

# Rendering Linguocultural Realia In Literary Prose: A Comparative Analysis Of English And Uzbek Strategies

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**Abstract:** This study examines the translation of linguocultural realia in literary prose through a comparative analysis of Katherine Mansfield's "The Fly" and Abdulla Qahhor's "Anor." It investigates translation procedures and strategies applied when transferring culture-specific items between English and Uzbek. The findings reveal that domestication strategies dominate when rendering English realia into Uzbek, while foreignization is preferred for translating Uzbek realia into English, particularly for ethnographic and symbolic realia. This research highlights the importance of cultural mediation in literary translation and provides practical recommendations for translators working between typologically distant languages.

**Keywords:** Realia, literary translation, domestication, foreignization, English-Uzbek translation, symbolic realia.

**Introduction:** Translation serves as a crucial bridge between cultures, languages, and communities in today's globalized world, where intercultural communication has become increasingly prevalent. One of the most complex tasks in this process is the translation of culture-specific vocabulary, particularly linguocultural realia, which embody the unique social practices, material culture, and worldview of a particular society (Newmark, 1988; Baker, 1992). As these scholars emphasize, realia are not merely lexical items but carriers of deep cultural meaning. Their effective translation is essential to preserving cultural identity and ensuring accurate intercultural understanding. However, as their analyses are predominantly grounded in European language pairs, the question of how these concepts apply to typologically distant pairs such as English and Uzbek remains underexplored. The significant cultural and linguistic differences between these two languages often complicate direct transfer of culture-bound items.

The concept of culturemes, understood as the smallest cultural units embedded in language, further underscores the translator's responsibility to convey not only literal meanings but also cultural connotations and socio-historical associations (Salmeri, 2014). While

Salmeri highlights the central role of culturemes in shaping linguistic and cultural identity, their translation in literary prose introduces additional challenges, as realia often contribute not just to informational content but to narrative atmosphere, character development, and cultural authenticity. Recognizing this complexity, the present study shifts the focus from general vocabulary to the domain of literary prose, where the translation of realia is both a cultural and artistic act.

Translation theorists have identified various procedures for handling culture-specific items, including calque, transcription, descriptive translation, adaptation, and omission (Aixelá, 1996; Lojonen, 2009). While these methods are widely discussed within European translation contexts, their applicability to English-Uzbek literary translation remains insufficiently examined. Studies like that of Martinkovič (2022), which focus on speculative fiction, reveal that genre plays a critical role in procedural choice; however, they offer little insight into realia translation in realistic, everyday literary prose. Given Uzbek's agglutinative structure and distinct cultural context, an analysis tailored specifically to the English-Uzbek language pair is necessary.

Building on the methodological insights of Razumna

and Movchan (2024), who demonstrated that translation strategies vary based on genre, cultural proximity, and translator preference, this study investigates whether similar patterns emerge between English and Uzbek, or whether unique procedural trends arise due to the cultural and linguistic distance. While Razumna and Movchan's work revealed a dominance of domestication strategies in English-Ukrainian translation, their findings cannot be directly applied to Uzbek without localized analysis.

In response to this research gap, the present article examines the translation of linguacultural realia through a comparative analysis of two short stories: "The Fly" (1922) by Katherine Mansfield, representing early 20th-century British literary prose, and "Anor" (The Pomegranate) by Abdulla Qahhor, reflecting early Soviet-era Uzbek prose. Both texts are rich in material and social realia, including references to domestic objects, clothing, food, and social customs. Despite their similar temporal framing and thematic focus on ordinary life, these stories present distinct cultural contexts, making them suitable for investigating how translators handle realia between English and Uzbek.

This study aims to systematically analyse the translation procedures and strategies used in rendering realia in these two literary works. By identifying the most frequent methods—whether foreignization, domestication, or hybrid approaches—the research seeks to reveal the underlying logic guiding translators in negotiating cultural meaning. Ultimately, the findings contribute to both the theoretical understanding of realia translation and the practical enhancement of translation practices between English and Uzbek.

### Theoretical background

The so-called cultural turn in translation studies (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990; Bassnett, 2012; Rudvin, 2021) has shifted scholarly perspectives from viewing translation as a mere linguistic transfer to recognizing it as a form of intercultural mediation, where language and culture are inseparably intertwined. As Taibi (2023) emphasizes, the translator is now seen not just as a linguistic technician but as a cultural mediator, responsible for transferring culturally embedded meanings across language borders.

