



PRINCIPLES OF TRANSLATING REALIA IN THE NOVEL “SCORPION FROM THE ALTAR” BY ABDULLA KADIRI

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the translation principles of realia in the novel “Scorpion from the Altar” by Abdulla Kadiri. The linguistic and cultural aspects of the concept of realia are discussed. Realia are linguistic units associated with the culture, customs, lifestyle, and historical experience of a particular people, and are considered means of expressing national identity. These language elements often lack direct equivalents in other languages, which creates certain difficulties in translation. The study examines the classification of realia, principles of their translation — such as transcription, explanatory translation, selection of equivalents, and other methods — and analyzes their linguocultural features.

Introduction

Language, in addition to being a tool for communication, also serves as a symbolic embodiment of the national ideology, cultural traditions and values of a particular people. The connection of language with the people, its culture is an axiom that does not require proof. Through language and the lexical units present in it, it is possible to express the culture, nationality, its unique aspects, as well as historical memory of each people at a certain time and present it not only to future generations, but also to the world. After all, language is considered an important tool that shows the national and cultural life of its owner. Yu. D. Apreysan emphasizes that “Language is a system that creates a model of the world. The national worldview is hidden in language units,” indicating how important language and its role in expressing nationality are. In her monograph “Semantic Study of Realities in the Uzbek Language,” scholar Z. Kasimova stated that “as a language is formed and develops in a particular society, it reflects all the national characteristics of the people who created it.” Nationality is reflected in literary criticism through folk images created in works of art, a unique national environment, ethnographic details, examples of folk oral creativity, realities and cultural codes. The place and role of means of expressing nationality in reflecting the spirit, worldview, traditions and values of their people in the works of art created by the writer is incomparable. Language units that reflect national semantics include symbolic units, realities, lacunae, metaphors, exaggerations, irony and other means of artistic depiction with national coloring, stereotypes, ethnographic units, phraseologisms and proverbs, anthroponyms and toponyms, religious and cultural units. In this article, we will discuss the realia that expresses nationality, as well as the principles of their translation. It is emphasized

that a deep study of realia and their most appropriate translation plays an important role in conveying cultural information and ensuring mutual understanding in international communication.

Literature review

Throughout human history, the traditions and customs formed in different countries, nations, and communities have been passed down from generation to generation, carrying within them unique meaning and distinctiveness. The peculiarities of a particular ethnic group's life are reflected in its language, since "culture as a system includes language" (Hertsovska, Fedorova, 2014: 38). Language embodies the national and cultural code of a given community, which finds its most vivid expression in such an original linguistic phenomenon as realia. The ideological, aesthetic, and cognitive value of realia is difficult to overestimate.

Linguistic units that reflect the unique aspects of the ethnocultural specificity of a particular people, their history, and culture have attracted the attention of linguists for quite a long time. Realias are considered as lexical units characteristic of a particular people's way of life, culture, history, social system and mentality. They embody national color and are distinguished by the fact that they do not have a complete equivalent in another language. A.V. Fedorov, who conducted fruitful research in this area, emphasizes about realias that "Realias are specific elements inherent in culture, the translation of which requires the translator to have a deep knowledge of the source culture and the target language" [2]. R. Zorivchak notes that "linguotranslational studies of realia shed light on numerous problems related to language as a means of communication," and that "the regularities established on the basis of translations serve as linguistic sources for lexicology and stylistics" (Zorivchak, 1989: 9). V.N. Komissarov defines realia as "lexical units expressing the uniqueness of the life and culture of a people"[2]. Scholar A. Khojiyev expresses the following opinion: "Realia words are language units expressing the lifestyle, mentality, and values of each people, and they are a linguistic reflection of nationality"[3]. Realias, as "elements that give the text a local and historical flavor", are usually used within the framework of literary translations, and are rarely found in technical translations (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2014: 139). Therefore, today, in the fields of linguistics, literary studies, and translation studies, the analysis of realias and their translation is one of the issues of language, artistic works, and intercultural dialogue.

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative linguocultural approach, aiming to explore how realia and lacunae function as carriers of national identity within language and translation. The study employs descriptive, comparative, and classificatory methods, focusing on the identification, categorization, and interpretation of culturally specific linguistic units. Realia are understood as words or expressions that denote unique objects, phenomena, or traditions characteristic of a particular culture, whereas lacunae are treated as conceptual or lexical gaps—instances of missing equivalents in intercultural communication.

The analytical process comprised three stages.

First, authentic language materials—including literary texts, media discourse, and academic sources—were examined to identify examples of realia and lacunae.

Second, the collected examples were classified according to their thematic and functional characteristics (e.g., ethnographic, socio-political, and everyday life domains).

Third, the strategies for transferring these culturally bound units into another language were analyzed within the frameworks established by leading scholars in translation studies (Newmark, 1988; Venuti, 1995), with particular attention to domestication, foreignization, descriptive translation, and adaptation.

