HOW TO TRANSLATE ENGLISH NAMES INTO ALBANIAN

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ABSTRACT

Translation is an activity which is carried out in a given cultural context. Translation has many challenges every translator faces with. One of them is the problem of translating proper names from one language to another. It is very complicated because the translator should consider all peculiarities of the proper names such as sex, geographical belonging, history, specific meaning, and playfulness of language, phonemic and grammatical formation, and cultural connotation. The focus of this study lies on the translation of proper names from English into Albanian language and especially the problems of the orthography of these names.

KEYWORDS: Orthography, Source, Target, Language, Albanian

INTRODUCTION

One of the most famous translation theorists Peter New mark pointed out: "Any old fool can learn a foreign language, but it takes an intelligent person to become a translator" [1] (1969) This statement suggests that besides the knowledge of a foreign language a translator needs special knowledge and skills which constitute his intelligence or competence. Since culture and translation are increasingly linked, cultural knowledge is an essential part of the translator's intelligence. Translating involves not just two languages, but a transfer from one culture to another. Each culture has its own ways of behaving that is why translators need to be well versed in the history, customs, habits and traditions of the source and the target cultures they are mediating between. In this sense we can use "cultural transposition" as a cover-term for the various degrees of departure from literal translation that one may resort to in the process of transferring the contents of a source text into the context of a target culture. Some of the most straightforward examples of the basic issues in cultural transposition are offered by place-names and proper names. Translating names is not usually a major concern, but a brief look at the question provides a simple introduction to what are often complex problems.

THEORIES ABOUT THE TRANSLATION OF NAMES

The translation of proper names is one of the most difficult areas any translator usually faces while translating different kinds of texts simply, proper names are not like other words translation of which can be easily found in dictionaries. Generally, they "occupy an exceptional position with regard to the language system because of their minimal integration to it" (Manini1996, p.161). Thus, special attention needs to be paid to the translation of proper names since this kind of activity is a real challenge for all translators.

In translating a name there are, in principle, at least two alternatives. Either the name can be taken over unchanged from the source text to the translated text which is called foreignaization, or it can be adapted to conform to the phonic/graphic conventions of the translated language which is called domestication.

The former, foreignization, aims at preserving all the cultural elements, while the latter, domestication, brings the

text closer to the readers by leaving out many of the cultural elements. Gergana Apostolova who indicates a variety of aspects to consider while translating proper names says.

"The transformation of names in translation is rooted deeply in the cultural background of the translator which includes phonetic and phonological competence, morphological competence, complete understanding of the context, correct attitude to the message, respect for tradition, compliance with the current state of cross-cultural interference of languages, respect for the cultural values and the responsibilities of the translator. The process reaches from an ear for aesthetic sounding to the philosophical motivation of re-naming." (Apostolova, 2004, p.14)

Many translator theorists such as New mark, Davies, Hagfors, etc. have written about this problem expressing different ideas. When proper names appear in a literary text, we can evaluate their presence having in mind different aspects: 1) the use of special names, 2) the use of meaningful names, 3) interpretation of names, 4) the contribution to characterization, 5) allusions in proper names, 6) text function or effect they create, etc. Most of us may simply think that proper names are usually not translated; however, after we compare translations with the source texts (ST), we can observe that translators do various sorts of things with proper names. There are translation theorists who think that that Proper names are never translated, which seems to be a rule deeply rooted in many people's minds. Yet looking at translated texts we find that translators do all sorts of things with proper names: non-translation, non-translation that leads to a different pronunciation in the target language, transcription or transliteration from non-Latin alphabets, morphological adaption to the target language, cultural adaptation, substitution, and so on. It is interesting to note, moreover, that translators do not always use the same techniques with all the proper names of a particular text they are translating. The translation of proper names has often been considered as a simple automatic process of transference from one language into another, due to the view that proper names are mere labels used to identify a person or a thing. This is exactly what Vendler purports when he writes that "*proper names have no meaning (in the sense of 'sense' and not of 'reference'), which is borne out by the fact that they do not require translation into another language*". (Vendler1975:117). In his view, proper names are to be treated as labels, which are attached to persons or objects and the only task of the translator is to carry them over, or transfer them, from the source language text to the target language text.

