

## **The Translator's Linguistic Identity in Cross-Cultural Literary Transfer: Author–Image–Translator Triad in Uzbek–Russian and Uzbek–English Translations**

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**Abstract:** *Literary translation requires negotiation not only between languages but between three distinct linguistic identities: the source author, the fictional characters or images constructed within the text, and the translator. This article proposes the Author–Image–Translator (AIT) triad as an analytical framework for studying how translators reproduce, transform, or suppress the linguistic identities encoded in source literary texts. Applying the framework to Uzbek–Russian and Uzbek–English literary translation, we demonstrate that translators' socio-cultural embeddedness, idiolectal preferences, and cognitive access to source-culture schemas are decisive factors in the preservation of the national character image across translation boundaries. We further argue that gender, ideological context, and creative competence are underexplored dimensions of translator linguistic identity that systematically shape translation output. The AIT framework offers a productive theoretical synthesis of cognitive translation studies, pragmatics, and cultural linguistics for the analysis of cross-cultural literary transfer.*

**Key words:** *translator linguistic identity; author–image–translator triad; Uzbek literary translation; idiolect in translation; cognitive pragmatics; national character; cross-cultural transfer.*

### **Introduction**

The figure of the translator has long occupied an ambiguous position in literary culture: simultaneously author and servant, creator and conduit, visible presence and invisible hand [1]. Recent decades have seen a significant rethinking of this position, driven by the intersection of translator studies, linguistic identity theory, and cognitive approaches to language and translation. Scholars now widely recognise that translators are not neutral channels for the transmission of meaning but active cognitive agents whose knowledge, values, and individual language use shape the texts they produce [2].

The translation of literary texts presents particular challenges in this respect because literary texts are not merely communicative but constitutive: they construct worlds, characters, and voices that carry the imprint of a specific cultural and individual sensibility. When a translator renders a literary text into another language, they must simultaneously reproduce the author's voice, the voices of fictional characters, and the cultural schemas within which those voices are meaningful [3]. The question of how translators manage this three-way negotiation—between their own linguistic identity and the identities embedded in the source text—has received insufficient theoretical attention [4].

This article addresses this gap by proposing the Author–Image–Translator (AIT) triad as a framework for analysing the role of translator linguistic identity in cross-cultural literary transfer. The framework is grounded in the Uzbek translation context but is intended to have broader applicability to other underrepresented literary traditions. We apply the AIT framework to comparative analysis of

Uzbek–Russian and Uzbek–English translations, with particular attention to the representation of national character—the complex of culturally shared values, behavioural norms, and cognitive schemas that define Uzbek identity in literary discourse [5, 6].

## **Methodology**

### Linguistic Identity: From Individual to Secondary

The concept of linguistic identity (*yazykovaya lichnost'*) was introduced into Russian linguistics by Vinogradov () and systematically developed by Karaulov (), who proposed a three-level model comprising the verbal-semantic level (knowledge of language norms and patterns), the linguo-cognitive level (the individual's conceptual worldview), and the pragmatic level (communicative goals, motivations, and intentions). This model has been extended and refined by subsequent scholars. Normurodova) and Ashurova () add a linguo-cultural level—encoding the individual's relationship to their cultural heritage—and a psychological level—encoding affective and temperamental dispositions toward language use.

For translators, an additional theoretical distinction is required. Plexov (see Normurodova,) characterises the translator's linguistic identity as 'secondary': derived from, and dependent on, the primary linguistic identity of the source author. The secondary character of translator identity does not, however, mean that it is simply subordinate or derivative. On the contrary, the translator's cognitive and cultural resources determine the range of choices available for the realisation of the source author's primary identity. A translator whose secondary identity lacks the cultural schemas needed to represent the source author's worldview cannot achieve conceptual equivalence regardless of their formal linguistic competence.

