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TRANSLATION CHALLENGES OF UZBEK IDIOMS INTO ENGLISH IN THE EXAMPLE OF "SHUM BOLA" ("NAUGHTY BOY") BY GAFUR GULOM

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Abstract: This very article explores the translation challenges of Uzbek idioms into English, more specifically in the example of Gafur Gulom's story "Shum Bola" (The Naughty Boy). The paper analyses cultural nuances and the obstacles, which translators face in order to preserve the real meaning and context of idiomatic expressions. The analysis involves examples from the story and makes a comparison between their translation and similar idioms in English, drawing on historical, cultural and linguistic insights. The aim of the article is to highlight the sophistication of idiomatic translation, shedding light on the vitality of cultural sensitivity in making idiomatic expressions accessible to a global audience, thus popularizing our own literature works.

Keywords: Translation challenges, Uzbek idioms, idiomatic expressions, cultural equivalence, linguistic adaptation, translation strategies, English language translation, intercultural communication, Gafur Gulom, Shum Bola (The Naughty Boy), phraseology in translation, loss of meaning in translation, translation theory, , formal equivalence, contextual meaning.

Introduction:

An idiom is a combination of words or a phrase whose meaning cannot be comprehended from the individual meanings of the words, from which it is constituted. These expressions are hugely rooted in the culture, history, and social context of the language in which they originate. Linguists categorize idioms into varying types, including proverbs, phrasal verbs, collocations, and set expressions, which all share the common feature of figurative meaning.

Some examples include:

Proverbs: "Actions speak louder than words".

Phrasal Verbs: "Break up", which means to end a relationship.

Set Expressions: "A piece of cake", meaning something easy to do

The differences between languages like Uzbek and English pose particular challenges in translating idiomatic expressions. Uzbek idioms often reflect unique cultural practices, historical references, and local beliefs, which may not have direct equivalents in English. For example, the structure of a phrase or the context in which an idiom is used may differ drastically between the two languages. English idioms, in turn, can sometimes be too abstract or less grounded in a particular cultural context, making it challenging to find an appropriate idiom in Uzbek that conveys the same meaning.

In the realm of Uzbek literature, *Shum Bola* (The Naughty Boy) by Gafur Gulom stands as a distinctive and influential work, first written in 1936. This short story, which portrays the childhood of a mischievous boy, Qoravoy and the vibrant life of early 20th-century Tashkent, is a satirical narrative that blends real historical events with artistic imagination and fantasy. Despite its strong ties to Gafur Gulom's own experiences, the work is not an autobiography, but rather a fictionalized account of his life, filled with humor and a vivid portrayal of the social dynamics of the time. *Shum Bola* has been translated into several languages, including Russian and Ukrainian, and has been widely praised by both local and international critics. On top of that, the story was privileged to be translated into

English by professor I.M. Tukhtasinov, and U.R. Yuldashev in the *Yangi asr avlodi* to make it accessible for foreign readers. In 2023, the work was included in BBC's list of the 100 best children's books of all time, a testament to its enduring relevance and appeal¹. However, translating a literary work like *Shum Bola* (The Naughty Boy), which is rich in cultural nuances, historical references, and local idioms, presents several challenges. The purpose of this article is to analyze these translation problems, focusing on how the translator navigated the complexities of conveying the essence of the story while making it comprehensible and accessible to a global audience.

Challenges in Translation:

When translating idioms, several types of challenges can arise, including:

Cultural Nuances: Idioms are often tied to the history, social customs, and traditions of a particular culture. Translating these without a deep understanding of the culture can lead to misinterpretation or loss of meaning².

Linguistic Differences: The syntax and structure of idiomatic expressions in one language may not be directly transferable to another, leading to awkward or inaccurate translations.

Figurative vs. Literal Meaning: Idioms convey meanings beyond their literal translations, so it's essential to find equivalent expressions that capture the figurative sense while respecting the tone and style of the original.

¹ BBC's 100 Greatest Children's Books of All Time (2023) – <https://www.tomiungerer.com/news-events/the-100-greatest-childrens-books-of-all-time-64afs-flwpF>

² Nida, Eugene A. *Toward a Science of Translating*. (Brill, 1964)

The Uzbek idiom “**Xayr-ma’zurni nasiya qilib ketaver**”, which was used in this story conveys the notion of leaving a place without informing others, akin to the English expressions “take French leave” or “sneak off”. However, the direct application of these English idioms in the context of Uzbek culture and the narrative of Gafur Gulom’s *Shum Bola* (The Naughty Boy) may not fully encapsulate the original sentiment.

