
Phraseological translation across cultures: balancing meaning and image in English–Uzbek idiom rendering

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Annotation *This study explores the principal strategies applied in translating culturally-bound phraseological units from English into Uzbek, combining theoretical foundations of translation studies with empirical observations from professional practice and academic teaching. Employing descriptive and comparative analysis within a framework informed by prominent translation theory models, the research identifies four core strategies: use of full equivalents, calquing, cultural adaptation, and descriptive translation. The study demonstrates that while universal idioms with shared cultural imagery can be directly translated without loss of meaning, phraseological units that embody culture-specific elements typically necessitate adaptation or explanatory rendering to maintain pragmatic value, stylistic nuance, and communicative effectiveness in the target language. Furthermore, it emphasizes that informed strategic decision-making, grounded in both linguistic competence and intercultural awareness, is crucial for balancing semantic precision with naturalness and acceptability. The findings reinforce the translator's role as an active cultural mediator, contributing significantly to successful intercultural communication in an increasingly globalized context.*

Keywords *Translation studies, phraseological units, cultural adaptation, English-Uzbek translation, equivalence, translator competence, intercultural communication*

Фразеологический перевод в разных культурах: баланс значения и образа в англо-узбекской передаче идиом

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Аннотация *Данное исследование посвящено анализу основных стратегий, применяемых при переводе культурно обусловленных фразеологических единиц с английского языка на узбекский, опираясь на академические и практические знания в области теории перевода и профессиональной переводческой деятельности. Исследование основано на описательном анализе наиболее распространённых трудностей, возникающих при переводе как в учебной среде, так и в реальной переводческой практике, и использует методологическую основу, сформированную на базе признанных моделей переводческой теории. В ходе анализа выявлены четыре ключевые стратегии: использование полных эквивалентов, калькирование, культурная адаптация и описательный перевод. Полученные результаты показывают, что при наличии универсальных идиом возможен прямой перевод, однако фразеологические единицы с выраженной культурной спецификой чаще всего требуют адаптации или описательного пояснения*

для сохранения прагматического значения и обеспечения естественности в языке перевода. В исследовании делается вывод о том, что стратегический выбор переводчика играет решающую роль в поддержании баланса между семантической точностью и лингвистической уместностью, подтверждая его функцию как культурного медиатора в условиях глобальной коммуникации.

Ключевые слова *Переводоведение, фразеологические единицы, культурная адаптация, перевод с английского на узбекский, эквивалентность, переводческая компетентность, межкультурная коммуникация*

Madaniyatlararo frazeologik tarjima: ingliz–o‘zbek idiomalarni tarjima qilishda ma’no va obraz muvozanati

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Annotatsiya *Mazkur maqola ingliz tilidan o‘zbek tiliga tarjima jarayonida madaniyatga xos frazeologik birliklarni tarjima qilishda qo‘llaniladigan asosiy strategiyalarni ilmiy-nazariy yondashuvlar hamda amaliy tarjima faoliyati va ta‘lim jarayonida kuzatilgan empirik kuzatuvlar uyg‘unligida tahlil qiladi. Tarjima nazariyasining yetakchi modellari asosida shakllangan chog‘ishtirma va tavsifiy tahlil metodlariga tayangan holda, tadqiqot to‘rtta asosiy strategiyani aniqlaydi: to‘liq ekvivalentlardan foydalanish, kalkalash, madaniy moslashtirish va tavsifiy tarjima. Tadqiqot natijalariga ko‘ra, madaniyatlararo umumiy obrazlarga ega frazeologik birliklar ma’no yo‘qotilmasdan to‘g‘ridan-to‘g‘ri tarjima qilinishi mumkin, biroq milliy-madaniy xususiyatlarni aks ettiruvchi birliklar pragmatik qiymat, uslubiy noziklik va kommunikativ samaradorlikni saqlash maqsadida ko‘pincha moslashtirish yoki izohli tarjimini talab qiladi. Shuningdek, semantik aniqlikni tabiiylik va qabul qilinuvchanlik bilan muvozanatlashda lingvistik kompetensiya hamda madaniyatlararo xabardorlikka tayanadigan strategik qaror qabul qilish zarurligi ta’kidlanadi. Olingan natijalar tarjimonning globallashuv sharoitida madaniyatlararo muloqotni samarali ta’minlovchi faol madaniy vositachi sifatidagi rolini yanada mustahkamlaydi.*

