

WORD CHOICE AND THE PROBLEM OF “FALSE EQUIVALENCE” IN THE UZBEK TRANSLATION OF GÜNTEKIN’S “ÇALIKUŞU”**Xayrulla Khudoyorovich Khamidov**Professor at the Department of Translation Studies,
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Abstract: This article examines the issues of word and phrase selection, as well as the problem of “false equivalence,” in the Uzbek translation of the novel *Çalığışu* by the prominent Turkish writer Reşat Nuri Güntekin, translated by the distinguished Uzbek writer and translator Mirzakalon Ismoilii. The study analyzes the preservation of the author’s individual style in translation and highlights the translator’s artistic mastery. Particular attention is paid to lexical choice, phraseological units, culturally marked expressions, and semantic discrepancies that arise between closely related languages such as Turkish and Uzbek. Through comparative analysis of examples from the original text and its Uzbek translation, the article demonstrates how “false equivalents” may affect the accuracy and stylistic authenticity of literary translation. The research also explores similarities and differences in Turkish and Uzbek phraseology, emphasizing their linguistic and cultural foundations. The article serves as an introduction to a broader monographic study devoted to the theory and practice of literary translation between Turkic languages.

Keywords: literary translation, translation studies, false equivalence, lexical choice, phraseological units, Turkish language, Uzbek language, author’s style, *Çalığışu*, Reşat Nuri Güntekin, Mirzakalon Ismoilii, Turkic literature, semantic equivalence, artistic translation.

Introduction: Based on the principle “Literary Friendship is Eternal Friendship,” the friendly ties strengthened in recent years between the peoples of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Türkiye through the dialogue conducted by the leaders of the two states are being consistently continued in scientific and literary relations as well. The noteworthy efforts being carried out to promote Uzbek literature in Türkiye and Turkish literature in Uzbekistan serve as a vivid example of this cooperation. In particular, the publication of the one-hundred-volume collection *Masterpieces of Turkic Literature*, consisting of Uzbek translations of works by writers of Turkic states, initiated at the suggestion of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, is considered a landmark achievement in this sphere [1, 271].

The continuation of cooperation in this direction not only contributes to the promotion of the literature of the two nations, but also serves to further strengthen the friendly relations between the two countries. Moreover, the amicable relations established between the intellectuals of the two brotherly states contribute to the development of science, artistic creativity, art, and culture.

This article discusses the famous novel *Çalığışu* by the prominent representative of twentieth-century Turkish and world literature, Reşat Nuri Güntekin, as well as the reflection of the author’s style and the manifestation of the translator’s skill in its Uzbek translation by the distinguished writer and translator Mirzakalon Ismoilii. Güntekin is well known to Uzbek readers and cinema enthusiasts through his world-famous works such as *The Brand (Damga)*, *Symphony of Love (Dudaktan Kalbe)*, *Falling Leaves (Yaprak Dökümü)*, and *Enemy of Women (Bir Kadın Düşmanı)*, along with sixteen novels, six collections of short stories, and nearly thirty plays.

The novel was translated and first published more than sixty years ago (its second edition was issued in 1965), and over the past sixty years it has been republished several times in tens of

thousands of copies. In 2022, the novel was included as Volume 41 of the one-hundred-volume collection *Masterpieces of Turkic Literature* [2].

It should be emphasized that this article may be regarded as an introduction to a broader translation studies research project devoted to the five major novels of Reşat Nuri Güntekin mentioned above, all of which have been translated into Uzbek. In the article, an attempt is made to examine the issue of recreating the novel *Çalığışu* in Uzbek from various perspectives of translation studies. “*The novel Çalığışu, written with great talent by the distinguished Turkish writer and translated into Uzbek with great love, reached readers as a symbol of Mirzakalon Ismoilij’s immense devotion to translation*” [5].

It is well known that rendering titles in literary translation requires a special approach, for this is as important as naming a child. Some translators begin their work with the title, while others, after completing the translation, choose a “new” title for the “new work” only after long reflection. This issue is directly related to the novel *Çalığışu* as well.

In fact, the meaning of the word “*Çalığışu*,” used as the title of the novel, in Turkish refers to “*a small bird belonging to the sparrow family, with a yellow (or red) head*” (zoological term), literally meaning “*a bird of the bushes or thickets.*” This name is a nickname given to the protagonist, Feride, because as a child she was extremely mischievous, lively, restless, energetic, and playful. Thus, the nickname fully reflects her character and accompanies her throughout her life. In Russian, *Çalığışu* was translated as *Korolyok – ptichka pevchaya* (“*The Little Songbird*”), and the film adaptation based on the novel was given the same title.

