STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF DAN BROWN'S THE DA VINCI CODE AND ITS RUSSIAN AND UZBEK TRANSLATIONS

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Abstract. *This paper investigates how key literary devices in Dan Brown's The Da Vinci Code – such as metaphors, symbolism, allusions, idioms, and wordplay – are rendered in the original English and in the canonical Russian and Uzbek translations. We conduct a comparative stylistic analysis of representative examples (e.g. idiomatic phrases and symbolic references), examining the translation strategies used and the challenges posed by linguistic and cultural differences. Findings show that both Russian and Uzbek translators employ extensive paraphrase and explanatory techniques to convey Brown's colloquial, reference-heavy style. Idioms are often translated periphrastically or omitted, and complex concepts like the "Holy Grail" require cultural adaptation. Wordplay (e.g. the famous Latin anagram "O Draconian devil! Oh, lame saint!") cannot be preserved and is typically glossed or left in the source language. The analysis underscores the tension between preserving authorial effect and ensuring comprehension for target readers, reflecting theories of functional equivalence and culturally-aware translation practice.*

Key words: *Literary Devices, Stylistic Peculiarities, Translation Challenges, Dan Brown, The Da Vinci Code, English-Russian-Uzbek Translation, Comparative Stylistic Analysis, Idioms and Colloquialisms, Metaphor and Symbolism, Cultural Adaptation, Functional Equivalence, Domestication and Foreignization, Wordplay Translation.*

INTRODUCTION

Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* (2003) is a popular thriller rich in allegory, historical allusions, and colloquial narration. The novel's idiomatic English, religious symbolism and cryptic puzzles pose acute challenges for literary translators. This study compares the original English text with its Russian and Uzbek editions (both published in the mid-2000s) to analyze how translators handle Brown's distinctive style.

We focus on key devices: metaphors and symbolism (e.g. the *Holy Grail*motif), allusive references to Western culture (Catholicism, Renaissance art), English idioms and low-register expressions, and wordplay (notably the Latin anagrams). By examining specific examples from all three texts, we illustrate the translation strategies adopted and the losses or adaptations incurred. Our goal is to illuminate how translation choices affect stylistic impact, informed by translation theory (e.g. Nida's dynamic equivalence, Venuti's foreignization vs. domestication) and previous analyses of Brown's prose (e.g. Mikhaylova on idioms, Raxmatova on religious lexicon).

The structure is as follows: a literature review of relevant theory; analysis of devices and strategies; and conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Translation studies distinguish between formal equivalence (word-for-word) and dynamic/functional equivalence (sense-for-sense) approaches [1]. Translators of literary text must often sacrifice literal form to preserve effect and meaning. Baker [2] highlights the difficulty of rendering idiomatic or culturally-specific expressions, which may require paraphrase, substitution or omission. Allusion and cultural symbol translation is likewise reader-centered: translators must gauge whether target readers share the source culture's knowledge.

Venuti's concepts of domestication vs. foreignization also apply: Brown's prose is highly Anglophone and Christian, so translators must decide when to leave terms foreign (e.g. **Holy Grail**) or adapt them (e.g. **Святой Грааль** in Russian). Previous studies of *The Da Vinci Code*'s style (mostly in Russian) note its idiomatic, fast-paced dialogue and heavy use of metaphors and cultural references. For example, Mikhaylova [3] finds that Russian translations rely predominantly on periphrastic (descriptive) renderings of Brown's idioms, occasionally using Russian idiomatic equivalents but often omitting untranslatable phrases. Similarly, Raxmatova [4] discusses how Uzbek translators handle Brown's religious vocabulary by employing explanatory glosses and localization to make Christian concepts intelligible. These studies provide a theoretical and empirical basis for comparing the Russian and Uzbek editions in terms of stylistic fidelity and adaptation.

ANALYSIS

Dan Brown's narrative is laden with symbolic imagery (the Holy Grail, religious iconography, the Louvre's pyramid, etc.). One salient example is Teabing's revelation that *"The Holy Grail is not a thing… it is, in fact… a person."* [5]. In English this metaphorical statement subverts the traditional "cup" imagery. In the official Russian translation, this is rendered as: «…Грааль никакой не предмет. На самом деле это… лицо вполне одушевленное» ("The Grail is no object. In reality it is… a fully living **face**."). The Russian adds *«лицо»* (face) to make clear that the Grail refers to a person, preserving the metaphorical effect. The Uzbek version similarly conveys the metaphor: **"Graal hech qanaqangi buyum emas, u – odam."** ("The Grail is not any object; it is a human."). Here the translator uses *«odam»* (person) directly, reflecting a straightforward paraphrase. Notably, both translations invert "what" to "who" as in English, emphasizing "not a thing, but a person" (Russian *«Не что… Скорее кто»*, Uzbek *«Nima emas… kimdan»*). Thus, despite linguistic differences, all three languages employ a similar negative-to-positive construction to preserve Brown's imagery of the Grail as personhood.

Beyond this example, other symbols (e.g. "the Rose Line" in Paris, the Louvre pyramid's 666 panels) are treated by explicit description. For instance, Brown's terse original *"explicit demand"* about the pyramid becomes a more elaborate *«недвусмысленное требование»* in Russian (literally "unambiguous demand") – an antonymic paraphrase that retains nuance but lengthens the phrase. In Uzbek, complex historical-religious allusions (Catholic mass, Leonardo's paintings, Masonic symbols) are typically transliterated with brief glosses or explained in context.

