BG Pulse Journal USA
ISSN:1947-2536 http://www.bgpulseusa.com/index.php/bg
BG PULSE JOURNAL

LINGUACULTURAL FEATURES IN THE TRANSLATION OF UZBEK LITERARY TEXTS INTO ENGLISH: A COMPARATIVE LINGUISTIC STUDY OF CULTURE-SPECIFIC UNITS

Inatova Raykhon, Master's student at UZSWLU
Scientific supervisor: Bayjanova Okila Iskandarovna
PhD. Associate Professor at UZSWLU

Abstract

This research paper examines the linguacultural features involved in translating Uzbek literary texts into English from the perspective of comparative linguistics, with particular attention to culture-specific units. The study proceeds from the view that literary translation is not limited to lexical replacement; rather, it requires the transfer of culturally marked meanings, pragmatic nuances, symbolic associations, and nationally specific worldview embedded in the source text. The paper integrates comparative linguistics, translation studies, and linguacultural analysis. A qualitative comparative method is applied to selected Uzbek culture-specific units and their possible English renderings. The analysis focuses on kinship terms, forms of address, traditional clothing, food names, social institutions, and phraseological expressions. The findings show that full equivalence is uncommon in Uzbek-English literary translation because many units are deeply rooted in Uzbek ethnocultural experience and lack exact English counterparts. As a result, translators employ transliteration, descriptive translation, cultural substitution, explicitation, and combined strategies.

Keywords: *linguaculture, literary translation, Uzbek-English translation, comparative linguistics, culture-specific units, equivalence, foreignization, domestication, national colouring*

Introduction

Literary translation is not merely the transfer of linguistic forms from one language into another. It is also the transfer of cultural memory, social relations, value systems, symbolic images, and nationally specific ways of conceptualizing reality[1]. This is especially true in the case of Uzbek literary texts translated into English, because Uzbek literary discourse often contains culture-specific units closely connected to everyday life, kinship structure, etiquette, food traditions, rituals, clothing, and local institutions[2]. From a comparative linguistic perspective, Uzbek and English differ not only in grammatical organization and lexical structure but also in pragmatic conventions and cultural conceptualization. Uzbek belongs to a Turkic linguistic and cultural tradition in which social hierarchy, kinship distinctions, and forms of respect are linguistically marked in ways that English often neutralizes. As a result, many Uzbek units cannot be translated into English through direct equivalence alone. Culture-specific units, therefore, become one of the most difficult areas of literary translation. Their translation involves a choice between preserving foreign cultural identity and adapting the text to the norms of the target audience. Such choices are not purely linguistic; they are also ideological, stylistic, and interpretive. This makes the translation of Uzbek literary texts into English an important field for comparative linguistic and translation-oriented analysis.

---

[1] Bassnett, S. (2014). Translation studies (4th ed.). Routledge

[2] Aixelá, J. F. (1996). Culture-specific items in translation. In R. Álvarez & M. C.-Á. Vidal (Eds.), Translation, power, subversion (pp. 52–78). Multilingual Matters; Newmark, P. (1988). A textbook of translation. Prentice-Hall International.

Literature Review

The theoretical basis for the study of culture-specific units in translation has been developed in translation studies, comparative linguistics, and linguaculture. Baker and Jones (2025) emphasize that translation problems arise at multiple levels, including lexical meaning, grammar, cohesion, pragmatics, and semiotics[3]. Their framework is particularly useful for analyzing units whose meaning extends beyond dictionary definitions. In the case of Uzbek literary translation, this is important because many culturally marked words carry pragmatic and symbolic meanings that are context-bound. Bassnett (2014) views translation as a form of intercultural communication and literary mediation[4]. Her work is especially relevant to literary translation because it highlights the relationship between language, literature, and society. This perspective helps explain why literary realia cannot be treated as ordinary vocabulary items. They must be interpreted within the cultural world of the original text. Venuti (2018) introduced the influential distinction between domestication and foreignization. Domestication adapts the source text to the target culture, often increasing readability but risking the loss of foreign cultural identity[5]. Foreignization, by contrast, preserves the strangeness of the source text and foregrounds cultural difference. In Uzbek-English literary translation, this distinction is especially important when dealing with words such as *mahalla, duppi, sumalak, or kelin salom*, which are deeply rooted in Uzbek culture. Newmark (1988) discusses the translation of culture-bound terms and offers a range of procedures such as transference, descriptive equivalence, functional equivalence, and notes[6]. His classification remains highly applicable to Uzbek-English translation because it allows the translator to select procedures according to the semantic and cultural density of the lexical item. Aixelá (1996) specifically conceptualizes culture-specific items as units that pose translation difficulty because they refer to objects, institutions, customs, or values absent or differently structured in the target culture[7]. His distinction between conservation and substitution strategies provides a useful framework for analyzing whether the translator preserves or adapts the original cultural unit. House (1977) contributes to the discussion through her model of translation quality assessment and the distinction between overt and covert translation. This model is useful for evaluating whether a translation should openly signal its foreign origin or be read as a target-language text[8]. In literary translation, especially from a culturally distant source language, overt translation often becomes more appropriate in order to preserve the cultural identity of the original. Studies directly related to Uzbek-English literary translation remain limited, but recent scholarship has begun to address this gap. Khamroyeva (2025), in her analysis of the English translations of Pirimqul Qodirov's historical novel Starry Nights, shows that transliteration, transcription, and analogous translation are frequently used to render culture-specific words[9]. Her study demonstrates the relevance of

