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PROBLEMS OF RENDERING FIGURATIVE UNITS IN LITERARY TRANSLATION

Gulnoza Rasulova

Global Education Learning Center

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Abstract: This article examines the lexical-semantic, stylistic, pragmatic, and linguocultural problems associated with rendering figurative units in literary translation. The ways of translating metaphor, simile, epithet, metonymy, personification, phraseological units, and culture-specific images are comparatively analysed on the basis of English and Uzbek material. The study argues that a figurative unit should not be reproduced through simple lexical substitution alone; rather, its core image, emotional and expressive value, textual function, and pragmatic effect on the reader must be taken into account. Issues of equivalence, adequacy, compensation, transformation, functional correspondence, and cultural adaptation are discussed, and the translator's creative decision-making is shown to be one of the principal factors determining the quality of literary translation.

Keywords: literary translation, figurative unit, image, metaphor, simile, epithet, phraseological unit, equivalence, adequacy, translation transformation, compensation, linguoculturology.

INTRODUCTION

Literary translation is a complex form of aesthetic communication between different languages and cultures. Whereas accuracy of information is the dominant requirement in scientific, technical, or official translation, literary translation requires the recreation not only of content but also of the work's style, tone, rhythm, system of imagery, emotional impact, and the author's individual manner of expression. For this reason, figurative units in a literary text constitute one of the most demanding layers for the translator. Metaphor, simile, epithet, metonymy, personification, phraseological imagery, and symbolic names often combine denotative meaning, aesthetic evaluation, and national-cultural content at the same time.

The difficulty of translating a figurative unit is determined by its multilayered semantic structure. For example, the English phrase "a cold glance" can be rendered in Uzbek as "sovuq nigoh," and in this case both the figurative basis and much of the stylistic effect are preserved. By contrast, a phraseological image such as "to be over the moon" does not produce a natural result when translated word for word. The Uzbek expression "boshi osmonga yetmoq" reproduces not the exact lexical form of the source unit but its meaning of intense joy and its emotional colouring. Thus, in literary translation, the notion of "the same artistic function" is often more important than that of "the same word."

The issues of equivalence and adequacy have long remained among the central problems of translation studies. P. Newmark draws attention to the relationship between semantic and communicative approaches in translation; M. Baker considers equivalence at the levels of word, phrase, grammar, text, and pragmatics; E. Nida, in turn, regards the functional correspondence of the effect on the receiving audience as especially important. Within the Uzbek school of translation studies, G'. Salomov consistently emphasized the need to preserve the unity of content, form, style, and national colouring

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in literary translation. These views provide an important theoretical basis for analysing the translation of figurative units.

The relevance of the topic lies in the fact that, under contemporary conditions of globalization, the scope of literary translation between English and Uzbek is steadily expanding. In this context, a translator must possess not only a sound knowledge of the lexical and grammatical systems of the two languages, but also an understanding of their models of figurative thinking, cultural codes, and aesthetic traditions. Otherwise, the content may be preserved while the image is lost, or, conversely, the external image may be retained while its communicative function is distorted.

AIM, OBJECT, SUBJECT, AND METHODS OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to identify the principal problems that arise when rendering figurative units occurring in English and Uzbek literary texts, to describe the causes of these problems, and to systematize effective translation strategies from a scholarly perspective. The object of the study comprises metaphor, simile, epithet, metonymy, personification, phraseological images, and national-cultural imagery. The subject of the study consists of the semantic and stylistic transformation of these units, their degree of equivalence, pragmatic value, and features of cultural adaptation.

The article employs comparative-typological analysis, componential analysis, contextual analysis, functional-stylistic analysis, linguocultural analysis, and the method of translation transformations. The comparative method makes it possible to identify how an image is verbalized in the two languages; componential analysis helps distinguish the semantic core and connotative elements of the image; and the contextual method reveals the function performed by a particular unit in a specific text. Linguocultural analysis is especially important for identifying the national-cultural code embedded in a figurative unit.

THE CONCEPTS OF LITERARY TRANSLATION AND FIGURATIVE UNIT

Figurative units in a literary text serve to represent reality not through direct naming but through a particular image, comparison, association, or symbol. Their function is not limited to creating a "beautiful expression." A figurative unit may reveal a character's personality, express the author's attitude, determine the emotional tonality of the text, evaluate an event, or activate a particular cultural background.

From this perspective, at least four components of a figurative unit should be taken into account in translation: first, its denotative or referential meaning; second, its core image; third, its emotional and expressive colouring; and fourth, its cultural and pragmatic associations. For instance, in the phrase "golden opportunity," the word "golden" does not literally refer to colour but expresses rarity and value. The Uzbek expression "oltin imkoniyat" is capable of preserving this image almost completely. However, such full correspondence does not exist in every case.

