



LINGUOCULTURAL FEATURES OF ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF TOPONYMS IN THE TEXT “BABURNAMA”

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Abstract

This article examines the linguocultural features of toponym translation in the English versions of Baburnama. It analyzes the main translation strategies used in rendering toponyms, including transliteration, semantic translation, explanatory translation, and their combined forms. The study also investigates differences between the Leyden–Erskine and V. Texton translations, focusing on pragmatic adequacy and the degree of cultural meaning preservation. The analysis demonstrates that toponyms function not only as linguistic units but also as linguocultural elements that encode national and cultural information. The findings show that transliteration is effective in preserving national specificity, while explanatory translation improves reader comprehension. However, neither approach fully ensures complete linguocultural equivalence in translation.

Keywords: Toponyms, Baburnama, linguoculturology, translation studies, transliteration, semantic translation, cultural meaning, pragmatics, linguocultureme, Leyden–Erskine translation, V. Texton.

Introduction

Linguoculturology is a relatively new field of linguistic research that has emerged at the intersection of cultural studies and linguistics. It investigates the interrelation and interaction between language and culture, as well as cultural representations reflected in language. In the process of developing socio-economic and intercultural relations among peoples, the demand for learning and using foreign languages is increasing. Learning another language also provides an opportunity to understand and experience the culture of that nation. In this sense, the study of the relationship between language and culture has become an



especially relevant issue in recent years. Accordingly, linguistics has developed a special direction known as linguoculturology.

The German linguist W. von Humboldt was among the first to express the relationship between language and culture in his works: “Human language lives insofar as it conveys to him information about an object. Every language reflects the people to whom the speaker belongs and their way of life” [1, 38].

Since the 1990s, linguoculturology has developed rapidly and has become one of the most significant directions in modern linguistics. It studies the interaction between language and culture, language and national mentality, as well as the interdependence of national identity and linguistic expression. In this regard, it is closely connected with cultural studies. Linguoculturology examines the national-cultural semantics of linguistic units, shades of meaning, and the representation of culture in language.

Words expressing concepts of everyday life undoubtedly constitute the national colouring and uniqueness of literary heritage. There are also factors defining the national character of a text that are connected with cultural mentality. The omission of such features in translation leads to the loss of pragmatic adequacy [2, 118].

In modern linguistic studies, the term linguocultureme has come into use. Linguoculturemes include not only nominative and referential meanings but also national-cultural components beyond language. A word as a linguistic sign is a component of a linguocultureme. While a word expresses objects and phenomena in language, a linguocultureme conveys cultural content. A linguocultureme may be expressed through a word, sentence, term, or phrase. It is a more complex phenomenon than a simple linguistic unit, as it reflects both linguistic expression and extra-linguistic reality (situation, cultural context). Any speaker of a language, whether native or foreign, inevitably incorporates cultural meaning into discourse. Without cultural meaning, it is impossible to fully understand a text or interpret its content. To comprehend cultural phenomena in texts, knowledge of national mentality is required. Linguoculturemes not only convey nominative meaning but also evoke cultural, educational, and associative national representations.

Since the main aim of this study is to demonstrate the linguocultural features of toponym translation, attention is focused on the representation of toponyms in



translations of “Baburnama” and the problems of their rendering. It is well known that, like other units of linguoculturology, both anthroponyms and toponyms should be accurately reflected in translation. Translation is not evaluated only by the correctness or incorrectness of individual lexical items. Its main success lies in the adequate reproduction of anthroponyms and toponyms, as well as in preserving the author’s style, meaning, and ideological content.

However, the translation of anthroponyms and toponyms remains one of the most challenging aspects in translating literature belonging to different cultural and national traditions. Toponyms differ not only in their structural and semantic features but also in their typological characteristics. Therefore, concepts specific to one culture cannot always be expressed through equivalents in another. They must be rendered in a way that is both faithful to the original and comprehensible to the target-language reader.

Understanding refined prose can also present difficulties even for native speakers of the language, as such texts frequently employ archaic vocabulary, historical figures, and place names. They directly reflect the culture, worldview, traditions, and technologies of the period in which they were written. Each of these elements contains various factors that illuminate national cultural identity. The text “Baburnama” is one such work that fully preserves these linguocultural features. Therefore, translating it requires the translator not only to possess knowledge of ancient Turkic and Uzbek languages, but also a deep understanding of the lifestyle, traditions, and toponymy of the Uzbek people.

In the text of “Baburnama”, attention is also given to the etymological aspects of toponyms and their linguocultural properties, which can be observed during the process of reading and analyzing the work. In the text “Baburnama”: “Самарқанднинг қалъасининг ичида яна бир қадимий имораттур, Масжиди Лақлақа дерлар. Ул гунбазнинг ўртасида ерга тепсалар тамом гунбаздин лақ-лақ, ун келур, ғариб амредур, ҳеч ким мунинг сиррини билмас” (Baburnama, 2002, p. 60). While describing one of the necrotoponyms, “Masjidi Laqlaqa”, the author explains why this mosque received such a name. By reading this explanation, the reader gains detailed information about the origin of the toponym. In this regard, Sh. Uljayeva also expresses her opinion on the matter¹.

