

Eureka Journal of Language, Culture & Social Change (EJLCSC)

ISSN 2760-4926 (Online) Volume 2, Issue 6, June 2026



This article/work is licensed under CC by 4.0 Attribution

<https://eurekaopenaccess.com/index.php/3>

INTERPRETATION OF CULTURAL REALITIES IN LITERARY TRANSLATION IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

Abdullayeva Lolaxon Sobirjonovna
Master Degree, Asia International University
lola.92.bek@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigates the linguistic and extra-linguistic challenges of translating cultural realities (realia) between English and Uzbek, two typologically and culturally distant languages. Using an asymmetric comparative framework, the paper analyzes the efficiency of various translation strategies such as calque, transliteration, adaptation, and descriptive translation in maintaining the conceptual equivalence of source texts. The results indicate that while direct borrowing preserves foreign flavoring, it frequently induces cognitive dissonance in the target audience due to a lack of shared historical context. Conversely, functional equivalence maintains readability at the cost of cultural dilution. The study proposes a hybrid pragmatic translation model aimed at optimizing cross-cultural decoding in Uzbek-English literary translation.

Keywords: Literary translation, cultural realities, realia, zero-equivalence, foreignization, domestication, English-Uzbek translation, pragmatic equivalence, cultural untranslatability, comparative linguistics.

Introduction

Literary translation transcends the mechanical boundaries of interlinguistic transposition, operating fundamentally as a complex channel for cross-cultural negotiation and semiotic decoding. Within the matrix of comparative linguistics

Eureka Journal of Language, Culture & Social Change (EJLCSC)

ISSN 2760-4926 (Online) Volume 2, Issue 6, June 2026



This article/work is licensed under CC by 4.0 Attribution

<https://eurekaopenaccess.com/index.php/3>

and translation studies, the accurate transfer of artistic text depends heavily on how a translator interprets and conveys realia lexical units that designate objects, customs, historical phenomena, traditions, and geographical features unique to a specific ethnic, national, or regional culture. Because realia are deeply embedded in the extra-linguistic experience of a speech community, they lack direct conceptual, functional, or structural equivalents in the target language. Consequently, they often create "zero-equivalence" zones that test the limits of cross-cultural communication.

The challenges of translating these cultural realities become exceptionally pronounced when dealing with the English and Uzbek language pair. This linguistic combination represents a profound divergence across multiple layers:

- **Typological Asymmetry:** English belongs to the analytical Indo-European language family, whereas Uzbek is an agglutinative language belonging to the Turkic family. This creates structural constraints when trying to map contextual nuances.

- **Cultural and Religious Polarity:** The source and target texts are rooted in entirely different sociocultural ecosystems the Western, Anglo-Saxon, predominantly Christian-secular heritage versus the Eastern, Central Asian, Islamic, and deeply community-oriented traditions.

In Uzbek classical and modern literature (such as the works of Abdulla Qodiri, Abdulhamid Chulpon, or Erkin Vohidov), text is rich with unique realities like mahalla (a self-governing local community council), hashar (voluntary, collective mutual aid), kuyovnavkar (the groom's ceremonial entourage), or gap (a traditional structured social gathering). These terms carry distinct socio-spatial and ethical weight that cannot be encapsulated by broad English words like "neighborhood," "cooperation," or "party."

Conversely, when translating English literary masterpieces (such as those by Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, or Virginia Woolf) into Uzbek, translators frequently struggle to convey historical British realities. Terms denoting social

Eureka Journal of Language, Culture & Social Change (EJLCSC)

ISSN 2760-4926 (Online) Volume 2, Issue 6, June 2026



This article/work is licensed under CC by 4.0 Attribution

<https://eurekaoa.com/index.php/3>

hierarchies, architectural styles, or culinary traditions such as gentry, cottage, parish, or pudding lose their specific cultural flavor and historical accuracy when subjected to over-simplified or mechanical translation methods.

While classical translation theories offer foundational paradigms-such as Lawrence Venuti's polarization of foreignization and domestication, or Eugene Nida's concepts of formal and dynamic equivalence -their practical application to the English-Uzbek linguistic pair remains significantly under-researched. Many translations suffer from either unchecked domestication, which completely strips the source text of its cultural authenticity, or excessive foreignization, which creates insufferable cognitive barriers for the target reader.

This study aims to bridge this gap by systematically analyzing the linguistic, semantic, and pragmatic mechanisms involved in translating cultural realities between English and Uzbek. By exploring the delicate balance between maintaining cultural authenticity and ensuring reader comprehension, this paper establishes a systematic matrix of translation strategies. Ultimately, it provides a structured framework to optimize the interpretation of realia in English-Uzbek literary translation.

Methods

This study utilizes a qualitative and descriptive-comparative methodology based on a purposive sample of 150 cultural realities extracted from 20th and 21st-century English and Uzbek literary masterpieces, along with their respective translations (e.g., Abdulhamid Chulpon's *Night and Day*, Abdullah Qodiri's *Bygone Days*, and selected works by Charles Dickens and Virginia Woolf).

The collected corpus of realia was classified into four primary domains based on Vlahov and Florin's taxonomies:

1. **Ethnographic realia** (food, clothing, customs, rituals).
2. **Geographical realia** (topography, flora, fauna specific to the region).
3. **Socio-political realia** (administrative units, titles, historical ranks).