DEALING WITH ENGLISH NAMES IN ALBANIAN LANGUAGE

Languages have particular personal names, some of which are deeply rooted in the culture of the speakers of the specific language; consequently, they can pose unique difficulties in the comprehension of culture-specific texts. It is interesting to note that some personal names have specific connotations, and omitting this implied information results in unacceptable translation Albanian language has its own phonological system, which comprises 7 vowel phonemes and 29 consonant phonemes. It is written in the Latin alphabet decided upon in 1908 at the Congress of Manastir. The Albanian language has an elaborated system of grammatical forms, a binary declension system: definite and indefinite, it retains the case forms (it has five cases), three genders (masculine, feminine and neutral); the latter is going out of use and is used only with a certain category of verbal nouns. Word order is generally free but the most common form is subject + verb + object. The vocabulary of the Albanian language consists of certain layers. Native words date back from an ancient Indo-European period (ditë, natë, dimër, motër, etc.), or are formed in a later period out of Albanian words (ditor, dimëror, i përnatshëm). Another layer consists of words borrowed from other languages as a result of the contacts the Albanian people have had with other nations over the centuries. Words have been borrowed from Greek, both ancient and modern, from Latin and Romance languages, from Slavonic and Turkish. Despite the numerous borrowings, Albanian language has

retained its originality as a separate Indo-European language. Thus, the main aim of the present article is to analyse the translation strategies that are applied for the translation of proper names from English into Albanian. trying to present the problems they cause in the orthography of standard Albanian, and find out the ways how to deal with these items and to highlight some tendencies that could be useful for any translator. First, the theoretical considerations deal with different aspects of proper names in literary texts translation. Then, principles of adapting proper names are discussed as provided by The Congress of the orthography of Standard Albanian We have treated proper names in general.In general, proper names cover several categories: names of persons, animals, companies, geographical places, zodiac signs and festivals The definition given in *The Oxford Concise English Dictionary* (2001, p.1146): a proper name is "*a name for an individual person, place, or organization having an initial capital letter*". In real life, proper names usually seem meaningless simple labels signaling reference. For example, the name *Nick* has nothing essential in itself and serves only a denotative purpose. Still, in real life "*proper names may be non-descriptive, but they are obviously not non-informative*" (Nord, 2003 p.183).

DAVIES' TRANSLATION STRATEGIES

Many translation theorists have presented different translation strategies. One of them is Eirlys E. Davies. (Davies's translation strategies have been chosen while analyzing proper names in the translated texts from English into Albanian.)

She lists her own translation strategies taking into consideration translations of cultural specific items including proper names. Her list consists of seven strategies: preservation, addition, omission, globalization, localization, transformation and creation.

- **Preservation:** Occurs when a translator transfers the term directly into the translated text with no further explanation

- **Addition:** When a translator "*decide[s] to keep the original item but supplement[s] the text with whatever information is judged necessary*". (Davies 2003, p.77). In this case additional information can be inserted within the text or in a footnote, gloss, introduction and notes

- **Omission:** When translators decide, as Davies writes, "*To omit problematic culture specific items altogether, so that no trace of it is found in the translation*" (Davies, 2003, p.79). Davies argues that, when "[…] *the inclusion of a problematic culture-specific item might create a confusing or inconsistent effect it is better to omit it,*" (Davies, 2003, p.80).

- **Globalization:** "*The process of replacing culture-specific references with the ones which are more neutral or general*" (Davies 2003, p.83).

An opposite strategy to globalization is what Davies calls 5) **localization**, when translators "*try to anchor a reference firmly in the culture of the target audience*" (Davies 2003, pp.83-84). Davies states that this strategy also includes phonological and grammatical adaptation of names and the use of gender endings.

The last Davies's strategy is called 6) **creation** and means a creation of a cultural specific item. Which "*is firmly or totally different from the source text or is not present in there*" (Davies, 2003, pp.72-89).

