

Ontological Modeling as a Modern Tool for Lexico-Semantic Analysis of English and Uzbek Legal Terms

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Article History	Abstract
<p>Original Research Article</p> <p>Received: 20-02-2026</p> <p>Accepted: 12-03-2026</p> <p>Published: 18-03-2026</p> <p>Copyright © 2026 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.</p> <p>Citation: Khujakulov Sunnatullo. (2026). Ontological Modeling as a Modern Tool for Lexico-Semantic Analysis of English and Uzbek Legal Terms. UKR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (UKRJAHSS), Volume 2(3), 91-97.</p>	<p><i>This article explores ontological modeling as a modern methodological tool for the lexico-semantic analysis of legal terminology in English and Uzbek. Traditional approaches to legal term analysis often struggle to capture conceptual asymmetries arising from differences between common law and civil law systems. To address this limitation, the study applies an ontology-based framework to systematize legal concepts, terms, and their functional relationships across the two languages. A comparative corpus of normative and doctrinal legal texts is analyzed to identify core legal concepts, semantic relations, and patterns of equivalence and divergence. The constructed bilingual legal ontology reveals cases of partial equivalence, polysemy, and context-dependent semantic shifts that are not evident through surface-level translation analysis. The findings demonstrate that ontological modeling enhances semantic interoperability and provides a structured representation of legal knowledge. The study contributes to jurilinguistics, legal translation studies, and comparative legal terminology by offering a replicable model for analyzing and harmonizing legal terms in multilingual legal contexts.</i></p> <p>Keywords: Legal terminology, lexico-semantic analysis, ontological modeling, jurilinguistics, semantic interoperability, legal translation, comparative legal linguistics.</p>

Introduction

The study of legal terminology occupies a central position in comparative legal linguistics, as legal terms function not only as linguistic units but also as carriers of legal concepts embedded within specific legal systems. Lexico-semantic analysis enables researchers to examine how legal meaning is structured, interpreted, and operationalized across languages, revealing both shared conceptual foundations and system-specific distinctions. In multilingual legal contexts, such analysis is particularly relevant for ensuring accuracy in legal translation, harmonization of legal norms, and effective cross-jurisdictional communication.

The comparison of English and Uzbek legal terminology presents specific challenges due to differences in their legal traditions, conceptual frameworks, and linguistic structures. English legal terminology is largely shaped by the common law system, characterized by precedent-based reasoning and historically layered meanings, whereas Uzbek legal terminology is rooted in the civil law tradition,

emphasizing codification and normative clarity. As a result, apparent lexical equivalents often conceal conceptual mismatches, partial equivalence, or functional divergence. These discrepancies complicate the interpretation and translation of legal terms and may lead to semantic distortion in legal discourse.

Traditional descriptive and translation-based approaches to legal terminology analysis tend to focus on surface-level correspondences between terms, relying primarily on dictionary definitions or contextual usage. While such approaches are valuable, they frequently fail to account for deeper conceptual structures and semantic relations underlying legal terms. In particular, they offer limited tools for modeling hierarchical relationships, functional roles, and cross-linguistic conceptual gaps. This limitation becomes especially evident when dealing with polysemous terms, culture-bound legal concepts, and terms whose meanings shift across legal domains.

In response to these challenges, ontological modeling offers a modern and systematic approach to the lexico-semantic analysis of legal terminology. Ontologies allow for the formal representation of legal knowledge by organizing concepts, terms, and their semantic relations within a structured framework. By distinguishing between linguistic labels and underlying legal concepts, ontological modeling makes it possible to identify patterns of equivalence, partial correspondence, and divergence more precisely. This approach enhances semantic transparency and supports interoperability between legal languages, particularly in bilingual and multilingual legal environments.

The primary aim of this study is to explore the effectiveness of ontological modeling as a methodological tool for the comparative lexico-semantic analysis of English and Uzbek legal terms. The research seeks to identify how legal concepts are structured and related within each language and to examine the extent to which ontological representation can address challenges of terminological equivalence. The objectives include constructing a bilingual legal ontology, analyzing semantic relations among selected legal terms, and evaluating the implications of ontology-based analysis for legal translation and comparative legal studies.

