

METAPHORICAL MEANING TRANSFER IN ENGLISH-UZBEK IDIOM
TRANSLATION

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Annotation: This article investigates the mechanisms of metaphorical meaning transfer in the process of translating idioms from English into Uzbek. It explores how metaphor, as a cognitive and cultural phenomenon, influences the equivalence and interpretation of idiomatic expressions. The study analyzes various translation strategies - literal, functional, and adaptive - used to render metaphorical meaning while maintaining expressiveness and cultural resonance. Through linguistic comparison, the article highlights how metaphors shape thought and communication across languages. It concludes that successful idiom translation depends on recognizing conceptual metaphors and recreating their imagery within the cultural framework of the target language.

Keywords: metaphor, idiom translation, metaphorical meaning, equivalence, cognitive linguistics, cultural adaptation, conceptual metaphor, image transfer, semantic shift, English-Uzbek translation, figurative meaning, cultural linguistics, cross-linguistic analysis, cognitive mapping.

Introduction. Metaphor is one of the most essential mechanisms of human cognition and communication. It allows speakers to conceptualize abstract ideas through concrete imagery, thus forming a bridge between thought and language. Idioms, which often rely on metaphorical imagery, represent condensed expressions of cultural knowledge and worldview. Translating idioms from English into Uzbek involves not only linguistic equivalence but also the transfer of metaphorical meaning that reflects cultural and cognitive patterns. This process becomes particularly complex when the underlying metaphor is culturally specific or when the imagery has no direct equivalent in the target language. Scholars such as Lakoff and Johnson have argued that metaphor structures human understanding through conceptual mappings, such as *life is a journey* or *argument is war*. These mappings differ across languages, leading to challenges in idiom translation. In Uzbek, idioms also embody deep metaphorical structures shaped by traditional life, nature, and moral values. The relevance of studying metaphorical meaning transfer lies in its role in preserving the expressive and cultural essence of idioms. As intercultural communication intensifies, translators must bridge differences not only in language but also in metaphorical thought. The main purpose of this study is to analyze how English metaphor-based idioms are translated into Uzbek, identifying strategies that ensure both semantic and cognitive equivalence.

Main part. Metaphor-based idioms are among the most difficult units to translate because they combine figurative meaning, cultural symbolism, and emotional connotation. Their translation requires an understanding of both the source and target conceptual systems. For instance, the English idiom *"to burn one's bridges"* metaphorically means to eliminate the possibility of returning to a previous situation. Its literal image comes from warfare, where destroying bridges

prevents retreat. In Uzbek, an equivalent expression would be *“ortga yo‘lni yopmoq”* or *“yo‘lni kesmoq,”* which conveys the same metaphorical concept - irreversibility of action. This example demonstrates that successful metaphorical transfer depends on identifying the shared conceptual base between the two languages.

According to cognitive linguistics, idiomatic metaphors are structured around conceptual domains. When translating, the translator must identify both the **source domain** (the concrete image) and the **target domain** (the abstract concept). For example, the English idiom *“to keep one’s head above water”* uses the source domain of *water* to express the idea of survival or managing difficult circumstances. In Uzbek, the idiom *“suvdan quruq chiqmoq”* or the expression *“o‘zini tutib turmoq”* can serve as functional equivalents, though the metaphorical focus slightly differs. The main task of the translator is to preserve the same cognitive effect even if the imagery changes.

One common strategy is **metaphorical equivalence**, where the metaphor is retained in the target language with minimal change. For example, *“time is money”* can be directly translated into Uzbek as *“vaqt bu pul,”* as both languages share the same conceptual metaphor linking time and value. However, in cases where the metaphor is culture-specific, literal translation may lead to misunderstanding. For instance, *“to put all eggs in one basket”* does not have a direct idiomatic equivalent in Uzbek. Translators usually replace it with *“hamma narsani bitta joyga tikmoq”* or *“bir yo‘lni tanlamoq,”* which preserves the sense of risk concentration without retaining the original image.

Another approach is **metaphorical adaptation**, where the translator substitutes the English image with a culturally familiar one in Uzbek. For example, the idiom *“every cloud has a silver lining”* metaphorically means that every difficult situation has a positive aspect. Uzbek uses a different metaphor - *“har bir yomonlikda bir yaxshilik bor”* or *“qorong‘ulikdan keyin tong otadi.”* Though the imagery differs, both express optimism and hope. This strategy reflects the translator’s awareness of cultural metaphors and the need to maintain emotional and moral resonance.

