

RECREATING FORM, IMAGERY, AND EMOTION IN TRANSLATING POETRY FROM UZBEK TO ENGLISH

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Abstract. This article explores the complex process of translating poetry from Uzbek to English, focusing on the recreation of poetic form, imagery, and emotional depth. Uzbek poetry, known for its rich metaphoric language, rhythmic structures, and deep emotional expression, poses unique challenges in translation. By applying theories from translation studies and comparative literature, this research analyzes how translators can effectively preserve the original poem's essence. Through selected case studies, it becomes evident that successful poetic translation requires not only linguistic proficiency but also cultural sensitivity and creative adaptation. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of cross-cultural literary translation and the strategies used to retain poetic quality across languages.

Keywords: poetry translation, poetic form, metaphor, imagery, emotion, Uzbek literature, cultural adaptation, comparative analysis

I. Introduction

Poetry is among the most challenging forms of literature to translate due to its unique blend of form, meaning, and emotional expression. Uzbek poetry, with roots in classical Persian and Turkic traditions, is particularly rich in metaphor and rhythm. Translating such poetry into English entails more than literal word-for-word conversion; it requires reimagining the poem so it resonates emotionally with a new audience while remaining faithful to the original intent.

Translators often struggle with whether to prioritize form (rhyme, rhythm), content (literal meaning), or feeling (emotional tone). Each decision shapes how the translated poem is perceived. This paper investigates how these elements can be successfully recreated when translating Uzbek poetry into English, with specific focus on form, imagery, and emotion.

II. Methodology

This study applies qualitative analysis to selected Uzbek poems and their English translations. Poems by renowned Uzbek poets such as Erkin Vohidov, Abdulla Oripov, and Zulfiya were chosen due to their linguistic richness and emotional resonance. The analysis examines:

Form: How rhythm, meter, and structure are adapted in translation.

Imagery: How metaphors, similes, and symbols are recreated.

Emotion: How the tone and sentiment of the original are preserved.

A comparative approach is used, with original and translated versions analyzed side by side. Translation strategies are discussed in light of relevant theories by scholars such as Eugene Nida, Peter Newmark, and Lawrence Venuti.

III. Analysis and discussion

1. Recreating Poetic Form

Uzbek poetry often utilizes fixed meters, rhyme schemes, and repetition. In translation, especially into English, strict adherence to these forms can result in awkward or unnatural phrasing. For instance, Erkin Vohidov’s lyrical poem uses “musaddas” rhyme (AABAAB). The English version, unable to replicate the exact scheme, instead uses free verse to prioritize fluidity. While the sound effect changes, the translator retains the structural balance by using parallel lines and repetition.

This shift highlights a key strategy: functional equivalence—replicating the purpose and effect of form rather than the form itself.

2. Preserving Imagery

Imagery in Uzbek poetry is deeply embedded in culture. Symbols such as the moon, tulip, nightingale, and desert often carry layered meanings. For example, in Abdulla Oripov’s poem, the tulip symbolizes martyrdom and love. A literal translation may lose this connotation. A culturally aware translation might use “crimson flame” instead, which conveys both color and emotional intensity.

Here, the translator’s role extends beyond language into cultural mediation, ensuring that imagery makes sense in the new context while evoking similar feelings.

3. Conveying Emotion

Emotional intensity is a hallmark of Uzbek poetry. The sorrow of separation, patriotic pride, and mystical love are expressed through tone and metaphor. Zulfiya’s poem about motherly love uses gentle rhythm and soft consonants to convey tenderness. The English version mirrors this by using smooth flowing diction and avoiding harsh sounds.

Emotion is conveyed not only through meaning but through sound and cadence. Translators must thus be attentive to the musicality of the target language, even if that means adjusting syntax or word choice.

IV. Conclusion

Translating poetry from Uzbek to English is a delicate balance of fidelity and creativity. The translator must navigate structural differences, cultural symbols, and emotional resonance. As shown through the analysis, there is no single “correct” way to translate a poem—each choice reflects an interpretation.

Ultimately, successful poetic translation involves re-creation, where the translator acts as both interpreter and poet. By preserving the essence of form, the depth of imagery, and the strength of emotion, translated poetry can cross linguistic boundaries while honoring its roots.

This study not only contributes to the field of translation studies but also emphasizes the cultural value of Uzbek poetry in a global literary context.

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