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THE STYLISTIC FUNCTION OF IRONY IN ERKIN A'ZAM'S PROSE AND ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF IRONIC WORDS, PHRASES, AND IDIOMS

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Annotation: This article analyzes the stylistic function of irony in Erkin A'zam's prose and its translation into English. Focusing on ironic words, phrases, and idioms, it examines how irony is preserved, transformed, or partially lost in translation. The comparative analysis shows that while the main meaning is generally maintained, culture-specific and idiomatic expressions create translation difficulties.

Keywords: Erkin A'zam, irony, Uzbek prose, literary translation, stylistics, ironic word, ironic phrase, idiom, English translation, comparative analysis

Annotatsiya: Mazkur maqolada Erkin A'zam nasrida kinoyaning uslubiy vazifasi va uning ingliz tiliga tarjimasi tahlil qilinadi. Kinoyaviy so'zlar, birikmalar va iboralar asosida kinoyaning tarjimada saqlanishi yoki o'zgarishi o'rganiladi. Tahlil natijalari umumiy ma'no saqlansa-da, madaniy va idiomatik birliklar tarjimada qiyinchilik tug'dirishini ko'rsatadi.

Kalit so'zlar: Erkin A'zam, kinoya, o'zbek nasri, badiiy tarjima, stilistika, kinoyaviy so'z, kinoyaviy birikma, ibora, inglizcha tarjima, qiyosiy tahlil

Аннотация: В статье рассматривается стилистическая функция иронии в прозе Эркина Аъзама и её перевод на английский язык. Анализируются иронические слова, выражения и идиомы, а также их сохранение или изменение в переводе. Результаты показывают, что основное значение в целом сохраняется, однако культурно-специфические элементы вызывают трудности.

Ключевые слова: Эркин Аъзам, ирония, узбекская проза, художественный перевод, стилистика, ироническое слово, ироническое выражение, идиома, английский перевод, сравнительный анализ

Irony performs a multifunctional role in literary texts, serving not only as a stylistic device but also as a means of expressing the author's evaluative attitude toward reality. In modern Uzbek prose, one of the most prominent writers who extensively employs irony is Erkin A'zam. His works are characterized by a subtle ironic worldview that reflects socio-psychological tensions, contradictions between ideals and reality, and changes in cultural and ideological paradigms, particularly from the 1980s onward.

Irony performs various functions in literary works. One of the key features of the creative style of the renowned Uzbek writer Erkin A'zam is closely associated with the use of irony. In studies of Uzbek literary criticism that examine Erkin A'zam's work, irony has been interpreted as an important characteristic of this writer's oeuvre. Today, the author's works have been translated into English and French. In this process, alongside a number of linguistic means, the translation of irony also requires

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special attention and analysis. We will attempt to compare the writer's use of irony in the original texts and in their translations.

Irony, in essence, is a stylistic device based on the use of a word in a reversed or opposite meaning. In a literary text, it expresses various attitudes toward the depicted reality and helps to reveal different aspects of the characters' personalities. As it is noted, "in irony, a comic situation is presented under the mask of seriousness with a dominant negative attitude; in humor, seriousness is expressed under the mask of the comic; whereas satire, through its exposing laughter, condemns negative traits"[1]. The effective and appropriate use of irony in literary creation has been developed by a number of scholars, including Gregory A. Bryant, Claire Colebrook, Anna Mellor, J.M. Whalen, P.M. Pexman, A.J. Jill, S. Nowson, Y.A. Kiryukhin, E. Miroshnik, L. Toshmukhamedova, and M. Sheralieva. Such features are clearly observable in Erkin A'zam's use of irony. The prevalence of irony in the writer's works is not accidental; it has its own underlying causes. The socio-psychological climate of the 1980s, marked by the emerging awareness of the discrepancy between people's ideals and real life, contributed to the prominence of this feature in the writer's creative output.

As the researcher N. Ashurova writes: "In the author's work, irony manifests in various forms: sometimes in words, phrases, proverbs, and sayings cited in the author's own voice; at other times in the interactions between characters. He expresses his attitude toward the pressing issues of the present day through bitter irony, sarcasm, and insinuation through which the writer's dissatisfaction and unease regarding the injustices of life and deeply rooted social vices become clearly visible". [2] Indeed, Erkin A'zam's use of irony to portray the problems of his time and the painful aspects of social life is one of his defining features.

According to M. Sheralieva, this phenomenon is related to:

1) the specific nature of socio-historical conditions and their influence on the writer's worldview;

2) the reflection of the need to radically change and renew socio-philosophical and aesthetic views in artistic interpretation; and

3) the degree of the writer's natural inclination toward irony.[3]

In the English translations of the writer's works, it is evident that the translator strives to render irony accurately both semantically and logically. In the author's works, the irony used can be structurally divided into three types:

1) ironic words;

2) ironic phrases;

3) ironic expressions.

The function of all three forms of irony is to enhance the expressiveness of the literary text and to ensure its emotional and expressive colouring. We will substantiate our observations through examples taken from Erkin A'zam's works "The Writer," "A Mixed Quarter," "Guli-Guli," "The Tender-Hearted Dwarf," and "The Din."

