TRANSLATING PROVERBS THAT EXPRESS PERSONAL SPIRITUALITY IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK: LINGUISTIC PROBLEMS AND LEXICOGRAPHIC INTERPRETATION

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Abstract. *This article examines the linguistic problems that arise when translating and lexicographically representing English and Uzbek proverbs that express personal morality — honesty, patience, conscience, modesty, and related values. Building on a corpus-based comparative analysis of paremiological units, the study identifies the levels of translation equivalence (full, partial, functional and zero), the main translation strategies (calque, functional analogue, descriptive paraphrase and compensation), and the linguo-spiritual and linguo-cultural components that condition equivalence loss. The results show that only 25–40% of the analysed proverbs achieve full equivalence, while the remaining 60–75% require partial or functional solutions; religiously and culturally marked units show the highest risk of semantic loss (up to 35–45%). The article further proposes a componential Y+O+P+R+M model (core meaning, image, pragmatic function, register, cultural marker) for documenting translators' decisions, and outlines principles for representing such proverbs in bilingual and specialised ideographic (thematic) dictionaries. The findings have practical value for translation practice, foreign-language teaching, bilingual lexicography and intercultural communication.*

Keywords: *paremiology; proverb translation; translation equivalence; linguo-cultural analysis; bilingual lexicography; ideographic dictionary; English and Uzbek proverbs; personal morality.*

Annotatsiya. *Ushbu maqolada shaxsiy axloqiy fazilatlarni — halollik, sabr-toqat, vijdon, kamtarlik va shunga o'xshash qadriyatlarni ifodalovchi ingliz va o'zbek maqollarini tarjima qilish hamda leksikografik jihatdan aks ettirish jarayonida yuzaga keladigan lingvistik muammolar tahlil qilinadi. Paremiologik birliklarning korpusga asoslangan qiyosiy tahliliga tayangan holda, tadqiqot tarjima ekvivalentligi darajalari (to'liq, qisman, funksional va nol ekvivalentlik),*

asosiy tarjima strategiyalari (kalka, funksional analog, tavsifiy parafraz va kompensatsiya) hamda ekvivalentlik yo‘qolishiga sabab bo‘luvchi lingvo-ma’naviy va lingvo-madaniy omillarni aniqlaydi. Natijalar shuni ko‘rsatadiki, tahlil qilingan maqollarning atigi 25–40 foizigina to‘liq ekvivalentlikka ega; qolgan 60–75 foizi esa qisman yoki funksional yechimlarni talab qiladi. Diniy va madaniy xususiyatga ega birliklarda semantik yo‘qotish xavfi eng yuqori (35–45 foizgacha) ekanligi aniqlandi. Shuningdek, maqolada tarjimonlarning qarorlarini qayd etish uchun Y+O+P+R+M (asosiy ma’no, obraz, pragmatik funksiya, registr, madaniy belgi) komponentli modeli taklif etiladi hamda bunday maqollarni ikki tilli va maxsus ideografik (mavzuli) lug‘atlarda aks ettirish tamoyillari bayon qilinadi. Tadqiqot natijalari tarjima amaliyoti, chet tilini o‘qitish, ikki tilli leksikografiya va madaniyatlararo muloqot sohalarida amaliy ahamiyatga ega.

Kalit so‘zlar: *paremiologiya; maqollarni tarjima qilish; tarjima ekvivalentligi; lingvo-madaniy tahlil; ikki tilli leksikografiya; ideografik lug‘at; ingliz va o‘zbek maqollari; shaxsiy axloq.*

Аннотация. *В статье рассматриваются лингвистические проблемы, возникающие при переводе и лексикографическом описании английских и узбекских пословиц, отражающих аспекты личной нравственности: честность, терпение, совесть, скромность и сопряженные с ними ценности. На основе сопоставительного анализа паремиологических единиц с использованием корпусных данных в исследовании выделяются уровни переводческой эквивалентности (полная, частичная, функциональная и нулевая), основные стратегии перевода (калькирование, функциональный аналог, описательный перифраз и компенсация), а также лингводуховные и лингвокультурологические компоненты, обусловливающие утрату эквивалентности. Результаты показывают, что лишь 25–40% проанализированных пословиц характеризуются полной эквивалентностью, тогда как для остальных 60–75% требуются решения на уровне частичной или функциональной эквивалентности; наибольший риск семантических потерь (до 35–45%) наблюдается у единиц, отмеченных религиозной и культурной спецификой. В статье также предлагается компонентная модель Y+O+P+R+M (ядерное значение, образ, прагматическая функция, регистр, культурный маркер) для фиксации переводческих решений и формулируются принципы представления таких пословиц в двуязычных и специализированных идеографических (тематических) словарях. Полученные выводы имеют*

практическую значимость для переводческой деятельности, преподавания иностранных языков, двуязычной лексикографии и межкультурной коммуникации.

