



THE DEVELOPMENT OF UZBEK TRANSLATION PRACTICE: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE INDIRECT TRANSLATION STAGE

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This article examines the historical development of translation practice in Uzbekistan, with particular emphasis on the analytical investigation of the indirect translation stage that significantly shaped the national translation tradition during the twentieth century. The study traces the emergence of Uzbek literary translation from the late nineteenth century and explores the socio-cultural and ideological conditions that led to the predominance of indirect translation through Russian as a mediating language. Particular attention is paid to the methodological features of the *podstrochnik* (interlinear) approach, the transformation of genre conventions in prose and poetic translation, and the implications of indirect translation for equivalence, stylistic adequacy, and cultural representation. By analyzing the translation of Western and American literary works—especially Shakespearean lyric poetry—the article evaluates both the constraints and the constructive role of indirect translation in the formation of a national school of translation. The study argues that, despite limitations in direct access to source languages, indirect translation functioned as a crucial mechanism of cultural mediation and literary integration within the global literary system.

The development of translation practice in Uzbekistan represents a complex and multilayered cultural phenomenon. In examining this trajectory, it is essential to distinguish between translation as a practical activity and translation studies as a theoretical discipline. While the latter emerged as a systematic academic field relatively late, translation practice itself has a longer and institutionally grounded history.

A central feature of this history, particularly throughout the twentieth century, was the predominance of indirect translation—i.e., translation mediated through a third language, most often Russian.

Early Stages of Uzbek Translation Practice

The introduction of world literature to Uzbek readers began in the late nineteenth century. Periodicals such as *Turkiston viloyatining gazet*i played a formative role in familiarizing the public with Russian and European authors. Early translations were frequently adaptive in nature, and translators were described by terms equivalent to “renderers” rather than the modern professional designation “translator.”

Scholarly assessments of this period indicate that translations were often characterized by additions and modifications. As Vladimirova notes, fidelity to the original text was occasionally achieved, yet textual augmentation was common [1]. These early attempts, though limited in methodological rigor, laid the foundation for the institutionalization of literary translation in Uzbekistan.

A landmark event was the 1911 Uzbek translation of Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* via Russian, marking one of the earliest systematic engagements with Western literature.



The Consolidation of Indirect Translation (1920s–1960s)

The 1920s witnessed significant changes in translation strategies. While earlier renderings emphasized accessibility and domestication, translators gradually sought closer structural and semantic alignment with source texts. Nevertheless, the dominant model remained indirect translation through Russian. This mediation was shaped not only by linguistic realities but also by ideological considerations.

During the Soviet period, Uzbek readers were deeply committed to reading translations of world literature. At a time when no fundamental academic works on translation theory and practice had yet been produced in Uzbekistan, translation through Russian served to meet the spiritual and intellectual needs of the readership.

In the early twentieth century, translation and original literature were not clearly separated; rather, translation functioned as an integral component of literary creativity. The stylistic individuality of translator-writers was formed in a context where translated and original texts coexisted without strict differentiation. In collections of translated works belonging to different authors but rendered by the same translator, a unified stylistic imprint was often perceptible. This period may therefore be regarded as a formative stage in which artistic taste, aesthetic thinking, and professional competence were gradually shaped.

Translators underwent an evolutionary process. Initially, the primary aim was the mere transmission of meaning. In subsequent years, increasing attention was devoted to artistic expressiveness, stylistic precision, and lexical selection. Drawing upon the theoretical contributions of Russian scholars such as A. Fyodorov, V. Komissarov, and L. Barkhudarov, G'aybullo Salomov played a decisive role in shaping translation theory and practice as an academic discipline in Uzbekistan [2]. The *podstrochnik* method (interlinear translation) became a widely used strategy. As Salomov argued, a rapid transition to direct translation from Romance and Germanic languages was institutionally unrealistic; therefore, indirect translation represented a pragmatic solution [2]. Uzbek translators frequently relied on established Russian versions of Western works.

Major Western and American authors—including Mark Twain, Jack London, Edgar Allan Poe, Ernest Hemingway, and Harriet Beecher Stowe—were translated into Uzbek primarily from Russian intermediary texts. From a theoretical perspective, such mediation inevitably influenced stylistic equivalence and semantic precision [4].

Sharipov emphasized that artistic translation requires not only linguistic competence but also literary mastery [3]. Within the mediated translation system, translators were compelled to reconcile the interpretative framework of the Russian text with the expressive resources of the Uzbek language.

Poetic Translation and Shakespearean Reception

Poetic translation presents a particularly illustrative case of indirect translation dynamics. While prose translation expanded significantly in the mid-twentieth century, poetic translation—especially from English—faced limitations due to the scarcity of specialists capable of direct engagement with source texts.

The translation of William Shakespeare's sonnets began systematically in the 1960s. Maqsd Shayxzoda translated several sonnets in commemoration of Shakespeare's 400th anniversary, and in 1978 Yusuf Shomansur published the first complete Uzbek translation of



all 154 sonnets. These translations were based primarily on Samuil Marshak's Russian versions rather than the English originals.