This strategy is rarely used and often includes an idea of compensation; for example, a translator can omit puns or

alliterations in one place and put them elsewhere.

Davies's translation strategies have been chosen while analyzing proper names in the translated texts from English into Albanian Three groups of translation strategies are distinguished: Proper names (used here interchangeably with the expression 'proper nouns') can be dealt with in a number of ways in translations. First, a proper noun can be transported wholesale from the target text (allowance being made for possible transliteration or transcription depending on the languages concerned). Second, it can be partly transported from the source language (SL) and partly translated. Thirdly, it can be replaced with more or less different names in the target language (TL). Finally, it can be dispensed with altogether. In the following I shall further refine this classification.

TRANSLATION STRATEGIES USED IN ALBANIAN LANGUAGE

- **Preservation**: Occurs when a translator uses the names as in the original language; for example names like *Harry, Brown, Bill* are left in Albanian translation with no changes.

But Albanian Language is written according to phonological principals, i.e. words are written as they are pronounced. So when translators use preservation strategy there is a real vogue in Standard Albanian. We see that the most perceptive traces of the influences of English are seen in the orthography. It is becoming a common practice the simultaneous publishing in two languages, either English or Albanian, ex. *Universiteti i Njujorkut*, or *University of New York*. In its written form Albanian is undergoing a process of mechanical reorientation to the English orthography. Our traditional written form was adapted to the orthography of neo-Latin languages, which was also used even in proper names, but now we see a number of cases when the rules are broken. According to Albanian orthography the proper names are to be written with Albanian spelling. Nowadays this rule is widely violated. A number of English names are used in Albanian as they are used in their original orthography, for example*, Shakespeare, Dan Brown, Jack London*, etc. Sometimes translators use the adaption of these names to the system of the Albanian language, but this process is not going very smoothly. For example some names can be used as they are pronounced in the original language but with Albanian spelling as, *Shekspiri, Xhek Landën*, etc. by producing a number of irregularities and a real mixed language.

Another problem is that in the Albanian alphabet there is no letter like the English *W*. When it appears in various occasions it is spelt like in the original language [dabelju] or as it consists of two V, [dubelve] or [dopio ve] So we are faced with the problem to find a solution for a new letter in Albanian language. One of the Albanian translation theorists, Xhevat Lloshi, says that "*there is a new letter to be added to the Albanian alphabet*" (Lloshi, Studio Albanica, pp.52,2005) There is a real confusion in practice, as it is clearly demonstrated by the every day necessity to mention famous names for example, ex-president of the United States of America, *George W. [dablju] Bush*, the writer *Dan Brown [braun]* etc. In this case the English letter *W* is read like the Albanian letter *U*. But in some other cases it is read and written like the Albanian letter *V, .*for example, *Waterloo* is used in translated texts either *Vaterlo,* or *Uotërlo,* or *Uotërlu.* The other hard example is the spelling of the internet system *www.* It is read as *[dubel v].*

Even the morphological rules of the Albanian Language are distorted. A particular case is the use of the proper nouns without case endings, as they appear in English language. So in Albanian of nowadays we can find cases like the following *Bush tha...*   It is identical with the English *Bush said*…instead of *Bush-i tha*… or *Sipas Bush*……is identical with the English *According to Bush*…, but according to the principals of Standard Albanian , it should be written *Sipas Bushit …or Sipas Bush-it…*.We see that the names are written without case endings.

- **Transformation**: Which involves alteration of the original, for example *Colombus* (English) is used as *Kolombi* in Albanian translations, *Teodor* (English) is used *Theodhori* (Albanian)etc.

