Linguocultural realia in English and Uzbek folktales: a comparative translation analysis of Joseph Jacobs' "English Fairy Tales" and "Zumrad va Qimmat"

Mushtariy AKHMEDOVA[1]

Jizzakh State Pedagogical University

ABSTRACT

This article explores the translation of linguacultural realia in two culturally distinct folktales: English Fairy Tales by Joseph Jacobs and the Uzbek folktale Zumrad va Qimmat. Through a comparative analysis, it examines how culturally specific items such as food, household objects, social titles, and ritual expressions are rendered in translation. The paper applies qualitative comparative methods to identify realia types and analyse translation strategies such as loan translation, adaptation, descriptive translation, and omission. The findings highlight the translator's role as a cultural mediator, showing that descriptive translation dominates in the case of culturally unique items, while adaptation and substitution are preferred for more universal concepts. The article contributes to understanding the complexities of folklore translation and offers practical insights into balancing cultural preservation with reader accessibility.

Ingliz va o'zbek xalq ertaklaridagi lingvomadaniy realiyalar: Jozef Jeykobsning "English Fairy Tales" hamda "Zumrad va Qimmat" asarlari tarjimasining taqqosiy tahlili

ANNOTATSIYA

Maqolada Jozef Jeykobsning English Fairy Tales va o'zbek xalq ertagi Zumrad va Qimmat asarlaridagi lingvomadaniy

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[1] PhD student, Jizzakh State Pedagogical University.
E-mail: mushtariy.axmedova@jdpu.uz

Xorijiy lingvistika va lingvodidaktika – Зарубежная лингвистика
и лингводидактика – Foreign Linguistics and Linguodidactics
Issue –3 № 4 (2025) / ISSN 2181-3701

madaniy vositachilik,
tavsiflovchi tarjima,
moslashtirish strategiyalari,
taqqosiy tahlil.

realiyalar tarjimasi tahlil qilingan. Taqqoslash asosida milliy taomlar, maishiy buyumlar, ijtimoiy unvonlar va marosimlarga oid iboralar tarjima jarayonida qanday aks etishi oʻrganilgan. Tadqiqot davomida realiyalar turlari aniqlanib, tarjima strategiyalari — toʻgʻridan-toʻgʻri oʻgirish, moslashtirish, tavsiflovchi tarjima va tushirib qoldirish — tahlil qilingan. Natijalar tarjimonning madaniy vositachi sifatidagi rolini koʻrsatib, madaniy oʻziga xoslikni saqlash uchun tavsiflovchi tarjima koʻp qoʻllanilishini, universallashgan tushunchalarda esa moslashtirish ustuvor boʻlishini koʻrsatadi. Ushbu maqola xalq ogʻzaki ijodi tarjimasi murakkabliklarini yoritib, tarjimonlar uchun amaliy tavsiyalar beradi.

Лингвокультурные реалии в английских и узбекских народных сказках: сравнительный анализ перевода «English Fairy Tales» Джозефа Джейкобса и «Зумрад ва Киммат»

Ключевые слова:
лингвокультурные реалии,
перевод фольклора,
культурное посредничество,
описательный перевод,
стратегии адаптации,
сравнительный анализ.

АННОТАЦИЯ

В статье рассматривается перевод лингвокультурных реалий в двух культурно различных сказках: английские народные сказки Джозефа Джейкобса и узбекской народной сказке Зумрад и Киммат. Путем сравнительного анализа исследуется, как в переводе передаются элементы культуры, такие как блюда, предметы быта, социальные титулы и ритуальные выражения. Методологическая база включает выявление типов реалий и анализ применяемых переводческих стратегий: заимствование, адаптация, описательный перевод и опущение. Результаты подчеркивают роль переводчика как культурного посредника и показывают преобладание описательного перевода в случае уникальных реалий, в то время как адаптация чаще используется для универсальных понятий. Исследование вносит вклад в понимание особенностей перевода фольклора и предлагает практические рекомендации для переводчиков.

INTRODUCTION

In translation studies, the challenge of transferring culturally bound elements across linguistic borders has long been recognized as a critical issue [1], [2]. This challenge becomes particularly complex in the translation of folklore, where language functions not merely as a communicative medium but as a vessel for preserving collective memory, social values, and cultural identity [3], [4]. As folklore texts reflect the worldview, social structures, and material realities of their source culture, they inevitably embed culturally specific elements that resist straightforward translation [5]. Within this context, linguacultural realia—terms denoting culturally unique objects, phenomena, and practices—pose one of the most significant obstacles for translators aiming to preserve both meaning and cultural distinctiveness [6], [7].

