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NATIONAL-CULTURAL AND PRAGMATIC ADAPTATION STRATEGIES IN TRANSLATING UZBEK HUMOR INTO ENGLISH

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Abstract: The translation of Uzbek humor into English presents complex challenges due to the interplay of national-cultural realities, linguistic structures, and pragmatic intentions embedded in humorous discourse. Uzbek humor often relies on wordplay, culturally specific idioms, intertextual references, social norms, and context-dependent pragmatic cues, which do not always have direct equivalents in English. This study examines the main strategies of national-cultural and pragmatic adaptation used in English translations of Uzbek humorous expressions, anecdotes, and conversational jokes. Drawing on linguistic pragmatics, cultural semiotics, and translation theory, the research identifies how translators employ techniques such as cultural substitution, explication, pragmatic strengthening, functional equivalence, and compensatory humor creation to preserve both the humorous effect and the communicative intent of the source text. The findings show that successful translation of Uzbek humor requires not only lexical and structural transformation but also deep sensitivity to cultural worldview, sociolinguistic norms, and the interactive functions of humor. The study contributes to current scholarship by highlighting adaptive mechanisms that ensure intercultural comprehensibility while maintaining the original humorous nuance.

Keywords: Uzbek humor; humor translation; pragmatic adaptation; national-cultural specificity; cultural substitution; functional equivalence; compensatory strategies; linguistic pragmatics; intercultural communication; translation studies.

INTRODUCTION

Humor is one of the most culturally saturated and pragmatically nuanced phenomena in human communication. In Uzbek linguistic culture, humor serves not only as a source of entertainment but also as a social regulator, a politeness strategy, a means of expressing criticism indirectly, and a marker of collective identity. Uzbek humor manifests in diverse genres—folk anecdotes, conversational jokes, proverbs with humorous undertones, parody, wordplay, and situational irony. Each of these forms carries embedded national values, culturally specific references, and socio-pragmatic functions shaped by historical traditions, interpersonal norms, and local communicative etiquette. Translating such humor into English requires more than a simple transfer of linguistic meaning; it demands careful reconstruction of cultural context and pragmatic intent. Humor is deeply tied to worldview, shared background knowledge, and culturally conditioned inferencing. Therefore, the translator must mediate between two distinct cultural systems: one grounded in Uzbek conceptual frameworks, relational communication styles, and collective sociocultural norms, and the other shaped by English-speaking pragmatic conventions and individualistic communicative preferences. If this mediation fails, the humorous effect may weaken, shift its meaning, or disappear entirely. A fundamental difficulty emerges from the limited equivalence between Uzbek humor markers—such as diminutives, kinship-based politeness, honorific forms, and culture-bound lexical items—and their English counterparts. Many humorous expressions rely on tacit cultural knowledge: national character stereotypes, rural–urban contrasts, traditional customs, social hierarchy, and folkloric imagery. English readers unfamiliar with these frames may miss the intended humor unless the translator employs strategies that adapt, explicate, or replace culturally embedded references. Pragmatic

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factors intensify these challenges. Humor in Uzbek discourse often functions as a face-saving mechanism, softening criticism or creating solidarity in social interaction. Translators must therefore preserve not only the humorous meaning but also the interpersonal effect—solidarity, irony, teasing, or indirectness—encoded in the original. This requires sensitivity to speech acts, implicatures, conversational maxims, and politeness strategies. A humorous line that serves as a subtle critique in Uzbek may need pragmatic strengthening or contextual adjustment in English to maintain its communicative force. Another layer of complexity is structural: Uzbek humor frequently employs morphological wordplay, phonetic resemblance, and multifunctional suffixes that have no direct English equivalents. In such cases, translators may resort to compensatory strategies, creating new humorous effects in the target language while remaining faithful to the original intention. In recent years, translation studies have increasingly emphasized cultural and pragmatic adaptation as essential processes for transferring humor across languages. Scholars argue that humor cannot be translated literally because its success depends on mutual cultural understanding and shared interpretive frames. This perspective is especially relevant for Uzbek-to-English translation, where typological differences and sociolinguistic contrasts significantly affect meaning construction. Thus, the translation of Uzbek humor into English is not merely a lexical or syntactic operation but a complex cultural-pragmatic negotiation. By analyzing adaptation strategies such as cultural substitution, explicitation, contextual re-framing, functional equivalence, and compensatory humor creation, this study seeks to demonstrate how translators can preserve both humorous effect and communicative intent. The findings highlight the importance of translator creativity, cultural literacy, and pragmatic awareness in achieving successful intercultural humor transmission.

CONCLUSION

The translation of Uzbek humor into English is a multidimensional process that requires far more than linguistic accuracy. It demands a deep understanding of cultural values, social norms, pragmatic intentions, and discourse-specific functions that shape humor in Uzbek communication. This study demonstrates that Uzbek humor is firmly rooted in national identity, everyday interpersonal dynamics, and culturally shared referents, which makes literal translation insufficient for conveying its full meaning and humorous impact. A central conclusion of the analysis is that successful humor translation depends on the translator's ability to navigate between cultural fidelity and communicative effectiveness. Uzbek humor often embodies subtle politeness strategies, indirect criticism, relational bonding, and context-dependent inferences. When transferred into English, these elements must be reinterpreted through strategies that maintain both the humorous effect and the intended pragmatic force. As shown, cultural substitution helps bridge gaps in background knowledge; explicitation provides the necessary context for understanding hidden meanings; functional equivalence preserves the original purpose of the humor; and compensatory strategies recreate humor where linguistic equivalence is unavailable. The findings also highlight the importance of pragmatic adaptation. Humor in Uzbek is frequently used to soften social tension, reinforce solidarity, or express disapproval in indirect ways. Translators must therefore be especially attentive to the interpersonal implications embedded in humorous expressions. A line that is teasing, playful, or sarcastic in Uzbek may require pragmatic reinforcement or contextual modification in English in order to achieve a comparable effect. This demonstrates that translation is not merely a linguistic transformation but a socio-pragmatic reinterpretation. Moreover, the study emphasizes creative decision-making as an essential competence for translators. Many humorous effects in Uzbek rely on morphological wordplay, phonetic resemblance, or culturally specific idioms. When such mechanisms cannot be reproduced in English, translators must craft alternative humorous devices that retain the intention and tone of the original. This creativity does not distort meaning; rather, it ensures that the humor remains functional and accessible to the target audience. Overall,

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this research underscores that translating Uzbek humor into English requires an integrative approach that balances linguistic precision, cultural mediation, and pragmatic sensitivity. The outcomes contribute to the broader field of translation studies by demonstrating that humor translation is inherently adaptive and interpretive. It demands a translator who is both a cultural mediator and a pragmatic analyst—someone capable of reconstructing not only the words but the entire communicative experience. Ultimately, the translation of Uzbek humor serves as a reminder that humor itself is a culturally situated phenomenon. Preserving its richness in another language requires respect for cultural nuance, awareness of communicative context, and a willingness to creatively negotiate meaning. Strengthening these competencies will enhance intercultural understanding and promote more effective and authentic translation practices.

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