This study applies the AIT framework through close comparative reading of selected texts from the Uzbek literary corpus in Russian and English translation, supplemented by analysis of translation choices in relation to the translators' linguistic identity profiles. Translator profiles are constructed from paratextual materials—prefaces, interviews, commentary—and from systematic analysis of idiolectal patterns across multiple translations by the same translator.

The primary analytical categories are: (1) author voice markers—lexical and syntactic features that encode the author's individual conceptual style; (2) image voice markers—features that distinguish character voices from the authorial voice and from one another; and (3) translator interference—cases where the translator's own idiolectal preferences or ideological orientations supersede fidelity to either the author's voice or the characters' voices.

We examine two translators in comparative detail: a Soviet-era Russian translator and a contemporary English translator, both working from the same Uzbek source texts. This comparison allows us to assess the effect of ideological context and temporal distance on the realisation of translator linguistic identity and its consequences for national character representation.

## **Results and Discussion**

### The Author–Image–Translator Triad

We propose that literary translation involves three analytically distinct linguistic identities arranged in a hierarchical but dynamic relationship. The source author (A) encodes their individual conceptual worldview in the text through lexical choices, narrative strategies, and the construction of character voices. Within the text, fictional images (I)—characters, narrators, implied speakers—are constituted by specific patterns of language use that distinguish them from one another and from the authorial voice. The translator (T) must reproduce the linguistic identity of the author and the identities of the images within a different linguistic and cultural system [6].

The AIT triad draws attention to a complication that is often overlooked in translation theory: the translator is not simply transferring the author's voice but must also maintain the distinctions between the author's voice and the voices of fictional images. In literary texts where character differentiation is achieved through dialect, register, idiolect, or sociolect—all of which are culturally specific—the translator faces a double challenge: they must both represent the cultural specificity of each voice and

maintain the relative differentiation between voices in the target text [7].

### Pragmatics and Cultural Schemas in the AIT Framework

The AIT framework integrates a pragmatic dimension through its attention to the reader's active participation in meaning construction. Following Sperber and Wilson's) relevance theory and Verschueren's () concept of linguistic adaptability, we argue that translators must attend not only to the conceptual content of source texts but to their illocutionary force—the communicative acts they perform for readers with specific cultural competences. A reader of an Uzbek text activates cultural schemas that encode expectations about hospitality, social hierarchy, and emotional expression; a reader of its English translation brings different schemas to the text, and the translator must negotiate this discrepancy [8].

This negotiation is not simply a problem of information transfer but of pragmatic adaptation: the translator must assess what background knowledge the target reader can supply, what gaps must be explicitly bridged, and what cultural information can be conveyed implicitly through contextual cueing. The AIT framework provides a principled basis for this assessment by treating each of the three identities in the triad as a distinct site of pragmatic obligation [9].

Analysis of the Soviet-era Russian translations reveals a systematic pattern of domestication at the level of author voice: culturally specific Uzbek idioms and conceptual metaphors are replaced by contextually equivalent Russian expressions that neutralise the foreignness of the source author's conceptual style. This pattern is consistent with the ideological imperatives of Soviet-era translation policy, which prioritised the accessibility of Central Asian literature to Russian readers over the preservation of its cultural distinctiveness [10].

The contemporary English translations exhibit a contrasting pattern: the translators tend to retain Uzbek source terms through transliteration or near-transliteration, accompanied by contextual glossing, in a strategy broadly consistent with Venuti's foreignisation. However, analysis of the cognitive effect of this strategy reveals a limitation: while the surface features of Uzbek cultural identity are preserved, the conceptual architecture of the author's voice—the specific network of evaluative schemas through which the author perceives and represents the world—is often not fully transmitted. Foreignisation preserves markers but does not guarantee that those markers will activate the correct schemas in the target reader's mind [11].

### Image Voice Differentiation

The differentiation of character voices presents particular challenges in the Uzbek–English translation pair because Uzbek literary texts frequently employ fine-grained variation in register, the use of honorifics, and switches between formal and colloquial speech styles to characterise social relationships and personality types. English, with its relatively impoverished honorific system, cannot reproduce these distinctions directly; translators must find functional substitutes that convey the pragmatic effect of social deference or informality without the specific cultural content of the Uzbek forms [12].

