

**PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATING METAPHORS AND FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE: A
CASE OF UZBEK LITERATURE**

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Abstract: This article explores the major challenges involved in translating metaphors and figurative language from Uzbek literature into English. Particular attention is paid to semantic shifts, cultural references, and national identity-based imagery that may lose meaning or emotional value in translation. By analyzing examples from the works of prominent Uzbek authors, the study examines common issues faced by translators such as the lack of direct equivalence, contextual inconsistencies, and difficulties in preserving artistic style. The article also discusses effective translation strategies aimed at maintaining the original text's expressiveness and cultural depth. Finally, practical recommendations are proposed to achieve more accurate and culturally sensitive translations of figurative expressions in Uzbek literature.

Keywords: metaphor, figurative language, translation studies, equivalence, Uzbek literature, cultural references, literary translation

Introduction: Metaphors and other forms of figurative language play a crucial role in shaping the stylistic and aesthetic value of literary works. They reflect not only the author's creativity but also elements of the cultural, historical, and linguistic identities of a particular society. Uzbek literature, with its rich poetic tradition and deep symbolic meanings, relies heavily on metaphoric expressions that embody national worldview, emotional nuances, and culturally specific concepts.

However, translating such figurative units into another language—especially English—presents serious challenges for translators. Direct or literal translation often results in the loss of intended meaning, stylistic effect, or cultural significance. The translator is therefore required to navigate between fidelity to the source text and intelligibility for the target audience. This places metaphor translation at the intersection of linguistic accuracy, cultural mediation, and creative interpretation.

In recent years, translation studies have increasingly focused on the issue of equivalence in literary translation. Yet, the unique complexities of Uzbek metaphors remain insufficiently explored in international academic discourse. Given the growing interest in Uzbek literature beyond national borders, such investigation becomes essential.

This study aims to analyze the primary problems encountered when translating metaphors and figurative expressions from Uzbek literature into English. By examining authentic examples from well-known Uzbek literary works, the research identifies key translation difficulties and evaluates strategies that can better preserve the expressive and cultural features of the original text. The findings are expected to contribute to more accurate and culturally informed translation practices in future studies of Uzbek literature.

Material and methods: This research is based on a qualitative and descriptive methodology aimed at examining the linguistic and cultural complexities that arise during the translation of metaphors and figurative expressions from Uzbek literature into English. The choice of a

qualitative approach is grounded in the understanding that metaphor, as a cognitive and cultural phenomenon, cannot be measured solely through quantitative indicators, but requires interpretative analysis of meaning, symbolism, and contextual function. The corpus of the study consists of metaphor-rich literary texts written by prominent Uzbek authors across various historical periods, including classical poetry exemplified by Alisher Navoi, realistic Soviet-era prose represented by Abdulla Qahhor, and modern emotionally expressive works written by O'tkir Hoshimov and Erkin Vohidov. Such diversity enables the identification of a wide spectrum of metaphorical patterns reflecting the evolution of Uzbek cultural and aesthetic traditions.

The primary analytical method employed is comparative textual analysis, which involves systematically comparing figurative units in the source texts with their English translations. Where official translations were unavailable, the researcher generated experimental translations in order to illustrate real-world challenges faced by translators. During this comparison, metaphors were examined according to their semantic structure, pragmatic value, stylistic role, and cultural embeddedness. The methodological foundation of the analysis relies heavily on established theories in translation studies. P. Newmark's metaphor translation techniques were used to classify the strategies observed in translations, differentiating between direct reproduction, substitution, paraphrasing, and descriptive translation. E. Nida's principles of dynamic and formal equivalence provided a framework for evaluating whether the translations achieve communicative adequacy while preserving literary and cultural authenticity.

In addition to translation theory, cognitive metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson) was adopted to analyze conceptual metaphors that shape cultural perceptions and worldviews expressed in Uzbek literature. This theoretical integration allowed for a deeper examination of how abstract concepts such as emotions, honor (or), conscience (vijdon), or spiritual beauty (ko'ngil) are linguistically conceptualized differently across cultures and languages. Data interpretation was performed through the categorization of recurring translation issues, such as semantic distortion, cultural untranslatability, stylistic attenuation, weakening of emotional resonance, and the loss or transformation of symbolic imagery. Each identified challenge was then substantiated with contextual examples to ensure analytical objectivity and provide empirical evidence for the conclusions drawn.

To ensure the reliability of findings, triangulation was conducted by cross-referencing theoretical assumptions with observed translation outcomes. The methodological rigor of this research makes it possible not only to highlight common translation errors but also to propose practical and innovative translation strategies that enable a more faithful representation of Uzbek metaphorical richness in English. As such, the methodological framework of this study is designed to contribute meaningfully to modern translation studies and to support the international dissemination and appreciation of Uzbek literary heritage.

