ISSN:3030-332X
Impact factor: 9,493
International journal of scientific researchers

CULTURAL CHALLENGES IN TRANSLATING UZBEK LITERARY WORKS INTO ENGLISH

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Abstract: This article explores the cultural challenges encountered in translating Uzbek literary works into English. Literary translation involves not only linguistic transformation but also the transfer of national identity, traditions, customs, and worldview embedded in the source text. Uzbek literary texts contain numerous culture-specific elements such as realia, kinship terms, idiomatic expressions, and national traditions that often lack direct equivalents in English. The study analyzes selected examples from Uzbek literary works and examines the strategies used to preserve cultural meaning in translation. The findings demonstrate that preserving cultural authenticity while maintaining readability for English-speaking audiences remains one of the major challenges in literary translation.

Keywords: Uzbek literature, literary translation, cultural challenges, translation strategies, equivalence, domestication, foreignization

Introduction

Translation serves as a bridge between cultures, enabling people from different linguistic backgrounds to understand each other's literature, traditions, and worldview. Literary translation reflects not only language but also the cultural identity of a nation. Translating Uzbek literary works into English presents numerous difficulties because of differences in traditions, customs, social values, and historical background.

Although several studies have explored cultural translation in general, limited research has focused specifically on how Uzbek cultural concepts are preserved in English literary translation. In Uzbek translation studies, researchers have particularly emphasized the translation of national realia, phraseological units, and culture-bound expressions.

Literature Review

The relationship between language and culture has always been central in translation studies. Eugene Nida (1964) introduced the theory of dynamic equivalence, arguing that translation should produce a similar effect on target readers. Peter Newmark (1988) highlighted the importance of translating culture-specific items through adaptation and descriptive equivalence, while Lawrence Venuti (1995) developed the concepts of domestication and foreignization.

Recent studies on Uzbek-English translation demonstrate that figurative language and culture-bound expressions often lose their stylistic and emotional effect when translated literally. Uzbek scholars such as G'aybullo Salomov (1983) and Qodir Mirmuhamedov (1991) emphasized that literary translation should preserve national spirit and cultural identity while remaining understandable for foreign readers.

Studies devoted specifically to Uzbek literary translation reveal that national concepts related to hospitality, customs, kinship relations, clothing, and traditional food create significant translation difficulties. Translators therefore frequently apply paraphrasing, transliteration, and explanatory translation strategies in order to preserve cultural authenticity.

Methodology

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method to analyze cultural challenges in translating Uzbek literary works into English. Selected examples from Uzbek literary texts, particularly works by Abdulla Qodiriy, are comparatively analyzed based on translation theories proposed by Nida, Newmark, and Venuti.

Analysis and Discussion

Uzbek literary works contain numerous culture-specific elements that reflect national traditions, worldview, and social relationships. These elements often create difficulties in English translation because many concepts are deeply rooted in Uzbek culture and lack direct equivalents in English.

One major challenge involves translating kinship terms such as “opa,” “aka,” “amma,” and “tog‘a.” These words express not only family relations but also respect, hierarchy, and emotional closeness. Translating them simply as “sister,” “brother,” “aunt,” or “uncle” weakens their cultural meaning.

Another important issue concerns national customs represented in literary texts. In the novel “O‘tkan kunlar” by Abdulla Qodiriy, terms such as “mahalla,” “to‘y,” and “kelin salom” reflect Uzbek social life. For example, the term “mahalla” is often translated as “neighborhood,” but this translation does not fully convey the idea of social solidarity and collective identity associated with Uzbek mahalla culture.

The analysis further demonstrates that domestication and foreignization strategies are widely used in Uzbek-English literary translation. While domestication improves readability for foreign readers, excessive adaptation may reduce the national spirit of the original text.

Conclusion

This study examined the cultural challenges involved in translating Uzbek literary works into English. The findings demonstrate that literary translation requires not only linguistic accuracy but also cultural sensitivity and intercultural competence.

The analysis revealed that culture-specific items such as kinship terms, customs, traditions, and idiomatic expressions create significant translation difficulties because many Uzbek cultural concepts lack direct English equivalents. Uzbek translation scholars also stress that the successful rendering of national realia depends largely on the translator’s intercultural competence and knowledge of Uzbek traditions.

Finally, the research highlights the importance of promoting Uzbek literature internationally through high-quality translation. Accurate and culturally sensitive translations contribute to intercultural communication and help introduce Uzbek national heritage to global readers.

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