

PHONETIC AND LINGUISTIC ISSUES IN CULTURAL HERITAGE TRANSLATION: THE CASE OF UZBEKISTAN'S ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT IN ENGLISH

Author: Sadullayeva Surayyo Ziyadullayevna

*Institution: Silk Road International University of Tourism and Cultural
Heritage*

1. Introduction

Cultural heritage is a vital component of national identity, and its accurate representation in global languages is essential for preserving its value. In Uzbekistan, rich archaeological heritage is increasingly being presented to international audiences, particularly through English. However, numerous translational and phonetic challenges arise. This paper explores these linguistic issues, with a focus on English-language renderings of Uzbek archaeological and cultural content, highlighting how poor translations—especially of names, terms, and site descriptions—can result in misinterpretation and heritage distortion.

2. Relevance of the Topic

Uzbekistan's status as a growing tourist destination and archaeological hub necessitates clear, accurate, and culturally respectful translation of historical content. Visitors and researchers rely on these translations to form their understanding of the region's past. When phonetic nuances such as 'o', 'g', 'sh', and 'q' are mistranslated or omitted, or cultural idioms are rendered literally, the result can be misleading or even offensive. Incorrect translation of dates, historical context, religious or ritual meanings, and museum descriptions can diminish the perceived credibility of national institutions.

3. Literature Review

Peter Newmark (1988) emphasized the importance of cultural equivalence in

translation, arguing that translators must preserve not just words but context and emotion. In the Uzbek context, transliteration rules are frequently violated, leading to inconsistent naming. UNESCO has underlined the necessity of respectful and informed translation for preserving heritage integrity. Studies in post-Soviet linguistic identity (e.g., Fierman, 2006) show that orthographic inconsistency in transliteration contributes to a fragmentation of cultural memory.

4. Methodology

The research was conducted through field analysis of three major Uzbek museums: State Museum of History (Tashkent), Afrasiab Museum (Samarkand), and Termez Archaeological Museum. A comparative study of Uzbek and English texts on museum labels, guidebooks, and digital signage was conducted. In addition, a survey with five English-speaking tourists and five local archaeologists was carried out to understand comprehension gaps.

5. Case Analysis and Findings

- The study revealed the following common issues in translations:
- Inconsistent transliteration of personal and place names (e.g., 'Qoratepa' vs 'Karatepa')
 - Omission or misrepresentation of culturally loaded terms (e.g., 'suzani' translated as 'cloth' rather than traditional embroidery)
 - Misdated historical periods due to numeral confusion (e.g., 'XII century' vs '12th century')
 - Literal translation of ritual terms without explanation (e.g., 'majlis', 'ziyorat', 'pir')

6. Discussion

Translation in archaeological contexts is not merely linguistic—it is also interpretive. Lack of collaboration between archaeologists and language specialists leads to miscommunication. The problem extends beyond names: historical roles (e.g., 'sofiya' mistranslated as 'wise woman'), architectural features (e.g.,

‘chortaq’ rendered vaguely as ‘gate’), and ritual meanings (e.g., mislabeling sacred objects) all contribute to a reduction in authenticity. These issues suggest an urgent need for interdisciplinary cooperation.

7. Recommendations

1. Develop a centralized and state-approved transliteration guideline for all cultural institutions.
2. Involve linguists, archaeologists, and native English editors in translation processes.
3. Create a digital glossary of Uzbek cultural and archaeological terms for public translators.
4. Encourage use of Virtual Museums with accurate English narration and subtitles.
5. Train museum staff and translators in phonetics, cultural sensitivity, and terminology.
6. Include explanation notes or QR-code linked guides beside complex terms in exhibitions.

8. Conclusion

Cultural heritage translation is a matter of national dignity. Errors in phonetics, mistranslations of rituals, and careless transliteration can result in cultural distortion and international misunderstanding. Uzbekistan’s increasing visibility on the world archaeological stage demands a systemized, interdisciplinary approach to translation. Through better training, standardized practices, and collaborative efforts, Uzbekistan can preserve the authenticity and dignity of its cultural message.

Sadullayeva Surayyo Ziyadullayevna