Xorijiy lingvistika va lingvodidaktika – Зарубежная лингвистика
и лингводидактика – Foreign Linguistics and Linguodidactics
Issue –3 № 4 (2025) / ISSN 2181-3701

The concept of *realia* itself was introduced into translation theory by Vlakhov and Florin [8], who defined these items as "lexical units denoting objects and concepts characteristic of the life, history, or culture of one nation, which are unknown in other nations." These units not only carry referential meaning but also evoke symbolic associations tied to national identity and collective experience. The translation of realia, therefore, cannot be addressed through linguistic substitution alone; as Leppihalme [9] argues, it requires a deliberate cultural negotiation wherein the translator acts as both a linguistic processor and a cultural mediator. This is especially relevant in literary translation, where the aesthetic and narrative functions of realia further complicate translation decisions [10], [11].

In the context of folklore translation, the translator faces dual pressures: on the one hand, the need to preserve the cultural uniqueness of the source text, and on the other, the obligation to ensure comprehensibility for the target audience [12], [13]. Domestication and foreignization strategies—popularized by Venuti [13]—thus play a critical role in shaping the translator's approach to realia. Whereas foreignization aims to preserve the foreignness of the source culture, domestication adapts culturally unfamiliar elements into familiar terms for the target audience [13],]14]. However, scholars such as Katan [2] and Aixelá [6] caution that neither strategy should be applied rigidly, advocating instead for a flexible, context-sensitive approach.

This article addresses these theoretical considerations through a comparative analysis of realia translation in two culturally distinct folktales: *English Fairy Tales* by Joseph Jacobs and the Uzbek folktale *Zumrad va Qimmat*. Both texts function as cultural artifacts, preserving and transmitting the material and social realities of their respective cultures. They contain diverse examples of realia, including household objects, traditional foods, social hierarchies, and ritual practices, each of which demands careful translation choices to balance cultural preservation with narrative coherence [5].

The primary aim of this paper is to explore how realia are identified, categorized, and translated in these two folktales. It analyses the application of strategies such as loan translation, adaptation, descriptive translation, and omission [15], [6], evaluating their effectiveness in preserving cultural meaning and facilitating reader comprehension. In doing so, this article contributes to the broader discourse on cultural representation and translator agency in folklore translation [11], [4].

The guiding research question of this article is: How are linguacultural realia identified and translated in English and Uzbek folktales, and what translation strategies are predominantly employed to balance cultural representation with readability?

In addressing this question, this study highlights the translator's dual role as both linguistic expert and cultural mediator, reinforcing the idea that literary translation, particularly of folklore, is as much a cultural negotiation as it is a linguistic operation.

METHODOLOGY

This article employs a qualitative comparative analysis, a method widely recognized in translation studies for its capacity to explore cultural and linguistic complexities in literary texts [1], [3]. The focus of this analysis is on identifying, categorizing, and comparing linguacultural realia present in two folktales: **English Fairy Tales** by Joseph Jacobs and the Uzbek folktale **Zumrad va Qimmat**. These works were chosen due to their status as culturally emblematic narratives in their respective

Xorijiy lingvistika va lingvodidaktika – Зарубежная лингвистика
и лингводидактика – Foreign Linguistics and Linguodidactics
Issue –3 № 4 (2025) / ISSN 2181-3701

traditions, as well as their accessibility for comparative analysis of realia types and translation strategies.

Following Aixelá's approach to culture-specific items, realia were identified in the selected texts through close reading [6]. Realia were recognized as lexical units denoting culturally unique objects, social practices, or phenomena, often embedded in everyday life or folklore-specific rituals. Particular attention was paid to narrative passages and dialogues where culturally marked references were concentrated, in accordance with Leppihalme's recommendation that allusions and culture-bound terms should be examined within their narrative context to fully understand their functional load [9].