Conceptual metaphor theory, proposed by Lakoff and Johnson, explains why such adaptations are necessary. Each language constructs its metaphorical system based on cultural experience. English, as a Western language, often employs metaphors related to technology, navigation, and trade, such as *“to steer one’s life,”* *“to pay the price for success,”* or *“to hit the target.”* Uzbek, rooted in agrarian and spiritual traditions, tends to use natural and moral metaphors, such as *“hayot yo‘li,”* *“ko‘ngil oynasi,”* or *“mehnatning mevasi.”* When translating, the shift between these metaphorical systems must be carefully managed to ensure that the target text reflects both meaning and emotion.

In many cases, **descriptive paraphrasing** is used when the metaphor cannot be transferred directly. For example, the idiom *“to bite the bullet”* (meaning to endure pain or difficulty) can be rendered as *“chidamoq”* or *“qiyinchilikni sabr bilan yengmoq.”* Although the metaphorical image of the bullet disappears, the pragmatic meaning is preserved. Descriptive translation prioritizes clarity and comprehension over imagery but risks losing stylistic vividness.

Conversely, **literal translation** can sometimes be effective if the metaphor is universal or easily understood. For instance, *“a snake in the grass”* meaning “a hidden enemy,” can be translated as *“maysada yotgan ilon,”* which retains both imagery and connotation, as snakes are universally associated with deceit and danger. However, literal translation must be applied cautiously, as not all metaphors are cross-culturally transparent.

Another issue in metaphorical meaning transfer involves **semantic shift**. During translation, an idiom's metaphor may shift from one image to another while retaining the general sense. For example, "*to have a heart of stone*" becomes "*tosh yurakli*" in Uzbek. The metaphorical object (stone) is preserved, but the emotional tone may differ slightly. Similarly, "*cold feet*" (meaning fear or hesitation) can be translated as "*qo'rqib qolmoq*" or "*jur'atsizlik*," with the metaphor disappearing but the sense remaining.

In literary translation, metaphors play a vital stylistic and symbolic role. Translators must balance between **fidelity to imagery** and **cultural acceptability**. For instance, in Shakespeare's plays, idioms such as "*the green-eyed monster*" (jealousy) and "*break the ice*" rely on vivid imagery. Translating "*the green-eyed monster*" as "*hasad alvasti*" or "*rashk balosi*" preserves the metaphor's emotional impact while aligning with Uzbek cultural expressions. Here, the translator becomes both an interpreter and a creative rewriter.

Metaphorical transfer also highlights **the asymmetry of worldviews**. English idioms often use metaphors related to industrial or maritime life - "*to sail through something*" (*easily accomplish*), "*to get the ball rolling*" (*start action*) - while Uzbek idioms draw from pastoral, domestic, or moral experiences, such as "*ishning boshini tutmoq*" or "*pichoq suyakka yetmoq*." This difference demonstrates that metaphorical meaning reflects not only linguistic habits but also historical experience and collective cognition.

An essential aspect of idiom translation is **contextual sensitivity**. The same metaphor can produce different effects depending on context. Translating "*to see the light*" could mean "*haqiqatni anglamoq*" or "*imonga kelmoq*," depending on whether the context is intellectual or religious. Therefore, the translator must interpret metaphors within discourse, not as isolated units.

Recent developments in **translation studies and cognitive linguistics** encourage a more systematic approach to metaphor translation. By comparing conceptual metaphors across languages, translators can identify patterns of equivalence and transformation. For example, both English and Uzbek share the metaphor "*life is a journey*" (*hayot yo'li*), allowing relatively direct translation of idioms like "*at the crossroads of life*" (*hayot yo'lida chorrahada turmoq*). Such shared metaphors facilitate communication and reduce semantic loss.

Moreover, bilingual idiom dictionaries increasingly provide not only literal equivalents but also metaphorical explanations. They indicate whether the metaphor is preserved or replaced, helping translators choose between cognitive and functional equivalence. In academic and pedagogical contexts, studying metaphorical idiom translation enhances cross-cultural understanding and linguistic creativity, encouraging learners to view idioms as cultural codes rather than fixed phrases. Metaphorical meaning transfer in idiom translation involves a delicate balance between preserving imagery, ensuring clarity, and maintaining cultural resonance. The translator's task is to mediate between two metaphorical systems, identifying where meanings overlap and where creative adaptation is required.

Conclusion. Metaphorical meaning transfers in English-Uzbek idiom translation reveals the deep connection between language, thought, and culture. Successful translation depends on understanding the conceptual metaphors that underlie idiomatic expressions and finding appropriate strategies to convey them in the target language. Equivalence, adaptation, paraphrasing, and contextual analysis all serve to preserve both semantic content and emotional tone. While literal translation may work for universal metaphors, culturally specific idioms demand creative transformation. Translators thus act as interpreters of metaphorical thought, reshaping imagery to resonate with the Uzbek worldview. Recognizing and transferring

metaphorical meaning not only improves translation quality but also fosters intercultural understanding and appreciation of linguistic diversity.

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