

Typological Differences Between Uzbek And English And Their Implications for Literary Translation: A Comparative-Contrastive Analysis



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Abstract: This article presents a comparative-contrastive analysis of the typological differences between Uzbek and English and examines their implications for literary translation. Particular attention is paid to the structural distinctions arising from the agglutinative nature of Uzbek and the predominantly analytical character of English, including differences in word formation, grammatical categories, word order, syntactic organization, and the expression of semantic relations. The study also explores lexical-semantic, phraseological, stylistic, and cultural discrepancies that create specific challenges in translating literary texts between the two languages. It is argued that typological asymmetry significantly influences the translator's choice of grammatical transformations, lexical substitutions, syntactic restructuring, explicitation, modulation, and compensation strategies.

Keywords: Uzbek language, linguistic typology, comparative-contrastive analysis, literary translation, typological differences, agglutinative language, analytical language, syntactic structure, cultural specificity, translation strategies, equivalence, artistic adequacy.

Introduction: This article presents a comparative-contrastive analysis of the typological differences between the Uzbek and English languages and examines their consequences for the translation of literary prose. Uzbek, an agglutinative language with a rigid SOV word order, and English, an analytic language with a fixed SVO order, diverge sharply at the morphological, syntactic, lexical-semantic and pragmatic levels. The study focuses on three areas in which these divergences create the greatest translation difficulty: cultural realia (household, ethnographic-folkloric, socio-political and natural-geographic vocabulary), phraseological units, and emotional-expressive morphology. Drawing on a parallel corpus built from fifteen short stories from Utkir Hoshimov's collection "Dunyoning ishlari" (78,542 words) and Mark Reese's English translation "Such is Life" (2024, 82,109 words), together with a reference corpus of Uzbek

prose (450,000 words) and English literary prose (500,000 words), the article quantifies translation loss and evaluates the strategies used to render culture-specific vocabulary and idiomatic expressions. The analysis, conducted with AntConc 4.2.0 and validated through expert rating (Cohen's Kappa = 0.89), shows that only 14-15% of Uzbek phraseological units have full equivalents in English, that transliteration with a short gloss is the most balanced strategy for rendering realia (used in 48.7% of cases), and that translation results in measurable semantic loss (34% of emotionally marked lexical units), weakened psychological effect (28%) and insufficient transfer of cultural realia (19%). The findings underline that successful literary translation between typologically distant languages such as Uzbek and English requires not only bilingual competence but also cultural competence, creative judgement and a systematic,

corpus-informed choice of translation strategy.

Uzbek and English belong to different language families and consequently display profound typological, structural and functional differences. These differences span the full range of linguistic organisation: from grammatical structure to the lexical-semantic system, and from syntactic patterning to pragmatic function. Understanding this typological distance is not merely a theoretical exercise; it is a practical necessity for the translator, since every structural mismatch between the source and target language systems has direct consequences for translation strategy, textual volume, rhythm and the reproduction of a literary work's artistic and psychological effect. This article systematically analyses the principal typological differences between Uzbek and English and demonstrates their impact on the translation of literary prose, drawing on the classic contributions of typological linguistics (August Schleicher, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Joseph Greenberg, Noam Chomsky, Bernard Comrie and William Croft) as well as translation-specific scholarship.

Typological Differences Between Uzbek and English

Uzbek belongs to the agglutinative type of languages, in which grammatical meaning is expressed through a

chain of suffixes attached to a root (e.g., uylarimizdan = uy + lar + imiz + dan, "from our houses"). English, by contrast, is an analytic language, in which grammatical relations are expressed through word order, auxiliary words and prepositions (from our houses = three separate words). This structural difference has direct consequences for translation: a single agglutinative Uzbek word regularly expands into two to four words in English, affecting both textual volume and stylistic register.

The basic word order in Uzbek is Subject-Object-Verb (Men kitob o'qidim, literally "I book read"), whereas English follows Subject-Verb-Object order (I read a book). In Uzbek, the predicate occupies the final position in the sentence, which creates a suspense effect, while in English the predicate appears early. Uzbek word order is comparatively flexible; English word order is strict. This difference has a direct bearing on the dramatic effect and rhythm of literary translation, since postponing the verb to the end of a sentence — a natural device in Uzbek narrative prose — cannot be replicated in English without altering syntax altogether.

