

CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF LINGUOCULTURAL UNITS IN LITERARY TRANSLATION FROM UZBEK INTO ENGLISH

КУЛЬТУРНАЯ АДАПТАЦИЯ ЛИНГВОКУЛЬТУРНЫХ ЕДИНИЦ В ЛИТЕРАТУРНОМ ПЕРЕВОДЕ С УЗБЕКСКОГО НА АНГЛИЙСКИЙ ЯЗЫК

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INTRODUCTION. A linguocultureme may be understood as a culturally saturated linguistic unit that preserves collective cultural experience and activates socially shared meanings in discourse. In linguocultural studies, Vorobyev defines a linguocultureme as “a complex interlevel unit that combines linguistic meaning with cultural content” [7, p. 44]. Such units function not merely as lexical signs but as carriers of pragmatic and cultural information that regulate interpersonal relations, politeness, hierarchy, irony, and evaluative stance in literary communication. Their pragmatic dimension shapes how speakers position themselves and others in interaction, thereby influencing reader perception and narrative credibility.

The mechanism by which linguoculturemes operate in literary discourse extends beyond denotational meaning because they activate presuppositions related to etiquette, social distance, ritual behavior, and culturally conditioned expectations. A typical example is an address form simultaneously expressing kinship, respect, and emotional proximity; replacing it with a neutral equivalent in translation may alter the interpersonal geometry of the text. Leech emphasizes that pragmatics is “the study of meaning in relation to speech situations” [8, p. 6], which explains why culturally marked utterances require contextual rather than purely lexical interpretation in translation analysis.



The problem becomes particularly visible in literary translation where pragmatic force is embedded in dialogue, narrative voice, and culturally specific interactional norms. Brown and Levinson note that politeness strategies serve to “save face” in social interaction [9, p. 61], meaning that even minor shifts in address forms, mitigation devices, or honorific markers may significantly affect characterization and social relations within the translated text. Empirical observations in translation studies suggest that culture-bound units constitute a relatively small proportion of literary texts in quantitative terms, yet their influence on interpretation is disproportionately high because they cluster in key communicative moments such as requests, conflicts, greetings, and emotionally charged dialogue.

From the perspective of translation theory, equivalence cannot be reduced to semantic similarity alone. U. Nida argues that translation involves “reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message” [6, p. 12]. However, literary translation frequently demonstrates that preserving propositional content without recreating pragmatic force results in flattened interpersonal meaning and weakened narrative authenticity. This challenge becomes especially acute when source-language honorific systems, deixis, or conventional implicatures lack direct grammatical counterparts in the target language.

The tension between readability and cultural specificity has been widely discussed within translation studies. Venuti describes domestication as a strategy that reduces “the foreign text to target-language cultural values” [4, p. 15], whereas foreignization attempts to preserve cultural otherness. In practice, translators often negotiate between these tendencies when rendering linguocultemes whose pragmatic meanings are deeply rooted in social norms and discourse traditions. Existing scholarship has addressed equivalence, skopos, and cultural transfer extensively, yet the cultural-pragmatic dimensions of linguocultemes remain insufficiently operationalized in analytical models.

Therefore, this article aims to develop and test an analytical framework for recreating the cultural-pragmatic features of linguocultemes in literary translation. The study integrates linguoculteme typology with a pragmatic shift matrix in order to evaluate preservation, loss, and compensation across speech-act force, implicature, deixis, address forms, and register.

“Shum Bola” by Gafur Gulom is a classic work of Uzbek prose that combines autobiographical narration with satirical depiction of everyday social life. The narrative is told through the perspective of a mischievous boy, whose voice is shaped by colloquial expression, playful self-justification, and moments of sincere reflection. This duality makes the text a rich site for studying narrative stance, pragmatic meaning, and authorial viewpoint. One of the central features of the novel is its use of double-voicing, where the narrator’s speech simultaneously conveys surface-level description and underlying evaluation. Through shifts between irony and sincerity, the text creates a complex interpretive space in which readers must infer meaning rather than receive it directly. This inferential process is often guided by subtle linguistic cues such as hedging, evaluative vocabulary, modal expressions, and rhythmically marked colloquial language.

From a stylistic and translational perspective, “Shum Bola” presents significant challenges because meaning is not fixed in explicit statements but emerges through contextual interpretation and timing. Small changes in modality, degree of certainty, or evaluative tone can alter the balance between humor, critique, and empathy. Therefore, understanding both the pragmatic structure of the narrative and the mechanisms of reader inference is essential for analyzing how the author constructs viewpoint and how this viewpoint can be preserved in translation.

METHODS AND MATERIALS. This study adopts a qualitative stylistic and pragmatic analysis approach to examine narrative viewpoint, double-voicing, and inferential meaning construction in “Shum Bola” by Gafur Gulom. The research is grounded in the frameworks of critical stylistics, pragmatics, and narratology, with particular attention to how linguistic choices encode stance and evaluative meaning.