The corpus consisted of selected tales from Jacobs' collection, including "Jack and the Beanstalk" and "Tom Thumb," as well as key narrative episodes from *Zumrad va Qimmat*. In total, approximately fifty realia units were identified in each folktale, covering diverse cultural categories such as material culture, food, social roles, and ritual practices. For instance, in Jacobs' tales, references like *"a peck of peas"* and *"a barley loaf"* illustrate material culture realia tied to traditional English rural life, while in *Zumrad va Qimmat*, terms like *"chillak suvi"* (water stored in a clay jar) and *"duv-duv gap bo'ldi"* (an idiom meaning "word spread everywhere") represent culturally specific Uzbek objects and expressions.

Once identified, realia were categorized into four types, as suggested by Vlakhov and Florin [8]:
- Material culture realia (e.g., foods, household items)
- Social realia (e.g., titles, family roles)
- Ethnographic and ritual realia (e.g., holidays, ceremonies)
- Toponymic realia (e.g., geographical names)

For each instance, the following elements were recorded: the realia itself, its narrative function (symbolic, functional, decorative), its cultural significance, and its potential translation challenges.

In terms of translation analysis, the study examined how each identified realia was treated in the available translations of the folktales or, in the absence of official translations, hypothetical translations were constructed based on Newmark's established framework of translation procedures. Four main strategies were applied in this comparative evaluation [15]:
- Loan translation (transliteration), preserving the source term in the target language.
- Cultural adaptation, replacing the source term with a culturally equivalent target item.
- Descriptive translation, explaining the term in the target language.
- Omission or generalization, where cultural specificity is reduced or omitted.

For example, *"barley loaf"* was translated using descriptive translation in Uzbek as *"arpa unidan tayyorlangan non"*, since no direct equivalent exists. Conversely, *"chillak suvi"* required descriptive explanation in English, such as *"water kept in a traditional clay jar"*, to convey the cultural reference without confusing the target audience.

The analytical process followed a systematic sequence:
1. Close reading and realia identification.
2. Classification according to type and cultural function.
3. Documentation of narrative context and cultural load.

Xorijiy lingvistika va lingvodidaktika – Зарубежная лингвистика
и лингводидактика – Foreign Linguistics and Linguodidactics
Issue –3 № 4 (2025) / ISSN 2181-3701

4. Analysis of translation strategies applied.
5. Evaluation of cultural representation outcomes.

While primarily qualitative, the analysis also involved comparative tabulation to observe general tendencies and contrasts between the two texts. In line with Katan's insights [2] on cultural framing, particular focus was placed on assessing whether the translation strategies tended toward domestication or foreignization [13], reflecting the translator's position as either a cultural bridge or a cultural filter.

Finally, it should be noted that this study deliberately limited its scope to lexical-level realia, excluding syntactic transformations and broader narrative-level adaptation. This methodological constraint allowed for an in-depth examination of how culturally specific terms and concepts are negotiated during the translation process.

Results. The comparative analysis of English Fairy Tales and Zumrad va Qimmat revealed significant differences in the distribution and treatment of linguocultural realia. Across both texts, realia were categorized into four main types: household items, food and drink, social roles and titles, and culturally embedded customs or practices. The two source cultures demonstrate different emphases in the representation of cultural elements, with material culture dominating the English tales, while social and ritual realia are more prominent in the Uzbek narrative.

Table 1 summarizes the identified realia types across the two folktales.

Table 1. Types of Linguacultural Realia in the Source Texts

Type of Realia	Example from English Tales	Example from Zumrad va Qimmat
Household items	Iron pot	Xum (clay jar)
Food and drink	Barley loaf, peck of peas	Chillak suvi, non
Social roles/titles	Lord, lady	Onaxon, ota, bek
Customs / Ritual practices	Sunday feast	Duv-duv gap, Ramazon hayiti
Place names	Land of Giants	Buxoro, Qo'qon

In the English folktales, household items and food-related realia are commonly found, reflecting the rural, agrarian lifestyle characteristic of the source culture. Phrases such as "a peck of peas" and "a barley loaf" serve not only a narrative function but also introduce culturally marked concepts specific to traditional English diet and measurement systems. In contrast, Zumrad va Qimmat foregrounds family structure, daily rituals, and social interactions, as seen in terms like "chillak suvi", a reference to a traditional Uzbek water vessel, or idiomatic expressions like "duv-duv gap bo'ldi", denoting the rapid spread of gossip within a community.

To analyse how these culturally embedded elements are rendered in translation, the identified realia were examined based on the strategies used to convey their meaning. Table 2 presents representative examples of realia along with the observed or modelled translation strategies.

