

## STRATEGIES FOR TRANSLATING CULTURE-BOUND IDIOMS FROM ENGLISH INTO UZBEK

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**Annotation.** *The translation of culture-bound idioms presents significant challenges due to their deep connection with the cultural, historical, and social background of the source language. This article explores the main strategies for translating English idioms into Uzbek, focusing on semantic equivalence, cultural adaptation, and pragmatic transfer. The study emphasizes the translator’s role as a cultural mediator who bridges linguistic gaps through creative transformation. Various examples demonstrate how literal translation, substitution, modulation, and descriptive methods affect the communicative and stylistic value of idiomatic expressions. The findings highlight the importance of maintaining both cultural authenticity and target language naturalness in idiom translation.*

**Key words:** *idioms, culture-bound expressions, translation strategies, equivalence, adaptation, modulation, descriptive translation, pragmatics, semantics, cultural mediation, cross-cultural communication, English-Uzbek translation, linguistic creativity, idiomatic meaning.*

### INTRODUCTION

Idioms represent one of the most intricate and colorful layers of any language. They carry a wealth of cultural and emotional meaning that often transcends direct lexical translation. In English and Uzbek languages, idioms reflect the collective worldview, national mentality, and social experience of the people. Therefore, translating idioms between these languages is not merely a linguistic process but a cultural negotiation. The issue of culture-bound idioms has long attracted the attention of linguists and translators. Scholars such as Nida, Newmark, and Baker have underscored the importance of functional equivalence and contextual adaptation when transferring idiomatic meaning. In the Uzbek linguistic tradition, similar research has been conducted to investigate the reflection of national color and mentality in idiomatic expressions.

However, due to differences in worldview, social values, and figurative perception, literal translation of idioms often fails to convey the intended meaning. This situation demands strategic approaches that consider both linguistic and extralinguistic factors. The main purpose of this study is to analyze and systematize strategies for translating English culture-bound idioms into Uzbek, focusing on the preservation of meaning, expressiveness, and cultural nuances. The relevance of the topic lies in the increasing intercultural communication between English and Uzbek speakers, especially in

literature, media, and education, where idiomatic usage is abundant. This research aims to contribute to the development of translation theory by offering practical insights into culturally adequate idiom translation.

## MAIN PART

Translating idioms that are deeply rooted in the culture of a particular nation requires more than linguistic competence; it requires cultural intelligence. English idioms such as “*spill the beans*,” “*kick the bucket*,” or “*the ball is in your court*” cannot be translated literally into Uzbek without distorting their pragmatic meaning. For instance, “*kick the bucket*” literally means to hit a bucket with one’s foot, but its idiomatic meaning is “to die.” A literal translation (*chelakni tepmoq*) would sound absurd in Uzbek. Therefore, the translator must find an equivalent expression like “*jon taslim qilmoq*” or “*vafot etmoq*.” This example illustrates the need for semantic and cultural adaptation in idiom translation.

One of the most commonly used strategies is **equivalent substitution**, where the translator finds an idiom in the target language that conveys the same meaning and emotional tone. For example, the English idiom “*to break the ice*” (meaning “to start a conversation in a friendly way”) corresponds to the Uzbek idiom “*suhbatni ochmoq*” or “*jimlik muzini eritmoq*.” Though the imagery differs, the communicative function remains similar. This strategy is effective when there exists a culturally or conceptually similar idiom in the target language.

Another important strategy is **descriptive translation**, used when no equivalent idiom exists in Uzbek. Here, the translator explains the meaning in neutral words. For instance, the idiom “*once in a blue moon*” can be translated as “*juda kam hollarda*” or “*deyarli hech qachon*.” Although the imagery is lost, the sense is preserved. Descriptive translation is particularly useful in scientific or didactic contexts, where clarity takes precedence over stylistic vividness.

A third strategy is **cultural adaptation**, which involves replacing the original image with one familiar to the target culture. For example, the English idiom “*as cool as a cucumber*” (meaning “very calm”) can be adapted as “*tog‘dek tinch*” or “*boshini yo‘qotmaslik*.” This approach ensures that the idiom sounds natural to the Uzbek reader while retaining its pragmatic force. Adaptation highlights the translator’s role as a cultural mediator who selects culturally resonant equivalents to maintain readability and authenticity.