Comparative analysis reveals that translators with greater socio-cultural knowledge of Uzbek life are more successful at devising functional substitutes that preserve the relative differentiation between character voices, even when the specific linguistic means differ from those of the source text. Translators working primarily from structural equivalence—matching grammatical categories without cultural contextualisation—tend to flatten character voice differentiation, producing translations in which all characters speak in a relatively uniform register that obscures the social and psychological distinctions encoded in the source text [13].

### Translator Interference: Idiolect, Gender, and Ideology

Analysis of idiolectal patterns across the two translators' outputs confirms the hypothesis that translator linguistic identity exerts a systematic effect on translation choices. The Soviet-era translator displays consistent preferences for certain lexical fields, syntactic constructions, and pragmatic strategies that recur across translated texts by different Uzbek authors—evidence of a robust idiolect

that functions as a filter through which source texts are processed. Among the most notable patterns are: a preference for attenuation of emotional intensity; a tendency to replace Uzbek communal value expressions with individualised Russian equivalents; and selective omission of passages containing ideological content critical of Soviet norms [14].

The gender dimension of translator linguistic identity, while theoretically contested, emerges empirically in subtle but consistent patterns in our data. Female translators in the corpus tend toward more elaborate pragmatic explication—expanding on emotionally charged passages, adding contextual information about social relationships—while male translators tend toward more economical rendering that preserves formal structure at the possible expense of affective nuance. These patterns are consistent with findings from gendered translation research but should be interpreted with caution, as individual variation within gender categories is substantial [15].

### Implications for Translation Theory and Practice

The AIT framework has several implications for translation theory. First, it foregrounds the multiplicity of identity negotiations involved in literary translation: the translator is not simply mediating between two languages but between (at minimum) three distinct linguistic identities, each with its own cognitive, cultural, and pragmatic demands. Existing frameworks that focus primarily on author–translator or source–target dyads underestimate this complexity.

Second, the framework draws attention to the cumulative effect of translator idiolect across a body of translated work. When a single translator's idiolectal preferences are applied to multiple source authors, the result may be a homogenisation of literary voice that obscures the individual distinctiveness of the translated authors. This is a particular concern in small translation markets—such as the Uzbek–English pair—where a small number of translators effectively mediate an entire literary tradition for the target audience.

Third, the framework has practical implications for the training of literary translators. Translator education should develop not only bilingual linguistic competence but what we have called conceptual bilingualism—the capacity to inhabit two culturally situated worldviews simultaneously and to assess, at any given translation decision, how a choice will affect the representation of the source author's voice, the characters' voices, and the broader cultural identity encoded in the text.

### Conclusion

This article has proposed the Author–Image–Translator triad as a theoretical framework for analysing the role of translator linguistic identity in cross-cultural literary transfer, with application to Uzbek–Russian and Uzbek–English translation. The framework illuminates aspects of translation practice that are obscured by dyadic source–target models: the internal differentiation of identities within the source text, the translator's idiolectal and ideological influence on translation output, and the cumulative cognitive effect of translation choices on the representation of national character.

Comparative analysis of Soviet-era and contemporary translations confirms that translator linguistic identity—shaped by socio-cultural embeddedness, cognitive access to source-culture schemas, idiolectal preferences, and gender—is a primary determinant of translation adequacy at the level of cultural representation. The AIT framework provides a principled basis for evaluating these factors and for developing pedagogical approaches that foreground cognitive and cultural competence alongside linguistic skills.

The Uzbek literary tradition deserves wider recognition in global literary culture, and achieving that recognition requires translations that not only convey the surface features of Uzbek language but transmit the conceptual architecture of Uzbek identity with fidelity and creativity. The AIT framework is offered as one contribution toward the theoretical foundations necessary for such translations.

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