

Evaluation Of The Female Image Through Phraseological Units And Figurative Expressions: Uzbek Equivalents Of German Phraseologisms

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Received: 14 December 2025 **Accepted:** 06 January 2026 **Published:** 09 February 2026

ABSTRACT

Phraseological units and figurative expressions are among the most culturally saturated elements of language, carrying condensed evaluations that can subtly shape how characters are perceived. In literary discourse, they function not only as stylistic ornamentation but also as instruments of axiological framing: they praise, condemn, soften, ridicule, idealize, or stereotype. This study examines how evaluative meanings directed at the female image are encoded in German phraseology and how these meanings are rendered in Uzbek equivalents in translation. Building on contrastive phraseology and translation studies, the article proposes an analytical model that distinguishes denotative reference, connotative evaluation, pragmatic force, and stylistic register as core components of phraseological meaning. Using a corpus-oriented qualitative approach, the study identifies recurring patterns of equivalence and shift, focusing on (1) direct idiomatic equivalence, (2) functional equivalence through culturally proximate Uzbek phraseologisms, (3) semantic modulation and explicitation, and (4) compensation strategies when phraseological imagery cannot be preserved. The results show that translations tend to preserve the overall positive/negative orientation of evaluation more consistently than they preserve imagery, and that Uzbek equivalents often intensify moral or social judgment through culturally salient frames (honor, modesty, reputation), while German originals may favor psychological nuance or irony. The article argues that faithful representation of the female image requires sensitivity to evaluative micro-meanings, particularly in idioms that encode gendered social expectations, and it offers criteria for selecting Uzbek equivalents that minimize distortion of characterization.

Keywords: Phraseology; figurative language; evaluation; female image; German–Uzbek translation; connotation; equivalence; pragmatics; literary discourse.

INTRODUCTION

Phraseological units—idioms, fixed comparisons, proverbial expressions, routine formulas—are “ready-made” speech segments that speakers use to evaluate people and events quickly and emphatically. In literary narration and dialogue, phraseology serves a dual function. On the one hand, it enhances naturalness and sociolectal authenticity, signaling a speaker’s education, age, social position, and emotional state. On the other hand, it condenses cultural judgments into compact formulas that can shape the reader’s perception of a character. When

phraseological units are used to describe a woman—her appearance, behavior, morality, emotionality, or social role—they often carry evaluative meanings that may be supportive (admiration, tenderness), ambivalent (ironic sympathy), or hostile (mockery, moral condemnation). Such meanings can be encoded indirectly, through imagery that is culturally “obvious” for native readers but opaque in translation.

In German, evaluative phraseology frequently draws on metaphorical scenarios such as masks and performance

(e.g., presenting oneself, hiding one's intentions), weather and volatility (mood changes), or social norms (respectability, decency). Uzbek phraseology is equally rich, but its figurative frames are often anchored in culturally salient concepts of honor, shame, family reputation, and modesty. Therefore, when a German phraseological unit is translated into Uzbek, the translator faces a choice: preserve the original image, preserve the function and evaluation, or balance both through adaptation. This becomes especially consequential when the phraseology is part of character portrayal, because a small shift in evaluation can transform the female image from "independent" to "improper," from "mysterious" to "deceptive," or from "emotional" to "unstable."

The study applies a qualitative contrastive-translation methodology supported by corpus principles. The analytical unit is a phraseological or figurative expression in German that contributes to evaluating a female character or a woman as a social type. "Evaluation" is understood broadly as any linguistic marking of approval/disapproval, emotional attitude, moral judgment, social positioning, or aesthetic assessment.

The procedure consists of four steps. First, German phraseological units were identified in narrative and dialogic contexts where they directly refer to a woman or indirectly frame her actions. Identification relied on phraseological criteria commonly used in German linguistics, including relative fixedness, idiomaticity, and conventionality, as described in standard works on phraseology. Second, each unit was decomposed into four meaning components: denotative reference (what situation it describes), evaluative polarity (positive/negative/ambivalent), pragmatic force (irony, insult, mitigation, intimacy), and stylistic register (colloquial, neutral, elevated). Third, candidate Uzbek equivalents were generated using bilingual competence and checked against Uzbek phraseological norms, with attention to whether the Uzbek expression is idiomatic and socially plausible for the depicted speaker. Fourth, equivalence was evaluated using functional translation criteria: a translation was considered adequate if it preserved the evaluative polarity and pragmatic force within an appropriate register, even if imagery shifted.

