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Socio-Cultural Aspects of Name Transformation In Translation

Abstract: Translation procedures are unique and responsible processes of transferring direct word-for-word as well as imagining and creating pieces of art, resulting in relevant and understandable texts into the source language. Having in mind the interpretation of names - or more specifically proper names – translators are supposed to keep the cultural identity of the original text and make the readers fully aware of the authors' ideas and symbolic choices they made when deciding on these particular markers of identity. Consequently, this paper appears to be an attempt to reveal the symbolism of proper names in Yordan Yovkov's "Legends of Stara Planina", translated from Bulgarian into English by John Burnip, presenting ways of transferring proper names - transcription, transliteration and semantic reconstruction, as well as, an analysis of the techniques John Burnip used in his translation. Did the translator manage to keep the original message, did he make it comprehensible for the recipients where exactly symbolism starts, or names just remain a part of the story with not much of a sense? We shall try to reach the answers to these questions on the basis of a close look into the mechanisms of name-rendering and the sounding of the names of Yovkov's heroes in American context re-read against our native Bulgarian environment.

Keywords: proper names, transcription, transliteration, semantic reconstruction, symbolism

Introduction

The translation process as a cultural phenomenon is an actual transfer of ideas, thoughts, and identity for the always demanding and searching professional. It is easy for a native speaker to decipher the message in a story, and consequently to convey it forward- to the people who are interested in it. However, being an outer spectator or experiencing the customs of another people, it is hard to first distinguish the message and then to transmit it to the target reader. It is an interesting, sometimes difficult, but definitely creative and responsible process to transfer one piece of writing from the source to the target language. It is sometimes even difficult for the new generation of Internet users and non-reader- of- books youngsters to distinguish where is the message in the works of authors like Yordan Yovkov, Ivan Vazov, etc.

Just a tiny but immensely important bit of the ocean of translating communication and messaging is the provoking aim to transfer names. It is precisely proper names that are of interest in the current study. The article is focused on the short stories written by one of the greatest writers in Bulgarian literary history - Yordan Yovkov. The collection of interest is "Legends of Stara Planina", translated into English by John Burnip[1]. Special attention is paid to the techniques used in the transfer of personal names. In the process of investigation, ten stories are examined - *Shibil*, *The Roe - Deer*, *The Most Reliable Escort*, *Bozhoura*, *Heroes' Heads*, *Postle's Mills*, *Indje*, *A Shepherd's Grief*, *In Time of Plague*, and *On Primrose Meadow*.

It is a well-known fact that Yordan Yovkov chose the names of his characters very carefully. Veselin Ignatov[2] notes that: "names of characters...are anthropogenic signs which need to be actualized in order to evoke or to necessitate definite ideas and suggestions." (my

translation- ИГНАТОВ 2002:1). Names occupy a special position in the stories to keep the individuality of Bulgarians, to try to preserve the message Yovkov tried to convey.

The issue of name transformation in translation has been subject of interest in the works of Jakobson, Newmark, Nida, Braun, Hatim and Mason etc., and it has also been a challenge not only for experienced translators but for novices, as well, to find the formula for the best target text. It is undeniable that a good translation is the translation which successfully identifies the cultural limits of the source language and conveys the information to the target text, keeping the identity peculiarities and the spirit of the original.

Roman Jakobson[3] (1959:233) introduces three kinds of translation: intralingual, which is rewording or paraphrasing, summarizing, expanding or commenting within a language, interlingual – the traditional concept of translation from source to the target text or the “shifting of meaning from one language to another”, and intersemiotic, which involves the changing of a written text into a different form, such as art or dance.

Newmark[4] (1988:45-47) differentiates word-for-word, literal, free, faithful, semantic, adaptation, idiomatic, and communicative methods of translation. Translators should follow the strategy that is suitable for their purpose of translation. One can use various methods of translation, undergo different procedures as long as the final result is an understandable and beautifully structured entity which is culturally- relevant and structurally well- rendered.

Definitions of proper name

In the process of translation, however, names tend to remain blank spots or even are literally copied from the source text in various writings of undergraduates. There, of course, appears the other tendency - Bulgarian students choose English variants of their names in their English classes. Thus, *Georgi becomes George, Rozaliya is Rose, Petar is Peter*, etc. Undergraduates are creative when it comes to choosing their names, but translating them, it is sometimes difficult to achieve the goal of preserving and transferring the meaning of this entity in the source text. Giving an entity a unique name it becomes specific, and the attempt to transfer it requires understanding of the culture of the source text. Gergana Apostolova [5] suggests that: “The transformation of names in the process of translating is as important as choosing names for real people.” (2002:7) and this is what lies in the focus of the current paper. Transferring the name, one can feel the mood of Bulgarian culture.

