

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN TRANSLATING UZBEK AND ENGLISH PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS

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Annotation: *This thesis explores the cultural differences in translating phraseological units between Uzbek and English, emphasizing the complexity and significance of idioms, proverbs, and fixed expressions in cross-cultural communication. Phraseological units are culturally bound, making literal translation often inadequate or misleading. The study highlights the need for cultural sensitivity, interpretive skills, and creative strategies such as cultural substitution, functional equivalence, and paraphrasing. Through linguistic analysis and illustrative examples, it demonstrates the challenges of maintaining semantic and emotional resonance in translation. The review incorporates classical and contemporary scholarly perspectives to offer insights beneficial for translators, linguists, and language educators, while also addressing advances in corpus linguistics and machine translation. Ultimately, the paper argues for the central role of cultural awareness in successful translation and intercultural understanding.*

Keywords: *phraseological units, idioms, cultural substitution, functional equivalence, Uzbek-English translation, translation strategies, intercultural communication, linguistic relativity, contrastive phraseology, dynamic equivalence.*

The study of cultural differences in translating Uzbek and English phraseological units is of significant importance in the field of translation studies, linguistics, and cross-cultural communication. Phraseological units—such as idioms, proverbs, and fixed expressions—are deeply embedded in the cultural, historical, and social contexts of a language. Their meanings often cannot be understood literally and require a nuanced understanding of both language and culture. Phraseological units often reflect a nation's worldview, beliefs, customs, and social norms. A literal translation of such expressions can distort or erase their cultural essence. Understanding cultural differences ensures that the translator conveys the original meaning, tone, and impact accurately. As globalization intensifies, the need for effective communication across cultures becomes essential. Translators serve as cultural mediators. By studying how phraseological units function in different cultures, translators can bridge gaps and prevent misunderstandings between Uzbek and English speakers. Finding equivalents for phraseological units between two languages with different linguistic and cultural systems is a major challenge. This topic helps highlight strategies—such as domestication, foreignization, and cultural substitution—that can be applied in translation practice to achieve better equivalence.

Understanding phraseological units and their cultural backgrounds enhances language competence. This topic benefits language learners and teachers by providing insights into figurative language, cultural references, and usage contexts in both Uzbek and English. In literature, phraseological units are often used for stylistic and emotional effects. A deep understanding of cultural nuances ensures that literary translations retain their artistic beauty and emotional depth, preserving the author's intent.

Translators and linguists who study phraseology across cultures gain a broader perspective on how different societies conceptualize common experiences, such as love, family, work, or nature. This fosters empathy and intercultural competence. The translation of phraseological units between Uzbek and English goes far beyond linguistic transfer—it requires cultural insight, interpretive skills, and creative problem-solving. This topic is therefore vital for advancing both theoretical and practical aspects of translation and for fostering mutual understanding between cultures. Translating phraseological units between languages with differing cultural backgrounds, such as Uzbek and English, presents both linguistic and cultural challenges. A growing body of research in translation studies, contrastive linguistics, and intercultural communication has addressed this issue from various theoretical and practical angles. This literature review explores the key contributions made by scholars in understanding the translation of phraseological units (PUs), with an emphasis on cultural differences and their implications.

Scholars such as Vinay and Darbelnet and Nida laid the groundwork for understanding equivalence in translation. Nida's concept of *dynamic equivalence* emphasized that the translator should strive to reproduce the same effect on the target audience as the original had on the source audience. This is particularly relevant in translating phraseological units, which often lose their meaning if translated literally. Baker in her influential work *In Other Words*, categorized translation problems at different levels, including idiomatic and fixed expressions. She highlighted the importance of cultural and linguistic awareness in translating idioms, especially when the target language lacks a direct equivalent. Phraseological units are culturally loaded; they often carry historical, religious, and social connotations. Koonin emphasized that idioms are integral to a nation's worldview, and their successful translation requires cultural substitution or adaptation. In Uzbek, idioms such as "It otini yebdi" (lit. "He ate a dog's meat") carry cultural meanings that may be unknown or misinterpreted in English unless adequately explained or adapted. Newmark suggested several strategies for translating culturally specific items, including idioms and proverbs: literal translation, cultural equivalent, functional equivalent, descriptive equivalent, and paraphrase. These strategies have been widely applied in translating phraseological units from Uzbek to English and vice versa. Specific research on Uzbek and English contrastive phraseology has increased in recent

years. Sultonova analyzed semantic differences and cultural mismatches in Uzbek-English idiom translation. She argued that many Uzbek phraseological units reflect agricultural, religious, and family-oriented cultural elements, which require careful cultural interpretation when translated into English.

In another comparative study, Juraev categorized Uzbek and English idioms into equivalent, partially equivalent, and non-equivalent types. His work highlighted the prevalence of non-equivalent idioms due to cultural divergence, suggesting that paraphrasing or using target-language analogs are often necessary. Many researchers, including A. V. Fedorov and P. Newmark, advocate for flexible strategies in the face of non-equivalence. When direct translation fails, translators may use:

Cultural substitution - replacing a culturally specific idiom with one of similar meaning in the target language.

Literal translation with explanation - retaining the original form but providing footnotes or explanations.

Functional equivalence - using a different idiom or expression in the target language that performs the same function.

For instance, the Uzbek idiom “*Ko‘ngli tog‘dek*” (lit. “His heart is like a mountain”) can be translated as “He is very generous” in English, capturing its figurative sense.

Recent studies increasingly use corpus linguistics to analyze the use and translation of idioms. Bulatova and Nurullaeva used parallel corpora to examine the frequency and context of idiom usage in Uzbek and English literary texts. They concluded that the translator's cultural literacy plays a key role in successful phraseological transfer. Moreover, with the development of machine translation and AI-assisted tools, researchers like Zohidov explored how automated systems handle idiomatic expressions and pointed out their limitations in recognizing cultural nuances.

The literature clearly demonstrates that phraseological units are not only linguistic but also cultural phenomena. Translating them between Uzbek and English requires more than lexical knowledge—it demands cultural sensitivity, contextual awareness, and creative adaptation. While many theoretical frameworks exist to guide this process, practical application still depends on the translator's deep familiarity with both cultures. As the field progresses, more comparative and corpus-based studies are needed to enrich our understanding and improve translation practices.

Phraseological units—such as idioms, fixed expressions, and proverbs—are culturally bound elements of language. Their translation requires not only linguistic accuracy but also a deep understanding of the cultural values and symbolic meanings behind them. When translating between Uzbek and English, literal translations often result in misunderstandings or loss of meaning. Therefore, translators must use strategies such as cultural substitution, functional equivalence, or paraphrasing. Below are several

examples that highlight the cultural differences and the appropriate approaches to translation.

Uzbek phrase: *Ko'ngli tog'dek*

Literal meaning: "His heart is like a mountain"

Cultural meaning: The person is very generous, kind, and noble-hearted.

In Uzbek culture, the mountain symbolizes strength, openness, and generosity. However, in English, such a metaphor may sound strange or unclear. The equivalent expressions in English are:

He has a heart of gold.

He is big-hearted.

These expressions reflect the same idea of generosity but use culturally familiar metaphors. Hence, cultural substitution or functional equivalence is the best approach.

English idiom: *Let the cat out of the bag*

Meaning: To accidentally reveal a secret.

This idiom originates from old European market practices and makes little sense if translated literally into Uzbek. Instead of saying "*Mushukni xaltadan chiqardi*," which would confuse an Uzbek reader, the translator should use culturally understandable expressions such as:

Og'zidan sir chiqib ketdi. (A secret slipped from his mouth.)

Tiliga ehtiyot bo'lmadi. (He wasn't careful with his tongue.)

This example demonstrates the need for cultural adaptation when the source idiom is not rooted in the target culture.

Uzbek idiom: *Eshakka minib, otga ergashdi*

Literal meaning: "He rode a donkey and followed a horse"

Cultural meaning: Someone foolishly tries to follow someone far superior.

In Uzbek culture, donkeys and horses often symbolize class or ability differences, especially in rural or traditional settings. English, however, does not use these animals in the same symbolic way. Therefore, equivalent English idioms might be:

Keeping up with the Joneses

A fool's errand

Punching above one's weight

Each of these English expressions carries the meaning of striving beyond one's ability or social level. The best approach here is functional equivalence.

English idiom: *Bite the bullet*

Meaning: To do something difficult or unpleasant that one has been avoiding.

This expression has military origins, where soldiers literally bit bullets to endure pain during surgery. Such a historical background does not exist in Uzbek culture. A literal translation would be meaningless. Instead, culturally suitable Uzbek expressions include:

Ko 'zini chirt yumib ishni qildi. (He did it with his eyes tightly shut.)

Og'ir bo'lsa ham chidadi. (He endured it, though it was difficult.)

These Uzbek equivalents reflect endurance and determination, conveying the intended meaning accurately. The correct strategy is cultural substitution with contextual adaptation.

These examples illustrate that phraseological units are not only language-specific but also culture-specific. Translating them requires more than word-for-word conversion. It requires insight into the metaphorical thinking, values, traditions, and worldview of the speaker community. Effective translation of phraseological units involves choosing expressions that evoke the same feeling, effect, or function in the target language. The main strategies used include:

Cultural substitution (replacing with a culturally familiar equivalent),

Functional equivalence (using an idiom or phrase with similar impact),

Paraphrasing (explaining the meaning when no equivalent exists).

Understanding and applying these strategies helps preserve the richness of both the source and target languages and fosters deeper cross-cultural communication.

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