

DOI <https://doi.org/10.30525/2592-8813-2026-2-60>

WORD CHOICE PROBLEMS IN LITERARY TRANSLATIONS FROM GERMAN INTO AZERBAIJANI TURKISH

Naila Ismikhan Huseynova,

*Senior Lecturer at the Department of German Lexicology and Stylistics,
Azerbaijan University of Languages (Baku, Azerbaijan)*

ORCID ID: 0009-0001-7668-3747

huseynovanaila07@gmail.com

Abstract. This study examines word choice problems in literary translations from German into Azerbaijani Turkish in terms of translation theory, cultural transfer, and stylistic structure. A qualitative research method was employed in the study; historical sources, translation theories, and literary works translated from German into Azerbaijani Turkish were analyzed through a comparative textual analysis method. Within the scope of the research, the semantic, aesthetic, and stylistic problems caused by synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, and polysemous words during the translation process were discussed, and the necessity for translators to develop context-appropriate equivalence strategies was demonstrated through examples from the works of writers such as Goethe, Remarque, and Zweig. The findings reveal that success in literary translation depends not only on transferring the literal meanings of words, but also on reconstructing the emotional atmosphere, cultural connotations, and aesthetic structure of the text in the target language. The study emphasizes the importance of contextual and cultural analysis in literary translations between German and Azerbaijani Turkish.

Key words: Literary translation, word choice, equivalence, German–Azerbaijani Turkish translations, synonymy, antonymy, homonymy, polysemy.

Introduction. Translation is not merely the process of transferring oral or written expressions from one language into another; it is also a multidimensional communicative activity that enables the exchange of knowledge, ideas, aesthetic values, and worldviews between cultures. Literary translation, in particular, is regarded as one of the most complex fields of translation studies because it requires the reconstruction not only of meaning, but also of the emotional atmosphere, aesthetic structure, cultural connotations, and the author's stylistic features within the target language. Research conducted in the global scholarly literature on translation theory demonstrates that issues such as equivalence, fidelity, cultural transfer, foreignization, domestication, and stylistic transmission constitute some of the central problems of literary translation. Especially in translations carried out between languages belonging to different language families, the problem of word choice becomes more prominent in terms of semantic shifts and aesthetic losses.

The structural, cultural, and semantic differences between German and Azerbaijani Turkish further transform word choice into a significant problem area within the literary translation process. The contrast between the syntactic density and conceptual precision of German and the rhythmic, metaphorical, and emotionally expressive structure of Azerbaijani Turkish requires translators to produce creative solutions not only on the linguistic level but also on the cultural and aesthetic levels. Nevertheless, studies concerning the transfer of synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, and polysemous words in literary translations from German into Azerbaijani Turkish remain limited. This situation increases the scholarly significance of the present research.

The aim of this study is to examine word choice problems in literary translations from German into Azerbaijani Turkish from the perspectives of translation theory, equivalence, and style, and particularly to reveal the semantic and aesthetic problems caused by synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, and polysemous words during the translation process. Through selected examples from the works of German authors such as Goethe, Remarque, and Zweig, the study evaluates translators' context-

appropriate word choice strategies and concludes that success in literary translation depends not only on the transfer of meaning, but also on reconstructing the aesthetic and cultural structure of the text in the target language.

The Historical Development of Translation and Its Role in Intercultural Communication

Translation, as one of the oldest cultural and communicative activities in human history, is not merely the process of transferring words and expressions from one language into another, but also a fundamental civilizational practice that enables the circulation of knowledge, ideas, beliefs, aesthetic values, and cultural experiences among civilizations. The need for communication that emerged as human communities became divided into different languages transformed translation into an indispensable instrument of intercultural relations throughout history. In this respect, translation is regarded not only as a linguistic transfer, but also as a creative and multidimensional activity that sustains intercultural communication, intellectual interaction, and historical continuity. Goethe's definition of translation as one of the most important means of communication among people clearly demonstrates its historical and social function (Nəzərova, 2021, pp. 261-262). As reflected in the narrative of the Tower of Babel, humanity's division from a common language into different languages has been interpreted as a symbolic indication of cultural fragmentation; consequently, translation has been considered a fundamental mechanism of communication that eliminates alienation among different communities (Kızıltan, 2000, p. 71). Therefore, the history of translation can also be read as the history of humanity's effort to understand one another, transcend cultural boundaries, and establish a common intellectual sphere.