Rendering a figurative unit does not mean mechanically transferring the form of the source-text image. Rather, it means reconstructing that image in the target language in a form that is natural, aesthetically appropriate, and functionally adequate. In some cases, this process requires preserving the original image; in others, replacing it with a national-cultural equivalent; and in still others, resorting to a brief explanation or a compensatory device.

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PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATING METAPHOR

Metaphor is one of the most complex figurative devices in literary translation because it reflects not only the lexical resources of a language but also the author's individual conceptual world. A metaphorical association that sounds natural in one language may appear unusual or obscure in another. The translator must therefore focus not on the external form of the metaphor but on its conceptual basis.

For example, the English phrase "a ray of hope" is naturally recreated in Uzbek as "umid nuri." Here, the conceptual model LIGHT — POSITIVITY/HOPE exists in both languages. In the sentence "His words cut deeply," however, the verb "cut" transfers a physical action into the domain of emotional pain. In Uzbek, this may be rendered as "uning so'zlari qattiq botdi" or, depending on the context, "so'zlari yuragini tilib yubordi." The first variant conveys the meaning naturally, while the second preserves the figurative intensity more strongly.

Three major situations can be distinguished in metaphor translation. In the first case, the source and target languages share the same conceptual and lexical image: "cold heart — sovuq qalb," "light of knowledge — ilm nuri." In the second case, the conceptual meaning is the same but the language-specific image differs. In the third case, the source metaphor has neither a direct nor a functional counterpart in the target language; in such situations, descriptive translation, neutralization of the metaphor, or stylistic compensation elsewhere in the text may be required.

It is also necessary to distinguish an authorial metaphor from a metaphor that has become conventionalized in the language. Lexicalized metaphors usually have dictionary equivalents, whereas an individual authorial metaphor contributes to the uniqueness of the literary text. Simplifying such a metaphor may reduce the stylistic value of the work. Therefore, the translator should preserve, as far as possible, the degree of originality and unusualness of the individual image.

RENDERING SIMILES AND EPITHETS

Because a simile is based on comparing two objects according to a particular feature, it is formally more explicit than metaphor. English commonly uses "like" and "as ... as," whereas Uzbek actively employs the markers "-dek," "-day," "kabi," "singari," and "misoli." In examples such as "as white as snow — qorday oppoq" and "as brave as a lion — sherdek jasur," both the comparative image and its cultural value are relatively close in the two languages.

However, some objects of comparison are closely connected with national aesthetic traditions. Images such as "oydek yuz" (a face like the moon), "qaldirg'och qosh" (swallow-like eyebrows), and "sarvdek qomat" (a cypress-like figure), common in Uzbek literary discourse, are deeply rooted in Eastern poetic thinking. Their word-for-word transfer into English does not always produce a natural aesthetic effect. In such cases, the translator must strike a balance between preserving national colouring and creating the intended image in the mind of the target reader.

Denotative meaning alone is also insufficient in the translation of epithets. In combinations such as "bitter truth — achchiq haqiqat," "warm smile — iliq tabassum," and "dark thoughts — qora yoki mudhish o'ylar," the emotional evaluation expressed by the adjective is crucial. Adjectives related to colour, temperature, taste, and sound may generate additional imagery through synesthetic transfer. If

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the same combination is unnatural in the target language, another expressive adjective appropriate to the context should be selected.

The main difficulty with the epithet lies in its proximity to an "ordinary adjective." In one context, "dark" may simply denote colour, whereas in another it may express danger, depression, or evil. Consequently, a translation decision should be based not on the isolated word but on the function that the word performs in the text.

TRANSLATION TRANSFORMATIONS AND COMPENSATION

In rendering figurative units, translators frequently employ various transformations. Among them, concretization, generalization, modulation, substitution, addition, omission, and compensation occupy a special place. Although transformation involves departing from the form of the source text, its purpose is to convey the content and function more accurately.

In concretization, a unit with a broad meaning is rendered by a more specific expression in the target language. In generalization, by contrast, a narrowly defined unit is replaced with a broader equivalent. Modulation makes it possible to represent the same situation from a different point of view. For example, if the original form of an image sounds unnatural in translation, its result, cause, or emotional feature may be expressed instead.

Compensation is particularly important in literary translation. If a figurative device cannot be preserved in the same position, the translator may restore the overall aesthetic effect by employing another expressive device in a nearby part of the text. When a pun, alliteration, or culture-specific idiom cannot be recreated exactly, strengthening imagery or rhythmic effect elsewhere in the same episode may perform a compensatory function.

Transformation, however, does not imply unlimited freedom. The translator is not entitled to "improve" the author's style or rewrite the text according to personal taste. Translational creativity must serve the artistic function of the original. Therefore, every transformation should be evaluated according to semantic accuracy, stylistic appropriateness, functional preservation of the image, and naturalness in the target language.

