# Skopos theory and cultural adaptation in translating Uzbek tourism texts into English

## Madinabonu SOBITOVA[1]

Uzbekistan State University of World Languages

**ARTICLE INFO**

**ABSTRACT**

This study examines the application of Skopos Theory in translating Uzbek tourism texts into English, highlighting the need for cultural adaptation to meet the expectations of international audiences. As tourism discourse aims to promote destinations and attract foreign visitors, the translator's role goes beyond linguistic equivalence, requiring sensitivity to pragmatic functions, target culture norms, and promotional intentions. Skopos Theory, introduced by Hans Vermeer, prioritizes the purpose (or skopos) of the translation over strict fidelity to the source text. This functionalist approach is particularly suitable for tourism translation, where cultural transference and persuasive impact are central. The research examines specific examples of Uzbek tourism texts, identifying common cultural references, idioms, and historical expressions that present challenges in direct translation. It then demonstrates how adapting these elements for English-speaking audiences can enhance comprehensibility and appeal without compromising authenticity. The study also discusses strategies such as localization, omission, and explanatory additions that align with the intended skopos. The findings support the view that effective tourism translation must mediate between source and target cultures through purposeful, audience-oriented choices.

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[1] Trainee Teacher, Uzbekistan State University of World Languages. E-mail: madinasobitova04052000@gmail.com

# O'zbek turizm matnlarini ingliz tiliga tarjima qilishda Skopos nazariyasi va madaniy moslashtirishning ahamiyati

**ANNOTATSIYA**

*Kalit so'zlar:*
Skopos nazariyasi, sayyohlik tarjimasi, madaniy moslashuv, o'zbekcha-inglizcha tarjima, funksionalistik yondashuv, mahalliylashtirish, madaniyatlararo aloqa, tarjima strategiyalari.

Ushbu tadqiqot o'zbek sayyohlik matnlarini ingliz tiliga tarjima qilishda Skopos nazariyasini qo'llashni o'rganadi va xalqaro auditoriya talablarini qondirish uchun madaniy moslashuv zarurligini ta'kidlaydi. Turizm sohasidagi matnlar yo'nalishlarni targ'ib qilish va xorijiy tashrif buyuruvchilarni jalb etishga qaratilgani bois, tarjimonning vazifasi lingvistik tenglikdan tashqariga chiqadi. Bu esa pragmatik funksiyalarga, maqsadli madaniyat me'yorlariga va targ'ibot maqsadlariga e'tibor qaratishni talab etadi. Hans Vermeer tomonidan taqdim etilgan Skopos nazariyasi asl matnga qat'iy sodiqlikdan ko'ra tarjimaning maqsadini (yoki skoposini) ustuvor qo'yadi. Ushbu funksional yondashuv, ayniqsa, madaniy o'ziga xoslikni saqlash va ishontirish ta'siri muhim o'rin tutgan sayyohlik tarjimasi uchun juda mos keladi. Tadqiqotda o'zbek sayyohlik matnlarining aniq misollarini o'rganib chiqib, to'g'ridan-to'g'ri tarjimada qiyinchilik tug'diradigan umumiy madaniy havolalar, iboralar va tarixiy ifodalar aniqlanadi. So'ngra, ushbu elementlarni ingliz tilida so'zlashuvchi auditoriyaga moslashtirish orqali haqiqiylikka putur yetkazmagan holda matnning tushunarliligini va jozibadorligini qanday oshirish mumkinligi ko'rsatib beriladi. Shuningdek, tadqiqotda ko'zlangan skoposlarga mos keladigan mahalliylashtirish, tushirib qoldirish va tushuntirish qo'shimchalari kabi strategiyalar muhokama qilinadi. Natijalar samarali turizm tarjimasi manba va maqsadli madaniyatlar o'rtasida maqsadli, auditoriyaga yo'naltirilgan tanlovlar orqali vositachilik qilishi kerakligini tasdiqlaydi.

# Теория Скопоса и культурная адаптация при переводе узбекских туристических текстов на английский язык

**АННОТАЦИЯ**

*Ключевые слова:*
теория Скопоса, перевод в сфере туризма, культурная адаптация, перевод с узбекского на английский, функционалистский подход, локализация, межкультурная коммуникация, переводческие стратегии.