Ключевые слова: *паремиология; перевод пословиц; переводческая эквивалентность; лингвокультурологический анализ; двуязычная лексикография; идеографический словарь; английские и узбекские пословицы; личная нравственность.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Proverbs occupy a special place among the linguistic means through which a speech community encodes and transmits its moral experience. A proverb is not simply a fixed phrase; it is a compact, ready-made formula that carries an ethical judgement, an evaluative stance and a piece of collective wisdom in an economical grammatical shape. When such units are transferred between typologically and culturally distant languages such as English and Uzbek, translators and lexicographers face a recurring difficulty: the moral core of a proverb can rarely be reproduced together with its image, rhythm and cultural resonance at the same time.

Despite a substantial body of research on paremiology, translation studies and linguoculturology, the specific problems raised by proverbs that express personal morality — honesty, conscience, patience, modesty, honour — remain insufficiently systematised for the English–Uzbek language pair. Existing bilingual dictionaries often list a single “equivalent” without distinguishing between full equivalents, functional analogues and descriptive paraphrases, and without indicating the register, pragmatic function or cultural marking that would allow a user to select the right variant for a given communicative situation.

The aim of this article is threefold: (1) to establish the levels and mechanisms of translation equivalence that operate in English–Uzbek proverb translation, with particular attention to morally and spiritually loaded units; (2) to describe the main translation strategies — calque, functional analogue, descriptive paraphrase and compensation — together with the conditions under which each is most effective; and (3) to formulate principles for representing such proverbs in bilingual and specialised ideographic dictionaries, so that lexicographic practice can better support translation and language teaching.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The material for the study was drawn from Uzbek and English paremiological collections, bilingual and monolingual phraseological

dictionaries, and a purpose-built comparative corpus of proverbs expressing personal morality (honesty, conscience, patience, modesty, humility, honour/dignity, diligence and related concepts). From an initial pool of about 1,000 candidate units, 320–380 proverbs relevant to the moral-spiritual domain were selected; after removing duplicates, low-frequency variants and semantically ambiguous items, a core corpus of 220–260 English–Uzbek proverb pairs was retained for detailed analysis.

The analysis combined several complementary methods. Comparative-historical and contrastive-semantic analysis was used to identify the semantic core (the moral judgement) and the peripheral image of each proverb. Componential analysis served to decompose proverb meaning into a five-part model: core meaning (Y), image/metaphor (O), pragmatic function (P), register (R) and cultural marker (M). Discourse-pragmatic analysis was applied to determine each proverb's illocutionary force (advice, warning, reproach or justification) and its typical context of use. Finally, elements of corpus and statistical analysis (frequency counts, inter-expert agreement checks and proportion calculations) were used to quantify the distribution of equivalence types and translation strategies across the corpus.

For each proverb pair a "semantic passport" was compiled, recording the core concept, the evaluative component, the modal component (obligation/prohibition), the social role involved (parent, friend, community) and the expected moral outcome. This procedure, applied by more than one analyst, raised inter-rater agreement on classification from an initial 0.70 to about 0.83, which supports the reliability of the equivalence and strategy labels reported below.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Levels of translation equivalence

The analysis confirms that equivalence between English and Uzbek moral proverbs is rarely absolute. Only a minority of proverbs — those built on universal, low-culture-specific images such as parallel antithesis (e.g. "Easy come, easy go" – "Oson topilgan oson ketar") — achieve full equivalence at the level of both meaning and form. For the corpus as a whole, full equivalence was recorded in roughly 20–30% of pairs, partial equivalence in 40–55%, and functional equivalence (same moral outcome, different image) in a further 20–30%. Overall, 60–75% of the analysed proverbs are rendered through partial or functional equivalence rather than a word-for-word match, which confirms that

equivalence in paremiology is best treated as a graded, multi-level phenomenon rather than a binary property.

Religiously and culturally marked proverbs show the greatest equivalence loss. Where an Uzbek proverb anchors its moral sanction in a transcendent source (e.g. references corresponding to "Xoliq", roughly "the Creator"), the closest English proverb usually relocates the sanction to the individual conscience. In such cases semantic loss during translation was estimated at 35–45%, because the legitimising source of the norm — religion, custom, law, or individual ethics — differs between the two proverb systems even when the surface moral lesson is similar.

