HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

PRAGMATIC AND LINGUOCULTURAL REINTERPRETATION OF IMPLICIT MEANING IN ENGLISH–UZBEK LITERARY TRANSLATION

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https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23219258

Abstract. This paper examines how implicit cultural meanings are interpreted and recreated in English–Uzbek literary translation. In literary discourse, culturally significant information is not always expressed directly. It may be conveyed through allusion, presupposition, connotation, metaphor, culturally marked forms of address, social practices, historical references, and context-dependent associations. Such meanings are relatively transparent to source-language readers but may remain inaccessible to target-language readers unless the translator reconstructs the cultural background behind them. The study approaches this problem from comparative translation studies, pragmatics, and linguocultural analysis. Particular attention is paid to the relationship between explicit wording and inferred meaning, as well as to the translator's choice between preservation, explanation, functional substitution, domestication, foreignization, and compensation. The discussion shows that successful English–Uzbek literary translation depends not on lexical equivalence alone, but on the transfer of communicative function and culturally embedded interpretation. The paper argues that implicit cultural meaning should be treated as a multi-layered translation unit in its own right, requiring contextual interpretation before an appropriate target-text solution can be selected.

Keywords: implicit meaning, cultural meaning, literary translation, interpretation, pragmatics, linguoculture, culture-specific items, allusion, domestication, foreignization, equivalence.

INTRODUCTION

Translation of literary texts involves more than the transfer of lexical and grammatical information from one language into another. A literary work carries historical memories, social conventions, value systems, symbolic associations, and assumptions shared by members of a particular culture. Some of these elements are stated explicitly, whereas others are only recoverable from context. The latter constitute an important part of what may be called implicit cultural meaning. For a reader who knows the source culture, such meaning can appear natural and almost effortless; for a reader from another cultural background, the same passage may be ambiguous, emotionally weak, or misleading. This makes the interpretation of implicit cultural meaning especially important in the translation of English and Uzbek literary texts.

The problem is directly relevant to comparative literary and translation studies because the English and Uzbek cultural systems differ in their patterns of social interaction, historical reference, politeness, family relations, and culturally loaded imagery. Within the 10.00.06 field, such research brings together comparative analysis of two literary traditions and the study of translation as a form of intercultural mediation. The central issue is therefore not simply whether a cultural item has a dictionary equivalent, but whether its implied cultural significance can be recognized and represented for target readers.

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IMPLICIT CULTURAL MEANING AS A TRANSLATION PROBLEM

From a pragmatic perspective, meaning is partly constructed through inference. Grice (1989) demonstrates that communication regularly contains meanings that are not directly encoded in words, while Yule (1996) emphasizes the role of context, presupposition, inference, and implicature in understanding what speakers mean beyond the literal form. Although these concepts were developed primarily for pragmatic communication, they are highly relevant to literary translation, where authors frequently expect readers to infer cultural information rather than receive it as explicit explanation.

In translation, the inferential burden may increase because the target reader does not necessarily share the same cultural knowledge. Nida (1993) stresses the close relationship between language and culture, suggesting that translation must account for cultural systems rather than operate at the level of isolated linguistic forms. Aixelá (1996) similarly treats culture-specific items as units that become problematic because the source and target cultures do not organize experience in identical ways. Consequently, a translator may face a situation in which a formally accurate translation still fails to reproduce the cultural interpretation of the original.

Allusion provides a clear example. In the illustrative sentence “He was a real Scrooge,” the proper name does not function merely as a personal name. It invokes the culturally familiar image of Ebenezer Scrooge and, by implication, a person characterized by extreme miserliness. A literal transfer of the name may preserve the wording but fail to preserve the intended characterization for readers without the relevant intertextual knowledge. Leppihalme (1997) describes such situations as “culture bumps,” noting that literal treatment of allusions can obscure their connotative and pragmatic function. The translator therefore has to decide whether to retain the allusion, explain it, replace it with a functional analogue, or compensate for the lost effect elsewhere.

A comparable challenge can occur in the opposite direction when Uzbek cultural concepts are translated into English. Words such as mahalla, oqsoqol, hashar, kelin salom, or choyxona may be understandable at a referential level, yet their cultural interpretation can extend beyond the basic dictionary meaning. For example, mahalla can denote not only a neighbourhood but also a socially organized community associated with mutual support, local relations, and forms of social responsibility. The exact interpretation depends on the literary context. This illustrates why culture-specific meaning should be treated as a contextual phenomenon rather than as a fixed list of untranslatable words.

