The OSCAR PUBLISHING Services
International Journal Of Literature And Languages

VOLUME Vol.06 Issue04 2026
PAGE NO. 210-216
DOI 10.37547/ijll/Volume06Issue04-45

Degrees of Equivalence and Translation Methods of Proverbs with A Colour Component in English And Uzbek

Mengnarova Maftuna Toshboy qizi

Lecturer, Department of English Philology, Termez University of Economics and Service; independent researcher, Termez State University, Termez, Uzbekistan

Received: 16 March 2026; **Accepted:** 05 April 2026; **Published:** 30 April 2026

Abstract: This article examines to what extent proverbs with a colour component can be rendered between English and Uzbek. A corpus of 299 proverbs selected from printed collections (172 Uzbek and 127 English-language) was compared unit by unit with the proverbs of the other language and divided into four degrees of equivalence: full equivalent (9.0%), partial equivalent with a colour component (13.0%), functional analogue without a colour component (17.1%) and non-equivalent unit (60.9%). Full equivalents rest mainly on the white–black opposition; none were found among proverbs with the Uzbek components ko‘k ‘blue; sky’, yashil ‘green’ and ola ‘piebald’. Two regular changes of colour were identified: Uzbek ola corresponds to English black or white, and Uzbek oq ‘white’ (of hair) to English grey. The presence of a counterpart depends on the theme of the proverb and on the evaluation carried by the colour image: negatively evaluated colour images are shared by the two languages more often than positive ones. A translation method is proposed for each degree of equivalence.

Keywords: Proverb, colour component, equivalence, functional analogue, change of colour, descriptive translation, English, Uzbek.

Introduction: The translation of proverbs is a separate problem in translation studies, because a proverb is at once a ready-made sentence with a fixed form, a unit built on an image, and an expression of a particular community’s experience of life. If any one of these features is lost in translation, the proverb turns into an ordinary sentence. A colour word inside the proverb makes the task harder still: colour-term systems do not coincide across languages, one colour word may have several meanings, and the evaluation attached to a colour depends on the word it combines with.

When the correspondence between English and Uzbek proverbs is discussed, three groups are usually named – “full”, “partial” and “without equivalent” – and their shares are estimated rather than counted. The aim of this article is to establish the correspondence of proverbs with a colour component on the basis of a complete corpus, to divide it into degrees with explicit criteria, and to indicate a translation method for each degree.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nida (1964, pp. 159–160) distinguishes formal equivalence, oriented towards the form and content of the message, from dynamic equivalence, based on the “principle of equivalent effect”. For proverbs the second is decisive: a proverb rendered word for word may convey the content, but the reader will not recognise it as a proverb. Newmark (1988, pp. 108–109) notes that proverbs which are not culture-bound can carry their image into the other language, whereas in most proverbs the image changes. In Komissarov’s (1990, p. 53) typology the first type of equivalence preserves only the purpose of communication, and he illustrates it precisely with a proverb. Baker (1992, pp.

71–78) lists the strategies for fixed expressions: using a unit of similar meaning and form; using a unit of similar meaning but dissimilar form; paraphrase; omission. In Uzbek translation studies Musayev (2005, pp. 183–207) names four ways of rendering phraseological units, proverbs among them: by equivalents, by analogues, by calque and by description. Vlakhov and Florin (1980, pp. 199–201) insist that a proverb is a miniature work of art and should be translated as such.

In international paremiology the relation between the proverbs of two languages is described in similar terms. Fiedler (2014, pp. 309–310) distinguishes total, partial, zero and pseudo-equivalence, the last being "false friends" with the same constituents and image but a different meaning, and notes that total equivalence in all parameters is hardly realistic. Petrova (2014, pp. 243, 249–250) observes that two proverb corpora usually coincide in syntactic structure, logical pattern and message and differ mainly in their images, and that a contrastive study needs a stable tertium comparationis; in the present study that basis is the colour component. Colour terms in proverbs have so far been examined mostly within one language or language pair and in terms of frequency and symbolism: 134 Kurdish proverbs (Anwar & Najeeb, 2021), 147 Persian and 135 English units (Mowlaei Kuhbanani et al., 2024), 120 Azerbaijani units (Golshaie et al., 2026), the words for white and black in Russian and German proverbs (Krupnova, 2025). Their translation has been studied quantitatively only by Abakumova (2016, p. 71), who found that 82.5% of 84 English units with white and black are rendered into Russian without the colour component. No comparable data exist for English and Uzbek.

