



**CULTURE-SPECIFIC VOCABULARY AS A TRANSLATION
CHALLENGE (USING THE EXAMPLE OF UZBEK AND RUSSIAN
LANGUAGES)**

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Abstract

This article examines the challenges of translating culturally-marked vocabulary from Uzbek into Russian. It analyzes cases of semantic discrepancies that arise in the literal translation of culturally-specific terms. Through concrete examples, the article demonstrates the impossibility of directly translating words with cultural connotations without considering their cultural context. The main types of translation errors in rendering non-equivalent vocabulary are identified.

Keywords: culturally-marked vocabulary, non-equivalent lexicon, translation techniques, cultural component, Uzbek language, Russian language, intercultural communication, semantic discrepancies.

Language is not merely a tool for communication. It is a mirror of culture, reflecting the worldview of a people, their history, traditions, and mentality. The national character is especially vividly manifested in vocabulary with cultural components. In interlingual communication, the direct translation of culturally specific words often disorients the recipient and provokes a «conflict of meanings». As V.N.Komissarov noted: «In this case, the equivalence of translation is ensured by reproducing the communicatively most important (dominant) elements of meaning, the transmission of which is necessary and sufficient under the conditions of this particular act of interlingual communication» [2 p. 79].

In translation studies, V.S.Vlakhov and S.P.Florin refer to such units as «realia» and emphasize that they are «the most vivid expressions of national color» [1, p. 4]. Their transfer into another language requires special solutions, since «the impossibility of a formal translation» inevitably leads to the loss of cultural nuance.



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The issue of literalness is closely related to cultural specificity. L.Venuti contrasted «the translator's «invisibility» in domestication with the task of preserving differences through foreignization», emphasizing that «the illusion of transparency results in distortion» [4, p. 115]. All this demonstrates that literalness in translating culturally marked words inevitably comes into conflict with the task of preserving meaning and local color.

An example based on Uzbek-Russian comparison can be seen in the lexeme «qo'chqor». In the Uzbek worldview, this word carries a positive semantic connotation of strength and status, as in the fixed expression «qo'chqorday o'g'il» («a son like a ram»). The Russian equivalent «баран» («ram»), however, often has a colloquial, negatively marked connotation, even functioning as an insult; therefore, a direct transfer destroys the original evaluative meaning. Translators may choose among several strategies. One option is a functional analogue that preserves the connotation, such as «a heroic son» or «a strong fellow». Another method is a foreignization strategy with an explanatory note at the first mention: «qo'chqor (an honored breeding ram, a metaphor of strength)». Finally, in a neutral context, modulation through adjectives like «stately» or «impressive» may be appropriate.

The lexeme «xo'roz» in Uzbek generally carries neutral or positive associations connected with vigor and pride. In Russian, however, its direct equivalent «петух» («rooster») can be problematic because of its stable connotations in criminal slang. In zoological or neutral contexts, the use of «петух» is acceptable, but in figurative language it is more accurate to select qualitative descriptors such as «proud», «arrogant», or «spirited».

«Voy, o'lay» is an emotional interjection (an expressive exclamation). A literal translation such as «let me die» is stylistically and pragmatically unacceptable, since in Uzbek speech this formula functions as a fixed emotive expression of surprise or distress. In Russian, adequate equivalents would be «Боже мой!» («My God!»), «Ой!» («Oh!»), or «Господи!» («Lord!»). The choice depends on the speech register and the character's portrayal [3, p. 314].

The fixed combinations «нос корабля» («the ship's nose») or «глухая ночь» («dead of night») sound unnatural when directly rendered into Uzbek. Expressions such as «kemaning burni» or «kar tun» are not used, as the linguistic norm (uzus) favors



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«kemaning tumshug‘i» («the beak of the ship») and «jimjit tun» or «sokin tun» («quiet» or «calm night»). These examples demonstrate that literal translation of idiomatic or collocational units often violates the natural associative patterns and imagery of the target language.

