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Article

Translation Strategies in Rendering Twentieth-Century Russian Poetry into Karakalpak: Imagery, Intonation, and Poetic Form

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Abstract: This article examines the artistic strategies employed in translating twentieth-century Russian poetry into Karakalpak, focusing on the works of Alexander Blok, Anna Akhmatova, Sergei Yesenin, and Vladimir Mayakovsky. The study aims to identify the principal challenges involved in transferring individual poetic style, imagery, emotional intonation, and formal organization from Russian into Karakalpak. The methodology combines comparative analysis, historical-literary contextualization, and stylistic analysis. Particular attention is given to the symbolic ambiguity of Blok's poetry, the psychological precision of Akhmatova's lyricism, the relationship between nature and national identity in Yesenin's poetry, and Mayakovsky's rhythmic and compositional experimentation. Mayakovsky's poem "Farewell," translated into Karakalpak by A. Begimov, is considered as a case study illustrating the interaction between poetic form and meaning. The analysis suggests that poetic equivalence should not be assessed solely through lexical correspondence. Rather, it depends on the translator's ability to preserve the semantic, imagistic, emotional, and stylistic functions of the original while producing a natural and expressive text in Karakalpak. The article contributes to the study of Russian–Karakalpak literary relations and the theoretical understanding of poetic translation.

Keywords: literary translation, Russian poetry, Karakalpak language, poetic equivalence, symbolism, lyric poetry, translation strategies, poetic imagery, rhythm, authorial style.

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1. Introduction

The translation of twentieth-century Russian poetry into Karakalpak represents an important dimension of literary and cultural exchange [1]. Through translated literature, Karakalpak readers have gained access to diverse poetic traditions, while Karakalpak translators have encountered new approaches to imagery, lyrical expression, rhythm, and poetic composition [2], [3]. This process has contributed to the expansion of the expressive resources of Karakalpak literary language. The poetry of Alexander Blok, Anna Akhmatova, Sergei Yesenin, and Vladimir Mayakovsky is particularly significant because these authors represent different artistic approaches. Blok's poetry is associated with symbolism and the ambiguity of poetic images; Akhmatova's lyricism is characterized by psychological precision and emotional restraint; Yesenin frequently connects nature imagery with memory, homeland, and national identity; and Mayakovsky experiments with rhythm, syntax, typography, and the organization of the poetic line. These differences create distinct translation problems, a point long recognised in discussions of the special difficulty of translating poetry [4], [5]. A strategy suitable for conveying the symbolic

ambiguity of Blok may not be sufficient for reproducing the compressed psychological expression of Akhmatova or the dynamic structure of Mayakovsky's poetry.

The problem addressed in this article is therefore not merely how Russian words and expressions are replaced by Karakalpak equivalents, but how the artistic functions of the original text can be preserved across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Classical linguistic approaches defined translation largely in terms of equivalence between source and target units [6], [7], whereas studies of poetic texts stress that equivalence and adequacy must be understood through the artistic function of the whole text [8].

The aim of the study is to identify the principal translation strategies involved in rendering the poetry of Blok, Akhmatova, Yesenin, and Mayakovsky into Karakalpak and to establish the criteria by which poetic equivalence can be evaluated.

The study addresses four research questions:

(RQ1) What difficulties arise when symbolic and psychologically complex imagery is translated into Karakalpak?

(RQ2) How can the emotional and cultural functions of Yesenin's nature imagery be preserved?

(RQ3) What challenges do Mayakovsky's rhythm, syntax, and graphic lineation present to the translator?

(RQ4) Which criteria are most useful for evaluating the artistic adequacy of Karakalpak translations of twentieth-century Russian poetry?

The object of the study is the Karakalpak translation of selected works by twentieth-century Russian poets. The subject is the transfer of imagery, authorial intonation, emotional meaning, and poetic form.

2. Materials and Methods

The study employs comparative analysis, historical-literary contextualization, and structural-stylistic analysis. Comparative analysis is used to identify semantic and stylistic relationships between the original Russian texts and their Karakalpak translations, with attention to the distinction between semantic and communicative translation. The historical-literary approach situates these translations within the development of Karakalpak literature and its engagement with Russian poetic traditions, in line with descriptive approaches to translation studies. Structural-stylistic analysis focuses on lexical choices, metaphorical structures, syntax, rhythm, and intonation.