Finally, the findings were interpreted in terms of their effectiveness in reflecting and transforming national identity within cross-cultural communicative contexts.

Results and discussion

It is believed that the term “realia” originates from the Latin word *realis*, which means “genuine” or “real,” and therefore denotes a materially existing object and serves as the basis for the nominative meaning of a word. According to the dictionary definition, a realia is “an object, phenomenon, concept that belongs to nature, culture, everyday life, or history and is mentioned in a literary work, as well as words that denote it, proverbs, sayings, aphorisms, etc., which reproduce the sociocultural and national specificity” (Batsevych, 2007: 307).

Many scholars have classified realia from different perspectives. One of the most well-known classifications was proposed by S. Vlahov and S. Florin, who define realia as “a word or expression that has no exact equivalent or is difficult to translate into another language, being closely connected with the culture, history, and lifestyle of a particular nation” [1].

According to their classification, realia can be divided into cultural, social, historical, ethno-geographical, and other types:

I. Cultural realia:

- a) National dishes;
- b) National clothing;
- c) Forms of art.

II. Ethno-geographical realia:

- a) Place names: Turkestan, Bukhara, Fergana, Kokand
- b) Natural objects: qir (hillside), adir (upland), daryo (river)

III. Social realia:

- a) Social institutions
- b) Customs and traditions

IV. Historical realia:

- a) Historical figures and events

The translation of realia is regarded as a linguocultural issue, since the translator must preserve the meaning and cultural connotation of the original while ensuring comprehensibility for the target audience. The most essential task in translating realia is to preserve their semantic and cultural color. Various strategies are applied in this process:

1. Transcription and transliteration – preserving the original phonetic form.
2. Descriptive (explanatory) translation – providing an explanation to clarify meaning.
3. Analog substitution – replacing the realia with a culturally similar concept from the target language.
4. Omission or generalization – in some cases, the realia may be omitted or replaced with a general term when necessary.

Each method has its advantages and limitations, and the choice of strategy depends on the genre, purpose, and target audience of the text. Thus, the translation of realia plays a significant role not only in linguistics but also in intercultural communication, serving as a bridge between different cultural and linguistic systems.

In this article, the characters of the novel “Mehrobdan Chayon” that we are analyzing—Anvar, Ra’no, Solih makhdum, Nigoroyim, Sultonali mirzo, Safar the cloth-maker, Shahodat mufti, mulla Abdurahmon, and others—appear before our eyes as if alive. Moreover, while reading the work, the reader also gains information about the social system, the lifestyle of ordinary people, and even the customs and traditions of the period nearly one hundred years ago. Thus, in creating this people-oriented novel, the author attempted to reveal the national culture, customs, history, and social system of his nation through linguistic means.

The works created by Abdulla Qodiriy embody the spirit of national identity. Indeed, as we examine the novel “Mehrobdan Chayon”, we can observe the writer’s skillful use of realia that serve to express national features. Likewise, the speech of the characters and the author’s own narrative style are depicted masterfully and uniquely. Such realia as Ra’no’s braided hair, Anvar’s being swaddled in a cradle, Nigoroyim preparing food at the hearth, the description of the makhdum hanging his turban on a peg, Gulshan arriving in a paranja, mulla Abdurahmon proposing marriage to Ra’no, and Tunqotar raising his hands in prayer—all serve to reflect the national culture characteristic of the Uzbek people.

Based on the explanations and definitions of realia given above, let us present some examples of realia that represent Uzbek national culture found in Abdulla Qodiriy’s novel “Mehrobdan Chayon”:

“ - Yo ‘q, - dedi **maxdum sallasini qoziqqa** ila-ila,-bir manti qilayliq,-dedim,-**manti yeganimizga ko‘b bo‘ldi, vallohi a‘lam...**” (Mehrobdan Chayon, 2023, p.7)

In these sentences from the original text, the words makhdum, salla, peg (qoziq), manti, and vallohi a‘lam are realia that represent Uzbek national culture. Makhdum refers to a title; salla refers to clothing; qoziq is an item/object; manti is a national dish; vallohi a‘lam is a religious expression.

The translator conveys this passage to the English reader as follows:

“-No,” Mahdum replied, putting his salla on to the peg. “Cook manti today,” he said. “It has been a long time ago when we last had manti...” (Scorpion from the Altar, 2019, p.8)

Analyzing the original and the translated text, we can see that the translator uses the method of transliteration in transferring the realia makhdum, salla, and manti to the Western reader, recreating them in the translation. However, the religious realia vallohi a‘lam has been omitted in the translated text.

Conclusion

In conclusion, realias are considered in linguistics as an important linguocultural unit expressing nationality. Realia is an important semantic unit expressing nationality. Through them, the mentality, lifestyle, cultural values, and national identity of the people are revealed. Therefore, realias are an important object of research for the disciplines of linguoculturology, translation studies, and cultural studies. By studying them and determining the methods of correct translation, it is possible to achieve mutual understanding in intercultural dialogue and to convey the national heritage on a global scale.

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