The study is guided by the research question of whether ontological modeling provides a more accurate and comprehensive framework for analyzing legal terminology than traditional approaches. It is hypothesized that ontology-based analysis enables the identification of conceptual and functional discrepancies that remain obscured in conventional descriptive models and contributes to improved semantic interoperability between English and Uzbek legal terminology.

Theoretical Background

Legal terminology constitutes a highly specialized lexico-semantic system distinguished by precision, conventional stability, and contextual dependency, which separates it from general language. Legal expressions function not only as linguistic signs but also as carriers of judicial concepts embedded in specific legal frameworks, reflecting procedural, normative, and doctrinal structures (Šarčević, 2019). Their meanings are highly context-dependent, and even minor semantic shifts may result in significant interpretative or procedural consequences. Lexico-semantic analysis in comparative legal linguistics allows researchers to examine these underlying structures, uncover equivalences and divergences, and ensure accurate cross-linguistic interpretation (Bhatia, 2017). This is particularly relevant in multilingual legal environments, where clarity and consistency in legal communication, interpretation, and harmonization of rules are essential.

The comparative analysis of English and Uzbek legal terminology illustrates the interaction between linguistic and legal systems shaped by different legal traditions. English legal expressions, developed within the common law system, often exhibit polysemy, historical layering, and interpretative flexibility, reflecting precedent-driven reasoning and reliance on judicial rulings (Tiersma, 1999). Terms such as “**estoppel**,” “**injunction**,” and “**fiduciary duty**” carry nuanced meanings that are fully understood only in their practical and doctrinal context. In contrast, Uzbek legal vocabulary, influenced by civil law codification and historical interaction with Russian and Islamic legal traditions, tends to be more codified and normative. Lexical equivalents in English frequently fail to fully capture the conceptual scope of Uzbek terms, resulting in partial equivalences and semantic gaps (Šarčević, 2019; Kuznetsova, 2020). These differences underscore the necessity of deep semantic and functional analysis, as literal translation often obscures underlying judicial concepts.

Legal expressions perform multiple functional roles within texts. They regulate conduct, organize reasoning, and mediate between abstract legal principles and their application. Terms may have normative, interpretative, and procedural functions, guiding legal actors in understanding regulations, rulings, and codified rules (Bhatia, 2017). Traditional descriptive or dictionary-based approaches focus primarily on surface-level equivalents, which is insufficient for capturing complex semantic networks, polysemy, and context-dependent meanings. Such approaches are limited in their ability to model hierarchical relationships, functional roles, and cross-linguistic conceptual gaps, which are central to comparative legal analysis (Kuznetsova, 2020).

Ontological modeling offers a modern solution for representing complex semantic systems, including specialized legal vocabulary. Ontologies are formal structures that represent concepts, their attributes, and the relationships among them within a domain (Gruber, 1995). In linguistic and terminological research, ontological modeling allows the distinction between linguistic labels and underlying judicial concepts, enabling researchers to systematically map semantic hierarchies, synonymy, hypernymy, and partial equivalences across languages (Buitelaar, Cimiano, & Magnini, 2005). Dynamic frame-based ontologies have been applied to legal vocabulary to capture context-dependent meanings and polysemy, providing structured representations that surpass traditional taxonomic methods (Zakharyashev & Kurucz, 2019). Ontology-based approaches support both visualization and computational analysis, enhancing semantic interoperability and facilitating cross-linguistic comparisons.

Theoretical and practical advantages of ontology-based analysis are substantial. Theoretically, it allows the formalization of conceptual structures, revealing asymmetries in bilingual legal terminology that traditional descriptive models cannot detect (Šarčević, 2019; Buitelaar et al., 2005). Practically, ontologies support legal interpretation, terminology standardization, and development of AI-driven judicial knowledge bases. By mapping concepts and their interrelations, ontological models improve semantic transparency and facilitate interoperability between English and Uzbek legal systems, addressing partial equivalences and divergent conceptual structures (Gruber, 1995; Kuznetsova, 2020). This methodology is particularly useful for languages with codified legal systems that differ from common law traditions.

