



CROSS-CULTURAL PRAGMATIC FAILURE IN ENGLISH-UZBEK NEWS HEADLINE TRANSLATION

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Abstract

The article studies cross-cultural pragmatic failure in the translation of English news headlines into Uzbek. The main attention is given to cases when a headline is translated correctly in grammar, but the real effect, hidden meaning, tone, or cultural signal is lost.

The article analyzes how English headlines use implicature, metaphor, presupposition, idioms, direct address, and cultural references. The study also explains why these elements can be difficult for Uzbek readers when a literal translation is used.

The aim of the article is to show the main reasons for pragmatic failure and to offer clear translation choices that can help to keep the meaning and the effect of the source headline. A qualitative method is used. Linguistic-pragmatic analysis, contrastive analysis, contextual analysis, and simple discourse analysis are applied to selected English headline examples and their Uzbek translations.

The results show that pragmatic failure is mainly caused by literal translation, wrong interpretation of idioms, loss of emotional tone, weak transfer of cultural background, and unsuitable use of direct commands.

The article concludes that a successful headline translation should not only repeat the words of the source text. The communicative aim, reader reaction, and



cultural context should also be preserved. The novelty of the article is connected with a focused English-Uzbek view of headline translation, where pragmatic meaning is treated as the central part of translation quality.

Keywords: pragmatic failure, news headline, English-Uzbek translation, culture, implicature, media discourse, translation strategy.

Introduction

News headlines are short, but their role in media texts is very strong. A headline gives the first signal about the article. It attracts attention, gives a short idea about the event, and often creates a certain feeling in the reader. In many cases a headline is read before the full text, and sometimes only the headline is read. For this reason, the translation of headlines has a special place in media translation.

The topic is important because English news is often translated into Uzbek for websites, social media pages, learning materials, and news reports. In this process, the headline may look simple, but the meaning may not be simple. English headlines often include shortened grammar, word play, metaphor, irony, idioms, cultural names, and hidden evaluation. These parts can be missed when a word-for-word translation is used. As a result, the Uzbek reader may receive a different message from the message intended in the English headline.

The main problem of the article is cross-cultural pragmatic failure. This term is used for a situation where the language form may be correct, but the communicative meaning is not received in the right way. Jenny Thomas explains pragmatic failure as failure to understand what is meant by what is said (Thomas 91). In translation, this problem becomes more serious because two languages and two cultures are involved. A translator needs to know not only vocabulary and grammar, but also how a headline works in a real media context.



The article analyzes the causes of pragmatic failure in English-Uzbek headline translation. The article also studies what kinds of translation changes can be used to reduce this failure. The analysis is based on selected headline examples that show the main types of problems: loss of implicature, wrong idiom translation, weak transfer of cultural meaning, unsuitable direct commands, and stylistic neutralization. The expected result is a clearer understanding of how headline meaning can be kept in Uzbek without making the translation heavy or unnatural.

The study is useful for students of translation, young translators, English teachers, and researchers interested in media language. The work can also be used in practical translation classes because the examples show how small words in a headline can change the whole effect of the text. The article follows the IMRAD order: introduction, literature review, methodology, analysis and discussion, conclusion, and references.

Literature Review

The theoretical base of the article starts with pragmatics. Austin studied how words can perform actions, not only describe things. His theory of speech acts showed that an utterance has a saying part, an action part, and an effect part (Austin). Searle later divided speech acts into groups such as assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations (Searle). These ideas are helpful for headline translation because a headline can inform, warn, invite, criticize, or persuade. If the translator notices only the words and does not notice the action of the headline, pragmatic failure may appear.

Grice developed the Cooperative Principle and explained how speakers and writers often mean more than they directly say (Grice 41-58). This idea is important for headlines because headlines are usually short and incomplete. Many headlines leave information open and make the reader guess the missing part. In translation, this hidden meaning should be understood before a target version is written.



Levinson and Yule also explained that meaning is strongly connected with context. Their works show that the same sentence can carry different meanings in different situations (Levinson; Yule).

