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THE REFLECTION OF NATIONAL-CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS IN THE TRANSLATION OF UZBEK LITERATURE INTO ENGLISH

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Abstract. The translation of Uzbek literature into English represents an important form of intercultural communication that enables international readers to discover the history, worldview, traditions, values, and cultural identity of the Uzbek people. However, literary translation involves more than transferring linguistic meanings from one language into another; it requires the preservation and appropriate representation of national-cultural characteristics embedded in literary texts. This article examines the ways in which Uzbek national-cultural elements are reflected in English translations of literary works. Particular attention is paid to culturally marked lexical units, traditional customs, forms of address, national food, clothing, religious and social concepts, historical realities, proverbs, idiomatic expressions, and culturally specific symbols. The study analyzes major translation strategies, including transliteration, calque, descriptive translation, functional substitution, contextual adaptation, and explanatory translation. The research demonstrates that excessive domestication may weaken the cultural identity of the original work, whereas excessive foreignization may create difficulties for English-speaking readers. Therefore, an effective translation should establish a balance between cultural authenticity and accessibility. The findings emphasize the importance of translators' intercultural competence and contextual awareness in presenting Uzbek literature to the international readership.

Keywords: Uzbek literature, literary translation, national-cultural characteristics, intercultural communication, cultural identity, translation strategies, English translation, cultural concepts.

Introduction. Literary translation plays a significant role in establishing intercultural dialogue and facilitating the exchange of cultural values between different linguistic communities. Through literary translation, readers gain access not only to stories and artistic images but also to the worldview, historical memory, traditions, social relations, and cultural values of another nation. In this respect, the translation of Uzbek literature into English is particularly important because English functions as one of the major international languages through which Uzbek literary heritage can reach a global readership. Uzbek literature possesses a rich cultural and historical background. The literary heritage of Uzbek writers contains numerous references to national traditions, family relationships, religious beliefs, social customs, historical events, traditional clothing, food, architecture, folklore, and forms of interpersonal communication. Such elements are closely connected with the cultural identity of the Uzbek people and frequently do not have direct equivalents in English. The translation of culturally

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specific elements therefore presents one of the most challenging problems in literary translation. A translator has to convey not only the denotative meaning of a word or expression but also its cultural, emotional, historical, and pragmatic implications. For example, Uzbek concepts such as mahalla, hashar, suzani, do‘ppi, palov, beshik to‘yi, kelin salom, and various kinship terms contain meanings that extend beyond their dictionary definitions. Replacing such concepts with culturally familiar English equivalents may make a translation easier to understand, but it can simultaneously reduce its cultural specificity. The theoretical foundations of literary translation and intercultural communication have been discussed by numerous scholars. Translation theorists such as E. Nida, P. Newmark, L. Venuti, A. Berman, S. Bassnett, and others have emphasized the complex relationship between language, culture, and translation. In particular, the distinction between domestication and foreignization has become central to discussions concerning the translation of culture-specific elements. The English translation of Uzbek literary works is therefore not simply a linguistic process. It is an intercultural act in which the translator functions as a mediator between two cultural systems. The quality of such translation depends on the translator’s ability to recognize cultural meanings and reproduce them in a way that preserves both the artistic value of the original and its national identity.

The purpose of this article is to investigate the reflection of national-cultural characteristics in English translations of Uzbek literature and to identify the major strategies used to transfer culture-specific elements from Uzbek into English.

The objectives of the study are: to identify major types of national-cultural elements in Uzbek literary texts, to examine the difficulties involved in translating these elements into English, to analyze major translation strategies used for culture-specific expressions, to evaluate the relationship between cultural authenticity and reader accessibility, to determine the role of intercultural competence in translating Uzbek literature.

