

CULTURAL MEANING IN TRANSLATION: A LINGUO-PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the representation of linguo-pragmatic elements that reflect national mentality in the translation of literary texts, with a particular focus on Abdulla Qodiriy's novel *O'tkan kunlar*. The purpose of the research is to identify how speech acts, cultural references, and context-dependent expressions are transferred into English and to what extent their pragmatic functions are preserved. The analysis is based on selected passages from the novel and their English translations by Mark Reese and Carol Ermakova. The research draws on theoretical insights from translation scholars such as E. Nida, S. Bassnett, and local Uzbek researchers who emphasize the importance of dynamic equivalence, cultural adaptation, and compensation techniques.

KEYWORDS: Linguo-pragmatics, Pragmatic equivalence, Speech acts, Politeness strategies, Implicature, Presupposition, Dynamic equivalence, Communicative effect

INTRODUCTION

Translation is not merely the transfer of words from one language into another but a cultural bridge that fosters intellectual and aesthetic exchange. In literary translation, the task extends beyond rendering words; it requires the transfer of meaning, spirit, and cultural mentality. The preservation of national identity in translation is particularly crucial for societies whose cultural heritage is deeply tied to their history and collective worldview. As Nida and Taber (1969) emphasized in their theory of dynamic equivalence, translation should strive to recreate the communicative effect of the original rather than simply mirror its form. Similarly, Bassnett (2002) views translation as intercultural communication, where cultural codes and pragmatic nuances must be preserved for the text to retain its authenticity.

In Uzbek literature, Abdulla Qodiriy's novel "*O'tkan kunlar*" serves as an excellent example of how speech acts and cultural elements reflect national mentality. Expressions such as commands, requests, warnings, and terms of address embody not only narrative functions but also values, social hierarchy, and interpersonal relations. Thus, analyzing their transfer into English reveals the challenges and strategies of translators in preserving cultural and pragmatic meaning.

METHODOLOGY

This study applies a linguo-pragmatic approach to analyze selected passages from *O'tkan kunlar* and their English translations by Mark Reese and Carol Ermakova. The analysis focuses on:

- Speech acts (commands, requests, questions, warnings).
- Pragmatic elements such as presuppositions, implicatures, and politeness strategies.

- Nationally bound words and cultural realia (e.g., mahalla, beshik to‘y, sumalak).

Comparative textual analysis is employed to identify how pragmatic force and national color are retained, modified, or neutralized in translation. The study also draws on theoretical insights from Nida and Taber (1969), Bassnett (2002), Komilov (2020), and Nurmatov (2020).

RESULTS

The analysis shows that while translators generally preserve the semantic content, pragmatic nuances are often transformed to align with English discourse norms. For instance, direct imperatives in the source text are frequently softened in translation to suit English politeness conventions. Similarly, expressions carrying metaphorical or cultural weight—such as “*umr savdosi*” (a metaphor for life decisions)—are rendered differently by the two translators. Reese emphasizes seriousness and social authority with formulations like “*our beloved children’s lives*”, while Ermakova opts for softer and more explanatory renderings such as “*the fate of a person.*”

National realia such as “sumalak”, “beshik to‘y”, and “mahalla” are generally transliterated and accompanied by brief explanations, ensuring that cultural specificity is not lost (Komilov, 2020). However, certain pragmatic features, such as humor, irony, or the social intimacy conveyed by address forms like *birodar*, are more difficult to reproduce.

TABLE 1

Original (Uzbek)	Translation (English)	Pragmatic Meaning	Explanation
“Bu ot savdosi emas, umr savdosi, birodar.”	Reese: “This is not horse trading; this is dealing with our beloved children’s lives, my friend.”	Partially preserved	“Umr savdosi” → “children’s lives”: emotional effect is stronger, but national metaphor is lost. “Birodar” → “my friend” = softer.
“Bu ot savdosi emas, umr savdosi, birodar.”	Ermakova: “We are not talking here about buying a stallion, but about the fate of a person, my friend.”	Preserved	“Umr savdosi” → “fate of a person” keeps original meaning. “Birodar” → “my friend” is contextually accurate.
“Mahalla”	Transliteration: “mahalla” (with note)	Preserved	Retains Uzbek cultural specificity through transliteration and explanation.
“Navro‘z”	Transliteration: “Nawruz” (without explanation)	Lost	Without additional explanation, cultural meaning is unclear for English readers.
“Navro‘z”	“Nawruz – Spring Festival”	Preserved	Provides cultural and pragmatic equivalence, understandable for target audience.

DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that pragmatic meaning plays a central role in the communicative effectiveness of translation. While semantic equivalence ensures accuracy, pragmatic equivalence ensures authenticity. Nida and Taber’s (1969) “*dynamic equivalence*” emphasizes communicative effect, while Bassnett (2002) highlights cultural intertextuality—both perspectives underscore the importance of pragmatics.

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In “O‘tkan kunlar” novel, speech acts not only advance the narrative but also embody social relationships, values, and historical context. Their translation demonstrates the tension between faithfulness to the source and adaptation to the target culture. Reese’s tendency toward directness preserves the authoritative tone of the original, while Ermakova’s softer approach prioritizes readability and emotional resonance. Both strategies, however, illustrate the challenge of balancing linguistic fidelity with cultural intelligibility.

Other Uzbek scholars also highlight this problem. Safarov (2017) stressed that meaning and content should be distinguished, and the translator’s duty is to render content, but without stylistic and cultural distinctiveness, translation cannot be considered complete. Similarly, Nurmatov (2020) examined how national realia like Navro‘z risk losing meaning in direct transcription and suggested explanatory notes or cultural equivalents (e.g., “Spring Festival”) for clarity.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights that national mentality in translation is best conveyed through careful attention to linguo-pragmatic elements. Translators must go beyond linguistic accuracy and engage with cultural codes, politeness strategies, and context-specific meanings. The research contributes to translation studies by showing how Uzbek cultural identity, as reflected in Qodiriy’s “O‘tkan kunlar”, can be preserved—or transformed—through translation strategies. Ultimately, successful literary translation requires sensitivity to both language and culture, ensuring that meaning, spirit, and national color are effectively transmitted across linguistic boundaries.

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