

## Translating Phraseological Richness a Comparative Study of Idioms in “Bygone days” and its English Version

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**Abstract.** *The translation of idiomatic expressions poses a major challenge in literary translation due to the complex interplay between linguistic form and cultural context. This article investigates theoretical approaches and practical strategies for the adequate transmission of idiomatic expressions, with a specific focus on the English translation of the Uzbek classic novel “Bygone days” by Abdulla Qodiriy, translated by Mark Reese. Through a comparative analysis, the paper explores the types of phraseological units in the source text, their semantic and stylistic functions, and the adequacy of their equivalents in the target text. The study utilizes V.N. Komissarov’s theory of equivalence to evaluate translation adequacy, and it aims to offer insight into the strategies used by the translator in preserving the cultural and expressive richness of the original text.*

**Key words:** *idiomatic expressions, phraseological units, translation equivalence, Uzbek-English translation, Bygone days, literary translation, cultural adaptation.*

**Introduction.** The art of translation involves more than linguistic substitution; it requires the careful transmission of meaning, tone, and cultural nuance. This is particularly true in the case of idiomatic expressions—fixed, figurative phrases whose meanings often cannot be deduced from their individual components. In Uzbek literature, idioms, proverbs, and phraseological units are central to the stylistic richness of the text. *Bygone days*, a seminal work in Uzbek literary history, is replete with such expressions. When translating this text into English, as accomplished by Mark Reese, a significant challenge emerges: how can one adequately render culturally-bound idiomatic expressions without losing their stylistic and emotive power?

This paper analyzes this challenge from both a theoretical and practical perspective. It aims to determine the extent to which idiomatic expressions in *Bygone days* have been translated adequately and to examine the strategies used by the translator to maintain the integrity of the original work.

**Literature Review.** The challenge of translating idiomatic expressions has long been a subject of scholarly interest in both general and literary translation studies. Scholars such as Mona Baker (1992) emphasize that idioms are among the most difficult units to translate due to their figurative and culture-specific nature. Baker outlines four key difficulties in idiom translation: the lack of an equivalent in the target language, a greater frequency of use in the source language, different stylistic connotations, and the potential for semantic mismatch.

Vinay and Darbelnet (1958) proposed a classification of translation techniques that includes modulation, adaptation, and equivalence, each of which is particularly relevant when dealing with idioms. Adaptation, in particular, allows the translator to replace a culture-bound term with one that performs a similar function in the target culture.

A.V. Kunin’s foundational work on phraseology laid the groundwork for classifying idiomatic expressions and understanding their structure and semantics. Kunin emphasized that phraseological

units are not merely fixed expressions but reflect the collective cultural and historical experiences of a linguistic community. In this regard, they function as carriers of national identity and worldview.

In the post-Soviet space, V.N. Komissarov's theory of translation equivalence remains highly influential, particularly his concept of multi-level equivalence, which provides a systematic framework for evaluating the adequacy of translation. Komissarov's levels—from formal-linguistic to pragmatic—allow researchers to assess not only whether an idiom has been translated, but how effectively its cultural and emotional nuances have been transmitted.

Other scholars, such as Newmark (1988), advocate for the “communicative translation” approach when dealing with idioms—prioritizing the effect on the target audience over formal correspondence. This is especially relevant in literary translation, where preserving the reader's emotional engagement is often more critical than retaining structural fidelity.

In the context of Uzbek-English translation studies, there is still a relatively limited body of research. However, studies by local scholars (e.g., Karimov, 2020; Tashkent State University translation department papers) have begun to examine the challenges of translating Uzbek idioms, particularly from the perspective of culturally embedded metaphors and historical expressions.

The English translation of *Bygone days* by Mark Reese offers a valuable case study in this domain. Reese, an experienced translator of Central Asian literature, navigates the idiomatic and cultural richness of the source text with considerable care, employing a mix of techniques drawn from the theoretical approaches mentioned above.

### **Theoretical Framework. Idiomatic Expressions and Phraseology.**

Phraseological units, commonly referred to as idioms or set expressions, include a wide range of language constructs such as collocations, proverbs, sayings, and clichés. According to Russian scholar A.V. Kunin, phraseological units are “stable word combinations with a completely or partially figurative meaning.” Idioms, as part of a nation's linguistic and cultural identity, require careful handling in translation.

