



CHALLENGES OF TRANSLATING HUMOR FROM ENGLISH INTO UZBEK

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ABSTRACT

Humor is one of the most difficult elements to translate because it is closely connected with language, culture, social values, and background knowledge. When translating humor from English into Uzbek, translators often face problems related to wordplay, idioms, cultural references, and linguistic differences. This article discusses the major challenges of translating humor from English into Uzbek and examines possible translation strategies based on the works of Delia Chiaro, Jeremy Munday, Lawrence Venuti, G'aybulla Salomov, and Qudrat Musayev [1; 2; 3; 4; 5]..

Introduction: Translation is not simply the transfer of words from one language into another. It is a complex process of conveying meaning, style, and cultural values. Humor presents a special challenge because what is funny in one language may not be funny in another. The translator must reproduce not only the meaning of a humorous text but also its comic effect on the audience.

English and Uzbek belong to different language families and cultural traditions. Therefore, many jokes, puns, and humorous expressions cannot be translated literally. According to Delia Chiaro, humor is deeply rooted in language and culture, making it one of the most problematic areas of translation [1]. As a result, translators need to find creative solutions to maintain the humorous impact of the original text.

The Nature of Humor in Translation

Humor can appear in different forms such as jokes, puns, irony, sarcasm, and wordplay. Delia Chiaro explains that humor often depends on linguistic ambiguity and cultural knowledge [1]. When these elements are absent in the target language, the humorous effect may be lost.

For example, English jokes frequently use homonyms and polysemous words. Since Uzbek may not have equivalent words with the same double meanings, translators face difficulties in preserving the original joke. In such situations, direct translation is usually ineffective.

Jeremy Munday emphasizes that translation involves finding equivalence between source and target texts. However, complete equivalence is rarely possible in humor translation because humor relies on unique linguistic features [2]. Therefore, translators often need to adapt the text rather than translate it word for word.

Linguistic Challenges

One of the main challenges in translating humor from English into Uzbek is linguistic difference. English contains many puns based on pronunciation, spelling, and multiple meanings. These language-specific features are difficult to reproduce in Uzbek [1].

Consider the joke:

"Time flies like an arrow; fruit flies like a banana."

The humor depends on the double meaning of the word "flies." In the first clause, it functions as a verb, while in the second it refers to insects. Such ambiguity does not exist in Uzbek, making literal translation ineffective.

Another challenge involves idiomatic expressions. English speakers often use humorous idioms that have no direct Uzbek equivalents. If translated literally, they may sound strange or meaningless. Therefore, translators must replace them with culturally appropriate expressions that create a similar humorous effect.

According to G'aybulla Salomov, successful translation requires preserving both content and artistic value. In humor translation, preserving artistic value often becomes more important than maintaining literal meaning [4].

Cultural Challenges

Culture plays a significant role in humor. Many English jokes refer to historical events, celebrities, traditions, or social practices familiar to English-speaking audiences. Uzbek readers may not understand these references.

Lawrence Venuti argues that translation always involves cultural transfer. The translator must decide whether to preserve the foreign cultural element or adapt it to the target culture [3]. This choice is particularly important in humor translation.

For instance, American or British sitcoms often contain jokes about political figures, television shows, or local customs. If Uzbek audiences are unfamiliar with these references, the joke may lose its effect. In such cases, adaptation may be necessary.

An English joke mentioning Thanksgiving may not be immediately understood by Uzbek readers because the holiday does not exist in Uzbek culture. The translator may need to provide an explanation or replace the reference with a more familiar cultural concept.

Qudrat Musayev notes that cultural adaptation is often essential for effective translation. The translator should consider the knowledge and expectations of the target audience to ensure successful communication [5].

Wordplay and Puns

Wordplay is perhaps the most difficult type of humor to translate. Puns rely on similarities in sound or meaning between words. Since languages differ in vocabulary and structure, equivalent puns rarely exist.

Delia Chiaro states that translators often have three options when dealing with puns: reproducing the pun with a different linguistic form, replacing it with another humorous element, or omitting the pun while preserving the meaning [1].

Each option has advantages and disadvantages. Reproducing a pun helps maintain humor but may require significant modification. Replacing the pun can preserve the comic effect while changing the original wording. Omitting the pun ensures clarity but sacrifices humor.

For English-Uzbek translation, replacement is often the most practical strategy. A new joke or humorous expression can create a similar reaction among Uzbek readers even if the original linguistic structure is lost.

Translation Strategies

Several translation strategies can help overcome difficulties in humor translation.

Literal Translation

Literal translation is suitable only when the humorous effect remains understandable in Uzbek. However, this strategy is rarely effective for puns and culture-specific jokes [2].

Adaptation

Adaptation involves modifying the text to fit the cultural context of the target audience. This strategy is frequently used in translating films, television programs, and literary works [3].

Substitution

Substitution replaces a source-language joke with a different joke that produces a similar effect in the target language. This method prioritizes audience response over linguistic accuracy [1].

Explanation

Sometimes translators add brief explanations to help readers understand cultural references. Although this approach may reduce spontaneity, it preserves important information [5].

Compensation

Compensation means recreating humor elsewhere in the text when it cannot be preserved in its original position. Many translators use this strategy to maintain the overall humorous tone of a work [2].

Jeremy Munday highlights that translation strategies should be selected according to the purpose of the translation and the needs of the target audience [2].

The Role of the Translator

The translator plays a crucial role in humor translation. Unlike technical translation, humor translation requires creativity and cultural awareness. Translators must understand both languages deeply and recognize what makes a particular joke funny.

Lawrence Venuti describes translators as cultural mediators who bridge the gap between different societies [3]. In humor translation, this mediating role becomes especially important because the translator must balance fidelity to the original text with the expectations of target readers.

A successful translator does not merely transfer words. Instead, the translator recreates the intended effect. If readers of the translated text laugh in the same way as readers of the original text, the translation can be considered successful [1].

Conclusion: Translating humor from English into Uzbek is a challenging task due to linguistic and cultural differences between the two languages. Wordplay, idioms, puns, and culture-specific references often lack direct equivalents in Uzbek. As a result, literal translation is frequently insufficient [1; 4].

The theories of Delia Chiaro, Jeremy Munday, Lawrence Venuti, G'aybulla Salomov, and Qudrat Musayev demonstrate that successful humor translation requires flexibility, creativity,

and cultural competence [1; 2; 3; 4; 5]. Strategies such as adaptation, substitution, explanation, and compensation help translators preserve the humorous effect while maintaining the meaning of the original text.

Ultimately, the goal of humor translation is not simply to reproduce words but to recreate laughter and amusement for the target audience. This makes humor translation one of the most demanding yet rewarding areas of translation studies.

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