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The Reproduction of National Colour in Russian and Uzbek Translations of Goethe's Tragedy *Faust*

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how national colour — a complex of cultural, historical, linguistic, and symbolic elements — has been reproduced in the Russian and Uzbek translations of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's monumental tragedy *Faust*. The concept of national colour is vital for understanding how translated texts preserve or transform the aesthetic and ideological undertones of the original. Goethe's *Faust* is deeply embedded in the German cultural matrix, and rendering its national spirit in another language presents significant challenges. The study compares multiple translations of *Faust* into Russian and Uzbek, with a focus on how translators deal with idiomatic expressions, cultural allusions, religious-philosophical concepts, and historical markers. It employs a comparative textual analysis and theoretical framework drawn from translation studies, hermeneutics, and cultural linguistics. The results demonstrate that while Russian translations often maintain the intellectual depth and poetic rhythm of the source, Uzbek translations tend to adapt the text to local linguistic structures and cultural paradigms. This suggests differing translation strategies: the Russian tendency toward semantic fidelity and the Uzbek inclination for cultural transposition. The paper concludes with a discussion on the translator's role in shaping intercultural dialogue and the potential for literary translation to act as a bridge between disparate worldviews.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Literary translation is more than a linguistic exercise; it is a cultural act that involves the recreation of a text within the norms, structures, and sensibilities of another language community. Among the many challenges in this complex process, one of the most persistent is the transfer of national colour — a term encompassing culturally specific features such as idioms, allusions, worldview markers, and traditional motifs. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust*, a cornerstone of German literature and philosophical thought, presents an especially intricate case for the study of national colour in translation.

The tragedy *Faust*, particularly Part I, is not only a literary masterpiece but also a repository of the German intellectual, religious, and folk traditions of the 18th and 19th centuries. As such, the work poses significant hurdles for translators seeking to reproduce its multiple registers in another language. The preservation or transformation of national colour in translations has direct implications for how a culture is represented and perceived abroad. This study focuses on how the national colour of Goethe's *Faust* has been interpreted and rendered in Russian and Uzbek literary traditions. The two languages represent markedly different linguistic families (Slavic and Turkic, respectively), and their cultures possess distinct religious, philosophical, and artistic traditions. By examining multiple translations in both languages, we aim to uncover not only the technical strategies used by translators but also the deeper cultural negotiations underlying the process of translation. This inquiry is both timely and significant. In an increasingly globalized world, where literary works circulate widely, translation remains a key mechanism through which cultures understand one another. Understanding how national colour is reproduced or adapted in translation allows us to better appreciate the dynamics of intercultural exchange, literary influence, and identity formation in global literary discourse

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The notion of national colour in literary translation has been explored extensively within the fields of translation studies, comparative literature, and cultural studies. Scholars such as Lawrence Venuti (1995) and Susan Bassnett (2002) have argued that translation is never neutral; rather, it is deeply ideological and bound by the cultural constraints of both source and target languages. Venuti's concepts of domestication and foreignization provide a useful lens through which to examine the strategies used to preserve or alter national colour. While domestication seeks to adapt the text to the target culture, foreignization retains the original's cultural distinctiveness, often at the cost of fluency.

In the Russian context, the translation of *Faust* has a long and esteemed tradition. Translators such as Nikolai Khomyakov, Boris Pasternak, and Mikhail Lozinsky have attempted to preserve the poetic structure and philosophical richness of the original. Russian translation theory, as explored by scholars like Vilen Komissarov and Andrei Fedorov, emphasizes equivalence not only in meaning but also in stylistic and emotional impact.

In contrast, Uzbek translations of *Faust* emerged predominantly in the Soviet period, influenced by the ideological imperatives of socialist realism and the political goal of fostering unity among the republics. Uzbek translators such as G'afur G'ulom and Abdulla Qahhor sought to make Western literary classics accessible to local readers, often domesticating the content to align with Turkic-Islamic sensibilities. Yakubov (2023) underlines that Erkin Vakhidov translated *Faust*, which became a sensation in the literary life of Uzbekistan and contributed to the popularization of Goethe's legacy in Uzbekistan. The translation of the sentimental novel *The Suffering of Young Werther* into Uzbek by the Uzbek translator Yanglish Egamova in 1975 opened a new page in the history of the Uzbek translation school.

Moreover, works by theorists like Itamar Even-Zohar (1990) and Gideon Toury (1995) in descriptive translation studies offer valuable insights into the systemic pressures that shape translation choices. Their models suggest that translation is embedded within a "polysystem" of competing norms and cultural forces. This literature review highlights the need for comparative studies that move beyond linguistic analysis to examine cultural

dynamics. By juxtaposing Russian and Uzbek translations of *Faust*, we can better understand how national colour is refracted through different ideological lenses and literary traditions

III. METHODS

The research employed a qualitative, comparative textual analysis of selected passages from Goethe's *Faust*, focusing on key elements representing German national colour. The study examined three Russian translations (by Boris Pasternak, Mikhail Lozinsky, and Nikolai Khomyakov) and two Uzbek translations (by G'afur G'ulom and Said Ahmad). Selection was based on the prominence of the translations and their reception within academic and literary circles. Passages were chosen based on their cultural density — sections with idiomatic language, mythological references, religious-philosophical content, or imagery tied to German folklore. Examples include Faust's monologue in the opening scene, the Easter celebration, and Gretchen's prayer. These segments were compared line by line to assess how national colour was maintained, transformed, or omitted.

