THE REPRESENTATION OF NATIONAL AND CULTURAL FEATURES IN THE TRANSLATION OF ENGLISH PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS INTO UZBEK

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Abstract. This article examines the representation of national and cultural features in the translation of English phraseological units into Uzbek. It explores ways of recreating the layers of meaning associated with cultural imagery, customs, values, and historical experience embedded in phraseological units. Semantic, stylistic, and linguocultural correspondences between English and Uzbek phraseological units are discussed from a comparative perspective. Particular attention is paid to the potential and limitations of phraseological equivalents, functional analogues, descriptive translation, and calquing in preserving cultural specificity, figurative imagery, and pragmatic effect.

Keywords: phraseological unit, national and cultural features, linguoculture, literary translation, cultural specificity, descriptive translation, calquing.

Introduction: One of the central tasks of translation in cross-linguistic communication is to convey a community's cultural experience, values, and worldview through the resources of another language. Phraseological units occupy a distinctive place in this process. Their meanings may extend beyond the dictionary meanings of their constituent words to encompass culturally specific imagery, evaluative attitudes, and historical associations. Consequently, translating English phraseological units into Uzbek requires the recreation of their figurative, stylistic, and cultural features alongside their semantic content.

Although English and Uzbek phraseological units may share similar meanings, their underlying imagery, contexts of use, and expressive force do not always correspond. Expressions describing the same situation may draw on different cultural symbols in the two languages. As a result, a lexically close translation may fail to convey the contextual meaning of the source expression, while an Uzbek phraseological analogue may introduce cultural associations absent from the original. The translator must therefore establish a balance between semantic accuracy, natural expression, and cultural specificity.

The significance of this issue lies in the limitations of treating phraseological translation solely as a search for ready-made equivalents. Translation decisions must account for an expression's textual function, its contribution to characterization, its stylistic colouring, and its cultural content. Moreover, before interpreting a phraseological unit as a marker of national culture, its degree of cultural specificity should be established within its context.

This article aims to examine the possibilities and challenges of representing national and cultural features when translating English phraseological units into Uzbek. It considers the cultural content of phraseological expressions, evaluates the semantic and stylistic suitability of translation alternatives, and discusses the conditions under which phraseological equivalents, functional analogues, descriptive translation, and calquing may be employed.

Main body: Representing national and cultural features in the Uzbek translation of English phraseological units first requires an understanding of their holistic meaning and underlying imagery. Although the constituent words denote individual concepts, the figurative meaning generated by their combination may not be recoverable through direct translation. The translator must therefore consider an expression's textual function, emotional colouring, and cultural associations in addition to its dictionary definition. Conveying semantic content and preserving cultural imagery are interconnected tasks, yet they cannot always be accomplished through the same translation solution.

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The cultural content of phraseological units emerges in relation to the lifestyles, social relationships, customs, and historical experiences that have shaped their imagery. However, not all phraseological expressions are equally culture-specific. Some draw on widely shared human experiences, whereas others require additional knowledge of a particular culture. Before selecting a translation strategy, it is therefore necessary to determine which aspect of the expression - its meaning, imagery, or context of use - carries cultural significance.

A phraseological equivalent may be used when English and Uzbek expressions exhibit semantic and figurative similarity. For example, translating “to play with fire as olov bilan o‘ynashmoq” preserves both the meaning of deliberately engaging in a dangerous activity and the image of fire. In an appropriate context, the sentence “He is playing with fire” may be translated as “U olov bilan o‘ynashyapti”, naturally retaining its warning function. Nevertheless, formal similarity does not guarantee complete correspondence in every context: the expressions’ stylistic properties and textual effects must also be assessed.

A functional analogue may be selected when expressions in the two languages convey similar meanings through different images. For example, to make a mountain out of a molehill may be rendered as “pashshadan fil yasamoq”, literally “to make an elephant out of a fly.” The English expression contrasts a molehill with a mountain, while its Uzbek counterpart contrasts a fly with an elephant. Both convey the excessive exaggeration of a minor matter. Although the original imagery changes, the meaning and evaluative attitude are retained. This example illustrates that the contextual function of an image may be more significant in phraseological translation than its exact reproduction.

