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BEYOND CULTURAL WORDS: TEACHING THE TRANSLATION OF IMPLICIT SOCIAL MEANINGS IN UZBEK–ENGLISH LITERARY DIALOGUE

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Abstract: Cultural meaning in literary dialogue frequently resides in the relationship between speakers rather than in an explicitly culture-specific word. This conceptual and methodological article examines how translator education can address implicit social meanings in Uzbek–English literary translation. Drawing on translation competence frameworks and literary pragmatics, it proposes a context–relation–voice procedure for interpreting and translating dialogue. Five original instructional cases illustrate kinship-based address, hospitality, indirect refusal, parental influence, and register change.

Keywords: literary translation; linguocultural competence; linguostylistic competence; implicit meaning; dialogue; Uzbek–English translation; translator education.

A line of fictional dialogue may be grammatically simple and culturally difficult. Its dictionary meaning can be clear while its effect remains uncertain: an invitation may exert pressure, a respectful address may soften a demand, and a change of pronoun may disclose emotional distance. Translating these lines requires attention to what speakers do through language and to how their interaction contributes to characterization.

In discussions of cultural transfer, highly visible items such as clothing, food, ceremonies, and institutional names often receive attention. These are important, but culture is also enacted through ordinary expressions. A familiar noun or a short question can acquire a particular social force through age, status, family relationships, the preceding exchange, and the narrator's framing. The pedagogical problem therefore extends beyond finding equivalents for realia.

This article focuses on the connection between linguocultural and linguostylistic competence in teaching Uzbek–English literary dialogue. Its central question is how students can justify a translation that preserves a culturally meaningful relationship while maintaining the character's voice. Two additional questions guide the discussion: How can educators distinguish justified inference from unsupported cultural generalization? How can the quality of a relational translation decision be made observable in assessment?

The study proposes a context–relation–voice procedure and demonstrates it through five constructed instructional cases. It makes no claim to describe all Uzbek speech practices, assess published translators, or prove an instructional effect. Its contribution is a methodological arrangement in which cultural interpretation leads to testable textual choices rather than an unrestricted explanation of presumed national characteristics.

Translation competence is broader than proficiency in two languages. PACTE describes it through interacting subcompetences that include bilingual, extra-linguistic, instrumental, strategic, and translation-knowledge dimensions [1]. This supports a distinction between knowing a cultural

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convention and knowing how to use that information when resolving a particular translation problem. The present procedure is a task-specific application, not an additional validated competence model.

The European Master's in Translation framework positions language and culture within a wider professional framework [2]. Cultural interpretation should therefore be connected to analysis, research, decision-making, and revision. However, neither framework makes an isolated cultural label sufficient evidence of competence. A student must show how contextual information affects the target wording.

Literary pragmatics foregrounds relationships among language, interpretation, and participants. Sell's account emphasizes the interpersonal dimensions of literary communication, including evaluation, modality, and politeness [3]. Scholarship collected in Pragmatics and Translation likewise establishes a research interface between pragmatic interpretation and translation [4]. These perspectives justify treating fictional interaction as crafted discourse whose linguistic choices produce effects.

For this article, linguocultural competence means the ability to interpret culturally situated meanings without reducing a represented community to a fixed stereotype. Linguostylistic competence means the ability to recognise and reproduce relevant features of voice, register, rhythm, evaluation, and figurative expression. These working definitions overlap in practice. An affectionate address, for example, can express a cultural relationship and establish an individual speaker's style.

Implicit social meaning is defined as a relational interpretation supported by an exchange but not fully stated in its literal wording. This definition separates an implication from a translator's speculation. A reader may infer pressure from repetition and hesitation, but a translator should not insert anger when the scene offers no evidence for it. Meaningful ambiguity must remain an analytical possibility.

The material consists of five original Uzbek instructional scenarios and alternative English renderings prepared for this article. They are deliberately limited examples designed to isolate translation decisions. They are not a corpus of published fiction, authentic conversational recordings, or representative evidence about Uzbek culture. No participants, classroom experiments, surveys, numerical findings, or statistical tests are reported.

Each case contains a short source utterance, a specified interactional context, and competing English solutions. The comparison considers semantic accuracy, relationship reconstruction, pragmatic force, stylistic credibility, and preservation of relevant uncertainty. The purpose is to demonstrate how these criteria interact, not to identify one compulsory rendering for every future context.

The proposed procedure has three stages. Context analysis establishes who speaks, to whom, in what situation, and after which preceding action. Relation analysis identifies the socially and narratively relevant connection between speakers: intimacy, authority, obligation, distance, or solidarity. Voice analysis tests whether the English solution fits the speaker's individual manner and the scene's stylistic organization.

After these stages, students produce a justified rendering and revise it against at least one alternative. Where the evidence permits several interpretations, the commentary must state the uncertainty. The English translation should not silently convert a tentative interpretation into an explicit fact.

4.1. Kinship-Based Address without Biological Kinship

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Case 1. At a neighbourhood repair shop, a young customer addresses an older man who is not a relative: “Aka, bir qarab yuborasizmi?”

A close lexical rendering is “Brother, could you take a look?” Another possibility is “Could you take a look, please?” A third is “Sir, could you take a look?” All three convey a request, but they construct different relationships.

Retaining brother can suggest intimacy, solidarity, a religious affiliation, or a marked speech style in English, depending on the setting. Sir may foreground formal status, whereas please can preserve polite requesting without reproducing the age-indexing address. None is automatically equivalent to aka. The stated context licenses attention to relative age and locally appropriate respectful familiarity; it does not establish that the English addressee must be called brother.

