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**POETIC TRANSLATION AS RECREATION:  
DIRECT TRANSLATION AND THE PROBLEM OF EQUIVALENCE  
ABSTRACT**

Poetic translation remains one of the most theoretically complex and aesthetically demanding areas within translation studies due to the inseparable unity of meaning, rhythm, imagery, sound, and cultural symbolism. This article examines the problem of translational adequacy in poetic translation and argues that direct translation from the source language constitutes the most reliable criterion for achieving equivalence. Proceeding from the axiom that translation is a form of creative activity, the study conceptualizes poetic translation as an act of recreation rather than mechanical reproduction.

Through a comparative analysis of Robert Burns's poetry and its Russian, Kazakh, and Uzbek translations, the article demonstrates that indirect translation – particularly translation mediated through a third language – frequently results in semantic omissions, distortion of imagery, and loss of culturally embedded aesthetic components. The study foregrounds the role of national literary traditions, cultural mentality, and metaphorical systems in shaping translational choices and poetic reception.

The findings confirm that while absolute equivalence in poetic translation is unattainable, direct translation provides the most effective means of preserving semantic integrity, aesthetic effect, and cultural resonance. Consequently, the article reaffirms direct translation as a fundamental criterion of adequacy in poetic translation and highlights the creative responsibility of the poet-translator in intercultural literary transfer.

**Keywords:** *poetic translation; direct translation; equivalence; translation as recreation; literary translation; cultural specificity*

1. Introduction

It is a well-established axiom in translation studies that translation is not merely a linguistic operation but a form of creative activity. Creativity, by its nature, presupposes experimentation, interpretative freedom, and aesthetic responsibility. This understanding of translation can be traced from early philosophical and scholarly reflections by Abu Nasr al-Farabi and Abu Rayhan al-Biruni to modern representatives of Uzbek and Russian translation studies, including Sanjar Siddiq, Jumaniyoz Sharipov, and Ghaybulla Salomov. In Russian literary thought, influential

figures such as Mikhail Lomonosov, Alexander Pushkin, Vissarion Belinsky, Valery Bryusov, and Mikhail Lozinsky consistently emphasized the artistic status of translation and its role in shaping national literary cultures.

Among the various forms of literary translation, poetic translation occupies a particularly complex and controversial position. Poetry is traditionally defined as emotionally rhythmic speech organized according to a specific melodic and structural order. As noted in *A Dictionary of Literary Studies Terms* by N. Khotamov and B. Sarımsıqov, poetry represents a synthesis of emotion, rhythm, imagery, and sound. This synthesis renders poetic translation uniquely challenging, as the translator must negotiate not only semantic content but also aesthetic form and cultural symbolism.

Within translation theory, two opposing positions persist regarding the translatability of poetry. One group of scholars maintains that poetry can be translated, provided sufficient creative effort and cultural sensitivity are applied. The opposing view asserts that poetry is fundamentally untranslatable, as its essence is inseparable from the specific linguistic and cultural conditions of its creation. The renowned Russian poet and translator Samuil Marshak articulated this paradoxical position by claiming that poetry cannot be translated, yet every successful poetic translation must be regarded as an exception. This formulation implicitly shifts the focus of translation theory from literal equivalence to creative recreation.

## 2. Poetic Translation and the Concept of Recreation

Marshak's assertion suggests that a translator is not always capable of producing a poetic text that fully corresponds to the original. In addition to advanced linguistic competence, poetic translation requires a particular creative and psychological state, refined aesthetic taste, emotional sensitivity, and deep familiarity with the cultural, mental, and literary traditions of the source language community. Ultimately, poetic translation presupposes a form of artistic talent that transcends technical skill.

It must be acknowledged that no translation can fully reproduce the totality of artistic components present in the original poetic text. The attempt to preserve all formal and semantic elements simultaneously often leads to aesthetic compromise. If absolute equivalence were established as a strict requirement, poetic translation would become theoretically and practically impossible. Therefore, poetic translation must be approached as an exceptional creative act, which this article defines as recreation. Although scholarly discourse continues to use the term "translation," its essence in the poetic domain lies in re-creating the work within another linguistic and cultural system.

The concept of recreation in poetic translation encompasses rhythmic precision, musical and intonational correspondence, the handling of meter and rhyme, the rendering of individual poetic style, and the transmission of national specificity.

These elements do not function independently but exist in a dialectical relationship, forming an organic aesthetic whole. Successful poetic translation emerges precisely from this dynamic interaction.

### 3. Cultural Specificity and Metaphorical Transformation

One of the most persistent challenges of direct translation lies in recreating metaphorical and symbolic components of the source text in the target language. Each culture possesses a distinct metaphorical system shaped by historical experience, geography, climate, and worldview. Consequently, figurative expressions that appear natural and aesthetically pleasing in one language may become inappropriate, obscure, or even negatively connoted in another.

