

## SOME ISSUES IN THE TRANSLATION OF UZBEK PROVERBS INTO FRENCH

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**Abstract:** This article examines the main linguistic, cultural, and semantic challenges encountered in translating Uzbek proverbs into French. Proverbs, as condensed carriers of collective wisdom and cultural identity, often contain figurative meanings, metaphorical expressions, and nationally specific imagery. The study applies a comparative and descriptive approach to analyze translation strategies such as literal translation, functional equivalence, adaptation, and paraphrasing. The findings reveal that the lack of direct equivalents, cultural asymmetry, and differences in metaphorical systems significantly complicate the translation process. The article concludes that achieving pragmatic and cultural equivalence is more important than preserving the original form, and translators must adopt flexible strategies depending on context.

**Keywords:** Uzbek proverbs, French translation, paremiology, equivalence, cultural transfer, metaphor, idiomatic expressions

Proverbs constitute an essential and integral component of both linguistic and cultural heritage. As condensed expressions of collective experience, they reflect a nation's worldview, ethical norms, and system of values. In Uzbek linguistics, proverbs (maqollar) function not only as stylistic devices that enrich speech, but also as instruments of moral instruction, social regulation, and intergenerational knowledge transmission. Their semantic density, figurative richness, and rhythmic structure make them a unique object of study within paremiology and translation studies. The translation of proverbs into other languages, particularly French, presents considerable challenges. These challenges arise from differences in linguistic structure, cultural background, metaphorical systems, and communicative traditions. Unlike ordinary lexical units, proverbs are deeply embedded in national culture and often rely on culturally specific imagery, historical experience, and symbolic associations.

For instance, many Uzbek proverbs are rooted in agrarian life, family hierarchy, and traditional ethics, whereas French proverbs often reflect European philosophical traditions and Christian moral values. This divergence creates a gap that cannot always be bridged through direct translation. The present study aims to identify and analyze the key problems involved in translating Uzbek proverbs into French and to evaluate the effectiveness of different translation strategies. Special attention is given to the preservation of semantic meaning, stylistic form, and cultural connotations.

The research is based on a corpus of Uzbek proverbs collected from classical and modern paremiological sources, including dictionaries, folklore collections, and academic studies. A selection of these proverbs was translated into French and analyzed using comparative, descriptive, and contextual methods.

The study focuses on four main translation strategies commonly used in proverb translation:

- Literal (word-for-word) translation
- Functional equivalence
- Cultural adaptation
- Descriptive translation (paraphrasing)

Each proverb was examined in terms of semantic accuracy, stylistic adequacy, pragmatic function, and cultural transfer. The analysis also considers the degree to which the translated proverb retains its expressive power and communicative effectiveness. One of the most significant challenges in translating Uzbek proverbs into French is the lack of direct equivalents.



Many proverbs are culturally bound and do not have ready-made counterparts in the target language.

For example:

- “Mehnat qilgan - to‘yadi”

Literal translation: “Celui qui travaille sera rassasié”

Although grammatically correct, this translation lacks the idiomatic and proverbial quality characteristic of French. A more appropriate equivalent would be:

- “On récolte ce que l’on sème” (You reap what you sow)

Another example:

- “Erta turgan - erta rizq topar”

Literal translation: “Celui qui se lève tôt trouve sa subsistance tôt”

French equivalent:

- “L’avenir appartient à ceux qui se lèvent tôt”

These examples demonstrate that functional equivalence often provides a more natural and culturally appropriate solution than literal translation.

Uzbek proverbs frequently contain culturally specific elements that are difficult to translate directly.

For instance: “Otangga rahmat, otingga rahmat”

This proverb reflects the importance of both lineage (father) and livelihood (horse) in traditional Uzbek society. The horse, in particular, symbolizes wealth, mobility, and status in nomadic and agrarian cultures. French culture, however, does not assign the same symbolic value to horses in everyday expressions. As a result, the proverb requires either adaptation or explanatory translation.

Another example:

- “Qo‘y boqsang - qo‘y bo‘l, echki boqsang - echki bo‘l”

This proverb emphasizes adaptability and alignment with one’s environment. A literal translation would be obscure in French, requiring reinterpretation such as:

- “Il faut s’adapter à son milieu”

Metaphors play a crucial role in proverbs, but metaphorical systems vary significantly between languages.

For example:

- “Til - boshning balosi” (The tongue is the trouble of the head)

Possible French equivalent:

- “La langue est la pire et la meilleure des choses”

Here, the metaphor is preserved but reinterpreted in a broader philosophical sense.

Another example:

- “Ko‘z qo‘rqoq, qo‘l botir”

Literal translation: “The eyes are afraid, the hands are brave”

French equivalent:

- “C’est en forgeant qu’on devient forgeron”

While the imagery differs, both proverbs convey the idea that action overcomes fear.

Uzbek proverbs are typically concise, rhythmic, and often based on parallelism or rhyme.

French proverbs, although also concise, may follow different syntactic and stylistic patterns.

For example:

- “Yaxshi gap - jon ozig‘i”

Literal translation: “A good word is food for the soul”

While understandable, the stylistic elegance of the Uzbek original may not be fully preserved. Even when the semantic meaning is successfully conveyed, the pragmatic effect of a proverb may be diminished in translation. Proverbs often function as persuasive, didactic, or rhetorical tools in discourse.



For instance:

- “Sabrlining toshi ham yorilar”

Literal translation: “Even the stone of the patient will crack”

French equivalent:

- “Tout vient à point à qui sait attendre”

While the meaning is preserved, the emotional intensity and imagery differ.

The analysis demonstrates that translating Uzbek proverbs into French requires more than linguistic competence; it necessitates deep cultural awareness and interpretative skills. Literal translation, although useful in certain contexts, often leads to semantic distortion or stylistic awkwardness.

Functional equivalence appears to be the most effective strategy, as it preserves the communicative intent and pragmatic function of the proverb. However, it may result in the loss of national and cultural specificity. Cultural adaptation helps mitigate this issue but introduces the risk of altering the original meaning.

Descriptive translation, or paraphrasing, is particularly useful when no equivalent exists. However, it sacrifices the brevity, rhythm, and figurative nature that define proverbs as a genre. The findings also highlight the importance of paremiological competence in translation. Translators must be familiar not only with the source language but also with the proverb systems of both cultures. Proverbs should be treated as culturally marked units rather than simple lexical items.

The translation of Uzbek proverbs into French is a complex and multifaceted process influenced by linguistic, cultural, and cognitive factors. The main challenges include the absence of direct equivalents, cultural specificity, metaphorical divergence, structural differences, and loss of pragmatic effect. The study concludes that no single translation strategy can adequately address all these challenges. Instead, translators must adopt a flexible and context-sensitive approach, combining various techniques to achieve optimal results. Ultimately, priority should be given to functional and cultural equivalence rather than formal accuracy. Preserving the communicative value and cultural essence of proverbs is essential for effective translation. Future research may focus on corpus-based analysis, comparative paremiology, and the application of digital tools in proverb translation.

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