

ISSUES IN TRANSLATING METAPHORS BETWEEN GERMAN AND UZBEK

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Annotation: This article investigates the linguistic and cultural issues involved in translating metaphors between German and Uzbek. By exploring metaphor theory, cognitive and cultural differences, and translation strategies, it offers a comprehensive view of how metaphorical meaning is interpreted and adapted across languages. The study uses comparative analysis of real-world texts to reveal the limitations of literal translation and the importance of cultural context.

Keywords: Metaphor, translation, German, Uzbek, cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphor, cross-cultural communication, metaphor theory

Introduction. Metaphor is a central feature of human language and thought, enabling abstract concepts to be understood through more concrete, familiar experiences. The phrase "Time is money" illustrates how an abstract concept (time) is metaphorically structured in terms of a more tangible domain (money). Such expressions are not unique to English but are found in all languages. However, how metaphors are formed and used varies significantly across cultures and linguistic systems. In the context of translation, metaphors pose one of the most persistent challenges [1,2]. Unlike purely referential language, metaphors are embedded with cultural, emotional, and cognitive significance. Translating them often requires more than linguistic equivalence—it demands a deep understanding of both the source and target cultures. This complexity becomes especially evident when translating between languages with different structural and cultural underpinnings, such as German and Uzbek. German, an Indo-European language, has a long tradition of philosophical and literary metaphor use, with influences from Christian theology, Enlightenment thinking, and modern technological society [3]. Uzbek, a Turkic language, is shaped by Islamic literature, oral traditions, and a collectivist worldview. These differences manifest in metaphorical structures that may have no direct equivalents. This paper aims to explore the issues in translating metaphors between German and Uzbek through a structured framework [4]. The core objectives are:

To examine metaphor as a cognitive and cultural phenomenon.

To identify common metaphor types in German and Uzbek.

To analyze translation difficulties and evaluate common strategies.

To propose guidelines for effective metaphor translation between these languages.

Methodology

This study combines qualitative and comparative research methods. The approach is rooted in cognitive linguistics, particularly the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) introduced by Lakoff and Johnson

(1980). According to CMT, metaphors are conceptual mappings between source and target domains that reflect how individuals perceive and categorize their experiences [6].

Data Collection

The primary data sources for this study include [7]:

Literary works by authors such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German) and Abdulla Qodiriy (Uzbek). News and political discourse from Der Spiegel (Germany) and UzA (Uzbekistan). Translated materials (both professional and amateur) in literature, journalism, and academic writing. Approximately 200 metaphorical expressions from each language were collected and categorized according to their conceptual domains, such as [8]:

Life as a journey

Emotions as forces of nature

Mind as a container

Time as a valuable resource

Analysis Framework

The analysis follows the steps:

Identification of metaphorical expressions in both languages. Categorization based on metaphorical domains and cognitive structure. Comparison to find direct, partial, or non-equivalent metaphor mappings. Strategy Evaluation of how metaphors are translated, using Newmark's (1988) and Schäffner's (2004) typologies [9].

Strategies considered include:

Literal translation

Metaphorical substitution

Cultural adaptation

Paraphrasing

Omission

Results

Conceptual Domains in German and Uzbek

The analysis revealed overlapping domains in metaphor use but significant differences in metaphorical framing: German metaphors tend to use industrial, war-related, and Christian imagery.

Example: Die Wirtschaft liegt im Koma (The economy is in a coma).

Uzbek metaphors often draw from nature, family, and Islamic tradition.

Example: Ko'ngil daryodek to'lqinlanadi (The heart ripples like a river).

While both languages use metaphors to describe emotions, time, and relationships, the imagery used reflects cultural specificities.

Translation Challenge

Several recurring issues were identified: Lack of Equivalence: Some metaphors have no conceptual counterpart in the target language.

Jemandem den Kopf waschen (to scold someone) is not idiomatically mirrored in Uzbek and is usually paraphrased

Cultural Alienation: Literal translations may confuse readers unfamiliar with the metaphor's source

context.

Das ist nicht mein Bier (That's not my problem) becomes meaningless if translated directly into Uzbek.

Semantic Distortion: Substituting metaphors can alter the emotional or rhetorical impact.

The German Blut und Boden (blood and soil), rich with historical connotation, loses its power in Uzbek due to differing historical context.

Strategy Usage

The observed translations used the following approaches:

Strategy	Frequency	Example
Literal Translation	15%	Zeit ist Geld → Vaqt bu pul
Cultural Substitution	30%	Ein Tropfen auf den heißen Stein → Bitta tomchi dengizda
Paraphrasing	40%	Den Kopf waschen → Qattiq tanbeh bermoq
Omission	10%	Den schwarzen Peter zuschieben often removed
Footnoted Translation	5%	Used in literary texts

Paraphrasing was the most common, especially in official translations. Cultural substitution was favored in journalistic and literary texts. Metaphor translation is not just a linguistic endeavor but a cognitive and cultural process that requires careful attention to both the surface and deep structures of language. The differences between German and Uzbek are rooted in their distinct grammatical systems, historical experiences, value systems, and modes of expression. This section explores how these differences shape metaphorical usage and what strategies can be used to navigate them effectively in translation.