Thomas gave a clear model for pragmatic failure and divided it into pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failure. Pragmalinguistic failure is connected with wrong language choice, while sociopragmatic failure is connected with wrong judgment of social and cultural rules (Thomas 99-112). This division is very useful for the present article. In headline translation, pragmalinguistic failure may appear when an idiom is translated literally. Sociopragmatic failure may appear when a cultural event, taboo topic, or polite tone is not adapted to the Uzbek reader.

Recent research has paid more attention to the pragmatics of headlines. Finkbeiner states that headlines have a central role in mediated communication and can be studied through pragmatic notions such as implicit meaning, emotion, relevance, and strategic communication (Finkbeiner 17-22). This research is helpful because it directly supports the idea that headlines should be analyzed as pragmatic texts. Al-Hindawi and Mohammed studied presupposition triggers in coronavirus news headlines. Their study selected sixty-six headlines from Fox News and BBC News and found that lexical presupposition triggers were especially frequent (Al-Hindawi and Mohammed 30-57). This result is important for the present article because presupposition is one of the main sources of hidden meaning in headlines.

Research on news translation also gives useful points. Hernández Guerrero explains that news translation is affected by journalistic needs, target reader expectations, and the culture of each language community. The chapter notes that news translators often use omission, addition, substitution, and reorganization, and that headlines are often recreated rather than translated word by word (Hernández Guerrero 232-249). Akhiroh studied how the intention of a news headline is transferred in translation and showed that thematic structure can show the writer's



intention (Akhiroh). This point is useful for English-Uzbek headline translation because the position of information in the headline can guide reader attention.

Methodology

The article uses a qualitative research design. The main aim is not to count all possible mistakes, but to explain how and why pragmatic failure appears in English-Uzbek headline translation. The selected examples are analyzed as short media texts. Each headline is treated as a communicative unit with a purpose, tone, and possible reader effect.

Four methods are used in the research. The first method is linguistic-pragmatic analysis. This method is used to identify the speech act, implicature, presupposition, tone, and intended effect of the source headline. For example, a headline with the word “must” may be more than information. It may carry pressure, judgment, or a call for action. The second method is contrastive analysis. English and Uzbek versions are compared to see what has been kept, changed, weakened, or lost. This comparison helps to find the place where pragmatic failure begins.

The third method is contextual analysis. A headline cannot be fully understood without context. Cultural background, topic, genre, and target reader expectations are considered. For instance, a headline about Thanksgiving needs cultural explanation for many Uzbek readers because the event is not part of everyday Uzbek culture. The fourth method is discourse analysis. The headline is studied as part of media discourse. The analysis asks how the headline positions the reader and how it frames the event.

Analysis and Discussion

Extract 1. Source headline: “Read our exclusive interview.” Possible literal Uzbek translation: “Bizning eksklyuziv intervyuni o‘qing.”



Simple analysis. The English headline uses the imperative form “Read.” In English online media, this form is common and usually sounds normal. It is used to invite the reader to open the article. In Uzbek, a direct command in a headline may sound too strong or too direct, especially when the aim is only to invite the reader. The literal translation keeps the grammar, but the tone becomes less natural.

Discussion. A better Uzbek version may be “Eksklyuziv intervyu: diqqat markazida” or “Eksklyuziv suhbat tafsilotlari.” In these versions, the invitation is kept in a softer way. The reader is still guided toward the article, but the headline does not sound like an order. This example shows a pragmalinguistic failure because the same grammatical form has different pragmatic force in two languages.

Extract 2. Source headline: “Why don’t you try our new product?” Possible literal Uzbek translation: “Nega yangi mahsulotimizni sinab ko‘rmayapsiz?”

Simple analysis. The English sentence looks like a question, but its real function is not a question. It is an invitation or advertisement. In Uzbek, the literal question can sound like blame. The reader may feel that a negative answer is being criticized. The speech act changes from invitation to pressure.

Discussion. A clearer Uzbek version may be “Yangi mahsulotimizni sinab ko‘ring!” or “Yangi mahsulot bilan tanishing.” The communicative purpose becomes more natural. The problem here is connected with speech act transfer. A form that works as an indirect invitation in English may not work in the same way in Uzbek.