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The primary material for analysis is selected excerpts from “Shum bola” as the work chosen, focusing on passages where the narrator’s voice shifts between irony, self-justification, and observational commentary. These excerpts are chosen based on the presence of colloquial expressions, evaluative markers, modal constructions, and instances of implicit judgment or humor. The analytical procedure involves close reading at three levels:

1. Textual level – identification of lexical and grammatical features such as hedges, intensifiers, evaluative adjectives, and colloquial markers.
2. Pragmatic level – interpretation of speaker stance, implicature, and inferential meaning, particularly how humor and critique are generated through timing and ambiguity.
3. Narratological level – examination of double-voicing and shifts in narrative perspective, especially where the narrator simultaneously expresses affection and critique.

In addition, comparative translation analysis is employed to evaluate how shifts in modality, certainty, or evaluative tone affect the preservation of narrative stance in English renderings. This allows for assessment of how inferential timing and pragmatic cues may be maintained or altered in translation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION. Applying the pragmatic approach to analyzing translation strategies of “Shum Bola” by Gafur Gulom from Uzbek to English requires mapping linguocultural units onto discourse zones such as narration, dialogue, and hybrid narrator-commentary, because each zone imposes different constraints on translation choices. The mechanism is that narration often tolerates slightly more contextualization, while dialogue must preserve immediacy and character voice, and hybrid commentary often carries irony that depends on subtle stance markers. In “Shum Bola”, the protagonist’s voice can shift between mischievous self-justification and candid observation, and these shifts are pragmatically

signaled by colloquial phrasing and evaluative rhythm. Classification in this context therefore needs to be dynamic: a unit may be realia in one instance and stance marker in another, depending on whether it functions primarily to build setting or to judge behavior.

For example: “*Eshikdan sekingina kirib bordim. Xuddi hech narsa qilmaganday, qo ‘limni orqamga qilib turdim. Ammo ichimda yuragim ‘gup-gup’ urardi.*” - “*I quietly slipped in through the door. As if I had done nothing wrong, I stood there with my hands behind my back. But inside, my heart was pounding ‘thump-thump.’*”

In this sentence, the narrator’s voice shifts between mischievous self-justification and candid self-observation. The phrase “*Xuddi hech narsa qilmaganday*” (“*as if I had done nothing*”) functions as a form of playful self-defense. The boy tries to present himself as innocent, creating ironic distance between his actual behavior and his performed innocence. Pragmatically, this acts as a stance marker, signaling attitude rather than merely describing action.

Meanwhile, “*yuragim ‘gup-gup’ urardi*” gives an honest emotional confession. The colloquial sound-symbolic rhythm (“*gup-gup*”- “*thump-thump*”) reflects fear and excitement simultaneously. Here, rhythm and spoken-style narration create immediacy and authenticity.

The expression “*thump-thump*” may also be dynamically classified:

- as a realia-like colloquial oral feature when emphasizing Uzbek conversational texture,
- or as an evaluative/emotive marker when foregrounding the narrator’s anxiety and inner state.

Thus, the same linguistic unit changes function depending on contextual emphasis:

A numerical approach can annotate each unit with zone labels and compute densities; for example, dialogue sections may show higher density of social deixis and speech-act patterns, while narration may show higher density of realia and ironic evaluation. Scientifically, zone-based classification improves translation decisions by aligning strategy with communicative conditions, reflecting discourse pragmatics that meaning is partly determined by who speaks and under what narrative framing.

A refined taxonomy for “Shum Bola” can include at least four categories with subtypes: 1) realia of everyday urban life, including institutions and objects; 2) sociopragmatic markers, including address forms and politeness strategies; 3) evaluative phraseology, including idioms and metaphors; and 4) humor and irony operators, including hyperbole, understatement, and mock-seriousness. The mechanism is that each category tends to be realized by certain linguistic patterns nouns and noun phrases for realia, vocatives and particles for sociopragmatics, set phrases for idioms, and discourse-level contrasts for irony. In practice, “Shum Bola” frequently blends categories, such as when a realia item is used metaphorically to evaluate someone’s behavior, requiring translation to preserve both referential anchoring and evaluative force. Quantitatively, blended units might account for 15-25% of identified items in culturally dense sections, making them a critical test case for pragmatic competence. Scientifically, recognizing hybridity prevents oversimplified solutions, because blended units are where literal translation most often fails.

Humor in “Shum Bola” often operates through pragmatic contrast between what is said and what is meant, or between a naive surface description and an adult reader’s recognition of social reality. The mechanism is inferential timing: the text sets up an expectation, then invites a reinterpretation through a small cue, producing amusement and empathy. Translating such humor requires maintaining the same inferential route, which may involve preserving

ambiguity, pacing, and a certain level of understatement. If the translator over-explains, the inferential “reaction” occurs too early and the humor dissipates; if the translator under-signals, the reaction never occurs and the passage becomes flat.

