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LINGUACULTURAL REPRESENTATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN TRANSLATION OF UZBEK AND ENGLISH LANGUAGES

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Abstract

Translation is not only a linguistic process, but also a cultural act that mediates between two cultural systems. Uzbek literary texts contain a wide range of linguacultural elements that reflect national traditions, social values, and collective identity. When these texts are translated into English, translators must preserve both the semantic meaning and the cultural essence embedded in the original language. This study delves into how Uzbek national identity is linguaculturally represented in English translations of Uzbek literary texts. The research focuses on culture-specific vocabulary, traditional customs, proverbs, metaphors, and forms of address. Through Uzbek and English examples, the paper demonstrates how translation strategies such as transliteration, descriptive translation, and cultural explanation help maintain cultural authenticity.

Keywords

linguaculture, translation studies, Uzbek literature, national identity, cultural concepts, Uzbek–English translation.

Introduction

Language is considered profound carriers of national culture and identity. Literary works, in particular, serve as repositories of cultural values, traditions, and collective historical experience. Uzbek literature reflects the cultural heritage of the Uzbek people through its unique vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, symbolic imagery, and representations of social relations. When Uzbek literary works are rendered into English, translators often face considerable difficulties because many culturally bound concepts in Uzbek do not have direct counterparts in English.

Language is closely intertwined with culture and social perception. As noted by Edward Sapir, language functions as a framework through which people interpret and understand their social environment, emphasizing that it reflects the worldview of a particular society (Sapir, 1921). In the context of translation, cultural aspects are equally significant. Peter Newmark points out that translation involves more than the substitution of words between languages; it also requires the transfer of cultural meanings and values embedded in the original text (Newmark, 1988). These perspectives are particularly relevant to the translation of Uzbek literary texts into English, where translators must communicate not only the semantic content but also the cultural identity reflected in the language. Therefore, this study examines how Uzbek national identity is conveyed in English translations through linguacultural components such as culture-specific vocabulary, traditional customs, proverbs, and metaphorical expressions.

Theoretical Background: Linguaculture and Translation

The notion of linguaculture highlights the close and inseparable connection between language and culture. Language does not function only as a tool for communication; it also carries cultural meanings, traditions, and social values embedded in vocabulary, expressions, and discourse structures. In translation studies, this relationship becomes particularly significant because translators must convey both linguistic meaning and cultural context. According to Eugene Nida, translation aims to reproduce the message of the source language in the target language in the most natural and equivalent form possible. As he explained that translation consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message (Nida, 1964). However, achieving such equivalence can be challenging when the source text contains culture-specific elements that have no direct counterparts in the target language.

The cultural dimension of translation is also emphasized by Lawrence Venuti, who argues that translation always involves the transmission of cultural meanings from one society to another. Venuti stated that translation inevitably involves the transfer of cultural values (Venuti, 1995). Therefore, translators must not only interpret linguistic structures, but also mediate between different cultural systems. In this context, translators face the challenge of balancing two essential objectives: maintaining the cultural authenticity of the original text while ensuring that the translated version remains clear and accessible for target-language readers.

Culture-Specific Words and National Identity

Culture-specific vocabulary plays a crucial role in representing national identity in literary texts. Such words often refer to traditions, social institutions, or cultural practices that are unique to a particular society. For example, in Uzbek language *"Mahallada hamma bir-birini yaxshi taniydi. English translation: In the mahalla everyone knows each other well"*. Mahalla is a traditional Uzbek neighborhood community that functions as a social support system in which residents maintain close social relations and assist one another during important events such as weddings, funerals, and community gatherings. The concept of mahalla reflects collective responsibility, social solidarity, and community cooperation—values that play an important role in Uzbek social life. The term is usually translated through transliteration, preserving the original word while providing contextual explanation. *Uzbek example: Navroʻz bahorning boshlanishini bildiradi. English translation: Navruz marks the beginning of spring*. Navroʻz is a traditional spring festival celebrated on March 21 that symbolizes renewal, harmony with nature, and the beginning of a new year. The celebration of Navroʻz represents ancient cultural traditions and serves as a symbol of national unity and cultural continuity among the Uzbek people. *Uzbek example: Mehmon uchun dasturxon yozildi. English translation: A traditional table was prepared for the guest.* Dasturxon refers to a traditional tablecloth or the arrangement of food placed on it, usually served to guests during meals. In Uzbek culture, preparing a rich and generous dasturxon represents hospitality, respect, and kindness toward guests. Offering food generously is considered an important cultural value and a sign of honor for visitors.