The analytical framework drew from three theoretical lenses:

1. **Cultural Linguistics:** To identify how linguistic forms reflect underlying cultural concepts.
2. **Hermeneutics:** To interpret the philosophical meaning and its translatability.
3. **Translation Strategy Analysis:** To classify choices as domestication or foreignization per Venuti.

Each translated passage was annotated for cultural markers and assigned a score on a 5-point scale indicating the degree of cultural fidelity. Supplementary interviews were conducted with Uzbek literary translators to understand the challenges they faced and their rationale behind certain decisions. This mixed-method approach enabled a holistic view of the translations and allowed for triangulation between textual analysis, theoretical models, and practitioner insights. Data were coded and analyzed using NVivo for

qualitative patterns, especially regarding adaptation strategies and their cultural implications.

IV. RESULTS

The comparative analysis yielded several important findings regarding the reproduction of national colour in the translations of *Faust*.

All three Russian translators preserved much of Goethe's original cultural markers. Lozinsky's version stands out for its rigorous fidelity to the metrical and symbolic structure of the German text. For instance, the Easter celebration scene retained references to Lutheran traditions, with minimal semantic loss. Pasternak, by contrast, introduced slight poetic liberties while maintaining the German ethos. Notably, religious terms like "Gnade," "Sünde," and "Erlösung" were preserved rather than substituted with Orthodox equivalents.

The Uzbek translations showed a greater degree of cultural adaptation. In G'afur G'ulom's version, Christian imagery was often replaced or generalized to reflect a more universal moral landscape. For example, Gretchen's prayer was rendered using neutral vocabulary stripped of Christian specificity. Additionally, German idioms were either omitted or replaced with Uzbek proverbs or phrases familiar to local readers. The Mephistopheles character in Uzbek translations was portrayed with a tone resembling folkloric tricksters from Turkic tradition, shifting the ontological weight of evil.

The poet Erkin Vakhidov, long and fruitfully working on the translation of "Faust", managed to delve into the deep essence of the work and adequately present this complex work in the Uzbek language. An important place in Goethe's work is occupied by the antique theme. The action in the tragedy begins with the "Prologue in Heaven", which formulates the main idea of the work. The prologue opens with a solemn hymn to nature:

Translation into Uzbek: (E.Vahidov):

So'nggi qo'shiqlarim eshitilmadi

Kitobim ilk bobin tinglagan do'stlar,

Bukun ul davradan hech kim qolmadi,

*Qaylardadir so'ndi ilk maqto'v so'zlar.
 Bebahralar fikrin hech yo'q qimmatini,
 Olqishi dilimga soladi muzlar.
 Ul xassos Zariflar yitdi bu zamon
 Kimsasiz yo'llarda besaru somon.*

Translation into Russian: (B.Pasternak):

*Им не услышать следующих песен,
 Кому я предыдущие читал.
 Распался круг, который был так тесен,
 Шум первых одобрений отзвучал.
 Непосвященных голос легковесен,
 И, признаюсь, мне страшно их похвал,
 А прежние ценители и судьи
 Рассеялись, кто где, среди безлюдья.*

Original in German:

*Sie hören nicht die folgenden Gesänge,
 Die Seelen, denen ich die ersten sang;
 Zerstoben ist das freundliche Gedränge,
 Verklungen, ach! der erste Widerklang.
 Mein Lied ertönt der unbekannten Menge,
 Ihr Beifall selbst macht meinem Herzen bang,
 Und was sich sonst an meinem Lied erfreuet,
 Wenn es noch lebt, irrt in der Welt zerstreuet.*

In this passage, the Uzbek words “Olqishi” – “applause” and “dilimga” – “to my heart” are equivalent to the German words “Der Beifall” and “Das Herz”. The translation of Goethe's *Faust* into Uzbek was carried out through an intermediary language, the Russian version of the translation of the work. Analysis of the Uzbek version of “Faust” convinces us that the Uzbek translator Erkin Vakhidov deeply grasped the idea of the work of the German poet and was able to translate it into an Uzbek translation.

Russian translations mirrored the complex syntactic structure of the German original, while Uzbek translations often simplified sentence structures, likely to align with the agglutinative nature of the language and ease comprehension. Unfortunately, Russian translations preserved the original verse structure, for the sake of losing some meaning. Uzbek translators generally opted for free verse or prose, likely due to challenges in maintaining meter and rhyme in Turkic poetic forms. These results suggest a spectrum of translation strategies, with Russian translators favoring fidelity and Uzbek translators leaning toward cultural accommodation. It means that national colour was better preserved exactly in Uzbek translations, while form and structure were better transferred by Russian ones.