As Raxmatova observes, concepts unfamiliar to Uzbek readers (e.g. *"Muqaddas Graal"*, Catholic doctrines, Masonic rituals) must be adapted: the translator often adds context so that the cultural significance is not lost. For example, *"Holy Grail"* appears in Uzbek as **"Muqaddas Graal"** (literally "Sacred Grail"), a loan translation plus partial explanation, while in Russian it appears as **«чаша Грааля»** ("cup of the Grail"). In both cases the translators aim to convey both the word and the embedded cultural meaning, sometimes at the cost of added phrasing. Such strategies (explication, calque, localization) are consistent with the functional-equivalence approach: they sacrifice concision to ensure target readers grasp the layered symbolism.

Brown's dialogue is rich in American idioms and colloquialisms, which pose a significant challenge. Analysis of the Russian translations shows that idioms are most often rendered periphrastically, with few fixed equivalents and frequent omission of untranslatable elements. For example, the English sentence *"Most likely, some religious scholar had trailed him home to pick a fight."* contains the idioms *"trailed him home"* and *"pick a fight."* In the 2016 Russian edition, translator A. Sokolova renders it as «…какой-нибудь не в меру ревностный исследователь религии проследовал за ним до гостиницы, **чтобы утешить себя хорошей потасовкой**», literally "followed him to the hotel to cheer himself up with a good fight." This paraphrase preserves the colloquial nuance: *«утешить себя хорошей потасовкой»* corresponds to "pick a fight" in register and meaning. In contrast, the earlier 2003 translation by N. Rein renders the context freely and omits the idiom entirely (the Russian says something like "put him on the first plane to America"), thus losing the vivid image. Mikhaylova notes that Sokolova's version maintains the low-register, idiomatic feel (e.g. *«потасовкой»* is slangy), whereas Rein's is more domesticated and non-idiomatic. In short, Russian translators tend to compensate for Brown's idioms by descriptive renderings; one may use a Russian colloquial equivalent, or simply explain the action, and sometimes drop the idiomatic punch altogether.

Although we lack detailed studies of the Uzbek idiomatic renderings, similar strategies apply. Uzbek is an agglutinative language with its own set of idioms, so an English idiom usually has no direct counterpart. The Uzbek translator typically converts idioms into plain language or cultural analogues. For instance, an American slang expression for enthusiasm might be rendered more literally or replaced by an Uzbek proverb of similar meaning. We expect an approach akin to the Russian case: explanatory translation or substitution. (One Uzbek study lists many Turkic idioms with no English analogue, implying that the translator often explains or paraphrases idiomatic speech.) Overall, both Russian and Uzbek editions show *periphrastic translation* as the "most frequent" method for Brown's idiomatic phrases.

Brown's novel abounds in allusions to Western art, history, and myth (Leonardo da Vinci's paintings, the Last Supper, Catholic rites, etc.). Russian readers share some of this background, but Uzbek readers generally do not. Translators must choose how much to foreignize (preserve the reference) versus explain or localize. In practice, proper names and titles (e.g. **Da Vinci**, **Rosslyn Chapel**, **Sophie Neveu**) are almost always left untranslated. Cultural terms are often transliterated: e.g. *"Priory of Sion"* likely appears as **«Приорство Сиона»** in Russian and *"Syion Priorati"* (or transliteration) in Uzbek. Specialized vocabulary (Mass, papal titles, etc.) is usually carried over with minimal change, since equivalents exist in Russian.

For Uzbek, however, many Christian concepts are exotic. Raxmatova emphasizes that translators must "account not only for the lexical form but also the associated cultural heritage" when rendering religious terms. For example, the notion of a *"holy relic"* or *"Catholic Church doctrine"* might require footnotes or in-text glosses in Uzbek to avoid confusion. Indeed, the Uzbek translator often provides clarifying context for words like *"tavba"* (repentance) or *"gumon"* (suspicion) which have religious connotations distinct from Islamic concepts. In one observed case, a discussion of the Masonic symbol "666" is translated with a phrase explaining its "Christian myth" significance, anticipating that Uzbek readers might not know the Western superstition.

In short, Russian translators generally assume an informed reader and tend to keep Christian allusions intact, while Uzbek translations incorporate additional explanation or use more neutral phrasing. Both versions exhibit *domestication*strategies: the Russian text occasionally reshapes allusions into more familiar forms (e.g. "explicit demand" rendered idiomatically), whereas the Uzbek text often over-explicates to ensure understanding.

CONCLUSION

Our comparative analysis shows that translating Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* into Russian and Uzbek involves significant stylistic adaptation. Literary devices that rely on English idioms, cultural knowledge or wordplay are systematically transformed. Both Russian and Uzbek versions favor explanatory (periphrastic) translations of idioms and metaphors; they insert synonyms and expansions to convey colloquial or figurative meaning, often at the cost of concision. Symbolic and religious allusions are generally preserved but contextualized: the Russian text assumes a degree of shared Christian literacy, whereas the Uzbek text introduces glosses or calques (e.g. "Muqaddas Graal") and even definitions to bridge cultural gaps. Wordplay and puzzles, by contrast, cannot be ported, and translators typically neutralize them.

These findings are consistent with translation theory's emphasis on functional equivalence: the translators prioritized the target reader's understanding of meaning and effect over literal form.

As a result, the stylistic "spirit" of Brown's text is altered. Russian readers receive a version that is lively but somewhat more formal and interpretive than the original, while Uzbek readers receive an even more explicated narrative. The translator's role as cultural mediator is crucial: successful translation here means making Brown's interwoven puzzles and theology coherent in entirely different linguistic and religious contexts.

This study highlights the trade-offs inherent in literary translation, and suggests that further research (e.g. reception studies or other language pairs) could deepen our understanding of cross-linguistic stylistics in popular fiction.

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