

# LINGUOCULTURAL PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATING CHILDREN'S LITERATURE INTO UZBEK: A STUDY THROUGH ROALD DAHL'S *MATILDA*

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## Introduction

Children's literature always carries more than a storyline. It brings with it the worldviews, humour, values, and small cultural habits of the society it originates from. When such stories travel into another language, the translator becomes the bridge between two cultural landscapes. Roald Dahl's *Matilda* is one of those works that seems simple at first glance, yet hides a vibrant world of invented words, exaggerated characters, and distinctly British cultural notes.

Translating this novel into Uzbek requires sensitivity to both language and imagination. The purpose of this article is to explore the linguocultural challenges that arise when bringing *Matilda* into Uzbek, and to reflect on how these challenges influence the way young Uzbek readers perceive Dahl's world.

## Children's Literature and Linguoculture

Children's literature speaks differently from adult fiction. It uses playful words, rhythmic expressions, comic exaggeration, and emotional warmth. Linguoculture — the shared system of cultural meanings embedded in language — makes this genre especially delicate for translators.

In stories for children, words do more than describe; they create moods, relationships, and the moral atmosphere of the book. A literal translation often fails to keep the charm, while too much adaptation risks losing the cultural flavour of the original. *Matilda*, with its humour, school-related vocabulary, and vivid character portrayals, sits exactly in this space of balance.

## *Matilda* as a Linguocultural Text

Roald Dahl is well known for playing with language. In *Matilda*, he creates an imaginative space filled with:

- expressive exaggerations,
- humorous insults,
- symbolic character names,
- invented words,
- and references to British education and daily life.

These elements form the novel's unique voice. Any attempt to translate it must consider how these layers can be carried into Uzbek without losing their colour.

## Linguocultural Challenges in Translation

### 1. Culture-Specific Realities

The world of *Matilda* reflects British life — second-hand car businesses, school culture, and social attitudes toward intelligence and discipline. For instance, the phrase “*second-hand car business*” is not just a business description; it also carries a stereotype of dishonesty associated with car salesmen in British culture.

In Uzbek, translating it simply as “*ishlatilgan mashinalar savdosi*” communicates the meaning, but not the cultural nuance. The translator must rely on context and tone to subtly recreate the humorous distrust that Dahl intended.

## 2. Character Names with Meaning

Dahl’s naming is never accidental.

- Miss Honey embodies warmth and gentleness.
- Miss Trunchbull sounds heavy and intimidating even before her behaviour is described.

If *Miss Honey* becomes *Miss Hani*, the sound remains but the sweetness disappears. If it becomes *Miss Asal*, the meaning is preserved but the foreign identity of the character weakens.

Such names demand a careful decision about whether to prioritise meaning, sound, or cultural authenticity.

## 3. Wordplay, Humour, and Tone

Dahl’s humour often comes from playful insults or exaggerated descriptions. When Matilda’s parents call her a “*scab*,” the word carries a childish rude tone — sharp enough to be funny, but not too offensive. There is no exact Uzbek equivalent with the same balance.

A translation like “*baloyi battol*” or “*boshog’riq*” keeps the light, humorous insult while staying appropriate for Uzbek children.

## 4. Figurative Language and Rhythm

Many of Dahl’s sentences are rhythmical, almost poetic in their energy.

For example:

“I’m right and you’re wrong, I’m big and you’re small.”

Translating it literally breaks the musicality.

A smoother Uzbek rendering could be:

“Men haqman, sen nohaq, men kattaman, sen kichik — gap tamom.”

The rhythm remains, and the tone stays playful yet firm.

A Closer Look: Selected Examples from *Matilda*

Hyperbole as Humour

Dahl writes:

“Matilda read a book a week.”

The exaggeration highlights her brilliance and contrasts with her parents’ indifference. To capture the same spirit, the Uzbek version must keep the sense of astonishment, not reduce it.

A lively rendering:

“Matilda har hafta bitta kitobni bemalol tugata olardi.”

Invented Words

Dahl’s playful inventions (“scorching brain,” “gobblefunk,” etc.) challenge translators because they rely on sound rather than meaning.

Instead of literal translations, the Uzbek version should recreate the energy and creativity, such as using lively, child-friendly expressions:

“Uning miyasi juda chaqqon edi.”

Humorous Dialogue

Dialogue is central to the charm of *Matilda*. Dahl's exchanges often resemble mini-poems, full of rhythm. Preserving their flow in Uzbek helps children feel the same emotional impact as English readers.

#### Strategies for a Culturally Sensitive Translation

- Creative adaptation to maintain playfulness
- Compensation when humour cannot be translated directly
- Foreignization for names and cultural items that should remain recognizably British
- Functional equivalence for school terms and cultural concepts
- Rhythmic restructuring to preserve musicality in dialogues

A successful translation is never a direct mapping of words; it is a re-creation of atmosphere.

#### Conclusion

Translating *Matilda* into Uzbek demonstrates how deeply language and culture intertwine in children's literature. Each invented word, each exaggerated description, and each humorous insult carries not only meaning but also tone, emotion, and cultural background. The translator's task is to preserve the liveliness of Dahl's storytelling while making it feel natural to Uzbek children.

A good translation of *Matilda* should let an Uzbek child laugh at the same moments, feel the same sympathy for Matilda, and sense the same warmth from Miss Honey — even if the words themselves take slightly different forms.

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