



# Strategies for Translating Cultural Elements from Korean To Uzbek

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**Abstract:** This study examines the challenges of translating Korean cultural elements into Uzbek and explores various strategies to address practical incongruities (실제적 부등성). The research applies R. Stolze's theory of cultural incongruence and Venuti's domestication and foreignization strategies to analyze the cultural adaptation process in translation. Using data from the Korean National Culture Encyclopedia, the study identifies five major strategies employed in translating culture-specific items. The findings indicate that domestication is the predominant strategy due to its accessibility for the target audience, while foreignization is selectively used to preserve cultural authenticity. The study concludes that an optimal translation approach requires a context-dependent balance between domestication and foreignization. These findings provide valuable insights for translation studies, particularly in training future translators for Korean-Uzbek cultural exchange.

**Keywords:** Cultural translation, Korean-Uzbek translation, practical incongruence, domestication, foreignization, cultural adaptation, equivalence in translation, translation strategies.

**Introduction:** Translation is the process of converting a source text into a target text. As the connection between translation and culture has developed based on new principles, the concept of "cultural elements" has been introduced into translation theory. Cultural elements refer to all socio-cultural factors that shape understanding or corresponding actions in a given context. This concept includes not only linguistic phenomena but also non-linguistic aspects that do not exist in the target language's culture or are defined differently.

When considering cultural elements in translation, it

becomes clear that translation involves accurately recognizing cultural components in the source language and recreating them in the target language. If a translator does not fully understand the cultural differences between Korean and Uzbek, errors in translation are likely to occur. Such differences can sometimes create barriers to accurate comprehension. Therefore, cultural elements play an increasingly significant role in translation, and interest in translation strategies addressing these elements is growing.

R. Stolze defines cultural elements unique to the source language culture but absent in the target language culture as "practical incongruence" (실제적 부등성). If such discrepancies exist between cultural elements, translation becomes more challenging. However, by employing appropriate compensation mechanisms, these cultural gaps can be bridged. The aim of this article is to identify effective translation strategies that help compensate for these cultural differences.

Therefore, this study explores the theory of cultural discrepancies and analyzes various translation strategies in Korean-Uzbek translation through practical examples.

## Literature Review

### Theories of Translating Cultural Elements

The concept of "cultural elements" is similar to a linguistic phoneme and represents fundamental components of culture. Skopos theory founder Vermeer considers language a part of culture and defines cultural elements as "cultural products that are not fully conceptualized within a speech network but can be accepted by the target language culture."

Kim Hyo-jung defines cultural elements as "all socio-cultural factors that trigger specific concepts or corresponding actions in a given situation." According to Kim, cultural elements include not only linguistic aspects but also non-linguistic phenomena and institutions present in the source language culture but unknown or interpreted differently in the target language culture.

Lee Geun-hee describes cultural elements as "culture-bound lexicon," emphasizing that such lexical units are based on a society's history, social status, economy, politics, and linguistic customs.

Aixela refers to culturally specific words and phrases as "culture-specific items," noting that these units serve a specific function in the source text and can pose challenges in translation. Examples include regional organizations, street names, historical figures,

artworks, and other cultural references.

S.Sun highlights that these terms lack direct equivalents in the target language culture, making translation more complex. As a cultural mediator, the translator plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between the source and target language cultures. Relying on S.Sun perspective categorizes cultural elements as follows:

1. Proper nouns (names of people, buildings, organizations)
2. Culture-related units
3. Units associated with specific events and figures
4. Idiomatic expressions
5. Measurement units

Although scholars have yet to reach a complete consensus on the classification of cultural elements, their concepts and understandings are largely similar. Therefore, this article follows Kim Hyo-jung's approach and refers to cultural elements as "cultural units."

If the set of cultural elements present in the source language culture has not developed in the same way in the target language culture, a cultural discrepancy arises. R. Stolze explains this phenomenon as follows: cultural elements that are widely known and commonly understood in the source language culture but unfamiliar in the target language culture; elements that evoke specific associations in the source language culture but do not perform the same function in the target language culture; and elements that are insignificant in the source culture but carry significant connotations in the target culture.

