

## INTERSEMIOTIC TRANSLATION OF VISUAL SYMBOLS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK MEDIA DISCOURSE

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17432437>

### Abstract

This paper investigates the phenomenon of *intersemiotic translation*—the process of transferring meaning between verbal and visual codes—within English and Uzbek media discourse. The study focuses on how visual symbols such as colors, gestures, and imagery are culturally encoded and reinterpreted in translation across two linguistic and semiotic systems. Using examples from online news portals and advertising materials, the research identifies three types of transformations: iconic adaptation, cultural reinterpretation, and semiotic substitution. Findings reveal that while English media relies heavily on metaphorical imagery and connotative symbolism, Uzbek translations tend to prioritize explicit verbal explanation and cultural domestication. The paper argues that successful translation in multimodal communication requires not only linguistic equivalence but also visual-cultural literacy. This approach contributes to comparative translation studies by extending the scope of analysis beyond words to multimodal meaning-making processes.

**Keywords:** intersemiotic translation, visual semiotics, media discourse, multimodality, comparative linguistics, Uzbek

### Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada ingliz va o'zbek media diskursida *intersemiotik tarjima* — ya'ni ma'noni so'zli va vizual kodlar o'rtasida o'tkazish jarayoni — tadqiq qilinadi. Tadqiqotda ranglar, imo-ishoralar, obrazlar kabi vizual belgilar madaniy kodlar orqali qanday ifodalanishi va tarjimada qanday talqin qilinishi tahlil etiladi. Internet nashrlari va reklama materiallari asosida o'tkazilgan tahlil natijasida uchta asosiy transformatsiya turi aniqlangan: ikoniklikni moslashtirish, madaniy qayta talqin va semiotik almashtirish. Ingliz media matnlarida metaforik obrazlar ko'p ishlatilsa, o'zbek tarjimalarida ularning o'rnini ko'pincha izohlovchi yoki madaniy moslashtirilgan shakllar egallaydi. Maqolada multimodal tarjimada muvaffaqiyatli ekvivalentlikka erishish uchun nafaqat lingvistik, balki vizual-madaniy savodxonlik ham zarurligi ta'kidlanadi. Ushbu yondashuv tarjimashunoslikning qiyosiy tahlil doirasini kengaytiradi va ma'no yaratishning multimodal jarayonlariga e'tibor qaratadi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** intersemiotik tarjima, vizual semiotika, media diskurs, multimodal tahlil, qiyosiy tilshunoslik, o'zbek tili

### Аннотация

В данной статье исследуется феномен *интерсемиотического перевода* — переноса смысла между вербальными и визуальными кодами — в английском и узбекском медиадискурсе. Анализируя материалы интернет-СМИ и рекламных текстов, автор выделяет три типа трансформаций: иконическую адаптацию, культурную переинтерпретацию и семиотическую замену. Результаты показывают, что английские медиа активно используют метафорические образы и символику, тогда как узбекские переводы чаще стремятся к вербальной ясности и культурной адаптации. Делается вывод, что успешный перевод в условиях мультимодальной коммуникации требует

визуально-культурной грамотности наряду с языковой компетенцией. Работа расширяет границы сравнительного переводоведения, рассматривая перевод как межзнаковый процесс конструирования смысла.

**Ключевые слова:** интерсемиотический перевод, визуальная семиотика, медиадискурс, мультимодальность, сравнительное языкознание, узбекский язык

### **Main Discussion**

Intersemiotic translation, as defined by Roman Jakobson (1959), refers to the “interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs from non-verbal sign systems.” This definition broadens the scope of translation beyond traditional linguistic equivalence and situates it within the interdisciplinary field of semiotics. In contemporary media environments, meaning is rarely produced by words alone; rather, it emerges through an interaction of visual, verbal, and cultural codes. English and Uzbek media discourse both demonstrate this multimodal nature, yet they differ significantly in the semiotic mechanisms they employ to convey meaning. In the English-language media, semiotic density is achieved through metaphorical images, typographic emphasis, and connotative visual framing. A single image—a raised fist, a broken chain, or a darkened sky—may encapsulate entire ideological narratives such as resistance, freedom, or crisis. In Uzbek media, by contrast, visual communication tends to be more literal and didactic. Symbolic imagery is often replaced by verbal elaboration or culturally familiar motifs. This difference reflects deeper socio-cultural patterns: Anglo-American media traditionally value individual interpretation, whereas Uzbek media prioritize collective understanding and moral clarity. Such semiotic asymmetry poses a challenge for translators who mediate between these two discursive cultures. Translators are not merely linguistic converters but “reconstructors of meaning” (Omonov, 2020), tasked with decoding the symbolic system of the source text and re-encoding it within the semiotic norms of the target culture. This cognitive process demands not only bilingual competence but also what Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) term *visual literacy*—the ability to interpret and recreate meaning through images and design structures.