When using a functional analogue, the translator should also consider the possibility of introducing excessive target-culture colouring. If an Uzbek expression contains a local custom, place name, or culturally distinctive reference, placing it in the speech of an English character may alter the cultural setting of the work. The translator must therefore examine the additional associations evoked by a proposed equivalent as well as its semantic similarity. In some contexts, a more culturally neutral expression can help maintain the consistency of the original setting.

Descriptive translation may be employed when no phraseological equivalent provides an adequate contextual match. For instance, when to break the ice refers to overcoming initial social awkwardness, it may be explained as suhbatni boshlab, o‘rtadagi noqulaylikni yo‘qotmoq - “to initiate a conversation and remove the awkwardness between those present.” The sentence “Her joke broke the ice” may be translated as “Uning hazili o‘rtadagi noqulaylikni yo‘qotib, suhbatga yo‘l ochdi”, meaning “Her joke removed the awkwardness and opened the way for conversation.” This rendering communicates the meaning clearly, although some of the original expression’s conciseness and imagery are lost. The length of a descriptive translation should therefore be adjusted to the pace and genre of the text and the characteristics of the speaker’s discourse.

Calquing may provide a means of recreating phraseological imagery in the target language. However, if a literally transferred image is not intelligible to Uzbek readers, the translation may sound unnatural. For example, rendering “to spill the beans as loviyalarni to‘kib yubormoq”, literally “to spill the beans,” does not communicate the meaning of revealing a secret unless a particular context establishes that interpretation. Translating “He spilled the beans about the plan” as “U reja haqidagi sirni oshkor qilib qo‘ydi” - “He revealed the secret about the plan” - ensures semantic clarity. The possibility of preserving the original image must therefore be assessed alongside its comprehensibility in the translated text.

The pragmatic properties of a phraseological unit also influence translation decisions. An expression may convey irony, reproach, humour, or dissatisfaction; transmitting its core meaning alone may therefore fail to reproduce its communicative effect. For example, translating “to add fuel to the fire as olovga moy quymoq” , literally “to pour oil onto the fire,” conveys both the worsening of a situation and a negative evaluation of that action. Nevertheless, the expression may produce different effects in serious narration, tense dialogue, and humorous conversation. Verb forms, sentence structure, and surrounding lexical choices help convey these differences in translation.

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When translating phraseological expressions in a character's speech, the translator should consider the character's age, social position, educational background, and relationship with the interlocutor. Replacing a colloquial expression with a literary or elevated phrase may alter the character's linguistic identity. Similarly, choosing a strongly negative equivalent for a neutral expression may intensify the evaluation conveyed in the source text. A proposed equivalent must therefore be examined within a specific communicative situation rather than assessed solely at the dictionary level.

Semantic accuracy, the function of imagery, stylistic appropriateness, pragmatic effect, and the consistency of the cultural setting may serve as principal criteria for evaluating phraseological translation. These criteria do not support the universal preference for any single strategy. A phraseological equivalent is appropriate when it provides a natural contextual match; a functional analogue helps recreate meaning and effect; descriptive translation promotes comprehensibility; and calquing is justified when the transferred image remains intelligible in the target language. The examples discussed illustrate possible translation solutions, whose ultimate suitability depends on the specific context of each literary work.

Conclusion: Translating English phraseological units into Uzbek requires an integrated consideration of their holistic meaning, imagery, stylistic colouring, and cultural content. Selecting an expression that corresponds to the dictionary meaning of the source unit does not always ensure the full recreation of its contextual function and pragmatic effect. Translation alternatives should therefore be evaluated in relation to the work's cultural setting, the character's speech, and the author's communicative purpose.

Phraseological equivalents, functional analogues, descriptive translation, and calquing each have context-dependent applications. Equivalents and analogues can preserve meaning and expressive force, while descriptive translation can make culturally complex expressions accessible to readers. Calquing is appropriate when the source image remains comprehensible in the target language. The suitability of a translation is thus determined by the extent to which the selected strategy achieves semantic accuracy, naturalness, and cultural appropriateness.

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