The origins of translation activities date back to very ancient times. According to Bayramov's studies, the discovery of the earliest written translation examples in ancient Egypt demonstrates that translation activities emerged during the earliest stages of human history (Bayramov, 1978, p. 7). War records, commercial documents, and religious texts dating back to the third millennium BCE reveal that translation initially functioned not only as a cultural practice but also as an application arising from administrative, military, and economic necessities. The Aswan inscriptions, which indicate that the princes of Elephantine also served as interpreters, show that translation and interpreting held an important social and political position in ancient Egypt (Nəzərova, 2021, p. 262). Clay tablets discovered in Nineveh, Achaemenid cuneiform documents, and ancient papyri further prove that translation activities possessed an institutional character within the civilizations of the Near East (Səmədova, 2024, p. 200).

One of the most remarkable examples in the history of translation is the translation of the Epic of Gilgamesh from Sumerian into Akkadian, which demonstrates the importance of translation in preserving and circulating cultural heritage (Nəzərova, 2021, p. 262). Similarly, the translation of Homer's *Odyssey* into Latin was regarded not merely as the transfer of a text into another language, but as a historical turning point through which ancient Greek thought was transmitted into Roman culture (Nağıyeva, 2009, p. 9). Thus, from its earliest stages, translation developed not simply as a process of word transfer, but as a means of transmitting cultural experiences and aesthetic values to new societies.

A significant portion of translations produced during Antiquity was based on the principle of word-for-word translation. This approach, which regarded the source text as an absolute authority, placed the translator in a largely passive position and relegated the reconstruction of meaning, aesthetic structure, and cultural context in the target language to the background (Kızıltan, 2000, pp. 74–75). Nevertheless, the approach introduced by Cicero liberated translators from absolute dependence on the source text and contributed to the development of a freer understanding that prioritized meaning, effect, and expressive power (Kızıltan, 2000, p. 77). During the Middle Ages, translation activities developed primarily around the transmission of religious texts. While Bible translations gained importance with the spread of Christianity throughout Europe, the great translation movement that began in

the Islamic world from the seventh century onward played a decisive role in the development of scientific and philosophical thought (Nəzərova, 2021, p. 263). Through translations from Greek, Syriac, and Persian conducted in centers such as the House of Wisdom (Bayt al-Hikma) in Baghdad, accumulated knowledge in science, medicine, astronomy, and philosophy was transferred into Islamic civilization and later carried to Europe through the Toledo School of Translators (Nəzərova, 2021, p. 264). In this way, translation functioned as an intellectual bridge between East and West and became the primary instrument of intercivilizational knowledge exchange.

During the Renaissance and Humanist periods, the understanding of translation gained a new direction. Admiration for ancient Greek and Roman culture transformed translation into one of the major instruments of cultural rebirth. Humanist translators sought to preserve not only the meaning of the source text, but also its aesthetic structure, word order, and expressive power (Kızıltan, 2000, p. 81). Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German is considered the beginning of a new era in translation history. By prioritizing a natural language that ordinary people could understand, Luther emphasized the comprehensibility of the target text and thereby contributed to the development of modern translation thought (Geldi, 2025, p. 53). Under the influence of Enlightenment thought during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, translation came to be regarded not merely as text transfer, but as an intellectual activity in which meaning, cultural context, and the relationship established with the reader were consciously organized (Akalin, 2018, p. 1).

With the rise of the Romantic period, translation theory was reconsidered within the framework of culture, national identity, and literary originality. During this era, rather than completely adapting a foreign work to the target culture, it was argued that the originality and foreignness of the work should be preserved in translation (Yücel, 2016, pp. 101-102). Consequently, translation began to be perceived as a field of experience that confronts readers with the intellectual and aesthetic world of another culture. The growing importance of concepts such as untranslatability, foreignization, and cultural originality in modern translation theory is also closely connected with this historical process.

The Formation of the Translation Tradition in Azerbaijan and Translations of German Literature

The formation of the translation tradition in Azerbaijan is closely connected with the cultural sphere of the medieval East. From the fourteenth century onward, the intensive cultural interaction among Arabic, Persian, and Turkish literary traditions made a significant contribution to the development of translation activities in Azerbaijan (Əsgərli, 2009, p. 9). In the early stages, the translation of religious texts, commentaries, and hadith books occupied a central position; however, over time, classical works of Eastern literature such as Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, Saadi's *Gulistan*, and the works of Nizami were also translated into Azerbaijani Turkish (Səmədova, 2024, p. 200).

Both literal and free translation approaches can be observed in the medieval Azerbaijani translation tradition. As Academician Möhsün Nağısoylu notes, literal translation is based on transferring word equivalents directly, whereas free translation aims to reconstruct meaning within the natural structure of the target language (Nağısoylu, 2000, p. 19). The fact that Eastern translators attached greater importance to free translation demonstrates that they perceived translation not as a mechanical transfer but as a process of creative reproduction. This approach can clearly be observed in Fuzûlî's masterful translation of Jami's *Chehel Hadith* into Azerbaijani Turkish (Səmədova, 2024, p. 202).

During the Safavid period, the Azerbaijani translation tradition entered a new stage of development. The translation of works such as *Şühedanâme* and *Sheikh Safi Tezkiresi* into the native language contributed to the development of prose literature, while in the nineteenth century, contacts established with Russian and European literature enabled the Azerbaijani translation school to engage more intensively with Western culture (Səmədova, 2024, p. 203). Thus, translation became one of the principal instruments for the dissemination of modern literary genres, new aesthetic perspectives, and contemporary systems of thought in Azerbaijan.

The translation of Azerbaijani literature into European languages has also been of great importance in terms of intercultural relations. In particular, the translation of classical authors such as Nizami Ganjavi, Nesimi, Fuzûlî, and Hâkânî into European languages contributed to the recognition of Azerbaijani literary thought within world literature. However, Azerbaijani–German literary relations occupy a special place within this process. The fact that the first translations from German into Azerbaijani Turkish began with the activities of M. Topçubaşov is regarded as one of the important stages in the introduction of German literature into the Azerbaijani cultural environment (Əlimirzəyeva-Mustafayeva, 1999, p. 15). In later periods, the works of German writers such as Goethe, Schiller, Heine, Anna Seghers, and Bertolt Brecht were translated into Azerbaijani Turkish, enabling Azerbaijani readers to become acquainted with German thought, Romanticism, and the humanistic worldview.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust* and *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, Friedrich Schiller's *The Robbers* and *The Maid of Orleans*, as well as Heinrich Heine's poetry, are among the significant examples of the Azerbaijani translation school. The translation of these works into Azerbaijani Turkish not only introduced German literature, but also contributed to enriching Azerbaijani national literary thought with new themes and aesthetic possibilities. Concepts such as German Romanticism, the idea of freedom, the individual's inner conflict, and social criticism created new layers of meaning within the Azerbaijani literary environment. Although translation activities during the Soviet period were carried out under ideological control, interest in German literature developed in a freer and more multidimensional manner after independence. In particular, the publication of world literary classics in Azerbaijani Turkish in accordance with the decree issued by İlham Aliyev on August 24, 2007 enabled important representatives of German literature to reach broader audiences. The translation of the works of writers such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Hermann Hesse, Stefan Zweig, Franz Kafka, Heinrich Böll, and Erich Maria Remarque into Azerbaijani Turkish represented not only a literary event, but also an important indicator of Azerbaijan's integration into world culture.

Through these translations, Azerbaijani readers gained the opportunity to become more closely acquainted with the history, culture, intellectual world, and aesthetic values of the German people, while the Azerbaijani translation school itself became linguistically and artistically enriched. Thus, translations from Azerbaijani into German and from German into Azerbaijani Turkish contributed to strengthening cultural dialogue between the two peoples, increasing mutual literary interaction, and establishing a broader sphere of shared understanding within world literature.

Word Choice, Equivalence, and Stylistic Problems in Literary Translation

Literary translation is not merely the process of transferring meaning from one language into another, but also the reconstruction of a culture's aesthetic world, mode of thought, emotional atmosphere, and artistic system of expression. For this reason, unlike other types of translation, literary translation aims not only to convey informative content but also to recreate the aesthetic effect, stylistic features, and emotional tone of the source text within the target language. From the perspective of translation theory, it becomes evident that translation must preserve not only meaning, but also form, rhythm, harmony, and expressive power. Indeed, as early as the Renaissance period, Dante emphasized that the greatest difficulty in translating poetry lies in the impossibility of transferring the harmony and musicality established in poetry completely into another language (Vəliyeva and Hacıyeva, 2022, p. 6). This view reveals the inevitability of aesthetic loss, recreation, and interpretative approaches, particularly in literary translation.

The concepts of fidelity, adequacy, and equivalence, which constitute the foundation of literary translation, demonstrate that translation is not a mechanical operation based solely on dictionary correspondences. A.V. Fyodorov defines translation as the reproduction of content expressed through the means of one language into another language while preserving semantic integrity and the principle of fidelity (Vəliyeva and Hacıyeva, 2022, p. 9). Similarly, Qak emphasizes that the

task of translation is not only to transfer thoughts expressed in the source language, but also to reconstruct the formal and stylistic characteristics of the text through the possibilities of the target language. According to him, the fundamental element distinguishing translation from other forms of transfer is the preservation of the relationship between content and form. This approach becomes especially prominent in literary texts, because a literary work reflects not only an individual expression but also the cultural memory, aesthetic understanding, and linguistic worldview of a particular society (Əliquliyeva, 2026, p. 164).

In this context, literary translation should be regarded as a creative process of reproduction that aims to create a similar aesthetic and emotional effect on the reader beyond merely transferring meaning. Eugene Nida's concept of "dynamic equivalence" also supports this idea. According to Nida, a successful translation is measured not only by conveying the information contained in the source text, but also by recreating in the target reader an effect similar to that experienced by the source reader (Nida, 1964, p. 120). The types of equivalence proposed by Werner Koller (denotative, connotative, pragmatic, and formal-aesthetic equivalence) likewise demonstrate that literary translation must take into account not only meaning, but also form, aesthetic structure, connotations, and reader response (Koller, 1992, pp. 215–216). Therefore, literary translation is a multilayered act of reconstruction that requires the translator to make creative decisions on linguistic, cultural, and aesthetic levels.

At the center of this creative process lies word choice. In literary texts, words are not merely units that carry meaning; they are also artistic instruments that create rhythm, atmosphere, character, emotion, and aesthetic connotation. Meyer regarded word choice not simply as a stylistic issue, but as the fundamental factor determining the expressive power of literary language (Meyer, 1906, p. 23). According to him, the correct word must convey not only the basic meaning of a thought, but also its emotional, cultural, and stylistic value. Therefore, word choice is not merely the act of finding dictionary equivalents, but the process of expressing thought in the most aesthetically and communicatively appropriate form.

Sowinski also identifies appropriateness, clarity, and concreteness as the fundamental principles of correct word choice. According to him, finding the right word often means solving the central problem of expression, because words not only convey information but also determine the emotional and aesthetic impact of a text (Sowinski, 1999, p. 201). Similarly, Riesel argues that ambiguity in word choice leads to the fragmentation of thought and weakens expressive power (Riesel, 1963, p. 42). Golub likewise emphasizes that every word carries a particular semantic and logical burden, and that an incorrectly chosen word may damage the entire aesthetic structure of a text. Therefore, in literary translation, word choice plays a decisive role not only in terms of linguistic accuracy, but also with regard to logical coherence, aesthetic harmony, and communicative effect.

Demirçizadə's views on word choice are of particular importance for literary translation. Dəmirçizadə evaluates word choice not merely as a problem of lexical equivalence, but as a fundamental stylistic element in the construction of literary imagery and the preservation of a text's aesthetic effect. According to him, translators should consciously make use of synonymous or near-synonymous words, figurative expression, sound harmony, and phonetic associations. Not only the conceptual meaning of a word, but also its sound structure, syllabic arrangement, rhythm, and emotional tone are significant in translation (Dəmirçizadə, 1962, pp. 32–33). This approach demonstrates that word choice occupies a central place in the process of aesthetic creation in literary translation.

In literary translations from Azerbaijani into German, word choice becomes even more complex. Azerbaijani Turkish and German not only belong to different language families, but also represent different cultural modes of thought, aesthetic traditions, and systems of expression. Azerbaijani Turkish is characterized by figurative expression, emotional intensity, rhythmic structure, and a vivid style rooted in folk speech, whereas German stands out as a more systematic language with strong structural and syntactic density. Therefore, in translations from Azerbaijani into German, the translator's

primary task is not merely to transfer meaning, but also to reconstruct the emotional and aesthetic atmosphere specific to Azerbaijani literary language within the expressive possibilities of German.

This issue becomes especially evident in the translation of figurative expressions, idioms, dialectal features, and cultural connotations. In Azerbaijani Turkish, a word often carries not only an objective meaning, but also reflects social belonging, emotional tone, cultural memory, and character traits. In order to preserve this multilayered semantic structure in German translations, translators must develop context-appropriate equivalence strategies. At this point, direct equivalents are not always sufficient; in some cases, synonymous, periphrastic, or occasional equivalences may need to be employed (Əliquliyeva, 2026, pp. 170–171). Particularly in transferring vocabulary specific to Azerbaijani culture into German, explanatory and contextual solutions gain importance.

The decisive role of word choice in literary translation can clearly be observed in Qurbanlı's Azerbaijani Turkish translation of Erich Maria Remarque's novel *Lisbon Night*. Remarque's psychologically dense language, built upon inner monologue and existential loneliness, is recreated in translation not only on the semantic level but also on emotional and aesthetic levels. For example, the German expression "wie erlöst" translated as "sanki, ayılmışam" does not merely convey the meaning of "as if relieved," but also expresses the character's inner transformation in a more natural and effective way in Azerbaijani Turkish. Similarly, the sentence "Die Schwere und Verlegenheit wich" rendered as "Ürək ağrıları da, pərtlik də çəkilib getdi" reproduces not the mechanical equivalent of the word "burden," but rather the character's psychological distress and emotional weight more powerfully in the target language. Here, the translator attempts to achieve emotional and expressive adequacy beyond semantic equivalence.

A similar situation can also be observed in the comparison of different Azerbaijani Turkish translations of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. In contrast to S. Şamilov's more word-bound approach, Qurbanlı's translation demonstrates a more natural, poetic, and fluent style. For instance, translating the expression "das liebe Tal" as "dörd yanımdakı gözəl vadi" preserves not only the semantic meaning, but also the romantic atmosphere of nature, emotional warmth, and poetic tone. Expressions such as "Keçilməz qaranlıq," "küllü-rəhmanın həniri," and "ayrı-ayrı saçaqlar oğurlanıb daxili müqəddəsiyə baş vuranda" recreate Goethe's romantic spirit through the aesthetic and rhythmic possibilities of Azerbaijani Turkish.

Similar problems also arise in translations from Azerbaijani into German. The emotional intensity, poetic quality, and metaphorical expression rooted in Azerbaijani folk culture do not always find direct equivalents in German. Therefore, translators are sometimes required to expand meaning and at other times to prioritize aesthetic effect in order to produce new solutions. Particularly when translating Azerbaijani poetry into German, sound repetitions, alliterations, diminutive suffixes, and emotional connotations are largely restructured. This is because the rhythmic and syntactic structure of German differs significantly from the melodic flow of Azerbaijani Turkish. Consequently, translators attempt to preserve the aesthetic effect while also creating a natural and readable text in the target language by taking into account the structural differences between the two languages.

Problems of Synonymy, Antonymy, Homonymy, and Polysemy in Literary Translations from German into Azerbaijani Turkish

In literary texts, words are not merely linguistic units that convey information; they are also fundamental elements that construct characters, create atmosphere, determine the rhythm of narration, evoke emotions in readers, and sustain the artistic integrity of the text. In this respect, word choice in literary translations from German into Azerbaijani Turkish reveals not only the translator's linguistic competence, but also their aesthetic sensitivity, cultural knowledge, and interpretative ability.

One of the most evident manifestations of word choice problems emerges in the field of synonymy. In linguistics, synonymy is defined as the existence of semantic proximity or similarity between two or more linguistic units. Nick Riemer explains synonymy as semantic sameness between two

words (Riemer, 2010, p. 150), whereas Hadumod Bussmann evaluates this concept as a semantic relationship establishing strong similarity of meaning between two or more linguistic expressions (Bussmann, 1998, p. 1165). John Lyons likewise states that expressions carrying the same meaning may be regarded as synonymous (Lyons, 1995, p. 60). Nevertheless, absolute synonymy is highly limited in natural languages. According to Stephen Ullmann, one word can replace another in every context without producing any cognitive or emotional difference only in cases of absolute synonymy, and such examples are extremely rare in natural languages (Ullmann, 1959, pp. 108–109). Therefore, in literary translation, synonymy should be approached not merely as semantic sameness, but as a relative semantic proximity dependent on context, usage environment, stylistic level, and aesthetic function.

German possesses a broad synonymic system capable of expressing the same concept with different psychological, social, and stylistic tones. For example, the verbs “sehen,” “blicken,” “schauen,” “starren,” and “glotzen” all generally belong to the semantic field of “looking,” yet each carries a different nuance of meaning. “Blicken” refers to a more conscious and attentive look, “schauen” to observation, “starren” to a prolonged and fixed stare, while “glotzen” expresses a rude or disturbing gaze. Rendering all of these words into Azerbaijani Turkish solely with the verb “baxmaq” may weaken the psychological detail and subtlety of character behavior present in the source text. Therefore, depending on the context, translators should select different equivalents such as “göz gəzdirmək,” “zillənmək,” “dik baxmaq,” or “mat-mat baxmaq.” Similarly, words such as “Angst,” “Furcht,” “Sorge,” “Kummer,” “Leid,” and “Verzweiflung” all belong to the semantic field of fear, anxiety, and suffering, yet they do not express the same emotional state. “Angst” conveys a more internal and existential fear, “Furcht” fear in the face of a concrete threat, “Sorge” anxiety, “Kummer” inner distress, “Leid” suffering, and “Verzweiflung” profound despair. Rendering all of these into Azerbaijani Turkish merely as “qorxu,” “narahatlıq,” or “kədər” may narrow the psychological layers of the text. For this reason, more functional equivalents such as “tələş,” “vahimə,” “daxili sıxıntı,” “əzab,” and “ümitsizlik” should be preferred according to context.

The problem of synonymy is not limited solely to the transfer of meaning; it is also decisive in terms of stylistic transfer. In German, the verbs “essen,” “speisen,” and “fressen” all express the act of eating, yet they do not belong to the same stylistic level. While “speisen” carries a more formal and refined tone, “fressen” has a rude and derogatory connotation. Translating all of these words into Azerbaijani Turkish simply as “yemək” in every context may eliminate the character’s social position, the narrator’s attitude, and the stylistic level of the text. Depending on the context, alternatives such as “qidalanmaq,” “yemək yemək,” “boğazlamaq,” or “tixışdırmaq” may be considered. This demonstrates that word choice possesses not only semantic, but also social, stylistic, and aesthetic functions. As E.G. Riesel points out, correct word choice plays a decisive role in conveying thought clearly, completely, and effectively; synonyms constitute one of the fundamental tools that allow translators to reconstruct thought in accordance with context, style, and communicative purpose (Riesel, 1963, p. 42).

Another important dimension of word choice problems is the transfer of antonyms. Antonymy is one of the fundamental categories of the lexical-semantic system of language and is closely connected with the human tendency to perceive reality through oppositions. Words name not only objects and events, but also abstract concepts formed within the human mind; the existence of oppositional qualities in nature and social life provides the basis for expressing these oppositions through words in language (Xəlilova, 2021, p. 10). John Lyons classifies oppositional relations into three main groups: antonymy, complementarity, and converseness. According to him, the opposition found in antonyms arises not merely because words exclude one another, but because they semantically condition one another (Xəlilova, 2021, pp. 10–12). This approach demonstrates that antonyms are not simply words with opposite meanings, but important elements that create semantic tension, dramatic structure, and intellectual contrast within a text.

In German literary texts, oppositions such as “Licht-Dunkelheit,” “Leben-Tod,” “Freiheit-Gefangenschaft,” and “Stille-Lärm” often function not only at the lexical level, but also at symbolic and philosophical levels. The opposition between “Licht” and “Dunkelheit” may include not only the physical relationship between light and darkness, but also abstract semantic layers such as hope-despair, knowledge-ignorance, and life-death. Therefore, rendering this opposition simply as “ışıq-qaranlıq” in every context may not always be sufficient; depending on the aesthetic and symbolic structure of the text, equivalents such as “nur-zülmət,” “aydınlıq-qaranlıq,” or “ümid-ümitsizlik” may be preferred. Similarly, the opposition “warm-kalt” may signify not only physical warmth and coldness, but also intimacy and distance in human relations. The expression “Ein warmer Empfang” should, depending on context, be translated not as “isti qarşılama,” but rather as “səmimi qarşılama,” while “kalter Empfang” may convey not merely “soyuq qarşılama,” but in some cases “laqeyd münasibət” or “rəsmi və məsafəli qarşılama.”

Context plays a decisive role in the translation of antonyms. The German word “leicht” may, depending on context, mean “light,” “easy,” “insignificant,” or “comfortable”; therefore, its opposite also changes according to context. In the semantic field of physical weight, the word “schwer” establishes opposition with the meaning “heavy,” whereas in the context of tasks or problems it means “difficult.” For this reason, translating the phrase “eine leichte Aufgabe” as “hafif görev” would be incorrect; the appropriate equivalent here should be “asan tapşırıq.” This example demonstrates that word choice should be based not on dictionary equivalence, but on the functional semantic relationship within the text. Likewise, while the opposition “gut-schlecht” can generally be translated as “yaxşı-pis,” more literary and aristocratic oppositions such as “edel-gemein” require more functional equivalents such as “nəcib-rəzil” or “alıcınab-alçaq.”

Homonyms also create significant word choice problems in literary translations from German into Azerbaijani Turkish. The term “homonym” derives from the Greek words “homos” and “onoma,” meaning “same name.” In linguistics, homonyms are defined as words that are identical in spelling or pronunciation but carry different meanings (Hüseynxanova, 2020, p. 29). Although homonyms appear similar to polysemous words, there is a fundamental distinction between them: in polysemous words, the different meanings share a common conceptual connection, whereas in homonyms, words with the same phonetic structure have no direct semantic relation, or such a relation has disappeared over historical development. For this reason, homonyms may create serious semantic ambiguities during the translation process.

In German, the word “Bank” may mean both “bank” and “bench.” The sentence “Er sitzt auf der Bank” should be translated as “O, skamyada oturur”; however, if the economic institution meaning is taken into consideration, the target text would produce a meaningless expression. Similarly, the word “Schloss” can mean both “castle/palace” and “lock.” Depending on the context, the sentence “Das Schloss ist alt” may be translated either as “Qəsər qədimdir” or “Kilid köhnədir.” Such examples demonstrate that, in the translation of homonyms, not only the sentence-level meaning but also the overall context of the text must be taken into account. In literary texts, homonyms are sometimes deliberately employed to create irony, wordplay, symbolic depth, or polysemy. In Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s work, the word “Partie” may, depending on context, mean “group,” “game,” “side,” or “entertainment”; the translator’s rendering of this expression as “dəstəyə qoşulmaq” represents a contextual choice that foregrounds the meaning of social togetherness (Goethe, 1958, p. 29; Qöte, 2010, p. 638).

One of the areas that requires the greatest attention in word choice is polysemy. Polysemy refers to the situation in which a word acquires different meanings according to context. Werner Koller states that polysemy creates serious problems during the translation process on lexical, grammatical, and syntactic levels (Koller, 2011, p. 139). Particularly in literary texts, the meanings of words are shaped not only by their basic conceptual values, but also by their connotative and aesthetic functions. Therefore, the translator must accurately determine which semantic aspect of a

polysemous word is active within the text. According to Bayramov, polysemy is resolved through context and situation during the translation process; the fact that a linguistic sign may possess multiple referents forces the translator to consider the text as a whole (Bayramov, 2008, p. 50). Abdullayev likewise evaluates phenomena such as polysemy, homonymy, synonymy, and idiomaticity as complex characteristics inherent in the natural structure of language (Abdullayev, 2013, p. 56). Dəmirçizadə also states that words are often not monosemous, but acquire new semantic layers in different contexts (Dəmirçizadə, 1962, p. 152).

The problem of polysemy can clearly be observed through the German word “grau.” In its basic sense, “grau” denotes the color “gray”; however, depending on context, it may also evoke connotations of gloom, uncertainty, paleness, hopelessness, or psychological distress. In Erich Maria Remarque’s work, the sentence “Es war grauer Morgen draußen” translated into Azerbaijani Turkish as “Bayırda tutqun bir səhər açılırdı” [Remarque, 1976, p. 16; Remark, 2009, p. 25] demonstrates that the word is conveyed not only through its color meaning, but also together with the atmosphere it creates. Likewise, the sentence “Das Mädchen lag grau in den Kissen” translated as “Qızın solğun bənizi yastıqdan güclə seçilirdi” (Remarque, 1976, p. 38; Remark, 2009, p. 50) shows that the word “grau” is associated not with physical color, but with a sense of illness, paleness, and weakness. Similarly, the expression “grauhaarige Herrschaftsdienner” in Stefan Zweig’s work translated as “çalbaş kamer-diner” (Zweig, 1986, p. 155; Svayq, 2010, p. 314) demonstrates that not only the color of the hair, but also the connotations of old age and experience are preserved in the target language.

Based on these examples, it can be argued that the problem of word choice in literary translation should be evaluated not merely on the lexical level, but within the entire aesthetic structure of the text. A translator cannot be satisfied with knowing only the dictionary equivalent of a word in the source language; they must also analyze the relationship of that word with character psychology, the narrator’s attitude, the rhythm of the text, its cultural connotations, and the effect it will create on the reader. Eugen Riesel’s classification of the stylistic function of word choice under three categories—“the precise, accurate, and concrete expression of ideological content,” “the expression of the speaker’s ideological-political position,” and “the expression of the speaker’s individual-subjective attitude” (Riesel, 1954, p. 41) – demonstrates that word choice is not merely a matter of transferring meaning, but also a question of intellectual and aesthetic positioning. Likewise, the emphasis by Riesel and Şendels that vitality, concreteness, imagery, and emotional intensity in literary language are constructed through different layers of vocabulary is highly significant in this respect (Riesel, 1975, p. 29).

Conclusion. The problem of word choice in literary translations from German into Azerbaijani Turkish is not merely a matter of linguistic equivalence; it is also a multilayered translation issue directly connected with cultural transfer, aesthetic reproduction, and the preservation of style. The findings of this study demonstrate that success in literary translation does not depend solely on transferring the dictionary meanings of words, but also requires the reconstruction of the emotional atmosphere, cultural connotations, rhythmic structure, and aesthetic effect of the source text within the target language. This situation becomes particularly evident in translations between languages belonging to different language families, such as German and Azerbaijani Turkish.

Within the scope of the study, it has been observed that synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, and polysemous words create significant semantic and stylistic problems during the translation process. The fact that many German words carry different psychological, cultural, and aesthetic layers of meaning depending on context makes it insufficient for translators to rely solely on direct equivalents. Therefore, contextual equivalence, functional adequacy, and cultural interpretation emerge as fundamental elements of the literary translation process. The examples drawn from the works of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Erich Maria Remarque, and Stefan Zweig demonstrate that successful translations are only possible through creative translation strategies capable of reconstructing the aesthetic spirit and expressive power of the text in the target language.

The research has also revealed that translations of German literature into Azerbaijani Turkish perform an important function not only in literary terms, but also in terms of cultural and intellectual interaction. The transfer of German literature into the Azerbaijani cultural environment has contributed to the development of cultural dialogue between the two peoples and has helped enrich the Azerbaijani translation school linguistically and aesthetically. In this context, literary translation functions as an intercultural bridge that creates a shared aesthetic and intellectual space among different societies.

References:

1. Abdullayev, S. Ə. (2013). Qeyri-səlis dilçilik təcrübəsi. *Victory*.
2. Akalın, R. (2018). Çeviri derslerinde metin seçimi ölçütleri. *Diyalog Interkulturelle Zeitschrift Für Germanistik*, 6(1), 227–236.
3. Bayramov, Q. H. (2008). Tərcümə sənəti. *OKA Offset*.
4. Bussmann, H. (1998). Routledge dictionary of language and linguistics. *Routledge*.
5. Dəmirçizadə, Ə. M. (1962). Azərbaycan dilinin üslubiyyəti. *Azərbaycan dilində*.
6. Əliquliyeva, L. (2026). Bədii tərcümədə ekvivalentlik. *İpək Yolu*, (1), 162–174.
7. Əlimirzəyeva-Mustafayeva, F. (1999). “Kitabi-Dədə Qorqud” dastanının alman filoloji fikrində. *Elm*.
8. Əsgərli, F. (2009). Bədii tərcümə prinsipləri. ADPU-nun Nəşriyyatı.
9. Fatimə Vəliyeva, & Hacıyeva, A. (2022). Şifahi tərcümənin prinsipləri. *Zəngəzurda çap evi*.
10. Geldi, M. (2025). Geçmişdən günümüze çevirinin serüveni. *Kesit Akademi Dergisi*, 11(43), 51–78.
11. Goethe, J. W. (1958). Die Leiden des Jungen Werthers. *Fremdsprachige Literatur*.
12. Hüseynxanova, A. (2020). Omonimlər leksik semantik hadisə kimi. *Elmi İş Jurnalı*, 29–33.
13. Kızıltan, R. (2000). Antik çağdan 19. yüzyl sonuna kadar edebi çeviri kuramları-I: Antik çağdan Barok çağın sonuna kadar. *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi*, 40(1–2), 71–88.
14. Koller, W. (1992). Einführung in die Übersetzungswissenschaft. *Heidelberg & Berlin*.
15. Koller, W. (2011). Einführung in die Übersetzungswissenschaft. Narr Francke Attempto GmbH.
16. Lyons, J. (1995). Linguistic semantics: An introduction. Cambridge University Press.
17. Meyer, M. R. (1906). Deutsche Stilistik. Oskar Beck.
18. Nağısoylu, M. (2000). Orta əsrlərdə Azərbaycanda tərcümə sənəti. *Elm*.
19. Nağıyeva, Ş. B. (2009). Bədii tərcümə nəzəriyyə və praktika. Çinar.
20. Nəzərova, A. (2021, October 15). Tərcümə tarixi və Azərbaycanda tərcümə sənətinin inkişafı. In “*Elm tarixi və elmşünaslıq: fənlərarası tədqiqatlar*” mövzusunda II Beynəlxalq elmi konfransın materialları.
21. Nida, E. (1964). Towards a science of translating. E. J. Brill.
22. Qöte, Y. V. (2010). Seçilmiş əsərləri (Ç. Qurbanlı, Trans.). Şərq-Qərb.
23. Remark, E. M. (2009). Seçilmiş əsərləri (Ç. Qurbanlı & V. Hacıyev, Trans.). Şərq-Qərb.
24. Remarque, E. M. (1976). Die Nacht von Lissabon. Aufbau-Verlag Berlin und Weimar.
25. Riemer, N. (2010). Introducing semantics. Cambridge University Press.
26. Riesel, E. (1954). Abriß der deutschen Stilistik. Hochschule.
27. Riesel, E. (1963). Stilistik der deutschen Sprache. Hochschule.
28. Riesel, E., & Schendels, E. (1975). Deutsche Stilistik. Hochschule.
29. Səmədova, L. (2024). Azərbaycan tərcümə sənəti Şərq və Qərb tərcüməçilik ənənələri kəsiyində. *Poetika.izm*, (1), 199–207.
30. Sowinski, B. (1999). Stilistik: Stiltheorien und Stilanalysen. J. B. Metzler.
31. Svayq, Ş. (2010). Seçilmiş əsərləri (Ç. Qurbanlı, V. Hacıyev, Y. Savalan, Z. Məmmədov, H. Arzulu, & A. Nəbi, Trans.). Şərq-Qərb.
32. Ullmann, S. (1972). Semantics: An introduction to the science of meaning. Basil Blackwell.
33. Xəlilova, S. R. q. (2021). Azərbaycan və ingilis dillərində antonimlik (Avtoreferat). Bakı.
34. Yücel, F. (2016). Çevirinin tarihi. Çeviribilim Yayınları.
35. Zweig, S. (1986). Triumph und Tragik des Erasmus von Rotterdam. Der Morgen.