

THE SPECIFIC FEATURES OF TRANSLATING FIGURATIVE EXPRESSIONS IN AMERICAN SHORT STORIES

Babajanova Yakitjan Masharipovna,

Senior Lecturer Uzbek State University of World Languages

Abstract:

This article explores the specific features and challenges of translating figurative expressions—such as metaphors, idioms, and other stylistic devices—found in American short stories into the Uzbek language. The research emphasizes the importance of cultural and linguistic nuances in the accurate and meaningful translation of these expressions. It analyzes the contextual roles of figurative language in the original texts, offers Uzbek equivalents, and discusses various translation strategies including literal translation, adaptation, and commentary. Special attention is given to issues of semantic ambiguity, connotative meaning, and stylistic consistency. The article highlights the necessity of preserving national and cultural color in translation while ensuring clarity and coherence for the target audience.

Keywords: Figurative expressions, literary translation, metaphor, idiom, American short stories, cultural differences, translation strategies, semantic equivalence, stylistic adaptation, intercultural communication.

Introduction

Translating literary texts is one of the most challenging tasks in the field of translation studies, particularly when it involves figurative expressions such as metaphors, idioms, similes, and other stylistic devices. These expressions carry not only linguistic but also cultural, emotional, and symbolic meanings that are deeply rooted in the source language and culture. American short stories, rich in colloquial language, cultural references, and artistic expression, often employ a wide range of figurative language that contributes significantly to their overall tone, character development, and thematic depth.

Translating figurative expressions from American English into another language, such as Uzbek, requires more than a literal rendering of words; it demands an understanding of both the source and target cultures, a sensitivity to context, and the ability to preserve the artistic and emotional impact of the original text. This task becomes even more complex when the target language lacks equivalent idiomatic structures or when cultural differences make direct translation ineffective or misleading.

This paper aims to explore the specific features of translating figurative expressions in American short stories, focusing on the strategies used to convey meaning accurately and artistically in the target language. It also examines the challenges translators face, such as

semantic ambiguity, loss of stylistic nuances, and the risk of cultural misinterpretation. Through comparative analysis and practical examples, the study seeks to provide insights into effective translation practices that maintain the integrity of the source text while making it accessible and engaging for the target audience.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach with elements of comparative analysis to examine the strategies and challenges involved in translating figurative expressions found in American short stories into Uzbek. The methodology consists of the following key stages:

1. Selection of Corpus. A representative sample of American short stories was chosen from both classical and contemporary authors, including works by Ernest Hemingway, O. Henry, Raymond Carver, and Jhumpa Lahiri. The texts were selected based on their rich use of figurative language, including idioms, metaphors, similes, and cultural references.
2. Identification of Figurative Expressions. Using close reading techniques, figurative expressions were identified and catalogued from the original English texts. Particular attention was given to expressions that do not have direct equivalents in the Uzbek language.
3. Translation Analysis. For each figurative expression, various Uzbek translations were compared. Where official published translations existed, they were analyzed; otherwise, independent translations were created for research purposes. The study examined how different translation strategies — such as literal translation, adaptation, substitution, and explanatory translation — affect the preservation of meaning, tone, and stylistic effect.
4. Comparative Evaluation. The study applied a comparative lens to evaluate the effectiveness of each translation strategy. Factors considered included cultural appropriateness, semantic accuracy, emotional impact, and stylistic faithfulness to the original.
5. Consultation of Theoretical Frameworks. The analysis was supported by established theories in translation studies, including Nida's dynamic equivalence, Newmark's communicative and semantic translation, and Venuti's domestication and foreignization strategies. Figurative language theories, particularly those by Lakoff and Johnson, also informed the interpretive framework.
6. Feedback from Language Experts. To validate the findings, a focus group of professional translators and linguists was consulted. Their feedback on selected translated passages provided insights into translation preferences and the perceived effectiveness of each strategy. By systematically analyzing figurative expressions through this multi-step approach, the study aims to highlight not only the linguistic intricacies of translation but also the cultural and interpretive challenges that shape the translator's decisions.

Analysis and Results

Below we will cover the topic based on scientific analysis.

