

# LINGUA-CULTURAL PROBLEMS IN INDIRECT TRANSLATION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH-RUSSIAN-UZBEK TRANSLATION CHAINS

<https://doi.org/10.70728/phil.v05.i02.016>

Kushmanov Jasur Bahodirovich  
Shomurotova Hilola Axmadjon qizi  
hilola.shomuratova@urdu.uz

Urgench State University named after Abu Rayhon Beruni

**Abstract:** Purpose. This research aims to systematically examine the lingua-cultural challenges encountered in indirect translation, where a text is translated through an intermediate language rather than directly from source to target language. Methods. The study employs a comparative descriptive methodology analyzing 50 literary and non-literary texts translated through the English-Russian-Uzbek chain. The analytical framework integrates contrastive linguistic analysis, cultural reference identification, semantic shift tracking, and pragmatic meaning comparison across three translation stages. Results. The findings reveal five major problem categories: (1) cultural referent distortion increasing progressively through translation chains; (2) cumulative semantic shift accumulation producing significant meaning deviations; (3) idiomatic and metaphoric transformation reflecting intermediary language patterns; (4) stylistic incongruence through register shifts and neutralization; (5) pragmatic loss and misinterpretation of implicature, presupposition, and speech acts. Conclusion. Indirect translation poses unique multiplicative challenges requiring translators to possess multilayered cultural awareness, recognition of intermediary language distortions, and strategic compensation techniques. The research contributes to translation studies by providing systematic categorization of lingua-cultural problems and proposing evidence-based strategies for quality improvement in multilingual translation chains.

**Keywords:** indirect translation, lingua-cultural problems, cultural mediation, semantic shift, translation chain, cultural equivalence, intermediary language

## INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly globalized world, translation serves as a crucial bridge for cross-cultural communication. While direct translation from source language (SL) to target language (TL) represents the ideal scenario, practical constraints often necessitate indirect or relay translation, where an intermediate language (IL) mediates between the source and target languages. This practice, though widespread, introduces

complex lingua-cultural challenges that extend beyond those encountered in direct translation<sup>1</sup>.

The relevance of this research lies in the growing prevalence of indirect translation in contemporary multilingual communication. As Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Maia note, indirect translation remains understudied despite its significant presence in translation practice globally<sup>2</sup>. The theoretical significance stems from the need to understand how cultural and linguistic problems multiply through translation chains, while the practical significance relates to developing strategies for improving translation quality in multilingual contexts.

Indirect translation is particularly common in literary translation, technical documentation, and international communication involving less commonly translated language pairs. For instance, works originally written in English are frequently translated into Uzbek via Russian, creating an English-Russian-Uzbek translation chain. Each translation stage introduces potential distortions, semantic shifts, and cultural adaptations that compound through the translation chain<sup>3</sup>.

The research problem addresses the gap in systematic understanding of how lingua-cultural problems accumulate and interact in indirect translation. Most translation studies focus on bilateral translation between two languages, overlooking the unique challenges of trilateral or multilateral translation processes<sup>4</sup>. This necessitates focused examination of how cultural and linguistic problems multiply through translation chains.

The aim of this study is to systematically identify, categorize, and analyze lingua-cultural problems in indirect translation using the English-Russian-Uzbek translation chain as a case study, and to propose evidence-based strategies for minimizing information and cultural nuance loss.

The objectives of the research include: (1) identifying major categories of lingua-cultural problems in indirect translation; (2) analyzing the mechanisms of problem accumulation through translation chains; (3) examining the role of intermediary language characteristics in shaping translation outcomes; (4) developing strategic recommendations for translators working in translation chains.

The scientific novelty of this research consists in providing the first systematic categorization of lingua-cultural problems specific to indirect translation in the English-Russian-Uzbek language combination, revealing the multiplicative rather than

<sup>1</sup> Assis Rosa A., Pięta H., Maia R.B. Indirect translation: theoretical, methodological and terminological issues // *Translation Studies*. — 2017. — Vol. 10, No. 2. — P. 113-132. DOI: 10.1080/14781700.2017.1286252

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. — P. 114.

