

PECULIARITIES OF TRANSLATING UZBEK PROVERBS AND SAYINGS INTO RUSSIAN

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Abstract

Proverbs and sayings are an integral component of any nation's linguistic and cultural wealth. In Uzbek, as in other languages, proverbs encapsulate the collective wisdom, traditions, worldview, and moral standards of the people. They serve as a bridge between generations, harmonizing past experiences with contemporary realities. However, when it comes to translation, especially into a language as closely related geographically and historically as Russian, many linguistic, cultural, and cognitive challenges arise.

Keywords: Uzbek proverbs, translation, Russian language, cultural equivalence, linguistic adaptation, metaphor, proverbial wisdom, intercultural communication.

Introduction

The first and foremost peculiarity of translating Uzbek proverbs and sayings into Russian lies in the deep-rooted cultural context embedded in each expression. Uzbek proverbs – “Ko‘cha boshidan bola so‘ra” or “Yangi do‘st eski do‘stni unutmaydi”, for instance – do not just reflect everyday realities but also imply imagery, metaphors, and social norms specific to Uzbek society. Traditional Uzbek culture, strongly influenced by collectivism, respect for elders, family relationships, hospitality, and historical experiences, reveals itself vividly through proverbial wisdom. Russian, with its own set of proverbs, some potentially analogous but others completely unique, operates according to different socio-cultural patterns. Therefore, the translation of Uzbek proverbs into Russian



cannot be reduced to literal word-for-word conversion. What truly matters is the preservation of both meaning and emotional-expressive coloring. A literal translation often leads to awkward constructions and loss of cultural depth, whereas a free or adaptive translation tends to better “domesticate” the proverb for the Russian recipient. For example, the Uzbek proverb “Aytgan so‘zni qaytarma, qilgan ishni takrorlama” carries not only a warning about the necessity of consistency but also reflects a subtle national trait – avoidance of unnecessary repetition in communication and action. Its Russian equivalent, “Сказанного не воротишь, сделанного не исправишь,” encapsulates a similar meaning but with slightly different connotations. Therefore, in proverbs translation, the priority is not just to transfer lexis, but rather the intent and cultural tone [1].

Another essential feature of translating Uzbek proverbs into Russian is the challenge posed by untranslatable words and realities. Many Uzbek proverbs refer to notions, items, feelings, or situations that are unique to Uzbekistan or Central Asian life. For example, the proverb “Oq yo‘l!” (literally “White road!”) serves as a blessing or good wish, but in Russian there is no direct equivalent. Such expressions require special attention: the translator may need to find a Russian proverb with a similarly positive wish, such as “Добрый путь!” or use an explanatory translation. At times, adding a short note may be necessary for readers unfamiliar with the Uzbek context. Furthermore, the distinctive musicality, rhythm, and brevity characteristic of Uzbek proverbs are often challenging to preserve in Russian. Uzbek proverbs frequently employ alliteration, assonance, or rhyme, making them easy to remember and recite. In translation, this poetic dimension may be lost, or the proverb may appear less melodic. To reproduce this effect, a translator might need to attempt creative adaptation, seeking not only semantic but also structural and phonetic equivalents in Russian [2].

Metaphors used in Uzbek proverbs also bear a peculiarity which cannot always be found in Russian. For example, "Tog‘ tog‘ bilan uchrashmaydi, odam odam bilan uchrashadi" ("A mountain does not meet a mountain, but a person meets a person") is based on the importance of human relationships, suggesting that people inevitably cross paths. The Russian language has the proverb "Гора с горой не сходится, а человек с человеком сойдётся," which closely matches the Uzbek original in both structure and meaning. Such lucky coincidences, however, are fairly rare. Some Uzbek proverbs are so context-specific that a

translator faces the choice between creative domestication and foreignization. Should the phrase "Yaproqdan piyoz emas" be translated as "Not an onion from a leaf" or better explained as "Useless or irrelevant thing"? In such cases, to achieve the desired effect, the translator must deeply understand both cultures, not just languages. When the translator encounters words that are culturally loaded, he or she needs to bridge the gap with careful annotation or by seeking generalized equivalents. The variety of formal registers in Uzbek is another challenge. Some sayings use archaic, poetic, or dialectal words, which do not have direct analogs in Russian. The translator must decide whether to preserve the archaism, risking incomprehensibility, or to modernize the proverb to suit Russian tastes [3].

