

Transliteration Problems of Recreational Place Names (Toponyms) in English and Uzbek

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ABSTRACT

Transliterating recreational place names between English and Uzbek involves complex linguistic considerations. This study examines how parks, gardens, and other recreational toponyms from modern Britain and Uzbekistan are transliterated, highlighting the challenges of different writing systems and phonologies. We review the transliteration systems in use (historical Cyrillic-based and current Latin-based Uzbek), and analyse orthographic issues (e.g., handling of digraphs, special characters), phonological adaptations (such as approximating sounds absent in the target language), and the effect on semantic transparency. Using a comparative analysis of real examples from both languages, we illustrate common patterns and problems in English → Uzbek and Uzbek ← English transliteration. The results include a comparative table of recreational toponyms, revealing how semantic integrity is maintained or altered through transliteration versus translation. We discuss how historical intermediaries (like Russian) have influenced transliterations of Uzbek place names, and how globalisation and standardisation efforts (e.g., adoption of Latin script) are shaping current practices. Findings indicate that while many well-known toponyms have established transliterated forms (often preserving recognizability), lesser-known names exhibit inconsistent approaches, requiring a balance between phonetic accuracy and preserving original identity. This paper emphasises the need for consistent transliteration standards to ensure clarity and cultural integrity in bilingual contexts.

Keywords: Transliteration; toponyms; recreational place names; English-Uzbek; orthography; phonological adaptation; semantic integrity; translation.

INTRODUCTION

Place names (toponyms) often carry significant historical, cultural, and semantic information. When transferring toponyms between languages with different writing systems, transliteration is typically employed to preserve the name's form across alphabets. Transliteration is defined as the representation of text from one writing system in the characters of another [8, 183]. In contrast, transcription attempts to represent the sound (pronunciation) of a name, and translation conveys the semantic meaning. This study focuses on the transliteration of recreational place names – names of parks, gardens, leisure areas and similar sites – between English and Uzbek. We examine how these toponyms are rendered in each other's language, and what linguistic challenges arise.

Transliteration between English and Uzbek is especially interesting due to the languages' differing scripts and phonologies. English uses the Latin alphabet and has complex phonetic combinations (such as *th*, *sh*, *ew*), while Uzbek has undergone script changes (Arabic to Latin in the early 1900s, then Cyrillic, and back to Latin post-1990s) [12]. Modern Uzbek is written in a modified Latin alphabet, but older generations and many resources still use Cyrillic. Moreover, Uzbek phonology lacks some English sounds (e.g., the “th” /θ/ and /ð/ fricatives, and the “w” /w/ semivowel), requiring adaptations in transliteration. For example, English “th” is usually rendered as a simple t (e.g., “Martha” becomes *Marta* in Uzbek) and “w” may be rendered as v or o' (e.g., “Walter” as *Valter* or *Uolter*). Conversely, Uzbek contains letters like “q,” “x,” “ng,” or “o” (representing sounds /q/, /x/~kh/, /ŋ/, and a distinct /o/), which have no direct single-letter equivalents in English orthography [8, 184]. These differences necessitate careful orthographic decisions to approximate the original names.

Transliterating recreational toponyms carries an additional layer of complexity: preserving semantic integrity. Many parks or recreational sites have descriptive names (e.g., “Independence Square,” *MustaqillikMaydoni* in Uzbek). Transliteration alone may obscure such meanings to those unfamiliar with the source language. For instance, transliterating the Uzbek name *Mustaqillik Maydoni* as “Mustakillik Maydoni” in English text might be phonetically accurate, but an English reader would not grasp that it means “Independence Square”. In practice, translators often provide a direct translation “Independence Square” alongside or instead of a transliteration to convey the meaning. On the other hand, certain iconic place names are treated as proper nouns and kept in their original form or a widely accepted transliteration without translating the meaning (e.g., “Hyde Park” in London remains “Hyde Park” in Uzbek usage, albeit pronounced “Hayd Park”). The balance between maintaining the original name’s identity and conveying its meaning is a key consideration in toponym handling [11].

Historically, transliteration practices for English-Uzbek toponyms have been influenced by third languages. During the 20th century, many Uzbek geographical names became known in English through Russian-transliterated forms [4, 127]. For example, the Uzbek city *Toshkent* (with *o* and *sh* in Uzbek) entered world maps via the Russian *Ташкент*, thus the English name became “Tashkent,” where Uzbek “*o*” was represented by “*a*”, and “*sh*” by “*sh*” (coincidentally the same in English). Similarly, Uzbek *Buxoro* became well-known as “Bukhara,” *Xiva* as “Khiva,” and *Farg’ona* as “Fergana” in English. These forms often use *kh* for the Uzbek letter *x* (*/x/* sound) and *q/kh* or *k* for the letter *Q* (*/q/* sound) [5, 185]. Such historical transliterations sometimes deviate from strict letter-by-letter mapping, showing the influence of Russian phonetic rendering (e.g., Uzbek *Qo‘qon* Russian *Коканд* English *Kokand* for the city of *Kokand*). Understanding these historical layers is important when examining modern transliteration practices, as some names have entrenched spellings that do not match a straightforward Uzbek-English transliteration.



