

IDENTIFYING PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN ANECDOTES ABOUT KHOJA NASREDDIN

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Abstract: Khoja Nasreddin's anecdotes, rich in humor and wisdom, often feature phraseological units (PUs) such as idioms, proverbs, and set expressions, which contribute significantly to the cultural and narrative depth of the stories. This study examines 50 anecdotes from Uzbek folklore, identifying and categorizing 150 PUs into idioms (60%), proverbs (25%), and set expressions (15%). The paper explores the narrative functions of these PUs, noting their role in advancing the plot and conveying moral lessons. Additionally, it addresses the challenges of translating these expressions into English, highlighting the difficulty of preserving their figurative meanings and cultural nuances. The study suggests translation strategies like dynamic equivalence and cultural adaptation to maintain the original meaning and humor. The findings emphasize the importance of PUs in Uzbek folklore and offer insights into the complexities of translating culturally specific linguistic features.

Keywords: Phraseological units, Uzbek folklore, Khoja Nasreddin, translation challenges, idioms, proverbs, cultural heritage

ОПРЕДЕЛЕНИЕ ФРАЗЕОЛОГИЧЕСКИХ ЕДИНИЦ В АНЕКДОТАХ О ХОДЖЕ НАСРЕДДИНЕ

Аннотация: Анекдоты о Ходже Насреддине, богатые юмором и мудростью, часто содержат фразеологические единицы (ФЕ), такие как идиомы, пословицы и устойчивые выражения, которые вносят значительный вклад в культурную и повествовательную глубину историй. В этом исследовании рассматриваются 50 анекдотов из узбекского фольклора, выявляются и классифицируются 150 ФЕ на идиомы (60%), пословицы (25%) и устойчивые выражения (15%). В статье исследуются повествовательные функции этих ФЕ, отмечается их роль в продвижении сюжета и передаче моральных уроков. Кроме того, в ней рассматриваются проблемы перевода этих выражений на английский язык, подчеркивая сложность сохранения их образных значений и культурных нюансов. В исследовании предлагаются такие стратегии перевода, как динамическая эквивалентность и культурная адаптация, чтобы сохранить исходное значение и юмор. Результаты подчеркивают важность фразеологизмов в узбекском фольклоре и предлагают понимание сложностей перевода культурно-специфических языковых особенностей.

Ключевые слова: фразеологические единицы, узбекский фольклор, Ходжа Насреддин, проблемы перевода, идиомы, пословицы, культурное наследие

INTRODUCTION

Khoja Nasreddin, a well-known figure in Central Asian folklore, has inspired generations with his anecdotes that blend humor, wisdom, and satire. These stories feature a unique combination of cleverness and insight into human nature, offering moral and philosophical lessons in a humorous context. One of the key linguistic features in these anecdotes is the widespread use of phraseological units (PUs) such as idioms, proverbs, and set expressions, which are crucial for their narrative structure and cultural depth. PUs carry meanings beyond their literal interpretations,

serving not only as linguistic tools but also as cultural markers that reflect the societal values and humor embedded in the tales.

As scholars like Mieder (2004) have pointed out, proverbs and idioms encapsulate "the distilled wisdom" of a culture, representing shared values and worldviews [1]. Similarly, Burger (2015) emphasizes that these expressions function as a "cultural mirror," offering insights into the customs and thought processes of the societies that produce them [2]. In the context of Khoja Nasreddin's anecdotes, these PUs are deeply tied to the Uzbek cultural heritage, encapsulating everyday wisdom, humor, and ethical lessons.

According to G'ulomov (2019), these phraseological units contribute to the "very essence of Uzbek cultural identity," shaping how people understand and communicate fundamental ideas about society, relationships, and personal conduct [3]. They are essential to the humor of the tales, often serving as punchlines or vehicles for conveying Khoja Nasreddin's wit. However, as Shukurov (2021) suggests, these expressions can be challenging to translate due to their reliance on cultural context and figurative meanings, which may not have direct equivalents in other languages [4]. Another researcher from Uzbekistan Iplina A. (2024) also points out the importance of translation of cultural words in the text to create the national atmosphere for a recipient [6].

This study aims to identify and analyze the phraseological units in Khoja Nasreddin anecdotes, categorizing them based on their functions and linguistic features. The research also addresses the translation challenges that arise when these culturally specific expressions are rendered into English.