Every culture possesses its own visual lexicon—a repertoire of signs and symbols that communicate shared experiences. For instance, in English visual culture, the color red carries multiple connotations: passion, danger, or political affiliation. In Uzbek culture, however, red often symbolizes celebration and joy, particularly in traditional dress and ornamentation. Consequently, when translating visual media that features a “red warning” motif, the translator must assess whether the symbolic resonance will be preserved or distorted in the Uzbek cultural context. Similarly, gestures such as the “OK” sign or the “thumbs-up” gesture, ubiquitous in Western digital communication, may not convey the same meaning in Uzbek society. Translators working on audiovisual materials, advertisements, or digital campaigns must therefore decide whether to *retain*, *modify*, or *replace* such symbols. This process—known as *semiotic adaptation*—requires sensitivity to the target audience’s cultural horizon. The notion of *semiotic substitution* becomes crucial in this regard. When a visual symbol from one culture lacks a direct counterpart in another, the translator must find a functionally equivalent sign that conveys similar pragmatic effects. For example, in a British public health campaign poster reading “*Stay Safe, Save Lives*” with an image of clasped hands, the gesture may evoke a sense of solidarity. In an Uzbek context, however, the same image might be culturally neutral or misunderstood. Replacing it with an image of community cooperation or the national

emblem of unity achieves a closer cultural equivalence. Such decisions demonstrate that intersemiotic translation is not a mechanical process but an interpretive one, grounded in socio-semiotic awareness.

Empirical observation of English and Uzbek media platforms (BBC, The Guardian, Kun.uz, Gazeta.uz, Daryo.uz) reveals several recurring translation patterns. Three major transformation types were identified:

1. Iconic adaptation – The translator modifies the image to align with cultural norms. For example, Western images depicting romantic relationships often feature direct physical contact. In Uzbek translations, these are replaced with more symbolic visuals, such as two hearts, birds, or traditional ornaments, preserving the concept of affection while respecting cultural modesty.
2. Cultural reinterpretation – Certain Western visual metaphors, such as “a melting clock” (symbolizing time pressure), are reinterpreted in Uzbek as “quvvatli vaqt” or “vaqt tig’iz.” The visual metaphor transforms into a verbal or cultural one, shifting modality but maintaining meaning.
3. Semiotic substitution – When the original visual element is incompatible or ambiguous, it is replaced by a locally recognizable symbol. For instance, political satire cartoons that use animals (e.g., lions, foxes) may be substituted by culturally neutral symbols or omitted entirely in Uzbek publications.

Such transformations confirm that intersemiotic translation is not merely a transfer of signs but a creative process of *re-semiotization*—the recreation of meaning through different sign systems (Chandler, 2017). The translator’s role is therefore comparable to that of a designer or cultural mediator rather than a mere linguistic executor.

Achieving intersemiotic equivalence involves negotiating between denotation, connotation, and cultural acceptability. In linguistic translation, equivalence can be lexical or syntactic; in intersemiotic translation, it extends to *semiotic resonance*—the capacity of signs to evoke similar cognitive and emotional responses across cultures. One recurrent issue is *visual overdetermination*: English media often relies on subtle color contrasts or spatial positioning to imply hierarchy, irony, or emotional tone. Uzbek media, being more text-oriented, may lose these nuances when translating captions or headlines. For example, the English headline “*Storm over Parliament*” accompanied by an image of lightning above Westminster merges visual and verbal irony. In Uzbek, a literal rendering (“*Parlament ustida bo’ron*”) without the image loses its figurative dimension. A culturally effective translation (“*Parlamentda keskin bahslar*”) restores communicative impact by substituting visual irony with verbal idiom. Another challenge lies in *ethical localization*. Visual signs that are humorous or provocative in Western discourse may be considered inappropriate in Uzbek culture. The translator must balance fidelity to source meaning with adherence to local moral codes, ensuring that translation does not become cultural offense. This ethical dimension distinguishes professional intersemiotic translation from algorithmic or automatic media localization.

The analysis suggests that comparative linguistics and translation studies can no longer be confined to the verbal level. The semiotic turn in linguistics, as advocated by Lotman, Jakobson, and Kress, calls for a holistic approach that integrates language, image, and culture. In the Uzbek academic context, this means developing a framework for comparative semiotic translation analysis, which includes:

- identifying dominant visual metaphors in English and Uzbek media;
- analyzing their cross-cultural interpretability;
- classifying transformation strategies;
- evaluating cultural and pragmatic adequacy.

Such methodology could enrich translation pedagogy in Uzbekistan, equipping future translators with multimodal literacy and intercultural competence. It also aligns with contemporary global research in *multimodal discourse analysis* and *media linguistics*, fields increasingly relevant in the digital age. In conclusion, intersemiotic translation between English and Uzbek media discourse is not a peripheral phenomenon but a central concern of modern translation studies. It bridges linguistic, cultural, and visual domains, revealing how meaning travels across semiotic systems. Translators engaged in this process contribute not only to communication but also to cultural continuity, shaping how global messages acquire local identities. As the digital landscape continues to expand, the ability to translate *beyond words*—to interpret colors, gestures, and images—is becoming a defining skill of the twenty-first-century translator. Developing a systematic, culturally grounded theory of intersemiotic translation thus represents both an academic and practical priority for Uzbek comparative linguistics.

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