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PROPER NAMES AND THEIR TRANSLATION

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ABOUT ARTICLE

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Abstract: This paper examines the various approaches and techniques employed by translators to tackle the unique challenges posed by proper names. It explores the factors influencing translation choices, including linguistic differences, cultural connotations, and transliteration systems. Additionally, it discusses the impact of globalization, technological advancements, and evolving translation practices on the treatment of proper names in translation. Proper names hold intrinsic cultural, historical, and social significance, making their accurate translation crucial for conveying meaning and preserving cultural nuances in translated texts.

INTRODUCTION

The descriptive theory of proper names is the view that the meaning of a proper name is a set of properties that can be expressed as a [description](#) picking out an object that satisfies the description. According to the descriptivist theory of meaning, there is a description of the sense of proper names which picks out the bearer of the name like a definition. The distinction between the embedded description and the bearer itself is similar to the distinction between the extension and the intension of a general term, or between [connotation and denotation](#).

As it is stated in Wikipedia, the extension of a general term like "dog" is just all the dogs that are out there; the extension is what the word can be used to refer to. The intension of a general term is basically a description of what all dogs have in common; it's what the definition expresses.

The difficulty with the descriptive theory is what the description corresponds to. there must be some essential characteristic of the bearer; otherwise we can use the name and deny the owner's having such a characteristic.

According to this wikipedia the [causal theory of names](#) combines the referential view with the idea that the name's referent is fixed by a baptismal act. Here the name becomes a [rigid designator](#) of the referent.

Crystal called the science that studies names as onomastics (Greek onomastikos from onoma “name”), which is usually divided into the study of personal names (anthroponomastics from Greek anthropos “human being”) and place names (toponomastics from Greek topos “place”). As he stated, the term onomastics is used to refer to personal names and toponomastics to place names. He considered this division an arbitrary one, as places can be named after people (for example: Alberta in Canada is named after the fourth daughter of Queen Victoria, Princess Louise Caroline Alberta).

Mezhuev stated that the special nature of names is often described in terms of the differences between proper nouns and common nouns. Proper noun is interpreted here as “the name of a specific individual or of a set of individuals distinguished only by their having that name”. A common noun, on the other hand, is a name whose “application is not restricted to arbitrarily distinguished members of a class”. For instance, a goblin or a horse is a common noun that may be used in reference to any individual characterizable in general as a goblin or a horse.

The Finnish scholar in Onomastics Eero Kiviniemi and Hanks and Hodges introduced anthroponymy as an established and approved system of personal names in every language, which the speakers of that language easily recognize as conventional names belonging to the system of ordinary names. According to them proper names are, to some degree, culturally and linguistically specific although some names and name forms are universal, which means that one and the same name (name form) is used in more than one language. For example first names originating from biblical persons (Christian names) and saints are the most widespread; other historical persons have been influential too.

Regarding geographical names, she stated that they often have specific forms in other languages (exonyms), which may differ not only in pronunciation, but also with respect to morphology and lexical entities. According to her some are translated literally and other back to ancient Latin forms.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Nord considered no specific rule for the translation of proper names. She argues that in non-fictional texts, it seems to be a convention to use the target-culture exonym of a source-culture name, if there is one, but if a translator prefers to use the source-culture form, she is free to do so as long as it is clear to what place does the name refer to. Nord stated that in this way perhaps the audience will think that the translator is showing off her knowledge. She acknowledged that wherever the function of the proper name is limited to identifying an individual referent, the main criterion for translation will be to make this identifying function work for the target audience.

Regarding translation of proper names in fiction Nord, maintained that in fiction, things are not quite as simple as it may seem. We have assumed that in fictional texts there is no name that has no informative function at all. According to her, if this information is explicit, as in a descriptive name, it can be translated—although a translation may interfere with the function of a culture marker. If the information is implicit, however, or if the marker function has priority over the informative function of the proper name, she maintained that this aspect will be lost in the translation, unless the translator decides to compensate for the loss by providing the information in the context.

