METHODS AND CHALLENGES OF TRANSLATING ENGLISH PROVERBS AND IDIOMS FROM ENGLISH TO UZBEK

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Abstract: This article explores the linguistic and cultural complexities involved in translating English proverbs and idioms into the Uzbek language. Unlike literal translation, rendering figurative language requires a deep understanding of the source culture and the application of specific translation strategies. The research focuses on practical analysis, categorizing translation methods into equivalent-based, analogical, and descriptive approaches. By examining specific examples, the article identifies major obstacles such as cultural untranslatability, lexical gaps, and stylistic differences. The findings emphasize that a successful translation must balance semantic accuracy with the preservation of the original's emotional and aesthetic impact, often necessitating domestication or functional equivalence over direct word-for-word translation.

Key words: Translation studies, idioms, proverbs, cultural equivalence, domestication, foreignization, linguistic barriers, figurative language, Uzbek translation.

Introduction: To begin with the fundamental terminology, the field of phraseology encompasses fixed expressions, phrases, and word combinations that possess a holistic meaning, independent of the individual definitions of their constituent parts. Within this linguistic framework, a proverb is defined as a brief, concise, and metaphorical piece of folklore that encapsulates the collective wisdom and life lessons of a nation. Proverbs serve as pedagogical tools, offering moral guidance or practical advice based on centuries of human experience. It is a well-established fact that every nation possesses a unique treasury

of phraseological units and proverbs that mirror its distinct lifestyle, spirituality, and cultural heritage.

In the realm of translation studies, rendering proverbs and idioms from English into Uzbek presents a complex array of ethnic, cultural, and stylistic challenges. Although the systematic study of translation emerged as a scientific discipline as early as the 15th and 16th centuries, the dilemma of effectively translating these figurative units remains a highly relevant and debated issue in contemporary linguistics.

This article aims to evaluate the efficacy and limitations of previously proposed translation methods, with a particular focus on Eugene Nida's theory of Formal and Dynamic Equivalence. By analyzing a selection of more than ten English proverbs and idioms and their Uzbek counterparts, this study seeks to identify the most effective strategies for achieving a translation that remains faithful to the original's essence while resonating with the target audience's cultural sensibilities.

The Nature of Proverbs and Idioms: A Multidimensional Analysis: Proverbs and idioms are not merely linguistic ornaments; they are the crystallized results of centuries-old social experiences, carrying significant educational and moral weight. Each unit undergoes a rigorous process of "social testing" over generations, resulting in a structurally stable and fixed form.

From a linguistic perspective, proverbs and idioms significantly influence the lexical, semantic, and pragmatic aspects of a language:

Lexically, these units are characterized by their stability; the individual words often lose their literal denotation to form a new, unified semantic concept. For instance, the English proverb "Rome was not built in a day" conveys the idea that great achievements require patience and persistent effort. Here, the literal mention of "Rome" or "day" fades into the background to serve a broader metaphorical meaning. In Uzbek, the equivalent "Musulmonchilik asta-sekinlik bilan" (Islam/faith is achieved through gradualness) is often employed to convey a similar sentiment of patience, albeit through a different cultural lens.

The pragmatic dimension of proverbs lies in their communicative purpose. Depending on the context, they function as tools for advice, warning, or moral instruction. For example, the English idiom "Don't count your chickens before they hatch" finds its pragmatic match in the Uzbek proverb "Jo‘jani kuzda sanaymiz" (We count the chicks in autumn). While the imagery differs (hatching vs. surviving until autumn), both serve the pragmatic function of warning against premature celebration or overconfidence.

Structurally, these expressions are characterized by a frozen grammatical framework. Altering a single component often results in a loss of the idiomatic meaning. Consider the idiom "A piece of cake," which signifies an extremely easy task. Substituting "cake" with "biscuit" or "candy" would render the expression nonsensical, as the unit relies on its fixed structure to convey the meaning of being as effortless as "Xamirdan qil sug‘urganday" (Like pulling a hair out of dough).