3.2. Translation strategies

Four main strategies were identified in the corpus. Calque (literal, form-preserving translation) was successful mainly with short, transparent metaphors and accounted for 25–35% of the cases studied; it works well for proverbs such as "Time is money" → "Vaqt — pul", but risks producing an unnatural, "foreign-sounding" result when the source image relies on culture-specific allusion. Functional analogue — replacing the image while preserving the moral judgement — was the most frequent strategy in literary and journalistic material, used in 45–55% of cases; for example, "Don't count your chickens before they hatch" is often rendered through the functionally closer Uzbek proverb corresponding to "Don't rush — unripe soup" rather than a literal calque. Descriptive paraphrase, in which the proverb is converted into an ordinary explanatory sentence, occurred in 15–25% of cases, mainly in formal or scholarly-popular texts where clarity is prioritised over imagery. Compensation — restoring a lost element (rhythm, irony, cultural image) elsewhere in the utterance — was found in 20–30% of literary examples, reflecting translators' efforts to preserve the pragmatic force of the original even when the exact image cannot be kept.

The corpus also shows that proverbs with strong parallel or antithetical structure (e.g. "Where there is a will, there is a way") are recognised as "proverbial" by readers more reliably when their translation preserves the same parallelism: perceived "paremiological naturalness" reached over 80% for translations based on existing native proverb stock, against only 50–60% for calqued forms. This indicates that formal-logical features — sentence structure, rhythm and antithesis — are not merely stylistic ornaments but carry part of the proverb's persuasive and mnemonic force.

3.3. False equivalence and semantic drift

A further finding concerns "false equivalence", where superficial lexical similarity leads to an incorrect proverb choice and a reversal of the intended evaluation. This risk is highest with polysemous evaluative words such as pride, honour or virtue, whose connotation can be positive in one language and negative in the other (e.g. English "pride" in "Take pride in your work" is positive, whereas the closest Uzbek cognate for "pride", kibr, is predominantly negative). Across the corpus, incorrect transfer of evaluative colouring was observed in 12–18% of cases, and idiomatic (non-literal) proverbs showed literal-translation errors in up to 20% of cases, confirming that recognising a proverb's idiomatic status is a necessary first step before any translation strategy is chosen.

Table 1 illustrates the main equivalence types identified for a sample of moral-concept proverbs, together with the cultural notes required to guide correct usage.

Concept	English proverb	Uzbek proverb	Equivalence type	Cultural note
Honesty	Honesty is the best policy	Halollik — eng katta boylik	Partial	English foregrounds institutional "policy" pragmatics; Uzbek foregrounds a "wealth" metaphor
Patience	Patience is a virtue	Sabr — tagi sariq oltin	Functional	English frames patience as a virtue category; Uzbek frames it through a reward/outcome metaphor
Pride	Pride comes before a fall	Kibrning oxiri xorlik	Partial	English "fall" reads as individual misfortune; Uzbek stresses public/social humiliation

3.4. A componential model for documenting translation decisions

To make translators' choices explicit and verifiable, the study proposes a componential model in which proverb meaning is decomposed as K = (Y + O + P + R + M): Y is the semantic core (the moral judgement), O is the image or metaphor, P is the pragmatic function (advice, warning, justification), R is the register, and M is the cultural marker (religious, family-related, communal, and

so on). For each proverb pair, every component can be marked as "retained", "replaced" or "lost", which turns the translator's decision from an intuitive judgement into a documented, checkable procedure. Applying this model across the corpus reduced analytical disagreement by around 10–15% and made it possible to justify, rather than merely assert, the choice between calque, analogue, paraphrase and compensation for a given proverb. Table 2 shows a sample application of the model.

Proverb	**Y (core)**	**O (image)**	**P (pragmatics)**	**Recommended strategy**
Every dog has its day	retained	replaced	retained	paraphrase / analogue
Pride comes before a fall	retained	partly retained	retained	compensation
Actions speak louder than words	retained	matched	retained	analogue / equivalent

3.5. Principles for bilingual and ideographic (thematic) lexicographic representation

The study further formulates a set of principles for representing moral-spiritual proverbs in dictionaries. First, equivalents and analogues must be terminologically distinguished: an equivalent shares both the semantic core and the pragmatic function with the source proverb, while an analogue shares only the moral core but differs in image or register; dictionaries that fail to mark this distinction were found to produce 18–22% more semantic drift than those that do, compared with 8–12% in dictionaries that separate the two categories explicitly. Second, each entry should carry a brief comment block covering the intensity of evaluation (strong condemnation, mild irony, advice, warning), since studies show that comment-equipped entries raise correct usage by learners by 20–30%. Third, variant forms should be recorded rather than suppressed, since a single Uzbek proverb typically has 1.7–2.4 attested variants, and collapsing them into one canonical form removes pragmatic nuance that native speakers rely on.

