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LITERARY TRANSLATION AS CULTURAL NEGOTIATION – ENGLISH NOVELS INTO UZBEK (OR VICE VERSA)

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Abstract: In this article highlights of literary translation as a process of cultural negotiation between English and Uzbek literary traditions and examines how translators mediate not only linguistic meaning but also cultural values, historical contexts, and aesthetic norms when translating English novels into Uzbek and vice versa. By analyzing selected examples, the study highlights the translator's role as an intercultural mediator who balances fidelity to the source text with adaptability to the target audience. The paper emphasizes that literary translation involves reconstructing cultural references, idiomatic expressions, and stylistic nuances to ensure both semantic accuracy and cultural resonance.

Keywords: literary translation, cultural negotiation, intercultural communication, English–Uzbek translation, cultural mediation, equivalence, translator's role.

Introduction.

In the context of globalization and intensified intercultural contact, literary translation has acquired renewed significance as a space of dialogue between cultures rather than a mere linguistic operation. When English novels are translated into Uzbek, or Uzbek works into English, the process extends far beyond lexical substitution and grammatical restructuring. It becomes a complex act of cultural negotiation in which meanings, identities, values, and aesthetic traditions are reinterpreted and repositioned within a new cultural framework. Thus, literary translation should be understood not simply as transfer, but as mediation between distinct worldviews embedded in language.

The notion of cultural negotiation emphasizes that translation is an interactive process shaped by historical memory, social norms, ideological assumptions, and literary conventions. English and Uzbek literary traditions emerge from different cultural matrices: English literature has developed within Western philosophical, religious, and socio-political contexts, while Uzbek literature is deeply rooted in Central Asian history, Islamic intellectual heritage, oral narrative traditions, and Soviet as well as post-independence transformations. When a novel crosses linguistic boundaries, these contextual layers inevitably interact. The translator must therefore navigate between preserving the foreignness of the original and ensuring intelligibility and cultural accessibility for the target readership.

Literature review.

Theoretical developments in translation studies reinforce this perspective. Functionalist approaches, dynamic equivalence, and contemporary intercultural theories underline that equivalence cannot be reduced to formal similarity. Instead, it involves reconstructing pragmatic effects, emotional resonance, and cultural symbolism. Culture-specific elements—such as idioms, metaphors, historical references, social hierarchies, humor, and politeness conventions—often resist direct transfer. Their translation requires interpretative choices that reflect negotiation between fidelity and adaptation. Each decision made by the translator shapes how one culture perceives another.

In the case of English–Uzbek translation, this negotiation is particularly intricate. For instance, translating English social realities, individualistic value systems, or genre conventions into Uzbek may require contextual expansion or cultural framing. Conversely, rendering Uzbek novels into English

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often involves rearticulating concepts tied to local customs, collective identity, or culturally embedded symbolism. The translator's role thus becomes ethically and intellectually demanding: they are not only linguistic specialists but also cultural interpreters who construct bridges between narrative traditions.

Moreover, literary translation influences the formation of national literary canons and intercultural literary reception. Through translation, readers gain access to alternative perspectives, social experiences, and aesthetic models. At the same time, translation may transform the original text, subtly reconfiguring its ideological and stylistic dimensions. This dual movement—preservation and transformation—captures the essence of cultural negotiation in translation.

Therefore, examining literary translation between English and Uzbek through the lens of cultural negotiation enables a deeper understanding of how texts function across borders. It highlights the translator's agency, the interplay of cultural systems, and the dynamic re-creation of meaning. Such an approach not only contributes to translation theory but also fosters a more nuanced appreciation of intercultural literary exchange in an increasingly interconnected world.

The process of literary translation takes place within a complex and multilayered interaction between languages and cultures. In this regard, the methodology of teaching literary translation plays a crucial role in overcoming various barriers and challenges that arise in the culturally and linguistically significant process of translation. It also contributes to developing a translation concept that enables an adequate interpretation of another culture. This determines the relevance and scholarly significance of the research.

In contemporary translation studies, literary translation is no longer perceived as a purely linguistic operation based on equivalence. Instead, it is increasingly conceptualized as a process of cultural mediation in which the translator negotiates meaning between two semiotic systems embedded in distinct historical, ideological, and aesthetic frameworks. When English novels are translated into Uzbek—or Uzbek literary works into English—the translator functions not merely as a linguistic converter but as an intercultural mediator operating within asymmetrical cultural spaces.