Popular dictionaries such as *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* define a proper name or noun as: “the name of a particular person, place or object that is spelt with a capital letter” while Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, suggests that a proper noun is “...a noun that in its primary application refers to a unique entity, such as London, Jupiter, Sarah, or Toyota, as distinguished from a common noun, which usually refers to a class of entities (cities, planets, persons, corporations), or non-unique instances of a certain class (a city, another planet, these persons, our corporation) ”.

Danchev [6] in his *Bulgarian transcription of English names* divides names in two basic groups- anthroponyms and toponyms. The first are those with referents people and the latter- places. Anthroponyms can be genetic, place, profession, wishing, protective, etc. When conveying information related to translation of personal names, there are three processes to undergo. Names can be transliterated, that is to substitute graphemes from the source to the target text; or transcribed, which is the process of phonetic rewriting of one language to another (Danchev 1978). There exists also the process of semantic reconstruction - translation of the name or part of it in order to preserve the meaning and symbolism for the target reader.

Name transformation and symbolism in translation

With his work on “Legends of Stara Planina” John Burnip lays a fundamental issue, namely how to transfer culture by means of proper names. In the process of translation, there appear eighty-one personal names and nicknames in the ten stories of the collection. In addition to that, there are interesting examples of toponymy, but this will not be subject of discussion in this paper.

When analyzing the transfer of proper names, one can see that a relatively small part is the names with a translated part, showing character, job or nickname of the person. Their number is 22. (see table 1).focusing on the meaning in each of the translated names, what strikes the attention is the name of “Дели Кадир” which is presented as Crazy Kadir. The attributive shows the character in the story, who Ignatov defines as a real personality. With the name of Old Yana the Kalmouchka /баба Яна Калмучката/ the name is associated with “Яга” and “калмук” has the meaning of a loose and mean person. Another interesting symbolic meaning contains the name of Vulko Son of Misfortune /Вълко Бинбеля/. It is in relation to his way of always seeking trouble.

Table 1

Bulgarian	Partly translated names into English
Бей ефенди	<i>BeyEff'endi*</i> / Bey Effendi/ The Bey
О. Амфилохий	Father Amphil'ochius
Поп Лукан от Жеруна	Father Louk'an of Zh'eravna/ Father Louk'an
Димчо кехая	D'imcho the Overseer
Поп Миндо	Priest M'indo
Поп Руско	Father Rousko
Стоил Войвода	Sto'il the Captain
Дядо Нейко Бардучката	Gaffer NeikoBardouchka
Сиври Билюкбаши	S'ivri the Captain
Дели Кадир	Crazy Kad'ir
Сяро Барутчията	Syaro the Powdermaker
Гърбавото	The Hunchback
Найден- намерено	Naiden- found
Баба Яна Калмучката	Old Yana the Kalmouchka
Тахир ага	Lord Tah'ir
Никола Узуна	Tall Nik'ola/ the Tall One
Добри Войвода	D'obri the Captain
Вълко Бинбеля	V'ulko Son of Misfortune
Вълчан войвода	V'ulchan the Captain
Цонко Войводата	Ts'onko , the Captain
Димитър Крайналията	Dim'itur Krainal'iya
Божил Кехая	Bozh'il the Overseer

A fact that somehow remains aside with the transfer of names is the direct transliteration of units, which in Bulgarian have symbolic meaning, but are in a way hidden and may not be understood by non-natives. This can be applied to the meaning of names like Божура(it is a name of a flower and it is a symbol of the girl's beauty), Калуда(it comes

from the root word for ‘black’ and it serves as a comparison between mother and daughter). The Bulgarian name Велико, Величко which is mentioned several times contains the wish for the bearer of the name to become well-known and remembered as a great person. One cannot fail to mention also the names of Рада (meaning joy), Иван (sympathetic), etc. Names like Syaro the Powdermaker, Sivri the Captain, etc. are anthropomyns with real referents. When interpreting allusions as it is the case with Crazy Kadir, Syaro the Powdermaker, etc. the translator still decided on the translation of the attributive, which he sees as a feature of a person’s character. In this case, the allusions mentioned are of famous people from the past, and after Leppihalme(1997) [7], aiming probably at characterizing people, suggesting unconscious impressions and attitudes in characters. In the case with no coincidence with real personalities, Yordan Yovkov purposefully named people in relation to their features of character or what they are supposed to suggest to the target reader.

