

## CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN TRANSLATING ENGLISH IDIOMS INTO UZBEK

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**<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15421691>**

### ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the complex nature of translating English idioms into Uzbek, with a focus on the challenges posed by cultural, structural, and semantic differences between the two languages. Idioms, being culturally and contextually bound expressions, often carry meanings that cannot be directly translated without losing their original sense or emotional resonance. Drawing on the works of leading scholars in translation studies such as Peter Newmark, Eugene Nida, Mona Baker, and others, this study explores theoretical frameworks and practical approaches for dealing with idiomatic translation. Strategies such as paraphrasing, cultural substitution, dynamic equivalence, and metaphor mapping are analyzed. Through a series of practical examples, this research demonstrates how these strategies can be applied to effectively render idioms from English into Uzbek while preserving their intended meaning and stylistic effect. The findings underscore the importance of understanding both linguistic systems and cultural contexts to achieve accurate and meaningful translations.

**Keywords:** idioms, translation, translation strategies, equivalence

### INTRODUCTION

Idiomatic expressions represent a rich and colorful component of language, embodying not only linguistic creativity but also the cultural identity of a community. In translation, idioms pose one of the most intricate challenges, particularly when working between languages from different linguistic families and cultural backgrounds—such as English and Uzbek. These expressions often cannot be understood or translated literally, as their meanings are deeply rooted in metaphor, context, and shared cultural knowledge.

The translation of idioms is not merely a linguistic task but a cultural negotiation. English idioms such as “kick the bucket” or “let the cat out of the bag” do not make sense when translated word-for-word into Uzbek. Instead, translators must find creative ways to render these expressions while preserving their meanings, emotional tones, and cultural resonances.

The aim of this study is to analyze the primary challenges involved in translating English idioms into Uzbek and to examine the strategies used to overcome these difficulties. The research is guided by the following questions:

What are the key challenges in translating idiomatic expressions from English to Uzbek?

What strategies can be applied to ensure that idioms are translated both accurately and naturally?

How do cultural, contextual, and structural differences between English and Uzbek affect idiomatic translation?

The study's relevance lies in its potential to aid translators, language learners, and researchers in translation studies by offering both theoretical insights and practical tools for dealing with idiomatic expressions.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Numerous scholars in the field of translation have addressed the issue of idiomatic translation. This chapter discusses some of the most influential theories and approaches relevant to translating idioms, with particular focus on the work of Peter Newmark, Eugene Nida, Jeremy Munday, Mona Baker, and George Lakoff.

Peter Newmark highlights the difficulty of finding equivalents for idioms in the target language. He proposes strategies such as paraphrasing, borrowing, and modification when a direct equivalent does not exist. According to Newmark, the goal is not literal fidelity but the preservation of meaning and effect.

Eugene Nida introduces the concept of dynamic equivalence, which emphasizes the effect of the message on the target audience. He argues that literal translations of idioms are often misleading and that translators should focus on reproducing the original emotional and communicative impact.

Jeremy Munday builds on these theories by emphasizing functional equivalence and cultural substitution. He points out that idioms are not only linguistic but also social artifacts, shaped by their context.

Mona Baker addresses the issue of cultural specificity in idioms. She proposes cultural substitution as a way to render idioms comprehensible in the target culture, though she warns of the risk of losing the cultural flavor of the original expression.

George Lakoff's work on conceptual metaphors reveals that idioms are often based on deeply ingrained metaphorical systems. Translating an idiom, therefore, means transferring not only words but also underlying cognitive frameworks.

These theories provide the foundation for understanding the complex nature of idiomatic translation and inform the analytical framework of this thesis.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This research employs a qualitative approach based on textual analysis. A selection of widely used English idioms and their proposed Uzbek equivalents are examined to identify common challenges and evaluate the effectiveness of different translation strategies.

The idioms were chosen based on their frequency in spoken and written English and the absence of direct equivalents in Uzbek. Each idiom is analyzed for its figurative meaning, cultural background, and possible Uzbek translations. The analysis is informed by established translation theories and seeks to highlight practical approaches used by translators.

The methodology also includes a comparative analysis of literal versus dynamic translations, taking into account the cultural and contextual appropriateness of each rendering.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **Lack of Equivalence**

One of the most common difficulties in translating idioms lies in the absence of direct equivalents in the target language. English and Uzbek are languages that originate from different linguistic families and cultural traditions; as a result, they often lack shared idiomatic expressions. The idiom "**let the cat out of the bag**" which means to reveal a secret, does not

carry any recognizable imagery or cultural resonance in Uzbek. A literal translation ("*mushukni xaltadan chiqarish*") would not be understood in its intended figurative sense. Therefore, translators typically resort to paraphrasing it as "*sirni fosh qilmoq*" ("to expose a secret").

Peter Newmark (1988) emphasizes that in the case of such idioms, the translator's task is not to replicate the wording but to preserve the communicative effect. This often involves modifying or completely replacing the idiom with a semantically similar phrase in the target language. For example, the idiom "**hit the sack**" which metaphorically refers to going to bed, may be translated simply as "*uxlagani yotmoq*". While the literal imagery is lost, the practical meaning is retained.

In such cases, the translator must make a judgment about what is more important—maintaining the original metaphor, or ensuring clarity and naturalness for the target audience. The general consensus among translation theorists is that meaning and impact take precedence over form, especially when idiomatic equivalence is not available.

### **Non-Literal Meaning**

Idioms are inherently non-literal, and this poses a significant challenge in translation. The literal meanings of their individual components often have little or nothing to do with their actual usage. Eugene Nida's concept of dynamic equivalence is particularly useful in this context. According to Nida, the translator should strive to achieve a similar response from the target audience as the source text elicits from its original audience, even if this means departing from a literal rendering.

