

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Problems of Equivalence of Phraseological Units in Literary Translation Between German And Uzbek Languages

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VOLUME: Vol.06 Issue05 2026

PAGE: 62-67

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## Abstract

This article analyzes the problems of equivalence of phraseological units in literary translation based on the German and Uzbek languages. Phraseological units, as elements of the figurative layer of language, ensure the expressiveness of a literary text and convey its national color. The study conducts a comparative analysis of the semantic and linguocultural features of German and Uzbek phraseological units and examines the main strategies used in their translation. The results of the research show that, in the process of translating phraseological units, cultural context plays an important role alongside linguistic equivalence.

## KEYWORDS

Phraseological unit, literary translation, equivalence, translation strategy, linguoculturology, German language, Uzbek language.

## INTRODUCTION

Phraseological units are considered one of the most complex and figurative layers of language. They not only increase the expressiveness of speech but also reflect the historical experience, mentality, and cultural values of a nation. Therefore, phraseological units occupy an important place in linguistic and translation studies. A phraseological unit is not merely a simple combination of separate words; rather, it appears as a ready-made linguistic unit that embodies a people's historical memory, figurative thinking, and cultural stereotypes. Consequently, phraseological units function as an active component of an author's style in literary texts.

## METHOD

The linguist V. V. Vinogradov characterizes phraseological units as stable combinations possessing semantic integrity and used in speech in a ready-made form [1; 43]. According to him, the main feature of phraseological units is the semantic connection between their components and their figurative

meaning. Phraseological units perform an especially important stylistic function in literary texts. They enhance the imagery of the author's speech and strengthen the aesthetic effect of the work. Therefore, the correct translation of phraseological units is one of the major tasks facing a literary translator.

Since German and Uzbek belong to different typological language systems, their phraseological funds differ considerably in terms of origin, imagery, and semantic structure. German phraseology largely includes units connected with the Bible, the ancient world, Christian culture, medieval urban culture, and European historical experience. Uzbek phraseology, in contrast, is dominated by images related to folklore, everyday cultural experience, Eastern moral values, kinship, and social relations. For this reason, the problem of equivalence becomes particularly acute in the literary translation of phraseological units.

In translation studies, the issue of equivalence has long been

one of the central theoretical problems. Nida distinguishes between formal and dynamic/functional equivalence in translation [2; 45]; Newmark differentiates semantic and communicative translation principles; Baker points to such methods as using equivalent idioms, paraphrasing, compensation, and sometimes omission in translating idioms and fixed expressions. Thus, phraseological equivalence is not limited to the principle of "one idiom for another idiom." The renowned translation scholar Mona Baker emphasizes that finding equivalence in translating phraseological units is one of the most difficult problems [3; 67]. According to her, translators must take into account not only linguistic but also cultural compatibility when translating idiomatic expressions.

The main characteristics of phraseological units may be summarized as follows:

- a) stability — the components cannot easily be replaced;
- b) semantic integrity — the overall meaning does not arise from the simple sum of its components;
- c) ready-made usage — they are not recreated in speech but used as fixed expressions;
- d) expressiveness — they often intensify evaluation, irony, emotion, or imagery.

These aspects are regarded as central criteria in classical phraseological studies. The Russian linguist Vinogradov developed a classical classification of phraseological units. According to him, phraseological units are divided into three groups:

- phraseological fusions/unities;
- phraseological units;
- phraseological combinations.

The advantage of this classification is that it allows an analysis of the degree of meaning and motivation within phraseological units. This criterion also provides a convenient theoretical basis for determining which units should be translated directly with an idiom and which require descriptive translation. Vinogradov's approach continues to serve as a foundational model for phraseological analysis in later research.

In addition, the linguist A. Kunin thoroughly studied phraseological units in Russian and English. He explains phraseological units on the basis of semantic integrity, stability, and reproducibility. His works are particularly important for understanding the place of phraseological units

within the lexical system and their connection with lexicography.

The development of German phraseology was greatly influenced by scholars such as Burger and Fleischer. Burger's *Handbuch der Phraseologie* and Fleischer's *Phraseologie der deutschen Gegenwartssprache* are among the main sources explaining the structure, functions, and modern approaches to German phraseology.