As can be seen, the writer and translator Mirzakalon Ismoilij rendered the title into Uzbek through transliteration as *Choliqushi*. However, this title does not carry any direct meaning in Uzbek. The work could also have been titled *Chittak* (“*Titmouse*”), *Chumchuq* (“*Sparrow*”), *Butazor qushi* (“*Bird of the Thicket*”), or *Sinchalak* (“*Wagtail*”). Yet, for some reason, the translator chose not to follow this path. Interestingly, today Uzbek readers have become so accustomed to the title *Choliqushi* that it no longer raises any debate or discussion among readers or viewers of the film adaptation.

Main part: The novel *Çalığışu* is one of the world’s famous literary works because of its artistic power, and moreover, a substantial part of it is constructed in the unique form of letters written in Feride’s memoir notebook. Literary scholar Z. Isomiddinov remarks: “*I feel inclined to compare the Feride of Çalığışu with Kumush created by M. Ismoilij.*”

Turning directly to the translation of the work, one of the most complex issues in literary translation between closely related languages is the problem of word choice and the phenomenon of “*false equivalents.*”

The phenomenon of “*false equivalence*” usually occurs when translation is carried out between closely related languages. For example, in translation from Turkish into Uzbek or vice versa, words borrowed long ago from Arabic or Persian into both languages but now used with different meanings may mislead the translator. For instance, the Uzbek word *iløj*, meaning “*solution,*” “*remedy,*” or “*possibility,*” in modern Turkish (*ilaç*) means “*medicine*” or “*drug.*” In Turkish, it almost never conveys the meaning of “*solution*” or “*way out.*” Because of its polysemantic nature, only a skilled translator can reliably render such expressions into the target language.

An example from *Çalığışu*: *Kızlarım, ümitsiz hastalıkların, mukadder felaketlerin son bir ilacı vardır: Tahammül ve tevekkül* [3,168].

In M. Ismoilij’s translation, this sentence is rendered as: “*Qizlarim, umidsiz kasalliklarning, tabiiy falokatlarning birgina dorisi bor: chidash va bo’ysunish*” [4,180].

In the Turkish text, the word *ilaç* is translated into Uzbek as *dori* (“*medicine*”), and here the literal translation is justified. However, the phrase *ümitsiz hastalıkların* would have been more appropriate if rendered not as “*hopeless illnesses,*” but rather as “*incurable diseases*” (*bedavo dard*). Likewise, the word *mukadder*, meaning “*destined*” or “*predestined,*” should not have been translated as “*natural,*” but rather retained as *muqaddar*. Similarly, *tahammül* could have

been preserved as tahammul, and tevekkül rendered not as “submission,” but as tavakkul. After all, this is part of Reşat Nuri Güntekin’s stylistic manner, and the translator is obliged to preserve it by all possible means.

From this perspective, the Turkish sentence could more accurately have been translated as:

“My daughters, the ultimate remedy for incurable diseases and predestined calamities is patience, endurance, and trust in God.”

Such a rendering would have produced a translation closer to the original text and preserved the author’s stylistic features more fully.

The word *ikram*, borrowed from Arabic, in Uzbek carries the meanings of “respect,” “honor,” and “hospitality.” However, in Turkish the usage range of the cognate word *ikram* is much broader. Meanings such as “respect” and “honor” are only secondary meanings of the word. In modern Turkish, its primary meaning is “to offer” or “to treat.” For example: *Misafirler'e çay ikram edildi* (“Tea was served to the guests”).

An example from the novel *Çalikuşu*: *Şimdi artık öğreneceğinizi öğrenmiş sayılacağınız için bir tane (fondan) ikram edebilirim* [3,52].

Translation:

“Endi kerakli narsani o’rganib olganingiz uchun bitta konfet hadya qilaman” (“Now that you have learned what was necessary, I will present you with a candy”) [4,54].

However, the sentence could have been translated into simpler and more natural Uzbek as:

“Endi bilishingiz kerak bo’lgan narsani bilib olganingiz uchun sizga bitta konfet beraman” (“Now that you have found out what you needed to know, I will give you a candy”).