Eureka Journal of Language, Culture & Social Change (EJLCSC)

ISSN 2760-4926 (Online) Volume 2, Issue 6, June 2026



This article/work is licensed under CC by 4.0 Attribution

<https://eurekaopenaccess.com/index.php/3>

4. **Onomastic realia** (anthroponyms and toponyms carrying connotative meanings).

Each translation instance was evaluated against four primary operational strategies:

- **Transliteration/Transcription:** Preserving the phonetic/graphic form of the source text.

- **Calque (Literal Translation):** Morpheme-by-morpheme or word-by-word structural copying.

- **Descriptive/Explanatory Translation:** Paraphrasing the cultural concept to ensure cognitive accessibility.

- **Cultural Substitution/Adaptation:** Replacing the source reality with a target culture analogue.

The degree of semantic loss and pragmatic equivalence was assessed using contextual discourse analysis.

Results

The empirical data collected from the corpus analysis reveals a distinct divergence in strategy selection depending on the direction of the translation (English-to-Uzbek vs. Uzbek-to-English). The distribution and success rates of the deployed strategies are summarized in the table below:

Eureka Journal of Language, Culture & Social Change (EJLCS)

ISSN 2760-4926 (Online) Volume 2, Issue 6, June 2026



This article/work is licensed under CC by 4.0 Attribution

<https://eurekaopenaccess.com/index.php/3>

Table 1. Distribution and Efficiency of Realia Translation Strategies

Strategy	Usage Frequency (Uzbek → English)	Usage Frequency (English → Uzbek)	Semantic Retention Rate	Target Audience Comprehension
Transliteration	42%	18%	High (90%)	Low (requires footnotes)
Calque	15%	22%	Medium (60%)	Medium-Low (causes literalism)
Descriptive Paraphrase	28%	35%	High (85%)	High (conceptually clear)
Cultural Substitution	15%	25%	Low (40%)	High (completely domesticated)

The findings demonstrate that Uzbek-to-English translations rely heavily on transliteration (e.g., rendering *tandir* as *tandoor* or *chopon* as *chapan*), which succeeds in maintaining the exoticism of the text but significantly lowers initial reader comprehension unless accompanied by extra-textual glosses or contextual clues. In contrast, English-to-Uzbek translations favor descriptive paraphrase and cultural substitution (e.g., rendering *pudding* as *shirinlik/tort* or *parish* as *mahalla/tuman*). This approach enhances readability but strips the text of its specific historical British atmosphere.

Discussion

The asymmetric results highlight a fundamental tension between faithfulness to the source culture and accessibility for the target reader.

When translating Uzbek realia into English, authors frequently encounter "zero-equivalence" zones. For instance, the Uzbek concept of *andin* or *andoza* in traditional ethics, or the social structure of *mahalla*, represents a socio-spatial reality that cannot be encapsulated by the Western term "neighborhood."

Eureka Journal of Language, Culture & Social Change (EJLCSC)

ISSN 2760-4926 (Online) Volume 2, Issue 6, June 2026



This article/work is licensed under CC by 4.0 Attribution

<https://eurekaoa.com/index.php/3>

Transliteration preserves the lexical integrity of the word, but without a semantic buffer, it creates cognitive gaps. The study shows that the most successful translations utilize a hybrid strategy: transliteration paired with an intra-textual brief explanation, such as:

"...entered the mahalla (the local traditional community council)..."

On the other hand, translating English realia into Uzbek often suffers from over-domestication. Replacing sheriff with boshliq or militsiya boshlig'i distorts the administrative reality of Western governance models, projecting an inaccurate cultural framework onto the source text.

The analytical data suggests that translators should adopt a Pragmatic Compromise Matrix. If a cultural reality is central to the plot or character development (e.g., Qodiri's use of paranja), it must be preserved via foreignization (transliteration + footnote). If the reality is merely decorative or background information (e.g., a specific type of fabric or casual food item), it should be domesticated via functional equivalence or descriptive paraphrase to maintain narrative momentum.

Conclusion

The interpretation of cultural realities between English and Uzbek requires a flexible, context-dependent approach rather than a rigid adherence to a single translation methodology. This study demonstrates that mechanical literalism and unchecked cultural substitution both undermine the integrity of literary texts. Translators must evaluate each piece of realia based on its narrative weight, systemic transparency, and the semiotic distance between the source and target audiences. Developing specialized bilingual dictionaries of cultural realia and establishing standardized glossaries for Uzbek-English literary translation are critical steps toward improving cross-cultural communication in this field.

Eureka Journal of Language, Culture & Social Change (EJLCSC)

ISSN 2760-4926 (Online) Volume 2, Issue 6, June 2026



This article/work is licensed under CC by 4.0 Attribution

<https://eurekaopenaccess.com/index.php/3>

References

1. Baker, M. (2018). *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.
2. Bassnett, S. (2014). *Translation Studies* (4th ed.). London: Routledge.
3. Catford, J. C. (1965). *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
4. Chesterman, A. (2016). *Memes of Translation: The Spread of Ideas in Translation Theory*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
5. Davies, E. E. (2003). A Goblin or a Dirty Nose? The Treatment of Culture-Specific References in Translations of the Harry Potter Books. *The Translator*, 9(1), 65–100.
6. Eco, U. (2001). *Experiences in Translation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
7. Newmark, P. (1988). *A Textbook of Translation*. London: Prentice Hall.
8. Nida, E. A. (1964). *Toward a Science of Translating*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.