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THE INFLUENCE OF MENTALITY ON IDIOM TRANSLATION FROM ENGLISH TO UZBEK AND RUSSIAN

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Abstract: This article examines the complex relationship between cultural mentality and the translation of idioms from English into Uzbek and Russian. Idioms, as linguistically and culturally embedded expressions, present unique challenges for translators working across these language pairs. The research explores how differences in national mentality, historical worldviews, and cultural frameworks influence translation strategies and outcomes. Through comparative analysis of idiomatic expressions in these three languages, this study demonstrates that successful idiom translation requires not only linguistic competence but also deep cultural awareness. The findings suggest that translators employ various strategies - including equivalence, paraphrasing, and cultural substitution - based on the degree of conceptual overlap between source and target cultures. This research contributes to translation studies by highlighting the interconnection between mentality and idiom translation in the specific context of English-Uzbek and English-Russian language pairs, offering insights for translators navigating these complex linguistic relationships.

Keywords: idiom translation, cultural mentality, English, Uzbek, Russian, translation strategies, cross-cultural communication

Idioms represent one of the most challenging aspects of translation practice. These fixed expressions, whose meanings cannot be deduced from their constituent parts, are deeply embedded in the cultural fabric of a language. When translating between languages with significant cultural and historical differences, such as English, Uzbek, and Russian, translators encounter not only linguistic barriers but also conceptual gaps stemming from divergent worldviews and cultural mentalities.

The concept of mentality - the characteristic way of thinking of a community or nation - plays a crucial role in understanding how idioms function and how they can be effectively translated. Each language community possesses distinctive mental frameworks shaped by historical experience, religion, geography, and social structures. These frameworks influence how speakers conceptualize reality and express it through language, particularly through idioms that often employ metaphorical thinking.

This article examines how differences in mentality between English, Uzbek, and Russian language communities affect the translation of idioms. By analyzing specific examples and translation strategies, we aim to provide insights into the complex interplay between cultural thought patterns and idiomatic expression. Understanding this relationship is essential for translators working between these languages, as it enables them to produce translations that preserve both semantic content and cultural resonance.

Idioms, according to Cacciari and Tabossi, are "frozen patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form and often carry meanings which cannot be deduced from their individual components." This definition highlights the dual challenge idioms present: their structural rigidity and semantic opacity.[1]

Baker (1992) further emphasizes that idioms are not merely linguistic phenomena but cultural artifacts that reflect shared experiences, values, and historical conditions. They function as repositories of cultural wisdom and perspective, often embodying distinctive ways of conceptualizing abstract notions through concrete imagery.[2]

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The concept of mentality, as used in this article, refers to the cognitive, emotional, and cultural frameworks that shape how members of a language community perceive and interpret reality. Following Wierzbicka's (1992) approach, we understand mentality as manifested in linguistic patterns, particularly in figurative language that reveals underlying conceptual categories and priorities.[3]

Russian scholars like Likhachev have developed the concept of "national mentality" to describe the distinctive thought patterns characteristic of particular cultural-linguistic communities.[4] This concept is particularly relevant when examining how idioms in English, Uzbek, and Russian reflect different approaches to similar human experiences.

Several translation theories address the specific challenges of idiom translation. Vinay and Darbelnet's classification of translation procedures distinguishes between direct translation methods (literal translation, calque) and oblique translation methods (transposition, modulation, equivalence, adaptation) - the latter being particularly relevant for idiom translation.[5]

Newmark's (1988) semantic and communicative translation approaches offer another framework for understanding idiom translation. While semantic translation attempts to preserve the exact contextual meaning of the original, communicative translation aims to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original.[6]

This methodology allows for a systematic exploration of how different cultural mentalities shape translation practices across these three linguistic context

The religious traditions and historical experiences of English, Uzbek, and Russian cultures significantly impact their idiomatic expressions and translation approaches.

English idioms often reflect Judeo-Christian influences and Western philosophical traditions. For example, the idiom "to separate the wheat from the chaff" derives from biblical imagery. When translated into Uzbek, which has been shaped by Islamic traditions, translators often employ cultural substitution, using expressions from Islamic texts that convey similar meanings. In Russian translations, with its Orthodox Christian heritage, translators can often find closer conceptual equivalents.

Consider the English idiom "forbidden fruit." In Russian, the direct equivalent "запретный плод" works well due to shared biblical knowledge. However, in Uzbek, translators may opt for "taqiqlangan meva" (literally "forbidden fruit") but might need to supplement it with explanatory elements since the biblical reference may not be as immediately recognizable to all readers.

Historical experiences also shape idiomatic expression. Russian idioms often reflect collectivist values shaped by its feudal and Soviet past, while Uzbek idioms incorporate elements from nomadic traditions, trade history, and Soviet influence. English idioms frequently embody individualist values and maritime imagery reflecting Britain's island status and naval history.[7]

Different cultural mentalities conceptualize fundamental categories like space and time in distinctive ways, affecting idiom translation.