The goal of this paper is to analyse current transliteration aspects of recreational toponyms between English and Uzbek, taking into account the official systems, common usage, orthographic and phonological hurdles, and the preservation of meaning. We draw examples from contemporary British and Uzbek contexts – for instance, how famous UK parks are referred to in Uzbek, and how Uzbek recreational sites are named in English travel literature, supplemented by historical notes where relevant. By doing so, we aim to highlight patterns, identify challenges, and suggest implications for transliteration standards and practices in a globalising world where accurate and culturally respectful place-name exchange is increasingly important.

METHODS

This research adopts a qualitative comparative analysis of English and Uzbek transliterated toponyms. The study proceeded in several steps. First, we surveyed transliteration guidelines and academic literature on Uzbek-English toponyms. This included reviewing official standards and linguistic studies on transliteration and transcription in Uzbek [1, 66]. These sources provided insight into the expected one-to-one correspondences between the scripts and known problem areas (for example, handling of vowels and consonants that do not have equivalents across the two languages). We also considered the current Uzbek alphabet, which consists of Latin letters including digraphs like *sh*, *ch* and special characters like *o'*, *g'*, and how these map to English letters or digraphs.

Second, we compiled a dataset of recreational place names from modern Britain and Uzbekistan. For the English dataset, we selected well-known examples of parks, gardens, and similar leisure locations (e.g., major London parks, gardens, national parks, and resorts). For the Uzbek dataset, we gathered names of notable parks, squares, and recreational complexes in Uzbekistan. Sources for these names included official tourism websites, maps, bilingual signage, news articles in both Uzbek and English. We ensured that each example had usage in both languages, allowing us to observe the transliterated form. Where

possible, we relied on scholarly or official references to confirm transliterations. Third, each toponym pair (English original and Uzbek rendition, or vice versa) was analysed to determine the transliteration method used. We noted whether the name was treated with a strict letter-mapping transliteration, a phonetic adaptation, or a translation of meaning (or a mix of these methods). We also identified specific orthographic challenges in each example.

Finally, we constructed a comparative table of selected examples, illustrating transliteration in both directions. This table serves to visualise the patterns and is accompanied by commentary. We then interpreted the results, identifying general trends (such as common substitutions or use of established exonyms) and discussing outliers or inconsistencies. The analysis also considered why certain choices were made – for instance, whether an English name was left unchanged in Uzbek due to international familiarity, or whether an Uzbek name was translated in English texts to aid understanding.

By combining document analysis with concrete examples, this method provides both a descriptive overview of transliteration systems and a practical insight into their application for recreational toponyms. The approach is limited by the availability of sources for less famous locations; however, focusing on notable examples ensures that transliteration forms can be corroborated by multiple references. The following section presents the comparative data and identifies key findings from these observations.

RESULTS

We found that transliteration between English and Uzbek generally follows the principle of replacing each source-script letter with a corresponding target-script letter or letter combination. However, due to script differences and historical usage, the practice is not always a one-to-one direct mapping. Uzbek's current Latin alphabet shares many letters with English, which simplifies transliteration for some names, but divergent conventions and sound differences still lead to modifications.

Table 1 below presents a set of real examples of recreational place names and their transliterations in each direction, accompanied by brief notes on the approach used:

Table 1. *Comparative examples of recreational toponym transliteration (English-Uzbek and Uzbek-English)*

Original English name (Location, UK)	Uzbek transliteration (Latin script)	Original Uzbek name (Location, UZ)	English transliteration (common usage)
“Hyde Park” (London)	<i>Hyde Park</i> (written same; pronounced <i>Hayd</i>)	<i>G' alabog' i</i> (Tashkent) – lit. “Victory Garden”	“Victory Park” (translation of meaning)
“New York” (city, U.S.; recreational context: e.g. “Central Park”)	<i>Nyu-York</i>	<i>Mustaqillik Maydoni</i> (Tashkent) – “Independence Square”	“Independence Square” (meaning translated) or <i>Mustakillikmaydoni</i>
“Greenwich Park” (London)	<i>Grinrich Park</i> (often spelled “Grinvich”)	<i>Navro' zParki</i> (Tashkent) – “Navruz Park”	“Navruz Park” (transliterated, o' - “u”)
“Kew Gardens” (London)	<i>Kyubog' lari</i>	<i>Bodomzor</i> (Tashkent district park; “Almond Grove”)	“Bodomzor” (transliterated, meaning “Almond Garden” not obvious)
“Lake District National Park” (Cumbria)	<i>LeykDistriktmilliybog' i</i> (transliterated name + “national park” in Uzbek)	<i>Chorvoq</i> (resort area, Tashkent region)	“Charvak” (anglicized; o' - “a”, q - “k”)