According to Stolze, a text is a product of culture, with culture being embedded in the text and the text manifesting as a concrete form of culture. The main challenge in translation is correctly identifying cultural factors expressed or implied in the text. Stolze categorizes cultural discrepancies into three main types:

1. **Absolute Non-equivalence (reale Inkongruenz)** – cultural elements present in the source language culture but completely absent in the target language culture.
2. **Formal Non-equivalence (formale Inkongruenz)** – cultural elements present in both cultures but with different linguistic forms.
3. **Semantic Non-equivalence (semantische Inkongruenz)** – elements in the target language that extend beyond the source language's meaning or evoke unintended associations.

Among these types, absolute non-equivalence poses the greatest challenge in translation. Stolze suggests that the most effective way to bridge such gaps is to substitute the source text element with a similar text in

the target language.

## METHODOLOGY

### Translation Strategies for Resolving True Non-Equivalence

When translating cultural elements that exist in the source language (Korean) but do not exist in the target language (Uzbek), what strategies should a translator adopt? This article analyzes the challenges associated with cultural elements that have a unique cultural background and exhibit true non-equivalence.

Difficulties arising during the translation of intercultural texts are often not only due to differences between the two language systems but also due to cultural disparities. In such cases, a translator must choose one of the following two approaches: preserving the original text's cultural environment as much as possible to help readers understand the foreign culture, or fully adapting cultural elements to the target language's culture to minimize readers' sense of foreignness.

From this perspective, Venuti introduced the concepts of "domestication" and "foreignization" in the translation process:

- **Domestication** – This strategy aims to integrate cultural and linguistic elements specific to the source language into the culture and traditions of the target language. In extreme cases, the translated text may significantly differ from the original.

#### o **Methods of domestication:**

1. Expressing the text freely to ensure clarity in the target language culture.
2. Using broader terms or superordinate terms to convey meaning at a higher level of generality.
3. Employing alternative terms that align with the target language culture.

- **Foreignization** – This strategy focuses on preserving the characteristics of the source language culture and making readers aware of the foreign nature of the translated text.

#### o **Methods of foreignization:**

1. Phonetically adopting words from the source language.

As Venuti emphasized, domestication and foreignization are two opposing yet comprehensive concepts. The extent to which the source text should be adapted to the target language culture or retained as foreign must be determined in each translation process.

### Analyzing Cultural Differences and Translation Strategies Through Real Examples

To identify cultural elements that exhibit true non-equivalence, it is sufficient to examine whether they exist in the target language culture. Therefore, studying which translation strategies are applied in the translated text is essential. This article analyzes a text taken from the "한국민족문화대백과사전" (Encyclopedic Dictionary of Korean National Culture), translating several Korean cultural elements into Uzbek and categorizing them into the following seven groups:

1. **Korean cuisine**
2. **Korean clothing culture**
3. **Korean lifestyle**
4. **Korean traditions and daily life**
5. **Korean folk beliefs**
6. **Korean aesthetics and art**
7. **Korean symbols and specialty products**

This dictionary is primarily intended for foreigners newly introduced to Korean culture, particularly Uzbek learners of the Korean language. Since the translated text highlights important aspects of Korean culture, it provides significant benefits for Uzbek-speaking readers.

However, translating cultural elements that exhibit true non-equivalence is not easy. Misinterpretations may arise as different translators translate the same cultural concepts differently. Therefore, in this article, several cultural elements from the encyclopedic dictionary are analyzed, examining whether domestication or foreignization was used in the translation process.

Cultural elements specific to the source language culture can be expressed in various ways. These differences play a crucial role in determining which approach should be used when translating cultural elements. The following sections will explore these strategies in detail.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Analyzing Translation Strategies for True Non-Equivalence

#### ① Expressing with an Equivalent Concept in the Target Language

This strategy involves translating cultural elements through explanation when no direct equivalent term exists in the target language. The main advantage of this approach is that it helps convey a large amount of cognitive information. If the cultural gap is significant, additional explanatory methods should be employed in the translation process to bridge this difference.