The research material corresponds to the three main areas examined in the third chapter of the dissertation:

- the translation of poetry by Alexander Blok and Anna Akhmatova;
- Karakalpak translations of Sergei Yesenin by J. Izbasqanov, M. Seytniyazov, B. Genjemuratov, and T. Matmuratov;
- Karakalpak translations of Vladimir Mayakovsky, including A. Begimov's translation of “Proshchanye” (“Farewell”).

The analysis follows four principal criteria:

(C1) Semantic accuracy: preservation of the central idea and significant meaning relations.

(C2) Imagistic adequacy: preservation of the artistic functions of metaphors, symbols, and cultural associations.

(C3) Intonational and stylistic correspondence: reproduction of emotional dynamics and individual poetic voice.

(C4) Naturalness of the target language: the ability of the translation to function as convincing Karakalpak poetry.

The study is qualitative rather than statistical. Its findings are based on textual interpretation and the examination of translation problems. No numerical claims are made without a separate quantitative analysis.

3. Results

A. Symbolic Imagery in Alexander Blok and Psychological Expression in Anna Akhmatova

Blok's poetry is characterized by symbolic ambiguity, musicality, emotional intensity, and the interaction between concrete images and broader philosophical or spiritual meanings. These features present a particular challenge for translation into Karakalpak. A symbol may communicate more than its immediate referential meaning. It can evoke several associations and contribute to the atmosphere and philosophical structure of a poem [9]. If a translator reduces such an image to its literal meaning, the interpretative possibilities of the original may be narrowed. Conversely, excessive explanation may destroy the ambiguity that gives the symbol its artistic power. The translator must therefore consider not only the dictionary meaning of an individual word but also its role within the entire system of poetic images. A successful translation should preserve the image's significant semantic and emotional functions, even when its linguistic form needs to change.

Akhmatova's lyric poetry presents a different set of challenges. Its characteristic features include psychological precision, emotional restraint, and the concentration of meaning within a limited verbal space. A seemingly simple statement may carry a complex emotional subtext that emerges through pauses, details, and the relationship between separate images. Consequently, the translation of Akhmatova requires particular attention to concision and understatement. Unnecessary expansion may weaken the psychological tension of the original, while excessive reduction may remove details essential to its emotional meaning. The comparison between Blok and Akhmatova reveals a fundamental principle: poetic equivalence involves preserving not only what a text communicates but also how its meaning is artistically constructed [10]. For Blok, the central challenge is often the preservation of symbolic ambiguity; for Akhmatova, it is the reproduction of psychological precision and emotional restraint.

B. Nature Imagery and Cultural Identity in Sergei Yesenin

Yesenin's poetry is especially relevant to Karakalpak translation studies because of the close relationship between natural imagery, emotional experience, and attachment to the homeland. In his lyric poetry, nature frequently functions as more than a descriptive background. Landscapes and natural images can express memory, affection, loss, spiritual belonging, and the passage of time. Their translation therefore requires attention to both referential meaning and emotional function. Three dimensions are particularly important: the concrete meaning of an image, its emotional associations, and its cultural significance. Preserving the literal meaning alone may be insufficient when a natural image also expresses nostalgia, personal loss, or attachment to one's native land. The dissertation examines translations by J. Izbasqanov, M. Seytniyazov, B. Genjemuratov, and T. Matmuratov. Their work provides a basis for investigating different translation decisions and identifying approaches to reproducing Yesenin's imagery in Karakalpak [11].

However, no single strategy can be assumed to work equally well for every poem. Lexical choices, syntactic structures, and rhythmic solutions must be assessed in relation to the particular text and the function of each image within it. The analysis thus supports the view that translating Yesenin involves reconstructing an interconnected imagistic and emotional system rather than replacing Russian words with isolated target-language equivalents.

C. Rhythm and Compositional Experimentation in Vladimir Mayakovsky

Mayakovsky's poetry presents a distinctive set of translation problems because of its experimental rhythm, declamatory intonation, unconventional syntax, and visually significant line breaks. The dissertation notes that the translation of Mayakovsky's works contributed to the introduction and development of alternative poetic forms in Karakalpak literary practice, including free verse and nontraditional lineation. Translating Mayakovsky requires attention to several interdependent elements: lexical meaning, intonational movement, the placement of semantic emphasis, and the function of graphic organization. Simply copying the visual arrangement of the original does not guarantee an equivalent artistic effect. Nevertheless, eliminating the original's compositional features may weaken the author's distinctive style [12].