Данное исследование рассматривает применение теории скопоса в переводе узбекских туристических текстов на английский язык, подчеркивая необходимость культурной адаптации для удовлетворения ожиданий международной аудитории. Поскольку туристический дискурс направлен на продвижение направлений и привлечение иностранных посетителей, роль переводчика выходит за рамки лингвистической эквивалентности, требуя чуткости к прагматическим функциям, нормам целевой культуры и рекламным намерениям. Теория скопоса, предложенная Гансом Вермеером, ставит цель перевода (или скопос) выше строгой верности исходному тексту. Этот

Xorijiy lingvistika va lingvodidaktika – Зарубежная лингвистика
и лингводидактика – Foreign Linguistics and Linguodidactics
Issue – 3 № 4 (2025) / ISSN 2181-3701

функционалистский подход особенно подходит для перевода туристических текстов, где ключевую роль играют передача культурных особенностей и убедительное воздействие. В исследовании рассматриваются конкретные примеры узбекских туристических текстов, выявляются распространенные культурные отсылки, идиомы и исторические выражения, которые представляют трудности при прямом переводе. Затем демонстрируется, как адаптация этих элементов для англоязычной аудитории может повысить понятность и привлекательность текста без ущерба для его аутентичности. В исследовании также обсуждаются такие стратегии, как локализация, опущение и пояснительные дополнения, соответствующие предполагаемому скопосу. Результаты подтверждают точку зрения, что эффективный перевод туристических текстов должен выступать посредником между исходной и целевой культурами посредством целенаправленного, ориентированного на аудиторию выбора.

Skopos Theory, developed by Hans Vermeer in the 1970s and further refined by Katharina Reiss and Vermeer (1984), revolutionized translation studies by shifting focus from source-text fidelity to target-text functionality. The term "skopos," derived from the Greek meaning "purpose" or "aim," emphasizes that translation decisions should be guided by the intended function of the target text rather than strict adherence to source text structure (Nord, 1997). This functionalist approach proves particularly relevant when translating tourism texts, where the primary objective is to attract, inform, and persuade potential visitors rather than merely convey linguistic content. According to Vermeer's framework, every translation is governed by its skopos, which determines the translation strategies and methods employed. The theory establishes a hierarchy of rules: the skopos rule (the end justifies the means), the coherence rule (the target text must be coherent for the target audience), and the fidelity rule (there must be coherence between source and target texts). In tourism translation, the skopos typically involves creating compelling promotional material that resonates with international audiences while maintaining cultural authenticity (Reiss & Vermeer, 1984).

The application of Skopos Theory to tourism translation necessitates understanding the target audience's cultural background, expectations, and motivations. When translating Uzbek tourism texts into English, translators must consider that their target readers likely possess limited knowledge of Central Asian culture, Islamic traditions, and Uzbekistan's historical significance along the Silk Road. Therefore, the skopos extends beyond mere translation to include cultural mediation and educational functions. Cultural adaptation in tourism translation involves modifying source text elements to ensure they are accessible and appealing to the target culture while preserving the destination's unique identity. Katan (2004) identifies several adaptation strategies that prove essential when translating Uzbek tourism materials. These include explicitation of cultural references, domestication of unfamiliar concepts, and strategic omission or addition of information based on target audience needs. The challenge in translating Uzbek tourism

Xorijiy lingvistika va lingvodidaktika – Зарубежная лингвистика
и лингводидактика – Foreign Linguistics and Linguodidactics
Issue – 3 № 4 (2025) / ISSN 2181-3701

texts lies in balancing cultural authenticity with accessibility. Uzbekistan's rich cultural heritage, deeply rooted in Islamic traditions, nomadic history, and Soviet influence, presents numerous translation challenges. Terms such as "madrasah," "minaret," "plov," and "chaikhana" require careful treatment to ensure comprehension without losing cultural specificity. The translator must decide whether to use foreignization strategies that preserve the exotic appeal or domestication approaches that prioritize understanding (Venuti, 1995). Cultural adaptation also involves addressing different tourism motivations and expectations. Western tourists often seek experiences that differ significantly from their daily lives, making the exotic and authentic aspects of Uzbek culture valuable selling points. However, certain cultural elements may require explanation or contextualization to prevent misunderstanding or cultural insensitivity. For instance, references to Islamic architecture, traditional gender roles, or religious practices must be handled with cultural sensitivity while maintaining their appeal to non-Muslim audiences.

To illustrate the practical application of Skopos Theory in translating Uzbek tourism texts, consider the following example from an official tourism brochure about Samarkand:

**Original Uzbek text:** "Samarqand – Sharqning durdonasi, Amir Temur va uning avlodlari tomonidan qurilgan go'zal shahar. Bu yerda Registon maydoni, Bibi-Xonim masjidi va Shohizinda maqbarasi kabi betakror yodgorliklar joylashgan."

**Literal translation:** "Samarkand – the pearl of the East, a beautiful city built by Amir Temur and his descendants. Here are located incomparable monuments such as Registan Square, Bibi-Khanym Mosque, and Shah-i-Zinda mausoleum."