<sup>3</sup> St. André J. Relay // *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* / Ed. by M. Baker, G. Saldanha. — 2nd ed. — London: Routledge, 2009. — P. 230-232.

<sup>4</sup> Washbourne K. Non-linear relationships in translation and relay interpreting: Jakobson revisited // *Translation Studies*. — 2013. — Vol. 6, No. 2. — P. 184-197. DOI: 10.1080/14781700.2012.735816

merely additive nature of translation problems in chains, and proposing an integrated analytical framework combining linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic dimensions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Theoretical Foundations of Indirect Translation*

Indirect translation has received scholarly attention from various theoretical perspectives. Toury examined relay translation within descriptive translation studies, highlighting how intermediate texts shape final translations and influence target language literary systems<sup>5</sup>. His polysystem theory provides a framework for understanding how translated texts function within receiving cultures, though it primarily addresses direct translation relationships.

Ringmar investigated relay translation in Swedish literary history, demonstrating how cultural filters operate through intermediary languages and how the intermediary text becomes a “prism” refracting the source text’s meaning<sup>6</sup>. His research revealed that relay translation often remains invisible in literary histories despite its significant role in cultural transfer.

Dollerup analyzed relay translation in Scandinavia, identifying systemic problems in translation chains and distinguishing between “relay” (sequential) and “support” (parallel consultation) translation<sup>7</sup>. His work established important terminological distinctions that inform current research methodology.

### *Cultural Mediation in Translation*

The concept of cultural mediation in translation has been extensively theorized by scholars working at the intersection of translation studies and cultural studies. Katan developed comprehensive models of cultural mediation emphasizing the translator’s role as intercultural mediator who must navigate between different cultural frames of reference<sup>8</sup>. His approach highlights the cognitive and cultural competencies required for effective translation.

Bassnett and Lefevere discussed translation as cultural rewriting, arguing that translations actively construct cultural images rather than merely transmitting textual content<sup>9</sup>. This perspective is particularly relevant for indirect translation, where multiple acts of cultural rewriting occur sequentially.

Venuti examined how translation reinforces or challenges cultural ideologies, introducing concepts of domestication and foreignization that illuminate translator

<sup>5</sup> Toury G. *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*. — Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1995. — 312 p.

<sup>6</sup> Ringmar M. *Roundabout routes: Some remarks on indirect translations* // *Selected Papers of the CETRA Research Seminar in Translation Studies 2006*. — Leuven: CETRA, 2007. — P. 1-16.

<sup>7</sup> Dollerup C. *Relay and support translations* // *Translation in Context: Selected Contributions from the EST Congress, Granada, 1998* / Ed. by A. Chesterman, N. Gallardo San Salvador, Y. Gambier. — Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2000. — P. 17-26.

<sup>8</sup> Katan D. *Translating Cultures: An Introduction for Translators, Interpreters and Mediators*. — 2nd ed. — London: Routledge, 2004. — 320 p.

<sup>9</sup> Bassnett S., Lefevere A. *Translation, History and Culture*. — London: Pinter Publishers, 1990. — 133 p.

choices in cultural adaptation<sup>10</sup>. In indirect translation, domestication may occur at multiple stages, progressively obscuring source culture characteristics.

### *Semantic and Pragmatic Dimensions*

Semantic shift and meaning transformation in translation have been studied extensively from various theoretical positions. Nida introduced the concept of dynamic equivalence, emphasizing functional rather than formal correspondence in translation<sup>11</sup>. While his framework primarily addresses Bible translation, the principle of prioritizing communicative effect over literal correspondence applies to all translation types.

Newmark distinguished between semantic and communicative translation, providing analytical tools for understanding different translation strategies<sup>12</sup>. Baker provided comprehensive analysis of equivalence at different linguistic levels, from word to text<sup>13</sup>. However, these theories primarily address direct translation, leaving gaps in understanding cumulative semantic shifts in translation chains.

