

INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

 **30**
OKTOBER
2026



CERTIFICATE
to Each Author



Google Scholar
Indexing



Online
Publication



E-Conference



HELSINKI
FINLAND



CONFERENCE THEMES

-  Social and Economic Sciences
-  Exact and Natural Sciences
-  Humanities and Philology
-  Medicine and Pharmacy
-  Information Technologies and Engineering
-  Pedagogy and Modern Education
-  Law and Public Administration
-  Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences
-  Architecture, Construction and Urban Studies
-  Innovative Research and Interdisciplinary Studies



REGISTER NOW



intconf.online





CULTURAL-SPECIFICITY AND EQUIVALENCE IN LITERARY TRANSLATION: A COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF THEORETICAL APPROACHES

Fotima Xayrullayeva Jahongir qizi

Student, Faculty of Foreign Language and Literature (English) National University of Uzbekistan, Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Email: fotima.goal2026@gmail.com

Abstract Literary translation is not merely a linguistic transfer but a complex process of cross-cultural mediation. One of the most persistent challenges in this domain is achieving equivalence while preserving the cultural specificity of the source text. This paper presents a comprehensive comparative review of foundational theoretical approaches to cultural equivalence in literary translation. By analyzing the paradigms established by Eugene Nida (Dynamic vs. Formal Equivalence), Peter Newmark (Semantic vs. Communicative Translation), Lawrence Venuti (Domestication vs. Foreignization), Mona Baker (Pragmatic Equivalence), and Javier Franco Aixelá (Strategies for Culture-Specific Items), this study delineates how different theoretical models address the untranslatability of cultural nuances. The review synthesizes these perspectives to establish a theoretical foundation for future empirical research, specifically targeting the translation of English literary texts into the Uzbek language. Ultimately, this paper argues that no single theoretical approach can provide an absolute solution to cultural specificity; rather, translators must adopt an eclectic, context-dependent methodology that balances the preservation of source-culture authenticity with target-reader comprehension.

Keywords: Literary Translation, Cultural Specificity, Equivalence, Culture-Specific Items (CSIs), Domestication, Foreignization, Translation Studies.

Introduction

In the realm of Translation Studies, literary translation holds a unique and challenging position. Unlike technical or legal texts, where the primary objective is the precise transmission of factual information, literary texts are characterized by their aesthetic value, stylistic intricacies, and deep embeddedness in the socio-cultural matrix of the source language. The translator of literature is constantly confronted with the dilemma of "cultural specificity"—the presence of concepts, traditions, historical references, and idiomatic expressions that are unique to the source culture and often lack direct equivalents in the target culture.

The concept of "equivalence," therefore, has been the central, and arguably the most controversial, concept in translation theory since the mid-20th century. Theoretical debates have continuously shifted between source-text-oriented approaches (prioritizing the author and the original culture) and target-text-oriented approaches (prioritizing the reader and readability).

The primary objective of this review is to critically compare the most influential



theoretical frameworks addressing cultural specificity and equivalence. By examining the works of Eugene Nida, Peter Newmark, Lawrence Venuti, Mona Baker, and Javier Franco Aixelá, this paper traces the evolution of translation theory from purely linguistic equivalence to cultural and ideological mediation. Furthermore, this theoretical synthesis aims to serve as a foundational step for future empirical research focusing on the translation of English literary prose into the Uzbek language—a linguistic pair that bridges vastly different cultural and typological worlds.

Comparative Review of Theoretical Approaches

Eugene Nida: Formal and Dynamic Equivalence

The modern scientific approach to translation equivalence was heavily shaped by Eugene Nida (1964). Moving away from the rigid, literal vs. free translation debate, Nida introduced two distinct types of equivalence: *Formal Equivalence* and *Dynamic Equivalence*.

Formal equivalence focuses on the message itself, in both form and content. The translator attempts to reproduce grammatical and lexical features of the source text as closely as possible. However, when dealing with highly culturally specific items, formal equivalence can lead to texts that are incomprehensible to the target reader.