However, a drawback of this strategy is that it may lead to the loss of stylistic uniqueness found in the lexical units of the source text. In other words, the aesthetic

and stylistic aspects of the original text might not be preserved, as the primary focus is placed on making the text understandable.

Examples of this strategy in the Uzbek translation of the "한국민족문화대백과사전" (Encyclopedic Dictionary of Korean National Culture) include:

약과 → "asal aralashtirilgan qovurilgan pechenye"

김장 → "qish uchun karam tuzlash odati"

떡볶이 → "achchiq sousda pishirilgan guruchli taom"

미숫가루 → "don va dukkakli o'simliklardan tayyorlangan kukunli ichimlik"

숫대 → "darvoza yoki qishloq chegarasiga o'rnatiladigan uzun yog'och ustun"

장승 → "himoya maqsadida yo'l chetiga o'rnatiladigan haykallar"

댕기 → "ayollar uchun an'anaviy soch tasmasi"

대님 → "erkaklarning shim bog'ichlari"

웃놀이 → "an'anaviy koreys taxtali o'yini"

고싸움 → "ikki jamoa bo'lib tayoq bilan urish musobaqasi"

살풀이춤 → "gieseng marosim raqsi"

김밥 → "guruch va dengiz o'tidan tayyorlangan yengil taom"

다리밟기 → "ko'prikdan yurish marosimi"

깍두기 → "tuzlangan turp salati"

동치미 → "turpdan tayyorlangan suyuq kimchi"

'막걸리' → "guruchdan tayyorlangan alkogolli ichimlik"

빈대떡 → "yasmiq unidan qovurilgan koreys quymog'i"

쌈 → "salat bargi ichiga go'sht va salatlarini o'rab yeyish"

곰국 → "suyak va go'shtdan tayyorlangan sho'rva"

인절미 → "guruchdan tayyorlangan shirin taom"

회 → "xom baliqli taom"

절편 → "bug'da pishirilgan guruchni dumaloq qilib tayyorlangani"

'두루마기' → "koreys an'anaviy ustki kiyimi"

'사물놀이' → "to'rt xil zarbli cholg'u ijrosi"

'판소리' → "epik vokal hikoyalash san'ati"

적 → "kabob uslubida tayyorlangan koreys taomi"

From these translations, it is clear that the translator has tried to explain the essence of cultural elements. This allows Uzbek readers to get a clearer understanding of concepts unique to Korean culture. However, in some cases, the length of the translated text may increase, and the stylistic aspects of the source text may be lost.

In the next section, other methods of domestication will also be examined.

### Example (1):

a. 장승은 지역의 수호신으로서 경계표시나 이정표 역할을 했던 민속문화의 조형물이다. 주로 마을 어귀나 사찰의 입구 혹은 성문 밖에 세워졌다. 장승은 재료에 따라 돌장승과 목장승으로 구분되는데, 목장승은 통나무를 잘라 사람 얼굴을 해학적으로 조각하고 전면에 이름을 새겨 만든다.

b. Jangseung (himoya maqsadida yo'l chetiga o'rnatiladigan haykallar) – bu xalq madaniyatiga oid haykaltaroshlik obidasi bo'lib, hududning himoyachisi sifatida chegara belgisi yoki yo'l ko'rsatkich vazifasini bajargan. U asosan qishloq chekkasida, ibodatxona darvozasi oldida yoki qal'a tashqarisida o'rnatilgan. Jangseung ishlatilgan materialiga qarab tosh jangseung va yog'och jangseung turlariga bo'linadi. Yog'och jangseung – daraxt tanasidan yasilib, inson yuzi hajviy tarzda o'yib ishlangan va old tomoniga uning nomi yozilgan haykal shaklida bo'ladi.

In (1a), the Korean term '장승' is a cultural concept unique to Korean heritage and is considered a reality foreign to Uzbek culture.

In (1b), based on the description "지역의 수호신으로서 경계표시나 이정표 역할을 했다" (which means "served as guardians of the area and functioned as boundary markers or signposts"), it has been translated into Uzbek as 'himoya maqsadida yo'l chetiga o'rnatiladigan haykallar' ("statues installed on the roadside for protection").