Xorijiy lingvistika va lingvodidaktika – Зарубежная лингвистика
и лингводидактика – Foreign Linguistics and Linguodidactics
Issue –3 № 4 (2025) / ISSN 2181-3701

Table 2. Translation Strategies Applied to Realia

Realia Item	Source Text	Translation Strategy	Example Translation
Barley loaf	English Tale	Descriptive translation	Arpa unidan tayyorlangan non
Peck of peas	English Tale	Descriptive / adaptation	Koʻp noʻxat (approximation)
Iron pot	English Tale	Cultural substitution	Qozon
Chillak suvi	Zumrad va Qimmat	Descriptive translation	Water kept in a clay jar
Duv-duv gap	Zumrad va Qimmat	Adaptation / descriptive	Word spread quickly through the village
Onaxon	Zumrad va Qimmat	Loan + explanation	Respected elderly mother
Ramazon hayiti	Zumrad va Qimmat	Descriptive translation	The feast marking the end of Ramadan
Land of Giants	English Tale	Loan translation	Gigantlar mamlakati
Buxoro	Zumrad va Qimmat	Loan translation	Bukhara

The analysis shows clear patterns in how cultural items are rendered for target audiences. In the case of food-related realia in English tales, such as "barley loaf" or "peck of peas", descriptive translation is predominantly used in Uzbek, as direct equivalents do not exist. Occasionally, translators employ adaptation, choosing general terms like "koʻp noʻxat" to replace the culturally specific "peck of peas."

Household items tend to lend themselves to cultural substitution, as seen in the replacement of "iron pot" with "qozon", which, while not identical, serves the same functional role in Uzbek culture.

In contrast, social and ritual realia from Zumrad va Qimmat present greater challenges for English translation. Terms like "chillak suvi" are typically rendered using descriptive translation to explain the cultural object without losing its identity. Idiomatic expressions such as "duv-duv gap boʻldi" necessitate adaptation or descriptive paraphrasing, as literal translation would result in semantic opacity. Ritual references like "Ramazon hayiti" are similarly explained for clarity in English translations.

A noteworthy observation is the treatment of personal titles and social roles. Terms like "lord" and "lady" from the English source texts are adapted in Uzbek translations using culturally proximate equivalents such as "bek" or "xonim". Conversely, in Uzbek-to-English translation, social terms such as "onaxon" are often retained as loan words accompanied by explanation or rendered using descriptive expressions that combine respect and relational role.

Finally, place names are consistently treated using loan translation in both directions to preserve cultural integrity. Whether referring to "Buxoro" or the "Land of Giants", phonetic consistency and cultural specificity are prioritized. In general, the

Xorijiy lingvistika va lingvodidaktika – Зарубежная лингвистика
и лингводидактика – Foreign Linguistics and Linguodidactics
Issue –3 № 4 (2025) / ISSN 2181-3701

translation strategies observed in this analysis reflect an underlying tendency towards foreignization when dealing with unique cultural practices and rituals, but a preference for domestication when adapting material culture and functional objects. The choice between these approaches is influenced by the cultural distance between the source and target audiences and the nature of the realia itself.

These findings highlight the central role of translators as cultural mediators, required to balance fidelity to the source culture with accessibility for the target audience. Whether explaining, adapting, or borrowing, the strategy chosen significantly shapes how cultural identity is preserved or transformed in the process of folktale translation.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of **English Fairy Tales** and **Zumrad va Qimmat** demonstrated that the translation of linguacultural realia involves complex decision-making processes influenced by cultural distance, narrative function, and the translator's aim to balance readability with cultural preservation. This section discusses the key patterns identified in the results and situates them within the broader context of translation theory and cultural mediation.

One of the most evident findings is the predominance of descriptive translation in cases where culturally specific items lacked functional or conceptual equivalents in the target culture. In translating from English to Uzbek, items like *"barley loaf"* or *"peck of peas"* could not be directly transferred due to the absence of corresponding food items in traditional Uzbek cuisine. Therefore, the translator resorted to explanatory phrases or approximations, ensuring that the target audience could understand the general meaning without distorting the original cultural reference. A similar pattern emerged when translating from Uzbek to English. Terms such as *"chillak suvi"* and *"duv-duv gap bo'ldi"* required descriptive elaboration or paraphrase, as these culturally marked concepts were not familiar to English readers.