She insisted that there are proper names that exist in the same form both in the source and the target culture. But this causes other problems: The character changes “nationality” just because the name is pronounced in a different way. She illustrated this by the case of English Richard which thus turns into a German Richard, and a French Robert into an English Robert—which may interfere with the consistency of the setting if some names are “bicultural” and others are not. Nord stated an example of a little comic strip which she translated with her students in the Spanish-German translation class, the two characters, brothers, are called Miguelito and Hugo. Nord urged that if we leave the names as they are, Miguelito will be clearly recognizable as a Spanish boy in the translation, whereas Hugo may be identified as a German. Then she suggested that in order to avoid the impression that this is a bicultural setting, the translator would have to either substitute Miguelito by a clearly German name or replace Hugo by a typical Spanish name, depending on whether the text is intended to appeal to the audience as “exotic” or “familiar”.

She considered this kind of problem very common in the translation of children's books, especially if there is a pedagogical message underlying the plot. A story set in the receiver's own cultural world allows for identification, whereas a story set in a strange, possibly exotic world may induce the reader to stay “at a distance.”

Nord also explained the role of descriptive names in fiction. According to her, apart from names typically denoting a particular kind of referent, like pet names, the authors of fictions sometimes use names which explicitly describe the referent in question (“descriptive names”). She made an example of it as this by a case in a Spanish novel in which the protagonist is called Don Modesto or Doña Perfecta. As she stated the readers will understand the name as a description of the character, since Don is an honorific title.

Nord also discussed about cultural makers in fiction. She stated that in some cultures, there is the convention that fictional proper names can serve as “culture markers,” for example: they implicitly indicate to which culture the character belongs. In German literature, as her example, if a woman called Joséphine appears in a story with a plot set in Germany, she will automatically be assumed to be French. On the contrary, in Spanish literature, proper names are more generally adapted to Spanish morphology.

Nord stated that there are times when copy cannot be interpreted as a procedure based on adequacy in the case of "bicultural" names where the same name form exists in both source and target cultures (for example: Portuguese: Jane, English: Jane). Moreover, in the case of transcription, there are names that, despite being transcribed in order to conform to the phonological and morphological conventions of the target language, continue sounding alien to the target audience and recognized as not belonging to the target cultural setting. Therefore, an effect of adequacy may be achieved by either preserving a foreign name, or by creating a new name not present in the source text, and while the addition of some explicit clarification of a name may make the target text more accessible, so may the deletion of this particular name. In view of this, Davies has already observed that there seems to be no clear correlation between the use of a particular procedure and the degree of adequacy or acceptability obtained in the target text.

From the translational perspective, Hermans broadly divided names into two categories:

-conventional names

-loaded names

Conventional names are those seen as "unmotivated" for translation, since they apparently do not carry a semantic load; their morphology and phonology do not need to be adapted to that of the target language system; or perhaps because they have acquired an international status. Loaded names, which are those seen as "motivated" for translation, range from faintly "suggestive" to overtly "expressive" names and nicknames. They include those fictional and non-fictional names in which historical and cultural inferences can be made on the basis of the "encyclopedic knowledge" available to the interlocutors of a particular culture. The distinction between them is one of degree: expressive names link with the lexicon of the language. The semantic load of the expressive names is more in evidence than in the case of suggestive' names. Hermans, introduced at least four ways of rendering names from one language into another: They can be copied, for example, reproduced in the target text exactly as they were in the source text. They can be transcribed, for example, transliterated or adapted on the level of spelling, phonology, etc. A formally unrelated name can be substituted in the target text for any given name in the source text. And insofar as a name in a source text is enmeshed in the lexicon of that language and acquires "meaning", it can be translated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Concerning the translation of proper names Newmark stated that, they are normally transferred in order to preserve nationality, assuming the proper names have no connection to the text.

Newmark pointed that regarding names that have connotations in imaginative literature like comedies, allegories, fairy tales and some children's stories, procedure of translation should be taken into account, unless nationality is important as in folk tales.

If both nationality and connotation of proper name is important, Newmark suggested that at first the name should be translated into target language then the translated word should be naturalized into a new proper name.

Newmark in his article with the title of “what is in a name” stated that if a translator wants his target language text to be accepted and understood by its readers, he must behave in accordance with what is expected and meaningful in the target culture. He, in his studying proper names, wanted to be able to write a prescriptive article offering solutions for translation of proper names. What he found, instead, were not rules, but conventions. According to his conventions are arbitrary, in the sense that in other times, another behavior could well have been the norm. Conventions are also diachronically interchangeable, because sometimes fads overlap. She stated that this explains why we may find two texts in Spanish published around the same time, one referring to the author of *Das Kapital* as Carlos Marx and the other as Karl Marx.

