

THE ROLE OF REALIA IN PRESERVING CULTURE THROUGH TRANSLATION

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TARJIMA ORQALI MADANIYATNI SAQLASHDA REALIYANING ROLI

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РОЛЬ РЕАЛИИ В СОХРАНЕНИИ КУЛЬТУРЫ ПОСРЕДСТВОМ ПЕРЕВОДА

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Abstract: This article explores the role of realia in preserving cultural identity through translation. Realia-terms or expressions tied to specific cultural phenomena- pose unique challenges for translators, as they lack direct equivalents in other languages. This study analyzes examples of realia from Uzbek and Karakalpak cultures, such as "sa'wkele", "beshik" and "mahalla", and examines the strategies employed by translators to maintain cultural authenticity. Through borrowing, contextual explanations, and cultural adaptation, translators act as mediators, ensuring the transmission of cultural knowledge across linguistic divides. The findings demonstrate how the careful handling of realia fosters global cultural appreciation while safeguarding local heritage.

Key words: realia, cultural identity, contextual explanation, calque, borrowing, translation, cultural preservation.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqola tarjima orqali madaniy o'ziga xoslikni saqlashda realiyaning rolini o'rganadi. Muayyan madaniy hodisalarga bog'liq reallik atamaları yoki iboralari tarjimonlar uchun o'ziga xos qiyinchiliklar tug'diradi, chunki ularning boshqa tillarda to'g'ridan-to'g'ri ekvivalentlari yo'q. Ushbu tadqiqot "sa'wkele", "beshik" va "mahalla" kabi o'zbek va qoraqalpoq madaniyatlaridagi realiya misollarini tahlil qiladi va tarjimonlarning madaniy o'ziga xoslikni saqlash uchun qo'llagan strategiyalarini o'rganadi.

Kalit so'zlar: realiya, madaniy o'ziga xoslik, kontekstual tushuntirish, calque, qarz olish, tarjima, madaniy saqlash.



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Аннотация: В этой статье рассматривается роль реалий в сохранении культурной идентичности посредством перевода. Реалии — термины или выражения, связанные с определенными культурными явлениями — представляют собой уникальные проблемы для переводчиков, поскольку у них нет прямых эквивалентов в других языках. В этом исследовании анализируются примеры реалий из узбекской и каракалпакской культур, такие как “sa’wkele”, “beshik” и “mahalla”, и изучаются стратегии, используемые переводчиками для сохранения культурной аутентичности.

Ключевые слова: реалии, культурная идентичность, контекстное объяснение, калька, заимствование, перевод, сохранение культуры.

INTRODUCTION. Translation serves as more than a linguistic exercise; it is a cultural exchange that bridges diverse societies. In this process, realia-words and expressions tied to the cultural practices, geography, history, or social structures of a particular group-play a critical role. These terms often have no direct linguistic equivalents in other languages, making their translation particularly complex. Realia encapsulate the unique traditions, values, and ways of life of a community, contributing to the preservation and dissemination of cultural identity. As Florin (1993) aptly describes, “Realia are the most vivid and colorful part of a nation’s language and culture”. According to Vlakhov and Florin’s interpretation, realia are lexical items of the source language which denote objects, phenomena and practices characteristic of one language community (its everyday life, social and historical development) and absent in another; these lexical items hence have no accurate correspondences in the target language and require a special treatment in translation (Vlakhov and Florin 1986-2012). According to the scholars, examples of such words and expressions include самовар, аршин, копейка, щи, квас, дача, декабрист, военный коммунизм etc. for Russian as a source language. Their translation requires not only linguistic expertise but also a deep understanding of the cultural contexts in which they are rooted. A failure to appropriately translate realia can result in the loss of cultural nuances and, in some cases, misrepresentation of the source culture. Consider the Scottish kilt, a garment deeply tied to Scotland’s cultural heritage and identity. Translating it as yubka (skirt) in Uzbek misrepresents its meaning, as yubka is traditionally associated with women, whereas the kilt is a symbol of masculinity. Similarly, Japanese kimono and Indian sari are unique cultural artifacts that defy direct translation. Translators often retain the original terms to preserve their cultural

significance. That is why, the words kimono and sari are available in some languages, including Uzbek, Karakalpak and English.

This article focuses on realia from Uzbek and Karakalpak cultures, examining how these culturally specific terms are handled in translation. Examples such as the sa’wkele (a ceremonial headdress), besik (a cradle-like structure), and mahalla (a social institution) highlight the importance of retaining cultural authenticity in translation. Through this analysis, the article sheds light on the strategies used by translators to balance cultural fidelity with comprehensibility.