This is because the Turkish verb *öğrenmek* in this sentence does not mean “to study” or “to learn” in the usual sense, but rather “to find out,” “to come to know,” or “to inquire and discover.” Likewise, the phrase *ikram etmek* here means “to give” or “to treat,” rather than “to present as a gift.”

Although the subject of “false equivalence” has been sufficiently discussed in translation theory up to the present day, the principles according to which works of a particular genre should be translated are often left to the translator’s intuition. In many cases, the same methods used for translating works written in distant languages are also applied to works written in closely related languages. This, in turn, may lead to an inaccurate evaluation of foreign literary works.

The following sentence appears in the novel *Çalikuşu*: *Ne olduğumu anlatamam. Kılığım, kıyafetim bir şeye benzese neyse. Fakat ayaklarım çıplak, arkamda açık bir beyaz gömlek* [3,265].

Translation: *“Qanday ahvolga tushganimni so’z bilan aytib berolmayman. Qilig’im, qiyofatim bir narsaga o’xshasa ham go’rga edi: oyoqlarim ochiq, egnimda yarim-yorti badanimni yopib turgan oq ko’ylak”* [4,289].

In the translation, the meaning of the Turkish sentence is conveyed reliably. However, the words *kılığım*, *kıyafetim* were translated literally as *qilig’im*, *qiyofatim*, instead of being rendered more naturally as *ust-boshim* (“my clothes”) or *tashqi ko’rinishim* (“my appearance”).

As the prominent scholar G’aybulla Salomov wrote: “To recreate a work in another language, that is, in the native language, the translator first deeply comprehends and internalizes the author’s idea, and then, depending on the character of the text, selects an appropriate equivalent word. The translator is constantly concerned with the meaning, resonance, form, stylistic equivalence of words, and with expressing the idea of the original text as fully as possible” [6,57].

A translator who understands this principle will always achieve success. Indeed, the ability to select and use the most suitable word from among several synonyms is a sign of mastery and of a profound sensitivity to the subtlest nuances of language.

Research in phraseology shows that in both Uzbek and Turkish dozens of idiomatic expressions have been formed on the basis of the word *qil* (“hair”). In both languages, the meaning of this word is almost identical. In Uzbek, *qil* refers to “the hair of a horse’s or another

animal's tail” or “*fiber*,” while in Turkish (kıl) it means “*hair*,” “*fur*,” “*goat hair*,” and similar notions. This may be observed in the following Turkish sentence from the novel *Çalığışu* and its translation:

“*Hacı Kalfa, beni dinlerken gözleri büyümiş, başında saç olmadığı için kaşlarının kılları dimdik olmuştu*” [3,147].

Translation:

“*Hoji xalifa so'zlarimni eshitib ko'zlari olaydi, boshida sochi bo'lmagani uchun qoshlarining tuki dikkaydi*” [4,158].

This sentence could more appropriately have been translated as: “*While listening to me, Hoji Khalfa's eyes widened, and since he had no hair on his head, the hairs of his eyebrows stood upright.*”

Some of the idiomatic expressions found in *Çalığışu* describe a person's physical and psychological condition. Examples include: *deve nalbanta bakar gibi bakmak* – “*to stare like a camel looking at a farrier*,” *haline köpekler gülmek* – literally “*even dogs laugh at one's condition*,” corresponding to the Uzbek expression “*even monkeys would cry at such a condition*,” *bir taşla iki tavşanı vurmak* – “*to kill two rabbits with one stone*,” corresponding to “*to kill two birds with one stone*,” *kuyruğunu kısmak* – “*to tuck one's tail*,” *kuyruğu dimdik* – literally “*tail upright*,” meaning “*stubborn*” or “*obstinate*,” *koku(sunu) almak* – “*to catch the smell of something*,” that is, “*to sense*” or “*to suspect*.”

The Turkish expression *tüylere diken diken olmak* (“one's hairs becoming like thorns”) corresponds to the Uzbek meaning “one's hair standing on end from fear or horror.” Likewise, *kulak kabartmak* and *kulak dikmek* literally mean “*to prick up one's ears*.” For example: “*Tavşan gibi kulaklarımı dikmiştim*” [3,14].

Translation: “*Quloqlarimni quyunday ding qilib oldim*” [4,13].

Here, the idiom *kulak dikmek* (“to prick up one's ears”) originates from the movements of animals such as rabbits or moles. When applied to humans, however, it conveys the meaning of “suddenly hearing something suspicious and concentrating attention in order to listen more carefully.”

