



Stylistic Functions of Phraseological Units in English and Uzbek Fiction

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Abstract

Phraseological units constitute one of the most expressive and stylistically marked layers of language. In literary discourse, idioms and phraseological expressions perform numerous stylistic functions including emotional intensification, characterization, humor, irony, sarcasm, and hyperbole. This article investigates the stylistic functions of phraseological units in English and Uzbek fiction and examines the ways these functions are preserved or transformed in translation. The study applies a qualitative contrastive and functional approach based on the theories of Vinogradov, Kunin, Nida, Newmark, Baker, and Munday. Literary examples from English and Uzbek fictional works are analyzed according to their stylistic role and translation strategy. The findings demonstrate that phraseological units contribute significantly to emotional expressiveness and narrative vividness, while translation often requires functional substitution, paraphrasing, compensation, and stylistic adaptation. The article also reveals that cultural specificity strongly influences the preservation of humor, sarcasm, and metaphorical imagery in translation.

Keywords: phraseological units, stylistics, literary translation, idioms, humor, sarcasm, hyperbole, English-Uzbek translation

Introduction

Phraseological units occupy a special place in linguistic systems because of their semantic integrity, expressive nature, and cultural specificity (Vinogradov, 1977; Kunin, 1984). Unlike free word combinations, phraseological expressions possess figurative meanings that frequently resist literal interpretation. In literary discourse, phraseological units are especially important because they enrich narration, intensify emotional expression, reveal character psychology, and create stylistic coloration. Modern linguistics increasingly examines phraseology not only as a lexical phenomenon but also as a stylistic and pragmatic instrument (Galperin, 1977; Simpson, 2004). Writers use idiomatic expressions to make fictional speech more vivid, natural, and emotionally engaging. Consequently, phraseological units become powerful tools for creating humor, irony, sarcasm, hyperbole, and emotional intensity.

The translation of phraseological units presents serious challenges because translators must preserve not only semantic meaning but also stylistic and emotional effects (Baker, 2018; Newmark, 1988). This task becomes even more difficult between culturally distant languages such as English and Uzbek. Therefore, the study of stylistic functions and translation strategies of phraseological units remains highly relevant in modern translation studies.

Phraseological theory has been extensively developed in Russian, English, and Western linguistics. Vinogradov (1977, p. 142) defined phraseological units as stable lexical combinations characterized by semantic integrity and reproducibility. Kunin (1984, p. 56) emphasized idiomaticity, figurativeness, and stability as the primary features of phraseological expressions. From the perspective of stylistics, phraseological units perform expressive and pragmatic functions. According to Galperin (1977, p. 89), stylistic devices intensify emotional and aesthetic impact in literary discourse. Phraseological units frequently function as expressive means because they contain metaphorical imagery and cultural associations. Translation scholars have also devoted considerable attention to idiomatic translation. Nida's theory of dynamic equivalence argues that translators should reproduce equivalent reader response rather than formal lexical similarity (Nida, 1964, p. 159). Newmark (1988, p. 47) distinguishes semantic and communicative translation, emphasizing the importance of preserving pragmatic effect. Baker (2018, pp. 66–77) classifies idiom translation strategies into equivalence, paraphrasing, omission, and substitution.

Methodology

The research applies a qualitative contrastive analysis method. Phraseological units were selected from English and Uzbek fictional works including novels by Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, Ernest Hemingway, Abdulla Qodiriy, and Abdulla Qahhor. The selected examples were classified according to their stylistic functions and translation strategies. The analysis of phraseological units in this article focuses mainly on the following functions: emotional-expressive function, humor and comic effect, irony and sarcasm, hyperbolic function, characterization, translation strategies and transformation.

Results and Discussion

The following five stylistic functions have been identified and analyzed by using examples from English and Uzbek discourse:

1. **Emotional and Expressive Function:** one of the most important stylistic functions of phraseological units is emotional intensification. Idiomatic expressions make narration more vivid and emotionally powerful. From *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain: "His heart sank" - Uzbek equivalent: "Ko'ngli cho'kdi." This phraseological unit expresses disappointment and emotional collapse through a downward metaphorical image. The idiom is stylistically more expressive than the neutral phrase "he became sad." Both English and Uzbek versions preserve emotional intensity and metaphorical movement. This example demonstrates near-complete phraseological equivalence because it successfully preserves: emotional tone, metaphorical imagery and stylistic intensity. Another example from *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens: "To add fuel to the fire" - Uzbek equivalent can be "Olovga moy quyish." The expression intensifies conflict and emotional tension. The metaphorical image of increasing fire is preserved identically in Uzbek. This phraseological unit contributes to dramatic narration and emotional escalation.
2. **Characterization Function:** phraseological units frequently reveal social background, emotional