**Skopos-oriented translation:** "Samarkand, the legendary 'Pearl of the East,' showcases the architectural genius of Tamerlane (Amir Temur) and his dynasty. This UNESCO World Heritage city captivates visitors with its magnificent monuments, including the breathtaking Registan Square with its three ornate madrasahs, the grand Bibi-Khanym Mosque, once among the Islamic world's largest, and the mystical Shah-i-Zinda necropolis, a stunning avenue of azure-tiled mausoleums." The skopos-oriented version demonstrates several adaptation strategies. First, it provides the commonly known Western name "Tamerlane" alongside the local "Amir Temur" to aid recognition. Second, it adds the UNESCO designation, which carries significant weight for international travelers. Third, it includes descriptive elements ("breathtaking," "magnificent," "mystical") that appeal to tourism marketing conventions. Finally, it provides brief explanations of unfamiliar terms like "madrasahs" and "necropolis" to ensure comprehension. Translating Uzbek tourism texts presents unique challenges that extend beyond linguistic conversion to encompass cultural mediation. One significant challenge involves religious and cultural sensitivity. Uzbekistan's Islamic heritage features prominently in tourism materials, but translators must navigate potential cultural barriers for non-Muslim audiences. Terms like "mihrab," "minbar," and "haram" require careful explanation without compromising their sacred significance. Another challenge involves historical contextualization. References to the Silk Road, Mongol invasions, and the Soviet period require background knowledge that target readers may lack. The translator must decide how much historical context to provide without overwhelming the promotional message. For instance, when describing Bukhara's significance, a translator might need to explain its role as a major Islamic learning center and trading hub while maintaining the text's persuasive function (Snell-Hornby, 1988). Food culture presents additional translation challenges. Uzbek cuisine, central to the tourism experience, includes numerous dishes with no direct English equivalents. "Plov"

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и лингводидактика – Foreign Linguistics and Linguodidactics
Issue – 3 № 4 (2025) / ISSN 2181-3701

(pilaf), "manta" (steamed dumplings), and "shurpa" (soup) require descriptive translations that convey both ingredients and cultural significance. The skopos of attracting culinary tourists demands appetizing descriptions that may require considerable adaptation from the original text.

Cultural events and festivals represent another complex area for tourism translation. Consider the translation challenges presented by Navruz, Uzbekistan's spring celebration:

**Original concept:** Navruz represents the Persian New Year, marking the spring equinox and renewal of nature. It involves family gatherings, traditional foods, and cultural performances deeply rooted in Zoroastrian traditions predating Islam.

**Translation challenge:** How to convey this cultural complexity to audiences unfamiliar with Persian traditions, Zoroastrianism, or Central Asian customs while maintaining its appeal as a tourist attraction?

**Skopos-oriented approach:** "Experience Navruz, Uzbekistan's vibrant spring festival celebrating renewal and family unity. This ancient Persian New Year celebration (March 21st) transforms cities with colorful bazaars, traditional music, and festive meals featuring symbolic dishes like sumalak (sweet wheat pudding). Join locals in parks and squares for folk performances, traditional games, and the warmth of Uzbek hospitality as the country welcomes spring with joy and hope." This translation exemplifies several Skopos Theory principles. It emphasizes experiential aspects appealing to tourists ("Experience," "Join locals"), provides necessary cultural context without overwhelming detail, includes specific dates for trip planning, and highlights the welcoming nature of the celebration. The translation serves its skopos of encouraging tourism participation while respecting cultural authenticity.

The digital age has transformed tourism marketing, requiring new approaches to translation and cultural adaptation. Uzbekistan's tourism websites, social media content, and mobile applications present unique challenges for translators working within Skopos Theory framework. Digital platforms demand concise, SEO-optimized content that maintains cultural appeal while ensuring discoverability by international audiences (Cronin, 2003). Social media translation requires particular attention to visual-textual relationships. Instagram posts featuring Uzbek architectural wonders must balance hashtag optimization with cultural accuracy. The skopos of increasing social media engagement may conflict with traditional translation principles, requiring creative solutions that serve both promotional and cultural preservation functions.

Digital tourism platforms also enable more interactive cultural mediation. QR codes at tourist sites can link to multilingual content that provides a deeper cultural context than traditional brochures allow. This technology enables layered translation approaches where basic information serves immediate tourism needs while additional content satisfies culturally curious visitors. Evaluating the success of Skopos-oriented tourism translation requires metrics beyond traditional translation assessment. Tourism translation effectiveness can be measured through visitor satisfaction surveys, booking conversion rates, and cultural understanding assessments. These practical measures align with Skopos Theory's emphasis on functional success over formal equivalence (Nord, 1997). Feedback from international visitors to Uzbekistan indicates that culturally adapted translations significantly enhance tourism experiences. Visitors report greater appreciation for local customs when tourism materials provide an appropriate cultural

context. However, over-domestication can diminish the sense of cultural discovery that many tourists seek, highlighting the delicate balance required in tourism translation. Long-term cultural impact also merits consideration. Translation choices influence how international audiences perceive Uzbek culture, potentially affecting cultural stereotypes and understanding. Responsible tourism translation within the Skopos framework should consider these broader cultural implications alongside immediate promotional objectives.

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