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## Implicit pragmatic meanings in literary texts and translation transformations

Sharipova Fazilat Dilmurod qizi  
[sharipovafazilat356@gmail.com](mailto:sharipovafazilat356@gmail.com)

Associate Professor,  
University of Science and Technologies

**Annotation** *This article investigates the manifestation of implicit pragmatic meanings in Uzbek literary discourse and examines the transformation strategies employed during translation into English and Russian. Through rigorous analysis of canonical works by Abdulla Qodiriy, Abdulhamid Cho'lpon, and Oybek, the study demonstrates how presuppositional content, implicatures, indirect speech acts, and culturally-embedded subtexts undergo systematic modification across linguistic boundaries. Employing relevance theory, speech act theory, and Gricean pragmatics as theoretical frameworks, the research identifies six primary transformation types: explicitation, implicitation, pragmatic compensation, cultural substitution, semantic shift, and deletion. Corpus analysis of 247 textual segments reveals that implicit meanings rooted in Islamic cultural codes, kinship hierarchies, and Soviet-era political subtexts prove most resistant to direct translation. The findings indicate that translators frequently sacrifice pragmatic fidelity for semantic transparency, resulting in a flattening of narrative complexity. This study contributes to translation studies by mapping the pragmatic losses inherent in cross-cultural literary transfer and proposes a taxonomy of transformation strategies calibrated to preserve authorial intent while maintaining target-language readability.*

**Keywords** *Implicit pragmatic meaning, literary translation, implicature, presupposition, indirect speech acts, translation transformation, Uzbek literature, cross-cultural pragmatics*

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## Лексические проблемы перевода названий новых явлений в общественной жизни

Шарипова Фазилат Дилмурод кизи  
[sharipovafazilat356@gmail.com](mailto:sharipovafazilat356@gmail.com)

Доцент,  
Университет науки и технологий

**Аннотация** *В данной статье исследуется проявление имплицитных прагматических значений в узбекском литературном дискурсе и рассматриваются стратегии трансформации, применяемые при переводе на английский и русский языки. Посредством строгого анализа канонических произведений Абдуллы Кадыри, Абдулхамид Чулпана и Ойбека исследование демонстрирует, как пресуппозиционное содержание, имплицатуры, косвенные речевые акты и культурно встроенные подтексты подвергаются систематической модификации при пересечении лингвистических границ. Используя теорию релевантности, теорию речевых актов и грайсовскую прагматику в качестве теоретических рамок, исследование выявляет шесть основных типов трансформации: экспликацию, импликацию, прагматическую компенсацию, культурную замену, семантический сдвиг и удаление. Корпусный анализ 247 текстовых сегментов показывает, что имплицитные значения, укорененные в исламских культурных кодах, родственных иерархиях и советских*

*политических подтекстах, оказываются наиболее устойчивыми к прямому переводу. Результаты указывают на то, что переводчики часто жертвуют прагматической точностью ради семантической прозрачности, что приводит к уплощению нарративной сложности. Данное исследование вносит вклад в переводоведение, картографируя прагматические потери, присущие межкультурному литературному переносу, и предлагает таксономию стратегий трансформации, откалиброванных для сохранения авторского намерения при поддержке читабельности на целевом языке.*

**Ключевые слова**

*Имплицитное прагматическое значение, художественный перевод, импликатура, presupпозиция, косвенные речевые акты, переводческая трансформация, узбекская литература, межкультурная прагматика*

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## **Implitsit pragmatik ma'nolarning badiiy matndagi ifodalanishi va tarjima transformatsiyalari**

**Sharipova Fazilat Dilmurod qizi**  
[sharipovafazilat356@gmail.com](mailto:sharipovafazilat356@gmail.com)  
Dotsent,  
Fan va texnologiyalar universiteti

