

Strategic Approaches to Rendering Intertextual Units in Translation

Nodira Rakhimova¹

¹ Navoi State University, Uzbekistan

E-mail: nodirarahimova2018@gmail.com

Abstract:

The role of intertextuality in literature has long been recognized as a key factor in shaping meaning and cultural depth, demanding equal attention in translation studies. Translating intertextual units—such as quotations, idioms, and culturally embedded allusions—poses a challenge due to their connotative richness and cultural specificity. Although numerous scholars have proposed strategies for translating intertextual elements, there remains a need for a cohesive framework that considers cultural competence and creative interpretation as central tools in this process. This study aims to analyze the typology of intertextual units and evaluate strategic approaches to their translation in literary texts, focusing on how translators navigate cultural and semantic constraints. The research identifies three main stylistic approaches—imitative, adaptational, and translator-author intertextuality—and outlines four key strategies: literal translation, adaptation, annotated translation, and elimination. These methods are examined through theoretical analysis and practical examples, illustrating their application and implications. The study contributes to literary translation theory by framing intertextual translation as a creative and interpretive act, where the translator assumes the role of cultural mediator and co-author rather than a passive conduit. The findings underscore that effective translation of intertextual units relies on the translator's interpretive insight, cultural awareness, and the ability to tailor strategies to the audience's cognitive and cultural framework, thereby enhancing the academic understanding of intertextual transfer in translation studies.

Keywords: Intertextual Unit, Intertext, Translation Strategy, Literary Translation, Adaptation, Commentary, Elimination, Cultural Difference, Connotation, Semiosphere

Introduction

Contemporary approaches to literary translation practice allow for a re-evaluation of its role in the literary process, particularly in recognizing translations as original creative products [1]. Consequently, the translator is no longer perceived merely as a linguistic mediator, but rather as a creative individual, a participant in intercultural dialogue, and a representative of cross-cultural thinking. In translating intertextual units, which are inherently multilayered and rich in cultural detail, the translator faces complex tasks that demand an imaginative and interpretive approach [2].

In the evolving field of translation studies, the role of the translator has expanded beyond linguistic fidelity to include cultural interpretation and creative authorship. This shift is particularly evident in the translation of intertextual units—textual fragments that reference other cultural or literary works—whose successful rendering requires not only semantic accuracy but also cultural insight and artistic sensitivity. The challenges posed by these units lie in their layered meanings, which often draw upon shared cultural memory [3]. Addressing these challenges, this article explores strategic approaches to translating intertextuality, focusing on techniques such as literal translation, adaptation, commentary, and elimination [4].

Literature Review

The question of how to translate intertextual references - those echoes of other texts we often find tucked inside literature - has become an increasingly important topic in translation studies. These references can include direct quotes, subtle allusions, or cultural nods that only make sense if the reader knows the original source [5]. The roots of this idea go back to J. Kristeva, who built on M. Bakhtin's theory of dialogism to show that no text is truly isolated - it's always in conversation with others. In translation, this layered dialogue becomes even more complicated [6].

One of the most influential frameworks for thinking about intertextuality comes from G. Genette, who offered a classification system to help us understand the various ways texts interact. This has helped translators and researchers better grasp how references, structures, and styles from one text bleed into another. But when it comes to translating these intertextual elements, it's not as simple as swapping words [7]. As A. Guseva found in her study of *Ulysses*, these references often lose their impact or vanish entirely in translation unless handled with great care.

Several scholars have looked at strategies for dealing with this challenge. Kuzin for example, outlines five practical approaches translators use: keeping the original wording, finding a culturally similar reference, explaining it in a footnote or comment, adapting it creatively, or, in some cases, leaving it out entirely [8]. Sokolova takes it a step further by stressing the importance of first recognizing these references - many of which are implicit and easy to miss - before choosing how to render them in another language.

There's also the question of intent. A. Dukate talks about how translators, rather than simply transferring meaning, are often active participants in shaping a new version of the story that fits their audience. In this sense, "manipulating" the source text isn't necessarily a bad thing - it's a thoughtful response to cultural differences [9]. H. Vermeer's Skopos Theory also supports this view, suggesting that the translation method should depend on what the translation is meant to achieve in the target culture.

Meanwhile, L. Venuti frames the translator's role as a balancing act between two approaches: domestication (making the text feel natural to the new audience) and foreignization (keeping the original feel, even if it's unfamiliar to readers) [10]. His work reminds us that every translation decision carries cultural weight - it either makes the source culture more visible or adapts it to fit the expectations of the new one.

Adding to this, M. Baker emphasizes that intertextuality isn't just about recognizing references; it's about how those references help construct meaning and shape the narrative [11]. The way we handle

these units in translation can alter how readers understand the story and the characters.

Leppihalme provides practical guidance on what translators actually do when they come across allusions and culturally-loaded phrases. Her research shows that they often explain the reference, substitute something more familiar, or insert a note - each choice depending on how likely the audience is to recognize the original [12].