In summary, legal terminology is a network of interrelated concepts whose analysis requires more than surface-level descriptive approaches. Integrating lexico-semantic analysis with ontological modeling provides a robust framework for examining the structure, meaning, and function of legal expressions. This integration allows researchers to identify patterns of equivalence, divergence, and functional differentiation, offering insights critical for comparative legal studies, translation, and development of interoperable legal knowledge systems (Šarčević, 2019; Tiersma, 1999; Buitelaar et al., 2005). Ontology-based methodologies represent a significant advance in jurilinguistics, providing replicable, rigorous, and semantically transparent tools for bilingual legal terminology analysis.

Methodology

The study employs a comparative and descriptive-analytical framework to investigate the lexico-semantic characteristics of legal terminology in English and Uzbek, integrating insights from both linguistics and legal theory. By combining interdisciplinary perspectives, the research aims to capture the structural, functional, and conceptual dimensions of legal terms while accounting for the differences between common law and civil law traditions. This approach allows for a systematic comparison of term usage, semantic relations, and functional roles across languages, highlighting areas of equivalence, divergence, and partial correspondence.

Data collection involved the careful selection of legal texts in English and Uzbek according to predefined criteria, emphasizing authenticity, representativeness, and relevance. Texts were drawn from normative, doctrinal, and interpretative legal sources across multiple branches of law, including constitutional, criminal, and administrative law. The corpus includes statutes, judicial rulings, and academic

commentaries, providing a balanced sample that reflects both formal and practical usage of legal terminology in each language. The size and diversity of the corpus ensure sufficient coverage for identifying recurring semantic patterns and functional distinctions.

Ontology construction was undertaken through a multi-step procedure beginning with the identification of core legal concepts in the selected corpus. These concepts were then organized hierarchically, with terms grouped according to their semantic and functional relationships. Concept-term-function mapping enabled the linking of linguistic labels to their corresponding legal meanings and operational roles, while semantic relations such as hypernymy, synonymy, and partial equivalence were encoded to capture cross-linguistic correspondences and divergences. This structured representation provides a comprehensive framework for comparing and analyzing legal terms across English and Uzbek.

Analytical tools and techniques included the use of ontology editors and modeling frameworks for building and visualizing the legal ontology. Semantic annotation and classification of terms were carried out systematically to ensure consistency and accuracy in the identification of conceptual and functional properties. Comparative mapping of English and Uzbek legal concepts allowed for the examination of equivalence patterns, polysemy, and functional asymmetries. Together, these methods provide a robust framework for the lexico-semantic and functional analysis of legal terminology, demonstrating the potential of ontology-based approaches for enhancing semantic interoperability and supporting comparative legal studies.

Results and Discussion

Legal terminology functions as a dense network of interconnected concepts whose meanings are shaped by linguistic, cultural, and legal system factors. The comparative lexico-semantic analysis of English and Uzbek legal terms reveals patterns of conceptual correspondence, divergence, polysemy, and functional differentiation, which are essential for understanding cross-linguistic equivalence and interoperability. In examining conceptual correspondence, three main equivalence patterns can be identified: one-to-one, one-to-many, and null equivalence. One-to-one correspondence occurs when a single legal term in English has a direct equivalent in Uzbek that fully reflects both its conceptual and functional dimensions. Such cases illustrate stable cross-linguistic alignment and facilitate translation and comparative analysis. One-to-many equivalence arises when a single term in one language corresponds to multiple terms in the other language, each reflecting different facets of the concept. For instance, the English term “**liability**” may correspond

to several Uzbek expressions such as “**javobgarlik**,” “**majburiyat**,” or “**mas’uliyat**,” depending on whether the context is civil, administrative, or procedural law. Null equivalence occurs when a term in one language has no direct counterpart in the other due to culture-bound or system-specific legal concepts, such as “**equity**” in English common law, which lacks a fully equivalent Uzbek term due to differences in legal tradition and normative frameworks (Šarčević, 2010; Bhatia, 2015).

