

## Realia as a Culturally, Historically and Textually Dynamic Category, How to Use it in the Classroom

Aziza Qulmamatova<sup>1</sup>

**Annotation:** The article considers about realia as a culturally, historically and textually dynamic category. How to use it in the classroom. There are suggested some ways of involving realias in classroom.

**Keywords:** realia, lexical equivalents, culture specificity, static character, culture-induced problems, specific lexis.

Realia are lexemes denoting objects or phenomena of material culture, ethno-national features, customs, rituals, as well as historical facts or processes and usually do not have lexical equivalents in other languages.

The term realia was introduced to translation studies by Andrei Fedorov (1941) and initially was understood as culture-specific objects and phenomena. For words denoting these objects, Fedorov proposed the term realia-words. Later, however, realia were increasingly used to refer to translation-resistant lexical items (Sobolev 1952, Vlakhov and Florin 1970, 1980, 1986/2012, Tomakhin 1988, Ivanov 2006). The term has since been adopted by some Western translation scholars (e.g. Leighton 1991, Leppihalme 2001, 2011 and Pedersen 2011 discuss this notion) but has not become mainstream. Pedersen (2011, 44) criticizes the term realia for being too vague and confusing, as well as potentially causing misinterpretation due to its primary sense in common use. Moreover, according to him, its original meaning (Latin “real things”) comes into conflict with the fact that culture-specific words might have fictional references. In order to resolve this paradox, Loponen (2009) proposes the term irrealia for made-up items of the fictional world.

When speaking of culture specificity, Nord emphasizes that it is only a valid concept in relation to specific cultures being compared. That is, a culture-specific phenomenon does not necessarily exist only in that particular culture: it “might be observable in cultures other than the two in question” (Nord 1997: 34). Similarly, Aixela (1996), when discussing the notion of culture-specific items, criticizes the way it is often treated as having a static character. This approach, according to him, is rooted in “the idea that there are permanent culture-specific items, no matter which pair of cultures is involved” (Aixela 1996: 57).

In line with this criticism, I find it important to emphasize that in my study realia are regarded not as a universal, but as a relative (culturally dynamic) category: i.e. the list of realia might be more or less constant in relation to most languages, yet every given lexical item can only have or lack a direct correspondence in relation to a particular language. Certainly, a lot depends on the cultural distance between the source language and the target language communities.

There is a large variety of terms for culture-induced problems in the translation studies literature:

- cultural terms, cultural words (Newmark 1981),
- culture-bound problems/elements (Nedergaard-Larsen 1993), • culture-bound words (Katan 2004),
- culture-specific items (Baker 2011a, Aixela 1996),
- culturemes (Vermeer 1983, Nord 1997, Katan 2004, 2009),
- exoticisms, alienisms (Berkov 2011),
- extralinguistic cultural references (Pedersen 2011),
- lacunae (Malblanc 1961),
- localisms (Finkel 1962),
- non-equivalent lexis (Ivanov 2006, Kostomarov and Vereshchagin 1983, 2005),
- realia (Vlakhov and Florin 1986/2012, Leighton 1991, Leppihalme 2011, Burak 2013, Tomakhin 1988, Fedorov 1983, Vinogradov 1978).

Apart from the idiosyncrasies of particular scholars and the tradition they are working within, the choice of a term depends on how one narrows down the scope of the notion in question. In other words, although the terms above may seem synonymic, they often imply somewhat different perspectives on the culture-induced problems in translation. For instance, scholars may or may not include proper names (anthroponyms, toponyms), idioms, allusions etc. in the discussion of culture-specific lexis.

<sup>1</sup> Uzbekistan state world languages university

Despite the above criticism, I have decided to use the term *realia* (Latin plural neuter from *realis*) in my study, and this choice is motivated by several arguments. First of all, it is a relatively well-established term in translation theory and, as mentioned above, not totally unfamiliar to the Western scholars.

In education, *realia* are objects from real life used in classroom instruction. In teaching vocabulary, *realia* is teaching media used to present vocabulary by bringing actual objects of items or something represent it which used in classroom to illustrate and teach vocabulary.

Simply put, *realia* refers to authentic objects from real life that one uses in the classroom to teach a specific concept. *Realia* can be both physical and virtual, as long as it is something used in the real world (rather than created specifically for an ESL class)

However, in the qualitative part of my research, I discuss a number of *realia* in their specific contexts and take a closer look at how different translation solutions may be contextually motivated.

*Realia* is everyday objects, such as newspapers and train tickets, used in the classroom to enhance the students' learning process in the target language. These authentic materials aid the teacher in delivering the most realistic and useful lessons possible.

How many times have you been forced to memorize a list of odd vocabulary in a language class? You might have thought that reviewing words like "snorkel" and "asbestos" was an absolute waste of time. However, the vocabulary learned from *realia* emphasizes essential words that the student would encounter in the country of the target language. The use of *realia* with your students will not only be fun, but it will also provide a practical and interactive approach to learning English. You students will immediately find relevance in the lesson by navigating through the vocabulary on things like bus timetables, signs from airports, listings online, and receipts. Additionally, students are more likely to remember the vocabulary presented in *realia* as they recall the real contexts where they learned it, and your kinesthetic learners will benefit from the tangible examples you provided for them.

There is no doubt that your students will be curious and eager to explore the authentic materials you bring to class

Below we have a few ideas of how to integrate *realia* into your classroom:

#### **Rotation:**

Put your students into groups of two and give each group material and a set of accompanying comprehension questions. Set the timer for 7 minutes, and when the time is up, discuss what the material is and review the answers to the questions. When the discussion is over, distribute the next material and repeat the cycle. Continue until you've facilitated conversations (in the target language!) for at least four different materials.

#### **Recreation:**

A fun way to let your artistic students shine is by recreating the *realia* you have presented to them. Spend at least 10-15 minutes distributing *realia* and discussing each piece. As you review each piece, be sure to write useful vocabulary on the board for the students to reference later on in the class. Next, pass out materials such as paper, scissors, markers, colored pencils, etc. for your students to use to make their recreations of the *realia*. Check each student's work to make sure they are using proper vocabulary.

#### **Bonus round:**

Foster a bit of a competitive environment by rewarding the student with the best and most accurate recreation with a tasty treat or a "get out of homework" pass.

As you can see, it doesn't take much to prepare a lesson using *realia* and it will go a long way. Students will feel accomplished when they successfully recall useful vocabulary and you will feel proud when your student comes back from vacation bragging about how they fearlessly conquered the tube in London thanks to your practical lessons!

As discussed above, using *realia* can help the teaching English vocabularies to learners run more effective. In delivering the material to the students, *realia* can make the learning experience more memorable for them. The students also became more active in receiving information during the learning process because the roles of the student are also important to support the lesson. By using *realia*, the students could recognize the things and remember the names easily. It means that they can absorb the material delivered better. Beside these, using *realia* can make the learning process more fun and attractive. As results, the students' interest to the lesson was increased and the boredom during the lesson can be avoided.

#### **Reference**

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