### *Research Gap*

Despite growing recognition of indirect translation's prevalence, systematic investigation of its lingua-cultural problems remains limited. St. André notes that indirect translation has been "largely ignored in Translation Studies" despite being "one of the most common forms of translation in human history"<sup>14</sup>. Washbourne argues that understanding indirect translation requires moving beyond linear models of translation to recognize the complex non-linear relationships that characterize translation chains<sup>15</sup>. This research gap necessitates focused empirical investigation of how cultural and linguistic problems accumulate and interact in specific language combinations.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### *Research Design*

This study employs a comparative descriptive methodology combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to analyze lingua-cultural problems in indirect translation. The research follows an inductive-deductive model, beginning with empirical observation of translation phenomena and proceeding to theoretical generalization.

### *Research Corpus*

The research corpus consists of 50 texts translated through the English-Russian-Uzbek chain, systematically selected to ensure diverse representation:

<sup>10</sup> Venuti L. *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. — 2nd ed. — London; New York: Routledge, 2008. — 336 p.

<sup>11</sup> Nida E.A. *Toward a Science of Translating: With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating*. — Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1964. — 331 p.

<sup>12</sup> Newmark P. *A Textbook of Translation*. — New York; London: Prentice Hall, 1988. — 292 p.

<sup>13</sup> Baker M. *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*. — 2nd ed. — London; New York: Routledge, 2011. — 332 p.

<sup>14</sup> St. André J. *Op. cit.* — P. 230.

<sup>15</sup> Washbourne K. *Op. cit.* — P. 185.

Table 1.

Corpus Composition by Text Type

| Text Type                              | Number | Percentage |
|----------------------------------------|--------|------------|
| Literary prose (novels, short stories) | 20     | 40%        |
| Technical documentation                | 12     | 24%        |
| Media texts (journalism, blogs)        | 10     | 20%        |
| Academic texts                         | 8      | 16%        |
| Total                                  | 50     | 100%       |

Selection criteria included: (a) availability of all three versions (English source, Russian intermediate, Uzbek target); (b) publication within the past 20 years; (c) verifiable translation chain (Russian version confirmed as source for Uzbek translation).

### *Analytical Framework*

The analytical framework integrates multiple methodological approaches:

1. Contrastive linguistic analysis across three languages, examining structural, lexical, and grammatical differences that may trigger translation problems.
2. Cultural reference identification and categorization based on Newmark's classification of culture-specific items<sup>16</sup>, adapted for trilingual analysis.
3. Semantic shift tracking through translation stages using componential analysis and frame semantics.
4. Pragmatic meaning comparison applying speech act theory and relevance theory principles.

### *Analysis Procedure*

Each text was analyzed at three points: English source (ES), Russian intermediate translation (RIT), and Uzbek target translation (UTT). This enabled systematic tracking of transformations through the following procedure:

1. Stage 1 (ES→RIT analysis): Identification of translation shifts between English and Russian versions, categorization by type and linguistic level.
2. Stage 2 (RIT→UTT analysis): Identification of translation shifts between Russian and Uzbek versions, with attention to whether shifts originate from RIT or constitute independent translator choices.
3. Stage 3 (ES→UTT comparison): Direct comparison of English source and Uzbek target to assess cumulative deviation and determine whether final translation adequately conveys source text meaning.

### *Problem Categorization*

Problems were categorized according to two dimensions:

Linguistic level: lexical, grammatical, stylistic, textual

<sup>16</sup> Newmark P. Op. cit. — P. 94-103.

Cultural dimension: material culture, social culture, ideological culture, ecological culture (based on Nida's cultural categories)<sup>17</sup>

Special attention was given to culture-specific items (CSIs), idioms, metaphors, and pragmatic markers that undergo multiple transformations through the translation chain.

## RESULTS

The analysis revealed systematic patterns of lingua-cultural problems across the research corpus. Five major problem categories emerged from the data, each exhibiting distinct characteristics and mechanisms of accumulation.

### 4.1. Cultural Referent Distortion

Cultural referents underwent significant distortion in indirect translation as each translator interpreted and adapted references according to their cultural framework. Analysis identified 187 instances of cultural referent distortion across the corpus.

Table 2.

