DEEP OR SERIOUS? GRADING CONCERN IN THE UZBEK AND ENGLISH VERSIONS OF DIPLOMATIC STATEMENTS

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Abstract. Official statements on international crises are read closely, and the strength of the concern they express is itself part of the message. This paper compares the Uzbek and English versions of four statements issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan in 2025–2026. Drawing on the Uzbek tradition of graduonymy and on the notion of graduation in appraisal theory, it shows that in both languages concern is graded along two dimensions: the strength of the speaker's feeling (*chuqur* / *deep*) and the seriousness of the situation (*jiddiy* / *serious*). In two of the four statements the language versions agree; in the other two the markers are swapped, so that Uzbek *chuqur xavotir* appears as *serious concern* and Uzbek *jiddiy xavotir* as *deep concern*. The paper also describes differences in grammatical form (nominal versus adjectival constructions) and a case where a verbal phrase is rendered by the stronger adjective *alarming*. Since the published texts do not show which version was drafted first, the mismatches are treated as a semantic asymmetry between the two languages rather than as translators' errors. A bilingual scale of stable equivalents is proposed for official translation and editing.

Keywords: diplomatic statement; concern; gradation; graduonymy; appraisal; intensifier; parallel texts.

1. Introduction

A diplomatic statement is the form in which a state makes its official position on an event public. Every word in it is weighed, because it will be read closely by other

governments, international organizations and the media. Evaluative units such as *expresses concern*, *condemns* or *supports* carry the core of the message: they show how close the state stands to the events and what signal it is sending to its partners.

Expressions of concern are graded. *Expresses concern* and *expresses deep concern* are not interchangeable, and the readers of a statement take the difference as a measure of how strongly the situation is being judged. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan publishes its statements in several languages at once, so the degree markers in different versions of one statement ought to match. This paper asks whether they do.

The aim is to compare how concern is graded in Uzbek and English and to identify mismatches between the two language versions of the same statements.

2. Theoretical background

Gradation was first described systematically in linguistics by Sapir, who regarded grading as a mental operation that precedes measuring and counting (Sapir, 1944). In Uzbek linguistics the phenomenon has been studied under the name of graduonymy, that is, the arrangement of words expressing one property to different degrees into ordered series (Orifjonova, 1996).

Appraisal theory offers a complementary perspective. Martin and White (2005) describe graduation as the system by which speakers raise or lower the force of their evaluations, and they separate evaluations of the speaker's own feelings (affect) from evaluations of things and situations (appreciation). This distinction turns out to be useful for telling *deep* concern from *serious* concern.

From a pragmatic point of view, boosting and hedging devices show how firmly a writer commits to a claim (Hyland, 2005). In diplomatic language they are also tied to the need to protect the addressee's face (Brown & Levinson, 1987), and Chilton (2004) has shown how evaluative choices in political discourse shape the way events are presented to the public.

3. Material and methods

The material consists of four statements published in Uzbek and English on the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan between June 2025 and September 2026. They were selected from statements on international security in which both language versions contain an expression of concern. For each statement, the

expression of concern, its modifier and its grammatical form were recorded, and the two versions were then compared for degree and dimension. The analysis combines comparative, componential and graduonymic methods. The sample is small, and the findings should be read as an exploratory description rather than a quantitative generalization.

4. Results

4.1. Two dimensions of concern

In the Uzbek statements concern appears in three main forms: *xavotir bildiradi*, *jiddiy xavotir bildiradi* and *chuqur xavotir bildiradi*. English offers a similar series: *concern*, *serious concern*, *deep concern*. These series, however, cannot be placed on a single line. *Deep* grades the speaker's inner state, the strength of the feeling, while *serious* grades the situation, the weight of what is happening. In appraisal terms, *deep* intensifies affect and *serious* intensifies appreciation (Martin & White, 2005).

Uzbek draws the same line: *chuqur* 'deep' points to the inner state and *jiddiy* 'serious' to the assessment of the situation. *Deep concern* says that the author has been strongly affected by the events; *serious concern* says that their consequences may be grave. In both languages, therefore, concern is graded along two dimensions: strength of feeling and seriousness of the situation.

4.2. Grammatical means of grading

The two languages also differ in grammar. Uzbek expresses concern mainly through the noun *xavotir* combined with the verb *bildirmoq* 'to express': *xavotir bildiradi*, *xavotirdaligini bildiradi*. English uses the nominal construction (*expresses concern*) but also, and quite often, an adjectival one: *is concerned*, *is deeply concerned*, *is gravely concerned*. With the adjective, degree is marked by an adverb; with the noun, by an adjective. English *grave* also ranks above *serious* and occupies the top of the scale. Uzbek has no stable unit that fully corresponds to it, and no modifier higher than *jiddiy* and *chuqur* occurred in the texts analysed.

