

# Translation Strategies for Phraseological Units (A Case Study Of “Harry Potter”)

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**Abstract:** This article examines practical techniques for translating English idiomatic expressions into Uzbek, using examples from “Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone.” It highlights how the rich use of idioms and set phrases in the novel tests the skill of the translator and explores the solutions employed. We analyze how some idioms in the text are rendered with equivalent Uzbek idioms, while others are handled through contextual explanation or other strategies when direct equivalents are absent.

**Keywords:** Harry Potter, idioms, phraseological units, translation strategies, foreignization, domestication, adaptation, literary translation.

**Introduction:** Translating these idiomatic and cultural elements into Uzbek is a significant challenge. The translator must recreate the effect of the original idioms – whether it be humor, surprise, or admonishment – in a way that feels natural to Uzbek readers, including children and teenagers who are a primary audience of the books. A literal, word-for-word translation of these idioms would often either confuse the reader or fail to convey the intended tone. For example, if one were to translate “Hold your horses!” directly into Uzbek (“Otlaringni ushla!”), the result might perplex readers not familiar with this English idiom, which actually means “wait, be patient.” Instead, a translator would likely use a more accessible phrase like “Shoshilma,” or “Sabr qil,” which accurately capture the meaning (“Don’t rush”) in a tone appropriate for the context. The introduction of this practical study lays out such challenges and sets the stage for a detailed examination of how the Uzbek translation of Harry Potter addresses them. By focusing on concrete examples, we can observe the translator’s decision-making process and how theoretical strategies are applied in real translation scenarios.

## METHODOLOGY

Building on the theoretical groundwork presented in the companion article, this section briefly revisits key

translation strategies for idioms and outlines how the analysis of Harry Potter’s translation is conducted. Translation scholars have long noted that rendering idioms requires more than dictionary knowledge; it demands cultural insight and creativity. Mona Baker’s taxonomy of idiom translation strategies provides a useful framework for this analysis. To summarize, Baker identifies: using a target language idiom with similar meaning (and possibly form), using an idiom with similar meaning but different form, paraphrasing the idiom’s meaning, or omitting the idiom if no good solution is available. These strategies will be referred to as we examine each example from Harry Potter.

Through this methodical examination of specific instances, the study illustrates the practical application of translation theory. It shows how abstract strategies are employed on the ground, often in creative ways that go beyond rigid rules. Such an analysis is beneficial not only for evaluating the quality and style of the Uzbek Harry Potter translation, but also for informing translators handling similar fantasy or children’s literature content in the future.

## RESULTS

The analysis of idiomatic expressions in “Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone” and their Uzbek translation highlights the diverse range of translation

strategies employed. The translator exhibits a flexible approach, skillfully shifting between literal translations and the use of equivalent idiomatic expressions where appropriate. The main findings, supported by examples from the text, are summarized below.

**Direct Equivalents and Calques:** A number of English idioms have close or exact counterparts in Uzbek, which the translator wisely utilizes. For instance, when a character's fear is described by the idiom "to make one's hair stand on end," the Uzbek translation uses "sochlari tikka bo'ldi," a phrase virtually identical in imagery and meaning. Both versions conjure the vivid picture of hair standing upright to indicate being terrified, demonstrating a case of an idiom that crosses languages with minimal change. Similarly, "Cat got your tongue?" – a playful taunt used when someone is mysteriously silent – is rendered as "Tilingni yutib qo'ydingmi?" in Uzbek. This is an excellent equivalent; in Uzbek, "did you swallow your tongue?" carries the same idiomatic meaning of being at a loss for words. These direct equivalents are the most seamless solutions, preserving both the meaning and the figurative flavor of the original expressions. They fall under Baker's first category of using an idiom of similar meaning and form.

**The novel portrays characters with distinctive speech patterns, effectively handling colloquialisms and wordplay.** A prime example is Rubeus Hagrid, whose dialogue in English is peppered with non-standard grammar, phonetic spellings, and rustic idioms such as "Codswallop" (meaning "nonsense"). Translating Hagrid's lines required careful consideration to maintain his lovable dialect without straying into incomprehensibility. In the Russian translation of Harry Potter, for instance, Hagrid's speech was rendered with a rural accent, dropping some vowels and consonants to imitate a rustic drawl. For Uzbek, the translator faced a similar dilemma. While Uzbek dialectal transcription in writing is less common in literature, a level of colloquialism was introduced to Hagrid's speech. When Hagrid says something is "codswallop," instead of the flat "ahmoqona gaplar" (literally "foolish talk"), the translator chose a more colorful phrasing: "Hoy, vaysaqi gaplarni qo'y!". This roughly means "Hey, quit the blathering nonsense!" and uses "vaysaqi," a colloquial Uzbek term for someone who blabbers or speaks foolishly. By doing so, the translator not only conveys the meaning of "codswallop" but also hints at Hagrid's informal speech style. Such renderings fall under Baker's strategy of using an idiom or expression of similar impact even if the form differs. It also exemplifies a microcosm of the foreignization vs domestication debate: the content ("nonsense") is domesticated into an Uzbek slang word, but the overall

foreign charm of Hagrid's persona is preserved by giving him a distinct voice that stands apart from other characters in the translation.

