

## LEXICAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE UZBEK TRANSLATIONS OF RUSSIAN CLASSICS BY CHOLPON

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### ABSTRACT

The article describes lexical transformations in the Uzbek translations of Russian classics produced by Abdulhamid Sulaymon o'g'li Cholpon (1897–1938). The material comprises his renderings of A. P. Chekhov's stories, analysed by I. G'afurov, together with his translations of A. S. Pushkin, N. V. Gogol, I. S. Turgenev and M. Gorky. Modulation, holistic transformation, lexical substitution by a rare or dialectal word, concretization and compensation are identified. Cholpon's lexical choice is shown to follow the recreation of authorial style rather than dictionary correspondence.

**Keywords:** Lexical transformations, literary translation, Cholpon, Russian classics, Uzbek language, modulation, holistic transformation, concretization, realia, translation skill.

### INTRODUCTION

Abdulhamid Sulaymon o'g'li Cholpon stands among the founders of modern Uzbek poetry, and his work as a translator shaped the literary norms of the Uzbek language during the late 1920s and the 1930s. Pushkin's *Boris Godunov* and *Dubrovsky*, Gogol's *The Government Inspector* (rendered as *Tergovchi*), Turgenev's prose, Gorky's *Mother* and a series of Chekhov's stories passed through his pen, and he is credited as the first translator of Shakespeare into Uzbek [1]. His translation career divides into a period of formation between 1919 and 1929 and a period of maturity between 1930 and 1938, a scheme established by T. A. Rahimov in the first dedicated study of his Pushkin renderings [2]. Much of this output appeared while Cholpon held a translator's post in Moscow at the Central Publishing House of the Peoples of the East between 1931 and 1934, and it was there that he turned to *Hamlet* and to *Gozzi*. The lexical side of that achievement, however, has rarely been examined on verified parallel material, partly because his name was suppressed after his arrest in 1937 and his manuscripts confiscated.

The present study concentrates on lexical transformations, the substitutions and shifts of word meaning that a translator performs when the formal and semantic systems of two languages diverge. Russian and Uzbek differ typologically, the first being a fusional language with grammatical gender and a rich inflectional morphology, the second an agglutinative Turkic language without gender, and this distance forces the translator into constant lexical decisions. The richest body of verifiable evidence comes from Cholpon's Chekhov translations, first issued as a separate booklet in 1933 and later re-edited by M. Aminov and H. Abdiev in the 2012 volume of Chekhov's selected stories, which the critic and translation scholar I. G'afurov analysed line by line against the Russian originals [3]. Working from that material, and framing it through the classifications of V. N. Komissarov [4], L. S. Barkhudarov [5] and

Ya. I. Retsker [6], the article asks a narrow question. Which lexical operations did Cholpon prefer, and what did each operation cost or gain for the authorial style of the source?

### METHODS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The analysis rests on the comparative method, set within a descriptive translation-studies frame oriented toward the source text and its stylistic effect. Aligned Russian–Uzbek pairs were drawn from G‘afurov’s commentary on Chekhov’s story *Gore* («Gam») and several adjacent stories, each pair being classified by the type of lexical transformation it exhibits. Komissarov’s taxonomy supplied the operational definitions of concretization, generalization, modulation, antonymic translation and compensation, while Barkhudarov’s account of substitutions and Retsker’s seven lexical operations were used to cross-check borderline cases. The theoretical literature on lexical transformations is anchored by V. N. Komissarov, whose *Theory of Translation* (1990) furnishes the definitions cited below [4], and by L. S. Barkhudarov, whose *Language and Translation* (1975) classes such operations under substitutions [5]; Ya. I. Retsker (1974) distinguished seven lexical operations grounded in the logical categories of subordination, intersection and contrariety [6]. A. V. Fedorov laid the broader foundation of a linguistic theory of translation [7], and V. S. Vinogradov treated lexical questions of literary rendering [8]. The Uzbek school grew from two roots, the work of G‘. Salomov on the principles of translation theory [9] and that of J. Sharipov on the history of translation in Uzbekistan [10]; M. Xolbekov has surveyed the discipline’s formation as a science [11]. On Cholpon specifically, the dedicated studies remain few. T. A. Rahimov’s candidate dissertation examined his Pushkin translations [2], I. G‘afurov’s essay supplied the only openly verifiable parallel analysis of the Chekhov renderings [3], D. Quronov reconstructed the writer’s life and legacy [12], and D. Z. Abdullayeva surveyed him as a translator of world poetry [13]. The biographical record itself carries unresolved discrepancies, with the birth year given variously as 1893, 1897 or 1898 across reference sources, a caution that bears on any dating of individual translations.