This problem is vividly illustrated in Robert Burns's poem "John Anderson," where the poet compares his friend's black hair to a raven. In Scottish cultural perception, the raven is a familiar and aesthetically neutral bird, and the comparison primarily evokes color rather than symbolic meaning. However, in Uzbek cultural tradition, the raven carries negative connotations associated with misfortune and darkness, rendering the metaphor unacceptable.

The Russian translation by Samuil Marshak replaces the raven metaphor with pitch (смоль), a substance traditionally valued in Russian culture and commonly associated with deep black color. The Kazakh translation by Quvandıq Shangitbayev further adapts this imagery by comparing the hair to coal (көмір), a culturally significant symbol of warmth and vital energy. In Uzbek poetic tradition, black hair is conventionally compared to night (туш), a metaphor associated with beauty, softness, intimacy, and aesthetic depth.

Thus, across four languages – English, Russian, Kazakh, and Uzbek – the same poetic idea is realized through culturally distinct metaphors: raven, pitch, coal, and night. Despite these differences, the semantic core of the original image is preserved. This example demonstrates that poetic equivalence is achieved not through literal reproduction but through culturally appropriate recreation. To provide a clearer sense and facilitate comparison, we present below the original versions of those lines alongside their translations in three languages:

*John Anderson my jo, John,  
When we were first acquaint,  
Your locks were like the raven,  
Your bonie brow was brent.<sup>1</sup>*

Robert Burns

*Джон Андерсон, мой старый друг,  
Подумайка, давноль,  
Густой, крутой твой локон*

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<sup>1</sup> [robertburnslive@hotmail.com](mailto:robertburnslive@hotmail.com)

*Был черен, точно смоль.*<sup>2</sup>  
Samuil Marshak

*Джон Андерсон, Джон досым,  
Мынауна жол босын,  
Самай шашын тоғілген  
Қара еді зой комірден.*<sup>3</sup>

Quvandiқ Shangitbayev

*Жон Андерсон, қадрдон дўстим,  
Бизлар илк бор танишган онда,  
Тундай қаро қуюқ сочларинг  
Барқ урарди дўнг пешонангда.*

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#### 4. Direct Translation versus Indirect Translation

A central argument of this study concerns the consequences of indirect translation. In several cases examined, Kazakh and Uzbek translations of Burns's poetry were produced through Russian intermediary texts rather than directly from English. Such mediation significantly increases the risk of semantic loss and aesthetic distortion.

The omission of the line "Your bonie brow was brent" in both Russian and Kazakh translations illustrates how indirect translation can result in the loss of poetically significant details that contribute to character portrayal and aesthetic imagery. Similar omissions are observed in translations of Burns's poem "The Lass That Made the Bed to Me," where the metaphor "Her teeth were like the ivorie" is absent in Russian, Uzbek, and Kazakh versions.

Original text: *Her hair was like the links o'gowd,  
Her teeth were like the ivorie,  
Her cheeks like lilies dipt in wine,  
The lass that made the bed to me.*<sup>4</sup>

Russian: *Был мягок шёлк её волос,  
И завивался, точно хмель,  
Она была душистей роз,  
Та, что постлала мне постель.*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Роберт Бёрнс в переводах С.Маршака. М., 1959.

<sup>3</sup> Роберт Бёрнс. "ЖАЗУШЫ" "БАСПАСЫ" О., 1979

<sup>4</sup> *That source*

<sup>5</sup> Роберт Бёрнс в переводах С.Маршака. М., 1959. Стр.113

Samuil Marshak

Uzbek: *Сочлари-чи, бирам жингалак,  
Ипакдан ҳам майинлиги бор,  
Таратишида хуш бўй ул малак,  
Атиргулни айларди бекор.*<sup>6</sup>

Muhammad Ali

Kazakh: *Есіліп шашы құлмақтай,  
Тосегін салған қарағым,  
Анқиды исі гул бақтай-  
Елжіреп балқып барамын*<sup>7</sup>.

Quvandiқ Shangitbayev

These omissions cannot be explained solely by cultural differences. Rather, they reflect the cumulative effect of translational distance, whereby each additional mediating layer increases the likelihood of semantic erosion. Direct translation, by contrast, enables the translator to engage directly with the original imagery and to seek culturally appropriate equivalents without relying on secondary interpretations.

Below, we attempt to reconstruct the omitted line – left out in the Russian, Kazakh, and Uzbek indirect translations – by translating it directly from the original:

*Майин эди сочи ипакдан,  
Тишларин дур қатори дейсиз.  
Менга ўрин - жой солиб берган  
Гул юзни гул ифори дейсиз.*

Begoyim Kholbekova

##### 5. National Literary Tradition and Aesthetic Norms

National literary traditions play a decisive role in shaping translational strategies. In Uzbek classical and folk poetry, a woman's white teeth are traditionally compared to pearls or precious stones rather than ivory. This metaphor emphasizes beauty, purity, and value in a manner that aligns with Uzbek aesthetic norms. Accordingly, direct translation from English into Uzbek allows for the recreation of the original image in a culturally resonant form, whereas indirect translation often suppresses such imagery altogether.

