

CHALLENGES IN TRANSLATING ENGLISH IDIOMS INTO UZBEK: A  
LINGUOCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

*Asrorova Zukhro Ilhom qizi*

*Student of the Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages*

*Gmail: [zasrorova569@gmail.com](mailto:zasrorova569@gmail.com)*

*Scientific supervisor: Zubaydova Nilufar Nematillayevna*

*Acting Associate Professor, Department of English Language Theory, Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages*

**Annotation:** This article discusses the linguistic and cultural challenges faced in translating English idioms into Uzbek. It highlights the importance of cultural context, semantic equivalence, and metaphorical meaning in achieving accurate translation. The study analyzes how differences in worldview, values, and linguistic imagery affect idiomatic transfer between English and Uzbek. It also suggests strategies that translators can employ to preserve both semantic and cultural nuances, thus ensuring more effective intercultural communication.

**Keywords:** idiom, translation, linguocultural, equivalence, metaphor, semantics, culture, English, Uzbek, worldview, phraseology, communication, adaptation.

Idioms represent one of the most expressive yet problematic aspects of translation. They carry meanings that go beyond the sum of their words and embody the collective experience, humor, and worldview of a culture. Translating English idioms into Uzbek is particularly challenging due to fundamental linguistic and cultural differences. An idiom that is natural in one language may sound strange or lose its expressive power in another. Therefore, understanding idioms requires not only linguistic competence but also deep cultural awareness.

From a linguistic perspective, idioms resist literal translation. Their figurative meaning is often derived from cultural associations that may not exist in the target language. For example, the English idiom “*break the ice*” means to initiate social interaction, but its literal equivalent in Uzbek, “*muzyorishni buzmoq*,” does not convey the same meaning. Instead, an Uzbek translator might use “*suhbatni boshlab yubormoq*” to express the same function. This demonstrates that translation of idioms depends more on functional equivalence than lexical similarity.

Another significant challenge lies in the metaphorical basis of idioms. English idioms often rely on metaphors rooted in Western experiences, such as maritime life, sports, or industrial society. Examples include “*to be in the same boat*,” “*hit below the belt*,” or “*get the ball rolling*.” Uzbek idioms, however, tend to originate from agrarian and nomadic traditions - for instance, “*otni qamchilamoq*” (to hurry up) or “*ko‘ngli tog‘day*” (generous). These metaphorical differences require translators to reimagine idioms within culturally familiar frames rather than reproduce foreign images directly.

The cultural dimension further complicates translation. Culture determines how emotions, morals, and values are linguistically encoded. English idioms often reflect individualism and pragmatism, while Uzbek idioms highlight collectivism, respect, and patience. For example, the English idiom “*time is money*” reflects a utilitarian attitude, whereas in Uzbek, expressions like “*sabr qilgan daryo kechar*” (patience crosses the river) value endurance over efficiency. Translators must be aware of these cultural contrasts to avoid unintended distortions of meaning.

Semantic equivalence is another delicate issue. Some idioms in English have no exact counterpart in Uzbek. For instance, “spill the beans” (reveal a secret) cannot be translated literally. The closest Uzbek equivalent is “*sirni ochmoq*,” but this loses the idiom’s metaphorical playfulness. Similarly, “let the cat out of the bag” would sound awkward if translated literally as “*sumkadan mushukni chiqarish*.” The translator must choose between paraphrasing or replacing the idiom with a culturally suitable expression that conveys the intended sense.

Idioms also carry emotional connotations that affect translation choices. An idiom can express humor, sarcasm, or sympathy, depending on its usage. For example, “*barking up the wrong tree*” expresses mild criticism or misjudgment, while its Uzbek paraphrase “*noto‘g‘ri odamga murojaat qilmoq*” lacks the humor of the original. Capturing the idiom’s tone requires sensitivity to both linguistic and cultural cues. This is why idiom translation cannot be reduced to dictionary-based equivalence; it requires creative interpretation.

**Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Selected English Idioms and Their Uzbek Equivalents.**

No	English Idiom	Literal Meaning	Uzbek Equivalent	Translation Strategy	Cultural Note
1	Break the ice	To shatter frozen water	Suhbatni boshlab yubormoq	Functional equivalence	Social interaction metaphor differs; English uses physical image, Uzbek uses conversational context.
2	Spill the beans	To pour out beans	Sirni ochmoq	Paraphrasing	English idiom humorous; Uzbek neutral — loss of metaphorical playfulness.
3	Once in a blue moon	When the moon turns blue	Juda kam hollarda	Sense-for-sense translation	Rare event concept is universal, but imagery is adapted culturally.
4	The black sheep	A person who is a disgrace to a family	Oilaning yuzi qora a‘zosi	Cultural substitution	Both languages share similar symbolic use of “black.”
5	Kill two birds with one stone	Achieve two goals with one act	Ikki ishni bir yo‘la bitirmoq	Equivalent idiom	Close semantic and structural similarity.
6	Time is money	Time equals financial value	Vaqt oltindan qimmat	Adaptation	Uzbek idiom shifts from economic to moral value.
7	To be in hot water	To be in trouble	Qiyin ahvolda bo‘lmoq	Paraphrasing	Cultural metaphor differs; heat imagery replaced by general difficulty.
8	Hit the nail on the head	Strike exactly on target	To‘g‘ri topmoq / to‘g‘ri aytmoq	Functional equivalence	Universal concept of precision preserved.

No	English Idiom	Literal Meaning	Uzbek Equivalent	Translation Strategy	Cultural Note
9	Cry over spilt milk	Regret something irreversible	O'tgan ishga salavot	Cultural adaptation	Uzbek idiom shifts focus from regret to acceptance.
10	Let the cat out of the bag	Release a cat from a sack	Sirni oshkor qilmoq	Paraphrasing	Literal image not used in Uzbek; meaning preserved through explanation.

