

EQUIVALENCE CHALLENGES IN TRANSLATING UZBEK IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS INTO ENGLISH

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Annotation: This article explores the complexities and challenges involved in achieving equivalence when translating Uzbek idiomatic expressions into English. Idioms, as culturally bound linguistic units, often pose significant difficulties for translators due to their metaphorical, non-literal meanings and cultural specificity. The study analyzes the types of equivalence, the nature of idioms in both languages, and common strategies employed to ensure accurate and culturally appropriate translations. Several Uzbek idiomatic examples are examined alongside their English counterparts to illustrate typical equivalence problems and solutions.

Keywords: equivalence, translation, Uzbek idioms, English idioms, cultural specificity, translation strategies

Introduction

In today's era of globalization, cross-linguistic translation serves not only as a means of achieving lexical or grammatical equivalence but also as a crucial tool for conveying cultural and spiritual meanings. Among the most complex tasks in translation is the accurate and equivalent rendering of idiomatic expressions, as idioms reflect the historical, cultural, and psychological characteristics unique to each nation. Idioms are multifaceted linguistic units—not only lexically, but also semantically, pragmatically, and stylistically—so a literal, word-for-word translation often distorts or completely misrepresents their meaning.

The Uzbek language is rich in unique idiomatic expressions deeply intertwined with the people's daily life, customs, and historical experience. For example, idioms such as *"og'ziga qum solmoq"* (literally, "to pour sand into someone's ear," meaning to deceive or distract someone) or *"tosh yutgan"* (literally, "someone who has swallowed a stone," referring to a very stubborn or determined person) are perfectly clear to Uzbek speakers but almost impossible to translate into English with a simple direct equivalent. Therefore, the translator must deeply understand the multiple layers of meaning, metaphorical images, and cultural context embedded in each idiom.

Equivalence is one of the core concepts in translation theory, encompassing how meaning, function, and stylistic features are conveyed from the source text to the target text. The issue of equivalence becomes especially acute when dealing with idiomatic expressions, as many idioms are built upon



culture-specific metaphors or historical-cultural codes unique to a particular language. Given the cultural distance between English and Uzbek, translators face numerous challenges in rendering idioms effectively between these two languages.

This article analyzes the main equivalence challenges encountered when translating Uzbek idiomatic expressions into English. It first reviews theoretical approaches to the concept of equivalence, then examines examples that illustrate how idioms function in both Uzbek and English. Additionally, the article discusses key strategies employed by translators, such as finding equivalent idioms, paraphrasing the meaning, using explanatory translations, or, in some cases, applying adaptation techniques [1.127].

The relevance of this topic lies in the growing need for high-quality translations of Uzbek literature, folklore, journalism, film, and other cultural materials into English as part of broader international promotion efforts. Effective translation of idiomatic expressions is an essential skill not only for language learners but also for professional translators, writers, and journalists. This paper aims to provide scientifically grounded recommendations for specialists engaged in translation theory and practice.

1. Understanding Idioms and Equivalence

What arei? Idioms are fixed expressions whose meanings cannot be deduced directly from the meanings of the individual words. For example, the Uzbek idiom *“tosh yutgan”* (literally “swallowed a stone”) means someone is extremely stubborn or determined. Similarly, in English, *“kick the bucket”* means to die, with no connection to the literal act.

Equivalence refers to the extent to which the meaning, style, and function of a source text (ST) element are reproduced in the target text (TT). According to theorists like Nida (dynamic vs. formal equivalence) and Baker (equivalence at word level, phrase level, textual level, etc.), achieving equivalence can be particularly demanding with idioms because of their cultural embeddedness [2,144].

2. Challenges in Translating Uzbek Idiomatic Expressions

Many Uzbek idioms are rooted in local customs, traditions, or imagery that have no direct counterpart in English. For instance, *“qulogʻiga qum solmoq”* (literally “to pour sand into someone’s ear”) means to deceive or mislead someone — a metaphor unfamiliar in English.

