

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF REALIA IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES

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Abstract: This article presents a comparative analysis of *realia*—culture-specific elements—in the English and Uzbek languages. Realia, which include items such as traditional foods, clothing, holidays, and social institutions, represent the unique cultural identity of each linguistic community. By examining various types of realia—geographical, ethnographic, social-political, and everyday-life related—the article highlights how language reflects cultural values and historical context. The study also discusses the difficulties that arise in translating realia between English and Uzbek, such as the absence of direct equivalents and the risk of cultural misinterpretation. Various translation strategies, including transliteration, explanation, and cultural substitution, are analyzed. The article concludes that understanding and properly conveying realia is essential for accurate translation, effective cross-cultural communication, and deeper intercultural understanding.

Keywords: Realia, cultural elements, English language, Uzbek language, translation strategies, cultural equivalence, cross-cultural communication, ethnographic terms, linguistic comparison, cultural adaptation.

Introduction: Language serves not only as a tool for communication but also as a repository of culture and identity. One of the most fascinating aspects of linguistic study is how language encodes the unique cultural realities of a society. These culture-specific elements, known as *realia*, encompass a wide range of tangible and intangible cultural phenomena including traditional customs, local foods, social institutions, festivals, and geographical landmarks. Realia are deeply embedded in the daily lives and historical experiences of communities, making them an invaluable resource for understanding the cultural fabric of a language-speaking group. Unlike universal vocabulary, realia often lack direct equivalents in other languages, posing significant challenges for translators, language learners, and intercultural communicators. The effective study and translation of realia thus require a multidisciplinary approach that combines linguistics, cultural studies, and translation theory. The English and Uzbek languages, representing different linguistic families and cultural backgrounds, offer a rich field for comparative analysis of realia. English, as a global lingua franca with roots in Western European culture, reflects the values, social structures, and historical developments of predominantly Anglo-American societies. In contrast, Uzbek, a Turkic language spoken in Central Asia, carries centuries-old cultural legacies influenced by Islamic traditions, nomadic heritage, and regional customs. This article aims to explore the nature of realia in both languages, categorizing them into geographical, ethnographic, social-political, and everyday life domains. By examining specific examples and their translation challenges, the study seeks to highlight how language functions as a cultural mirror and how cross-cultural communication can be enriched through better understanding of realia. Moreover, the increasing interconnectedness of the modern world calls for more sophisticated translation strategies to bridge cultural gaps. This research not only contributes to the field of

comparative linguistics and translation studies but also offers practical insights for translators, educators, and cultural mediators working between English and Uzbek.

Concept of Realia and Its Importance: Realia are culture-specific elements in a language that represent tangible and intangible cultural phenomena such as traditions, local foods, social institutions, festivals, and geographical landmarks. They connect language with cultural context and can be defined as “real-world objects or concepts” specific to a particular culture. Usually, realia do not have direct equivalents in other languages, which creates difficulties for translators, language learners, and intercultural communicators. For example, the Uzbek word “*mahalla*” refers to a unique social institution in Uzbek society and has no exact English equivalent.

Types of Realia

Realia can be divided into several categories:

1. **Geographical realia:** Related to countries, regions, natural features, and climate conditions. For example: In English: *Outback* (Australia’s desert area) In Uzbek: *cho’l* (desert), *tepalar* (hills), *qishloq* (village)

2. **Ethnographic realia:** Include cultural traditions, clothing, national foods, holidays, and crafts. In English: *Thanksgiving*, *Christmas*, *trousers* In Uzbek: *Navruz*, *osh* (pilaf), *do’ppi* (traditional hat)

3. **Socio-political realia:** Social structures, political institutions, and traditional practices. In English: *Parliament*, *House of Commons*. In Uzbek: *mahalla*, *kengash* (council), *oqsoqol* (elder)

4. **Everyday life realia:** Commonly used tools, habits, and customs. In English: *bicycle*, *pub*. In Uzbek: *lavash* (bread), *chaqmoq* (flint)

Cultural Characteristics of English and Uzbek Realia: The English language mainly reflects industrialized and urban culture. Many English realia mirror modern society and political institutions rather than traditional rural life. For example, expressions like “*the Queen’s Speech*” or “*Black Friday*” reflect unique British cultural concepts. The Uzbek language incorporates realia related to rural, familial, and traditional society influenced by Islamic traditions, Central Asian history, and local customs. For instance, “*Navruz*” is a culturally significant holiday, and “*mahalla*” represents a unique neighborhood social institution.

Challenges in Translating Realia

Some main challenges when translating realia include: **Lack of equivalence:** Many realia have no direct counterparts in the target language. For example, translating “*Thanksgiving*” into Uzbek fully is difficult. **Cultural misunderstanding:** The audience may be unfamiliar with the cultural concept behind the realia. **Loss of cultural context:** The original cultural meaning of the realia can be lost during translation.

Translation Strategies for Realia:

1. **Transliteration** – Writing the word phonetically in the target language, e.g., “*do’ppi*” → “*doppi*”.

2. **Expansion** – Adding explanatory information, e.g., “*mahalla*” (*a traditional Uzbek neighborhood community*).