### Example (2):

a. 댕기란 길게 땀은 머리 끝에 드리는 장식용 끈을 말한다. 삼국 시대부터 조선 시대까지 사용되었다. 쓰임에 따라 쪽댕기·제비부리댕기·큰댕기·앞댕기·어린이용댕기

가 있다.

b. Daengi (ayollar uchun an'anaviy soch tasmasi) – bu, uzun o'rilgan soch uchiga bog'lanadigan bezakli tasmaga aytiladi. Undan uch qirallik davridan tortib Choson davrigacha foydalanilib kelingan. Qo'llanilishiga qarab chok-daengi, jebiburi-daengi, katta daengi, old daengi va bolalar uchun daengi kabi turlarga bo'linadi.

In (1a), '댕기' is described as a ribbon that Korean women in earlier times used to tie their hair.

In (2b), however, the emphasis is placed more on the meaning of 'soch tasmasi' rather than 'bog'ich'. That is, in the Uzbek translation, it is defined as 'ayollar uchun an'anaviy soch tasmasi' ("a traditional hair ribbon for women").

Although this word could be directly translated as it is, a more detailed explanation is necessary to ensure better comprehension for Uzbek learners of the Korean language.

#### Example (3):

a. 윷놀이는 길고 작은 원기둥 모양의 나무 두 개를 세로로 반씩 쪼개어 네 쪽으로 만든 윷과 말, 그리고 말판으로 노는 놀이이다. 남녀노소 가릴 것 없이 누구나 즐기며 장소에도 특별한 제약이 없다. 윷을 던져 갯수가 정해지면 말을 가지고 말판에 갯수에 맞게 올려놓거나 옮긴다.

b. Yutnori (an'anaviy koreys taxtali o'yini) – bu o'yin kichik va uzun silindrsimon shakldagi ikkita yog'ochning bo'ylamasiga teng ikkiga bo'linib, to'rtta bo'lakdan iborat yut, shuningdek, figuralar va o'yin taxtasi yordamida o'ynaladi. Bu o'yinni yosh-u keksalar hamma zavq bilan o'ynashi mumkin va uni o'ynash joyi bo'yicha hech qanday cheklov yo'q. Yutni otganda tushgan natijaga qarab, figuralar taxtaga joylashtiriladi yoki harakatlantiriladi.

In (3a), the Korean term '윷놀이' is a cultural word unique to the Korean people and is unfamiliar to Uzbek culture. Koreans usually play this game with their families on national holidays. However, since this type of game does not exist in Uzbek culture, translating it presents a challenge.

In (3b), based on the description “나무 두 개를 세로로 반씩 쪼개어 네 쪽으로 만든 윷과 말, 그리고 말판으로 노는 놀이이다”, the term has been translated into Uzbek as 'an'anaviy koreys taxtali o'yini' ("a traditional Korean board game").

#### ② Using Cultural Equivalents in the Target Language

The strategy of using cultural equivalents extends and applies the equivalence theory proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet. This approach involves using corresponding cultural terms in the target language when the source language contains cultural units that do not exist in the target culture.

The main advantage of this strategy is that it allows the reader to understand the translation more easily by using familiar equivalent words. As a result, the reader can grasp the translated text without feeling a sense of foreignness.

Primarily, native words that are deeply rooted in the local culture fall into this category. Below are some examples for analysis.

'나막신' → "yog'och kovush"

'뚝배기' → "sopol kosa"

'식혜' → "guruchli ichimlik"

'탈춤' → "niqob raqsi"

'불고기' → "go'shtli ovqat"

'반찬' → "salat"

'양반' → "zodagon"

주불놀이 → "olov o'yini"

