

Article

The Expression of National Identity in The English Translation of Uzbek Stories

Tursunova Munira Raxmonovna

English Teacher of Asia International University

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Abstract: This article examines the expression of national identity in the English translation of Uzbek short stories. The study explores how cultural values, linguistic features, and stylistic elements that reflect Uzbek national character are preserved, transformed, or weakened in translation. Particular attention is given to culture-specific vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, narrative voice, and implicit meaning. The research combines theoretical insights from translation studies with textual analysis of selected Uzbek literary works translated into English. The findings demonstrate that the transmission of national identity depends not only on lexical equivalence but also on the translator's cultural awareness and strategic choices.

Keywords: National Identity, Literary Translation, Uzbek Short Stories, Cultural Realia, Translation Shifts, Narrative Voice, Equivalence

1. Introduction

In the context of globalization, literary translation plays an essential role in introducing national cultures to the wider world. Through translation, literary works cross linguistic borders and become accessible to international readers. However, literary translation is not limited to transferring plot and characters. It also involves the transmission of cultural memory, national worldview, and collective identity. This is particularly true for Uzbek literature, where national identity is deeply embedded in everyday life, social relations, and symbolic imagery. Uzbek short stories are especially rich in cultural meaning. Writers such as Abdulla Qahhor and O'tkir Hoshimov portray national life through domestic scenes, family relationships, and moral values rather than large historical events. As a result, translating these stories into English requires more than linguistic competence. The translator must convey cultural nuance, emotional restraint, and implicit meaning. National identity in literature can be defined as the representation of a people's traditions, worldview, and social behavior within a literary text. It is expressed through cultural symbols, forms of address, household objects, and moral concepts such as patience, honor, and respect. These elements function as cultural markers that shape the reader's perception of the text. Modern translation studies view translation as a process of cultural mediation rather than mechanical substitution. The translator acts as an intermediary between two cultural systems. This perspective is particularly relevant when translating Uzbek stories into English, since many culture-specific elements do not have direct equivalents in the target language. Translators must decide whether to preserve original terms, explain them, or replace them with functional analogues. National identity is also encoded in linguistic form. Culture-specific vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, narrative voice, and implicit meaning all contribute to the national coloring of Uzbek prose. For example, kinship terms and domestic imagery reflect social hierarchy

and communal life. Idioms express worldview through metaphorical language, while silence and understatement often convey emotional depth more powerfully than explicit dialogue. The translation of such elements inevitably leads to transformation. Some aspects of national identity are preserved, while others are adapted or partially lost. These shifts do not necessarily indicate translation failure; rather, they reflect the interaction between two linguistic and cultural systems. This article aims to examine how national identity is expressed in the English translation of Uzbek short stories. It focuses on the linguistic and stylistic carriers of cultural meaning and analyzes how translators negotiate between fidelity to the source text and readability in the target language. By combining theoretical insights with textual analysis, the study seeks to identify patterns in the representation of Uzbek national identity in English translation.

One of the most visible carriers of national identity in Uzbek short stories is culture-specific vocabulary. Such words reflect everyday life, social structure, and traditional practices that are unique to Uzbek culture. When these lexical items are translated into English, they become key sites where national identity is either preserved or transformed. Culture-specific vocabulary in Uzbek prose includes terms related to community organization, household life, clothing, food, and kinship relations. Words such as *mahalla*, *dasturxon*, *chapan*, and various forms of address are deeply embedded in cultural experience. These items carry meanings that extend beyond dictionary definitions. They evoke social hierarchy, communal values, and traditional lifestyles. Therefore, their translation requires careful strategic decisions. One common strategy is **borrowing**, where the original Uzbek word is preserved in the English text. For example, in some English translations of Uzbek stories, the word *mahalla* is retained rather than replaced with "neighborhood." While both terms denote a residential area, *mahalla* implies a communal system based on mutual support, shared traditions, and collective responsibility. By preserving the original term, the translator maintains cultural specificity and signals to the reader that the concept is culturally distinct. Another strategy is **explicitation**, where the borrowed word is accompanied by a brief explanation. For instance, *dasturxon* may be translated as "dasturxon, the traditional cloth laid out for meals." In this case, the translator balances cultural preservation with reader comprehension. The Uzbek word remains visible, but its meaning becomes accessible to a foreign audience. In contrast, some translations employ **generalization or substitution**. Culture-specific items may be replaced with broader English terms such as "table," "robe," or "community." While this approach increases readability, it often reduces national coloring. For example, translating *chapan* simply as "coat" removes its cultural and symbolic associations with Uzbek tradition. Such choices demonstrate how lexical simplification can weaken the expression of national identity. Cultural realia are also closely connected with symbolic meaning. In Abdulla Qahhor's short story "*Anor*," the pomegranate functions not only as a fruit but also as a symbol of hope, dignity, and hardship. When translated into English as "pomegranate," the basic denotative meaning is preserved. However, the deeper cultural associations familiar to Uzbek readers may not be fully transmitted. This illustrates that even accurate lexical equivalents do not always convey the full cultural weight of a symbol. The analysis shows that the translation of culture-specific vocabulary involves constant negotiation between preservation and adaptation. Borrowing and explicitation tend to retain national identity, while generalization and substitution may dilute it. Translators must therefore balance cultural authenticity with communicative clarity. Their choices determine how Uzbek cultural reality is represented in English literary space. Thus, culture-specific vocabulary serves as one of the primary linguistic channels through which national identity is expressed, transformed, or partially lost in translation.

2. Materials and Methods

Another important layer through which national identity is expressed in Uzbek short stories is idiomatic language and narrative style. While culture-specific vocabulary reflects

material culture and social life, idioms and stylistic features reveal deeper aspects of worldview, emotional expression, and communicative norms. These elements are often more difficult to translate because their meaning is not always explicit. Uzbek idiomatic expressions frequently rely on metaphorical imagery drawn from everyday experience, nature, and social relations. For example, expressions describing patience, shame, or moral responsibility often employ figurative language that is culturally transparent to Uzbek readers. When translated literally into English, such idioms may sound unusual or lose their intended emotional effect. Therefore, translators often replace them with communicative equivalents that convey meaning rather than imagery. For instance, an Uzbek expression meaning *"his eyes opened"* may be translated as *"he finally understood."* In this case, the metaphorical image is removed, but the psychological meaning is preserved. This type of shift demonstrates how idiomatic translation prioritizes communicative clarity over formal correspondence. However, such adaptation may also reduce national coloring by eliminating culturally specific imagery. Narrative voice is another key marker of national identity. Uzbek short stories often reflect oral storytelling traditions, characterized by conversational tone, repetition, and emotional restraint. The narrator may address the reader indirectly, and much meaning is conveyed through implication rather than direct statement. This narrative style creates intimacy and cultural familiarity.

3. Results and Discussion

In English translation, this oral quality is sometimes softened. Repetitions may be reduced, and emotionally expressive particles may be omitted to conform to English literary norms. As a result, the translated narrative voice may appear more neutral or restrained. While this enhances readability for international audiences, it may also alter the cultural texture of the original text. Silence and understatement also function as stylistic devices in Uzbek prose. Characters often express suffering, dignity, or moral conflict without explicit verbalization. Emotional meaning is conveyed through gesture, pause, or minimal dialogue. Translating such implicit meaning presents a major challenge. English translations sometimes make these emotions more explicit, thereby clarifying psychological motivation but reducing interpretive subtlety. The analysis shows that idioms and stylistic features are crucial carriers of national identity. Their translation involves not only lexical substitution but also shifts in tone, rhythm, and narrative perspective. While translators strive to preserve meaning, the stylistic embodiment of national worldview often undergoes transformation.

The analysis carried out in this article demonstrates that the expression of national identity in the English translation of Uzbek short stories is a complex and multidimensional process. National identity is not conveyed through a single linguistic element but through the interaction of vocabulary, idiomatic language, narrative voice, and stylistic nuance. Each of these layers contributes to the cultural texture of the literary text and presents specific challenges in translation. The study has shown that culture-specific vocabulary functions as one of the most visible carriers of national identity. Terms related to communal life, domestic practices, and social relations often lack direct equivalents in English. Translators therefore employ strategies such as borrowing, explicitation, or generalization. While borrowing helps preserve cultural authenticity, generalization may reduce national coloring. This demonstrates that lexical choices play a decisive role in shaping how Uzbek cultural reality is represented in translation. Idiomatic expressions constitute a deeper level of national expression. Uzbek idioms encode worldview through metaphorical imagery that is culturally grounded. When translated communicatively, their figurative form may be lost, even if semantic meaning is preserved. This shift illustrates the tension between readability and cultural specificity. The translator must decide whether to maintain foreign imagery or prioritize target-language fluency. Narrative voice and stylistic structure also significantly influence the transmission of

national identity. Uzbek short stories often reflect oral storytelling traditions, emotional restraint, and implicit meaning. In English translation, these features may undergo modification due to differences in literary norms. Repetition, understatement, and silence are sometimes reduced or made explicit. Although such transformations improve accessibility for international readers, they may alter the emotional rhythm and cultural atmosphere of the original text.

4. Conclusion

Overall, the findings confirm that translation inevitably involves transformation. However, these transformations should not be interpreted solely as losses. Rather, they reflect the interaction between two linguistic systems and two literary traditions. Successful translation requires balancing cultural preservation with communicative clarity. Translators act as cultural mediators who reconstruct national identity within the interpretive framework of the target audience.

The study concludes that the expression of national identity in translated Uzbek short stories depends not only on linguistic equivalence but also on cultural awareness, stylistic sensitivity, and strategic decision-making. A nuanced understanding of these factors is essential for preserving the artistic and cultural value of Uzbek literature in global literary circulation.

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