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NATIONAL IDENTITY IN AMERICAN AND UZBEK CHILDREN'S ADVENTURE AND FANTASY LITERATURE

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Abstract

This article analyzes the representation of national identity in American and Uzbek children's adventure and fantasy literature from a linguocultural and translational perspective. Using comparative, descriptive, and cultural analysis methods, the study investigates the main national identity markers reflected in both literary traditions and identifies the challenges they present in translation. The study argues that successful translation of national identity markers requires functional equivalence, cultural adaptation, descriptive translation, and explanatory commentary. This study examines the representation of national identity in American and Uzbek children's adventure and fantasy literature and identifies the major translation challenges associated with culture-specific elements.

Keywords: national identity, children's literature, adventure literature, fantasy literature, linguocultural analysis, translation studies, American literature, Uzbek literature.

Introduction.

Children's literature serves as an important medium for the transmission of cultural values, social norms, and national traditions across generations. Through literary narratives, young readers acquire knowledge about the historical memory, cultural heritage, belief systems, and collective identity of their communities. As Nikolajeva argues, children's literature contributes not only to entertainment but also to the cognitive and cultural development of readers[1]. Among its various genres, adventure and fantasy literature occupy a distinctive position due to their ability to combine educational, aesthetic, and cultural functions. By integrating imaginative storytelling with culturally embedded symbols, values, and traditions, these genres are important in shaping children's understanding of both national identity and intercultural diversity.

[1] Nikolajeva M. Reading for Learning: Cognitive Approaches to Children's Literature. – Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2014. 45 p.

The concept of national identity has attracted considerable attention in cultural and literary studies. According to Smith[2], national identity is based on common historical memory, cultural traditions, symbols, myths, and shared values. Similarly, Anderson[3] argues that national identity is constructed through shared narratives and cultural experiences that unite members of a community.

In children's literature, national identity is reflected through characters, settings, folklore motifs, social institutions, cultural symbols, and behavioral norms. However, when such texts are translated into another language, many culture-specific elements become difficult to render due to differences between source and target cultures. Therefore, the study of national identity in children's literature is closely connected with translation studies and intercultural communication.

Materials and Methods. The research employs comparative, descriptive, and linguocultural methods of analysis. The material consists of representative examples from American and Uzbek children's adventure and fantasy literature, including literary texts, folk narratives, and fantasy stories.

Particular attention is paid to the following categories:

- *cultural values;*
- *family relations;*
- *social institutions;*
- *folklore elements;*
- *culture-specific concepts;*
- *national symbols.*

The study also applies translation-oriented analysis to examine how these national identity markers may be rendered in intercultural communication.

Results and Discussion.

The analysis demonstrates that national identity in children's literature is represented through a complex system of linguocultural markers. These markers reflect a nation's worldview and serve as important tools for cultural transmission.

American children's adventure and fantasy literature emphasizes individualism. Young protagonists are frequently portrayed as independent, self-reliant, and capable of solving problems through personal initiative. Such representations correspond to broader American cultural values. Hofstede identifies individualism as one of the defining characteristics of American society[4].

Cultural concepts such as *"freedom", "self-made hero", "frontier spirit",* and *"American dream"* frequently appear in American literary narratives. These concepts possess meanings that extend beyond their dictionary definitions and therefore create translation difficulties. For example, the term *"frontier spirit"* refers to a historical and cultural tradition associated with exploration, self-sufficiency, and independence. Since no direct equivalent exists in Uzbek culture, translators often rely on descriptive translation to preserve its meaning.

In contrast, Uzbek children's adventure and fantasy literature places greater emphasis on collective identity and social harmony. *Family relations, community life, mutual support,* and *respect for elders* occupy a central place in literary narratives. Such characteristics reflect traditional Uzbek cultural values and social structures.

One of the most important markers of Uzbek national identity is the concept of *mahalla*. Although

[2] Smith A. D. National Identity. – Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991. – 57 p.
[3] Anderson B. Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. – London: Verso, 2006. – 20 p.
[4] Hofstede G. Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations. – Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2001. – 59 p.

frequently translated as *"neighborhood"* or *"community",* these equivalents do not fully convey its cultural significance. The mahalla functions as a traditional social institution responsible for cultural transmission, social support, collective decision-making, and moral education. Consequently, transliteration accompanied by explanatory commentary often provides a more adequate translation strategy.

Other culture-specific concepts, such as *hashar, oqsoqol, Navro'z,* and *duo,* present similar challenges. *Hashar* refers to voluntary collective labor performed for the benefit of the community. Although the American concept of a *"community clean-up day"* conveys a similar idea, it does not fully represent the cultural and social functions associated with *hashar* in Uzbek society. Consequently, descriptive translation is often necessary to preserve its cultural significance. Since English lacks a direct lexical equivalent, translators commonly employ descriptive translation or explanatory notes. Likewise, *oqsoqol* denotes not simply an elderly person but a respected community leader possessing social authority and cultural prestige.

Folklore constitutes another important component of national identity. American fantasy literature frequently incorporates mythological figures derived from Greek mythology, Native American traditions, and European folklore. Uzbek fantasy literature, by contrast, draws heavily upon oral traditions and folk narratives.

For instance, characters such as *dev, pari, ajdarho,* and *sehrgar* represent important elements of Uzbek fantasy discourse. Although English equivalents such as *giant, fairy, dragon,* and *wizard* may be available, these translations do not always reproduce the cultural associations present in the original context. Therefore, translators must consider not only semantic meaning but also cultural connotations.

The findings indicate that national identity is encoded in literary texts through a network of interconnected cultural elements rather than isolated lexical units. Consequently, translation requires a linguocultural approach that considers both language and culture simultaneously.

Based on the analysis, four strategies appear particularly effective in translating national identity markers:

- *transliteration for unique cultural concepts (mahalla, hashar, Navro'z);*
- *descriptive translation for culture-specific institutions;*
- *functional equivalence for culturally analogous concepts;*
- *explanatory commentary for culturally significant elements lacking direct equivalents.*

These strategies enable translators to preserve cultural authenticity while ensuring comprehensibility for target readers.

Conclusion.

The study demonstrates that national identity occupies a central place in American and Uzbek children's adventure and fantasy literature. It is represented through cultural values, family relations, folklore elements, social institutions, and culture-specific concepts.

American literary traditions primarily emphasize individualism, freedom, and personal achievement, whereas Uzbek literature highlights collective responsibility, family unity, respect for elders, and cultural continuity. These differences reflect the distinct historical and cultural experiences of the two societies.

The research also reveals that national identity markers frequently present translation challenges because they are deeply rooted in specific cultural contexts. Successful translation, therefore, requires not only linguistic competence but also intercultural awareness. Functional equivalence, cultural adaptation, transliteration, and explanatory translation represent effective strategies for preserving national identity in translated children's literature.

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