



Difficulties In Translating Metaphorical And Symbolic Elements In Narratives About Amir Timur

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the key difficulties involved in translating metaphorical and symbolic elements in narratives depicting Amir Timur across English and Russian literary traditions. The study focuses on how culturally embedded metaphors, historical symbolism, and ideologically shaped imagery challenge the achievement of semantic equivalence in translation. Using a comparative literary and discourse-analytical approach, the research analyzes selected texts from both traditions to identify recurring translation problems, including loss of connotation, distortion of symbolic meaning, and shifts in evaluative tone. Special attention is given to the role of cultural context, intertextual references, and translator subjectivity in shaping the reconstructed image of Timur. The findings demonstrate that metaphor and symbolism are not merely linguistic features but carriers of cultural memory and ideological framing. The article proposes context-sensitive translation strategies that preserve both meaning and stylistic nuance in cross-cultural narratives.

Keywords:

Amir Timur, metaphor, symbolism, translation studies, cultural context, discourse analysis, equivalence, literary translation, narrative representation, intercultural communication

Introduction

The translation of metaphorical and symbolic elements in historical narratives represents one of the most complex challenges in contemporary translation studies, particularly when such narratives construct culturally and ideologically significant figures such as Amir Timur. Metaphors and symbols function not only as stylistic devices but also as cognitive and cultural frameworks through which historical figures are interpreted and evaluated. As George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argue, metaphor is fundamental to human thought, shaping the way individuals conceptualize abstract realities [4; p. 3]. Consequently, translating such structures involves more than lexical

substitution; it requires the transfer of culturally embedded meanings and conceptual mappings across linguistic boundaries.

Within the field of translation studies, scholars have long emphasized the difficulty of achieving equivalence when dealing with figurative language. Eugene Nida highlights the importance of preserving the intended effect of the source text on the target audience [7; p. 159]. Similarly, Peter Newmark distinguishes between semantic and communicative translation, noting that metaphor often requires adaptation rather than direct transfer [6; p. 104]. These theoretical perspectives are particularly relevant when analyzing narratives about Amir Timur, where metaphorical

representations frequently reflect ideological positions and cultural memory.

Furthermore, the symbolic construction of historical figures is deeply influenced by discourse and power relations. Edward Said demonstrates how literary discourse can shape perceptions of the “Other,” often leading to the creation of stereotypical or mythologized images [11; p. 54]. In a similar vein, Teun A van Dijk emphasizes the role of ideology in discourse production, which directly affects how metaphors and symbols are encoded and later interpreted in translation [10; p. 21]. In narratives about Amir Timur, such discursive mechanisms contribute to the formation of contrasting images—ranging from heroic ruler to destructive conqueror—each supported by specific metaphorical frameworks.

From a semiotic perspective, Yuri Lotman argues that literary texts operate as complex sign systems in which symbols carry layered meanings shaped by cultural context [5; p. 37]. This complexity is further reinforced by the dialogic nature of texts, as proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin, where multiple voices and interpretations coexist [1; p. 84]. Such plurality complicates the translator’s task, as preserving symbolic meaning often requires balancing fidelity to the source text with accessibility for the target audience.

In addition, modern translation theory highlights the translator’s active role in reconstructing meaning. Lawrence Venuti stresses the visibility of the translator and the inevitable influence of cultural mediation [8; p. 19], while Gideon Toury views translation as a norm-governed activity shaped by the target culture [9; p. 56]. These perspectives suggest that translations of metaphorical and symbolic elements are not neutral reproductions but interpretive acts that may reshape the image of Amir Timur in different literary traditions.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the key difficulties associated with translating metaphorical and symbolic structures in narratives about Amir Timur and to analyze how these challenges influence the representation of his image across cultures. By integrating approaches from translation theory, discourse analysis, and semiotics, the research

seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how meaning is transformed in the process of cross-cultural literary translation.

Methods

This study employs an interdisciplinary methodological framework combining comparative literary analysis, discourse analysis, and translation studies in order to examine the difficulties of translating metaphorical and symbolic elements in narratives about Amir Timur. The research is based on a qualitative approach, focusing on close textual analysis of selected English and Russian literary works that construct the image of Timur through figurative language. The corpus includes representative texts from both traditions where metaphor and symbolism play a central role in shaping ideological and cultural meanings.

