

Strategies For Transmitting Irony In Uzbek-English Literary Translation: A Case Study Of "O'tkan Kunlar"

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Annotation: This article explores the language and practical processes of translating irony between two different language systems: Uzbek and English. It focuses on Abdulla Qodiriy's famous historical novel O'tkan Kunlar (Days Gone By) to show how verbal and structural irony are recreated for Western readers. The study uses Relevance Theory and Skopos Theory to evaluate how translators move away from word-for-word translation to rebuild hidden meanings based on context. The article highlights the role of translation strategies like modulation and explicitation in preserving the original artistic voice.

Keywords: irony, literary translation, Relevance Theory, Skopos Theory, Abdulla Qodiriy, digital education.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada ikki xil til tizimi — o'zbek va ingliz tillari o'rtasida kinoya (ironiya)ni tarjima qilishning lisoniy va amaliy jarayonlari tahlil qilinadi. Unda Abdulla Qodiriyning "O'tkan kunlar" romani misolida so'zaki va tarkibiy kinoyaning g'arb kitobxonlari uchun qayta yaratilishi ko'rib chiqiladi. Maqolada tarjimonlarning so'zma-so'z tarjimadan uzoqlashib, matn mazmunini kontekstga moslab qayta tiklashi Relevance va Skopos nazariyalari asosida yoritilgan. Shuningdek, asardagi badiiy bo'yoqni saqlashda modulyatsiya va eksplikatsiya kabi tarjima strategiyalarining o'rni ko'rsatib o'tilgan.

Kalit so'zlar: kinoya, badiiy tarjima, Relevance nazariyasi, Skopos nazariyasi, Abdulla Qodiriy, raqamli ta'lim.

Аннотация: В данной статье анализируются языковые и практические процессы перевода иронии между двумя различными языковыми системами: узбекским и английским языками. На примере знаменитого исторического романа Абдуллы Кадыри «Минувшие дни» рассматривается воссоздание вербальной и структурной иронии для западных читателей. В исследовании используются теория релевантности и теория скопоса для оценки того, как переводчики отходят от дословного перевода для воссоздания скрытых смыслов на основе контекста. Подчеркивается роль таких переводческих стратегий, как модуляция и экспликация, в сохранении оригинального художественного стиля.

Ключевые слова: ирония, художественный перевод, теория релевантности, теория Скопоса, Абдулла Кадыри.

1. Introduction

Irony is not just a decorative style or a fancy way of writing in literature. It works as a smart language tool that creates two different levels of meaning at the exact same time. In classical novels, irony is an important method used for quiet social criticism, hidden political meanings, character development, and emotional depth. However, moving irony between distant languages and different cultures is very difficult. The big difference between Uzbek and English creates unique communication challenges. Uzbek literary writing is historically based on indirect communication, community values, hidden clues, and respect-based speech patterns. On the other hand, modern English communication is generally more direct, individual, and open.

In classical Uzbek literature, irony is rarely out in the open. Instead, it is usually hidden deep within the background context, character conversations, and the main goals of the story. This is often seen through what Uzbek linguistics calls *piching* (sharp hint) or *kinoya* (veiled sarcasm). In Abdulla Qodiriy's famous historical novel *O'tkan Kunlar* (1922), irony works as a main tool to show the deep problems, corruption, and human hypocrisy in the old government system of the 19th-century Kokand Khanate. This study aims to show how these hidden layers of irony can be successfully moved into the English language by focusing on the true meaning and impact, rather than just copying surface-level words.

2. Theoretical Framework

To study the translation of classical irony at a clear university level, this research combines two main language theories.

2.1 Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson)

Relevance Theory explains verbal irony not as a simple lie, but as an echoic use of language. This means that a speaker repeats an implicit thought, a social belief, or a political promise while secretly showing a mocking, skeptical, or critical attitude toward it. The reader successfully understands the irony by noticing a big mismatch between the literal meanings of the words spoken and the actual real-life situation. Therefore, the translator's main job is to give English readers enough contextual clues so they can guess the hidden critical meaning without having to struggle or guess too much.

2.2 Skopos Theory (Vermeer)

Skopos Theory states that translation is a purposeful human action driven entirely by its final goal, which is called the *skopos*. In literary translation, the main goal is to recreate the specific emotional and artistic effect—the "ironic sting"—on the new audience. If a direct word-for-word translation fails to create an ironic meaning because of a cultural gap, the final goal of the text allows the translator to make big structural, word, or cultural changes just to keep the original message alive for the new readers.

3. Methodology

This research uses analytical and descriptive methods to examine current trends in literary translation. It evaluates a real, documented example of verbal and structural irony taken directly from Abdulla Qodiriy's *O'tkan Kunlar*. The target text analysis relies on real data found in modern translation studies. Specifically, it analyzes the translation choices made by the academic team of I. Tukhtasinov, O. Muminov, and A. Hamidov alongside the literary translation produced by Carol Yermakova.

The main translation strategies studied in this text collection are grouped as follows:
Literal Translation: Direct word-for-word language transfer.

Modulation: Changing the viewpoint, perspective, or conceptual basis of the expression.