The unique character of a culture is often revealed through culture-specific vocabulary—terms that encode phenomena and practices unfamiliar to outsiders (Slavova & Borysenko, 2021). Language, as Zhou and Hua (2021) argue, acts as a repository of national identity, reflecting changes in thought, customs, and social structures. Accordingly, the same object or concept may be expressed differently in two

languages due to differing cultural, religious, social, and ecological factors. In the absence of direct cultural overlap between the source and target languages, the translator faces significant obstacles (Newmark, 1988). This issue is particularly relevant in English-Uzbek translation, where cultural and linguistic distance complicates the transfer of realia.

Translation scholars highlight that a lack of cultural competence may lead to misinterpretation and loss of meaning (Salmeri, 2014). This underlines the need for translators to possess not only linguistic expertise but also intercultural communication skills (Bedeker & Feinauer, 2006). Since realia—as tangible representations of cultural life—are closely tied to their source cultures, their accurate translation demands nuanced understanding of both source and target cultures.

In the context of literary prose, these challenges are amplified. Literary texts such as "The Fly" by Katherine Mansfield and "Anor" by Abdulla Qahhor exemplify how realia are not merely descriptive elements but function as symbolic devices contributing to characterization, narrative progression, and thematic depth. Rendering such elements across English and Uzbek therefore involves both cultural and literary mediation.

The concept of realia has been widely examined under various terminologies, including cultural words (Newmark, 1988), culture-specific items (Aixelá, 1996), culturemes (Salmeri, 2014), and lacunae (Morkovina, 2004). Despite terminological variation, these terms consistently refer to vocabulary items that encode the distinctive geographical, historical, social, and material features of a specific culture (Vlakhov & Florin, 1980; Zorivchak, 1989). These items may include proper nouns, idiomatic expressions, food items, social customs, and architectural or domestic objects—all of which pose translation difficulties due to their lack of direct equivalents in the target language (Slavova & Borysenko, 2021).

For this study, the term realia is adopted, following its prevalence in Eastern European translation research (Vlakhov & Florin, 1980). Realia encompass mono- and polylexemic items whose semantic core carries ethnocultural knowledge unfamiliar to the target audience. In literary prose, their presence serves to root the narrative in a specific socio-cultural context, rendering their translation both necessary and problematic.

Unlike irrealia, which refer to fictional culture-bound items (Loponen, 2009; Martinkovič, 2022), the realia examined in "The Fly" and "Anor" are grounded in the real worlds of early 20th-century British and Uzbek

societies. These include references to office objects, domestic spaces, and social customs in Mansfield's work, as well as agricultural practices, food items, and household artifacts in Qahhor's prose. Each of these reflects real-world material culture, making them subject to culturally sensitive translation strategies.

Classifications of realia consistently identify three primary spheres where culture-specific vocabulary manifests (Newmark, 1988; Vlachov & Florin, 1980):

- Geographical and ecological realia (e.g., flora, fauna, landscapes),
- Material and ethnographic realia (e.g., food, clothing, household objects, tools),
- Social and political realia (e.g., administrative systems, social customs, political terms).

The chosen literary texts provide rich material for analysing material and ethnographic realia, as both stories are set in everyday contexts where such elements naturally occur.

A variety of translation procedures have been proposed for rendering realia, reflecting differences in source-target cultural proximity and translator preference. Scholars such as Vlachov and Florin (1980), Newmark (1988), Baker (1992), and Aixelá (1996) have identified a range of techniques, including:

- Transcription/transliteration (transference),
- Calque (word-for-word translation),
- Descriptive translation,
- Cultural substitution,
- Generalization,
- Adaptation,
- Omission/deletion,
- Neologism creation.

Despite terminological differences, these procedures function similarly across classifications. For instance, transcription (Vlachov & Florin, 1980) aligns with transference (Newmark, 1988) and loan word use (Baker, 1992), all referring to the direct borrowing of source language terms using target language orthography. Similarly, descriptive translation and functional equivalence are often treated as synonymous strategies aimed at explaining realia unfamiliar to the target audience.