4.3. Mismatches between parallel versions

Table 1 shows how concern is expressed in the Uzbek and English versions of the four statements.

Table 1. Expressions of concern in statements of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan

Date	Subject	Uzbek version	English version
13.06.2025	Israel's military operation against Iran	*chuqur xavotir bildiradi*	*expresses its serious concern*
27.02.2026	Situation on the Afghanistan–Pakistan border	*chuqur xavotirdaligini bildiradi*	*expresses its deep concern*
28.02.2026	Escalation in the Middle East	*jiddiy xavotirdaligini bildiradi*	*expresses deep concern*
12.09.2026	Situation in the Middle East, attacks on Saudi Arabia	*chuqur xavotir bildiradi*	*expresses its deep concern*

Source: compiled by the author from statements of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2025, 2026a, 2026b, 2026c).

In two statements *chuqur xavotir* is rendered as *deep concern*, and the degree matches fully (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2026a, 2026c). In the other two the markers are reversed. In the statement of 13 June 2025, Uzbek *chuqur xavotir* corresponds to English *serious concern* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2025); in the statement of 28 February 2026, Uzbek *jiddiy xavotir* corresponds to English *deep concern* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2026b). Put differently, the dimension of feeling in one language has become the dimension of situation in the other, and the other way round.

4.4. Other differences in form

The Uzbek texts alternate between *xavotir bildiradi*, which performs the speech act directly, and *xavotirdaligini bildiradi*, which reports the Ministry's state (roughly 'states that it is concerned'). The English texts likewise alternate between *expresses deep concern* and *expresses its deep concern*, where the possessive *its* ties the evaluation explicitly to the institution. These differences matter less than the degree markers do, but they affect the stylistic consistency of official texts.

The statement of 13 June 2025 contains one more case worth noting: the Uzbek verbal phrase *xavotir uyg'otmoqda* 'is giving rise to concern' is rendered by the English adjective *alarming* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2025). The meaning is preserved, yet *alarming* is stronger than 'concern' and comes closer to 'alarm' or 'danger'.

5. Discussion

A swap of degree markers looks like a minor matter, but in a diplomatic text it has pragmatic consequences. Readers of the Uzbek version understand that the situation has been judged serious; readers of the English version understand that a strong feeling has been expressed. The same statement thus sends two audiences slightly different signals. Since much of the international audience reads only the English version, the difference carries more weight than it may seem. Politeness theory predicts that the stronger an evaluation is, the heavier it weighs on the addressee (Brown & Levinson, 1987), so an accidental rise or fall in degree is undesirable in diplomatic writing.

It should be stressed that the published texts do not show which version is the original and which is the translation; both may well have been drafted at the same time. It would therefore be wrong to put the mismatches down to translators' errors. A more plausible explanation is a semantic asymmetry: Uzbek speakers often perceive *jiddiy* and *chuqur* as synonyms, while English *serious* and *deep* belong to different dimensions. In addition, the Uzbek phrases *chuqur xavotir* and *jiddiy xavotir* are structurally close to formulas found in Russian official statements, which raises the question of how they entered Uzbek diplomatic usage and calls for a separate study.

To prevent such mismatches, the scale of stable equivalents in Table 2 is proposed.

Table 2. Proposed Uzbek–English scale of equivalents for expressions of concern

Uzbek form	**English equivalent**	**Dimension graded**
xavotir bildiradi	*expresses concern*	neutral (base level)
jiddiy xavotir bildiradi	*expresses serious concern*	seriousness of the situation
chuqur xavotir bildiradi	*expresses deep concern*	strength of feeling
xavotir uyg'otmoqda	*gives rise to concern*	seriousness of the situation

Uzbek form	English equivalent	Dimension graded
tahlikali; *jiddiy tashvish uyg‘otmoqda*	*alarming*	seriousness of the situation, high degree

Source: compiled by the author.

If such a scale were adopted as an internal guide for translators, the same form would be chosen for the same kind of situation, and stylistic variation between statements would decrease.

6. Conclusion

In both Uzbek and English, concern is graded not along a single line but along two dimensions: strength of feeling and seriousness of the situation. Of the four parallel statements of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs analysed here, two showed matching degree markers, while in the other two *chuqur* and *jiddiy* were swapped in the English version. This confirms that evaluative units require particular attention in diplomatic translation. The proposed scale of equivalents may help to align the language versions of official texts and can be used in translation, editing and translator training. Future research will look at other evaluative units, such as *condemns* and *supports*, from the same angle.

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