METHODOLOGY

On this basis four degrees were distinguished. A full equivalent is a proverb of the other language in which the colour, the meaning and the image are all close. A partial equivalent with a colour component shares the main idea and contains a colour word, but the colour or the image differs. A functional analogue without a colour component expresses the same idea, but contains no colour word. A non-equivalent unit is a proverb for which no proverb with the same idea was found. The traditional category of "partial equivalent" was split in two because the translator faces two different situations: in the first the colour image is partly preserved, in the second it disappears altogether. Assigning a degree involves judgement, so one rule was applied to all borderline cases: proverbs that share only a theme, but not the main idea, were not counted as counterparts.

The material consists of 299 proverbs selected exhaustively from printed paremiographic sources. The Uzbek part (172 units) comes mainly from the collection of Mirzayev, Musoqulov and Sarimsoqov (2005), with additions from Afzalov and Ibrohimov (1978) and Jumaniyozov (1970). The English-language part (127 units) comes from Hislop (1862), Preston (1880), Apperson (1929), Speake (2015), de Ley (1998), Stone (2006) and other dictionaries. It is not homogeneous: it includes English proverbs (48), Scottish proverbs (36) and units recorded in English-language dictionaries as proverbs of other peoples (43). For this reason the term "English-language proverbs" is used, and the conclusions concern the paremiological stock available in English rather than the worldview of one nation. Only proverbs expressing a complete judgement were included; colour idioms such as black sheep or white lie were excluded. For every proverb a counterpart was sought first in the other part of the corpus and then among the other proverbs of the same sources. Each unit was additionally described by the theme of the proverb, the evaluation of the colour image (positive, negative, neutral) and the syntactic position of the colour word.

RESULTS

Overall distribution. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Distribution of proverbs with a colour component by degree of equivalence

Degree	Uzbek (172)	English (127)	Total (299)
Full equivalent	14 (8.1%)	13 (10.2%)	27 (9.0%)

Partial equivalent with a colour component	19 (11.0%)	20 (15.7%)	39 (13.0%)
Functional analogue without a colour component	38 (22.1%)	13 (10.2%)	51 (17.1%)
Non-equivalent unit (lacuna)	101 (58.7%)	81 (63.8%)	182 (60.9%)

Full equivalents are few: roughly one proverb in eleven. Six proverbs out of ten have no corresponding proverb in the other language, and this share is close in the two languages. Proverbs whose colour component can be preserved in translation – full and partial equivalents with a colour component – make up less than a quarter (22.1%). Of the 33 Uzbek proverbs that have a counterpart with a colour component, 23 contain black or white. No full equivalent was found for proverbs with ko‘k, yashil or ola.

Full equivalents. The 27 units form ten clusters, in each of which one or several Uzbek proverbs correspond to one or several English-language proverbs (Table 2).

Table 2

Clusters of full equivalents (examples)

Uzbek proverb (literal meaning)	English-language proverb	Shared idea
Qorani yuvgan bilan oq bo‘lmas (‘Washing does not make black white’)	A craw will no wash white; Frequent washing makes not the crow whiter	nature cannot be washed away
Tagi qora qoraligicha qolar (‘What is black at the root stays black’); Qoradan ortiq bo‘yoq bo‘lmas (‘No dye is stronger than black’)	Black will take no other hue	black takes no other colour
Qora itning uyati oq itga tegar (‘The black dog’s shame falls on the white dog’)	The black dog gets the food; the white dog gets the blame	the innocent bears the blame
Mullaning sallasi oq, yuragi – qora (‘The mullah’s turban is white, his heart is black’)	Black souls wear white shirts	white clothes, black inside
Kun qizarib botsa, qizingni uzat, tong qizarib otsa, tomingni tuzat (‘If the sun sets red, give your daughter in marriage; if the dawn breaks red, mend your roof’)	Red sky at night, shepherd’s delight; red sky in the morning, shepherd’s warning	the colour of the sky foretells the weather
Sharob uzumdan rang olar, odam odamdan rang olar (‘Wine takes its colour from the grape, a man from other men’)	Every man assumes the colours of his surroundings	a person takes on the colour of the environment
Qo‘ng‘iz bolasini oppog‘im der, kirpi bolasini yumshog‘im der (‘The beetle calls its young “my snow-white one”, the	Every craw thinks his ain bird whitest	one’s own child is the whitest

hedgehog “my soft one”’)		