1. Ironic Word

The short story "The Writer" contains several examples of irony:

"He was a writer of rather average standing. This, of course, reflects the opinion of 'sages' like us, who have a habit of reading everything indiscriminately until we are almost overwhelmed".[4]

In the translation, this is rendered as:

[1] Toshmuhamedova L. Badiiy asarda kulgining estetik vazifasi // O'zbek tili va adabiyoti. – 2004. – №2. – B. 18–24.
[2] Ashurova N. Erkin A'zam uslubining xususiyatlari // O'zbek tili va adabiyoti. – 2012. – №5. – B. 65–67.
[3] Sheralieva M. Hozirgi o'zbek nasrida kinoya (monografiya). – Toshkent: Akademnashr, 2016. – 224 b.
[4] A'zam Erkin. Shovqin. Roman, qissa, hikoyalar. – Toshkent: O'zbekiston, 2011. – 188 b.

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“He was a writer of average acclaim. According to ‘sages’ like us, that is, who eagerly devoured every book available”.[5]

In this excerpt, the word “wise” (“dono”) is used ironically; in context, its opposite meaning is implied, closer to “ignorant” rather than truly “wise.” In the translation, it is rendered as “sages.” The translator has taken into account the ironic usage in Uzbek and preserved the intended meaning in English.

Furthermore:

“Moreover, although some of his works were included in school textbooks, for some reason perhaps because he had never held an official position, or perhaps due to his extreme modesty and humility, he was not regarded as part of ‘great literature’, and writers like us would not even consider him worthy of attention”.[6]

In this passage, the word “great” in the phrase “great literature” is used ironically, referring to writers who have gained recognition not solely due to talent, but through reputation, status, or external validation. In English, it is translated as:

“Moreover, even though some of his writings were included in scholastic books, for some reason perhaps because he never held an official post, or perhaps because he was too mild and withdrawn, he was not counted among the representatives of ‘great literature’, and writers like us just disregarded him”.

Here, not only the word “great” but also “literature” is placed in quotation marks as “great literature,” which broadens the scope of irony in the translation.

Another example:

“The chairman’s manuscript was in a completely unreadable condition. Moreover, this ‘headache’, typed on a ‘mute’ typewriter, was further ruined by a local literature teacher who had travelled to the capital and tried to ‘correct’ it so much so that it resembled an excellent essay written by an outstanding student, full of formulaic expressions such as ‘he had gone’, ‘he had come’, ‘he had said’.

In this passage, two ironic expressions are used: “mute typewriter” and “perfectly correct (‘to’ppa-to’g‘ri’) writing.” The expression “mute typewriter” is used ironically. In earlier typewriters, the writing process produced audible mechanical sounds; therefore, “mute” here ironically suggests the opposite meaning, namely “noisy.” In the English translation, it is rendered as:

“The kolkhoz director’s manuscript was weird. Not only had this ‘headache’ been typed up on an obsolete typewriter, but to make matters worse, some local literature teacher who had studied in the capital had made some ‘correction’, too. The manuscript looked like an ‘excellent’ essay by an excellent pupil...”.

The translator uses the word “obsolete” to render “sovuq/sershovqin typewriter” indirectly. In English, “obsolete” means outdated or no longer in use. However, the ironic nuance of “mute” is not fully preserved. A more accurate rendering could have been “dumb typewriter,” which would better preserve the irony. On the other hand, the word “excellent” is preserved in quotation marks, effectively maintaining the author’s ironic intent.

Finally:

“On Saturday, he sent Olashovur and invited him to the kolkhoz. He gave a ‘chortang’ banquet in a pleasant pavilion located in the center of his ‘Bogi Eram’ garden”.

In English:

[5] Erkin A’zam. Farewell to Fairy Tales. – United Kingdom: Hertfordshire Press Ltd, 2016. – 239 p.
[6] A’zam E. Jannat o‘zi qaydadir. Bir yil bitiklari (hikoyalar, kinoqissalar, dramatik asar va publitsistik miniaturalar). – Toshkent: Sharq, 2007. – 128 b.

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"On Saturday, he invited the editor to the kolkhoz, sending Olashovur to pick him up. He arranged a fine banquet right in the middle of his beautiful garden".

The word "chortang" originally refers to:

something narrow or enclosed on all four sides;

lively, intense, or animated conversation.

However, in its ironic usage, it refers to a large festive banquet held in a pleasant pavilion. Since "chortang" is a culture-specific realia, it cannot be translated directly. Therefore, in the English version, it is rendered according to its contextual meaning as "fine banquet," and the cultural-ironic nuance is adapted rather than literally transferred.

2. Ironic Phrase

In the short story "The Writer," the following example appears:

"Soon, the local press began publishing numerous reviews praising 'the kolkhoz director who wrote such a magnificent work despite his household responsibilities''.[7]

In the English translation, this is rendered as:

"It was not long before the local press began running reviews, one after another, praising 'the kolkhoz director who wrote such a magnificent book in addition to his main duties in the kolkhoz''.

The ironic meaning of the extended phrase "the kolkhoz director who wrote such a magnificent work despite his household responsibilities" lies in the implication that the work was not actually written by the chairman himself, but rather rewritten by another skilled writer in order to promote his name. In the translation, the phrase is preserved in quotation marks, thereby maintaining its ironic effect.

In the story "A Mixed Quarter," the following example appears:

"According to the shameless claim of the 'chief craftsman', half a cubic meter of solid timber and about six kilograms of German paint were used for this job".

Here, the phrase "chief craftsman" is used ironically. The shopkeeper had repaired an old bench with the help of workers and, having spent his own money on it, ironically presented himself as the "chief craftsman" of the project. In the English translation, it is rendered as:

"The 'main craftsman' shamelessly claimed he used half a cubic metre of timber and six kilogrammes of German paint on it".

The expression is placed in quotation marks, thereby indicating its ironic nature.

Another example:

"When the elder, who had only recently begun learning how to perform prayers, finished the noon prayer and stepped out into the hallway, his granddaughter who had supposedly come to help her grandmother during the holidays handed him the telephone receiver".

The phrase "who had come to help her grandmother during the holidays" functions as irony, as it actually implies that the granddaughter came not for assistance but for rest and leisure. In the English translation, this is rendered as:

"When the aksakal finished reciting his namaz (he had recently learned how to recite a prayer), his granddaughter (who had come to help their grandparents during the summer holidays) passed the telephone receiver to him".

Here, the ironic meaning is conveyed through an explanatory parenthetical phrase, which indirectly preserves the ironic nuance.

In Erkin A'zam's novel "The Din" irony is also used to reveal the essence of characters:

[7] A'zam E. Jannat o'zi qaydadir. Bir yil bitiklari (hikoyalar, kinoqissalar, dramatik asar va publitsistik miniaturalar). – Toshkent: Sharq, 2007.

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"At that time, the passionate revolutionary had also visited Uzbekistan, and newspapers were filled with large and small photographs of him standing like a mountain beside the famous 'creators of white gold''.[8]

The phrase "creators of white gold" originally refers to cotton farmers. In this context, however, it carries an ironic meaning, implying a sense of artificial or imposed fame. In English, it is translated as:

"All the newspapers carried his photos posing alongside those famous 'creators of white gold''.[9]

The phrase "creators of white gold" effectively preserves the ironic meaning in translation. Additionally, the translator provides the explanatory equivalent "cotton pickers," which further clarifies the cultural and semantic context.

Furthermore:

"She attends various festive film events dressed in bright khan-atlas garments and embroidered robes in order to appear 'national''.

Here, the phrase "to appear national" is used ironically, referring to a woman who is not genuinely national in either character or identity. In English, it is translated as:

"She spends her time at various festivals and resorts, clad in her bright khan-atlas dress and traditional embroidered robe to give her an 'ethnic' look".

The phrase "ethnic look" successfully conveys the ironic meaning of the original expression.

3. Ironic Idiom

In the novel "The Din," the following example is found:

"Whatever you ask, whatever you want me to do even if you hurt me I agree, dear Farhodjon!" the woman pleads, using her last effort. "I am not one who takes leftovers!" says the 'contented' official inwardly.

The expression "contented" ("ko'zi to'q") is used ironically here. When used in its literal sense, it is an idiom meaning "satisfied" or "self-sufficient," but in this context it conveys the opposite meaning "greedy" or "self-serving."

In the English translation, it is rendered as:

"You can do as you please with me, even hurt me, but please, help me, brother Farhodjon," beseeched the lady. "I don't wear others' hand-me-downs," he would say to himself.

The idiomatic phrase "ko'zi to'q" is not explicitly translated. This can be explained by two reasons:

1) it functions as a culture-specific idiom with realia characteristics;

2) it reflects national cultural specificity. However, to ensure clearer semantic transmission, it could alternatively be rendered as "the lavish spender" or a similar idiomatic equivalent.

It is evident that the use of irony is a distinctive feature of Erkin A'zam's prose. Through ironic words, phrases, and idioms, the writer successfully reveals the social reality of his time and the psychological depth of his characters in a realistic manner. The comparative analysis above shows that, in the translation process, the translator has generally succeeded in conveying the author's intended meaning. This demonstrates a strong command of both Uzbek and English lexical systems. At the same time, when translating culturally specific ironic expressions (realia), certain difficulties arise, as such elements do not always have direct equivalents in English, which occasionally leads to partial loss of ironic nuance.

Overall, the findings suggest that while the semantic core of Erkin A'zam's irony is generally maintained in translation, its stylistic and pragmatic nuances are not always fully transferred. This

[8] A'zam Erkin. Shovqin. Roman, qissa, hikoyalar. – Toshkent: O'zbekiston, 2011. – 16 b.
[9] Erkin A'zam. Farewell to Fairy Tales. – United Kingdom: Hertfordshire Press Ltd, 2016. – 14 p.

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highlights the importance of combining linguistic competence with cultural sensitivity in literary translation. The study ultimately confirms that irony in Erkin A'zam's prose is not only a stylistic device but also a key element in shaping narrative meaning and authorial worldview, making it a significant subject for both literary and translation studies.

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