

Translating Uzbek Works of Literature Into English: Linguopragmatic Nuances

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Abstract: *This article examines the linguistic and pragmatic intricacies involved in translating Uzbek literary works into English, with a focus on the novel *Dunyoning Ishlari* (1982) by Utkir Hoshimov. The English translation, *Such is Life* (2024), co-translated by the author of this article and Mark Reese, serves as the primary material for analysis. By applying principles from linguopragmatics and translation theory, the study explores how cultural memory, emotional undertones, and stylistic elements are conveyed or transformed in the target language. Particular attention is given to the translator's choices in handling metaphor, intertextuality, and sociocultural references.*

Keywords: *Translation studies, linguopragmatic nuances, Uzbek literature, English translation, cultural adaptation, linguistic challenges, literary translation, cross-cultural communication, language and identity, translation theory.*

The translation of literature often goes beyond mere linguistic conversion; it entails transferring not only words but also meanings, cultural connotations, and emotional undertones. In this study, I examine the translation of *Dunyoning Ishlari* (1982) by Utkir Hoshimov, a work written in memory of the author's mother. The English translation, *Such is Life*, co-translated by Abdullajon Ruziev (the author of this article) with Mark Reese, highlights the complexity of conveying the linguopragmatic features of the original Uzbek text into English. This article aims to demonstrate how translation decisions shape the emotional and cultural experience for the reader, specifically by focusing on linguopragmatic nuances such as politeness, irony, implicit meaning, and cultural references.

The central question addressed here is how the translator navigates the challenge of balancing accuracy with cultural adaptation, ensuring that the target audience receives a version that respects the emotional depth and social context of the original. To explore this, I will analyze key excerpts from the book and discuss the strategies employed to address challenges in linguopragmatic translation.

Theoretical Framework

The translation of literary works, especially those with rich cultural and linguistic backgrounds, involves a complex interplay of linguistic, pragmatic, and cultural factors. In the case of Uzbek literary works translated into English, as with Utkir Hoshimov's *Dunyoning Ishlari* (*Such is Life*), the translation process requires a thorough understanding of both the source language (Uzbek) and the target language (English), as well as the underlying cultural nuances that these languages carry.

Translation, in its most basic form, can be understood as a process of transferring meaning from one language to another. However, this seemingly straightforward process becomes increasingly intricate when dealing with literary works, which often contain culturally embedded references, expressions, and idioms. The concept of **linguopragmatics**, as discussed by Kade (1968), refers to the relationship between language and its social context, emphasizing the importance of understanding how meaning is shaped by cultural norms and situational factors. This aspect of translation is crucial in translating works like *Dunyoning Ishlari*, where the author's use of language reflects not just linguistic but also cultural conventions and social norms specific to Uzbek society.

Pragmatics in Translation

In the context of literary translation, pragmatics plays a pivotal role in conveying not just the literal meaning of a text but also its underlying social function. According to Hatim and Mason (1990), pragmatics in translation involves understanding the intended effect on the audience, which can differ between cultures. For instance, *Dunyoning Ishlari* contains references to local traditions, values, and even the daily rhythms of life in Uzbekistan. Translating such cultural references requires a translator to not only convey the words but also the social context in which they are situated.

One key concept in translation theory that is relevant to this article is **dynamic equivalence**, as proposed by Eugene Nida (1964). Nida argued that a translation should aim to produce an effect on the target audience that is similar to the one produced on the source audience. This theory emphasizes the importance of adapting the message in a way that resonates with the target culture. In the case of Hoshimov's work, translating cultural nuances such as the concept of "motherhood" and references to spiritual beliefs in a way that resonates with an English-speaking audience is a central challenge.