The Uzbek proverbs in the table are quoted from Mirzayev et al. (2005, pp. 70, 280, 309, 311, 399, 490) and Jumaniyozov (1970), the English-language ones from Hislop (1862), Apperson (1929), Speake (2015), de Ley (1998) and Stone (2006). Seven of the ten clusters rest on the white–black opposition: the distinction between light and dark, clean and dirty has given rise to the same images in both languages – black that cannot be washed white, a black heart under white clothes. Six of the 13 English-language full equivalents, however, are not English or Scottish proverbs but units recorded in English-language dictionaries as proverbs of other peoples, while 26 of the 36 Scottish proverbs (72.2%) have no counterpart in Uzbek at all.

Partial equivalents and changes of colour. In the 39 units of this degree the idea is the same, but the colour image does not fully coincide. In some pairs the colour is kept and the image changes: “Qora ko‘ngildan oq so‘z chiqmas” (‘No white word comes from a black heart’) – “There’s no getting white flour out of a coal-sack” (Kelly, 1859). More important for translation practice are the pairs in which the image is close but the colour changes, since a word-for-word rendering of the colour leads to error (Table 3).

Table 3

Pairs with a change of colour

Uzbek proverb (literal meaning)	English-language proverb	Change
Ho‘kiz o‘lsa ham, ko‘zining olaligi qolmas (‘Even when the ox dies, the piebald of its eye remains’)	Black will take no other hue	ola → black
Ola bo‘lsa ham, o‘zimizniki (‘Piebald it may be, but it is ours’)	Every craw thinks his ain bird whitest	ola → white
Oh tortmasang, soch oqarmas (‘Without sighing, hair does not turn white’)	Horns an’ grey hair dinna aye come o’ years	oq → grey
Yaxshiga qora yuqmas, yomonga el boqmas (‘No black sticks to the good; no one looks at the bad’)	True blue will never stain	qora (negated) → blue
Qora kunlar ham o‘tar (‘Black days too will pass’)	Every cloud has a silver lining	qora → silver

The Uzbek proverbs in Table 3 come from Mirzayev et al. (2005, pp. 74, 460), Afzalov and Ibrohimov (1978) and Jumaniyozov (1970). Two changes are regular. Uzbek ola ‘piebald, variegated’, which has no corresponding colour component in English-language proverbs, is rendered by black when it marks a conspicuous, unwelcome trait and by white when it marks something dear because it is one’s own. Uzbek oq ‘white’ becomes English grey when hair and old age are meant.

Functional analogues without a colour component. Fifty-one units correspond in the other language only to a proverb without a colour word: “Qora pulni qora kunga saqla” (‘Keep a black coin for a black day’; Mirzayev et al., 2005, p. 366) – Save something for a rainy day; “Ne eksang, shu ko‘karar” (‘Whatever you sow will sprout’; p. 357) – As you sow, so shall you reap; “Ilondan qo‘rqqan ola chilvirdan hatlamas” (‘He who

fears a snake will not step over a piebald rope'; p. 429) – He that has been bitten by a serpent is afraid of a rope; "The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence" – Qo'shnining tovug'i g'oz ko'rinar ('The neighbour's hen looks like a goose'). What the other language lacks here is not the idea but the colour: qora kun 'black day' corresponds to rainy day, a weather image in place of a colour; ko'k in the meaning 'sky' corresponds to heaven; English green in the meaning 'unripe' corresponds to Uzbek images of youth such as nihol 'sapling'.

Non-equivalent units. This is the largest group (182 units). In the Uzbek part the lacunae have four sources: fixed colour collocations specific to national life – qora qozon 'black cauldron', i.e. one's own hearth ("Qarindoshim – qora qozonim, urug'im – unli chuvolim", p. 270), oq yo'l 'white road', yuzi qora 'black-faced', i.e. disgraced; the meaning 'discord' of ola ("Yer ola – yurt ola", p. 452); proverbs with ko'k 'sky' and the verb ko'karmoq 'to sprout, to prosper' ("Duo bilan el ko'karar, yomg'ir bilan yer ko'karar", p. 79); and proverbs built on rhyme ("Tirishgan – er, tirishmagan – qora yer", p. 36). In the English-language part the main sources are signs of the weather and the farming calendar ("A green winter makes a fat churchyard"), proverbs specific to Scottish life and beliefs ("Rowan-tree and red thread mak the witches tine their speed"), superstitions about the colour of clothes ("They that marry in green, their sorrow is sune seen") and blue as a symbol of fidelity ("Blue is love true") (Hislop, 1862; Speake, 2015).