### **Translation Equivalence.**

V.N. Komissarov proposes five levels of translation equivalence:

Level of linguistic signs (formal correspondence)

Level of utterance (preservation of the same reference)

Level of situational equivalence

Level of semantic equivalence

Level of pragmatic equivalence

Achieving adequacy in idiom translation generally requires semantic and pragmatic equivalence, which respects the figurative and cultural meaning of the expression in the source language (SL) and recreates a functionally similar effect in the target language (TL).

**Methodology.** This study applies qualitative analysis based on comparative examples extracted from the original Uzbek text of *Bygone days* and its English translation by Mark Reese. Selected idiomatic expressions are analyzed with reference to their lexical structure, figurative meaning, and cultural content. The translation choices are evaluated based on Komissarov's model to determine their adequacy.

### **Analysis of Idiomatic Expressions in the Translation of “Bygone days”. Literal vs. Functional Equivalence**

Example 1:

- Uzbek (SL): Ko‘ngli tog‘dek ko‘tarildi
- Literal translation: “His heart rose like a mountain”

- Reese's translation: "His spirits soared"

Analysis: Reese chooses a functionally equivalent idiom in English. Although the metaphorical image changes, the emotional connotation is preserved. This reflects semantic-pragmatic equivalence (Level 4 and 5), demonstrating adequacy.

### Cultural Substitution

Example 2:

- Uzbek (SL): Gap orasiga suqilib kirdi
- Literal translation: "He slipped into the middle of the talk"
- Reese's translation: "He butted into the conversation"

Analysis: The Uzbek expression is metaphorical and culture-specific. The English expression "butt in" is an informal idiom with similar meaning and tone. Here, cultural substitution achieves pragmatic equivalence.

### Loss of Idiomatic Color

Example 3:

- Uzbek (SL): Ko‘ngli ko‘ngliga sig‘may
- Literal translation: "His heart could not fit in his heart"
- Reese's translation: "He was very excited"

Analysis: The vivid poetic imagery is lost in favor of clarity. While the general meaning is preserved, the emotive and stylistic force diminishes. This reflects a shift toward situational rather than stylistic equivalence.

### Preservation of Original Imagery

Example 4:

- Uzbek (SL): Har kim o‘z oshini o‘zi pishiradi
- Literal translation: "Everyone cooks their own pilaf"
- Reese's translation: "Everyone must cook their own pilaf"

Analysis: The translator retains the culinary imagery, preserving cultural flavor. Though unfamiliar to English readers, the phrase adds authenticity. It reflects an effort to maintain cultural context and style—Level 5 equivalence.

**Discussion.** The examples above illustrate a range of strategies used by Mark Reese in translating idioms:

- Functional substitution is the most common strategy, ensuring that the meaning and effect are preserved even if the form changes.
- Literal translation is rare and used selectively, usually when the cultural expression is transparent or adds exotic flavor.
- Explication or paraphrase is sometimes used when no direct equivalent exists.
- Preservation of metaphor is achieved in some cases to maintain stylistic tone.

The translator's choices show a clear preference for preserving the spirit of the original rather than the letter, aligning with Komissarov's higher levels of equivalence.

**Conclusion.** Translating idiomatic expressions is a delicate and intricate task that requires more than linguistic proficiency; it demands a deep understanding of both the source and target cultures. As demonstrated through the analysis of Mark Reese's English translation of *Bygone days*, achieving adequacy in idiom translation involves strategic decision-making and creative adaptation. Reese

employs a combination of functional substitution, cultural equivalence, and, at times, literal preservation to convey the stylistic and emotional resonance of the original Uzbek expressions.

By applying V.N. Komissarov's model of translation equivalence, this study has shown that most of Reese's idiomatic translations fall within the higher levels of equivalence, particularly semantic and pragmatic. However, in a few cases, the stylistic richness of the original idioms is partially lost in favor of clarity or accessibility for the English-speaking reader. This reflects the inevitable tension in literary translation between fidelity to the source text and readability in the target language.

Ultimately, this case study reinforces the broader consensus in translation studies: that the translator must act as both a linguistic mediator and a cultural interpreter. The successful rendering of idiomatic expressions in *Bygone days* not only preserves the beauty and depth of Abdulla Qodiriy's language but also helps bridge the cultural gap between Uzbek and English-speaking audiences. Future research might extend this study by exploring how similar strategies are applied in other Uzbek literary works, or by comparing multiple English translations of the same text to uncover stylistic and ideological shifts in the treatment of phraseology.

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