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LINGUOCULTURAL FEATURES OF TRANSLATING NATIONAL REALIA IN AMERICAN SHORT STORIES

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Abstract:

This article examines the linguocultural features of translating national realia in American short stories, focusing on the interaction between language, culture, and meaning in the translation process. National realia, as culture-specific elements, reflect unique aspects of a society's history, traditions, values, and everyday life, and therefore present significant challenges for translators. The study analyzes various translation strategies used to render realia, including transliteration, descriptive translation, functional equivalence, and cultural substitution.

Special attention is given to the role of context and the translator's interpretative competence in preserving both semantic accuracy and cultural authenticity. The paper also explores how the loss or transformation of cultural meaning may occur when realia are transferred into another linguistic and cultural system. Through examples from American short stories, the research highlights the importance of balancing fidelity to the source text with accessibility for the target audience.

Keywords: National realia, linguocultural features, translation, American short stories, cultural transfer, translation strategies, intercultural communication, equivalence, cultural adaptation, language and culture



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The translation of national realia in literary works places a significant responsibility on the translator. National realia refer to concepts, objects, traditions, phenomena, or sets of phenomena that are specific to a particular people, nation, or culture. Realia (from Latin: related to a thing or object) are words and notions characteristic of a particular nation, that is, culture-specific lexical items. They express national identity and contribute to the creation of national color in literary texts. Realia include personal and place names, rituals, customs and traditions, clothing, food, household items, musical instruments, and other elements related to both the material and spiritual life of a people.

Definitions of “national realia” found in translation studies dictionaries are generally similar. The views of translator and scholar E. Ochilov largely coincide with those presented in the dictionary of the Russian linguist L. L. Nelyubin. In particular, Nelyubin defines realia as follows:

1. words or expressions denoting objects, concepts, or situations that do not exist in the practical experience of speakers of another language;
2. elements studied in extralinguistics and translation studies, such as the political system, history, culture, and linguistic interactions of a given country;
3. objects of material culture that serve as the basis of the nominative meaning of a word;
4. words that reflect the national specificity of life and everyday existence.

National realia can be classified into the following types:

1. **Geographical realia** (place names, climate, natural objects)
Examples: Grand Canyon, Mississippi River
2. **Ethnographic realia** (clothing, food, customs, religious traditions)
Examples: Thanksgiving, Fourth of July barbecue, apple pie



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3. Socio-political realia

Examples: The White House, Democrats and Republicans, Wall Street

4. Cultural realia (film, sports, famous personalities, literature)

Examples: Hollywood, Broadway, Mark Twain, Harlem Renaissance

If national realia are translated literally, they may lose their meaning or become incomprehensible. Therefore, the following translation strategies are commonly used:

1. **Transliteration:** preserving the original form of the word

Example: Thanksgiving → Tengskgiving

2. Descriptive translation

Example: Fourth of July barbecue → a family barbecue held on July 4th (Independence Day)

3. Functional equivalence (analogy)

Example: Apple pie → can be described as a traditional American dessert, though renaming is not recommended

4. Commented (explicative) translation

Example: The White House → the official residence of the President of the United States

Below, based on examples from contemporary American short stories, we present a comparative analysis of national realia in the original texts and their Russian and Uzbek translations.

Original: He sold papers on Wall Street since he was twelve. (O. Henry)

Translation: U o‘n ikki yoshidan beri **Uoll-Strit**da gazeta sotardi

In this example from O. Henry’s story, the name of a New York street appears as “Wall Street” in the original and is rendered as “Uoll-Strit” in Uzbek translation. The translator uses the phonetic principle to reproduce the original pronunciation. Wall Street is known as the financial center of the United States. The translator



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provides an in-text explanation, describing it as “a street in New York known as a financial center.”

Original: Every Thanksgiving, the whole family gathered in Grandma’s house. (O. Henry)

Translation: Har yili “**Tengskgiving**” bayramida butun oila buvi uyida yig‘ilardi..

The term “Thanksgiving” represents an American national holiday deeply rooted in cultural tradition. The translator retains the original form through transliteration and supplements it with an explanatory note: “a holiday celebrated in the United States on the last Thursday of November.” Thus, the realia is preserved and clarified simultaneously.

Original: She dreamed of making it to Broadway one day. (O. Henry)

Translation: U bir kuni **Brodvey** sahnasiga chiqishni orzu qilardi.

In this example, “Broadway” is also retained through phonetic adaptation, as it refers to a well-known cultural location in New York associated with theater. Since it is a proper noun and a national realia, direct borrowing is considered appropriate.

Overall, these examples demonstrate that the translation of national realia requires a careful balance between preserving the original cultural meaning and ensuring comprehensibility for the target audience. The translator’s choice of strategy depends on linguistic, cultural, and contextual factors, as well as the intended readership.

The specific features of translating national realia are closely connected not only with linguistic means but also with culture, history, national mentality, and social values. Therefore, a simple word-for-word translation approach is insufficient when dealing with such elements. The main characteristics of this process can be outlined as follows:



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1. **Cultural dependence (cultural specificity);**
 2. **Semantic multilayeredness;**
 3. **The translator's cultural competence;**
 4. **Diversity of translation strategies;**
 5. **Consideration of the target audience (reader factor);**
 6. **The principle of functional equivalence.**

The translation of realia must be adequate not only at the lexical level but also at the cultural and functional levels. In other words, the function of a realia in the source text should be preserved in the translation: whether it serves as humor, criticism, symbolism, or a persuasive device, it should perform the same function in the target text.

The works of such prominent American writers as Jack London, Mark Twain, Ernest Hemingway, Theodore Dreiser, and O. Henry, who have left a profound mark on modern American literature, are well known to Uzbek readers. Literary translation plays a crucial role in enabling readers to become acquainted with the history, culture, and ethnographic features of another nation through their native language.

The short stories of these authors have been translated into Uzbek by both older and younger generations of translators. Representatives of the older generation, such as Sh. Usmonxo'jayev, A. Abdumajidov, and Kh. Ahrorova, as well as younger translators like F. Nizomov, Sh. Mutalov, and A. Obidov, have skillfully rendered national realia in their translations, successfully preserving their cultural and artistic value.

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