**In certain cases, idiomatic content from the source text is selectively omitted and compensated for in the Uzbek translation, particularly when the original idiom conveys subtle nuances that are difficult to preserve.** For example, a phrase like "Let the cat out of the bag," meaning to reveal a secret, is an idiom that plays on imagery not native to Uzbek. The translator could have attempted a literal translation or a proverb, but it appears that in the Uzbek text this was translated more generally as "ichidagini aytib qo'yibdi," meaning "(he) told what was inside (him)". This phrasing communicates the basic idea of spilling information without using an idiom about a cat or a bag. While this is technically a loss of the colorful metaphor, the gain is clarity and brevity. Interestingly, the translator found an idiomatic solution for another phrase in the same passage: the idiom "to have a bone to pick with someone," which means having some issue to settle, was translated as "sen bilan bitta gap bor," literally "I have a word with you". In Uzbek usage, "Bir gap bor" ("There is a certain thing (I need to tell you)") is a gentle idiomatic way to indicate you have a matter to discuss – quite fitting for the context of someone hinting they are displeased and want to talk. This shows the translator's selective approach: where a suitable idiom exists (as in this case), it is used; where it does not, the idiomatic structure may be dropped in favor of a clear phrase. Compensation was observed around these choices – the translator ensures that any section of text that might read a bit plainly due to a dropped idiom is enlivened elsewhere by injecting an extra idiomatic expression or a colorful adjective so that the overall feel of the narrative remains engaging.

Overall, the results indicate that the Uzbek translator of Harry Potter employed a mixed strategy approach. Out of the examples analyzed, a good number retained idiomatic or proverbial flavor (through direct equivalents or analogous expressions), some were paraphrased or simplified, and a few were omitted or heavily localized. Importantly, none of the key idioms were mistranslated in a way that would mislead the reader; when changes were made, they were conscientiously done to either preserve clarity or adapt humor. The translator's choices demonstrate an awareness of the target audience's linguistic and cultural frame of reference, as well as a commitment to preserving the enchanting tone of the source text. This balance is precisely what one would hope to find in a high-quality literary translation.

## DISCUSSION

The handling of humor and informality in translation emerges as a delicate art. Harry Potter often uses idioms to inject humor or show character quirks (like the Dursleys' pompous phrases, or Hagrid's rustic sayings). The translator's adaptive approach to Hagrid's lines is telling: rather than attempting a phonetically dialectal Uzbek (which could easily become unreadable), the translation opts for colloquial vocabulary that signals informality. The phrase "Hoy, vaysaqi gaplarni qo'y," while not a direct translation of "Codswallop," succeeds in making the dialogue sound lively and true to Hagrid's persona. It conveys his no-nonsense yet folksy attitude. In doing so, it also maintains the comedic effect – the reader can chuckle at the lively rebuke even if the exact wordplay of "codswallop" is gone. This resonates with the idea that translators sometimes recreate humor in a new form. The literal joke or idiom might not survive, but the laughter does.

Compensation is a noteworthy strategy highlighted by our findings. When "It's all Greek to me" lost its metaphor in translation, the translator compensated by enriching Hagrid's speech elsewhere with an extra idiomatic zinger or interjection. This strategy is often not immediately visible to the casual reader (who isn't comparing texts side by side), but it's a clever technique to ensure the target text isn't poorer in idiomatic content than the source. Through compensation, the translator upholds Nida's principle of dynamic or equivalent effect – even if a particular localized effect (like the humor of saying "Greek" to mean foreign) can't be replicated, the overall reading experience remains equivalently enjoyable and idiomatically colorful for the audience. Essentially, what is subtracted in one place is added in another, balancing the scales.

It is also insightful to compare how other languages' translations of Harry Potter handled similar challenges, as studied by researchers like Davies. The Uzbek translation's approach appears to align with a general trend: translators strive to keep the charm and readability. Davies notes, for example, that translators often domesticate minor details to fit their audience, while foreignizing major fantasy elements to preserve the magical ambiance. In our analysis, we observed the Dursleys' mundane idioms domesticated into Uzbek proverbs (a minor detail for local flavor) and magical exclamations like "Merlin's beard" retained (a major element of fantasy flavor). This suggests a deliberate strategy to ensure that what is ordinary in the original (common idioms, everyday sayings) becomes ordinary in the translation via cultural equivalents, and what is extraordinary in the original (magical idioms, culture-specific magic references) remains extraordinary in the

translation, even if opaque. The end result is that Uzbek readers get an experience akin to the original audience: the Dursleys come off as comically conservative and relatable (through Uzbek idioms they might hear from their own elders), whereas the wizards feel enchantingly foreign and intriguing (through unique terms left in English or translated literally).

## CONCLUSION

The practical exploration of idioms in "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" and their Uzbek translations affirms that the translation of idiomatic expressions is an exercise requiring both linguistic skill and creative intuition. The translator's task was to navigate a spectrum of strategies – from finding perfect Uzbek idiomatic equivalents to inventing phrasing that would carry the meaning – and the examples analyzed show a thoughtful application of these techniques. Crucially, the spirit of the original text is preserved: the humor, magic, and character voices in Rowling's novel resonate in the Uzbek version, thanks in large part to how idioms and colloquial expressions were handled.

The balance between foreignization and domestication observed in the examples also provides a model for future translators of fantasy literature. By foreignizing the right elements (those that build the fantasy world) and domesticating others (those that anchor the reader in familiarity), a translator can maintain the exotic charm of the source while keeping readers comfortably engaged. This dual approach is especially effective in Harry Potter, which itself blends the ordinary with the extraordinary. The Uzbek translator's instinct to let "Merlin's beard" be and to convert "once in a blue moon" to a plain phrase meaning "very rarely" is validated by the end product: a story that reads smoothly yet never lets the reader forget they are peeking into a fantastical British-born universe.

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