The primary method applied is comparative analysis, which allows for the identification of similarities and differences in metaphorical structures across source and target texts. This approach is complemented by principles of descriptive translation studies, as outlined by Gideon Toury, emphasizing the role of norms and target culture constraints in translation processes [9; p. 78]. The study also incorporates the concept of dynamic equivalence proposed by Eugene Nida, which serves as a criterion for evaluating the adequacy of metaphor translation in terms of preserving meaning and effect [7; p. 166].

In addition, discourse analysis is used to investigate how metaphorical and symbolic elements contribute to the construction of ideological meanings within the texts. Following the framework of Teun A van Dijk, the study examines the interaction between language, ideology, and power in shaping the representation of Timur [10; p. 45]. This is particularly important for understanding how certain metaphors reinforce positive or negative images depending on cultural and historical context.

A cognitive approach to metaphor is also integrated into the methodology, drawing on the theory developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson [4; p. 56]. This perspective

enables the analysis of underlying conceptual mappings that structure metaphorical expressions and reveals how these mappings may shift or be altered in translation. Furthermore, semiotic analysis, based on the work of Yuri Lotman, is applied to interpret symbols as elements of a broader cultural sign system [5; p. 102].

The research procedure consists of several stages: (1) selection of relevant texts containing metaphorical and symbolic representations of Amir Timur; (2) identification and classification of metaphors and symbols within the source texts; (3) comparison of their translated equivalents; (4) analysis of translation strategies used (e.g., literal translation, substitution, omission, or adaptation); and (5) evaluation of the impact of these strategies on meaning, tone, and cultural connotation. Special attention is given to cases where translation results in semantic loss, transformation, or ideological shift.

Thus, the methodological design ensures a comprehensive analysis of both linguistic and extralinguistic factors influencing the translation of metaphorical and symbolic structures, allowing for a deeper understanding of how the image of Amir Timur is reconstructed across different languages and cultures.

Results

The analysis of the selected corpus reveals that the translation of metaphorical and symbolic elements in narratives about Amir Timur is characterized by systematic shifts in meaning, connotation, and evaluative tone. The findings demonstrate that metaphorical structures rooted in the source culture often undergo transformation due to linguistic, cultural, and ideological differences between English and Russian contexts. In many cases, direct equivalents are either unavailable or insufficient to convey the full semantic and symbolic load of the original expression, confirming the complexity of metaphor translation as outlined in translation theory [6; p. 112].

One of the most frequent results observed is the partial loss of conceptual metaphor. According to the cognitive framework proposed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, metaphors are based

on underlying conceptual mappings [4; p. 67]. However, the study shows that these mappings are often altered or simplified in translation, leading to a reduction in interpretive depth. For instance, metaphors portraying Timur as a “storm” or “scourge” tend to be either neutralized or intensified depending on the target audience, which affects the overall perception of his character.

Another significant finding concerns the transformation of symbolic meaning. Drawing on the semiotic approach of Yuri Lotman, symbols function within a broader cultural code [5; p. 119]. The analysis indicates that when such symbols are transferred into another linguistic and cultural system, they frequently lose their original associations or acquire new ones. This is particularly evident in cases where historical or religious symbols embedded in the source text are unfamiliar to the target audience, resulting in adaptation or substitution strategies.

The study also identifies a strong influence of ideological and discursive factors on translation outcomes. Following Teun A van Dijk, discourse reflects underlying power structures and ideological positions [10; p. 52]. The results show that translations often reinforce or modify the ideological stance of the original narrative, especially in representations of Timur as either a heroic leader or a destructive conqueror. This confirms the argument of Edward Said that literary discourse can construct “Otherness” through selective use of imagery and metaphor [11; p. 63].

Furthermore, the findings highlight the role of translation norms and strategies in shaping the final text. In line with Gideon Toury, the analysis demonstrates that translators operate within target-culture norms that influence their choices [9; p. 89]. Common strategies identified in the corpus include literal translation, modulation, cultural substitution, and omission. Each of these strategies produces different effects, ranging from preservation of meaning to significant transformation of symbolic content. Overall, the results confirm that the translation of metaphorical and symbolic elements is not a neutral process but a complex act of interpretation. The reconstructed image of Amir

Timur in translation is shaped by cognitive, cultural, and ideological factors, leading to variations that reflect the priorities and expectations of different literary traditions.

