

THE RENDERING OF ANTHROPONYMS IN BUSINESS AND POLITICAL TEXTS FROM ENGLISH INTO LITHUANIAN

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Abstract

The phenomenon of naming a person has existed from time immemorial, with ancient philosophers such as Socrates and Aristotle already being interested in the origin and meaning of human names. In terms of translation, anthroponyms are sometimes considered as untranslatable linguistic elements or, rather, elements which do not need to be translated, as they can cross the boundaries of different languages in their authentic forms. Yet, in reality, the situation is quite different, as names can have literal meaning and serve as character defining elements in literary texts while differences of languages create problems even when rendering anthroponyms with no semantic meaning in non-fictional texts. This paper focuses on the translation of personal proper nouns from English into Lithuanian in business-related and political discourse and aims to find out the dominant translation tendencies. The scope of the study is 100 anthroponyms. The renderings are analysed and subdivided according to the following name translation procedures: transference, substitution, translation, modification.

Keywords: anthroponyms, translation, business discourse, political discourse, naming

1. INTRODUCTION

Anthroponyms fall under a broader category of a proper noun, which, according to *Oxford English Dictionary* (2024), is ‘a noun that designates an individual person, place, organization, animal, ship, etc., and is usually written with an initial capital letter’. However, anthroponyms are specific proper nouns, i.e. they are personal names, which represent one of the sub-branches in the field of onomastics. Ainiala and Ostman (2017) present the following classification of names, including anthroponyms:

1. Toponyms (place names)

1.1 Nature names (whose referent is a natural place)

1.2 Cultural names (whose referent is a place built or formed by humans)

2. Anthroponyms (personal names)

2.1 First names

2.2 Surnames

2.3 Bynames (nicknames, secondary names)

It is worth noting that different countries and cultures might have their own, distinctive, naming system and personal names are not necessarily limited to the three categories mentioned above. According to *The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming* (2016), the following main personal naming systems can be distinguished throughout the world:

- the patronymic system, according to which a person is identified not only by a given name, but also by a given name of their father or their father’s ancestors. The traces of the patronymic naming system can be observed in such surnames as *Johnson* (son of John) or *McDonnald* (son of Donnald), while in the Russian tradition the patronymic names exist to this day, e.g. *Vladimir Mikhailovich Kuznetsov* (Vladimir Kuznetsov, the son of Mikhail);
- the binomial system, which is now a standard naming practice in Europe and English-speaking part of the world, as well as in certain other countries. According to this system, an individual has a given name/-s and a surname;

- the Arabic system, which allows to include up to five elements in a name: nickname, given name, patronymic, locative name, and distinguished name.

From the viewpoint of translation, anthroponyms are sometimes considered as untranslatable linguistic elements or, rather, elements which do not need to be translated, as they can cross the language boundaries in their authentic forms. Yet, it is worth noting that in literary texts anthroponyms may serve wider purposes than just naming characters. A number of translation studies show that there is a distinction between semantically meaningful anthroponyms (sometimes referred to as charactonyms) and those with no semantic meaning. A vast majority of studies on anthroponym translation focuses on the translation of semantically meaningful anthroponyms in literary texts, e.g. studies by Nord (2003), Sabzalipour and Pishkar (2015), Jaleniauskienė and Čičelytė (2009), to mention but a few. Such tendencies are reasonable as semantically meaningful personal names often have character defining qualities, which are very important, but not always possible to be successfully transferred into a target language text. However, grammatical and cultural differences of languages create problems even while rendering anthroponyms with no semantic meaning and in linguistic contexts which are far from fiction. This paper focuses on the translation of personal proper nouns from English into Lithuanian in business-related and political texts and aims to find out the dominant translation tendencies.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Materials

The analysis focuses on the rendering of 100 cases of anthroponyms from English into Lithuanian in business-related and political texts. The sources for examples are the English and the Lithuanian versions of the business-related articles on the *European Parliament* website. In addition, some examples are taken from the following books: *Elon Musk: Tesla, SpaceX, and the Quest for a Fantastic Future* (Vance 2015), its Lithuanian translation *Elon Musk: 'Tesla', 'SpaceX' ir fantastinės ateities paieškos* (2016, translated by Kačerauskienė); *Trump: The Art of the Deal* (Trump and Schwarts 1987) and its Lithuanian translation *Trump. Sandorio menas* (2007 translated by Bieliūnas).