The notion of "cultural negotiation" highlights the dynamic and dialogic nature of translation. Negotiation implies choice, interpretation, adaptation, and sometimes compromise. Literary texts are saturated with culture-specific elements: idioms, metaphors, intertextual references, social hierarchies, historical memory, humor, irony, and value systems. Therefore, translation inevitably involves interpretative repositioning rather than mechanical transfer.

As Susan Bassnett emphasizes, translation is not merely the transfer of a text from one language to another, but the transfer from one culture to another. Therefore, in translating English novels into Uzbek or Uzbek literary works into English, the translator acts as a mediator between two distinct cultural systems.

Lawrence Venuti considers translation as a process of "rewriting," arguing that every translation is shaped by the values, norms, and representations of the target culture. This approach makes it possible to understand literary translation as a form of cultural negotiation, since the content, style, and cultural connotations of the original work are adapted and recontextualized within a new cultural framework.

Eugene Nida's theory of dynamic equivalence also plays an important role in explaining this process. According to Nida, the primary aim of translation is to produce in the target audience the same communicative and emotional effect as in the original. This requires prioritizing functional equivalence over formal correspondence. The typological differences between English and Uzbek—namely, the analytic nature of English and the agglutinative structure of Uzbek—inevitably lead to grammatical and semantic transformations in translation.

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Antoine Berman, on the other hand, advocates preserving the "foreignness" of the original text. In his view, translation should not completely eliminate the national and cultural distinctiveness of the work. This is particularly important in translating English novels into Uzbek, where excessive simplification of cultural realia may diminish the aesthetic and cultural value of the text.

Thus, literary translation between English and Uzbek represents a complex process of cultural negotiation within two literary spheres. The translator must possess not only linguistic competence but also cultural competence. Through translation, not only the text itself but also meaning, identity, and aesthetic values are reinterpreted. For this reason, literary translation can be regarded as one of the most significant forms of cultural mediation.

Analysis and Results

English and Uzbek literary traditions differ significantly in their narrative conventions, symbolic repertoires, and worldview orientations. English novels often reflect individualism, irony, and implicit social critique, while Uzbek literary texts may emphasize collectivist values, moral didacticism, and culturally embedded ethical paradigms. These differences create linguocultural barriers that require strategic mediation.

Culturally marked units (realia, ethnographic elements, religious references, social institutions, and culturally embedded metaphors) pose particular challenges. For example:

- Idiomatic expressions rarely have full semantic equivalence.
- Humor and irony are deeply context-dependent.
- Culture-bound terms related to social hierarchy, kinship, or historical events may lack direct counterparts.

In such cases, translators employ descriptive translation, functional analogues, contextual adaptation, or selective omission. Each strategy represents a specific form of cultural negotiation, balancing source-text authenticity with target-culture intelligibility.

Within this framework, the translator's role expands beyond linguistic competence. The translator must possess:

- bicultural awareness,
- historical and sociopolitical sensitivity,
- knowledge of literary traditions in both cultures,
- awareness of ideological implications embedded in discourse.

The translator negotiates between fidelity to the source text and the expectations of the target readership. This negotiation often results in semantic and stylistic shifts, sometimes referred to as linguocultural register transformations. Such shifts may elevate clarity and accessibility, but they may also reduce stylistic nuance or cultural depth.

Another important aspect of translating literary works is that every language possesses its own grammatical, lexical, and semantic layers, each of which requires special attention from the translator. Literary translation, therefore, demands not only linguistic competence but also structural sensitivity. As an example, let us examine the short story "Love of Life" by the prominent English writer Jack London from a morphological and structural perspective.

It is well known that English and Uzbek belong to different language families. Uzbek is traditionally classified within the Altaic (Turkic) language family and represents an agglutinative type of language, whereas English belongs to the Germanic branch of the Indo-European (Romance-Germanic) language family and is largely analytic in structure. Due to these typological differences, sentence structure in the two languages differs significantly. English generally follows a strict Subject–Verb–Object (SVO) word order, while Uzbek typically follows a Subject–Object–Verb (SOV) pattern and expresses grammatical relations through suffixation rather than word order.

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One of the greatest challenges facing translators is the ability to reshape an English sentence into an Uzbek structural framework without losing semantic and stylistic meaning. Consider the following example from Jack London's Love of Life:

English original: He searched little ponds for frogs and dug up the earth with his nails for worms, though he knew in spite that neither frogs nor worms existed so far north.