The issue of translating phraseological units is considered one of the most complex areas of modern translation studies. The main reason is that phraseological units, unlike ordinary lexical items, embody not only a certain meaning but also imagery, emotional expressiveness, stylistic coloring, and national-cultural experience. Therefore, the issue of equivalence in translating phraseological units should be interpreted not as a one-dimensional phenomenon but as a multi-component and complex one.

In translation studies, the concept of equivalence refers to the semantic, functional, and communicative correspondence of the translated text to the original text.

In the translation of phraseological units, equivalence manifests itself on at least four levels. The first level is semantic equivalence. It refers to the extent to which the main meaning and conceptual core of the phraseological unit are preserved in translation. If the semantic content is distorted during translation, the compatibility of the remaining levels loses significance. Therefore, the translator must first restore the semantic core of the original unit [4; 97].

The second level concerns stylistic equivalence. Phraseological units often create a specific stylistic coloring in speech. For example, they may express irony, sarcasm, colloquiality, or elevated literary style. If this stylistic coloring is lost in translation, the artistic impact of the text decreases considerably, even if the content is conveyed correctly. Thus, the translator must recreate not only "what is said" but also "how it is said" [5; 89].

The third level is pragmatic equivalence. This concept concerns whether the translated text can produce an effect on the target audience similar to that produced by the original text on its readers. In some cases, a semantically accurate translation may fail pragmatically because phraseological units often strengthen the communicative purpose of the text through irony or emotional coloring [6; 112].

The fourth level is linguocultural equivalence. Phraseological units are often closely connected with a people's historical experience, religious beliefs, customs, and national mentality. Therefore, a phraseological image belonging to one language may not be understood in the same way in another culture. In such situations, the translator must choose between preserving the original phraseological unit directly or expressing its meaning through means more suitable for the target culture. Hence, phraseological equivalence should be determined not only by lexical correspondence but also by cultural compatibility [7; 203].

The problem of translating phraseological units has been approached differently by various scholars. In particular, the American translation theorist E. Nida emphasizes that functional equivalence is more important than formal correspondence. According to him, translation should aim not at reproducing the external form of the original text but at recreating its effect on the target reader [8; 159]. This approach is especially important in translating phraseological units because they often fulfill emotional and stylistic functions.

One of the scholars who practically analyzed the translation of phraseological units is Mona Baker. She identifies several main strategies for translating idioms and fixed expressions. The first strategy is translating with an idiom similar both in form and meaning. This method is considered the most preferable because it preserves the semantic and stylistic characteristics of the phraseological unit to the greatest extent possible [9; 71].

The second strategy is translating with an idiom of similar meaning but different form. In such cases, the target language may not possess an idiom with the exact same image, but another phraseological unit with a functionally similar meaning may be found. As a result, the semantic content is preserved, though the imagery undergoes certain changes.

The third strategy is translation through paraphrase. This method is usually applied when no ready-made phraseological equivalent exists in the target language. Through paraphrase, the meaning of the phraseological unit is explained more freely. However, in this process, the imagery and stylistic coloring may partially disappear.

The fourth strategy involves neutralizing idiomaticity and translating with a neutral expression. In this case, the

translator seeks to preserve the informational meaning rather than the figurative form of the phraseological unit. Although this method may ensure communicative clarity, it reduces the expressiveness of literary language.

Peter Newmark's views are also significant in the translation of phraseological units. Newmark emphasizes that when conveying cultural units in translation, it is necessary to consider the meaning, imagery, communicative function, and reception of the unit simultaneously [10; 103]. According to him, the translator must find a balance between preserving the image of the phraseological unit and prioritizing its meaning.

This issue becomes especially evident in the comparison of German and Uzbek phraseological units. While some German phraseological units are connected with the Bible, historical figures, or European cultural experience, many Uzbek phraseological units are closely related to folklore, everyday national experience, and Eastern moral values. Therefore, in translating phraseological units, cultural equivalence is as important as semantic equivalence.