Kalit so‘zlar *Tarjimashunoslik, frazeologik birliklar, madaniy moslashtirish, ingliz tilidan o‘zbek tiliga tarjima, ekvivalentlik, tarjimon kompetensiyasi, madaniyatlararo kommunikatsiya*

Introduction

In recent decades, the expansion of global relations and intensification of intercultural communication have significantly influenced linguistic interaction among nations.

As international collaboration grows, both in academic and professional contexts, the process of translation increasingly demands awareness of not only linguistic mechanisms but also cultural realities embedded within the

source language. This necessity becomes especially pronounced when dealing with phraseological units such as idioms, proverbs, and set expressions, as these constitute highly culture-bound elements of language that carry deep connotative, historical, and symbolic meaning.

In the context of English–Uzbek translation, this issue is particularly relevant due to the differing socio-cultural and historical backgrounds of the two languages. Although globalization promotes mutual understanding and facilitates access to linguistic diversity, it simultaneously creates challenges when culturally specific linguistic elements are transferred without appropriate adjustment. Translators – especially those working between languages with distinct cognitive and cultural frameworks – are required to transcend mere lexical conversion. They must function as cultural interpreters who assess, deconstruct, and reconstruct meaning in a way that is both comprehensible and culturally appropriate for the target audience.

The complexity of rendering phraseological units arises from their non-compositional nature. As Baker (1992) states, the meaning of the whole expression cannot be inferred simply by analyzing its individual parts. For example, the phrase “kick the bucket” cannot be translated by literally interpreting “kick” and “bucket,” as its meaning is idiomatic. This phenomenon demands a deeper cognitive and cultural analysis, requiring translators to identify the intended meaning, conceptual structure, and cultural references before transferring them into the target language.

Scholars such as Nida (1964), Newmark (1988), and Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) have proposed theoretical frameworks that guide translators in resolving such issues. Nida’s dynamic equivalence emphasizes naturalness and functional impact, whereas Newmark differentiates between semantic and communicative translation, prompting translators to balance meaning and readability. Vinay and Darbelnet operationalize these

theories through strategic procedures such as literal translation, calquing, adaptation, and modulation, treating translation as a system-based decision-making process rather than a linear linguistic transformation.

This paper investigates translation strategies applied to English phraseological units and their rendering in Uzbek. Particular attention is given to identifying approaches that effectively bridge cultural disparities while maintaining semantic accuracy. The primary research question addressed is: Which translation strategies are most suitable for overcoming cultural barriers and ensuring natural, pragmatic equivalence when translating English phraseological units into Uzbek? By analyzing selected examples, the study proposes a strategic framework that may be used by translators and educators to enhance both translation quality and cultural adequacy.

Methods

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach, examining how English phraseological units are rendered into Uzbek using authentic and academically relevant sources. The corpus included samples from bilingual phraseological dictionaries, translated literary texts, and commonly encountered expressions in translation-based training materials. Phraseological units were selected based on their frequency in written and spoken discourse, potential for misinterpretation during translation, and relevance for academic instruction and practical application.