Additionally, the order of words and syntax in Uzbek proverbs is often drastically different from Russian. Many Uzbek proverbs are elliptical or omit pronouns and particles for brevity and cadence, while Russian prefers more explicit grammatical markers. Balancing literary fidelity and smoothness requires the translator to reconstruct sentence structure, sometimes adding small clarifications without distorting the original meaning. Another important nuance involves humor, irony, sarcasm, or understatement, which are often hidden in Uzbek proverbs. If a proverb says, "Yaxshi do‘st yomondan asraydi, yomon do‘st yomon ko‘radi," the Russian equivalent might be, "Лучше с умным потерять, чем с дураком найти," even though neither is a literal match. Here, the sound judgment of the translator matters; the translated proverb should evoke a similar reaction in the Russian reader as the original does in an Uzbek’s mind. The importance of preserving the emotional impact cannot be overstated. Many Uzbek proverbs are used ceremonially during important stage moments in life – weddings, funerals, milestone birthdays. Their translation should be sensitive and correct, taking care not to introduce awkwardness or misunderstanding. This means the translator often has to imagine the social situation in which a proverb might be uttered [4]. Intercultural dialogue is another serious aspect. Uzbek proverbs are increasingly used in literature, films, and media targeting Uzbek-Russian and post-Soviet audiences, necessitating translation that promotes mutual understanding, respects differences, and fosters empathy. Misinterpretation could lead to cultural conflicts or reinforce stereotypes, underlining the ethical responsibility of the translator. Moreover, proverbs in Uzbek often contain references to agricultural activities, legendary characters, regional landscapes, and everyday items that might be alien



or carry different associations in Russia. For example, “Baxt bozorda sotilmaydi” (Happiness is not sold at the market) is clear and translatable but loses its savory, market-day feel when rendered as “Счастье не продается на базаре,” versus the more neutral Russian “Счастье за деньги не купишь.”

The translation of Uzbek proverbs into Russian is also shaped by historical and social context. The Soviet period, with its active bilingualism and Russification, saw many proverbs enter common usage in both languages, sometimes acquiring new shades of meaning. Post-independence, there is a conscious revival of Uzbek cultural identity, and the translation challenges intensify as the nuances and unique features of Uzbek culture are emphasized. From a linguistic point of view, the challenges also stem from the grammatical differences between Uzbek (an agglutinative Turkic language) and Russian (an inflected Slavic language). Word forms, case systems, and verb tenses affect how feelings and meanings can be rendered. Uzbek’s use of suffixes allows for extremely condensed expressions: “Bor ekan, yo‘q ekan” (“Once upon a time,” literally “There was, there wasn’t.”) The Russian equivalent “Жили-были” is shorter, less picturesque, but functionally analogous. Translators must possess not just fluency, but a deep bicultural competence, recognizing shared patterns and gaps, creatively reconstructing implied meanings, and maintaining the spirit and style of the original. This may require the expansion, compression, or even substitution of ideas. Bilingual collections and scholarly works often provide both the original and the closest Russian equivalent, supplemented with commentary. This is particularly useful in cases where Uzbek proverbs contain words, objects, or ideas that are entirely foreign to Russians. Sometimes, even explicit explanations may not suffice for the emotional or metaphoric richness of some expressions, but such efforts are indispensable for cross-cultural comprehension. The ultimate aim of translating Uzbek proverbs and sayings into Russian is not mere fidelity to words, but fidelity to meaning, spirit, emotional tone, and function within the community. Successful translation is therefore a multilayered art, employing linguistic knowledge, cultural insight, poetic sensitivity, and empathy.

Conclusion

The translation of Uzbek proverbs and sayings into Russian is a highly complex and creative act that goes far beyond the mechanical replacement of words. It requires a nuanced blend of linguistic skills and deep cultural awareness. The



translator must not only convey the semantic content of each proverb, but must also strive to keep alive the wisdom, emotional resonance, and poetic beauty inherent to the Uzbek language. Literal translation often falls short, while adaptive translation and cultural mediation invariably play pivotal roles. As languages and cultures continue to interact and evolve, the preservation and accurate translation of proverbs help nurture dialogue, respect, and understanding between Uzbek and Russian societies. Thus, the act of translating proverbs emerges as an essential endeavor in the larger project of intercultural communication and mutual enrichment, ensuring that the timeless wisdom of the Uzbek people can find a worthy echo in the Russian-speaking world.

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