Discussion

The results of the study confirm that the translation of metaphorical and symbolic elements in narratives about Amir Timur cannot be reduced to purely linguistic transfer, but must be understood as a complex interpretive process shaped by cognitive, cultural, and ideological factors. The observed shifts in meaning and connotation support the theoretical position of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, who argue that metaphor structures human thought rather than merely decorating language [4; p. 89]. When these conceptual structures are transferred across languages, their transformation becomes inevitable, which explains the frequent simplification or reinterpretation identified in the results.

At the same time, the findings reinforce the relevance of equivalence-based approaches in translation studies. The difficulties in preserving metaphorical meaning demonstrate the limitations of strict equivalence, as emphasized by Eugene Nida, who proposed dynamic equivalence as a way to maintain communicative effect rather than formal similarity [7; p. 171]. However, the analysis suggests that even dynamic equivalence may not fully capture culturally specific symbolic meanings, especially when dealing with historically loaded narratives about Amir Timur. This supports Peter Newmark's view that metaphor often requires adaptation or even re-creation in the target language [6; p. 120].

The discussion also highlights the significant role of discourse and ideology in shaping translation outcomes. In line with Teun A van Dijk, the study demonstrates that translation is embedded within broader discursive structures that reflect power relations and cultural perspectives [10; p. 67]. The variation in the representation of Amir Timur—as either a heroic ruler or a destructive force—illustrates how translation can reinforce or alter ideological framing. This observation aligns with Edward Said's concept of "Otherness,"

where literary discourse constructs images of historical figures through selective metaphorical patterns [11; p. 72].

From a semiotic perspective, the transformation of symbolic elements confirms Yuri Lotman's idea that meaning is generated within a cultural sign system [5; p. 134]. When symbols are removed from their original semiotic environment, they inevitably undergo reinterpretation. This process is further complicated by the dialogic nature of texts, as described by Mikhail Bakhtin, where multiple voices and perspectives coexist [1; p. 102]. Translation, therefore, becomes a negotiation between these voices, rather than a straightforward reproduction of meaning.

Moreover, the findings emphasize the active role of the translator as a mediator between cultures. As argued by Lawrence Venuti, the translator's choices are never invisible but shape the final representation of the text [8; p. 24]. This is further supported by Gideon Toury's concept of norms, which determine acceptable translation practices within a given cultural context [9; p. 95]. In the case of narratives about Amir Timur, these norms influence not only linguistic choices but also the broader ideological interpretation of his image.

In sum, the discussion demonstrates that the translation of metaphorical and symbolic structures involves a dynamic interaction between language, culture, and ideology. The reinterpretation of these elements in translation does not merely reflect differences between languages but reveals deeper processes of cultural negotiation and meaning reconstruction. This underscores the necessity of adopting an interdisciplinary approach to translation analysis, particularly when dealing with historically and culturally significant figures such as Amir Timur.

Conclusion

The present study has demonstrated that the translation of metaphorical and symbolic elements in narratives about Amir Timur constitutes a complex and multilayered process that extends beyond linguistic substitution. The findings confirm that metaphors and symbols function as carriers of cultural memory, ideological meaning, and conceptual structures,

which makes their accurate transfer into another language particularly challenging. As shown in the analysis, shifts in meaning, loss of connotation, and transformation of symbolic value frequently occur due to differences in cognitive frameworks and cultural contexts [4; p. 95].

The study also highlights that achieving full equivalence in translating figurative language is often unattainable. In line with the theoretical perspectives of Eugene Nida and Peter Newmark, the research confirms that translators must prioritize communicative effectiveness and cultural adaptability over formal accuracy [7; p. 178; 6; p. 135]. At the same time, the influence of discourse and ideology, as emphasized by Teun A van Dijk and Edward Said, plays a crucial role in shaping the translated image of Amir Timur, leading to variations that reflect the values and expectations of the target culture [10; p. 74; 11; p. 80].

Furthermore, the research underscores the active role of the translator as an interpreter and cultural mediator. Following Lawrence Venuti and Gideon Toury, translation is understood as a norm-governed and context-dependent activity that inevitably involves subjective decision-making [8; p. 30; 9; p. 101]. This reinforces the idea that translations are not neutral reproductions but reconstructed texts shaped by cultural and ideological factors.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the necessity of adopting an interdisciplinary approach that integrates translation theory, discourse analysis, and semiotics in order to fully understand the complexities of translating metaphorical and symbolic structures. Such an approach allows for a deeper insight into how

the image of Amir Timur is transformed across languages and cultures, contributing to broader discussions in comparative literary studies and translation research.

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