Cultural Specificity and the Notion of "Foreignization"

The notion of **foreignization** (Venuti, 1995) also plays a crucial role in translating works like *Dunyoning Ishlari*. Foreignization, as a strategy in translation, involves retaining elements of the source culture, which can help preserve the text's original flavor and cultural authenticity. For example, terms related to local customs, religious practices, and historical contexts may require explanations in the English translation. This is particularly important when translating texts with deeply rooted cultural nuances, as the aim is not only to provide a linguistic equivalent but also to convey the cultural subtext that may be unfamiliar to the target audience.

In contrast to **domestication**, which seeks to make a translation conform to the cultural norms and expectations of the target language, foreignization involves highlighting the "otherness" of the source culture (Venuti, 1995). For instance, in *Such is Life*, the references to local customs or expressions in Uzbek may be foreign to an English-speaking audience. However, foreignization allows for a more direct representation of the original text's cultural specificity, encouraging the target audience to engage with and understand the source culture's uniqueness. This approach can be seen in the way we translated culturally significant terms like "Toy" (a short version of an Uzbek name "Toyirjon" or a direct translation of an English word foal – a baby horse), which, in the context of Uzbek culture, carries connotations of honor or equating a person to an animal.

Translating Linguistic Pragmatics

The linguistic pragmatics of a text, including the use of speech acts, implicatures, and politeness strategies, also shape the translation process. As Gutt (1991) emphasizes, **relevance theory** suggests that the process of translation is guided by the principle of relevance, where the translator must convey the most relevant information in a way that aligns with the cognitive and communicative expectations of the target audience. In *Such is Life*, the way in which characters address each other—using informal or formal modes of speech—reflects societal hierarchies and relationships. Translating these nuances requires a deep understanding of both the linguistic structures and the social conventions of both the source and target cultures.

For example, in *Dunyoning Ishlari*, the interaction between the characters is often characterized by the use of terms of address that reflect their social roles. The translation must navigate the challenge of preserving the politeness strategies and social hierarchies embedded in the language. This is particularly evident in the relationship between the narrator and his mother, where linguistic choices denote respect, love, and familial ties. The challenge lies in finding an equivalent level of formality and warmth in English, where these dynamics may not always be as explicitly marked in speech.

The Role of the Translator's Subjectivity

The translation of culturally laden texts is inherently subjective. **The translator's invisibility**, as discussed by Lawrence Venuti (1995), highlights the tension between the translator's role as a mediator and their influence on the final text. The translator's choices, influenced by their own cultural background and understanding, are inevitably present in the translation. Venuti argues that translators can either adopt a "domesticating" or "foreignizing" approach, both of which carry implications for how the target culture interprets the source text.

In the case of *Such is Life*, the translation process reflects the collaborative effort of two translators—myself and my co-translator Mark Reese. This collaboration, while adhering to a common translation goal, also allowed for different perspectives to influence the way cultural elements were translated. This dual approach helped ensure that the translation remained faithful to the spirit of the original while making it accessible to an English-speaking audience. At times, our decisions were guided by the need to balance the preservation of Uzbek cultural nuances with the expectations of English-speaking readers.

Extracts from the original and the translation.

The following excerpt is taken from the short story "Toy", in which the narrator's childhood friend is revealed to be his milk-brother—a revelation made by the friend's mother, Niso. This emotionally charged episode underscores the profound selflessness of a mother and highlights the deep sense of solidarity among women, particularly in the harsh conditions of the war years. Following the death of the narrator's mother, friends and neighbors gather to pay their respects, among them Toy and his mother, Niso. Her testimony serves as a poignant reminder that Utkir's mother's compassion extended beyond her own child; she was a source of nurturing care to any infant in need of a mother's warmth and protection.

