LINGUISTIC NUANCES AND CULTURAL BARRIERS IN LITERARY TRANSLATION: ON THE EXAMPLE OF UZBEK AND GERMAN PROSE

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Abstract: This article examines the complex interplay of linguistic nuances and cultural barriers in the literary translation of prose between Uzbek and German. Drawing on comparative analysis of selected works of Uzbek classical and modern prose and their German counterparts or translations, the study explores how semantic, stylistic, pragmatic, and cultural asymmetries affect the transfer of meaning, aesthetic effect, and reader reception. Particular attention is paid to culture-specific concepts, idiomatic expressions, narrative perspective, and the challenges of rendering socio-historical contexts. The research demonstrates that successful literary translation requires not only linguistic competence but also deep intercultural awareness and strategic decision-making between foreignization and domestication approaches. Practical recommendations are offered for translators, literary scholars, and educational institutions engaged in Uzbek–German literary exchange.

Keywords: literary translation, linguistic nuances, cultural barriers, Uzbek prose, German prose, intercultural communication, domestication, foreignization, translation strategies, comparative literature

Introduction

Literary translation occupies a unique position at the intersection of linguistics, cultural studies, and aesthetics. Unlike pragmatic or technical translation, it aims not only to convey propositional content but also to recreate the artistic, emotional, and cultural resonance of the original text [1, pp. 23-31]. When the source and target languages belong to distant cultural and linguistic families - as is the case with Uzbek (Turkic family) and German (Germanic family) - the difficulties multiply.

Uzbek prose is characterized by rich oral-narrative traditions, dense cultural allusions, and a strong emphasis on collective values, hospitality, and historical memory. German prose, by contrast, often privileges precision, psychological interiority, philosophical abstraction, and complex syntactic structures [2, pp. 45-53]. These differences generate numerous linguistic nuances and cultural barriers that the translator must navigate.

In the context of growing cultural exchange between Uzbekistan and German-speaking countries, the quality of literary translation has acquired both scholarly and practical importance. The present article seeks to analyze the principal types of difficulties encountered in translating Uzbek and German prose and to evaluate strategies that can mitigate loss of meaning and aesthetic effect.

Main Part

1. Linguistic nuances in Uzbek-German literary translation

Linguistic nuances encompass differences at the levels of lexis, morphology, syntax, and stylistics.

Uzbek is an agglutinative language with a flexible word order and a rich system of suffixes that encode modality, aspect, and evidentiality. German, as an inflectional language with relatively rigid word order and extensive use of compound nouns, presents a different structural logic [3, pp. 67-75]. Translators frequently face the problem of rendering Uzbek evidential markers or honorific forms that have no direct equivalents in German.

Lexical gaps are particularly evident in culture-bound vocabulary. Concepts such as *mahalla* (traditional neighbourhood community), *mehmondo'stlik* (sacred hospitality), or *or-nomus* (honour

and dignity) resist one-to-one translation and often require explanatory strategies or approximate functional equivalents [4, pp. 112-120]. Conversely, German abstract nouns and compound formations (e.g., *Weltschmerz*, *Sehnsucht*, *Zeitgeist*) pose challenges when rendered into Uzbek, where more concrete or descriptive paraphrases may be needed [5, pp. 88-96].

Stylistic nuances also play a crucial role. Uzbek classical prose often employs rhythmic repetition, proverbs, and elevated rhetorical figures rooted in oral tradition. German literary prose, especially in modernist and contemporary works, tends toward syntactic complexity, free indirect discourse, and understatement. The translator must decide whether to preserve the rhetorical density of the source or to adapt it to the stylistic expectations of the target readership [6, pp. 34-42].

2. Cultural barriers and their manifestation in prose: Cultural barriers arise from divergent worldviews, historical experiences, and social norms.

Uzbek prose frequently embeds references to Islamic ethics, Soviet-era collective memory, rural-urban contrasts, and traditional gender roles. German readers may lack the background knowledge necessary to interpret these allusions fully. Conversely, German prose may contain references to Christian symbolism, Enlightenment rationalism, or post-war trauma that require contextualization for Uzbek audiences [7, pp. 55-63].

A particularly sensitive area is the translation of humour, irony, and understatement. What appears humorous or subtly critical in one culture may be perceived as offensive or opaque in the other. Similarly, the portrayal of interpersonal relations - hierarchy, indirectness, and emotional restraint - differs markedly between the two literary traditions [8, pp. 101-109].

Historical and ideological layers further complicate the task. Translations of Uzbek works written during the Soviet period into German must carefully handle ideological vocabulary and censored subtexts, while German works dealing with National Socialism or the division of Germany demand sensitive rendering for readers whose historical frame of reference is different [9, pp. 77-85].

3. Translation strategies: foreignization versus domestication

Following the theoretical framework of Venuti and other scholars, translators of Uzbek and German prose typically choose between foreignization (preserving the cultural otherness of the source text) and domestication (adapting the text to target-culture norms) [10, pp. 15-24].

In practice, a balanced approach often proves most effective. Culture-specific terms may be retained with footnotes or a glossary, while syntactic structures are adjusted for readability. Explicitation - making implicit cultural information explicit - is frequently employed, especially when translating for readers with limited background knowledge of the source culture [11, pp. 132-140].

Case studies of existing translations reveal that successful versions combine linguistic accuracy with creative compensation: when a proverb cannot be rendered literally, an equivalent target-language proverb or a descriptive paraphrase may restore the rhetorical effect. The translator's visibility and ethical responsibility become particularly important when dealing with politically or culturally sensitive material [12, pp. 48-56].

Discussion

The analysis confirms that linguistic nuances and cultural barriers in Uzbek-German literary translation are deeply interconnected. Purely linguistic solutions are insufficient; the translator must act as a cultural mediator capable of assessing the cognitive and emotional horizon of the target audience.

While theoretical models provide useful orientation, practical translation decisions remain context-dependent. Factors such as the intended readership (academic, general, or educational), the purpose of the translation (literary appreciation, intercultural dialogue, or language learning), and the publisher's policy all influence the final strategy.

Uzbek scholarship has increasingly emphasized the need for systematic comparative studies of Turkic and European literatures, yet concrete research on Uzbek-German prose translation remains relatively limited [13, pp. 22-30]. Expanding this field would benefit both translation practice and intercultural understanding.

Conclusions and Recommendations: Literary translation between Uzbek and German prose is a demanding intercultural enterprise that requires mastery of linguistic nuances and sensitivity to cultural barriers. The principal challenges lie in culture-bound vocabulary, stylistic conventions, historical allusions, and differing narrative traditions.

Recommendations:

1. Develop specialized bilingual glossaries and cultural commentaries for key Uzbek and German literary concepts.
2. Encourage collaborative translation projects involving native speakers of both languages and literary scholars.
3. Integrate modules on intercultural literary translation into university curricula in Uzbekistan and German-speaking countries.
4. Promote the publication of annotated bilingual editions that make cultural background accessible to readers.
5. Support empirical reception studies to evaluate how different translation strategies affect reader understanding and aesthetic appreciation.
6. Foster regular academic exchange and translation workshops focused on Uzbek-German literary relations.

Implementation of these measures would enhance the quality of literary exchange and contribute to deeper mutual understanding between the two cultures.

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