Uzbek: *Biror marta pardoz qilganini eslay olmayman, oppoq sochini engsasiga tortib turmaklar edi.*

English: I don't ever remember her other than without makeup, grey hair pulled back in a bun.

Analysis:

- Lexical-semantic: The phrase “*Biror marta pardoz qilganini eslay olmayman*” could have been literally translated as “*I can’t remember her ever wearing makeup*”. Instead, the chosen structure “*I don't ever remember her other than without makeup*” strengthens the negative identification and character description.

- Imagery: The word “*turmak*” (a traditional Uzbek hair arrangement) is replaced by “*bun*”, showing cultural adaptation by using a more familiar English equivalent.

- Stylistic shift: The English version simplifies the original's gentle tone, replacing culturally embedded imagery with standard description for broader understanding.

Uzbek: Men esa ko’proq boboyga tortgan edim, katta oyog’u yo’g’on bilaklar, tog’day ko’kragu qop-qora soch — hammasi undan o’tgan edi.

English: I have his large feet, thick wrists, big chest, black hair.

Analysis:

- Lexical reduction: The metaphor “*tog’day ko’krak*” (mountain-like chest) becomes simply “*big chest*”, resulting in a loss of figurativeness and semantic simplification.

- Omitted nuance: The phrase “*hammasi undan o’tgan edi*” (I inherited all of it from him) is not fully reflected. This omits emotional depth and familial connection, flattening the richness of meaning.

- Despite preserving factual meaning, stylistic depth is lost, representing information loss rather than functional equivalence.

Uzbek: Yujinning old tishlari o’rtasidagi tirqish, yirik qo’llari bo’g’imlarini qoplagan mo’y, birov ish buyursa, yuzi terlashi — hammasi mendan olingan.

English: Eugene is me, down to the gap between my front teeth, the hair covering the knuckles on my large hands, the way my face sweats when I'm under pressure.

Analysis:

- Stronger identification: The English version begins with “*Eugene is me*”, increasing psychological depth and subjectivity.

- Detail consistency: Both versions use physiological details to show biological inheritance, maintaining equivalence in meaning and imagery.

- Stylistic elaboration: The phrase “*when I'm under pressure*” offers a broader and more universally understandable explanation for “*birov ish buyursa*”, representing an interpretative translation.

General Conclusion:

Criterion	Example 1	Example 2	Example 3
Translation strategy	Cultural adaptation	Semantic simplification	Interpretative equivalence
Imagery preservation	Partial	Lost	Largely retained
Semantic clarity	High	Moderate	High
Cultural mediation	Effective	Weak	Strong

These examples highlight the necessity of considering semantic clarity, stylistic appropriateness, and cultural nuances in the translation process. In literary translation especially, conveying emotion and connotation often takes precedence over literal meaning.

The analysis of figurative expressions found in American short stories and their Uzbek translations revealed several important trends and challenges. The selected examples demonstrated that literal translations of idioms, metaphors, and other stylistic devices often lead to a loss of cultural and emotional depth, especially when the original imagery does not have a direct equivalent in Uzbek.

Three examples were examined in detail:

- The translation of descriptive phrases related to personal appearance and familial traits.
- The substitution or omission of culturally embedded metaphors (e.g., "mountain-like chest" rendered as "big chest").
- The shift from culturally specific expressions (e.g., "when ordered to do something") to more generalized phrases (e.g., "under pressure").

These findings show that functional equivalence often requires not only linguistic but also cultural mediation. While some imagery is preserved through adaptation, many expressions undergo semantic simplification or are entirely omitted, which may affect the overall aesthetic and emotional resonance of the text.

Discussion

The study suggests that figurative language serves multiple functions in literary texts: it builds characterization, evokes emotion, and encodes cultural values. When translating such texts, especially from English to Uzbek, translators face the challenge of preserving style, tone, and meaning within a target culture that may lack the same referents.

Several strategies were observed:

1. Literal translation – which works only when the metaphor has a near-identical counterpart.
2. Adaptation – replacing the metaphor with a culturally appropriate equivalent.
3. Explication – using additional explanation to convey the same idea.
4. Omission – avoiding the metaphor entirely due to untranslatability.

While adaptation and explication are often necessary, overuse can dilute the original author's voice. This presents a tension between fidelity and readability, a classic problem in translation studies.