Conceptual Universality vs. Cultural Specificity

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that conceptual metaphors arise from shared human experiences and are thus universal to some extent. For example, the metaphor life is a journey appears in many languages:

German: Der Lebensweg (life path), Er hat eine Kurve genommen (he took a turn)

Uzbek: Hayot yo'li (path of life), yurish yo'lini o'zgartirdi (he changed his walking path)

However, while the base metaphor is the same, the lexical realization varies significantly. This shows that even universal metaphors may be realized in culture-specific ways. This variation becomes critical in translation because the translator must recognize the metaphor at the conceptual level, not merely the lexical. Consider the German metaphor jemandem den Rücken stärken (to strengthen someone's back, i.e., to support someone). A literal translation into Uzbek (uning belini mustahkamlash) might not communicate the same message unless rephrased idiomatically as uni qo'llab-quvvatlash (to support him).

Metaphors in Political and Journalistic Discourse

Political texts frequently employ metaphors to simplify complex ideas and manipulate public opinion. German political discourse often uses metaphors derived from war, sports, or machinery:

Der Kanzler steht unter Beschuss (The chancellor is under fire)

Die Koalition läuft wie geschmiert (The coalition runs smoothly)

Translating such metaphors into Uzbek requires not only linguistic adaptation but political and cultural sensitivity. For example:

Kansler o'qqa tutilmoqda might be interpreted literally in Uzbek, unless paraphrased as kuchli tanqid ostida goldi (subject to heavy criticism).

Similarly, in Uzbek political discourse, metaphors from farming or construction are more common, due to historical and cultural associations with agrarian identity and nation-building:

Yangi yo‘l ochildi (A new path has been opened) — used metaphorically for policy change

Poydevor qo‘yildi (The foundation has been laid) — indicating the start of a reform

A German translation of these phrases would require adjustments to match German metaphor conventions. For instance, Poydevor qo‘yildi could be rendered as *Es wurde der Grundstein gelegt* (The foundation stone was laid), a metaphor familiar to German audiences.

Metaphors in Literary Translation

Literature is the domain where metaphors flourish most richly, often with deep emotional and cultural connotations. Uzbek literature frequently uses natural metaphors — rivers, mountains, birds — to express internal states:

Ko‘ngil daryosi toshdi (The river of the heart has overflowed) — expressing emotional excess

German literature, in contrast, often draws on metaphors from classical mythology, Enlightenment thought, or Christian theology:

Die Seele ist in Aufruhr (The soul is in turmoil)

Translating these metaphors requires aesthetic judgment. A literal rendering may not carry the same poetic impact or cultural resonance. Instead, translators must opt for functionally equivalent metaphors in the target language. For example, in Goethe’s *Faust*, metaphors of light and shadow reflect moral struggle. Translating these into Uzbek requires awareness of local metaphorical traditions:

Ich fühle Nacht in meiner Brust (I feel night in my chest) could become *Qalbimda zulmat to‘plangan* (Darkness has gathered in my heart), preserving the emotional tone while adapting the metaphor.

Metaphors and Linguistic Constraints

German is an inflected language with compound structures that allow the creation of new metaphors on the fly:

Wortschöpfung (word creation), Gedankenfabrik (thought factory), Herzenskälte (cold-heartedness) Uzbek, being an agglutinative language, uses suffixes and postpositions instead, and is generally less flexible in forming compound metaphors. Translators must then rephrase or break complex metaphors into simpler expressions. For example:

Herzenskälte → *yuraksizlik* (heartlessness) or *mehr yo‘qligi* (absence of love)

Gedankenfabrik → *fikr zavodi* might be technically correct but sounds unnatural; *fikr ishlab chiqaruvchi* (producer of thoughts) may be clearer.

Implications for Translation Strategy

From the data and comparative analysis, we observe: Literal translation works only for metaphors that share cognitive and cultural grounding. Substitution and paraphrasing are most successful when the metaphor’s function is retained. Footnotes may be necessary for literary or historical metaphors but should be used sparingly to maintain readability. Cultural annotations are useful in academic texts but may disrupt narrative flow in fiction. A flexible, context-dependent approach is thus essential for metaphor translation. The translator must ask: What does this metaphor mean in its context? What is its emotional effect? How is it received by the target audience?

Conclusion

The translation of metaphors between German and Uzbek involves more than a linguistic operation; it is an act of intercultural mediation. Metaphors are deeply embedded in the thought processes, cultural narratives, and emotional lives of speakers. While some metaphors are nearly universal, many are not,

and direct translation can lead to confusion, misinterpretation, or loss of meaning. This study showed that metaphor translation requires: An understanding of the conceptual metaphor behind the surface expression. Sensitivity to the cultural implications of metaphorical language. Creative adaptation to preserve the metaphor's function and emotional resonance. Literal translation, while sometimes adequate, often fails to capture the metaphor's essence. Paraphrasing and substitution—when carefully done—offer better solutions, especially when combined with cultural awareness. Literary translation requires special attention to aesthetics, while political and journalistic translation demands clarity and contextual accuracy.

Future research could explore metaphor translation in audio-visual media, social media communication, and multilingual education, where metaphors also play a powerful role. More importantly, incorporating metaphor studies into translator training programs would enhance competence and confidence in dealing with metaphorical language.

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