From the perspective of translation theory, such mediation inevitably affects semantic nuance, rhythm, and stylistic layering [4]. Baqoeva's comparative research demonstrates that mediated poetic translation frequently produced hybridized structures combining Russian interpretative traditions with Uzbek poetic conventions [5].

Alongside prominent translators who contributed to literary practice, translation scholars began to emerge as active contributors to the field. One group of researchers—including J. Sharipov, Y. Po'latov, M. Rasuliy, and N. Vladimirova—focused on the historical study of literary translation in Uzbekistan [1,3]. Another group—G'. Salomov, N. Komilov, Q. Musayev, H. Karomatov, K. Karomatova, K. Tojiev, M. Xolbekov, K. Jo'raev, A. Abdullajonov, L. Xo'jaeva, S. Shukurullaeva, F. Salimova, Y. Egamova, N. Otajonov, R. Fayzullaeva, I. G'afurov, E. Ochilov, M. Javbo'riev, S. Jabborov, O. Rustamov, and R. Karimov—produced major theoretical studies on the evolution of translation principles and comparative translation studies [2;6].

Subsequent research by D. G'ulomova, M. Baqoeva, S. Sirojiddinov, N. Isamuhamedova, R. Karimov, S. Q. Abilov, G. Odilova, O'. H. Yusupova, M. V. Akramjanova, and D. N. Turg'unpo'latova further elaborated theoretical aspects of translation methods, translation aesthetics, and translator competence [5].

State Policy and the Shift Toward Direct Translation

In 2008, the First President of Uzbekistan, I. A. Karimov, in his work *High Spirituality – An Invincible Force*, emphasized that Uzbek literary works had previously been translated into foreign languages mainly through Russian mediation. While acknowledging the achievements of that period, he stressed the necessity of translating the finest works of Uzbek literature directly from the original language into Western and Eastern languages. Following this statement, direct translation was elevated to the level of state cultural policy.

Nevertheless, less than ten percent of Uzbek literary works have been translated into foreign languages. This limited dissemination has restricted the formation of a comprehensive global perception of Uzbek literary and spiritual heritage.

Critical Reassessment of Indirect Translation

Later scholarly reassessment of mediated translations revealed numerous linguistic, pragmatic, lexical, and semantic inaccuracies. At a time when no fundamental academic literature on translation theory had yet been produced domestically, translation through Russian fulfilled an essential cultural function. However, retrospective analysis demonstrated the methodological risks inherent in indirect translation.

For example, in my doctoral dissertation, I conducted a detailed analysis of Yusuf Shomansur's Uzbek translations of Shakespeare's sonnets, which were based on Samuil Marshak's Russian versions. The study revealed serious errors resulting from the translator's insufficient understanding of the grammatical category of gender in Russian—a category absent in Uzbek.

Due to the misinterpretation of grammatical gender in the intermediary Russian text, 126 of Shakespeare's 154 sonnets—originally addressed to a male friend—were rendered in Uzbek as though they were addressed to a female addressee. This shift significantly altered the semantic and communicative orientation of the original text. The example illustrates how



indirect translation, particularly when structural linguistic differences are substantial, may lead to distortion of authorial intention.

The Problem of the "Beloved" Image and Semantic Distortion in Indirect Translation of Shakespeare's Sonnets

It is hardly surprising that Shakespeare, through his poetry, awakened hope in the hearts of his readers. The poet expresses deep devotion to his friend, seeking various metaphors to describe the friend's beauty. In Sonnets 24, 44, 47, 50, and 51—where the divine power of friendship is manifested—the poet articulates the torment of longing for his friend.

Regrettably, the artistic level of Yusuf Shomansur's Uzbek translations was somewhat diminished due to reliance on an intermediary language. The poetic texture and emotional resonance of the sonnets are weakened to such an extent that the translated text departs significantly from the original meaning, inevitably raising questions in the reader's mind.

For instance, in Sonnet 20, the first and second quatrains preserve the general meaning and tone of the original. The first quatrain introduces the central idea of the sonnet, while the second develops the theme by enumerating the friend's qualities, gradually leading the reader toward the culmination in the third quatrain. The third quatrain constitutes the semantic and emotional climax of the sonnet. However, in the Uzbek translation, the steady development of ideas collapses precisely at this crucial point, and the original meaning is distorted:

*And for a woman wert thou first created;
Till Nature, as she wrought thee, fell a-doting,
And by addition me of thee defeated,
By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.* (W.Shakespeare)

The literal meaning suggests that the addressee was created for women, and that Nature, in bestowing an additional feature, deprived the poet of exclusive possession. In Marshak's Russian version, the sense is rendered metaphorically while preserving the masculine orientation of the addressee. However, in Shomansur's Uzbek translation, the line "*Zuvālangni ayol qilib qorgan chog'*" ("When Nature kneaded you as a woman") generates the impression that the addressee is female. The final two lines of the quatrain further confuse the reader: if the sonnet is addressed to a beloved woman, why does separation from her bring happiness to womankind? The internal logic of the sonnet becomes obscure.