The expressions “**taking French leave**” and “**sneak off**” have distinct origins and cultural connotations¹. While both imply to leaving without informing others, their usage and the contexts in which they appear do differ.

1. “**Taking French Leave**”²: This phrase refers to departing from a place without informing one’s host or employer, often without permission. The term originated in the 18th century, with the French practice of leaving a social gathering without bidding farewell being viewed as polite in France but considered rude in England.

Example in Literature:

In *Robert Louis Stevenson’s The Master of Ballantrae*, the character reflects on the notion of taking French leave:

“But as I was certain I should not be allowed to leave the enclosure, my only plan was to take French leave”.

Context: Here, the character intends to leave without permission, anticipating that formal leave would be denied.

2. “**Sneak Off**”³: To “sneak off” means to leave a place quietly and secretly, often to avoid detection or without informing others.

Example in Literature:

In *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by *Mark Twain*, Tom sneaks away without telling Aunt Polly:

“Tom slipped away without a word”.

Context: Tom’s departure is unannounced, highlighting his desire to leave without drawing attention.

Cultural and Contextual Suitability: While both expressions involve leaving without notice, “taking French leave” carries a historical and cultural weight, often implying a departure without formalities, sometimes without permission, and can be seen as either polite or rude depending on the context. In contrast, “sneak off” emphasizes secrecy and avoidance, typically with a connotation of trying to escape notice. In the context of translating the Uzbek idiom “Xayr-ma’zurni nasiya qilib ketaver” from *Shum Bola* (The Naughty Boy), neither “taking French leave” nor “sneak off” may fully capture the original sentiment. The Uzbek phrase conveys a sense of leaving without informing others, possibly due to the expectation of not being granted permission, but without the negative connotations that “sneak off” might imply. Therefore, translators

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/> — Merriam Webster Dictionary

² <https://www.merriam-webster.com/> — Merriam Webster Dictionary

³ G‘afur G‘ulom, *Shum Bola* (Yoshlar nashriyot uyi, Toshkent – 2018)

considered alternatives like “leave without saying goodbye” to preserve the original meaning without introducing unintended nuances.

Original Context in Uzbek:

The phrase “*Hozir oydin kecha, shomdan endigina o‘tdi, hali ham gap-so‘zni chuvalashtirib o‘tirmay ketaver¹*” was translated as: “**Now it is night, the evening has just passed, don’t stretch words and go⁶**”.

Here, for the idiomatic expression “**gap-so‘zni chuvalashtirmoq**”, a number of equivalent phrases can be found in English. Although their translations suit the above one, they may not be the best option to go, thanks to the contextual problems.

1. “**Beat Around the Bush**” *Etymology*: The phrase “beat around the bush” originates from hunting practices in medieval times. The idea is that a person would “beat” the bushes with a stick to drive game out, but the actual hunting (the real action) would be left to others. So, beating around the bush referred to someone who was doing all the unnecessary or preparatory work while avoiding the main task. By the 16th century, the idiom came to represent the avoidance of a subject and was used metaphorically to describe evasion or indirectness in communication.

Literary Examples:

In **Pride and Prejudice** by Jane Austen:

“*Mr. Collins, you are always so willing to entertain us, but you really must not beat around the bush*”.

Context: Here, Elizabeth Bennet scolds Mr. Collins for being overly verbose and evasive in his proposal to Charlotte Lucas. It fits the definition of avoiding the point by being indirect.

In **The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn** by Mark Twain:

“*We never beat around the bush about our plans. We just went straight ahead*”.

Context: Huck and Jim directly confront their plans and goals without evasion, showing the opposite of “beating around the bush”.

Why It Doesn’t Fit the Uzbek Context:

“Beating around the bush” is about evasion or not getting to the main point, whereas “Gapni chuvalashtirma” is about avoiding unnecessary expansion or over-explanation. The Uzbek idiom encourages being direct and to the point, not avoiding the point altogether.

2. “**Muddy the Waters²**”

Etymology: The phrase “muddy the waters” refers to making a situation unclear or more difficult to understand by introducing irrelevant details. It originates from the literal concept of stirring up muddy water, making it difficult to see the bottom or get a clear view. It’s often used in contexts where someone is complicating an issue or making things more confused than they need to be.