### RESULTS

Modulation, the replacement of a source unit by a target unit whose meaning follows logically from it, recurs at the most expressive points of Cholpon’s Chekhov. In Komissarov’s wording the operation is defined precisely. Модуляция (смысловое развитие) — лексико-семантическая замена слова или словосочетания ИЯ единицей ПЯ, значение которой является логическим следствием значения исходной единицы. [4].

Chekhov’s turner, driving his dying wife to the doctor, reaches for her cold hand, and the original reads «Наконец, чтоб покончить с неизвестностью, он, не оглядываясь на старуху, нащупывает ее холодную руку. Поднятая рука падает как плеть». Cholpon renders the abstract *neizvestnost’* not by its dictionary equivalent *noma’lumlik* but by the unexpected *chuchmallik*, a word naming the insipid taste between sweet and bitter, here carrying the sense of vague uncertainty. G‘afurov registers the surprise of the choice and explains its logic, noting that no writer after Cholpon used *chuchmallik* in that sense again. The same passage turns *plet’* (a lash) into *gavron*, a herdsman’s thick staff, because a hand frozen stiff in the cold falls like a rigid stick, not like a limp whip.

Holistic transformation governs the rendering of exclamations and curses, where a word-for-word path is closed. Faced with the widow's death the peasant cries «Померла, стало быть, комиссия!», and Cholpon writes «Ўлиб қолганга ўхшайди. Қиёмат!», choosing *qiyomat* (doomsday, an unholy mess) for the Russian colloquial *komissiya* in its sense of a troublesome affair. G'afurov comments on the principle behind such moves in the language of the source itself. Контекст тақозоси таржима қилишни эмас, авторда бўлмаган ибора ёки сўз бирликларини кашф қилишни амр этади. Шунда сиз текст, яъни туб матн ҳақиқатига оғишмай роя қилиш заруратини жуда чуқур ҳис этасиз. [3].

The strategy reappears across the curses. Where the peasant snaps at his horse «...чтоб тебе пусто было, черт!», Cholpon supplies the idiomatic «...эй, ер тортқур, лаънати!»; the oath «Вот те крест!» becomes «Нон урсин агар!», an Uzbek formula of swearing by bread; and «Ну и дура!» is turned into «Эси пастсан-да ўзинг ҳам!» rather than the flat *ahmoq* or *tentak* that a literal hand would have produced.

**Table 1. Holistic transformation of Russian exclamations and curses in Cholpon's Chekhov**

Russian source	Cholpon's Uzbek	Type of operation
Померла, стало быть, комиссия!	Ўлиб қолганга ўхшайди. Қиёмат!	Holistic substitution
...чтоб тебе пусто было, черт!	...эй, ер тортқур, лаънати!	Holistic substitution
Вот те крест!	Нон урсин агар!	Holistic substitution
Ну и дура!	Эси пастсан-да ўзинг ҳам!	Holistic substitution
неизвестность	чучмаллик	Modulation
плеть	гаврон	Contextual substitution

Source: compiled from I. G'afurov (2014) [3].

Lexical substitution by a rare or dialectal word is the most visible feature of these renderings, and it reflects Cholpon's command of many Turkic idioms. He read freely in Turkish, Tatar, Crimean Tatar, Azerbaijani, Nogai, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Turkmen and Persian, and the resources of those literatures surface in his lexicon. Chekhov's *tokar* (a turner) he rendered as *qirmachi*, a word whose dialectal origin G'afurov could not pin down and which never entered the spoken standard, since *tokar* itself prevailed once industry spread. A cluster of further substitutions runs in the same direction, *kurok* rendered as *kulangir*, *toshchiy* as *arvak*, *zastenchivo* as *uyalchan*, *dich'* as *ilvarsin*, and the institutional *vospitatel'nyy dom* as the compact *go'dakxona*. G'afurov places these searches within the conditions of their decade. Ҳали мукамал ишланмаган кўп томли икки тилли луғатлар бўлмаган шароитда бундай изланишларни, ҳозир қандай нотабий бўлиб кўринмасин, ўша бадий таржимадаги изланишлар даври учун характерли ҳодисалар деб биламиз. [3].