A relevant example is “Proshchanye” (“Farewell”), translated into Karakalpak by A. Begimov. In the poem, the speaker is in Paris but ultimately affirms his attachment to Moscow: “I would like to live and die in Paris, / if there were not such a land — Moscow” . The contrast between Paris and Moscow expresses a conflict between the attraction of a foreign city and the speaker's deeper emotional connection with his homeland. Geographical space becomes a means of articulating an inner choice. An assessment of the Karakalpak translation should therefore examine whether the semantic contrast is preserved, whether the movement from desire to conditional qualification remains effective, and whether the final reference to Moscow retains its climactic function. This example illustrates that the translation of Mayakovsky requires an integrated approach to vocabulary, syntax, intonation, and visual composition. In his poetry, form is not merely a container for meaning; it is one of the principal means through which meaning is produced [13].

D. Criteria for Poetic Equivalence

The analysis of the four poets suggests that the artistic adequacy of translations can be evaluated through four interrelated criteria. Semantic accuracy concerns the preservation of the author's central idea and the significant relationships between textual elements. Imagistic adequacy concerns the reproduction of the artistic functions of metaphors, symbols, natural images, and cultural associations. Intonational and stylistic correspondence concerns the preservation of emotional dynamics, psychological nuance, and the author's individual poetic voice. Naturalness in the target language concerns whether the translation functions as convincing poetry within the expressive conventions of Karakalpak. These criteria must be applied together. A semantically accurate translation may remain stylistically ineffective if it disrupts the original's intonation. Conversely, an expressive translation may become inadequate if it changes essential semantic relationships.

The quality of a poetic translation therefore depends on the interaction of meaning, imagery, intonation, and linguistic naturalness rather than on any single formal measure.

4. Discussion

The findings indicate that the translation of twentieth-century Russian poetry into Karakalpak requires differentiated strategies. Blok, Akhmatova, Yesenin, and Mayakovsky employ distinct systems of imagery and different relationships between poetic meaning and form. A single translation method cannot adequately address all these differences. Blok's poetry calls for the preservation of symbolic ambiguity; Akhmatova's lyricism requires psychological precision and restraint; Yesenin's poetry demands attention to the emotional and cultural functions of natural imagery; and Mayakovsky's work requires sensitivity to rhythmic movement, syntax, intonation, and graphic organization [14].

The principal argument advanced in this article is that the artistic equivalence of a Karakalpak translation of twentieth-century Russian poetry should be assessed through the preservation of the functional unity of meaning, imagery, emotional intonation, and poetic form rather than through formal lexical correspondence alone. This approach recognizes the translator as an interpreter who makes informed decisions in response to the artistic functions of the original and the expressive possibilities of the target language, rather than as an invisible conduit between texts [15]. At the same time, the evaluation of particular translation choices requires systematic comparison of parallel texts, including individual lines and images.

The study has limitations. It is qualitative, relies on selected texts and translations, and offers no statistical generalisation. Further research should therefore expand the comparative corpus, particularly for Blok and Akhmatova, and examine specific translation versions of works by Yesenin and Mayakovsky in greater detail

5. Conclusion

The study leads to the following conclusions:

1) The translation of twentieth-century Russian poetry into Karakalpak is a complex interpretative process involving meaning, imagery, intonation, and individual style.

2) The translation of Blok requires particular attention to symbolic ambiguity and the associative structure of poetic images.

3) The translation of Akhmatova depends on psychological precision, emotional restraint, and the preservation of concentrated meaning.

4) The translation of Yesenin requires the reproduction of the emotional functions of nature imagery and its relationship to cultural memory.

5) The translation of Mayakovsky demands sensitivity to rhythm, syntax, intonation, and visually significant lineation.

6) Translation transformations are justified when they preserve the artistic function of the original without distorting the author's central meaning.

7) Semantic accuracy, imagistic adequacy, intonational and stylistic correspondence, and naturalness in the target language constitute interrelated criteria for evaluating poetic equivalence.

8) Translations of twentieth-century Russian poetry have contributed to the development of Karakalpak literary expression and the strengthening of interliterary relations.

In conclusion, successful poetic translation depends on the translator's ability to reconstruct the artistic system of the original through the expressive resources of Karakalpak while preserving its semantic depth and emotional-aesthetic impact.

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