Culturally, proverbs are inextricably linked to a nation’s traditions, worldview, and historical identity. They act as a mirror reflecting the soul of the people. For instance, "The early bird catches the worm" reflects the Anglo-Saxon value of punctuality and individual initiative. In the Uzbek cultural context, a similar value is expressed through the proverb "Erta turgan kishini Xudo o‘nglar ishini" (God prospers the work of those who rise early), which blends the virtue of diligence with a spiritual reliance on divine blessing.

The practical analysis of translating English idioms into Uzbek reveals a profound tension between literal structure and functional resonance. When examining an expression like "A piece of cake," a translator immediately confronts the limitations of formal equivalence. Translating this phrase word-for-word into Uzbek as "bir bo‘lak tort" would result in a complete loss of its idiomatic essence, which signifies an effortlessly completed task. To achieve what Eugene Nida defines as dynamic equivalence, the translator must seek a functional substitute that triggers the same cognitive response in the Uzbek reader. The phrase "xamirdan qil sug‘urganday" (like pulling a hair out of dough) serves as a perfect cultural and functional equivalent, as it utilizes a local metaphor for ease that carries the same pragmatic weight as the English original.

The challenge of cultural "realia" and concept gaps becomes even more apparent with the idiom "Break the ice." In English, this phrase originates from the literal necessity of clearing paths for ships, but metaphorically it refers to easing social tension. In an Uzbek context, a translator must decide whether to use a descriptive method or a creative adaptation. A literal translation would be nonsensical; therefore, providing a dynamic equivalent like "muzlarni eritmoq" (melting the clouds/ice) or "suhbatni qizitmoq" (warming up the conversation) is necessary to preserve the communicative intent. This process mirrors the struggle of translating folklore terms, where the goal is to prevent "cultural flattening" by ensuring the emotional energy of the source text remains intact.

Similarly, the idiom "Under the weather" presents a case of lexical and semantic ambiguity. Since this expression refers to feeling unwell without a specific illness, a direct translation regarding the weather would mislead the target audience. Applying Peter Newmark’s strategy of functional equivalence, the translator might opt for "mizoji yo‘q" or "tobim qochdi." This transition from the English meteorological metaphor to the Uzbek focus on physical disposition illustrates the necessity of prioritizing the message over the individual code units. The same logic applies to "Spill the beans," where the act of revealing a secret is not tied to legumes in the Uzbek worldview. Instead, a translator might use "sirni boy bermoq" or "og‘zidan gullab qo‘ymoq" (to flower from the mouth), which captures the accidental or sudden nature of the disclosure.

Financial and physical metaphors such as "Cost an arm and a leg" highlight the structural rigidity of idioms. One cannot replace "arm" with "finger" without destroying the idiom’s identity. When translating this into Uzbek, the concept of extreme expensiveness is often rendered through hyperbole related to wealth or survival, such as "otning kallasidek pul" (money as big as a horse's head) or "falon pul." Using the "naturalization" method here would fail; instead, the translator must employ a cultural equivalent that resonates with the Uzbek perception of high value.

The idiom "Let the cat out of the bag" showcases how folklore-like fixedness influences modern speech. To preserve the original’s dynamic energy, the translator avoids the literal "sumkadagi mushuk" and instead looks for an Uzbek equivalent that implies the

revelation of a hidden truth, such as "siri fosh bo‘lmoq." In all these instances, the application of equivalence theory demonstrates that successful translation is not merely a linguistic exchange but a sophisticated cultural mediation. By moving away from the analytical structure of English and toward the synthetic and metaphorical nature of Uzbek, the translator ensures that the aesthetic and pragmatic impact of these popular expressions is fully realized in the target language.

Continuing the practical analysis with these more complex metaphorical structures, we see a clear shift from literal representation toward the necessity of what Nida terms "Dynamic Equivalence." For instance, the expression "Hit the nail on the head" describes the act of being precisely correct. If a translator were to apply formal equivalence here, the Uzbek reader would be left with a technical image of carpentry ("mixning boshiga urmoq"), which lacks the figurative nuance of accuracy. Instead, by utilizing a functional equivalent like "ayni muddaoni aytmoq" or "nuqtaga urmoq," the translator successfully bridges the gap between English mechanical imagery and Uzbek verbal precision, ensuring the "awe" and clarity of the message are preserved.