DISCUSSION

Some English recreational names remain virtually unchanged in Uzbek usage, especially if they are internationally famous. The transliteration patterns observed in this study highlight several important linguistic and practical implications:

1. *Orthographic challenges and adaptations*

The differences in the English and Uzbek writing systems necessitate certain substitutions, which, if not standardised, can lead to inconsistency. The English digraph “th” has no direct

Uzbek equivalent, so transliterators must choose an approximation (usually *t*) [7]. Similarly, the Uzbek letter *o'* (a mid-back rounded vowel often transliterated as *o'* or *ũ*) and “*g'*” (*/ɣ/*) do not exist in English; translators often drop the mark and use plain “*o*” or “*g*” (or “*gh/kh*”), respectively, which can obscure the pronunciation. For example, *Qo'qon* “*Kokand*” loses the glottal stop and the distinct *o'*, yet *Kokand* has become the accepted spelling. These orthographic compromises sometimes sacrifice phonetic accuracy for readability or tradition. In the context of recreational toponyms, which may not be as globally fixed as major city names, there is an opportunity to apply consistent rules. However, our findings show that even within similar categories (parks, gardens), variation exists – e.g., *Chorvoq* vs *Charvak*, *Navro'z* vs *Navruz*. Adhering to a standard transliteration (for instance, always using *o'* as *o'* or as a certain letter combination in English) would aid in reducing confusion on maps and signs.

2. *Phonological considerations*

Successful transliteration must take into account the phonological systems of both source and target languages. In some cases, a strict letter mapping can result in unpronounceable or misleading forms for the target audience. Uzbek writers, for example, could spell *Snowdonia* exactly as *Snowdonia* in Latin script, but an Uzbek reader might pronounce every letter (including the *w* and the *-ia*) differently from the English intended pronunciation. By writing it as *Snoudoniya*, the transliterator ensures an Uzbek reader will come closer to the English sound [9]. This indicates a tilt towards transcription (sound-based) within the ostensibly transliteration process – effectively a hybrid approach. Likewise, English speakers encountering an Uzbek name like *Qorabog'* (hypothetical park name meaning “black garden”) would struggle if it were written exactly so; they might interpret *Qo* oddly or not know “*g'*”. If instead it's presented as *Korabogh* or *Karabog*, it becomes more digestible, at the cost of altering letters. Our examples show this balancing act: e.g., *Buxoro* → *Bukhara* added an “*h*” to signal the guttural “*x*” sound. For practitioners, understanding these phonological adaptation tendencies is

crucial. It explains why transliterations are not uniform and suggests that training in both languages' phonetics can improve transliteration accuracy (making foreign names easier for locals to pronounce and vice versa). It also points to the fact that sometimes pure transliteration (letter fidelity) is sacrificed to preserve pronounceability.

3. *Semantic integrity and cultural context*

A notable discussion point is whether to translate a place name's meaning or not. Recreational place names often have descriptive elements ("Greenwich Park" refers to the "Greenwich area, Independence Square" commemorates independence, *Navro'z Park* honours a holiday). Transliteration keeps the foreign sound but can render the name opaque in meaning to the target audience. Conversely, translation conveys the meaning but can break the link to the original name (and potentially cause confusion if the translated name isn't recognised as an official name). In our study, we saw both approaches: "Independence Square" for *Mustaqillik Maydoni* clearly communicates the concept and likely resonates more with international visitors or readers, whereas *Mustaqillik Maydoni* (if untranslated) might not. The choice often depends on context and audience. If an English text is describing a location to tourists, using Independence Square with the original in parentheses maintains semantic clarity and factual accuracy. Uzbek texts about foreign parks sometimes add explanations too; for example, a travel article might refer to "Hyde Park" and note it as *qirollikbog'i* (royal park) to impart its status. Cultural context also matters: as noted by Artikova (2024), translators must consider historical and cultural associations of names [1, 66]. For instance, The Hague being rendered as *Hollandiya* in Uzbek was likely due to historical usage where the country name was more salient in context [12]. While not a direct transliteration, it reflects a cultural translation choice – one that might be outdated in contemporary practice but is an interesting artifact of transliteration history. We infer that maintaining semantic integrity sometimes competes with preserving the formal integrity of a name. Striking a balance – perhaps via explanatory

footnotes or dual naming – can enrich understanding. In scholarly works or formal documents, the trend is to preserve original names (transliterated) to avoid ambiguity, whereas in popular or guidebook content, a translated descriptive name may be preferred for clarity.

