provider document, or a public information notice. Therefore, the aim of this article is to examine social protection terminology as a discourse-sensitive system and to identify the main levels at which contextual equivalence is established between English and Uzbek.

The study uses a comparative-discursive approach combining terminological, contextual, functional, and translation analysis. Terminological analysis is based on the relation between concept, designation, and definition. ISO 704:2022 emphasizes the links among objects, concepts, definitions, and designations and treats terminology work as a systematic activity applicable to legal, administrative, scientific, and other specialized fields [7]. This principle is particularly relevant to social protection because institutional designations are connected with legally and administratively defined concepts.

The first and most important type of variation concerns the pair social protection and social security. In ILO usage, these terms are often treated as near-equivalents, but their scope is not absolutely fixed. The ILO glossary explains that social protection may refer broadly to social security and related forms of protection, while in some contexts it can be used more narrowly for measures directed at vulnerable or excluded groups [1]. In Uzbek institutional discourse, ijtimoiy himoya has become the dominant umbrella designation, especially in strategic and administrative documents. Ijtimoiy ta’minot, by contrast, tends to evoke a more specific system of material guarantees, pensions, payments, or provision. Therefore, translating social security automatically as ijtimoiy himoya in every text may erase an important conceptual distinction, while translating social protection as ijtimoiy ta’minot may unduly narrow its scope.

The second area of variation involves social assistance. In English-language policy discourse, social assistance usually refers to non-contributory support

financed from public resources and provided according to need or eligibility criteria. In Uzbek, ijtimoiy yordam is the most natural generic equivalent, but the term may be realized through more specific administrative designations such as moddiy yordam, nafaqa, kompensatsiya, subsidiya, or xizmat depending on the mechanism of support. Thus, equivalence is hierarchical: social assistance corresponds conceptually to ijtimoiy yordam, whereas a particular programme may require a narrower Uzbek designation. This distinction is essential for legal and administrative translation because a generic equivalent cannot replace the official name of a specific benefit.

A similar problem arises with benefit and allowance. English benefit functions as a broad hyperonym covering many forms of financial or in-kind entitlement. Allowance is often more specific, but its exact institutional meaning differs across systems. Uzbek nafaqa may correspond to benefit or allowance in particular contexts, yet not every benefit is a nafaqa. Pension, compensation, subsidy, grant, and material assistance may all fall under a broader benefit category while requiring distinct Uzbek terms. Consequently, the translator must first identify the institutional type of payment before selecting the lexical equivalent. Contextual equivalence here depends on programme status, financing mechanism, eligibility, and legal designation.

The term cash transfer illustrates a different relationship between international and national terminology. In ILO usage, cash transfer is a broad expression for non-contributory programmes that provide money to individuals or households; the ILO glossary also distinguishes conditional cash transfers according to behavioural requirements [1]. A literal Uzbek rendering, pul o‘tkazmasi, can be misleading because in everyday and banking discourse it primarily suggests the technical act of transferring money. In social policy contexts, pul shaklidagi ijtimoiy to‘lov, pul yordami, or the official name of a benefit may communicate the concept more precisely. This example shows that formal lexical similarity is less important than institutional function.

Social protection floor is another term whose meaning cannot be reconstructed successfully through word-for-word translation alone. ILO Recommendation No. 202 defines social protection floors as nationally defined sets of basic social security guarantees designed to ensure access to essential health care and basic income security across the life cycle [10]. Uzbek policy discourse has used formulations related to ijtimoiy himoyaning minimal darajasi and minimum social guarantees. The 2022 national strategy explicitly refers to ILO Recommendation No. 202 and the creation of a system guaranteeing a minimum level of social protection for all

citizens [2]. In this case, a contextual equivalent should preserve the institutional concept of a nationally defined set of guarantees rather than merely reproduce the surface metaphor of “floor.”

Institutional variation is particularly visible in newer service-oriented terminology. Social services is most naturally rendered as ijtimoiy xizmatlar, but the term covers diverse activities: assessment, home care, rehabilitation, counselling, referral, support planning, and other interventions. With the establishment of the National Agency for Social Protection and “Inson” centres, Uzbek administrative discourse increasingly uses integrated service terminology [3]. Here the translation problem is not the existence of an equivalent but the relation between the general category and its administrative subtypes. A bilingual terminology system should therefore link the umbrella term to recognized service categories rather than present an isolated translation pair.

The analyzed material allows contextual equivalence to be represented as a three-level model. The first level is conceptual equivalence: whether the source and target units activate substantially the same concept. The second is institutional equivalence: whether the target designation corresponds to the same legal programme, administrative category, or institutional mechanism. The third is communicative equivalence: whether the selected term is appropriate for the intended audience and genre. A term can be conceptually accurate but institutionally wrong; it can also be institutionally accurate but communicatively opaque. High-quality translation requires alignment at all three levels.

CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis confirms that English–Uzbek social protection terminology cannot be adequately described through isolated word pairs. Institutional discourse creates systematic variation because terms function inside legal systems, policy frameworks, administrative procedures, professional practices, and public communication. Social protection and social security may overlap internationally but differ in national conceptual associations; social assistance must be distinguished from the names of particular payments; benefit and allowance require identification of a legal payment category; cash transfer should be translated according to its social-policy function rather than its everyday banking meaning; and newer units such as case management, vulnerability, and disability inclusion require discourse-sensitive adaptation.

For English–Uzbek terminology development, the most productive future direction is the creation of an institutional bilingual database in which each term is supplied not only with a translation but also with a definition, legal or policy source,

field label, preferred and admitted variants, usage context, and authentic examples. This would support translators, researchers, social service professionals, public administrators, and lexicographers. It would also contribute to terminological consistency at a time when Uzbekistan’s social protection system is undergoing active institutional development.

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