Because Uzbek translations may differ by edition and translator, the discussion is framed in terms of equivalence types and typical shifts rather than as an audit of a single published translation. However, the examples are

representative of choices commonly available to translators working between German and Uzbek and reflect attested phraseological patterns described in lexicographic sources (German idiom dictionaries and Uzbek phraseological dictionaries).

The analysis reveals that evaluation of the female image through phraseology tends to cluster around several semantic-pragmatic domains: appearance and attractiveness; modesty and reputation; emotionality and "temperament"; sincerity versus manipulation; social dependence versus agency; and morality (fidelity, honesty). Across these domains, four equivalence patterns dominate.

The first pattern is direct idiomatic equivalence, where German and Uzbek share a comparable evaluative idiom, allowing both meaning and style to be retained with minimal distortion. For instance, German colloquial evaluations of excessive emotion or agitation sometimes align with Uzbek idioms that also depict a loss of self-control. When the German context conveys that a woman "cannot restrain herself," Uzbek can render this with a phraseological unit that preserves the pragmatic stance—mild critique, sympathy, or ridicule—depending on context. In such cases, the female image remains relatively stable across languages, because the translator can maintain both the judgment and the interpersonal tone.

The second pattern is functional equivalence through culturally proximate phraseology, where the German image is replaced by an Uzbek image that carries an equivalent evaluative charge but is rooted in different cultural metaphors. A typical example concerns reputation and social judgment. German phraseology may encode reputational concerns through metaphors of "talk" or "appearance," whereas Uzbek phraseology often evokes the social gaze more directly. In contexts where German implies that "people will talk," Uzbek equivalents may strengthen the social dimension by invoking communal opinion and the consequences for family standing. This functional substitution can be successful if the source text also emphasizes social pressure, but it can become problematic if the German original is psychologically focused and does not frame the woman primarily through moral reputation. In those cases, the Uzbek equivalent may inadvertently moralize the female image, shifting the reader's interpretation.

The third pattern is semantic modulation and explicitation,

often used when a German phraseology is highly idiomatic, culture-bound, or carries irony that is difficult to recreate. Modulation occurs when the translator changes perspective or conceptual framing while keeping the general evaluation. For example, German idioms describing a woman as “not easily approachable” may rely on spatial metaphors or subtle idiomatic cues. Uzbek, depending on the narrative voice, may render this as “she kept her distance” or “she was reserved,” possibly losing the idiomatic sharpness. Explicitation often removes ambiguity: a German ironic phrase might hint at hypocrisy without naming it, while Uzbek translation may state it more directly. This can intensify negative evaluation, especially when the target expression becomes a straightforward accusation rather than an ironic insinuation.

The fourth pattern is compensation, used when neither direct nor functional equivalents can preserve both imagery and pragmatic force. In compensation, the translator may render the phraseology neutrally in one place but add an evaluative or figurative expression elsewhere in the same stretch of text to restore stylistic density and characterization. This is particularly relevant in portraying women through repeated small evaluative cues, where the cumulative effect matters more than any single idiom. Compensation can be effective if it respects the narrator’s stance and avoids importing culturally heavy judgments that were absent in the original.

Across the corpus, preservation of evaluative polarity is generally high: negative German idioms tend to remain negative in Uzbek, and positive ones remain positive. However, two systematic shifts emerge.

First, Uzbek equivalents tend to increase moral-social framing in domains related to reputation, modesty, and interpersonal boundaries. German evaluative phraseology may position a woman as “capricious,” “proud,” or “hard to read,” leaving moral judgment implicit. Uzbek phraseological resources, especially those commonly used in everyday speech, may map these traits onto stronger social evaluations, sometimes bordering on blame. If the translator chooses an Uzbek idiom that is conventional but normatively loaded, the female image becomes less psychologically ambiguous and more socially judged.

Second, German irony is frequently softened or lost. German phraseological evaluation often works through understatement, wry idioms, or conversational formulas

that allow the speaker to critique while appearing polite. Uzbek can express irony richly, but the translator must select culturally appropriate ironic expressions; otherwise, the translation may shift toward directness. When irony is lost, the woman may appear more plainly criticized, and the text’s ambivalence may collapse into a single evaluative direction.

The findings can be explained by structural and cultural factors in phraseology and by translator decision-making under constraints of readability and idiomacity.

From a structural perspective, idioms are multi-layered: they do not merely “mean” something; they perform social action. An idiom can insult while maintaining a joking frame, or it can praise while signaling intimacy. This is why literal translation of idioms is rarely adequate. German phraseologisms often encode evaluation through metaphorical frames that are historically entrenched, such as “mask,” “stage,” “game,” or “nerves,” and these frames can be transferred only if Uzbek offers a comparable figurative scenario. When such a scenario is unavailable, translators face the choice of preserving meaning or preserving style. Many choose meaning, which is understandable, but the cost is a loss of evaluative subtlety.

From a cultural-pragmatic perspective, phraseological evaluation of women is deeply intertwined with socially salient norms. Uzbek phraseology frequently engages communal ethics and relational identity, so an equivalent that feels “natural” may carry stronger social condemnation or praise than the German source. This is not inherently an error; it can be an appropriate domestication strategy when the target readership expects explicit social anchoring. The risk arises when the translator’s idiomatic choice imposes a moral framework that alters characterization. For example, a woman portrayed in German as psychologically conflicted may appear in Uzbek as socially improper if the translation activates idioms associated with shame or dishonor. The translator, therefore, must separate the evaluative polarity (positive/negative) from the evaluative dimension (aesthetic, psychological, moral, social). Preserving polarity alone is not enough; the dimension matters.

A practical implication is that equivalence should be assessed along at least four parameters: evaluation (polarity and dimension), intensity (mild, moderate, harsh), pragmatic frame (irony, sympathy, contempt), and register (colloquial, neutral, elevated). Consider a German idiom

used in dialogue by a sarcastic character. A neutral Uzbek paraphrase may preserve denotation but erase sarcasm, thereby making the female target of the idiom appear less contested and more objectively judged. Conversely, a strongly idiomatic Uzbek replacement may intensify contempt, making the speaker harsher than in the original. Adequacy requires aligning the idiom not only with “what it says” but with “how it positions the speaker and the woman.”

The study also suggests a preference hierarchy for translators working with evaluative phraseology about women. When possible, direct idiomatic equivalence is best because it maintains density and naturalness without forcing new cultural frames. When direct equivalence is absent, functional equivalence is acceptable if it preserves not only polarity but also the same evaluative dimension. If the German idiom expresses psychological skepticism (doubt about sincerity), the Uzbek equivalent should ideally express the same skepticism rather than moral condemnation. Modulation and explication should be used cautiously in character portrayal, because explication tends to reduce ambiguity, and ambiguity is often essential to literary female images. Compensation is a valuable strategy, but it requires stylistic discipline: added figurative evaluation must match the narrator’s voice and should not introduce stereotypes not present in the source.

Finally, the results resonate with broader translation-theoretical debates about domestication and foreignization. In phraseology, complete foreignization (retaining German imagery literally) can produce unnatural Uzbek and distract the reader, while complete domestication can overwrite the source’s evaluative nuance. A balanced strategy—retaining imagery when it is transparent and functional, adapting when it is opaque, and compensating when necessary—best preserves the complexity of the female image.

Phraseological units and figurative expressions are powerful carriers of evaluation in literary portrayal of women. In German–Uzbek translation, the overall positive or negative orientation of such evaluation is usually preserved, but imagery, irony, and evaluative dimension often shift. Uzbek equivalents frequently strengthen social-moral framing, especially in contexts linked to reputation and modesty, while German originals may rely more on psychological nuance or understated irony. These shifts can alter characterization and, consequently, the reader’s

perception of the female image.

To translate evaluative phraseology adequately, translators should move beyond surface meaning and assess idioms across evaluation dimension, intensity, pragmatic frame, and register. Direct idiomatic equivalence is ideal when available; functional equivalence is effective when it matches not only polarity but also evaluative dimension; modulation and explication should be controlled to avoid moralizing ambiguity; and compensation should be used strategically to preserve stylistic density without importing unintended stereotypes. Future research could expand the corpus to include multiple published Uzbek translations of German prose and apply quantitative methods to measure evaluative intensity shifts across translators and genres.

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