

The Expression Of Phraseological Units In Translation: On The Example Of The Fairy Tale “Shamshirboz”

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Abstract: This article analyzes the Russian translation of the fairy tale «Shamshirboz» originally recorded by A.Shukurov and translated by M.Abdurahimov. The study discusses the similarities between this tale and other fairy tales, the translator's skill, the rendering of idiomatic expressions used in Uzbek into Russian, and the use of syntactic transformation methods.

Keywords: Shamshirboz, fairy tale, storyteller, translation, translator, syntactic transformation.

Introduction: Folklore works, as unique and unparalleled examples of folk creativity, represent the artistic heritage that reflects each nation's history, worldview, customs, values, and aesthetic ideals. Such works are passed down orally from generation to generation, playing an important role in enriching the spiritual world of the people, preserving national identity, and educating future generations. Folklore works are not only the cultural heritage of a particular nation but also a part of the spiritual wealth of all humankind.

In particular, during the process of translating such works from one language to another – especially from Uzbek into Russian – not only linguistic but also cultural and semantic complexities arise. This is because the translator must always act as a mediator between two cultures. Their task is to convey the artistic imagery, national color, and spiritual content of the original work while ensuring that the translation remains clear and emotionally expressive in the target language.

This article aims to shed light on the complex process of translation by analyzing certain linguistic and cultural issues that arise during the translation of the Uzbek folk tale “Shamshirboz” into Russian. In particular, the study examines, on a scholarly basis, the genre features of the tale, its plot structure, the interpretation of its characters, and the challenges involved in translating the national phraseological expressions used in the

text.

The Uzbek folk tale “Shamshirboz,” one of the unique examples of the nation's oral heritage, embodies the traditional features of Uzbek storytelling and stands out for its logical structure, dynamic plot, and system of characters. This tale was recorded in 1957 in the city of Kitob, Kashkadarya region, from Abdug'ofur Shukurov, a representative of oral folk creativity, by the renowned folklorist Zubayda Husainova. The 37-page manuscript is currently preserved in the archive of the Institute of the Uzbek Language, Literature and Folklore of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan under inventory number No. 1316.

The fairy tale “Shamshirboz” has attracted interest not only on a national scale but also internationally, owing to its artistic qualities, the extraordinary elements within its plot, and its harmony with folk didacticism. In 1987, the tale was skillfully translated into Russian by M. Abdurahimov under the title “Shamshirboz i ego volshebnyy mech” (“Shamshirboz and His Magic Sword”) and was published in the collection “Zhemchuzhnoye ozherelye” [Zhemchuzhnoye ozherelye, 3:335]. Furthermore, in 2023, both the original Uzbek version and its Russian translation were included in the eighth volume, “Zmeyeborstvo” (“Dragon-Slaying”), of the “Skazki narodov Evrazii” (“Tales of the Peoples of Eurasia”) series published by Kalmyk State University.

The fairy tale “Shamshirboz” belongs to the category of three-part folk tales in terms of composition. The sequence of events in the plot develops in a chain-like manner, maintaining logical consistency and coherence throughout. The main storyline unfolds against the backdrop of the extraordinary adventures of three brothers—a motif typical of Uzbek folk tales. The events depicted in this tale, in terms of both content and compositional structure, resemble those of the tale “Uch oga-ini botirlar” (“The Three Heroic Brothers”). However, the development of the plot, the moral and didactic conclusions, and the artistic resolution in “Shamshirboz” possess distinctive features that set it apart from that tale.

In order to convey the characters of the fairy tale and to present events in a vivid and convincing manner, the storyteller makes extensive use of national phraseological expressions. In the following sections, we will discuss the issue of the translator’s skill in rendering the Uzbek phraseological units used in “Shamshirboz” into Russian.