METHODS. To investigate the role of realia in translation, this study employs a qualitative approach, analyzing culturally significant terms from Uzbek and Karakalpak cultures. Data were collected from ethnographic materials, dictionaries, and cultural studies. The selected examples illustrate the challenges of translating realia and the strategies used to address these challenges.

The analysis focuses on:

1. Borrowing: Retaining the original term in the translation.
2. Contextual Explanation: Providing additional information or context to clarify the meaning.
3. Calque: Creating a literal translation of the term while retaining its cultural essence.

These strategies are examined in relation to specific examples of realia, highlighting their effectiveness in preserving cultural identity.

RESULTS. The study identifies several culturally significant terms in Uzbek and Karakalpak cultures that exemplify the challenges of translating realia:

1. Sa’wkele: This ceremonial headdress, adorned with corals and semi-precious stones, was traditionally worn by aristocratic daughters during marriage ceremonies in the 19th century. Its cultural

and historical significance makes it irreplaceable in translation. Translators often retain the term and provide a brief explanation, such as “an ornate headdress used in Karakalpak wedding ceremonies”.

2. *Besik*: A traditional cradle-like structure used in Uzbek and Karakalpak cultures, particularly during the *besik to'y* ceremony, where a baby is placed in the *besik* for the first time. Translating it simply as “cradle” overlooks its ceremonial and cultural importance, so the term is usually retained with explanatory notes.

3. *Mahalla*: A cornerstone of Uzbek social life, the *mahalla* functions as both a residential area and a social institution. The United Nations Development Programme (2007) describes it as “a unique blend of communal ties and administrative functions.” Translating it as “neighborhood” diminishes its cultural depth, so retaining the term with a detailed explanation is preferred.

4. *Atlas* and *Adras*: Traditional Uzbek fabrics made of silk, recognized for their vibrant patterns. While some translations attempt to describe them as “silk textiles”, retaining the original terms allows for better cultural representation.

5. *Taqiya*: A traditional headdress often translated as “skullcap”. While this translation conveys a general idea, it fails to capture the *taqiya*'s distinctive designs and cultural associations.

6. *Palov* (*Plov*): A national dish of Uzbekistan, known for its rich flavors and ceremonial significance. Borrowing the term ensures its cultural essence is preserved in translations.

7. *Qalpaq*: A traditional headdress commonly worn by the people of Central Asia, particularly among nomadic communities. It holds cultural significance and reflects the identity and heritage of these groups. By translating it into English as “hat”, its cultural essence may be lost, since this type headdress is a part of Karakalpak nation.

8. *Paranji*: A garment historically worn by women in Central Asia to cover their faces in the presence of male strangers. This traditional attire was part of cultural practices aimed at maintaining modesty and privacy.

9. *Iyt Koylek*: This term refers to the first garment made for newborns in Karakalpak culture. Traditionally, after a child's first forty days, their initial shirt was placed on a dog as part of a ritual to protect the baby from the evil eye and misfortunes. It was believed that any harm intended for the child

would transfer to the dog, giving the garment its name, which translates to “dog shirt”.

DISCUSSION. The findings emphasize the critical role of *realia* in cultural preservation. Translating *realia* involves choices that affect how a culture is perceived by external audiences. Venuti (1995) highlights this dilemma, noting, “Translation always involves a choice between domestication and foreignization”. For *realia*, foreignization – retaining the original term – is often the most effective strategy. Borrowing terms like *sa'wkele* and *palov* ensures that their cultural essence remains intact. However, this strategy necessitates supplementary explanations to aid understanding. For instance, describing the *sa'wkele* as “an elaborate headdress used in marriage ceremonies” enhances comprehension without compromising cultural authenticity. Contextual explanations are similarly important for terms like *mahalla*. By highlighting its dual role as a social institution and residential area, translators convey its unique cultural and administrative functions. This approach aligns with Newmark's (1988) assertion that “Translation requires a balance between precision and cultural sensitivity”. The study also underscores the broader significance of translating *realia*. By preserving terms like *besik* or *iyt koylek*, translators contribute to cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. This not only safeguards cultural heritage but also fosters global respect for cultural diversity.

CONCLUSION. *Realia* are vital to preserving cultural identity in translation. Terms like *sa'wkele*, *besik*, and *mahalla* encapsulate the unique traditions of Uzbek and Karakalpak cultures, underscoring the importance of cultural sensitivity in translation. By employing strategies such as borrowing and contextual explanation, translators ensure that these cultural artifacts are understood and appreciated worldwide. In an increasingly interconnected world, the careful translation of *realia* is essential for fostering cultural exchange and mutual respect.

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