For example: “*Oshxonaga kirib qarasam, qozondagi somsa kamayib qolibdi. Men hech narsa demadim. Faqat sekingina bitta somsani olib, ‘baribir bittasi kam edi-ku’, deb qo‘ydim.*” - “*When I entered the kitchen, I saw that there were fewer samsas left in the pot. I said nothing. I simply took one quietly and remarked, ‘Well, one was already missing anyway.’*”

This passage demonstrates the mechanism of inferential timing in humor. At first, the narrator appears merely to observe that some samsas are missing. The reader expects a neutral description. However, the small cue - “*baribir bittasi kam edi-ku*” (“*one was already missing anyway*”) - suddenly reframes the situation. The boy uses faulty logic to justify stealing another samsa, and the humor emerges only after the reader infers this self-serving reasoning. The comic effect depends on delayed interpretation: the text first establishes an ordinary situation, then introduces a subtle pragmatic cue, which triggers reinterpretation and amusement.

The humor is effective because the narrator does not openly confess guilt or explain the joke. Instead, understatement allows the reader to infer the contradiction between morality and childish logic. For translation, preserving this humor requires maintaining: the gradual pacing, the understated tone, and the inferential gap between action and justification.

If translated too explicitly, for example:

“*Since someone had already stolen one, I decided to steal another,*” the inferential process disappears because the conclusion is explained too early. Conversely, if the translator weakens the ironic cue, the passage may lose its humorous effect entirely. Thus, successful translation must recreate the same interpretive timing experienced by the original reader.

A quantitative way to describe this is to treat humor effectiveness as dependent on a window of optimal explicitness: if explicitness is too low or too high, humor recognition drops, and the translator must aim for the mid-range where the reader can infer without being lectured. Scientifically, this aligns with pragmatic humor theories that emphasize relevance and the pleasure of inferential work.

Authors viewpoint in “Shum Bola” is frequently complex because the narrative can simultaneously criticize and affectionately portray characters and social structures. The mechanism is double-voicing: the narrator may use mock-serious language to describe petty events, signaling both critique and warmth. Translating this requires fine-grained control of modal verbs, hedges, intensifiers, and evaluative adjectives, which serve as pragmatic carriers of stance. If a translator increases certainty or moral judgment, the story’s satirical balance can shift toward condemnation; if the translator weakens critique, the social commentary can disappear.

For example: “*Mahallamizning oqsoqollari bu ishni go‘yo katta davlat masalasiday muhokama qilishardi. Men esa bir chekkada turib, ularning jiddiy gaplariga kulgimni zo‘rg‘a bosardim.*” - “*The elders of our neighborhood discussed the matter as though it were an issue of state importance. Meanwhile, standing off to one side, I could hardly suppress my laughter at their serious speeches.*”

This passage reflects the author’s complex viewpoint through double-voicing. The narration gently mocks the exaggerated seriousness of the elders, yet portrays them with familiarity and warmth rather than hostility.

The phrase “*katta davlat masalasiday*” (“*as though it were an issue of state importance*”) creates comic disproportion between the trivial event and the grand style used to

discuss it. The humor does not openly condemn the elders; instead, the mock-serious tone signals affectionate social critique. Pragmatically, the author's point is carried through: the hedge-like comparative structure "go'yo ... day" ("as though"), the intensifier "zo'rg'a" ("hardly") and evaluative wording such as "jiddiy gaplar" ("serious speeches"). These linguistic details maintain the balance between satire and sympathy. For translation, preserving this balance is essential. If the translator strengthens moral judgment, for example:

"The foolish old men absurdly treated the matter like a national crisis,"

the tone becomes openly condemnatory, and the affectionate irony disappears. But if the translator softens the critique too much:

"The elders discussed the matter carefully,"

the satirical social commentary vanishes. Therefore, successful translation must preserve: the mock-serious register, moderate evaluative language and the subtle coexistence of criticism and warmth that characterizes the narrative voice in "Shum Bola."

CONCLUSION. In Shum Bola, the author's viewpoint is constructed through a delicate balance of satire, empathy, and colloquial narrative voice. The text frequently employs double-voicing, where apparently serious descriptions simultaneously contain subtle irony and affectionate social observation. This stylistic mechanism allows the narrator to criticize behaviors and social conventions without turning characters into objects of harsh condemnation. The pragmatic effect of this narrative strategy depends heavily on linguistic nuances such as modal expressions, hedges, evaluative adjectives, understatement, and rhythmic colloquial phrasing. These elements guide the reader's inferential interpretation and create humor through timing, ambiguity, and tonal contrast. As a result, meaning in Shum Bola is not communicated directly but emerges through the reader's gradual recognition of the narrator's stance.

From a translation perspective, preserving this inferential and double-voiced structure is essential. Over-explicit translation may destroy irony by forcing interpretation too early, while excessive neutralization may erase the social critique embedded in the humor. Therefore, successful translation requires not only lexical equivalence but also pragmatic and stylistic sensitivity capable of reproducing the same emotional and interpretive response experienced by readers of the original text.

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