The word “overseer”, which can be found in several names, is used with the meaning of “кехая”, which can be placed after the personal name and it can mean “a village crier” or “a person who breeds sheep”. The translator here preferred the term “overseer” accompanied by the definite article - Dimcho the Overseer, Bozhil the Overseer, etc. There are also two variants of the Bulgarian word for „поп“. One can come across “father”, as well as “priest” as in Priest M’indo /Поп Миндо/ and Father Rousko /Поп Руско/.

When classifying transliterated names, the result reveals that here is the greatest part - 51(see table 2). For the sake of better transfer of names, the author of the English version of the text decided to include the stress in the names of people, as it can be seen from the table.

Table 2

Bulgarian original	Transliterated names by John Burnip
Yordan Yovkov	
Шибил	Shib’il/ Shibil
Рада	R’ada/ Rada
Мустафа	Moustaf’a
Цоно	Ts’ono
Стефан	St’efan
Дойна	D’oina
Калистрат	Kalistr’at
Димана	Dim’ana
Драгота	Drag’ota(at all places with the stress)- after the second part of the story- without the stress
хаджи Емин	Hadj’iEm’in(at most places with the stress)
Косан	Kos’an
Кара Имам	Kar’a- Im’am
Марга	Marga
Ранка	Ranka/ R’anka(once with the stress- the second mentioning)
Кара Колю	Kar’a- K’olyou
Калуда	Kal’ouda
Божура	Bozh’oura
Хаджи Вълко	Hadj’iV’ulko
Ганаила	Gana’ila
Василчо	Vas’ilcho

Жечевица	Zh'echevitsa
Пена	P'ena
Радул	R'adul
Али/ Субашът Али	Al'i
Милуш	Mil'oush
Додованяка	PenkoDodov'anyak
Люца	Lyoutsa
Марин	Mar'in
Женда	Zhenda
Върбан	Vurb'an/ Vurb'aan
Едерханоглу	Ederh'anoglou
Индже	Indj'e
Кара Феиз	Kar'a- Fe'iz
Гочо	Gocho
Пауна	Pa'ouna
Кара Фиджи	Kar'a-Find'i
Али Паша	Al'iPash'a
Пазвантоглу	Pazv'antogl'ou
Пенчо	Pencho
Юмер Драза	Youm'er- Draz'a
Димчо	Dimcho
Елена	El'ena
Хаджи Драган	Hadj'iDrag'an
Тиха	Tiha
Дочка	D'ochka
Люцкан	Lyoutskan
Вълко	V'ulko
Стоян	Stoy'an
Вълчан войвода	Vulchan
Курта	Kourta
Гълъб	G'ulub

The initial part of the investigation focuses on the transfer of vowels. One can immediately see that the Bulgarian /y/ vowel becomes /ou/ in all examples, as it is in Moustafa (Мустафа), Kalouda (Калуда), Bozhoura (Божура), etc. The Bulgarian /й/ is transferred to /i/, as it is in Doina (Дойна). The names, containing the letter /ю/ are transliterated by means of three vowels /you/, as it can be seen in Kara Kolyou (Кара Колю) or Lyoutsa (Люца). The vowel /ъ/ is shown as /u/ in the name Vurb'an/ Vurb'aan (Върбан) or in Gulub (Гълъб).

The second section of interest is the transfer of consonants. There is not a fundamental deviation from the accepted rules for transliteration. The example with Hadji/ Хаджи/ and Indje/ Индже/ shows a different variation of the transfer of /дж/ to /dj/. This, however, has some previous background since the word 'hadji' is shared by the languages from the East and has been long known to the English language.

To sum up, there are certain differences, but this is surely due to the fact that the new Law of Transcription of Bulgarian names was introduced in 2009 and the book was published in 1990. There is the so called Streamline System of transliteration of Bulgarian names to other

languages, which opposed to the Danchev system[8], suggests different ways of transliteration. The author of the English version of the collection “Legends of Stara Planina” probably followed Danchev’s system, introduced in *An English Dictionary of Bulgarian Names: Spelling and Pronunciation*. What is distinguishable with this system is the Bulgarian letters /y/ and /ъ/ to be transliterated as /ou/ and /u/ , which is the case with Gulub, and Bozhoura, for example. For the combination /ой/ Danchev proposes /oi/, as it can be seen in the name of Doina. However, Danchev’s suggestions as well as the common practice of transliterating our names for international documents are eclectic since they are using English and French bases. That is why Bulgarians are asked to spell their own names in the Latin manner each time we go to have our identity documents issued.

