

The Colloquial Speech and Criminal-Invective  
Substandard Lexicon in “Shaytanat”  
(Devildom) by Tahir Malik and the  
Problems of Translation into English

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ABSTRACT

*The study of criminological discourse and its linguistic dimensions has gained considerable scholarly attention globally, with researchers examining the semantics, pragmatics, and cultural foundations of criminal terminology across different languages and genres. Linguists have explored the evolution, usage, and social roles of criminal slang, with significant attention given to its semantic and cognitive characteristics in both legal and subcultural contexts. Investigations into the linguistic features of criminal argot and slang have offered insights into its structural complexity, its relationship with broader cultural norms, and its function within criminal subcultures. Additionally, comparative analyses of criminal discourse in various languages have highlighted the ways in which language shapes public perceptions of crime and criminality. In Uzbek linguistics, studies of legal and criminal lexicons have primarily focused on the internal structure of the language, offering fewer comprehensive comparisons with global perspectives. This article situates these linguistic observations within the context of Shaytanat (Devildom) by Tahir Malik, highlighting the novel’s unique representation of colloquial and criminal lexicons and the challenges of translating these culturally rich elements into English.*

**Keywords:** *Shaytanat*, criminal lexicon, invective speech, colloquial language, translation issues, cultural adaptation, Uzbek literature, criminal discourse, linguistic features, coded language.

## INTRODUCTION

Criminal speech, as linguistic and sociocultural phenomenon, serves as a mirror to the undercurrents of organized crime and the societal structures that sustain it. The analysis of criminal discourse not only unveils its structural-semantic features but also aids in understanding the mechanisms of power, manipulation, and social dynamics within illicit networks. Linguistic research into the criminal world enables a more profound comprehension of its communication practices, terminology, and invective lexicon, ultimately facilitating the development of strategies for combating crime, shaping criminal justice policies, and enhancing law enforcement practices.

As a critical component of social discourse, criminological language strengthens international cooperation and promotes solidarity among nations in the pursuit of justice. Furthermore, studying the structure, semantics, and pragmatics of criminal terminology enhances translation accuracy across languages, revealing the intricacies of synonymy, polysemy, and phraseological units in criminal lexicons. This process also necessitates the exploration of typological classifications of criminal terms across languages, offering insights into their comparative and translational challenges.

*Shaytanat* by Tahir Malik exemplifies how literature can encapsulate the complexities of criminal vocabulary and discourse. The novel stands out for its vivid portrayal of criminal jargon and substandard expressions deeply rooted in Uzbek culture. These linguistic features pose significant challenges when translating into English, requiring a balance between preserving cultural authenticity and achieving linguistic equivalence [21]. The need for meticulous translation methods becomes evident, particularly when dealing with idiomatic expressions, invective language, and culturally specific terms [12].

Criminal terminology extends its influence beyond literary and cultural domains, playing a critical role in law enforcement, journalism, and social sciences. For instance, terms like “mob boss”, “ragging out”, and “hush money” in English carry connotations that extended beyond their lexical definitions, shaping societal perceptions of crime. Similarly, “Shaytanat” employs terms like “avtoritet” (authority figure) and “obro” (reputation), reflecting power hierarchies within Uzbek criminal culture. The translation of culturally embedded criminal terminology often involves complex decisions. For instance, the term “blood feud” in English lacks the depth of the Uzbek “qasos olish”, which carries historical and cultural connotations tied to tribal justice systems. A comparative analysis of Shaytanat reveals similar translational difficulties.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of criminological discourse and its linguistic dimensions has gained significant attention worldwide. Researchers have investigated into the semantics, pragmatics, and cultural underpinnings of criminal terminology across various languages and genres. For instance, I. Langford, in his monographic research, systematically analyzed the semantic field of “crime”, highlighting shared and distinct semantic features of lexemes in both common usage and legal discourse [8]. Similarly, L. Kucheruk explored the linguistic and cognitive aspects of contemporary English legal terminology, offering insights into its complex structure and practical application [7].

Prominent works on criminal slang, particularly argot in the English language, have been contributed by leading European linguists such as J.C. Hotten, E.H. Partridge, and R. Spears. These scholars have extensively explored the linguistic intricacies of slang, focusing on its evolution, usage, and social functions within the context of the criminal underworld. For instance, J.C. Hotten’s seminal work, *A Dictionary of Modern Slang, Cant, and Vulgar Words*, explores the etymology and sociolinguistic aspects of criminal slang in Victorian England [4]. Similarly, Eric Partridge’s *A Dictionary of Slang and*

*Unconventional English* is a subculture, including criminals [15]. R. Spears has contributed notably with his works on American slang, such as *Slang and Euphemism*, offering insights into how reflects cultural and social changes over time [18].

In Russian linguistics, A.P. Sukhodolov and A.F. Moskovtsev adopted modern approaches to study criminal discourse [19], while N.A. Semenova specifically examines the phraseological expressions and their functions in F.M. Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* [17]. O. Fedunina expanded this perspective by analyzing crime within the artistic discourse, revealing its narrative and stylistic significance [3]. Moreover, German researcher U. Tabbert provided a comparative linguistic analysis of crimes, criminals, and victims as represented in German and British media, emphasizing the linguistic constructions shaping public perception [20].

In Uzbek linguistics, criminal terminology has also been explored, albeit less comprehensively. Researchers like M. Kosimova [5], Sh. Kuchimov [6], G. Gulomova [2], P. Nishonov [13], V.I. Normuratova [14], D.N. Satimova [16], F. Abdullayeva and K. Muydinov [1] have contributed to the study of legal and criminal lexicons. However, these studies often remain confined to the boundaries of the Uzbek language, lacking broader comparative insights with other languages such as English.

#### METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative and comparative linguistic analysis to explore the colloquial speech and criminal-invective substandard lexicon in *Shaytanat* (Devildom) by Tahir Malik, as well as the challenges of translating these elements into English. The following methodological approaches were used: textual analysis, semantic and pragmatic analysis, translation studies approach, comparative analysis, literature review on criminal studies in English, Russian, and Uzbek linguistics. In the results section of the article, an illustrative method is utilized to represent the linguistic and speech units found in the criminal underworld. This approach visually categorizes and explains key elements of the lexicon, including criminal argot, invective

expressions, idiomatic phrases, and metaphorical constructs, highlighting their roles within the broader socio-cultural and linguistic framework.

#### ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The novel *Saytanat* by Tahir Malik intricately weaves linguistic elements that vividly portray the criminal underworld's structure, social dynamics, and power hierarchies. These linguistic features include:

1. **Criminal terminology:** Criminal vocabulary as *tinchitmoq* (to silence, often implying to kill), *yo'q qilmoq* (to eliminate), *qoradori* (drugs, specifically heroin or opiates), and *shotir* (subordinates or henchmen) signify more than their dictionary. For instance, the term *qoradori* is not merely a generic term for drugs but is used within the narrative to symbolize power structures within the criminal hierarchy. Its presence in the text denotes a significant source of wealth and influence, serving as a central axis for conflicts and alliances within the underworld.
2. **Symbolic lexicon:** The use of *shaytoniy til* (devilish speech) highlights the language of deception and manipulation intrinsic to the criminal world. The term *shaytonsaroy* (literally Devil's Palace) in *Shaytanat* is laden with symbolic meaning. It functions as both a metaphorical and contextual representation of a space where unethical and sinister plans are conceived. Linguistically, this compound lexeme is formed from *shayton* (devil) and *saroy* (palace), signifying of a combination of grandeur and malevolence. Culturally, *shaytonsaroy* reflects the criminal hierarchy's reliance on spaces that are metaphorically detached from morality, presenting an almost theatrical or exaggerated representation of criminal authority.
3. **Idiomatic phrases:** Expressions such as *qon izidan bormoq* (follow the trail of blood) showcase the figurative language deeply embedded in the criminal discourse of *Shaytanat*. Another expression *qo'nimni so'rib tashlashdi* (literally they

sucked blood) metaphorically conveys a sense of extreme exploitation or betrayal. It implies that the speaker has been taken advantage of in a manipulative or harmful way. The phrase reflects an emotional intensity, suggesting that the speaker feels financially or morally drained, likely due to deceit or extortion.

Moreover, the novel *Shaytanat* incorporates a distinctive lexicon that vividly portrays the socio-cultural dynamics and hierarchical structures of the criminal underworld in Uzbek society. For instance, terms such as *qilich* (sword), which doubles as a nickname for criminal, and *chuvrindi* (trash/scum) a pejorative nickname, reflect both the denotative and connotative meanings imbued in the criminal world. The nickname *qilich* carries both a literal and figurative meaning, connoting strength, danger, and loyalty in the criminal world. If we turn our attention to the excerpt from the novel, we can analyze the invective vocabulary and expressions associated with the criminal underworld:

- By yer o'zimning qo'limda. Lekin... Xosilboyvachcha deganni eshitganmisiz? **O'shaning odamlari ko'z ochirmaydi. Qonim so'rib tashlashdi.**
- Shuni Fedyaga atdingmi?
- Qaysi Fedyaga? – shunday deb “Sotdingmi?” degan ma'noda Axadbeyga qaradi. – Axadbeyga qarama, menga qarab javob ber. Fedyaga nima deding?
- Shuni aytdim.
- Yordam ber, dedingmi?
- Ha.
- Ahmoqsan. Puling ko'p-u, aqling kam. U nima dedi, **o'zim tinchitaman**, dedimi?
- Ha.
- Sen bu yerdan ko'chib ket.
- Nega endi?
- **Qirg'inning uyasiga cho'p suqub qo'yibsani.** Kelib-kelib Fedyadan yordam so'raysanmi?
- Kimdan so'ray bo'lmasa?
- Kuching yetsaishla. Bo'lmasa **yag'ir bo'lib yuraver.** [10, 163]

In this context the phrase *qo'nimni so'rib tashlashdi* is commonly used in Uzbek to denote situations of oppression or exploitation but, in the criminal underworld, it may specifically allude to rival factions extorting or betraying someone. The *qonim* (my blood) serves as a metaphor for the individual's essence, dignity, or morality that lead to make the person under the pressure. The verb *so'rib tashladi* (sucked away) highlights a forceful or deliberate action, indicating the aggressive and exploitative behavior typical in criminal contexts. "They drained me dry" or "They sucked the life out of me" could be culturally appropriate translations for this expression, retaining its emotional and contextual intensity.

Another phrase *o'zim tinchitaman* (literally I will calm it myself) suggests an assertion of personal responsibility for resolving a conflict. The verb lexeme *tinchitaman* belongs to the colloquial vocabulary of the Uzbek language and, in criminal jargon, carries semantic connotations *o'ldirmoq* (to kill), *urmoq* (to beat), *yo'q qilmoq* (to eliminate) *ma'no semalariga ega*. In a criminal context, this likely refers to handling the matter through violent or decisive means. Within the dialogue:

**Yordam ber, dedingmi? / Ha.**

This exchange establishes the request for assistance, likely in a desperate or vulnerable situation. The acknowledgment "Ha" sets the stage for the following judgment and response.

U nima dedi, **o'zim tinchitaman**, dedimi?/ **Ha.**

The verb *tinchitaman* shifts from its literal meaning of "calming" or "pacifying" to a figurative, criminal connotation of eliminating or neutralizing. The context makes it evident that the term is not about peaceful resolution but about violent action, possibly murder or severe harm, as a mean to resolve the issue. This use of *tinchitaman* exemplifies how colloquial vocabulary can take on metaphorical or coded meanings in criminal discourse. In this case, it serves to obscure the explicit intent of violence, relying on shared cultural and contextual understanding within the

conversation. The dialogue illustrates the tension between surface-level politeness and the underlying menace, a hallmark of invective language in criminal settings. In the translation, the phrase “I’ll take care of it myself” or “I’ll silence it myself” effectively captures the dual meaning inherent in *o’zim tinchitaman*, encompassing both the notion of resolving a situation and the implied threat of violence. The term *o’zim tinchitaman* functions as a euphemistic expression, where its literal meaning – I’ll calm it down myself – is subverted in criminal jargon to convey a more ominous implication, such as eliminating a problem, whether through physical harm, silencing an adversary, or eradicating a threat entirely. This duality highlights the speaker’s intent to handle the matter decisively, with the exact nature of the resolution (peaceful or violent) left ambiguous, yet strongly leaning towards a violent resolution in the given context. For a translation of *o’zim tinchitaman* that remains faithful to the original intent while preserving the layered meaning, a contextualized adaptive translation would be most suitable.

The phrase *qitg’inning uyasiga cho’p suqib qo’yibsan* (literally you’ve poked a stick into the hornet’s nest) metaphorically suggests provoking a dangerous situation or entity. *Qitg’in* (plague or epidemic) symbolizes chaos or destruction, while *uyasi* (nest) implies the source or center of danger. The imagery of inserting a stick into a hornet’s nest evokes a deliberate or reckless action that has aggravated a volatile or perilous situation. The structure combines vivid metaphor with a reprimanding tone, implying the person’s action has unnecessarily escalated a conflict. This expression is rich in cultural imagery, resonating with Uzbek linguistic traditions where nature and everyday objects symbolize human behaviors and consequences. In the criminal underworld, it suggests that the person has disturbed a powerful or dangerous rival group. “You’ve stirred up a hornet’s nest” or “You’ve provoked chaos” effectively conveys the metaphorical and situational meaning.

These phrases exemplify the rich linguistic creativity and euphemism prevalent in the criminal lexicon. They are not only reflective of the characters’ emotions and intentions but also



serve to encode violence, betrayal, and hierarchy in ways that resonate with the socio-cultural dynamics of the setting. Translating such phrases requires careful attention to both their literal meanings and cultural connotations to ensure that their impact is preserved in the target language.

In this context, the phrase *Kimdan so'ray bo'lmasa?/ Kuching yetsa ishla. Bo'lmasa yag'ir bo'lib yuraver* carries a layered meaning deeply rooted in the distinctions of criminal slang and cultural context. *Kimdan so'ray bo'lmasa?* (Who else would you ask, if not me?) This rhetorical question conveys frustration or disdain, implying that the person lacks the autonomy or capability to seek help elsewhere, thereby underlying their dependency or helplessness. *Kuching yetsa ishla. Bo'lmasa yag'ir bo'lib yuraver.* (If you're capable, work. Otherwise, just be a **lackey/stooge/drudge**). The imperative tone reflects a sharp judgment. It suggests that the individual should either take responsibility and work hard (*kuching yetsa ishla*) or resign themselves to a degrading status within the criminal underworld (*yag'ir bo'lib yuraver*). The term *yag'ir*, according to *Explanatory Dictionary of Uzbek language*, literally refers to something filthy or tattered (especially regarding clothes) [9]. In this context, it metaphorically describes someone serving as a low-level operative or errand-runner in the criminal world, a person without status or respect who is reduced to servitude. The phrase implies not just degradation but also an admonition to know one's place within a harsh social or criminal hierarchy. It can be alternatively translated as:

- Who else would you ask, if not me?
- If you have the strength, work. Otherwise, keep degrading yourself by serving like a **worthless pawn**.

If we turn our attention to another excerpt from the novel, we can observe the specialized vocabulary of the criminal underworld, invective expressions characteristic of colloquial speech, as well as linguistic units commonly found in conversational Uzbek. This combination reflects the intricate interplay between the

informal spoken language and the coded lexicon specific to criminal discourse, adding depth and authenticity to the narrative:

- Mahmudga ber ularni. Mahmud, kallangni ishlatib, yo‘li bilan tergovchilarga ro‘para qil, **xitlanishmasin**. Haydar, ularning sharti qanaqa bo‘ladi?
- **Qoradori-da.**
- Qaerda bo‘lsa ham yetkazib beramiz. Sen Sanginani **ko‘zdan yo‘qot**.
- Uvol bo‘lmaydimi?
- O‘ldir deganim yo‘q, **ko‘zdan yo‘qot** dedim. Tergovchining akasini o‘ldirgan bolani topib uyiga tashlalar. **Sal eti o‘lib tursin**.
- Qaysi birini tashlaylik?
- Nechta o‘zi?
- **Uch-to‘rtta bo‘lib o‘ldirishgan**. Lekin o‘sha paytda bittasi qamalgan. Bittasi keyinroq do‘konda **qo‘lga tushgan**. Qolgan ikkitasining aybi kamroq deyishdi.
- O‘sha asosiy ikkitasini toplaring.[10, 160]
- Bu yerda **xitlanishmasin**so‘zi sezishmasin degani, qoradori narkotik degani, **ko‘zdan yo‘qot** aslida o‘ldir deagi, lekin bu kontekstdagi javobga binoan o‘ldir emas, balki boshqa joyga yo‘qot yoki og‘zini yum, umuman ko‘zga ko‘rinmasin, degani. **Sal eti o‘lib tursin** iborasi ham o‘ziga kelib tursin, adabini yesin, aqlini yig‘sin degani. **Uch-to‘rtta bo‘lib o‘ldirishgan** jinoyat olamiga tegishli bo‘lib, guruh bo‘lib o‘ldirganini anglatadi. **qo‘lga tushgan** esa **qamoqqa olingan deagni**. **Barchasi jinoyat olamiga tegishli so‘z va iboralar**.

The passage uses heavily coded and euphemistic language, typical of criminal underworld discourse, to obscure direct references to violence or crime. This type of lexicon serves several functions:



The term *xitlanishmasin* literally means don’t let them notice or don’t let them suspect. In the context, it conveys the importance of subtlety and ensuring that the investigators do not perceive or

sense any irregularities. The word *qoradori* refers to narcotics, specifically illegal drugs. Its colloquial usage here aligns with criminal jargon, emphasizing the illicit trade and its integration into the dialogue.

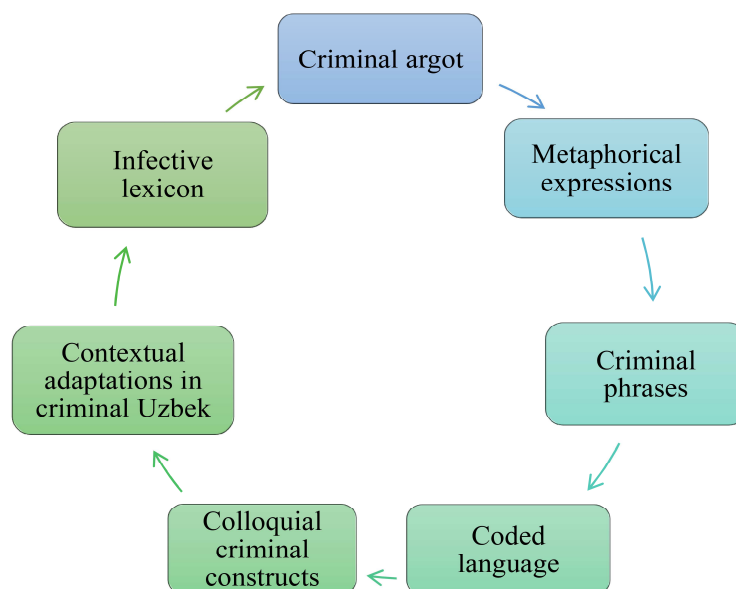
While *ko'zdan yo'qot* literally translates as make disappear, in this context, it holds layered meanings. Based on the clarification in the subsequent dialogue, it does not mean to kill but rather to:

- relocate someone to an unseen place;
- silence them entirely, ensuring they do not surface or interfere.

The phrase subtly underscores the coded language of the criminal world, where the speaker avoids directly commanding an act of violence but leaves room for interpretation. *Sal eti o'lib tursin* - this idiomatic phrase, literally let his flesh die a little, metaphorically implies let him reflect, let him suffer temporarily, or let him realize his mistake. It conveys a desire for the individual to endure consequences without necessarily facing fatal harm. The use of this idiom reflects the harsh yet calculated approach typical of criminal exchanges. The phrase *uch-to'rta bo'lib o'ldirishgan* directly references a group killing or a murder committed by multiple individuals. It highlights the collective nature of the crime, which is a common characteristic of organized criminal activity. *Qo'lga tushgan* literally translating as caught, this phrase refers to someone being apprehended or arrested. It signifies legal consequences for the individual involved in the crime.

## RESULTS

Thus, we can observe the following linguistic and speech units in the criminal underworld:



The linguistic and lexical units of the criminal underworld provide a fascinating lens through which we can analyze the intersection of language, power, and social dynamics. The criminal lexicon is far more than mere slang—it is a specialized tool for communication, secrecy, and cohesion within illicit circles. This unique vocabulary includes criminal argot, invective lexicon, colloquial criminal constructs, metaphorical expressions, criminal phrases, coded language and contextual adaptations in criminal Uzbek, each serving distinct purposes in the operations of the underworld.

#### CONCLUSION

The novel *Shaytanat* (Devildom) by Tahir Malik serves as a rich linguistic and cultural artifact that intricately captures the criminal underworld of Uzbek society. Through a comprehensive exploration of its colloquial speech, criminal-invective substandard lexicon, and the challenges posed in its translation into English, several critical insights emerge. The criminal lexicon in *Shaytanat*

transcends basic vocabulary, reflecting intricate social structures, power dynamics, and cultural differences of the criminal world. From a structural and semantic perspective, the lexicon is enriched with compound words, idiomatic expressions, and metaphorical constructs rooted in the cultural and societal frameworks of the Uzbek language. The process of translating such culturally and linguistically dense material into English presents significant challenges. The lack of direct equivalents for terms illustrates the difficulty in preserving the cultural resonance and emotional depth of the original text. Profanities, idiomatic expressions, and invective lexicon demand careful adaptation to ensure the tone, context, and intent remain intact without estranging the target audience. Employing strategies like cultural localization, contextual rephrasing, and functional equivalence is essential to address these challenges effectively. The symbolic lexicon of the novel—rooted in criminal slang, invective expressions, and metaphorical language—provides a window into the socio-linguistic fabric of the Uzbek criminal world. These elements not only enhance the narrative but also reflect broader societal and cultural norms shaping criminal discourse. *Shaytanat* offers a vivid tapestry of criminal argot, invective expressions, metaphorical constructs, and culturally specific difficulties that bring the Uzbek underworld to life. Translating such a text requires a deep understanding of both linguistic intricacies and cultural underpinnings to preserve its authenticity and impact. By employing adaptive translation strategies and culturally sensitive approaches, translators can bridge the gap between languages and cultures, ensuring the narrative's richness and symbolic depth resonate with a global audience. Ultimately, this exploration of criminal discourse highlights not only the linguistic diversity inherent in the novel but also its broader socio-cultural significance.

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