Uzbek translation scholars Ghaybulla Salomov and Najmiddin Komilov have justifiably characterized poetic translation as the highest form of literary translation, emphasizing its artistic and creative nature. Poetic translation may be metaphorically compared to childbirth: just as new life emerges through physical and emotional struggle, a poetic translation is born through intellectual effort, aesthetic intuition,

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<sup>6</sup> Роберт Бёрнс. *Қўшиқ ва балладалар*. Т., 1971 34 - бет.

<sup>7</sup> . Роберт Бёрнс. “ЖАЗУШЫ” БАСПАСЫ О., 1979 138 - бет.

and creative labor. This analogy underscores the ethical and artistic responsibility borne by the poet-translator.

#### 6. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This study is grounded in cultural and functional approaches to translation theory, which prioritize semantic integrity, aesthetic effect, and cultural resonance over formal correspondence. Poetic translation is treated as an act of recreation, requiring the translator to balance fidelity to the source text with conformity to the expressive norms of the target language.

Methodologically, the article employs comparative qualitative textual analysis of selected poems by Robert Burns and their Russian, Kazakh, and Uzbek translations. The analysis focuses on metaphorical rendering, imagery transformation, semantic omissions, and the impact of indirect translation. Particular attention is paid to how culturally conditioned metaphors are adapted, replaced, or omitted in different linguistic contexts.

#### 7. Conclusion

The analysis confirms that poetic translation, although inherently transformative, remains both possible and meaningful when approached as an act of creative recreation. Indirect translation – especially translation mediated through a third language – frequently leads to semantic omissions, weakened imagery, and cultural distortion, thereby undermining translational adequacy.

By contrast, direct translation from the source language enables closer engagement with the original poem's semantic structure, aesthetic design, and cultural specificity. While absolute equivalence in poetic translation is unattainable, direct translation provides the most reliable conditions for preserving artistic integrity and intercultural meaning. Accordingly, this article reaffirms direct translation as a fundamental criterion of adequacy in poetic translation and supports the view that each poetic translation must be regarded as a unique creative exception rather than a mechanical reproduction.

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## РЕЗЮМЕ

В статье рассматриваются проблемы эквивалентности и переводческой адекватности в поэтическом переводе как одной из наиболее сложных сфер переводоведения. Поэтический перевод анализируется не как буквальное воспроизведение текста, а как творческое воссоздание художественной, образной и эстетической структуры оригинала. Особое внимание уделяется прямому переводу как наиболее эффективному способу сохранения смысловой целостности, ритмики и культурно-национальной специфики произведения.

Материалом исследования послужили стихотворения Robert Burns и их русские, казахские и узбекские переводы. На основе сравнительно-сопоставительного анализа выявляются семантические смещения, утраты художественных образов и ослабление эстетического воздействия, возникающие при косвенном переводе через язык-посредник. В статье делается вывод о том, что абсолютная эквивалентность в поэтическом переводе недостижима, однако прямой перевод позволяет максимально сохранить художественную семантику, авторскую образность и культурный резонанс оригинала, выступая важным условием полноценной межкультурной литературной коммуникации.

**Ключевые слова:** поэтический перевод; прямой перевод; эквивалентность; перевод как развлечение; литературный перевод; культурная специфика

## XÜLASƏ

Bu məqalədə tərcüməşünaslığın ən mürəkkəb sahələrindən biri olan şeir tərcüməsində ekvivalentlik və tərcümə adekvatlığı məsələləri araşdırılır. Poetik tərcümə mətnin hərfi surəti kimi deyil, orijinalın bədii, məcazi və estetik strukturunun yaradıcı şəkildə yenidən qurulması kimi təhlil edilir. Əsərin semantik bütövlüyünü, ritmini, mədəni və milli spesifikliyini qorumağın ən təsirli yolu kimi birbaşa tərcüməyə xüsusi diqqət yetirilir. Tədqiqat Robert Börnsün şeirlərinə və onların rus, qazax və özbək tərcümələrinə yönəlmişdir. Müqayisəli təhlil vasitəçi dil vasitəsilə dolayı tərcümə ilə baş verən semantik dəyişiklikləri, bədii obrazların itirilməsini və estetik təsirin zəifləməsini aşkar edir. Məqalədə şeir tərcüməsində mütləq ekvivalentliyin əldə edilə bilməyəcəyi qənaətinə gəlinir; lakin birbaşa tərcümə orijinalın bədii semantikasının, müəllif obrazlarının və mədəni rezonansının maksimum dərəcədə qorunmasına imkan verir və tam mədəniyyətlərəarası ədəbi ünsiyyət üçün vacib şərt kimi xidmət edir.

**Açar sözlər:** poetik tərcümə; birbaşa tərcümə; ekvivalentlik; istirahət kimi tərcümə; ədəbi tərcümə; mədəni spesifikasiya.

**Rəyçi:** ADU Əliyeva Elmira Ə. q

**Fil e.ü.FD, Dosent**