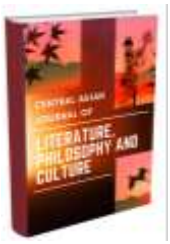

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Article

Cultural Untranslatability of Endearment Terms in Shakespeare: The Cases of Ladybird and Nymph in Uzbek Translation

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Abstract: This article explores the phenomenon of cultural untranslatability in rendering Shakespeare's terms of endearment into Uzbek, focusing on "ladybird" in Romeo and Juliet and "nymph" in Hamlet. Although both words have lexical equivalents in Uzbek, their affective and stylistic nuances resist direct transfer. The study argues that the translation of such endearments goes beyond lexical substitution, involving complex interactions between cultural perception, emotional tone, and poetic imagery. Through a comparative analysis of existing Uzbek translations and their English originals, the research reveals how translators navigate the tension between semantic accuracy and emotional expressiveness. By highlighting the loss, adaptation, or transformation of tenderness embedded in these words, the article contributes to broader discussions on the limits of equivalence and the role of cultural context in artistic translation. Ultimately, it shows that in Shakespearean translation, meaning may survive, but the subtleties of affection often fade, inviting the translator to act not as a mediator, but as a re-creator of emotional resonance.

Keywords: Shakespeare, endearment, cultural untranslatability, artistic translation, Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Uzbek translation, equivalence, stylistic meaning, emotional nuance.

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1. Introduction

Translation is an in-between place of languages and cultures but also a place of negotiation, of adaptation, of loss. William ShakespeareWilliam ShakespeareThe style of Shakespeare, complex and full of poetry, will be one of the most daunting materials for translators. Translators operating in non-European linguistic and cultural environments face specific challenges posed by Shakespearean use of culturally-bound expressions, archaic idioms, and affective metaphors. This particular type of problem is the challenge that arises with the rendering of terms of endearment — words that carry both affective weight and cultural specificity.

However, this becomes especially clear in the examples of the words – ladybird in Romeo and Juliet and nymph in Hamlet in the context of Uzbek translation. Both terms encapsulate affectionate or idealized address, reflecting social and poetic conventions of Elizabethan England that do not have direct cultural or linguistic parallels in Uzbek. Their Uzbek translations often reproduce semantic meaning but fail to retain the stylistic tenderness, gendered nuance, or mythological resonance of the original. This disjunction

exemplifies what Roman Jakobson defined as cultural untranslatability – the inability of target language and culture to reproduce a concept in its full emotive and contextual force [1].

The current paper attempts to study such cases as instances of partial untranslatability, in which the meaning is transferred but the emotional texture and stylistic shading are weakened or changed. It explores the untranslatability of Shakespearean affectionate terms rooted in Elizabethan socio-cultural codes into Uzbek, a language informed by Turkic, Persian, and Islamic aesthetic traditions. Thus, this research attempts to show that the translation of Shakespeare into Uzbek consists not only in terms of the lexicon, but, hopefully, in terms of cultural negotiation and emotional re-construction, and that by integrating linguistic and literary methods.

Literature Review

The concept of untranslatability has been central to translation theory since the mid-twentieth century. Roman Jakobson distinguished between linguistic untranslatability, where structural differences between languages prevent direct transfer, and cultural untranslatability, where the absence of shared cultural concepts obstructs equivalence. Building upon Jakobson, Catford emphasized that translation equivalence operates within cultural frames and cannot always achieve total correspondence [2], [3].

Eugene Nida's theory of dynamic equivalence further advanced the idea that translation should aim not for literal sameness, but for an equivalent effect on the target audience. According to Nida, "the message must be so translated that the response of the receptor is essentially like that of the original receptors." This approach recognizes emotional and functional dimensions of meaning – crucial for rendering terms of endearment. Likewise, Peter Newmark made a distinction between semantic translation, which aims a greater allegiance to the source text, and communicative translation, which attempts to reflect the readers understanding and emotion [4]. Both frameworks emphasise that complete equivalence is frequently not reasonably possible, particularly for emotionally charged or culture bound expressioons.