Each phraseological unit was evaluated using two primary parameters: the level of its cultural embeddedness and the translation strategy applied. The classification system was grounded in the procedural framework proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995), extended with elements of semantic equivalence theory (Larson, 1984) and pragmatic effect analysis (Nida, 1964). The analysis distinguished four strategic approaches:

1. **Direct Translation (Full Equivalents):** Applied when the phrase has an established idiomatic counterpart in the target language (e.g., "To lose one's head" → "boshi aylanmoq").
2. **Calque (Loan Translation):** Used when the literal component image can be transferred without distorting meaning, provided that comprehension remains intact.
3. **Cultural Adaptation:** Involves replacing the source phraseological image with a culturally corresponding expression in the target language.
4. **Descriptive Translation:** Used when no idiomatic or culturally adequate

equivalent exists, requiring the translator to explain the meaning directly.

Each strategy was evaluated based on its ability to preserve pragmatic meaning, maintain stylistic appropriateness, and achieve naturalness within the target language. Additional insights were obtained from translator feedback and classroom-based observations, reflecting real-life decision-making in translation training.

Results and Discussion

The analysis revealed a consistent link between the degree of cultural imagery complexity and the translation strategy used. The Table 1 summarizes key case examples used for analytical purposes.

Strategy	Applicability	English Example	Uzbek Translation	Analysis of Equivalence
1. Direct Translation	Universal or historically shared imagery	"To lose one's head"	"boshi aylanmoq"	Full equivalence; metaphor and meaning preserved
2. Calque	Logically interpretable structure	"To fish for compliments"	"maqtoivni ovlamoq"	Understandable but not conventional; partial equivalence
3. Cultural Adaptation	Culture-dependent figurative meaning	"To carry coal to Newcastle"	"suvni dengizga tashimoq"	Strong functional equivalence using culturally relevant imagery
4. Descriptive Translation	Opaque, context-driven idioms	"To show someone the ropes"	"biror ishni qanday bajarilishini o'rgatmoq"	Accurate meaning, but figurativeness omitted

Table 1. Case examples used for analytical purposes

Direct translation produced consistent results only where an existing Uzbek idiom conveyed equivalent meaning and imagery. Such occurrences were limited to universally shared concepts or historical metaphors found across multiple cultures. For example, "boshi aylanmoq" adequately renders the figurative meaning of "to lose one's head."

Calquing was moderately effective in cases where imagery was conceptually transparent but resulted in expressions that lacked idiomatic naturalness. Therefore, calques should be used cautiously, as overuse may lead to semantic distortions or stylistic incongruities.

Cultural adaptation emerged as the predominant strategy for idioms with strong

cultural associations. Translators tended to replace foreign imagery with culturally familiar constructs, demonstrating alignment with Nida's dynamic equivalence and Newmark's communicative translation principles. This approach is particularly suitable when translating for audiences with high expectations of linguistic naturalness, as is often the case in literary or public communication.

Descriptive translation was necessary when transfer of figurative meaning was impossible without causing misunderstanding. Although this method sacrifices stylistic elegance, it ensures clarity and semantic precision, which may be essential in technical or academic domains.

Conclusion

The translation of culturally-bound phraseological units from English into Uzbek is a complex process that extends beyond direct linguistic transfer, requiring careful balance between semantic accuracy and cultural suitability. Based on the analysis, **cultural adaptation** is identified as the most effective strategy for ensuring naturalness and

pragmatic equivalence. Direct translation and calquing are workable only in cases of shared conceptual structures or easily interpretable imagery. When cultural references have no equivalent within the Uzbek context, descriptive translation serves as a viable alternative, offering clarity at the expense of figurativeness.

Effective phraseological translation ultimately depends on the translator's ability to make informed strategic decisions that align meaning with communicative intention. Given the increasing intercultural dynamics and expanding importance of accurate linguistic mediation, the translator's role continues to evolve beyond literal translation, functioning instead as a facilitator of cultural dialogue.

Future research should focus on corpus-based quantitative analysis to identify recurring strategy patterns, as well as digital integration of phraseological databases to aid translator training. Further study into cognitive aspects of idiom processing may also contribute to advancing translation methodology, particularly for languages with deeply rooted cultural expressions such as Uzbek.

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