ENGLISH–UZBEK LITERARY TRANSLATION: INTERPRETIVE STRATEGIES

The translator’s task is best understood as a process of cultural interpretation. Hatim and Mason (1990) place translation within discourse, pragmatics, semiotics, and social context and regard the translator as a mediator between cultures. This perspective is particularly useful for implicit cultural meaning because it shifts attention from formal substitution to communicative function. House (2015) likewise demonstrates that translation assessment cannot be separated from contextual and intercultural considerations.

Several strategies may be used when implicit cultural meaning creates a gap between source and target readers. The first is preservation: the original cultural element is retained so that the target text continues to display the foreign cultural environment. The second is explicitation or explanation, in which information that was implicit in the source is made more visible to the target reader. The third is functional substitution, where a source-culture element is replaced by a target-language expression that performs a similar communicative role. The fourth is compensation, through which a meaning or

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stylistic effect lost in one part of the text is recreated elsewhere. These choices are not mechanically determined; they depend on genre, narrative voice, authorial intention, audience, and the cultural prominence of the element in question.

Newmark (1988) and Baker and Jones (2025) both emphasize the importance of contextual decision-making in translation. Baker's recent fourth edition is particularly useful for contemporary translation training because it connects lexical and pragmatic problems with broader decision-making processes and translation practice. In literary translation, this means that a culturally implicit element should first be interpreted and only then transferred. The sequence is therefore: identify the cultural signal, recover its contextual meaning, determine its pragmatic function, and select a target-text form capable of recreating that function.

Domestication and foreignization provide a further theoretical dimension. Venuti (2018) describes the tension between making a translation fluent and familiar for target readers and preserving the alterity of the source culture. Neither option is universally preferable. Excessive domestication can erase culturally meaningful difference, while excessive foreignization without contextual support can make the text unnecessarily opaque. In English-Uzbek literary translation, a balanced approach may therefore be more productive: culturally distinctive items can be preserved when they contribute to the identity of the literary world, while strategically chosen explanations or functional equivalents can be introduced when comprehension would otherwise be seriously compromised.

DISCUSSION AND PROPOSED ANALYTICAL MODEL

For comparative analysis, implicit cultural meaning can be classified into several recurrent groups: (1) historical and literary allusions; (2) culturally marked forms of address and kinship terms; (3) social practices, rituals, and etiquette; (4) religious or value-laden references; (5) symbols and metaphors whose interpretation is culture-dependent; and (6) lexical items whose connotations depend on shared cultural experience. The value of this classification is methodological: it makes it possible to compare not only which items are translated, but also what happens to the meanings implied by them.

A useful analytical model may be represented as follows: source-cultural signal - contextual identification - pragmatic and linguocultural interpretation - assessment of the target reader's likely inference - selection of translation strategy - functional re-expression. This model combines the inferential perspective of pragmatics with the cultural and communicative concerns of translation studies. Gutt (2000), from a relevance-theoretic perspective, also places strong emphasis on inferential communication and context, which supports the idea that the success of a translation depends partly on whether target readers can arrive at an interpretation sufficiently close to the one intended in the source text.

The proposed approach also changes the way translation adequacy may be evaluated. A translation should not be judged inadequate merely because it differs lexically from the original. Conversely, formal similarity should not automatically be treated as success. A more useful criterion is functional interpretive adequacy: whether the target text allows readers to recover the key cultural association, pragmatic force, emotional coloring, or narrative implication that matters in the original. This perspective is especially promising for future empirical work based on parallel passages from English and Uzbek literary texts and their published translations.

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CONCLUSION

Implicit cultural meaning represents one of the most delicate areas of English-Uzbek literary translation because it lies between what a text says directly and what a culturally competent reader understands from it. Its translation requires the reconstruction of cultural knowledge, pragmatic intention, and contextual association rather than the replacement of words alone. The comparison of English and Uzbek literary translations can reveal how translators negotiate cultural distance through preservation, explanation, functional equivalence, domestication, foreignization, and compensation.

The study consequently argues that implicit cultural meaning deserves to be treated as an independent analytical category within comparative translation research. A systematic examination of its interpretation and re-expression can contribute to a clearer understanding of the relationship between language, culture, and literary communication. At the same time, such an approach offers a practical basis for analysing translation losses and gains and for identifying strategies that preserve both the cultural identity of the source text and the communicative accessibility of the target text.

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