Trapped into Shakespearean translation, Bassnett, for one, makes the claim that the translator cannot help but become a cultural mediator [5], [6]. The aim is not just linguistic content but to carry the aesthetic and affective power of the original. Artistic translation, then, demands interpretative creativity rather than mechanical fidelity.

In more recent discussions, the concept of artistic translation (or in Uzbek scholarship "badiiy tarjima") highlights the idea that translation is a creative act where the translator is an artist with the aim of recreating style, imagery and feeling. For instance, Uzbek theorist Q. Musayev defines literary translation as "an act of aesthetic equivalence in which the translator must not only understand the words but recreate their emotional universe as well" [7].

Vinay and Darbelnet proposed the concept of *adaptation*, a strategy employed when cultural elements have no direct equivalent. In such cases, the translator substitutes a culturally analogous expression in the target language to evoke a similar response. However, when translating Shakespeare's endearments, adaptation often results in *emotional flattening,* as the intimate or mythological tones embedded in the source terms lack analogs in Uzbek discourse.

Shakespeare entered Uzbek literature primarily through Russian mediation during the Soviet period. Early translations by G. Gulom, Uygun, M. Shaykhzoda and other poets introduced *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Othello* to Uzbek readers. These translations aimed to preserve Shakespeare's grandeur and moral depth while making his language accessible to the Uzbek audience. However, it must be noted that translators often domesticated culturally unfamiliar concepts to align with Uzbek poetic and moral sensibilities.

For instance, metaphoric expressions of affection in Uzbek tend to derive from kinship, spirituality, or physical beauty rather than animal imagery or mythological references. This cultural difference explains why terms like *ladybird* or *nymph*, though translatable lexically, fail to evoke the same emotional resonance. Within this framework, the issue of cultural untranslatability remains central to understanding how Shakespeare's emotional

lexicon transforms in Uzbek versions [8]. The translator's task is to bring Shakespeare closer to the heart of the Uzbek reader without tearing him away from his own poetic roots.

2. Materials and Methods

The research design for this study is qualitative, comparative, and descriptive. The work deals with the translation of two Shakespearean affectionate words, ladybird (Romeo and Juliet) and nymph (Hamlet) into Uzbek. This methodology melds language analysis with style interpretation and cultural contextualization.

It contains ladybird and nymph selected passages from Shakspeare original English and their recognized translation into Uzbek by famous translators such as Maksud Shaykhzoda, Jamol Kamol [9]. We selected these texts for their relative representativity and cultural uniqueness.

The analysis utilizes one of three theoretical perspectives: 1. Jakobson to define equivalence and untranslatability as linguistic and cultural barriers; 2. Use of Nida's dynamic equivalence theory to assess the extent of: emotional and functional equivalence attained; 3. Stylistic analysis for deciphering the translated expressions composition and emotional conveyance mechanisms.

We analyze each term at the semantic (denotative and connotative meaning comparison), stylistic, and cultural (sociocultural associations and emotional resonance in both languages) levels.

Contextualizing the results – both interpretation and performance – in Uzbek cultural practice and Elizabethan emotional discourse demonstrates translation as both a cultural bridge and a gap.

3. Results

The comparative analysis of the English source texts and their Uzbek renderings revealed that the translation of culturally loaded endearment terms such as *ladybird* (*Romeo and Juliet*) and *nymph* (*Hamlet*) reflects both the linguistic and cultural asymmetry between English and Uzbek:

William Shakespeare *Romeo & Juliet* *(Act 1, Scene 3)*	*NURSE* *Now, by my maidenhead, at twelve year old,* *I bade her come. What, lamb! what,* ***ladybird!***
M. Shaykhzoda's translation (p.44)	*ENAGA* *Ont ichaman, ma'sum qizlik iffati haqi,* *Uni boya, chaqirgandim: Qo'zichoq!* ***Qumrim****!*
J. Kamol's translation *(p.25)*	*ENAGA* *Kechgan qizlik iffatimga qasam ichaman,* *O'n ikki yoshimda berib qo'yganman uni.* *Men chaqirdim, qo'zichog'im,* ***ovunchog'im,*** *kel!*

and

William Shakespeare *Hamlet* *(Act 3, Scene 1)*	*HAMLET* *The fair Ophelia!* ***Nymph****, in thy orisons* *Be all my sins remember'd.*
M. Shaykhzoda's translation *(p.109)*	*HAMLET* *Ofeliya! Quvonchim! Gunohlarimga –* *O'z duongda kechirim tila, ey* ***pari****!*
J. Kamol's translation *(p.282)*	*Hamlet* *Bas, kifoya! Ofeliya, ey* ***go'zal pari****,* *Bir osiyman, duoyingda yod ayla meni.*

These terms, though lexically translatable, lose their affective and metaphorical force when transferred into Uzbek due to the absence of equivalent forms of address within the Uzbek linguistic worldview [10].

According to Online Etymology Dictionary, *ladybird (n.) also lady-bird, 1590s, "sweetheart" a term of endearment, from lady + bird.* H. Roy and P. Brown write: "In English, the name ladybird is a dedication to *Our Lady, The Virgin Mary*. They are 'Our Lady's birds".

According to a legend, European farmers once prayed to the Virgin Mary when their crops were being destroyed by pests. Soon after, a swarm of small, brightly colored beetles appeared and devoured the harmful insects. Grateful for this help, the farmers named the creatures "beetles of Our Lady," a phrase that eventually evolved into the modern term "ladybug".

So, we can conclude that the ladybug symbol stands for protection, healing, good fortune, and grace.

Shaykhzoda translated the word *ladybug* as *qumrim* which literally means *my dove*. In Uzbek, dove symbolizes peace, purity, and innocence. In lyrical poetry, it may also suggest love and loyalty, but unlike English, *qumrim* is rarely used as an endearment [11]. It sounds poetic or symbolic rather than intimate.

Kamol translated the word as *ovunchog'im*. This word is defined as follows: *ovunchoq – kishini ovuntiradigan, yupatadigan narsa, kimsa, ish; ovunch, yupanch;* – i.e. *something or someone that comforts, soothes, or consoles a person; a source of comfort or consolation – (author's translation)*. In Uzbek culture, this word is often used toward children to express affection. Both Uzbek translations of ladybird are adequate and convey its connotational meaning, whereas denotational meaning would simply refer to a bug in Uzbek.

Similarly, the term *nymph* in *Hamlet* reflects Renaissance ideals of purity and divine femininity. Its mythological undertones evoke both chastity and seduction, positioning Ophelia as a figure of ethereal beauty and vulnerability. Uzbek translations often render *nymph* as *pari*, or *go'zal pari*, each of which partially conveys the intended imagery but fails to encapsulate the Greek mythological connotation that would be alien to the target culture.

Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines *nymph* as follows: *nymph – (in ancient Greek and Roman stories) a spirit of nature in the form of a young woman, that lives in rivers, woods, etc.* In *A Shakespeare Glossary*: *nymph – young and beautiful woman*.

In the Uzbek explanatory dictionary, *pari – go'zal ayol, yaxshilik qiluvchi ruh; mif. Sharq xalqlari folklorida keng tarqalgan, juda go'zal qiz qiyofasidagi, nurdan yaratilgan, kishilarni ins-jinslardan saqlaydigan afsonaviy obraz; go'zallik ramzi; koch'. juda go'zal, xushro'y ayol, nozanin;* – i.e. *a beautiful woman or a benevolent spirit, fairy; in mythology, a legendary figure widespread in the folklore of Eastern peoples, depicted as a radiant maiden created from light who protects humans from evil spirits; a symbol of beauty; fig., a very beautiful, charming woman or fair lady – (author's translation).*

It can be concluded that the figurative meaning of the word in English coincides with that in Uzbek; however, the mythological image is drawn from culturally familiar sources.