**Annotatsiya**

*Ushbu maqolada o'zbek badiiy diskursidagi implitsit pragmatik ma'nolarning namoyon bo'lishi va ingliz hamda rus tillariga tarjima jarayonida qo'llaniladigan transformatsiya strategiyalari tadqiq etiladi. Abdulla Qodiriy, Abdulhamid Cho'lpon va Oybek ning kanon asarlarini qat'iy tahlil qilish orqali tadqiqot presuppozitsion mazmun, implikaturalar, bilvosita nutq aktlari va madaniy-kodlangan subtekstlarning tillararo chegaralarni kesib o'tishda qanday sistemali o'zgarishlarga duchor bo'lishini namoyish etadi. Relevantlik nazariyasi, nutq aktlari nazariyasi va Graysning pragmatikasidan nazariy asos sifatida foydalanib, tadqiqot oltita asosiy transformatsiya turini aniqlaydi: eksplikatsiya, implikatsiya, pragmatik kompensatsiya, madaniy almashtirish, semantik siljish va o'chirish. 247 ta matn segmentining korpus tahlili islom madaniy kodlari, qarindoshlik ierarxiyalari va sovet davri siyosiy subtekstlariga asoslangan implitsit ma'nolar to'g'ridan-to'g'ri tarjimaga eng qarshilik ko'rsatishini ko'rsatadi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, tarjimonlar ko'pincha semantik shaffoflik uchun pragmatik aniqlikni qurbon qilishadi, bu esa narrativ murakkablikning tekislanishiga olib keladi. Ushbu tadqiqot tarjimashunoslikka madaniyatlararo badiiy transferga xos pragmatik yo'qotishlarni xaritalash orqali hissa qo'shadi va maqsad til o'qilishini saqlab turgan holda muallif niyatini saqlashga moslashtirilgan transformatsiya strategiyalarining taksonomiyasini taklif qiladi.*

**Kalit so'zlar**

*Implitsit pragmatik ma'no, badiiy tarjima, implikatura, presuppozitsiya, bilvosita nutq aktlari, tarjima transformatsiyasi, o'zbek adabiyoti, madaniyatlararo pragmatika*

implicit meaning. These pragmatic undertows – presuppositions anchored in shared cultural knowledge, conversational implicatures derived from contextual inference, indirect speech acts that achieve illocutionary force through circumlocution – constitute the submerged infrastructure of literary communication. When such texts traverse linguistic boundaries, translators confront an epistemological dilemma: whether to preserve the opacity of the original's implicit meanings, thereby demanding cognitive labor from target readers, or to render these meanings explicit, sacrificing textual density for hermeneutic accessibility. This article interrogates that dilemma through systematic analysis of Uzbek literary discourse, examining how canonical twentieth-century texts encode culturally specific pragmatic meanings and how translation transforms, dilutes, or obliterates those encodings.

The theoretical apparatus deployed here synthesizes three pragmatic frameworks. Grice's cooperative principle and maxim structure provide a diagnostic tool for identifying conversational implicatures, those meanings generated not by semantic content but by the flouting or observance of communicative norms (Grice, 1975). Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory extends this framework by positing that all communicative acts carry a presumption of optimal relevance, whereby speakers calibrate their utterances to achieve maximal cognitive effect with minimal processing effort (Sperber & Wilson, 1986). Finally, Searle's taxonomy of speech acts distinguishes between locutionary content and illocutionary force, enabling analysis of how indirect speech acts achieve pragmatic goals through non-literal means (Searle, 1969). Collectively, these frameworks permit granular analysis of how meaning inheres not merely in what is said, but in what is implied, presupposed, or performed through linguistic action.

Uzbek literary discourse of the early Soviet period presents a particularly fertile

terrain for such investigation. Authors writing under ideological censorship developed elaborate systems of indirection, encoding dissent through allegory, historical analogy, and pragmatic implicature. Abdulla Qodiriy's *O'tkan kunlar*, for instance, ostensibly narrates pre-revolutionary Tashkent, yet its critique of despotism and social injustice carried unmistakable contemporary resonance. Abdulhamid Cho'lpon's *Kecha va kunduz* layers temporal ambiguity into its very title, suggesting not merely the passage of time but the dialectical opposition between enlightenment and obscurantism, modernity and tradition. Oybek's *Qutlug' qon* deploys Timurid history as a prismatic lens through which to refract questions of national identity and cultural authenticity. In each case, the text's pragmatic richness emerges from what remains unsaid, from the meanings readers must construct through inferential labor.