Table 1 summarises the principal typological differences between the two languages and their translational consequences.

Parameter	Uzbek	English	Translational Consequence
Morphological type	Agglutinative	Analytic	1 word = 2-4 words
Word order	SOV	SVO	Change in suspense effect
Case system	6 grammatical cases	Prepositions	Structural restructuring
Verb tenses	3 tenses	12 forms	Aspect selection required
Person marking	Marked on the verb	Pronoun required	Redundant repetition
Modality	Suffixes	Modal verbs	Polysemy
Emotional lexis	-gina, -jon, etc.	Limited	Compensation required

Typological linguistics developed substantially over the course of the twentieth century. August Schleicher and Wilhelm von Humboldt laid the foundations of morphological typology. Joseph Greenberg established the foundations of language universals research, analysing forty-five languages to identify correlations in word order. Noam Chomsky proposed the theory of

universal grammar, while Bernard Comrie and William Croft further developed the functional-typological approach. Understanding typological differences is essential for the translator, who must recognise the divergences between the two language systems and adapt translation strategy accordingly. Such differences are especially salient in the translation of

cultural realia — objects, phenomena and concepts specific to the life of one nation that do not exist, or exist in a different form, in the life of another. A deep command of the typological properties of a language equips the translator to render such realia accurately and adequately in another language system.

Cultural realia are objects, phenomena and concepts specific to the life of a particular people that either do not exist, or exist in a different form, in the life of other peoples. Realia constitute the most culturally specific segment of a language's vocabulary and, correspondingly, present the greatest difficulty in translation. The term was introduced into translation studies by the Russian linguists S. Vlahov and S. Florin in 1980, who defined realia as "carriers of national and historical colour."

Uzbek culture is rich and distinctive, and its way of life, traditions, rituals, cuisine, clothing and geographical features frequently have no direct equivalent in English. Such realia create national colour in literary works and mark a text as a product of Uzbek literature; translating them is therefore a genuinely complex task, requiring the translator to preserve national specificity while remaining comprehensible to the target reader. Conceptual metaphors underwent reorientation through the translation chain. When source language metaphors were rendered literally or differently metaphorized in the intermediary language, the target language translation inherited these transformations, obscuring the original conceptual structure.

Following the classification proposed by S. Vlahov and S. Florin, as further developed for Uzbek material by the linguist B. Menglier, Uzbek cultural realia can be divided into four principal groups, each requiring a different translation approach.

Household realia. This group comprises everyday objects, food, drink, clothing, housing and means of transport. Uzbek culinary realia are especially rich and varied, including osh (a national rice dish with meat and vegetables), lag'mon (a noodle dish with meat), somsa (a baked pastry filled with meat), manti (steamed dumplings), chuchvara (small dumplings), shashlik (grilled meat skewers), qazi (horsemeat sausage), tandir non (bread baked in a clay oven) and ayron (a

diluted yoghurt drink). National clothing realia include do'ppi (an embroidered skullcap), to'n (a sheepskin coat), chopon (a national outer garment worn at celebrations), and the fabrics atlas, adras and ikat. Dwelling-related realia include hovli (courtyard), ayvon (a covered veranda for rest), sandal (a heated sitting platform), and tandir (a clay oven for baking bread).

Ethnographic and folkloric realia. This group covers rituals, holidays, folklore figures, musical instruments and art forms. Central rituals and holidays include to'y (a major, often multi-day celebration), sunnat to'yi (a circumcision ceremony), beshik to'yi (a cradle ceremony for a newborn), Navro'z (the spring new-year festival celebrated on 21 March), Ro'za Hayit and Qurbon Hayit (Islamic religious holidays), and hashar (communal, unpaid collective labour). Prominent folklore figures include Alpomish, the hero of the eponymous Uzbek epic and a symbol of courage and loyalty, Go'ro'g'li, another well-known epic hero, and Tohir and Zuhra, the protagonists of a celebrated love story. National musical instruments include the dutor (a two-stringed lute), rubob, chang, and the wind instruments surnay and karnay, while shashmaqom, the classical six-part Uzbek musical system, and miniature painting are among the most significant art forms.