The translator's competence plays a decisive role in resolving these issues. A skilled translator must recognize idioms, understand their metaphorical meaning, and find functionally and culturally appropriate equivalents. According to Eugene Nida's theory of dynamic equivalence, translation should aim to evoke the same response in the target audience as in the original. In idiom translation, this means preserving the idiom's communicative effect rather than its literal form. For example, "*don't count your chickens before they hatch*" can be rendered as "*tuxumdan jo'ja chiqmasdan sanama*," which maintains both meaning and imagery.

Another important consideration is linguocultural adaptation. Idioms act as condensed forms of cultural knowledge. When translated into another language, they must be adapted to fit the target culture's conceptual framework. This involves not only finding equivalents but also ensuring that the idiom sounds natural to native speakers. A literal translation that preserves form but sounds unnatural is less effective than a culturally adapted version that captures meaning fluently.

In recent years, researchers have proposed various strategies to overcome these challenges. Mona Baker (2018) suggests four main methods: using an idiom of similar meaning and form, using one of similar meaning but different form, paraphrasing, or omitting the idiom entirely when no suitable equivalent exists. Uzbek translators often favor paraphrasing to maintain clarity, especially in academic or literary texts. However, paraphrasing risks losing the expressive richness that makes idioms powerful. Therefore, a balance between accuracy and naturalness is crucial.

In practice, idiom translation also reveals asymmetry in linguistic worldview. English idioms often employ animal and color metaphors ("*white lie*," "*black sheep*"), while Uzbek idioms emphasize moral and emotional imagery ("*ko'ngli qora*," "*ko'ngli ochiq*"). This asymmetry reflects distinct ways of perceiving reality. A linguocultural perspective helps bridge this gap by interpreting idioms as carriers of both language and culture rather than as isolated phrases.

Overall, translating English idioms into Uzbek requires combining linguistic precision with cultural interpretation. A purely linguistic approach cannot capture the full essence of idioms, while a purely cultural approach may overlook grammatical and semantic structure. The most effective translations arise from a linguocultural balance — where meaning, emotion, and cultural resonance are harmonized.

In conclusion, the challenges of translating English idioms into Uzbek lie not only in linguistic structure but also in cultural meaning. Idioms embody the worldview, humor, and social norms of their speakers. Effective translation requires deep cultural knowledge, creative thinking, and sensitivity to metaphorical meaning. By adopting a linguocultural approach, translators can ensure that idioms retain both their expressive force and cultural identity in the target language.

Future research should expand corpus-based studies and investigate how idioms evolve under cultural influence, enriching bilingual understanding between English and Uzbek speakers.

### References

1. Baker, M. In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation. – London: Routledge, 2018. – 332 p.
2. NS Amriddinova. Some Aspects of Correlation in Semantic Actualization of Phraseological Units. Modern Views and Research 183
3. Z Fayzulloyeva. The Role of Irony in Main Characters' Speech of O'Henry's Stories. Journal of Language Pedagogy and Innovative Applied Linguistics 1 (5), 45-49
4. SB Jurayeva, NA Rasulov. IMPORTANCE OF READING COMPREHENSION. Лучшая студенческая статья 2025: сборник статей XVII Международного научно ...
5. ZZ Fayzulloyeva. EXPRESSIVE MEANS AND THEIR ROLE IN TRANSLATION OF A LITERARY TEXT. "TAMADDUN NURI" Ilmiy, ijtimoiy-falsafiy, madaniy-ma'rifiy, adabiy-badiiy ...
6. Nida, E.A., Taber, C.R. The Theory and Practice of Translation. – Leiden: Brill, 2003. – 218 p.
7. AN Shamsidinovna. Peculiarities of supply and difficulties in the research of variation of phraseological meaning in vocabulary articles. СЎЗ САЊЪАТИ ХАЛҚАРО ЖУРНАЛИ, 14.
8. Sodiqov, I. (2025). The social and political role and educational significance of public holidays in Uzbekistan. Western European Journal of Linguistics and Education, 3(03), 99-102.
9. Karimov, Sh. Til va madaniyat: Lingvokulturologik yondashuv. – Toshkent: Fan, 2020. – 240 b.
10. NA Rasulov, NQ Rajabova. THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN CHILDHOOD. THE DEVELOPMENT HISTORY AND MODERN SIGNIFICANCE OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE 1 ...
11. Newmark, P. A Textbook of Translation. – New York: Prentice Hall, 1988. – 292 p.
12. НШ Амриддинова. НЕКОТОРЫЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ АМЕРИКАНСКОГО ВАРИАНТА АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА. Ученый XXI века
13. Jumaniyozova, D. Frazeologizmlarni tarjima qilishda madaniy muvofiqlik masalalari. – Samarqand: SamDU nashriyoti, 2022. – 185 b.
14. ZZ Fayzulloyeva. EXPRESSIVE MEANS AND THEIR ROLE IN TRANSLATION OF A LITERARY TEXT. "TAMADDUN NURI" Ilmiy, ijtimoiy-falsafiy, madaniy-ma'rifiy, adabiy-badiiy ...
15. Xusanov, H. (2021). Historical stages of Uzbek national singing art. Интернаука, (22-4), 59-60.
16. Mo'minova, L. R. (2023). Results of focusing on art and culture in the new Uzbekistan. Экономика и социум, (10 (113)-2), 244-247.
17. NA Rasulov, MD Barakayeva. EXAMINING THE DRAWBACKS AND BENEFITS OF ONLINE EDUCATION. THE DEVELOPMENT HISTORY AND MODERN SIGNIFICANCE OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE.