

Uzbek Translation Peculiarities of English Proverbs

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Abstract. *This article analyzes the challenges of translating English proverbs into Uzbek and examines effective strategies for preserving their meaning and cultural value. The study focuses on the semantic, cultural, and stylistic features of proverbs that complicate direct translation. Several English proverbs are analyzed together with their Uzbek equivalents to demonstrate how different translation methods can be applied. The paper also discusses approaches such as equivalent translation, descriptive translation, and cultural adaptation to achieve semantic accuracy and natural expression in the target language.*

Key words: *proverbs, implicit meaning, figurative meaning, ambiguity, literal translation, equivalents, paraphrasing, analogy, context dependence, descriptive translation, syntax and word order.*

1. Introduction

Proverbs are often used to give advice or share a life lesson in a subtle way, sometimes through a story or a philosophical phrase. Understanding their correct meaning can be difficult, especially for non-native speakers. If used incorrectly, the intended message can be lost. A good knowledge of the language is necessary to use proverbs properly [1]. In today's digital era, language is constantly changing, and the use of idioms and proverbs is growing. New expressions are being added regularly, but fast online communication can make it harder to convey the exact meaning. Still, using proverbs and idioms online helps people communicate creatively and share ideas in an engaging way [2, 3].

2. Literature review.

The translation of proverbs has been widely discussed in translation studies, particularly because such expressions carry both linguistic and cultural meaning. Eugene Nida and Charles Taber (1969) introduced the concept of equivalence and argued that a translation should convey not only the meaning but also the effect of the original text [4]. Peter Newmark (1988) examined practical ways of translating idioms and proverbs and suggested that when direct equivalents are unavailable, translators may use descriptive or adapted expressions [5].

Mona Baker (2011) also explored strategies for translating idiomatic language and emphasized the importance of context in interpreting figurative expressions [6]. Lawrence Venuti (1995) focused on the cultural aspect of translation and noted that excessive adaptation to the target culture may obscure important features of the source text. Roman Jakobson (1959) highlighted linguistic challenges in translation and pointed out that culturally specific expressions such as proverbs often require flexible translation solutions [7].

3. Methodology

Uzbek scholar Ghaybulla Salomov made a significant contribution to the study of translation as well. He described proverbs and idioms as distinctive elements of language and emphasized that translation is both a precise and creative process. In his view, translators should preserve the meaning and stylistic character of proverbs while ensuring that the translation sounds natural in the target language.

4. Discussion and Results

English proverbs often express important values such as patriotism, bravery, justice, love for knowledge, respect for women, friendship, ethics, and education. These ideas can often be found in similar forms in Uzbek proverbs. For example [8]:

One good turn deserves another – Yaxshilik qilsang, yaxshilik qaytar, yomonlik qilsang – yomonlik.

This proverb means that kindness is usually returned with kindness, while bad actions bring negative consequences. It promotes the values of goodness, fairness, and moral responsibility, encouraging people to treat others well in order to build a positive and just society [9].

Two heads are better than one – Bir kalla – kalla, ikki kalla – tilla.

Working together makes things easier and often leads to better results. It highlights the importance of cooperation, friendship, and listening to others' ideas [10].

A healthy mind in a healthy body – Sog' tanda, sog'lom aql.

This proverb reminds us that our mental state is closely connected to our physical health. When the body is strong and cared for, the mind works better too. It encourages a balanced lifestyle and self-discipline [11].

The meanings of proverbs and sayings are often clarified through context. Sometimes proverbs have close equivalents in two or more languages. For example:

Strike while the iron is hot – Temirni qizig'ida bos.

This proverb suggests that timing matters. When the right moment comes, it's important not to hesitate. It teaches people to be alert, confident, and ready to act [12].

Better late than never – Hechdan ko'ra kech yaxshi.

Even if something is delayed, doing it is still better than not doing it at all. It gives a sense of hope and encourages people to keep going instead of giving up.

As you brew, so you must drink – Nimani eksang, shuni o'rasan / O'zing pishirgan oshni o'zing ichasan.

This reminds us that we have to deal with the results of our own choices. Good decisions bring good outcomes, and bad ones bring problems. It encourages honesty, accountability, and careful thinking before acting [13].

However, such direct equivalents are not very common. In many cases, translators try to find a suitable variant that conveys the same meaning in the target language. Sometimes proverbs are translated literally, depending on the situation. Therefore, the same proverb may be translated in different ways in different contexts.

