

TRANSLATION STRATEGIES OF CULTURE-SPECIFIC LEXICAL UNITS

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Annotation: *Language is closely connected with culture, history, and traditions of a particular society. Every language contains lexical units that reflect the cultural values and lifestyle of its speakers. Such units often create difficulties in the process of translation because they may not have direct equivalents in another language. The present article examines the main strategies used in translating culture-specific lexical units from Uzbek into English and vice versa. The research focuses on such translation strategies as transliteration, descriptive translation, functional equivalence, and explanatory translation. The analysis demonstrates that the successful translation of culture-specific vocabulary requires not only linguistic competence but also a deep understanding of the cultural context. The study emphasizes the importance of intercultural knowledge in achieving an adequate translation of culturally bound expressions.*

Keywords: *culture-specific vocabulary, realia, translation strategies, linguocultural competence, transliteration, descriptive translation, functional equivalence.*

Language plays a crucial role in reflecting the cultural identity of a nation. It is not only a means of communication but also a repository of cultural traditions, social practices, and historical experiences. Every language contains a number of lexical units that are closely connected with the culture and lifestyle of its speakers. Such lexical items are often referred to as culture-specific lexical units or realia in translation studies. Culture-specific lexical units usually refer to objects, traditions, social institutions, or historical phenomena that are unique to a particular culture. For example, the Uzbek language includes words such as mahalla, sumalak, and doppi, which represent important elements of Uzbek cultural life. Similarly, the English language includes culture-bound expressions such as Thanksgiving, pub, and afternoon tea. [2, 50]

Translating such lexical units is often a challenging task for translators. Since these words represent culture-bound concepts, they may not have direct equivalents in another language. As a result, translators must use various translation strategies in order to convey the meaning accurately and preserve the cultural nuances of the original text. The purpose of this article is to analyze the main strategies used in translating culture-specific lexical units and to demonstrate their application through examples from Uzbek and English languages. Theoretical Background of Culture-Specific Lexical Units: The issue of translating culture-specific vocabulary has been widely discussed in translation studies. Many scholars emphasize that language and

culture are inseparable, and therefore translation should be considered not only as a linguistic process but also as a cultural transfer. Culture-specific lexical units usually belong to several categories. These categories may include:

1. traditional food and cuisine
2. clothing and national costumes
3. customs and rituals
4. social institutions
5. historical and cultural phenomena

For instance, the Uzbek word *sumalak* refers to a traditional dish prepared during the celebration of Navruz, which symbolizes renewal and the arrival of spring. Such a concept does not exist in many other cultures, which makes its translation more complex. Similarly, the English word *Thanksgiving* refers to a national holiday celebrated primarily in the United States and Canada. It represents a cultural tradition that may not be fully understood by speakers of other languages without additional explanation.[1, 25] These examples illustrate that culture-specific lexical units carry not only lexical meaning but also cultural and historical information. Translation Strategies for Culture-Specific Lexical Units: One of the most common strategies used in translating culture-specific lexical units is transliteration or transcription. In this method, the original word is transferred into the target language while preserving its phonetic form. [4, 124] For example:

1. *mahalla* → mahalla
2. *sumalak* → sumalak

This strategy allows the translator to preserve the cultural uniqueness of the concept. However, it may require additional explanation for readers who are unfamiliar with the term. Descriptive Translation: Another important strategy is descriptive translation. In this approach, the translator explains the meaning of the word through a descriptive phrase. For example: *sumalak* – a traditional sweet dish made from wheat and prepared during the Navruz festival. This method helps readers understand the concept even if it does not exist in their culture. Additionally, functional equivalence involves finding a similar concept in the target culture that performs a comparable function. For example: *to'y* → wedding ceremony. Although the traditions associated with weddings may differ across cultures, the general concept of a marriage celebration exists in many societies. Translation combination: In some cases, translators combine transliteration with a short explanation in order to clarify the meaning of a culture-specific word. For example: *mahalla* – a traditional neighborhood community institution in Uzbekistan.

This approach is particularly useful in academic texts and literary translations where cultural accuracy is important. The Uzbek and English languages have developed in different historical and cultural environments. As a result, their lexical systems contain many culture-specific expressions that may not have direct

equivalents in each other. For instance, the concept of mahalla plays a significant role in Uzbek society. It represents not only a residential neighborhood but also a social institution responsible for community organization, cultural traditions, and social support. Translating this concept simply as neighborhood does not fully convey its cultural significance. [6, 80]

Therefore, translators must choose the most appropriate strategy depending on the context of the text and the target audience. In literary works, preserving cultural flavor is often more important, whereas in informative texts clarity may be the primary goal. The development of intercultural competence is essential for translators working with culture-bound vocabulary. Understanding the cultural background of both source and target languages enables translators to produce more accurate and meaningful translations. Culture-specific lexical units represent an important aspect of linguistic and cultural diversity. Their translation poses significant challenges due to the absence of direct equivalents in other languages. [5, 67]

This study has demonstrated that translators can apply several strategies in order to overcome these difficulties, including transliteration, descriptive translation, functional equivalence, and explanatory translation. Each strategy has its own advantages and limitations, and the choice of strategy depends on the context and purpose of the translation.

Ultimately, the successful translation of culture-specific vocabulary requires not only linguistic knowledge but also a deep understanding of cultural contexts. Translators must act as mediators between cultures, ensuring that the meaning and cultural significance of the original text are preserved in the target language.

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