¹ Ўлжаева Ш. «Бобурнома»да Самарқанд тавсифи <https://kor.facebook.com/groups/246149995752425/permalink/382439522123471>

At the same time, this passage also reflects clear linguocultural features. In order to reveal the linguocultural characteristics of toponym translation in “Baburnama,” we will analyze selected translated excerpts from the text.

In Leyden–Erskine translation: “Within the walls of Samarkand is another ancient building, called the Laklaka (or Echoing) mosque; because, whenever any person stamps on the ground in a mosque an echo (laklaka) is returned. It is a strange thing, the secret of which is known to nobody” (Leyden–Erskine. II; 85). (Самарқанд деворлари орасида яна бир қадимий бино бўлубтур, «Лақлақа» (Акс Садо) масжиди дерлар; чунки бирор-бир киши масжидни ерини тепса, акс садо (лақлақа) қайтар. Хайратланарлиси шундаки, буни сирини ҳеч ким билмайди». The author presents the classification of the necrotoponym through the expression «Ул гунбазнинг ўртасида ерга тепсалар тамом гунбаздин лақлақ, ун келур» In contrast, the translation renders this meaning more generally as «бирор-киши масжидни ерини тепса, акс садо (лақлақа) қайтар». However, in the original text, the description is more specific, referring explicitly to striking the central part of the mosque’s dome and the resulting acoustic phenomenon. In the translation, this specificity is lost, resulting in a more generalized formulation, which reduces the precision of the source text. Nevertheless, this indicates that the pragmatic equivalence is to some extent preserved for the target reader.

The translator renders the toponym “Masjidi Laqlaqa” as “the Laklaka (or Echoing) Mosque”. In this case, both transliteration and semantic translation are employed simultaneously. However, this translation does not fully reproduce the exact cultural meaning of the original toponym. The linguocultural feature embedded in the word “laqlaqa” is also not fully reconstructed in the translation. This is because the word “laqlaqa” is deeply rooted in Turkic linguistic and cultural traditions and reflects a culturally specific auditory metaphor. As such, it carries national-cultural connotations that are difficult to fully transfer into English without loss of meaning.

In A.Beveridge translation: «Inside the walls again, is an old building of his, known as the Masjid-i-laqlaqa (Mosque of the Echo). If anyone stamps on the ground under the middle of the dome of this mosque, the sound echoes back from the whole dome; it is a curious matter of which none know the secret». (A.Beveridge. 1922, 80) (Деворлар ичида яна бир бино бўлубтур, Масжид-и-



лақалақа (Акс садо Масжиди) номи билан маълумдир. Агар кимдир масжид гумбази остидаги ерни ўртасини тепса, аск садо овози бугун гумбазни тутуди; кизиқарли томони шундаки, ҳеч ким буни сирини била олмайди). The translator follows the Leyden–Erskine approach, while also ensuring that the receptor-oriented reader can easily understand the specific referent. The toponym “Masjidi Laqlaqa” is rendered in translation as “Masjid-i-Laqlaqa (Mosque of the Echo)” through transliteration, and, in order to facilitate comprehension for the target reader, it is additionally explained as “the Mosque of Echo”. However, in this case as well, the translator is unable to fully convey the linguocultural features of the source text in accordance with the author’s classification, particularly in terms of pragmatic equivalence.

In the reconstruction of toponyms, some translators provide alternative variants, which may lead to different types of textual misunderstandings. In contrast, others rely primarily on the transliteration method in rendering toponyms. There are also cases where toponyms are translated based on their semantic content and meaning. For instance, in V. Texton’s translation, toponyms are predominantly rendered through transliteration. Their comprehensibility for the recipient is ensured through explanations and commentaries. As noted, “The main reason for using transliteration is to avoid replacing culturally specific linguistic units, which do not exist in the target language, with culturally inappropriate equivalents, or eliminating their national character altogether” [4, 93]. In his translations, V. Texton adopts an approach consistent with the views of the translation scholar Q. Musaeu.

In order to ensure that the linguocultural features of toponyms in the translated text remain understandable to the receptor, the translator must be familiar with the customs and traditions of the source-language community. If the linguocultural features of toponyms are misinterpreted in translation, this may negatively affect the overall meaning of the text. In some translations, toponyms that are not fully rendered in one version may be expressed more clearly in another. At times, translators tend to be creative, while in other cases they rely extensively on commentary and explanatory notes, which may result in the transformation of the original text into a different type of discourse. As noted, “Babur’s artistic talent and poetic skill are also clearly reflected in Baburnama.



Babur consistently strives for clarity and simplicity of expression, avoiding overly ornate descriptions and complex syntactic constructions” [3, 165].

In translation practice, when conveying the linguocultural features of toponyms, it is essential to focus on their semantic essence and ensure their accurate representation.

References

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