Thus, from the perspective of translation studies, the translation of phraseological units requires a multilayered theoretical analysis. Semantic, stylistic, pragmatic, and linguocultural forms of equivalence are closely interconnected. The theoretical views of Nida, Baker, Newmark, and other scholars provide an important methodological basis for understanding the translation of phraseological units.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

During the literary translation of phraseological units, the degree of equivalence manifests itself in different ways. In some cases, almost complete semantic and functional correspondence can be observed between the two languages, while in other cases only partial equivalence exists, or no direct phraseological equivalent can be found at all. Therefore, a comparative analysis of German and Uzbek phraseological units helps identify their specific features in the translation process.

From the perspective of translation, phraseological units may be divided into three main groups: full or close equivalents, partial equivalents, and non-equivalent units.

Some phraseological units are formed on the basis of similar semantic models in different languages, which makes them relatively easy to transfer during translation. In such units,

semantic meaning, imagery, and communicative function correspond almost completely.

For example, the German phraseological unit "Zwei Fliegen mit einer Klappe schlagen" means "to achieve two results through one action." In Uzbek, there is a semantically similar expression: "Bir o'q bilan ikki quyonni urmoq" ("to kill two rabbits with one shot"). The semantic similarity between these two phraseological units is fully preserved. However, the imagery differs slightly: German uses the image of "two flies," whereas Uzbek uses "two rabbits." Nevertheless, both expressions convey the idea of achieving two benefits through one action. Therefore, this case may be regarded as an example of strong functional equivalence.

This example demonstrates that absolute formal correspondence is not necessary in phraseological translation; the main criterion is semantic and functional similarity.

Another example is the German phraseological unit "Öl ins Feuer gießen". This expression means to intensify a situation or aggravate an existing conflict. Uzbek also has a phraseological unit formed on the same image: "Olovga yog' sepmoq" ("to pour oil on the fire"). In this case, the semantic content, imagery, and stylistic effect correspond almost completely. Therefore, such units belong to the most naturally transferable phraseological units in literary translation.

The German expression "Jemandem Sand in die Augen streuen" also has a partially figurative equivalent in Uzbek. This phraseological unit means "to deceive someone" or "to create a false impression." Uzbek has similar expressions such as "Ko'ziga tuproq sepmoq" or "ko'zbo'yamachilik qilmoq." In translation, the choice of variant depends on the context. If the text has a colloquial style, a figurative phraseological unit may be used; if the text is closer to a neutral or scientific style, a semantically simpler variant may be preferable.

### Partial Equivalent Phraseological Units

Among phraseological units, there are often expressions that are semantically similar but differ in imagery or structure. In such cases, partial equivalence occurs during translation.

For example, the German phraseological unit "Tomaten auf den Augen haben" means "not to notice or see something obvious." In German, this expression is conveyed through the humorous and vivid image of "tomatoes on one's eyes." Uzbek, however, does not possess a phraseological unit based on the same image. Therefore, translators use variants such

as "Ko'rmaganga olish" ("to pretend not to see"), "burning tagidagini ko'rmaslik" ("not to see what is under one's nose"), or "sezmay yurmoq" ("to remain unaware"). In this case, the meaning is preserved, but the figurative component of the original expression is partially lost.

A similar situation can be observed in the German phraseological unit "Ins kalte Wasser springen." This expression refers to starting a risky task without preparation. Since a literal translation sounds unnatural in Uzbek, it is usually translated through paraphrases such as "Tavakkal qilib ish boshlamoq" ("to begin something riskily") or "bilmay turib ishga sho'ng'imoq" ("to plunge into work without knowing"). Although the phraseological image is not preserved, the core semantic meaning is restored.

The German expression "Da liegt der Hund begraben" refers to the main cause of a problem or the essence of an issue. Uzbek equivalents include expressions such as "Gapning po'stkallasi shu," "Hamma gap shunda," or "Muammo aynan shunda." However, these Uzbek expressions do not fully reproduce the original German image. Thus, while the translation remains semantically equivalent, the imagery and cultural coloring are partially lost.