[3] Baker, M., & Jones, H. (2025). In other words: A coursebook on translation (4th ed.). Routledge.
[4] Bassnett, S. (2014). Translation studies (4th ed.). Routledge.
[5] Venuti, L. (2018). The translator's invisibility: A history of translation. Routledge.

[6] Newmark, P. (1988). A textbook of translation. Prentice-Hall International.
[7] Aixelá, J. F. (1996). Culture-specific items in translation. In R. Álvarez & M. C.-Á. Vidal (Eds.), Translation, power, subversion (pp. 52–78). Multilingual Matters.
[8] House, J. (1977). A model for translation quality assessment. Narr.
[9] Khamroyeva, S. (2025). The analysis of culture-specific words in the English translations of the Uzbek historical novel Starry Nights by Pirimkul Kadirov. Foreign Linguistics and Linguodidactics, 3(Special Issue 2), 241–245. https://doi.org/10.47689/2181-3701-vol3-iss2/S-pp241-245

general translation theory to Uzbek literary material and confirms that national colouring remains one of the central issues in translation practice. Taken together, these studies show that culture-specific units cannot be adequately translated through purely formal equivalence. Their translation requires sensitivity to semantics, pragmatics, cultural symbolism, genre, and reader reception. The present study builds on this theoretical background and applies it specifically to Uzbek literary discourse.

Materials and Methods

This research uses a qualitative comparative-analytical method. The material consists of representative Uzbek culture-specific units commonly found in literary discourse. The study follows three analytical stages. First, each Uzbek unit is examined for its semantic core, connotative meaning, and pragmatic function. Second, possible English translation options are identified. Third, these translation options are evaluated according to comparative linguistic criteria: semantic accuracy, pragmatic adequacy, preservation of national colouring, and target-reader comprehensibility. The analysis also considers the translation strategies most commonly used in literary translation: transliteration, transcription, descriptive translation, explanatory translation, cultural substitution, functional equivalence, and mixed strategies. The opposition between foreignization and domestication serves as an interpretive framework for discussing the broader stylistic and ideological consequences of translation choices.

Results

Table 1. Translation and analysis of kinship terms and forms of address

Uzbek unit	Literal / basic meaning	Possible English rendering	Translation Strategy	Linguacultural analysis
Opa	older sister; respectful female address	older sister / sister / respected elder woman	functional equivalence + context	The Uzbek word may indicate both kinship and respectful social address. English often loses the social nuance.
Aka	older brother; respectful male address	older brother / brother / respected elder man	functional equivalence + context	In Uzbek, the term may encode age hierarchy and familiarity. English usually neutralizes this.
Xola	maternal aunt; also older woman in speech	aunt / maternal aunt	partial equivalence	The family relation can be translated, but the broader social use is often lost.

Taqsir	sir; respected gentleman	sir / honoured sir	functional equivalence	English can convey politeness, but not the full historical-cultural tone.
Siz	respectful second-person pronoun	you	grammatical neutralization	English does not grammatically distinguish between respectful and informal second person.

The Table 1 demonstrates that kinship terms and forms of address in Uzbek literary texts are highly culture-dependent and often carry meanings that go beyond their direct lexical reference. Units such as *opa, aka, xola, taqsir, and siz* do not simply identify family relations or grammatical person; they also express age hierarchy, politeness, emotional closeness, and social status. In many cases, English equivalents preserve only the denotative meaning, while the sociocultural and pragmatic layers are either weakened or completely neutralized. For instance, the distinction between siz and sen is lost in translation because English uses only one second-person pronoun, you. Similarly, terms like opa and aka may function not only as kinship labels but also as respectful forms of address in everyday interaction. Therefore, the table confirms that direct lexical equivalence is usually insufficient in translating such units, and translators must rely on contextual adaptation, functional equivalence, or explanatory support in order to preserve the intended interpersonal meaning.

Table 2. Translation and analysis of traditional clothing culture

Uzbek unit	Cultural meaning	Possible English rendering	Translation Strategy	Linguacultural analysis
Duppi	traditional embroidered skullcap	duppi / Uzbek skullcap	transliteration + gloss	Preserves national colouring while aiding comprehension
Chakmon	traditional outer robe or coat	chakmon / traditional robe	transliteration + descriptive translation	Pure substitution may distort the object; descriptive support is helpful.

