

TRANSLATION PROBLEMS OF PROVERBS WITH HYDRONYM COMPONENTS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES

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Abstract

This article explores the translation challenges of proverbs containing hydronyms – place names or water body names (such as rivers, seas, and lakes) – between English and Uzbek. Proverbs are deeply embedded in cultural contexts, and hydronyms in these sayings often carry symbolic and metaphorical meanings that are specific to the historical settings of a language. The article also examines the linguistic, cultural, and conceptual difficulties that arise when translating proverbs with hydronym components from English to Uzbek and vice versa. It also discusses translation strategies such as substitution, literal translation with explanation, and adaptation, which can help preserve the essence of the original proverb while making it meaningful to the target audience.

Keywords: Proverbs, hydronyms, translation problems, linguistic differences, cultural significance, cross-cultural translation, translation strategies, substitution, literal translation, adaptation.

Introduction

Language is not just a system of communication; it is a reflection of a culture, its values, and its worldview. Proverbs, which are brief, traditional sayings that convey wisdom and life lessons, are particularly rich in cultural significance. These proverbs often utilize metaphors, symbols, and idioms that are deeply rooted in the specific cultural and geographical contexts of the language in which they are used. One of the unique challenges in translating proverbs lies in the presence of hydronyms – place names or names of water bodies like rivers, seas, and lakes. Hydronyms in proverbs carry specific meanings that are tied to the culture of the language in which they originate. When translating such proverbs between languages, particularly from English to Uzbek or vice versa, several issues arise that require careful attention. This article explores the translation problems associated with proverbs containing hydronym components in English and Uzbek, focusing on linguistic, cultural, and conceptual challenges [4;88].

Proverbs are an integral part of every language, serving as vessels of collective wisdom, cultural values, and life lessons. Passed down through generations, they reflect the beliefs and experiences of communities and often offer moral advice or practical guidance. One of the most fascinating features of proverbs is their ability to encapsulate complex ideas through simple, vivid imagery. Among the various elements used in proverbs, hydronyms

– names of rivers, lakes, seas, or other bodies of water – are often employed to convey deeper meanings or symbolize significant aspects of life. Hydronyms in proverbs frequently draw upon the characteristics of natural water bodies, such as rivers, lakes, and oceans, to express ideas that resonate with human experience. Water itself is a multifaceted symbol, such as it can represent purity, danger, life, depth, or change, among other things. For example, the proverb “*Still waters run deep,*” uses the image of calm water to suggest that quiet or unassuming individuals often have profound thoughts or emotions beneath the surface. This proverb relies on the assumption that, much like a body of water, people who appear still or composed may actually possess hidden depths of character or knowledge.

Similarly, in Uzbek culture, proverbs involving water may carry related but sometimes distinct meanings. Water is often seen as a symbol of life and renewal, as well as a force that can be both nurturing and dangerous. For instance, an Uzbek proverb might employ the metaphor of a river to illustrate themes of time, change, or the unpredictability of life. For example, “*Daryo chuqur bo‘lsa, tinch oqar.*” Just as a river flows continually, life too moves forward with challenges and opportunities that can be both tranquil and turbulent. The image of water in Uzbek proverbs might also be linked to concepts of wisdom, serenity, and reflection, where the flowing nature of rivers symbolizes the passage of time and the smooth course of personal growth or struggle[1;32].

However, hydronyms are not mere decorative elements in proverbs, they are place names with historical, cultural, and geographical significance. Rivers, lakes, and seas are not just natural features in these sayings – they often carry with them deep local associations that are woven into the community’s identity and worldview. For example, the Thames River in England is not only geographically important, but it is also a symbol of British history, culture, and even political power. Its mention in English proverbs might evoke associations with British identity, the nation’s maritime history, and its role in shaping Western civilization. In contrast, the Amu Darya or Syr Darya rivers in Uzbekistan hold immense cultural and historical importance. These rivers have long been central to the life of the Central Asian region, influencing the development of civilizations, trade, and agriculture for centuries. For Uzbek speakers, these rivers are far more than just water bodies, they are imbued with layers of meaning related to the region’s history, its people’s resilience, and the natural beauty of the land. When these rivers appear in proverbs, they can evoke specific emotions tied to local experiences, struggles, and victories.

Because hydronyms in proverbs are so closely linked to a particular culture’s geography and history, they can carry meanings that may not directly translate to other languages. A proverb that references the Thames in English may invoke a specific set of cultural associations that would be unfamiliar or even meaningless to an Uzbek speaker. Similarly, the mention of the Amu Darya in an Uzbek proverb may not resonate with an English-speaking audience, who may not have the same historical or emotional connection to that river. This is where the complexity of translation arises[2;43].