He also explicated that for a very long time it had been fashionable to translate proper names in order to “naturalize” them; but as, according to her, the current trend in most Western languages, perhaps due to the immediacy of global communication, is to not translate them.

Newmark continued by stating that for rendering names into target language, the translator should find out all of the ideas associated with the name in the source-language culture. Failing to do so could have serious consequences. She illustrated such carelessness on the part of a translator by an example: German Chancellor Helmut Kohl compared Gorbachov to Goebbels, and the English translator for *Newsweek*—thinking that his audience would not necessarily know who Goebbels was—added that “he was one of those responsible for the crimes of the Hitler era”. The political repercussions were immediate, and the Russians swiftly canceled German Minister Riesenhuber’s visit.

Novikova, in her article named “proper name in translation” demonstrated that contrary to popular views, the translation of proper names is a non-trivial question, and it is closely related to the problem of the meaning of the proper name.

In her research regarding translation of proper names particularly from English into Hungarian, Novikova first introduced four basic operations for translating a proper name: transference, translation proper, substitution and modification. The paper presents a case study, which tries to explain the treatment of proper names in the translation of J. F. Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans*. Her analysis is based on the conclusion that translation is a special form of communication, based on establishing interpretive connection between the source text and the target text. The findings seem to confirm the claim that proper names behave in a largely predictable way in translation: the particular operations chosen to deal with them are a function, partly, of the semantic content they are loaded with in the source context and, partly, of considerations of how this content may be preserved in the

target communication situation, including elements like the specific audience, intertextual relationships and translation norms.

Lincoln Fernandes, in his paper about translating names discusses the translation of names in children's fantasy literature and underlines the importance of names in translating this certain text type. First, he defines what it is meant by "names" and attempts to present some of the most important types of "meanings" usually conveyed by names. Then, he discusses the issue of readability in the translation of these narrative elements.

The following is a group of eight procedures in the translation of names proposed by Lincoln Fernandes.

1. Rendition

This is a "matching" procedure and is used when the name is transparent or semantically motivated and is in standardized language, that is, when the name in a source text is trapped in the lexicon of that language, thus acquiring "meaning" should be rendered in the target language.

2. Copy

He confirmed that his procedure bears resemblance to Vinay and Darbelnet's concept of "borrowing" as the simplest type of translation. In this procedure, the names are reproduced in the translated text exactly as they appear in the source text without suffering any sort of orthographic adjustment. From a phonological perspective, however, Nord points out that these names often acquire a different pronunciation in the text. For example, in the name Artemis, which is the name of the Greek Goddess of Hunt, the stress is placed on the second syllable in Brazilian Portuguese and on the first syllable in British English. Therefore, despite being copied, these names often acquire a different character in the target context.

3. Transcription

Fernandes described this as a procedure in which an attempt is made to transcribe a name in the closest-sounding letters of a different target alphabet. In other words, this procedure occurs when a name is transliterated or adapted at the level of morphology, phonology, grammar, etc., usually to conform to the target language system. In this procedure the translator may suppress, add, and changed the position of letters, probably as a way to preserve the readability of the text in the context.

3. Substitution

Fernandes stated that in this type of procedure, a formally and/or semantically unrelated name is a substitute in the target text for any existent name in the source text. In other words, the TL name and the SL name exist in their respective referential worlds, but are not related to each other in terms of form and/or semantic significance.

4. Recreation

This type of procedure consists of recreating an invented name in the second language text into the target language text, thus trying to reproduce similar effects of this newly-created referent in another target cultural setting. Fernandes noted that recreation differs from substitution in the sense that in recreation the lexical item does not exist in the second language or in the target language.

5. Deletion

Fernandes considered this procedure as rather a drastic way of dealing with lexical items, but even so it has been often used by translators.

According to him deletion (\emptyset) as a translation procedure involves removing a source-text name or part of it in the target text. It usually occurs when such names are apparently of little importance to the development of the narrative, and are not relevant enough for the effort of comprehension required for their readers.

6. Addition

Fernandes considered this procedure as the one in which extra information is added to the original name, making it more comprehensible or perhaps more appealing to its target audience. Sometimes it is used to solve ambiguities that might exist in the translation of a particular name.

