

EXPLORING CULTURAL REALITIES THROUGH CROSS-CULTURAL INTERPRETATION IN LITERARY TRANSLATION

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ANNOTATION

This article examines the role of cultural realia in English literary translation and how they are interpreted in the translated texts. It also analyzes the linguocultural challenges translators face when rendering culturally bound units, as well as the effective strategies employed to preserve the original meaning and national spirit of the work.

Key words: realia, denotative, connotative, pragmatic layer, phenomena, equivalent, descriptive translation.

ANNOTATSIYA

Ushbu maqolada o'zbek va ingliz badiiy tarjimasida madaniy realiyalarning tutgan o'rni va ularning badiiy tarjimada qanday talqin qilinishi o'rganiladi. Shu bilan birga, tarjima jarayonida tarjimonlar madaniy bog'langan birliklarni tarjima qilishda duch keladigan lingvomadaniy muammolar, asarning asl mazmuni va milliy ruhini saqlab qolishda qo'llaniladigan samarali strategiyalar tahlil qilinadi.

Kalit so'zlar: realiya, denotativ, konnotativ, pragmatik qatlam, hodisalar, ekvivalent, tasviriy (izohli) tarjima.

АННОТАЦИЯ

В данной статье рассматривается роль культурных реалий в узбекском и английском художественном переводе, а также способы их интерпретации в переводных текстах. Кроме того, анализируются лингвокультурные проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются переводчики при передаче культурно обусловленных единиц, и эффективные стратегии, применяемые для сохранения исходного смысла и национального духа произведения.

Ключевые слова: Реалия, денотативный, коннотативный, прагматический слой, явления, эквивалент, описательный (пояснительный) перевод.

Literary translation serves as a cultural bridge, enabling readers to access foreign works while preserving the original text’s cultural identity. One of the most challenging aspects of this process is translating realia, which are culture-specific terms and expressions that lack direct equivalents in the target language. These terms are closely linked to a community’s history and culture, so they need careful adaptation to preserve their meaning, associations, and style. This research looks at the challenges of conveying cultural realia in English literary works, focusing on whether these elements are kept, changed, or left out in translation. When we study translation as a unique form of communication, it becomes clear that translation theory is not just about language. It also involves the meeting of different cultures. This idea has interested well-known German scholars and cultural figures, including A. Schlegel, J. W. Goethe, J. Grimm, and W. Humboldt. L. S. Barkhudarov describes translation as turning a text in one language into a text in another language while keeping the content the same. In this process, the words and expressions change, but the information stays the same. Barkhudarov’s definition is an important foundation for this research. He saw translation as moving a verbal work from one language to another “without changing its content” [1:59]. While this idea of keeping the content unchanged is important in classical translation theory, it is hard to fully agree with it. This is especially true when translating cultural realities, where not only the basic meaning matters, but also the connotative, pragmatic, and cultural aspects. Many researchers have looked at realia in English literary translation, but there is still not enough research on how the connotative meaning of realia changes during translation. Most research focuses on the basic meaning, but there is a gap in understanding how the emotional, cultural, and historical layers are transformed. This article aims to explore these aspects of realia and offer insights into their cross-cultural interpretation.

The Latin word realia, which means “real things,” refers to tangible objects and things. Put another way, realia refers to things that truly exist in reality, as opposed to abstract concepts. Different methods of translating cultural realities are frequently employed in world literature. Translation theorists who have made significant contributions to the theory of translation in world linguistics, like Nida, Catford, Newmark, and Venuti, emphasize the importance of equivalency and cultural adaptation in the process of translating realia in order to convey the original meaning of the context. Newmark categorized realias as “culture-specific items” in 1988 and proposed translation techniques like transcription, functional replacement, and description. In 1995, Venuti, following Newmark, used the concepts of domestication and foreignization to define the cultural position of the translator, linguists like Sh. Shomusarov, N. Komilov, and A. Abduazizov emphasize the importance of preserving national-cultural identity when translating realia in Uzbek translation studies. The contextual and pragmatic interpretation of realias in English and Uzbek literary