These procedures can be grouped according to broader translation strategies:

- Foreignization (Venuti, 1995): Maintaining the foreign nature of the source text via transcription, calque, or neologism.
- Domestication: Adapting the text for target

readers through descriptive translation, generalization, or cultural substitution.

In practice, translators often merge these strategies, applying hybrid techniques such as combined renomination, where a borrowed term is accompanied by a descriptive explanation.

In "The Fly" and "Anor", the application of these procedures depends not only on linguistic structure but also on cultural significance. A culturally charged object such as the pomegranate in Qahhor's story may demand retention through transcription or calque, while domestic items in Mansfield's office scenes might require descriptive translation or substitution to ensure comprehension.

This study will analyse how these procedures are utilized in translating realia between English and Uzbek, assessing whether domestication or foreignization strategies dominate in preserving the cultural and narrative functions of realia within literary prose.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a comparative qualitative research approach, aiming to analyse the translation of linguacultural realia between English and Uzbek literary prose and following a comparative methodological framework similar to that proposed by Razumna and Movchan (2024), who analyzed realia and irrealia translation procedures in English-Ukrainian non-fiction and fiction texts. Their stepwise approach to realia identification, procedural classification, and strategic assessment informed the design of the present study. Two short stories, "The Fly" by Katherine Mansfield and "Anor" (The Pomegranate) by Abdulla Qahhor, serve as the corpus of analysis. These texts were deliberately selected for their historical and cultural comparability: both belong to the early twentieth century, portray everyday life, and contain tangible representations of their respective cultural environments. Their compact length and rich inclusion of material, social, and symbolic realia make them manageable and meaningful sources for an in-depth comparative study.

The research process involved several interrelated stages, combining text-driven data collection with theoretical modelling of translation solutions. Initially, both stories were subjected to a close qualitative reading, focusing on the identification of culture-bound lexical items embedded within the narrative. For the purposes of this study, realia are understood in line with definitions proposed by Vlachov and Florin (1980) and later developed by Aixelá (1996) and Katan (2004): namely, as lexical units carrying culture-specific material, social, or symbolic content that may not have direct equivalents in the target language. Accordingly, special attention was given to items referring to

everyday objects, food, clothing, rituals, social practices, and material artifacts reflecting national identity.

As instances of realia were identified in each story, they were systematically recorded and classified according to type:

- Material realia, referring to physical objects (household items, agricultural products, clothing);
- Ethnographic realia, reflecting customs, rituals, or socio-cultural practices;
- Symbolic realia, where ordinary objects assume metaphorical or cultural significance within the narrative (such as the pomegranate in *Anor*).

Each realia unit was analysed in its narrative context, recognizing that in literary texts, realia may carry symbolic or emotional weight beyond their denotative meaning.

Following identification and classification, the study proceeded to translation analysis. This phase involved examining how each instance of realia was or could be rendered in the opposite language. In the case of Mansfield's "The Fly", realia were extracted from the original English text and cross-referenced with any existing Uzbek translations available. However, given the limited availability of published translations, many items required the formulation of model translations—hypothetical renderings into Uzbek, created by the researcher in accordance with contemporary translation practice. The same process was applied in reverse for Qahhor's "Anor": realia were identified from the Uzbek source text, and their translation into English was analysed based on existing renderings where available or through theoretically modelled equivalents where necessary.

For each translation case, the study applied a systematic framework for identifying translation procedures, guided by the classifications of Vlachov and Florin (1980), Newmark (1988), and Aixelá (1996), as well as more recent contributions from Pettini (2021). The following procedures were considered in analysing how realia are translated:

- Transcription or transliteration, whereby the source language term is preserved using the script of the target language;
- Calque, involving literal word-for-word translation;
- Descriptive translation, where functional or contextual explanations replace the original term;
- Adaptation or cultural substitution, where a target culture equivalent replaces the source culture item;

- Generalization, in which a broader, less specific term is used;
- Omission, where the realia item is excluded from the translation;
- Combined methods, such as pairing a borrowed term with a descriptive explanation.

Each identified or proposed translation was evaluated in terms of the underlying strategy, whether leaning toward foreignization or domestication, based on Venuti's (1995) framework. Foreignizing procedures such as transcription and calque preserve the foreign identity of the source culture, while domesticating techniques like adaptation, descriptive translation, and omission seek to make the text more accessible and relatable to target language readers.

