CONTRASTING MEANINGS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LINGUOCULTURES: OXYMORONS AND THEIR TRANSLATION CHALLENGES

Muattar Temirova
Teacher, Denau Institute of Entrepreneurship and Pedagogy
fragrant9898@gmail.com

Abstract. This article analyzes into the comparative analysis of oxymorons as a stylistic device within English and Uzbek linguocultures. It explores how these paradoxical expressions, which juxtapose contradictory terms, reflect cultural nuances and cognitive frameworks specific to each language. The study highlights the significant challenges translators face when attempting to convey the intended meaning, stylistic effect, and cultural resonance of oxymorons from one language to another. Drawing upon principles of contrastive linguistics, translation theory, and cultural semantics, the article examines various scholarly opinions and provides illustrative examples to demonstrate the complexities involved. It argues that successful translation of oxymorons requires not only linguistic proficiency but also a deep understanding of the source and target linguocultures to navigate the conflicting meanings effectively.

Keywords: oxymoron, linguoculture, translation problems, contrastive linguistics, figurative language, cultural semantics, cross-cultural communication.

Language is intrinsically linked to culture, serving as both a product and a shaper of a society's worldview. The concept of “linguoculture”, emphasizing this inseparable bond, is crucial for understanding how different languages express reality. Figurative language, in particular, offers a rich domain for observing these lingocultural specificities. Among such figures of speech, the oxymoron – a combination of contradictory or incongruous words (e.g., “deafening silence”) – presents a fascinating case study. Oxymorons create a striking effect, often conveying complex ideas, irony, or highlighting inherent paradoxes.

This article aims to explore the nature and function of oxymorons within English and Uzbek linguocultures and, more importantly, to analyze the significant translation challenges they pose. While oxymoronic structures may exist in many languages, their specific instantiations, frequency, and the cultural connotations of their constituent parts can vary widely. This variation leads to conflicting or paradoxical meanings not just within the oxymoron itself, but also in the process of its cross-linguistic transfer.

We will examine scholarly perspectives on figurative language translation and provide examples to illustrate the difficulties in achieving equivalence.

Linguoculture, a term popularized by scholars like **A. Vezhbitskaya** and further explored in various linguistic fields, posits that language and culture are so intertwined that one cannot be fully understood without the other. As **Edward Sapir** and **Benjamin Lee Whorf** hypothesized, the language we speak can influence how we perceive and categorize the world. Oxymorons, as deliberate violations of semantic expectations, are potent expressions of this linguacultural interplay. They often rely on shared cultural understandings and associations to achieve their intended effect.

An oxymoron typically joins an adjective and a noun with contrasting meanings, or two contradictory terms. Their power lies in forcing the reader or listener to reconcile the apparent contradiction, leading to a deeper or more nuanced understanding.

Dirven and Verspoor (2004) in "Cognitive Exploration of Language and Linguistics" argue that figurative language, including oxymorons, is not merely decorative but fundamental to how we conceptualize abstract concepts. The tension in an oxymoron can highlight the multifaceted nature of an experience or entity.

The English language is rich with established oxymorons, many of which have become idiomatic.For instance:

- **Deafening silence**: Emphasizes an overwhelming and uncomfortable quiet.
- **Living dead**: Used for zombies or metaphorically for people who are alive but seem to lack vitality or consciousness.
- **Awfully good**: An intensifier where "awfully" (historically meaning inspiring awe or dread) is used colloquially to mean "very".
- **Bittersweet**: Describes something that is pleasant but also tinged with sadness.
- **Open secret**: Information that is widely known but not officially acknowledged.
- **Friendly fire**: Weapon fire coming from one's own side that causes accidental injury or death to one's own forces.

These examples are deeply embedded in English usage and their paradoxical nature is readily understood by native speakers. The cultural context often dictates their interpretation and impact. For instance, "friendly fire" carries a heavy emotional and political weight specific to military contexts.

Uzbek, like any other developed language, possesses mechanisms for expressing paradoxical ideas. While the direct structural equivalent of English oxymorons (adjective-noun contradiction) might be constructed, their naturalness and cultural resonance can differ. Often, similar paradoxical concepts are expressed through different linguistic structures or established phrases.