– Iya, Toyirjon sizning ukaingiz-ku! – Niso xola astoydil ajablandi. Keyin ma'yus tortib jimib qoldi-da, xo'rsindi. – O'shanda siz talpinchoq bo'lib qolgan edingiz. Toyirjonning chillasi chiqmagan... Xudoning ham bandalariga atagan azobi ko'p ekan. Bir kechada kasalga chalinib qoldim. Ko'kragimga yomon yara chiqib, qirq kun "ol ket, ol qo'y" bo'lib yotibman deng... Ayni qahatchilik, urush, birov birovga holing nima kechdi, deyishi mahol... O'zim-ku, mayli, bolam o'lib qoladi, deyman. Dokaga angishvonadek yog'mi, nonmi o'rab, chaqaloqning og'ziga solib qo'yishadi. Shunda deng, bir kuni Poshsha opam kelib qoldilar. Aylanib-o'rgilib, Toyirjonni bag'rilariga bosib emizdilar. Shu yerdan Beshqo'rg'onga saratonda kuyib har kuni uch marta qatnaydilar. Qirq kun shunday qildilar. Bir ko'kragini siz emasisiz, bittasini – Toyirjon. – Niso xola hiqillab qoldi. Yosh g'iltillagan ko'zini ro'molining uchi bilan artdi.

Below is the English translation of the emotionally resonant episode from the story "Toy", in which the narrator learns that his childhood friend, Toyirjon, is in fact his milk-brother—a detail revealed by Toyirjon's mother, Niso Xola. In our translation, my co-translator, Mark Reese, and I aimed to retain the original tone, emotional depth, and cultural nuance of the source text, preserving the raw maternal sentiment and post-war solidarity that pervades the scene.

"Well, Toyirjon is your little brother!" Nisa Xola was absolutely stunned to have to deliver this news. She appeared to sink into a vague gloom with a faint moaning under her breath while attempting to maintain a smile. "You were very young and flighty during those times. It was not one month since Toyirjon was born... Seems like the Almighty sends his people so many challenges. I had caught some random illness. A serious lesion appeared on my body, and I just came out of the jaws of death... We were at the peak of famine; the war was on; no one was interested in another's travails. It was unbearable... I held no concern for myself; I was worried that my son would just pass away. But only a small piece of bread or butter would make its way into his mouth. Once, you know, my sister Pasha visited me. She with great compassion and grace nursed Toyirjon, hugging him tightly to her body like

her own. She would visit us three times a day to nurse Toyirjon no matter what, no matter how hot the day. She would go and return to Beshkurgan in one day. She did so for forty days. One of her breasts was for you, the other for Toyirjon.” Nisa Hola could not help but shed some tears. Wiping her eyes, now welling with grief and freely falling tears, with the edge of her ramol.

Linguopragmatic Analysis: A Comparison of the Uzbek and English Versions

The provided extracts offer a rich ground for examining how linguopragmatic features were navigated in the translation of *Dunyoning Ishlari* (Such is Life). This passage encapsulates the emotional depth, familial bonds, and historical struggles that are deeply embedded in the original Uzbek text. The translator’s task was to preserve not only the literal meaning but also the emotional resonance, cultural references, and the implicit nuances in the interaction between the characters.

1. Cultural Nuances and Idiomatic Expressions

One of the key challenges in translating this passage was capturing the specific cultural references that convey significant meaning in the original text. For example, the phrase “*ol ket, ol qo’y*” (“take the goat, take the sheep”) refers to an old Uzbek saying used during difficult times, especially famine, to describe the act of desperate survival where families would share the little they had. In the English translation, this phrase could easily lose its impact. However, the translator opts for a more descriptive approach:

- **Uzbek:** “*Ko’kragimga yomon yara chiqib, qirq kun ‘ol ket, ol qo’y’ bo’lib yotibman deng...*”
- **English:** “*A serious lesion appeared on my body, and I just came out of the jaws of death...*”

Here, the translation departs from a direct, culturally specific phrase and uses more universal imagery, maintaining the dire situation without losing the gravitas of the original. While “*ol ket, ol qo’y*” evokes a specific sense of cultural hardship, the English phrasing brings the reader into the emotional experience of suffering in a more universally relatable manner.

