

LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL BARRIERS IN TRANSLATING ENGLISH
IDIOMS INTO UZBEK

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Annotation: This article examines the linguistic and cultural barriers that arise when translating idioms from English into Uzbek. Idioms are fixed expressions whose meanings cannot be understood by translating individual words directly. Because idioms are deeply rooted in the culture, history, and everyday life of a nation, they often create serious difficulties for translators. The study focuses on how differences in worldview, traditions, and cultural associations between English-speaking and Uzbek-speaking communities affect the process of achieving equivalence in translation.

The article also discusses common translation strategies used to overcome these barriers, such as using functional equivalents, paraphrasing, or replacing an idiom with a culturally appropriate expression in the target language. Through comparative examples, the research shows that full equivalence is not always possible, and translators must balance accuracy, meaning, and cultural acceptability. The findings highlight the importance of cultural competence and linguistic awareness in producing high-quality and natural translations of idiomatic expressions.

Key Words: Idioms, translation equivalence, linguistic barriers, cultural barriers, English – Uzbek translation, intercultural communication.

Annotation: Mazkur maqolada ingliz tilidagi idiomalarni o'zbek tiliga tarjima qilish jarayonida yuzaga keladigan lingvistik va madaniy to'siqlar tahlil qilinadi. Idiomalar — bu alohida so'zlar ma'nosi orqali tushuntirib bo'lmaydigan, barqaror birikmalardir. Ular xalqning madaniyati, tarixi va kundalik hayoti bilan chambarchas bog'liq bo'lgani sababli, tarjima



jarayonida ko‘plab qiyinchiliklarni keltirib chiqaradi. Tadqiqot ingliz va o‘zbek tillariga xos bo‘lgan dunyoqarash, urf-odat va madaniy tushunchalardagi farqlar idiomalar tarjimasiga qanday ta’sir qilishini yoritadi.

Shuningdek, maqolada tarjimonlar tomonidan qo‘llaniladigan asosiy strategiyalar, jumladan, funksional muqobillarni topish, izohlab tarjima qilish yoki madaniy jihatdan mos ifodalar bilan almashtirish usullari ko‘rib chiqiladi. Misollar asosida to‘liq ekvivalentlik har doim ham mavjud emasligi, shu sababli tarjimon mazmun aniqligi va madaniy moslik o‘rtasida muvozanatni saqlashi zarurligi ko‘rsatib beriladi. Tadqiqot natijalari idiomatik tarjimada lingvistik bilim bilan bir qatorda madaniy kompetensiyaning ham muhim ekanini tasdiqlaydi.

Kalit so‘zlar: Idiomalar, tarjima ekvivalentligi, lingvistik to‘siqlar, madaniy to‘siqlar, ingliz–o‘zbek tarjimasiga, madaniyatlararo muloqot.

Idioms are an essential part of any living language because they reflect how people think, feel, and interact with the world around them. They are not simply decorative expressions but meaningful linguistic units that carry emotional, cultural, and social information. In English and Uzbek alike, idioms are used to express attitudes, evaluate situations, give advice, or describe experiences in a concise and vivid way. However, when idioms are transferred from one language to another, especially between languages belonging to different language families and cultures, the translation process becomes complex and challenging. Scholars in translation studies often emphasize that idioms are among the most problematic elements to translate because their meanings cannot be deduced from the meanings of their individual components [1][2].

One of the main reasons idioms cause difficulties in translation is their non-literal nature. An English idiom such as “*kick the bucket*” does not refer to a physical action but means “to die.” If such an expression is translated word for word into Uzbek, the result will be confusing or even meaningless for the reader. This problem has been discussed by many researchers, who argue that idioms require semantic rather than lexical translation [3]. In other words, the translator must focus on conveying meaning, function, and effect instead of individual words. This approach is particularly important when translating between English and Uzbek, where direct equivalents are often absent.

Linguistic barriers form the first major group of difficulties in idiom translation. English and Uzbek differ significantly in grammatical structure, word order, morphology, and lexical composition. English relies heavily on fixed word order and auxiliary verbs, while Uzbek is an agglutinative language with flexible word order and extensive use of suffixes [4]. These structural differences affect how idioms are formed and understood. Many English idioms are based on phrasal verbs, such as “*give up*,” “*look after*,” or “*run out of*,” which have no direct grammatical equivalents in Uzbek [5]. As a result, translators must restructure the entire expression to make it acceptable in the target language.