Atlas	traditional patterned silk fabric	atlas silk / traditional Uzbek silk	transliteration + explanation	The textile has cultural and aesthetic value beyond material description.
Mahsi	traditional soft leather footwear	mahsi / traditional soft boots	transliteration + gloss	English lacks a close equivalent, so retention is preferable

Table 2 shows that traditional clothing items and material-culture words in Uzbek literary texts require special attention in translation because they reflect ethnographic identity and national-cultural specificity. Lexical items such as duppi, chakmon, atlas, and mahsi refer not only to physical objects but also to historically and culturally meaningful elements of Uzbek life. Since English usually lacks exact equivalents for such items, literal substitution with general words like cap, robe, or boots may reduce the cultural richness of the source text. The analysis suggests that transliteration combined with a short descriptive explanation is often the most effective strategy, as it preserves the original cultural term while also making it understandable for the target reader. This table therefore illustrates that material-culture vocabulary is one of the areas where foreignization can be particularly productive, especially when the translator seeks to maintain the national colouring and ethnographic authenticity of the literary original. The cultural notion of restraint has no exact English single-word equivalent. Phraseological units create difficulty because their meaning is conceptual and culturally embedded. Literal translation may sound unnatural or obscure, while free translation may erase the metaphorical and cultural texture of the original. Functional-pragmatic adequacy is often more important than formal equivalence in such cases.

Discussion

The findings show that Uzbek culture-specific units present translation challenges at lexical, pragmatic, and conceptual levels. Comparative linguistic analysis reveals that the problem is not simply the absence of corresponding words in English, but the different ways in which Uzbek and English encode social relations, material culture, and symbolic experience. Kinship terms and forms of address demonstrate how Uzbek grammar and lexicon encode respect, family hierarchy, and social distance with greater specificity than English. When *"siz"* is translated as *you*, the translator must recover the lost distinction through context, tone, or surrounding lexical choices. This shows that grammatical equivalence does not guarantee pragmatic equivalence. Items of clothing, food, and social institutions further illustrate the importance of cultural framing. A word like *"mahalla"* cannot be adequately translated as neighborhood because the English term reflects physical locality more than communal organization. The analysis supports Venuti's view that translators must negotiate between domestication and foreignization[10]. In the Uzbek-English context, full domestication often produces semantic clarity but cultural flattening. Full foreignization preserves authenticity but may hinder readability. The most effective strategy in many cases is controlled foreignization, where the original item is retained and minimally

[10] Venuti, L. (2018). The translator's invisibility: A history of translation. Routledge.

explained. The findings also support Aixelá's distinction between conservation and substitution. Conservation is especially appropriate when the cultural identity of the unit is central to the literary effect of the text. Substitution may be more appropriate only when a source-culture element is marginal or when readability must be prioritized for a specific target audience. From a broader perspective, the study confirms that literary translation requires more than bilingual competence. It requires linguacultural literacy, comparative awareness, and sensitivity to the interaction of semantics, pragmatics, and aesthetics.

Conclusion

This study has shown that the translation of Uzbek literary texts into English is deeply shaped by linguacultural factors. Culture-specific units such as kinship terms, forms of address, traditional clothing, food names, ritual terms, social institutions, and phraseological expressions present major challenges because they embody meanings that extend beyond direct lexical reference. The comparative analysis demonstrates that full equivalence is rare. In most cases, translators must choose among partial equivalence, transliteration, descriptive rendering, explicitation, or strategic compensation. The most successful translations are those that preserve national-cultural colouring without making the text inaccessible to the target reader. Therefore, the translation of Uzbek literary texts into English should be understood as an act of intercultural mediation. The translator must balance fidelity to the source culture with readability in the target language. In this sense, comparative linguistics provides a valuable framework for understanding why certain units resist direct translation and how their meanings can be most adequately represented.

References

1. Aixelá, J. F. (1996). Culture-specific items in translation. In R. Álvarez & M. C.-Á. Vidal (Eds.), Translation, power, subversion (pp. 52–78). Multilingual Matters.
2. Baker, M., & Jones, H. (2025). In other words: A coursebook on translation (4th ed.). Routledge.
3. Bassnett, S. (2014). Translation studies (4th ed.). Routledge.
4. House, J. (1977). A model for translation quality assessment. Narr.
5. Khamroyeva, S. (2025). The analysis of culture-specific words in the English translations of the Uzbek historical novel "Starry Nights" by Pirimkul Kadirov. Foreign Linguistics and Linguodidactics, 3(Special Issue 2), 241–245. https://doi.org/10.47689/2181-3701-vol3-iss2/S-pp241-245 .
6. Newmark, P. (1988). A textbook of translation. Prentice-Hall International.
7. Venuti, L. (2018). The translator's invisibility: A history of translation. Routledge.