It is well known that the fairy tale is the most dynamic genre of oral folk art, appearing frequently within other folklore genres and fulfilling an aesthetic function. “Like proverbs, fairy tales acquire an organic connection with them through their didactic character. Accordingly, a fairy tale and a proverb are more closely related in terms of content than in form” [Imomov K., 5:215]. Our folklorists have noted that, in order to enhance artistic and emotional expressiveness, imbue the narrative with life meaning, and demonstrate its educational value, fairy tales, like other folklore genres, make effective use of proverbs [Afzalov M., 1:103; Imomov K., 5:115]. Our folklorists have observed that, in order to enhance artistic and emotional expressiveness, imbue the narrative with life meaning, and demonstrate its educational value, fairy tales, like other folklore genres, make effective use of proverbs [Afzalov M., 1:103; Imomov K., 5:115]. In particular, the folklorist K. Imomov notes: “In fairy tales, proverbs are used to ensure the vivid and artistic expression of thoughts and reflections, to logically substantiate ideal ideas, to reject negative actions and situations, and to endorse goodness” [Imomov K., 5:184].

Y. Rahmatov comments on this matter as follows: “Usually, the content of proverbs is not fixed and stable; the expression embedded in a proverb changes depending on the context in which it is used, its purpose, the skill of the performer, and their worldview. While an idea in a proverb is expressed concisely and with deep meaning, when transferred to a fairy tale, it becomes greatly simplified and is conveyed in a way that is understandable to the listener, serving to enrich the tale’s content and, at the

same time, enhance the depiction of a particular situation” [Rahmatov Y., 6:111]. Indeed, in this fairy tale, proverbs serve precisely these functions.

At one point in the tale, the following proverb is cited:

“Brothers, there is an old saying: “O’limning hammasi – bir o’lim”, “Osilsang, baland dorga osilginki, oyog’ing erga tegmasin”. Shunda ham katta ma’no bor, shuning uchun borsak ham, bir arkoni davlatga boraylikki, ovimiz bir baror topsin, – degandan keyin yigitlar: – Barakallo, e o’g’lon, haqiqatni aytding, – deb dalaga chiqdilar [Skazki narodov Evrazii, 8:254–255] (All deaths are but one death,’ ‘If you are to hang, be hung so high that your feet do not touch the ground.’ There is great meaning in this, so let us go to the ruler with one rope so that our hunt may succeed.” After this, the young men said, “Well said, son, you have spoken the truth,” and set out into the field).

It is well known that the translation of fixed expressions, phrases, proverbs, and wise sayings is among the most complex processes in translation practice. This is because, during the translation of phraseological units, it is often difficult to find an equivalent expression in the target language. Therefore, when no direct equivalent exists, the translator naturally relies on their own creative skill. According to A.V. Fyodorov and K. Chukovsky, if proverbs and sayings in the source language are translated literally without adaptation, they may give rise to new proverbs and sayings in the target language, which can eventually be assimilated into it [Salomov G., 7:244–245]. G. Salomov emphasizes: “Translating the proverbs and sayings of another people literally requires great skill and caution. Otherwise, in trying to faithfully convey the national mindset of another people, one might reduce a proverb to a mere statement and a saying to a bland phrase” [Salomov G., 7:244]. This is because proverbs, sayings, and idioms are units that reflect the character and national identity of a people, and carelessness in their translation can diminish the artistic value of a work and lead to a deviation from the author’s original intent. Translation scholars pay serious attention to this issue for good reason, as certain proverbs, sayings, and phraseological expressions lose their essence when translated literally; the wisdom they contain, their unique national color, and their primary and figurative meanings may not be fully conveyed in the target language. In such cases, the translator must possess great skill and a deep understanding of the subtleties of both the source and target languages [Igamatova D., 4:57]. Therefore, the translator strives to apply their artistic insight to preserve the meaning of proverbs within the context of the text as faithfully as possible.

In the Russian translation: Недаром говорится: если вешаться, то на высокой виселице. Всякая смерть человеку одинакова. Поэтому я предлагаю: если уж идти на разбой, то на большой разбой: ограбить шахскую казну, забрать все сокровища. Это будет настоящее дело. – Молодец, верно говоришь, приятель, – поддержали его разбойники. – Если уж упасть, так с хорошего коня. [Skazki narodov Evrazii, 8:254-255]

In literary translation, transferring the subtleties of one language into another, preserving national characteristics, and reflecting the author's style is an extremely complex process. For example, the proverbs "O'limning hammasi – bir o'lim" and "Osilsang, baland dorga osilginki, oyog'ing erga tegmasin" were translated by M. Abdurahimov as "Всякая смерть человеку одинакова" and "Если вешаться, то на высокой виселице". In these translations, he effectively employed the phenomenon of syntactic transformation.