7. Transposition

This procedure is defined as the replacement of one word class with another without changing the meaning of the original message. Fernandes stated that for Chesterman, this procedure also involves structural changes, “but it is often useful to isolate the word-class change as being of interest in itself”.

Alexander Kalashnikov in his article with the title of “proper names in translation of fiction” discussed the minimum function of personal names to be nominal; and stated that some designation must be affixed to a person. He paid attention to the formal attributes of proper names which can play an important role in literature by evoking, for example, an epoch, social status, or nationality of the characters. According to him in translation, proper names are usually given in their original spelling, or if they are to be rendered into the language with another script, they are transliterated. He pointed out that along with their nominal function, given names and family names often perform a descriptive or characterizing function. Such meanings are an integral part of the total meaning in many books.

Alexander Kalashnikov defined charactonyms or significant names as names performing a characterizing function. According to him if names in a literary work have such functions, it is better to translate the functions in some way, but unfortunately they are often ignored even in the translations of outstanding works by Dickens.

According to him the tradition of transliterating (or transcribing in the same alphabet) proper names in literature may be explained by the wish to keep the nominal function simple, to transmit the nationality of the character, and to avoid excessive expressive coloring which can give the name a

nance of a nickname. At the same time if a personal name characterizes its bearer, the expressive-and-stylistic function may dominate the nominal one.

Kalashnikov defined the common stem as one of the signs of a characteronym. According to him a common stem is a part of a name or an entire name that retains its form a common word: Smith (smith—a worker in metal), Sawders (sawder—flattery, blarney), Hennie (henny—hen-like). If this common stem characterizes (conveys attributes to) the bearer of the name, the stem becomes a significant (meaningful) element of the name and this name may be called a charactonym.

Kalashnikov reported that charactonym can have clearly different implications of meaning in contexts of the same book. Thus, a charactonym has no absolutely permanent characteristic meaning. Rather such names express a semantic continuum, and to translate them properly is a hard work. But motivators allow one to find the main characteristic dominating others, while still allowing ambiguity.

Kalashnikov gave details of four types of charactonyms.

1) Names whose significant element do not have a stylistically colored significant element, for example: a connotation defined with expressive terms such as showing a critical attitude and lack of respect for somebody being colloquial like the word “Parakeet”.

2) Expressive-and-characteristic names, which are with a stylistically colored significant element: “Scribbler” (the common noun scribbler is marked in “Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English” as derogatory or humorous):

An academician who is incompetent to understand the meaning and value of a literary work may write a treatise titled, “A Comparative Study of the Use of the Comma in the Literary Works of Otto Scribbler”.

3) Intersemantisizing names whose motivators become other names from the narrow context. In this case closely situated common stems create a certain semantic field and become motivators to each other. The names give more descriptive meanings, emphasize the semantics of each other and finally appear relevant for translation even without any other context. Kalashnikov considered these as different kinds of enumerations: “Broccoli” (broccoli), “Articiocchi” (artichoke) that create a semantic field of “vegetables”.

4) Expressive names that are expressive because of their lexical meanings but have no motivators—for example, “Blunt” may be defined as a person “obtuse in understanding or discernment,” a fool. However, such names must be treated as conditional or charactonyms until they are justified by the context in literary works. Kalashnikov expressed that in real life it is incorrect to link the lexical meaning of an expressively colored family name with its bearer. If the meaning of an expressive name is not reinforced by a motivator, we may assume that the meaning is at least somewhat less important than it would be otherwise and that its translation is not obligatory.

CONCLUSION

Finally, when to translate Proper nouns we should keep in my mind that there are some strategies used in translating functional names. There are eight types of translation equivalents which can help a translator to transform a meaning from both linguistically and linguaculturally, because when translating any piece of a foreign text one should be aware of both features of translation characteristics mentioned above:

1. Usual equivalent which is the common way to translate the words word-by-word;
2. Usual equivalent with irrelevant coloring might happen when linguacultural aspects are not known;
3. Occasional equivalent which is the word having a proper equivalent in the translating language;
4. Occasional equivalent with irrelevant coloring;
5. Equivalent with a changed characteristics and irrelevant coloring;
6. Irrelevant equivalent might happen when there is a lack of lexical resource and general knowledge beyond the language itself;
7. Irrelevant equivalent with irrelevant coloring is the case when a translator tries to transform a meaning of a word that is being translated according to the wrong word selection with incorrect meaning [26; p. 22].

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