A particularly illustrative case is the Russian idiom «пускать петуха». It is polysemous, having both a musical and a colloquial meaning: on the one hand, it denotes «to sing in falsetto» or to produce a high, unsteady note; on the other hand, in colloquial and figurative speech it means «to set something on fire». A literal translation into Uzbek, without considering the situational context, inevitably leads to a semantic clash or even absurdity.

In the vocal sense, («пускать петуха») this idiom can be adequately rendered as «ingichka ohangga chiqib ketmoq» («to slip into a thin, high tone»), while in the incendiary sense, the corresponding Uzbek equivalent would be «o‘t qo‘ymoq» («to set fire»). The translator’s task, therefore, is to determine the intended meaning through careful contextual interpretation before selecting an appropriate strategy — either a «functional analogue» that reproduces the pragmatic effect, or a descriptive translation that explicates the cultural and semantic nuance for the reader.

The phrase «чёрная кухарка» also requires careful handling in translation. In older Russian texts, the adjective «чёрный» does not denote skin color but rather indicates social status or type of labor — as in «черновая работа» («menial work») or «чёрный люд» («common people»). Therefore, a literal translation into another language, particularly into Uzbek, may lead to misinterpretation if perceived through the lens of modern racial semantics. In such contexts, «чёрная кухарка» should be understood as «служанка низшего звена» or «повариха простого происхождения», emphasizing the social rather than physical aspect.

The Uzbek expression «ichi qora» («black inside») carries an entirely different semantic load. It functions as a moral and psychological evaluation, describing someone who is «envious», «malicious», or «ill-intentioned». The Russian adjective «завистливый» adequately conveys the evaluative meaning but inevitably loses the metaphorical imagery tied to the color black, which in Uzbek culture symbolizes hidden negativity or inner darkness.



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The Russian adjective «толковый» in the sense of «smart» or «efficient» lacks a direct Uzbek equivalent. The word «izohli» («explanatory») is unsuitable, as it functions as a metalinguistic term used in dictionary contexts. Depending on the communicative situation, various contextual analogues may be employed: «aqli» («intelligent»), «uddaburon» («resourceful», «capable»), «tetik» («energetic», «vigorous»), or «farosatli» («perceptive», «insightful»). Each of these reflects a specific aspect of the Russian «толковый», but none fully captures its pragmatic and evaluative breadth — that of a person both clever and practical.

Conversely, the Uzbek adjective «sovuq» («cold») demonstrates a distinct case of semantic divergence in metaphorical extension. In figurative usage, it does not relate to physical temperature but conveys a negative psychological or aesthetic judgment. Thus, «sovuq odam» describes an unattractive or unpleasant person, not a «cold» or «unemotional» one in the Russian sense. Similarly, «sovuq soʻz» refers to a hurtful or distressing remark — often implying «bad news» or «an unpleasant word». Rendering it as «холодное слово» distorts the original meaning and creates an unnatural expression.

An even more idiomatic case is «ogʻzi sovuq» («a person with a cold mouth»), which characterizes someone who habitually says unpleasant or ill-omened things. The literal translation «человек с холодным ртом» would be nonsensical in Russian. The functional equivalents in Russian are «злаязычный» («spiteful»), «неприятный» («unpleasant»), or «вечно говорит что-то плохое».

Finally, the Uzbek expression «istarasi issiq» denotes a person of pleasant appearance or an agreeable, likable look. A literal translation such as «hot face» completely distorts the meaning and is pragmatically unacceptable. More accurate renderings in Russian would be «приятной внешности», «симпатичный», «располагающий вид», or, in a colloquial register, «миловидный». Each of these options reflects the positive evaluative nuance inherent in the original expression while preserving naturalness within Russian usage.

The translation of culturally specific lexicon is invariably fraught with the risk of semantic loss and cultural distortion. The analysis of Uzbek-Russian examples demonstrates that only functional analogues, descriptive translations, and foreignization strategies ensure the preservation of both the semantic and cultural



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value of the source expressions. These methods allow the translator to maintain the delicate balance between linguistic accuracy and cultural authenticity, preventing the erasure of national imagery embedded in the original language.

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