**Modulation** is another technique, where the translator changes the perspective or logic of the expression without altering the meaning. For instance, “*the ball is in your court*” might be rendered as “*endi navbat sendan*” in Uzbek. This translation shifts from a sports metaphor to a more general expression of responsibility but keeps the original

message intact. Modulation ensures communicative equivalence even when direct correspondence is impossible.

Sometimes, **borrowing** or **calque** can be used, especially when the idiom has become internationally recognized. For instance, “*Achilles’ heel*” has entered Uzbek as “*Axilles tovoni*,” maintaining both the mythological image and metaphorical meaning of vulnerability. However, such cases are rare and should be applied cautiously, as they may sound artificial to the target audience if not well established.

The translator’s decision often depends on the **context** and **purpose** of translation. In literary works, idioms serve to enrich imagery and character speech, requiring creative equivalence rather than literal accuracy. For example, in Mark Twain’s works, idioms like “*let the cat out of the bag*” or “*hit the nail on the head*” express social humor and irony, which can be rendered in Uzbek as “*sirni oshkor qilmoq*” and “*to‘g‘ri topmoq*.” Meanwhile, in journalistic or political texts, idioms are used to evoke emotional response or highlight ideology, requiring both accuracy and stylistic balance.

The challenges of idiom translation stem from **cultural asymmetry**. English and Uzbek differ in their metaphorical imagery, religion, traditions, and daily life. For example, idioms related to Christianity or British customs, such as “*the prodigal son*” or “*carrying coals to Newcastle*,” have no direct Uzbek equivalents. The first can be rendered descriptively (*ota-onasining kechirimiga loyiq bo‘lgan farzand*), while the second can be adapted as “*qumni cho‘lga tashimoq*” or “*keraksiz joyga narsa olib bormoq*.” These examples show that successful translation depends on cultural awareness and the ability to create dynamic equivalence that resonates with the target audience.

Another key factor is **pragmatic function**. Idioms often convey not just meaning but also attitude, irony, or politeness. Translators must preserve these nuances. For example, “*bite the bullet*” (meaning “to endure something difficult”) can be translated as “*chidamoq*” or “*qat‘iy qaror qilmoq*,” but the translator may choose “*tishlarini tishiga bosmoq*” to retain the idiomatic flavor. The balance between naturalness and expressiveness is crucial in ensuring communicative success.

From a theoretical perspective, the translation of idioms can be classified according to Peter Newmark’s methods: communicative translation (prioritizing naturalness and readability) and semantic translation (preserving original meaning). In practice, a hybrid approach often yields the best results. Mona Baker emphasizes idiom recognition and contextualization, arguing that misunderstanding idioms leads to pragmatic loss. Therefore, translators should not only understand idioms semantically but also evaluate their function in discourse. For instance, humorous idioms may require creative reformulation to preserve their stylistic impact.

The role of **corpus linguistics and bilingual dictionaries** has also grown in recent years. Modern English-Uzbek dictionaries increasingly include idioms with cultural notes and equivalent explanations, which assists translators in identifying contextually appropriate forms. However, idiom translation remains partly subjective, as it depends on the translator's intuition, cultural background, and experience.

In educational settings, teaching idiom translation enhances learners' intercultural competence. Students of translation studies benefit from exercises comparing English and Uzbek idioms, analyzing their structure and meaning. This pedagogical approach promotes awareness of metaphorical thinking and encourages creative translation strategies.

## CONCLUSION

The translation of culture-bound idioms from English into Uzbek is a complex process that requires linguistic accuracy, cultural sensitivity, and creative adaptability. Effective translation depends on selecting strategies appropriate to context—such as equivalence, adaptation, modulation, or descriptive translation—to preserve both meaning and style. Translators act as mediators who bridge cultural differences and ensure communicative harmony between languages. While literal translation often fails, culturally informed strategies enable idioms to retain their expressive and emotional power in the target language. Thus, understanding idiomatic expressions not only enriches translation practice but also deepens intercultural understanding between English and Uzbek speakers.

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