



CULTURAL CONCEPTUALIZATION IN ENGLISH- UZBEK LITERARY TRANSLATION

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Abstract

This article examines culturally and conceptually marked elements in English-Uzbek literary translation, focusing on metaphorical imagery, culture-specific references, and forms of address. These features reflect worldview, social relations, cultural memory, and evaluative position, so they cannot be treated as isolated lexical units. Using a qualitative cognitive-cultural analysis of English micro-contexts and Uzbek variants, the study shows that direct translation may retain words but lose conceptual function, while excessive domestication may erase cultural specificity. A context-sensitive model based on conceptual preservation, culturally calibrated adaptation, and pragmatic reconstruction is proposed. Successful translation depends on preserving the relationship between linguistic form, cultural meaning, and narrative function.

Keywords: Cultural conceptualization; English-Uzbek translation; literary metaphor; culture-specific item; forms of address; extralinguistic context; pragmatic reconstruction; authorial idiolect.

Introduction

Literary discourse is deeply connected with culture. Writers construct fictional worlds through imagery, objects, place names, social titles, terms of address, ritual references, and culturally meaningful metaphors. These elements contribute to authorial idiolect by revealing recurrent ways of conceptualizing emotion, social relations, memory, and identity.



Culturally marked units are difficult to translate because their meanings exceed dictionary definitions. A metaphor may embody a cultural model of emotion, while an address form may encode hierarchy, intimacy, irony, age difference, or emotional distance. The translator must therefore decide whether to retain, adapt, explain, or compensate for such features.

This issue is especially important in English-Uzbek literary translation. English often leaves interpersonal relations implicit through the pronoun *you*, whereas Uzbek requires a choice between *sen*, *siz*, respectful nominal forms, or indirect structures. Likewise, English metaphors involving heart, darkness, burden, road, and silence may have several Uzbek equivalents with different emotional associations.

Cognitive approaches show that metaphor organizes conceptual experience rather than merely decorating language (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). In literary texts, metaphors can reveal how an author interprets fear, love, grief, time, home, or moral conflict. Translation should therefore preserve both the image and its conceptual effect.

The present article investigates the reconstruction of metaphorical imagery, culture-specific references, and forms of address in English-Uzbek literary translation. Recent research on modernist literary texts also demonstrates that idiolect and conceptosphere emerge through recurring stylistic and cognitive patterns rather than isolated lexical choices (Yokubovna, 2026). Building on this view, the study develops a context-sensitive approach to language, culture, and narrative function.

Materials and Methods

The study uses a qualitative cognitive-cultural design based on illustrative English literary micro-contexts and Uzbek translation variants. The examples demonstrate typical problems related to metaphor, culturally marked vocabulary, and interpersonal address.

The analysis asks four questions: What conceptual or cultural function does the source unit perform? Which extralinguistic factors make it meaningful? What may be lost through direct translation or excessive adaptation? Which Uzbek rendering best preserves the intended function?

No single solution is treated as universally correct. Translation decisions are evaluated in relation to narrative situation, character relationship, historical setting, genre, emotional tone, and target-cultural expectations.

Metaphor as Conceptual Compression

Metaphors often compress complex emotional and cultural meanings into a short linguistic image. In literary discourse, they may reflect the author's individual worldview and habitual patterns of conceptualization. Translating metaphor therefore requires more than finding a lexical equivalent.

Consider the following example:

Example 1: *The room was full of unsaid words.*

Uzbek translation: *Xona aytilmagan gaplarga to'lib turgandek edi.*

The English sentence treats silence as physical presence: the room is filled not with spoken words but with their absence. The Uzbek version preserves this conceptual paradox and retains the emotional density of the image.

A paraphrase such as *Ular aytmoqchi bo'lgan gaplari juda ko'p edi* conveys information but loses the image. The source text makes silence tangible, and this effect should be preserved where possible.

Metaphor translation is difficult when one image has several Uzbek correspondences. The English heart may be rendered as *yurak*, *qalb*, *dil*, or *ko'ngil*, but these words are not interchangeable: they foreground different associations of courage, spirituality, intimacy, mood, or inner pain.

The choice should therefore depend on context. Conceptual transfer requires attention to cultural and emotional nuance, not simply lexical similarity.

Culture-Specific References and Narrative Worldbuilding

Culture-specific items include customs, ceremonies, food, institutions, titles, holidays, and historically marked objects. They construct the narrative world and locate events within a particular social and cultural setting.