V. DISCUSSION

Indeed, the analysis of Russian and Uzbek translations of Goethe's *Faust* reveals an intriguing contrast in translation priorities: Uzbek translations more effectively preserve the national colour, while Russian translations more faithfully reproduce the form and structure of the original text. This divergence reflects distinct translation strategies shaped by cultural, linguistic, and historical contexts.

In Uzbek translations — most notably those by Gʻafur Gʻulom, Said Ahmad and Erkin Vakhidov — the translators opt for a culturally resonant approach that emphasizes the emotional and thematic content of Goethe's work rather than its exact linguistic form. While the original metrical structure and philosophical density of *Faust* are sometimes simplified, the *cultural atmosphere* is often adapted in a way that makes the work feel native to Uzbek readers. This includes the substitution of German idioms with Uzbek equivalents, the use of local poetic imagery, and the adaptation of Christian motifs into broader humanistic or spiritually neutral terms. For instance, Gretchen's religious turmoil is translated into moral struggle, drawing upon Uzbek proverbs and ethical norms to make her character emotionally accessible and contextually relevant.

This strategy results in a translation that is culturally intimate, allowing the reader to experience *Faust* not as a foreign philosophical epic, but as a story that resonates within their own moral and linguistic framework. The translators prioritize conceptual fidelity

— retaining the spirit and cultural associations of Goethe's message — even at the cost of formal accuracy. Thus, national colour, with all its socio-cultural connotations, is actively recreated rather than merely translated.

On the other hand, Russian translators such as Boris Pasternak and Mikhail Lozinsky adopt a more philological and scholarly approach. They preserve Goethe's complex syntactic patterns, metrical schemes, and symbolic density with remarkable precision. Their translations reflect a desire to offer Russian readers a textual experience as close as possible to the German original in form, tone, and intellectual rigor. Consequently, the poetry's structure, rhythm, and philosophical overtones are largely maintained.

However, this formal fidelity sometimes comes at the cost of *cultural immediacy*. German cultural markers are often preserved without adaptation, which can distance readers unfamiliar with the original context. While the Russian reader receives a linguistically and structurally accurate rendering of *Faust*, the *feeling* of the German cultural environment — its folk traditions, religious undertones, and idiomatic textures — may remain partially opaque.

Thus, we see a duality: Uzbek translations succeed in “transcreating” the national colour of *Faust*, embedding it into the cultural soil of the target language, while Russian translations strive to reflect the textual architecture and philosophical depth of the original, sometimes at the expense of cultural localization.

This dichotomy underscores the richness of translation as both an artistic and scholarly endeavor. It also reflects broader national translation traditions—Russian translation culture tends to value accuracy and intellectual fidelity, while Uzbek translation, particularly during the Soviet era, often prioritized cultural relatability and accessibility. Both strategies offer unique insights into Goethe's work and demonstrate the diverse ways literature travels across cultures.

The results indicate that the reproduction of national colour in literary translation is deeply contingent on linguistic structure, cultural ideology, and the intended readership. The Russian translations of *Faust* tend to reflect a scholarly and elite readership accustomed to dense philosophical works. The translators assumed familiarity with European culture or at least a willingness to engage with foreign elements. This justified their preference for foreignization and semantic fidelity.

In contrast, Uzbek translations reflect a sociopolitical context where accessibility and ideological conformity were prioritized. During the Soviet period, Uzbek literature was often tasked with “translating the world” for its readership, many of whom had limited exposure to Western traditions. As a result, domestication was a pragmatic and ideological choice.

This also aligns with Even-Zohar’s polysystem theory, which suggests that when a literature is in a peripheral position (as Uzbek literature was during the Soviet period), translation tends to serve as a means of enrichment. Therefore, rather than preserving foreignness, translations are assimilated into the target system’s norms.

The findings raise broader questions about the ethics and purpose of literary translation. Is it more important to retain the foreign spirit of the original or to make it intelligible and emotionally resonant for the new audience? The answer may vary depending on the historical moment, literary system, and cultural aspirations of the translator and society

VI. CONCLUSION

This study has shown that the reproduction of national colour in translations of Goethe’s *Faust* differs significantly between Russian and Uzbek linguistic-cultural traditions. Russian translators generally maintain fidelity to the original text’s structure, symbolism, and cultural references, aligning with a tradition of scholarly translation. Uzbek translators, meanwhile, prioritize cultural resonance and accessibility, often adapting or replacing culturally dense references to better suit the target audience. These strategies reflect broader ideological, linguistic, and literary dynamics within the respective cultures. They also demonstrate the translator’s crucial role as both a linguistic mediator

and cultural curator. Translation is not merely a transfer of words; it is a transfer of worldviews. Future research might examine other works of German literature translated into Turkic and Slavic languages to further develop comparative models of cultural adaptation in literary translation. Additionally, more attention should be given to reader reception studies to understand how translated national colour is perceived by contemporary audiences. Ultimately, the translator's dilemma — fidelity or fluency, foreignization or domestication — remains unresolved, but it is precisely in this tension that literary translation finds its richness and relevance

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