Cultural Referent Distortion by Category

| Category                                     | Instances | Percentage | Severity Level |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|----------------|
| Material culture (food, clothing)            | 67        | 35.8%      | High           |
| Social culture (customs, institutions)       | 54        | 28.9%      | High           |
| Ideological culture (beliefs, values)        | 42        | 22.5%      | Medium         |
| Ecological culture (flora, fauna, geography) | 24        | 12.8%      | Medium         |
| Total                                        | 187       | 100%       | -              |

Example 1: The English phrase "American Dream" carries specific cultural connotations related to social mobility, individualism, and opportunity in American society. When translated to Russian as "американская мечта," some cultural nuances were preserved but filtered through Russian understanding. The subsequent Uzbek translation "Amerika orzusi" further shifted meaning, as Uzbek readers interpreted it through their cultural lens, potentially losing the specific ideological associations of the original concept.

Material culture references proved particularly problematic. English terms for foods, clothing, or household items were frequently replaced with Russian equivalents, then translated into Uzbek using different equivalents, resulting in final translations bearing little resemblance to the original referent. The English "bagel" became "бублик" in Russian (which has different characteristics), then "kulcha" or "non" in Uzbek, completely altering the cultural reference.

### 4.2. Semantic Shift Accumulation

<sup>17</sup> Nida E.A. Op. cit. — P. 91.

Semantic shifts occurred at each translation stage, accumulating through the chain and producing significant deviations from source text meaning. The research identified 234 instances of cumulative semantic shift.

Table 3.

Semantic Shift Types and Frequencies

| Shift Type          | ES→RIT | RIT→UTT | Cumulative |
|---------------------|--------|---------|------------|
| Generalization      | 43     | 38      | 81         |
| Specification       | 31     | 27      | 58         |
| Meaning extension   | 24     | 29      | 53         |
| Meaning restriction | 19     | 23      | 42         |
| Total               | 117    | 117     | 234        |

Example 2: The English word “privacy” encompasses legal rights, personal space, and psychological autonomy. Translated to Russian as “личная жизнь” or “приватность,” certain dimensions were emphasized while others faded. When the Uzbek translator worked from Russian and translated it as “shaxsiy hayot” or “yolg‘izlik,” additional semantic shifts occurred, potentially losing the legal and psychological dimensions present in the English original.

Polysemous words proved particularly vulnerable to cumulative semantic shift. When an English word with multiple meanings was translated into Russian using one specific sense, and the Russian translator then translated that Russian word into Uzbek based on a slightly different interpretation, the final meaning diverged substantially from the original.

#### 4.3. Idiomatic and Metaphoric Transformation

Idioms and metaphors posed distinctive challenges in indirect translation as they are deeply rooted in specific cultural and linguistic contexts. The study documented 156 instances of idiomatic transformation.

Example 3: The English idiom “to kill two birds with one stone” was translated into Russian as “убить двух зайцев одним выстрелом” (kill two hares with one shot). The Uzbek translator, working from Russian, used “bitta o‘q bilan ikki quyovni otish” (maintaining the hare image from Russian) rather than an indigenous Uzbek idiom such as “bir tosh bilan ikki qush urmoq.” This resulted in a translation bearing marks of the intermediary language rather than achieving optimal cultural adaptation.

Conceptual metaphors underwent reorientation through the translation chain. When source language metaphors were rendered literally or differently metaphorized in the intermediary language, the target language translation inherited these transformations, obscuring the original conceptual structure.

#### 4.4. Stylistic Incongruence

Stylistic features including register, tone, formality level, and rhetorical devices often failed to transfer consistently through translation chains. The analysis identified 143 instances of stylistic incongruence.

Table 4.

Stylistic Incongruence Categories

| Category                         | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Register shift (formal↔informal) | 52        | 36.4%      |
| Tone neutralization              | 41        | 28.7%      |
| Rhetorical device loss           | 31        | 21.7%      |
| Dialect/sociolect erasure        | 19        | 13.2%      |
| Total                            | 143       | 100%       |

Example 4: Colloquial English dialogue with specific dialect features was standardized to literary Russian, losing dialectal markers. Uzbek translation from Russian then produced standard literary Uzbek, completely eliminating the sociolinguistic variation present in the original. The characterization through speech patterns was thus lost in the translation chain.

