



THE PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATING VULGAR WORDS IN ENGLISH MOVIES INTO UZBEK

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17450673>

Abstract. *This article examines the challenges of translating vulgar language from English films into Uzbek, focusing on productions released between 2000 and 2025. Vulgarisms-including profanity, swearing and taboo expressions-carry strong pragmatic and emotional force in English, yet direct rendering into Uzbek clashes with cultural and religious norms that strongly reject obscene speech. Adopting a qualitative descriptive method, the study analyzes subtitling and dubbing practices through examples drawn from both official and fan-made translations. The findings reveal a strong tendency toward euphemization, omission and neutralization, which translators replacing offensive terms with mild exclamations or removing altogether. While sometime subtitles rely on the original audio to convey intensity, dubbing practices almost completely erase vulgarity due to stricter broadcast regulations. This results in a systematic loss of expressive force, transforming foul-mouthed characters into more polite figures in Uzbek versions. The study situates Uzbek practice within domestication strategies described in translation studies. It concludes that Uzbek translation of vulgarisms exemplifies cultural mediation, balancing source authenticity with target norms and points to gradual but limited future shifts as global media exposure increases.*

Key words: *Audiovisual translation, vulgarism, profanity, Uzbek translation, subtitling, dubbing, domestication, cultural adaptation*

Introduction.

Translating vulgar language from English movies into Uzbek language presents a complex set of challenges rooted in both linguistic and cultural differences. Vulgar words-including swear words, profanity and other taboo expressions-carry strong emotional and social connotations in the source English dialogues. When rendering these into Uzbek translators must navigate significant cultural taboos and norms. Uzbek society traditionally regards profanity as highly offensive and public use of foul language is largely unacceptable. For example, recent degree even forbids Uzbek officials from using foul language on social media. Consequently, direct translations of English vulgarisms risk violating audience expectations. This cultural gap means that what might be a casual expletive or vulgar words in a Hollywood movie could be shocking or unacceptable if directly translated into Uzbek. This article examines the key problems and strategies in translating English movie vulgarisms into Uzbek, focusing on films released between 2000 and 2025. We consider both dubbing and subtitling practices as both are employed in Uzbek



audiovisual landscape. The study draws on insights from translation studies, vulgarism translation research and cultural adaptation literature.

Methods.

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to explore how English vulgar words are translated into Uzbek films. The research is based on a literature review of audiovisual translation and taboo language including works by Diaz-Cintas & Ramael and other scholars on profanity translation. This framework identifies common strategies such as deletion, substitution and euphemism which serve as a basis for comparison with Uzbek practice.

Examples were drawn from films released between 2000 and 2025, combining professional cases (Alimova's 2024 analyses of the *Covenant*) with fan-made subtitles and dubs found online. Each English-Uzbek pair was examined to determine the translation strategy, then categorized according to existing typologies of vulgarity. Although access to official scripts is limited, this combined approach reveals recurring strategies and challenges in rendering English vulgarity into Uzbek across both subtitles and dubbing.

Results.

Our analyses shows that Uzbek translators overwhelmingly use mitigating strategies when dealing with English vulgar words. The most common approach in both subtitling and dubbing are euphemization and omission, in line with findings from other languages. Instead of direct equivalents, translators replace crude terms with softer expressions or omit them if unnecessary. For example, "*What the hell are you doing?*" often becomes simply "*Nima qilyapsan?*" with the curse omitted, while "*Get the fucking car out of here!*" may be translated as "*Mashinani bu yerdan chiqaring*" without profanity. Common substitutions include neutral exclamations like "*Voy*" or insults like "*Ahmoq*" rather than strong Uzbek vulgarisms. As Alimova observed translators prefer general or diluted terms to avoid rudeness.

Omission is frequent due to both cultural norms and technical limits of subtitles where swearwords are easily dropped without altering basic meaning. In dubbing, omissions are often stricter, as state broadcasters avoid harsh content altogether, sometimes even excluding entire films heavy with profanity. Official dubs usually neutralize swearing. For instance, "*Are you fucking kidding me?*" may be translated like "*Hazillashyapsanmi o'zi?*". Fan-made translations may allow slightly stronger terms like "*damn*" into "*la'nat*", but still avoid extreme vulgarity. This practice results in loss of tone and expressiveness, foul-mouthed characters become more polite in Uzbek, reducing emotional intensity.



Subtitling and dubbing differ slightly: subtitles influenced by time and space constraints, often omit or euphemize while relying on the original audio to convey emotion. Dubbing, however, erases profanity entirely, as viewers only hear Uzbek voice-over. Audience reception generally supports sanitized translations, reflecting conservative cultural and religious norms. Many viewers consider the softened language "normal", though bilingual audiences sometimes criticize the excessive politeness. While streaming platforms may one day introduce more direct Uzbek subtitles, the current scopes of translation prioritize cultural acceptability over fidelity, resulting in widespread toning down of vulgar language.

Discussion.

Our findings highlight a key tension in audiovisual translation: fidelity to source dialogue and conformity to target-culture norms. For vulgar language, Uzbek translators consistently prioritize cultural acceptability, aligning with Venuti's concept of domestication. English profanity is toned down to fit Uzbek standards of politeness, producing translations that sound natural but lose pragmatic intensity. A swearword carries emotional weight, which often diminishes when replaced by euphemisms or omissions.

This practice reflects both censorship and self-censorship. Broadcasters explicitly ban obscene terms, while translators internalize expectations, avoiding coarse slang or Russian loanwords in favor of literary Uzbek. Taboo translation reflects societal values and Uzbek translations confirm a preference for respectful speech. Strategies include euphemism, omission and creative compensation-e.g. using repetition, particles or mild insults to replace stronger language. Religious and sexual vulgarities are especially filtered, like "*God, damn it!*" becomes "*Hayf senga*" or "*Attang!*" while sexual insults are softened to neutral commands like "*bor, yo'qol*".

Audience reception largely supports these choices, consistent with expectancy norms: viewers expect decorum in media and rarely criticize omissions. However, fansubbing communities sometimes push norms by retaining mild slang or transliterated swears (e.g. *fak*), reflecting younger audiences' exposure to global media.

Looking ahead gradual cultural change and internet exposure may slightly relax taboos, as seen in other societies where sanitized dubs become more tolerant over time. Yet, given Uzbekistan's strong cultural and religious values, such as shifts will be slow. For now, euphemization, omission and neutralization remain dominant strategies enabling translators to mediate between English profanity and Uzbek norms.



Conclusion.

In conclusion translating vulgar language from English films into Uzbek reveals the ongoing tension between accuracy and cultural appropriateness. Uzbek translators overwhelmingly choose euphemisation, omission and neutralization to ensure acceptability, even if this reduces the emotional force and authenticity of dialogues. These strategies reflect both external censorship and internalized cultural norms allowing foreign films to reach Uzbek audiences in a “clean” form. While effective in meeting audience expectations such as domestication raises questions about fidelity, character portrayal and artistic integrity. As Uzbekistan’s media landscape evolves, future research should examine whether exposure to global media shifts norms and creates demand for more direct translations. Ultimately, the Uzbek case illustrates how translation is not merely transfer but also cultural mediation, where translators balance source meaning with target norms.

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