Throughout the analysis, the translator's role as a cultural mediator was foregrounded. Each translation solution was assessed not only in terms of linguistic accuracy but also in how it negotiates between preserving cultural specificity and ensuring communicative clarity. This was particularly significant in cases of symbolic realia, where material objects in the source culture carry metaphorical significance that may not directly translate into the target culture without explanatory mediation.

In the final stage of the research, a comparative synthesis was undertaken to examine how translation procedures and strategies varied depending on directionality (English to Uzbek vs. Uzbek to English), cultural distance, and type of realia involved. This step aimed to uncover procedural preferences, assess whether certain strategies were favoured in one translation direction over the other, and identify any recurrent challenges or asymmetries. Patterns of foreignization and domestication were compared across both stories to evaluate how cultural preservation and adaptation were balanced by translators.

While the small-scale, text-focused nature of this study limits its generalizability, the selected corpus allowed for depth of analysis rather than breadth. A further methodological limitation concerns the use of theoretically modelled translations where published translations were unavailable. This introduces a degree of subjectivity; however, model translations were constructed strictly following established procedural frameworks and cultural considerations, aiming to simulate professional translation decision-making.

In sum, this methodological approach integrates textual analysis, translation modelling, and comparative strategy assessment to provide a detailed, context-sensitive account of how realia are handled in



English-Uzbek literary translation. It is designed to reveal not just procedural patterns but the broader cultural negotiation underlying the rendering of culturally specific content between two distinct literary and linguistic traditions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis of Katherine Mansfield's "The Fly" and Abdulla Qahhor's "Anor" identified a total of 39 instances of linguacultural realia: 21 in "The Fly" and 18 in "Anor". These realia were distributed across three primary categories: material, ethnographic, and symbolic. Each realia instance was analysed based on how it was translated or could be translated into the opposite language, allowing for identification of procedural preferences and strategic patterns.

In "The Fly", material realia were dominant. For example, the term "inkpot" posed a challenge for Uzbek translation, as inkpots are no longer common in contemporary Uzbek culture, and the specific term may be unfamiliar. In available translations, this term was rendered as "siyohdon", which is functionally equivalent but not culturally salient. In modelled translation, the solution involved a combined approach:

- siyohdon (qalam va siyoh uchun maxsus idish) — Descriptive translation with clarification, prioritizing readability while preserving cultural function. This shows a tendency toward domestication, adapting the foreign item to the target reader's cultural framework.

Another example from "The Fly" is the "war medal" mentioned as part of the protagonist's memories. In Uzbek, this was translated directly as "urush medali", which preserves the literal meaning. However, British war medals carry cultural connotations absent in Uzbek society. In this case, a descriptive strategy was applied in modelled translation:

- urush medali (jangda qatnashganlarga beriladigan mukofot nishoni) — preserving the term but adding an explanatory gloss to convey its cultural significance.

In contrast, Abdulla Qahhor's "Anor" presented ethnographic and symbolic realia that resisted direct equivalence in English. The word "anor" itself, while lexically equivalent to "pomegranate", carried additional cultural and symbolic connotations in the source text. In modeled English translation, two procedures were applied simultaneously:

- "anor (pomegranate)" in initial appearance, retaining the Uzbek term to foreground cultural identity (foreignization),
- Followed by using "pomegranate" in later references after contextualization.

The ritual of offering fruit to guests, common in Uzbek hospitality, represented another case of culturally embedded ethnographic realia. In "Anor", the act of selecting the finest pomegranate for a visitor reflects deep-rooted social norms. In translating this passage, a strictly literal approach risked omitting its cultural depth. Therefore, the modeled translation used descriptive translation combined with cultural gloss:

- "She placed before him the finest pomegranate from the harvest—a gesture no Uzbek guest would refuse."

This procedure not only preserved the object but also explained its function within the social custom, ensuring both cultural preservation and reader comprehension.

A particularly noteworthy finding involved the symbolic role of the pomegranate in "Anor". Beyond being a fruit, it serves as a metaphor for generosity and social obligation. In rendering this metaphorical layer, domestication strategies would weaken the cultural and symbolic weight. Consequently, modeled translations preserved the original term and supplemented it with narrative explanation:

- "The anor, not just a fruit, but a symbol of giving, stood untouched in the guest's presence."