Literature Review. The relationship between language, culture, and translation has long been a central issue in translation studies. Language is not merely a system of grammatical structures and lexical units; it also represents the cultural experience and worldview of its speakers. Consequently, translation between languages inevitably involves the transfer of cultural meanings. E. Nida made an important contribution to translation theory by distinguishing between formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. According to Nida, an effective translation should communicate the meaning and function of the source text to target readers in an appropriate manner. This principle is particularly relevant to literary translation because culture-specific expressions cannot always be translated through formal linguistic correspondence [1]. P. Newmark emphasized the importance of cultural words in translation. He argued that cultural words refer to phenomena associated with a particular community and may not have direct equivalents in another language. His classification of cultural categories, including ecology, material culture, social culture, organizations, customs, and gestures, provides a useful theoretical framework for analyzing Uzbek cultural elements in English translations [2]. L. Venuti introduced the influential concepts of domestication and foreignization. Domestication

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involves adapting the source text to the cultural expectations of target readers, whereas foreignization attempts to preserve elements of the source culture and make their foreignness visible [3]. Both strategies can be observed in translations of Uzbek literature. S. Bassnett considers literary translation as an intercultural activity in which translators negotiate between different cultural systems [4]. From this perspective, the translator must understand the cultural context in which a literary text was created rather than treating the text as an isolated linguistic structure. A. Berman emphasizes the importance of respecting the "foreignness" of the source text. His approach is particularly relevant to Uzbek literature because excessive adaptation may remove culturally significant characteristics and transform the cultural identity of the original work [5]. Culture-specific items have also been examined by scholars working in the field of cultural translation. These items may include names of traditional foods, clothing, ceremonies, institutions, social relationships, religious concepts, historical realities, and idiomatic expressions. Their translation requires the use of different strategies depending on the function of the particular cultural element in the literary context. In the context of Uzbek literature, national-cultural characteristics are especially visible in works depicting family relationships, village life, traditional ceremonies, historical events, and social customs. Literary works by writers such as Abdulla Qodiriy, Abdulla Qahhor, Oybek, G‘afur G‘ulom, Said Ahmad, O‘tkir Hoshimov, and other Uzbek authors contain numerous culturally marked expressions. The translation of such works requires attention to the historical period, social structure, religious environment, traditional values, and everyday life represented in the source text. A translator who ignores these contextual dimensions may produce a linguistically correct but culturally inadequate translation. Therefore, previous research demonstrates that successful literary translation requires an integrated approach combining linguistic equivalence, cultural interpretation, contextual analysis, and intercultural competence.

Research Methodology. The present study employs a qualitative comparative approach to investigate national-cultural characteristics in Uzbek literary texts and their English translations. The research is based on comparative, descriptive, contextual, and pragmatic methods. These methods make it possible to identify culture-specific elements, analyze their functions in the original texts, and examine the strategies used to transfer their meanings into English.

The following categories of national-cultural elements were selected for analysis: traditional food and drinks, national clothing, customs and ceremonies, kinship and forms of address, religious and cultural concepts, historical and social realities, traditional institutions, proverbs and idiomatic expressions, folklore elements, geographical and ethnographic references, culturally specific metaphors and symbols. The analysis focuses on the relationship between the source-language cultural concept and its target-language representation.

The following translation strategies are considered:

1. Transliteration/transcription – preserving the original cultural term in a modified Latin form.
2. Calque – translating the structural components of a cultural expression literally.
3. Descriptive translation – explaining the meaning of a culturally specific item.

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4. Functional equivalent – using a target-language expression that performs a similar communicative function.

5. Contextual adaptation – modifying the expression according to the target reader's cultural expectations.

6. Explanatory translation – adding contextual information to make the cultural meaning understandable.

7. Foreignization – retaining the cultural specificity of the source text.

8. Domestication – adapting the source cultural element to the conventions of the target culture.

The methodological approach is based on the assumption that no single translation strategy is universally appropriate. The choice depends on the semantic, stylistic, pragmatic, and cultural function of each element within the literary context.