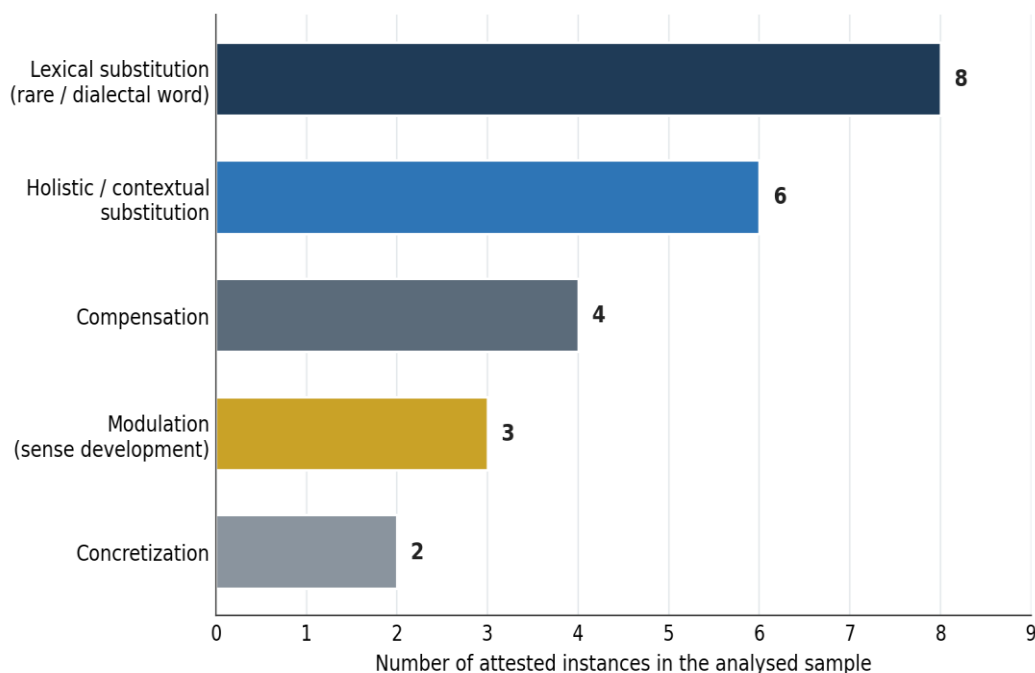


Fig. 1. Distribution of lexical transformation types in the verified Chekhov sample [3]

Concretization and its mirror operation belong to the same toolbox, and Komissarov's definitions frame them sharply. Конкретизация — лексико-семантическая замена единицы ИЯ, имеющей более широкое значение, единицей ПЯ с более узким значением. Генерализация — лексико-семантическая замена единицы ИЯ, имеющей более узкое значение, единицей ПЯ с более широким значением. [4].

Cholpon's *blednolitsaya* rendered as *zahl* illustrates the risk of a narrow choice, since G'afurov judges that the context would have been better served by *oq yuzli* (pale-faced); the rare word here narrows where it need not. A reverse motion appears when the verbal phrase of the original is loosened into a freer Uzbek turn, as in the rendering of «Он думает, как на этом свете всё быстро делается!» by the lyrical «мунча бевафо бу дунё!» (how faithless this world is). The shift moves from the concrete observation of speed to a generalized lament, and it carries the poet's voice into Chekhov's prose.

A longer passage shows transformation working across a whole sentence rather than a single word. The turner's retrospection in the original is dense and bitter. За пьянством, драками и нуждой не чувствовалось жизни. И как назло, старуха умерла как раз в то самое время, когда он почувствовал, что жалеет ее, жить без нее не может, страшно виноват перед ней... Жить бы сызнова, — думает токарь. [3].

Cholpon compresses the tragic verdict *ne chuvstvovalos' zhizni* (life was not felt) into the plain and wholly Uzbek «муҳтожликлар ичида умринг ўтгани ҳам билинмади» (amid hardships even the passing of life went unnoticed), and he keeps the rhythm of the surrounding clauses. G'afurov names the operation in Cholpon's own practice as a genuine *conversion*, turning the source over rather than carrying it across, and he draws a fine line between the literal sense of the Uzbek *tarjima* and the Russian *perevod*. The forty years of the couple's life are likened to a passing fog, an image the translator builds without departing from Chekhov's meaning. Where does the boundary lie between such recreation and a free retelling?

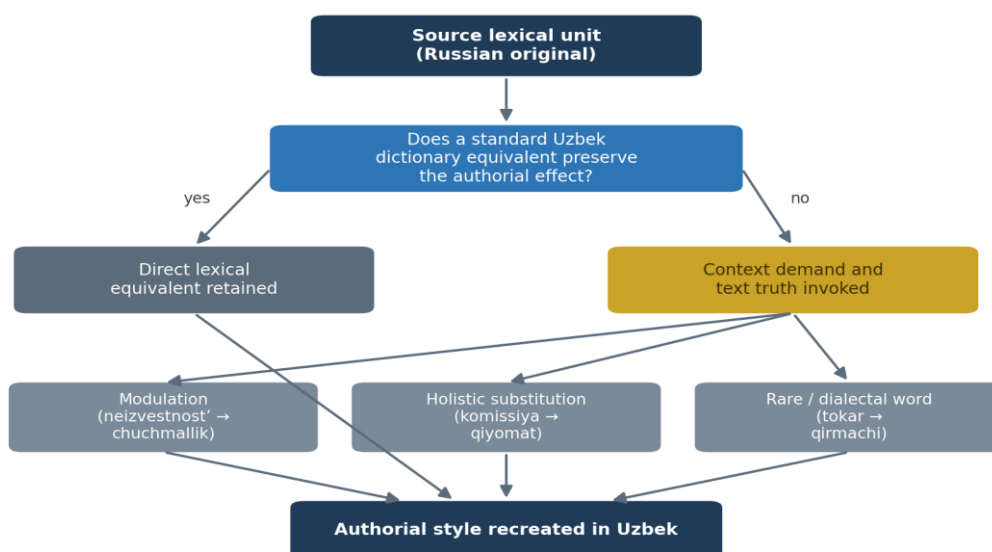
**Table 2. Sentence-level transformation and rare-lexeme substitutions**