Culture-bound and system-specific concepts present particular challenges for comparative lexico-semantic analysis. Legal terms are often deeply embedded within the cultural and historical context of a legal system, and their meanings may not be fully recoverable outside that context. For example, the English term “**fiduciary duty**” carries doctrinal and procedural connotations shaped by centuries of common law jurisprudence, including notions of trust, loyalty, and ethical obligations, which are largely absent in Uzbek civil law. Conversely, Uzbek legal terminology may contain terms derived from civil codification principles, such as “**fuqarolik huquqi**” (civil rights) or “**ijro etish majburiyatlari**” (execution obligations), which do not have exact counterparts in English legal discourse. Recognizing and analyzing these culture-bound concepts is crucial for legal translation, interpretation, and the development of bilingual ontologies, as they reveal structural and functional divergences that cannot be bridged by literal translation alone (Tiersma, 1999; Kuznetsova, 2018).

Polysemy and contextual variation constitute another critical dimension of legal terminology. Legal terms often possess multiple meanings depending on the textual, procedural, or doctrinal context, and these meanings can differ significantly from their general-language counterparts. For example, the term “**action**” in English may denote a civil lawsuit, a procedural step, or a statutory remedy, whereas its general-language use conveys physical activity or conduct. Similarly, the Uzbek term “**da’vo**” can refer to a formal legal claim or dispute but may also be employed in everyday discourse to indicate complaint or assertion, illustrating the semantic shift between legal and general usage. Such context-dependent variation highlights the importance of situational and domain-specific analysis, as meaning is not fixed but contingent upon textual, procedural, and institutional factors (Koptseva, 2017; Šarčević, 2010). Cross-linguistic comparison further complicates matters, as English and Uzbek legal systems encode concepts differently, leading to asymmetries in term usage and semantic scope. Ontology-based frameworks allow these polysemous and context-sensitive relations to be mapped systematically, revealing patterns that facilitate accurate translation and functional understanding.

Functional differentiation of legal terms adds another layer of complexity to lexico-semantic analysis. Legal terms are not only semantic entities but also perform specific functions within texts and discourse. Normative functions involve prescribing or prohibiting conduct, as seen in English terms such as “**statutory obligation**” or Uzbek terms like “**majburiyat**,” which direct legal actors’ behavior. Interpretative functions guide understanding and reasoning about the law; terms such as “**precedent**” in English or “**qonun sharhi**” (commentary on law) in Uzbek support judicial interpretation and doctrinal analysis. Procedural functions structure the steps and processes through which legal rules are applied, such as “**motion to dismiss**” in English civil procedure or “**arizani rad etish**” (rejection of an application) in Uzbek courts. Doctrinal functions, meanwhile, involve the conceptual organization of legal knowledge, encompassing principles, categories, and classifications that underpin legal reasoning (Bhatia, 2015; Kuznetsova, 2018). Functional mismatches often occur when terms in one language encapsulate multiple functions that are distributed across several terms in the other language. For example, the English term “**injunction**” carries both procedural and normative implications, whereas in Uzbek, equivalent functions may be represented separately by “**majburiy to’xtatish tartibi**” (procedural stopping order) and “**majburiy taqiq**” (normative prohibition). Recognizing such mismatches is essential for accurate interpretation, translation, and ontology construction.

