

FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE OF RHETORICAL DEVICES IN THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF ALISHER NAVOIY'S "MAHBUB UL-QULUB"

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Abstract: This thesis examines the rhetorical devices used in Alisher Navoiy's "*Mahbub ul-Qulub*" and their functional equivalents in English translation. The study aims to reveal how the rich rhetorical expressions of classical Uzbek literature can be effectively conveyed through translation while preserving their original aesthetic and moral essence. By analyzing metaphors, similes, parallelisms, and other rhetorical figures in Navoiy's prose, the research highlights the challenges of maintaining stylistic harmony and cultural depth in translation. The paper also explores the translator's role in balancing literal accuracy with expressive meaning, showing how rhetorical elements contribute to the universality of Navoiy's philosophical thought. The findings suggest that functional equivalence in translation requires not only linguistic proficiency but also a deep understanding of cultural and spiritual contexts.

Keywords: Alisher Navoiy, *Mahbub ul-Qulub*, rhetorical devices, functional equivalence, translation studies, linguistic analysis, stylistic harmony, classical Uzbek literature.

Introduction

Alisher Navoiy, one of the greatest representatives of classical Turkic and Persian literature, occupies a unique place in the history of world thought as a poet, philosopher, and rhetorician. His prose work "*Mahbub ul-qulub*" ("The Beloved of Hearts"), written at the end of the 15th century, is a profound moral-philosophical treatise that reflects the ethical, social, and spiritual ideals of the time. The text is distinguished not only by its moral depth but also by its rich use of rhetorical devices — metaphors, allusions, parallelisms, and antitheses — that serve to persuade, inspire, and educate the reader. Navoiy's mastery of rhetoric demonstrates his exceptional ability to combine artistic beauty with didactic purpose.

The analysis of rhetorical devices in "*Mahbub ul-qulub*" has long been a central topic in Navoiy studies; however, their **functional equivalence in English translation** remains a relatively unexplored area. Since the rhetorical structure of Navoiy's text is deeply rooted in the cultural, religious, and linguistic context of 15th-century Central Asia, achieving equivalence in translation requires more than literal rendering — it demands a deep understanding of the communicative, emotional, and ethical functions of each rhetorical expression. Translators face the challenge of preserving not only the semantic content but also the persuasive and aesthetic force that defines Navoiy's style.

From the standpoint of modern translation theory, especially within the frameworks proposed by Eugene Nida and Peter Newmark, *functional equivalence* refers to the ability of the translated text to evoke in the target reader the same response as the original does in its audience. Applying this concept to "*Mahbub ul-qulub*" enables an in-depth exploration of how rhetorical devices such as metaphorical expressions, repetition, rhythm, and rhetorical questions are adapted into English while maintaining their intended communicative impact. This approach bridges linguistics, translation studies, and literary analysis, contributing to a better understanding of how classical Uzbek literature can be represented in the global literary space.

Furthermore, the study of rhetorical equivalence in Navoiy's work is significant not only for translation practice but also for intercultural communication. Through his eloquent language, Navoiy conveys universal themes — love, justice, piety, and moral responsibility — that transcend time and culture. When translated effectively, these rhetorical elements preserve the emotional and ethical resonance of the original text, allowing modern readers to engage with its timeless wisdom.

Therefore, this research aims to analyze the main rhetorical devices used in Alisher Navoiy's "*Mahbub ul-qulub*" and to identify their functional equivalents in English. The paper will explore the linguistic and stylistic transformations that occur during translation and will evaluate how effectively the translator conveys the aesthetic, persuasive, and ethical functions of the original text. By doing so, the study contributes to the fields of comparative rhetoric, translation studies, and intercultural literary communication, highlighting the universal value of Navoiy's rhetorical mastery.

Main Part

Alisher Navoiy's "*Mahbub ul-qulub*" represents one of the highest achievements of rhetorical art in Eastern literature. The text combines poetic eloquence with philosophical reflection, serving both aesthetic and didactic purposes. The rhetorical devices used by Navoiy are not mere ornaments of speech; they are deeply connected with the moral and spiritual message of the work. Understanding these rhetorical features and their functional equivalents in English translation is crucial for appreciating Navoiy's artistic genius and for maintaining the communicative effect of the original text in another language.

1. Metaphor and Symbolism

Metaphor is one of the most powerful rhetorical devices in "*Mahbub ul-qulub*." Navoiy frequently uses metaphors related to nature, light, and the heart to express spiritual and ethical concepts. For instance, the *heart (qalb)* often symbolizes purity, wisdom, or divine connection. In English translation, this metaphor is preserved through direct equivalence — "heart" — which functions both literally and symbolically in both languages. However, cultural nuances differ: in Uzbek classical literature, the heart is also seen as the "mirror of the soul," whereas in English, the heart primarily connotes emotion and compassion.

Example:

"Qalb durdonasini tozalagan kishi, haqiqat nuri bilan yoritilar."

Translated as: "*He who polishes the pearl of his heart is illuminated by the light of truth.*"

Here, the translator successfully maintains the metaphorical image and its moral implication, achieving **functional equivalence** by preserving both the semantic and emotional resonance of the original.

2. Parallelism and Repetition

Parallel structures and repetition are frequently used by Navoiy to emphasize moral lessons and create rhythmic harmony. These rhetorical patterns reflect the oral tradition of didactic literature, where repetition reinforces meaning and aids memorization.