Russian source	Cholpon’s Uzbek	Operation
не чувствовалось жизни	умрининг ўтгани ҳам билинмади	Sentence-level (conversion)
как на этом свете всё быстро делается	мунча бевафо бу дунё!	Modulation / generalization
токарь	қирмачи	Rare-word substitution
тощий	арвак	Rare-word substitution
дичь	илварсин	Rare-word substitution
воспитательный дом	гўдакхона	Compression / calque
бледнолицая	заҳл	Concretization (debatable)

Source: compiled from I. G‘afurov (2014) [3].

Compensation, the recovery elsewhere of a meaning lost at one point, underlies the whole method, and Komissarov defines it without ambiguity. Компенсация — способ перевода, при котором элементы смысла, утраченные при переводе единицы ИЯ в оригинале, передаются в тексте перевода каким-либо другим средством, причем необязательно в том же самом месте текста, что и в оригинале. [4].

Where Russian curses carry an idiomatic charge that no Uzbek equivalent matches one to one, Cholpon recovers the missing colouring by inventing turns of phrase native to the peasant’s mouth, so that «Нон урсин арап!» compensates for the cultural weight of swearing by the cross. The same logic explains the poet’s freedom with abstract nouns, which he keeps vivid where a literal equivalent would have gone flat. G‘afurov ties the whole achievement to one condition, that of a deep and capacious command of the language, and he ends his analysis on its consequence for the very name of a translator. Айтолганларимиздан хулоса шуки, юксак ва теран тил бойлигига эга бўлмагунча ҳеч қайда моҳир санъаткор таржимон адиб йўқ. Тил бойлиги бўлгандагина таржиманинг энг қийин қадрли иши — туб матннинг услуб мавжларини санъаткорона гавдалантириб бермоқлик мумкин. [3].



**Fig. 2. Decision schema for Cholpon’s lexical choice, after G‘afurov’s notion of context demand and text truth [3]**

## DISCUSSION

Read against the three classifications, the evidence points to a clear preference. Cholpon leans on holistic transformation and rare-word substitution far more than on the safe operations of concretization or direct equivalence, and the distribution in Fig. 1 makes that leaning visible in the verified sample. The pattern fits the typological distance between the languages, for an agglutinative Turkic system without gender or case prepositions offers few one-to-one matches for Russian fusional forms and idiomatic curses, and it pushes the translator toward recreation. It also fits the conditions of the 1930s, when bilingual lexicography barely existed and a translator had to mint solutions, as Gʻafurov stresses. The cost is uneven. Some inventions, such as *chuchmallik* for *neizvestnostʹ*, proved too narrow in their semantic colouring to enter the language, while others, such as the bread-oath for the Russian cross-oath, struck a cultural register that has lasted.

The findings carry two cautions for any wider claim. The verified parallel material is confined to the Chekhov stories, and no line from the Pushkin, Gogol, Gorky or Shakespeare translations could be checked against an original in open sources, so the operations charted here describe Cholpon's Chekhov with confidence and his larger output only by inference. The attribution record is itself unsettled, since one Russian-language source assigns the Uzbek *Dubrovsky* to Maruf Hakim rather than to Cholpon, a conflict that a full study of the Pushkin renderings must resolve from the printed editions, above all the three-volume *Asarlar* of 1999 and the four-volume edition of 2016. Until those texts are aligned line by line, the safest grounding for a lexical account of Cholpon's method remains the Chekhov material analysed by I. Gʻafurov, which the next stage of this work will extend to the Pushkin corpus.

## CONCLUSION

Cholpon's lexical practice in translating Russian classics is governed by the recreation of authorial style rather than by word-for-word correspondence, and within the verified Chekhov material it favours holistic transformation, modulation and substitution by rare or dialectal Uzbek words, supported by concretization and compensation at points where the two language systems diverge. The renderings of *neizvestnostʹ* as *chuchmallik*, of *komissiya* as *qiyomat*, and of *tokar* as *qirmachi* show a translator drawing on the full Turkic lexical store to keep Chekhov's voice alive, sometimes at the price of words that the standard language never absorbed. A complete account now requires the alignment of the Pushkin, Gogol and Gorky translations against their originals, a task the printed editions of 1999 and 2016 make possible.

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