PECULIARITIES OF PROPER NAME TRANSLATION ACROSS TIME

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Rezumat: *Articolul dat are ca scop urmărirea tendinţelor de traducere a numelor proprii în diferite perioade de timp, precum şi identificarea obstacolelor des întâlnite de către traducător şi propune metode de soluţionare a acestora.*
Cuvinte-cheie: *nume propriu, traducere fidelă, transcripţie, transliterare, tradiţie.*

Language is the most flexible and changeable means of communication that serves as the main subject of the translation studies. Possessing the ability to broaden

its paradigms and borrow new words and meanings, it evolves, allowing modern tendencies to prevail over the old ones. Thus, translation studies is constantly required to adjust to new rules and perfect its theories, methods and strategies in order to provide the most faithful [3] and appropriate translation of a text. Throughout the time, various changes have occured in the tendencies of rendering, especially in the matter of proper names translation. The key issue of this subject is determined by the unclear usage of methods in the procedure of translation, lack of distinct rules and contradictory tendencies of translation in different languages, mainly in Romanian, Russian and German.

As a rule, most proper names are not rendered if they denote exclusively human beings. However, they are still adjusted according to the graphic and phonic rules of the target language. In fact, rendering personal names is especially important in factual texts. Indeed, it does not distort the message, but a wrong translation might attribute a scientific discovery, a book, an invention etc. to a completely different person, resulting in copyright infringement or even criminal prosecution in the case of legal translations. Thus, a translator must be familiar with different tendencies in rendering not only according to the time, but also according to the domain. Generally, names suggest diverse peculiarities about the referent. In the book, «Имена собственные на стыке языков и культур», the Russian linguist, lexicographer and translator, Dmitry Ermolovich lists at least four common traits that all proper names reveal to the reader: (1) the fact that such a person/object/ place exists; (2) its affiliation within a particular category, for instance: people, animals or geographical places; (3) the idea of individuality which combines the previous two traits: a person named George exists; (4) a set of defining characteristics [2, p. 12]. Thus, the translation of proper names is needed as they might carry a significant amount of the meaning of a sentence, text or work. In order to understand the previous statement, let us consider the sentence: *Isaac Newton formulated the theory of gravity in 1687.* If we omit the proper name in the translation, the meaning is partially lost. Nonetheless, if we render the name wrongly: «Айзек Невтон сформулировал теорию гравитации в 1687 году», then the foreign reader will receive an absurd assertion, as into Russian *Isaac Newton* is always translated as *Исаак Ньютон.* For the purpose of understanding the reason why some names are rendered in a particular way and others are not, it is important to analyze most commonly used methods of rendering and the tendencies of translation across time.

Preserving the original form of the name is, perhaps, the most convenient way of rendering, as the chances to receive a wrong translation is minimal. This tendency is especially evident in the 20th century, due to lack of knowledge and theories on the proper way of translation, a fact shown through some of the works by Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin – «он увез супругу лорда Carmar» [5, p. 1]. Regardless, this method can still be used nowadays in factual texts, but the reader might face difficulties in pronunciation, if they are unfamiliar with the name in the source language. In order to overcome this problem, the translator might provide the original name with its transcription in brackets: «Луи́ Витто́н» (*Louis Vuitton*) [4, pp. 117-118].

Transcription is the method of translation that renders the phonic form of the proper name from the SL into the TL. It is widely used in the modern Russian translation practice as a result of the idea that the oral form of the word prevails over the written one [2, p. 15]. In the Romanian and German languages, proper names are left unchanged: George Washington (EN) – George Washington (RO), George Washington (DE); Amazon (company) – Amazon (RO), Amazon (DE). Yet, in the Russian language transcription is the main method of proper name translation: John (EN) – Джон (RU), not Иван, Dom Pérignon (FR) – Дом Периньон (RU), not Дом Перигнон. It is worth mentioning that the transcription has its drawbacks, for instance, the reader still faces hardships regarding the proper pronunciation, as the TL often imposes its own pronunciation standards: e.g. Michigan (EN) – Мичига́н (RU). Even if transcription is rather frequently used, there are still exceptions such as members of the royal family, biblical names or accepted versions of previous translations. In these cases, the translator must check the name in the dictionary or consult an expert in the domain before giving preference to variant.

