

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Failures in Translating Hospitality Concepts: Evidence from English And Uzbek Literary Discourse

 **Najmiddinova Mekhrigul Najmiddin kizi**

Lecturer of Navoi State University, Navoi, Uzbekistan

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Abstract

This paper investigates the phenomenon of cross-cultural pragmatic failures in translating hospitality concepts between English and Uzbek literary texts. Hospitality is not merely a communicative act but a deeply embedded cultural construct loaded with implicit social codes, honor systems, and ritual protocols. When translating literary discourse across typologically and culturally distinct languages, direct lexical transfer often triggers pragmatic failures sociopragmatic or pragmalinguistic misalignments due to differing conceptual frameworks of host-guest dynamics. Utilizing a comparative, pragmatic, and translational methodology, this study analyzes literary excerpts to identify sources of pragmatic failure in rendering culture-bound hospitality units (e.g., specific terms of address, ritual invitations, and formulas of refusal or persistence). The findings demonstrate that resolving these failures requires dynamic equivalence and pragmatic adaptation rather than literal translation to preserve the aesthetic and cultural integrity of the source text.

KEY WORDS

Pragmatic failure, hospitality concept, literary translation, cross-cultural pragmatics, English, Uzbek, discourse analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Translation is fundamentally an act of cross-cultural communication rather than a mere mechanical substitution of lexical items from one linguistic code to another (Bassnett, 2014). When dealing with culturally loaded concepts (CLCs) such as hospitality, translators frequently encounter profound disparities between source and target language worldviews (Wierzbicka, 1996). In literary discourse, hospitality acts as a structural narrative device that reveals character motivations, social stratification, and moral values. However, translating hospitality discourse between culturally distant languages such as analytic/inflectional English and agglutinative Uzbek often results in pragmatic failures (Thomas, 1983).

Pragmatic failure occurs when a reader or target audience misinterprets the illocutionary force or sociopragmatic weight

of a translated utterance. While pragmalinguistic failures stem from structural linguistic mismatches, sociopragmatic failures arise from differing social taboos, cross-cultural norms, and value systems regarding how guests should be received, fed, and honored. The object of this study is the translation of hospitality discourse within English and Uzbek literary texts, while the subject comprises the types, causes, and translation strategies for mitigating cross-cultural pragmatic failures. The objective is to systematically analyze how structural and cultural divergences in hospitality concepts lead to translation misalignments and how they can be resolved through cognitive and functional frameworks.

METHODOLOGY

To conduct a comprehensive investigation into translation

discrepancies, a multi-layered methodological framework was employed:

- **Comparative-Contrastive Discourse Analysis:** Used to juxtapose source text (ST) and target text (TT) excerpts containing hospitality scenes, examining the shift in illocutionary force and pragmatic meaning (Yartseva, 2006).
- **Pragmatic Analysis Framework:** Based on Jenny Thomas's classification of pragmatic failures (pragmalinguistic vs. sociopragmatic) and Shoshana Blum-Kulka's shifts of cohesion and coherence in translation (Thomas, 1983; Blum-Kulka, 1986).
- **Cognitive Metaphoric Mapping:** Applied to analyze how conceptual metaphors underlying hosting (e.g., home as a sanctuary, guest as a blessing) shift or break down during interlingual transfer (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).
- **Translational Adaptation and Functional Equivalence:** Evaluated through Eugene Nida's dynamic equivalence theory and Peter Newmark's communicative translation principles to determine how cultural conceptualizations are successfully rendered (Nida & Taber, 1969; Newmark, 1988).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The comparative evaluation of English literary works (e.g., novels by Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, or contemporary prose) and their Uzbek translations, alongside reverse translation instances, reveals specific patterns of pragmatic failure in hospitality representation.

Pragmalinguistic Failures in Terms of Address and Invitation Formulas

Pragmalinguistic failures occur when linguistic structures of politeness are transferred literally without accounting for functional equivalents.