THE ISSUE OF EQUIVALENCE AND ADEQUACY

Understanding equivalence in literary translation as absolute lexical identity is a limited approach, because the same word may carry different connotations and cultural associations in different languages. It is therefore useful to distinguish formal, semantic, stylistic, and pragmatic equivalence in the translation of figurative units.

Formal equivalence refers to closeness to the form of the image. Semantic equivalence concerns correspondence of the basic meaning; stylistic equivalence concerns similarity of register and expressive force; and pragmatic equivalence refers to the functional similarity of the effect produced on the reader. Literary translation cannot always fully satisfy all these criteria simultaneously. The translator must therefore establish priorities in accordance with the purpose of the text and its dominant artistic features.

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Adequate translation, in turn, depends not merely on the equivalence of individual units but on the semantic and aesthetic integrity of the text as a whole. If a formally altered metaphor or idiom better preserves the artistic impact of the entire episode, such a decision may be regarded as adequate. Thus, equivalence primarily denotes a comparative relationship, whereas adequacy refers to the correspondence of the translation to its communicative and aesthetic purpose.

THE TRANSLATOR'S LINGUOCULTURAL COMPETENCE

Knowledge of two languages alone is not sufficient for the successful translation of a figurative unit. The translator must understand what associations a particular image evokes in the source and target cultures and distinguish which units are neutral and which are archaic, poetic, ironic, or colloquial. The same object may possess different symbolic values in different cultures.

For example, images associated with colours, animal names, plants, seasons, national foods, and clothing often carry a strong cultural load. In such cases, choosing the first dictionary equivalent is not enough. The translator must identify the connotative "profile" of the image and find an associative field in the target language that is as close as possible to it.

Linguocultural competence is especially important in translating classical literature. Rendering a historically marked image in excessively modern and simplified language may erase the colouring of the period. Conversely, archaizing every unit can make the text artificial. The translator must harmoniously take into account the historical period, genre, and the author's individual style.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis shows that the rendering of figurative units in literary translation is a multistage interpretative process. At the first stage, the translator should identify not merely the literal meaning of the unit but its figurative function in the text. At the second stage, the universal or national-cultural character of the image is determined. At the third stage, the formal, semantic, and functional correspondences available in the target language are compared. At the fourth stage, the variant that best fits the style of the entire text is selected.

The study identified three main types of correspondence in the translation of figurative units: 1) full figurative correspondence; 2) partial or functional correspondence; and 3) a non-equivalent image. In the first type, preserving the image is the optimal strategy; in the second, functional substitution and modulation are effective; and in the third, description, explanation, or compensation may be necessary.

The analysis also established that literal translation is not a universal method for figurative units. It produces successful results only when the figurative model and its connotations correspond in both languages. Otherwise, formal fidelity may result in semantic or stylistic loss. Therefore, in literary translation, fidelity should be understood not as attachment to individual words but as loyalty to the author's artistic intention and to the function of the text.

The quality of literary translation depends on the translator's dual competence — linguistic and cultural. The dictionary meaning of linguistic units serves only as the starting point of translation, whereas context, style, pragmatics, and culture determine the final decision. This understanding presents the translator not as a mechanical intermediary but as a responsible interpreter.

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CONCLUSION

The problem of rendering figurative units in literary translation is a complex research area that brings together lexical-semantic, stylistic, pragmatic, and linguocultural issues in translation studies. Metaphor, simile, epithet, personification, metonymy, and phraseological imagery play a significant role in the aesthetic structure of a literary work; consequently, weakening these elements in translation may adversely affect the artistic impact of the entire text.

Comparative analysis has shown that English and Uzbek share a number of universal figurative models: light is associated with hope and knowledge, coldness with emotional distance, and the heart with feelings and emotions. In such cases, the possibility of preserving the image directly is relatively high. However, in phraseological, historical, and national-cultural units, formal correspondence is often insufficient.

The most appropriate criterion for translating a figurative unit is not its word-for-word similarity to the source but the fullest possible harmonious recreation of its semantic content, core image, emotional-expressive force, stylistic register, and pragmatic effect. From this perspective, functional correspondence, transformation, and compensation constitute essential tools of the translator.

The translator's creative freedom also has definite limits: any modification must serve to preserve the artistic function of the original. The translator should neither embellish the author's image according to personal preference nor lose it through obscure formal fidelity. The most successful translation is one that sounds natural to the target reader while still allowing the stylistic and cultural distinctiveness of the original to be felt.

Future research may investigate this issue on the basis of individual authors, genres, or parallel corpora of literary works; assess translation variants through corpus-statistical and experimental methods; and compare the degree to which figurativeness is preserved in human translations and translations generated by artificial intelligence. These directions appear particularly promising from a scholarly perspective.

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