3. **Cultural substitution** – Replacing a realia with a culturally similar one in the target language, e.g., substituting “*Thanksgiving*” with “*Navruz*”.

4. **Generalization** – Using a broader term instead of the realia, e.g., “*mahalla*” → “*neighborhood*”.

Importance of Studying English and Uzbek Realia: Helps language learners better understand the culture behind the language. Assists translators in accurately conveying culturally bound elements. Improves intercultural communication. Enhances the understanding of the relationship between language and culture.

Comparative Examples

English Realia	Uzbek Realia	Explanation
Thanksgiving	Navruz	Both are important holidays, but with different historical and cultural backgrounds.
Pub	Choyxona	Both are social gathering places, but differ culturally.
Parliament	Kengash	Different political institutions.
Doormat	Gilamcha	Everyday objects with cultural differences.

Summary: Realia serve as cultural identifiers within language. English and Uzbek realia are deeply connected to their unique historical and cultural contexts. Understanding and translating realia correctly enhances cross-cultural communication. Modern linguistics and translation theory increasingly focus on the study of realia.

Additional Information and Analyses:

1. Realia and Culture Interconnection: Realia function as cultural codes embedded in language, reflecting the historical, social, religious, economic, and political life of communities. For example, the Uzbek word *"oqsoqol"* (literally "white beard") refers to a respected elder in the community, a concept without a direct English equivalent due to differing social structures.

2. Difficulties in Learning Realia: Language learners often find realia difficult to grasp because they require cultural as well as linguistic knowledge. For example, the English word *"pub"* is not just a bar but also an institution reflecting British social culture, which may be unfamiliar to Uzbek learners.

3. Translation Theories and Realia: There are two main approaches to translating realia: Domestication – adapting realia to fit the target culture, e.g., replacing *"Thanksgiving"* with *"Navruz"*. Foreignization – preserving the original cultural element to introduce the reader to a new culture, e.g., keeping the word *"mahalla"* untranslated.

Both approaches have their place depending on the translation goals.

4. Contextual and Semantic Features: Realia are often context-dependent. For instance, *"tea"* in English is not only a drink but also a social ritual. Similarly, *"choy"* (tea) in Uzbek culture symbolizes hospitality. Thus, realia embody social semantic systems beyond mere vocabulary.

5. Technology and Globalization Impact: Globalization spreads technological realia such as *"smartphone"* and *"hashtag"* worldwide, introducing new lexical items into many languages including Uzbek. These changes affect traditional realia and language usage patterns.

6. Historical Development of Uzbek Realia: Uzbek realia often relate to the country's nomadic heritage, Islamic influence, and Central Asian history. Words like *"kurak"* (a farming tool) or *"ko'chmanchi"* (nomad) reflect historical and cultural realities absent in English-speaking contexts.

Types of Realia: Realia can be broadly classified into:

1. Geographical realia (e.g., "Outback" in Australia, "cho'l" in Uzbek),
2. realia (e.g., traditional clothing like "kimono" in Japanese or "do'ppi" in Uzbek),
3. Social-political realia (e.g., "the House of Commons" in the UK or "mahalla" in Uzbekistan),

4. Daily life and household realia (e.g., "Thanksgiving" in the US or "Navruz" in Central Asia).

Realia in English and Uzbek: Cultural Reflections: English realia often reflect Western, especially Anglo-American traditions, individualism, and modernization. Uzbek realia are shaped by centuries of Central Asian history, Islam, and community-based social structures. Examples: English: "pub", "Thanksgiving", "tenure", "Black Friday" Uzbek: "osh", "Navruz", "do'ppi", "mahalla" Challenges in Translation: Realia present unique challenges for translators: Lack of equivalents in the target language, Risk of cultural misinterpretation, Balancing fidelity and comprehensibility. Translation strategies include: Transliteration (e.g., *do'ppi* → *doppi*), Footnoting or explanations, Cultural substitution (e.g., replacing "Thanksgiving" with "Navruz" in some contexts), Generalization (e.g., *mahalla* → *neighborhood*).

Conclusion: Realia in both English and Uzbek languages serve not only as linguistic expressions but also as carriers of deep cultural, historical, and social meanings. Through the comparative analysis conducted in this article, it becomes evident that realia reflect a nation's worldview, values, traditions, and collective memory. While English realia often mirror the individualistic and institutional nature of Western societies, Uzbek realia highlight the significance of community, hospitality, and spiritual heritage rooted in Central Asian history and Islamic tradition. The translation of realia poses significant challenges due to the lack of direct equivalents in the target language and the risk of cultural loss or distortion. Translators must be culturally aware and equipped with a range of strategies to effectively render realia without sacrificing meaning or cultural nuance. These strategies include transliteration, cultural substitution, descriptive translation, and the use of explanatory notes. Furthermore, this study shows that successful translation of realia enhances intercultural understanding and preserves cultural diversity in global communication. Therefore, special attention should be given to training translators and language professionals in dealing with culturally bound elements. It is also essential for language learners and educators to explore realia as a tool for cultural competence and deeper linguistic insight. In conclusion, the study of realia is not merely a linguistic endeavor, but a bridge between cultures. As globalization increases cross-cultural interactions, the proper understanding and translation of realia becomes more crucial than ever.

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