English temporal idioms often reflect a linear conception of time (e.g., "time is money," "against the clock"). When translated into Uzbek, where traditional concepts of time were more cyclical and seasonal, translators may need to find expressions that resonate with local temporal frameworks. For instance, "time is money" might be translated as "vaqt – oltin" (time is gold), shifting the metaphor slightly to maintain the core meaning while using a value comparison more resonant in Uzbek culture.

Russian temporal expressions often emphasize process over precision, reflecting cultural attitudes toward time that differ from Anglo-American exactitude. The English idiom "in the

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nick of time" might be rendered in Russian as "в последний момент" (at the last moment), which captures the meaning but lacks the same urgency.[8]

Idioms based on body parts reveal fascinating differences in cultural conceptualization. While all three languages use body-based idioms extensively, the symbolic values assigned to different body parts vary significantly.

In English, "heart" idioms often relate to emotions and courage, while "head" idioms typically connect to intelligence and rationality. Uzbek idioms place greater emphasis on the liver ("jigar") as a seat of deep emotions, particularly familial love. Russian idioms frequently use "soul" ("душа"/dusha) where English might reference the heart or mind.

These differences necessitate creative translation strategies. For example, the English idiom "to learn by heart" is translated into Russian as "выучить наизусть", which does not reference the heart at all. In Uzbek, it might become "yodlash" or "yod olmoq," also without the heart metaphor. These translations reflect different cultural models of how memory and emotional connection function.

The natural environments in which languages developed influence their idiomatic expressions. English idioms contain numerous maritime references ("sailing close to the wind," "weathering the storm"), reflecting Britain's island geography. Uzbek idioms often reference desert, steppe, and agricultural imagery, while Russian idioms frequently employ forest and winter imagery.[9]

When translating nature-based idioms, translators must navigate these environmental differences. The English idiom "to beat around the bush" might be translated into Uzbek using imagery more familiar to traditional Central Asian life, such as "gap aylantirib gapirmoq" (to speak in circles). In Russian, it becomes "ходить вокруг да около" (to walk around and about), maintaining the concept of circling a topic without the specific bush reference.

The analysis of translation strategies reveals clear patterns in how cultural mentality influences approach selection:

When cultural mentalities share conceptual ground, translators can often employ the equivalence strategy, finding target language idioms that convey both similar meaning and similar imagery.[10] This strategy is more commonly viable between English and Russian than between English and Uzbek, reflecting greater historical cultural exchange between European traditions.

For example, the English idiom "to kill two birds with one stone" has close equivalents in both Russian ("убить двух зайцев одним выстрелом" - to kill two hares with one shot) and Uzbek ("bir o'q bilan ikki quyonni urmoq" - to hit two rabbits with one arrow). The minor variations (birds vs. hares/rabbits, stone vs. shot/arrow) reflect subtle cultural adaptations while maintaining the core conceptual metaphor.

Cultural substitution involves replacing source language cultural elements with target language cultural elements.[11] This strategy is particularly prevalent in Uzbek translations of English idioms, where translators substitute Western cultural references with Central Asian ones.

The English idiom "to carry coals to Newcastle" (meaning to take something to a place that already has plenty of it) might be translated into Uzbek as "Samarqandga meva olib bormoq" (to bring fruit to Samarkand), referencing the famous fertility and fruit production of this Uzbek city. In Russian, it might become "ехать в Тулу со своим самоваром" (to go to Tula with one's own samovar), referencing the Russian city known for samovar production.

When cultural gaps are significant, translators often resort to paraphrase or explanation. This strategy is more common in English-Uzbek translation than in English-Russian translation, reflecting greater cultural distance.[12]

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The English idiom "to rain cats and dogs" has no conceptual equivalent in Uzbek mentality. Translators typically render it as "jala quymoq" (to pour heavily) or "chelaklab quymoq" (to pour by buckets), losing the vivid but culturally specific animal imagery while preserving the core meaning.

In some cases, translators choose literal translation while adding compensatory elements to bridge the cultural gap. This approach is often used for idioms that reflect universal human experiences but express them through culturally specific imagery.

The English idiom "to be on cloud nine" might be literally translated into Uzbek as "to'qqizinchi bulutda bo'lmoq," but a translator might add contextual elements to clarify the meaning of extreme happiness, as this specific cloud reference is not part of traditional Uzbek imagery. [13]

This study demonstrates that cultural mentality significantly influences the translation of idioms between English, Uzbek, and Russian. The mental frameworks that shape how speakers of these languages conceptualize reality—influenced by historical experience, religious traditions, geographic conditions, and social structures—create both challenges and opportunities for translators.

These findings suggest that translator training should incorporate cultural and anthropological knowledge alongside linguistic skills. Further research might explore how digital translation tools could incorporate cultural mentality factors to improve idiom translation between these languages.[14]

Understanding the influence of mentality on idiom translation not only improves translation quality but also promotes deeper cross-cultural understanding between English, Uzbek, and Russian language communities.

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