Another linguistic challenge is polysemy and metaphorical extension. Many words used in idioms have multiple meanings, and only one of these meanings is activated in an idiomatic context. For example, the word “*head*” appears in many English idioms with abstract meanings, such as “*keep your head*” or “*lose your head*.” Uzbek may express similar ideas using different body parts or completely different imagery. Researchers point out that metaphorical systems



differ from language to language, which makes literal equivalence rare [6]. Therefore, translators must recognize the metaphorical basis of an idiom before attempting to translate it.

While linguistic barriers are significant, cultural barriers often create even deeper problems. Idioms are deeply rooted in the culture of the speech community and often reflect historical events, social norms, beliefs, and everyday practices [7]. English idioms frequently include references to sports, animals, food, weather, and social behavior that are common in English-speaking societies. For example, idioms related to cricket, horse racing, or Western dining traditions may not be culturally transparent to Uzbek readers [8]. When such idioms are translated without cultural adaptation, the target text may lose its communicative value.

Uzbek idiomatic expressions, on the other hand, are strongly influenced by traditional values such as respect for elders, family relations, patience, and moral behavior. Many Uzbek idioms originate from agricultural life, folklore, and oral tradition. Because of this, cultural images used in Uzbek idioms may not match those found in English. Scholars argue that idioms serve as cultural markers and reflect national identity, which makes them resistant to full translation equivalence [9]. A translator who ignores cultural context risks producing a translation that is linguistically correct but culturally inappropriate.

The concept of equivalence plays a central role in idiom translation. In translation theory, equivalence does not mean absolute sameness but rather functional or communicative similarity between the source and target texts [10]. When translating idioms, achieving full equivalence is often impossible because the cultural and emotional layers of meaning cannot be fully transferred. Instead, translators aim for partial or functional equivalence, where the translated idiom performs a similar function in the target language. This approach is widely accepted in modern translation studies because it prioritizes understanding and naturalness over formal similarity [11].

Several translation strategies are commonly used to deal with idioms. One of the most effective strategies is using an idiom with a similar meaning and function in the target language. For example, an English idiom expressing impatience or anger may be replaced with an Uzbek idiom conveying the same emotion, even if the imagery differs. This strategy helps preserve stylistic richness and emotional impact [12]. However, this method is only possible when such an equivalent exists, which is not always the case.

When no equivalent idiom is available, paraphrasing becomes a useful alternative. Paraphrasing involves explaining the meaning of the idiom using neutral language. Although this strategy may reduce expressiveness, it ensures clarity and avoids misunderstanding. Paraphrasing is especially common in academic, informational, and educational texts, where clarity is more important than stylistic effect [13]. In some contexts, translators may also choose to omit the idiom entirely or replace it with a non-idiomatic expression if it does not play a crucial role in the text.

The choice of translation strategy depends on several factors, including the type of text, target audience, and purpose of translation. Literary texts usually require more creative solutions because idioms contribute to character development, tone, and atmosphere. In contrast, technical or official texts often favor clarity and precision over stylistic richness. Scholars emphasize that translators must make informed decisions based on context rather than applying one strategy mechanically [14]. This highlights the importance of translator competence and experience.



Another important aspect of idiom translation is the role of context. Idioms may change meaning depending on the situation in which they are used. Without understanding the broader context, a translator may misinterpret the intended meaning of an idiom. Contextual analysis allows translators to determine whether an expression is used literally or idiomatically and how it contributes to the overall message of the text. This process requires careful reading and cultural sensitivity [15].

In addition, modern globalization and media exposure have influenced idiom usage in both languages. English idioms increasingly appear in Uzbek media, social networks, and youth speech, sometimes in adapted or hybrid forms. While this phenomenon may facilitate understanding for some audiences, it also raises questions about language purity and cultural preservation. Translators must balance innovation with respect for linguistic norms and cultural values.

In conclusion, translating English idioms into Uzbek involves complex linguistic and cultural challenges that require more than basic bilingual knowledge. Idioms are culture-bound expressions that reflect national identity, historical experience, and social values. Linguistic differences, metaphorical variation, and cultural specificity all contribute to translation difficulties. Although complete equivalence is rarely achievable, effective translation is possible through functional equivalence, paraphrasing, and context-sensitive strategies. Ultimately, successful idiom translation depends on the translator's ability to combine linguistic skill, cultural awareness, and creative thinking. This makes idiom translation not only a technical task but also an art that plays a vital role in intercultural communication.

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