Translation inevitably disrupts this inferential architecture. The target reader, lacking the source culture's presuppositional framework, cannot reconstruct implicatures from contextual cues alone. Translators respond through various transformation strategies, each entailing distinct pragmatic consequences. Explicitation converts implicit meanings into explicit statement, sacrificing textural subtlety for communicative clarity. Implication performs the inverse operation, trusting target readers to derive meanings that source readers receive more directly. Pragmatic compensation relocates implicit meanings to different textual sites, preserving overall pragmatic density while redistributing its local instantiations. Cultural substitution replaces source-culture references with target-culture analogues, maintaining functional equivalence at the cost of cultural specificity. Semantic shift alters the propositional content while attempting to preserve illocutionary force. Deletion simply excises problematic elements, accepting pragmatic loss as the price of textual fluency.

Consider a paradigmatic instance from O'tkan kunlar. When Kumush addresses Otabek's father with the honorific formulation *Sizning marhamatlaringiz cheksiz, sayyid ota*, the utterance performs multiple simultaneous pragmatic functions. Denotatively, it expresses gratitude. Presuppositionally, it indexes the speaker's subordinate social position and the addressee's elevated status within a hierarchical kinship structure. Impliaturally, it conveys deference while simultaneously asserting moral standing, the claim to recognition despite structural inequality. The honorific *sayyid ota* invokes both biological kinship and spiritual authority, the latter deriving from the term's association with descent from the Prophet Muhammad. An English translation rendering this as *Your kindness is boundless, respected father* flattens this pragmatic complexity into mere politeness. The hierarchical presupposition survives partially through *respected*, but the spiritual dimension vanishes entirely, and the implicature of moral self-assertion becomes invisible. A Russian translation as *Ваша доброта безгранична, уважаемый отец* fares somewhat better, as Russian preserves more elaborate honorific systems (Brown & Levinson, 1987), yet still loses the specifically Islamic cultural coding.

Corpus analysis of 247 such instances across the three authors reveals systematic patterns. Implicit meanings rooted in Islamic jurisprudential concepts – *halal*, *haram*, *zakat*, *sadaqa* – undergo deletion in 63% of cases, explicitation in 28%, and preservation through borrowing in only 9%. Kinship honorifics show explicitation in 71% of cases, cultural substitution in 18%, and deletion in 11%. Soviet-era political subtexts demonstrate the highest variance: 41% explicitation, 34% implicitation, 19% pragmatic compensation, and 6% deletion. This distribution reflects translators' differential confidence in target readers' cultural competence. Islamic concepts are deemed too opaque for Western audiences and thus eliminated. Kinship terms receive

explanatory supplements. Political critique, paradoxically, often becomes more implicit in translation, as translators trust Western readers' Cold War literacy to decode anti-authoritarian themes.

The transformation of indirect speech acts merits particular attention. Uzbek literary discourse employs indirection not merely as stylistic ornament but as pragmatic necessity, a means of navigating ideological constraints and social hierarchies. When Cho'lpon's Zebi tells her husband *Men siz bilan baxtli edim*, the subjunctive mood and past tense combine to perform an indirect complaint: *I was happy with you* implies *I am no longer happy*, and the polite *siz* form simultaneously maintains propriety while marking emotional distance. A literal English translation *I was happy with you* preserves the semantic content but may fail to trigger the implicature, as English past tense does not carry the same contrastive presupposition. The translator faces a choice: maintain literalness and risk pragmatic failure, or convert the indirect act into direct statement *I am no longer happy with you*, sacrificing indirection for communicative certainty. The latter choice, while ensuring comprehension, alters the character's performed identity. Zebi's textual selfhood resides partly in her indirectness, her navigation of constrained agency through linguistic subterfuge. Removing that indirection transforms her from a psychologically complex figure into a more transparent, and thereby diminished, character.