"**Achchiq haqiqat**" (bitter truth): This is a very common and culturally resonant phrase in Uzbek, functioning similarly to the English "bitter truth". The components "achchiq" (bitter) and "haqiqat" (truth) create a familiar oxymoronic sense.

"**Shirin yolg‘on**" (sweet lie): Similar to "achchiq haqiqat," this phrase is well-understood and frequently used, highlighting a lie that is pleasant to hear but ultimately false.

Consider translating the English "deafening silence". A literal translation like "**kar qiluvchi sukunat**" (silence that makes one deaf) might be understood, but it may not carry the same idiomatic punch or immediate recognition as the English counterpart. An Uzbek speaker might express a profound silence using different imagery or phrases, perhaps "qabriston sukunati" (cemetery silence), which evokes a similar feeling of unease but is not structurally an oxymoron in the same way.

The English "living dead" ("tirik o‘lik") is a direct translation and conceptually understandable, especially with global exposure to zombie tropes. However, its usage as a casual metaphor might be less common than in English.

Translating oxymorons effectively between English and Uzbek is fraught with difficulties. The specific words forming the oxymoron in the source language may not have direct equivalents with the same range of connotations in the target language. For "awfully good," translating "awfully" as "dahshatli" (terrible, awful) in "dahshatli yaxshi" would create genuine confusion rather than the intended intensification, because the colloquial positive sense of "awfully" is specific to English.

The cultural associations that make an oxymoron effective in one language may be absent or different in another. What is considered a poignant paradox in English culture might be perceived differently or not at all in Uzbek culture, and vice versa. For example, the irony in "working vacation" might be understood, but the underlying cultural practice or expectation might differ. The conciseness, surprise element, or poetic quality of an oxymoron can be lost. A translator might resort to paraphrase or explanation, which conveys the meaning but sacrifices the stylistic punch. For example, explaining "open secret" as "hamma biladigan, lekin rasman aytilmaydigan sir" (a secret everyone knows but isn't officially spoken of) is accurate but less concise.

The grammatical means of forming oxymorons might differ. While English often uses adjective-noun pairings, Uzbek might favor other constructions to express similar paradoxical ideas.

The translator's primary task is to recognize the "conflicting meanings" intended by the oxymoron and find a way to recreate a similar cognitive and emotional effect in the target language. This often requires creative solutions. **Eugene Nida's (1964)** concept of "dynamic equivalence" (or functional equivalence) over "formal equivalence" is paramount here. The goal is to achieve a similar response from the target audience.

Translation Strategies (as suggested by scholars Newmark, Baker):

1. **Literal Translation:** If a similar paradoxical structure exists and makes sense in the target language (e.g., "achchiq haqiqat" for "bitter truth").

2. **Finding a Target Language Oxymoron/Figurative Equivalent:** Using an existing oxymoron or another figure of speech in Uzbek that conveys a similar effect, even if the literal words differ.
3. **Paraphrase:** Explaining the meaning of the oxymoron, especially if a concise equivalent is unavailable. This often leads to a loss of stylistic effect.
4. **Omission (as a last resort):** If the oxymoron is not crucial to the overall meaning and its translation would be too awkward or confusing.

Oxymorons, as potent carriers are deeply embedded within their respective linguocultures. The analysis of oxymorons in English and Uzbek reveals both shared human tendencies to perceive and express paradox, and culture-specific ways of doing so. The translation of these figures of speech presents considerable challenges, demanding more than mere linguistic substitution. Translators must act as cultural mediators, possessing a profound understanding of both source and target linguocultures, cognitive patterns, and stylistic conventions. The task is not simply to translate words but to translate the intended effect, the underlying cultural resonance, and the cognitive jolt that oxymorons are designed to produce. While direct equivalence is often elusive, a combination of linguistic skill, cultural sensitivity, and creative problem-solving, informed by translation theory, can help bridge the gap between English and Uzbek expressions of paradox, ensuring that the vibrant essence of such figurative language is conveyed as faithfully as possible. Further comparative research into specific oxymoronic constructions and their reception in both linguocultures would undoubtedly enrich our understanding of this fascinating linguistic phenomenon.

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