



PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATION: LINGUISTIC, SEMANTIC, AND CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

Translation is a multifaceted process that involves transferring meaning, style, and cultural nuances from one language to another. Translators face numerous challenges, including linguistic differences, semantic ambiguities, idiomatic expressions, cultural references, and stylistic features. This article examines the main problems encountered in translation, with a particular focus on English–Uzbek and Uzbek–English translation. The study discusses linguistic, semantic, and cultural difficulties and explores strategies for overcoming them. Comparative examples, including idioms, metaphors, proverbs, and stylistic devices, demonstrate how translators balance meaning, style, and cultural relevance. Understanding these challenges is essential for translators, linguists, and language learners to ensure effective and accurate communication across languages.

Keywords: Translation, linguistic equivalence, cultural transfer, idioms, semantics, stylistics, English–Uzbek translation, metaphor translation.

Introduction

Translation is not merely a process of substituting words from one language with equivalents in another. Rather, it is a complex cognitive and cultural activity that requires sensitivity to linguistic structures, semantics, stylistics, and sociocultural context. A translator must consider both micro-level linguistic elements (lexicon,



syntax, morphology) and macro-level communicative functions (cultural connotations, stylistic tone, pragmatic effect).

Problems in translation arise due to the differences in language systems, conceptual frameworks, and cultural traditions. Translators must address challenges such as lexical gaps, syntactic divergences, idiomatic expressions, cultural references, and stylistic devices, particularly when translating literary or culturally loaded texts.

This article examines common problems in English–Uzbek and Uzbek–English translation, provides examples illustrating these challenges, and discusses strategies for resolving them.

Literature Review

Translation studies have long emphasized the interplay of linguistic and cultural factors. Baker (1992) highlights the translator's need to address both semantic equivalence and cultural appropriateness, especially when dealing with idioms, metaphors, and culturally bound expressions. Newmark (1988) distinguishes between semantic translation (focusing on word-for-word meaning) and communicative translation (focusing on the reader's response). Catford (1965) discusses formal and textual equivalence, pointing out that perfect equivalence is often impossible due to structural and cultural differences between languages.

In the context of English–Uzbek translation, Abdurahmonov (2012) observes that differences in syntax, morphology, and lexical availability frequently pose challenges. English often relies on articles, auxiliary verbs, and modal verbs, while Uzbek uses agglutination and specific verb morphology to convey meaning. Additionally, cultural and historical differences complicate translation, particularly for idioms, proverbs, and metaphorical expressions.

Methodology

The research adopts the following methods:

1. Comparative analysis – comparing linguistic, semantic, and cultural features of English and Uzbek.
2. Pragmatic analysis – examining context-dependent translation issues, including politeness, cultural references, and register.



3. Textual analysis – analyzing literary, journalistic, and technical texts to identify common translation problems.

The study draws on examples from literary works, newspapers, and spoken discourse in both languages.

Linguistic Problems in Translation

1. Lexical and Syntactic Differences

Linguistic differences frequently challenge translators in maintaining accuracy and fluency:

Articles: English has a, an, the, which Uzbek lacks. For example:

English: She bought a book.

Uzbek: U kitob sotib oldi.

Here, the specificity indicated by a must be inferred from context.

Tense and aspect: English employs complex tense systems (e.g., present perfect, past continuous), while Uzbek uses morphological markers:

English: I have been reading the book.

Uzbek: Men kitobni o‘qib kelayapman.

Word order: English follows strict SVO structure, whereas Uzbek allows flexible word order due to case endings.

2. Semantic Problems

Semantic issues arise from polysemy, idioms, and stylistic nuances:

Polysemy: Bank – financial institution or riverbank.

Idioms: Break the ice → Uzbek equivalent: muzni eritmoq in context.

Metaphors: English metaphorical expressions may require creative adaptation:

English: He has a heart of stone.

Uzbek: Uning yuragi toshdek qattiq. (literal) or U juda sovuq yurakli. (naturalized)

3. Cultural Problems

Cultural context heavily influences translation:

Greetings: English How do you do? must be adapted to Uzbek conventions (Salom, yaxshimisiz?) to retain politeness.

Historical or literary references: English allusions may be unknown to Uzbek readers.

Proverbs: Literal translation often fails:

English: Every cloud has a silver lining.

Uzbek equivalent: Har bir mushkul ishning ijobiy tomoni bor.

Humor and irony: Cultural background affects interpretation; humor often requires adaptation rather than literal translation.

Table of Examples

English Expression	Literal Translation	Uzbek	Functional Equivalent in Uzbek	Type of Problem
Kick the bucket	Chelakni tepmoq		Jon bermoq	Idiom/semantic
Break the ice	Muzni sindirmoq		Muloqotni boshlamoq	Idiom/cultural
Every cloud has a silver lining	Har bir bulutning kumush qirrasini bor		Har bir mushkul ishning ijobiy tomoni bor	Cultural/proverb
He has a heart of stone	U tosh yurakli		U juda sovuq yurakli	Metaphor/stylistic

Strategies for Overcoming Translation Problems

1. Adaptation – Replace culturally specific items with target-language equivalents.
2. Transposition – Change grammatical structures for naturalness.
3. Modulation – Alter perspective or semantic focus.
4. Paraphrasing – Reword expressions to preserve meaning and style.
5. Explication – Add context or explanation for culturally specific items.

These strategies are chosen based on text type, audience, and communicative goals.

The comparative analysis demonstrates that translation involves more than linguistic equivalence. Translators must:

Address structural differences (syntax, morphology, articles).

Resolve semantic ambiguity (polysemy, idioms, metaphors).

Navigate cultural differences (proverbs, humor, etiquette).

Results

Successful translation requires a delicate balance between faithfulness to the source text and the need to produce a natural, culturally appropriate rendition in



the target language. Maintaining fidelity involves preserving the original meaning, stylistic features, and intent of the author, while ensuring that the text remains comprehensible and acceptable to the target audience. In practice, this balance is often challenging because languages differ not only in grammar and vocabulary but also in how they encode cultural, social, and pragmatic nuances. In the case of English–Uzbek translation, particular care must be taken to address differences in syntactic structures, morphological patterns, and lexical availability. For example, English articles, auxiliary verbs, and modal constructions often have no direct equivalents in Uzbek, requiring translators to infer meaning and adjust sentence structures. Similarly, English idioms, metaphors, and culturally bound expressions frequently need adaptation rather than literal translation to maintain both semantic and pragmatic equivalence. Cultural norms, such as the use of honorifics, levels of politeness, and social conventions embedded in Uzbek, must also be respected to preserve the communicative effect of the original text.

Thus, effective English–Uzbek translation is not merely a linguistic exercise but a cultural negotiation, where the translator must reconcile differences in language systems, social expectations, and literary conventions. Achieving this balance ensures that the translated text is both accurate and resonant, allowing the target audience to experience the meaning, style, and aesthetic value intended by the original author.

Conclusion

Translation is a multifaceted linguistic and cultural process. Translators face challenges related to structural differences, semantic ambiguity, idiomatic expressions, and culturally specific references. Overcoming these challenges requires:

Deep linguistic competence in both source and target languages.

Cultural awareness and sensitivity to norms, history, and values.

Creativity and stylistic flexibility, especially in literary translation.

By employing strategies such as adaptation, modulation, paraphrasing, and explicitation, translators can preserve meaning, stylistic effects, and cultural relevance. Future research could examine the impact of machine translation,



digital communication, and social media on translation practices, as well as methods for teaching translation competence effectively in bilingual education.

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