What the presence of a counterpart depends on. Comparing the degrees of equivalence with the other features of the proverbs revealed two regularities. First, in both languages proverbs about labour and material life have the fewest counterparts: 69.2% of such Uzbek proverbs and 82.4% of the English-language ones are non-equivalent, since they are tied to particular household objects and conditions. Second, in the Uzbek part more than a quarter of the proverbs in which the colour image is evaluated negatively (26.4%) have an English-language counterpart with a colour component, whereas among those with a positive evaluation the figure is only 9.1%.

DISCUSSION

The results make the usual three-way division more precise. Baker's (1992) first strategy, a unit of similar meaning and form, is available for only 9% of the corpus, and even there it is not always the best choice: one of the nineteenth-century counterparts of "Qorani yuvgan bilan oq bo'lmas", There's no washing the blackamoor white, contains a word that is now obsolete and offensive, so that in a modern text the variant with the crow is preferable. The second strategy, a unit of similar meaning but dissimilar form, covers two different situations that should be kept apart: in 13% of cases the colour image survives in a changed form, and in 17% it disappears. Komissarov's (1990) observation that in proverb translation equivalence is often achieved only at the level of the purpose of communication describes exactly this last group.

The share of Uzbek proverbs whose colour component cannot be kept in a proverbial counterpart – functional analogues and non-equivalent units together, 80.8% – is close to the figure Abakumova (2016) obtained for English phraseological units with white and black translated into Russian (82.5%). The loss of the colour component in translation therefore appears to be a general tendency rather than a peculiarity of this language pair. Pairs such as qora kun 'hard times' (literally 'black day') and English black day 'day of disaster' correspond to what Fiedler (2014, p. 310) calls pseudo-equivalents: the same constituents and image, but a different meaning; such pairs are the main source of error in word-for-word rendering.

The asymmetry between negative and positive colour images is the least expected result. A negative evaluation expressed through colour – a black heart, blackness that cannot be washed off, a stain that rubs off – is largely common to the two languages. A positive evaluation expressed through colour is mostly national: images such as qora qozon, oq yo'l or ko'karmoq have no parallel among English-language proverbs. For the translator this means that a ready-made counterpart is least likely where an Uzbek proverb uses a colour to name something valued.

Non-equivalent proverbs require descriptive translation, and the analysis suggests that the decision to keep the colour should depend on its function. If the colour denotes the real hue of a thing, it is preserved: "Red brackens bring milk and butter" – "Qirqquloq qizarsa, sut-qaymoq mo'l bo'lar". If the colour is used

figuratively and the other language lacks that figurative use, its meaning is given instead: “Yer ola – yurt ola” – “When the land is at odds, the people are at odds”. If the colour is a symbol, it is preserved and explained: oq yo‘l – “a white road”, the blessing spoken before a journey. In all three cases the conciseness and the parallel structure of the proverb should be kept; rhyme, by contrast, is usually lost and can be compensated for by repetition or strict parallelism.

Two limitations must be borne in mind. The corpus is based on printed collections and dictionaries: it shows which proverbs are recorded, not how often they are used today. And because the English-language part includes proverbs of other peoples, the degree of closeness between the two languages depends on which sources are admitted; the figures given here hold for the English-language paremiological stock in this broad sense. Uzbek analogues without a colour component were recorded only when their text was found in the sources of the corpus, so the share of non-equivalent English-language units may be somewhat overstated.

CONCLUSION

1. The correspondence of proverbs with a colour component between English and Uzbek is best described in four degrees: full equivalent, partial equivalent with a colour component, functional analogue without a colour component, and non-equivalent unit. This classification makes it possible to assign a translation method to each degree: a ready-made counterpart; a figurative counterpart of the other language, in which the colour may change; a functional analogue or a literal translation, as the text requires; and descriptive translation.

2. Of the 299 proverbs of the corpus, 27 (9.0%) have a full equivalent, 39 (13.0%) a partial equivalent with a colour component and 51 (17.1%) a functional analogue without a colour component; 182 (60.9%) are non-equivalent. The colour component can be preserved in translation in less than a quarter of cases.

3. Full equivalents form ten clusters and rest mainly on the white–black opposition; there are none among proverbs with ko‘k, yashil and ola.