4. *Influence of historical intermediaries*

The results reinforce that transliteration cannot be divorced from its historical pipeline. Many Uzbek place names entered English discourse not directly, but through Russian or Persian. This relay transliteration has left a legacy in how places are spelt. The persistence of “Bukhara,” “Samarkand,” “Khiva” in English, instead of *Buxoro*, *Samarqand*, *Xiva*, is a prime example. For recreational names, which often were not as internationally known, we observe that newer sources are using more direct transliterations. For example, “Navruz Park” is a new name, and English sources use the Uzbek term *Navruz* (Persian-origin word for New Year) rather than some Russian-derived variant. However, old park names or city parks named after people might have variations: a park named after “Alisher Navoiy” (Uzbek poet) might appear as *Navoi Park* or even *Navoi National Park*, depending on who transliterates and when. The discussion here is that consistency and clarity benefit from recognising these historical influences and choosing one system. Uzbek authorities in recent years have been keen on promoting the Uzbek-based forms internationally (e.g., in official tourism materials, one sees *Samarqand* alongside “Samarkand,” or “Tashkent” spelt *Toshkent* in some publications to reflect local spelling). Yet, for practical purposes, well-established names are hard to change globally. For translators working on recreational toponyms, it’s important to consult up-to-date authoritative sources to see preferred spellings. In the absence of that, following a consistent scheme (for instance, using the Uzbek Latin form unless an English exonym exists) is advisable.

5. *Errors and misinterpretations*

A final point worth discussing is the potential for errors in transliteration and the effect on comprehension. Errors can arise

from misidentifying letters (e.g., reading Uzbek *Sirdaryo* as “Sirdargyo” if unfamiliar with the characters) or from over-translation. For instance, a translator not aware that “bog” means park might transliterate an Uzbek park name ending in *bog‘i* literally, yielding a tautology like *Navoi Boghi Park*. One example from our review noted that inexperienced translators sometimes mix methods improperly, such as transliterating one part of a name and translating another incorrectly, leading to awkward hybrids or loss of meaning [3]. This emphasises the need for translator training in handling proper nouns and for editorial oversight. In the realm of recreational toponyms, such mistakes could mislead tourists (imagine a map labeling a place in a confusing way). It’s therefore recommended that publications adhere to recognised name lists. The comparative table we provided can serve as a reference for some common cases, but a more comprehensive database would be beneficial.

CONCLUSION

Transliteration of recreational toponyms between English and Uzbek is a nuanced process requiring linguistic sensitivity and awareness of historical conventions. In this study, we investigated how names of parks, gardens, and similar leisure sites are rendered across the two languages, illustrating that while the fundamental goal is to maintain the name’s identity, practical adaptations are often necessary. We found that English names in Uzbek texts are usually rendered via phonetic transliteration, adjusting for sounds and letters not native to Uzbek. Uzbek names in English contexts tend to follow the Uzbek Latin spelling, but legacy spellings via Russian influence are still common for well-known locations. Orthographic challenges such as handling of *w*, *th*, *q*, *x*, *o‘*, etc., are managed through a combination of established conventions and ad-hoc solutions, as shown by our comparative examples. Crucially, the study underscores that transliteration choices can affect comprehensibility and cultural perception. Consistent use of standardized transliteration enhances mutual intelligibility – an English reader can recognize “Charvak” as the Uzbek *Chorvoq*,

and an Uzbek reader recognizes *Hyde Park* even if written in Latin. Inconsistent or erroneous transliterations, however, can lead to confusion or loss of the toponym's cultural nuance. For transliteration of recreational place names, we recommend the following best practices based on our findings: (1) Use established transliteration standards (such as Uzbekistan's official alphabet mappings) for formal communications, (2) consider adding translations or explanations for descriptive names to preserve semantic meaning in the target language, (3) remain aware of historical forms but lean towards modern standardized forms for consistency, and (4) verify names against reliable sources (maps, official lists) to avoid introducing new inconsistencies. By doing so, translators and authors can ensure that the beauty and significance of recreational places – from London's historic parks to Uzbekistan's vibrant public gardens – are accessible and clear to all, regardless of language.

In conclusion, transliteration acts as a bridge connecting languages and cultures through place names. The case of English and Uzbek recreational toponyms reveals both the progress made in bridging that gap and the areas that require careful navigation. Ongoing efforts in standardisation, coupled with translator education, promise to refine this process further. As Uzbekistan continues to present itself to the world and English-speaking audiences discover more of Central Asia's attractions, a robust and intuitive transliteration practice will be instrumental in sharing these recreational spaces – by name – with accuracy and respect for their identity.

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