translation, however, has not been adequately compared in the literature to date. In this sense, by comparing translation techniques in Uzbek and English literature, this study fulfills the current scientific gap. Since the translation process involves both intercultural and linguistic relationships, translation theory is not restricted to the study of its linguistic underpinnings. Many German cultural leaders, including A. Schlegel, I. Goethe, J. Grimm, and W. Humboldt, were interested in translation issues. W. Humboldt expressed doubts about whether translation could be entirely successful, according to his well-known views on the subject. He noted that, “trying to remain completely faithful to the original, the translator inevitably encounters one of two difficulties: either at the expense of the taste and linguistic characteristics of his people, or at the expense of the loss of the national identity of the work”. With this comment, Humboldt points out the hardest part of the translation process. I think it's a good idea to say that the translator is stuck between two “traps” when translating a work of art into another language. This is because it's not easy to meet two different needs at the same time. The translator's primary responsibility is to fully transmit the national spirit, the author's style, and the cultural implications of the work, in addition to making the language comprehensible, natural, and acceptable to the target audience. Therefore, the translator's greatest ability is striking a balance during the translation process. Therefore, the translator's job is to replicate the text for the reader in a fluid and natural way while maintaining the meaning, style, and cultural uniqueness as much as possible. Realias undoubtedly contribute significantly to the expression of national variety and cultural identity. Realias was categorized as a distinct linguistic category by renowned linguists S. Vlahov and S. Florin. They defined realias as “words and expressions that name objects, phenomena, and beings that are characteristic of the life, everyday life, culture, and social development of one people, are unfamiliar or alien to another people, express national and temporary diversity, do not have clear equivalents in another language, and require a special approach to translation.” [2:45]. A systematic linguistic approach to the translation of realia can be observed in the works of Ya. I. Retsker, whose research is closely associated with the concept of “regular correspondences” that he developed. However, this issue is examined in the most detailed manner in the scholarly works of leading representatives of linguistic translation studies such as A. D. Shveitser, L. S. Barkhudarov, and A. V. Fedorov. M. L. Vaisburd, in his research, approaches realia from a country-specific (area studies) perspective, including in their scope “events related to a nation's social and cultural life, various public organizations and institutions, customs and traditions, as well as numerous isolated facts that are difficult to classify” [98]. Such an approach significantly broadens the boundaries of the concept of realia and makes it challenging to clearly define the limits of this layer of vocabulary. While the existing scientific research above has highlighted the use of different approaches to translating realities,

there has been insufficient research on the interpretation of these units in the context of English and Uzbek literary translations. Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap and identify how realities change in translation and what strategies are most effective.

The practical use of theoretical ideas in translating realia becomes clearer when examined through case studies that show how various translation strategies work in real situations. This section explores the ways cultural realia have been rendered in different English literary works, drawing on examples from multiple historical eras and literary genres. By comparing original texts with their translated versions, the analysis seeks to reveal the difficulties translators encounter and the methods they apply to preserve both semantic precision and cultural authenticity. The present research examines cultural realia in a range of English literary works representing different genres and historical stages. The corpus includes: *Nineteenth-century English literature*, illustrated through Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* and Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*, both of which offer rich examples of culturally embedded units; *Twentieth-century modernist fiction*, represented by E. M. Forster – *A Passage to India*, where culture-religious and ideological realia serve as key elements of meaning; *Contemporary literary texts*, particularly modern translations that incorporate cultural realia originating from non-English contexts. These texts were selected to provide a comparative foundation for analyzing how realia are interpreted, adapted, or transformed during translation, and how cultural meaning is preserved across linguistic boundaries. The methodological process consists of three main steps: *Identifying all culturally specific realia that appear in the original literary texts; examining how these realia are rendered in different translations and determining which translation techniques are used; and evaluating how well these techniques convey the intended cultural meaning and how effectively the target audience receives them.*

Case Analysis of Realia in Selected Texts.

A. *British Cultural Realia in Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice*

Austen’s novels portray the social norms and cultural practices of the 19th-century British upper class, many of which have no direct counterparts in other cultures, creating significant challenges for translators. Here is an example.

Example: “Breakfast parlor” — a domestic-cultural reality

Original phrase: “...and sometime afterwards from the two elegant ladies who waited on his leisure in the breakfast-parlour ”[4:265].

Meaning: During Austen’s time, different rooms were strictly separated according to their purpose: “breakfast parlor” — a room intended only for breakfast.

Reality type: Domestic cultural reality.

Translation strategy: Descriptive translation: breakfast room.

Analysis: Today’s reader may not be aware of such a clear domestic division, but the description will be sufficient for translation.

B. Culture-religious realia in E. M. Forster’s work “A Passage to India.”

This work is a very convenient choice for analyzing reality, because it contains many examples of the direct clash of Anglo-Indian cultural realities, the lack of cultural equivalents in translation, and the transcription, transliteration, and description of linguistic and cultural units.

Example: “Purdah”

Type of reality: religious-cultural (typical of Islamic and Hindu culture).

Meaning: The tradition of women hiding themselves from men or walking behind special curtains. Translation problem: This concept does not have a complete equivalent in either English or Uzbek.

Translation strategy: Transliteration: purdah.

Explanatory translation: purdah — the custom of separating women from men.

Analysis: Transliteration preserves the national color, while the explanation explains the meaning. In academic translations, both are often used together.

C. Uzbek Realias in English Translations of Utkir Hoshimov’s works.

Contemporary literary texts also include modern Uzbek works that contain rich cultural realia, such as Utkir Hoshimov’s *Dunyoning ishlari*. The text reflects contemporary Uzbek customs, social practices, and everyday cultural units - many of which lack direct English equivalents - making it a valuable source for examining transliteration, descriptive translation, and cultural adaptation strategies.

In most cases, culturally specific items in the text are translated with full explanatory notes to ensure clarity for the target reader. For example: Realia: Navro‘z. Translation: Navruz — the traditional spring celebration in Central Asia. Realia: to‘y (Uzbek wedding ceremony) Translation: toy — a traditional Uzbek wedding celebration. Realia: dugona (a close female friend involved in wedding traditions) Translation: dugona — a close female friend, usually participating in wedding rituals. These examples demonstrate how transliteration combined with descriptive explanation helps retain the cultural meaning of Uzbek realia in English translation.

The methodological approach used in this study was focused on identifying, classifying realities, and analyzing their strategies for translation. The research mainly used qualitative and comparative analysis methods, and reality units were extracted from the selected texts based on the context. They were divided into categories such as cultural, historical, everyday, and geographical, and compared with the corresponding equivalents in translation. The analysis process was carried out based on the translation theories of scholars such as Nida, Venuti, and Newmark.

The comprehensive analysis spanning three distinct literary works - Utkir Hoshimov’s “*Dunyoning ishlari*,” E. M. Forster’s “*A Passage to India*,” and Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* - culminated in the extraction of 164 instances of cultural realia. These culture-specific units collectively displayed the peculiar social, historical,

and cultural specificities inherent to the societies under consideration (Uzbek, British-Colonial Indian, and Georgian English, respectively). For systematic examination, these extracted units were subsequently categorized into four broad, overarching groups:

1. Everyday Domestic Culture: Items related to common food, clothing, and housing.
2. Social and Institutional Elements: Terms covering social hierarchy, administration, and legal concepts.
3. Geographical and Historical Names: References to specific places, events, or historical figures.
4. Practices Characteristic of Rituals or Customs: Terms associated with religious rites, traditions, and social ceremonies.

In the work “Dunyoning ishlari,” a substantial corpus of sixty-eight pieces of realia was identified. The majority of these terms are fundamentally connected to the traditional Uzbek lifestyle, encompassing elements such as do‘ppi (a traditional cap), osh (a national dish), mahalla (a traditional neighborhood structure), and kelin salom (a specific wedding ritual). The translators primarily relied on the method of transliteration for these items, frequently supplementing the term with necessary explanations to ensure comprehension. The technique of descriptive translation was also quite popular, while cultural adaptation was employed less often. Significantly, certain items—such as dugona (a specific female friendship term) or hashar (a collective voluntary community work tradition)—lacked readily available direct equivalents in English. This inherent gap necessitated the provision of additional contextual clarification to fully convey the meaning and cultural weight of the concept to the target audience.

A Passage to India presented a complex array of cultural challenges, containing fifty-seven distinct instances of realia. These ranged broadly from specific cultural terms, such as purdah (the practice of secluding women) and punkah-wallah (a servant who operates a fan), to references concerning religious architecture and specialized colonial administrative vocabulary.

When examining the English-to-Uzbek translations, borrowing emerged as the most frequently employed method for handling these items. However, the use of functional equivalents still constituted a significant portion of the strategy, accounting for approximately 29% of the translational solutions. It is noteworthy that certain highly culture-loaded terms, particularly those related to the intricate systems of caste or specific religious rites, proved exceptionally difficult. Due to their profoundly peculiar and complex cultural backgrounds, finding a fully satisfactory equivalent in the Uzbek language often proved challenging.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, a careful examination identified thirty-nine distinct elements of realia, with the majority being closely associated with the British social hierarchy, formal titles (e.g., Mr., Mrs., Lady Catherine de Bourgh), and institutional concepts such as entailment and specific estate arrangements.

The Uzbek translations of the novel predominantly prioritized strategies of cultural adaptation and the establishment of functional equivalence when handling these terms. It appears, however, that due to the absence of directly comparable notions within the Uzbek socio-legal system, some institutional terminology - particularly the concept of entail - has inevitably suffered a loss of its original, deeply embedded cultural and legal relevance in the process of transposition. This underscores the inherent difficulty in translating specific, legally grounded socio-cultural concepts across vastly different legal traditions.

A comparative analysis of the three works reveals substantial distinctions in their cultural deployment of realia (culture-specific items). Forster, for instance, focuses on illustrating the complex meeting point between established Indian customs and the pervasive British colonial influence. In contrast, Austen's narrative prominently displays the intricate, nuanced culture of the upper-class English society. Hoshimov, meanwhile, portrays the familiar, ordinary realities of everyday Uzbek life.

These fundamental cultural differences significantly influenced the translation decisions that followed. Concepts possessing a degree of universal recognition - such as certain place names or well-known religious structures - were generally easier to transfer or borrow directly into the target language. Conversely, items that were deeply ingrained and highly specific to a particular cultural environment - terms like mahalla, hashar, or purdah - required more descriptive, adaptive, or explanatory solutions from the translator to bridge the cultural gap for the new readership.

The research's results emphasize the intricate and varied aspects of translating cultural elements in literary works from different cultural backgrounds. The comparison of the three texts indicates that translators' approaches are significantly affected by the cultural significance, recognizability, and translatability of each specific cultural item. The observed trends generally support the view that translation involves more than just linguistic conversion; it represents an interaction between cultural frameworks. A primary finding of the examination is the impact of cultural similarity on the translation process ease or complexity. The realia in “*Dunyoning ishlari*” were closely related to the ordinary life of Uzbeks and to ritual social behavior. As these items have no direct English equivalent, translators frequently use transliteration with explanation. This approach maintained cultural integrity while aiding naive readers in comprehending culturally loaded meanings. High dependence of descriptive methods shows that deeply situated realia cannot be transplanted without contextual aid.

A different pattern is seen in the data from “A Passage to India”. Borrowing emerged as the predominant tactic in Uzbek translations since many Indian cultural terms are commonly used in international discourse. Concepts of caste and religious rites, however, continued to be difficult, indicating that even well-known cultural elements become less nuanced when translated into a language with a different socio-religious background. This illustrates the more general challenge of cross-cultural translation of hierarchical or ritual-based systems.

Realias were primarily institutional or socially structured ideas that reflected British aristocratic life in “Pride and Prejudice.” Because many British social practices, like entailment or specific class markers, are incompatible with Uzbek cultural frameworks, cultural adaptation was employed more frequently than in the previous two works. Regardless of the translator’s approach, certain socio-legal concepts resist complete transfer, as evidenced by the translations’ partial loss of cultural nuance.

Comparing the three texts reveals that translation techniques rely on the cultural “distance” between the source and target contexts in addition to the type of cultural element. While culturally specific or socially complex units require more interpretive transformation, universal or globally recognized items are easily borrowed. This illustrates that translation is a process of cultural negotiation in which the translator mediates meaning between two opposing worldviews rather than just being a language activity.

Overall, the discussion shows that the analysis of realia requires sensitivity towards cultural depth, readers’ awareness, and textual function. The translators’ task is to maintain balance, loyalty to the cultural source, with clarity for the target audience, making strategic choices that preserve meaning while enabling comprehension.

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