4. Discussion

The results emphasise that untranslatability is more than a linguistic phenomenon; rather it is a cultural and semiotic one, especially when it comes to literary and poetic communication. Translation, as Lefevere has pointed out, is a form of rewriting, but it is one carried out within the limits set by the constraints imposed by what may be called the cultural and ideological parameters of the target system [12]. On the strategic level, the translators in the Uzbek context are driven by the spirit of domestication rather than foreignization, implying that the readers' emotional accessibility to the work takes precedence over cultural fidelity.

In English the endearment terms based on flora and fauna are almost unlimited as the cultural tendency underlies the metaphorizing of love through natural imagery which is familiar to us. Conversely, Uzbek affection is anthropocentric, based on kinship (yorim, bolam, begim) or spiritual metaphors (jonim, farishtam). Thus, direct translations of ladybird or nymph do not exist, and translators have a choice between adhering to literal fidelity or cultural acceptability.

This is consistent with dynamic equivalence which has been championed by Nida and aims to produce the same response from the target reader, rather than matching linguistic form. This is why translators often import images that ring more true to people's

emotional core. But, as Newmark warns us, it will result in a lo with stylistic or metaphorical impeditment.

In Shakespeare's language, endearment terms function as condensed poetic symbols that encapsulate social relations, emotional intimacy, and cultural perception. The tender humor of *ladybird* – a nurse's affectionate call to young Juliet – depends on the charm of an image rooted in European folklore [13]. The absence of the word's connotation in Uzbek culture renders literal translation ineffective. By substituting it with *qumrim* or *ovunchog'im*, the translator conveys emotion but omits the playful connotation that enriches Shakespeare's text.

Similarly, *nymph* encapsulates the Renaissance fascination with mythological archetypes of feminine virtue and fragility. When translated as *pari* (fairy), the word acquires an Eastern nuance of supernatural beauty but loses the Hellenic cultural layer that frames Hamlet's poetic vision. This is a manifestation of what Jakobson described as *intralingual* versus *intersemiotic* shifts – where meaning changes not only across languages but across semiotic systems.

Translators often employ compensation techniques to restore lost aesthetic value. In the case of *ladybird*, they may enhance surrounding dialogue with affectionate tone, diminutive suffixes possessive determiners *(-im* – i.e. *my*) to replicate tenderness. For *nymph*, metaphorical intensification through poetic imagery (*pari*, i.e. *fairy*) can partially preserve the stylistic aura.

Such strategies demonstrate the translator's role as a creative mediator rather than a linguistic imitator. As Holmes and Bassnett note, literary translation involves the recreation of poetic function within the target culture rather than the transfer of isolated lexical meanings [14].

The tension between fidelity and creativity illustrates the dynamic nature of artistic translation. In Uzbek translations of Shakespeare, translators balance between the authority of the canonical source and the cultural expectations of readers. This interplay validates Toury's concept of *norms*, where the translator's decisions reflect the socio-cultural system governing translation behavior.

Ultimately, the inability to reproduce certain endearment terms like *ladybird* and *nymph* suggests not absolute untranslatability but what Eco called *degrees of loss and gain* [15]. Each translation is a negotiation – a compromise between preserving the foreign and nurturing the familiar.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that *ladybird* and *nymph* exemplify cultural untranslatability in Shakespeare's works when rendered into Uzbek. Though translators can convey affection or beauty through functional equivalents, the cultural resonance and intertextual symbolism inherent in these terms remain partially lost. This loss, however, is not purely negative – it reflects the adaptability of the Uzbek language and the translator's creative engagement with the text.

The research underscores the importance of recognizing translation as both a linguistic and cultural act. The translation of endearment terms reveals how each culture encodes emotion, gender, and intimacy differently. The untranslatability of such expressions thus opens a broader discussion about intercultural poetics and the limits of linguistic universality. Future research could explore other Shakespearean endearments (*sweetheart*, *dear heart*, *my jewel*) across Uzbek and other translations to map patterns of domestication, metaphorical shift, and emotional equivalence.

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