The problem in translating proverbs with hydronyms lies in the fact that the hydronyms themselves may not have an equivalent in the target language. The geographical and cultural context that shapes the meaning of a proverb in one language may not be easily replicated in another. For instance, while “*Still waters run deep*” in English is easily understood due to the universal associations with water, a similar proverb in Uzbek might reference a local river like the Amu Darya, which carries different historical and cultural meanings. Simply translating the name of the water body might strip the proverb of its cultural richness, making it harder for the target audience to fully grasp its intended message. Moreover, the metaphorical use of hydronyms is often deeply ingrained in the language and culture, making it difficult for non-native speakers to comprehend the symbolism without additional explanation. The cultural nuances that shape the meaning of hydronyms in proverbs require translators to not only be linguistically proficient but also culturally aware. A translator must navigate these cultural differences by finding ways to preserve the symbolic weight of the hydronyms while making the proverb meaningful in the target language. Thus, understanding proverbs with hydronyms requires more than just a linguistic translation – it necessitates a deep understanding of the cultural, historical, and geographical context that shapes the metaphorical use of water bodies. The translator’s role is to ensure that the cultural resonance of the hydronyms is preserved, even if that means adjusting the metaphor to reflect the cultural context of the target language.

The translation of proverbs that involve hydronyms from English to Uzbek or vice versa is complicated by the fundamental linguistic differences between the two languages. English is a Germanic language, while Uzbek is a member of the Turkic language family. This distinction in linguistic roots means that the syntax, grammar, and word usage in each language differ significantly, presenting a considerable challenge for translators. These differences often make a direct, word-for-word translation impossible and require creative solutions to preserve both the meaning and the cultural resonance of the proverb. One of the most noticeable distinctions between English and Uzbek is their sentence structure. English typically follows a subject-verb-object (SVO) order, whereas Uzbek uses subject-object-verb (SOV) word order. This difference in structure can affect how proverbs are expressed and understood. A proverb in English that begins with a hydronym, such as “*The Thames runs deep*” may need to be restructured in Uzbek to fit the SOV structure as “*Temza daryosi tinch oqadi*”, which could lead to shifts in emphasis or tone[3;43].

Additionally, the grammatical rules for tenses, verb forms, and pluralization in the two languages are also quite different. English uses auxiliary verbs and modal verbs to express nuances of time and possibility, while Uzbek often relies on suffixes and verb conjugations that reflect aspects such as politeness or formality. For example, the choice of tense or aspect in an English proverb, such as “*Do not change horses in the middle of the river*” can require a more complex transformation in Uzbek to preserve the same temporal nuance, such as “*Kechuvda ot almashtirilmaydi*”. These structural and grammatical differences present challenges in ensuring that the proverb’s message remains intact while adhering to the syntactic conventions of the target language. Beyond grammatical differences, one of

the most significant issues when translating proverbs with hydronyms between English and Uzbek is the cultural and conceptual relevance of the water bodies referenced. In English, rivers like the Thames or the Mississippi, and bodies of water like the Atlantic Ocean, hold cultural connotations tied to specific historical events, national identities, and popular symbols. For instance, the Thames River in London is often associated with British heritage, the history of London, and the development of modern civilization. Its mention in an English proverb may evoke feelings of nostalgia, power, or continuity, depending on the context. However, in Uzbek culture, rivers such as the Amu Darya and Syr Darya have their own rich set of associations, which are linked to the geography, economy, and history of Central Asia. The Amu Darya, for example, is a symbol of the region's long-standing agricultural traditions and its role in facilitating trade along the Silk Road. The Syr Darya holds significance as a vital source of water in the arid landscapes of Uzbekistan. These rivers have long been central to the lives of the Uzbek people and are closely associated with concepts like survival, resourcefulness, and the rhythm of life in Central Asia[5;76]. Given this, the hydronyms in English proverbs may not have direct equivalents in Uzbek, and vice versa. The Thames, with its Western historical and political connotations, may not hold the same symbolic weight in Uzbekistan as the Amu Darya, which carries its own set of deeply-rooted meanings. Translating an English proverb that includes the Thames, such as "The Thames never runs dry," into Uzbek requires more than just substituting the name of one river for another; it requires a shift in metaphor to ensure that the translation is conceptually relevant for the Uzbek audience. A direct translation might leave the target audience confused or fail to evoke the same feelings. The translator might need to either choose a different hydronym altogether or rework the proverb so that its metaphor resonates within the cultural context of Uzbekistan.

In addition to linguistic and cultural differences, there is the issue of the conceptual meaning behind the hydronyms used in proverbs. Water metaphors are common in both languages, but their implications can vary significantly across cultures. For example, in the English proverb "*Don't cross the bridge until you come to it,*" the reference to a bridge is used as a metaphor for avoiding unnecessary worry about future problems. The "bridge" represents an obstacle that is not yet relevant and may never appear, emphasizing the need to focus on the present. However, the image of a bridge might not hold the same cultural significance in Uzbek as it does in English. While bridges are common in both cultures, they may not carry the same symbolic weight in terms of crossing over into unknown territory or dealing with future problems. In Uzbekistan, water-related metaphors such as crossing a river or navigating the flow of water might be more culturally meaningful. Rivers in Uzbek proverbs are often associated with the passage of time, change, and the unpredictability of life. A translator, in this case, might choose to replace the bridge metaphor with a reference to a river or another local geographical feature that conveys a similar message about uncertainty and the need to wait until a situation arises. Alternatively, the translator might opt to adapt the proverb entirely. The goal is not just to preserve the literal meaning of the proverb but also to maintain its underlying message and

emotional resonance. For example, in Uzbek, an adapted version might replace “crossing the bridge” with “crossing the river,” reflecting a more familiar metaphor for Uzbek speakers while still conveying the intended lesson of addressing problems when they appear, rather than worrying about them prematurely [6;34].