#### Example (4):

a. 양반은 고려-조선시대 지배신분층이다. 국왕이 조회를 받을 때, 남향한 국왕에 대하여 동쪽에 서는 문반과 서쪽에 서는 무반 두 반열을 통칭하여 양반이라 하였다. 고려 초반까지만 해도 양반은 문자 그대로 문-무반 관료를 지칭하는 말이었다. 그러나 양반관료체제가 점차 정비되면서 가부장적인 가족 구성과 공동체적인 친족관계로 인하여 양반 관료의 가족과 친족도 양반으로 불리게 되었다. 양반층은 음식과 과거를 통한 관직의 세대 이전, 그들 간의 폐쇄적 혼인 등으로 점차 폐쇄적 계층으로 굳어졌고, 양반이라는 말 자체도 지배 신분층을 뜻하는 개념으로 바뀌어 갔다.

b. 양반(zodagon)– Goryeo va Choson davrining hukmron tabaqasi. Goryeo va Choson sulolalari davrida ular jamiyatning hukmron tabaqasini tashkil qilgan. Qirol davlat ishlarini muhokama qilish uchun qabul qilganda, sharqda turgan munban (fuqarolik amaldorlari) va g'arbda turgan muban (harbiy amaldorlar) birgalikda 양반 (zodagon) deb atalgan.



Dastlab, Goryeo boshlarida 양반 (zodagon) faqat davlat xizmatidagi fuqarolik va harbiy amaldorlarni bildirgan. Biroq, vaqt o'tishi bilan 양반 (zodagon) tizimi mustahkamlanib, patriarxal oilaviy tuzilma va jamoaviy qarindoshlik munosabatlari sababli amaldorlarning oilasi va qarindoshlari ham shunday ataladigan bo'ldi.

Bu tabaqa merosiy lavozim olish, faqat o'z tabaqasidagi kishilar bilan nikoh tuzish, davlat imtihonlari orqali martabaga erishish kabi yo'llar bilan jamiyatning yopiq elitasiga aylandi. Shunday qilib, 양반 (zodagon) tushunchasi asta-sekin hukmron tabaqa ma'nosiga ega bo'lib bordi.

In (5a), the term '양반' historically referred to the ruling class in Korea. This word can be replaced with the Uzbek term 'zodagon', as it fully corresponds to the given definition of '양반'. In this case, readers familiar with the target culture will not face significant difficulties in understanding the meaning.

If there is no exact equivalent, the term can be replaced with a more general concept (a higher-level term – 상위어). However, the drawback of this method is that it may slightly alter the primary meaning and diminish the cultural nuances.

Therefore, this strategy should be applied carefully, depending on the translator's discretion and the purpose of the translation.

## CONCLUSION

This article examined methods of conveying cultural elements in Korean-to-Uzbek translation, drawing on R. Stolze's theory of "practical incongruity" and Venuti's translation strategies of localization and foreignization. To analyze these methods, cultural texts from the 한국민족문화대백과사전 (Korean National Cultural Encyclopedia) were translated into Uzbek, and the applied translation strategies were studied.

The research identified five main translation strategies, summarized as follows:

1. Translating the source language's cultural concept through explanation.
2. Replacing the source language concept with a cultural equivalent in the target language.

When analyzing the applied strategies, it was observed that localization was used more frequently. However, the method of translation involving high-level generalization within localization was not utilized, as this approach might alter meanings and obscure cultural characteristics of the source language.

Additionally, within the foreignization strategy, direct translations of certain words were frequently used. However, they were applied in a limited manner to avoid creating comprehension difficulties for readers.

A key takeaway is that the mentioned translation strategies each have distinct functional properties and effectiveness and can be used in combination. Therefore, selecting the most appropriate strategy based on the translation's purpose and context is crucial.

Nevertheless, due to the limited scope of the selected texts, some translation choices may have been influenced by the translator's personal linguistic style. Hence, caution should be exercised when generalizing these findings.

Moreover, the classification and precise boundaries of each translated cultural element remain a challenge. These boundaries may sometimes overlap, making their distinction unclear. For this reason, further in-depth research on this topic is necessary.

## Future Research Prospects

Beyond this analysis, it would be beneficial to compare how cultural elements are translated across different text genres. From a translation education perspective, studying and developing methodological materials on cultural translation techniques holds significant value. This could serve as a valuable academic and practical resource for incorporating cultural aspects more effectively in future translations.

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