Furthermore, translators must navigate between preserving the source culture's uniqueness and making the text accessible to Uzbek readers. The more culturally loaded a figurative expression is, the more likely it is to lose its impact in direct translation.

Translating figurative language from American short stories into Uzbek is not merely a linguistic task but a complex intercultural act. The analysis leads to several key conclusions:

- Figurative expressions are semantically dense and culturally specific, making their translation highly context-dependent.
- Literal translations often fail to convey the intended emotional or stylistic effect, while adapted or reinterpreted translations may risk deviating from the original meaning.

- Successful translation requires a balance between faithfulness to the source and clarity for the target audience, emphasizing the role of the translator as a cultural mediator.
- To maintain literary and emotional integrity, translators must be well-versed not only in both languages but also in the cultural, historical, and social backgrounds of the source and target texts.
- Training in figurative competence and cultural pragmatics should be included in translator education programs to enhance the quality of literary translation.

The translation of figurative expressions in American short stories into Uzbek reveals the intricate interplay between language, culture, and literary aesthetics. Figurative language—comprising metaphors, idioms, similes, hyperboles, and other stylistic devices—serves not only as a means of embellishment but also as a reflection of the cultural worldview and emotional nuance of the source text. Its effective translation, therefore, demands more than mere lexical equivalence; it requires a translator's sensitivity to both semantic meaning and cultural connotation.

Through detailed analysis, it has become evident that literal translation often falls short in preserving the intended meaning and emotional impact of figurative expressions. This is particularly true when such expressions are culturally bound or context-dependent. As a result, translators are frequently compelled to adopt alternative strategies such as **adaptation**, **explicitation**, or even **reconstruction** of the expression in the target language. These strategies, while necessary, raise important questions about fidelity to the original text versus accessibility and resonance for the target audience.

The study highlights that successful translation of figurative language is contingent on the translator's:

- deep understanding of both source and target languages,
- awareness of cultural codes and communicative norms,
- ability to identify functional equivalents or recreate stylistic effects in the target language.

Furthermore, the role of **context** in interpreting and rendering figurative meaning cannot be overstated. A figurative expression often draws its full significance from the surrounding narrative, character development, and thematic motifs—factors that must be carefully considered in translation.

Conclusion

Ultimately, this research underscores the translator's dual responsibility as both **linguistic interpreter and cultural mediator**. In the context of American short stories, this means conveying not only the literal events but also the subtextual layers of identity, irony, emotion, and symbolism embedded in figurative language.

It is recommended that future translator training programs place greater emphasis on the interpretation and reproduction of figurative language, incorporating contrastive stylistic analysis and cultural pragmatics. This will not only enhance the literary quality of translations

but also foster deeper intercultural understanding between English and Uzbek-speaking audiences.

Figurative language translation remains one of the most demanding aspects of literary rendering, and a deep understanding of both linguistic structure and cultural semantics is essential for achieving nuanced and meaningful results.

In conclusion, figurative language represents one of the most challenging yet enriching aspects of literary translation. Its successful transfer from one language and culture to another depends on the translator's literary intuition, cultural literacy, and creative flexibility—qualities that must be cultivated through ongoing research, practice, and reflection.

References:

1. Ekasani K. A. The Use of Figurative Expression //International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Culture. – 2015. – T. 1. – №. 1. – С. 24-33.
2. Park O. et al. The issue of metaphor in literary translation: Focusing on the analysis of a short story translation //Journal of Universal Language. – 2009. – T. 10. – №. 1. – С. 155-175.
3. Dobrovolskij D., Piirainen E. Figurative language: Cross-cultural and cross-linguistic perspectives. – Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2021. – Т. 350.
4. Babjanova Y. M. INNOVATIVE EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY IN THE TRAINING PROCESS //Экономика и социум. – 2018. – №. 10 (53). – С. 27-29.
5. Radjabova M. R. JOZEF EPSHTEYNNING “UKAGINAM ILAY” QISQA HIKOYASINING OZBEKCHA TARJIMASIDA LEKSIK TRANSFORMATSIYALAR //МОЛОДОЙ ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬ: ВЫЗОВЫ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ. – 2021. – С. 633-638.