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## SEMANTIC AND CONTEXTUAL ISSUES IN THE UZBEK TRANSLATION OF JURJI ZAYDAN'S NOVEL "THE BRIDE OF FERGANA"

**Abstract.** *This article analyzes the adequacy of semantic and contextual transfer in the Uzbek translation of Jurji Zaydan's novel "The Bride of Fergana." Through comparative analysis of the source text and its translation, the study examines semantic equivalence, the translation of historical terms, cultural connotations, and the rendering of stylistic features. Various translation strategies including calque, interpretative translation, and descriptive equivalence are examined through textual examples drawn from the translation by Shoikrom Shoislomov (Zaydan, 2005). The findings indicate that the translation successfully preserves the historical background, artistic imagery, and overall conceptual integrity of the original work, while also revealing instances of semantic narrowing, stylistic softening, and cultural simplification that are inherent to any act of literary translation between historically and culturally distant traditions.*

**Keywords:** *literary translation; semantic equivalence; historical terms; translation strategies; Jurji Zaydan; cultural adaptation; Arabic; Uzbek.*

### INTRODUCTION

The translation of Jurji Zaydan's "The Bride of Fergana" into Uzbek raises important scholarly questions about the degree to which the original semantic content, historical terminology, and artistic imagery have been accurately reproduced. Zaydan's style is distinguished above all by the precision with which historical facts are presented and by the harmony between those facts and the literary narrative constructed around

them (Gibb, 1960). For this reason, achieving contextual accuracy in the translation requires not only the selection of appropriate linguistic equivalents but also the recreation adapted for the Uzbek reader's sensibility of the novel's atmosphere, historical spirit, social relations system, and the distinctive stylistic layers of the Arabic source text.

The syntactic structure of Arabic, the metaphorical nature of its imagery, and the distinctive terminology of the historical novel genre together constitute a complex semantic field that must be rendered in Uzbek through functionally equivalent images. Uzbek translators have striven to recreate this field not through literal translation but on the basis of the principle of semantic equivalence (Xo'jayeva, 2000:45). It is evident from the very first sentences of the novel that the skilled translator Shoikrom Shoislomov approached his task with a degree of creative freedom a freedom that is not only permissible but necessary in literary translation, since strict word-for-word rendering would impede the reader's engagement with the text (Shoislomov, 1970).

The aim of this article is to conduct a systematic comparative analysis of selected passages from the Arabic source text and their Uzbek translations, with the objective of identifying the specific semantic, stylistic, and cultural transformations that occur in the translation process and of assessing the overall degree of equivalence achieved.

## METHODS

The article employs comparative-analytical and historical-linguistic methods. The corpus of analysis consists of selected passages from the Arabic source text of Zaydan's novel and from the Uzbek translation prepared by Shoikrom Shoislomov (Zaydan, 2005). Each passage is analyzed at the levels of semantic content, terminological accuracy, stylistic register, and cultural connotation. The analytical framework distinguishes between two principal translation strategies employed in the text calque translation and interpretative translation and identifies cases of semantic narrowing, stylistic softening, and cultural simplification. Supporting reference sources include Zaydan's "History of Islamic Civilization" (Zaydan, 1970), the scholarly studies of Gibb (1960) and Xo'jayeva (2000), and Shoislomov's own earlier translation work (Shoislomov, 1970).

## RESULTS

Opening sentence: temporal and cultural terms. To illustrate the translator's approach, we begin with the opening sentence of the novel. The Arabic source text reads:

أصبح أهل فرغانة في يوم من أيام سنة ٢٢١ للهجرة وهم يتأهبون للاحتفال بالنريوز (رأس السنة).

A direct translation of this sentence would read: “The people of Fergana, on one of the days of the year 221 of the Hijri calendar, were preparing to celebrate Nawruz (the beginning of the year).” The translator’s version renders this as: “221 [AH]. The people of Fergana were making preparations to welcome the New Year” (Zaydan, 2005:3). The difference is readily apparent. The Hijri calendar reference (hijriy sana) has been reduced to a bare date, and the term “Nawruz” (the traditional spring festival) has been replaced by the generic expression “New Year.” This simplification is historically understandable: produced during the Soviet period, the translation reflects the translators’ caution around Islamic temporal references and the national festival name “Nawruz.”

Omission of qualificatory adjectives. In the second sentence, a distinctive phenomenon is observable: certain adjectives present in the source text find no correspondence in the translation. The Arabic reads:

فأخذوا في إقامة معالم الزينة، ناصبين الأعلام الملونة فوق منازلهم، معلقين طاقات الرياحين على أبوابها

The translation renders this as: “They were raising flags above their rooftops and hanging bouquets above their gates” (Zaydan, 2005:17). Analysis reveals that the adjectives al-zinah (“ornamental”) and al-mulawwanah (“multi-colored”) have been omitted, and the term al-riyahin (“fragrant herbs” or “sweet basil”) has been rendered as “bouquets,” which is a broader and less specific term. These omissions reduce the descriptive richness of the original, though the translator may have judged them inessential to narrative progression.

Historical terms: diwan al-jund, amir al-umara, al-haras, sitr al-haram. One of the most frequent challenges in translating the novel is finding semantic equivalents for Arabic historical terms. Terms such as al-diwan al-jund, amir al-umara, al-haras, and sitr al-haram carry precise historical meanings. The Uzbek translation sometimes preserves these terms through calque and sometimes renders them through interpretative equivalents drawn from the Uzbek historical-cultural context. This approach testifies to the harmonious application of two strategies calque translation and interpretative translation since a direct translation of some terms would result in semantic loss, while rendering others through their Uzbek historical equivalents facilitates the reader’s comprehension.

