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Original Article

LEXICAL LACUNAE IN THE UZBEK TRANSLATIONS OF LEO TOLSTOY'S WORKS

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ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the analysis of strategies for rendering non-equivalent vocabulary in the Uzbek translation of Leo Tolstoy's novella Hadji Murad, performed by the prominent poet and translator Uygun (Rakhmatulla Atakuziev). The author examines lexical lacunae as points of contact between two linguocultures and analyzes the methods used to overcome them, ranging from direct transliteration to functional-stylistic adaptation.

Keywords: Non-Equivalent Lexis, Lexical Lacunarity, Literary Translation, Translation Strategies

INTRODUCTION

The translation reception of Leo Tolstoy's works in uzbekistan represents a unique process of intercultural dialogue, in which the author's late novel, *Hadji Murad*, occupies a central place. This work, characterized by utmost stylistic precision and an abundance of ethnographic details, presents the translator with the complex task of overcoming lexical lacunarity. In this context, the problem of rendering non-equivalent lexis extends beyond a purely linguistic search, transforming into an act of cognitive and cultural adaptation.

Our study is based on the fundamental definition of nonequivalent lexis proposed by L. S. Barkhudarov, who viewed such units as "words that have neither full nor partial equivalents in the target language" Barkhudarov (1975). Within a literary text, these lacunae often overlap with the concept of *realia*, which, according to S. Vlakhov and S. Florin, serve as carriers of national and historical color Vlakhov and Florin (1980). The concept of the "linguistic and cultural value of a word," developed by E. M. Vereshchagin and V. G. Kostomarov, holds particular significance for analyzing the translation into Uzbek. According to their theory, non-equivalence in *Hadji Murad* stems not only from the absence of objects but also from the divergence between the "lexical backgrounds" of Russian and Uzbek readers Vereshchagin and Kostomarov (2005).

The history of mastering Tolstoy's heritage in Uzbekistan is linked with the names of the famous 20th-century writers. For a long time, confusion persisted in bibliographic sources regarding the authorship of the translation of *Hadji Murad*. However, textual analysis and archival data confirm that the canonical translation of the novella into the Uzbek language was executed by the prominent national poet and playwright Uygun (Rakhmatulla Atakuziev). Uygun approached the task not as a technical transmitter, but as a master of the literary word who understood the specifics of Tolstoy's style. As noted by the researcher G. Salomov, the founder of the Uzbek school of translation theory, Uygun's translation activity is characterized by a strive for "functional adequacy," where preserving the author's idiolect prevails over literalism Salomov (1973).

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An interesting scientific fact is that in *Hadji Murad*, Tolstoy himself acts as a "translator" of caucasian realia for the russian reader. When transferring this text into the Uzbek linguistic environment, a phenomenon of *double lacunarity* emerges.

- First, 19th-century russian realia (military ranks, secular etiquette) constitute nonequivalent lexis for the Uzbek language.
- Second, the Caucasian realia, which are presented as exoticisms in the russian original, paradoxically acquire the status of equivalent units in the Uzbek translation. This occurs due to the shared Islamic cultural codes and lexical strata (for instance, terms like *murid, imam*).

Thus, the purpose of our article is to provide a linguostylistic analysis of how Uygun overcomes these barriers while preserving the "energy of delusion" and artistic truth that form the core of L. N. Tolstoy's poetics.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND CLASSIFICATION OF LACUNAE

The phenomenon of non-equivalence in literary translation is inherently linked to the concept of lacunarity (from the Latin *lacuna* – a hollow, a gap). In linguistics, lacunae are understood as "empty cells" in the lexical grid of one language compared to another. As researcher Yu. A. Sorokin notes, a lacuna is not merely the absence of a word; it is a "signal of specificity" of a foreign culture, which requires either filling (explication) or compensation from the translator Salomov (1973).

In the context of translating L. N. Tolstoy's novel into the uzbek language, three types of lacunarity should be distinguished, each possessing its own specific nature:

1) **Linguistic lacunae:** situations where a concept exists in both cultures, but the target language lacks a separate word to designate it. For instance, let us consider the russian word *zavalinka* (a low earthen mound along the outer walls of a russian peasant house). In Uzbek domestic life, there are similar elements (e.g., *supa*), but *zavalinka* carries a specific northern rural flavor, which in the uzbek language requires either a descriptive translation or the use of an ethnographic analogue.
2) **Ethnographic lacunae:** the absence of the object itself in the material world of the target language speakers. These include specific details of 19th-century russian military life (*kiver, mentik, epoleti*). According to S. Vlakhov and S. Florin, such realia are "untranslatable" in the strict sense of the word and most frequently require transcription followed by a commentary Vlakhov and Florin (1980).
3) **Associative and connotative lacunae:** words that have equivalents but evoke completely different emotional responses. The image of the "*tatarnik*" (thistle) in the prologue of the novella belongs to this category. For a russian reader, it is a weed, a symbol of rough yet insurmountable life force. In the uzbek poetic tradition, *tikan* (a thorn) is also a polysemantic symbol, but its aesthetic "dosage" in the text may differ, thereby creating a stylistic lacuna.

V. N. Komissarov pointed out that non-equivalence often arises due to different ways of "segmenting" reality. In *Hadji Murad*, we witness how Tolstoy describes the caucasian world through Russian perception. When Uygun translates this into Uzbek, he faces reverse symmetry. Many "caucasian" words that act as non-equivalent exoticisms in the Russian text (*murid, shariat, gazavat*) are related or borrowed units for the Uzbek language (via Arabic and Persian). Here, the "emptiness" (lacuna) in the "Russian – Uzbek" pair is filled with a direct lexical correspondence, which, however, may bear a different stylistic coloring, being more mundane than in the Russian original.

TRANSLATION STRATEGIES AND DISCUSSION

In the works of Ya. I. Retsker, it is emphasized that when dealing with lacunae, a translator chooses between two paths. One method is direct borrowing, which means preserving the "foreignness" (foreignization). The other method is adequate substitution, which implies using a functional analogue understandable to the target reader (domestication) Retsker (2007).

For Uygun, as a translator-poet, the preservation of the "rhythmic lacuna" was of fundamental importance. If Tolstoy uses a brief, laconic, clipped description, Uygun tries to avoid wordy descriptive translations (explications) that could "dilute" the author's style, even if this results in retaining certain semantic voids for an unprepared reader.

Thus, the problem of lacunarity in Uygun's translations is not merely a matter of finding a dictionary equivalent, but a question of maintaining the distance between cultures. The success of the translation of *Hadji Murad* into Uzbek is largely due to the fact that the translator was able to recognize the nature of each lacuna, deciding where to leave an "exotic" trace and where to fill the void with a vivid image comprehensible to the Uzbek reader.

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