In reality, Sonnet 20 is addressed to a man—the poet's friend. A distinctive feature of Shakespeare's lyric poetry, often misinterpreted by translators, is the image of the beloved friend. Shakespearean friendship differs from conventional notions of friendship; it is elevated to a spiritual and almost sacred level. At times, the poet places his friend above women, lamenting that the friend's youthful beauty is being wasted in sensual pursuits.

Debates surrounding the male addressee in Shakespeare's sonnets have sometimes led to speculative interpretations of the poet's personal inclinations. However, biographical evidence and contextual analysis confirm that such assumptions arise from a misunderstanding of Renaissance poetic conventions and the symbolic language of devotion.

A comparable conception of friendship may be found in Alisher Navoi's poetry. Navoi frequently addresses his companions as *yor* ("beloved friend"). For example, he refers to his close friend Shaykhim Suhayli as "dear beloved." In one of his aphoristic lines, Navoi defines a true friend as one whose word and heart are united. Thus, the spiritualization of friendship is not alien to Eastern literary traditions.



The Russian translation preserves this spiritual tone partly because both English and Russian possess grammatical gender categories. Uzbek, however, lacks such a category. As a result, certain lexical-semantic mismatches occur. For example, Marshak[8] translates Shakespeare's line:

Much steals men's eyes and women's souls amazeth
as: *Druzei plenyat I razit podrug.*

In Uzbek, this was rendered as "Do'stlaring asiru dugonalar lol," where *dugona* (female friend) implies a female addressee. In Uzbek literary usage, a woman may have both *do'st* (friend) and *dugona*, but a man does not have a *dugona*. Consequently, the Uzbek reader may infer that the sonnet describes a woman.

A similar distortion occurs in the third quatrain and the concluding couplet:

But since she prick'd thee out for women's pleasure,

Mine be thy love and thy love's use their treasure.

S.Marshak renders:

Lyubi menya, a ikh dari lyubov'yu.

U. Shomansur [9] translates:

Mayli shundoq bo'lsin, shartim shul senga,

Ularni sevginu, mehr qo'y menga.

Because of the earlier misinterpretation, the final couplet now suggests that the beloved woman should love her female friends while giving affection to the poet—an interpretation entirely foreign to the original text. In Shakespeare's intention, the poet accepts that his friend may love women physically, yet urges him not to withdraw spiritual affection from their friendship.

Numerous similar examples appear in other sonnets (26, 29, 30, 39, 62, 87, 112, 120, etc.), where the consistent use of feminine forms (*yorim*, *dilbarim*, *qumrim*) shifts the gender orientation of the addressee.

In Sonnet 81, Marshak successfully conveys the philosophical reflection on mortality and immortality addressed to a male friend:

Tebye li menya pridetsya khoronit',

Il' mne tebya – ne znayu, drug moy milyy...

In the Uzbek translation, however, "drug moy" ("my friend") becomes "dildorim," and "tvoy obraz" ("your image") becomes "ruxsoring" ("your face"), thereby transforming the spiritual bond of friendship into romantic imagery.

The cause of such distortions lies not solely in the intermediary language but also in the translator's insufficient familiarity with the broader ideological and historical context of Shakespeare's sonnets. The corpus of 154 sonnets may be grouped thematically as follows:

1. Sonnets addressed to the friend (1–126), including themes of friendship, loneliness, resentment, separation, jealousy, and reconciliation.
2. Sonnets addressed to the Dark Lady (127–152).
3. The concluding mythological epigrams (153–154).

Failure to recognize this structural division leads to misinterpretation.

Scholar M. Baqoeva cautions that Marshak's translations must be approached with great care. Marshak often privileges holistic poetic resonance over lexical symmetry. While his



translations remain remarkably faithful in spirit, any secondary reinterpretation in a third language may easily result in deviation from the original style[5].

It is evident that Shomansur had little alternative but to rely on the already modified Russian versions. This reliance constitutes the first major factor leading to distancing from the original. The second negative factor is that the intermediary language gradually assumes dominance in the translation process. Since Russian and Uzbek differ significantly in grammatical structure—particularly in the category of gender—misinterpretations become almost inevitable.

Consequently, among the sonnets dedicated to the male friend (1–126), translations appear that portray a female beloved entirely inconsistent with the original. In direct translations from English, such distortions would likely disappear, as the translator would engage directly with the semantic and stylistic nuances of the source text [7].

The history of Uzbek translation practice demonstrates that indirect translation constituted a decisive and structurally formative stage in the twentieth century. Mediated primarily through Russian, it enabled access to world literature and contributed to the emergence of a national translation school.

At the same time, critical reassessment reveals that linguistic and pragmatic distortions were often unavoidable under mediated conditions. The contemporary shift toward direct translation should therefore be understood as a natural evolutionary progression aimed at achieving greater textual accuracy, stylistic fidelity, and cultural authenticity within global literary exchange.

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