The analysis of phraseological units used in the novel demonstrates that a considerable number of them are based on the behavior of animals (*kuyruk sallamak* – “*to wag one's tail*”) or on bodily movements (*tüylere diken diken olmak* – “*one's hair standing on end*”). For example, the expression *kuyruğunu kısmak* [7,75], meaning “*to tuck one's tail*,” derives from the image of a small animal shrinking in fear before a larger animal or a human. Similarly, *kuyruğu dimdik* (“*tail standing upright*”) conveys alertness and readiness, while *koku(sunu) almak* (“*to catch a scent*”) [7,75] metaphorically expresses sensing or suspecting something.

In the above-mentioned idioms, such figurative meanings as “*to flatter submissively*,” “*to withdraw in fear*,” “*to be stubborn or obstinate*,” or “*to sense something instinctively like an animal*” are vividly reflected in speech. Thus, animal behavior and characteristics merge with human actions and acquire metaphorical meaning. For example: “*Kedi gibi kulak kabartarak durdum*” [3,52].

Translation:

“*I stood there pricking up my ears like a cat*” [4,55].

In this example, the idiom *kulak kabartmak* (“to prick up one's ears”), which metaphorically compares human attentiveness to the alert movements of animals such as rabbits, is a variant of *kulak dikmek* (“to prick up one's ears”).

The following conclusions may be drawn from the above discussion:

In many cases, specialists do not regard translation between closely related languages and the process of selecting words and expressions in this context as a complex creative task. Rather, they tend to treat it merely as transferring a literary text from one cognate language into another, that is, as a simple adaptation. In other words, literary translation is often understood as

mechanically transferring a text from one language to another and replacing only some difficult or unclear words with more comprehensible ones.

As the translation scholar Zohid Isomiddinov has written: “Cases in which ‘false equivalents’ mislead translators in translation between closely related languages actually arise because the translator does not know the original language sufficiently well” [8,159]. The conclusion reached by the Turkish researcher H.

Yıldız also confirms this idea: “The problem of deceptive equivalents arises because the translator places excessive trust in his or her own knowledge and memory, neglects reference sources, works carelessly, becomes distracted even for a moment, or relies on sources that are themselves insufficiently reliable” [9,613].

The similarities and differences between Turkish and Uzbek phraseological units stem primarily from the similarities in the lifestyles, geography, religion, history, and worldview of the two peoples. Most importantly, at the core of such expressions there always stands the human being and the material world surrounding him or her.

It should be especially emphasized that this article, which examines the issues of word and phrase selection as well as the problem of “false equivalence” in the translation of the novel *Çalığışu* by the distinguished Turkish writer Reşat Nuri Güntekin, translated by the well-known Uzbek writer and translator Mirzakalon Ismoilii, should be regarded as the introduction to a larger monographic research project devoted to the representation of the author’s style in translation and the manifestation of the translator’s mastery.

Conclusion: The analysis of the Uzbek translation of *Çalığışu* demonstrates that literary translation between closely related languages such as Turkish and Uzbek requires not only linguistic competence, but also deep cultural, stylistic, and semantic sensitivity. The study of lexical units, phraseological expressions, and so-called “false equivalents” reveals that even words with common historical roots may acquire different semantic shades and stylistic functions in the two languages, thereby creating serious challenges for the translator.

The research has shown that the translation carried out by Mirzakalon Ismoilii successfully preserves the artistic spirit and emotional atmosphere of the original work in many cases. At the same time, certain examples indicate that literal rendering or insufficient consideration of semantic nuance may weaken the stylistic originality of the text. Therefore, the translator’s task is not merely to transfer words from one language into another, but to recreate the author’s worldview, artistic intention, and expressive style in the target language.

The comparative analysis of phraseological units further confirms that the similarities between Turkish and Uzbek linguistic imagery stem from the shared cultural heritage, traditions, worldview, and historical experience of the two peoples. Nevertheless, differences in usage and connotation require translators to approach idiomatic expressions with particular caution and creativity.

In conclusion, the problem of word choice and false equivalence remains one of the central issues in translation studies involving Turkic languages. A successful literary translation can only be achieved through profound knowledge of both languages, careful attention to contextual meaning, and a high degree of artistic mastery. The present article may therefore serve as an important theoretical and practical basis for future monographic research devoted to the preservation of authorial style and the enhancement of translation quality in Uzbek–Turkish literary relations.

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