



LITERARY TRANSLATION IN THE PARADIGM OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION: CULTURAL MEDIATION, MEMORY, AND THE TRANSLATOR'S AGENCY

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Abstract

This article examines literary translation within the paradigm of intercultural communication, emphasizing its function as cultural mediation, a vehicle of cultural memory, and a site of translator agency. Moving beyond linguistic equivalence, the study argues that literary translation operates as a transformative intercultural act shaped by ideological, historical, and aesthetic factors. Drawing on examples from Russian and Uzbek literature in English translation—including works by Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Nikolai Gogol, Abdulla Qodiriy, and Togay Murod—the article analyzes strategies for rendering nationally specific realia and identity markers. The research synthesizes insights from contemporary translation studies and intercultural theory, highlighting the ethical and interpretative responsibility of the translator as an intercultural agent. The findings demonstrate that literary translation not only transfers meaning but also reconstructs cultural representation within global literary systems.

Keywords: Literary translation, intercultural communication, cultural mediation, cultural memory, translator's agency, realia, identity representation, Russian literature, Uzbek literature.



Introduction

In contemporary humanities scholarship, literary translation is increasingly conceptualized as a central mechanism of intercultural communication. Rather than viewing translation as a secondary or derivative activity, modern translation studies emphasize its constitutive role in shaping global literary exchange and cultural perception.

The shift from structuralist equivalence models toward communicative and cultural paradigms—associated with scholars such as Eugene Nida, Gideon Toury, André Lefevere, and Lawrence Venuti—has foregrounded the interpretative and ideological dimensions of translation. Literary translation is now understood as an act of mediation embedded in social, historical, and political contexts.

This article explores literary translation within the paradigm of intercultural communication through three interrelated dimensions:

1. Translation as cultural mediation;
2. Cultural memory and identity in translation;
3. The translator as an intercultural agent.

Examples from Russian and Uzbek literary works translated into English illustrate how translation reconstructs cultural meaning in cross-cultural contexts. Cultural mediation refers to the interpretative process by which culturally embedded meanings are reconstructed in another linguistic and social environment. Literary texts are saturated with nationally specific realia, symbolic references, idioms, and worldview structures. Their translation requires not only linguistic but also cultural competence.

In *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy, numerous French expressions appear in the Russian original, reflecting aristocratic speech norms of early nineteenth-century Russia. English translators face a complex decision: whether to preserve French insertions, translate them into English, or annotate them. Each choice reshapes the cultural layering of the novel. Retaining French preserves historical authenticity but may challenge readability; translating into English risks flattening sociolinguistic nuance.

Similarly, in *Dead Souls* by Nikolai Gogol, the term “souls” (*dyuu*) refers to serfs registered for taxation. While literal translation is possible, the socio-economic



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reality behind the word demands contextual awareness. Without cultural mediation, readers may misinterpret its significance.

Uzbek literature presents equally complex mediation challenges. In O‘tgan kunlar by Abdulla Qodiriy, terms such as *mahalla*, *kelin*, and *hashar* reflect social institutions integral to Uzbek communal life.

The term *mahalla* denotes more than a neighborhood; it implies a self-regulating community structure with moral authority. Translating it simply as “neighborhood” erases sociocultural depth. Most English translations retain *mahalla* in transliteration, occasionally supplemented with contextual explanation. This strategy exemplifies foreignization, preserving cultural specificity while inviting reader engagement with difference.

In works by Togay Murod, rural cultural practices and kinship hierarchies are central narrative elements. Uzbek kinship terms encode age, respect, and relational nuance beyond English equivalents. Translators must decide whether to substitute approximate English terms or retain original forms, each option entailing interpretative consequences.

Literary texts function as repositories of collective memory. They encode historical experiences, religious beliefs, and national myths. Translation transmits this memory across linguistic boundaries but inevitably reshapes it.

In *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoevsky, the figure of the *starets* (spiritual elder) embodies Orthodox Christian spirituality. Translating *cmapey* as “elder” diminishes theological resonance. Many translators retain “starets,” thereby preserving religious specificity and signaling cultural otherness.

Such decisions influence how Russian spiritual identity is perceived within English literary discourse.

According to Gideon Toury, translation norms within the target culture significantly shape the representation of foreign identity. Anglo-American publishing traditions often prioritize fluency and readability, encouraging domestication.

However, domestication can inadvertently neutralize cultural markers. For example, replacing Uzbek honorifics with neutral English forms may erase hierarchical nuance embedded in social interaction. Conversely, excessive foreignization without contextualization may alienate readers.



Translation thus participates in constructing national images within global literary systems. It mediates between self-representation and external perception, shaping intercultural understanding.

The translator occupies a central position in intercultural communication. Far from being invisible, the translator makes interpretative choices that determine how the source culture is framed.

Different English translations of Anna Karenina illustrate this agency. Some translators adopt archaic English to reflect nineteenth-century atmosphere; others employ contemporary language to enhance accessibility. These stylistic decisions influence reader perception of Russian society and character psychology.

Antoine Berman emphasized the ethical dimension of translation, arguing for respect toward the foreign text's alterity. Similarly, Lawrence Venuti advocates translator visibility to resist ethnocentric domestication.

In translating Uzbek literature into English, ethical mediation may involve retaining culturally specific lexemes while providing explanatory frameworks. Paratextual elements—prefaces, glossaries, and footnotes—become instruments of responsible intercultural dialogue.

Translation inevitably transforms the source text, but transformation can be productive. When Russian or Uzbek novels enter English literary space, they engage new readerships and interpretative communities.

Through translation, culturally specific narratives become part of world literature. Yet this inclusion is mediated by translator choices, publishing norms, and ideological frameworks. Literary translation thus functions as both bridge and filter—connecting cultures while shaping the terms of connection.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that literary translation operates within the paradigm of intercultural communication as:

1. **Cultural mediation**, negotiating between preservation and adaptation;
2. **Transmission of cultural memory**, reconstructing historical and symbolic meanings;
3. **Translator agency**, involving ethical and interpretative responsibility.



Examples from Russian and Uzbek literature confirm that translation extends beyond linguistic substitution to become a transformative cultural act. It shapes global literary exchange and influences how national identities are represented and perceived.

In a globalized world characterized by intensified intercultural contact, literary translation remains a vital instrument of dialogue, understanding, and cultural continuity.

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