Literary texts exemplified this problem clearly. Stylistic innovation in the source text was normalized in the intermediary translation, then translated into the target language as conventional prose.

#### 4.5. Pragmatic Loss and Misinterpretation

Pragmatic meanings including implicature, presupposition, speech acts, and contextual effects proved highly vulnerable in indirect translation. The research documented 128 instances of pragmatic loss.

Example 5: English irony and sarcasm, which rely heavily on contextual cues and cultural shared knowledge, were misinterpreted or neutralized in Russian translation. When the Russian translator took statements literally or marked irony explicitly (using quotation marks or phrases like “так называемый”), the Uzbek translator working from Russian produced literal translations, completely losing the original ironic effect.

Politeness strategies varied significantly across English, Russian, and Uzbek cultures. English indirect requests were translated into Russian using different politeness markers, which were then translated into Uzbek with yet another politeness strategy, resulting in pragmatic meaning differing substantially from the original speaker’s intention.

## DISCUSSION

### *Multiplicative Nature of Translation Problems*

The findings reveal that lingua-cultural problems in indirect translation are not merely additive but multiplicative. Each translation stage introduces potential problems, and these problems interact and compound through the translation chain. A

minor semantic shift in the first translation may trigger larger distortions in subsequent translation as translators work from already-shifted meaning.

This finding aligns with Ringmar's observation that relay translation creates a "double refraction" of meaning<sup>18</sup>, but extends it by demonstrating the multiplicative rather than additive nature of distortion. The mathematical model can be expressed as:

$$\text{Total Distortion} \approx D_1 \times D_2 \text{ (rather than } D_1 + D_2 \text{)}$$

where  $D_1$  represents distortion in Stage 1 and  $D_2$  represents distortion in Stage 2.

### *Asymmetric Cultural Mediation*

Cultural mediation operates at multiple levels simultaneously in indirect translation. The first translator mediates between source and intermediary cultures, while the second translator mediates between intermediary and target cultures. However, the second translator typically has limited access to source culture, relying primarily on the intermediary text.

This creates asymmetric cultural mediation where later translators in the chain lack direct access to source cultural context. The phenomenon explains why certain culture-specific items undergo progressive domestication through the translation chain, ultimately losing connection to their original cultural referents.

### *Intermediary Language Influence*

The intermediary language's characteristics significantly influence the translation chain's outcomes. Russian, as the intermediary language in our corpus, tends toward standardization and formalization, potentially losing colloquialisms and cultural specificity from English. This standardization constrains Uzbek translation possibilities, as translators work from already-neutralized text.

This finding supports Dollerup's observation that intermediary languages function as filters affecting what can be transmitted to target languages<sup>19</sup>. The research extends this insight by demonstrating specific filtering mechanisms operating in the English-Russian-Uzbek chain.

### *Strategic Implications*

To minimize problems in indirect translation, several strategic approaches emerge from the findings:

1. Source text consultation: Target language translators should consult source texts when possible, even if lacking full competence in the source language. Visual examination of the original can provide crucial context for ambiguous passages.
2. Uncertainty marking: Explicit marking of uncertain translations in the intermediary text helps subsequent translators identify potential problems requiring additional verification.

<sup>18</sup> Ringmar M. Relay translation // Handbook of Translation Studies / Ed. by Y. Gambier, L. van Doorslaer. — Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2012. — Vol. 3. — P. 141-144.

<sup>19</sup> Dollerup C. Op. cit. — P. 19.

3. Collaborative translation: Translation processes involving source, intermediary, and target language experts can reduce cumulative distortions through multi-directional consultation.

4. Technology integration: Parallel corpora showing source, intermediary, and target versions enable pattern identification and quality control. Machine translation can provide alternative renderings helping human translators recognize when intermediary translation may have introduced distortions.

## CONCLUSION

This study has systematically examined lingua-cultural problems in indirect translation through analysis of the English-Russian-Uzbek translation chain. The following conclusions emerge from the research:

First, cultural referents undergo progressive distortion through translation chains as each translator interprets and adapts references according to their cultural framework, creating increasing distance from original cultural context. Material and social culture references show highest susceptibility to distortion.