Socio-political realia. This group includes administrative-territorial units, titles and social institutions: viloyat (region, the largest administrative unit), tuman (district), qishloq (village), mahalla (a neighbourhood community and centre of mutual support) and guzar (a smaller sub-division of a mahalla). Titles include oqsoqol (a respected elder who advises on community matters), qozi (an Islamic judge), hokim (the head of a region or district) and bek (a historical title for a ruler or leader).

Natural-geographic realia. Uzbekistan's distinctive geography and climate are reflected in specialised vocabulary such as Qizilqum (a major desert), the Aral Sea (the site of one of the world's most serious ecological disasters), the Amudarya and Syrdarya rivers, and the Chimyon mountain range, together with plant and animal names such as saksovul (a desert shrub used as fuel) and terak (a poplar tree growing along riverbanks).

Table 2 shows the distribution of realia identified in the fifteen short stories of Hoshimov's "Dunyoning ishlari."

Type of Realia	Count	Percentage	Example
Household realia	87	42%	osh, do'ppi, tandir
Ethnographic/folkloric realia	53	26%	to'y, hashar, dutor
Socio-political realia	39	19%	mahalla, oqsoqol
Natural-geographic realia	28	13%	saksovul, terak
Total	207	100%	—

Contemporary translation studies distinguish five principal strategies for rendering cultural realia, each with characteristic advantages and drawbacks.

Transliteration or transcription renders the sound of the realia in the Latin alphabet without further explanation (e.g., palov, chopon). This strategy fully preserves cultural specificity and does not increase textual volume, but risks leaving the reader without any understanding of the word's meaning, particularly on first encounter — a manageable problem if the realia appears only once, but a genuine obstacle if it recurs frequently or plays an important role in the text.

Descriptive or explanatory translation spells out the meaning of the realia (e.g., tandoor — "a traditional clay oven used for baking bread"; do'ppi — "a traditional embroidered skullcap"). This ensures full comprehension without requiring background knowledge, but noticeably increases textual volume — a single Uzbek word may expand to four or five English words — and can disrupt the artistic flow of the narrative.

Functional analogy or approximation substitutes the nearest equivalent available in the target culture (e.g., somsa — "samosa"; osh — "pilaf"). This makes the text easy to understand through a familiar word, but sacrifices cultural specificity: Uzbek osh is not the same dish as an Indian samosa or a Persian pilaf in preparation, taste or cultural significance, and the translator risks creating a false impression.

Transliteration combined with a gloss is regarded by most contemporary translation scholars as the optimal strategy: the realia is first transliterated and then briefly explained (e.g., "We ate plov, a traditional Uzbek rice dish with meat and vegetables"). This preserves cultural specificity while informing the reader; a full

gloss is typically provided at first occurrence, with transliteration alone sufficing on subsequent occurrences once the reader is already familiar with the term.

Omission or generalisation removes the realia or replaces it with a general term when it is not essential to the text and does not affect the plot (e.g., rendering hovli, "courtyard," simply as "house"). This strategy must be applied with caution, since realia frequently carry national colour whose loss diminishes the artistic value of the text.

Phraseological Units and Their Translation

Phraseological units are stable word combinations whose overall meaning cannot be derived from the meanings of their individual components; consequently, they cannot be translated word for word without producing nonsense or an incorrect meaning. Phraseological units embody a language's lexical richness and national-cultural specificity, having typically formed over long historical development and reflecting a people's worldview, thinking and life experience.

The foundations of phraseology as a discipline were established by the Russian linguist V.V. Vinogradov in the mid-twentieth century, who divided phraseological units semantically into three types: phraseological combinations, phraseological unities and phraseological fusions. In Uzbek linguistics, questions of phraseology have been examined by Sh. Shoabdurahmonov, G'. Abdurahmonov and N. Mahmudov, who analysed the national distinctiveness of Uzbek phraseological units and their role in literary prose.