Syntactic transformation involves altering the syntactic functions of words and phrases, including: changing the order of words and sentences, omission – removing individual words from a sentence, addition – introducing extra words into a sentence, merging two sentences into one, splitting one sentence into two, and replacing a simple sentence with a complex one or vice versa. In the given example, the placement of the proverbs in the Russian translation demonstrates such syntactic transformations, reflecting both the meaning and stylistic nuances of the original.

If the Uzbek proverb "Osilsang, baland dorga osilginki, oyog'ing erga tegmasin" is translated literally into Russian, it would read: "Если вешаться, то на высокой виселице, чтобы ноги до земли не доставали". Since there is no exact equivalent of this proverb in Russian, the translator rendered it through a calque as the shorter form "Если вешаться, то на высокой виселице", omitting the second part of the sentence. This does not in any way diminish the quality or meaning of the translation.

The Uzbek proverb "O'limning hammasi – bir o'lim" has a Russian equivalent: "Всякая душа вкусит смерть" ("Every soul shall taste death"). However, the translator rendered it as "Всякая смерть человеку одинакова" ("For a human, all deaths are the same"), thereby preserving the original meaning. In our view, if M. Abdurahimov had used the equivalent expression "Всякая душа вкусит смерть" ("Every soul shall taste death"), the emotional-expressive nuance of the proverb could have been conveyed even more vividly in the translation.

In the Russian translation, M. Abdurahimov concludes

with the phrase "Если уж упасть, так с хорошего коня" ("Even if you fall, fall from a good horse"). Compared with the original, the Russian text undergoes greater syntactic transformation and is rendered more extensively. As noted above, syntactic transformation allows the translator to expand the context and add more appropriate words. "Transformations arise for certain reasons and are intended to achieve adequacy in translation" [Barkhudarov L., 2:190]. Similarly, M. Abdurahimov, in order to provide Russian-speaking readers with an adequate and fluent translation, enriches the text by adding a phraseological expression at the conclusion, thereby enlivening and polishing the work.

In both the Uzbek and Russian versions of the tale, the hero's journey is vividly depicted through expressions such as "temir kovushni kiyib" – "надев железные башмаки" ("putting on iron boots"), "temir xassaga tayanib" – "взяв железный посох" ("taking the iron staff"), and "qirq kechayu qirq kunduz" – "сорок дней и ночей" ("forty days and nights"), emphasizing the distance and hardships of the path. In "Shamshirboz", the departure of the brothers and their arrival at a location is described as follows:

Yo'l yurib, yo'l yursa ham mo'l yurib, otalari aytganday kech vaqtida oldilaridan bir masjid chiqdi. (As they journeyed on, traveling a long distance, just as their father had said, by evening they came upon a mosque.) [Skazki narodov Evrazii, 8:253]

In the Russian translation: Долго ли коротко ли они шли, и вот, как предсказывал отец, под вечер вышли к одной мечети. This rendering preserves the meaning of the original while slightly expanding the temporal aspect of the journey, illustrating the translator's use of syntactic transformation to maintain narrative flow and clarity for Russian-speaking readers. [Skazki narodov Evrazii, 8:253]

In this tale recounted by Abdug'ofur Shukurov, the phrase "yo'l yurib, yo'l yursa ham mo'l yurib" functions as an epic formula, used as a fixed expression in Uzbek folk tales. A corresponding formula exists in Russian folk tales: "долго ли, коротко ли они шли" ("whether they walked long or short"). This expression, indicating an indefinite distance, in both languages emphasizes the heroes' departure, their adventures along the way, and vividly conveys the vastness of the journey.

When rendering idioms and proverbs from one language into another, the translator must have a deep knowledge of the phraseology of both the source and target languages. If idioms are not distinguished from ordinary sentences and are translated word-for-word, the original meaning of the work can be distorted. Therefore, it is appropriate to use various methods in

translating idioms and proverbs, such as finding equivalents, calques, or lexical translation. In the translation of the “Shamshirboz” tale, M. Abdurahimov successfully conveyed the storyteller’s intentions and achieved an adequate translation. The idioms used by the narrator are expressed in the target language through equivalents or rendered as ordinary sentences, employing syntactic transformation techniques such as addition, expansion, or omission, enabling the reader to fully grasp the text.

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