To finish with the analytical part, there are eight names with translated attributive (“gaffer”, “old”, “grannie”, “mother” for older woman who is not a relative), showing either the relationship or the age of the character presented. (see table 3)

Table 3

Bulgarian	Names with translated attributive
Леля Гана	Mother G’ana
Дядя Руся Сапунджията	Old R’ousi the Soapmaker
Дядо Руси	Gaffer Rousi
Баба Ана	Grannie Anna/ Old Anna
Дядо Иван	Gaffer Ivan
Дядо Гуди от Чукурово	Gaffer G’oudi of Chouk’ourov
Дядо Вълъо	Gaffer V’ulyou
Дядо Нейко	Old Neiko

It becomes obvious that the greatest part of personal names were transliterated, probably aiming to preserve the original way names are transferred. However, there are cases where the name is either given additional information about or it is translated for the sake of better understanding of the character described. Semantic reconstruction is a way to convey the symbolism in an item, which is the most important role of translators because if they manage to find symbolism in every detail, they will definitely be as close as possible to the source text, and thus create a piece of art with recognizable identity for the target reader.

There is also the tool of making a glossary where but only a couple of names are explained e.g. Stephen Young in opposition to Stephan Karadja, as well as the name of Stara Planina in the title of the collection as the Bulgarian native name for the Balkan Mountains.

Conclusion

The process of translation is target-reader oriented. It always aims at conveying symbolism, ideas, and meaning in various ways, using different procedures and methods.

Transferring anthroponyms, in reality, is a responsible deed bearing the fact that they are loaded with emotional and semantic meaning. A master translator analyzes and produces the piece of writing, having examined the authors’ cultural background, previous works, and writing behaviour.

However, upon reading The Legends about the Balkan, for the first time, a Bulgarian reader naturally winces at the resounding of the names. It is not only a matter of alphabet-insufficiency: it is a matter of adoption of sounds even when unheard.

There are also the foreign sounding names of Yovkov even to us, Bulgarians. When giving a text of Yovkov's for class translation to BA graduates, we often use the glossary tool, employed by Burnip to create our own or to extend the given one.

In the Bulgarian cultural environment, proper names are to be highlighted and paid special attention to, as their symbolism carries half the importance in the translation process. It is interesting even for the native speakers to investigate the name symbolism and better comprehend what may remain unveiled for the one who accepts names just as names. A further exploration is naturally to be grounded on the notion of *intercomprehension*, as described by Todor Shopov in *Intercomprehension Analysis* [9].

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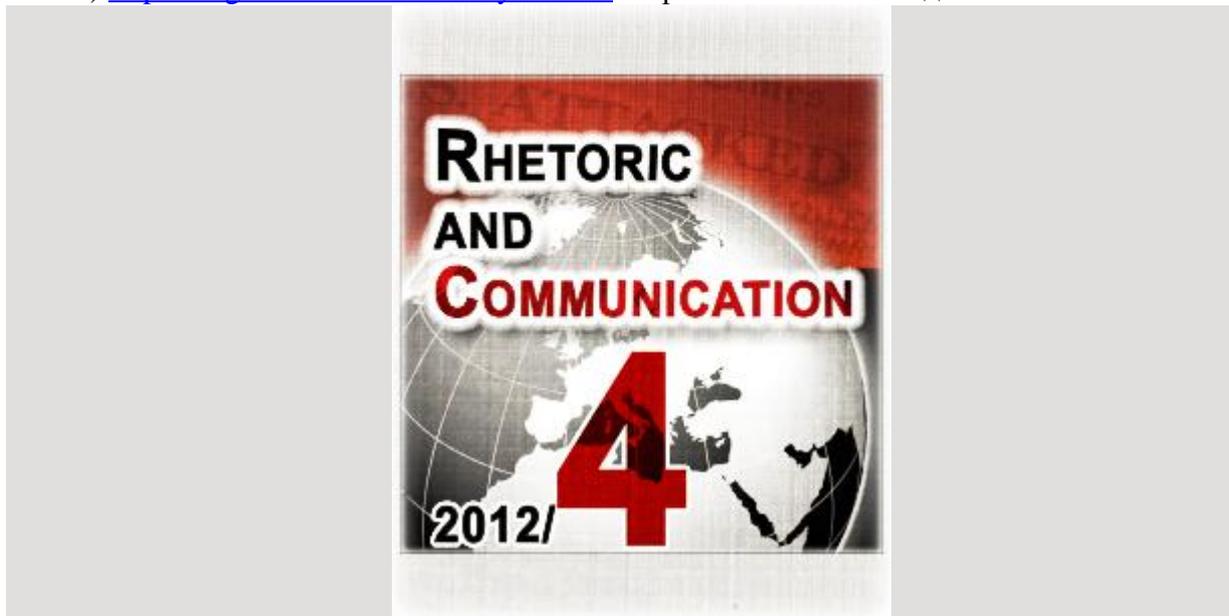
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