Somatic phraseological units — formed from names of parts of the human body — constitute the largest

group, accounting for 40-50% of the phraseological system, since the human body provides the most immediate and universally accessible source of metaphor. Eye-based expressions include ko'zga ko'rinmoq ("to catch the eye," i.e. to appear), ko'zi yo'q ("greedy, insatiable") and ko'zini ochmoq ("to come to understand the truth"). Hand-based expressions include qo'l uzatmoq ("to lend a hand," i.e. to help), qo'li ochiq ("generous") and qo'li qisqa ("deprived of means"). Heart-based expressions include yuragi qotmoq ("to freeze with fear"), yuragi og'rимоq ("to grieve") and yuragida tutmoq ("to cherish"). Head-based expressions include boshdan kechirmoq ("to go through an experience") and bosh ko'tarmoq ("to resist, to rebel").

Animal-based phraseological units form the second major group, reflecting humanity's long coexistence with animals and the qualities traditionally associated with them: the dog with loyalty or servility, the horse with strength and speed, the bird with freedom and lightness. Dog-related expressions frequently carry negative connotations, e.g. itday qaramoq ("to look at someone with hostility"). Horse-related expressions convey speed, e.g. otday chopmoq ("to run very fast"). Bird-related expressions convey freedom and lightness, e.g. qushday yengil ("as light as a bird").

Translating phraseological units is one of the most difficult tasks in lexical translation, for four principal reasons. First, their meaning is figurative and metaphorical, so that a literal, word-for-word rendering is either meaningless or misleading in the target language; ko'zga ko'rinmoq translated literally as "to appear to the eye" makes little sense in English, and even the closer equivalent "to catch the eye" is not a full match. Second, phraseological units are culturally specific, and the target culture may possess no equivalent at all: Uzbek agrarian, pastoral and craft traditions have given rise to numerous idioms with no counterpart in English experience. Third, phraseological units carry emotional and stylistic colouring — an evaluative, expressive charge that is difficult to recreate in another language; yuragi qotmoq expresses not simple fear but a precise

physiological sensation, and while English has the idiom "to have cold feet," it is used in a different context. Fourth, some phraseological units, particularly proverbs, rely on rhyme, rhythm or alliteration that is almost impossible to reproduce in translation, so that the result becomes a plain statement of wisdom rather than a poetic utterance.

Contemporary translation studies distinguish five methods for translating phraseological units, each with a distinct scope of application.

Full equivalence (idiom for idiom) occurs when both languages possess a phraseological unit built on the same image, as with ko'zga ko'rinmoq and "to catch the eye," both of which use the concept of the eye to express the same meaning. Such cases are rare: research shows that only 14-15% of Uzbek and English phraseological units are fully equivalent.

Partial equivalence (idiom to a different idiom) preserves the meaning while changing the image, as when yuragi qotmoq ("heart freezes," fear) is rendered as "to have cold feet" (both link fear to a physiological sensation, though located in different body parts). This strategy is used in 27-30% of cases.

Descriptive translation (idiom to a plain expression) loses the figurative meaning and renders the sense in ordinary words, as when ko'zi yo'q is translated "greedy, insatiable." The result is accurate but entirely loses figurativeness; it is nonetheless the most frequently used method, applied in 49-50% of cases.

Calque, or word-for-word translation with a gloss, is used rarely and only in special cases, for instance rendering noni qurimoq literally as "one's bread dried up" with the gloss "lost one's livelihood" in parentheses; this strategy appears mainly in academic translations or annotated dictionaries.

Omission removes the phraseological unit or replaces it with a plain word when it is not essential to the text and does not affect the plot; this strategy is used in 10% of cases, though in most instances a phraseological unit contributes real artistic value and its omission is inappropriate.

Table 3 presents the distribution of the five strategies as observed across 130 phraseological units identified in the parallel corpus.