Context-dependent and functionally differentiated meanings also reveal the dynamic interaction between legal terms and the systems in which they operate. Terms evolve in response to changes in legislation, judicial practice, and doctrinal development, resulting in semantic shifts that affect both language-specific and cross-linguistic understanding. For example, reforms in Uzbek civil law may introduce terms that approximate English concepts, such as “**intellectual property rights**” translated as “**intellektual mulk huquqlari**,” but subtle differences in scope, enforcement, and doctrinal interpretation persist. Similarly, English legal terminology adapts to statutory reforms, common law evolution, and jurisdictional variation, leading to continuous semantic adjustments that must be captured in comparative analysis (Zakharyashev & Kurucz, 2019; Tiersma, 1999).

In conclusion, the lexico-semantic analysis of legal terms across English and Uzbek demonstrates the importance of examining conceptual correspondence and divergence, polysemy, contextual variation, and functional differentiation. One-to-one, one-to-many, and null equivalence patterns provide insight into the alignment or mismatch of legal concepts across systems, while culture-

bound and system-specific terms highlight the limits of literal translation. Polysemy and context-dependent shifts reveal the need to consider both general-language and domain-specific meanings, and functional analysis underscores the multiplicity of roles that terms perform in legal discourse. Collectively, these dimensions underscore the complexity of bilingual legal terminology and provide a foundation for ontology-based modeling, translation, and comparative jurilinguistic research (Šarčević, 2010; Bhatia, 2015; Kuznetsova, 2018; Tiersma, 1999; Zakharyashev & Kurucz, 2019).

The ontological modeling of English and Uzbek legal terminology produced a structured framework that captures conceptual hierarchies, semantic relations, and functional roles across both languages. The developed ontology organizes legal vocabulary according to core concepts, operational domains, and inter-term relations, providing a comprehensive representation of bilingual legal knowledge (Buitelaar, Cimiano, & Magnini, 2005; Gruber, 1995). At the highest level, the ontology distinguishes between broad legal areas, including civil, criminal, administrative, and constitutional law, each of which is further subdivided into domain-specific concepts. For instance, within civil law, concepts such as **“obligations arising from agreements,”** **“negligence claims,”** and **“ownership rights”** are identified, while in Uzbek, the corresponding categories include **“shartnoma asosidagi majburiyatlar,”** **“beparvolik javobgarligi,”** and **“mulk egalik huquqlari”** (Kuznetsova, 2018; Šarčević, 2010). This hierarchical structuring enables the identification of direct, multiple, and absent equivalences, while also providing a platform for analyzing culture-bound and system-specific concepts.

The ontology captures semantic relations between terms through multiple relational layers, including superordinate–subordinate relations, synonymy, and partial correspondence (Tiersma, 1999; Koptseva, 2017). Superordinate–subordinate relations establish parent–child structures between broad legal categories and specific expressions, clarifying conceptual scope and dependencies. Synonymy identifies equivalent or near-equivalent expressions across English and Uzbek, while partial correspondence highlights terms that overlap in meaning but differ in scope, functional use, or context. For example, the English term **“prohibitory order”** is linked to the Uzbek **“majburiy to‘xtatish tartibi”** and **“ta’qiq,”** reflecting a split of procedural and regulatory functions (Zakharyashev & Kurucz, 2019). These relations are visualized in semantic networks using ontology modeling tools, enabling clear illustration of conceptual clusters, hierarchical structures, and cross-linguistic correspondences.

Case studies of selected legal terms demonstrate the utility of the ontology for comparative analysis. The term **“responsibility”** in English was mapped to multiple Uzbek terms, including **“javobgarlik,”** **“majburiyat,”** and **“mas’uliyat,”** depending on whether the context was civil, administrative, or procedural law (Šarčević, 2010; Kuznetsova, 2018). This mapping reveals both conceptual divergence and partial correspondence, illustrating how a single English term may correspond to a cluster of Uzbek terms in different functional contexts. Similarly, the English term **“fiduciary obligation”** was linked to the Uzbek expressions **“ishonchli majburiyat”** and **“axloqiy javobgarlik,”** reflecting doctrinal, ethical, and procedural aspects distributed across multiple terms (Bhatia, 2015). These examples demonstrate how ontology-based modeling can capture functional differentiation, polysemy, and context-dependent variation, providing a precise framework for cross-linguistic semantic mapping.