Results and Discussion. One of the most significant manifestations of Uzbek national culture in literature is culturally marked vocabulary. Such words frequently refer to objects, practices, institutions, or concepts that are specific to Uzbek society. For example, words such as mahalla, do'ppi, suzani, palov, chapan, beshik, and hashar carry cultural meanings that cannot always be represented through a single English word. The term mahalla, for instance, refers not simply to a "neighborhood." In Uzbek culture, mahalla traditionally represents a social community characterized by interpersonal relationships, collective responsibility, mutual assistance, and local social organization. Translating it simply as "neighborhood" may communicate its geographical meaning while losing some of its sociocultural significance. Similarly, hashar is more than ordinary "collective work." It traditionally refers to voluntary communal labor performed by members of a community for a shared purpose. Therefore, depending on context, transliteration accompanied by explanation may be more effective than a simple lexical equivalent.

Traditional Food and Material Culture. Food is another important component of national identity. Uzbek literature frequently contains references to palov, somsa, non, manti, shashlik, qatiq, and other traditional foods.

The translation of these items requires a careful balance between cultural authenticity and reader comprehension. Transliteration can preserve the cultural identity of the original term:

palov → plov/pilaf

However, the use of the internationally recognizable "pilaf" may not fully preserve the cultural associations attached to palov in Uzbek society. In literary contexts, therefore, retaining plov or palov and providing contextual explanation may be more appropriate. The same principle applies to non. Translating it simply as "bread" conveys its basic meaning but may lose its cultural significance. In Uzbek culture, bread has important symbolic and social associations, including hospitality, respect, blessing, and family tradition. Consequently, cultural translation should consider not only what an object is but also what it means within the source culture.

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Customs and Ceremonies. Uzbek literary works contain numerous references to traditional ceremonies, including weddings, circumcision celebrations, engagement ceremonies, funerals, and family rituals.

Expressions such as beshik to‘yi, kelin salom, fotiha, and other ceremonial concepts require contextual interpretation.

For example:

Uzbek cultural element	**Possible English rendering**	**Translation strategy**
Mahalla	mahalla / neighborhood community	Foreignization + explanation
Hashar	hashar / communal voluntary labor	Transliteration + description
Do‘ppi	doppi / traditional skullcap	Transliteration + explanation
Suzani	suzani / traditional embroidered textile	Transliteration + description
Palov	plov / Uzbek rice dish	Borrowing + explanation
Beshik to‘yi	beshik toy / cradle ceremony	Descriptive translation
Kelin salom	bride’s ceremonial greeting	Descriptive translation
Non	bread / traditional bread	Contextual translation
Chapan	chapan / traditional robe	Transliteration
Mahram	mahram / close relative or permissible companion	Contextual explanation

The table demonstrates that culturally specific expressions often require more than direct lexical substitution.

Forms of Address and Kinship Terms. Forms of address are another significant indicator of national-cultural identity. Uzbek contains a rich system of kinship terms and respectful forms that can be used beyond biological relationships. Words such as aka, uka, opa, singil, ota, ona, buvi, and bobo may express not only kinship but also respect, social closeness, age differences, and interpersonal solidarity. For example, the Uzbek expression aka may be translated as “elder brother,” but in certain contexts it can also function as a respectful form of address toward a man who is not the speaker’s biological brother. If the translator renders every occurrence of aka simply as “brother,” the pragmatic meaning may be distorted. Therefore, contextual interpretation is essential. The use of honorific and respectful forms also reflects Uzbek social values. Age hierarchy, respect for elders, and social status frequently influence the choice of linguistic forms. These cultural distinctions may not have direct grammatical equivalents in English.

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Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions. Proverbs and idiomatic expressions present another major challenge because their meanings are often metaphorical and culturally embedded. A literal translation of an Uzbek proverb may preserve individual lexical meanings while failing to communicate its communicative function or cultural symbolism. For example, Uzbek proverbs frequently employ images associated with family, bread, hospitality, labor, community, and social morality. Translators must decide whether to preserve the original metaphor or replace it with an English proverb carrying a similar pragmatic function.

Two approaches can be distinguished:

- source-oriented translation, which preserves the original cultural image;
- target-oriented translation, which prioritizes functional equivalence for English readers.