In short, translating intertextual references is a complex process that goes far beyond words. Translators must weigh meaning, audience, culture, and even ideology. The approaches - whether sticking close to the original, adapting creatively, or inserting helpful commentary - all come down to context. And as these scholars show, thoughtful translation of intertextuality requires both an analytical eye and a deep respect for the interconnectedness of texts [13].

Methods

Intertextual elements embedded in literary texts often carry specific connotative meaning and are linked to socio-cultural contexts beyond the scope of language. Therefore, the translator must ensure both semantic precision and cultural coherence. Translation - especially when intertextuality is involved - shifts from a linguistic conversion into a cognitive and interpretive endeavor [14].

In this regard, manipulative translation theory serves as a relevant practical foundation. According to Latvian scholar A. Dukate, manipulation in translation is the socio-psychological and cultural adjustment that occurs when the source text is adapted for the target language audience. The translator's individual experience, cultural competence, and creative decisions form an integral part of this manipulative approach. In such cases, the translator may insert intertextual units into a new, culturally appropriate context by taking into account cultural differences. This process leads to the creative re-interpretation of intertextual references.

Effectively conveying intertextual units in translation involves several stages. Initially, the translator must identify the intertextual elements in the source text, determine their functional role, and then choose the most appropriate translation strategy. At this stage, the translator must also consider the intertextual awareness of the target audience, i.e., their cultural literacy, associative thinking, and ability to interpret connotative meanings - this directly impacts the formation of a viable translation option [15].

Results and Discussion

Types of intertextual translation approaches

Three main stylistic approaches to intertextual translation may be distinguished:

Imitative intertextuality – This approach strives to replicate the intertextual structure of the source text as faithfully as possible. Quotations, proverbs, or other cultural references in the original are rendered through equivalent pretexts in the target language. If an equivalent cultural reference exists in the target language and can be directly expressed, imitative intertextuality can be fully realized. For instance, the English phrase All that glitters is not gold can be rendered in Uzbek as *Hamma yaltiragan narsa ham oltin emas*.

Adaptational intertextuality – Intertextual units are adapted to ensure clarity and cultural relevance for the target audience. The translator attempts to preserve the primary semantic load of the original reference while transferring it into a new semiosphere (a semiotic-cultural space). For example, the English phrase Achilles' heel may be translated into Uzbek as *nozik joyi* or *ojiz nuqtasi* (vulnerable spot). This strategy is especially useful for cultural, religious, or historical references.

Translator-author intertextuality – In this approach, the translator becomes not merely a linguistic intermediary but a creative co-author, recreating the intertextual elements in a new context. This strategy is typically employed when no suitable pretext exists in the target language or when the cultural connotations do not match. In such cases, the translator may use annotated translation

(commentary), find an equivalent, opt for elimination, or develop new semantic structures to convey the intertextual meaning in an alternative form.

Translation strategies

According to scholars such as A.A. Guseva, several fundamental translation strategies can be employed to render intertextuality effectively:

Formal equivalence (literal translation) – The intertextual unit is translated with maximum preservation of its lexical-semantic structure and connotation. This approach is generally used for universally recognized texts e.g., proverbs, idioms, religious expressions, or folklore.

Adaptation – This is a transformative strategy aimed at conveying the intertextual element in a culturally appropriate and comprehensible form. It is suitable for culturally unfamiliar or obscure references.

Annotated (commentary) translation – When direct translation of the intertextual unit is not possible, the translator adds explanatory notes to convey the intended meaning. This is common in translating texts with literary or historical intertextuality.

Elimination – The translator may choose to omit certain intertextual units from the translation entirely. This decision is usually made when the intertext is unknown to the target audience, sounds unnatural, or negatively impacts the coherence of the translation.

In selecting among these strategies, the translator must consider several factors such as the cultural background and interpretive capacity of the target audience, the artistic level and connotative richness of the text, and the functional role of the intertextual unit within the text. In certain cases, omitting or replacing an intertextual unit with a semantically similar reference may be the best way to preserve the coherence and integrity of the translated work.

Conclusion

The rendering of intertextual units in translation tests not only the translator's knowledge but also their cultural sensibility, interpretive competence, creative decision-making, and aesthetic judgment. Each translation scenario demands a unique strategic approach. The exploration of these approaches opens up new possibilities for the development of literary translation theory as a distinct academic field.

In conclusion, the translation of intertextual units is a nuanced task that requires a blend of linguistic expertise, cultural sensitivity, and creative interpretation. This article has demonstrated that successful rendering depends not only on recognizing intertextual elements but also on selecting appropriate strategies—ranging from literal translation to adaptation, annotation, or elimination—based on the target audience's cultural and interpretive context. The translator becomes a co-creator who reshapes the text within a new cultural framework. Ultimately, thoughtful handling of intertextuality enhances both the fidelity and artistic value of the translated literary work.

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