¹ G‘afur G‘ulom, Shum Bola (The Naughty Boy). English translation by I.M. Tukhtasinov and U.R. Yuldashev, (“Yangi asr avlodi” 2017)

² <https://www.merriam-webster.com/> — Merriam Webster Dictionary

Literary Examples:

In **The Tempest** by William Shakespeare:

“The truth be told, you are only trying to muddy the waters of our conflict”.

Context: This would apply to a character trying to introduce confusion into a situation that should be straightforward.

In **The Great Gatsby** by F. Scott Fitzgerald:

“You’re only muddying the waters with these unnecessary details”.

Context: Here, someone’s attempt to complicate the story with irrelevant details is criticized.

Why It Doesn’t Fit the Uzbek Context:

The idiom “muddy the waters” suggests causing confusion, whereas the Uzbek idiom is about simplifying a conversation, avoiding unnecessary elaboration. The Uzbek phrase does not suggest adding complications, but rather being straightforward and clear. Therefore, this idiom doesn’t suit the context of the passage.

By considering the etymology and context of these idioms in literature, we can see how cultural and linguistic differences affect the translation of idioms, highlighting the importance of preserving both the figurative meaning and cultural nuances when translating¹.

Conclusion:

1. Cultural Nuances and Contextual Sensitivity:

The idiomatic expressions used in Shum Bola reflect not only the linguistic features of Uzbek but also the cultural context in which the story is set. For example, expressions like “Xayr-ma’zurni nasiya qilib ketaver” are deeply rooted in Uzbek culture, where leaving without notice or sneaking away is a subtle but meaningful social behavior. In contrast, English idioms like “take French leave” or “sneak off” capture only a fraction of the original meaning, failing to encompass the cultural undertones. This highlights the importance of understanding both the source and target cultures when translating idiomatic expressions.

2. Challenges of Finding Equivalent Idioms:

While English has its own set of idiomatic expressions, such as “beat around the bush” and “muddy the waters”, they do not always align with the original Uzbek idioms. For instance, the Uzbek phrase “Gapni chuvalashtirma” (don’t stretch the words) is more accurately conveyed in English as “stretch the conversation”, emphasizing the avoidance of unnecessary elaboration. However, “beat around the bush” and “muddy the waters” suggest evasion and confusion, which do not fully align with the straightforward, concise nature of the Uzbek expression. This reinforces the idea that idioms are often culturally bound, and direct translations may result in a loss of meaning or misinterpretation².

3. Translation Methods and Adaptation:

¹ Karimov A. “Challenges in Translating Uzbek Idioms into English”. Journal of Language & Culture, vol. 5, no. 3, 2015, pp. 56–67

² Dagut, Menachem. “Can ‘Metaphor’ Be Translated?” Babel, vol. 22, no. 1, 1976, pp. 21–33.

In some cases, translators need to adapt idioms rather than directly translate them. For example, “Xayr-ma’zurni nasiya qilib ketaver” might be best translated as “sneak off” or “take French leave”, but the translator must provide additional context to ensure the meaning is conveyed to readers unfamiliar with the cultural significance of the phrase. Similarly, in the case of “Gapni chuvalashtirma”, phrases like “get to the point” or “don’t over-elaborate” might serve as more accurate alternatives to “beat around the bush” or “muddy the waters”.

Translating idioms from Uzbek to English involves a delicate process of navigating cultural differences and language structures. While some idioms can be translated directly, others require more nuanced adaptation to maintain their original intent. In the case of Shum Bola, the translation of idiomatic expressions offers valuable insights into the complexities of language and culture, highlighting the importance of cultural sensitivity and creative solutions in the art of translation. By understanding both the linguistic and cultural contexts of idioms, translators can more effectively bridge the gap between languages and provide readers with an experience that remains faithful to the spirit of the original work.

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BOZORG ALAVIYNING “چشم‌هایش” ASARI TARJIMASIDA SIFATLAR BERILISHIDA TARJIMON MAHORATI (tarjimon professor A.Quronbekov)

Hulkar MUROTOVA

*TDSHU, Tarjima nazariyasi va amaliyoti
fors-ingliz yo‘nalishi 4-kurs talabasi
Ilmiy rahbar f.f.d., dots. D. Axmedova*

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada fors adabiyotining taniqli vakili Bozorg Alaviyning چشم‌هایش badiiy asaridagi sifatlar va ularning o‘zbek tiliga A.Quronbekov tarjimasi jarayonidagi sifatlarining ifodaviy mosligi tahlil qilinadi.