Second, semantic shifts accumulate through the translation chain in multiplicative rather than additive fashion, with each translation stage introducing potential deviations that compound in subsequent translations, potentially producing significant meaning changes.

Third, idioms and metaphors undergo multiple transformations, often reflecting the intermediary language's cultural patterns rather than achieving optimal adaptation to target culture. This phenomenon, termed "intermediary language interference," represents a distinctive challenge of indirect translation.

Fourth, stylistic features fail to transfer consistently through translation chains, with register shifts and stylistic neutralization occurring progressively through each translation stage. Literary texts are particularly affected by cumulative stylistic neutralization.

Fifth, pragmatic meanings are highly vulnerable to loss and misinterpretation in indirect translation, as each translator interprets pragmatic force based on their cultural framework and linguistic resources. Irony, implicature, and politeness strategies are most frequently lost.

The research contributes to translation studies by providing: (a) systematic categorization of lingua-cultural problems specific to indirect translation; (b) empirical evidence for the multiplicative model of translation problem accumulation; (c) evidence-based strategies for improving indirect translation quality.

Practical recommendations for translators include: developing awareness of multiple cultural frameworks, consulting source texts when possible, marking uncertain passages for subsequent translators, and utilizing collaborative translation models.

Future research should investigate additional language combinations, develop quantitative quality assessment frameworks for indirect translation, and explore how translation technology can support translators working in translation chains. Additionally, translator training programs should incorporate awareness of indirect translation challenges and strategies for managing them effectively.

## References

1. Assis Rosa A., Pięta H., Maia R.B. Indirect translation: theoretical, methodological and terminological issues // Translation Studies. - 2017. - Vol. 10, No. 2. - P. 113-132. DOI: 10.1080/14781700.2017.1286252
2. - P. 113-132. DOI: 10.1080/14781700.2017.1286252
2. Ibid. - P. 114.
3. St. André J. Relay // Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies / Ed. by M. Baker, G. Saldanha. - 2nd ed. - London: Routledge, 2009. - P. 230-232.
4. Washbourne K. Non-linear relationships in translation and relay interpreting: Jakobson revisited // Translation Studies. - 2013. - Vol. 6, No. 2. - P. 184-197. DOI: 10.1080/14781700.2012.735816
5. Toury G. Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond. - Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1995. - 312 p.
6. Ringmar M. Roundabout routes: Some remarks on indirect translations // Selected Papers of the CETRA Research Seminar in Translation Studies 2006. - Leuven: CETRA, 2007. - P. 1-16.
7. Dollerup C. Relay and support translations // Translation in Context: Selected Contributions from the EST Congress, Granada, 1998 / Ed. by A. Chesterman, N. Gallardo San Salvador, Y. Gambier. - Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2000. - P. 17-26.
8. Katan D. Translating Cultures: An Introduction for Translators, Interpreters and Mediators. - 2nd ed. - London: Routledge, 2004. - 320 p.
9. Bassnett S., Lefevere A. Translation, History and Culture. - London: Pinter Publishers, 1990. - 133 p.
10. Venuti L. The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation. - 2nd ed. - London; New York: Routledge, 2008. - 336 p.
11. Nida E.A. Toward a Science of Translating: With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating. - Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1964. - 331 p.
12. Newmark P. A Textbook of Translation. - New York; London: Prentice Hall, 1988. - 292 p.
13. Baker M. In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation. - 2nd ed. - London; New York: Routledge, 2011. - 332 p.
14. St. André J. Op. cit. - P. 230.
15. Washbourne K. Op. cit. - P. 185.

16. Newmark P. Op. cit. - P. 94-103.
17. Nida E.A. Op. cit. - P. 91.
18. Ringmar M. Relay translation // Handbook of Translation Studies / Ed. by Y. Gambier, L. van Doorslaer. - Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2012. - Vol. 3. - P. 141-144.
19. Dollerup C. Op. cit. - P. 19.