Such combined procedures reflect the complexity of translating symbolic realia, where linguistic, cultural, and narrative functions intersect.

Comparatively, the research revealed distinct asymmetrical tendencies between the two translation directions. When translating English realia into Uzbek, procedures leaned predominantly toward domestication. The observed preference for domestication strategies when rendering realia aligns with the findings of Razumna and Movchan (2024), who reported a predominance of domestication in translating culture-specific vocabulary into Ukrainian, despite procedural variations between realia and irrealia. Descriptive translation, adaptation, and generalization were frequently applied to minimize cultural distance and facilitate target reader comprehension. This suggests an effort to integrate Western material culture into the Uzbek reader's conceptual world.

Conversely, in translating Uzbek realia into English, especially from "Anor", translators showed a consistent preference for foreignization strategies. Retaining culture-specific terms (e.g., anor) and providing contextual explanations allowed for cultural preservation, introducing the target reader to unfamiliar Uzbek customs rather than adapting them to Western equivalents. This reflects a tendency to

emphasize cultural uniqueness when translating from peripheral to dominant cultures, as theorized by Venuti (1995) and supported by Aixelá (1996).

In sum, the analysis shows that:

- Material realia like inkpots and war medals are more readily adapted via domestication when translating from English into Uzbek.
- Ethnographic and symbolic realia in Uzbek texts, such as hospitality rituals and the pomegranate motif, resist simplification and are more often foreignized in English translations to retain cultural authenticity.

These findings demonstrate that realia translation is not uniform but shaped by the interplay of cultural distance, text type, and narrative function. In both cases, translators emerge as active cultural mediators, making nuanced decisions not only at the lexical but also at the interpretive level.

## CONCLUSION

This study explored the translation of linguacultural realia in English and Uzbek literary prose through a comparative analysis of Katherine Mansfield's "The Fly" and Abdulla Qahhor's "Anor". By analyzing realia as carriers of cultural identity and narrative meaning, the research demonstrated that translating such culture-specific items involves far more than lexical substitution. Instead, it is a process of cultural negotiation where translators function as mediators between source and target cultures.

The findings reveal clear asymmetrical tendencies in the choice of translation strategies between English and Uzbek. In translating English realia into Uzbek, translators predominantly employed domestication strategies, prioritizing descriptive translation, adaptation, and generalization to reduce cultural distance and improve comprehensibility for Uzbek readers. Conversely, when rendering Uzbek realia into English, particularly items reflecting ethnographic customs and symbolic meanings, translators leaned toward foreignization strategies, preserving source culture specificity through transcription, calque, and combined procedures such as loan terms with explanations. This trend highlights the emphasis on cultural preservation when translating from a peripheral language like Uzbek into a dominant language like English.

The analysis also established that the type of realia significantly affects procedural choices. While material realia often allow greater procedural flexibility, ethnographic and especially symbolic realia require more nuanced translation solutions, balancing narrative clarity with cultural authenticity. Items like

the pomegranate in "Anor" or the war medal in "The Fly" illustrate that cultural items embedded within narrative symbolism cannot be effectively rendered through literal translation alone.

This study contributes to existing translation theory by highlighting that language pair typology, cultural distance, and narrative function collectively influence procedural and strategic decisions in literary translation. Moreover, it reinforces the need to view translators not as neutral conduits but as cultural agents who consciously manage the transmission of cultural identity through their lexical choices.

In practical terms, the study underscores the importance of combining procedural rigor with cultural sensitivity in translating realia. It encourages translators working between English and Uzbek to consider both the cultural function and narrative role of realia before selecting procedures, advocating for a flexible, context-dependent approach rather than a rigid application of theoretical models.

Given its corpus-focused nature, this study represents a modest yet focused contribution to realia translation research. Future studies could expand the scope to include larger corpora, contemporary texts, or specialized genres such as children's literature or historical novels, thereby enriching understanding of how realia translation strategies evolve across text types and cultural contexts.

In conclusion, the translation of linguacultural realia in literary prose is a complex, culturally loaded process that demands strategic awareness and interpretive skill. By examining translation as both linguistic rendering and cultural transfer, this study highlights the delicate balance required to bridge two distinct literary traditions—British and Uzbek—through the prism of realia translation.

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