In many cases, when hydronyms in proverbs are culturally bound and cannot be directly translated, the translator’s role is to adapt the proverb so that it still carries the intended meaning but is more relatable to the target audience. This often involves modifying the metaphor to better suit the cultural context, which may require finding new symbols that resonate with local traditions, beliefs, and natural imagery. For example, while an English proverb may focus on the power of the sea, an Uzbek equivalent may draw on the imagery of the steppe or desert, highlighting the differing ways in which each culture interacts with the natural world. Adapting proverbs requires a deep understanding of both the source and target cultures, as well as a sensitivity to the symbolic use of hydronyms. The translator must navigate the delicate balance of staying true to the original meaning of the proverb while ensuring that it feels both familiar and appropriate to the target audience.

The cultural significance of hydronyms is another crucial factor when translating proverbs. In English, water bodies like the Thames, the Nile, or the Atlantic Ocean often carry historical or cultural significance tied to Western narratives. The “crossing the Rubicon” metaphor, originating from Julius Caesar’s crossing of the Rubicon River, carries profound political and historical implications in the West. These proverbs are rooted in the cultural history of the West and may not be immediately understood by speakers of Uzbek, who have their own unique set of historical and geographical references. In Uzbek, the symbolism associated with rivers like the Amu Darya or Syr Darya may differ substantially from the water bodies in English proverbs. These rivers hold historical significance as major geographical features in Central Asia and have been important for trade, agriculture, and cultural exchange for centuries. Translators must therefore be sensitive to the cultural and symbolic meanings of these hydronyms. A proverb using the Amu Darya might need to be adjusted to ensure that it resonates with the target audience in a way that aligns with local cultural references [7;54].

When translating proverbs with hydronyms, several strategies can be employed to address the challenges outlined above. The first strategy is substitution. If an equivalent hydronym exists in the target language that carries similar cultural or symbolic significance, it can replace the original hydronym. For example, the English proverb “*Rivers and mountains may change; human nature, never*” could be translated into Uzbek with a reference “*Daryo chuchuk – ariq chuchuk, Daryo achchiq – ariq achchiq*” if it evokes similar connotations of depth and hidden complexity in the Uzbek context. If a direct substitution is not possible, the translator may choose a literal translation followed by an explanation. For instance, the metaphor “crossing the Rubicon” might be translated literally, but the translator would need to provide additional context or footnotes to explain the historical background of the Rubicon River and its significance. This ensures that the reader understands the metaphor, even if the hydronym itself is unfamiliar. Another approach is

adaptation, where the proverb is restructured to retain its meaning but without using the original hydronym. In cases where a direct translation would not carry the same weight or meaning, the translator may use a local metaphor or symbolic image that reflects the original proverb's message while aligning with the cultural and geographical context of the target language.

In conclusion, translating proverbs with hydronym components between English and Uzbek presents a unique and intricate set of challenges. These problems arise from several key factors: linguistic differences, cultural disparities, and the specific symbolic meanings attached to hydronyms in each language. The process of translation is never a straightforward task, and when it comes to proverbs, particularly those that involve hydronyms, the translator must navigate not only the words themselves but also the deeper cultural and conceptual meanings behind them.

Linguistically, English and Uzbek belong to distinct language families as Germanic and Turkic, respectively meaning that their structures, grammatical rules, and vocabulary are often radically different. These structural disparities can result in significant difficulties when attempting to translate proverbs directly, especially when hydronyms are integral to the meaning. The differing word orders, verb forms, and use of idiomatic expressions between the two languages further complicate the task of preserving the proverb's original intent and stylistic nuances [8;65].

Ultimately, the key to successful translation lies in balancing fidelity to the original message with cultural relevance. Proverbs, especially those with hydronyms, are reflections of a culture's worldview, history, and values. They convey wisdom and insight that are uniquely tied to the experiences and perspectives of the community that created them. As such, the act of translating these proverbs is not just about transferring words from one language to another; it is about bridging cultural gaps and ensuring that the wisdom embedded in these proverbs can continue to be shared across linguistic boundaries. In this sense, the translation of proverbs with hydronym components is both an art and a science. It requires not only linguistic expertise but also cultural understanding and empathy. The translator must be able to read between the lines, understanding not just the literal meaning but also the metaphorical and cultural significance of the proverb in its original context. By doing so, the translator ensures that this valuable cultural wisdom can be passed on, preserving the essence of the proverb while adapting it to a new linguistic and cultural environment.

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