To resolve this, Nida proposed *Dynamic Equivalence* (later termed "functional equivalence"). The goal of dynamic equivalence is to produce the "closest natural equivalent" to the source-language message. Nida argued that the relationship between the target receptor and the translated message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the original message. In literary translation, dynamic equivalence is highly effective in translating cultural idioms and humor. For instance, if an English cultural metaphor lacks an exact equivalent in the target language, dynamic equivalence permits the translator to substitute it with a different target-culture metaphor that evokes the same emotional and cognitive response.

Peter Newmark: Semantic and Communicative Translation

Peter Newmark (1988) expanded upon Nida's concepts but criticized dynamic equivalence for being too accommodating to the target reader, arguing that it could diminish the author's unique voice. Newmark introduced a dichotomy between *Semantic Translation* and *Communicative Translation*.

Communicative translation, much like dynamic equivalence, attempts to produce an exact effect on its readers as was produced on the original readers. It aims for a smooth, natural-sounding target text. Semantic translation, conversely, attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original.

For literary translation, particularly when dealing with culture-specific items (CSIs), Newmark favored semantic translation. He argued that the aesthetic and cultural elements of a literary work (such as local dialects, specific cultural objects, or historical allusions) belong to the author and the source culture. Semantic translation respects the "foreignness" of the text, requiring the reader to make an effort to understand the source culture, rather than erasing cultural specificity for the sake of



easy reading.

Lawrence Venuti: Domestication and Foreignization

While Nida and Newmark approached equivalence from linguistic and pragmatic standpoints, Lawrence Venuti (1995) analyzed translation through a cultural, ethical, and ideological lens. Venuti famously critiqued the Anglo-American publishing industry's preference for fluent, "invisible" translations that aggressively assimilate foreign texts to target-culture values—a process he termed *Domestication*.

Domestication involves an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bringing the author back home to the reader. Venuti argued that this approach violently erases the cultural specificity of the source text.

As an ethical alternative, Venuti advocated for *Foreignization*. This strategy involves retaining the foreignness of the original text, deliberately breaking target conventions, and registering the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text. In a foreignizing translation, the translator is highly visible, and the reader is forced to "go abroad." In literary translation, foreignization preserves culture-specific items, untranslated local terms, and unique syntactic structures, reminding the reader that they are engaging with a culturally distinct world.

Mona Baker: A Bottom-Up Approach to Equivalence

Mona Baker (1992) approached the problem of cultural specificity through the lens of applied linguistics and pragmatics. In her seminal work *In Other Words*, Baker structured equivalence across different levels: at the word level, above the word level (collocations and idioms), grammatical level, textual level, and pragmatic level.

Baker's most significant contribution to the study of cultural specificity lies in her exploration of *Pragmatic Equivalence*. She emphasizes the role of "implicature"—what the speaker means or implies rather than what is literally said. Cultural specificity often resides in implicatures, as authors rely on shared cultural knowledge that target readers do not possess. Baker outlines various strategies for translating culture-specific concepts, such as translation by a more general word (superordinate), translation by cultural substitution, translation using a loan word with an explanation, and translation by omission. By breaking down translation into structural and pragmatic levels, Baker provides a highly practical toolkit for translators to manage cultural non-equivalence systematically.

Javier Franco Aixelá: Strategies for Culture-Specific Items (CSIs)

Javier Franco Aixelá (1996) offered one of the most precise and widely utilized models for dealing specifically with cultural nuances. He defined Culture-Specific Items (CSIs) as elements in the text whose function and intertextual status do not exist in the target culture, or possess a different value there.

Aixelá established a concrete continuum of translation strategies for CSIs, ranging from *Conservation* (preserving the foreign element) to *Substitution* (replacing it with a target-culture element). The **Conservation** strategies include:

1. *Repetition*: Keeping the foreign word (e.g., retaining "muffin" or "pub").



2. *Orthographic Adaptation*: Adapting the word to the target language's phonetic and writing system.
3. *Linguistic (Non-cultural) Translation*: Generating a literal translation of the item.
4. *Extratextual Gloss*: Providing footnotes, endnotes, or a glossary to explain the cultural concept.
5. *Intratextual Gloss*: Incorporating a brief explanation directly into the text.

The **Substitution** strategies include:

1. *Synonymy*: Finding a parallel item in the target language.
2. *Limited Universalization*: Replacing the CSI with a more recognizable but still foreign concept.
3. *Absolute Universalization*: Replacing the CSI with a completely neutral, culture-free term.
4. *Naturalization*: Replacing the source CSI with a target-culture CSI.
5. *Deletion*: Completely omitting the cultural reference if it is deemed unessential.

Aixelá's taxonomy demonstrates that equivalence is not a binary choice but a spectrum, heavily dependent on text type, the translator's ideological stance, and editorial constraints.

Discussion: Bridging Theory and the English-Uzbek Literary Context

The theoretical frameworks reviewed above provide a crucial foundation for exploring specific language pairs. The future potential of this theoretical review lies in its application to the translation of English literary prose into the Uzbek language.

Translating between English and Uzbek presents profound challenges regarding cultural specificity. The two languages belong to entirely different families (Indo-European vs. Altaic/Turkic) and operate within vastly different socio-cultural and religious matrices (Western/Judeo-Christian vs. Central Asian/Islamic-Turkic).

Applying **Nida's Dynamic Equivalence** to English-Uzbek translation is often necessary for idiomatic expressions. However, aggressive dynamic translation or **Venuti's Domestication** risks culturally assimilating the English text into an Uzbek environment, making English characters sound inappropriately Central Asian. Conversely, extreme **Foreignization (Venuti)** might alienate the Uzbek reader, given the wide cultural gap between the two worlds.

Therefore, an eclectic approach, heavily reliant on **Aixelá's strategies** and **Baker's pragmatic levels**, appears most viable for English-Uzbek literary translation. For instance, translating specific English cultural items (like Thanksgiving, Victorian architecture, or specific British culinary terms) into Uzbek requires a careful balance of *Repetition* coupled with *Intratextual Glossing*. This preserves the English cultural identity of the text while providing the Uzbek reader with the necessary pragmatic



context to achieve semantic equivalence, as advocated by Newmark. Future empirical studies should involve corpus-based analyses of existing English-Uzbek literary translations to determine which of Aixelá's strategies are most frequently and successfully employed by Uzbek translators.

Conclusion

The quest for equivalence in literary translation is inherently complicated by the deep cultural specificity of literary texts. As this comparative review has shown, the theoretical paradigms governing this process have evolved significantly. Eugene Nida prioritized the reader's response through dynamic equivalence; Peter Newmark championed the author's semantic integrity; Lawrence Venuti highlighted the political ethics of foreignization against domestication; Mona Baker provided a pragmatic, multi-level toolkit; and Javier Franco Aixelá delivered a concrete taxonomy for handling specific cultural items.

It is evident that absolute equivalence in literary translation is an illusion, particularly when transferring texts between culturally distant languages. No single theory can act as a universal panacea. Translators must act as active cultural mediators, navigating the spectrum between conservation and substitution. By understanding and critically combining these theoretical approaches, future researchers and translators can develop more nuanced, ethically sound, and pragmatically effective strategies for cross-cultural literary transmission, particularly in emerging and complex translation pairs such as English and Uzbek.

References

1. Aixelá, J. F. (1996). Culture-specific items in translation. In R. Alvarez & M. C.-A. Vidal (Eds.), *Translation, Power, Subversion* (pp. 52-78). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
2. Baker, M. (1992). *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*. London: Routledge.
3. Newmark, P. (1988). *A Textbook of Translation*. New York: Prentice Hall.
4. Nida, E. A. (1964). *Toward a Science of Translating: With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
5. Venuti, L. (1995). *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. London and New York: Routledge.