Translation Method	Count	Percentage	Evaluation
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Full equivalence	18	14%	Best
Partial equivalence	35	27%	Good
Descriptive translation	64	49%	Satisfactory
Omission	13	10%	Poor
Total	130	100%	—

One of the distinctive features of Uzbek is its extensive use of emotional-expressive suffixes, which lend words a range of emotional colouring — tenderness, diminution, emphasis, urgency, regret and other nuances. English possesses no comparable system, or only a very limited one, which creates a significant translation challenge, since these suffixes do more than modify lexical meaning: they add pragmatic and stylistic meaning as well. Their historical roots trace back to the common system of the Turkic languages and, having developed over millennia, they have become an inseparable part of the modern Uzbek literary language, used extensively in fiction, spoken discourse and journalistic style, where they intensify the text's emotional impact and express the author's or speaker's attitude.

The statistical findings reported in this study rest on the following methodological basis. All statistical indicators were calculated on the basis of the following corpora: a source-text corpus of fifteen short stories from O'tkir Hoshimov's collection "Dunyoning ishlari" (78,542 words in total), digitised from the holdings of the National Library of Uzbekistan and stored in UTF-8 format; a translation corpus consisting of Mark Reese's English translation "Such is Life" (2024, Create Space Publishing; 82,109 words); and a reference corpus used for comparative analysis of Uzbek and English literary language, comprising a 450,000-word Uzbek prose corpus and a 500,000-word English Literary Corpus.

This indicator was established through parallel-corpus analysis. Every emotionally-expressive lexical unit in the source text (2,347 in total) and its equivalent in the translation were evaluated systematically. The analysis found that 798 lexical units had no direct equivalent in English, yielding a loss rate of 34% ($798/2,347 \times 100$). This means that, on average, one in every three emotionally-expressive lexical units undergoes semantic loss in translation — a figure classified in translation scholarship as an "average level of loss."

This indicator, which follows directly from the

typological differences between the two languages (agglutinative versus analytic structure), was established through expert evaluation. A panel of five translators and three literary scholars rated every grammatical transformation (verb tense, modality, syntactic restructuring) on a five-point scale, where 5 indicated that the psychological effect was fully preserved and 1 indicated that it was entirely lost. The mean rating was 3.6, corresponding to a weakening rate of 28%.

This indicator was evaluated using the translation-strategy classification proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958). Of the 189 cultural realia identified in the source text, the translation strategies applied were distributed as follows: transliteration with a gloss, 92 instances (48.7%); functional analogy, 54 instances (28.6%); omission, 36 instances (19.0%); and full descriptive translation, 7 instances (3.7%). Realia that were omitted or rendered through an inaccurate analogy were classified as "insufficiently transferred," giving 36 instances, or 19%.

All statistical computations were carried out in AntConc 4.2.0. Word frequency was calculated using the Word List function, and collocations were identified using the Clusters/N-Grams function (three- to four-word combinations). Inter-rater reliability was confirmed through Cohen's Kappa coefficient, which returned a value of 0.89, indicating a high level of agreement.

The statistical findings reported here apply specifically to the collection "Dunyoning ishlari" and its English translation; indicators may differ for other literary works or other translators.

CONCLUSION

The typological differences between Uzbek and English are profound and multidimensional, spanning morphological structure (agglutinative versus analytic), syntactic organisation (SOV versus SVO), the lexical-semantic system (realia, phraseological units, emotional lexis) and grammatical categories (the verb

system, person marking, case, modality). These differences generate serious challenges in the translation of literary prose. A translator must possess not only deep command of both language systems but also cultural competence, creative ability and literary sensitivity. Fully conveying the national colour, psychological depth and emotional expressiveness of Uzbek literature into English represents one of the most demanding tasks a translator can undertake.

The findings of this study indicate that successful translation between typologically distant languages such as Uzbek and English depends on the combination of typological knowledge, cultural competence, creative approach, strategic choice and literary sensitivity. Only under these conditions can the rich traditions, deep content and unique artistic qualities of Uzbek literature find adequate expression in English and reach readers worldwide.

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