***The following four passages illustrate these phenomena in detail.***

*Passage 1 diwan al-jund:* “كان اسمه مُسجلاً في ديوان الجند منذ صِغَرِه” is translated as: “His name had been registered in the military chancellery roll from his youth” (Zaydan,

2005:12). The rendering of *diwan al-jund* as “military chancellery roll” preserves the core meaning but narrows the institutional and historical content of the original term, which refers to a formally organized military registry system of the early Islamic state. The addition of “roll” improves comprehensibility for the Uzbek reader while introducing a degree of stylistic amplification.

*Passage 2 amir al-umara:* “دخل أمير الأمراء المجلس تحفُّ به الحاشيةُ” is translated as: “The Amir of Amirs entered the assembly surrounded by his servants” (Zaydan, 2005:52). While the general meaning is preserved, the rendering of *al-hashiya* as “servants” narrows the original term, which denotes the broader social stratum of court attendants, chamberlains, and retinue members. This represents a case of semantic narrowing combined with stylistic simplification.

*Passage 3 al-haras:* “وقف الحرس على أبواب القصر يمنعون الدخول” is translated as: “Guards were stationed at the palace gates, preventing entry” (Zaydan, 2005:18). The rendering of *al-haras* as “guards” is contextually appropriate. However, the Arabic verb *yamna* ‘un carries the stronger meaning of “prohibiting” or “forbidding” entry, while the translation renders this as “preventing,” producing a degree of stylistic softening that slightly reduces the force of the original.

*Passage 4 sitr al-haram:* “اختفت النساء خلف ستر الحرم حين سمعن الصوت” is translated as: “The women hid behind the harem curtain when they heard the sound” (Zaydan, 2005:42). The rendering of *sitr al-haram* as “harem curtain” preserves the surface form of the phrase but does not fully convey the cultural concept of the enclosed inner women’s quarters of a palace, which carries broader social and architectural meaning. This represents a case of partial cultural-semantic narrowing.

Phraseological enrichment in translation. Another significant dimension of the translation process is the rendering of simple lexical units in the source text through phraseological units in the translation and vice versa. This bidirectional movement between ordinary lexis and set expressions produces some of the most striking transformations in the translated text. Three examples illustrate this phenomenon clearly.

In the market scene, the Arabic text describes a busy crowd. The translation renders the heightened activity of the crowd through the Uzbek idiomatic expression “*oyog’i olti, qo’li yetti bo’lib*” (literally “having six legs and seven arms” meaning “rushing frantically”), creating a vivid equivalent that enriches the stylistic register of the passage (Zaydan, 2005:26). In the description of warriors pledging loyalty to the “Bride of Fergana,” the Arabic phrase about sacrificing one’s life is rendered through

the Uzbek idiomatic expression “jon olib-jon berishmoqda” (“giving and taking life”), which intensifies the emotional impact of the passage (Zaydan, 2005:19). The expression “*ko’ngliga qo’l solib ko’rmoqchi bo’ldi*” (“tried to reach into her heart”) renders a nuance of empathetic restraint that is fully consistent with the emotional register of the source passage (Zaydan, 2005:26). In the lion-hunt scene, the phrase “*o’takasi yorilib*” (“terrified to the point of bursting”) renders the sense of extreme fear with expressive force (Zaydan, 2005:115).

## DISCUSSION

The analysis of these passages confirms that the translation of “The Bride of Fergana” by Shoikrom Shoislomov represents a sophisticated exercise in semantic equivalence pursued through a combination of calque, interpretative, and phraseological strategies. The recurrent patterns identified semantic narrowing of institutional terms, adjective omission, stylistic softening of verbal expressions, partial cultural-semantic reduction of culturally specific phrases are not failures of translation but inherent consequences of the structural and cultural distance between Arabic and Uzbek that any literary translator must navigate (Gibb, 1960; Xo’jayeva, 2000:48).

Particularly significant is the direction of the most creative transformations: they are not simplifications but enrichments. The replacement of simple Arabic lexical units with Uzbek idioms in the market scene, the loyalty pledge, and the lion-hunt demonstrates that the translator’s creative freedom operated primarily in the direction of amplifying the stylistic and emotional register of the Uzbek text, rather than reducing it. This is a noteworthy feature of Shoislomov’s approach: where the original might be rendered more neutrally, he characteristically selects an expressive Uzbek idiom that intensifies the scene’s affective impact (Shoislomov, 1970). The historical and political context of the translation produced under Soviet conditions that discouraged explicit Islamic temporal and religious references explains the specific choices made in the opening sentence and should not be read as evidence of translatorial incompetence but as an index of the external constraints within which literary translation was practised in that era.

## CONCLUSION

The Uzbek translation of Jurji Zaydan’s “The Bride of Fergana” represents a high level of equivalence in terms of content, meaning, artistic imagery, historical accuracy, and

stylistic rendering. The translation has preserved not only the linguistic correspondence of the original but has also succeeded in recreating the novel's historical-artistic conception, the spirit of the period, and the system of imagery for the Uzbek reader demonstrating that it constitutes a genuine work of literary translation (Zaydan, 2005; Shoislomov, 1970).

The analysis has identified three recurring categories of transformation: semantic narrowing of historically and institutionally specific terms; stylistic softening of strong verbal expressions; and partial cultural-semantic reduction of culturally embedded phrases. These transformations are partially explicable by the Soviet-era production conditions of the translation and partially by the inherent structural and cultural distance between Arabic and Uzbek. They are counterbalanced by a significant reverse phenomenon: the creative enrichment of the Uzbek text through the strategic deployment of Uzbek idiomatic expressions that amplify the emotional and stylistic register of key scenes. Future research should extend this comparative analysis to other novels from Zaydan's historical cycle (Zaydan, 1970; Gibb, 1960) and should examine the translation's rendering of the novel's religious and ethical dimensions in greater depth.

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