In contrast, cultural substitution was observed primarily in the translation of functional material culture items where the cultural gap could be bridged without significant loss of meaning. For example, the translation of *"iron pot"* as *"qozon"* in Uzbek is a practical solution, as both cultures recognize the object's purpose, even if the form differs. Similarly, in the case of social titles, adaptation strategies were frequently applied: *"lord"* and *"lady"* were rendered as *"bek"* or *"xonim"* in Uzbek to evoke a similar sense of status and social hierarchy.

These findings confirm the observations of Vlakhov and Florin [8] regarding the importance of cultural context in determining translation solutions for realia. According to their theory, translators must choose between preserving foreignness and adapting content to the target culture's frame of reference. In the analysed folktales, the translators' tendency toward foreignization when dealing with unique cultural items (especially rituals and idiomatic expressions) suggests a deliberate effort to preserve cultural identity and authenticity. This strategy aligns with Leppihalme's argument [9] that retaining culturally significant terms can enhance the educational and intercultural value of a text, even at the cost of reader comfort.

However, the analysis also indicates that translators act as cultural mediators, required to make compromises depending on the narrative function and cultural load of each realia instance. When cultural specificity risks obscuring meaning, as in the

Xorijiy lingvistika va lingvodidaktika – Зарубежная лингвистика
и лингводидактика – Foreign Linguistics and Linguodidactics
Issue –3 № 4 (2025) / ISSN 2181-3701

case of food items or household tools, translators tend to domesticate or explain rather than borrow directly. This pragmatic approach reflects Newmark's functionalist perspective [15], which emphasizes communicative effectiveness in translation over strict adherence to formal equivalence.

An important implication of this analysis is the translator's responsibility to recognize which cultural elements are central to the narrative's authenticity and which can be adapted without significant distortion. Folktales, as repositories of national culture and tradition, demand heightened sensitivity to the preservation of culturally embedded concepts. Excessive domestication risks erasing these unique cultural markers, while overreliance on foreign terms or literal translation can alienate readers.

Finally, the limitations of this study must be acknowledged. The analysis focused solely on word-level and phrase-level realia, excluding broader stylistic, narrative, or structural adaptations. Moreover, the reliance on constructed translations (where official translations were unavailable) introduces subjectivity into the analysis, though these reconstructions were based on established translation practices.

In sum, the findings of this article confirm that translating realia in folktales is not merely a linguistic task but a cultural negotiation. The translator's role extends beyond language conversion to cultural representation, requiring both linguistic competence and cultural awareness to bridge the gap between source and target audiences effectively.

CONCLUSION

This article examined the translation of linguacultural realia in two culturally distinct folktales: ***English Fairy Tales*** by Joseph Jacobs and the Uzbek folktale ***Zumrad va Qimmat***. By identifying culturally significant items and analysing the strategies used to render them into the target language, this work highlighted the complex interplay between cultural preservation and communicative clarity in folktale translation.

The analysis revealed that descriptive translation is the most frequently applied strategy when dealing with culturally specific items that lack direct equivalents, particularly in the translation of food-related and ethnographic realia. Cultural substitution was also observed, especially when functional equivalence could be established between source and target cultures. These patterns reflect the translator's need to balance respect for cultural authenticity with the target audience's cultural knowledge and reading comfort.

One of the key findings of this article is the central role of the translator as a cultural mediator. Translators must constantly navigate between maintaining the foreignness of the source culture and adapting content for target readers. Their strategic decisions directly influence how much of the source culture is preserved or transformed in translation.

From a practical standpoint, the findings suggest that translators of folklore should adopt a flexible approach. Where realia represent core cultural values or identity, foreignization or descriptive translation is advisable to preserve authenticity. In contrast, everyday objects or functional terms can often be rendered through

Xorijiy lingvistika va lingvodidaktika – Зарубежная лингвистика
и лингводидактика – Foreign Linguistics and Linguodidactics
Issue –3 № 4 (2025) / ISSN 2181-3701

adaptation or cultural substitution, minimizing potential confusion without compromising cultural representation.

This study is limited in scope to lexical realia at the word and phrase level. Future research could extend this analysis to narrative structures, stylistic devices, and paratextual elements in folklore translation. Additionally, comparative studies involving other language pairs would contribute to a broader understanding of how cultural realia are managed across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts.

Ultimately, this article underscores the significance of realia in folktale translation as both a linguistic and cultural challenge, requiring sensitivity, creativity, and intercultural awareness from translators working in this field.

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