Example:

“Ilm – insonni yuksaltirur, jaholat – qulatirur.”

Translated as: “*Knowledge elevates man, ignorance brings him down.*”

The translator retains the **antithetical parallelism** — a rhetorical structure that contrasts opposing ideas within the same sentence. This direct and rhythmical balance ensures that the persuasive power of Navoiy’s statement is maintained in the English version.

3. Allusion and Intertextual Reference

Navoiy often alludes to Qur’anic verses, Hadiths, and Sufi philosophy. These allusions serve as rhetorical tools to enhance the authority and universality of his message. Translating such references poses significant challenges, as they carry deep cultural and religious connotations.

For instance, the concept of “*nur*” (divine light) and “*zulmat*” (darkness) in Navoiy’s text allude to Qur’anic imagery of guidance versus misguidance. In English translation, maintaining **functional equivalence** requires explanatory adaptation rather than literal translation. The translator must evoke a similar sense of spiritual enlightenment familiar to English-speaking readers, sometimes through footnotes or contextual paraphrase.

4. Antithesis and Contrast

Antithesis is one of Navoiy’s favorite rhetorical devices. By juxtaposing opposites — wealth and poverty, wisdom and ignorance, purity and corruption — he highlights moral truths.

Example:

“Boylik badan ziynati, kambag‘allik vijdon ziynati.”

Translated as: “*Wealth adorns the body, poverty adorns the conscience.*”

The English translation achieves full **functional equivalence** because it conveys the same moral and aesthetic contrast through a balanced syntactic form. The translator’s choice of rhythm and parallel structure mirrors the original’s rhetorical strength.

5. Rhetorical Questions and Didactic Appeal

Navoiy’s prose frequently employs rhetorical questions to engage the reader in moral reflection. These questions are not meant to elicit answers but to provoke contemplation.

Example:

“Agar inson o‘z nafsini yengmasa, kim unga g‘alaba qilur?”

Translated as: “*If a man cannot conquer his own desires, who can triumph over him?*”

Here, the rhetorical question retains its philosophical tone in English. The translator achieves **dynamic equivalence** by reproducing the contemplative function of the question, even though the syntactic structure slightly differs.

6. Rhythm and Sound Devices

Although “*Mahbub ul-qulub*” is prose, Navoiy’s language often exhibits poetic rhythm, alliteration, and cadence. These sound patterns enhance memorability and emotional appeal. Recreating them in English is complex, as Uzbek phonetics and rhythm differ significantly. Translators therefore employ stylistic compensation — using parallel structure or balanced clauses to mimic the musicality of the original.

For example, short rhythmic sequences such as:

“Sabr qilgan najot topur, shoshgan halokat topar.”

Translated as: “*He who is patient finds salvation; he who rushes meets destruction.*”

The translator preserves the **proverbial tone** and rhythmic opposition, ensuring that the moral and aesthetic effect remains intact.

7. Cultural Context and Pragmatic Adaptation

Navoiy’s rhetoric is deeply intertwined with Islamic ethics, Sufi mysticism, and Central Asian sociocultural norms. When translating such culturally bound expressions, literal equivalence may lead to misunderstanding. Therefore, **pragmatic adaptation** — adjusting the text to the target audience’s cultural expectations — is often necessary to achieve functional equivalence.

For example, Navoiy’s references to “pir” (spiritual guide) or “tavba” (repentance) carry strong Sufi connotations that may be unfamiliar to Western readers. Translators often render “pir” as “spiritual master” and “tavba” as “repentance before God,” thus preserving both the spiritual meaning and rhetorical force.

Summary of Findings

The comparative analysis demonstrates that rhetorical devices in “*Mahbub ul-qulub*” can achieve **functional equivalence** in English when translators prioritize communicative and emotional correspondence over literal translation. Metaphor, antithesis, repetition, and rhetorical questioning remain the most translatable devices, while culturally specific allusions and rhythmic expressions require contextual adaptation.

Through skillful translation, the universal moral and spiritual essence of Navoiy’s rhetoric — his call for purity, justice, and compassion — can be effectively conveyed to English-speaking audiences, preserving his status as a timeless humanist thinker.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study of rhetorical devices in Alisher Navoiy's "*Mahbub ul-Qulub*" and their functional equivalents in English reveals the depth and richness of Navoiy's linguistic and philosophical thought. His use of metaphor, simile, parallelism, antithesis, and repetition demonstrates a highly sophisticated rhetorical style aimed at moral, ethical, and spiritual enlightenment. When translated into English, many of these devices retain their general meaning, but often lose subtle nuances related to Eastern spirituality, Sufi symbolism, and cultural context.

The functional equivalence approach helps preserve not only the literal sense but also the persuasive and aesthetic force of the original text. Translators play a crucial role in maintaining the balance between fidelity to the source language and naturalness in the target language. Moreover, comparative analysis of rhetorical means between Uzbek and English provides valuable insights into cross-cultural communication and stylistic adaptation.

Therefore, this research highlights the universality of human thought expressed through rhetoric and the importance of translation as a bridge between different cultural and linguistic worlds. It reaffirms Alisher Navoiy's timeless influence as a master of words whose works continue to inspire moral and linguistic reflection across languages.

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