2.2. Methods

The examples representing the rendering of anthroponyms from English into Lithuanian (100 cases) are compared, analysed and subdivided according to the name translation procedures discussed by Lionginas Pažūsis (2014) (transference, substitution, translation, modification), a prominent Lithuanian translator and theoretician in the field of translation and linguistics. All the cases for the analysis are chosen randomly.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1. Problematic aspects of Anthroponym Translation from English into Lithuanian

Name translation, as well as translation in general, faces similar translation problems, which are usually related to the differences in languages. In terms of English and Lithuanian, one of the main differences is that Lithuanian is an inflectional language featuring the declination of nouns, pronouns, adjectives and numerals. Thus, if English anthroponyms are adapted while translating them into Lithuanian, the renderings might require Lithuanian inflections to indicate a specific case, for instance:

I had never heard of Victor Palmieri <...>

Niekada nebuvo girdėjęs apie Viktorą Palmieri <...>

In this example, *Victor Palmieri* in the Lithuanian sentence is in the Accusative case, therefore, the endings *-ą* and *-į* need to be added to the first name and the surname respectively to indicate the specific case.

Another difference is that the majority of English nouns, including personal proper nouns, do not have a grammatical gender; names referring to a male person are considered masculine while those referring

to a female person are considered feminine. In contrast, all Lithuanian nouns have grammatical genders which are clearly indicated by different inflections, e.g. *Lina Survilienė*, where the endings *-a* and *-ė* show that it is a feminine anthroponym. In brief, such noun endings as *-a*, *-ė*, *-i*, *-is*, *-uo* mark the feminine gender in the Lithuanian language whereas the endings *-as*, *-is*, *-ys*, *-(i)us*, *-uo* mark the masculine. Although Lithuanian common nouns do not change their gender by simply changing the inflection, some first names behave in this way, e.g. *Bronius* (masculine) – *Bronė* (feminine); *Ligitas* (masculine) – *Ligita* (feminine).

What is also specific about Lithuanian names is the fact that the grammatical structure of women surnames reveals a woman's marital status. As Justyna Walkowiak explains (2018), 'Contemporary Lithuania is the only European country in which the surname of a woman is – or since 2003, at least potentially has been – indicative of its bearer's marital status'. Women's surnames are formed by suffixation of the masculine surname stem, e.g. the suffixes *-aitė*, *-ytė*, *-utė*, *-ūtė*, and *-iūtė* are used for the surnames of unmarried women (e.g. *Judickas* – *Judickaitė*, *Katkevičius* – *Katkevičiūtė*, etc.), while up to 2003 the suffixes *-ienė*/*-uvienė* served as an indication of a married woman (e.g. *Lubys* – *Lubienė*; *Greičius* – *Greičiuvienė*, etc.). Since 2003, the suffix *-ė* was introduced as an additional option to form feminine surnames of married women (e.g. *Tautrimas* – *Tautrimė*, *Stankevičius* – *Stankevičė*) (ibid.).

Another problematic aspect concerning name rendering between English and Lithuanian is related to the differences of the two languages on the level of phonemes and spelling. According to *the Dabartinės lietuvių kalbos gramatika*, such phonemes as /ɜ/, /w/, /θ/, /ð/, /ŋ/ and /ə/, as well as all diphthongs containing /ə/, are not present in the Lithuanian language (Ambrasas et al. 2006, pp.17-19). In addition, such English letters as *q*, *w* and *x* are not present in the Lithuanian alphabet. Thus, the transfer of such anthroponyms as *Curtis* [kɜ:tɪs], *Thatcher* [θ] or *William* into the Lithuanian orthography is challenging.

Apart from linguistic differences, certain distinctions in the traditions of anthroponym usage can be noticed. The main difference is that in formal contexts in the English language it is common to use only a person's surname or a surname accompanied with a title; however, in Lithuanian a surname is usually accompanied with the initial letter of the name or the whole name, for example:

Landsbergis says cooperation with this bank will help <...>

G. Landsbergis sakė, kad bendradarbiavimas su šiuo banku padės <...>

In this example, the initial *G* before the surname *Landsbergis* in the Lithuanian text stands for the name *Gabrielius*. The usage of the surname alone in the Lithuanian tradition might sound somewhat impolite. Yet, in both languages the tradition of using full names (a name and a surname) is rather similar.

3.2. Methods for the Rendering of Anthroponyms

Despite some views that names are not actually translated, but rather transplanted into a target text and therefore should not be considered as a challenge for translators, the number of works on personal name translation and translation strategies show the opposite. Name translation methods are proposed by different researchers all over the world, such as Leppihalme (1997), Nord (2003), Vermes (2003), Pažūsis (2014), etc. For example, Hermans' (1988, pp. 13-15) classification of translation strategies, explicitly reflects the possibilities of name translation from one language into another and includes the following translation strategies:

- *copy* – the translation strategy when an SL name is transferred into the TL text without any changes in its orthographic form.
- *transcription* – the transliteration or adaptation of spelling, phonology, etc.
- *translation* (when the semantic meaning of a source language name is rendered)
- *substitution* (when a source language name is substituted with a target language name)
- *non-translation* (when a source language name is omitted)
- *replacement of a source language proper noun with a target language common noun*

- *replacement of a source language common noun with a target language proper noun*
- *insertion* (when an anthroponym is added in a target text where it does not exist in a source text).

In Lithuania, the main body which regulates the rendering of proper names from other languages into Lithuanian is the State Commission of the Lithuanian Language (lt. Valstybinė Lietuvių kalbos komisija). According to the guidelines, approved by the Commission (Vladarskienė & Zemlevičiūtė 2022, pp. 180-181), personal names from other languages, if used in Lithuanian, can be transcribed, adapted grammatically by adding Lithuanian inflections according to their grammatical case, used in their original form, or replaced with their Lithuanian equivalents (in cases where such equivalents are established and have been traditionally used). Transcription is advised to be used for the names which appear in fiction, popular literature, and texts for youth and children, while in specific texts (documents, scientific texts, etc.) authentic orthographic forms of names should be used. Grammatical adaptation of foreign names should be used in any running text.

A prominent Lithuanian translator and translation theoretician, Lionginas Pažūsis (2014), outlines a number of tendencies which are observed when foreign names are transferred into Lithuanian. He states that the original forms of anthroponyms can be directly transferred into a Lithuanian text without any changes or they can be adapted orthographically, phonetically and morphologically. In addition, since Lithuanian is an inflectional language, Lithuanian inflections are often added to the authentic or adapted forms of source language anthroponyms, e.g. (En) *Kurt Vonnegut* – (Lt) *Kurtas Vonnegutas*. Other name rendering possibilities include the usage of both adapted and original anthroponyms, presenting the original name in brackets, e.g. *Stivas Džobsas* (*Steve Jobs*). Also, the names are sometimes substituted with conventional correspondents, e.g. (En) *Peter* – (Lt) *Petras*; (En) *John* – (Lt) *Jonas*; if anthroponyms are semantically meaningful, they can be translated, e.g. (En) *Spike* – (Lt) *Spygliys*. Finally, Pažūsis (2014) describes the modification strategy, which is defined as any other procedure for proper name rendering except the ones mentioned above. This category includes different variations, such as first name omission, e.g. (En) *John Smith* – (Lt) *Smitas*; addition, e.g. (En) *Smith* – (Lt) *Džonas Smitas*; replacement of the name by a common noun, e.g. (En) *Sally* – (Lt) *auklė* (En. *nanny*), etc. It has to be noted that not all translation strategies are appropriate in different contexts; for instance, personal name translation is common in literary texts, but would be impossible or/and inappropriate for the translation of names in news or business articles, even in cases when names are semantically meaningful.

4. RESULTS

The following sub-sections present the results of comparative linguistic analysis of randomly chosen English anthroponyms which occur in business-related and political texts and their rendering into Lithuanian according to the following translation procedures: transference, substitution, translation, modification.

4.1 Transference

The majority of proper names analysed were translated using the transference method, when the source language name is copied into a target language text without any modifications or, specifically, in case of English names translated into Lithuanian, with an addition of Lithuanian inflections, for instance:

(EN1) *Tony Schwartz wishes to thank the many people who gave generously of their time, in particular, Robert Trump*<...>

(LT1) *Tonis Schwartzas dėkoja tiems, kurie knygai skyrė daug savo laiko, o ypač Robertui Trumpui* <...>

(EN2) *Fly to Washington, D.C. that night and see President Obama.*

(LT2) *Tą patį vakarą skrydis į Vašingtoną susitikti su prezidentu Obama.*

(EN3) *European Parliament President David Sassoli passed away on 11 January. The Parliament will honour his memory in a ceremony on Monday in Strasbourg.*

(LT3) *Sausio 11 d. mirė Europos Parlamento (EP) pirmininkas **Davidas Sassolis**. Parlamentas pagerbs jo atminimą pirmadienį Strasbūre prasidedančioje EP plenarinėje sesijoje.*

As the examples above show, Lithuanian inflections are added to the names *Robert Trump* and *David Sassoli* to indicate a Dative and an Accusative case respectively. It is worth mentioning that certain tendencies are noticed in the usage of the transference method in the corpus analyzed. Namely, the personal names which appear in the articles on the European Parliament website, tend to be copied into the target language texts without any changes, while the ones which appear in the English versions of the books investigated, tend to acquire Lithuanian inflections more often than not when transferred into Lithuanian.

4.2 Substitution

Another translation operation is substitution, when personal proper nouns are replaced by traditional target language equivalents. Only one example of this strategy in use is found:

(EN1) *On 3 May 2022, Parliament launched the second edition of the **Daphne** Caruana Galizia Prize for Journalism, in memory of the Maltese journalist killed in a bomb attack in 2017, to reward outstanding journalism reflecting EU values.*

(LT1) *2022 m. gegužės 3 d. Europos Parlamentas paskelbė kvietimą teikti paraiškas **Dafnės** Karuanos Galicijos žurnalistikos premijai. Balandį EP paskelbė apie naują jaunųjų žurnalistų stipendijų schemą ir mokymo programas, kurios turėtų prasidėti iki metų pabaigos.*

In this example the source language name *Daphne* is substituted with the Lithuanian equivalent *Dafnė* in its Genitive case. In Greek mythology *Daphne* is the name of one of the female nymphs, a personification of the laurel tree. The Lithuanian traditional equivalent for the name is *Dafnė*, which features phonetic adaptation (ph→f) and the use of Lithuanian inflection -ė, which marks the feminine gender. The scarcity of this translation strategy in the corpus analyzed is not surprising since this strategy is mainly used to translate biblical names and names of the saint figures, which are very rare in business-related and political contexts.

4.3 Translation

Translated names are commonly found in fiction, where they might have links to common words, be semantically transparent and might serve character defining purposes. Only one case of translation proper appears in the corpus:

(EN1) *It didn't make Musk feel any better that he and Page were very close friends and that he felt Page was fundamentally a well-intentioned person and not **Dr. Evil**.*

(LT1) *Musko ne kiek neguodė net tai, kad Page'as – labai artimas jo bičiulis, kad jis žinojo jį esant geros širdies žmogų, o ne kokį **Daktarą Blogį**.*

Here, the source language personal name *Dr. Evil* is literally translated into *Daktarą Blogį*. Although technically *Dr. Evil* is an anthroponym, it is clear that it is a fictional rather than a real name. In business-related and political texts such names are virtually non-existent, as well as the strategy of translation.

4.4 Modification

The analysis shows that several types of modification were used for the translation of anthroponyms, namely, addition and specification. No cases of omission were noticed. The following example illustrates modification by means of addition:

(EN1) *Most MEPs stressed the need to defeat **Putin** but also underlined that the best way to do this was to minimise the costs faced by the EU itself.*

(LT1) *Dauguma EP narių taip pat atkreipė dėmesį, kad karo kaštų ES sumažinimas prisidėtų prie pergalės prieš **V. Putiną**.*

(EN2) *Macron*, whose country currently holds the rotating presidency of the Council, said reforming the treaties would allow the EU to “move forward towards more simplicity” and would “provide legitimacy to the democratic control” launched by the Conference.

(LT2) Tarybai atstovaujančios Prancūzijos prezidentas **Emmanuel Macron** sakė, kad sutarčių reforma leistų ES „judėti link paprastumo“ ir „suteiktų teisėtumą Konferencijos pradėtai demokratinei kontrolei“.

In the first example the capital letter *V* of the first name *Vladimir* is added to the surname *Putin*, while in the second example the name *Emmanuel* is added to the surname *Macron* in the Lithuanian translation. Both cases illustrate the Lithuanian tradition of not using surnames alone, since it is seen as somewhat impolite. Of all the cases of modification found in the corpus, the addition procedure appears to be the most frequent.

Apart from addition, several cases of modification by means of specification are also found, for instance:

(EN3) *European defense should be strengthened with a rapid reaction force, and Europol turned into a European FBI, he concluded.*

(LT3) *Europos gynybai būtina steigti greito reagavimo pajėgas bei Europol agentūrą paversti europine FTB, teigė M. Weber.*

In this example the pronoun *he* is specified in the Lithuanian translation by providing the surname and the initial letter for the first name, which is a typical formal reference to a person in the Lithuanian tradition. Yet, it has to be noted that in this case the reason for such translation choice might not be related to the actual translation of the anthroponym, but rather to the fluency of the text on a larger scale. In the original article both the name *Manfred Weber* and the pronoun *he* is used interchangeably throughout the whole paragraph, so the translator might have chosen to use the anthroponym instead of the pronoun in order to keep the natural flow of the target text.

5. CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, despite the fact that anthroponyms in translation are often considered as items which do not call for any interpretation or translation variations, the reality is usually different. Due to different grammatical systems and even naming traditions in different languages a name is not always an item which is simply transplanted from a source to target text. In terms of English and Lithuanian, the most challenging differences concerning anthroponyms may be the following:

- Lithuanian is an inflectional language, which allows for the declination of nouns, pronouns, adjectives and numerals and indicates the grammatical gender of nouns, whereas English nouns do not have a grammatical gender;
- Lithuanian and English differ in phonetics and spelling;
- In Lithuanian, women's surnames have a distinctive structure which indicates their marital status;
- Lithuanian and English have different traditions for the usage of names.

The analysis of 100 English anthroponyms and their translations into Lithuanian in business-related and political texts shows that the majority of English names are transferred into Lithuanian by adding the Lithuanian inflections, thus conforming to the Lithuanian grammatical system. In some rare cases the English anthroponyms are transferred into Lithuanian without any changes, i.e. in their original forms. The second most widely used translation strategy is modification by mean of addition, when in the translated text either the initial letter of the first name or the whole first name is added to the surname which is originally used alone. Such translation procedures reflect the prevailing Lithuanian tradition of avoiding the usage of the surname alone. Finally, only one case of translation proper was noticed in the corpus. Given the formal nature of the texts analysed, it is natural that this translation strategy is not very common.

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