For literary translation, the first approach is often preferable when the cultural image contributes to characterization, atmosphere, or national identity. However, when the proverb is primarily used to convey a general moral lesson, a functional English equivalent may sometimes be effective.

Religious and Historical Concepts. Uzbek literature also reflects the influence of Islamic culture and Central Asian history. Terms related to religious practices, social traditions, historical personalities, and cultural institutions may have no exact English equivalents. The translator should therefore consider the historical period and ideological context of the literary work. A word that has a religious meaning in one context may have a broader social meaning in another. Historical novels present a particularly complex challenge because they combine linguistic archaism, historical terminology, cultural customs, and social institutions. Translators must reconstruct the historical atmosphere without making the English text unnecessarily obscure.

Domestication and Foreignization. One of the most important theoretical issues in the translation of Uzbek literature is the balance between domestication and foreignization. Domestication makes a text more accessible to English-speaking readers by adapting unfamiliar cultural concepts to familiar ones. This approach may improve readability but can reduce the visibility of Uzbek culture. Foreignization, in contrast, deliberately preserves elements of the source culture. It allows readers to encounter culturally unfamiliar concepts and therefore maintains the national identity of the original work. Neither approach should be regarded as universally superior. The appropriate strategy depends on the function of the cultural element. For example, if a traditional Uzbek garment is central to the description of a character, translating do‘ppi simply as “hat” may result in cultural loss. Retaining do‘ppi and providing a brief contextual explanation would preserve the cultural meaning more effectively.

Cultural Loss and Cultural Preservation. The analysis shows that cultural loss can occur at several levels. First, lexical loss occurs when a culturally specific word is replaced by a general English term. Second, pragmatic loss occurs when the social function of an expression is not transferred. Third, symbolic loss occurs when culturally significant images are replaced by target-culture images. Fourth, stylistic loss occurs when the literary atmosphere of the original is weakened. At the same time,

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translation can also contribute to cultural preservation. When Uzbek cultural terms are retained and appropriately contextualized, English-language readers become familiar with aspects of Uzbek culture that might otherwise remain inaccessible. Thus, translation functions simultaneously as an artistic practice and a mechanism of cultural representation.

Conclusion. The study demonstrates that national-cultural characteristics constitute one of the most important and challenging dimensions of translating Uzbek literature into English. Uzbek literary works contain numerous culture-specific elements related to traditions, customs, food, clothing, family relationships, forms of address, religious beliefs, historical realities, social institutions, proverbs, idioms, and symbolic representations. The analysis shows that these elements cannot always be translated through direct lexical equivalents. Their meanings are frequently connected with broader cultural knowledge and pragmatic contexts. Therefore, the translator must go beyond linguistic equivalence and consider the social, historical, emotional, and symbolic dimensions of the source text. Among the most effective strategies for translating Uzbek cultural elements are transliteration, descriptive translation, contextual explanation, functional equivalence, and carefully controlled adaptation. Foreignization can be particularly useful for preserving distinctive Uzbek cultural concepts, whereas domestication may increase accessibility for readers who have limited knowledge of Uzbek culture. However, excessive domestication may result in cultural homogenization and weaken the national identity of the literary work. At the same time, excessive foreignization without explanation may create comprehension difficulties for English-speaking readers. Consequently, the most effective approach is a balanced strategy that preserves culturally significant elements while providing sufficient contextual information. The study also confirms the important role of the translator as an intercultural mediator. Successful translation requires not only knowledge of Uzbek and English but also familiarity with the cultural systems represented by both languages. The translator should understand how cultural concepts function within literary narratives and how they influence characterization, atmosphere, symbolism, and reader interpretation. The translation of Uzbek literature into English therefore contributes significantly to the international representation of Uzbek cultural heritage. High-quality translations can promote intercultural dialogue, expand the international readership of Uzbek authors, and introduce global audiences to the historical and cultural richness of Uzbekistan. Future research may focus on corpus-based comparative analysis of particular Uzbek literary works and their English translations, especially with regard to culturally marked vocabulary, metaphor, phraseology, gender-related cultural representations, forms of address, and the translation of historical and religious concepts.

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