Consider the example:

Example 2: *They gathered for Thanksgiving dinner.*

Possible Uzbek translation: *Ular Thanksgiving bayrami munosabati bilan kechki ovqatga yig'ilishdi.*

Thanksgiving may be rendered as *Minnatdorchilik kuni*, *Thanksgiving bayrami*, or *AQShdagi Minnatdorchilik kuni*. The choice depends on genre and audience;

where cultural specificity matters, retention with a brief contextual cue is often preferable.

If a cultural item creates family atmosphere, historical setting, or social contrast, replacing it with an Uzbek analogue such as Navruz would make the text familiar but erase the source culture.

Complete foreignization can also create opacity. The translator should preserve cultural identity while ensuring comprehension through controlled explanation, contextual clues, or a culturally transparent equivalent.

As Katan (2018) notes, translation involves cultural mediation because linguistic forms are inseparable from communal values and assumptions.

Forms of Address and Social Meaning

Forms of address are highly sensitive in English-Uzbek translation. English uses you for both formal and informal relations, whereas Uzbek requires a choice between sen, siz, kinship terms, honorifics, titles, or indirect forms.

Consider the following example:

Example 3: *You knew, did you not?*

Uzbek translation: *Siz bilardingiz, shunday emasmi?*

The use of siz may signal distance, respect, restrained accusation, or hierarchy. The appropriate choice cannot be made grammatically; it depends on the speakers' relationship and the tone of the scene.

Close friends or relatives may require sen, whereas formal or hierarchical relations may require siz. Uzbek can also avoid direct pronouns: *Bilgan ekansiz, shundaymi?*

Such choices show that translation involves pragmatic reconstruction rather than simple grammatical substitution.

Address forms may also reflect age, gender, class, and historical period. Translators must recreate social distance in forms meaningful for Uzbek readers without domesticating the setting artificially.

For example, Mr. Darcy should not automatically become an Uzbek-style kinship title. Retention may be necessary because the source social system is part of the narrative world.

Cultural Adaptation and the Limits of Domestication

Domestication may improve readability, but excessive domestication can erase historical and cultural identity. Venuti (2018) warns that extreme fluency may conceal linguistic and cultural difference.

Adaptation is appropriate when direct preservation would be incomprehensible or ineffective, but it should retain the source unit's narrative function.

A culturally unfamiliar image may be replaced only when the new Uzbek image produces a comparable conceptual effect; otherwise controlled explanation or partial retention is preferable.

The following model can guide translation decisions:

Translation stage	Main question	Possible response
Identification	What cultural or conceptual element is present?	Identify metaphor, cultural item, title, or address form
Contextualization	What social, historical, or emotional meaning does it carry?	Analyze setting, relationship, genre, and narrative voice
Assessment	What will be lost in direct translation?	Identify possible opacity, tone shift, or cultural flattening
Reconstruction	Which Uzbek means preserve the function?	Retention, adaptation, compensation, or controlled explanation
Verification	Does the final version fit the wider narrative?	Check consistency of voice, culture, and interpersonal tone

Translation choices should remain consistent. A character who uses *siz* should not shift to *sen* without a narrative reason, and recurring metaphors should be recognized as part of the authorial conceptual system.

Implications for Translator Training

Students should analyze metaphor, cultural references, and address forms in relation to extralinguistic context, asking what these elements reveal about the narrator, character, social setting, or cultural worldview.

Translation exercises should move beyond dictionary equivalents. Students should compare Uzbek variants and justify their choices through tone, social relation, conceptual force, and cultural relevance.

Uzbek offers nuanced resources for interpersonal and emotional meaning, but these should not add content absent from the original. The task is to recreate the author's cultural and conceptual world for Uzbek readers.

Conclusion

This article has examined metaphorical imagery, culture-specific references, and forms of address in English-Uzbek literary translation. These elements reflect historical setting, cultural memory, social hierarchy, emotional tone, and authorial worldview.

Direct lexical translation is often insufficient. Metaphors should be preserved or functionally adapted; culture-specific items should retain source-cultural identity when they shape narrative worldbuilding; and address forms should be selected through interpersonal context.

The proposed model helps translators avoid both literal opacity and excessive domestication by treating linguistic form, cultural meaning, and narrative function as interconnected dimensions of authorial idiolect.

Future research may test this framework on published English-Uzbek translations and examine how readers perceive metaphorical and interpersonal nuance.

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