Extract 3. Source headline: “The ball is in your court.” Possible literal Uzbek translation: “To‘p sizning maydoningizda.”

Simple analysis. This English idiom means that the next decision or action belongs to another person. A literal translation may be understood as a sports



statement. The intended meaning is lost because the idiom is culture-bound and figurative. The source headline depends on shared idiomatic knowledge.

Discussion. A better Uzbek translation depends on the context. Possible versions are “Endi navbat sizda,” “Qaror qabul qilish sizga bog‘liq,” or “Keyingi qadam sizdan.” These versions do not repeat the image of the ball, but they keep the pragmatic meaning. This example shows that idiom translation should be meaning-based. Formal similarity can create misunderstanding.

Extract 4. Source headline: “A storm in a teacup.” Possible literal Uzbek translation: “Choy piyolasidagi bo‘ron.”

Simple analysis. The English idiom means that a small problem is made to look too serious. The literal Uzbek version sounds strange and may not give the intended meaning. Some Uzbek readers may understand the image, but the journalistic effect is still weak. The phrase loses its naturalness.

Discussion. A possible Uzbek version is “Arzimagan masala atrofidagi shovshuv” or “Kichik muammo katta gapga aylandi.” The translation becomes longer, but the meaning becomes clear. In headline translation, a short target version is good, but clarity is more important when the idiom is not shared by both cultures.

Extract 5. Source headline: “Thanksgiving dinner: more than just turkey.” Possible literal Uzbek translation: “Shukrona kuni kechki ovqati: kurkadan ko‘proq.”

Simple analysis. The English headline uses a cultural event that is familiar to many American readers. For Uzbek readers, Thanksgiving may not have the same cultural value. The word “turkey” is not only food in this headline. It is connected with family, holiday tradition, and national culture. A literal translation gives the words, but does not give the cultural frame.



Discussion. A better Uzbek headline may include a small explanation: “Thanksgiving bayrami dasturxonlari: kurka bilan cheklanmaydigan an’ana.” This version keeps the cultural term and adds the idea of tradition. The example shows sociopragmatic failure because the problem is not grammar. The problem is shared cultural knowledge.

Extract 6. Source headline: “What the hell is going on in Sudan?” Possible literal Uzbek translation: “Sudanda do‘zaxda nima bo‘lyapti?”

Simple analysis. The English expression “what the hell” is used to show shock, anger, or strong confusion. If it is translated literally with a religious word, the Uzbek version may sound rude, strange, or culturally unsuitable. The emotional force is not the same in the two languages. The literal choice may create an unwanted religious association.

Discussion. A more acceptable Uzbek version may be “Sudanda aslida nima bo‘lyapti?” or “Sudandagi vaziyat nega bu qadar og‘ir?” The strong emotion can be kept through context and wording, not through literal religious language. This example shows that taboo and emotional language need careful adaptation.

The examples show that pragmatic failure in headline translation is mainly caused by five repeated problems. The first problem is literal transfer of forms. The second problem is weak recognition of the speech act. The third problem is literal translation of idioms. The fourth problem is loss of cultural background. The fifth problem is loss of emotional or attractive force. These problems are linked with both language and culture.

Conclusion

The article analyzed cross-cultural pragmatic failure in English-Uzbek news headline translation. The results show that pragmatic failure appears when the Uzbek translation gives the basic words but loses the intended function, tone, hidden



meaning, or cultural signal of the English headline. The most common problems are literal translation, wrong transfer of indirect speech acts, idiom misunderstanding, cultural mismatch, and stylistic neutralization.

The analysis shows that headlines should be translated as communicative texts. A headline is not only a title. It is a small media message that informs, attracts, evaluates, and sometimes persuades. For this reason, the translator needs to identify the pragmatic purpose before choosing Uzbek words. The source headline should be checked for speech act, implicature, presupposition, cultural reference, idiom, and emotional tone.

The achieved result is a simple practical model for headline analysis: extract, simple analysis, and discussion. This model can be used in translation classes and in small research projects. The novelty of the article is that English-Uzbek headline translation is discussed through pragmatic failure, not only through lexical or grammatical equivalence. The article also shows that successful translation may require softening, explanation, substitution, or rewording.

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