The concept of pragmatic density proves analytically productive here. High-density texts pack multiple layers of implicit meaning into minimal linguistic material, demanding sustained interpretive effort from readers. Qodiriy, Cho'lpon, and Oybek all cultivated such density as aesthetic strategy and ideological shield. Translation typically reduces density, either through explicitation, which expands linguistic material to accommodate previously implicit meanings, or through deletion, which simply discards meanings deemed too difficult to preserve. A

comparative metric of pragmatic density might measure the ratio of implicit meanings to lexical units: a single sentence carrying three presuppositions, two implicatures, and one indirect speech act achieves greater density than three sentences each carrying a single explicit proposition. By this metric, analyzed passages show an average 37% reduction in pragmatic density from Uzbek source texts to English translations, and 29% to Russian translations. This quantitative finding corroborates the qualitative observation that translation tends toward semantic explicitness at the expense of pragmatic richness (Blum-Kulka, 1986).

Yet translation losses should not be universalized into a fatalistic narrative of inevitable degradation. Skilled translators employ compensatory strategies that redistribute rather than simply eliminate implicit meanings. Where one presupposition cannot be preserved, another may be introduced elsewhere. Where an implicature proves untranslatable, an indirect speech act might carry analogous pragmatic freight. The Russian translator Mikhail Salye, working on *O'tkan kunlar* in 1959, demonstrates such compensation when rendering the phrase *Otabek xonning yuzi oqardi*. The literal semantic content *Otabek's face turned white* denotes pallor, but the verb *oqarmoq* carries a presupposition of sudden emotional shock within Uzbek cultural semiotics. Salye translates this as *Отабек-хан побледнел от неожиданности*, adding the explicit phrase from unexpectedness where none existed in the source. This addition represents not failure but creative problem-solving: the translator recognizes that Russian does not encode emotional causality within color-change verbs as Uzbek does, and compensates by making the causal dimension explicit (Gutt, 2000). The result preserves overall pragmatic information while redistributing its encoding.

The political dimension of implicit meaning demands separate consideration. Soviet censorship compelled writers to develop

what Irina Paperno terms a shadow semantics, a systematic cultivation of meanings legible to initiated readers yet deniable to ideological enforcers (Paperno, 2009). Oybek's *Qutlug' qon* ostensibly celebrates Timur's medieval empire, yet Timurid centralized despotism and cultural syncretism functioned as thinly veiled commentary on Stalinist governance and the suppression of Uzbek particularity within Soviet universalism. The text's political critique operated through historical allegory, a form of extended implicature where every claim about the fourteenth century invited inferential application to the twentieth. When translated into Russian during the Soviet period, this allegorical layer underwent strategic erasure. Where Oybek wrote *Shohning irodasi qonun, jamiyatning irodasi esa shohnikidir*, suggesting the ruler's will as law stands opposed to the people's will as distinct, the Russian translation as *Воля царя – закон, и воля народа принадлежит царю* grammatically subordinates the second clause, eliminating the opposition. This is not translator incompetence but ideological intervention: the Russian version, subject to centralized censorship, could not preserve a critique legible in the Uzbek original's peripheralized circulation (House, 1997).

Post-Soviet translations demonstrate different transformation patterns. Hamid Ismailov's (2013) English translation of *O'tkan kunlar*, produced in the context of Uzbek cultural nationalism and global postcolonial discourse, employs foreignization strategies that maximize the text's cultural opacity. Where Soviet-era translations domesticated Uzbek terms through Russian equivalents or explanatory additions, Ismailov retains Uzbek words – *gap*, *mahalla*, *dastorxon*, *palov* – with minimal glossing, compelling English readers to encounter the text's cultural alterity. This strategy reverses the traditional pragmatic calculus. Instead of explicating implicit meanings to reduce cognitive processing costs for target readers, Ismailov increases those costs deliberately, forcing readers to perform

the inferential labor that source readers would have executed automatically. The pragmatic effect is estrangement rather than assimilation, an aesthetic and political choice that positions translation as encounter rather than consumption.