The ontology also facilitates visualization of comparative semantic networks that highlight patterns of equivalence, divergence, and functional asymmetry (Buitelaar et al., 2005; Gruber, 1995). Conceptual clusters are depicted as interconnected nodes, with edges representing semantic relations such as hierarchical links, synonymy, and partial overlap. In the English–Uzbek ontology, nodes representing procedural constructs, normative obligations, and doctrinal concepts are annotated to indicate functional roles, enabling rapid identification of mismatches and conceptual gaps. For example, procedural nodes such as **“application rejection”** and **“arizani rad etish”** are linked to their normative and operational counterparts, illustrating the cross-system mapping of both function and meaning (Koptseva, 2017; Zakharyashev & Kurucz, 2019). These visualizations demonstrate that ontology-based approaches provide both theoretical and practical tools for comparative legal analysis, allowing researchers to navigate complex semantic structures and address culture-bound or system-specific concepts.

Beyond individual terms, the ontology supports construction of integrated semantic networks that reveal interdependencies among legal concepts within and across languages. By modeling hierarchical and associative relations, the ontology enables the identification of clusters where functional and conceptual alignment is high, as well as zones of divergence where conceptual gaps, partial correspondences, or culture-bound meanings occur (Šarčević, 2010; Bhatia, 2015). For instance, clusters related to civil obligations, property claims, and accountability reveal strong direct and multiple correspondences, while clusters representing common law constructs such as **“equitable responsibility”** or **“trust duties”** display absent equivalence in Uzbek. This

comprehensive mapping allows scholars and translators to anticipate potential challenges in cross-linguistic interpretation, identify terms requiring contextual explanation, and design bilingual terminological resources that reflect both legal content and functional usage (Kuznetsova, 2018; Tiersma, 1999).

In conclusion, the ontological modeling of English and Uzbek legal terminology demonstrates the value of structured, ontology-based approaches for capturing complex lexico-semantic relations. The developed ontology provides hierarchical organization, maps semantic relations, and visualizes conceptual networks, offering both analytical insight and practical applications. Case studies illustrate the nuanced mapping of direct, multiple, and absent equivalences, while comparative semantic networks reveal functional and conceptual divergences critical for cross-linguistic understanding. By integrating these modeling techniques, the ontology establishes a replicable, rigorous, and semantically transparent framework for bilingual legal terminology, supporting translation, interpretation, and comparative jurilinguistic research (Buitelaar et al., 2005; Šarčević, 2010; Kuznetsova, 2018; Bhatia, 2015; Zakharyashev & Kurucz, 2019).

Conclusion

The present study demonstrates the critical role of ontological modeling in the lexico-semantic analysis of English and Uzbek legal terminology. Through hierarchical structuring, semantic mapping, and comparative analysis, the research has revealed patterns of direct, multiple, and absent equivalences, as well as functional asymmetries between the two legal systems. Culture-bound and system-specific concepts were shown to present particular challenges for cross-linguistic interpretation, emphasizing the limitations of traditional translation-based and descriptive approaches. Polysemy, contextual variation, and functional differentiation were identified as central features of legal terms, highlighting the dynamic interplay between language, legal norms, and doctrinal frameworks.

The ontology developed in this study provides a systematic, replicable, and semantically transparent framework for representing bilingual legal concepts. It enables the visualization of conceptual networks, the mapping of semantic and functional relations, and the identification of areas of equivalence and divergence, supporting both academic research and practical applications such as translation, terminology standardization, and comparative jurilinguistic studies.

By integrating linguistic, legal, and ontological methodologies, the study bridges the gap between lexical analysis and functional understanding of legal terms, offering a foundation for future research in bilingual legal

terminology, semantic interoperability, and artificial intelligence-based legal knowledge representation. Ultimately, this research underscores the importance of ontology-based approaches for enhancing clarity, consistency, and cross-linguistic alignment in legal communication between English and Uzbek contexts.

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