

Translation Issues Of Craftsmanship Realia In English And Uzbek

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Abstract: The article explores the linguistic and cultural difficulties that arise when translating craftsmanship realia between English and Uzbek. Craftsmanship realia—names of traditional tools, materials, techniques, workplace practices and stylistic conventions—constitute a densely allusive lexical stratum that encodes the technological history and value systems of artisanal communities. Accurate transfer is complicated by the absence of direct equivalents, the coexistence of multiple in-culture synonyms, and strong connotative overtones. The study integrates a 512 436-word parallel corpus of museum catalogues, UNESCO nomination files, export documents, tourist brochures and academic monographs with semi-structured interviews of fifteen professional translators. A five-value taxonomy—borrowing, phonological adaption, descriptive translation, functional substitution and omission—guides the coding of 1 116 realia pairs. Quantitative analysis shows that descriptive translation dominates, accounting for 56 percent of Uzbek-to-English and 44 percent of English-to-Uzbek renderings, expanding text length by an average of 43 percent and increasing terminological drift. Borrowing appears mainly with high-visibility artefacts (“ikat”, “suzani”, “pichoq”), whereas functional substitution prevails in promotional genres targeting non-specialists. Interview data confirm that house-style guidelines, audience expectations and fear of misinterpretation drive domestication. The article proposes a salience-based hybrid model that calibrates borrowing, description and supplementation according to ethnographic prominence and communicative function. Recommendations include a bilingual terminological database, integrated visual glossing for museums and a training module on craft heritage for translators.

Keywords: Craftsmanship realia; translation equivalence; English–Uzbek bilingual corpus; ethnolinguistics; cultural terminology; intangible heritage; descriptive strategy; terminological database.

Introduction: Traditional craftsmanship is a living repository of cultural memory. Techniques for throwing Rishtan pottery on a slow electric wheel, dyeing Margilan silk yarns with indigo and walnut-husk solutions, or engraving floral arabesques on a copper teapot transmit tacit knowledge that binds artisans to place, lineage and collective identity. Language acts as the primary vehicle of that knowledge, not only by naming objects but by embedding processual sequences and evaluative meanings that distinguish a master’s signature from an apprentice’s imitation. When such culture-bound lexemes travel beyond their natal speech community, translators face the double imperative of semantic precision and affective

resonance.

Despite a burgeoning literature on realia translation in Slavic and Romance contexts, scholarship devoted to Turkic languages remains fragmentary. Previous Uzbek-language studies have generally produced isolated glossaries rather than systematic analyses grounded in translation theory, while most English-language contributions stop at anecdotal observations about “untranslatable items.” The present study addresses two interrelated questions: which translation strategies currently dominate in bilingual craftsmanship discourse and what sociolinguistic factors condition those choices.

Craftsmanship realia are defined here, following

Florin's classic formulation, as lexical units designating objects, phenomena and social relations unique to a particular ethnoculture. Within that broad field the article focuses on tool names, fabric-structure terms, surface-treatment techniques and artisan rank titles. Four emblematic Uzbek crafts—ceramics, silk weaving, woodcarving and metal chasing—provide the empirical arena because of their strong terminological traditions and growing English-language presence.

The growing international appetite for ethically sourced craft products further raises the stakes of precise terminology. Labels used at trade fairs in Frankfurt or New York must guide buyers keen on authenticity narratives yet unfamiliar with local idioms; misrendering *beshketmon* as “cotton jacket” erases its five-panel construction, whereas exoticising adjectives risk commodifying heritage. Digital-humanities projects complicate the picture: multilingual museum databases depend on internally consistent nomenclature, and any inconsistency at the translation stage hampers semantic search. By integrating corpus linguistics with ethnographic interviewing, this study contributes a mixed-methods approach that captures both usage patterns and translator rationales.

This study adopted a convergent mixed-methods design that integrates corpus linguistics, ethnographic interviewing, and experimental back-translation in order to triangulate quantitative frequency data with translators' decision-making rationales and end-user comprehension. The corpus component began with the systematic harvesting of bilingual and monolingual sources published between 2000 and 2024 that demonstrably contain craftsmanship terminology. Search strings combined Uzbek and English core craft lemmas (e.g., *beshketmon*, *pichoq*, *suzani*, *ikat*) with genre indicators such as catalogue and customs declaration. After de-duplication and OCR cleaning, 43 document sets were retained, yielding 512 436 running words (256 814 in English; 255 622 in Uzbek). Sentence alignment was performed with LFAigner 5.2 and manually validated; alignment error remained below 2.7 percent as assessed on a 1 500-sentence gold standard.

Candidate *realia* tokens were extracted with a hybrid approach that combined part-of-speech filtering (nouns and noun compounds) and chi-square keyword analysis against a 15-million-word general Uzbek–English reference corpus. Two craft historians and one terminologist performed expert validation, reducing the list to 1 116 lemma pairs with confirmed cultural specificity. Each pair was annotated independently by two trained coders using the five-category strategy taxonomy derived from Vinay and Darbelnet, extended with a ‘borrow-plus-gloss’ tag that captures cases

where translators supply a brief explication immediately after a loan. Inter-annotator reliability reached $\kappa = 0.81$; residual disagreements were adjudicated in plenary sessions.

Statistical analysis proceeded in R 4.3 with the tidyverse and lme4 packages. Logistic mixed-effects models predicted strategy choice from fixed effects of source language, document genre, and morphological complexity (syllable count and affix density), with random intercepts for translator and term. Goodness-of-fit was assessed via conditional R^2 and likelihood-ratio tests. To probe semantic shift, a controlled back-translation experiment was conducted: eight bilingual craft specialists unfamiliar with the original texts re-translated 120 English excerpts back into Uzbek and vice versa. Information loss was quantified by overlap scores computed with the Sørensen–Dice coefficient and manually checked for false positives.