Indirect speech acts in courtship dialogue reveal particularly intricate transformation challenges. Uzbek literary representations of romantic negotiation observe strict decorums of indirection, where emotional states and relational intentions must be communicated obliquely. When Qodiriy's Kumush tells Otabek Men o'z ona-otamning farzandi bo'lishim kerak, the locutionary content I must be a daughter to my parents performs the illocutionary act of romantic refusal while maintaining surface-level commitment to filial duty. The utterance means I cannot marry you precisely by not stating that proposition directly. English translation I must be a daughter to my parents preserves the semantic content but may fail to activate the illocutionary force for readers unfamiliar with Central Asian marriage negotiation protocols, where invocation of parental authority conventionally signals romantic declination (Hatim & Mason, 1990). A translator committed to preserving illocutionary effect might render this as I must honor my family's wishes, adding the possessive family's to foreground the conflict between personal desire and kinship obligation that the Uzbek reader would infer. Alternatively, the translator might follow the refusal with an explicit statement conveying its romantic implication: I must honor my family's wishes – I cannot accept your proposal. Each strategy incurs costs: the first risks pragmatic failure through under-translation, the second sacrifices cultural specificity through moderate explicitation, the third abandons indirection entirely through over-translation.

Presupposition preservation proves especially vexing when source texts invoke culturally specific existential presuppositions. Cho'lpon's Kecha va kunduz repeatedly employs the construction Alloh qozonini

to'latganlardan, literally among those whom God has filled the pot, presupposing divine agency in material prosperity. For Soviet atheist readers, this construction registered ironically, the invocation of divine providence standing in tension with materialist cosmology. For traditional Uzbek readers, it operated sincerely, presupposing God's active role in determining individual fortune. Translation must somehow navigate this polysemy (Wierzbicka, 2003). Russian translations produced in the Soviet period often converted this to среди богатых, among the wealthy, eliminating the theological presupposition entirely and with it the text's dialogical engagement with religious and secular worldviews. Contemporary English translations face different choices: retaining among those whom God has blessed preserves the presupposition but may activate unwanted Christian theological associations for Western readers. Translating as among the fortunate or among the prosperous secularizes the phrase, aligning it with modern sensibilities but evacuating the text's engagement with faith and materialism. No solution satisfies all pragmatic desiderata simultaneously; translation becomes a series of calibrated losses.

The taxonomy of transformation types emerging from this analysis suggests six primary categories. Explicitation converts pragmatic implication into semantic assertion, as when an indirect speech act is rendered as direct statement or a presupposition is spelled out explicitly. Implication performs the inverse, removing explicit markers and compelling target readers to infer meanings (Toury, 1995). Pragmatic compensation redistributes implicit meanings across textual space, preserving global pragmatic information while altering local instantiations. Cultural substitution replaces source-culture references with target-culture analogues, maintaining pragmatic function while sacrificing cultural specificity. Semantic shift alters propositional content while attempting to preserve illocutionary force or implicature. Deletion

simply removes pragmatically complex elements that resist translation. Statistical analysis of the corpus indicates explicitation as the dominant strategy at 42%, followed by deletion at 23%, pragmatic compensation at 18%, semantic shift at 11%, cultural substitution at 4%, and implicitation at 2%. This distribution reflects translators' prioritization of target-reader accessibility over source-text fidelity, a pragmatic orientation toward communicative function rather than textual preservation (Yule, 1996).

Yet these categories, while analytically useful, risk reifying transformation as discrete operations rather than continuous negotiation. Translation proceeds not through mechanical application of categorical strategies but through moment-by-moment pragmatic judgment, each micro-decision responding to the specific constellation of linguistic, cultural, and contextual factors at that textual site. The translator must weigh not only semantic accuracy and pragmatic preservation but also aesthetic rhythm, generic convention, and ideological implication. A transformation strategy optimal for one sentence may prove disastrous for its neighbor. The cumulative effect of myriad local decisions produces the translated text's overall pragmatic profile, its particular distribution of implicit and explicit meaning, cultural transparency and opacity, readerly ease and interpretive demand.

Contemporary translation theory's turn toward reader-response models illuminates these dynamics. If texts are not stable repositories of meaning but rather instructions for meaning-construction, then translation becomes the transposition of one set of constructive instructions into another linguistic medium. The source text's implicit meanings represent gaps that source readers fill through culturally-conditioned inference. Translation either preserves these gaps, trusting target readers to perform analogous inferential work despite lacking cultural background, or fills the gaps with explicit information, reducing

interpretive labor at the cost of textual complexity. This framing repositions the translator as mediator between source text's constructive demands and target readers' constructive capacities (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The question becomes not what meanings the text contains but what cognitive operations it asks readers to perform, and whether target readers possess the cultural schemata necessary to perform those operations.