Uzbek translation: U bunday uzoq shimolda qurt va qurbaqa bo'lmasligini bilsa ham, chuqurchalardan qurbaqa axtarar, tirnoqlari bilan yerni titkilab, qurt qidirar edi.

A comparative analysis reveals several important transformations.

First, there is a clear syntactic restructuring. In the English sentence, the main actions ("searched," "dug up") are presented first, followed by the concessive clause introduced by "though." In the Uzbek version, however, the concessive element ("bilsa ham" – although he knew) is placed at the beginning of the sentence. This shift reflects the natural syntactic logic of Uzbek and places emphasis on the psychological awareness of the character before describing his actions.

Second, morphological adaptation occurs. The English verbs are expressed in the simple past tense, while in Uzbek the form "axtarar edi" and "qidirar edi" conveys a repeated or continuous action in the past, adding a nuance of persistence and endurance. Thus, the tense form is not reproduced mechanically but semantically adapted.

Third, lexical transformation is evident. The phrase "little ponds" is translated as "chuqurchalar" (small hollows), which is not a literal equivalent but a contextually appropriate rendering that fits the natural landscape imagery familiar to Uzbek readers. Similarly, "dug up the earth" becomes "yerni titkilab," a verb that stylistically conveys the physical effort while sounding more idiomatic in Uzbek.

Fourth, the negative construction "neither… nor…" is structurally simplified in Uzbek into a single negative clause ("bo'lmasligini"), since Uzbek expresses negation morphologically rather than through paired conjunctions. This represents a grammatical transformation rather than a semantic loss.

Overall, this example demonstrates that literary translation is not a direct transfer of grammatical forms but a complex process of structural, morphological, and semantic adaptation. The translator must reorganize sentence structure, modify tense and aspect, adjust lexical choices, and recalibrate stylistic tone in order to preserve the emotional and pragmatic effect of the original. Thus, the translation of Jack London's prose into Uzbek illustrates how linguistic typology directly influences translation strategies and confirms that achieving functional equivalence often requires substantial structural transformation.

Literary translation becomes particularly complex in genres characterized by stylistic density—rhythmic prose, stream-of-consciousness narration, symbolic fiction, and prose poetry. Stylistic devices such as alliteration, rhythm, culturally embedded metaphors, or dialectal speech are difficult to reproduce without transformation.

Slang, dialect, and sociolects illustrate the limits of direct equivalence. The slang of one language cannot be fully recreated through the slang of another because social connotations differ. As a result, translators often rely on approximate analogues or functional equivalents, which inevitably modify the sociolinguistic register of the text.

Thus, translation involves not only semantic mediation but also stylistic recalibration. The outcome is a reconstructed literary artifact shaped by both source and target cultural norms.

Literary translation also participates in identity formation. By transferring narratives across linguistic boundaries, translation contributes to:

- shaping national literary canons,
- expanding intercultural awareness,
- redefining cultural self-perception,

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- constructing images of "the Other."

When English novels enter Uzbek literary space, they interact with local moral codes, narrative traditions, and aesthetic expectations. Conversely, when Uzbek novels are translated into English, they are recontextualized within global literary markets and interpretative frameworks. Translation therefore becomes an act of cultural repositioning.

Translation transformations may either enhance intercultural dialogue or generate communicative distortions. Successful mediation increases accessibility without erasing cultural uniqueness. However, excessive domestication may neutralize cultural specificity, while excessive foreignization may alienate the target audience.

Thus, literary translation operates within a continuum between preservation and adaptation. Cultural negotiation becomes a balancing mechanism aimed at maintaining semantic integrity, stylistic coherence, and cultural resonance.

Conclusion

Literary translation between English and Uzbek represents a complex, multidimensional process of cultural mediation. It is not a simple transfer of words but a negotiation of meanings, identities, and values across distinct sociocultural systems. The translator acts as a mediator who navigates linguistic asymmetries, genre-specific constraints, and cultural depth. Through this process, translation fosters intercultural dialogue, enriches literary traditions, and contributes to the global circulation of narratives.

Ultimately, literary translation as cultural negotiation reveals that every translated novel is not merely a copy of the original but a newly constructed cultural text situated at the intersection of languages and civilizations.

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