One of the main difficulties in translating proverbs is that every language has its own national character. Proverbs are created from the life experience of people and reflect their traditions and worldview. Their formation is closely connected with people's occupations, lifestyle, national character, and geographical environment [14].

Therefore, a translator should understand that translation is not only a technical process but also a creative activity. The translator must interpret and express the meaning of each language unit of the original text in a creative and natural way in the target language. Here are some common translation problems:

1. *Lack of equivalents – Some expressions don't exist in other languages.*

Mehmon otangdan ulug' – (A guest is greater than your father).

This proverb is deeply rooted in Uzbek culture, where guests are treated with exceptional respect. However, when translated literally into English, it may sound unusual or exaggerated, as English-speaking cultures do not typically place guests above close family members.

2. *Context dependence – Meaning depends on situation.*

Don't judge a book by its cover – can simply mean not to underestimate a person by their appearance or in another context a warning to avoid potential problems.

3. *Subtlety and implicit meaning – Cultural nuances may be lost.*

Still waters run deep – This refers to people, specifically those who are quiet, reserved, or introverted. The underlying implication is that quiet individuals often possess intense emotions, profound wisdom, or hidden talents.

4. *Loss of rhyme – Rhymes often disappear in translation.*

No pain, no gain – (Mehnat, mehnatning tagi rohat).

5. *Ambiguity and multiple meanings – Proverbs can be interpreted in different ways.*

Proverbs can have multiple meanings which can be interpreted in different ways, depending on context. Translators must be cautious about the intended meaning and choose the best expression which suits it most. Example: *“All that glitters is not gold”*

- The first meaning – do not judge a person by their appearance
- The second meaning – not everything which seems worthwhile is worthwhile.

6. *Figurative language – Metaphors and symbols may not have equivalents.*

To carry coals to Newcastle – *O'rmonga o'tin bilan bormoq.*

This proverb contains a culture-specific metaphor, as Newcastle was historically associated with coal. In Uzbek, the same idea is expressed through a different image, since the original reference would not be meaningful for Uzbek speakers [15].

Strategies for translating proverbs

Levels of Equivalence

Complete equivalence (similar meaning and form)

- *First think, then speak* – *Avval o'yla, keyin so'yla*

Partial equivalence (similar meaning, different form)

- *Once bitten, twice shy* – *Og'zi kuygan qatiqni ham puflab ichar*

Paraphrasing (giving the general meaning)

- *To live from hand to mouth* – *Qo'l uchida yashamoq*

Three main principles in translating proverbs

1. Find a suitable equivalent in the target language – a proverb with the same meaning and form.
2. Find a suitable variant by analogy – same meaning, different wording.
3. Translate word for word – literally, if possible.

If none of these methods work, translators can use paraphrasing, explaining the meaning in simple words.

Translation Methods:

1. *Equivalent Translation*

Meaning and structure are almost the same. Examples:

- *Art is long, life is short – San’at abadiy – umr qisqa*
- *A good name is better than riches – Yaxshi nom boylikdan Afzal*
- *No pain, no gain – Mashaqqatsiz rohat yo’q*

2. Analogical Translation

Meaning is the same, but wording or structure is different. Examples:

- *There is no smoke without fire – Shamol bo’lmasa, daraxtning uchi qimirlamas*
- *While the cat’s away, the mice will play – Sulayman o’ldi, devlar qutildi*

3. Descriptive Translation (Paraphrasing)

Used when no direct equivalent exists. Meaning is explained in words. Examples:

- *An unfortunate man would be drowned in a tea-cup – Kambag’alni tuya ustida ham it qopadi.*
- *A leopard can’t change its spots – Bukrini go’r to’g’rilar*
- *No use crying over spilt milk – O’tgan ishga salovat*

When translating proverbs, a translator must understand both the linguistic and non-linguistic features of the two languages. Non-linguistic features refer mainly to culture, because proverbs are strongly connected to cultural traditions and experiences. Each proverb expresses a specific meaning in a particular situation. Therefore, translators should try to keep the same cultural meaning as the original proverb.

5. Conclusion.

Translating proverbs constitutes a complex task that reflects the broader challenges inherent in translation as a discipline. It requires not only linguistic precision but also a high level of cultural competence and strategic decision-making. As culturally marked units, proverbs encapsulate collective experience and worldview, which must be carefully mediated in the target language. Adequate translation of proverbs facilitates cross-linguistic transfer while preserving their semantic and pragmatic functions, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of both universal and culture-specific aspects of human cognition. Despite inherent difficulties, effective proverb translation plays a significant role in intercultural communication, enabling the transmission of values, knowledge, and traditions across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

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