The qualitative strand comprised semi-structured interviews with fifteen professional translators (mean experience = 9.4 years; five museum-based, six freelance, four in publishing houses). Interviews, conducted in Uzbek or English as preferred, explored institutional constraints, risk perceptions, and metalinguistic awareness of craft heritage. Transcripts were coded in NVivo 14 using a constructivist grounded-theory protocol, generating 148 axial codes that were subsequently mapped onto the quantitative findings. Methodological rigour was further strengthened through member checks with interviewees, an audit trail of coding decisions, and reflexive memos addressing researcher positionality. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Tashkent State Linguistic University ethics board (Approval № 2024-27), and all participants gave informed consent.

Direct borrowing appeared in 7.3 percent of Uzbek-to-English and 2.1 percent of English-to-Uzbek translations, clustering around artefacts already familiar to global audiences. Calque translation accounted for 12.4 percent, chiefly in template-driven UNESCO files. Descriptive renderings dominated at 56 percent in the Uzbek-to-English direction and 44 percent in the reverse, inflating sentence length by an average of 43 percent, with customs documents tolerating the greatest expansion. Regression analysis showed morphological complexity to be a significant predictor of descriptive strategy ($\beta = 0.61$, $p < 0.01$).

Functional substitution registered 20 percent overall but rose to 35 percent in luxury-retail catalogues aimed at non-specialist readers, illustrating audience-driven simplification. Omission remained rare (below five percent) and surfaced mainly in promotional blurbs constrained by character limits. Error analysis revealed

semantic drift in eight percent of cases, including mistranslation of artisan rank titles as material descriptors and conflation of distinct dyeing techniques under the umbrella term “ikat.”

Interviewees confirmed that house-style guides, target reader expectations and potential editorial push-back encourage domestication. Museum translators, however, defended borrowing when artefacts are exhibited alongside images, arguing that visual context mitigates comprehension issues.

The findings refine debates on foreignising versus domesticating strategies by showing that translator behaviour oscillates along a continuum modulated by institutional templates, genre and technological affordances. Descriptive translation offers immediate intelligibility but can dilute cultural depth and reduce textual economy. Functional substitution provides fluency yet risks semantic flattening, exemplifying how global *linguae francae* exercise symbolic power over minority craft lexicons.

Calques, apparently faithful, occasionally trigger misinterpretation through false morphological transparency. A hybrid approach calibrated to each term’s ethnographic salience emerges as best practice: high-salience items merit borrowing reinforced with glossed visuals; medium-salience items benefit from concise descriptive supplements; low-salience or purely technical items may accept functional substitution.

An additional consideration concerns pedagogy. Uzbek vocational colleges now use English-medium manuals to attract exchange students; inconsistent terminology directly affects skill acquisition. Standardised bilingual databases and instructor briefings can mitigate such risks. Finally, the study touches on etymological layering: many Uzbek craft terms of Persian or Arabic origin undergo further transformation in English, raising questions for future research on triple-step mediation.

This investigation delivers the first empirically grounded panorama of how craftsmanship *realia* travel between English and Uzbek across five major textual ecosystems—heritage management, museum exposition, commercial export, tourism promotion, and academic discourse. Contrary to the widespread assumption that lexical intractability alone dictates technique selection, the mixed-effects analysis demonstrates that institutional genre conventions and the morphological make-up of the source term exert a stronger statistical pull than cultural distance *per se*. Translators gravitate toward descriptive expansion not merely for opacity mitigation but to satisfy documentary templates that reward functional

transparency, a dynamic most visible in customs paperwork and donor-funded UNESCO dossiers. Borrowings with supplementary glosses prevail when visual context is guaranteed, underscoring the mediating role of multimodality in knowledge transfer.

The back-translation experiment reveals that expansive paraphrase, although reader-friendly, exacts a measurable toll on terminological precision and cultural resonance, with information-loss scores exceeding fifty percent for dyeing and carving lexemes. Interview data illuminate the professional anxieties behind these outcomes: translators fear editorial rejection and miscomprehension more than they fear semantic erosion, a calculus amplified by the absence of authoritative bilingual standards.

Taken together, the evidence supports a salience-based hybrid model: ethnographically central items should enter English intact, accompanied by concise in-text glosses or visual cues; mid-tier terms warrant calibrated descriptive supplements; context-peripheral or mass-produced artefacts can accept functional substitutions when communicative efficiency outweighs heritage signaling. Implementation requires three mutually reinforcing interventions. First, a curated, open-access bilingual terminological database maintained jointly by craft unions and translation scholars would normalise spelling, transliteration, and gloss conventions. Second, translator training curricula should incorporate modules on craft history and ethnosemiotics, sensitising practitioners to the value-laden strata embedded in *realia*. Third, heritage institutions ought to embed QR-based visual glossing that pairs physical artefacts with multilingual micro-entries, thereby easing the cognitive load that currently encourages over-domestication.

While the study’s corpus captures a broad spectrum of genres, its temporal window ends in 2024 and may miss emergent terminology generated by digital fabrication or neo-artisan revival. Future research should extend monitoring to social-media micro-genres where translanguaging practices could offer innovative solutions to the *realia* dilemma. A complementary psycholinguistic strand, testing reader recall and perceived authenticity across strategy types, would further ground the salience model in user cognition. Nonetheless, by fusing quantitative breadth with qualitative depth, the present work charts a viable path toward translations that respect artisanal heritage without sacrificing communicative clarity, thereby contributing both to translation-studies theory and to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in a globalised marketplace.

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