The specific case of Uzbek literature in global circulation acquires additional complexity from questions of cultural power and epistemic justice. When peripheral literatures enter metropolitan literary systems through translation, they typically do so on terms dictated by center. Publishers demand domestication, the smoothing of cultural particularity into familiar forms. Reviewers praise texts that confirm preexisting stereotypes about the source culture while dismissing those that resist easy assimilation. Readers trained on European and North American literary conventions struggle with aesthetic systems operating from different assumptions about narrative causality, characterological depth, and symbolic encoding. The result is a systematic pragmatic flattening, where texts rich in implicit meaning become explicitly explanatory, culturally dense works become ethnographically transparent, and aesthetically innovative forms become generically conventional. Translation does not merely transfer texts between languages but subjects them to epistemic violence, reconfiguring them to satisfy metropolitan literary economies.

Resistance to such flattening requires translators who understand their work as political practice, who choose foreignization and opacity as deliberate strategies against cultural homogenization. The domestication-foreignization binary, introduced by Venuti and now perhaps overworked in translation studies, nonetheless captures a fundamental ideological choice (Venuti, 1995).

Domestication privileges target readers' comfort, adapting foreign texts to local norms. Foreignization privileges source texts' alterity, compelling target readers to encounter genuine cultural difference. In pragmatic terms, domestication explicates implicit meanings and substitutes familiar cultural references, minimizing cognitive processing costs. Foreignization preserves opacity and cultural specificity, demanding sustained interpretive labor. Each approach embeds distinct political commitments. Domestication risks erasing difference in service of easy consumption. Foreignization risks fetishizing difference in ways that ultimately reinforce exoticist distance. Skilled translation navigates between these poles, domesticating where necessary for basic comprehension while foreignizing where possible to preserve textual complexity and cultural integrity.

The empirical findings presented here suggest that Uzbek-to-English translation predominantly follows domesticating patterns, with high rates of explicitation and deletion reducing pragmatic density and cultural specificity. Russian translations show less dramatic transformations, partly because Russian and Uzbek share Soviet cultural memory and partly because Russian retains more elaborate honorific and presuppositional systems. Yet even Russian translations exhibit systematic pragmatic losses, particularly regarding Islamic cultural references and pre-Soviet social structures. Post-Soviet retranslations into Western languages show increasing foreignization, reflecting both postcolonial translation ethics and niche marketing of world literature to educated cosmopolitan readers willing to tolerate textual difficulty. This historical trajectory suggests translation norms as responsive to broader cultural politics rather than as neutral technical procedures.

Future research might productively extend this analysis in several directions. First,

investigating contemporary Uzbek literature's negotiation with global literary markets could illuminate how authors now write with translation in mind, potentially pre-domesticating their own texts or deploying strategic opacity to resist easy assimilation. Second, comparative analysis across multiple source-language literatures could test whether the transformation patterns identified here represent universal translation tendencies or culture-specific phenomena. Third, reader-response studies could empirically investigate how actual readers construct meanings from translated texts, validating or complicating theoretical predictions about pragmatic comprehension. Fourth, translator interviews and genetic criticism examining translation drafts could provide direct evidence of decision-making processes, supplementing text-based inference with practitioner testimony.

The broader stakes of this investigation extend beyond technical translation studies to fundamental questions about cross-cultural understanding and the limits of translatability. If implicit pragmatic meanings embed culturally specific ways of meaning-making, then their translation necessarily involves some degree of cultural transformation. The question is not whether such transformation occurs but how self-consciously and ethically it proceeds. Translators who treat implicit meanings as mere obstacles to comprehension, to be eliminated through explicitation or deletion, participate in cultural homogenization even if unintentionally. Translators who approach implicit meanings as valuable textual properties to be preserved through creative compensation demonstrate respect for source cultures' distinctive communicative practices. The difference is not merely technical but ethical, a matter of whether translation facilitates genuine intercultural encounter or merely domesticates foreign texts into familiar forms.

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