A suitable instructional task asks students to identify the relationship lost or added by each alternative. If the broader text has already established the age difference, the second version may be adequate. If the address recurs as a distinctive voice feature, a different solution may be required. Students should evaluate distribution across the passage rather than translate the address mechanically every time.

Case 2. A host invites a visitor to sit. The visitor reaches for a coat, and the host speaks gently: “Yana bir piyola choy iching.”

“Have another cup of tea” retains the immediate invitation. “Stay for another cup of tea” makes continuation of the visit more explicit. “You must have another cup of tea” introduces stronger pressure. The context supports an invitation to remain, but the word must could overstate obligation.

The utterance’s cultural significance resides partly in the interactional sequence: preparing to leave, offering tea, and gently encouraging the visitor to stay. Translating piyola as cup does not itself erase hospitality, while borrowing piyola does not itself preserve the invitation’s tone. The relevant issue is how the target reader understands the host’s action.

The cultural explanation should also avoid asserting that every repeated tea offer is compulsory or ceremonial. The specified scene represents this host’s behavior. A translator can use the surrounding narrative to convey warmth while leaving the spoken line concise. This preserves the allocation of meaning between dialogue and narration.

Case 3. A character is invited to travel the following morning. She looks toward a stack of unfinished work and replies: “Ertaga biroz ishlarim bor edi.”

“I have some things to do tomorrow” preserves an understated response. “I’m afraid I can’t come tomorrow” makes refusal explicit. “I was going to be rather busy tomorrow” retains a hesitant formulation but may introduce a planning nuance that does not fit the scene.

The contextual cues support interpreting the response as a possible refusal. However, the original line does not independently rule out negotiation. Perhaps the character will come later, rearrange the work, or accept after reassurance. If the English translation conclusively states that she cannot come, it may remove a narrative possibility.

This case illustrates calibrated inference. Students should first classify the interpretation as supported, plausible, or unsupported. They can then choose wording that reflects its evidential strength. A grammatically fluent English sentence remains problematic if it decides more than the scene establishes.

Case 4. A young adult discusses a job offer far from home: “Otamning ko‘nglini og‘ritgim kelmaydi.”

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"I don't want to hurt my father" is concise but may temporarily allow physical injury as an interpretation. "I don't want to hurt my father's feelings" foregrounds emotional concern. "I cannot disobey my father" reconstructs the issue as obedience and inability rather than desire and emotional consequence.

The third solution changes both agency and motivation. The character says that causing emotional hurt is undesirable; the alternative declares that disobedience is impossible. Parental authority may be part of the wider narrative, but that possibility does not justify replacing the line's particular stance without supporting evidence.

A linguocultural reading can explain why parental approval matters in the represented family. A linguostylistic reading asks whether the character speaks vulnerably, defensively, or with resignation. The two readings must be coordinated. Cultural knowledge should not override the individual position established by the words.

Case 5. In a fictional exchange, a character has consistently addressed another person with siz. During an argument, the character switches: "Sen buni yaxshi bilasan."

English you does not reproduce the siz–sen distinction directly. "You know that very well" preserves the propositional meaning but makes the switch less visible. "You know perfectly well" can convey sharper insistence, although it does not identify the pronoun change itself. Adding a hostile insult would introduce a separate action rather than merely reproduce the shift.

The relational interpretation must come from the specified pattern. Sen is not inherently insulting: it can indicate intimacy, familiarity, or other relationships. In this constructed case, its significance arises because an established pattern changes during an argument. The event, rather than a presumed permanent value of the pronoun, is the translation problem.

Possible solutions include adjusting emphasis, a neighboring address form, or the speech-reporting context when the translation brief permits it. Each option has costs. A translator should avoid adding an explanatory sentence merely to announce a grammatical feature if it disrupts the narrative. The student's commentary can acknowledge a partly unrecoverable distinction while defending a proportionate compensation.

The cases show that cultural interpretation cannot be separated from the distribution of narrative information. A translation may reproduce a social convention explicitly and nevertheless alter a speaker's vulnerability or the scene's uncertainty. Conversely, a familiar English expression can preserve an interpersonal function without retaining the original cultural label.

Three recurring risks follow. First, lexical retention can create misleading relationships: brother may suggest ties that the scene does not establish. Second, explicitation can narrow an uncertain action: an understated response becomes a definitive refusal. Third, cultural explanation can replace character agency: concern for a parent becomes obligatory obedience. These are demonstrated possibilities within constructed cases, not frequency findings about published translations.

The proposed procedure addresses the risks by requiring the translator to connect each inference with a contextual cue. A translation commentary should distinguish what the source states, what the scene supports, and what the translator proposes. This distinction encourages accountable interpretation while allowing creativity.

The procedure also makes linguistic and cultural knowledge mutually corrective. Cultural information can reveal why a literal solution is insufficient, while textual detail can prevent an

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overgeneralized cultural reading. An individual speaker may comply with, resist, or strategically use a social expectation. Literary translation must leave room for all three.

A 90-minute session can begin with ten minutes of independent translation of two unfamiliar cases. Students then spend fifteen minutes marking contextual cues and identifying alternative relational interpretations. Twenty minutes are allocated to comparing candidate renderings in pairs. During this stage, each pair must explain both a benefit and a cost of every solution.

The following twenty minutes focus on voice. Students revise register, rhythm, emphasis, and address patterns without inserting unsupported motivations. A fifteen-minute peer review asks whether the revised translation adds a social fact, removes an ambiguity, or changes the speaker's agency. The final ten minutes require a short commentary identifying the cue that most strongly influenced the decision.

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