METHODS

For our research we have used such methods as:

- Qualitative content analysis, which involves systematically analyzing textual data (in this case, the anecdotes) to identify and categorize specific linguistic elements, such as phraseological units (PUs). The goal is to gain insight into the themes, humor types, and specific language features present in the stories. Researchers can focus on the frequency, context, and variations of PUs in the anecdotes;
- Phraseological analysis, which focuses specifically on identifying and analyzing phraseological units within the anecdotes, categorizing them into idioms, proverbs, and set expressions. Also the study focuses on the linguistic structures of these expressions, their figurative meanings, and their use within the broader context of Uzbek folklore;
- Thematic analysis was applied as well to identify recurring themes within the anecdotes, such as wisdom, irony, or social critique, and how the use of PUs contributes to these themes.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In our research we identified Pus of the source texts in Uzbek language and classified them into the following categories:

1. Idioms usage represents 60% as they were the most frequent PUs, contributing to the humor and exaggeration in the anecdotes.
2. Proverbs consistence is 25% in the texts, which conveyed moral lessons or general truths, emphasizing the stories' underlying messages.
3. Set expressions has the rate of 15%, that included common phrases that provided cultural context and shaped the anecdotes' structure.

In addition, a subset of the identified PUs was analyzed in English translations of Khoja Nasreddin anecdotes. This analysis focused on how well the translation maintained the meaning, humor, and cultural context of the original expressions. The study explored various strategies for

translating these PUs, such as dynamic equivalence and cultural adaptation, to preserve the intent of the original text.

Thus, a total of 150 PUs were identified across 50 anecdotes in translation and were distributed as follows:

- Idioms (60%) were the most common PUs, often providing humor or exaggeration. For example: “Qo‘y sotib olib, bo‘ridan maslahat so‘radi” (He bought a sheep and sought advice from the wolf), illustrating foolishness. Or: “Tilingdan balo topma” (Do not invite trouble with your tongue), advising caution in speech.

- Proverbs (25%) conveyed wisdom and moral lessons. For instance: “Ko‘p o‘ylagan kam qilar” (He who thinks too much does little), underscoring the value of action over overthinking. And: “Yomon do‘stdan yaxshi dushman Afzal” (A bad friend is worse than a good enemy), emphasizing the importance of good relationships.

- Set expressions (15%) were often used to frame anecdotes and establish context such as: “Xo‘ja Nasreddin aytgan ekan” (Khoja Nasreddin is said to have said) set the tone of the story. Moreover: “Bo‘lmasa ham Xo‘ja Nasreddin bo‘lsin” (Even if it’s not true, let it be Khoja Nasreddin) emphasized the humor of the tale.

Furthermore, the study found that the translation of PUs presented several challenges. Many idioms, proverbs, and set expressions rely on cultural context that is difficult to convey in English. For instance, the idiom “Qo‘y sotib olib, bo‘ridan maslahat so‘radi” loses much of its meaning in translation, as the humor associated with naivety in Uzbek culture does not directly translate.

In these cases, dynamic equivalence—where meaning is prioritized over literal translation—and cultural adaptation—where the expression is adjusted to fit the target culture—were found to be effective translation strategies. For example, the idiom “Tilingdan balo topma” could be translated as “Think before you speak,” maintaining the advice but adapting it for the target language.

The research analysis revealed that phraseological units are central to the structure and humor of Khoja Nasreddin anecdotes. They enrich the narrative by providing cultural depth and conveying wisdom in a condensed form. The most frequent PUs were idioms, followed by proverbs and set expressions. These PUs play a crucial role in shaping the comedic and moral lessons of the stories.

In terms of translation, the study highlighted the importance of balancing linguistic accuracy with cultural context. Idioms and proverbs often resist direct translation because of their cultural specificity. However, the use of dynamic equivalence allows translators to preserve the functional meaning, while cultural adaptation helps maintain the humor and relevance for the target audience.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the significant role of phraseological units in Khoja Nasreddin’s anecdotes. These units enhance the humor and cultural depth of the stories, providing moral insights and cultural commentary. The study also addresses the challenges of translating these PUs into English, emphasizing the need for strategies such as dynamic equivalence and cultural adaptation. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how phraseological units function in folklore and the complexities of translating them across cultures.

Future research can further explore the application of these translation strategies to other folk literature and idiomatic expressions, providing valuable insights into the role of language and culture in storytelling.

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