Consider the idiom "**kick the bucket**" which informally means "to die." A literal translation into Uzbek would be nonsensical. Instead, the more culturally and linguistically appropriate translation would be "*ko'z yumdi*", which literally means "closed one's eyes," a euphemism for death commonly used in Uzbek.

Another example is "**don't cry over spilled milk**" which advises against regretting past mistakes. A direct translation into Uzbek ("*to'kilgan sut uchun yig'lama*") would sound awkward and confusing. A better equivalent would be "*o'tgan ishga salovat*", which conveys the idea of accepting the past with patience and moving on.

These examples show that a successful translation of non-literal expressions demands a careful balancing act—one that prioritizes the emotional and pragmatic intent over the superficial form of the idiom.

### **Cultural Specificity**

Idioms are often born from the unique historical, social, and cultural experiences of a language community. As Mona Baker (1992) points out, idiomatic expressions frequently carry implicit cultural references that are not easily transferable to another language.

One of the clearest examples of cultural specificity is the English idiom "**when pigs fly**" which is used to express disbelief or to suggest that something is extremely unlikely or impossible. The humor in this idiom arises from the absurdity of the image—pigs, being land animals, are clearly incapable of flight. However, in Uzbek culture, pigs are not common animals and do not feature prominently in everyday imagery or folklore. As such, a literal translation of this idiom ("*cho'chqalar uchganda*") would likely sound awkward or meaningless to a native Uzbek speaker.

Instead, the appropriate Uzbek equivalent is **“tuyaning dumi yerga tekkanda”** which literally means *“when the camel’s tail touches the ground.”* This expression conveys the same idea of improbability but draws on imagery familiar to Uzbek speakers, particularly those from regions where camels are part of traditional life. While the metaphors differ, both idioms serve the same communicative function and reflect the cultural environments from which they emerge.

The English idiom **“to go Dutch”** which refers to the custom of sharing a bill equally, stems from a specific Western cultural practice. In Uzbek, where this custom may not be well known, a literal translation would confuse readers. Therefore, translators may use a descriptive equivalent such as *“har kim o‘z ulushini to‘laydi.”*

This process, known as cultural substitution, can result in the loss of the original cultural imagery. However, it also ensures that the message remains intelligible and relevant to the target audience. In some cases, idioms can be localized through the use of culturally analogous metaphors, allowing the translator to preserve both meaning and cultural color.

### **Contextual Dependence**

Context is crucial in idiomatic translation, as idioms are often polysemous and highly dependent on the situation in which they are used. Without proper contextual awareness, a translator might misinterpret the idiom entirely. Walter Benjamin and Hatim & Mason have stressed that idioms should be interpreted within their full communicative and cultural context rather than isolated from their usage environment.

Take, for instance, the idiom *“break a leg.”* In the context of theater, it means *“good luck,”* but outside that context, it could be misread literally or even negatively. A translator must therefore consider the setting and render it as *“Omad tilayman”* when the idiom is clearly intended as a wish of success.

The failure to properly consider linguistic, cultural, or situational context can lead to translations that are not only incorrect but also misleading. Therefore, a context-sensitive approach is vital to preserving the meaning and function of idioms in translation.

### **Language Structure Differences**

English and Uzbek differ significantly in terms of grammatical structure, word order, and syntactic patterns. These differences present structural barriers that complicate the process of idiomatic translation. Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet (1995) argue that structural constraints often necessitate the use of oblique translation strategies, such as modulation and transposition, in order to maintain fluency and idiomaticity in the target language.

English often employs passive constructions in idioms, such as *“he was caught red-handed.”* Uzbek, by contrast, prefers active forms. The equivalent expression in Uzbek would be *“u qo‘lga tushdi”* which conveys the same meaning without relying on passive voice.

These examples underscore the importance of adapting sentence structure, verb forms, and metaphors in a way that aligns with the grammatical and rhetorical expectations of the target language.

### **Multiple Equivalent Idioms**

At times, the translator is faced with the opposite challenge: not a lack of equivalents, but a surplus of them. A single English idiom may have several possible renderings in Uzbek,

each with subtle variations in tone, formality, or cultural connotation. In such cases, the translator must make a strategic decision based on the context and intended audience.

Consider the idiom “many hands make light work.” Potential Uzbek equivalents include:

- “Ko‘p qo‘l – yengil ish” (a near-literal version)
- “Birlikda ish baraka topadi” (emphasizing cooperation)
- “Yelkani yelkaga bersa, tog‘ ham ko‘chadi” (more poetic and expressive)

Each version conveys a similar idea but with different stylistic effects. For academic writing, a neutral and clear version may be preferred, whereas in literature or speeches, the poetic version might be more appropriate.

The translator’s choice among these options depends on factors such as genre, tone, and audience expectations. This aspect of idiomatic translation underscores the translator’s role not just as a linguistic mediator but also as a stylistic and cultural interpreter.

### CONCLUSION

Translating idioms from English into Uzbek is a multifaceted process that involves not only linguistic competence but also cultural awareness and creativity. This thesis has identified six major areas of difficulty in idiomatic translation: lack of equivalence, non-literal meaning, cultural specificity, contextual dependence, structural differences, and multiple target equivalents.

The analysis shows that strategies such as paraphrasing, dynamic equivalence, cultural substitution, and metaphor mapping are essential for preserving the meaning and emotional tone of the original idioms. Furthermore, understanding the cultural and structural differences between English and Uzbek enables translators to make informed and effective choices.

This study contributes to the broader field of translation studies by emphasizing the importance of balancing fidelity to meaning with naturalness and readability in the target language. Future research could expand this analysis to include idioms from other languages or explore how idiomatic translation is taught in educational settings.

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