The German phraseological unit "Den Kopf verlieren" also belongs to the category of partial equivalents. It means "to lose self-control," "to panic," or "to become confused." Uzbek equivalents include "boshini yo'qotmoq," "es-hushini yo'qotmoq," or "gangib qolmoq." However, depending on the context, the semantic nuances of these expressions may differ; therefore, the translator must carefully consider the context.

### Non-Equivalent or Culturally Loaded Phraseological Units.

Some phraseological units are closely connected with a specific historical or cultural context and therefore do not possess direct equivalents in another language. In such cases, translators are forced to use descriptive translation or semantic adaptation.

For example, the German phraseological unit "Alt wie Methusalem" originates from the biblical figure Methuselah and means "very old." Since this image may not always be familiar to Uzbek readers, translators often use variants such as "juda qari" ("very old") or "qariyb asr ko'rgan" ("having lived nearly a century"). However, in such translations the religious and cultural coloring of the original expression is partially lost.

The German expression "Nach Adam Riese" is also associated with a historical figure and means "according to exact calculation." Since the name Adam Riese is not widely known among Uzbek readers, the phraseological unit is usually translated descriptively as "hisob-kitobga ko'ra" ("according to calculations") or "aniq hisob bo'yicha" ("according to exact calculation").

The German phraseological unit "Hinz und Kunz" has an anthroponymic character and means "ordinary people" or "just anyone." In translation, variants such as "har kimsa," "kelgan-ketgan," or "hamma-hamma" are used. In this case, the personal names are omitted because they have no semantic significance for Uzbek readers.

Similarly, the German expression "Vom Saulus zum Paulus" is based on the biblical story of Saul's transformation into Paul and signifies a radical spiritual or moral transformation. In Uzbek, it is often rendered as "butunlay o'zgarmoq" ("to change completely") or "tamoman boshqa odam bo'lib qolmoq" ("to become a completely different person"). If the text has a religious or historical context, however, preserving the original form of the phraseological unit may also be appropriate.

The examples above demonstrate that the degree of equivalence between German and Uzbek phraseological units may vary considerably. Some units possess complete semantic and functional correspondence, while in others the imagery or cultural component changes. In addition, certain phraseological units are translated through paraphrasing or descriptive methods.

Therefore, when translating phraseological units, the translator must take into account not only semantic correspondence but also stylistic, pragmatic, and linguocultural factors. It is precisely these factors that ensure the adequacy of literary translation and allow the imagery and aesthetic effect of the original text to be preserved as much as possible.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study comparatively analyzed the problems of equivalence in the literary translation of German and Uzbek phraseological units. The analyzed materials demonstrated that complete formal equivalents between the phraseological systems of the two languages occur relatively rarely. In most cases, phraseological units are translated on the basis of semantic or functional similarity. This confirms the

multilayered nature of phraseological equivalence.

The results of the analysis also confirmed that the greatest translation difficulties arise in phraseological units containing cultural markers. In particular, units based on biblical, historical, or anthroponymic imagery may not be directly understood in another linguistic culture. In such cases, translators use descriptive translation or paraphrasing in order to preserve semantic equivalence. However, during this process, the figurative and cultural coloring of the original phraseological unit may be partially lost.

In literary translation, preserving meaning alone is not sufficient for the adequate rendering of phraseological units. Translation should also recreate, as far as possible, the stylistic coloring, imagery, and communicative impact of the original expression. Therefore, translating an idiomatic unit with another idiom is considered the most effective strategy. Nevertheless, because such equivalents cannot always be found, translators are often compelled to employ paraphrasing, semantic adaptation, or neutral expressions.

Thus, the main task in the literary translation of phraseological units is to preserve the imagery of the original text to the maximum extent while ensuring that the translated text remains understandable and natural for the target reader. Consequently, finding a balance between "preserving imagery" and "communicative comprehensibility" is one of the translator's most important tasks. It is precisely this balance that determines the adequacy and aesthetic value of literary translation.

The results of this research demonstrate the necessity of comprehensively considering semantic, stylistic, pragmatic, and linguocultural factors in the translation of German and Uzbek phraseological units. Future research conducted on the basis of broader corpus materials may provide deeper insights into the translation strategies of phraseological units.

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