Often, there is no one-to-one match between Uzbek and English idioms. For example, *“ilonning boshi ezilmasa, dumini koʻtaradi”* (if the snake’s head isn’t



crushed, it will raise its tail) has no precise English idiom but conveys the idea that problems must be decisively eliminated or they will return.

Even when idioms have similar meanings, the metaphors they use may differ. The Uzbek *“ogʻzi burnidan chiqmoq”* (literally “mouth and nose bursting out,” meaning overwhelmed) has no metaphorical twin in English but could be rendered as *“snowed under”* or *“up to one’s neck.”*

Uzbek idioms often carry a colloquial or humorous tone, while English equivalents may be more formal or vice versa. This mismatch can lead to a loss of nuance in translation[3,24].

3. Strategies for Translating Uzbek Idioms into English

When an English idiom expresses the same idea, translators can replace the Uzbek idiom directly. For example, *“oʻng qoʻli nima qilayotganini chap qoʻli bilmasin”* can be translated as *“don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.”*

If no equivalent idiom exists, paraphrasing the meaning in plain language is often necessary. For example, *“tosh yutgan”* may become *“stubborn and unyielding”* rather than a literal or idiomatic rendering.

In some contexts (especially in literary or academic translation), keeping the literal image and adding a footnote or brief explanation preserves cultural flavor[4.151].

In some cases, idioms are omitted or adapted to fit the target audience’s expectations and avoid confusion, especially in functional texts like advertisements or news.

<i>Koʻprikdan oʻtmay turib, yoʻq demas</i>	Don’t say no before crossing the bridge	Don’t say no until you try / Don’t dismiss it too soon
<i>Koʻkka sapchimoq</i>		Get overexcited / Get carried away
<i>Oʻrdakning boshi ketsa ham suvdan toymas</i>	Even if the duck loses its head, it won’t get enough of the water	A person addicted to something can’t give it up, even at great risk

These examples show that translators must often balance between literal meaning, figurative meaning, and cultural resonance.

5. Recommendations for Translators



Develop Cultural Awareness: Understanding the cultural roots of both source and target languages is critical.

Build an Idiom Bank: Collect pairs of Uzbek and English idioms for frequent reference.

Use Context Sensitively: Consider the text type and audience when choosing strategies.

Collaborate with Native Speakers: Feedback from native English speakers can help fine-tune the translation's naturalness.

Conclusion

Translating idiomatic expressions from Uzbek into English is a multifaceted challenge that goes far beyond literal word matching or surface-level linguistic equivalence. Idioms are deeply embedded in the cultural, historical, and social fabric of a language, carrying meanings, associations, and emotional nuances that are often untranslatable in a direct sense. As this paper has demonstrated, the key challenges in achieving equivalence lie not only in finding suitable lexical or structural correspondences but also in successfully conveying the pragmatic function and stylistic impact of the original idiomatic expression.

One of the most critical insights highlighted by this study is that there is rarely a one-size-fits-all solution when dealing with idiomatic translation. While some Uzbek idioms may have clear and ready-made English equivalents (for example, when universal human experiences are involved), many others require the translator to make interpretive choices, balancing between semantic fidelity and naturalness in the target language. In some cases, translators may opt for functional equivalents or culturally adapted phrases; in others, they may choose paraphrasing or explanatory translation, especially when the cultural specificity of the original idiom is too deeply rooted to allow smooth transfer.

Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of the translator's cultural competence and creative skills. Translators must act not merely as linguistic mediators but as cultural interpreters, capable of grasping the underlying meanings, stylistic tones, and communicative intents behind idiomatic expressions. Without this cultural sensitivity, translations risk sounding awkward, unnatural, or, worse, completely misrepresenting the intended meaning.

In conclusion, addressing the equivalence challenges in translating Uzbek idiomatic expressions into English requires an integrative approach that combines theoretical understanding with practical strategy. Translators should





be equipped with a rich toolkit: familiarity with both source and target idioms, the ability to recognize when adaptation or paraphrasing is necessary, and a deep awareness of the cultural layers embedded in each expression. As the demand for high-quality Uzbek-English translations grows, particularly in fields like literature, media, and intercultural communication, advancing research and training in idiomatic translation will become increasingly vital.

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