condition, and personal traits of fictional characters. From *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain: "He was scared to death." -In Uzbek it can be translated as: "qattiq qo'rqib ketdi." The English phraseological unit contains hyperbolic exaggeration. Twain uses colloquial idioms to create realistic folk speech and characterize Huck as a simple rural boy. In Uzbek translation, the hyperbolic component becomes weaker because the idiom is rendered descriptively. Stylistic peculiarity is hyperbole and translation strategy is descriptive paraphrasing. We can analyze another example taken from *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen: "She lost her head." Uzbek equivalent would be "Es-hushini yo'qotdi." This idiom characterizes emotional instability and impulsive behavior. Austen frequently uses phraseological expressions to reveal emotional restraint and social manners of characters. The Uzbek translation preserves semantic meaning but slightly weakens metaphorical imagery. It is a partial equivalence.

3. **Humor and Comic Effect:** Phraseological units often create comic effects because of exaggeration, colloquial imagery, or unexpected contextual usage. "I nearly died laughing." It is a phrase from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and it creates hyperbolic humor. In Uzbek we can translate it as "Kulaverib o'lib qolay dedim." This hyperbolic phraseological unit creates humorous exaggeration. The expression intensifies comic effect while maintaining colloquial naturalness. Both versions preserve emotional and humorous intensity so this is a full functional equivalence. "He made a mountain out of a molehill" – from *Three Men in a Boat* by Jerome K. Jerome. Uzbek equivalent of this idiom: "Pashshadan fil yasadi." Both English and Uzbek idioms ridicule exaggeration through comic imagery. The humorous effect is preserved because both cultures possess equivalent metaphorical models. This is a full phraseological equivalence
4. **Irony and Sarcasm in Phraseological Units:** phraseological units frequently function as instruments of irony and sarcasm in literary discourse. A good example for this is from *Oliver Twist*: "He is a fine gentleman indeed." Dickens uses irony to criticize hypocrisy and false morality. The phraseological structure gains sarcastic meaning through contextual opposition. Literal translation may fail to preserve ironic nuance unless the translator reproduces contextual tone. Another glaring example is from *Pride and Prejudice*: "What an excellent idea!" In this context, the phrase expresses sarcasm rather than admiration. The ironic effect emerges from contextual contradiction between literal meaning and communicative intention. Austen frequently employs ironic phraseological expressions to criticize social hypocrisy and superficial manners. In Uzbek translation, the sarcastic tone may require lexical intensification or punctuation adaptation. In terms of translation method, it is a pragmatic adaptation.
5. **Hyperbolic Function of Phraseological Units:** hyperbole is one of the most common stylistic effects created by phraseological expressions. A clear example can be taken from *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway: "He was dead tired." Uzbek equivalent: "Juda holdan toygan edi." The phraseological unit exaggerates physical exhaustion. Hemingway's concise style uses idiomatic intensification sparingly but effectively. The Uzbek translation preserves meaning but weakens hyperbolic image

Conclusion

Phraseological units constitute an essential stylistic component of both English and Uzbek fictional discourse. Their figurative and expressive nature enables writers to intensify emotional impact, create humor and irony, characterize literary heroes, and reflect national and cultural identity. The analysis conducted in this study demonstrates that phraseological units perform numerous stylistic functions, including emotional expressiveness, hyperbole, sarcasm, comic effect, and pragmatic intensification. The comparative analysis of English and Uzbek literary examples revealed that the translation of phraseological units is a complex linguistic and cultural process. Translators must preserve not only semantic meaning but also stylistic coloring, emotional intensity, and communicative effect. However, due to cultural asymmetry and differences in metaphorical systems, complete phraseological equivalence is relatively rare. As a result, translators frequently employ strategies such as functional substitution, partial equivalence, descriptive paraphrasing, compensation, and pragmatic adaptation.

The research further demonstrates that humorous and sarcastic phraseological units present particular difficulties in translation because their stylistic effect often depends on cultural background, contextual implication, and metaphorical imagery. In many cases, the preservation of communicative and emotional

effect becomes more important than literal reproduction of lexical structure. The findings confirm that successful translation of phraseological units requires not only linguistic competence but also intercultural awareness and stylistic sensitivity.

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