Transliteration is the method which preserves the graphic peculiarities of the SL when translated into the TL. Historically, transliteration preceded transcription, its evidences being traced back to the 18th - 19th century, a period when such names as: Невтон, Гамлет, Исаак and Ватсон appeared in the Russian language [5, p. 2]. It is essential to underline the fact that in Romanian and German such changes do not emerge. In Russian, however, the changing tendencies are highly visible. For instance, the proper name Isaac Newton, being translated in the 19th century, was brought in the Russian speaking realia as Исаак Невтон (later Ньютон), whereas the conveyed name of the 20th century writer Isaac Asimov is Айзек Азимов. This example shows how drastic can a name change be due to diverse tendencies. On the one hand, this method helps to denote unique and important personalities, but on the other hand this is an exception that breaks the modern rules. Analyzing the name Hamlet, it is obvious that nowadays it should be substituted with the modern variant Хэмлет, rather then Гамлет, yet the main reason why the old variant still remains is because it was widely accepted in the language. Moreover, it might be considered a mistake, or even treated as a completely different character, if it is rendered according to the new tendency. Currently, the method of transliteration is not used individually, but together with transcription: e.g. sterling – стерлинг, Morning Star – Морнинг Стар [4, p. 121].

Considering these examples of old, but accepted translation variants into the TL, it is crucial to highlight the principle of *tradition* [2, p. 29]. According to this, some proper names are translated into the TL with its conventional equivalent: e.g. The Netherlands (EN) – Olanda/ Țările de Jos (RO); China (EN) – Китай; Austria (EN) – Österreich (DE). Similar changes occur to the names of historical personalities: e.g. William I the Conqueror (EN) - Вильгельм I Завоева́тель (RU), Wilhelm der Eroberer (DE), William Cuceritorul (RO). As it can be observed, in Romanian and German the half calquing method was applied, which proves the idea that all languages are different and have their specific ways of treating proper names. For instance, George VI (EN) - Георг VI (RU), George al VI-lea (RO), Georg VI (DE);

John Lackland (EN) - Иоанн Безземельный (RU), Ioan Plantagenetul (RO), Johann Ohneland (DE). The justification behind these translations lies in the fact that the names of the royalty were initially rendered on the analogy with biblical names. Therefore, this method of rendering might be used to glorify personalities, accentuate the high morals of a person and his or her connection to God; it also designates saints or higher ranks of clergy members.

However, as mentioned previously, language is a flexible body and according to some fixed traditions in the language exceptions like: George Washington (EN) - Джордж Вашингтон (RU), but Abraham Lincoln (EN) – Авраам Линкольн (RU), are not a novelty. Biblical names, being conveyed from the Greek language, are strictly translated into Russian based on the Greek version: Abel (EN) – Авель (RU), Abel (RO), Abel (DE); Jeremiah (EN) - Иеремия (RU), Jeremia (DE), Ieremia (RO) [1]. It must be specified that these are just a few examples of translation and the rules of biblical name conveyance into the Romanian and German languages, remain an open subject for further investigation.

The *actual translation of the proper names* is the method that conveys the name from the SL into the TL, using equivalents, similar names and explanations. According to the article «Антропоним в тексте перевода», written by O. Sidorova, proper names that are not translated, suffer from a major loss of meaning. Since the 19th century names were used in works with symbolic meanings, yet according to the tendencies of translation, names were rather transcribed or transliterated [5, p. 3]. In order to prove this statement, let us consider the tale Cinderella (EN) – Cenu-șăreasa (RO), Золушка (RU), Aschenputtel (DE). All these translation variants, in fact, render the same meaning of *ashes*. This name is symbolic as it reveals not only a specific character but also the hardships and unfairness she endures, working as a slave for her step-mother and step-sisters. However, if not rendered, the character would have lost an important and suggestive detail, thus making the name intelligible for the target audience.

In conclusion, proper name translation is a rather burdensome procedure as it requires a thorough examination of two languages, its peculiarities, tradition, realia, and certainly the methods and tendencies of translation. It should be recalled that language is an evolving phenomenon that cannot be treated as an exact science, as it allows multiple changes within its structure. Thus, more exceptions, rules and tendencies are yet to be discovered and analyzed. Nowadays, having identified considerable amounts of methods and examples of translation, it remains at the translators' predilection what method to chose in order to obtain the most appropriate and faithful text.

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