Adaptation: Replacing a source cultural situation with a matching target cultural setup in English.

Explication: Making hidden background meanings clear and visible in the target text.

Compensation: Introducing an ironic element in an alternative place when it cannot be copied at the exact same spot.

4. Results and Discussion: Textual Case Study

4.1 The Irony of Political Promises and Exploitation

In *O'tkan Kunlar*, Qodiriy uses irony in a deep structural way to criticize bad political systems. He often allows characters to voice feelings of hope, only to immediately contrast them with the terrible realities of social abuse. A great example occurs during the public sadness surrounding the cruel rule of Azizbek, spoken through the pained words of Khoji Yusufbek:

Source Text (Uzbek):

"Bizni xalqni yer yutsin. Azizbekning tulkiligiga uchdida, uning kechagi zulmlarini unutdi, yetmish kunlab bir zamon jon berib, jon olib nihoyat xizmat haqqi uchun o'ttiz ikki tanga mukofot, eng keyingi burda noningni ham ber!"

In terms of real meaning, this passage works on a powerful layer of verbal irony, specifically driven by two expressions: "tulkiligiga uchdi" and "o'ttiz ikki tanga mukofot". The word *mukofot* (reward) is used in a

completely opposite way; it does not mean a real reward, but rather an oppressive, forced tax that takes away the citizens' last piece of bread.

When looking at how different translators managed this ironic part, clear differences stand out. In the translation produced by I. Tukhtasinov, O. Muminov, and A. Hamidov, the passage is written as follows: "Curse on our people, they trusted Azizbek's words and forgot everything he had done to them. They fought seventy days against the enemies, but now thirty-two coins of tax as a reward for their loyalty, for their true service, they should give even the last piece of their bread!". In this approach, the translators chose to explain the cultural phrase "tulkiligiga uchdi" by changing it to the direct words "trusted Azizbek's words". While this makes the situation clear, it completely loses the original animal metaphor of the fox (tulki), which Qodiriy intentionally used to show clever deception, lies, and political tricks. However, this team successfully keeps the verbal irony of the passage by preserving the conflicting phrase "tax as a reward".¹ On the other hand, Carol Yermakova translates the exact same passage with a different focus: "May the ground open up and swallow my people! They fell for his foxy tricks, forgot his cruelty and defended the city for seventy long days and nights without a thought for their own lives! And here's his thanks for their service – levying a tax of thirty-two tanga on each one, forcing them to hand over their last breadcrumb!". Yermakova's choice closely follows the rules of Relevance Theory. By choosing the phrase "fell for his foxy tricks," she keeps the exact metaphor of the original Uzbek words, allowing the English reader to see the animal image of tricks. Furthermore, instead of translating "mukofot" as a literal "reward"—which might confuse an English reader who might take the word seriously—she uses a clear explanation mixed with sarcasm: "And here's his thanks for their service – levying a tax". This addition directly guides the reader to see the immediate contradiction between expectation and reward, saving the ironic impact of Qodiriy's text.²

5. Typological Analysis of Classical Irony

The analysis of irony in O'tkan Kunlar shows that Qodiriy's ironic style is closely connected to the political and historical background of the story. His irony is not a simple, light joke. Instead, it is hidden inside historical words and old cultural situations. The main ideas in this analysis include:

Using logical contradictions. When irony uses simple, opposite meanings—like calling a terrible tax a "reward"—direct translation works well. This is because the contrast is easy for English readers to understand. Problems with cultural metaphors. When irony uses local cultural phrases, like "tulkiligiga uchdi", translating word-for-word does not work. It can make the text lose its original artistic beauty.

Changing the perspective. Translators must use clearer words and change the viewpoint slightly. This helps the English reader feel the exact same negative or mocking tone.

Keeping the background context. Translators need to show the old historical and political situation clearly. This helps the reader understand why a character is being sarcastic.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, irony cannot be effectively translated by merely swapping words from an Uzbek dictionary to an English dictionary. It depends entirely on culture, immediate context, and differing styles of human communication. In Abdulla Qodiriy's O'tkan Kunlar, irony is a critical tool used to analyze bad power structures and human deception.

¹ Tukhtasinov, I. M., Muminov, O. M., & Hamidov, A. A. *The Days Gone By* (Tashkent, 2017), as cited in Karimov, M. (2023). "The Role of Synecdoche and Irony Used in Abdulla Kadiri's Novel 'The Days Gone By'". *Pindus Journal*, p. 74.

² Qodiriy, A. *Days Gone By* (C. Yermakova, Trans.). Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Loubatières, 2015. P. 89, as cited in Karimov, M. (2023). "The Role of Synecdoche and Irony Used in Abdulla Kadiri's Novel 'The Days Gone By'". *Pindus Journal*, p. 74.

While language differences continue to present challenges in literary translation, the role of the translator remains central in shaping clear, adaptable, and culturally responsible texts. Translators must frequently use smart strategies like modulation, protecting metaphors, and adding clear pragmatic explanations. These strategies ensure that the subtle historical, political, and social criticisms are completely saved for a Western reader, keeping the original author's artistic voice and ironic sting fully alive.

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