4. Two regular changes of colour were identified: Uzbek ola – English black or white; Uzbek oq (of hair) – English grey. They should be recorded in bilingual dictionaries.

5. Negatively evaluated colour images are shared by the two languages more often than positive ones, and proverbs about labour and material life are the least translatable by a proverb.

6. In descriptive translation the natural hue of a thing and the symbol are preserved (the symbol is explained), while a figuratively used colour is replaced by its meaning.

REFERENCES

1. Abakumova, I. A. (2016). Akhromaticheskie tsveta v angliyskikh frazeologizmakh i varianty ikh perevoda [Achromatic colours in English phraseological units and variants of their translation]. Filologicheskie nauki. Voprosy teorii i praktiki, 12(66), part 3, 69–72.
2. Afzalov, M., & Ibrohimov, S. (1978). O‘zbek xalq maqollari [Uzbek folk proverbs]. Fan.
3. Anwar, H. B., & Najeeb, D. D. (2021). Colour terms in Bahdini Kurdish proverbs. Humanities Journal of University of Zakho, 9(4), 1000–1010. https://doi.org/10.26436/hjuoz.2020.9.4.768
4. Apperson, G. L. (1929). English proverbs and proverbial phrases: A historical dictionary. J. M. Dent & Sons.
5. Baker, M. (1992). In other words: A coursebook on translation. Routledge.
6. Fiedler, S. (2014). Proverbs and foreign language teaching. In H. Hrisztova-Gotthardt & M. Aleksa Varga (Eds.), Introduction to paremiology: A comprehensive guide to proverb studies (pp. 294–325). De Gruyter Open.
7. Golshaie, R., Pirzadeh, M., & Nourzadeh, F. (2026). Color-related conceptual metaphors in Azerbaijani Turkish proverbs and idioms: A cognitive linguistic approach. Research in Western Iranian Languages and Dialects, 14(2), 47–60. https://doi.org/10.22126/jlw.2026.13674.1887
8. Hislop, A. (1862). The proverbs of Scotland. Edinburgh.
9. Jumaniyozov, R. (1970). O‘zbek xalq maqollari [Uzbek folk proverbs]. Fan.
10. Kelly, W. K. (1859). Proverbs of all nations, compared, explained, and illustrated. W. Kent & Co.

11. Komissarov, V. N. (1990). Teoriya perevoda (lingvisticheskie aspekty) [Theory of translation (linguistic aspects)]. Vysshaya shkola.

12. Krupnova, N. A. (2025). Polisemiya koloronimov «belyy» i «chernyy» v poslovitsakh i pogovorkakh russkogo i nemetskogo yazykov [Polysemy of the colour terms 'white' and 'black' in Russian and German proverbs and sayings]. Professional Discourse & Communication, 7(2), 93–112. https://doi.org/10.24833/2687-0126-2025-7-2-93-112

13. Ley, G. de. (1998). International dictionary of proverbs. Hippocrene Books.

14. Mirzayev, T., Musoqulov, A., & Sarimsoqov, B. (2005). O'zbek xalq maqollari [Uzbek folk proverbs]. Sharq.

15. Mowlaei Kuhbanani, H., Oraki, A., & Bahramnejad, A. (2024). A contrastive study of color-terms in Persian and English proverbs based on Berlin and Kay theory. Journal of Sociolinguistics, 7(1), 83–96. https://doi.org/10.30473/il.2024.69618.1619

16. Musayev, Q. (2005). Tarjima nazariyasi asoslari [Fundamentals of translation theory]. Fan.

17. Newmark, P. (1988). A textbook of translation. Prentice Hall.

18. Nida, E. A. (1964). Toward a science of translating. E. J. Brill.

19. Petrova, R. (2014). Contrastive study of proverbs. In H. Hrisztova-Gotthardt & M. Aleksa Varga (Eds.), Introduction to paremiology: A comprehensive guide to proverb studies (pp. 243–261). De Gruyter Open.

20. Preston, T. (1880). A dictionary of English proverbs and proverbial phrases. Whittaker & Co.

21. Speake, J. (Ed.). (2015). The Oxford dictionary of proverbs (6th ed.). Oxford University Press.

22. Stone, J. R. (2006). The Routledge book of world proverbs. Routledge.

23. Vlakhov, S., & Florin, S. (1980). Neperevodimoe v perevode [The untranslatable in translation]. Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya.