

EPONYMICAL LEXICAL ITEMS AS THE OBJECT OF TRANSLATION

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It is generally claimed that in the text of the translation the proper names (nomina propria) are not translated but left in the original form. Moreover, as observations show it is actually put into practice. Nevertheless, there is a particular kind of proper names that this rule does not refer to or only refers to in a limited range. These are particular expressions which are partly a kind of the proper names and partly a kind of the common words. I mean the eponymous lexical items. But before defining that limits, as well as other problematic issues connected with eponymous expressions functioning in translations, I would like to devote a little attention to the notion of the eponym and how this term functions in linguistic terminology.

The collection of all words in a particular language is divided into two big groups: 1. appellatives and 2. proper names.

The label „eponym” was taken from the Greek language, where it meant ‘something or somebody giving the name’. For ancient people eponyms were persons, gods or heroes, whose names were used to name cities, tribes and different objects, as well as officers (e.g. archonts, consuls). The same time the historic notion of „eponym” expanded, though it meant not only the personal name, but also the name of an animal or an object, which gave their names for example to a locality, an ethnic group, or a period in history.

Nowadays the term „eponym” is more frequently used with reference to common words which have been singled out in a language on the principle of displacing one lexical item from the class of proper names to the class of common words with simultaneous attribution of metaphorical lexical meaning and – usually, but not in every language – the change of writing.

Therefore, we deal with three separate notions of an eponym:

1. being (more often) or object (rarely),
2. proper name,
3. common word.

The matter of the first meaning (with reference to beings or objects) is not problematic because it is the historical meaning of an eponym. It would be proper to maintain the name „eponym” for the group of proper names, which are the basis of metonymical or metaphorical appellativization, and all the words created as a result of this process – to name as eponymous appellatives or eponymisms (similarly to archaism, colloquialism, barbarism, etc.). The important difference between those two items is the function which they fill in the communication process, for eponyms it would be the nominative function (naming, indicating), for eponymisms – predicative function (denoting, characterizing). The proposition would be worth considering.

In this article I would like to analyse the functioning of eponymisms in translations and comment on possible translation strategies one can use while translating eponymisms. I analysed over 200 words and their dictionaries descriptions. I did it using both bilingual dictionaries and general Polish and English dictionaries (*The New Oxford Dictionary of English* (1998), *Inny słownik języka polskiego* (2000), *Uniwersalny słownik języka polskiego* (2003), *Wielki słownik angielsko-polski Oxford-PWN* (2002) and others given in the bibliography).

Thus, translators while translating eponymisms face the problem of formulating an immediate hypothesis about the encyclopedic knowledge of users of the language of the original text and users of the language in which the original one is translated into.

The meaning of eponymism is built on stereotypical associations concerning a concrete, particular eponym and having the character of encyclopedic connotation. Differences between these connotations in different languages predetermine different possibilities of appellativization of proper names. However the precise formulating of such an hypothesis is extremely difficult, and sometimes even impossible. That occurs because at the same time the borders of languages are the borders of separate cultural communities, and this phenomenon is not leveling off in spite of the recent acceleration in the globalization processes. Moreover, literature is created „spontaneously”, without taking into consideration the differences in the cultural consciousness of different nations.

The first important issue related to eponymisms is the matter of their etymological transparency which is a discreet feature depending on the linguistic competence and encyclopedic knowledge of particular speakers. Then the question arises: should the translator take into consideration such issues? Undoubtedly such eponymisms as *lolita* ‘a sexually attractive young girl’ or *superman* ‘a man with exceptional physical or mental ability, with strong integrity’ are etymologically transparent both to Polish and to English speakers so translating them does not cause any problems. Similar situation applies also to the eponymisms, which have lost their transparency in both languages (for instance *Adonis* named after a beautiful youth loved by both Aphrodite and Persephone and killed by a boar, or *badminton* named after Badminton in SW England, country seat of the Duke of Beaufort, where it was played, *Esperanto* – after the penname used by Ludwik Zamenhof – the inventor of the international language. However, the situation is more complicated if a particular eponymism is transparent in one language, and therefore it has some lexical connotation, and in other languages does not evoke any mental reactions of speakers who do not connect the common word and its lexical meaning with a suitable eponym. For instance *hooligan* (Pol. *chuligan*) ‘a violent young troublemaker, typically one of the gang’ which in Polish language is completely etymologically non-transparent and in English – as it seems to be – we can observe a certain degree of transparency and the connection between the eponymism and *Hooligan* the surname of a fictional rowdy Irish family in a music-hall song of the 1890s. Some reflections are also evoked by the eponymism *colossus* (Pol. *kolos*). The degree of transparency of this word is very hard to define both in English and Polish, but in Polish *colossus* evokes more meanings and connotations. In both languages it means: 1. ‘a statue that is

much bigger than life size', 2. 'a person or thing of enormous size (in English also of enormous importance, or ability), however in Polish it means also 3. 'a big and strong commercial business or company'. Moreover, it appears in an idiom *kolos na glinianych nogach* (= *colossus on earthen legs*) meaning 'a country, company etc. which appears to be strong but in reality is very weak'. Such a semantic productivity of *colossus* can decrease in Polish the degree of its etymological transparency, but in English it seems to preserve that transparency which is proved by giving to the 2nd meaning in the dictionary for *colossus* the label „figurative”. However not every eponymism causes problems. Those, which are non-transparent, do not cause any problems.

A more important reason for problems with translating are eponymisms which have strictly national character, even though they may or may not be transparent. In this situation we not only can have trouble with finding a linguistic equivalent for such a word, but also we can have trouble with finding a functional equivalent. When I say the linguistic equivalent of the eponymism, I mean a word, which in the second language has a similar formal sound and spelling, and therefore has the same or similar meaning. When I say the functional equivalent of the eponymism I mean a word, which in the second language has no formal similarity (both in sound and in spelling) but in the language of translation it fulfils the same functions and plays the same role as it does in the language of the original text. The example of linguistic equivalent of Polish word *odyseja* 'długa wędrówka obfitująca w przygody' is an English eponymism *Odyssey* 'a long and eventful or adventurous journey'. And the example of functional equivalent of Polish word *lowelas* which does not have any linguistic equivalent, is such English eponymism as *Romeo* or *Don Juan*. At the same time, the English *Don Juan* is the linguistic equivalent of the Polish word *donżuan*.

Strict national character is attributed to such eponymisms as the Polish words *dulska* meaning 'a petty, limited, hypocritical woman that pays extravagant attention to others' opinion' (named after the heroine of the Polish comedy by G. Zapolska) or the euphemism *volkswagen* meaning 'a humpy person' (named after colloquial appellation „humped” applied to one of the primary models of the car made by Volkswagen). In English then we can find such words as *Canterbury* meaning 'a low open-topped cabinet with a partition for holding music or books' (named after Canterbury in Kent according to a common belief that the Archbishop of Canterbury ordered such a piece to be made) or *dick* meaning 1. 'a man's penis', 2. 'a stupid or contemptible person' (named after the pet form of the given name Richard).

The translator can find himself in a similar situation if eponymism, when it is not limited to functioning in one country or one cultural region, does not function in a given language. It is characteristic that even in languages consisting of or folding on one broad cultural region (as in European culture for instance), we can observe many differences between particular languages. There are numerous examples of such a phenomenon and information about their existence in a language and their meaning is given in a following table:

Eponymism	The Polish meaning	The English meaning
Pol. Bedeker, Eng. Baedeker,	'guidebook for tourists'	does not exist
Pol. golgota, Eng. Golgotha	1. 'severe suffering especially the mental one' 2. 'the reason of suffering'	does not exist
Pol. harpagon, Eng. Harpagon	'a person who hoards wealth and spends as little money as possible'	does not exist
Pol. katon, Eng. Cato	'a person of strong fundamentals, demanding for others and for himself'	does not exist
Pol. ksantypa, Eng. Xanthippe	'a malicious, intrusive woman, permanently grumbling and brawling with others'	does not exist
Pol. narcyz, Eng. Narcissus	1. 'a bulbous plant of a genus Amaryllidaceae with smelling flowers that have white or pale outer petals and a shallow orange or yellow cup in the centre', 2. 'a person who is obsessed with his or her own beauty, wisdom and other features'	'a bulbous Eurasian plant of a genus that includes daffodil, especially (in gardening) one with flowers that have white or pale outer petals and a shallow orange or yellow cup in the centre' The 2 nd Polish meaning does not exist.
Pol. wersal, Eng. Versailles	'a style or manner of behaviour that shows someone's good manners, good taste etc.'	does not exist
Pol. irokez, Eng. Iroquoian	'a hairstyle creating a kind of plume, with a head shaved except for a strip of hair from the middle of the forehead to the back of the neck, typical for punks'	does not exist
Pol. Mohikanin, Eng. Mohican	does not exist	'a hairstyle with a head shaved except for a strip of hair from the middle of the forehead to the back of the neck, typically stiffened to stand erect or in spikes'
Pol. Mohawk, Eng. Mohawk	does not exist	1. 'a hairstyle with a head shaved except for a strip of hair from the middle of the forehead to the back of the neck, typically stiffened to stand erect or in spikes', 2. (skating) a step from either edge of the skate to the same edge on the other foot in the opposite direction'

Pol.Machiavelli, Eng.Machiavelli	does not exist	'a person perceived as a prepared to use unethical means to gain an advantage'
Pol. Salomon, Eng. Solomon	does not exist	'a very wise person'

The most interesting thing in this table is the triad *Iroquoian – Mohican – Mohawk* because of the specific and the peculiar distribution of different lexical meanings in each of these two languages.

Another type of problem is connected with eponimisms, which apparently have their linguistic equivalent in the language that the text is translated to, but there are essential differences in the structure of the meaning of a given eponimism in each of the languages. This may concern both the number of the meaning and the sense of the particular semantic characteristic. Among numerous examples of such eponimisms it is worth mentioning *Amazon*, *geyser*, *harpy*, *moloch*, *mentor*, *Turkey* which meaning structures are presented in another table:

Eponimism	The Polish meaning	The English meaning
Pol. amazonka, Eng. Amazon	1. 'a horsewoman dressed in a special clothes', 2. 'a special clothes worn earlier by women while horse-riding and typically consisted of men-style jacket and long skirt'	'a very tall and strong or athletic woman'
Pol. <i>gejzer</i> , Eng. <i>geyser</i>	'a hot mineral spring of volcanic origin in which a tall column of water and steam is regularly sent into the air',	1. 'a hot spring in which water intermittently boils, sending a tall column of water and steam into the air', 2. 'a jet or steam of liquid', 3. 'a gas-fired water heater through which water flows as it is rapidly heated'
Pol. <i>harpia</i> , Eng. <i>harpy</i>	1. 'an inhumanly cruel or wicked woman tormenting others', 2. 'an animal of a genus <i>Falco</i> which is a big diurnal bird of prey with black-white feathers found in Amazonian forests'	'grasping, unscrupulous woman'
Pol. moloch, Eng. moloch	'something huge, enormous, typically a city or a building, which cause fear and where one can easily get lost', 2. 'an institution, a place, or an idea which seem to be insatiable, tyrannical and permanently demanding sacrifices and causing fear'	1. 'a tyrannical object of sacrifices', 2. 'a harmless spiny lizard of grotesque appearance which feeds chiefly of on ants, found in arid inland Australia'
Pol. mentor, Eng. mentor	1. 'a person who permanently obtrudes his or her advices', 2. (old) 'someone's experienced and wise advisor or teacher', 3. (horticulture) 'an older special plant with desirable feateres on to which a scion is grafted to get the same features'	1. 'an experienced and trusted advisor', 2. 'an experienced person in company, college, or school who trains and counsels new employees or students'
Pol. <i>turek</i> , Eng. <i>Turkey</i>	1. (informal) 'a type of coffee brewed with sugar and not filtered', 2. regional 'a plant with a big round flower, typically orange or yellow'	1. 'a large mainly domesticated game bird native to North America, having a bald head and (in the male) red wattles. It is prized as food, especially on festive occasions such as Christmas and (in the USA) Thanksgiving', 2. 'the flesh of the turkey as food', 3. (informal, chiefly US) 'something that is extremely or completely unsuccessful, especially a play or film', 4. (informal, chiefly US) 'a stupid or inept person' phrases: <i>like turkeys voting for Christmas</i> (informal); <i>talk turkey</i> (N. America; informal)

Another important issue in translation of eponimisms is the so called style-shifting, that is because apart from semantic differences the register of eponimisms can also vary, and unfortunately even if two eponimisms (each one from different languages) are linguistic equivalents and have more or less the same meaning they can differ in stylistic value and belong to a different register. Thus using an eponimism in a text of translation may only seem to be a proper equivalent, and in fact it could be more meaningful or vague, and could unintentionally make sense or not make sense. Giving examples is difficult because sometimes dictionaries omit information about the register, especially because different people often have different opinions about particular words. In Polish and English dictionaries there are some eponimisms which are linguistic equivalents but they differ as far as the register is concerned. They are: Adonis 'an extremely handsome young man', which in English is relatively neutral and in Polish is rather jocular or ironic; Judas 'a person who betrays a friend or comrade', which in English is relatively neutral and in Polish is strongly pejorative, or

zephyr 'a soft gentle breeze' which in English is a poetic or literary word and in Polish is relatively neutral if used as a meteorological term or seems to be literary word but rather without poetic character.

The above case of eponimisms represents an example of eponimisms of the first degree which means that they are only semantic derivatives coined because of metaphorical extension and based on the same form as the eponym represents. However, there are also the eponimisms of second degree, which are derivatives based on particular eponyms. The problems connected with these items are slightly different from what has been mentioned above and concern the derivative mechanisms in different languages. Saying in Polish *dziewczyneczka* is not in a pragmatic dimension equal with English *little girl*. But this subject could be a topic of a separate study. Here I will only give some examples chosen forms of eponimisms. In the Polish language the bound morpheme *-eria* added to noun free morphemes gives derivatives naming the attitudes or types of behaviour and using morpheme *-eria* brings the pejorative sense and expresses disapproval or contempt. In English finding such a morpheme is hardly possible. As a result in an English dictionary we find the eponimism *Don Juan* but we cannot find the equivalent of Polish word *donżuaneria*. Even if we tried to coin a neologism *donjuanism*, it would not have such a pejorative sense as *donżuanizm* has in Polish. However, there are some exceptions like the Polish eponimism *kopciuszek* and the English eponimism *Cinderella*, which are almost absolute equivalents. Nevertheless we must remember some differences in the meaning structure of these words in Polish and English, and as a result – about different connotations in each case. In English dictionaries we find two meanings: 1. 'a person or thing of unrecognised or disregarded merit or beauty', 2. 'neglected aspect of something'. In Polish, on the other hand *kopciuszek* is name only for 'a girl, typically shy and modest, often disregarded and sometimes overused by others'. Nevertheless, this – as I said – is the subject for another study.

Then the question arises about how we can cope with such difficulties in translating eponimisms. There are some possibilities. Firstly, a translator can use a linguistic equivalent without regards to the differences in connotation and register between the translated word and its translation. Secondly, he or she can use a functional equivalent. This solution is possible when the given eponimism has its linguistic equivalent or when a linguistic equivalent does not exist in the language that the text is translated into. Thirdly, one can use a common word or a paraphrase to express the meaning of translated eponimism using some different words. Yet a further possibility, which applies only to eponimisms of the second degree, is to coin a derivative neologism, which is a copy, that traces out the morphological structure of a translated word or which is translator's own single neologism.

According to the rule of basic fidelity and strictness one should chose the first solution, however there is a risk that the sense of the eponimism can be mistaken if the meaning structure of the two linguistic equivalents in two given languages are different. Besides, in that case such a solution can cause a change in lexical meaning of the word in the language of translation. This is called a semantic borrowing. The important value of this solution is not only retaining fidelity to an original text but also preserving the specific cultural atmosphere, tone of the translated text. Therefore, to avoid possible vagueness the translator can add some metatextual comments.

Using the second strategy destroys the specific cultural tone of the translated text, because it is a kind of translator's interpretation, but it assures the readers' comprehension and avoids ambiguity. Choosing the third and fourth strategies has similar consequences. Nevertheless it must be remembered that when using the third solution that not only the specific cultural atmosphere is lost but also the reader can not experience the important and characteristic play upon the words' meanings between a particular literal meaning of the eponym and a metaphorical meaning of the eponimism. In addition, a reader receives the final solution of play upon words' meanings which is a translator's interpretation of the author's activity and operation on meanings and the aim of that process. It results both in receiving by a reader a kind of transcription of the original text and in preserving from mistakes and ambiguity in communication. Then the fourth strategy is connected with introducing a morphological innovation to the language of translation, and is criticised by some linguists. However, it can be a source of linguistic development like in case of the eponimism *kopciuszek / Cinderella*. The choice of strategy depends on a translator's preferences which should be able to predict the readers' needs and reactions as precisely as possible and find a solution which in particular circumstances is the best one.

SUMMARY

The main subject of the article is the functioning in translations of specific lexical items which are eponimisms based on proper names. The analyse of chosen examples leads to proposition of some possible translator's strategies, one can use, while translating eponimisms. Finally, some attention is paid to important consequences of using a particular strategy.

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