2. Emotional Tone and Politeness Strategies

In the original, Niso Hola’s grief is conveyed through subtle linguistic choices, such as her sighs, pauses, and hesitation: “*hiqillab qoldi*,” which could be roughly translated as “she choked up” or “she sobbed.” This emotional texture is important in conveying her sorrow and the weight of the memories she is sharing. In the English translation, the choice to describe her emotional state as “she could not help but shed some tears” allows the reader to feel the depth of her sadness but in a slightly more overt and explanatory way.

- **Uzbek:** “*Niso xola hiqillab qoldi. Yosh g’iltillagan ko’zini ro’molining uchi bilan artdi.*”
- **English:** “*Nisa Hola could not help but shed some tears. Wiping her eyes, now welling with grief and freely falling tears, with the edge of her ramol.*”

Here, the translator effectively maintains the emotional undercurrent of the original while making the emotional reaction clear for an English-speaking audience. The use of “welling with grief” and “freely falling tears” is a slightly more direct description of the emotional response, which might not be as implicit in English as it would be in Uzbek, where the tone and nuances of speech convey emotions more implicitly.

3. Preservation of Familial Terms and Kinship Language

In both the original and the translation, kinship terms like “*Toyirjon*” and “*Niso xola*” (Nisa Aunty) are preserved. The name *Toyirjon* retains its significance in the English text, but a small adaptation is made to provide additional context:

- **Uzbek:** “*Toyirjonning chillasi chiqmagan...*”

➤ **English:** “*It was not one month since Toyirjon was born...*”

The use of “Toyirjon” in both versions helps preserve the intimacy and the specific cultural connection to the character. In Uzbek, kinship terms often carry connotations of affection and respect, and in the English version, the translator opts to maintain these names without offering an alternative (e.g., “little brother” for Toyirjon). This decision aligns with a strategy of foreignization, where the original terms are kept to retain the cultural authenticity of the source text.

4. Handling of the Historical and Societal Context

The passage reflects the hardships of war, famine, and community solidarity in Uzbekistan during a time of crisis. The mention of Pasha visiting regularly to nurse Toyirjon during the harsh conditions of war is deeply rooted in the social and cultural fabric of Uzbek society. The translation maintains this sense of sacrifice and collective responsibility:

➤ **Uzbek:** “*Beshqo ‘rg‘onga saratonda kuyib har kuni uch marta qatnaydilar.*”

➤ **English:** “*She would visit us three times a day to nurse Toyirjon no matter what, no matter how hot the day.*”

The translator’s choice to describe the repeated effort as “no matter what, no matter how hot the day” captures the unyielding nature of Pasha’s devotion. In the Uzbek text, the focus on “*saratonda kuyib*” (burning under the summer sun) refers to the unbearable heat, which highlights the severity of the conditions. The English translation takes this literal meaning and extends it to emphasize the relentlessness of Pasha’s care, making it accessible to an English-speaking audience without losing the original emotional weight.

Conclusion

The translation of *Dunyoning Ishlari* (Such is Life) by Utkir Hoshimov from Uzbek into English provides a profound example of the complexities involved in literary translation, particularly with respect to linguopragmatic nuances. By focusing on key excerpts from the story, this article has demonstrated how both the emotional depth and cultural context of the original text were conveyed in the English translation. The challenge for translators lies in maintaining the integrity of the source material while ensuring that the cultural references, social dynamics, and emotional undertones are accessible to a new audience.

The linguistic decisions made in translating idiomatic expressions, kinship terms, and emotional tone reveal the translator’s responsibility in balancing cultural authenticity with readability. Techniques such as foreignization and dynamic equivalence, alongside a nuanced understanding of sociocultural references, have enabled the translators to preserve the spirit of the original work while making it resonate with English-speaking readers. Ultimately, this study underscores the importance of considering not only the linguistic aspects of a text but also the cultural and social layers that shape the narrative. Translating *Dunyoning Ishlari* into *Such is Life* required careful attention to these linguopragmatic factors, demonstrating the delicate balance that translators must strike between the source and target languages.

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