



THE TRANSLATION OF THE CONCEPTS “HOSPITALITY” AND “MEHMONDO‘STLIK”

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Abstract. This paper explores the translation of the English concept “*hospitality*” and the Uzbek term “*mehmondo‘stlik*,” focusing on their semantic, cultural, and pragmatic differences. While these terms are often treated as direct equivalents, they reflect distinct cultural frameworks and social expectations. Using a qualitative comparative methodology, this study analyzes dictionary definitions, contextual usage, and cultural practices associated with both concepts. The findings demonstrate that “*hospitality*” in English primarily emphasizes politeness, service, and professionalism, whereas “*mehmondo‘stlik*” embodies a deeper cultural value rooted in generosity, honor, and moral obligation. The paper argues that direct translation leads to partial equivalence and potential loss of meaning. It highlights the importance of cultural awareness and appropriate translation strategies, such as descriptive and adaptive translation, in conveying culturally bound concepts. The study contributes to translation studies by illustrating the complexity of achieving equivalence across languages and cultures.

Keywords: hospitality, mehmondo‘stlik, translation studies, cultural equivalence, intercultural communication, semantics, pragmatics, Uzbek culture.

Introduction

Translation is not merely the process of transferring words from one language to another; it is also the transfer of meaning, culture, and worldview. One of the most challenging aspects of translation involves culturally bound concepts—terms that carry deep cultural significance and cannot be easily rendered into another language without some degree of meaning loss. The concepts of “*hospitality*” in English and “*mehmondo‘stlik*” in Uzbek provide a clear example of this issue.

Hospitality is widely regarded as a universal human value, present in nearly all societies. However, its interpretation varies significantly depending on cultural norms and traditions. In English-speaking cultures, hospitality is often associated with politeness, friendliness, and service, particularly within professional contexts such as hotels and restaurants. In contrast, Uzbek culture places a much stronger emphasis on the moral and social obligations of hosting guests, where “*mehmondo‘stlik*” is seen as a defining cultural trait.



Previous research in translation studies has highlighted the difficulty of achieving equivalence when translating culturally specific terms (Nida, 1964; Newmark, 1988). Concepts such as “*mehmondo‘stlik*” cannot be fully understood without considering their cultural context. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the semantic and cultural differences between “*hospitality*” and “*mehmondo‘stlik*,” and to evaluate how these differences affect translation.

The objectives of this paper are threefold:

- I. To examine the meanings and usage of both concepts;
- II. To identify key cultural differences;
- III. To evaluate translation strategies that can effectively convey these meanings.

Methods

This study adopts a qualitative comparative research design. The analysis is based on three main approaches: semantic analysis, cultural analysis, and translation strategy evaluation.

First, dictionary definitions from authoritative English and Uzbek sources were examined to identify the core meanings of “*hospitality*” and “*mehmondo‘stlik*.” This step provided a foundation for understanding their denotative meanings.

Second, a semantic and pragmatic analysis was conducted. This involved examining how the terms are used in different contexts, including everyday communication, literary texts, and professional settings. Attention was given to connotations, emotional tone, and implied meanings.

Third, a cultural analysis was carried out to explore how each concept functions within its respective society. Uzbek cultural practices, such as traditional guest-host relationships, were compared with norms in English-speaking cultures.

Finally, various translation strategies were evaluated, including:

- A. **Literal translation**, which focuses on direct word-for-word equivalence;
- B. **Functional equivalence**, which aims to preserve meaning rather than form (Nida, 1964);
- C. **Descriptive translation**, which explains the concept in more detail;
- D. **Cultural adaptation**, which adjusts the meaning to fit the target culture (Venuti, 1995).

Results

The findings of this study reveal both similarities and significant differences between the concepts of “*hospitality*” and “*mehmondo‘stlik*.”

Semantic Differences

The term “*hospitality*” in English generally refers to the friendly and generous reception of guests. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2020), it emphasizes politeness,



friendliness, and the provision of services. It is often used in both personal and institutional contexts.

In contrast, “*mehmondo‘stlik*” encompasses a broader range of meanings. It includes not only welcoming guests but also demonstrating generosity, respect, and self-sacrifice. The concept is deeply embedded in Uzbek culture and is often associated with moral values and social expectations.

Cultural Differences

One of the most significant differences lies in cultural perception. In English-speaking societies, hospitality can be both personal and professional. For example, in the hospitality industry, interactions are often guided by formal standards and customer service principles.

However, in Uzbek culture, “*mehmondo‘stlik*” is primarily a personal and moral responsibility. Guests are treated with exceptional respect, and hosting them is considered an honor. It is common for hosts to offer their best food and resources, even if it requires significant effort or expense.

Pragmatic Differences

From a pragmatic perspective, “*hospitality*” can sometimes be neutral or formal, especially in business contexts. In contrast, “*mehmondo‘stlik*” carries strong emotional and cultural connotations, emphasizing sincerity and warmth.

Translation Challenges

The analysis shows that translating “*mehmondo‘stlik*” as “*hospitality*” results in partial equivalence. While the general idea is preserved, important cultural nuances are lost. This confirms the argument that culturally bound terms require more than direct translation.

Discussion

The results of this study highlight the complexity of translating culturally rich concepts. The differences between “*hospitality*” and “*mehmondo‘stlik*” demonstrate that language is deeply intertwined with culture and social values.

According to Nida (1964), achieving functional equivalence requires focusing on the effect of the message rather than its form. In this case, simply translating “*mehmondo‘stlik*” as “*hospitality*” does not produce the same cultural effect for the target audience. Therefore, alternative strategies are necessary.

Descriptive translation can be particularly effective in this context. For example, “*mehmondo‘stlik*” may be translated as “traditional Uzbek hospitality characterized by generosity and deep respect for guests.” Although longer, this approach preserves the cultural meaning.

Additionally, cultural adaptation may be used in certain contexts, especially in literary translation. However, this approach carries the risk of losing the original cultural identity of the concept (Venuti, 1995).

This study also emphasizes the importance of intercultural competence. Translators must understand not only the language but also the cultural background of both source and target



audiences. Without this understanding, translation may lead to misinterpretation or oversimplification.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the concepts of “hospitality” and “mehmondo‘stlik” share a common foundation but differ significantly in cultural depth, emotional intensity, and social function. While “hospitality” emphasizes politeness and service, “mehmondo‘stlik” reflects a deeply rooted cultural value centered on generosity and moral responsibility.

This study demonstrates that direct translation is often insufficient for conveying culturally bound concepts. Effective translation requires cultural awareness, contextual understanding, and the use of appropriate strategies such as descriptive and functional translation.

Future research may explore similar concepts in other languages and investigate how globalization influences the interpretation and translation of cultural values.

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