

Linguistic Challenges, Translational Strategies, and Cultural Mediation in Uzbek, Kazakh, and English Literary Translation

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Abstract. This article examines the process of literary translation among the Uzbek, English, and Kazakh languages. It analyzes the linguistic, cultural, and stylistic obstacles that emerge when translating literary works among these three languages. Through the analysis of actual examples from prose and poetry, the article emphasizes the methods translators employ to maintain meaning, style, and cultural units while engaging new audiences.

Key words: cross-cultural communication, translation strategies, Turkic languages, poetry translation, idiomatic expressions, cultural adaptation, dynamic equivalence, multilingual translation, structural differences, translator's role.

Introduction

Literary translation is more than a linguistic activity—it is an act of cultural mediation.¹ The interplay among Uzbek, English, and Kazakh literary traditions offers unique insights into how language reflects identity and worldview. Uzbek and Kazakh, both Turkic languages, share historical and cultural proximity, while English represents a global lingua franca with different grammatical and stylistic norms. The task of translating among these three languages requires deep intercultural sensitivity and a mastery of translation techniques.

Literature Review. Literary translation, especially between linguistically and culturally distinct languages, has been widely explored by scholars like Nida (1964) and Bassnett (2014), who emphasize the importance of conveying both meaning and effect. In the context of Uzbek, Kazakh, and English, translation challenges include structural differences, cultural concepts, and the preservation of literary style.

Turkic language specialists such as Shukurov (2015) and Tolegenov (2017) note that agglutinative grammar, flexible word order, and idiomatic expressions make Uzbek and Kazakh texts difficult to render accurately into English. Venuti's (1995) concept of foreignization vs. domestication is relevant here, especially when translating culturally rich terms. Although

¹ Nida, E. Toward a Science of Translating. Brill, 1964. P.143.

projects like Kazakhstan's Rukhani Zhangyru and Uzbekistan's state-supported translation programs have increased international exposure, comparative studies involving all three languages remain limited. This article aims to fill that gap through real examples and strategic analysis of literary translation among Uzbek, Kazakh, and English.

Main body. Linguistic and Structural Differences. Uzbek and Kazakh languages follow the Subject–Object–Verb (SOV) order, are agglutinative, and use suffixes to express grammatical relationships. English, in contrast, uses Subject–Verb–Object (SVO) word order and relies on prepositions and auxiliary verbs. These structural differences significantly affect literary translation.

From Uzbek into English.

“*Odam bolasi hech qachon sevgisiz yashay olmaydi*”.² (Uzbek – Abdulla Qodiriy, *O’tkan kunlar*).

“*A human child never without love live can*”. (Word for word translation)

“*No human being can live without love*”. (Refined and more natural English translation).

In this example, the SOV structure is reshaped in English, but the emotional depth is retained. The translator must balance grammatical transformation with emotional fidelity.

Uzbek and Kazakh literature are rich in idioms and culturally specific metaphors that are hard to translate into English directly.

Translation of idiomatic expressions from Kazakh into Uzbek and English

“*Қалың елім, қазағым, қайран жұрттым...*”³ (Kazakh – Abay Qunanbaiuly)

“*Qalin el, qardoshim, bag’rikeng yurtim...*” (Uzbek correspondence)

“*My vast nation, my Kazakh people, my dear homeland...*” (English correspondence).

The Kazakh word “*қалың*” (vast/thick) is emotionally rich. In Uzbek, it is rendered as “*qalin*”, preserving both meaning and rhythm. In English, the metaphor “*vast nation*” is accurate, though some emotional tone is inevitably softened. This demonstrates the difficulty of conveying layered national identity in English.

Poetry is the most challenging genre in translation due to its reliance on sound, meter, and cultural allusion.

Translating poetry from English into Uzbek and Kazakh

“*The woods are lovely, dark and deep,*

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep...”⁴ (Robert Frost – *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*).

“*O’rmonlar jozibali, qorong’u va chuqur,*

Ammo va’dalarim bor – o’zimga shukur,

Yana yurishim kerak, uyqudan oldin...” (Uzbek Translation)

“*Ормандар тамаша, қараңғы, терең,*

Бірақ уәдем бар, жолға төзем,

Үйықтардан бұрын әлі жүрер жолым көп...” (Kazakh Translation)

In both Uzbek and Kazakh, translators adapt rhyme patterns and cultural rhythm to suit the audience, but the deep philosophical tone is preserved. This highlights the importance of **functional equivalence** – not word-for-word translation, but spirit-for-spirit.

Kazakh and Uzbek literature often include regional dialects or oral storytelling elements. Translating these into English without losing their flavor is complex.

“*Айтысқа шықсам, сөзден кем болмайын,*

Қалың жұрттым қолдаса, сен болмайын”. (Kazakh Aitys Poetry)

This type of verse depends on live performance and improvisation.

“*If I step into the aitys, I shall not falter in words,*

Let my people stand by me, and I shall not fear the world”. (English translation).

In translation of this Kazakh oral language element, metaphor and public spirit must be made accessible to English readers while staying faithful to the original's oral energy.

² Qodiriy, A. O’tkan kunlar. Tashkent: Gafur Ghulom Publishing House. P.167.

³ Abay, Q. Qara Sozder. Almaty: Kazakh Academy of Sciences. P. 231.

⁴ Frost, R. Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening. 1923. P. 98.

Translation Strategies. To address the challenges mentioned, translators often rely on these strategies:

- **Transcreation** – reshaping the content to suit target readers while keeping core meaning (esp. in poetry).
- **Footnotes or Glossaries** – used when translating realia (e.g., *beshik*, *aitys*, *navro 'z*) to retain cultural content.
- **Domestication and Foreignization** – choosing whether to make the text feel “local” to the reader or preserve its foreignness.

Conclusion. Literary translation among Uzbek, English, and Kazakh is not merely a linguistic exercise—it is a cultural mission. It requires deep understanding of each language's structure, literary tradition, and cultural roots. Through carefully chosen strategies and real-world practice, literary translators can continue to serve as vital bridges between these nations, fostering mutual understanding and shared human experience.

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