Beyond the general bilingual dictionary, the material supports the design of a specialised ideographic (thematic) dictionary of moral-spiritual proverbs, organised as a concept → sub-concept → micro-feature hierarchy (for example, Honesty → Truthfulness → "honesty in speech" / "honesty in work"). An optimal structure of 8–12 major themes, each with 6–12 sub-themes, was found to balance thematic coverage against ease of navigation. Within each thematic field, a

nucleus–periphery model separates proverbs that state the moral norm directly (the nucleus, 55–65% of items) from those that convey it indirectly through metaphor or narrative situation (the periphery, 35–45%). Cross-referencing between themes is essential, since moral concepts are typically multi-centred: a single proverb about diligence, for instance, may also belong to the field of honesty or responsibility.

Finally, tagging entries consistently with concept, cultural marker, pragmatic function and equivalence-type labels makes the resulting resource compatible with digital and corpus-linguistic applications: comparable tagged paremiological resources report topic-classification accuracy around 0.80 and inter-annotator agreement (F1) in the 0.78–0.86 range, suggesting that a well-documented ideographic dictionary of this kind could also serve as training or reference data for text-analysis and content-monitoring tools focused on moral-educational discourse.

4. DISCUSSION

The results support the view, established in earlier paremiological and translation-studies research, that proverb equivalence cannot be reduced to lexical matching. Because a proverb condenses a semantic core, an image, a pragmatic function, a register and a cultural marker into a single formula, translation success depends on which of these components a given communicative situation requires the translator to preserve. This explains why the same source proverb can legitimately receive different target-language renderings depending on text type: literary and persuasive texts favour functional analogues that restore naturalness and rhythm, while formal or scholarly texts more often tolerate descriptive paraphrase in exchange for semantic precision.

The particularly high equivalence loss found for religiously and socially marked concepts — such as the Uzbek collective categories of or-nomus (“honour/dignity”, tied to communal judgement) contrasted with the more individually oriented English integrity or honor — confirms that moral vocabulary is not merely descriptive but institutionally anchored: the same abstract value (honesty, honour, modesty) is legitimised by different social authorities (religion, community, law, individual conscience) in the two cultures. This finding has direct implications for translator training: recognising the legitimising source of a moral proverb should precede, and guide, the choice of translation strategy.

The componential Y+O+P+R+M model addresses a long-standing methodological gap in paremiological translation research, namely the lack of a

transparent, reusable format for justifying equivalence judgements. By making explicit which components are retained, replaced or lost, the model moves proverb translation analysis from an essentially intuitive "black box" toward a documented and pedagogically transferable procedure, which is also directly compatible with the entry structure proposed for the ideographic dictionary.

Some limitations should be noted. The corpus, though systematically compiled, remains finite and skewed toward proverbs already documented in existing paremiological collections; proverbs that circulate mainly in oral or regional use may be under-represented. The percentages reported here describe tendencies within this corpus rather than fixed universal ratios, and should be read as indicative rather than exhaustive. Future work could extend the componential model to additional moral-concept clusters, validate the proposed dictionary structure with target users (translators, language learners, lexicographers), and explore automated tagging of larger paremiological corpora using the concept, marker and pragmatic-function labels introduced here.

5. CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis of English and Uzbek proverbs expressing personal morality shows that translation equivalence in this domain is graded rather than absolute: only about a quarter to a third of the studied units achieve full equivalence, while the majority require partial or functional solutions supported by calque, functional analogue, descriptive paraphrase or compensation, chosen according to text type and communicative purpose. Religiously and culturally marked proverbs carry the highest risk of semantic and pragmatic loss and therefore require the most deliberate translator judgement. The proposed componential (Y+O+P+R+M) model offers a practical, documentable way of recording and justifying such judgements, while the outlined principles for bilingual and ideographic (thematic) dictionaries — explicit equivalent/analogue distinction, comment blocks on evaluative intensity, recorded variants, and a concept-based nucleus–periphery hierarchy — provide a concrete basis for improving lexicographic practice. Taken together, these results are directly applicable to translator training, foreign-language teaching, bilingual and thematic lexicography, and the development of digitally tagged paremiological resources for intercultural communication.

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