The challenge of "Realia" and cultural untranslatability is perhaps most vivid in the idiom "The elephant in the room." This phrase signifies an obvious problem that everyone is ignoring, but since the elephant is not a traditional symbol of domestic tension in Uzbek folklore, a literal translation would create a "cultural flattening." To avoid this, the translator must look for an analytical structure or a descriptive method. One might translate this as "ko‘rinib turgan haqiqatni tan olmaslik" (not acknowledging the visible truth). This highlights how certain Western conceptual frameworks require neologisms or detailed paraphrasing to prevent the loss of the original’s pragmatic weight. Similarly, "See eye to eye" relies on the visual metaphor of agreement. In Uzbek, where agreement is often tied to the "heart" or "language," a cultural equivalent like "bir yoqadan bosh chiqarmoq" (putting heads through one collar) or "firi bir joydan chiqmoq" is applied to maintain the idiomatic energy.

Strategic decision-making becomes critical when dealing with procedural idioms like "Call it a day." This phrase marks the conclusion of an activity, but translating it literally

as "buni kun deb ata" would be nonsensical. Following Newmark's method of functional equivalence, the translator opts for "bo'ldi, yetar" or "ishni yig'ishtirmoq" (to pack up the work). This ensures that the communicative intent—ending a task—is prioritized over the lexical units. A more complex linguistic barrier appears with "Barking up the wrong tree" (often misstated as *breaking*). This hunting-based metaphor for a mistaken focus has no direct ecological equivalent in the Uzbek linguistic landscape. The translator must therefore move toward a "Naturalization" of the concept, rendering it as "noto'g'ri yo'ldan ketmoq" or "manzilni xato tanlamoq," thereby replacing the English canine imagery with a more universal path-finding metaphor.

Idioms like "Bite off more than you can chew" and "Burn bridges" demonstrate the rhythmic and phonological impact of idiomatic language. The former, an advice against over-ambition, finds a near-perfect cultural and structural analog in the Uzbek proverb "Ko'rpangga qarab oyoq uzat" (stretch your legs according to your quilt). While the metaphors differ—eating versus sleeping—the "Equivalence in Difference" as argued by Jakobson is achieved because both texts warn against exceeding one's limits. For "Burn bridges," which refers to irrevocably cutting ties, the translator might use "ildiziga bolta urmoq" (hitting the root with an axe) or "ortga qaytish yo'llarini yopmoq." These choices demonstrate that for a translator at the Department of Translation Theory and Practice, the goal is always to balance semantic accuracy with the preservation of the original's emotional and aesthetic impact, ensuring the English idiom speaks to the Uzbek soul with the same resonance as a native *daston*.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the translation of proverbs and idioms is a multifaceted process that demands more than mere linguistic proficiency; it requires a sophisticated level of cultural intelligence and creative adaptability. As demonstrated through the practical analysis of various English idiomatic expressions, achieving a successful translation is rarely a matter of finding a direct lexical match. Instead, it is an intricate act of balancing linguistic accuracy with the historical, social, and cultural contexts of both the source and target

languages. The inherent difficulty in finding exact equivalents highlights the fact that these phraseological units are deeply embedded in the collective memory and unique worldview of a nation.

A translator's role, therefore, extends beyond the boundaries of traditional linguistics. To prevent the loss of the original's pragmatic force—whether it be humor, moral instruction, or a stern warning—the translator must often move away from formal structures and prioritize dynamic resonance. This frequently necessitates the strategies of adaptation, functional equivalence, or even total recreation within the target language's cultural framework. As explored through the theories of Nida and Newmark, the most effective translations are those that evoke the same emotional and cognitive response in the Uzbek reader as the original does in an English speaker.

Ultimately, the successful rendering of proverbs and idioms serves as a testament to a translator's mastery. It requires a harmonious blend of creativity and deep ethnographic knowledge to ensure that the "soul" of the source text is preserved. By navigating the complexities of ethnic, cultural, and stylistic barriers, the translator acts as a vital bridge, allowing the wisdom and wit of one culture to be authentically experienced and understood by another. This study reaffirms that in the realm of folklore and idiomatic language, the goal of translation is not merely to change words, but to transport meaning across the vast landscapes of human culture.

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