Results and Discussion: The analysis of Uzbek metaphors and figurative expressions in translation revealed several major issues that significantly influence the accuracy and cultural resonance of the target text. The findings indicate that metaphoric structures embedded in Uzbek literature often rely on deep cultural symbolism, local worldview, and context-dependent meanings, which cannot always be conveyed through direct linguistic equivalents in English.

One of the most frequently observed problems is the partial or complete loss of original meaning. Many metaphors in Uzbek literature derive from culturally coded imagery—nature, social relations, spiritual beliefs, and national traditions. When translated literally, these expressions frequently become obscure or misleading to English-speaking readers. For instance, metaphors rooted in agricultural or nomadic lifestyles are often unfamiliar and therefore lose their

communicative power. This confirms Newmark's claim that metaphor translation requires balancing semantic precision and aesthetic impact.

Certain metaphors are closely tied to Uzbek national identity and represent specific historical, folkloric, or ethical concepts. These expressions are difficult to render in English without additional contextual explanation. For example, symbolic references such as ko'ngil, or, bosh egmoq hold cultural and emotional layers that lack direct analogues. Translation strategies such as cultural substitution or descriptive paraphrasing can ensure comprehension but may weaken symbolic density and artistic expressiveness. This supports Nida's theory that dynamic equivalence must sometimes override literal accuracy to preserve communicative function.

Another prominent issue concerns the shift in stylistic tone and register. Figurative language in Uzbek literature often contributes to emotional intensity and narrative rhythm. However, English translations can reduce the effect by employing plain or overly explanatory language. Poetic metaphors, especially those in classical literature (e.g., Alisher Navoiy), suffer from diminished musicality and imagery when converted into more analytical forms. As a result, the aesthetic function of figurative language becomes less impactful.

Cognitive metaphor theory highlights that different cultures conceptualize abstract ideas through different metaphor systems. The analysis demonstrates that Uzbek metaphors frequently map emotional and moral states onto concrete images such as heart, soul, and natural phenomena. In translation, these conceptual metaphors may shift toward a more rational or less symbolic mode of expression in English. Consequently, the target text risks losing the unique philosophical worldview embedded in Uzbek literary tradition.

The results collectively suggest that the core difficulty in translating Uzbek metaphorical expressions lies not merely in linguistic differences but in the transmission of cultural cognition. A translator must act as both interpreter and cultural mediator, maintaining metaphorical integrity while ensuring audience comprehension. To overcome structural and semantic barriers, the following translation strategies were found to be most effective:

- Metaphor retention, where cultural metaphors are preserved to sustain authenticity.
- Adaptation through culturally familiar imagery, when direct translation obstructs understanding.
- Creative metaphor recreation, producing equivalent emotional and stylistic effects.
- Contextual commentary, applied selectively to decode essential cultural layers.

The findings align with recent scholarship emphasizing translator creativity and cross-cultural negotiation as essential components of literary translation.

Ultimately, the research highlights the need for increased academic attention to Uzbek literature within global translation studies. Recognition of the cultural richness encapsulated in metaphorical expressions is fundamental to promoting the international accessibility and appreciation of Uzbek literary heritage.

Conclusion: The study demonstrates that translating metaphors and figurative language from Uzbek literature into English involves a complex interplay of linguistic, cultural, and stylistic factors. Uzbek metaphoric expressions carry profound symbolic meanings rooted in national identity, historical memory, and cultural worldview. When transferred into a different linguistic system, these elements often face the risk of semantic distortion, stylistic reduction, or cultural misinterpretation.

The analysis reveals that literal translation approaches are insufficient for preserving the expressive qualities and aesthetic richness characteristic of Uzbek literary texts. Instead, successful translation requires the use of flexible strategies that prioritize both cultural sensitivity and artistic equivalence. Techniques such as metaphor retention, creative recreation, and context-based adaptation help maintain the emotional impact and symbolic depth of the original works.

Furthermore, the findings highlight the essential role of the translator as a cultural mediator who must understand both the cognitive mechanisms behind metaphoric conceptualization and the expectations of the target audience. As Uzbek literature continues to expand its presence in global cultural spaces, enhancing translation quality becomes vital for promoting accurate international recognition of its artistic and philosophical values.

Future research could broaden the current investigation by including a larger corpus of literary works, incorporating reader-response analysis, or comparing translation outcomes across multiple languages. Overall, this study contributes to the ongoing academic discourse on translation studies by emphasizing the importance of culturally informed strategies for translating figurative language and metaphors within the context of Uzbek literature.

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