The pronunciation of the original proper names sometimes is very complicated for the Albanians. Therefore, when proper names are adapted, they are easy to pronounce and become similar to the Albanian proper names The adaptation of proper names is widely used in textbooks for pupils, this because of the phonological principals of the Albanian language. They also includes phonological adaptations of letters that do not exist in the Albanian Alphabet as for example the English *W.*

- **Localization**: When translator uses a reference in the target language, for example, we find *Engjellushe* instead of the English name *Angel* or *Gjon Pali* instead of the Italian name *Papa Giovanni-Paolo.* Another example is the Albanian word *Londer* for *London,* the Albanian *Mikel* for *Micheal,* Albanian *Gjon* for *John* etc.

Furthermore, there are some examples which seem to have clearly descriptive elements in them; however, these are not translated but adapted phonologically. Or not. Again, this proves some inconsistency of the translator. For example, *Cinderella* (used in folks) is sometimes either adapted phonologically as *Sindërella*, or replaced by another folk name which is so dear for children, *Hirushja.*

Historically, Albanian Language was in close contacts with other languages, with Latin and neo-Latin languages, with Greek, with Slavonic and Turkish languages. During the relations with them, Albanian elaborated solutions to preserve its nature regardless of the intense influence from foreign languages. But Albanian doesn't have a long experience in confronting English language and the cultural complex it represents. Other European languages in the recent decades were considering the consequences of the English impact through globalization.

- **Literal translation:** As Davies (2003, p.75) states, if:

"A name contains clearly recognizable descriptive elements, translators often opt to preserve the descriptive meaning of a name rather than its form, and use a literal translation".

Thus, some translators of English into Albanian language are seen acting like Davies suggests; for example the proper name *"You-Know-Who"* in Harry Potter is translated into Albanian directly as *"Ti-e Di-Kush"* or *"Ai-Qe-Nuk-Duhet-Përmendur"*. Another example is the name of Shakespeare' birth town *"Stratford-on-Avon"* which is translated into Albanian as *"Stratford-mbi-Avon"* or *"Stratfordi mbi lumin Avon"* (lumi=river). *Snow-White* (name for a girl) is translated *Borëbardha,* In this case the translator has used literal translation because this name contains common meaningful words.

PRINCIPLES OF THE ORTHOGRAPHY IN STANDARD ALBANIAN

The Congress of the orthography of Standard Albanian has approved certain principles

That the translators should comply with. According to "Rules of Spelling and Punctuation of the Albanian Language" (1981, pp. 71) we can read: *"Foreign Proper Names are written according to the principals of phonology and morphology of the Albanian Language. Their original form should be written in brackets. Ex. Shekspiri (Shakespeare*)

*If foreign proper names have got **aj, ej, oj, uj** in their pronunciation they should be written with **j** in Albanian language"* (pp. 92) ex. Byron (English) Bajron (Albanian).

"When proper names are translated from foreign languages into Albanian They are inflected for case and a case

ending is added to them.(Drejt. P. 129,§ d).

Ex. *Byron* (English), *Bajroni, Bajronit, Bajronin* (Albanian*), Clinton* (English), *Klintoni, Klintonin, Klintonit*

*"If proper names that are translated into Albanian have got **au, eu, aw**, they should be written with **au or eu**."* For example, Brown (English) *Braun* (Albanian)

The pronunciation of the original proper names sometimes is very complicated for the Albanians. Therefore, when proper names are adapted, they are easy to pronounce and become similar to the Albanian proper names

CONCLUSIONS

As a conclusion we can say that the translation of proper names is a challenge for translators. To translate efficiently it is not enough to be well linguistically educated. Cultural education is also very important. A good translator has to consider the intended audience because different audiences require different strategies. Lastly, the Albanian translators have to obey the translation principles that have been adopted by Congress of the orthography of the Albanian Language. By applying different translation strategies, they find appropriate ways to render proper names into the Albanian language. For further research, it would be interesting to find out to what degree the Albanian translators adapt proper names in accordance with the Decisions of the Congress of the Orthography of the Albanian Language. Of course, it remains a constant source of debate whether translators are entitled to interfere with the original, make changes, or be strict with the phonological rules of the Albanian language. It seems to me that here we have a new field of studies: to see what is the influence of the globalization on the Albanian language in order not to risk too much to lose a part of our inherited identity.

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