

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE DEPICTION OF
NATURAL LANDSCAPES IN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

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Abstract: *This expanded research examines how natural landscapes are portrayed in English translations of literary works from different linguistic and cultural traditions. The article presents comparative examples from Russian, Japanese, Uzbek, Arabic, and French literature to demonstrate how linguistic choices, cultural symbolism, and stylistic devices undergo transformation during translation.*

Introduction

Natural landscapes have historically functioned as powerful expressive tools in world literature. They serve not only as geographical backgrounds but also as symbolic and emotional frameworks that shape the reader's understanding. In translation, however, the imagery of landscapes may be transformed due to differences in language structures, cultural perceptions, and translator interpretations. The main aim of this study is to explore how such transformations occur and how they influence the final perception of the text by English-speaking audiences.

Background of the Study

Each literary tradition maintains its own stylistic norms and symbolic interpretations of nature. For instance, Russian literature often uses forests and

snow to evoke themes of endurance and national spirit, while Japanese literature emphasizes subtle, transient natural imagery influenced by Shinto and Buddhist aesthetics. Uzbek literature frequently describes deserts, steppes, and mountains tied to nomadic culture, spirituality, and history. When these culturally rich elements are translated into English, they often lose some of their symbolic depth.

Methodology

This study compares selected descriptive passages from original literary texts and their English translations. The analysis focuses on four key aspects:

1. Lexical transformation.
2. Stylistic change.
3. Cultural symbolism.
4. Translator's interpretive role.

A comparative method with close reading was used to identify alterations and shifts.

Comparative Analysis with Examples

1. Lexical Transformations

Example 1: Russian Literature

Original (Tolstoy):

“Берёзовая роща тихо белела вдали.”

Literal meaning: “A birch grove quietly whitened in the distance.”

English translation:

“The birch trees shimmered faintly in the distance.”

Analysis:

- “white shimmer” (белела) carries the visual effect of pale, snow-like birch trunks.



- The English “shimmered” evokes movement rather than color.
- Cultural nuance of birch trees as a Russian national symbol is not explicitly conveyed.

Example 2: Japanese Literature

Original (Bashō):

“古池や蛙飛び込む水の音”

Literal: “Old pond — a frog jumps in — sound of water.”

Common English translation:

“An old silent pond... A frog jumps into the pond, splash!”

Analysis:

- The minimalist Japanese style emphasizes stillness and sudden disruption.
- The English “splash” adds an auditory vividness not present in the original.
- The philosophical nuance of impermanence (*wabi-sabi*) is reduced.

Example 3: Uzbek Literature

Original (A. Qodiriy):

“Qir-adirlar uzra sokin shamol ohista esardi.”

Literal: “A calm wind gently blew over the hills and ridges.”

English translation:

“A gentle wind blew across the hills.”

Analysis:

- “qir-adirlar” are unique geographical formations in Central Asia.
- English simplifies them to “hills,” removing geographic specificity.

2. Stylistic Variations

Example: Japanese vs. English stylistics

Original (Kawabata):

“Qor tushishi shunchalik mayin ediki, go‘yo osmonda hech narsa o‘zgarmayotgandek.”

Translation:

“The snow fell so softly it seemed as though nothing in the sky was changing.”

Analysis:

- Japanese prose uses lyrical softness.
- English translation is accurate but loses rhythmic elegance due to syntactic differences.

3. Transformations of Cultural Symbolism

Example: Arabic Literature

Original:

“عادلة لكنها قاسية أم الصحراء.”

Literal: “The desert is a harsh mother, but a just one.”

English translation:

“The desert is harsh, but fair.”

Analysis:

- The metaphor “mother” is removed, weakening cultural symbolism tied to life, protection, and struggle.

Example: French Literature (Victor Hugo)

Original:

“La mer est un miroir de l’âme humaine.”

Literal: “The sea is a mirror of the human soul.”

English translation:

“The sea reflects human emotion.”

Analysis:

- Symbolic depth (“mirror of the soul”) becomes simplified (“emotion”).

4. Translator's Interpretive Role

Example: English addition for clarity

Original Uzbek:

“Sahro uzra charaqlagan quyosh yurakni ezardi.”

Literal: “The sun glittering over the desert weighed on the heart.”

Translation:

“The scorching desert sun felt overwhelming.”

Analysis:

- “scorching” is an interpretive addition.
- Emotional nuance is preserved but rephrased.

Discussion

The examples show that translation often reshapes landscape imagery by:

1. Generalizing culturally unique natural elements.
2. Modifying metaphors and symbolic expressions.
3. Adjusting stylistic and rhythmic patterns.
4. Interpreting or simplifying culturally embedded meanings.

These shifts can benefit readability but also diminish cultural richness.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that natural landscape depictions undergo notable transformation when translated into English. While some changes improve clarity, others reduce symbolic complexity and cultural authenticity. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for translators, scholars, and readers who aim to preserve the artistic integrity of world literature.

Recommendations

1. Provide footnotes to preserve cultural context.
2. Maintain original metaphors where possible.
3. Use parallel corpora in training translators.
4. Conduct further research focusing on reader reception.