Proverbs as Cultural Wisdom

Proverbs play a significant role in expressing the collective wisdom, ethical values, and cultural beliefs of a nation. Uzbek proverbs reflect everyday experiences and social norms that have been passed down through generations. *Uzbek proverb: Mehmon otangdan ulugʻ. Literal*

translation: A guest is greater than your father. Interpretative translation: A guest deserves the highest respect. This proverb emphasizes the importance of hospitality in Uzbek culture. Guests are treated with exceptional respect and care, reflecting the deeply rooted tradition of welcoming visitors warmly. *Uzbek proverb: Birlikda kuch bor. English translation: Strength lies in unity.* The proverb highlights the value placed on cooperation and solidarity in Uzbek society. It reflects the belief that collective effort leads to greater success and stability. *Uzbek proverb: Yaxshi so‘z — jon ozig‘i. English translation: A kind word nourishes the soul.* This proverb illustrates the significance of polite and respectful speech in Uzbek culture, where kind words are believed to uplift and encourage others.

Forms of Address and Social Relations

The Uzbek language contains various forms of address that express respect, age hierarchy, and social relationships. These linguistic features reveal important cultural values related to family structure and interpersonal relations. *Uzbek example: Assalomu alaykum, aka. English translation: Hello, brother.* Aka is used to address an older male and conveys respect, even if the person is not a biological relative. *Uzbek example: Rahmat, opa. English translation: Thank you, sister.* Opa is used when addressing an older woman and expresses respect and familiarity. *Bobo Uzbek example: Bobo bolalarga hikoya aytib berdi. English translation: The grandfather told a story to the children*. In Uzbek culture, elders play an essential role in transmitting cultural values, traditions, and knowledge to younger generations.

Cultural Metaphors and Symbolism

Metaphors often reflect the cultural worldview of a society and are widely used in literary texts. *Uzbek example: Uning yuragi bahor gullaridek ochildi. English translation: Her heart blossomed like spring flowers.*

Symbolism: Spring in Uzbek culture symbolizes renewal, happiness, and new beginnings. *Uzbek: Yurt tinchligi eng katta boylikdir. English translation: Peace in the homeland is the greatest wealth.* The word “yurt” conveys a deep emotional connection to homeland, reflecting patriotism and collective identity.

Translation Strategies in Cultural Representation

To convey culturally specific meanings effectively, translators employ several strategies. Transliteration: This method preserves the original cultural term in the translation. *Example: mahalla → mahalla.* Descriptive Translation: In this strategy, the translator explains the meaning of the cultural concept. *Example Uzbek: Mahalla raisi yig‘ilish o‘tkazdi. English: The head of the mahalla community held a meeting.* Sometimes additional context is necessary to help readers understand the cultural concept. *Example Uzbek: Navro‘z yangi yil bayrami hisoblanadi. English: Navruz is a traditional festival celebrating the arrival of the new year.* The analysis demonstrates that Uzbek national identity is deeply embedded in cultural vocabulary, traditions, and social practices. When translating Uzbek literary texts into English, translators must therefore act as cultural mediators who bridge the gap between two linguistic and cultural systems. Preserving culturally significant words such as mahalla, *“Navruz”* and *“dasturxon”* enables readers to experience Uzbek cultural realities more authentically. However, translators must also provide explanations or contextual information to ensure that target-language readers fully understand these cultural concepts. Through such strategies,

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translation becomes not only a linguistic process but also a means of preserving and communicating national identity across cultures.

Conclusion

The translation of Uzbek literary texts into English involves transferring not only linguistic meaning but also cultural identity. Uzbek national identity is reflected through cultural concepts, traditional customs, proverbs, and metaphors. This study shows that translation strategies such as transliteration, descriptive translation, and cultural explanation help maintain cultural authenticity while ensuring comprehension for international readers. By preserving linguacultural elements, translators contribute to the global recognition of Uzbek literary heritage and cultural identity.

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