- **The Uzbek Perspective:** In Uzbek literature, hospitality invitations are heavily ritualized, involving hyperbolic insistence, multiple offers, and specific honorific terms of address (aka, uka, hoji aka, kelin). For instance, an invitation such as "Ostonadan hatlab o'ting, uyingiz — uyimiz" carries an absolute moral imperative of submission to the host's generosity.
- **The English Perspective:** English literary discourse relies

on contractual politeness, options, and negative face preservation (e.g., "Drop by whenever you have time" or "Feel free to grab a drink").

- **Translation Friction:** When English invitations are translated literally into Uzbek without expanding their pragmatic weight, they sound unnaturally cold, violating the reader's cultural expectations of Eastern hospitality. Conversely, translating heavy Uzbek hospitality formulas into English with literal lexical choices can make characters appear overly obsequious or pragmatically anomalous to Western readers (Baker, 2011).

Sociopragmatic Failures in Ritualized Dining and Persistence

Sociopragmatic failures involve cross-cultural differences in what is considered socially acceptable behavior during hosting.

- **The Concept of Refusal and Persistence:** In Uzbek culture, a guest's initial refusal of food or tea ("Rahmat, to'qman") is governed by a complex sociopragmatic rule of modesty, requiring the host to insist repeatedly ("Yo'q, bir piyola choy ichasiz"). In contrast, English discourse typically treats a refusal ("No, thank you, I'm really full") at face value, governed by principles of autonomy and avoiding imposition (Brown & Levinson, 1987).
- **Literary Impact:** Translators who fail to decode these underlying sociopragmatic rules often produce target texts where characters misread each other's intentions. In literary translation, rendering a host's persistent urging as mere annoyance rather than a sacred duty destroys the cultural subtext of the scene.

Cognitive-Pragmatic Mechanisms of Metaphorical Transfer in Translation

A critical source of translation failure lies in the conceptual mapping of domestic spaces. In English literature, domestic space is often framed via economic and privacy metaphors ("An Englishman's home is his castle"), emphasizing boundaries. In contrast, Uzbek conceptual models frame the home and table (dasturxon) through communal and open-door metaphors ("Mehmon rizqi bilan keladi"). When translating these metaphors literally, the target reader misses the associative cognitive background, leading to cognitive dissonance and pragmatic distortion (Karasik, 2019).

Strategies for Compensating Pragmatic Losses

To overcome these barriers, professional literary translators must deploy specific compensation strategies:

- 1. Explanatory Modulation:** Adding micro-context within the narrative description to explain the cultural weight of a hosting ritual without breaking literary flow.
- 2. Functional Substitution:** Replacing culture-bound idioms with target-culture functional equivalents that evoke a comparable emotional and pragmatic response (Newmark, 1988).
- 3. Pragmatic Expansion:** Amplifying implicit pragmatic markers (such as tone indicators or respectful modal particles) when translating from English into Uzbek to match the required Eastern politeness register.

Universal vs. Culturally Specific Translation Solutions

- **Universal Features:** The underlying communicative intent to show respect, build rapport, and welcome a traveler exists in both literature traditions (Wierzbicka, 1996).
- **Cultural Specificities:** While English literary texts encode hospitality through privacy, individual comfort, and negotiated boundaries, Uzbek literary texts portray it as an expansive, collective, and morally binding ritual. Translators must apply dynamic equivalence, explanatory modulation, and cultural substitution to prevent pragmatic failure.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of cross-cultural pragmatic failures in translating hospitality concepts between English and Uzbek literary discourse indicates that literal translation is inadequate for culturally dense domains. Pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic misalignments arise because hospitality is governed by distinct national behavioral scripts, moral obligations, and politeness maxims. Mitigating these failures requires translators to act as cultural mediators, employing functional equivalence, cognitive adaptation, and pragmatic compensation to preserve both the aesthetic value of the literary text and the authentic cultural flavor of the hospitality concept. These insights contribute significantly to translation studies, cross-cultural pragmatics, and contrastive linguistics.

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